

REVIEWS

WALT WHITMAN. *The Journalism*, ed. Herbert Bergman, Douglas A. Noverr, and Edward J. Recchia. Volume 2. New York: Peter Lang, 2003. xxviii + 501 pp.

In spite of its numerous exclusions, volume two of Herbert Bergman's life-long work on Whitman's complete and collected journalism is without doubt one of the most important editions in many years. Its significance is enhanced by the fact that it presents Whitman's early, pre-1855 writings, what Emerson famously named the "long foreground." *Journalism 2* gives us for the first time the most comprehensive chronological edition of the great majority of Whitman's writings in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, which he edited between 1846 and 1848. The equally monumental *Journalism I* appeared in 1998 and presented Whitman texts from newspapers Whitman edited or worked for between 1834 and 1846, including the first five months of the *Eagle* under Whitman's editorship. Anyone who has labored in the gnarled vineyard of the many papers for which Whitman worked can testify that today these serials are extremely rare and often difficult to read. For example, the only extant file of the *New York Aurora*, which Whitman edited briefly in 1842, resides in the Paterson Free Public Library, an expensive cab ride or car rental from the nearest airport. In their first volume Bergman and his associates, Douglas A. Noverr and Edward J. Recchia, set down the criteria for choosing material. Their edition of the collected journalism includes "editorials, articles, reviews, feature stories, other prose matter, and poems."

Volume I reprinted for the first time a completely unknown and fascinating piece of Whitman's early fiction entitled "The Fireman's Dream: With the Story of His Strange Companion" from the *Sunday Times & Noah's Weekly Messenger* of March 31, 1844. Some have wondered what fiction was doing in a volume of journalism, but the editorial principles in Volume I state that "other prose matter, and poems" are included so long "as they appeared in their original sources." Accordingly, in reprinting the Whitman material from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* from August 1, 1846, and January 14, 1848, the editors did not include the poet's earlier fiction that he reprinted in the *Eagle*. In a way, this is unfortunate because such entries would have given us a clearer context for measuring Whitman's development as the future poet of *Leaves of Grass*. At the very least, these entries might have been indicated by titles in brackets in their chronological place in the edition, along perhaps with contributions of Whitman's major contemporaries, which include during this period Bryant, Hawthorne, Holmes, Longfellow, Lowell, Poe, and Whittier. Whitman himself recycled seven pieces of fiction: "Revenge and Requital" as "One Wicked Impulse" on September 7, 1847; a version of "Franklin Evans; or the Inebriate" under the pseudonym of "J.R.S." and the title of "A Tale of Long Island" on November 16-30, 1846; "A Fact-Romance of Long Island" on December 16, 1846; "An Incident on Long Island Forty Years Ago" on

December 24, 1846; "The Child and the Prolifigate" on January 27-29, 1847; "Death in the School room" on December 24, 1847; and "The Boy-Lover" on January 4-5, 1848. These items are reprinted in their original forms for the most part in Thomas L. Brasher's edition of Whitman *Early Poems and Fiction* (1963), where he fails however to note the *Eagle* version of "The Boy-Lover."

Whitman's contributions to the *Eagle* have been previously reprinted in the following editions—all three titles now long out of print and indeed rare: Cleveland Rodgers and John Black's *The Gathering of the Forces* (1920), Emory Holloway's *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose* (1921), and Florence Bernstein Freedman's *Walt Whitman Looks at the Schools* (1950). The largest collection, by Rodgers and Black, is not arranged chronologically. These editions account for a great many of the reprinted pieces. *Journalism 2* presents most of these items between August 1846 and January 1848 in chronological order. Additionally, it reprints from the same period for the first time another—by my count—144 items, many of which will entice Whitman scholars. On the other hand, I count fifty-nine items in the *Eagle* for this period that are absent from *Journalism 2*; eight of these were reprinted from the *Eagle*, mainly in *The Gathering of the Forces*. Needless to say, the selection principles are hardly based on "hard science," not only in Bergman's case but the others as well, including my own list (printed at the end of this essay). Often, even some of the items reprinted in *The Gathering of the Forces* are nothing more than a sentence, often about something so trivial as the weather. In noting the absent items, I have excluded minor ones that have no recognized connection to Whitman. Also, in making my count I have ignored Whitman's book and magazine reviews because most of the noteworthy ones have already been reprinted.

