Walt Whitman: A Current Bibliography

Ed Folsom

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Aucoin, Matthew. *Crossing*. 2015. [Opera inspired by Whitman’s Civil War diaries, with Whitman interacting with wounded soldiers as he listens to them share their feelings and memories; commissioned by the American Repertory Theatre (A.R.T.) at Harvard University; world premiere at A.R.T. in May and June 2015 at the Shubert Theater, Boston, Massachusetts, directed by Diane Paulus, with baritone Rod Gilfry in the role of Whitman.]

Baine, Wallace. “Actor John Slade Channels the Boundless Spirit of Walt Whitman in New One-Man Show.” *Santa Cruz Sentinel* (April 29, 2015). [Reports on John Slade’s new “one-man theatrical musical show” in which Slade portrays Whitman; the first half of the show examines “the spiritual traditions from which ‘Leaves of Grass’ came,” and the second part is “a narrative of Whitman’s experience as a medic during the Civil War”; performed at Don Quixote’s International Music Hall in Felton, California.]

Blalock, Stephanie M. “Go to Pfaff’s!”: The History of a Restaurant and Lager Beer Saloon. Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2014. [Published online at *The Vault at Pfaff’s: An Archive of Art and Literature by the Bohemians of Antebellum New York*; offers a detailed history of Charles Pfaff’s New York restaurant and lager beer saloon that became the hangout of Whitman and the American bohemians in the late 1850s and early 1860s, provides biographical information about Pfaff and his family, and “considers the origins of Pfaff’s before the American bohemians arrived and follows the restaurant through a series of moves in New York city, documenting changes in the appearance of the establishments and the customers they attracted once the group and, later, the owner himself left the famous cellar behind.”]


Blankenship, Bill. “Washburn Choir to Debut Work by Music Professor.” *Topeka Capital-Journal* (March 6, 2015). [Reports that the Washburn University Choir is performing the world premiere of “A Prairie Sunset,” a musical setting of Whitman’s poem composed by Gordon McQuere.]

Bloom, Harold. *The Daemon Knows: Literary Greatness and the American Sublime*. New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015. [Examines “the daemonic tradition in our literature”; Chapter 1, “Walt Whitman and Herman Melville” (21-150), focuses on “our two most ambitious and sublime authors” and views them as “the Giant Forms (William Blake’s term) of our national literature,” whose major works (*Moby-Dick* and *Leaves of Grass*—“our national counter-sublime” and “the American sublime”) “have the aura and resonance of Homeric epics and in that sense share a primacy among all our imaginative writers”; goes on to argue that “Melville and Whitman inaugurate the American fourfold metaphor of night, death, the mother, and the sea that has become perpetual for us”; the section on Whitman (30-
119) offers “an induction” to the poet (and a reading of “The Dalliance of Eagles”), followed by readings of “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,” “Song of Myself,” “The Sleepers,” “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” “A Word Out of the Sea,” “As I Ebb’d With the Ocean of Life,” and “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.”]


Brehm, Brett Russell. “Kaleidophonic Modernity: Sound, City, Technology.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 2015. [Chapter 3, “The Sound of New York,” “focuses on how Whitman absorbs and transforms the sounds of New York into song through his mode of rapturous listening” and examines “the way Whitman dramatizes the phenomenology of rapt listening and poetic ‘sounding’ within the city’s ‘turbulent chorus,’” the way “his urban lyric voice depends upon this noisy turbulence”; offers comparisons of the reactions of Whitman, Baudelaire, and Poe to city sounds; Proquest Dissertations and Theses (DAI-A 76/08, February 2016).]


Danielpour, Richard. War Songs. 2015. [Song cycle for baritone and orchestra, with musical settings of Whitman’s “Hush’d Be the Camps To-day,” “Look Down Fair Moon,” “Reconciliation,” “Year that Trembled and Reel’d Beneath Me,” and “Come Up from the Fields Father”; world premiere with the Nashville Symphony conducted by Giancarlo Guerrero, with Thomas Hampson, baritone; Nashville, Tennessee, March 2015.]

Fifelski, Julie Beth. “Imprinted Products: Domestic Manufactures and Nineteenth-Century American Literature.” Ph.D. Dissertation, Fordham University, 2014. [Argues that “the rise of domestic industry is crucial to the development of nineteenth-century American literature,” and examines Whitman among other authors “whose concerns about both foreign and domestic manufactured goods pulse through their works”; Proquest Dissertations and Theses (DAI-A 76/07, January 2016).]

