



# WALT WHITMAN

## QUARTERLY REVIEW

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VOLUME THIRTY-NINE NUMBER ONE SUMMER 2021

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A SCHOLARLY OPEN ACCESS JOURNAL

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Front Cover: Facsimile of the frontispiece of the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass* /  
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“GLORIOUS TIMES FOR NEWSPAPER  
EDITORS AND CORRESPONDENTS”:  
WHITMAN AT THE NEW ORLEANS  
*DAILY CRESCENT*, 1848-1849

STEFAN SCHÖBERLEIN AND ZACHARY TURPIN



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”<sup>1</sup>

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

—Walt Whitman<sup>2</sup>

LESS THAN A DECADE into the construction of the mammoth, still-authoritative *Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*,<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.”<sup>5</sup> 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*.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> 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.

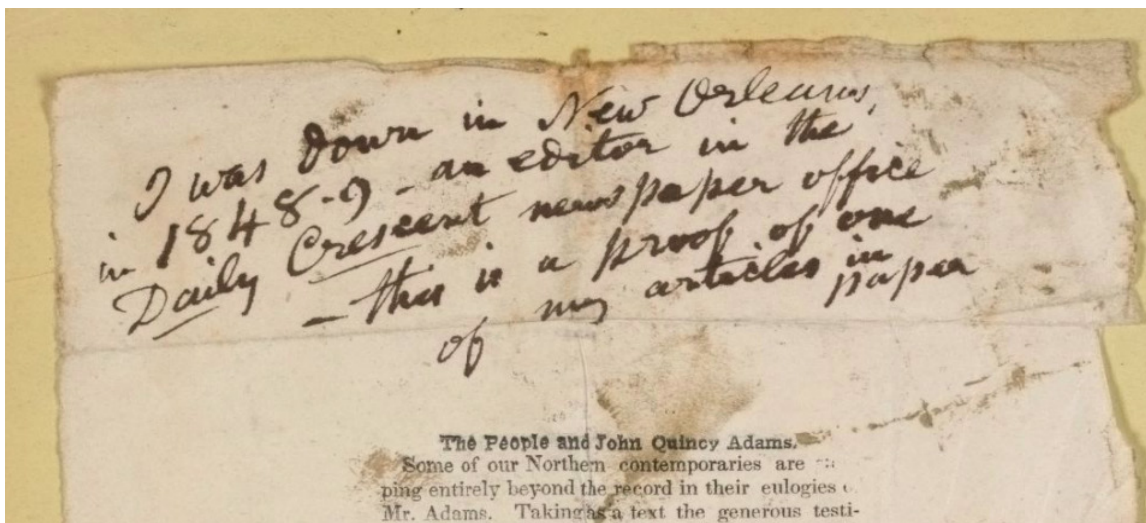


Figure 1. An editorial Whitman annotates as being one of his from the *Daily Crescent*, although its actual venue is unknown (Library of Congress).<sup>9</sup>



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"),<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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,<sup>12</sup> has been used in the past to identify texts of disputed authorship for both Edgar Allan Poe and Walt Whitman.<sup>13</sup> 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”<sup>14</sup> 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*)<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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-shrunk 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.<sup>17</sup>

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.

