

“GLORIOUS TIMES FOR NEWSPAPER
EDITORS AND CORRESPONDENTS”:
WHITMAN AT THE NEW ORLEANS
DAILY CRESCENT, 1848-1849

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From the situation of the country, the city of New Orleans had been our channel and *entrepot* for everything, going and returning. It had the best news and war correspondents . . .

—Walt Whitman, “New Orleans in 1848”¹

I was down in New Orleans, in 1848-9—an editor in the Daily Crescent newspaper office

—Walt Whitman²

LESS THAN A DECADE into the construction of the mammoth, still-authoritative *Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*,³ general editor Gay Wilson Allen had to admit that he had officially abandoned the project’s editorial goal “to print everything, so that the *Collected Writings* could be called absolutely complete.” “Everything” was even then proving not only too immense, but too elusive—with Whitman’s newspaper writing in particular being singled out as the “most baffling” editorial problem of all.⁴ Whitman, like Mark Twain or Fanny Fern, spent decades as an editor and journalist, so that by mid-life he already identified as “an old newspaper man.”⁵ Yet most of his voluminous journalism appeared unsigned, with the result that this extensive prose corpus—likely the majority of all words Whitman published during his lifetime—is still significantly undefined, disputed, unlocated, and/or unknown.

Whitman himself has been of little help in clarifying things. Most extant interviews with the poet, for instance, only serve to add to our confusion as Whitman tries to downplay and sideline his early work. Whitman never even mentioned, in writing at least, his authorship of the “Paumanok” and “Travelling Bachelor” letters, nor that in 1858 he had pseudonymously serialized a journalistic series on men’s wellness, *Manly Health and Training*, in the pages of the

New York Atlas.⁶ His reticence to discuss early work was often coupled with a tendency to misrepresent and distort the historical record. This is especially true for Whitman's accounts of his short, yet momentous, trip to New Orleans in spring of 1848 to help start the then-nascent *Daily Crescent* newspaper. "Everything about his visit," Ed Folsom observes, "got disguised in exaggeration and legend" in Whitman's late-life recollections.⁷

Still, in terms of historical evidence, scholars do find something close to ideal circumstances here: we know exactly when Whitman arrived in New Orleans with his brother Thomas Jefferson "Jeff" Whitman, when the first issue of the *Crescent* was printed, and when the brothers packed their bags and headed back north. Because Whitman "was there for only three months in early 1848," the poet's claims of having been "down in New Orleans in 1848-9" expressed on a print proof (see figure 1) must surely show a mind "capable of error," as William White puts it.⁸ The truism that Whitman only worked for the *Crescent* while physically in New Orleans by now underlies most, if not all, scholarship on this time in the poet's life. This assumption, we will demonstrate here, is false. We believe that Whitman was not misremembering so much as conflating time spent *editing* the *Daily Crescent* in New Orleans with time spent *contributing* to it.

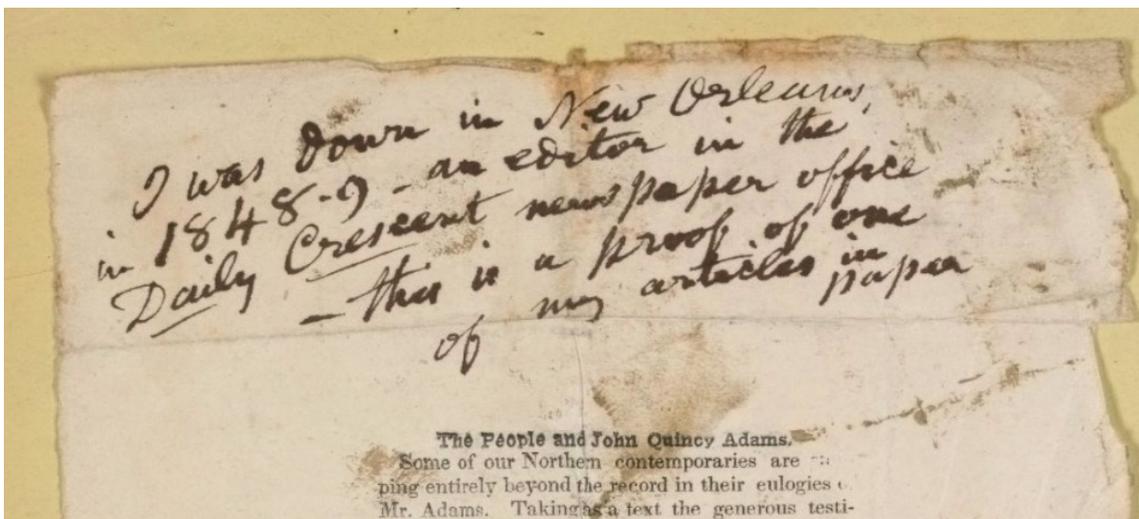


Figure 1. An editorial Whitman annotates as being one of his from the *Daily Crescent*, although its actual venue is unknown (Library of Congress).⁹

As in all distortions, there are kernels of truth in many of Whitman's misrepresentations. Considering that recently discovered texts have verified his off-handed remark about having authored "a novel or two" (as, he once said, "every fellow must"),¹⁰ Whitman's assertions of having worked in New Orleans for a year or longer deserve closer scrutiny. Indeed, autobiographical notes by the poet *repeatedly* claim some time between 1848 and 1849 for his stay in New Orleans.¹¹ While the dates do not square with the existing biographical understanding of Whitman's time in the south, they nevertheless suggest that his *Crescent* tenure lasted longer, in memory or in matter, than a mere few weeks. Certainly, a single spring does not easily morph into two years in retrospect. While Folsom explains these consistent inaccuracies by emphasizing "how vital the trip was for" Whitman (44), we posit that there is more truth contained in these statements hidden in plain sight, namely, that although Whitman did leave New Orleans in May 1848, he continued writing for the *Crescent* for quite some time.

We argue that Whitman contributed writings by mail after he left and continued his involvement with the paper until the early weeks of 1849, when he learned that one of the editors, John Eliot McClure, was retiring from the business for health reasons. We will demonstrate this thesis by focusing on two sets of texts: the well-known "Sketches of the Sidewalks and the Levee," a series of humorous character portraits which, unbeknownst to scholars, continued publication until August of 1848, as well as a lengthy series of print correspondence from Whitman *sub rosa* as "Manhattan" that ran until late January of 1849. While both sets of texts—the "Manhattan" correspondence and the "Sidewalks" sketches—sound distinctly Whitmanian, this essay will pursue two lines of proof to add objective weight to our initial, subjective attribution: a computational, stylometric assessment—a method that has proven helpful in the past—as well as historical and biographical contextualization.

Computational Assessment

For an initial round of attribution, we employed a computational approach that relies on identifying statistical similarities between texts, based on ranked lists of most frequent character trigrams. This method, which uses the "classify" function in the *stylo* suite of tools for the programming language R,¹² has been used in the past to identify texts of disputed authorship for both Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman.¹³ Essentially, the software counts what strings of characters are used most in one or more "unknown texts"—in this case the "Sidewalks" sketches as well as the "Manhattan" letters. In this particular assessment, the

top five most frequently used trigrams, for example, were: “_th,” “the,” “he_,” “_an,” and “and” (with underscores standing in for blanks). The software then compares how often these strings appear in the works of known authors (twenty total, including Whitman) and computes how similar (or least distant) each author’s ranked list of most frequent character trigrams is to those of our unknown texts.

In past assessments, we have explained this approach with shopping lists. One might imagine compiling the shopping lists of twenty different people for a year and then entering the various items on them into a spreadsheet, ranked by most frequently bought item. If we were then handed a mysterious, unsigned shopping list, we could compute who of the twenty people whose shopping preferences we had compiled is most likely to be its author, based on how frequently each person had bought which items in the past. Whitman’s past preferences for “polish’d breasts of melons” and “apples and lemons”¹⁴ on these hypothetical shopping lists should inform his future shopping preferences. Still, even if Whitman ends up the most likely candidate for the mystery shopper, there are two complications to account for: what if there is a freak change in items bought—a specific kind of, say, Thanksgiving dish that requires one to deviate from typical shopping behavior? And what if our mystery shopper is not one of the twenty we anticipated might be the author?

To account for this uncertainty, we have factored noise into the assessment: we included two thematically similar texts that cannot be assessed, one set in New Orleans (Abraham Oakey Hall’s 1851 *The Manhattaner in New Orleans*)¹⁵ and one in New York (Jacob A. Riis’s 1890 *How the Other Half Lives*), as well as a text that can be assessed but is not by Whitman (Poe’s 1838 *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*). All texts were scrubbed and split using the tool Lexos 4.0.¹⁶ We repeated each assessment with incrementally growing most frequent character trigram lists (from 200 to 2000 most frequent trigrams, in steps of 1), and we employed three different measures of distance (classic delta distance, support vector machines, and nearest-shrunken centroid). In total, each unknown text was attributed 5,403 times under slightly different conditions. Only overwhelming positive attribution to Whitman would allow us to find stylometric support for his authorship.¹⁷

Our results were clear: Oakey Hall’s and Jacob Riis’s book could not be attributed; Poe’s novella was correctly and overwhelmingly attributed to Poe—and both our “Manhattan” and “Sidewalks” corpora were overwhelmingly attributed to Whitman (see figure 2). While this attribution does not unequivocally guarantee that Whitman is the author of the texts in question, it does add positive support to such an attribution.

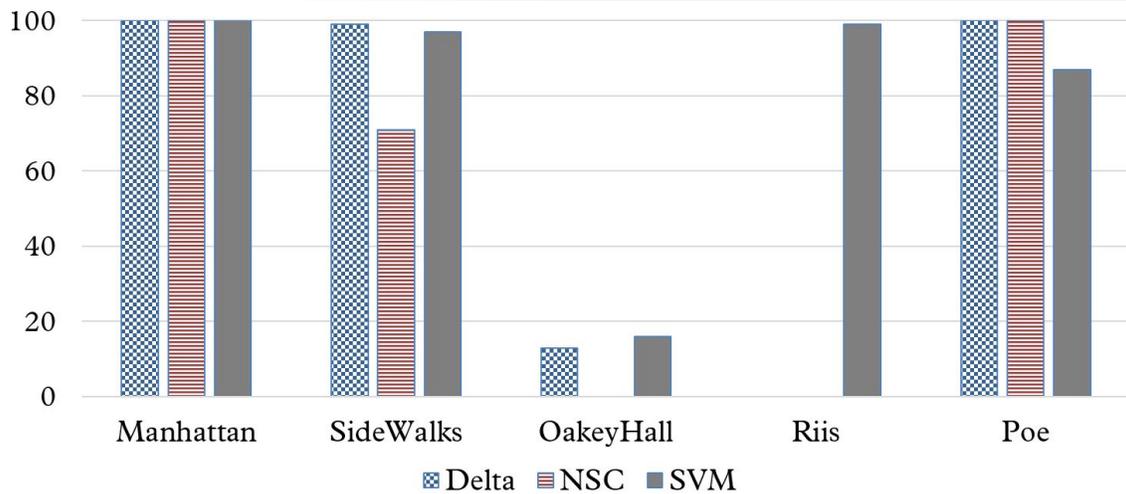


Figure 2. Attributions to Whitman (Sidewalks, Manhattan, Oakey Hall's and Jacob Riis's books) and Poe (Arthur Pym) for 1801 Delta, NSC, and SVM attributions, using most frequent character trigrams.

Any rediscovery of an author's unknown writings must be falsifiable, ideally requiring biographical, bibliographic, and manuscript evidence to bolster it, and we understand our assessment as a heuristic that encourages further research, rather than replacing it.¹⁸ As such, these initial findings constitute strong probabilistic indicators that the Good Gray Poet authored both texts and thus sustained a professional relationship with the *Crescent* even after his physical departure. The following pages will examine these "probable Whitmans" in more detail and lay out what we believe to be a compelling case for Whitmanian authorship. Coupled with the preceding assessment, we feel confident that there is a strong argument for attributing these texts as hitherto lost or overlooked Whitman works.

