

Western Jaunt (Lawrence, Kansas: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1981). I thank the Society's Director of Archives for detaching (on 16 October 1980) the postcard from the loose leaf to which it had been only partially pasted.

WHITMAN IN *THE SOUTHERN LITERARY MESSENGER*

Walt Whitman did not go unnoticed in *The Southern Literary Messenger*. In three different issues, the "Editor's Table" section of the magazine once edited by Edgar Allan Poe made Whitman the subject of ridicule.¹ The July 1860 number carefully reprinted Whitman's "Longings for Home" (later titled "O Magnet South") from the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. This, apparently, was the poem's second printing.² But the action was not a friendly one. George W. Bagby, the gifted humorist, raconteur, and staunch Southern patriot who assumed the editorial helm of the *Messenger* in June 1860, used his introductory comments to lash out against Whitman, Emerson (note the allusion to *Representative Men*), and all Northern literature:

The pantheism of Theodore Parker and Ralph Waldo Emerson, pervades and pollutes the entire literature of the North. It is nowhere more apparent than in that clumsy romance, "The Marble Faun." It culminates in the spasmodic idiocy of Walt Whitman. The smart scribblers who compose the better part of the Northern literati, are all becoming infected with the new leprosy—Whitmansy. This latest "representative man" of the North has his imitators by the hundred, his admirers by the thousand, and an organ—the slang-whanging paper called *The Saturday Press*. A specimen of the twangling-jack style of Whitman is given below. Take a pair of frog-legs, put a tongue to every toe of both legs, and place the legs under a galvanic battery—and you have the utterings of Whitman. In the following slosh [i.e., "Longings for Home"], Whitman says he "grew up" in Virginia. We should feel mean if this statement were anything else than a Whitmaniacal license, accent on the first vowel in license. Here is the sample of his obnubilate, incoherent, convulsive flub-drub.

When a reader protested that "Longings for Home" was a pretty good poem, Dr. Bagby demolished the upstart, in the August 1860 number, in a style reminiscent of Mark Twain's lampoons of rambunctious antebellum journalism:

"The Writer," writing from New York, tells us that he "liked Walt Whitman's 'Longings for Home' very much." We appreciate the information. He tells us further, that "Ossian's poetry is something in the style of Whitman's." Only remotely and feebly, we consider. The Bible, also, is "something in the style of the Book of Mormon." Also, paste is "something in the style" of the diamond. Also, the goose is "something in the style" of the swan. Also, "The Writer" is "something in the style" of the goose, and we doubt not the imitation is a close and successful one. . . .

In the January 1862 number, the "Editor's Table" printed a 68-line parody of Whitman's verse entitled "The War"; it was prefaced by Dr. Bagby's remarks, as follows: