

the predicate. Such foregroundings can produce intriguing insights, as in the discussion of nominalization and the accompanying reading of this phrase from "Song of Myself": "Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock" (723). Thurin notes that the line appears in the lengthy catalogue of Section 33, "in which most of the nouns are concrete. Whitman *could* have used such a noun in this case, too, writing, say 'Where the rattle-snake [*sic*] suns his long, flabby body on a rock.' He prefers to hypostatize one quality of the rattlesnake's body by means of the abstract noun *length* and making *flabby* modify this noun. In doing so, he in a sense makes not only the word *body* but the body itself disappear from sight, and it may thus be said in this and similar cases that he turns away from the 'objects' he professes to love" (95).

The nagging doubt remains, however, that such moments of aesthetic and interpretive insight emerge randomly and fitfully. Rather than emerging from a theoretical approach and deepening as the argument proceeds, Thurin's best discussions seem to come *ex nihilo*, glimmer briefly, and then disappear. The binary scheme prevents the argument from gathering momentum because each of the ten chapters is a brief, sketchy taxonomy of stylistic characteristics. Worse, the interpretive opposition of impressionism/expressionism repeatedly traps Thurin into useless classification. So, for instance, the interesting discussion of abstract nouns and that rattlesnake's "flabby length" devolves into a confusing paragraph on impressionist painting, the Goncourt brothers, expressionism, and Whitman's impressionism (95-96). In short, Thurin never effectively clarifies the interpretive opposition in order to show how Whitman's style creates the threshold effects of "betweenness." Finally, the linguistic focus is, for an American reader, too unrelenting and narrow. Although Thurin provides literary figures as points of comparison and contrast in order to measure Whitman's innovative style—Longfellow, Poe, and Tennyson are used most often—there is little or no cultural context in this study. The ahistorical manner is clear from the use of impressionism and expressionism, which function as Cartesian coordinates rather than as historical movements. Indeed, as I read this book I found myself thinking, "Your identity comes back in horror. Over Cartesian vortices you hover." And that may be, ultimately, a measure of the distance between American and European literary/cultural studies.

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ROBERT BAIN, ed. *Whitman's and Dickinson's Contemporaries*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996. xxxvi + 555 pp.

PAUL KANE, ed. *Poetry of the American Renaissance: A Diverse Anthology from the Romantic Period*. New York: George Braziller, 1995. 383 pp.

These two anthologies respond to a growing need in American literature courses to offer more contextualization. In a time when fewer and fewer students are schooled in the once-canonical works of American literature, it is increasingly difficult to make young readers of American literature understand

just how and why Whitman and Dickinson were such radical poets. Students tend not to know what kinds of poetry Whitman and Dickinson were reacting against, what kinds of poetry mid-nineteenth century readers were accustomed to, and what kinds of subjects the reading public considered suitable for poetic exploration. These anthologies seek, then, to reconstruct “the age’s taste in verse,” as Robert Bain puts it in his introduction, going on to note that “That taste was largely not the taste of those who admire Whitman and Dickinson today.”

