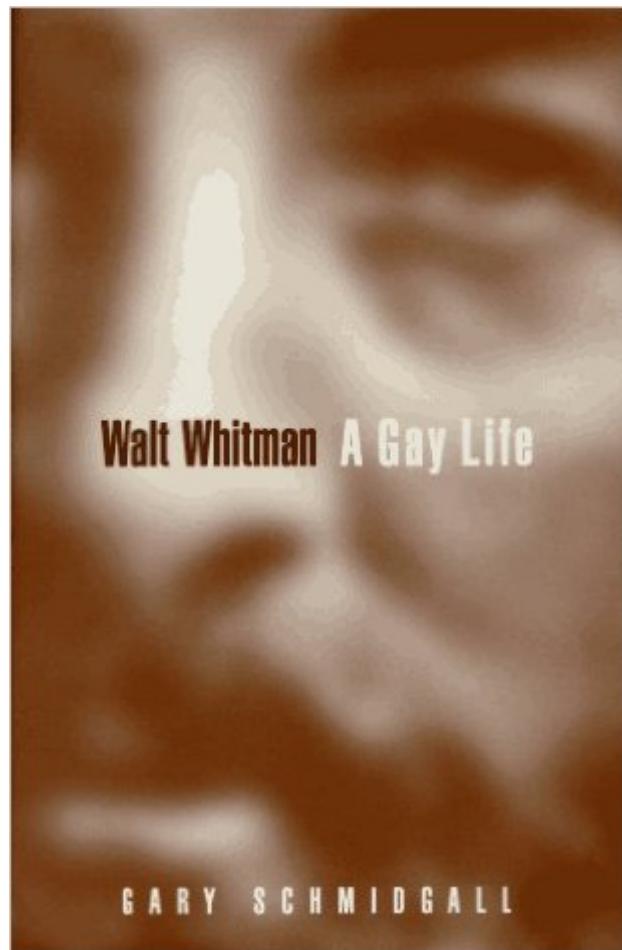


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Walt Whitman: A Gay Life



Synopsis

A revealing biography of the renowned American poet explores the relationships Whitman had with his male friends, most notably his long-time lover Peter Doyle, and uses such insight as a basis for literary criticism of his work. 10,000 first printing."

Book Information

Hardcover: 464 pages

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Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars See all reviews (4 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

One of the things that people often do is to take their heroes and try to see within that person themselves. It's only natural. It's through someone else's greatness that we experience it, and often, find our own. So it's not surprising that many Whitman biographers have passively denied Whitman's homosexuality, or out right refuted it. It's also not surprising that Gary Schmidgall takes a different view, and sees Whitman through the eyes of a gay man, writing an impressive, passioned look at Whitman's life called "Walt Whitman: A Gay Life". Based on a look on Whitman's poetry, letters, and other sources, Schmidgall tells a tale of a gay Whitman. This isn't a biography, however, which Scmidgall admits right away. His book attempts to describe Whitman during different phases in his life, particularly important ones that would have shaped his gay identity. Therefore, the focus is not broad across the span of Whitman's many years, but very intensely focused specific times, for example, Whitman as an opera lover. Schmidgall admits upfront the task before him which is enormous; being that in all of Whitman's known correspondances, interviews, archival evidence, details on his sexuality and sex life is scanty at best. We have no big true confessional, and when asked directly about the sexual content of "Leaves of Grass", his pat answer is to let the work speak

for itself. However, Schmidgall does an awesome job reconstructing Whitman, looking at everything through the eyes of a gay man, bringing the poet alive much more than other biographies which I've read. Schmidgall liberally uses the words like "imagine, think, suppose" when talking about his points, but you forgive him. The task is daunting, but well done. Whitman is alive in this book as he never has been before.

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