

Book Reviews: On Whitman, Pilgrims, Banks, and Appraisals

WILLIAM BUTTS

TANE, Susan Jaffe, and KARBIENER, Karen (curators). *Poet of the Body: New York's Walt Whitman – An exhibition based on the Walt Whitman Collection of Susan Jaffe Tane on the occasion of the Bicentennial Anniversary of Whitman's Birthday.* New York: The Grolier Club, 2019. 4to. Hardbound, dust jacket. 218pp. Numerous illustrations. **\$65.00.**

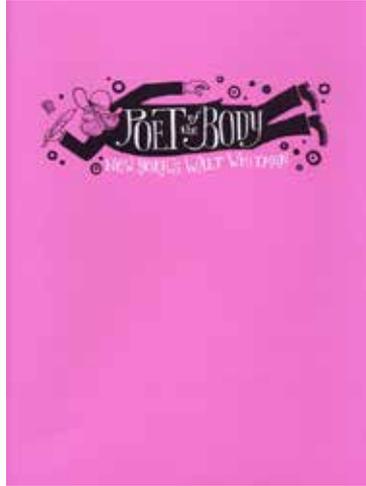
BANGS, Jeremy Dupertius. *Plymouth Colony's Private Libraries, as Recorded in Wills and Inventories, 1633-1692.* Leiden, The Netherlands: Leiden American Pilgrim Museum, 2018. Small 4to. Hardbound. 397pp. **\$30.00.**

CUNNINGHAM-KRUPPA, Ellen. *Mooring a Field: Paul N. Banks and the Education of Library and Archives Conservators.* Ann Arbor: The Legacy Press, 2019. Small 4to. Hardbound, dust jacket. 285pp. Illustrations. **\$65.00.**

APPRAISAL FOUNDATION, The. *Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice: 2018-2019 Edition.* Washington, DC: The Appraisal Foundation, 2018. 4to. Spiral bound. 346pp. **\$75.00.**

With the 200th anniversary of Walt Whitman's birth there's a Whitmanesque buzz in the air, with events and festivities abounding, a new U.S. postage stamp released and all manner of hullabaloo of which the "Good Gray Poet" would have approved. I finally felt compelled to read my copy of *The Solitary Singer: A Critical Biography of Walt Whitman* that Gay Wilson Allen inscribed for me exactly thirty years ago. Gay – who passed away in 1995 at age 92 – wrote the introduction to our first autograph catalogue in 1991, and I'm pleased to note his award-winning 1955 biography/literary study is still richly satisfying, holding up well despite the dozens of later Whitman studies volumes that have used it as a stepping stone. *Solitary Singer* is a cornerstone bowled me over, in fact, and I highly recommend this page-turning look at the life and work of this complex, endearing, often baffling figure.

Side by side with this pioneering classic I place the spectacular exhibition catalogue (you can spot its vibrant magenta dust jacket at ten paces) *Poet of the Body: New York's Walt Whitman – An exhibition based on the Walt Whitman Collection of Susan Jaffe Tane on the occasion of the Bicentennial Anniversary of Whitman's Birthday*, hosted at New York's famed Grolier Club for an all-too-brief May 15 to July 27, 2019. Member Susan Jaffe Tane curates her own extraordinary Whitman collection, supplemented with choice artifacts from the Library of Congress's noted Feinberg Whitman Collection and the New York Public Library's Berg Collection, among others. As its subtitle suggests, *Poet of the Body* focuses



somewhat on Whitman's connection to New York and its role in his development. It is rich in a breathtaking array of letters and documents, books (including every edition of *Leaves of Grass* published during the poet's lifetime), photographs, portraits, maps, newspapers and artifacts. Autograph material of all sorts abounds, ranging from Whitman's ownership signature in his personal copies of Homer's *Iliad* and the *History of the New Netherlands* to private drafts and notes made for a variety of projects and his copy of Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* in which he penciled an account of their meeting on the flyleaf. Among the poignant artifacts pictured are a man's and a woman's gold rings, each sporting a lock of Whitman's graying hair, and a rustic walking stick with engraved silver top presented by Whitman to the son of his patron.

