

If an editor feels compelled to make a substitution here, a far better word choice than *hu-men*, or so it seems, would be *humans* or *persons* or, quite simply, *men and women*.

Well-intentioned though they may be, the revisions in this edition of the 1855 *Leaves* have about them a light, sometimes even comic, quality. Upon encountering again and again the “humanist pronouns”—*hu*, *hus*, *hum*—, I frequently found myself recalling the famous Bud Abbott and Lou Costello routine, “Who’s on First?” Eventually I began to work out my own routine, a politically correct one at that, with *Hu* on first, *Hus* on second, and *Hum* on third. *Hu-wee* (pronounced *hoey*) ended up at short. On the other hand, the revisions have about them a dark, frightful quality. They seem, at bottom, Orwellian. Appropriately enough, at the end of 1984, in an “Appendix” titled “The Principles of Newspeak,” George Orwell discusses the language of totalitarianism, commenting on how Ingsoc (English Socialist) Party members had begun to develop a vocabulary consisting of “words which had been deliberately constructed for political purposes: words, that is to say, which not only had in every case a political implication, but were intended to impose a desirable mental attitude upon the person using them.” Near the end of this essay, Orwell talks of the progress being made toward translating classic literature into Newspeak words and grammatical constructions:

A good deal of the literature of the past was, indeed, already being transformed in this way. Considerations of prestige made it desirable to preserve the memory of certain historical figures, while at the same time bringing their achievements into line with the philosophy of Ingsoc. Various writers, such as Shakespeare, Milton, Swift, Byron, Dickens and some others were therefore in process of translation; when the task had been completed, their original writings, with all else that survived of the literature of the past, would be destroyed. These translations were a slow and difficult business, and it was not expected that they would be finished before the first or second decade of the twenty-first century.

To invoke the name of Orwell may be to overstate the case against A. S. Ash’s edition. After all, the primary motive behind the edition—the repudiation of sexist language—can only be regarded as laudable. Nevertheless, there remains something ominous about the book. It is certainly not the collection of poems toward which to direct beginning students of Whitman. Scholars, though, may find the reprinting of some interest. If anyone ever undertakes a study of the expurgated, adulterated, or otherwise altered versions of *Leaves of Grass*, the edition by Bandanna Books will be, for that scholar, a central text.

*University of Wisconsin-Parkside*

DONALD D. KUMMINGS

JOYCE W. WARREN. *Fanny Fern: An Independent Woman*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992. xiv + 374 pp.

Up until recently, Whitman has been considered, by and large, a “man’s poet,” with numerous articles referring to Whitman’s devotion to the father-stuff. Things are changing, however, as scholars have begun to read *Leaves of Grass*

with a feminist awareness. In a recent issue of the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* (Spring 1993), Maire Mullins applies Hélène Cixous's reading strategies to passages in *Leaves*. Karen Oakes, in a chapter in *Out of Bounds: Male Writers and Gender[ed] Criticism* (1990), speaks of Whitman's early voice as "feminine" and sees it change as he revised poems and editions. M. Jimmie Killingsworth explores the representation of female sexuality in *Leaves* in his book *Whitman's Poetry of the Body* (1989). Betsy Erkkila speaks of Whitman's increasing reliance on female images as he worked out the implications of the Civil War to American democracy in her *Whitman the Political Poet* (1989). I write of Whitman's concept of women in American democracy in the *MLA Approaches to Teaching Whitman's Leaves of Grass* (1990). Though these approaches have opened *Leaves* to us in a new way, one important aspect remains untreated: a reading of what women themselves were saying and doing at the time of the writing of *Leaves*. My article in the fall 1989 issue of the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* told one story essential to Whitman biography, the story of Whitman's friendship with Abby Hills Price, a woman who in no way fit the Cult of True Womanhood ideology. There are numerous other stories left to be told of friendships between Whitman and reform-minded women. These stories potentially have as much a place in Whitman's biography as those of Whitman's friendships with John Burroughs, William D. O'Connor, and Richard Maurice Bucke.

What is the consequence of a continuing ignorance of the connection between Whitman and the 1850s women's rights movement? One result is the kind of polarization and reduction Joyce Warren has created in her biography of Fanny Fern. Whitman's interactions with activists in this movement go unmentioned in Warren's analysis of the Fanny Fern/Whitman relationship (chapter 10), and Whitman comes out looking very bad indeed.

