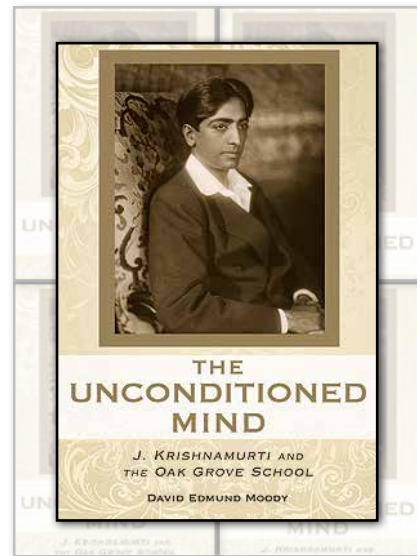
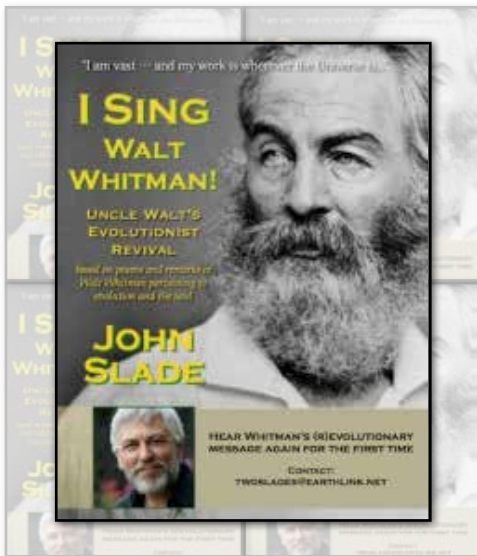


THE POET & THE PHILOSOPHER

ALBUM, BOOK LEAD TO
LOVING CONVERSATION
BETWEEN WALT
WHITMAN AND J.
KRISHNAMURTI



By Tree Bernstein

If Walt Whitman sat down to dinner with J. Krishnamurti on a cool winter's evening, what do you think they'd discuss? The Pink Moment? Fracking in upper Ojai? Or love? I'm betting on love.

Two books available through modern whiz-bang technology—one a spoken word CD, the other on Kindle and in print—bring contemporary listeners and readers the wisdom of a radical poet and a revolutionary philosopher.

I Sing Walt Whitman

By John Slade

Album produced by John Slade and Ken Eros © 2014

Recorded by Ken Eros at Eros Creative and Sound
with April Theriault and Jimmy Calire

Available at CDBaby download \$9.99 CD \$12

Walt Whitman's poetry is brought to life in this spectacular spoken word CD by local actor John Slade. It is a dramatic interpretation of a handful of Whitman's most beloved poems, some sung, some spoken—all with love and respect. The album opens appropriately with a poem from Whitman's "Song of the Open Road":

*Allons! (Let's go!) Whoever you are, come travel with me!
Traveling with me you find what never tires.
I swear to you there are more divine things more
beautiful than words can tell.*

The little irony is that Whitman's beautiful words do tell — with John Slade's interpretation, we get a fresh view of how indelible the old poet's vision is. This is not an academic recording. The music is contemporary, even worldly, with local musicians contributing melody and texture. Jimmy Calire is recognizable on sax and Hammond B3. April Theriault's clear vocals and haunting tin whistle on the final cut add a note of high lonesome. Ken Eros, with his deft guitar work and spot-on drumming, pulls it all together. The CD was engineered at Eros Creative and Sound here in Ojai.

Slade plays with Whitman's poems, and you can tell he is having a ball. His phrasing is often surprising, as, in "One of the Roughs" from "Song of Myself," he gleefully chants: "Who goes there hankering, gross, mystical, nude . . . ? Walt Whitman, an American, one of the roughs. . ." A tribal backbeat of drums creates a mystical mood, which then morphs into an evangelical frenzy of ecstatic preaching by Uncle Walt. "I celebrate Myself and what I assume, you shall assume. Every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you!"

Unlike my high school English teachers, Slade does not avoid the obvious homoerotic poems of Whitman. "We Two Boys" is a joyous romp sung and whistled: "Armed and fearless — eating, drinking sleeping, loving . . . Fulfilling our foray!" Later in the poem-song, perhaps in correspondence with Ralph Waldo Emerson, Whitman declares, "Waldo, the dirtiest book in the world is the expurgated book. If I cut sex out, I may as well cut everything out, the full scheme would no longer exist—it would be violated in its most sensitive spot: love. Love is the pulse of all."

The last cut is the most poignant, and arguably Whitman's most famous poem: his metaphorical tribute on the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln, "O Captain, My Captain." The simple arrangement of piano and tin whistle underscores the grief and love expressed in the poem that so many know by heart. *I Sing Walt Whitman* by John Slade and friends is not merely a fitting tribute to a great visionary poet—it is a celebration that invites you to the party.

The Unconditioned Mind—J. Krishnamurti and The Oak Grove School

By David Edmund Moody

Published by Quest Books Theosophical Publishing House © 2011

Available at Amazon Paperback \$24.95 Kindle \$13.99

Jiddu Krishnamurti put Ojai on the map of spiritual discourse. Perhaps, in an effort to offer an alternative to the status quo, he established his own schools in India, England and the U.S. "A school is a place where one learns about the totality, the wholeness of life. Academic excellence is absolutely necessary, but a school includes much more than that. It is a place where both the teacher and the student explore not only the outer world, the world of knowledge, but also their own thinking, their own behavior," he wrote. Krishnamurti personally guided the development of Oak Grove School in Ojai, "his youngest child" from its inception in 1975 until his death in 1986. It was the capstone of an illustrious and sometimes confounding career.

Biographies of the Indian-born philosopher abound — everyone from learned scholars to Krishnamurti's cook has something to say. One book that stands out from the crowd, however, is David Moody's carefully documented tribute, "The Unconditioned Mind." Moody was the first teacher hired at Oak Grove School. He later served as educational director and principal. He writes, "I had been a student of Krishnamurti's work for years and was drawn to the school by my dual fascination with the teachings and with the man who articulated them." This account is written from the heart; his devotion to the man and the philosophy is palpable.

The first part of the book summarizes Krishnamurti's early life, deftly skirting certain peccadilloes of the master, such as his romantic relationship with Rosalind Rajagopal, his secretary's wife. Moody does explicate the later lawsuits between D. "Raja" Rajagopal and the Krishnamurti Foundation for control over Krishnamurti's intellectual property: "The very soil on which the school (Oak Grove) was built was recovered in the lawsuit."

Much of the book concerns the internal operation of Oak Grove in a period of flowering for the school and self-realization for the author. Moody recalls Socrates' aphorism, "know thyself," which he counters with Krishnamurti's dictum, "observe yourself." Moody's observations at lunch with Krishnamurti and other teachers and guests at the table (including the cook) are the most delicious part of the story. K comes across as compassionate, witty, and keenly insightful.

Krishnamurti lectured and wrote into his late his eighties. However, in the winter of 1986, at the age of 90, his time on earth came to an end. Moody writes tenderly of his last words with the great philosopher. He took the dying man's hand and said, "I want you to know that I think of you all the time, and I remember everything you told me." Krishnamurti responded "... by increasing the force of his grip on my hand with surprising strength."

"The Unconditioned Mind" is an important contribution to the complex story of J. Krishnamurti, Krishnamurti wondered aloud if Oak Grove School would survive after his death. Now, more than two decades after his passing, Oak Grove School remains a vital institution.