

NOTES

1 The articles by Benson, Hillard and Saintsbury are not listed in Scott Giantvalley's *Walt Whitman, 1838-1939* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981).

REVIEWS

C. Carroll Hollis. *Language and Style in Leaves of Grass*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1983. xii, 277 pp. \$27.50.

Whitman's debt in *Leaves of Grass* to the oratorical tradition in mid-nineteenth-century America has been commented on by a number of critics as a matter of course, but C. Carroll Hollis has for the first time provided a full-scale, often provocative study of this important influence on Whitman.

Around 1848 or so, Whitman was well aware that an effective speaker could make a career in oratory. He particularly admired the Quaker preacher Elias Hicks and Father Taylor (Melville's Father Mapple), the one for "his passionate unstudied oratory" and the other as the "one essentially perfect orator." In his 1839 *Journal*, Emerson defined the great appeal of the public platform: ". . . here everything is admissible, philosophy, ethics, divinity, criticism, poetry, humor, fun, mimicry, anecdotes, jokes. . . . Here [the orator] may lay himself out utterly, large, enormous, prodigal, on the subject of the hour. Here he may dare to hope for ecstasy and eloquence." And Whitman echoed Emerson's ideas in his comments on Hicks and Taylor, who had "the same inner . . . fund of latent volcanic passion—the same tenderness, blended with a curious remorseless firmness. . . . Hearing such men sends to the winds all the books, and formulas, and polished speaking, and rules of oratory."

Apparently Whitman was aware that he lacked such oratorical skills, and fortunately looked elsewhere to make his mark. He has left a large number of notes on the subject scattered in various collections. Hollis has examined this published and unpublished material and did not find a single complete draft for a lecture. If for Whitman performing in public might well have been a fantasy, the techniques of the orator were not. It was Whitman's shift from the orator *manqué* to the reality of *Leaves of Grass* that Mr. Hollis is concerned with in this work.

Put briefly, it is Mr. Hollis's thesis that much of Whitman's poetry from 1855 to 1860, or from the first to the third edition of *Leaves*, is heavily indebted to the oral tradition. Here Whitman addressed his readers, the "You" of his poems, in direct, closely personal terms that were the stock-in-trade of the orator. However, in his poetry after the Civil War, he mainly drops the one-to-one oratorical techniques of the earlier poetry and becomes less personal; the physicality of his early work gives way to the spiritual and in the process often he becomes abstract. Moreover, as his attitudes change, and in line with his current thinking, he returns to *Leaves of Grass* to alter his original work, often through heavy revisions.

To be sure much of this has received comment elsewhere, but Mr. Hollis's approach here is solidly informed by his knowledge of nineteenth-century oratorical techniques, and to that extent he adds much to our awareness of the direction of *Leaves of Grass*

over six separate editions. Hollis is at ease with contemporary Whitman scholarship, but he also draws heavily on the works of a battery of linguists, notably Morton Bloomfield, Jonathan Culler, Morris Croll, David Crystal, Roman Jakobson, Otto Jespersen, and others. Hollis examines Whitman's poetry selectively but fairly. He is sensitive to the alterations that Whitman subjected his poetry to from edition to edition and as well to the reworking of his manuscripts that Whitman utilized for his published poetry.

For example, drawing on Morris Croll's important essay "The Cadence of English Oratorical Prose," Hollis for the first time applies to advantage the "oral, not metrical" rhythmic device of the *cursus* to *Leaves of Grass*. The term *cursus* comes from the classical and medieval rhetorics and refers to "a conventional way of giving a beautiful flow at the end of a rhetorical unit." The *cursus* has filtered down to its use in English sermons. The origins of the *cursus* are oral, and this device is shaped by the "physiological requirements of breathing and utterance." Within these limitations the *cursus* in *Leaves* marks the accents from the end of a line. "There is no concern with the whole unit (unless it is very short) but only in the termination. . . . an investigation of stress, when it is marked, must go backward in the count; that is, one counts from the end of the . . . [line] marking the accented or stressed syllables."

Hollis's extended analysis of the 1855 version of the then untitled "Song of Myself" is too complicated to go into here, and many of his examples demand contextual understanding. He demonstrates that Whitman adapted this oratorical feature to *Leaves of Grass* so that many of his lines ended with a cadence, especially in "Song of Myself," but also in such other poems of the 1855–1860 period as "Starting from Paumanok" and "So Long!" In short, Whitman integrated the *cursus* in *Leaves of Grass* along with such other features of the oral tradition as the two, three, and four dots of the 1855 edition to indicate breath pauses—not ellipses; the anaphora and epistrophe (the repetition of opening and closing words); the antitheses and rhetorical questions, and the like.

Hollis is probably right when he says that "There is no way to know how aware Whitman was of the *cursus* device. But . . . he seems to have recognized this feature in the sermons, lectures, and orations he admired. . . . With the *cursus* Whitman was able to suggest, imply, communicate something of his responses to . . . the American experience—a something that he might suggest in his voice but believed he could not do in conventional prose or in traditional metrical prosody." Here Hollis has brought to our attention an important rhetorical technique in *Leaves of Grass*. A number of lines that Hollis glosses reflect Whitman's modulations within the same poem from the *cursus*, the end of the line cadence, to long stretches where he does not use this device. Whitman did not use this device over the six editions of *Leaves*. Hollis shows that after the 1860 edition the *cursus* is used infrequently. In the later editions Whitman "turned away from the oral foundation of his art. The *cursus* is rarely used in the late poetry and, . . . seems more accidental than intentional." Hollis is equally suggestive in his chapters on "Negation," "Metonymy," and "The Rhetorical-Oratorical Combination." He reads carefully and his structuralist analyses, especially of "Who Learns My Lesson Complete?," are handled with insight and sensitivity.