Admittedly, Fanny Fern has not been treated well by Whitman scholars. Gay Wilson Allen, who has written what remains the definitive biography of Whitman (*The Solitary Singer* [1955]), and who offered a favorable view of Whitman's mother when many other male critics scorned her, has nothing but scorn for Fanny Fern: "the highest paid purveyor of sentimental pap, the incomparable Fanny Fern." Allen mentions that Fern "was living in Brooklyn with her third husband, James Parton, who had recently published a *Life of Horace Greeley*, the first of a series of excellent biographies." Allen introduces a passage from Franny Fern's review of Whitman with the phrase, "Fanny Fern gushed," and goes on to note: "This review, at least, was not written by Whitman himself" (177). Allen implies here that lamentable though it may have been for Whitman to write reviews of himself, at least he can't be charged with writing the sentimental pap of Fanny Fern.

Thanks to Warren and scholars like her, Fanny Fern's status in the study of American literature has risen markedly in the past decade. Warren is responsible for an edition of Fern's writing (*Ruth Hall and Other Writings*), this biography of Fern, and chapters, articles, and papers on her. In my own experience, Fanny Fern is always one of the writers my students (especially female students) most appreciate; I, in turn, appreciate the valuable work Warren has done in making Fern more accessible to me and my students.

However, valuing Fern does not demand that one therefore devalue Whitman, which is the position I find Warren's work asking of me, and of her readers in general. Warren's chapter on the Whitman/Fern relationship appeared, in slightly different form, in *Patrons and Protegees: Gender, Friendship, and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (1988), edited by Shirley Marchalouis. Warren's assessment of Whitman, then, has appeared in two recent books dealing with nineteenth-century women, and thus it sets the stage for a general misreading of Whitman's representation of women in American democracy.

Granted, Whitman and the Partons had a falling out when Whitman failed to repay on time a loan the Partons made him of \$200. (Shortly before Whitman borrowed the money, Fanny Fern had written an adulatory review of the 1855 *Leaves*.) Also, Whitman critics have often not treated Fanny Fern kindly or fairly in their portrayal of her writing and of this quarrel. Whitman came to distrust Fanny Fern; she and her husband distrusted him. But the personal dynamics leading to that distrust and the interpretations of it by critics do not determine the role that Whitman conceptualized for women in American democracy.

Warren makes the point that Whitman critics have taken passages which Fern wrote about Whitman out of context, a point well made. She refers to an April 19th, 1856, New York *Leader* article and the misreading of it given by Whitman scholars, which can only be made, she says, "if the passage is taken out of context—out of the context of the series in which it is only one short sketch among many, and out of the context of Fern's career" (162). Warren's call for a comprehensive contextualization in our reading of Fern is fair, but Warren does not demand of herself the same kind of comprehensiveness in her study of Whitman. Warren takes the Parton/Whitman quarrel and makes it *the* point of reference for her assessment of *Leaves of Grass* and the possibilities it holds for female readers, thereby reducing Whitman and his work to the dynamics of the Parton/Whitman conflict.

One of the most troubling aspects of Warren's appraisal of Whitman is her use of Thomas Butler Gunn's diary as an authoritative source on Whitman. For example, she says: "Thomas Butler Gunn's diary entries for 1856 and 1857 provide a revealing picture of the relationship between Whitman and Fern," which answers "some important questions about the friendship between Whitman and Fern" (163). But in a later chapter, Warren tells of Gunn's and Fern's own falling out in April, 1859. She quotes from an article Fern wrote in May, 1859, about Gunn, called "A Social Nuisance." Warren comments:

Fern apparently felt that Gunn had exaggerated and used his acquaintance with her in order to advance his own fortunes, which assessment she must have based on comments that had been reported to her by others. That [Fern] was accurate in her accusation about the 'shrugs and innuendos' behind her back and the suggestion that [Gunn] would 'not hesitate to sting, even while fawning' is apparent from Gunn's comments in his diary. Although he crossed out some of the most unkind comments regarding what he assumed were irregularities in Fern's sexual life (assumptions based on gossip and the unconventional aspects of her behavior and of her writing), he apparently discussed them with his friends, even while he was a presumably trusted guest in Fern's home (233).

