among others. Yet, because of its sustained volume-long effort at bound breaking, making vital new connections, and remembering forgotten or stifled connections within Whitman studies and American cultural studies, this book is "special." Although the title and cover art, a nude photograph of (possibly) Whitman by Eakins (recently rediscovered by Folsom), may make the collection seem controversial, transgressive, or improper, one of the most admirable aspects of this collection is its moral vision and social responsibility. *Breaking Bounds* asks teachers, scholars, and readers to consider Whitman in relation to the political and cultural contexts of his time as well as our own. For the critics in this volume, how we write about, talk about, and teach Whitman matters in an immediate, political, crucial way. In their detailed, historically-specific analyses, they remind us that the culture Whitman inhabited was different from ours, but also that the culture in which we read and talk about Whitman is our own present—it is a now marked by life-threatening epidemics (the AIDS pandemic and the suicide epidemic among gay teenagers) and cruel and pervasive discrimination against gay men, lesbians, queers, and people living with AIDS. When it rejected the "Breaking Bounds" conference's request for support, the National Endowment for the Humanities asked the organizers, "Does it matter to you that Whitman was gay?" (260). The answer *Breaking Bounds* provides is: it matters, a lot.

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EZRA GREENSPAN, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Walt Whitman*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. xiv + 234 pp.

This anthology of ten essays suggests the vitality and variety of critical responses to Whitman today, or, as Ezra Greenspan writes in his introduction, how Whitman "has again become one of the most current figures in American literary criticism" (3). While Greenspan notes that this variety of scholarly responses reflects the "wide-open, decentralized" nature of current Whitman scholarship, what strikes one is how so many of these essays intersect and comment upon certain distinctive features of Whitman's poetry. Foremost among these is what Alan Trachtenberg, in a fine phrase, calls "Whitman's most audacious claim on poetics, that the reader completes the poem as life" (200). These essays suggest the diversity of ways in which Whitman's readers complete his work—from radical women reformers of the 1850s who were galvanized by Whitman's message of sexual liberation to modernist artists like Hart Crane and Isadora Duncan who found in him a visionary prophet to inspire a radical newness in their work.

What strikes one, too, is how many of these essays are deeply immersed in the historical contexts both of the production and reception of Whitman's work. Six of these essays are especially illuminating in this regard. David S. Reynolds and M. Wynn Thomas describe how Whitman's poetry emerges from and responds to the political and social crises that defined the United States at mid-century. Ed Folsom examines how Whitman adapted the emerging technologies of printing illustrations in books in order to fashion self-representation. And Alan Trachtenberg, Ruth Bohan, and Sherry Ceniza illumi-

nate the kinds of artistic, political, and personal responses Whitman has elicited from his readers.

Reynolds's thesis is that Whitman sought through the "all-absorptive poetry" of the "gargantuan 'I' " to heal a nation divided in the 1850s by sectional animosities over slavery, the collapse of the party system, political corruption, and deep class divisions (66-67). Reynolds focuses most of his discussion on slavery and proposes that Whitman, who feared sectional extremism might tear apart the nation's social fabric, "tried mightily" in his poetry to restore the balance of opposing views (83). Yet the value of Reynolds's argument is not so much his demonstration of how Whitman sought balance in his poetry (if, in fact, he did), but rather the ways in which Reynolds shows Whitman to have absorbed the "subversive political rhetoric" of reform novelists like George Lippard in his early 1850s poems on slavery. Reynolds argues that "the seeds of *Leaves of Grass* were sown in the political crises of 1850," specifically in the way these early poems incorporate and yet transcend the popular subversive style with hopeful images of restoration that anticipate the "affirmation" and "balance" of the 1855 poetry.

Thomas's thesis is deceptively simple—namely, that Whitman's brother George helped lead Whitman to an intimate understanding of "the unprecedented scale and terrifyingly modern character of the Civil War" (36) and sensitized him to respond imaginatively to certain kinds of war experience. Yet Thomas's approach yields a number of rich insights into Whitman's war poetry and letters: that *Drum-Taps* poems are marked by a "dual perspective" in which Whitman assumes the voice of the soldier (or his family) and yet also mediates that experience through the voice of a sympathetic observer; that Whitman seeks to recognize and memorialize the individual, to bestow "a kind of identity on some poor unknown through a glance of sympathetic recognition," a "sight" which leads to the speaker's own "spiritual insight" about the hidden meaning of the war (39); and that *Drum-Taps* offers an alternative vision of America, one ruled not by the "cash nexus" coming to dominate northern society but by "a network of intimate, comradely relationships" (43). Thomas's close reading of Whitman's wartime writing within a fuller cultural context makes for one of the more satisfying essays in the volume.