Folsom, Ed. “Walt Whitman’s Invention of a Democratic Poetry.” In Alfred Bendixen and Stephen Burt, eds., The Cambridge History of American Poetry (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 329-359. [Offers an overview of Whitman’s writing career, his influence, and his work, emphasizing that Whitman was seeking “nothing less than the creation of a previously unheard democratic voice.”]

Friedman, David M. Wilde in America: Oscar Wilde and the Invention of Modern Celebrity. New York: W.W. Norton, 2014. [Chapter 4, “Celebrity Is Contagious” (102-131), recounts Wilde’s visit to Whitman in Camden, New Jersey, in January 1882 and argues that what drew Wilde to Whitman's house was “the opportunity to discuss fame”; proposes that the “subtext” of their conversation “wasn’t literary form; it was how to build a career in public, with all the preening and posing that self-glorifying achievement requires.”]

Griffin, Martin. “How Whitman Remembered Lincoln.” New York Times (May 4, 2015). [Offers an overview of how Whitman elegized Lincoln in “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d,” and suggests that, “for Whitman, the poetry and the politics of Lincoln are a dynamic unity,” and that the poem reveals something “central to Whitman’s view of Lincoln as a hero”: the president is admired “not because he led the Union to victory or because of the Emancipation Proclamation, but because his death involved the ultimate gift to the people in a mythic economy of sacrifice and power: ‘the grand deaths,’ as Whitman calls them, are a nation’s most important inheritance.”]


Hoag, Andrew. “Translation as Collaboration: Jorge Luis Borges’s Unfaithful Relationship with Literature from the United States.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas at San Antonio, 2014. [Chapter 6, “Borges, Whitman, and the Poetic I: Working Toward a Truly Collaborative Translation,” investigates Borges’s translation of Whitman’s poetry, concluding that it “both demonstrates the power of translation’s ‘creative infidelities’ and takes the least amount of liberties with its original” of all of Borges’s translations of American writers; Proquest Dissertations and Theses (DAI-A 76/05, November 2015).]


Jafri, Maqsood. “In Praise of Walt Whitman,” Parts I and II. *Daily Times* [Lahore, Pakistan] (April 28, 2015), A7; (April 29, 2015), A6. [Summarizes Whitman’s career and influence as “the national poet of the US” and “the poet of democracy,” and “acknowledge[s] his influence in the shaping of my poetic zeal. . . . I may not agree with his lascivious ideology but I admire his deep love for democracy and humanity. He is a great sage for all ages. . . . The real message of Walt Whitman must be followed.”]


Keller, Catherine. *Cloud of the Impossible: Negative Theology and Planetary Entanglement*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2015. [Chapter 6, “‘Unfolded Out of the Folds’: Walt Whitman and the Apophatic Sex of the Earth” (196-214), reads Whitman in the context of a study of “encounters between the relational and the apophatic or, to paraphrase, between the nonseparable and the nonknowable,” and in the more specific context of “explicatio, the unfolding, of a relational ontology of entangled difference,” yielding a Whitman who “plies the human with an extravagant transhuman imaginary of folds physical, animal, vaginal, queer, democratic, terrestrial, astronomical, and impiously divine.”]


Kreitner, Richard. “The Echoes of Walt Whitman’s ‘Drum-Taps.’” *Boston Globe* (April 19, 2015). [Reviews the re-issuing of *Drum-Taps* by the New York Review of Books Press, edited by Lawrence Kramer, and discusses the early reviews of Whitman's book as well as Ben Lerner's comments on Whitman's Civil War writings in his 2014 novel *10:04*, and concludes by saying that, while “the poet of ‘Drum-Taps’ was not all we might now wish him to have been,” the republication of Whitman's book “is an invitation to recognize anew that the America he sang about remains, for better or for worse, our own.”]


Levin, Jennifer. “Walt Whitman and Pablo Neruda Onstage.” *Santa Fe New Mexican* (March 20, 2015). [Reports on *Word Over All: Walt Whitman and Pablo Neruda*, “a staged bilingual performance of the poetry and prose of these beloved figures,” performed in March 2015 at Teatro Paraguas Studio in Santa Fe, written and directed by Dan Bohnhorst.]


Lovett, Katrina, and Cynthia Shor, eds. *Starting from Paumanok . . .* 28 (Spring 2015). [Newsletter of the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association, with news of association events, and, in this issue, a report that “the Whitman Family Bible” was donated to the Birthplace Association by Natalie Swetfager Pearson, the widow of “the great-great-grandson of Mary Elizabeth Whitman, Walt’s beloved sister,” who received the Bible as a Christmas gift from Walt in 1878.]