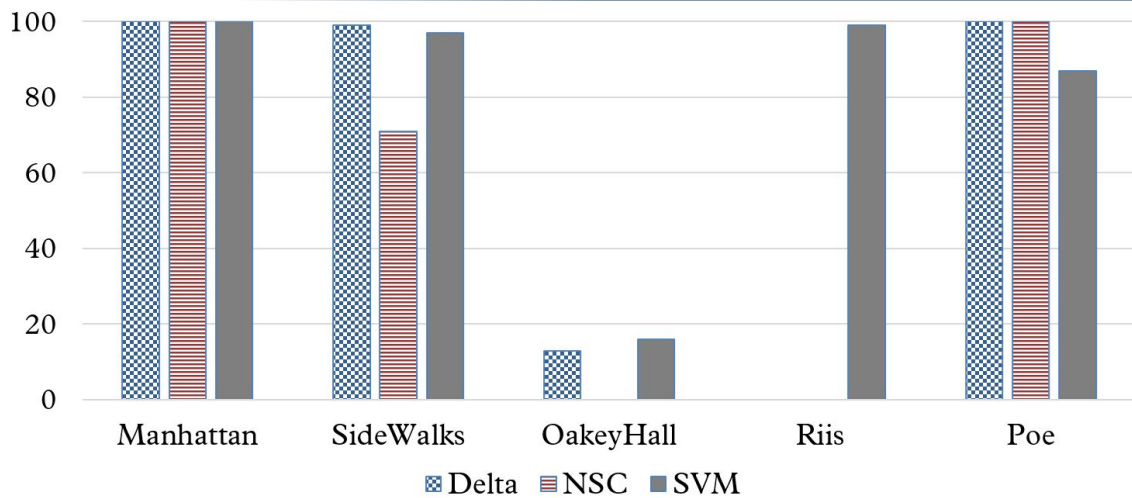


Figure 2. Attributions to Whitman (SideWalks, Manhattan, Oakey Hall's and Jacob Riis's books) and Poe (Arthur Pym) for 1801 Delta, NSC, and SVM attributions, using most frequent character trigrams.

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.<sup>18</sup> 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,<sup>19</sup> 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.<sup>20</sup> As with "Paumanok," "Mannahatta" struck Whitman as a sort of primordial place name, an example of what Emerson calls the "fossil poetry" of words.<sup>21</sup> 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").<sup>22</sup> However Whitman chose to spell it, it is clear that "Mannahatta" captured for him the living personality and bustling multiplicity of urban life.<sup>23</sup>

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.<sup>24</sup>

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.

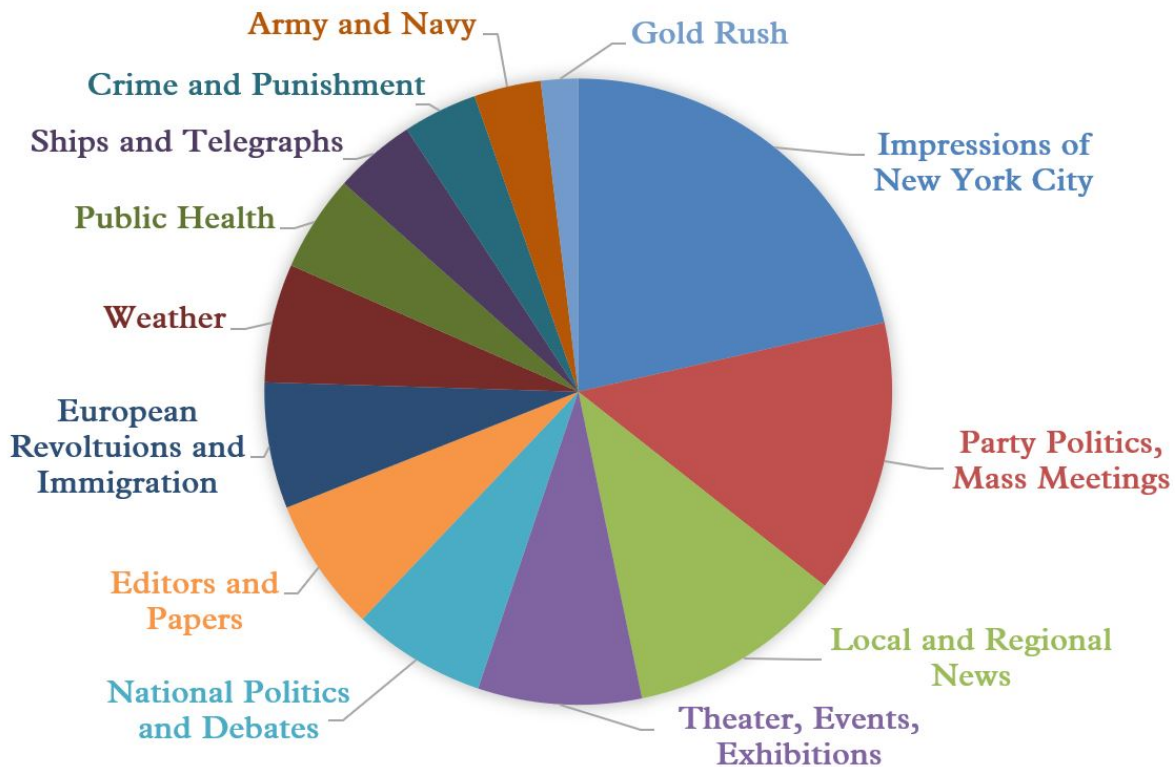


Figure 3. Relative extent of topics and themes in “Manhattan’s” correspondence (counted on a paragraph level, one theme per paragraph; varying length of paragraphs not accounted for).

