WALT WHITMAN
QUARTERLY REVIEW

Volume 2 | Number 4 (1985) pps. 50-50

Unpublished Prose MS: Idea for a Whitman Poemet

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ISSN 0737-0679 (Print)
ISSN 2153-3695 (Online)

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Recommended Citation
White, William. "Unpublished Prose MS: Idea for a Whitman Poemet." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 2 (Spring 1985), 50-50.

Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.13008/2153-3695.1095

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ON THE BACK COVER:

UNPUBLISHED PROSE MS: IDEA FOR A WHITMAN POEMET – These rough pencil notes in Walt Whitman's hand were written on two small leaves, 6¼ by 4 inches, sewn together as a little booklet: "Poemet embodying the idea I wander along my life hardly ever meeting with comrades [.] Therefore I have not met & drawn out my love for comrades [.] For I have not met them [.] Therefore I have put my passionate love of comrades in my poems [.]" On an accompanying sheet, dated Philadelphia, 3 June 1896, Thomas Donaldson, author of *Walt Whitman the Man* (London: Gay & Bird, 1897), writes about Whitman's habit of carrying paper in his pockets on which he put "thoughts or made rough drafts of poems or prose," and he dates this MS 1880–1886. No such poemet (Whitman's term for a short verse) turns up during this period though Whitman wrote numerous lines about his love for comrades all of his poetic life, such as in "Starting from Paumanok" (1856), "I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love" (l. 92); and in "These I Singing in Spring" (1860), "And who but I should be the poet of comrades?" (l. 3); and in "I Hear It Charged Against Me" (1896), "Only I will establish. . . / The institution of the dear love of comrades" (ll. 4, 7). This unpublished fragment does not appear in Edward F. Grier's edition of Whitman's *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts* (New York: New York University Press, 1984); it printed here for the first time with the permission of the Charles E. Feinberg Collection (Library of Congress), which recently obtained it in the Hamilton Sale with other Thomas Donaldson material.

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