Maher, Mickle. “Song About Himself.” 2015. [Play, set in a dystopian future, where the Web has been destroyed (and is called “The Weed”); dialogue is an ornate corruption of Whitman’s poetry; premiered at Storefront Theater in Chicago, Illinois, March 27-April 26, 2015.]

Marsh, John. *In Walt We Trust: How a Queer Socialist Poet Can Save America from Itself*. Monthly Review Press, 2015. [Extended meditation on how Whitman “saved my life,” mixing literary criticism, autobiography, biography, self-help, and political manifesto: “when I felt at my absolute worst, when I felt like the malaise would overwhelm me, I started reading Walt Whitman” and “learn[ed] how to die. I learned how to accept and even celebrate our (relatively speaking) imminent death. Just as important, I learned how to
live: how to have better sex, what to do about money, and, perhaps best of all, how we might survive our fetid democracy without coming away stinking ourselves. . . . I am convinced he is the cure for what ails us”; goes on to offer extended examinations of Whitman’s attitudes toward death, moneymaking, sex, homosexuality, shame, freedom, liberal democracy, and socialism.]

Mason-Browne, Nick. “‘Live like the sparrow’: Vachel Lindsay’s Whitman.” Walt Whitman Quarterly Review 32 (Winter 2015), 111-130. [Offers an overview of Vachel Lindsay’s attitudes toward Whitman and the ways his work responds to and argues with him, proposing that “where Whitman tends to the abstract, Lindsay tends rather to the concrete and even literal” and “where Whitman might deal in generalities, Lindsay struggles to provide, albeit with mixed results, a range of hard specifics,” but, still, “at the heart of Lindsay’s overall aesthetic project, with its striking and often explicit sociopolitical dimension, is a notion of the Whitmanian word made flesh”; compares Lindsay’s “Gospel of Beauty” to Whitman’s own “gospel of beauty” in his 1851 Brooklyn Art Union address; examines in detail “Lindsay’s ambivalence about Whitman.”]


Moxley, Jennifer. “A Deeper, Older O: The Oral (Sex) Tradition (in Poetry).” In Julie Carr and Jeffrey C. Robinson, eds., Active Romanticism: The Radical Impulse in Nineteenth-Century and Contemporary Poetic Practice (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), 70-90. [Suggests that “the poetic O” may be “the most radical inheritance Romanticism bequeathed to our ironic age” because it echoes “a nonlinguistic human sound often associated with sexual arousal and orgasm” and thus can “put us in an uncomfortable proximity to the sound of the body’s dissolution, and by analogy, death”; goes on to track the persistence of the poetic O in American poetry as John Wieners and Robert Duncan “enthusiastically embrac[e] the emotional O of their Romantic inheritance” from Whitman and Hart Crane, who “evince this receptivity in their poems . . . through the figure of oral sex.”]


Paolino, Tammy. “Camden Night Garden Event to Honor Walt Whitman.” Courier-Post (April 13, 2005). [Reports on a Camden, NJ, festival to be held on May 1, 2015, in honor of Whitman, featuring “a light projection of excerpts from Whitman’s masterpiece ‘Leaves of Grass,’” and “a 12-foot-high ‘CITY INVICIBLE’ sign (in homage to Whitman’s ‘I dreamed in a dream’) created in collaboration with 14 artists.”]

Perelman, Bob. “Copying Whitman.” In Julie Carr and Jeffrey C. Robinson, eds., *Active Romanticism: The Radical Impulse in Nineteenth-Century and Contemporary Poetic Practice* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), 99-107. [Meditates on what it means for one writer to “type out the work of other writers” (“What had been ‘You write, I copy’ becomes ‘I write your writing’ becomes ‘I write you’ which eventually reads ‘I write’”) and records the author’s own typing out of the last section of “Passage to India,” “which I hadn’t read in decades,” and reproduces “that typing, but with some editing (interrupting the interruptions, retyping the thinking and rethinking the retyping), editing but aiming for the whole flavor of reading and writing mixing.”]

Price, Kenneth M. “‘Many long dumb voices . . . clarified and transfigured’: The *Walt Whitman Archive* and the Scholarly Edition in the Digital Age.” *Nuovi Annali: Della Scuola Speciale per Archivisti e Bibliotecari* 28 (Firenze, Italy: Leo S. Olschki, 2014), 241-256. [Examines “editing in the age of the digital archive and the rise of so-called big data”; emphasizes “the importance of hearing multiple voices within Whitman, thereby highlighting the collaborative creation of many of his writings”; and stresses Whitman’s “role as a collaborative creative force”—all elements of “the Whitman I think we are creating at the *Walt Whitman Archive*”; concludes by analyzing the scribal documents that Whitman wrote while working in the Attorney General’s office and suggesting how those documents illuminate his involvement in a “network of Washington clerks” that in some ways came “to replace the group at Pfaff’s beer hall” as the sustaining source of his collaborative work in the years following the Civil War.]

