Creating a Digital Scholarly Edition of Walt Whitman's Short Fiction: A Case Study in TEI/XML Dr. Stephanie M. Blalock, School of Library and Information Science, The University of Iowa

Introduction

Walt Whitman is primarily known as the author of *Leaves of Grass*. However, from 1841 to 1848, when he was in his twenties, he published approximately 24 short stories and 1 temperance novel in New York periodicals—newspapers and magazines.

Literary critics and biographers have long believed Whitman's fiction was "pretty terrible" and, therefore, unpopular. But the stories were widely circulated and often reprinted in 19th-century periodicals.

Using periodical databases, I have discovered 324 reprints of Whitman's short fiction since 2010.

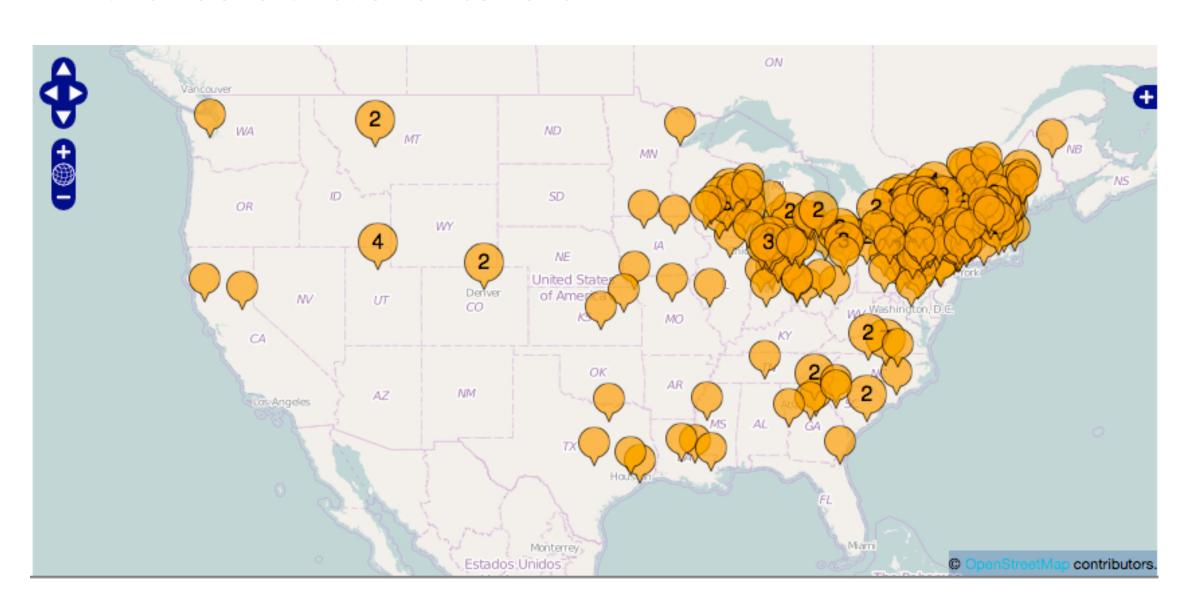


Figure 1: This map shows the locations of all known printings and reprints of Walt Whitman's fiction in the United States. This map was created with Viewshare.

My work on Whitman's fiction became part of the basis for the forthcoming NEH-Funded Whitman's Pre-Leaves of Grass Fiction project (co-edited with Nicole Gray of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln) for *The Walt Whitman Archive* (http://www.whitmanarchive.org/).

The What and Why of TEI/XML

Text encoding refers to the process of marking up a text with code in order to create a machine-readable version for display on the web.

Text encoding uses Extensible Markup Language (XML). XML is a markup language like HTML, but XML is largely concerned with the structure of a text. TEI, or the Text Encoding Initiative, is an extension of XML that provides guidelines—a standard—for marking up texts.

Encoding Whitman's stories with TEI/XML and creating a digital scholarly edition makes them accessible, searchable, and allows for the added value of annotations and a scholarly introduction.