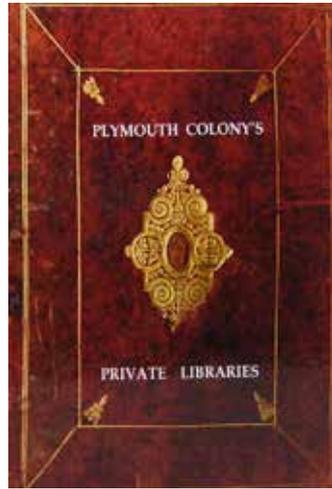
Whitman scholar Karen Karbiener provides a pleasing and readable text that places these many objects smoothly into the chronological context of Whitman's rather frenetic life. A fine marriage of a narrative with a superbly-illustrated exhibition catalogue it is. Tane's comment in her preface about "our vision of a different type of exhibition catalog" has been fully attained in what I can only describe as one of the most handsome and unusual exhibition catalogues ever reviewed in this column. No Whitmaniac should be without it and any aficionado of 19th century literary autographs will want this for reference.

Leading Plymouth Colony scholar Jeremy Bangs has done something intriguing in his revised *Plymouth Colony's Private Libraries, as Recorded in Wills and Inventories, 1633-1692* and it brings out the beach-combing treasure hunter in me.

We don't think of those original 102 intrepid Pilgrims as particularly bookish folk, and for the most part they weren't. But Bangs has surveyed the literature about the book collections that existed at Plymouth Colony during the 70+ years of its existence,

ranging from “The extensive library of William Brewster, with over 385 titles” to the slightly larger library of the obscure Ralph Partrich and numerous smaller collections of your garden-variety Pilgrims. He has closely studied the wills and inventories of 510 of these settlers. While well-known collections such as Brewster’s have been the subject of scholarly discussion since the 19th century, almost all the others appear only in arcane specialized scholarly books.

Of great interest is his discovery that many of the published lists of Pilgrim-owned books are riddled with errors. “I conclude that many are the result of an inability to make a correct choice between possible interpretations, an inability arising from unfamiliarity with the historical material – the authors and books read and discussed by seventeenth-century clergy. For example, the manuscripts marks for the letters ‘u’ and ‘n’ are often indistinguishable. A historian



will know that the correct reading of one entry refers to Eusebius, not ‘Ensebioun.’ Other mistakes are less easily explained. Simmons’ ‘Pingills workes’ rather than ‘Virgills workes’ is a surprise....” In the Brewster inventory alone, “that amount of divergence from my reading of the manuscript inspired me to revisit the Brewster inventory. I discovered 92 entries (out of 393) where my reading or identification differs from that provided by” early scholars.

This is autographic unraveling of the most useful sort, clarifying the historical record and correcting false assumptions. Imagine trying to reconstruct a historical record of books owned using faulty book titles – a great many remained simply unknown.

Bangs modestly points out that 19th century “bibliographic sleuthing... was far more difficult to accomplish than it is now, when it is possible to make quick and easy use of all the world’s library catalogues that have been incorporated in ‘Worldcat.’ It is therefore no great superiority of research that is represented by the ability to make such corrections – made at ease using a computer at home.”

Bangs’ diligent research when he “decided to transcribe and annotate all the records of Plymouth Colony’s private libraries” turns up worthwhile information. Whereas it’s known that Brewster’s library consists heavily of theology and biblical commentary and Captain Myles Standish’s far smaller collection naturally held a fair number of military titles, Bangs’ new and improved transcriptions reveal that some Pilgrim libraries “turn out to include a broad range of subjects, such as... a book for a limner [portrait or miniature painter], a tantalizing reference to visual art in the colony. The last inventory with several specified titles... contrasts by being restricted almost entirely to works on one subject, medicine.” Many inventories, it should be noted, only note the presence of books without itemizing their titles:

There are 45 [inventories] that name authors or book titles. Unspecified books are mentioned in 177 inventories. Inventories that mention a Bible plus unspecified other books number 51. Bibles and Psalm books only are found in 39 inventories. Inventories that do not mention books at all amount to 198. That no books appear in an inventory does not necessarily mean that the person had had none. ...