"Manhattan / Manahatta" Correspondence

On July 24, 1848, not long after Whitman returned from New Orleans to Brooklyn, a letter signed "Manahatta" appeared in the New Orleans *Daily Crescent*, addressed to its editors but clearly written for a larger audience. The editors eagerly shared it with their readers: "For a clash of New York life, read our correspondent 'Manahatta's' letter," they recommended. For Whitmanians, the pseudonym alone may raise eyebrows. The poet developed an early fondness for the "aboriginal name[s]" associated with New York and Long Island,¹⁹ ostensibly beginning with "Paumanok," the Algonquin name for Long Island that Whitman adopted in 1850 as a pen name and recurring newsprint persona. Shortly thereafter, Whitman would also incorporate "Mannahatta" (usually with two *n*'s) into his poetic lexicon as a demonym for the central island of New York City. At the outset, it is important to emphasize that this word, while rare

in pre-1860 newsprint, was not entirely unknown, so its use does not by itself signal Whitman's hand.²⁰ As with "Paumanok," "Mannahatta" struck Whitman as a sort of primordial place name, an example of what Emerson calls the "fossil poetry" of words.²¹ Whitman confirms as much in a poem titled "Mannahatta," first published in *Leaves of Grass* in 1860. Whitman writes:

I was asking for something specific and perfect for my city, and behold! here is the aboriginal name!

Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane, unruly, musical, self-sufficient, I see that the word of my city, is that word up there . . . (585)

Thanks to this poem, and others in which Whitman reuses this notable moniker, the name "Mannahatta" is now closely associated with the poet. It was not, however, publicly linked to Whitman prior to the mid-1850s and so, if used as a pseudonym, could have provided a layer of anonymity.

The varied spelling is also consistent with the poet's early trials of the term. Whitman experimented with several variants of the term in his first known usages, including prominent instances with only one *n*. For example, in the second edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1856), "Manahatta" appears spelled with one *n* three times: twice in "Poem of Salutation" (later "Salut au Monde!" [1860], where he re-spells one instance "Manhatta") and once in "Sun-Down Poem" (later "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" [1860], where it takes the now-familiar form of "Mannahatta").²² However Whitman chose to spell it, it is clear that "Mannahatta" captured for him the living personality and bustling multiplicity of urban life.²³

That personality and multiplicity are on full display from the very beginning of the first "Manahatta" letter, published on page two in the July 24, 1848 issue and titled "Northern Correspondence":

Eds. Crescent—"Barnburner" and "Hunker,"—Taylor, Cass and Van Buren—"What are Taylor's principles?"—"Is there no way to compromise?"—Tammany Hall in a Pandemoniac state—the Tribune corner a focus for all sorts of loud words and excitement—a huge crowd around the Globe bulletin-board—dust flying in the Park—men whose names are known from one corner of the land to the other walking unnoticed along the walk, and across from the great gates, to the Nassau street side-walk—the cracked tones of the man with "leg of mutton candy," now and then piercing through the din—a mighty and never-ceasing tide of humanity rolling along from day-dawn till midnight, a majority of whose members would not stop two minutes to look at Queen Victoria, or even a street assassination;—there you have, in disjointed sentecnes [*sic*], and some words that are heard in every part of the neighborhood every five minutes, a picture of current "life" as developed in that part of New York where Nassau street pokes its nose out to the Park, at the south end of City Hall.²⁴

So begins a series of almost fifty letters from “Manahatta”—soon to be “Manhattan,” the pseudonym to which the letter-writer shifts in the fifth installment. These letters appear with regularity in the *Daily Crescent* until the last installment on January 19, 1849, a few months into Whitman’s tenure as founding editor of the *Brooklyn Freeman*. From the outset, readers will see the pseudonymous correspondent as a theater fan and urban rhapsodist from New York, who had recently lived in New Orleans and was heavily invested in Barnburnerism (see figure 3). In a highly personable style, “Manhattan” shared his city with the readers of the *Crescent*, relating impressions of walks through town, sharing news about goings-on in town, and soapboxing about politics.

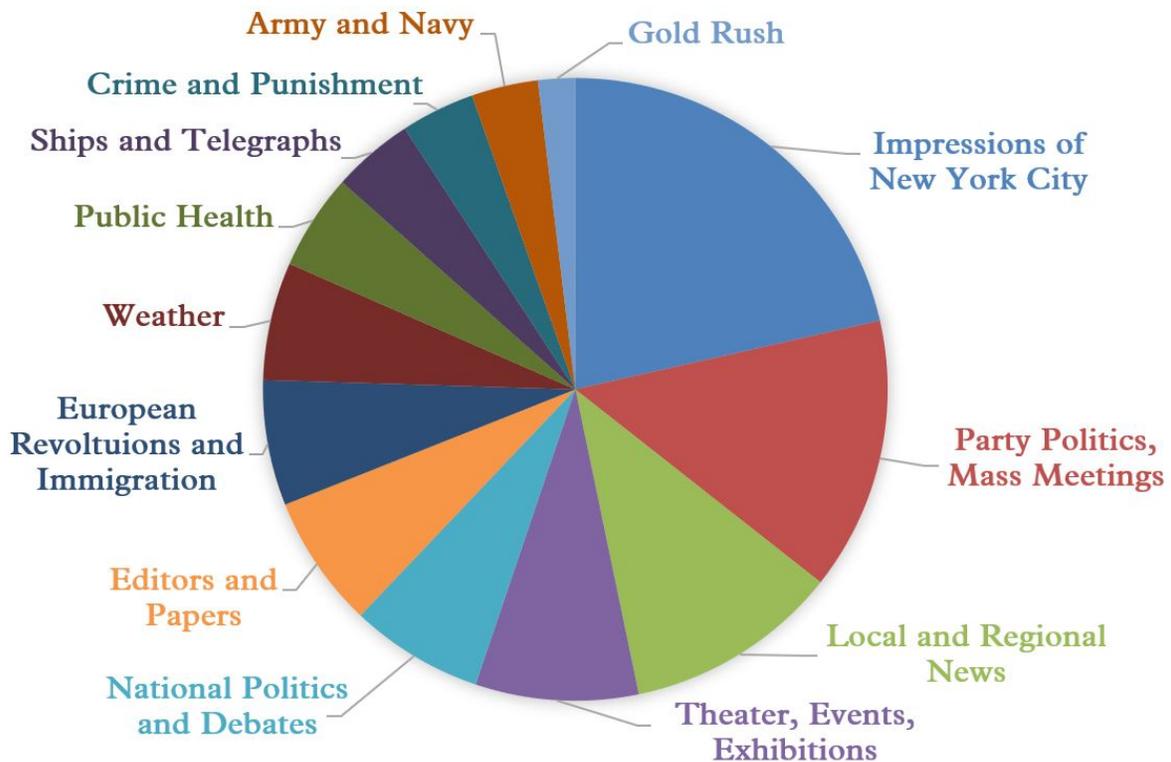


Figure 3. Relative extent of topics and themes in “Manhattan’s” correspondence (counted on a paragraph level, one theme per paragraph; varying length of paragraphs not accounted for).

What indications are there that “Manahatta / Manhattan” might be Whitman, submitting letters to the *Daily Crescent* following his return to New York? First, the timing is plausible: the “Manahatta” series begins July 24, 1848, not long after Whitman’s return trip to New York in June.²⁵ It extends as late as January 19, 1849, a few months into his work editing the *Brooklyn Freeman*. All “Manahatta / Manhattan”²⁶ letters are addressed from New York City, of course. And the letter-writer seems to be on familiar terms with the editors and well-acquainted with the paper and the city of New Orleans, which Whitman would have been. The timing of the letters themselves also seems to conform to some of the major events in Whitman’s life in the latter part of 1848. For instance, on July 29 “Manahatta” informs the *Crescent* that he “lately travelled nearly the whole length of Long Island”; on August 2, the *Sag Harbor Corrector* began running daily ads from Whitman, inquiring after purchasable land.²⁷ (Sag Harbor is near the easternmost tip of Long Island, a 100-mile journey from Whitman’s home in Brooklyn). In late August, two “Manhattan” letters describe the Buffalo Convention of the Free-Soil Party earlier that month, which Whitman attended as a delegate. Like Whitman, “Manhattan” whole-heartedly endorsed Van Buren.²⁸ There is also a noticeable silence between the letters postmarked September 4 (published September 14) and September 22 (published October 2). This lines up with what was perhaps the most notable event of the year for Whitman, one that would understandably interrupt any letter-writing: the night of September 10 when his *Freeman* office burned to the ground. Subsequent letters by “Manhattan” at times return to “burnt up” Brooklyn²⁹ and its recovery efforts, though no special mention is made of the *Freeman*.³⁰



The writer of the “Manhattan” letters also shares numerous cultural fascinations with Whitman. The first of these is perhaps the oddest one: an Austrian performance group called the Steyermarkers. They are referenced in passing when “Manhattan” writes on October 12, about a musical performance at Niblo’s:

the Seguins, with their satellites, are at the Broadway, giving Balfe’s beautiful plagiarism of “the Bohemian Girl.” The German Musical Society, twenty-three performers, have been giving concerts at the Tabernacle. They are glorious players—in individual perfection fully equal to the Steyermarkers, and more of them.³¹

The Steyermarkers were by no means a major success and barely left an imprint in the newspaper sphere of the day.³² Still, “Manhattan’s” passing reference

presupposes that the readers of the *Crescent* would be familiar with the Steyer-markers *and* would have known about the high esteem in which the writer held them.

Indeed, the group had been in New Orleans during Whitman's in-person tenure and were promoted by the *Daily Crescent* to an almost excessive degree. The most elaborate of these puffs—which totaled nine, each overflowing with praise—was published on April 1, 1848:

We announce with true pleasure the arrival of the Steyermarkische (so called from the Austrian dependency whence they come) corps of musicians, already mentioned, some days past, in our columns. This fine band consists of eighteen performers; each a perfect master of the instrument on which he plays. . . .

When you visit the performances of the members of this band, you are struck, at the very beginning, with the signs they show of superior taste—even before you discover, as you will when the first three or four notes are played, their surpassing genius. You see enter some eighteen *gentlemen*, quiet and at ease in their manners, dressed in plain black; no airs, no clap-trap, none of the little arts so usual in most public performers. The leader steps forward quietly and modestly with an obeisance, *not* that of the dancing master. He is extremely youthful, and in his beauty you see the intellectual mingling of genius. No flourishing of a wand by the white-gloved hand, no pretension, no melo-dramatic waiting and coquetting, offends you, as in so many other cases. You are saved even the discordant tuning of instruments.³³

How might this anonymous reviewer have known how great the troupe was, even before its first appearance? He had already seen them three months before—and reviewed them for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, at times using the same phrases:

Never did we realize so well as last night, (6th inst.) at the New York Tabernacle, the perfect melody of a well trained band of musicians! Then and there heard we the “Steyermarkische company”—(so named from the Austrian dependency, whence they come.) Imagine reader, a score of gentlemen, with the elegant polish of manners that would be self composed at Versailles; none of the clap-trap of “great artists”—no affectation—a youthful leader, who does not have his “grand entrees,” nor flourish his wand with his back to the audience.³⁴

The groundwork for the assumptions behind “Manhattan’s” reference originate in the various promotional efforts by Whitman for the Steyermarkers in Brooklyn and New Orleans in the respective outlets that employed him. They also suggest that Germany had become a focal point of republican, revolutionary interest of Whitman, who appears quite infatuated with German culture when writing for the *Eagle* and the *Crescent*. “Manhattan” even attends German republican events and finds himself loudly saluting the revolutionary flag (today’s flag of

Germany): “I, too, caught the enthusiasm, and though I understand German about as much as Choctaw, found myself cheering . . . as loudly as the rest.”

