

constructional methods and materials common in the Upland South and in the Middle Atlantic cultural hearth. Based on a square module that was additive in nature, these Southern Highlanders erected their log, balloon frame, box construction, or braced frame houses one room deep, gave them gable roofs, placed doors on the long side facing the road, laid up exterior end-chimneys of stone, and created symmetrical facades with the arrangement of windows and doors. The simple, boxy interiors of these houses offered little privacy, regardless of type, and were composed of unspecialized spaces—except for cooking and eating—with a bed in nearly every room. Of the six traditional houses—single pen, double pen, saddlebag, central hall cottage, dogtrot, and I-house—the double pen house with two front doors, sometimes called the “Cumberland” house, was preferred.

New possibilities from an expanding national culture eventually flowed to the eddies of Ozark life with the help of railroads, pattern books, magazines, catalogs, and architects, in spite of the people’s suspicion of new ideas and outsiders. Some folds adopted one of three popular house types—the ben house, the prow house, or the one-story pyramid house. The house ideas, however, were never copied exactly, for Ozark values had to be considered. Putting on airs was frowned upon, which pressed more progressive Ozark people to tone down their new houses, eliminate extravagant Queen Anne details, keep the interiors simple, and maintain elements of traditional houses in their new popular ones. If Ozark people wanted to express their status or economic success, they chose larger rather than fancier houses.

Whether traditional or popular, Sizemore’s study confirms the conservative nature of Ozark life, of “making do,” being self-sufficient, and having anti-intellectual tendencies. Although other studies of the Ozarks point to two Ozark cultures and divergent styles of life based on the fertility of the soil, topography, transportation and differing standards of living, Sizemore’s study of houses reveals a “fundamental unity” (211) in Arkansas Ozark life. While she found some significant differences in the distribution of house types in the Boston Mountains compared to the Springfield Plain, there were more commonalities between the houses of these two parts of the Ozarks than differences. All of the houses displayed important aspects of the cultural values and traditions of the Upland South, especially the practices and procedures of long-standing carpentry traditions.

Sizemore’s book is more than a discussion of common houses in Arkansas. It is also a primer of vernacular architecture that introduces many of the most important theories and findings in the discipline. For the beginner, this introduction is very good; however, those already familiar with the discipline may find the first didactic chapters frustrating. The subtitle of the book is also somewhat befuddling. I read the book twice but could not find the word, “homeplaces,” which has special meaning in vernacular studies. Still, this book is an important contribution to the understanding of the Ozarks, because “time is running out for the ordinary and unpretentious houses” (1) of this fascinating region of our country.

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WALT WHITMAN’S AMERICA: A Cultural Biography. By David S. Reynolds. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1995.

In the first half of this six-hundred-page volume, David Reynolds runs a biographical thread through an array of bulky beads—or, rather, of cultural and historical influences on Walt Whitman’s work. Reynolds describes Brooklyn and other parts of Long Island; Manhattan; its Bowery B’hoy culture; New York theater; American oratory; musical

performances in New York; the opera there; popular physiologists; the American women's rights movement; evolutionary science before Darwin; phrenology; mesmerism; spiritualism; Swedenborgian and post-Swedenborgian mysticism; the Harmonial movement, with its trance voyages and bonding with nature; American daguerreotypists; and American painters, especially genre painters and luminists.

At the beginning of the second half of his biography, Reynolds turns to a discussion of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1855), calling it a "utopian document." With it Whitman as a poet, he says, sought to unify the nation, after the politicians had failed. The poet trusted in its heritages of artisan labor and the unified stem family, reverence for the nation's founders and for the Revolutionary War, and in other elements of a common culture:

The lively audience-performer interaction that characterized popular plays, music, and speeches had engendered a participatory style enjoyed by most Americans. Religion and progressive science, which mingled with the rise of Harmonialism and spiritualism, were other areas of widespread interests, as were popular visual media. . . .

The dissolving of boundaries between different occupational categories was very much part of the daily life for many antebellum Americans. Actors, musicians, lecturers, scientists, popular preachers, showmen, photographers, and painters—all borrowed from each other and appealed to an ever-widening audience. The 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* was a proclamation of these fertile cultural interactions, made in language that dissolved the boundaries between prose and poetry, between polite diction and slang (308).

