the District. One compelling example is his account of the recent rediscovery of Clara Barton's Missing Soldiers Office. As the war drew to a close, Barton transitioned from nursing to searching for soldiers. She converted the boarding house rooms that had previously stored hospital supplies into the Missing Soldiers Office, where she responded to thousands of letters from families requesting assistance. According to Peck, Barton helped locate more than 20,000 soldiers. In 1868, Barton closed the Missing Soldiers Office, storing some of her possessions in the attic, where the material was forgotten until 1997. When the building was being prepared for demolition, a contractor noticed a letter protruding from the ceiling. Upon entering the attic, he found, in Peck's words, "a veritable Clara Barton time capsule, untouched for more than a century" (70). This discovery saved the building from destruction; a museum opened on the site in 2014, under the direction of the National Museum of Civil War Medicine.

Peck's book, then, can introduce unfamiliar readers, particularly D.C. residents and visitors seeking to retrace the poet's Civil War footsteps, to a pivotal time in Whitman's life and Washington's history. Scholars and readers familiar with Whitman Studies are unlikely to find this book essential. Yet, as evidence of continued popular interest in this vital point in Whitman's biography, we should find its publication heartening.

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Adam C. Bradford, *Communities of Death: Whitman, Poe, and the American Culture of Mourning*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2014. xiv + 248 pp.

For those accustomed to the conventional literary wisdom that Walt Whitman's primary mentor was Ralph Waldo Emerson, Adam Bradford's *Communities of Death* may prove startling. Bradford puts forward the audacious thesis that instead of Emerson's Transcendentalist work,

Poe's macabre work served to inspire Whitman's most ambitious poetic projects. Contending not only that Poe influenced Whitman, Bradford asserts that Poe was responsible for Whitman's most crucial achievements in both democratic and spiritual poetics; Whitman developed a democratic vision by drawing upon the importance of communal mourning, and a spiritual vision by drawing upon the material proximity of the deceased. Bradford states that Whitman "repeatedly testified to the oddly recuperative potential of Poe's Gothic and macabre literature and claimed that it played a central role in spurring him to produce the rather remarkably transcendent *Leaves of Grass*" (6). Central to this argument is the need to see both poets as their contemporaries did, specifically in terms of the cultural work of mourning.

That we have largely failed to see the recuperative aspects of Poe's poems and stories in our time is due to our removal from and uneasiness with the nineteenth-century practices of prizing attachment, including bodily attachment, to the deceased. Early twentieth-century Freudian conceptions of grief work posited detachment from the dead as the way to reach a healthy reintegration of the self in mourning, but nineteenth-century conventions conceived of attachment as desirable because it signaled a healthy relationship with the dead, and could even extend the relationship into the afterlife. Antebellum mourning depended upon culturally sanctioned rituals that drew mourners into involvement with members of the community by way of the crucial rituals of making and exchanging material objects of mourning.

Bradford's examination of this nineteenth-century material culture in terms of poetics is the most valuable of many astute contributions in *Communities of Death*. His examination will most likely be of interest to any historian of nineteenth-century literature that deals with representations of death and absence—in other words, a great deal of it. Antebellum materials of mourning were drawn from close contact with the dead, and included such objects as weavings made from the hair of the deceased, memorial quilts, mourning portraits, jewelry made from the deceased's effects, photography (of the corpse), and consolation poetry inscribed on urns, headstones, and the like. These items, perhaps distasteful to us, were hardly perceived as such

during the period and, indeed, aided in the active remembering that might enable a survivor to be in the continued presence of the departed. The items connected family members, friends, and communities, strengthening and renewing social ties; not simply mementos, the items served as potent talismans, and were seen as salubrious in preventing separation from the departed for years, or even a lifetime.

Bradford investigates the role of these funerary materials to show how Poe's audience read his work "with a sense of empathetic commiseration as opposed to shock and horror, making these poems into invaluable tools [for the] bereaved" (13). To immerse oneself in such mortuary details and reread poems like "Annabel Lee" and "The Raven" under Bradford's tutelage is to discover a different Poe from the one we may have thought we knew. The speakers of these and others of Poe's poems do not engage in morbid activities but rather perform accepted nineteenth-century rituals of mourning that allowed access to the bodies of the dead, expressing grief in what were seen as healthy and natural ways. Poe's readers were affected because they "approached the text with an understanding of grief that made allowance for these types of otherwise unconventional thoughts and behavior" (43). The reception of Poe's work by the nineteenth-century populace as conducive to an appropriate mourning process is proved upon Bradford's offerings of many contemporaneous readers' accounts.