For a print-on-demand product *Plymouth Colony’s Private Libraries* isn’t unattractive, its glossy paper image of a calf binding with rustic gilt rules and devices reminiscent of many a worn 17th century binding. It doesn’t quite come across as the glorified photocopy of which print-on-demand books are sometimes

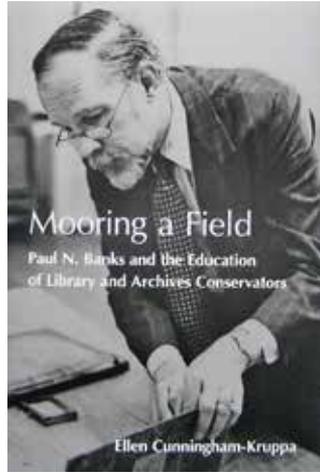
charged. Sure, the text stock is rather painfully white (I never thought you could get snow blindness from reading), the leading and margins overly generous, the typesetting and justification a bit off – all production issues that scream p-o-d to a seasoned eye. Print-on-demand may be quick and cost-effective, but the real issue is whether they will prove durable over time.

The reason *Plymouth Colony's Private Libraries* especially appeals to this reviewer frankly isn't the reason Jeremy Bangs (who is director of the museum that publishes it) wrote it. His improvement of our knowledge of the books owned by the Pilgrims is a wonderful thing, helping to correct our image of these adventurers as religion-obsessed puritans. But the book and autograph collector in me can't help wondering:

Could any of these late 16th and 17th century titles on less-than-sexy topics we occasionally see that might not pique our interest actually bear *ownership signatures* of honest-to-God Plymouth Colony pilgrims? Keep in mind that in an age when books were highly valued and expensive commodities, placing an ownership signature (often more than once) in a book was almost always done. Certainly any book owned by a Myles Standish, William Brewster or any other Plymouth Colony founding figure would have considerable monetary value – but *any* book provably owned by an actual Plymouth Colony pilgrim would be a great and exciting find indeed. The game is afoot....

The Legacy Press of Ann Arbor, Michigan is a small press in a medium-size city doing big things. In the Summer 2017 issue I reviewed Christine A. Smith's *Yours Respectfully, William Berwick: Paper Conservation in the U.S. and Western Europe, 1800 to 1935*, a beefy tome that lays out the pioneering work of Berwick and shows how surprisingly recent is the profession of document conservation – first half of the 20th century. Now,

with Ellen Cunningham-Kruppa's *Mooring a Field: Paul N. Banks and the Education of Library and Archives Conservators*, Legacy Press does the same thing for library and archives conservator that Smith did for document conservation: Brings home what a truly recent academic field this is (half a century at best) by highlighting the groundbreaking work of one pivotal practitioner. Think of *Yours Respectfully* and *Mooring a Field* as companion volumes.



Writes Cunningham-Kruppa, “This book asks questions about the nature of library and archives conservation while attempting to get at the root of why it took so long for the field to win a seat at the academic table.... The modern study and practice of conserving cultural records is a combination of science and ‘traditional’ crafts... a mix of theoretical, scientific, craft, and haptic education.” As for Paul Banks’ role in establishing this new hybrid scholarly discipline, he is a seminal player in this highly-specialized field – an “influencer” in his day -- which means he’s largely unknown outside library science circles. “This is not a traditional biography; Banks’ personal life is little interrogated. Rather, he serves as an anchor and a vehicle for observing and tracking how library and archives conservation became a professional field. ...”

Personally, I favor thick, robust cradle-to-grave biographies of the no-stone-unturned school a la Samuel Boswell’s *Life of Johnson* (unabridged version, of course!) and Richard Ellmann’s *James Joyce*. I didn’t finish *Mooring a Field* feeling I held a fleshed-out vision of Paul Banks as a person – but such wasn’t the author’s intent. I do feel an appreciation for the man’s work as an innovator in spearheading new methods of teaching library and archives

conservation, of his stature among colleagues. She accomplishes just what she set out to do in this thorough, well written, painstakingly-researched study. (This last of which is evident by ample footnotes that not only contain the expected bibliographic details, but are information packed and well worth reading.)