When Whitman's country did not "absorb" him after the book appeared, he felt rejected, Reynolds says. Though successful in selling and publishing his writings during his career, he thought himself a victim of neglect; the reason was that he did not have the cultural impact at which he had aimed.

Reynolds offers so much material and so many opinions on Whitman's life and work that few of the particulars can be assessed in a brief review. His book is informative and provocative, it will without doubt influence interpretations of important details in Whitman's poems, but it is nevertheless an uneven work. I will cite only three problems.

Descriptions of the cultural influences on Whitman are often poorly focused. One example is in Reynolds' section on the influence of the New York theater, where he writes at length about the actor Junius Brutus Booth and about the Astor Place Riot of 1849 (156-66). I found myself objecting that I had set out to read a biography of Whitman, not a history of the New York theater.

Still more serious is Reynolds' sometimes riding hobby horses in interpreting Whitman's poetry. He shows little appreciation of the store of traditional literary experience the poet—unconsciously as well as consciously—drew upon, pays minimal attention to the phenomenon of creative imagination, and occasionally even to the immediate sense of Whitman's text. These deficiencies may be seen in Reynolds's interpretation of "Passage to India." Having presented evidence of Whitman's favoring contemporary ethnological science and his believing that certain races would eventually disappear (471-73), Reynolds suggests a sinister interpretation for line 4 of the following verse (500):

Passage to India!

Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?
The earth to be span'd, connected by network,
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,
The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
The lands to be welded together (section 2).

To a mind untutored by this biography, *marriage* will not imply extinction.

Again, "Passage to India" posits a quest by the human soul—through myth, religion, literature, technology, geographical exploration, and science—for ultimate discoveries and experiences. In stanza eight, Whitman's soul, fearless of death, continues man's journey on to a union with God. Here Reynolds comments: "The poem's movement from rapture over technology to imaginings of spirituality suggests an underlying uneasiness, as though Whitman wants to exalt capitalistic America but also to escape it" (501). Surely religious ecstasy and the contemplation of death cannot be subsumed under the description "escape from capitalism." In the commentaries on the poems, Reynolds's book seems to me much inferior to Gay Wilson Allen's *The Solitary Singer: A Critical Biography of Walt Whitman* (rev. ed., 1967).

Finally, there is Reynolds's discussion of Whitman's homosexuality. He is illuminating in his discussions of same-sex passion in pre-Civil War America; to a degree startling in contemporary America, hugging, kissing, and lying in bed together were not considered abnormal. However, Reynolds is less than just to Whitman in his commentary on an oral tradition that he suffered a calamity in 1841 while he was a schoolteacher in Southold, Long Island. According to the tradition, a pastor charged him with sodomizing pupils, whereupon a mob tarred and feathered Whitman (69-80). There is no preponderance of evidence that Whitman was guilty of sodomy. But Reynolds will not say this. Instead, he dwells on the possibility. "There is some evidence he [Whitman] himself had committed it [forced sodomy] or at least been charged with it . . ." he writes (395). Reynolds need not be a lawyer to know that there is a huge difference between the two.

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WALT WHITMAN'S NATIVE REPRESENTATIONS. By Ed Folsom. Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press. 1994.

This lucid and engaging study examines how four nineteenth-century cultural events—the development of American dictionaries, the growth of baseball, the evolution of American Indian policy, and the development of photography—helped shape Walt Whitman's democratic poetics. Folsom sees Whitman as "one of the first American cultural semioticians, reading cultural activities as a vast text of democracy, searching for ways these cultural actions could be turned into American words, into a rhetoric of democracy" (2). Folsom focuses on these cultural events less as subjects in Whitman's poetry than as influences which helped Whitman to define and clarify his own artistic purposes and "to generate a new kind of American language, a native diction" (3).

Folsom's thesis is most compelling in his two chapters on Whitman and photography (almost half the book), where he argues that the new art of photography had a profound influence on Whitman's poetics by teaching him a "democratic field of seeing." Unlike