



Democratic Vistas: The Original Edition in Facsimile (Iowa Whitman Series)

Walt Whitman

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Written in the aftermath of the American Civil War during the ferment of national Reconstruction, Walt Whitman's *Democratic Vistas* remains one of the most penetrating analyses of democracy ever written. Diagnosing democracy's failures as well as laying out its vast possibilities, Whitman offers an unflinching assessment of the ongoing social experiment known as the United States. Now available for the first time in a facsimile of the original 1870–1871 edition, with an introduction and annotations by noted Whitman scholar Ed Folsom that illuminate the essay's historical and cultural contexts, this searing analysis of American culture offers readers today the opportunity to argue with Whitman over the nature of democracy and the future of the nation.

Living in Washington, D.C., where Congress granted male African Americans the right to vote nearly five years before the fifteenth amendment extended that right across the nation, and working for the office charged with enforcing the new civil rights amendments to the Constitution, Whitman was at the volatile center of his nation's massive attempt to reconstruct and redefine itself after the tumultuous years of civil war. In the enduring cultural document that *Democratic Vistas* has become, the great poet of democracy analyzes the role that literature plays in the development of a culture, the inevitable tensions between the "democratic individual" and the "democratic nationality," and the corrosive effects of materialism on the democratic spirit.

His own conflicting racial biases notwithstanding, Whitman in *Democratic Vistas* offers his most eloquent and extended articulation of the beckoning American democratic future. At a time when the nation has elected a president whom Whitman could never have imagined, his controversial and provocative book is a timely reminder of those occasions when we experience the expansion of America's democratic dream.

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