

single path of influence that runs from the eighteenth century to our own times, finding its fullest realization perhaps in the work of John Ashbery.

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JONATHAN NED KATZ. *Love Stories: Sex between Men before Homosexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001; issued in paperback, 2003.

In 1989, when I reviewed Charley Shively's *Drum-Beats: Walt Whitman's Civil War Boy Lovers* in this journal, I called for "a revisionist biography of Whitman that does not assume that the poet was *heterosexual* (we've had those biographies before) or that he was *asexual* or *omnisexual* or *monosexual* or passively *homoerotic* (we've had those, too), but one that . . . represents a full life built on the assumption that (not built out of the suspicion that) Whitman was gay." Shively's own work, along with the pioneering efforts of critics like Robert K. Martin, Michael Lynch, and Martin Duberman, helped pave the way for such a study. There have been a number of excellent and suggestive studies of Whitman as a gay writer since that time, most notably Byrne R. S. Fone's *Masculine Landscapes: Walt Whitman and the Homoerotic Text* (1992) and Gary Schmidgall's *Walt Whitman: A Gay Life* (1997). Neither of these books was a full-fledged biography, however, and Jonathan Ned Katz's *Love Stories*—published in 2001 and recently issued in paperback—certainly is not a biography of Whitman either. But Katz does offer the most fully contextualized study we so far have of Whitman's affections for males. *Love Stories* uses Whitman as a kind of leitmotif in an extended anecdotal history of what Katz calls "men's lust and love for men in the nineteenth century United States, with a glance across the Atlantic." The book will strike some readers as uncomfortably voyeuristic, but Katz's purpose is precisely to peer into sexual practices that have been silenced for so long and to tell some of the first documented "love stories" between men.

Nearly half of the book's twenty-four chapters focus on Whitman or on Whitman's influence on and relationships with others. Chapter 3, "A Gentle Angel Entered," analyzes Whitman's 1841 story "The Child's Champion," echoing Michael Moon's reading in *Disseminating Whitman* but going on to emphasize how in this story Whitman struggles to name a new kind of love between men, grappling with a language and a set of cultural assumptions that still set a barrier between "sex-love" and "pure love": "Bodily love and spiritual love were thought of then as inhabiting distinct realms—the sensual and the spiritual never met and mated." Whitman, of course, would devote much of his poetry to affirming the marriage of the body and the soul, the physical and the spiritual. Katz reads Whitman's "The Child's Champion" as his first faltering attempt to merge male/male love and male/male lust, and thus to transform "an illicit sex story into a romantic sex-love tale." Katz argues that Whitman could get away with publishing what seems to our ears a dangerously explicit story of male/male sexual love precisely because the culture of the time, under the spell of "the asexual love ideal," would have blocked the sexual allusions so as to keep pure the declarations of love. John Lankton and the young boy Charles, the main characters in "The Child's Champion," then,

would have been perceived by most readers as enacting a “spiritual love” that could be “officially, legitimately, and openly” expressed. Katz explains: “In contrast to the intimacies of males, the intimacies of nineteenth-century men and women might sometimes be perceived as more dangerously fraught with carnal possibilities. The age’s sexual system ironically decreed more restrictions on the intimacies of men and women than on those of men with men and women with women.”

But all of that was soon to change, as Katz demonstrates. Two years after “The Child’s Champion” was published, New York’s “gossip-peddling paper, *The Whip*” began a campaign to rid New York of “sodomites”; it was “the earliest-known American crusade against sodomites,” and it would bring male/male sexual behavior into public discussion as it had never before been in this country. Katz’s detailed examination of this campaign is revealing, demonstrating the shifting array of sexual behaviors that were incorporated under the term “sodomy.” Katz is particularly illuminating in tracing the way that a growing cultural tolerance of “men’s nonreproductive pleasure-sex with female prostitutes” necessitated the vilification of men’s pleasure-sex with men on grounds other than that it was immoral because it did not lead to reproduction. *The Whip* therefore worked hard to paint male/male sex as monstrous and vampiric, but, at the same time, went on to condemn as “worse, by far, than sodomy” the interracial sex between white prostitutes and black males: it is clear that many kinds of borders were being policed by early campaigns against sodomy.

Katz offers an overview “of the 105 legal cases mentioning the words ‘sodomy,’ ‘buggery,’ or the ‘crime against nature’ appealed to and decided during the nineteenth century by the high courts of twenty-five American states (or districts or territories), or by federal courts” (Texas, with twenty-four such cases, had far and away the greatest number). These crimes, for most of the nineteenth century, included only “penis-in-vagina intercourse of men with female animals and women with male animals” and “penis-in-anus intercourse of human males with men, women, and boys” (one single case involved a male with a young girl). Katz points out that by nineteenth-century definitions, there was no such thing as “penisless” sodomy or bestiality: women and girls who had sexual relationships with each other (or with female animals) were engaging in something other than sodomy or bestiality. And oral sex was outside the statutes until late in the century, when fellatio began to be criminalized: “oral-genital acts were the topic of a new, intense, end-of-the-century legal debate,” Katz tells us, going on to examine the cases that would, in the words of one state’s attorney, broaden the “crime against nature” to include “any form of unnatural carnal knowledge with any part of the human frame,” leading at the very end of the century to court rulings that criminalized such acts even between a husband and a wife. For most of the nineteenth century, though, any number of erotic acts (including mutual masturbation, body/body rubbing, hand-jobs, and oral sex) were not illegal and constituted a realm of what Katz calls “not-sodomy”—sexual acts that were permissible in the sense that they remained safely outside statutory prohibition, and thus acts that created room for erotic touch between males who did not want to risk becoming sodomites.