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.<sup>25</sup> It extends as late as January 19, 1849, a few months into his work editing the *Brooklyn Freeman*. All “Manahatta / Manhattan”<sup>26</sup> 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.<sup>27</sup> (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.<sup>28</sup> 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” Brooklyn<sup>29</sup> and its recovery efforts, though no special mention is made of the *Freeman*.<sup>30</sup>



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.<sup>31</sup>

The Steyermarkers were by no means a major success and barely left an imprint in the newspaper sphere of the day.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup>

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.<sup>34</sup>

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.”



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.<sup>35</sup> “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.<sup>36</sup>

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.<sup>37</sup>

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 1848<sup>38</sup> 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.”

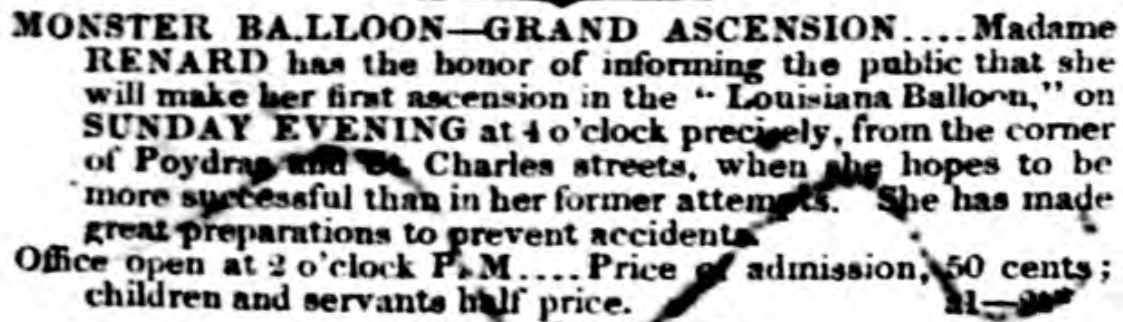


There is more evidence yet—evidence that will be familiar to any reader of Whitman’s prose. Like the journalist Whitman, and like the novelist Whitman in his anonymously published *Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*, “Manhattan” shows an intense fascination with Trinity Church and, in particular, the grave of Revolutionary War naval hero James Lawrence.<sup>39</sup> If Whitman conceptualized much of his novel *Jack Engle* around 1846-1848,<sup>40</sup> 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.<sup>41</sup>

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"<sup>42</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup>

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 dragging it over the fence tore it all to peices, they did not leave a peice a foot square So ended all that.<sup>44</sup>

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.<sup>45</sup>

“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.<sup>46</sup>

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.<sup>47</sup> Based on this attribution, Emory Holloway included seven installments in his *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*,<sup>48</sup> 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.<sup>49</sup> The only prominent dissenting voice is biographer Jerome Loving.<sup>50</sup>

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.<sup>51</sup> *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’hoy” 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.

