



'Morbid Adhesiveness--To Be Kept Down': Unpublished MS

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ISSN 0737-0679 (Print)

ISSN 2153-3695 (Online)

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Recommended Citation

White, William. "'Morbid Adhesiveness--To Be Kept Down': Unpublished MS." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 4 (Summer 1986), 49-49.

Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.13008/2153-3695.1135>

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ON THE BACK COVER:

"MORBID ADHESIVENESS—TO BE KEPT DOWN": UNPUBLISHED MS.—An often noted term associated with Walt Whitman, "adhesiveness," appears in line 16 of the "Calamus" poem "Not Heaving from My Ribb'd Breast Only": "Not in any or all of them adhesiveness! O pulse of my life! / Need I that you exist and show yourself any more than in these songs." And again in line 22 of "So Long!": "I announce adhesiveness, I say it shall be limitless, unloosen'd, / I say you shall yet find the friend you were looking for." Once more, in line 91 of "Song of the Open Road": "Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it is apropos; / Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by strangers? / Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?"

In a manuscript recently obtained by the Feinberg Collection, published here for the first time through the courtesy of Charles E. Feinberg, Whitman writes in ink in two narrow columns on a scrap of paper: "Morbid adhesiveness—To be kept down Replaced by Something Physical Sensual Animal Nonchalant & Apathetic—absorbing (and strengthening therefrom) the spirit & sense of *al fresco* Nature." And he elaborates on this in an adjoining column: "Too incessant a strain of the Mind—continual alacrity of thought—a never-quiet lambency of brain—*too restless an Intellect*—That is it—'too restless an intellect'—*the wearer out of life*—It is not *Soul*—it is Intellect.—*Soul* is longeve, good,—it helps, sustains, makes sane—but *too restless an Intellect and Brain action* wears out life.—"

By using pointed fingers, initial capital letters and underlinings Whitman here emphasizes words and phrases as he writes about "morbid adhesiveness" in a somewhat different way from the "adhesiveness" of his poetry.