

**WALT WHITMAN;
A STUDY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649756490

Walt Whitman; a study by John Addington Symonds

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS

**WALT WHITMAN;
A STUDY**

The New Universal Library.

WALT WHITMAN: A STUDY

WALT WHITMAN
A STUDY

BY
JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS



LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LIMITED
NEW YORK : E. P. DUTTON & CO.

PREFACE

THIS study hardly needs an introduction. All that is wanted for a knowledge of Walt Whitman and his works is the *Complete Poems and Prose* (1888), and *Walt Whitman*, by Richard Maurice Bucke, M.D. (D. Mackay, Philadelphia, 1883). I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. J. W. Wallace, of Anderton, Lancashire, for the use of copious notes from conversations with the poet.

DAVOS PLATZ,

March 10, 1893.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTICE OF WALT WHITMAN'S LIFE

	PAGE
BORN in 1819 on Long Island—His ancestry—Life in boyhood at Brooklyn—Teaching school and journalism—Learns the printing trade—Youth and early manhood in New York—Descriptions of his personal appearance and qualities—Roamings through the Southern and Western States—Speculates in building—Forms the first conception of <i>Leaves of Grass</i> —Experiments in style—First edition of 1855—Its reception—Emerson, Thoreau, Lincoln—Walt adheres to his original plan—The Secession War—Hospital work—Severe illness in 1864—Paralysis in 1873— <i>Drum Taps</i> and <i>Democratic Vistas</i> —Whitman and Secretary Harlan—Whitman in the Attorney-General's office—His chronic bad health, owing to the stress of hospital-work, lays him up—Poverty— <i>Specimen Days</i> —Their value for the understanding of his character—Protracted invalidism at Camden, N.J.—Growth of his fame as writer—Devoted friends—Death in 1892 . . .	11

STUDY OF WALT WHITMAN

I

DIFFICULTY of dealing with Whitman's work by any purely critical method—Controversies aroused by <i>Leaves of Grass</i> —The man and his personality—Leadership of a cause—Originality and largeness of scale—Impossibility of reducing his doctrine to a system—The main points of his creed . . .	33
--	----

II

	PAGE
Religion—God immanent in the universe—All faith and dogmas are provisional, relative in value—Analysis of the poem <i>Chanting the Square Deific</i> —Unrestricted faith and imperturbable optimism—In what way was Whitman a Christian?—His religion corresponds to the principles of modern science—The Cosmic Enthusiasm—Its importance for the individual	42

III

Personality or Self—The meaning of egotism for Whitman—Intimate connection between man and nature—Paramount importance of a sound and self-reliant personality—All things exist for the individual—Body and soul—The ideal of athletic selfhood	61
---	----

IV

Sex-Love—Amativeness and Adhesiveness—Love of women, love of comrades—Whitman's treatment of the normal sexual emotions—His relation to science—The poet's touch on scientific truths—Breadth of view—Primitive conception of sexuality and marriage—Misconceptions to which his doctrines have been exposed	75
--	----

V

The Love of comrades— <i>Calamus</i> —The ideal of a friendship, fervid, passionate, pure—Novelty of this conception—Liability to misconstruction—Question whether a new type of chivalry be not involved in the doctrine of <i>Calamus</i> —Political importance of comradeship—Speculations on the ground-stuff of <i>Calamus</i>	85
---	----

VI

Democracy—The word <i>En-Masse</i> —Equality of human beings—Miracles are all around us in the common world—Wherever and	
--	--

CONTENTS

9

PAGE

whoever—Heroism in daily life no less than in ancient fable or religious myth—De- mocracy under the aspect of a new creed —Questions regarding Democratic Art— Extension of the spheres of poetry and plastic beauty—Middle-class prejudices and pettinesses—The advent of the people —Critique of culture—America and Europe —Whitman's firm belief in Democracy— The <i>Divine Average</i> —His attitude toward the past	100
--	-----

VII

Whitman's start in literature—Attempts to create a new style—Analysis of the first preface to <i>Leaves of Grass</i> (1855)—Quali- ties, intellectual and moral, demanded from the democratic bard	132
--	-----

VIII-IX

Summary of Whitman's description of the poet —How far did he realize his own ideal?— Weak points in his method—His per- manently substantial qualities—Question whether his writings are to be called poetry —Passages proving his high rank as a creative artist	143
---	-----

X

Return to the difficulty of criticising Whitman —Allusive and metaphorical ways of pre- senting him—The main thing is to make people read him—Statement by the author of this study of what Whitman did for himself	155
--	-----