The editors adequately describe the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* as a six-column paper in four sheets. Advertisements made up almost all of the first page. The second (editorial page with masthead repeated) contained editorials, articles, news, and advertisements. Much of the "news" came from exchange newspapers in an era before such wire services as AP and UPI; this material is easily distinguishable from local productions, and I do not find the editors choosing any as issuing from Whitman's hand. The third page was also filled with advertisements, and the fourth with legal notices and more advertisements. Occasionally, the front page also contained in its first two or three columns light-hearted literary material, which was advertised under the masthead on page two. Here I found in checking for missing items in *Journalism 2* a little piece entitled "Going to Bed," which I believe belongs to Whitman and whose edited text I have presented in another part of this issue of the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*.

Most of us familiar with the earlier editions featuring the journalism know by now the civic concerns Whitman wrote about—better streets and schools, temperance, local crime, capital punishment, the tariff, fairer salaries for sewing women, slavery, the Mexican War, American expansionism, personal hygiene (exactly twenty minutes per visit in the public bath), and general health (boosted here occasionally with advertisements from phrenologists such as Fowler and Wells). Naturally, the most remarkable items have already been reprinted in Rodgers and Black, Holloway, or Freedman. The newly reprinted

items in *Journalism 2*, however, are still well worth perusal and study. On August 12, 1846, for example, the poet complains about British flogging in its navy. Two days later, the future poet of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" writes: "How lurid the sun was, when he went down last night! We watched him from the Fulton ferry as he hung like a great ball over the roofs of the Gomorrah on the other side of the river." A similar piece anticipating that great poem may be found in "Arrival of the Hibernia" (January 25, 1847). In "The Gayety of Americans," appearing on September 23, 1846, he compares Paris with Manhattan and concludes: "Theirs is a spirit which seems to partake of the thoughtlessness of the savage—a disposition to . . . take no care for to-morrow. Ours, we think, is more the disposition to make business a pleasure." So much for "Whitman and the French."

In "Monkeyism in Brooklyn," the poet disapproves of the American obsession with Byron and Scott (January 12, 1847). In the *Eagle* Whitman often complained about the extremism of the abolitionists, but in "Democratic Doctrine" (January 16, 1847) he condemns the extremists on both side of the slavery issue. While Whitman, who was a Free Soiler, came closer to accepting Abolitionism while on the *Eagle* and afterward the *New Orleans Crescent*, his main concern was opposition to expansion of the slave states and the illegal slave trade which continued to import fresh slaves. On April 24, 1847, he published "Reminiscences of the Slave Trade." "In 1811," he wrote, "there was a slave market in full operation in Wall-street. *Yankee Doodle* often thinks he still hears the whip and the groans of the victims." A day earlier he had published "Poverty—A Scene in New York," which is full of pathos. Whitman, as he tells us at the end of "Song of Myself," was replete with contradictions. In an editorial of March 15, 1847, this champion of the Founding Fathers suggests that Andrew Jackson is possibly more important than either Washington or Jefferson. Yet when it came to the vernacular, Whitman had made up his mind. "Don't attempt to be too fine in speaking," he warns on July 20, 1847 in "Fineness in Speaking" (the editors' title): "Use good honest English, and common words for common things. If you speak breeches, shirt, or petticoats, call them by their right names. The vulgarity is in avoiding them."

Of the fifty-nine missing items, most are local in scope but sometimes major in importance. From "Visits of 'Pleasure'" (August 4, 1846), which chides those who must get away from the city in summer, to "How Shall We End the Mexican War?" (December 10, 1848), which reviews the debate over whether Texas will become a slave or free state, Whitman appears ever on top of events that would in one form or another work their way into the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. (The Mexican War piece is the penultimate missing piece, preceding "Going to Bed.") "Something About Suicides" of August 13, 1846, meditates on the deaths of three Brooklyn residents, a businessman, an attorney, and an artist, who take their lives to avoid debtors' prison. "Ah," writes the future poet of "Song of Myself" who will describe the suicide "with its dabbled hair," "there are volumes of meaning in those three dreary cases!" Under "City Intelligence," a regular column offering short observations, we have evidence to refute Robert D. Faner's claim in *Whitman & Opera* (1951) that the poet disliked the piano (September 3, 1846). This author of more than one temperance tract also offered pro-and-con observations on the de-

mon rum. In "Physical Economy" (February 6, 1847), he advises against, saying: "Simple water is the body fluid called for by the system." In those days, of course, with surface water sources becoming polluted by rapid urbanization, getting "simple water" wasn't that simple. In "Excise Election—Temperance" (April 29, 1847), Whitman opposes the licensing of taverns on the grounds that it would be an impediment to free trade.