And Cunningham-Kruppa doesn't neglect the nuts and bolts, the framework of Banks' life. He was born outside Los Angeles in 1934, and it's intriguing that from an early age he showed a "desire to elevate – to clarify philosophically and technically – what he saw as the role of handcraft work in a highly mechanized society." He absorbed every aspect of book production: Printing and typesetting, book design and layout, commercial and handcraft bookbinding methods – even served a stint as designer for Viking Press. He was an "opinionated and plucky twenty-six-year-old" and a square peg trying to fit himself into the round holes of the New York publishing and printing scene and had an inborn "activist nature, taking an oppositional stance against the mechanized, routine production of bound books."

Through hands-on work and self-education Banks became an established, well-regarded if small New York craft binder, but he yearned to teach European-quality hand bookbinding in this country and for this age-old craft to become a respected profession. "Banks' ideas were counter-cultural," observes Cunningham-Kruppa. "[H]e wanted the kind of Bauhaus education of an earlier time and... a degree conferring professional status to binders who performed high-level work." In short, Banks made himself a force in the field – named first editor of the *Guild of Book Workers Journal* in 1962, then neck-deep in the massive Grolier Club project of restoring their 37,000-volume collection, which sparked a passion for "conserving large collections as a whole, concerns that defined his work, research and teaching during the decades ahead."

In 1964, at the breathtakingly-young age of 30, Banks got his first regular full-time job: Curator and head of the Conservation

Department at Chicago's famed Newberry Library, even though he had "no library education and possess[ed] little knowledge of or experience in managing a collection the size of the Newberry's." But a movement was beginning to germinate, at least in his head. When in November 1966 the Arno River in Florence overflowed its banks and an "estimated 600,000 tons of mud, sewage, and rubble... had been deposited throughout its streets, homes, churches, stores, libraries, and museums," Banks and other leading-edge conservators from the U.S., Great Britain and elsewhere leapt into action. An enormous stew consisting of hundreds of thousands of water-logged, mud-soaked old and rare book volumes and manuscripts demanded an immediate massive rescue operation.

Florence's disaster gave many of these Library and museum professionals "the idea of building an international center for book conservation in Florence, where work on the city's collections would serve as a teaching and scientific research concern for conservators." Far, far more easily envisioned than accomplished, as Cunningham-Kruppa's comprehensive dissection of this vision lays out. Banks gets ensnarled in a whirling dervish of efforts among a dizzying array of agencies (with a who's-on-first alphabet soup of acronyms this reviewer couldn't keep straight) from different countries with differing agendas. This multi-year endeavor forms the core of *Mooring a Field*, the defining event of Banks' career, and Cunningham-Kruppa dives deeply into the weeds untangling in detail the complexities of this international effort and Banks' critical part in it. His prickly personality occasionally comes to light during these trying times ("His ego, hubris, and impatience were characteristic traits") – but "For the emerging field of book conservation, the Florence experience proved to be transformative with regard to sharing knowledge and forming a collegial network of conservators."

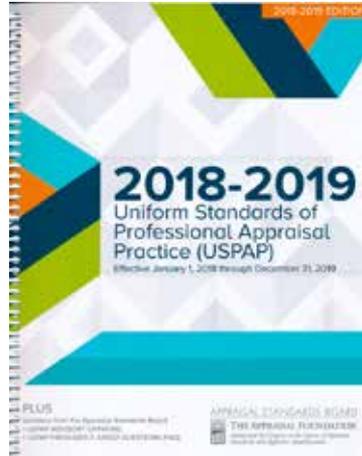
Cunningham-Kruppa pays considerable attention to Banks' function in the creation of the National Conservation Advisory Council in the 1970s, then in 1981 the crowning event of Banks'

career when he was named director of the new Conservation Education Program at Columbia University's School of Library Service. Here was his dream job, and the author admirably illuminates the many revolutionary educational and training measures Banks undertook with varying degrees of success. Cunningham-Kruppa's closing analysis of the library and conservation field that arose from these decades of struggle and experimentation close out *Mooring a Field* nicely. It's a dense, provocative philosophical discussion of the emerging field's role in academia, its challenges and disappointments and ultimate viability.

