

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WWQR WEBSITE AND E-MAIL

The *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* now has its own website, available at the following URL: <http://www.uiowa.edu/~wwqr>[.] Over the next few months, we will be expanding the material available on the site. Currently available are submission guidelines, subscription information, and links to other Whitman-related sites. Readers can now reach WWQR via e-mail at wwqr@uiowa.edu[.]

WHITMAN INTERPRETIVE VISITORS' CENTER OPENS

A new Interpretive Visitors' Center opened in the spring of 1997 next to the Whitman Birthplace in Huntington Station on Long Island. A joint effort of the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association and the State of New York, the Center is administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation in cooperation with the Birthplace Association. The Center is housed in a 4,900-square-foot building containing exhibition galleries, a performance space ("The Poetry Circle"), classrooms, a library, and a museum shop and bookstore. There are several permanent installations, including a wall of Whitman photographs and a timeline of Whitman's life. The Whitman Birthplace currently attracts more than 20,000 visitors each year. The Center was dedicated on May 31, 1997, in a program featuring Whitman music and a reading by Galway Kinnell, the 1997 Walt Whitman Birthplace Poet-in-Residence. The opening ceremonies were briefly interrupted by members of a gay activist group called the Calamus Preservation Society, who threw blackboard erasers to protest what the group claimed was the "erasure" of Whitman's homosexuality from the opening exhibit.

PATHOLOGICAL POETS

In a 1996 article in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, Felix Post has published the results of his investigation of one hundred American and British writers, suggesting that the "much higher prevalence of pathological personality traits and alcoholism" long noted in creative writers is in fact less evident in poets than in writers of prose fiction and plays. Walt Whitman is one of the poets studied, and on a scale of "penalty points for psychopathology," he rates a "2" (out of a possible six points, a "6" indicating the most serious dysfunctional personality deviations, substance abuse, etc.). Part of a group that, according to Post, "never suffered from either depressive or any other episodic disorders," Whitman nonetheless "exhibited abnormal personality traits": "Walt Whitman had been very much impaired throughout life by many traits of borderline, narcissistic, and passive-aggressive personality disorders." (See Felix

Post, "Verbal Creativity, Depression and Alcoholism," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 168 [1996], 545-555.)

WHITMAN SALUTED IN AIRPORT ARTWORK

Words of Walt Whitman now salute arriving (and, no doubt, shout "So Long!" to departing) passengers—expected to number 16 million a year—at the new North Terminal of the National Airport in Washington, D.C. A quotation in large copper letters, from "Song of the Exposition," graces a 145-foot-long painted steel balustrade designed by the Iranian-American sculptor, Siah Armajani. The balustrade stands at the edge of a mezzanine overlooking the immense quarter-mile-long concourse of the many-domed building, which opened on July 27, 1997, to great acclaim for the architect, Cesar Pelli, and the thirty artists who contributed to Pelli's Art Enhancement Program for the building. Through 54-foot-high glass walls opposite the mezzanine is a spectacular view of the many-domed city of Washington, where Whitman lived and worked and wrote some of his major poems and essays, between 1863 and 1873.

Armajani is perhaps best known at present for the bridge, tower and cauldron he designed for the Olympic flame at the Atlanta games, 1996. He also designed a poetry garden for the Lannan Foundation, Los Angeles; the "Lighthouse and Bridge" for the ferry terminal at Staten Island, N.Y.; and a railing along the waterfront of the World Financial Center at Battery Park City in Manhattan. These display quotations from Wallace Stevens, William Carlos Williams, Frank O'Hara, and Walt Whitman, among others. Mr. Armajani likes American poetry, and in the Persian tradition of including calligraphy in art and architecture, often displays lines of it in his work. For the National Airport he selected a passage from "Song of the Exposition" that celebrates great nineteenth-century buildings like the Crystal Palace, London, 1851, and the American Crystal Palace, New York, 1853, as well as the exposition structures of the fortieth Annual Exhibition of the American Institute, New York, 1871, for which Whitman specially wrote and recited this Song. In addition to the copper letters of Whitman's poem, numerous cast-bronze, toy-like objects from "everyday life" are attached to the balustrade, which doubtless please the shade of Walt, as he declaims to passengers and visitors alike:

Around a palace, loftier, fairer, ampler than any yet,
Earth's modern wonder, history's seven outstripping,
High rising tier on tier with glass and iron facades,
Gladdening the sun and sky, enhued in cheerfulest hues,
Bronze, lilac, robin's-egg, marine and crimson,
Over whose golden roof shall flaunt, beneath thy banner Freedom,
The banners of the States and flags of every land,
A brood of lofty, fair, but lesser palaces shall cluster.

Somewhere within their walls shall all that forwards perfect human life be started,
Tried, taught, advanced, visibly exhibited.

—*Sherwood Smith, The Washington Friends of Walt Whitman*