Given the nature of this study, Hollis is right to stress that "in poetry every word is supposedly consciously drawn and placed"; and elsewhere he says the same for

Whitman's use of internal and terminal punctuation. Consequently it is most regrettable that a disconcerting and certainly puzzling number of errors in transmission in his citations from the 1855, 1860, and final 1891–1892 editions of *Leaves of Grass* have crept into this work. Hollis quotes widely from *Leaves*, and while many lines on a spot-check basis present no problems, a number of them do. These range from typographical errors that alter the meaning of the line, to the omission of words within the line that at times negate Whitman's important use of parallel construction, to the appearance of words not in the original, to the absence of internal and terminal punctuation, and the like.

For example, on page 50 (and coming at the end of the line in his discussion of the *cursus*), for "the egg of a wren," read "the egg of the wren,"; on page 57, for "Washer and razors for foofoos", read "Washes and razors for foofoos"; in the next line, for "What blurt is it about virtue and vice?", add "about" preceding "vice?"; and in the penultimate line in this citation, for "some is always the ore of right," replace "always" with "only"; on page 59, top, lines 1–2 and 3–4 incorrectly follow in sequence; actually they are parts of separate consecutive stanzas; in the same passage, line 1, for "old-fashioned" read "oldfashioned"; and for the fourth line, for "His was the English pluck," read "His was the English pluck, and there is no tougher or truer, and never was, and never will be;" (this reoccurs a few lines later); below, page 59, the five lines cited are *not* the same "for the 1867 and subsequent editions" – in the 1867 and 1871 editions, three of the five lines differ from the quoted final 1891–2 text; on page 60, in line 7, for "everyone," read "every one,"; on page 62, line 1, for "I am aware of who they are", omit "of"; below, for "mannikins" read "manikins", and in the next line, for "I am aware of who they are (they)", read "I am aware who they are, (they)"; on page 63, line 2, for "And know my" read "Know my" and add a terminal comma; below, in line 2 of the quotation, for "surfaces, and all palpable life," read "surfaces, and all the palpable life,"; and finally, for Chapter II, same page, first line, bottom, for "My rendezvous is appointed and certain," read "My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,".

To conclude matters, in discussing Whitman's emphasis on the immediacy of the present tense in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Hollis cites on page 84 the first lines or independent clauses of the twelve separate poems in this edition. The absence of terminal punctuation in *Leaves* is rare, and Whitman clearly was not given to run-over lines. Yet in the first and third lines, the first being the familiar "I celebrate myself," from "Song of Myself," the terminal commas are missing. Elsewhere, in line 8, for "Here there are faces," read "Here then are faces,"; replace the terminal period in line 9 with a comma (in other citations Hollis properly gives the original punctuation for the last quoted line in a series, and so the comma would be expected here); in line 11, for "Like Lightning Europe le'pt forth. . . .", read "Like lightning Europe le'pt forth . . . half startled at itself,"; and the final terminal period of the last line should be a comma. On page 92, the first line of "Song of Myself," 1855, is correct, but lines two and three have blank spaces where there should be a terminal comma and period. Regrettably, there are more of the same sorts of errors to page 122, where I simply stopped my spot-checking.

All this is a shame. Mr. Hollis has made an important contribution to Whitman studies and has moved into certain linguistic areas untouched by other Whitman scholars. To be sure, some of his assertions are arguable, and he is aware of it. That

is one of the strengths of his approach. He anticipates certain objections to his methodology and proceeds in a level-headed fashion to address them. He never presses. For these reasons, when this book goes into a second printing, he should clean up his text. This book merits it.

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Philip Dacey. *Gerard Manley Hopkins Meets Walt Whitman in Heaven and Other Poems*. Wood Engravings by Michael McCurdy. Great Barrington, Mass.: Penmaen Press, 1982. 98 pp. 900 copies. Hardcover \$22.50, paperback \$8.50, signed edition \$75.00.

This collection of poems, a sustained, intense vision of the English Jesuit poet, half historical, half invented, will surely evoke mixed reactions in any lover of Gerard Manley Hopkins. Its best, and certainly to students of Whitman its most interesting poem, is the long dialogue which gives the book its title.

Many of the shorter poems seem curiously contradictory. Dacey, who is certainly steeped in Hopkins's poetry, successfully imitates the poet's idiosyncratic diction. A good deal less successfully he employs the characteristic Hopkins alliteration, assonance, and consonance. His attempts to parallel Hopkins's equally idiosyncratic rhythms are least successful of all: too often his lines jolt and jerk, making ear and eye stumble through the poem.

But the form of these poems is often more satisfactory than their substance. Where Hopkins is concrete, Dacey is abstract. Where Hopkins presents and dramatizes, Dacey argues. And though the Manichean conflict between flesh and spirit gives tension to Hopkins's verse, Dacey makes it the very substance of his vision. In Hopkins's letters to and dialogues with Bridges, in his soliloquies, in his dreams, Dacey's Hopkins is obsessed with the heavy load of the body. And in at least one of them, "Hopkins to Bridges," Dacey uses the image of Christ on the cross to dramatize with startling explicitness the homosexual element in this conflict. It is an explicitness which the poet himself would certainly repudiate with horror.

But in the long title poem Dacey is more successful. Readers of Whitman will enjoy and appreciate the portrait of the poet as Walt challenges his younger alter ego to accept the world and the flesh. Based on Section 11 of "Song of Myself," and on Thomas Eakins's painting "Swimming Hole," this long poem dramatizes the poet of "Leaves of Grass" who here again, in many of his own words, sings to the English poet a song of himself and compels the younger man to accept the beauty and reality of the body. Whitman fans will, on the whole, endorse Dacey's book for this poem, leaving the admirers of Hopkins to prefer his own poems to any of Dacey's.

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