Both volumes offer a wide-ranging selection of the forgotten and near-forgotten poets of the nineteenth century, most of whom were better known in their own day than Whitman and (of course) Dickinson. Both anthologies offer poems by Lydia Huntley Sigourney, George Moses Horton, Jones Very, William Ellery Channing, Frederick Goddard Tuckerman, Phoebe Cary, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Henry Timrod, Helen Hunt Jackson, and Emma Lazarus. The editors’ selections emphasize the fact that American poetry of the period was an endeavor undertaken equally by men and women, and that African American and ethnic voices were indeed present. Both editors also offer a selection of poems by better known writers that today’s students usually associate only with prose (Emerson, Poe, Thoreau, Melville) or may be familiar with only as empty names supposedly indicating hopeless poetic conventionality (Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell). Each anthology contains some poets who do not appear in the other. In Paul Kane’s book, we can find poems by Maria Gowen Brooks, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Margaret Fuller, Frances Sargent Osgood, Christopher Pearse Cranch, Julia Ward Howe, Henry Howard Brownell, James Monroe Whitfield, John Rollin Ridge, and Adah Isaacs Menken. None of these poets appears in Bain’s book, but Bain does include many poets not in Kane: Sarah Helen Whitman, William Gilmore Simms, John Godfrey Saxe, Josiah Gilbert Holland, Alice Cary, Thomas Buchanan Read, Bayard Taylor, Richard Henry Stoddard, John Townsend Trowbridge, Paul Hamilton Hayne, Edmund Clarence Stedman, John James Piatt, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Joaquin Miller, John Hay, Abram Joseph Ryan, Bret Harte, Edward Rowland Sill, Sidney Lanier, John Banister Tabb. Bain also includes a large selection of poems by poets who wrote in the generation or two following Whitman and Dickinson—poets like James Whitcomb Riley, Eugene Field, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Edwin Markham, Lizette Woodworth Reese, Louise Imogen Guiney, William Vaughn Moody, and Paul Laurence Dunbar. Even Horace Traubel makes an appearance in Bain’s collection, represented by seven poems: this has to be the only poetry anthology in many decades to include Whitman’s faithful socialist disciple.

Bain’s anthology is larger than Kane’s, contains more works by each poet, and anthologizes more poets. What Bain does not include are any selections by Whitman and Dickinson. His anthology presents, then, a solar system of small planets revolving around the missing double suns of American poetry. He suggests that instructors can easily order cheap collections of Whitman and Dickinson and use his anthology as a supplement. Kane, on the other hand, offers a complete course package, including twenty poems by Whitman and around fifty by Dickinson. Neither anthology is perfect, but both are very useful tools. It would be nice to have one book that blended the virtues of each of

these. In terms of teaching Whitman, for example, it is disappointing not to find Adah Isaacs Menken (whom Whitman knew during his Pfaff's beer cellar years) in Bain's collection, and it is certainly problematic that Kane's book excludes such poets as John Townsend Trowbridge, John James Piatt, Edmund Clarence Stedman, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Joaquin Miller, and Paul Hamilton Hayne, some of whom had close connections with Whitman and all of whom had strong opinions about him. Bain's collection is finally more useful in offering a greater number of poets who help contextualize Whitman's evolving poetics. In Bain's book, the introductions and bibliographies for each poet are prepared by different scholars, while Kane provides shorter prefatory comments for all the poets in his collection. As a result, Kane offers the more seamless presentation of the period. Kane, after all, is interested in the "Romantic period" as a contained era, while Bain is concerned more with a spacious evocation of Whitman's and Dickinson's poetic environment. Again, each approach has its advantages—Bain's anthology, because it is a rougher, more contradictory, and larger collection, offers a sense of discovery missing in Kane's more sifted and focused work.

These two anthologies serve as welcome companions to two recently published anthologies of Civil War poetry: *The Poetry of the American Civil War*, edited by Lee Steinmetz (Michigan State University Press, 1991; the book was originally published in 1960 and is reprinted in this edition with a new preface), and *The Columbia Book of Civil War Poetry*, edited by Richard Marius (Columbia University Press, 1994). Like the Bain and Kane anthologies, these books allow for Whitman's poetry to be more fully understood in terms of the cultural work it was undertaking. The Civil War anthologies offer diverse poetic responses to the same events and scenes that Whitman's *Drum-Taps* and *Memories of President Lincoln* were responding to. Marius, for example, puts Whitman's Lincoln poems next to poems about Lincoln by poets from William Cullen Bryant to Langston Hughes, and Steinmetz offers a group of very different kinds of responses to Lincoln's death by lesser known or unknown poets like Stoddard, "Neal Neff," Eleazar Parmly, and Martha A. Parks. All of these collections invite us to read Whitman in old/new poetic contexts. Kane and Bain help us to see how poets other than Whitman were addressing such issues as gender, marriage, technology, religion, democracy, and slavery. The insights that will emerge from such investigations could have an impact on both the teaching of and the scholarship about Whitman.

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