Before closing with my list of missing articles which I offer as a friendly supplement to this important edition, let me congratulate the editors on their work and encourage them in their third and possibly last volume. Allow me also to caution them about including much, if anything, of the material collected in Emory Holloway's *I Sit and Look Out: Editorials from the Brooklyn Times* (1932). As I have argued in my recent biography of Whitman, *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* (1999), the empirical evidence that Whitman wrote more than one or two of the pieces collected in Holloway's edition is almost nonexistent. Furthermore, most of the editorials are politically conservative at a time when the poet was radicalizing American poetry and ultimately its culture.

MISSING ARTICLES FROM VOLUME 2

(GF—*The Gathering of the Forces*; UPP—*Uncollected Poetry and Prose*; WLS—*Whitman Looks at the School*; WWE—Thomas L. Brasher, *Walt Whitman as Editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle* [1970]. The star before certain items indicates that I could not double-check a printed list I had established during the research for my biography because my microfilm copy for the *Eagle* at those points is unreadable. In significant cases where the title of the article is not indicative of its content, I have briefly annotated it.)

- "Visits of 'Pleasure,'" Aug. 4, 1846.
- "Outrages Upon Immigrants," Aug. 5, 1846.
- "Wyatt, the Murderer," Aug. 12, 1846.
- "Something About Suicides," Aug. 13, 1846.
- "A Hanging To-Day," Aug. 17, 1846.
- "Wyatt, the Murderer," Aug. 18, 1846.
- "City Intelligence: 'We spent a pleasant afternoon yesterday . . .,'" Sep. 3, 1846.
- "Poor Mexico!" Sep. 4, 1846 ["Santa Anna is a wicked man . . ."].
- "The Hutchinson Family [Singers]," Sep. 7, 1846.
- "Bitter But True," Sep. 9, 1846 [preoccupation with amassing wealth].
- "Servants," Sep. 16, 1846 [GF 1:154-156].
- "The Excursion Yesterday," Oct. 2, 1846 [initial run of the new steamboat "Montauk"; mentioned in WWE, 52].
- "As a Very Average Proof," Oct. 7, 1846 [GF 2:341-342].
- "Something about Consumption," Dec. 21, 1846.
- "A Paragraph for Young Fellows," Dec. 29, 1846.
- "Items from 'Free Soil' Writers," Dec. 30, 1846.
- "Radicalism at the West," Dec. 30, 1846.
- "One More Unfortunate," Jan. 4, 1847.
- "A Good life, and a High Example—Mrs. Fay," Jan. 13, 1847.
- "Incidents in the Life of a Poor Author," Jan. 14, 1847.
- "A Warning to Young Men, and All Men!" Jan. 25, 1847.
- "Capital Punishment," Jan. 26, 1847.
- *"Do Your Rooms Have the Proper Ventilation?" Feb. 8, 1847.

- *"Hints to the Young—A Gem of Character," Feb. 12, 1847.
- *"Traits of Ireland," Feb. 13, 1847.
- *"Physical Economy," Feb. 16, 1847.
- *"Two Authentic Cases of Illy-Paid Female Labor," Feb. 16, 1847.
- "A City Fire," Feb. 24, 1847 [UPP 1:154-156].
- *"Bishop Hughes' Lecture," Mar. 20, 1847 [calls attention to the availability of tickets].
- "Of all professions," says Goldsmith . . .," Mar. 27, 1847 [mentioned in *WLS*, 188].
- "Something About Children," Apr. 9, 1847 [*GF* 1:145-147].
- "Excise Election—Temperance," Apr. 29, 1847.
- "Beginning of Our Republic's Government—Washington in New York City—Reminiscences," Apr. 29, 1847, 1847.
- "Mr. Hochkiss," May 7, 1847.
- "Brooklyn Morals—Those Wax Figures," May 8, 1847 [concerns a traveling wax museum of crime scenes, which the New York newspapers have claimed is permanent in Brooklyn and thus an indication of its morality, or low culture].
- "Politics of Gen. Taylor," May 21, 1847.
- "The Hotchkiss Robbers," June 9, 1847.
- "Bloody Affair at Gravesend. Mother and Child Killed. More of Rum's Doings," June 14, 1847.
- "How the Fourth of July Is to Be Celebrated," July 1, 1847 [signed: "By the Order of the Committee of Citizens, Walter Whitman, sec'y"].
- "Young Men, and What They Have Done," July 12, 1847.
- "Outrages Upon Shipboard," July 26, 1847.
- "The Infamous Slave-Trade," July 26, 1847.
- "What the Hanging Laws Have Done," July 28, 1847.
- "Long Island—The English and the Dutch," July 29, 1847 [defends the Dutch conduct in acquiring land from the Indians; blames the English for its shameful history of white betrayal of Indians].
- "An Incident on the Fulton Ferry Boat," July 30, 1847 [argues that cigar smoking should be forbidden on ferries].
- "The Effects of Intemperance," July 30, 1847.
- "Rowdyism in Brooklyn.—The Watch," Aug. 2, 1847.
- "Myrtle Avenue," Aug. 16, 1847 [mentioned in *WWE*, 67].
- "An Anecdote with a Moral," Aug. 31, 1847 [warns against jumping shore before the ferry docks].
- "Present Management of the Long Island Rail Road: Yesterday's Excursion to Greenport," Sep. 3, 1847 [mentioned in *WWE*, 75].
- "The Hochkiss Robbers," Oct. 2, 1847.
- "Vagrom [vagrant] Women," Oct. 14, 1847 [*Journalism* 2 reprints an article with the same title for Dec. 27, 1847].
- "Lecture of Professor Agassiz," Nov. 26, 1847.
- "The New York Globe—A New Editor," Nov. 30, 1847.
- "Public Annoyance and Municipal Negligence," Dec. 2, 1847.
- "A Ferry That Is a Ferry," Dec. 8, 1847.
- "The Worth of Liberty," Dec. 10, 1847 [reports favorably on an anti-slavery lecture in Brooklyn].
- "How Shall We End the Mexican War?" Dec. 18, 1847.
- "Going to Bed," Dec. 30, 1847.