Price, Kenneth M. “A New Errand Bearer: Daisaku Ikeda’s Poetic Response to Walt Whitman and His Quest for Peace.” In Ronald A. Bosco, Kenneth M. Price, and Sarah Ann Wider, *Encountering the Poems of Daisaku Ikeda* (Cambridge, MA: Ikeda Center, 2015), 59-91. [Reprints Daisaku Ikeda’s 1992 poem “Like the Sun Rising” (59-70)—a poem Ikeda says is “offered to Walt Whitman, poet of the people”—and provides a broad context (including Ikeda’s experiences in Japan during World War II) for understanding Whitman’s extensive and long-lasting influence on Ikeda, arguing that Ikeda and Whitman “are after the same goal—democracy that permits common humanity to flourish,” and concluding that “it is the international Whitman of comrades and the divine average of all races—the poet of democracy—that is most influential for Ikeda.”]

Ramadan, Abdel-Moneim. “Funeral for Walt Whitman.” *Words without Borders* (August 2012), wordswithoutborders.com. [Poem, translated from the Arabic original by Michael Beard and Adnan Haydar, beginning: “So finally, atop the fender of a tank, / lounges Walt Whitman. / Finally he observes the streets of Baghdad.”]

Ramadan, Abdel-Moneim. “Walt Whitman and Me: Notes on a Poetic Education.” *Words without Borders* (November 2014), wordswithoutborders.com. [Essay, translated from the Arabic by Michael Beard and Adnan Haydar, recalling the author’s “poetic education” in Egypt, including his meeting a
fellow student at the university named Muhammad Abu al-Qumsân, who, “because he had memorized Leaves of Grass in English and liked to recite it in a high voice in both English and in Arabic,” was called “Muhammad Walt Whitman”; describes his various encounters with Whitman’s work, including in Lorca’s “Ode to Walt Whitman” and in Saadi Yusef’s Arabic translation of Whitman’s poetry.]

Reddy, Srikanth. Changing Subjects: Digressions in Modern American Poetry. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. [Chapter 4, “Digression Personified: Whitman, the New York School, and the Drift of Poetry” (95-127), examines the implications of Whitman’s statement in “Shut Not Your Doors”—“the words of my book nothing, the drift of it everything”—and argues that “Whitman’s notion of poetic drift has continued to resonate with American poets well into the twentieth century, from the ‘radiant gist’ of William Carlos Williams’s Paterson to the implicit question—‘get my drift?’—which grounds the Beat aesthetic in the postwar period”; goes on to “outline a critical approach toward reading the drift of Whitman’s poetry, showing how this writer inaugurates a digressive model for the literary invention of a modern American self,” including Whitman’s “habit of deferral” by which he “repeatedly defer[s] the actual fashioning” of his text, tendering “a series of promissory notes for future utterance” on the subjects he seems to engage, acting out “the figure of the drifter” as he “assume[s] and discard[s] various social roles like a child playing make-believe,” becoming—in what Whitman describes as “the loose drift of character”—“digression personified,” as his “literary speaker . . . slip[s] effortlessly from one identity to the next.”]

Rutter, Jim. “‘Mickle Street’ a Dull Depiction of Wilde and Whitman.” Philadelphia Inquirer (February 21, 2015). [Review of performance of Michael Whistler’s drama Mickle Street, portraying the meeting of Oscar Wilde and Whitman, at Philadelphia’s Walnut Theatre.]

Sandy, Mark. “‘The Enigmatical Beauty of Each Beautiful Enigma’: The Persistence of Beauty and Death in the Poetics of Walt Whitman and Wallace Stevens.” In Michael O’Neill, Mark Sandy, and Sarah Wootton, eds., The Persistence of Beauty: Victorians to Moderns (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2015), 71-87. [Examines “the renewal of the beautiful in the poetry of Whitman and Stevens through a post-Romantic and post-Transcendentalist re-evaluation of the ordinary,” and argues that “for all their differences, Whitman, Stevens and their English Romantic predecessors share a readiness to elicit the beautiful from ‘complex transactions between the often chaotic world of ordinary experience and the creative consciousness,’ transactions that include, as readings of poems such as Whitman’s ‘Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking’ reveal, subtly enigmatic and beautiful confrontations with the fact of death, end of and spur towards delight in the ordinary.”]

in the culture and society in which they lived,” and goes on to investigate “some of the ways Ginsberg can be seen as having ‘lived over again’ the legacy of Blake and Whitman,” including the way “Ginsberg shared the conviction of Blake and Whitman that the ideal person and the ideal society must be integrated and balanced.”]


