



In Walt We Trust: How a Queer Socialist Poet Can Save America from Itself

John Marsh

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Life in the United States today is shot through with uncertainty: about our jobs, our mortgaged houses, our retirement accounts, our health, our marriages, and the future that awaits our children. For many, our lives, public and private, have come to feel like the discomfort and unease you experience the day or two before you get really sick. Our life is a scratchy throat. John Marsh offers an unlikely remedy for this widespread malaise: the poetry of Walt Whitman. Mired in personal and political depression, Marsh turned to Whitman—and it saved his life. *In Walt We Trust: How a Queer Socialist Poet Can Save America from Itself* is a book about how Walt Whitman can save America's life, too.

Marsh identifies four sources for our contemporary malaise (death, money, sex, democracy) and then looks to a particular Whitman poem for relief from it. He makes plain what, exactly, Whitman wrote and what he believed by showing how they emerged from Whitman's life and times, and by recreating the places and incidents (crossing Brooklyn ferry, visiting wounded soldiers in hospitals) that inspired Whitman to write the poems. Whitman, Marsh argues, can show us how to die, how to accept and even celebrate our (relatively speaking) imminent death. Just as important, though, he can show us how to live: how to have better sex, what to do about money, and, best of all, how to survive our fetid democracy without coming away stinking ourselves. The result is a mix of biography, literary criticism, manifesto, and a kind of self-help you're unlikely to encounter anywhere else.

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