



## David Goodale (1910-1983): A Tribute

Florence B. Freedman

ISSN 0737-0679 (Print)

ISSN 2153-3695 (Online)

Copyright © 1984 Florence B Freedman

---

### Recommended Citation

Freedman, Florence B. "David Goodale (1910-1983): A Tribute." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 2 (Summer 1984), 40-41. <https://doi.org/10.13008/2153-3695.1061>

This Note is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in Walt Whitman Quarterly Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

## DAVID GOODALE (1910–1983): A TRIBUTE

In Clifton Joseph Furness's facsimile edition of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* (Columbia University Press, 1939), he acknowledges the help of "friends of Whitman. Foremost among these is David Oscar Goodale" whose "thorough research has been an invaluable aid in the present study."

At the age of nineteen, having completed a course in flying at the Palo Alto School of Aviation, David Goodale was about to leave for China to become a captain and flying instructor in the Chinese army. Before he left a friend gave him a copy of *Leaves of Grass*. "It was dead straw and shavings to my uncultured mind," he confessed. He was enroute to return it when he decided to give it another look: "It was as if the top of my head opened up and Walt Whitman entered in." He decided to learn more about Whitman. He said farewell to flying. He rented a plane in Sacramento, climbed to 4,000 feet, looked down at the Sacramento and American Rivers, and recited all of "Salut Au Monde" at the top of his voice. "Circling back to the airport and landing, I thus left that field forever."

For the rest of his life he devoted as much time as he could to the study of Whitman and later of the poet's friend and defender, William Douglas O'Connor. Goodale was the true *amateur*—student and researcher not as part of an academic field of study, for he was never part of academia, but for delight in reading, collecting, research, and writing, and equal delight in sharing his collection and knowledge with others.

It was as a result of his generosity that he began to work with Clifton Furness. In response to a notice in the *Saturday Review* that Furness and Henry S. Saunders were preparing a Whitman bibliography (which was never completed), Goodale immediately offered to send the materials and information that he had collected since 1930. Furness invited the young man to join them, offering him a room in his house. Goodale did not have a college education; he acquired one informally by working with Furness and Saunders, and grading some of Furness's students' papers. Interesting visitors were also part of his education: James B. Conant, president of Harvard University; Bliss Perry, Harvard professor and Whitman biographer; Carl Sandburg, who spent weeks at a time in the Furness home; and others.

While in Boston, Goodale mined the lode of treasure in the second-hand bookstores, finding among other books Frances Wright's *A Few Days in Athens*, and the Comte de Volney's *Ruines*, the study of which led to his article, "Some of Walt Whitman's Borrowings," published in *American Literature* in May, 1938. Planning a biography of William Douglas O'Connor, he was permitted by Perry, Furness, and Saunders to copy relevant letters, notes, and documents from their collections.

The next step for Goodale was working with the O'Connor material in Brown University Library, to which he came with letters from Perry and Furness. His promising career in Whitman and O'Connor studies came to an abrupt halt when Brown University refused him access to the material; at that time they were limiting its use to their own graduate students. Deeply disappointed, he had to abandon his biography of O'Connor. Goodale went back to California, where he got a job with the Dole Pineapple Company and remained until his retirement forty years later. Through the years, he continued adding to his Whitman-O'Connor collections and sharing them with others.

In 1955, to celebrate the centenary of *Leaves of Grass* he exhibited 200 items from his collection at San José State College, with the co-sponsorship of Dr. Esther Shephard, author of *Walt Whitman's Pose* and professor at San José. He published two more articles on Whitman—"Wood Odors" in the *Walt Whitman Review* (March, 1962) and "Walt Whitman's 'Banner at Daybreak'" in the *Huntington Library Quarterly* (November, 1962). In that year he responded to a notice in *American Literature* that "Florence B. Freedman was working on a biography of O'Connor." He immediately offered to send me all the material he had collected over the years, stating that he knew that he would never have the time to write the book he had planned so many years ago. Asking no recompense except the writing of a book on O'Connor, he provided me with a private research library!

He also wrote to Katharine Stetson Chamberlin, O'Connor's step-grandniece, with whom he had exchanged letters in 1938. She, too, was interested in helping with a book on O'Connor, and invited him to come to Pasadena to copy the letters and reminiscences she had inherited from her step-mother Grace Channing, O'Connor's niece. Goodale made the 400-mile trip to Pasadena during weekends and vacations, copying very important materials by hand, since Mrs. Chamberlin did not want them to leave the house for photocopying. Mrs. Chamberlin and I began corresponding, and later I visited her and the Goodales in California. Mrs. Chamberlin once asked him, "Why are you doing all this for someone else's book?" He answered that "someone else's book" if it "was about O'Connor, was *my* book, or anyone's book, if it could be made complete and represent the true man in his time. O'Connor deserves this." In commenting about Charles Feinberg's offer to let me use his collection, Goodale wrote, "I wonder if the same enthusiasm for sharing materials exists in the other fields of American literature as it does in the Whitman-O'Connor part."

Generosity and enthusiasm were the hallmarks of Goodale's character and personality. Once he celebrated Whitman's birthday by sailing in his boat, the "Sea-Drift," to a "secluded nook where the waves dashed green and splendid against the dark moss-covered rocks, and showered rainbows on the golden scene, while I read Walt's poems from my India-paper copy of *Leaves of Grass*."

David Goodale wrote that he wanted me to be sure to include in my book what Walt Whitman said when he was informed of O'Connor's death: "Our dear friend is buried & all has gone like tracks on the shore by sea waves washed away passing." But all was not gone, then or now.

*New York City*

FLORENCE B. FREEDMAN

[Florence B. Freedman's biography of O'Connor will be published this year by Ohio University Press.]