At this point, the leap from Poe's use of mourning materials to Whitman's is not so large as might otherwise be supposed, especially given that Whitman assented to characterizing his own 1855 *Leaves of Grass* as "most remarkable" by dint of "what it had to say about death" (89). Bradford makes the point that Whitman offered to his readers a kind of funerary object in the book itself—a "death-defying cryptext" (116), which would bring comfort to survivors. Bradford claims that the materiality of Whitman's volume purposefully resembled memorial volumes made by individuals at the time—a claim that for this reader needs more thorough contextualizion with a larger number of books from the period so as to be able fully to gauge its verity. However, Bradford's discussion of Whitman's use of the poetic device of apostrophe is riveting in the light of revisiting *Leaves*

of Grass as an object of mourning to be shared with a community of readers. Though countless critics have discussed Whitman's use of the poetic device of apostrophe, no one has attained the corporeal urgency of the apostrophe to the degree Bradford does. Whitman almost certainly learned and honed the technique of addressing the audience as "you" in his early journalistic writing, but in his poetry he turned the apostrophe into an even more intimate device to enable him to commune with readers about the life event so important to them, and to deepen the poetic project of speaking about death that he stated was his primary concern. With the apostrophe, Whitman links the "I" of the speaker and the "you" of the reader in a lyric present tense that permits the reader to perceive that "death does not equate with cessation or annihilation and that individual identity and interpersonal relationships are eternal" (99).

Bradford's argument for the power of Whitman's project of mourning in general depends largely upon a comprehension of the importance of nineteenth-century material objects of mourning, and implicitly on Bill Brown's *A Sense of Things*. Though Bradford doesn't mention thing theory, he must benefit from at least an ambient under-standing of the importance of Brown's contribution. Bradford clearly draws energy for his argument from the force of that theory. The early *Leaves of Grass*, then, through its thingness as book, and also through its powerful use of apostrophe, aided the mourning process through a kind of literary transaction of consolation between the "I" and the "you," or the writer and the reader. As a "death-defying" poetry it facilitated the presence of the loved one and made for democratic mourning through the exchange of the material book as mortuary object, and resulted in the fortification of social ties.

It is compelling to track Adam Bradford's argument that Whitman used similar strategies to aid in the mourning of the nation at large as Americans turned to assuage the enormous losses of the Civil War. For a grieving country, in which almost every person experienced loss of family members or friends, Whitman produced the 1865 *Drum-Taps* as a way to speak to the populace and hold the deceased in hallowed connection. Specifically, Whitman wrote the war volume by employ-ing "thin" descriptions of soldiers, in which he resisted supplying the

particular details of individual soldiers about whom he'd written in his notebook to offer instead only a couple markers of description, thus presenting a way by which many readers could "identify" their loved ones. In these "thin" descriptions he provided the trace of the body of the departed and created an "ameliorative power of binding the living to the dead" (176). Survivors were often unable to attend the burial site and witness the funeral of their departed, and *Drum-Taps* allowed the dead to be present through the text. Though many survivors could not physically claim the departed they could claim them emotionally, under the aegis of the book as mourning object. Ultimately, Whitman's aim was to heal the nation by prompting the populace to share grief with one another.

There is much that is fresh and valuable in Adam Bradford's book. Especially useful is his reframing of the historical and social constructs of nineteenth-century death rites toward a more full comprehension of the expectations of the era's readers. The historical path from Poe to Whitman in this reframing is particularly illuminating: "Just as Poe's 'intolerable' images of death and the afterlife sparked a reader's creative faculties and goaded them to replace these images with something more transcendent, the horror of the complete loss and total annihilation of a loved one spurred readers . . . to create a tolerable and recuperative death for their lost soldiers" (135). Of potentially enduring interest for Whitman scholars and students is a renewed understanding of how the poet could parlay the corporeal and material world directly into poetic terms—something Whitmanians have always known Whitman did, and still does, better than anyone else. Now, though, we can appreciate in greater detail how those terms were received by his contemporaries, especially those who were in mourning, and we can apprehend the means Whitman used to turn absence into presence, loss into self, death into perpetuity. These transformations have been and still are the major lyrical motions that galvanize his poetry and empower both his spiritual and his democratic project. With Bradford's study we have a fuller picture of how Whitman undertook that project. Too, Bradford's observations on mourning are especially important for Civil War studies in general, and for reading Civil War literature with an added perspective on a subject which in the end is

all perspective and only perspective—death. Relatively recently Drew Gilpin Faust in her elegant, solemn *This Republic of Suffering* offered the decisive text on the subject of Civil War death, and one might say Bradford's *Communities of Death* offers useful variations on the subject as delineated through Poe's and Whitman's poetry. Bradford's thesis provides a new means of thinking our way through a major strain in the history of nineteenth-century literature, a way that he himself attests "surprises, to say the least" (200). It becomes more convincing, though, as one reads through the thesis that spans chapters bolstered by numerous biographical contextualizations, helpful illustrations, and ample contemporaneous reader responses.

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