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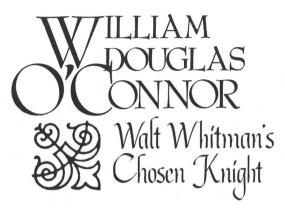
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Florence Bernstein Freedman

Whitman's correspondence and reminiscences are filled with references to William Douglas O'Connor, and, late in his life, Whitman commented to his young friend Horace Traubel, "I wonder what *Leaves of Grass* would have been if I had been born of some other mother and had never met William O'Connor."

O'Connor (1832-1889) was the author of poems, popular short stories, newspaper articles and a novel; a supporter of freedom in letters, of women's rights and abolition; and a friend of writers and statesmen. The son of Irish immigrants in Boston, he was self-educated, erudite, witty, volatile, and quixotic. From the early 1860's, he was Whitman's staunchest supporter and advocate, giving him, in the brilliant pamphlet *The Good Gray Poet*, the appellation by which he continues to be known.

Throughout most of the 1860's, the small home of O'Connor and his wife served as Whitman's salon, where friends and admirers gathered almost nightly until a quarrel between the two men led to a ten-year estrangement. Despite their division, O'Connor continued to defend Whitman in the press.

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A "Lost" Whitman letter to Louisa Orr Whitman. See page 29.