

WILLIAM PANNAPACKER. *Revised Lives: Walt Whitman and Nineteenth-Century Authorship*. New York: Routledge, 2004. xix + 197 pp.

At the heart of *Revised Lives* is the notion of “self-refashioning,” the ways in which some nineteenth-century American authors continuously reinvented their persona throughout their careers. Since Walt Whitman serves as Exhibit A, one might expect a focus on the successive editions of *Leaves of Grass*. One would be wrong. Instead, William Pannapacker takes a more fractured but more novel and illuminating approach in this deeply researched, clearly written book.

In five disparate chapters, Pannapacker connects Whitman to a variety of nineteenth-century figures, showing how Whitman used others to refashion his “self” and how readers constructed their own versions of “Walt Whitman.” The heart of the book is its chapters on Abraham Lincoln and James Russell Lowell. From the 1860s on, Whitman used these two contemporaries as opposing figures against whom he could define himself and promote his career. Plenty of writers have pointed out the many parallels between President and poet: both were political/cultural outsiders from humble origins who used formidable rhetorical skills to win positions of authority, all the while maintaining a common-man persona. Pannapacker’s most original contribution is his discussion of the poet’s Lincoln lectures. Beginning in 1879, Whitman delivered an annual lecture on “The Death of Abraham Lincoln,” always ending it with a poem that he knew to be uncharacteristic of his work and that he claimed to disdain: “O Captain! My Captain!” The 1887 lecture, held in New York as a benefit for Whitman, attracted the city’s cultural and economic elite: Richard Watson Gilder, John Hay, Augustus St. Gaudens, and Mark Twain, among others; Andrew Carnegie did not attend but purchased a box for \$350. In 1855 Walt Whitman had declared himself to be one of the roughs, a sensualist, a breeder. With his Lincoln lectures, he presented himself as a respectable patriot, attracting the broad audience that had previously eluded him. As Pannapacker writes, “Whitman’s experiments in self-creation finally succeeded with a major segment of the public when he enclosed his persona within the halo encircling the martyred President” (22).

The audience at the 1887 Lincoln lecture was filled with figures one would never have expected to pay tribute to Walt Whitman, but none was more surprising than James Russell Lowell. For decades, Whitman and his followers portrayed Lowell as the anti-Walt: a conventional, hyper-respectable Fireside Poet who won wealth and esteem while his counterpart remained poor and despised. Pannapacker brilliantly illuminates the Whitman-Lowell relationship by applying Pierre Bourdieu’s insights into the inverse relationship between economic and symbolic capital. Lowell may have enjoyed a Harvard professorship and a comfortable income, but Whitman’s poverty and lack of institutional connections served to enhance his prestige among the cultural avant-garde. However, Pannapacker does not uncritically adopt Bourdieu’s model, which was designed to interpret France’s relatively small and cohesive cultural system. Bourdieu implies that writers in a capitalist economy have only two models: the market-blind avant-gardist or the market-driven producer. Within the large, diverse, postcolonial and transatlantic nineteenth-

century U.S. cultural marketplace, writers did not have to choose between being Emily Dickinson or P. T. Barnum; most artists, including Whitman and Lowell, were somewhere between those poles.

Nevertheless, Whitman and his followers constructed an appealing narrative that fixed the two writers in simple roles: Lowell as wealthy and powerful bully, Whitman as poor but brilliant artist. Never mind that the East Coast elite, including Lowell, flocked to Whitman's Lincoln lectures; ignore the fact that Whitman's name was at least as well known as Lowell's—Whitman and his disciples successfully portrayed him as a martyr to his art, with Lowell as a smug Pilate. Pannacker explodes the simple dichotomies that have persisted from Whitman's time to our own and analyzes the complex, often contradictory versions of "Walt Whitman" that proliferated before and after Whitman's death. He understands the desire to seize on one "Whitman" in order to advance a cultural/political agenda, but in the eloquent conclusion to his chapter on Lowell, the longest and best in the book, he argues that Whitman's success may stem from his "ability to elude precise definition; to seem to appeal to all groups (the *avant-garde* and the middlebrow, the elitist and the populist, the nationalist and the cosmopolitan, the heterosexual and the homosexual). It is this protean quality—the capacity for admirers of Whitman to refashion him in their own image . . .—which has kept him the object of interest and speculation for more than a century and a half" (104).

No admirer of Whitman was more fervent or more keenly interested in re-fashioning the poet in his own image than Edward Carpenter. Pannacker's chapter on Carpenter and the other English homosexual disciples is essentially an expansion of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's brief, brilliant, and suggestive essay on Whitman in *Between Men*. However, his extensive research and careful analysis yield some new perspectives. In particular, he shows how Carpenter's relationship with George Merrill, which Sedgwick cites as a model of cross-class bonding, was inescapably enmeshed in British class hierarchies.

*Revised Lives* concludes with a chapter on photographic images of Poe—a strange coda, particularly considering that Whitman himself was the most photographed author of the nineteenth century. No matter—the book is invaluable to anyone interested in Whitman or in the fluid, complex interactions among writers, readers, and texts in nineteenth-century Anglo-American culture.

*The College of New Jersey*

MICHAEL ROBERTSON

KENNETH M. PRICE. *To Walt Whitman, America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. 182 pp.

For Walt Whitman, "America" and "democracy" were convertible terms. For not a few writers after him, "Whitman" and "America" seemed convertible terms, apparently one inspiration for Kenneth Price's title, although the more literal source is a letter sent to Whitman late in his life and addressed quite simply "America." That it reached its destination would not have surprised Malcolm Cowley, who opined in 1923 that, "Before Walt Whitman America hardly existed." "His crudity is an exceeding great stench," wrote Ezra Pound,