In a September 18, 1861 entry, Gunn wrote: "Were I Jim [James Parton], I'd horsewhip her [Fanny Fern] until she prayed for mercy" (191). To cite Gunn's observations on Whitman as authoritative and then to reveal his unreliability as a source later in the book raises questions about the credibility of Gunn's statements about Whitman and Warren's unquestioning acceptance of Gunn's comments about him.

Another assessment of Gunn's unreliability comes from a manuscript in the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, a transcription of a letter written to Florence Bannard Adams from Louis Morris Starr regarding Bannard's book *Fanny Fern or A Pair of Flaming Shoes* (1966). In the letter, Starr—an American historian who at the time was a professor of journalism at Columbia and author of *Bohemian Brigade: Civil War Newsmen in Action* (1954)—tells Bannard how delighted he was to get her book, for he, too, had become interested in Fern, whose name he came across "poking around in the periodical literature of the Civil War period." He had also "poked around" in Gunn's diary, where, he said, he had initially come upon Fanny Fern's name:

[A]bout a year ago, the firm of Alfred Knopf asked me to look into an enormous diary one of their editors had heard about at the Missouri Historical Society. This turned out to be the work of one Thomas Butler Gunn, a hack writer and artist who came to New York from England in 1841 and comforted himself by keeping one of the most gossipy private journals you can imagine. Gunn fell in with the Bohemians of the city, T. Nast and Walt Whitman among them, and came to know and admire James Parton. Gunn wrote often of Fanny. She came through to him as a highly volatile, warm, uninhibited woman, but, possibly because he was embittered by his own lack of success, he wrote a good many quite poisonous entries about her and came to regard her as a willful, self-seeking vixen.

Gunn's depiction of Whitman quoted by Warren—that of a loquacious guest monopolizing the conversation—does not match the view of him given by numerous of his friends who repeatedly emphasize Whitman's main role in conversation as a listener. Also, the following passage from Gunn's diary, quoted by Warren, can only be labelled gossip:

How does that man—a unique character in his way—live? He has a mother, an industrious brother, and one idiotic. I suppose the second maintains the family. Then, too, there is or was some middle aged Philadelphia lady, a widow of indifferent character, who admired [Whitman] and whom he spunged from. (171)

Warren quotes the passage from Gunn's diary apparently in order to validate Whitman's stinginess when it came to money. That point can be readily disproved by reading the letters which Whitman's mother wrote to him over the years. In these letters, Louisa Van Velsor repeatedly thanks Whitman for the money he sends her, tells him that he is her "main dependence," and indirectly reveals Whitman's attempts to support her indomitable and otherwise independent spirit.

The reference to the "middle aged Philadelphia lady," who is Sarah Tyndale (though Gunn does not name her), belongs under Louis Starr's category of Gunn's "poisonous entries." Warren does not identify Sarah Tyndale, even

though she was a significant participant in the early 1850s women's rights conventions. Paulina Wright Davis—one of the leading activists in the National Woman's Rights conventions and movement—provided a brief sketch of Tyndale in her *History of the National Woman's Rights Movement for Twenty Years*:

From our midst another is missing: Mrs. Sarah Tyndale, of Philadelphia—one of the first to sign the call. Indeed, the idea of such a convention had often been discussed in her home, more than two years before, a home where every progressive thought found a cordial welcome. To this noble woman, who gave herself to this work with genuine earnestness, it is fitting that we pay a tribute of affectionate respect. She was, perhaps, more widely known than any other woman of her time for her practical talents: having conducted one of the largest business houses in her native city for nearly a quarter of a century. Genial and largely hospitable, there was for her great social sacrifice in taking up a cause so unpopular. (14-15)

Whitman met Sarah Tyndale at Abby Price's home. Tyndale had worked with Price, Davis, and Ernestine L. Rose—all friends of Whitman and all leading activists in the early women's rights movement—on the National Woman's Rights Conventions; the "business" Davis refers to was Tyndale's husband's which she successfully managed after he died. Whitman mentions Tyndale in his notebooks, at one point commenting favorably on her views of sexuality. A letter from Whitman to her—dated June 20, 1857—is in E. H. Miller's collection of Whitman's *Correspondence*; two letters from her to Whitman—dated June 24th and July 1st, 1857—are in the Feinberg Collection at the Library of Congress. In one, she offers to give Whitman \$50 to buy back his plates from Fowler and Wells; she professes her belief in *Leaves of Grass*; she writes to him as his friend.