Project Workflow







 Major Authors CD-ROM



Processing



Image scans

Encoding check

Development server

The Challenges of Encoding Periodical Fiction: Walt Whitman's "The Tomb-Blossoms"

<milestone unit="undeclared" rend="horbar-short-center"/>

which citizens possess, balance these?

rend="center" type="main-authorial">THE TOMB-BLOSSOMS.</head>

<pb xml:id="leaf002r" facs="per_sb.00068_large.jpg" type="recto"/>

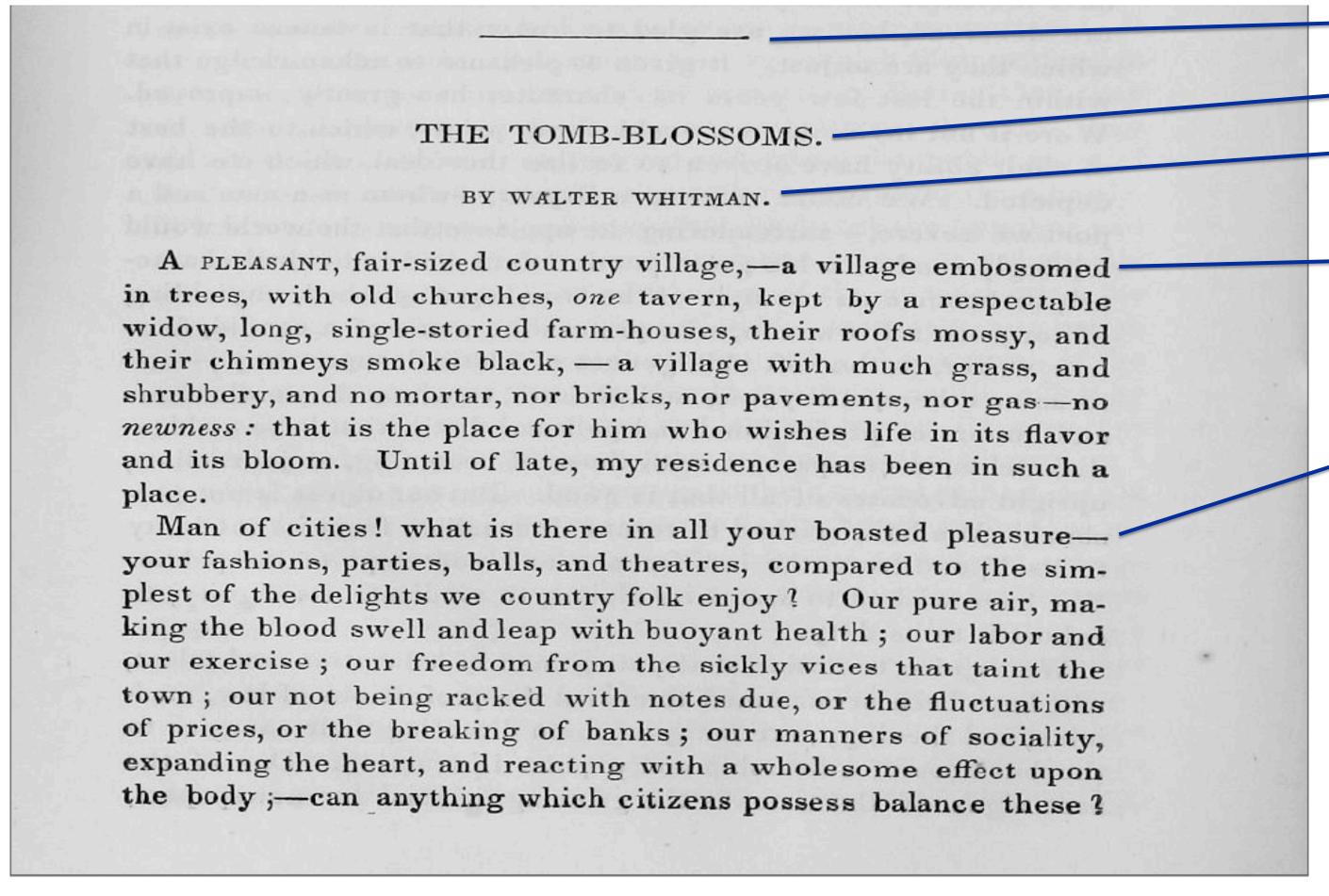


Figure 2: "The Tomb-Blossoms" from the *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, January 1842

Historical print periodicals may be illegible and/or unavailable, and digital scans can also be illegible and/or of low quality.

Choosing the source text for encoding projects is a difficult editorial decision. In this case, I chose the original periodical printing over later, revised versions of the short fiction.

TEI guidelines do not have a specific set of instructions for encoding short stories originally published in 19th-century periodicals. But there are guidelines for prose texts and for structural elements that appear in periodicals.

