



Conserving Walt Whitman's Fame: Selections from Horace Traubel's Conservator, 1890-1919 (Iowa Whitman Series)

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It is now difficult to imagine that, in the years before Whitman's death in 1892, there was real doubt in the minds of Whitman and his literary circle whether *Leaves of Grass* would achieve lasting fame. Much of the critical commentary in the first decade after his burial in Camden was as negative as that in Boston's *Christian Register*, which spoke of Whitman as someone who “succeeded in writing a mass of trash without form, rhythm, or vitality.” That the balance finally tipped toward admiration, culminating in Whitman's acceptance into the literary canon, was due substantially to the unflagging labor of Horace Traubel, famous for his nine volumes of Whitman conversations but less well known for his provocative monthly journal of socialist politics and avant-garde culture, the *Conservator*. *Conserving Walt Whitman's Fame* offers a generous selection from the enormous trove of Whitman-related materials that Traubel included in the 352 issues of the *Conservator*. Among the revelatory, perceptive, and often entertaining items presented here are the most illuminating of the *Conservator*'s more than 150 topical essays on Whitman and memoirs by many of his friends and literary cohorts that shed new light on the poet, his work, and his critical reception. Also important is the richer understanding these pages afford of Horace Traubel's own sophisticated, deeply humane, and feisty views of America.

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