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Another cultural touchstone shared by “Manhattan” and Whitman is seeing French artist Paul Delaroche’s 1848 painting *Bonaparte Crossing the Alps*, then displayed at the Hall of the Academy of Design on Broadway.³⁵ “Manhattan” describes the event thusly:

I went in, the other day, to see Delaroche’s painting of Napoleon crossing the Alps. It is grand! Never was the sublimity of nature better depicted, in all simplicity, by art! You know the ordinary engravings (from former paintings) represent Napoleon on a fiery horse, the said horse twirling around on his hind legs, and standing almost perpendicularly—while the great conqueror, with a drawn sword, points his toiling soldiers onward—his cloak, drapery, in the meantime, floating with a lightness and looseness very convenient to make a showy painting, but rather chilly for the winter snows of the mountain. Well, in this painting, he is on a mule, well wadded with clothing, and guided by an old muleteer. I stood an hour and gazed on that picture; and if I were to attempt describing the feelings that passed through my mind then, every body would laugh at me.³⁶

Whitman had the same experience as “Manhattan,” and would have had to have seen the painting at the same time. Indeed, even in old age Whitman shares “Manhattan’s” assessment of the painting. Speaking to Horace Traubel and Thomas Biggs Harned, Whitman recalled:

An actor who had no faith in the real, the tangible, in life, portrayed by Napoleon crossing the Alps on a noble charger, uniformed, decorated, having altogether a hell of a time [W. indicating its grandiose spirit by half rising from his chair and throwing up his right hand as though it held a sword]. Delaroche, not satisfied with such a conception, took the trouble to investigate the case—to get at the bottom facts. What did he find? Why, just this: that Napoleon rode on a mule—that the mule was led by an old peasant—that the journey was hard, the manner humble—that the formal-picturesque nowhere got into it. This don’t mean that it was less picturesque—it means that it was more—much more—picturesque: but the artists, many of them, won’t have it that way.³⁷

Whitman in old age acts out the very gesture that “Manhattan” finds equally ridiculous—one that is absent from the painting in question. Both compare the present painting to a similarly titled one of 1801 by Jacques-Louis David and focus on two misrepresentations they find corrected in the Delaroche’s: mule instead of horse, raised sword missing. While the painting spent a few weeks in New York between late October and December of 1848³⁸ and Whitman’s enthu-

siasm and criticism was shared widely, this convergence of time, place, and opinion certainly adds weight to the assessment that Whitman is “Manhattan.”



There is more evidence yet—evidence that will be familiar to any reader of Whitman’s prose. Like the journalist Whitman, and like the novelist Whitman in his anonymously published *Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*, “Manhattan” shows an intense fascination with Trinity Church and, in particular, the grave of Revolutionary War naval hero James Lawrence.³⁹ If Whitman conceptualized much of his novel *Jack Engle* around 1846-1848,⁴⁰ it makes sense that its most commented-on moment is also enshrined in the “Manhattan” letters. In the following late-July letter, for instance, “Manhattan” takes New Orleans readers through a tour of the churchyard of *Jack Engle* fame:

Here we are in front of “Trinity.” The brown marble rises above, in its elegant and grand proportions—the cross on the top of the spire glitters in the sun. Though it looks so little up there, it is, in reality, some fifteen feet in length. The spot on which we stand has been used, from the first settlement of the Island, for church purposes; it is one of the few historical spots yet preserved intact. . . .

Very much of the interest connected with this church lies in the grave-yard which surrounds it. At the left hand of the entrance is the grave of Lawrence, the gallant captain, whose memory will ever be idolized in our Navy. Until a couple of years since, it was in an old dilapidated corner of the yard, on Rector street. Since the completion of the present church it has been removed. At the corners are four cannon, placed in the ground in a perpendicular manner, and serving as corner posts.⁴¹

In a letter from October 10, “Manhattan” again visits “the brave Lawrence’s burial place and monument” and cites the very inscription that stands at the core of the now-famous nineteenth chapter of *Jack Engle*. The scene even ends with a similar glance from the silent grave to the busy sidewalks and also mentions the cannons that form the lower structure of the monument. Once again, this suggests Whitman’s handiwork.

★



MONSTER BALLOON—GRAND ASCENSION....Madame RENARD has the honor of informing the public that she will make her first ascension in the “Louisiana Balloon,” on **SUNDAY EVENING** at 4 o'clock precisely, from the corner of Poydras and St. Charles streets, when she hopes to be more successful than in her former attempts. She has made great preparations to prevent accidents. Office open at 2 o'clock P.M.... Price of admission, 50 cents; children and servants half price.

Figure 4. “Monster Balloon,” *Times-Picayune* (April 2, 1848), 3.

The fourth and final cultural connection is even more specific and serves to tie Whitman to “Manhattan” in perhaps the most conclusive manner yet, considering the scarcity of primary proof from the poet’s mouth or pen: The repeated attempts by a “Madame Renard”⁴² to fly a balloon in New Orleans that echo through both corpora. Unlike Delaroche’s painting or even the Steyermarkers reference, this event was about as local and underreported as possible: one New Orleans paper, it seems, ran an ad for it (see figure 4), and only the *Crescent* covered it. Luckily no conjecture is needed to identify Whitman as the author of the unsigned *Crescent* coverage: Jeff Whitman wrote their mother about it. On March 27th, Jeff writes:

Yesterday we were to have a balloon ascension, but just as it was ready to go up the balloon bursted so it did not go up, this is the third time she (it was a lady that was to go up in it) has tried it and each time failed.⁴³

Soon afterwards, Madame Renard tried again. Again, the Whitmans attended and, again, Jeff tells his parents:

You will remember that I said that we were to have a balloon ascension opposite our boarding house, the thing was tried four or five times, but as just enough persons got inside the thing would manage to burst. A few Sundays ago it was said it would go up again, they had got it all ready when it blew all to peices. The persons that had paid to see it thought it was nothing but a suck in (which I think was the case) As soon as it touched the ground they all laid hold of it, and draging it over the fence tore it all to peices, they did not leave a peice a foot square So ended all that.⁴⁴

In the *Crescent*, these two events are covered by Whitman as “Non-Ascension of the Balloon” (April 3) and “The Balloon Blow Up” (April 10). In these, Whitman shares his brother’s amusement:

Several small boys attempted to get a sight of the evaporated, ruined balloon, but the way that the Madame pelted them with brickbats would have taught a lesson to the gentleman in the primer, who, “finding that turf was of no avail, had recourse to stones.” One of the persons who was engaged in some mysterious operation in connection with the “airy elevator” got his whiskers singed considerably by the flames that issued from the stove. The expectations of the audience went down when they found that the balloon did not go up.⁴⁵

“Manhattan” wistfully recalls these events in a letter of October 19, referencing the exact position of the ballooning attempt in relation to Whitman’s hotel in New Orleans:

We are to have some entertainment in the way of balloon ascensions, the current week, of a Dr. Morrill. (I hope they will prove more authentic than those which, for several successive Sundays gathered all the New Orleans boys, negroes, and curious ones, last spring around the corner of Poydras and St. Charles streets.⁴⁶

With the specificity of this reference—the multiple failed attempts to start a balloon in front of Tremont House on successive Sundays in 1848—it is difficult to argue that “Manhattan” and Whitman are not one and the same.

Of course, it is still possible that there happened to be another New Yorker who stayed at the same corner in New Orleans at the same time, attended multiple failed balloon starts alongside Walt and Jeff, returned to New York around the same time as them, wrote with the same focus about the same grave at the same church as Whitman frequently did, attended the same Free Soil event as delegate Whitman, enjoyed the same obscure German vocalists, and saw the same painting during the same month and a half, at the same place, forming near-identical impressions of it. It is possible—but highly unlikely. Unless one can account for such extensive coincidences, the logical explanation is that the “Manhattan” letters indicate Whitman had not left New Orleans without making arrangements to keep contributing to the paper. While not physically, Whitman seems to have found another way to stay “down in New Orleans, in 1848-9.”

“Sketches of the Sidewalks and the Levee” Series

Supporting our thesis of Whitman’s extended involvement with the *Crescent* is a set of related texts that has a long history of being attributed to the poet—albeit without any scholarly acknowledgement of how they complicate established time-frames. The humorous “Sketches of the Sidewalks and Levee; With Glimpses into the New Orleans Bar (rooms.)” constitute the only thematically coherent prose work as well as the only titled series that Whitman would have produced while in New Orleans. Some of its installments were first publicly attributed to Whitman in 1918 in *The Cambridge History of American Literature*, co-edited by Whitmanites Carl Van Doren, Stuart Pratt Sherman, and John Erskine (alongside William P. Trent), who identified seven sketches as Whitman’s, produced during his then-known tenure.⁴⁷ Based on this attribution, Emory Holloway included seven installments in his *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*,⁴⁸ solidifying a scholarly consensus that was later supplemented with an additional segment discovered by William White in 1958. Since then, a total of eight “Sketches of the Sidewalks and Levee” have remained a very likely part of Whitman’s early prose and a basis for a number of scholarly interrogations of the poet, including recent work by Jay Grossmann, Andrew Lawson, Jason Stacy, Matt Sandler, and Ed Folsom, who all acknowledge these short pieces of fiction as Whitman’s.⁴⁹ The only prominent dissenting voice is biographer Jerome Loving.⁵⁰

Still, further probable candidates for Whitman’s authorship exist beyond the time of his brief sojourn in New Orleans (March-May 1848). Instead of just the canonical eight, the series is actually made up of thirteen installments that briefly ceased publication in May of 1848 (anticipating Whitman’s departure later that month) and resumed two weeks after Whitman’s return to New York.⁵¹ *Crescent* staff seemed quite aware of the sudden absence of the author of these sketches and overcompensate: The June 29 piece, the first installment after Whitman’s trip back to New York, is oddly self-consciously signed “*New Orleans, June 27*”—the only installment to date and place itself. The author of all of these sketches appears to be the same: one was even printed out of order, with the first installment of a two-part piece about “Samuel Sensitive” appearing after the second—and following Whitman’s return north.

Appearing from Whitman’s first weeks in New Orleans to the late summer in New York, “Sketches of the Sidewalks and Levee,” with its 17,000 words total, is in play as one of Whitman’s more sustained newspaper endeavors, rivalling his “Letters from a Travelling Bachelor” (19,000 words) and surpassing series like his “Sun-Down Papers” (10,000 words). It constitutes the only Whitman corpus discovered so far that places fictional characters in the episodic format of

his journalistic/essayistic periodical series. Taken together, “Sidewalks” sketches would be Whitman’s third-longest prose work behind *Jack Engle* and *Franklin Evans* (just barely beating out “Arrow-Tip”).

The total outline of this likely Whitman production looks as follows:

- 13 March 1848 (1)—Peter Funk, Esq.
 Sketch of a “Peter Funk” and the fake auction of a golden watch for which Funk is tasked to drive up the price.
- 16 March 1848 (1)—Miss Dusky Grisette
 Encounter with a mixed-race flower girl and prostitute, leading to speculations about her daytime employments and the racial dynamics of New Orleans.
- 25 March 1848 (1)—Daggerdraw Bowieknife, Esq.
 Portrait of a criminal and desperado, haunted by his murders.
- 28 March 1848 (1)—John J. Jinglebrain
 Attack on vapid dandyism via a caricature of a soulless, mustachioed pursuer of haircuts and elegant garb.
- 04 April 1848 (3)—Timothy Goujon
 Portrait of a French oyster vendor, relishing in French accents and linguistic mixing.
- 12 April 1848 (1)—Mrs. Giddy Gay Butterfly
 Harsh sketch of a woman too vain to be a good housewife and mother.
- 18 April 1848 (1)—Patrick McDray
 Follows the day of a “Paddy” and his unrefined wife, abounding in Irish accents while casting Patrick and his wife as hot-headed but loveable.
- 02 May 1848 (1)—Samuel Sensitive (Part II, printed out of order)
 Depicts Samuel’s pursuit of and marriage to Miss Julia Katydid.
- 29 June 1848 (2)—Doctor Sangrado Snipes
 Cautions readers against an overreliance on doctors by depicting them as error-prone, dangerous grifters.
- 12 July 1848 (1-2)—Old Benjamin Broekindown
 Cautionary tale of a down-on-his-luck merchant who would have squandered all of his wealth, were it not for his prudent wife.
- 15 July 1848 (1-2)—Samuel Sensitive (Part I, printed out of order)
 Introduces Samuel, a Tennessee-born merchant apprentice who

sets out to “make it” in New Orleans but imprudently slips into dandyism—from which love saves him.

25 July 1848 (1)—Miss Virginity Roseblossom

A harsh attack on spinsterism that blames the phenomenon on the unattractive character of certain women, leading the author to muse on physiognomy and the nature of love—and woman’s responsibility for instigating the feeling.