Periodical Features/Challenges

87 <byline>BY WALTER WHITMAN.</byline>

<div1 type="story" xml:id="tombblossoms">

- Titles
- Milestones
- Epigraphs
- Older Spellings
- Trailers ("To be continued")
- Small Caps
- Illegible Texts (damage)
- Column Headings

TEI/XML Solutions for the Pre-Leaves of Grass Fiction

<head rend="center" type="main-authorial"></head> <milestone unit="undeclared" rend="horbar-short-center/>

<|g><|></|g>

A<hi rend="smallcaps">PLEASANT</hi>, fair-sized country village—a village embosomed in trees,

with buoyant health; our labor and our exercise; our freedom from the sickly vices that taint the town;

our not being racked with notes due, or the fluctuations of prices, or the breaking of banks; our manners

One Saturday, after paying a few days visit at New York, I returned to my quarters at the country inn.

and <choice><orig>despatch</orig><reg>dispatch</reg></choice> my affairs quickly, for fear of being left

The day was hot, and my journey a disagreeable one. I had been forced to stir myself beyond comfort,

by the cars. As it was, I arrived panting and covered with sweat, just as they were about to start.

Figure 4: Text Encoding (TEI/XML) for "The Tomb-Blossoms" in Oxygen XML Editor

of sociality, expanding the heart, and reacting with a wholesome effect upon the body; — can any thing,

with old churches, <hi rend="italics">one</hi> tavern, kept by a respectable widow—long, single-storied

farm-houses, their roofs mossy, and their chimneys smoke black—a village with much grass and shrubbery,

and no mortar, nor bricks, nor pavements, nor gas—no <hi rend="italics">newness :</hi> that is the place

for him who wishes life in its flavor and its bloom. Until of late, my residence has been in such a place.

Man of cities! what is there in all your boasted pleasure— your fashions, parties, balls, and theatres,

compared to the simplest of the delights we country folk enjoy? Our pure air, making the blood swell and leap

<choice><orig></orig><reg></reg></choice>

<trailer></trailer>

<hi rend="smallcaps"></hi>

This project can serve as the foundation for *The Walt Whitman Archive's* future work with the fiction and the reprints

because the reprints share many of the same features as the original printings. However, they also introduce new

I hope to create data visualizations based on the metadata I have recorded for each reprint in order to document

I would like to start my own digital humanities project in addition to writing a book on Whitman's fiction.

challenges, including editorial changes. For example, "The Tomb-Blossoms" was reprinted under variant titles,

<supplied reason="damage" source="xml:id"></supplied>

<head rend="center" type="sub"></head>

Future Research: Encoding More Than 300 Reprints of the Short Fiction

HER OFFERINGS.

Why a Poor Woman Decorated Two Paupers' Graves.

Added

Value

Headnotes

Scholarly

Annotations

introduction

Her Dead Husband Occupied One Them, But Which One?-An Affection That Was Finally Transferred to a Bright Reward.

[COPYRIGHT, 1892.]

A pleasant, fair-sized country village, a village embosomed in trees, with old churches, one tavern, kept by a respectable widow, long, single-storied farmhouses, their roofs mossy, and their chimneys smoke black, a village with grass and shrubbery, and no mortar, nor bricks, nor pavements, nor gasno newness; that is the place for him who wishes life in its flavor and its bloom. Until of late, my residence has been in such a place.

two and look alternately at each. Then she would go to one and arrange something and come back to the midway place, and gaze first on the right and then on the left, as before. The figure evidently had some trouble in suiting things to her mind. Where I stood, I could hear no noise of her footfalls; nor could I see accurately enough to tell what she was doing. Had a superstitions man beheld the spectacle, he would possibly have thought that some spirit of the dead, allowed the night before to burst its cerements and wander forth in the darkness, had been belated in returning, and was now perplexed to find its coffin house again. Curious to know what was the woman's employment, I undid the simple fastenings of the gate, and walked over the rank wet grass toward her. As I came near I recognized her for an old, a very old inmate of the poorhouse,

Display

New fiction

Archive

section for *The*

Walt Whitman

Figure 3: "The Tomb-Blossoms" reprinted as "Her Offerings" in the Rochester Daily Republican (Indiana), October 25, 1892

Checking/

Revising

Checking project

Final approval

Suggested

revisions

named Delarer. Stopping a moment, Man of cities! What is there in all while I was yet several yards from her, your boasted pleasure—your fashions, and before she saw me, I tried to call to

Acknowledgments

including "The Tomb-Flowers" in 1881 and "Her Offerings" in 1892.

trends in national and international circulation.

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I would especially like to thank Ed Folsom of The University of Iowa English Department for introducing me to Whitman and for being my mentor, colleague, and friend since my first year of graduate school.



Figure 5: Walter Whitman, c. 1848-1854. Image from *The Walt* Whitman Archive