NB. "The Republic of Cracow 'Extinguished,'" Dec. 19, 1847 [*GF* 1:47-49], and "Dreadful Outrage on the Continent," Dec. 19, 1847 [*GF* 1:49], are not found in either *Journalism* 2 or the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* for these dates. Indeed, December 19 fell

on a Sunday, and the *Eagle* was not published on Sundays. Furthermore, "Government," July 27, 1847, listed in *GF* 1:51-53 but not *Journalism* 2, is not found in the *Eagle* for this date. "Altruism," December 23, 1846 [*GF* 2:359], is correctly printed as "Ultraism" in *Journalism* 2.

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JEROME LOVING

JAY GROSSMAN. *Reconstituting the American Renaissance: Emerson, Whitman, and the Politics of Representation*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2003. 261 pp.

Since the 1980s, Whitman criticism has been largely occupied with trying to understand how *Leaves of Grass* is informed by the social and political life of the antebellum period. Four themes have dominated this endeavor: sexuality, slavery, disunion, and the relationship between literary and political representation. Jay Grossman's awkwardly titled new book focuses mainly on the last of these themes, but it touches on all of them, and it therefore bears the burden of distinguishing itself from much of the important Whitman scholarship of the last two decades. There are two options for the critic in this situation—one methodological, the other contextual. One must either challenge the approach of previous studies and present a new, corrective one in its place or provide a new context in which to examine the established themes. Grossman does issue a methodological challenge, but his target, Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*, is an old one. When he opposes himself to "the standard model derived from Matthiessen in which the abundance of the Renaissance springs, Athena-like, out of the head of an Emerson-Zeus" (5) or promises "to interrogate the . . . standing of [Matthiessen's] representative figures" (25), he is following a script that dates back at least to 1985, when Jonathan Arac and Donald Pease published critiques of Matthiessen in *The American Renaissance Reconsidered*. By now, attacking Matthiessen has become a gesture of New Americanist solidarity rather than a mark of iconoclasm. What matters is where Grossman stands in relation to his more recent predecessors.

Grossman's stronger claim to originality is of the contextual variety. Whereas Allen Grossman and Kerry Larson interpreted Whitman's challenge to representative institutions in light of the constitutional crises of the 1850s, his book traces it back to the anti-Federalist rhetoric of the ratification debates. As Grossman puts it, "*Reconstituting* argues that . . . writings by Emerson and Whitman . . . have their origins in facets of the Constitutional settlement that have never wholly ceased reverberating through American literary history" (15). This is not an entirely new idea—Larson's important book, *Whitman's Drama of Consensus*, considers the analogy between the Constitution and *Leaves of Grass* at length—but in Grossman's hands it becomes a rationale for detailed cross-century comparison of a kind that is new to Whitman studies. Of course, this comparison brings its own challenges—formal as well as historical—and when Grossman moves from the *Federalist* in chapter one to Emerson and Whitman in chapter two, he raises a host of questions about the political thought of the intervening seventy-odd years that are simply beyond the scope of a book about Emerson and Whitman. The greater challenge arises, however, from Grossman's decision to devote a full chapter to the ratification