10 August 1848 (1-2)—Ephraim Broadhorn

Celebration of a Connecticut-born, Kentuckian longboat “b’hoi” visiting the big city, feeding his manly appetite on an abundant lunch, and making a fool of himself when mistaking French for English and annoying a local Frenchman in conversation.

Beyond attribution history, there are elements in these sketches that support the suggestion of Whitman’s authorship, beginning with the authorial persona employed. When Loving suggests that either a local city news writer or a mysterious “local humorist” (who must have not been on the staff, never republished these, nor asked for any attribution) would have written these pieces, he is overlooking the fact that the writer of “Sidewalks” is clearly *not* a New Orleans native, but a recent arrival. Considering that these pieces are supposed to be humorous takes on typical characters about town, essentially none divulge *any* deep knowledge of the city, its culture and history, the region or its peoples—none, that is, beyond things a visitor could quickly pick up on (i.e., accents, looks). Indeed, half of the sketched subjects have an explicit immigration background and the other half (except perhaps for the infamous “Dusky Grisette”) is made up of such broad, unspecific characters (the spinster, the crook, the vain woman, the dandy) that they would feel at home in *any* major city in the US.⁵² By claiming friendships with some of these characters that predate their arrival in New Orleans—such as “Old Benjamin Broekindown” who the author claims to know from Philadelphia—the narrator of “Sidewalks” expressly acknowledges an outsider’s perspective.

The narrator’s cultural references and language are also strikingly at odds with the hyperlocal set-up of these sketches. Most strikingly, the narrator uses the term “b’hoi” multiple times—a hip but comparatively rarely-printed expression popularized by Benjamin A. Baker’s 1848 farce *A Glance at New York* that profoundly influenced Whitman, leading him to assume what some call a “Bowery b’hoi swagger” for *Leaves*.⁵³ In the mid-1840s, “b’hoi” was still very much an urban, a Northeastern, and especially a New Yorker concept

that had not spread widely to the culturally distinct South. Indeed, Whitman himself describes the idea of the “b’hoi” as an import from New York in “The Habitants of Hotels.”⁵⁴ The database Newspapers.com accounts for two hotspots of the usage of the term in 1848: New York and Louisiana, with the former having roughly double the latter’s (see figure 5).⁵⁵ Upon closer scrutiny, almost all results for mentions of “b’hoi” in Louisiana point to work published in the *Crescent* during Whitman’s canonical tenure or the extended tenure we propose. There is no local slang in “Sketches,” aside from parodies of French—but there is more than a hint of “Manhattan.”⁵⁶

The sketches also frequently quote from popular British authors Whitman enjoyed and had read by the time, sprinkled into the narrative in a manner similar in style to other writings by Whitman for the *Crescent* (for instance his “Novelties in New Orleans”). In block quotes strewn throughout these texts, we find Byron, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, *Richard II*, *Hamlet*, and *Macbeth*, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Alexander Pope, plenty of Robert Burns and Thomas Moore, Oliver Goldsmith, and Walter Scott (whose collected letters the author was apparently reading). There is also a quote by James Merrick, which Whitman could have encountered in Cooper’s *Deerslayer*. Loving finds these “strained literary allusions . . . more than slightly condescending” but one can locate them in Whitman as late as his *Specimen Days*.⁵⁷ The only referents of which we have no clear echo among Whitman’s personal preferences is a passing quote from John Tobin’s play *The Honey Moon*, and a quote from a popular soldier’s song.

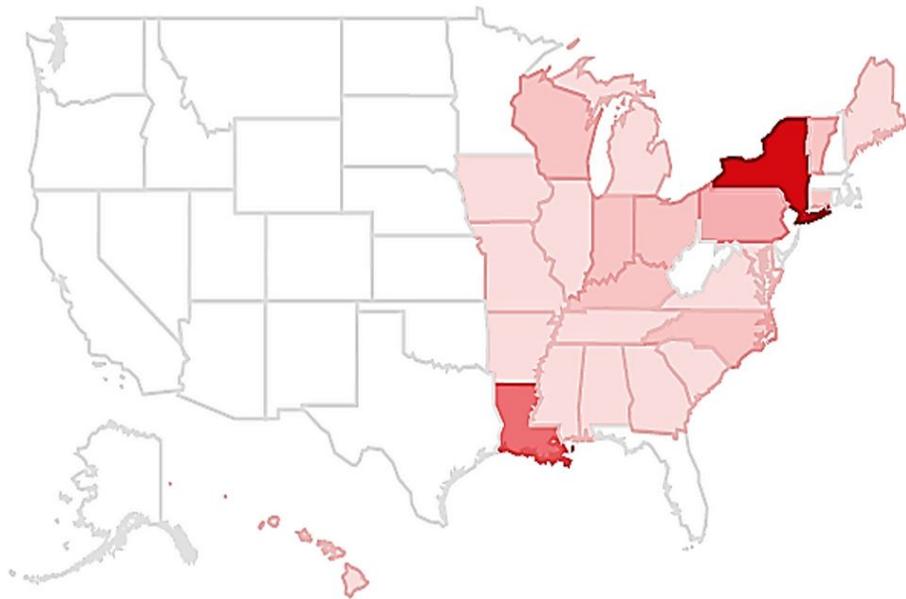


Figure 5: Mentions of “b’hoi” in 1848 as archived on the Newspapers.com database.

Besides all of these British authors dear to Whitman, the sole quote from an American poet is from Fitz-Greene Halleck, a writer so admired by the author of “Sketches” that he forces his “Kentucky flatboatsman” in the “Ephraim Broadhorn” sketch to have a narratively pointless childhood in Connecticut, just so he can incorporate Halleck’s eponymous praise of the state, quoting the poem twice and paraphrasing it at times. Like Halleck, the author here “admire[s] the plain, blunt, honest, and open character of our Western b’hoys” and finds “pure republicanism” in their manly, rough intelligence.⁵⁸

Whitman would later socialize with Halleck at Pfaff’s,⁵⁹ and Halleck’s sexual queerness likely had a major impact on his poetic and personal development. Halleck biographer John W. M. Hallock claims that “Whitman might never have been able to envision his homosexual theology without the previous work of Halleck,” whom Hallock terms the “American Byron.”⁶⁰ Indeed, Whitman’s list of high-cultural English referents is so full of “confirmed bachelors” and flaunters of sexual norms—Burns, Goldsmith, Pope, Shakespeare, and Byron—that they almost read like clever (or subconscious) countercontext to the heteronormativity the “Sidewalks” espouse on the surface. There is also a reference to the *Journals* of British actress Fanny Kemble,⁶¹ who had yet to fully break into stardom in the United States before her first solo tour of the country in 1849. Whitman had become “entranced” with her performances upon seeing her at the Park Theater in 1834,⁶² an experience he shared with “Manhattan.”⁶³

The “Ephraim Broadhorn” sketch, a short tale of a country bloke arriving on a Mississippi flatboat and clashing with New Orleans culture and customs, is consonant with a number of other moments in Whitman. There is, of course, the reference to “The flatboatmen mak[ing] fast toward dusk near the cottonwood or pekantrees” in what would later be titled “Song of Myself.”⁶⁴ This particular moment in Whitman has a clear ecological niche, placing the location of this verse at the farthest southwestern section of Whitman’s biographical reach—and thus flatly alongside the shores of the Mississippi (see figure 6).

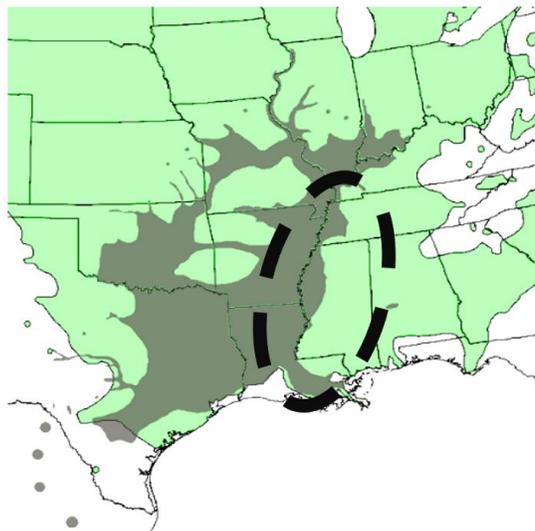


Figure 6: Distribution of Pecan (dark), and Eastern Cottonwood (light) via Wikimedia. Mississippi circled.

The time of day—preceding the “The Mississippi at Midnight” of Whitman’s poetic arrival in Louisiana—also supports the thesis of a biographical echo here. Likely, Whitman had encountered a number of such trade vessels while on route to and sauntering in New Orleans but he had also been primed by one of his favorite visual artists of the mid-1840s: George Caleb Bingham, a highly specific priming that can also be located in the Broadhorn sketch.

Whitman loved the Missouri painter’s famous “The Jolly Flatboatmen” (figures 7 and 8), set on the Mississippi. It was shown in New York City’s Art Union in 1846 and made the painter’s career as *the* artist to imagine the democratic promise of the West for a Northeastern, urban audience. Whitman had seen the painting before leaving for New Orleans and it left a lasting, well-documented impression on his writing (Henry Rule makes a convincing case for Whitman’s call for an “American artist” in the *Crescent* as inspired by Bingham).⁶⁵ The Broadhorn sketch certainly seems to echo Bingham’s vibrant painting:

Ephraim became “one of ‘em,” and at the age of thirty or upwards, was as unsophisticated a double specimen of Yankee and the Hoosier as ever trod the streets of Orleans in a pair of coarse brogans. It was some time during the past spring that Ephraim landed his flatboat at the Levee, and we chanced to see him as he jumped ashore. His dress was in three pieces—shirt, trowsers and straw hat: the former soiled by a fortnight’s wear and tear at the oar, amid sweat and sunshine; the second was “more holy than righteous,” as he himself expressed it, and his old straw hat was in keeping with the balance of his apparel. He was not only sunburnt but sunbrowned—hair and beard both lank and long, and reddened by exposure.

The outfits, attitude, and suntans are a perfect match, and we can even identify brogans in the painting. “The Jolly Flatboatmen,” like the Broadhorn sketch, depicts a moment of jubilation over a job well done, interpreted as the same expressive republicanism that Bingham and Whitman see in it. The author of the sketch thus not only shares Whitman’s and Bingham’s particular fascination with flatboatmen—but also the same cultural referents that would not have been available to a “local humorist” without having spent some time further north: before G. C. Bingham (as papers referred to him) pursued a promotional tour of the deep South that included lithograph sales in 1853,⁶⁶ we find no records of him in currently digitized newspapers of Louisiana.

What we don’t get in the Broadhorn sketch or its echo in the *Leaves* catalogue is dancing—for that, we may have to look at an undated, likely 1850s (perhaps earlier), draft of Whitman that contains this description:



Figure 7: Detail from George Caleb Bingham, *The Jolly Flatboatmen* (1846, National Gallery of Art).



Figure 8: Sunburnt cheeks, brogans and trousers tucked in boots in Bingham's *The Jolly Flatboatmen*.

How gladly we leave ^{the best of what is called learned and refined society, or} the company of lawyers and book-factors and men withfrom stores and offices ^{from [even?]} ^{the best of what is called intellectual society} to sail all day on the river with- amid a party of pilots and ^{fresh and jovial} boatmen, with no coats or suspenders, and their trowsers tucked in their boots.—~~What polkas are danced~~ ^{Then How} the ^{quick} blood within us joins ^{other} ^{their} gay blood and ^{the} ^{twain} dances swift polkas from the top to the bottom to the top of the houses, when, [?] after long constraint in the respectable and money-making dens of existence, we ^{a man} emerges for a few hours into for a few hours⁶⁷

This passage, which also has echoes in other moments of *Leaves*,⁶⁸ seems to suggest that there is something particularly noteworthy to Whitman about this jolly group of rugged men, travelling and partying together in a liminal, transitional space that at once is full of democratic promise while depicting only a brief moment of respite from commerce and toil.⁶⁹ This moment seems to have stuck with Whitman since seeing it at the Brooklyn Art Union, then traversing the Mississippi alongside such men, and, perhaps, proposing it to the *Crescent* readership as a model of “true republicanism” via “Ephraim Broadhorn”—before carrying it onwards into *Leaves*. (And perhaps onward even further: the egalitarian appeal of these rugged, un-dandylike men certainly rings true to any reader of 1858’s *Manly Health and Training*.)