Katz suggests that Whitman's explicit naming and defending of the "onanist" and "the prostitute," but never the "sodomite," "provides one measure of the abject terror linked then with that demonized sexual character." Katz's survey of punished sexual behaviors, including bestialty, also might add an edge to such Whitman lines as "I think I could turn and live with the animals . . . / A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my caresses. . . ." Katz's interest, however, is not so much in reading Whitman's poems (though he devotes one chapter—"Voices of Sexes and Lusts"—to cataloguing Whitman's efforts to "give words to his ardent intimacies" in the 1855, 1856, and 1860 editions of *Leaves of Grass*, especially *Calamus*, and to analyzing critical responses to those editions), but rather in recounting the poet's actual affectional relationships with young men in the context of the evolving nineteenth-century notion of male/male love. His book is not literary criticism but rather largely anecdotal cultural history, so what is important about Whitman for Katz is not so much his written work but rather his affectional work in developing love-relationships with males.

Katz effectively creates a historical panorama of nineteenth-century male/male sexual behavior and demonstrates how the culture worked to keep "romantic, spiritual love" between men totally separate from sexual lust between men. Whitman becomes, then, for Katz the breakthrough figure who "began to explore the erotic intimacy of men and to invent a new language to express it." Until Whitman, men could express love toward other men, or they could have sex with other men, but they could not express doing both together. Whitman discovered a way to talk about men loving men sexually. It may be that, before the twentieth century, there were homosexual acts but no homosexuals, but Katz shows there *were* "sodomites"—it's just that that particular identity did not allow for love relationships: a sodomite was constructed as a monster, a freak of nature. Whitman in this sense, then, *did* invent gay identity, because, after him, it became possible to express love through acts that before had been cast outside of love's reach. Katz thus offers several Whitman "love stories"—his 1850s relationship with Fred Vaughan; his numerous affectional relationships with young Civil War soldiers; his well-known partnership with Peter Doyle; his troubled and intense relationship with Harry Stafford; and his less well-known relationship with Edward Cattell. It is this last love story that Katz finally and surprisingly finds most revealing; he proposes that Cattell's expressed love for Whitman illuminates a great deal about nineteenth-century male-male affection, for here Whitman finally was able to achieve for a brief period in his life what he had articulated in his poetry: "Cattell and Whitman, I believe, consciously used their time's language of spiritual true love to speak safely and freely of a relationship that was actively affectionate and erotic."

Katz's telling of most of Whitman's love stories will sound familiar to most Whitman scholars, but in this book context is everything, and never before have these stories been told against such a detailed backdrop of nineteenth-century male/male sexual and affectional behavior. While Whitman is the recurring story in this book, he is not the only male lover on whom Katz focuses. Some are unfamiliar names, like "Claude Hartland," the pen name of a Southerner whose 1901 *The Story of a Life* is one of the earliest gay autobiographies,

recording a young man's struggles to deal with the emerging paradigm of homosexuality as a pathology even while he felt romantic love toward the males he was drawn to. Other figures are well-known: the book opens with an examination of Abraham Lincoln's intimacy with Joshua Speed and Lincoln's sexual discomfort with women. Such stories, Katz tells us, carry us "back to a foreign land of love and lust, a universe differing substantially from today's." Katz explores this alien landscape to argue that it reveals "basic shifts in the ordering of sexuality and affection" through a relatively brief period of our history, thus indicating that "a changing, fully historical sexuality" releases us from the imprisoning concept of a fixed set of sexual norms.

Some of Katz's most valuable chapters for Whitman scholars are the three chapters on John Addington Symonds and his insistent questioning of the meaning of Whitman's *Calamus*. Katz offers the most detailed and convincing reading we so far have of this long and problematic relationship, and he shows why Whitman became so oddly cautious about Symonds's probing questions at this particular moment in American history, a caution that led to the poet's infamous claim that he had fathered six children. Equally revealing is Katz's study of Whitman's influence on Charles Warren Stoddard, who wrote about his erotic adventures with males in the South Seas and in 1870 sought (and received) Whitman's blessing for such activity (Whitman's encouragement to Stoddard to seek the same relationships on American soil is particularly telling). In these cases, Katz has simply dug deeper than anyone else to put the stories together in compelling, surprising, and satisfying ways. Whitman scholars will come away from this book much better informed about the range of sexual behaviors in the nineteenth century and with a far clearer sense of how Whitman's life and work responded to and helped create that rapidly changing sexual landscape.

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