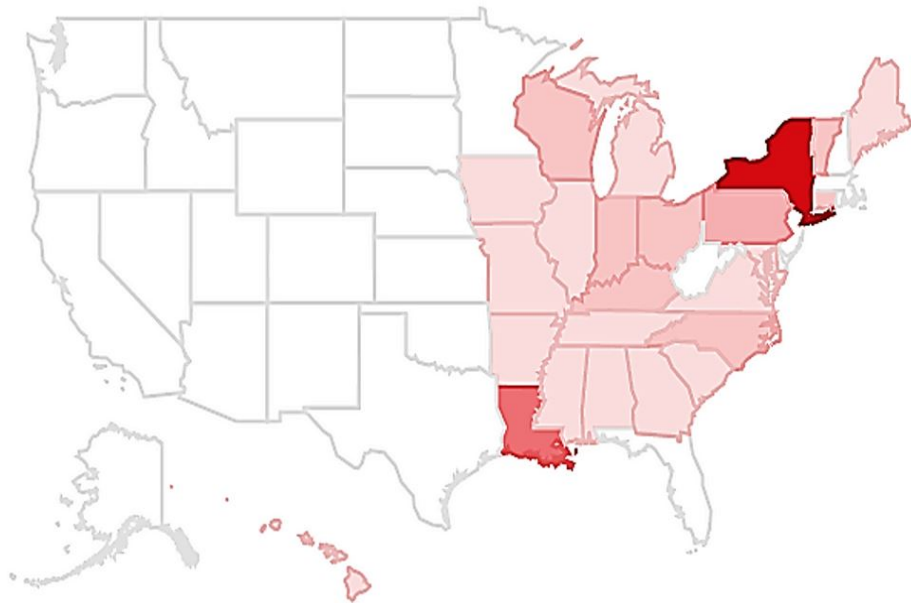
Beyond attribution history, there are elements in these sketches that support the suggestion of Whitman’s authorship, beginning with the authorial persona employed. When Loving suggests that either a local city news writer or a mysterious “local humorist” (who must have not been on the staff, never republished 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.<sup>52</sup> 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’hoy” 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’hoy swagger” for *Leaves*.<sup>53</sup> In the mid-1840s, “b’hoy” 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.”<sup>54</sup> 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).<sup>55</sup> 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.”<sup>56</sup>

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*.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup>

Whitman would later socialize with Halleck at Pfaff’s,<sup>59</sup> 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.”<sup>60</sup> 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,<sup>61</sup> 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,<sup>62</sup> an experience he shared with “Manhattan.”<sup>63</sup>

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.”<sup>64</sup> 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).

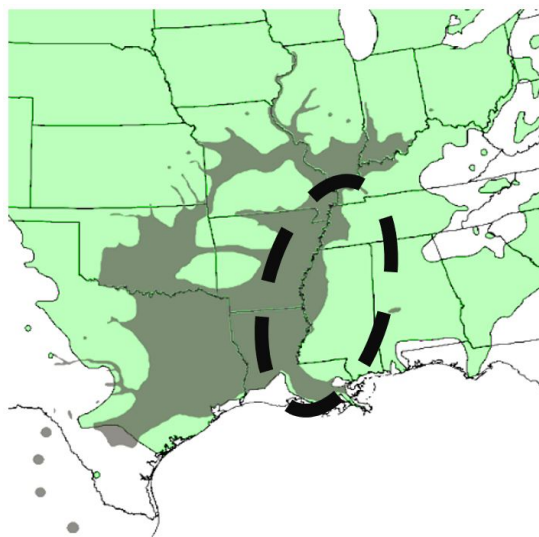


Figure 6:  
Distribution of  
Pecan (dark),  
and Eastern  
Cottonwood  
(light) via  
Wikimedia.  
Mississippi  
circled.

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).<sup>65</sup> 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,<sup>66</sup> 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 <sup>the best of what is called learned and refined society, or</sup> the company of ~~lawyers and book-factors~~ and men ~~with~~from stores and offices <sup>from [even?] the best of what is called intellectual society</sup> to sail all day on the river ~~with-~~amid a party of ~~pilots and~~ <sup>fresh and jovial</sup> boatmen, with no coats or suspenders, and their trowsers tucked in their boots.—~~What polkas are danced~~ <sup>Then How the quick blood within us joins other their</sup> gay blood and <sup>the</sup> ~~twain~~ dances ~~swift~~ polkas from the ~~top to the~~ bottom to the top of the houses, ~~when,~~ <sup>after</sup> long constraint in the respectable and money-making dens of existence, ~~we~~ <sup>a man</sup> emerges ~~for a few hours into~~for a few hours<sup>67</sup>

This passage, which also has echoes in other moments of *Leaves*,<sup>68</sup> 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.<sup>69</sup> 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)”<sup>70</sup> 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.”<sup>71</sup>