Shelley, Kevin C. “Revisiting Camden Meeting of Whitman and Wilde.” Courier-Post [Camden, NJ] (January 18, 2015). [Recaps Oscar Wilde’s visit to Whitman in Camden on January 18, 1882, and considers whether it was “the very first meeting on fame, branding and image through self-promotion and the cultivation of media attention,” “the birth of celebrity culture,” where Wilde came to learn from Whitman “how to be a famous person.”]

Speser, Arendt Oak. “Round Song: Narrative Bibliography and the Living Archive.” Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 2013. [Seeks to define “a method of archival research, a method that uses an expanded idea of the archive to situate a practice of narrative bibliography” and examines “the critic as bibliographer”; analyzes Specimen Days as “a text which is an archive in itself,” one that creates a seemingly random “sequence” that nonetheless “instills a continuity of thought and feeling and presence that highlights the play of the poetic imagination”; the final chapter turns to a study of Democratic Vistas and examines the online Walt Whitman Archive “as an example of the emerging trend of digital archives,” criticizing it for its focus on Whitman’s poetry but praising it for its encouragement of scholarly collaboration and community; Proquest Dissertations and Theses (DAI-A 75/05, November 2014).]

Spratlan, Louis. “Of War.” 2015. [Choral work in four parts, with part 3 a setting of Whitman’s “Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night”; world premiere in April 2015 by University of Illinois Symphony Orchestra, Chamber Singers, and Oratorio Society, conducted by Andrew Megill.]
Tytell, John. *Writing Beat and Other Occasions of Literary Mayhem*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2014. [Chapter 10, “Ginsberg Today,” contains a section called “A Literary Excursus” (134-141) that traces how, for Allen Ginsberg, “the crucial predecessor was Walt Whitman,” and offers examples of how “Ginsberg would frequently invert, telescope, or magnify a quality he found in Whitman.”]


Whistler, Michael. *Mickle Street*. 2015. [Play depicting Oscar Wilde’s 1882 visit to Whitman in Camden, New Jersey; world premiere at the Walnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia, in February and March 2015, directed by Greg Wood with Daniel Fredrick as Wilde and Buck Schirner as Whitman.]


Willis, Elizabeth. “Bright Ellipses: *The Botanic Garden*, *Meteoric Flowers*, and *Leaves of Grass*.” In Julie Carr and Jeffrey C. Robinson, eds., *Active Romanticism: The Radical Impulse in Nineteenth-Century and Contemporary Poetic Practice* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2015), 18-30. [Examines Erasmus Darwin’s 1791 book *The Botanic Garden* with its “distracting superabundance of data, its interdiscursive ease, and its wild formal variation,” and examines its similarities to *Leaves of Grass*, since “Whitman hopes that America’s poems will achieve the status of living, organic, botanical forms” and since he hopes too for “companions, readers, and lovers, his hand against the leaves of his endlessly remade book, a site of literary, sexual, and political risk”; goes on to suggest how both *The Botanic Garden* and *Leaves of Grass* influenced Willis’s own book of poetry, *Meteoric Flowers* (2006), which “was fueled, in part,” by “the embodied vision of poets like Darwin and Whitman,” who “helped me confront the muddled conditions of the present into which I repeatedly awoke” and “allowed me to see the sentient, conscious qualities of the green world,” “to see the undoing within the making of things.”]

Unsigned. “Visual Artist Jenny Holzer Commissioned for NYC AIDS Memorial Installation.” *PR Newswire* (March 4, 2015). [Reports that “visual artist Jenny Holzer has been commissioned by the Board of Directors of the New York City AIDS Memorial to design a text installation for the surface of the memorial,” and that the text she has selected “will include passages from Walt Whitman’s ‘Song of Myself’ engraved in a dense spiral emanating from the central water feature.”]

Unsigned. “Why Whitman and SFGMC?” *San Francisco Bay Times* (March 8, 2015). [Offers an interview between Tim Seelig, artistic director of the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus, and composer Steve Huffines, whose “My Friend, My Lover: Five Whitman Songs” was premiered by the Chorus in April 2015 at Davies Symphony Hall in San Francisco; the interview discusses how “Whitman speaks very directly to 21st Century gay men.”]

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“Walt Whitman: A Current Bibliography,” now covering work on Whitman from 1838 to the present, is available in a fully searchable format online at the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* website (ir.uiowa.edu/wwqr/) and at the *Walt Whitman Archive* (whitmanarchive.org).