

straight to the reader's heart at the words written in September of 1891 to Dr. John Johnston in Bolton, England, concerning the enclosed proof sheets; they are, Whitman says with finality, from "the forthcoming & really last & completed ed'n of L of G, Love to you & all the friends, WW" (118).

It is the reviewer's unhappy task to note that even in so carefully edited a volume as this, several errors and omissions occur. On page 97 there is a letter in which Whitman writes to thank William Sloane Kennedy for his "translation" and refers to "M. Sarrazin." Gabriel Sarrazin and his article, "Walt Whitman," published in *La Nouvelle Revue* on May 1, 1888, go unidentified, and Whitman's comment that Sarrazin's article "is a great steady trade wind hurrying the slip into port" should surely read "the ship" (and the citation to the previously known partial transcript of this letter should refer to Volume 4 of *The Correspondence*, not Volume 5). The omission of a December 5, 1872, letter from Whitman to Alfred Webb of Dublin, Ireland, published for the first time in my *Whitman and the Irish* (2000), serves to validate the editor's point, however, that one of the distinct advantages of the electronic medium is its "infinite expandibility [which] no longer limits the range of what may be included" (xvi). If, indeed, this is to be the last of the print editions of Whitman's correspondence, it takes its place worthily beside its predecessors.

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M. JIMMIE KILLINGSWORTH. *Walt Whitman and the Earth: A Study in Ecopoetics*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2004. xii + 225 pp.

In this timely, elegant addition to the Iowa Whitman Series, Jimmie Killingsworth merges his deep knowledge of Whitman's poetry and environmental rhetoric to give "a reconsideration of Whitman's language in light of an ecological understanding of the world and a reconsideration of that world through the lens of Whitman's mighty language" (5). The double aim, admirably achieved, will make this slim book interesting both for Whitman scholars and for ecocritics. Following Kenneth Burke, Killingsworth sees the process of identification as entangled with division, discord, and domination; the result is a fresh reading of Whitman's tropes of identity over the length and breadth of his poetic career.

The subtitle identifies the theoretical orientation as "ecopoetics," which Killingsworth defines as primarily phenomenological and concerned with the cognitive, moral, and mystical limits of knowing the objects of the earth through language. The limitations of language emerge in the "unspeakableness of things," as in the unspeakably offensive "something" that confronts the poet in the 1856 "This Compost." In Chapter 1, "This Compost" becomes Killingsworth's proof text for ecopoetics, for his reading shows how Whitman confronts the limits of his own poetic figuration in order to find new possibilities of understanding his relationship to the things of the earth. The analysis of "This Compost" relies on Bill Brown's 2001 essay "Thing Theory," but it relies even more on Killingsworth's own intelligent sensitivity to language.

The analysis freshens the poem, just as Whitman's revisions of the poem freshen his figuration and open his ways of experiencing the earth.

This effect of renewal, transformation, or freshening is repeated often in *Walt Whitman and the Earth*. Killingsworth does not block out a reading of a poem and then leave it behind; instead, the reading continues, accruing significance and nuance as the argument develops. At the same time, Killingsworth develops particular ways of seeing and knowing. In the prominent phrase, "alternating gestalt," for example, he traces the tension between closeness and distance, concrete attachment and abstract detachment, pride and sympathy, self and other. The rhetoric of this "alternating gestalt" creates poetic dramas of identification, both within particular poems and within Whitman's poetic career. In addition, Killingsworth is more than a rhetorical reader. He also brings a wide range of literary influences to bear on his understanding of a poem. In reading "A Noiseless Patient Spider," for instance, he provides a context that includes Jonathan Edwards, Native American myth, Virginia Woolf, and Aldo Leopold, and then he adds a lengthier, deeper account of William Cullen Bryant's "To a Waterfowl" and Oliver Wendell Holmes's "The Chambered Nautilus" in order to illuminate Whitman's secularized, doubtful sense of the spider-soul. Killingsworth's literary expertise also pays extra dividends. Thus the clear account of Wordsworth's sonnet "The World is Too Much with Us" resonates in several chapters, providing a basis for distinguishing Whitman's varying degrees of modernity from Wordsworth's Romantic sublime.