Like Reynolds and Thomas, Folsom reads Whitman's portraits within a larger cultural-historical framework, at one point, for example, bringing in Frederick Douglass for a particularly illuminating comparison. Folsom argues that Whitman's careful selection of portraits of himself for editions of his poetry was part of his "radical democratic aesthetics," a strategy which forces the reader "to enter into the creative act; to bring the poem to life" (138). Folsom shows how Whitman, one of the most photographed figures of his time, appropriated various emerging print technologies to shape self-representation consonant with his intention for the reception of particular editions, such as the familiar 1855 frontispiece portrait which replaces the conventional poet's portrait with the full-bodied image of the worker-poet (139-140) or the woodcut portrait for the 1876 *Leaves* which seeks to create an "engraved permanence" for the reader to encounter the poet in a "perpetual present" (148). A lifetime of pictures not only tracked his life in a way no other technology could, Folsom says, but raised for Whitman fundamental questions of personal identity.

While these three essays describe the artistic impulses and strategies which shaped his work, three others describe how artists and others have been transformed by it. Alan Trachtenberg and Ruth Bohan focus on American modernist artists. Trachtenberg argues cogently that Whitman was "the single most revered and honored and idolized figure" for American moderns across the range of arts because he represented liberation, especially liberation for male artists from a "complacent, obedient company man" model of American manhood which had replaced an earlier era of the "rugged individual" (198). Trachtenberg describes two ways in which Whitman inspired modernist poets: as breaker of the old wood of convention (Williams) and as visionary of a new life (Crane).

Yet Whitman's inspiration of modernist artists was not restricted to men only. In one of the volume's most rewarding essays, Ruth Bohan demonstrates how Isadora Duncan became for her generation, in the words of Max Eastman, "a winged apostle to the whole world of Walt Whitman's vision of a poised and free-bodied and free-souled humanity" (166). Bohan describes how Duncan came to regard Whitman as her "spiritual father," carrying with her a copy of *Leaves of Grass* when she traveled. "Duncan danced the vernacular Whitman sang," writes Bohan (182), especially in the "organic wholeness and fluid expressiveness" of her movement which celebrated the body and rejected the "antiphysical approach" of traditional ballet. Bohan's conclusion that Duncan, like Whitman, gave "new respect to the female body . . . as a formidable locus of power and authority" resonates with Sherry Ceniza's central assertion that Whitman, especially in the "Children of Adam" cluster, empowered progressive nineteenth-century women by celebrating their sexuality and awakening them to their essential selves, free of societal "frames of reference" (127). Ceniza's study of specific women who defended him in print demonstrates how powerful was his effect on women reformers and on the women's reform movement.

Four essays round out the volume: Stephen Railton examines the "you" of Whitman's poetry, asking if the intended audience is public/plural or private/singular, and concluding, at one point, that Whitman sought "erotic satisfaction in the realm of art, where his private imaginings became public performances of these [erotic] personal encounters" (21); Ezra Greenspan offers observations on how and why Whitman used participles as one of his "most basic tools"; James Perrin Warren argues that Whitman's later poetry can be more fully appreciated when one sees that Whitman employs two models of stylistic change—revolutionary, a break from, but not a total rejection of, the past (as in 1855), and evolutionary, a post-war style that entails a "combinatory" rhetoric of continuity and change; and Fernando Alegría examines the complex influence of Whitman on Jorge Luis Borges as poet and translator. The volume includes a chronology of Whitman's life, primary and secondary bibliographies, and striking pictures and illustrations in the Folsom and Bohan articles. Perhaps Fernando Alegría best summarizes much of this volume when he observes: "Whitman's followers accommodate him to the size of [their] dream that is, in truth, his peculiar poetic art" (208).

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