One thing stands out among these jubilant scenes: an almost complete absence of liquor—even when “bar(rooms)”⁷⁰ are jovially alluded to in the series’ subtitle (a legal pun the author continues with his various “Esqs”). Although Loving repeatedly references “barrooms” when discussing “Sidewalks” and hence tries to attribute them to the “‘excessively intemperate’ Mr. Reeder,” a fellow *Crescent* writer, these are rather abstinent portraits (121). For a former temperance crusader like Whitman, an abundance of drinking scenes would certainly be a warning sign for attributors. Luckily—and, given the subtitle, paradoxically—there are essentially none. Even a sketch of a stormy Irish couple features no explicit scene of alcohol consumption. Except for some passing references, all allusions to “drink” refer to nourishment (“eat and drink”). For the vernacular, low-brow romp promised by these sketches, the closest its author can bring himself to writing a drinking scene is an ample *lunch* that sees his character’s “‘mouth fairly watered’ as his eye and his appetite were both feasted upon the savory dishes before him.”

The absence of a referent for the promised “bar(rooms)” and a missing framing device for these pieces (a fact Loving strains into a confirmation of the “Humor of the Old Southwest”) may lead us to consider another fact: no explicit framing device was needed. Whitman’s own person—this fashionable, oversized New Yorker living in the French Quarter and traversing New Orleans while twirling his cane—may have been a readily available referent to the *Crescent*’s readers. Or as Whitman refers to himself in a different editorial for the *Crescent*:

In the Crescent City, he was “you know who.”⁷¹

Indeed, we might read Whitman’s editorial “The Habitants of Hotels” of March 10, 1848, as a set-up and frame for these “Sketches.” “Habitants,” signed by “W.,” presents us with pithy, on-point snapshots that seem to anticipate the segments that would begin appearing in the pages of the *Crescent* only a few days later. The piece ends by previewing a series to come—and with a view of a bar room:

The parlor of the hotel we will not enter, but when we have a pen, virgin so far as ink is concerned—any quantity of satin paper with gilded edges, and a few gallons of cologne, who shall endeavor to describe the peculiarities of those chosen mortals who will live above board—or, at least above the bar-room.⁷²

Whitman’s pen is aching to write about these charming, somewhat sleazy characters, employing similar wordplay as the subsequent “sketches” to create a caricature of crooks with an ironic air of respectability. We never see what “shall” follow here—unless what follows are, indeed, the sketches of “Jinglebrain” who “boards at one of the crack hotels,” or the sleepless “Daggerdraw” menacingly pacing the hallways of “boarding-houses,” or the crook Peter Funk that the author claims to have “boarded [with] a while,” etc., etc. A noteworthy degree of vagrancy is a shared trait between sketcher and sketched in “Sidewalks” and Whitman’s “The Habitants of Hotels.” Each narrator relishes in the persona of the ‘looker in’—a temporary guest who snoops around and quips about the personages brushing past on the street or in the narrow halls of boarding-houses, occasionally lapsing into philosophical musings and what the author calls “moralizing.”

Loving picks up on some of these moments, identifies them as too sexist for Whitman, and proceeds on the two-fold task of disproving authorship and saving the poet’s reputation. To this end, Loving focuses on the two “Sidewalks” sketches of women that were available to him at the time. His verdict is clear: “The writer,” Loving observes about the sketch of Giddy Gay Butterfly, “is not Whitman but a misogynist who perhaps in his intemperance has seduced many young women and now condemns them as middle-aged human beings” (122). This mysterious misogynist, like the “intemperate Reed” before, then absolves Whitman in Loving’s portrayal of elements that are clearly part of Whitman’s established literary record but do not serve to elevate the poet to modern readers.

“Whitman seems to have loved motherhood more than womanhood, but he praised both in his poetry,” Loving states, overlooking that Mrs. Butterfly is expressly violating sentimental norms of motherhood: she is vain, excessively so.

Butterfly's love of self and dress in middle age renders her children "poor, little, motherless Butterflies"; they are orphaned by lack of motherly care:

There are some people in this world of inhabited creation that supposed—vainly suppose—that if children—little immortals in jackets and trowsers—only have a plenty of bread and meat wherewith to cram their stomachs, and a trifle of clothing withal, that the grand totality of parental duty, in all its length and breadth and importance, is abundantly fulfilled. As for the rest—why, the streets and the highways can open wide their arms and receive them.⁷³

In de-mothering herself, Giddy Gay Butterfly becomes spinster: "as years increase she, of course, appears less attractive, and will, no doubt, become soured in temper from such cause." Spinsterhood is a thoroughly established target of Whitman's disdain. From the outright disgust over the "avarice and wretchedness" of a greedy mother who had given up her children in his "Travelling Bachelor,"⁷⁴ to the "solemn and sour" spinster of *Franklin Evans*, and the "yellow-faced" spinster of his contemporaneous "The Shadow and the Light of a Young Man's Soul,"⁷⁵ Whitman had little understanding but ample disgust for women refusing the role of mother.

Consequently, it is the sketch of an actual spinster—unknown to Loving—that really puts this aspect of Whitman's late-1840s beliefs on display. Spinsterhood is a status that Whitman and the narrator of these sketches both describe as foul and unnatural—a souring that can even be read in the face. "There dwells about the mortal physiognomy of this elderly branch of the virgin tree," the author observes of spinster Virginité Roseblossom, "nothing but thorns and fish-hooks," going on to compare her appearance to that of a lizard and her voice to an artillery barrage. In her, the "blessedness of a feminine nature is all turned into wormwood and bitterness" and "the sweet milk of human kindness has long since become curdled and sour." Roseblossom becomes a warning to the young as her heartless ambition "spreads its bitterness over . . . families, and carries them through the spring and early summer of life with no inhalement of sweets, and no plucking of flowers!" To Whitman and the author of the "Sidewalks" sketches, womanhood either ripens into blessed motherhood, or spoils, becomes bitter, turns vinegar, withers on the vine. Old mothers are wise, old spinsters are rotten.

While much of Whitman's objectionable writings about certain non-forming women were readily available to Loving, he nonetheless chooses to gloss over them. This is especially true when it comes to the most well-known of these sketches—that of a mix-raced sex worker. "The jaundiced view of women in 'Miss Dusky Grisette' is uncharacteristic of Whitman's sympathetic depic-

tion of fallen women,” Loving again rushes to the poet’s defense. “He would never have delighted . . . in the young woman who ‘has a smile and a wink for every one of the passers-by’” (122). Skillfully overlooking the rather unflattering depiction of the “prostitute that draggles her shawl” with her “bonnet bob[bing] on her tipsy and pimpled neck” in “Song of Myself,”⁷⁶ Loving takes the slightly more respectful “To a Common Prostitute” and unspecified *Eagle* editorials to support this point.

More recent readings of the passage, including Sandler’s, have put forward a more nuanced view of the scene as a complex glimpse of New Orleans racial politics.⁷⁷ Much scholarly commentary has focused specifically on the sexual aspects of Grisette’s labors—which are described strikingly more positively than the above passage from “Song of Myself.” Still, the sketch does not end there. Instead, the reader is treated to Grisette’s daytime activities, too. After a short night’s rest, Grisette dons a headdress and apron to sell cheap coffee to the working class:

Flowers and fancy for the upper ten thousand, in the glow and excitement of evening and gas-light—but neither airs nor graces attend her, nor do flowers deck her hair as, by day-light, in the cool of the morning, she repairs to her accustomed stand, with her tin coffee-urn upon her head.⁷⁸

Clearly, we hear echoes here in Whitman’s *Specimen Days* memories of getting “a large cup of delicious coffee from the immense shining copper kettle of a great Creole mulatto woman” at the French Market in New Orleans.⁷⁹ Oddly enough, Loving goes out of his way to distance Whitman from authorship of the “Sidewalks” sketches by inserting an intertext instead of commenting on these lines directly. Loving gives Holloway “credit” for “admitt[ing] that the description of ‘Miss Dusky Grisette’ does not agree with Whitman’s description.” Loving mentions neither coffee nor the weight of the women—to which Holloway’s “admission” clearly refers (i.e., she is not “sylph-like” but rotund in *Specimen Days*).⁸⁰ The biographer also does not quote the *Specimen Days* passage, not even in an endnote. Instead, he suggests by omission that Holloway agrees with him on a distinct difference in how Dusky Grisette is *portrayed as a character*—a “jaundiced” portrayal that could not possibly have been composed by the noble versifier of “To a Common Prostitute.” Certainly, Dusky Grisette is not the same person as the woman selling coffee; even the sketch acknowledges these paragraphs as speculation.⁸¹ But one has to try as hard as Loving here to be able to overlook the strong association between coffee, mixed-race women, and New Orleans markets that Whitman developed down south and

readily recalled almost forty years later—an association that clearly supports our attribution.

Paradoxically, in these passages we might discover Whitman's most nuanced view of a prostitute. Grisette's sex work is just that: work. It does not define her. Instead, we find her to be an integral part of the city, moving up and down societal ranks and engaging in tabooed and racialized tasks without turning into a caricature—even in an arguably (and, to many modern readers, uncomfortably) humorous sketch. She is also the hardest worker presented in these sketches, her workday stretching from the early morning hours to late at night without much interruption. Given the relative complexity of this sketch and comparatively positive depiction of a person abjected three-fold—for her gender, race, and trade—we cannot agree with the judgment of “jaundice” that Loving so quickly bestows on it. In character she seems to remain paradoxically pure (in a Whitmanian, sentimental sense) by the end of her sketch—more “flower,” certainly, than thorny Virginité Roseblossom.

The remaining “Sketches” disclose a number of like, at times faint, thematic resonances from Whitman's prose universe. Phrenology, physiognomy, and Romantic science creep around every corner of these pieces. Fashionista John J. Jinglebrain, in his insalubrious obsession with dress, illustrates a need for manly health and training.⁸² We find in Patrick McDray an Irishman who not only shares a nationality and sizable litter with *Jack Engle's* Barney Fox but also gets bit by the politics bug around election time (in a sketch beginning with the Whitmanian salutation: “Stranger”). We discover Whitman's warning from *Manly Health* that the “land is too full of poisonous medicines and incompetent doctors—the less you have to do with them the better” (213) embodied by the white-coat butcher Dr. Sangrado Snipes whose “fancy luxuriate[s] in the prospect of big bills.” The brief warnings in “New York Dissected” about “Peter Funks” (and humorous news items about a man being “Peter Funked” in the *Crescent* itself)⁸³ are elaborated in the eponymous sketch. And one can certainly hear a hint of oyster-aficionado Whitman in the confession that “we ourselves have refreshed and regaled the ‘inner man,’ many times” on the wares of shellfish peddler Goujon.

In each of these moments, though, we could also hear an Abraham Oakey Hall, a George G. Foster, or even a “local humorist.” Prose Whitman in many ways was a typical nineteenth-century writer, and there is a danger for any Whitman scholar wading into the murky waters of nineteenth-century newspaper prose to experience a sort of “Whitman Tunnel Vision.” Even so, we feel confident that our stylometric assessment is supported by a wide variety of

circumstantial evidence in these texts, ultimately adding up to likely authorship by Whitman. “Sidewalks” thus position themselves well within Whitman’s substantial writings for the *Crescent*, and exhibit all of the genre markers, quibbles, and interests that resonate in Whitman’s still-expanding corpus of prose.