One of the specifically ecocritical concepts that Killingsworth develops to advantage is the role of *place* in Whitman's poetry. Readers of Lawrence Buell's *Environmental Imagination* and *Writing for an Endangered World* will recognize the centrality of place in environmental literature and criticism. For Killingsworth, place functions as a means of gauging Whitman's ecopoetics. So, in Chapters 2 and 3, such "globalizing" poems as "Starting from Paumanok," "Passage to India," and "Song of the Redwood-Tree" show Whitman's penchant for overextension and abstraction, whereas the local quality of a poem like "Spontaneous Me" begins with the poet's own body as a place.

My favorite chapter, the fourth, "The Island Poet and the Sacred Shore," focuses on four shoreline poems, treated as two overlapping pairs: "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd"; "As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life" and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." The pairings are innovative, developing a strong sense of the shoreline as a sacred place in Whitman's poetic geography. Of course the primary shoreline is that of Long Island, Paumanok, but Killingsworth also shows that New York City should be recognized as a seacoast island, and his second pairing illuminates the role of tides in the island poetry. Although one might be excused for expecting a laudatory reading of "Lilacs," Killingsworth's critical acumen makes the swampy landscape of the poem both murky and tragic. In reading this chapter, I found myself wishing for more discussion, especially of the second pair. In addition, I wanted to hear about the entire cluster of *Sea Drift* poems, for I could imagine they would significantly add to the sense of the shoreline as a sacred place.

The reader's desire for *more* becomes sharp in the last two chapters. Whitman's double identity as the poet of urban landscapes and Civil War landscapes is complex and multifaceted. Chapter 5 treats these dual roles clearly, framing them in a plot of poetic modernization. In this reading, Whitman's pre-War sense of "alternating insularity and openness of urban environments" (139) becomes a pronounced ambivalence that ultimately hardens into a strict opposition between nature and society during the War. Modernization means alienation, the loss of intimacy, and the pervasive figure of war in Whitman's thinking about the relationship between nature and culture.

In the last chapter, the Timber Creek entries in *Specimen Days* and the old-age annexes to *Leaves of Grass* reprise the ecopoetical themes of the book and of Whitman's career. As Whitman ages, he mounts a surprisingly strong resistance to modernity. So, for example, "A Sun-Bath—Nakedness" contrasts country and city in terms that recall the best of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, such poems as "Song of Myself" and "I Sing the Body Electric." The short lyrics from the annexes resume many of the great shoreline poems, and here again I found myself wishing for more extended discussion of such mini-clusters as *Fancies at Navesink*. Whitman's annexes contain more sacred shorelines than we see at the end of this excellent critical work.

In a recent book review in this journal, Wynn Thomas remarked that "the test of any study of Whitman is the extent to which it refreshes and augments our appreciation of the poetry" (*WWQR* 20:178). By that test, *Walt Whitman and the Earth* is a model of critical precision and learning.

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DAVID S. REYNOLDS. *Walt Whitman*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 159 pp.

A few years after completing his magisterial 1955 biography *The Solitary Singer*, Gay Wilson Allen issued a delightful supplemental volume called simply *Walt Whitman*, which he explained was "intended primarily for the enjoyment of the non-specialist." David S. Reynolds has made a somewhat similar progression. A decade after publishing *Walt Whitman's America*—the imposing study that so richly documents Whitman's relation to, and his absorption of, his physical and intellectual milieu and demonstrates their relevance to his poetry—he has just published his own *Walt Whitman*, a pleasant little volume of some 40,000 words, essentially derived from the larger work. "Drawing from the extensive research behind my cultural biography *Walt Whitman's America*," he says, "the current book is the first to describe concisely the transformation of cultural materials into poetry that never loses its power to inspire, to provoke, and to heal." And, considering the formidable and probing research and interpretation that characterize Reynolds's larger work and its demonstration of the ways in which the complex and often self-contradictory poet reacted to and distilled his nineteenth-century American world into great poetry, one must admire the way in which the new volume successfully encapsulates the