Warren simply errs when she says that Fern was the only woman to praise Whitman for many years. Fern's review, written in May of 1856, certainly deserves more credit and attention than Whitman critics have given it. In 1860, however, other women wrote in praise of the third edition of *Leaves*, just four years after Fern's review. When the 1860 *Leaves* appeared, Whitman was attacked for its immorality, most especially for the "Enfants d'Adam" cluster. Three women wrote strong articles for Henry Clapp's *Saturday Press* defending Whitman, and, specifically, his representation of female sexuality. Four years after that, Eliza Farnham quoted Whitman, though she did not name him, in her book *Woman and Her Era*.

Warren's claims that "[f]or Whitman, woman does not exist for herself, and she is nothing without a man" and "[Whitman] never saw woman as a person independent of her relation to man" do not fit with the facts of Whitman's life (169; 170). His close friendship with Abby Hills Price, who lived a far more radically independent life than most of us do now, was possible only because he accepted her and admired her for what she was. As I've already noted, he also maintained friendships with two other women who likewise were leaders in the women's rights movement from 1850 to, roughly, 1875—Paulina Wright Davis and Ernestine L. Rose. One of the people Whitman most honored was Frances Wright. Whitman did not admire these women because their self-identification came from their association with males. These women carried out their public lives as independent citizens and were not eclipsed by males. The article by

Whitman's friend Charles Eldridge which Warren quotes to back up her contention that Whitman favored "old-fashioned women, mothers of large families preferred, who did not talk about literature and reforms" also does not fit with the facts of Whitman's life (170). Eldridge's assessment is his own projection and exposes his inability to see the complexity of history.

Warren's charge that Whitman "feared unlimited reading among women and blamed female infidelity on the 'evil influence of French and British literature'" is egregiously off the mark. In letter after letter to Whitman from his mother, sisters, and nieces, they speak of the books, newspapers, and journals he sent them, among them books by George Sand, whom Whitman frequently praised. Perhaps no statement so sweepingly articulates Whitman's admiration of French and British writers as the following passage in which Whitman says to Horace Traubel:

I had in mind the question, what is woman's place, function, in the complexity of our social life? Can women create, as man creates, in the arts? rank with the master craftsmen? I mean it in that way. It has been a historic question. Well—George Eliot, George Sand, have answered it: have contradicted the denial with a supreme affirmation. (WWC, 3:35)

Prior to this comment, Traubel asked Whitman if he regarded Sand as a better novelist than Victor Hugo. Whitman responded: "Oh! greatly! Why, read Consuelo: see if you don't think so yourself: it will open your eyes."

Part of the problem with Warren's representation of Whitman derives from its reliance on what is assumed to be Whitman's editorials in the Brooklyn *Daily Times*. Validating the authorship of Whitman's newspaper articles has presented problems significant enough to prevent the inclusion of Whitman's journalism in the New York University Press *Collected Works*. Ezra Greenspan, in *Walt Whitman and the American Reader*, says this about Whitman's *Daily Times* experience:

There was less of Whitman in the paper than there had been of him in his previous papers—less of his personality; fewer of his personal convictions, activities, and stylistic idiosyncrasies; and, most interestingly, none of his creative writings. As far as readers of the paper were concerned, the editor of the *Times* and the author of the volume of poems which had been reviewed in its pages just several months before his accession to the editorship could have been two entirely separate personalities. (184-85)

Greenspan does not question that Whitman actually wrote all of those editorials, but based on the work I have done reading the *Times*, I do.

Finally, when Warren speaks of a note which Fern sent Whitman on April 21, 1856, she speaks as if Fern had somehow thwarted Whitman by claiming authorial participation when she read *Leaves*. Warren writes:

Quoting from *Leaves of Grass* the lines, 'What I assume you shall assume,' [Fern] wrote, 'What I assume, *you* shall assume!' The significance is in her italics. By italicizing the words that she did, she pointed out to him that they could have the reverse meaning as well—that she, too, was the self, the 'I' of the poem. (176)

But isn't that precisely what Whitman hoped his readers would do—through active reading, to participate in making the poem?

*Texas Tech University*

SHERRY CENIZA