Conclusion

We believe that Whitman’s extended tenure at the *Crescent* is more than a biographical blip or curious, minor addendum to his known corpus. “Manhattan” and “Sidewalks” not only fill in a gap in Whitman’s post-New Orleans record but suggest themselves as a place of journalistic professionalization as well as genre experimentation. While loosely organized thematic series like the “Sun-Down Papers,” for instance, are part of his established journalistic output, we are unaware of any other overtly fictional series by Whitman that relies on a *flâneur* persona in place of a sustained plot. “Sidewalks” thus seems to mark the transition from a Dickensian narrative approach to Whitman’s later, more decentralized and impressionistic mode of storytelling that focuses on character types and constellations. In the end, Whitman would pursue this impetus toward typification into the poetic innovation that are his verse “catalogues.” In a parallel vein, we know that Whitman would write in an epistolary style at times (for instance in his “Travelling Bachelor”) and was an avid letter-writer—but “Manhattan” constitutes his first instance writing as a regular “newspaper correspondent” addressing a public through intimate letters from afar.⁸⁴

When it comes to this correspondence, Whitman’s output puts him in the position, once again, of straddling generic boundaries that had yet to settle into place. Newspaper correspondence as “straightforward” journalistic writing would only become common and codified during the Civil War,⁸⁵ when out-of-state and foreign correspondence grew to be the more narrowly news-oriented—if still overtly opinionated and political—newspaper genre that it is still known as today. Freelance correspondence like Whitman’s thus helped make those very newspapers the more hybridized, cosmopolitan endeavors they strove to be, even as it also encouraged these very writers to think outside the bounds of traditional prose genres.

News journalism (alongside ads) was the primary content of many nineteenth-century newspapers, with poetry and prose—as much as it was a lure for prospective readers—often relegated to the role of interstitial column-filler. Prestigious northern papers like the *Herald* or the *Times* had a quasi-monopoly on original news reporting and having correspondents like “Manhattan” was the closest a regional paper like the *Crescent* could come to competing; the *flavor*

was original, even when the facts of the news weren't. In a time before direct telegraph lines between New York and New Orleans, letters like "Manhattan's" allowed for a welcome emotive and informational exchange between major cultural and political hubs. Consequently, when the first issues of the *Crescent* came out, its owners made sure to feature a solid roster of correspondents, pilfering, for instance, the famous war correspondent "Chaparral" from the *Delta* and securing letters from "P. W. W.," whom Whitman knew from the *Eagle*.⁸⁶ Whitman himself, late in life, bases his positive assessment of New Orleans' papers on having some of the "best news and war correspondents," specifically highlighting "Chaparral."⁸⁷ Reviews of the *Crescent* from 1848 echoed this notion. "[The *Crescent*] had no infant struggles," a fellow Louisiana paper noted. "It . . . took its position at once, among the leading journals in the Union. Its correspondence according to admirable pre-arrangement was as full, varied and valuable at the beginning, as that of any of its older contemporaries."⁸⁸ Even Whitman's former employer, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, praised the *Crescent's* "strong letters from New York, from Washington, and from the army in Mexico."⁸⁹

Having the right correspondents, in other words, could make or break a paper, especially one with no national circulation. In this case, it seems "Manhattan" was able to hit the tone appropriate to the most successful antebellum news correspondents: somewhere between straightforward news, local color, and sheer gossip. The void he left after going silent in January of 1849 was quickly filled by another "Mr. Manhattan": A. Oakey Hall's *Manhattaner in New Orleans* (via its serialized debut in *The Literary World* [New York]) began appearing in the *Crescent* only days after the departure of "Manhattan." Later that year, the *Delta* would, in an apparent nod to the competition, start running letters by a "Little Manhattan." It appears that New York correspondence was exceedingly important to New Orleans papers—the proof of "Manhattan's" success being the extent to which it spawned its own imitators and successors in town.

The "Manhattan" letters and "Sidewalks" sketches remind us that Whitman's contributions to the evolution of American literary genres are not limited solely to poetry. Whitman, at his best, was a natural hybridizer. In his role as author of *Leaves of Grass*, this has been the common line about Whitman for more than a century, and a few of his prose writings have also been adjudged similarly revolutionary, especially his episodic autobiography *Specimen Days* (1882). Less often, though, are his newspaper writings taken as anything more than conventional—and while they *are* conventional enough, the

“Manhattan” letters and “Sidewalks” sketches also reveal that Whitman and his fellow contributors built and rebuilt those very conventions from afar, writing letters, sketches, and news correspondence that melded nearly every available prose genre in the interest of delivering news to readers that bridged the local and the global, objective and subjective, stereotypical and surprising, prosaic and literary.

In both sets of texts that we have relied on here to argue for his extended connection to the *Daily Crescent*, Whitman considers what he, as “Manhattan,” variously calls “cosmopolitanism” and a “citizen-of-the-world disposition”: a way of being-in-the-world that fuses the specific with the universal. There is something about the urban experience, about being “among the masses,” that begins to resonate in these works. They demonstrate that Whitman’s cosmopolitan “I” was born not exclusively of New York soil, but in conversation with and contrast to the sidewalks and levees of New Orleans. In the same way that a thorough understanding of one language requires a modest understanding of another, Whitman triangulates his new, urban identity between New Orleans and New York, with “Manhattan” and “Sidewalks” narrating that process of discovery.

The third leg of this triangulation, and one that deserves further study, is Whitman’s engagement in these series with Europe. The *Daily Crescent* was an unambiguously republican paper, expressly interested in European news and heavily invested in the revolutionary progress abroad. It first fell on Whitman to both cut and arrange updates on Europe from New York papers into publishable form while in New Orleans, and then to narrate them in his “Manhattan” letters. Betsy Erkkila has long suggested that Whitman’s revolutionary poetry shows a noticeable engagement with the republican upheavals of 1848, suggesting that these events abroad helped Whitman develop and confirm a “revolutionary reading of history” as progressing toward an “ultimate triumph of liberty.”⁹⁰ Given the distinct likelihood that Whitman penned the “Manhattan” letters, it becomes clearer that Whitman’s politics, poetry, and prose alike were more thoroughly “inspired by the signs of revolutionary ferment in Europe” while and after he spent time in New Orleans, than has been accepted as scholarly consensus.⁹¹ The attention of “Manhattan” to what Erkkila calls 1848’s “revolution throughout the world”—especially in Ireland, Germany, and France—thus makes a more complete case that New Orleans was not only the impetus for Whitman’s sexual and racial awakening (as scholars have long argued), but also a distinct moment of politicization and radicalization in which Whitman wrote at the nexus of Irish Repeal, mass meetings of Fortyeighters in New York, and

the dawn of the Second French Republic. The “Manhattan” correspondence urges a two-fold reconsideration of 1848 in Whitman: in his work as “exchange editor” for the *Crescent*,⁹² and in his later poetry.

Whitman’s work for the *Daily Crescent*—as well as the increasingly complex relationships between Whitman, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, and the *Crescent*—are ripe for deeper assessment. Much of what Whitman Studies assumes about the poet’s time in the South has rested on interpretations of limited historical and biographical data gathered by early- to mid-twentieth-century scholars, data that have rarely been revisited. We hope, then, that this essay, driven by stylometric analysis and triangulated by significant bibliographic and biographical evidence, underscores the need for a larger reconsideration of the role of New Orleans and the *Crescent* in Whitman’s development as a writer, in addition to serving as a model for future rediscovery methodologies. “My belief is,” “Manhattan” writes, “that New York and New Orleans have more identity of character and interest than any other two cities in America.” This “identity” in Whitman’s work and thought is only just beginning to be explored. Much, it seems to us, will be learned from investigating Whitman’s complex relationship with New Orleans in a national and global context—and this essay aims to be a starting point for that exploration.

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Notes

- 1 *Walt Whitman: Poetry and Prose* (New York: The Library of America, 1982), 1200.
- 2 *Walt Whitman Papers in the Charles E. Feinberg Collection: Literary File, -1919; Prose, -1892; 1848 to 1849, “The People and John Quincy Adams,” New Orleans Daily Crescent, proof sheet with corrections and notations.* 1849, 1848. Manuscript/Mixed Material. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/mss1863000848.
- 3 New York: New York University Press, 1961-1984; and Peter Lang, 1998-present.
- 4 Gay Wilson Allen, “Editing the Writings of Walt Whitman: A Million Dollar Project Without a Million Dollars,” *Arts and Sciences* 1 (1963), 11.
- 5 Quoted in [Anonymous,] “Walt Whitman: A Glimpse at a Poet in His Lair,” *The Times* (February 24, 1876), 2. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* (whitmanarchive.org), ID: med.00525.

6 See Zachary Turpin's "Introduction to Walt Whitman's 'Manly Health and Training,'" *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* (hereafter *WWQR*) 33 (2016), 147-183, as well as the text of the series itself, 184-310.

7 Ed Folsom, "What New Orleans Meant to Walt Whitman," *New Orleans: A Literary History*, edited by T. R. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 44.

8 William White, "Sketches of the Sidewalks and Levee: With Glimpses into the New Orleans Bar (Rooms.) Mrs. Giddy Gay Butterfly. [By Walt Whitman]," *Walt Whitman Review* 4 (September 1958), 87-90. See page 87. For White's comment that Whitman was "capable of error" when remembering his editorial stints, see White's "Some Uncollected Whitman Journalism" in *Emerson Society Quarterly* 33 (1963), 87.

9 *Walt Whitman Papers*, (www.loc.gov/item/mss1863000848/).

10 Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1906), 1:455. Hereafter *WWC*. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.

11 Whitman, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, 6 vols., ed. Edward F. Grier (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 1:37, 1:41.

12 M. Eder, J. Rybicki, and M. Kestemont, "Stylometry with R: a package for computational text analysis," *R Journal* 8.1 (2016), 107-121.

13 For a proof-of-concept assessment of the particular approach used here, see: Stefan Schöberlein, "Poe or Not Poe? A Stylometric Analysis of Edgar Allan Poe's Disputed Writings," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 73 (2017), 644-646. For an application to Whitman's journalism, see: Kevin McMullen, Stefan Schöberlein, and Jason Stacy, "Walt Whitman at the Aurora: A Model for Journalistic Attribution," *WWQR* 37 (Summer/Fall 2019), 107-115.

14 *Leaves of Grass* (Boston: Thayer and Eldridge, 1860-61), 102, 288. All editions of *Leaves of Grass* listed here are available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.

15 Some of the writings contained therein were actually reprinted in excerpt by the *Crescent* (via their initial publication in the *Literary World*) right at the cessation of letters by "Manhattan" (January 18, 1849). While in New Orleans, Oakey Hall was a law apprentice and, following his return to New York, became a correspondent for the competitor of the *Crescent*, the *Commercial Bulletin*, using the pseudonyms "Hans Yorkel," "Croton," and "Gotham" (c.1851-1854). Oakey Hall is even referred to as "Mr. Manhattan" in the *Crescent* editor's introduction but he could not have been the writer of the "Manhattan" letters, as he was very likely still in New Orleans when "Manhattan" began corresponding from New York (Michael Rubbinaccio, *Abraham Oakey Hall: New York's Most Elegant and Controversial Mayor* [Seattle, WA: Pescara Pub., 2011], 32). Oakey Hall's politics would also have been an ill fit for "Manhattan": Hall repeatedly ran for office on Whig tickets in the early 1850s and only switched to the right wing of the Democratic party during the Civil War, after a brief interlude in the Republican party which ended in his outraged resignation in 1863 over what he termed "military emancipation" ("Letter from A. Oakey Hall, District

Attorney's Office," *Bedford Gazette* [May 29, 1863], 2) and the destruction of the South by "Abolition Pharisees" ("Speech of A. Oakey Hall," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* [October 30, 1863], 2). The *Liberator* described the Anti-Lincolnite in 1864 as a "copperhead prosecutor," after district attorney Hall had accused the president of "treason, homicide, arson, kidnapping, robbery" and other assorted high crimes ("Speech of Mr. Philips," *The Liberator* [October 28, 1864], 3). Clearly, a Free Soiler "Elegant Oakey" was not.

16 C. Zhang, W. Feng, E. Steffens, A. de Landaluce, S. Kleinman, and M.D. LeBlanc, "Lexos 2017: Building Reliable Software in Python," *Journal of Computing Sciences in Colleges* 33 (2018), 124-134.

17 Our analysis data is attached to this article on the *WWQR* website. Whitman's test corpus consisted of *Jack Engle, Manly Health and Training*, all prose available on the *Whitman Archive*, the journalism contained in Peter Lang's *The Journalism*, volume 2 and an early draft of volume 3 (with all *Crescent* texts excised), as well as *Specimen Days*.

