



A Manuscript Draft of Whitman's Preface, 1876

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On the Back Cover:

A MANUSCRIPT DRAFT OF WHITMAN'S PREFACE,
1876

Reproduced on the back cover is a one-page draft of part of Whitman's "Preface, 1876, to the two-volume Centennial Edition of *Leaves of Grass* and *Two Rivulets*," originally published in *Two Rivulets* (Camden, NJ, 1876). The manuscript is now in the collection of the Salisbury House Foundation of Des Moines, Iowa, and is reproduced with permission. Like many of Whitman's manuscript drafts, this one is comprised of pieces of paper glued together, forming a kind of collage. Whitman often literally cut and pasted his poems and essays together. His manuscripts are often palimpsests and are thus difficult to categorize and transcribe. On the back of one of the pieces of this manuscript is a note Whitman made to himself about his deteriorating health ("Since I was here have much pain in breast / side growing worse & more frequent / quite severe & sore in breast / *?Diaphragm?* some trouble there/ *all left side— / ?is it probably* can it be fro[m] drinking? / Had I better stop / on [illegible]").

The pasted-together manuscript draft of the 1876 Preface reads: "In those former *Leaves*, composed in the flush of my health & strength, from the age of 30 to 50 years, I dwelt on Birth and Life—and ^on^ solid strength, and ~~passionate~~ maturity—and affectionate adhesiveness and manly love— [*different piece of paper:*] ~~30 to 50 years~~— ^clothing my ideas in pictures, scores days, transactions of my time, to give them positive forms, identity—^ saturating them with that vehemence of pride & audacity of freedom necessary to loosen the mind of formative pliant America from the accumulated folds, ~~layers of~~ ^the^ superstitions, & all the long, tenacious & stifling anti-democratic authorities of the Asiatic & European past—~~After~~ ^an my enclosing purport being to^ expressing [*different piece of paper:*] ~~in those Leaves~~ ^from that those points of view^ the ~~personality~~ & ^normal^ ~~natural~~ ^bodily^ character of One's-Self.*" The passage clearly underwent more revision before Whitman published it: readers can compare this draft to the finished passage in *Prose Works 1892*, edited by Floyd Stovall (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 2:468.

Such drafts of Whitman's prose are numerous and scattered across many different libraries and individual collections. No attempt has yet been made to gather and edit these manuscripts, and thus studies of Whitman's prose have been hampered by the absence of any edition that would allow us to examine in detail the process of Whitman's prose composition and his techniques of revision. The same is true, of course, for Whitman's poetry. Kenneth M. Price and I have begun work on gathering Whitman's poetry manuscripts for presentation on the *Walt Whitman Hypertext Archive* (<http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/whitman/>), but the massive numbers of manuscripts of both prose and poetry at this point remain available to scholars and students only in a piecemeal fashion. More than a century after Whitman's death, huge editing tasks remain.