Mooring a Field: Paul N. Banks and the Education of Library and Archives Conservators isn't easy reading for bookish readers not normally immersed in library and information sciences, but anyone interested in books and documents and the archives that preserve and protect them will enjoy and benefit from Cunningham-Kruppa's chronicle.

Misconceptions about regarding appraisals. The popularity of *The Antiques Roadshow* and similar shows have made the word "appraisals" more household than ever in recent years, and ever more misused, as any dealer will tell you. What the public considers "appraisals" are often what dealers would more properly consider *expert valuations* – informal educated oral opinions. Proper appraisals are generally written documents for which a fee is charged and into which considerable research is invested and a written report created. Strict guidelines should be followed, especially if the appraisal is performed for tax donation purposes and IRS review may be involved. Other misconceptions: That membership in one of the "big three" appraisal membership associations is a requirement. Definitely not, as much as these associations would like it to be. The appraiser had better demonstrate serious chops and expertise

by membership in a by-election professional association such as the ABAA (Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America) and show that they've been performing appraisals regularly for a good many years. There's also a fallacy that an appraiser can be USPAP *certified*. No, no, no – and an appraiser who calls themselves that ought best be avoided. That's simply not how it works. An appraiser should be what is called USPAP *compliant* – **never** “USPAP certified.”



I've been struggling with what to write about *Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice: 2018-2019 Edition* since I reviewed the 2014-2015 edition in 2015 (direct link to that review: https://www.mainstreetfinebooks.com/images/upload/articles_55_1.pdf). Everything I wrote in that review remains true today, just... more so. With a revised edition of this critical text published every other year a basic review seems in order. (By the time this review appears, a brand new 2020-2021 edition will have supplanted the 2018-2019 edition.)

Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice: 2018-2019 Edition (call it “USPAP” – any pronunciation goes) is a fascinating and indispensable book you never want to read unless you have to. Since appraisals have come under increasing IRS scrutiny for years now and the guidelines increasingly complex and stringent, *USPAP* is an absolute must-have for those performing appraisals and a must-know-about for anyone using appraisals.

USPAP's purpose “is to promote and maintain a high level of public trust in appraisal practice by establishing requirements for appraisers. It is essential that appraisers develop and communicate

their analyses, opinions, and conclusions to intended users of their services in a manner that is meaningful and not misleading.” While this sounds straightforward enough, the resulting hefty manual of rules and guidelines makes for dense and intense reading. Like any specialized tool, of course it brings with its own specialized vocabulary and concepts: jurisdictional exception, extraordinary assumption, hypothetical condition, on and on and on. . . . All is laid out in a highly organized,

meticulously-outlined fashion, to be sure, but nevertheless *USPAP* presents such a large mass of data that it’s a lot to swallow. Add to this a revised edition every second year (mainly, I assume, details relating to changes in IRS regulations), no doubt accomplished by a committee of some sort, and you have a recipe for—well, for a book you never want to read unless you have to!

I recently participated in an online *USPAP* course – continuing education for professionals performing appraisals that need pass the highest muster. Twenty headset-wearing pupils from across the country sat glued to their PC monitors for several long, intense evenings as a well-known instructor took us point by point through this Holy Bible of appraisal standards. It was a memorable experience that brought home how rigorous and disciplined are the criteria that produce appraisals able to withstand the most intense legal scrutiny.

The vast majority who read this review fall into the category of those who will never, ever have to read and absorb *USPAP*. But they should know enough about it that if they’re ever in a position to need an appraisal they insist that their appraiser be *USPAP* compliant – that their appraiser understands and abides by its tenets. And as for anyone performing appraisals, whether they be autographs or books or whatever type of personal property, to quote my 2015 self, they “disregard its principles at their own peril.”