18 Examples of unfalsifiable attributions may be found in the academic cottage industry that has sprung up around "rediscovered" Shakespeare plays—the supreme example being the long-suspect *Double Falshood* (a.k.a. *Cardenio*). Such apocrypha have been enthusiastically embraced by many top Shakespeare scholars based on problematic statistical analyses, as well as on the extrapolation of probability to certainty. In the realm of Whitman scholarship, we intend to avoid such scientism—the "reverent attitude toward metrical statistic" that, among Shakespeareans, scholar Paul Benjamin Bertram has called "a mild form of collective insanity" (*Shakespeare and The Two Noble Kinsmen* [New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University, 1965], 185-186).

19 *Leaves of Grass* (Boston: 1860-1861), 404.

20 One notable early example of "Manahatta/Manhattan" as replacement name for New York City is an unsigned 1842 essay titled "American Names" in the *Democratic Review* (11 [November 1842], 475-481). Its themes of "red men of the forest, melting away" and charging the country with names suggest that Whitman, who regularly published in the *Review* in 1842, read it carefully. Its author appears to be David Dudley Field II, who revised and expanded the piece into a lecture for the American Geographical Society in 1885 (*Nomenclature of Cities and Towns in the United States* [New York: Martin B. Brown, 1885]). Whitman must have studied Dudley's early essay carefully and made one of his central claims his own: "New York—what a name for the mart of the New World, the Queen of American cities, the maritime capital of both the continents! Compare it with the name of the Indian,—*barbarian*, as we call him,—Manhattan, or Manahatta. Is there a resident of this city who would not wish to restore this euphonious name of the original inhabitants!" ("American Names," 480).

21 *Essays and Lectures* (New York: The Library of America, 1983), 457.

22 In 1859, Whitman also notes to himself the possibility of delivering "Manahatta Lectures," in which he imagines asking: "Do you know whom you celebrate in the name of this haughty and populous city?" See Whitman's *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, ed. Edward F. Grier (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 1:407.

Likewise, the next year, Walt's niece Hattie Whitman (1860-1886), daughter of his younger brother Jeff, had the given name Manahatta bestowed upon her—again, with only one *n*.

23 See also: Kimo Reder, "Whitman's Metro-Poetic Lettrism: The Mannahatta Skyline as Sentence, Syntax, and Spell," *WWQR* 35 (Summer 2017), 88-114.

24 For full text of this letter and a sampling of other "Manhattan" letters, see Appendix, 40-50.

25 For Whitman's account of and rough chronology for his return trip from New Orleans, see his "New Orleans in 1848" in *Poems and Prose*, 1199-1204. See also Whitman's manuscript notes that contributed to that account: "is rougher than it was" and "wooding at night," both available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* (ID: duk.00786 and duk.00790, respectively).

26 For ease of reading, we will refer to the whole set of letters as the "Manhattan" letters in this paper (including those attributed to "Manahatta").

27 "Northern Correspondence," New Orleans *Daily Crescent* (July 29, 1848), 2. As for the *Sag Harbor Corrector* ad, discovered by Margaret Guardi, it ran thirty-nine times from August 2 to December 16, 1848: "15 ACRES OF LAND WANTED—Any person in any of the eastern towns of Long Island, having 12 or 15 acres of Land (with a little woodland, if possible, though that is not absolutely requisite) may hear of a purchaser, by addressing a note through the Post Office, to the undersigned. If near the water it will be considered a great advantage. No buildings wanted on the land, and price to be not more than \$16 an acre. W. Whitman, Jr., 71 Prince st., Brooklyn."

28 As "Manhattan" writes on August 7: "The probability is . . . that Van Buren will be the nominee for President . . . These are wonderful days, when such things come to pass!" ("Northern Correspondence," *Daily Crescent* [August 17, 1848], 2). On August 6, "Whitman [had] made some remarks," at a pre-meeting Democratic assembly, "introducing a resolution instructing all delegates from Kings county to go unconditionally for the nomination of Martin Van Buren" ("Kings County Democrats in the Field for Van Buren," *Evening Post* [August 7, 1848], 2). Likely, "Manhattan's" letter contains some elements of what Whitman argued for that day. One of the fellow speakers at the Brooklyn event was Alden Spooner, the editor and publisher of the *Long Island Star*—and Whitman's employer prior to the *Eagle*.

29 "The Cholera in New York—Gold Fever—Doings in General," *Daily Crescent* (December 21, 1848), 1.

30 This inauspicious event inaugurated the *Freeman's* one-year run. The newspaper, edited and primarily written by Whitman himself in a subterranean editorial office at 110 Orange Street, Brooklyn, first appeared in print on September 9, 1848. Disaster struck instantly. The very next evening, September 10, a fire that broke out in a nearby furniture store rapidly burnt eight square blocks of Brooklyn, ultimately destroying over two hundred wooden buildings, including the *Freeman's* office, with Whitman's press and likely all of his printer's materials. For a contemporaneous account of the fire and its losses, including

a map of the affected area, see “The Doings at Night,” (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle* [September 11, 1848], 2). It would take two months, and undoubtedly an uncomfortable reinvestment of some of Whitman’s own money, before the newspaper was brought back into production. The delay, however, does not seem to have fully dampened the *Freeman*’s chances at success; once back in production, Whitman went on to publish the paper for a year, even boosting its circulation to daily issues in May 1849 (under the new banner of *Brooklyn Daily Freeman*) before handing off the editorial reins that September. In spite of its good circulation and the consistent editorial attention it received from other newspapers in New York, only two issues of the *Freeman* survive today: the first issue of the *Freeman* (Vol. 1, no. 1; September 9, 1848), kept today in the archives of the New York Public Library; and an issue of the *Daily Freeman* published on May 30, 1849 (Vol. 2?, no. 22) which only recently resurfaced at auction, before being purchased by an anonymous buyer. A few scattered reprintings of single *Freeman* items also exist. Given these circumstances, it has long been a safe assumption that, with the exception of his rediscovered “Letters from a Travelling Bachelor” to the *New York Sunday Dispatch* (1849-1850) and his “Paumanok” letters to the Washington, DC, *National Era* (1850), all or nearly all of Whitman’s newspaper writings from mid-1848 to early 1850 are now lost.

31 “Politics—Strangers—Ballooning, &c,” *Daily Crescent* (October 23, 1848), 2.

32 Newspapers.com returns a total of thirty-five instances of “Steyermarkers” in their overall corpus of digitized newspapers: ten are associated with Whitman, three with papers in the North-East, and the remaining eleven are ads.

33 “Arrival of the Steyermarkers,” *Daily Crescent* (April 1, 1848), 2.

34 “The New German Band,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (January 7, 1848), 2. The piece is missing from the second volume of Peter Lang’s *The Journalism*.

35 “Napoleon Crossing the Alps,” *New Orleans Weekly Delta* (October 30, 1848), 1.

36 “Correspondence of the Crescent,” *Daily Crescent* (December 30, 1848), 1.

37 *WWC* 1:155.

38 The first ad in newspapers appears to be from October 23rd (“Napoleon Crossing the Alps,” *New York Daily Herald* [October 23, 1848], 3) and the *Crescent* reported on October 9, 1848, that the painting was en route to New York. The final account appears to be “Manhattan’s.” By February 22nd of 1849 it was in Havana on its way to the Louvre in Paris (“Later from Havana,” *New York Daily Herald* [March 3, 1849], 1).

39 See *The Gathering of the Forces*, ed. Cleveland Rodgers and John Black (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1920), 1:86-89.

40 Stefan Schöberlein and Stephanie M. Blalock, “‘A Story of New York at the Present Time’: The Historico-Literary Contexts of Jack Engle,” *WWQR* 37 (Winter/Spring 2020), 145-184.

41 “Northern Correspondence,” *Daily Crescent* (August 11, 1848), 2.

42 Misspelled “Renards” by Whitman.

43 Thomas Jefferson Whitman to Walter Whitman, Sr., Louisa Van Velsor Whitman, Andrew Jackson Whitman, George Washington Whitman, Hannah Louisa Whitman, and Edward Whitman, March 27, 1848. Available on the *Whitman Archive* (ID: nyp.00132).

44 Thomas Jefferson Whitman to Walter Whitman, Sr., and Louisa Van Velsor Whitman, 23–24 April 1848 (ID: nyp.00133).

45 “Non-Ascension of the Balloon,” *Daily Crescent* (April 3, 1848), 3.

46 “Herr Hecker—Macready, &c.,” *Daily Crescent* (October 19, 1848), 3.

47 *The Cambridge History of American Literature* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1918), 2:559.

48 Whitman, *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman, Much of Which Has Been but Recently Discovered*, ed. Emory Holloway (New York: P. Smith, 1932), 199–217.

49 Jay Grossman, *Reconstituting the American Renaissance: Emerson, Whitman, and the Politics of Representation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 184; Andrew Lawson, *Walt Whitman & The Class Struggle* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), 41; Jason Stacy, *Walt Whitman’s Multitudes: Labor Reform and Persona in Whitman’s Journalism and the First Leaves of Grass, 1840–1855* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 98; Matt Sandler, “Kindred Darkness: Whitman in New Orleans,” in *Whitman Noir: Black America and the Good Gray Poet*, ed. Ivy G. Wilson (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2014), 61; Ed Folsom, “What New Orleans Meant to Walt Whitman,” in *New Orleans: A Literary History*, ed. T. R. Johnson (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 43.

50 Loving believes, largely based on his personal assessment of the quality and tone of these pieces, that Whitman “was not—in this biographer’s opinion—the author of the ‘Sidewalks and Levees’ sketches that have been attributed to him. . . . [They were] probably written by a local humorist, or perhaps by ‘Mr. Reeder,’ who was in charge of the ‘city’ news” (*Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000], 212). “Mr. Reeder” is George W. Reeder (born c. 1822 in Maryland), a journalist and actor who would die of Cholera in December of 1848, a few days after his younger brother. In his obituary, the *Crescent* describes him as thoroughly “connected with the Stage, and the Press” of New Orleans and praises “his sketches which frequently appeared, were favorably received by the public, and were extensively copied throughout the Union” (“George W. Reeder,” *The New Orleans Crescent* [December 27, 1848], 2). While his ethnicity is not mentioned (the name could be English, Dutch, or Irish), he was very active in Irish Nationalist affairs in New Orleans via organizations like the Emmet Club and the American League—suggesting (together with Whitman’s comment on his “intemperance”) that he may have been Irish. If the latter is true, this does not seem to fit the more stereotypical depiction of the Irish (and their language) in these sketches. Reeder appears to not have published much under his own name—perhaps with the exception of the poem “A Mermaid’s Song” printed in the inaugural issue of *The American Miscellany* (1840, 135). Reeder was also associated with the *Daily Delta*, by some accounts primarily so. Perusing

1848 issues of the *Delta*, we cannot locate similar works to the “Sidewalks” sketches. We did, however, discover a number of humorous *dialogues* such as “New Year’s Celebration in the Parish Prison” (January 6, 1848) or “Different Ideas of Happiness” (January 8, 1848) that overlap in style with similar sketches in the *Crescent* (such as “Mr. and Mrs. Timms—or the Miseries of Marriage” of March 8 or “A Tavern, but not an Ultra-Tavern” of October 4). In the *Crescent*, these overlap at times with crime reporting. We thus propose that Mr. Reeder (as “City Reporter” in Whitman’s memory) was largely assigned to the various Recorder Courts for the *Crescent*, and occasionally spun out humorous dialogue sketches that would be reprinted as a first-page item in the *Crescent* and *Daily Delta*, while spreading widely as third-/fourth-page items for other papers. This highly satirical coverage (full of literary references and puns on defendants’ names), especially of Record Baldwin’s Court, ended with the death of Reeder and only continued in a much-reduced, more matter-of-fact fashion. Crime coverage, as well as coverage of fires, were the only real “city news” featured in the *Crescent*.

51 The typical time between letters mailed by “Manhattan” from New York City and their publication in the *Crescent* is around ten to fifteen days.

52 “Manhattan” considers this a “cosmopolitan” attitude: “Among the men, I notice more of the cosmopolitan influence than ever; a genuine New Yorker, indeed, may be known by his possessing *no* characteristic trait. The peculiarities of all notions are softened and blended in him” (“Northern Correspondence,” *Daily Crescent* [October 11, 1848], 2).

53 See M. Wynn Thomas’s entry on “Labor and Laboring Classes” in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, ed. J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.

54 “In the 1840s the press began to focus attention on a seemingly novel breed of young men known as ‘b’hoys,’ who were rowdy in comportment and rough in language . . . B’hoys were not found everywhere but were limited to the ‘large cities and thinly settled’ that had so concerned reformer William Alcott” (Richard Briggs Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009], 103-104). Whitman himself, in “The Habitants of Hotels” describes the b’hoys as “That young man with the bandy legs, who is standing with his back to the stove, has just arrived from New York. He prides himself upon the neatness of the tie of his crimson neckcloth, and professes to be a connoisseur in everything relating to pea-nuts. Whilst he puffs the smoke of a remarkably bad segar directly underneath your nostrils, he will discourse most learnedly about the classical performances in the Chatham Theatre. . . This is one of the ‘b’hoys of the Bowery.’ He strenuously contends that Mr. N.P. Willis is a humbug—that Mike Walsh is a ‘hoss,’ and that the Brigadier ‘ain’t no where.’ The great probability is that the ‘b’hoys’ in question never saw either of the gentlemen that he attempts to lampoon.” Directness of sociolected speech, an aura of manliness—Ephraim Broadhorn, though not urban, can thus be considered a “b’hoys” by the author—while the urban, New Orleans dandy “Jinglebrain” “could never by any possible mischance be considered as ‘one of the b’hoys’” (*Daily Crescent*, March 10, 1848, 2).

55 It should be cautiously noted that these numbers are not proportional, i.e., they will be affected by the total number of available OCR’ed newspapers for a given state.

56 The author of “Sidewalks” also sides with Whitman in all variant spellings we could locate: both the more common “traveller” and “Shakspeare” as well as the less common “trowsers” have been found in Whitman’s other writings.

57 Loving, 120.

58 As Halleck puts it: “Theirs is a pure republic, wild, yet strong, / A ‘fierce democracie,’ where all are true / To what themselves have voted—right or wrong— / And to their laws denominated blue” (*The Poetical Works of Fitz-Greene Halleck* [New York, NY: D. Appleton & Co., 1848], 97). Ephraim echoes these politics: he sees himself as “a ‘dimocrat,’ a one of the b’hoys,” Tantalizingly, these political musings have the author of Ephraim Broadhorn end the sketch as well as the whole series with a direct political quote from one of the authors of the Missouri Compromise: Pinkney’s plea to respect “the unsophisticated good sense and noble spirit of the American people” makes an early States’ Rights argument (claiming that each new state should be allowed the same right to decide whether to be a slave-state or not).

59 Jay Charlton, “Bohemians in America,” *The Danbury News*, c. 1882. Available on the *Whitman Archive*.

60 John W. M. Hallock, *The American Byron: Homosexuality and the Fall of Fitz-Greene Halleck* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 170.

61 The author observes that Jinglebrain “dawdles about, as Fanny Kemble would say, until dinner.” Kemble was known, and at times ridiculed, for her spirited expressions like “dawdles.” See Faye E. Dudden, *Women in the American Theatre: Actresses and Audiences, 1790-1870* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 44.

62 As Whitman observes in 1850: “As a fat-cheeked boy, in round jacket and broad shirt-collar, there, trembling with expectation and excitement, I received my first idea of the drama; there I saw Fanny Kemble, in her early and great days” (in “Letters from New York,” *The National Era* [November 14, 1850]). See also: Susan M. Meyer, “Actors and Actresses,” in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*.

63 “On the Park stage we first saw Fanny Kemble. Hers *was* playing. She ‘did’ Marianne, in *The Wife*; and many a man, who had visited the theatre for years, then saw playing for the first time” (*Daily Crescent* [August 14, 1848], 3). In *Specimen Days*, Whitman names the same play: “Fanny Kemble—name to conjure up great mimic scenes withal—perhaps the greatest. I remember well her rendering of Bianca in ‘Fazio,’ and Marianna in ‘the Wife’” (*Poetry and Prose*, 704).

64 *Leaves of Grass* (Brooklyn: 1855), 23.

65 Henry B. Rule, “Walt Whitman and George Caleb Bingham,” *Walt Whitman Review* 16 (1969), 248-253.

66 Paul C. Nagel and George Caleb Bingham, *George Caleb Bingham: Missouri’s Famed Painter and Forgotten Politician* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2005), 72-74.

67 Whitman, “[How gladly we leave the],” c. 1850-1855. Trent Collection of Whitmaniana, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University. Available on *Whitman Archive*.

68 See editorial note for “[How gladly]” on the *Whitman Archive*.

69 We might even find it anticipated in Whitman’s writings about travelling to New Orleans. Meeting an old man from Ohio, he muses: “And here I may say, once for all, that, though expecting to find a shrewd population as I journeyed to the interior, and down through the great rivers, I was by no means prepared for the sterling vein of common sense that seemed to pervade them—even the roughest shod and roughest clad of all. A satirical person could no doubt find an ample field for his powers in many of the manners and ways of the West” (“Crossing the Alleghanies,” *Daily Crescent* [March 5, 1848], 1).

70 Whitman seemed to associate roomy bars with New Orleans. Late in life he reminisced with Traubel about “great Southern bar-rooms: for instance, those in New Orleans—the acre-large bar-rooms—in which come all classes, for talk, discussion: and the listeners, too, silent, inarticulate” (*WWC* 2:27).

71 “A Night at the Terpsichore Ball. By ‘You Know Who,’” *Daily Crescent* (May 18, 1848), 1.

72 W., “Habitants of Hotels,” *Daily Crescent* (March 10, 1848), 2.

73 Compare this to when Martha’s father in *Jack Engle* remembers: “my home was not worthy the name; I had no home. Although parents cared enough for me to spend money liberally, and give me an almost unlimited indulgence that way, yet they did not furnish me what is most wanted from parents—good example, good counsel and a true home-roof. I was boarded, almost from the beginning, away in the country” (“Jack Engle,” 340). Here we have the same logic of providing the material but not the emotional familial support—coupled with a premature injection into the outside world. Similar character elements are contained in Inez’s backstory as well.

74 Paumanok, “Letters from a Travelling Bachelor,” *New York Sunday Dispatch* (October 28, 1849), 1. Available on the *Whitman Archive*.

75 “Franklin Evans; or, the Inebriate. A Tale of the Times,” *The New World* (November 23, 1842), 7. Available on the *Whitman Archive*.

76 Another passage worth contrasting to Grisette is Whitman’s 1856 sketch of a sex worker for *Life Illustrated*: “Dirty finery, excessively plentiful; paint, both red and white; draggle-tailed dress, ill-fitting; coarse features, unintelligent; bold glance, questioning, shameless, perceptibly anxious; hideous croak or dry, brazen ring in voice; affected, but awkward, mincing, wagging gait. Harlot” (“New York Dissected,” *Life Illustrated* [August 16, 1856], 125).

77 Sandler, 61-63.

78 Holloway, *Uncollected Poetry and Prose* 1:204.

79 *Poetry and Prose*, 1201.

80 Holloway footnotes the coffee passage by observing that “Whitman himself was fond of taking his morning coffee . . . at the old French market from the shining kettle of a mulatto woman; but his description of her . . . does not agree with his description” here (204). “Description” clearly means “physical description.” Holloway is pointing out an overall similarity that *supports* his assessment—not one that cautions against attribution to Whitman, as Loving misconstrues this comment.

81 “*Perhaps*, in the morning, she sells coffee . . . During the day, *perhaps*” (italics ours).

82 As Whitman will note in his later health guide: “The ideas of beauty allowed to prevail and take the lead are too much under the control of [literary types], and of the standard of tailor’s and milliner’s fashion-plates, and the like” and as such create “pretty, chalk-and-pink face[d]” men who should be “classed with deformed things” (*Manly Health and Training; To Teach the Science of a Sound and Beautiful Body*, ed. Zachary Turpin [New York: Regan Arts, 2017], 127-128).

83 “Talent Transported,” *Daily Crescent*, (March 18, 1848), 2. Apparently, the Louisiana legislature was in the process of passing legislation against these fake auctioneers, according to a news item in the *Crescent* of April 28, 1848. Said news item echoes the language of the sketch (“green ‘uns”) and may have been written by Whitman himself. Indeed, both of these notices suggest Whitman may have contributed to news and humorous dialogues as well (for instance the Whitmanian “The ‘News Boys” of April 11, 1848).

84 Folsom rightly notes that “previous scholarship has not fully appreciated just how thoroughly letter-writing influenced Whitman’s poetics, and just how important the idea of correspondence was for a writer who saw his whole life’s work as an attempt to prompt a response from the reader.” If Whitman indeed, as Folsom suggests, had a fundamentally epistolary relationship with this poetic audience (as ‘co-respondents’) that he gleaned from letter-writing, the “Manhattan” correspondence certainly constitutes a major “missing link” between Whitman’s personal letters and the larger sense of ‘co-respondency’ of *Leaves* (“Co-Responding with Walt Whitman,” *The Edinburgh Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Letters and Letter-Writing*, ed. Celeste-Marie Bernier, Judie Newman, and Matthew Pethers [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016], 493).

85 Hazel Dicken Garcia, *Journalistic Standards in Nineteenth-Century America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 56-57.

86 “Chaparral’s” letters were well-known during the Mexican-American War and were frequently reprinted on the first pages of major New York papers like the *Herald* (for example on May 11, 1847). The first “Chaparral” letter for the *Crescent* appeared in its inaugural issue (March 5, 1848). “Chaparral” was John H. Peoples of the *Corpus Christi Star* (“The Corpus Christi Expedition,” *New Orleans Weekly Delta* [September 25, 1848], 1). “P. W. W.” was writing to the *Crescent* from Brooklyn (“Brooklyn and its Improvements,” *Daily Crescent* [May 23, 1848], 2) and had contributed three letters to the *Eagle* in 1847 (on October 5, 8, and September 4), detailing a trip from Brooklyn to the Water Gap in eastern Pennsylvania. He is likely Peter W. Wilson, a printer referenced in Jeff Whitman’s letter

from New Orleans of March 14, 1848, which mentions a “Mr Wilson in the Eagle office” (WWA ID: nyp.00131). Wilson is the only person in *The Brooklyn City Directory* of 1848 ([Brooklyn: E.B. Spinner, 1848], 245) that fits the abbreviation as well as the only “Wilson” in that *Directory* pursuing a trade that could put him in the “Eagle office.” Peter W. Wilson was also active in a number of social groups alongside (fellow) *Eagle* staff members such as the “Meeting of the friends of Mrs. H. V. Lovell” that included *Eagle* printer Andrew W. Tombs (also mentioned in one of Jeff’s letters) and *Eagle* owner Isaac Van Anden (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle* [December 20, 1850], 2). Other recurring *Crescent* correspondents from 1848 include: Sunshine (whose first letter appeared in the inaugural *Crescent* issue), Nine Long, Marion, Sara Bayou, Sydney, Orleans, J. R. T., and Thomas Jefferson Spear, writing as Spear-EE/Spearee (who also contributed poems).

87 *Poetry and Prose*, 1200. The piece misspells the name as “Chapparal.”

88 “The New Orleans Crescent,” *Concordia Intelligencer* (April 22, 1848), 2. It continues its overflowing praise: “Its editorials were racy, *recherche*, powerful and ‘up with the times’ from the very opening number . . . There is no more interesting or instructive newspaper now *on file* among us.”

89 “The Crescent,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (March 14, 1848), 2. It also positively highlights the “handy work” of “Mr. Whitman” in its editorials.

90 Betsy Erkkila, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 58.

91 Erkkila, *Whitman*, 57.

92 It should also be noted that while Whitman is minimizing his tasks at the *Crescent* to that of (just) an “exchange editor,” many contemporary reviewers read his association with the *Crescent* differently. The *Brooklyn Evening Star*, a paper that had published Whitman’s “Shirval” in 1845, puts the future poet of *Leaves* “in charge” of the *Crescent* (“The Crescent” [March 15, 1848], 2) while Anson Herrick’s *Atlas*—sister paper of the *Aurora* and future publisher of *Manly Health and Training*—praises the *Crescent* as “a capital paper . . . edited by Walter Whitman, a gentleman well-known in this city” (“New Orleans Daily Crescent” [May 14, 1848], 2).