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.<sup>72</sup>

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.<sup>73</sup>

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,"<sup>74</sup> 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,"<sup>75</sup> 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,”<sup>76</sup> 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.<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup>

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.<sup>79</sup> 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*).<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup> 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 Virginity 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.<sup>82</sup> 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)<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup>

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,<sup>85</sup> 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*.<sup>86</sup> 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."<sup>87</sup> 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."<sup>88</sup> 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."<sup>89</sup>

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.”<sup>90</sup> 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.<sup>91</sup> 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*,<sup>92</sup> 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](http://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](http://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/](http://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’hoy 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’hoy’ 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’hoy” 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, waggling 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 facec[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).

## APPENDIX: A SAMPLING OF NEW ORLEANS *CRESCENT* “NORTHERN CORRESPONDENCE” FROM “MANAHATTA”/“MANHATTAN”

[July 24, 1848, p. 2]

### NORTHERN CORRESPONDENCE.

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NEW YORK CITY, July 13, 1848.

*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 sentences, 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. A calculation was made sometime since, by a curious boarder at Tammany, of how many persons passed and repassed there in the course of the day. Somewhere about forty or forty-five thousand, I believe, was the number, estimated from actual counting at several periods of several days! In the morning come tripping along hundreds and hundreds of girls from fourteen to twenty-five years old, many of them really beautiful, and all, with a rare exception here and there, neat and healthy looking; they are employed in book-binding, umbrella, lace, and other establishments, and their wages range from two to six dollars per week. It is astonishing what a vein of intelligence—one may say refinement—is perceptible in these young women; no other city on earth, not even Paris, where grace is the female’s



birthright, can equal them. Besides these girls, there are innumerable swarms of mechanics and other workmen, porters, store-boys with their big brass keys, etc. An hour or two later, the complexion of the crowd is a little changed. There is a great quantity of better broadcloth, less worn and less dusty; but, in general, the wearers are not so comely as the more hard-working folk of the earlier morning. The merchants and store-keepers—the head clerks, editors, late risers, lawyers, traders—make up the volume of the stream. Still a little later, and all during the middle of the day, it continues to be of the most ample and heterogeneous materials. If you are fond of studying “character,” here is your chance; here you have it in all its varieties, each variety presenting itself in all its different forms. Important news is generally known here, the first place of all the town. In times of political elections, when returns are due from distant States, or from quarters of New York itself more important even than some States, here you may see packed in a dense body, sometimes filling up the whole of the immense area, thousands and tens of thousands of that majestic animal “the People,” waiting to hear “who’s elected.” Nothing [sic] else on God’s wide and beautiful earth, would stop them one tithe as long from their regular avocations.

Of late years, nearly all the big meetings—the “mass meetings” of the people—have been called in the Park, just nigh the quarter described in the foregoing lines; and it has been found that the best time to call these meetings is 6 o’clock in the evening. By the time the business of getting under weigh is through with, the “masses,” who stop work at 6 o’clock, are on their way home in myriads. Rarely do they fail—those who come from down town, on their course up to the immense section above Chatham Square (all our triangular pieces of land here are called “squares”)—to stop and tarry awhile at these meetings. Working men thus lose no time, and if the speakers make out a good argument, and show a fair cause, they seldom fail of creating an impression on the minds of hundreds of their auditors; for, after all, the body of the “common people,” aay from the corrupting influence of politicians, are anxious to do right, on principle. Perhaps there is no completer or more convincing evidence of the superiority of the political fabric of this country, over any other that has yet existed on earth, than one of these Park meetings—where, of late years, it is no uncommon thing to see from twenty to thirty thousand people assembled. It is n’t considered any thing at all unless the attendance numbers six or eight thousand. The moment the audience gets too large to be conveniently talked to by a couple of speakers, (one on each end of a large stage,) up go other stages with the rapidity of magic. If these all get enveloped with hearers, and more “accommodation” is wanted yet, the steps of the Hall of records, the jutting stones at the top of the basement

windows of the City Hall, a neighboring hogshead or barrel, any thing handy, is put to the uses of a standing place, where the multitude can come nigh and be talked to. All the various branches of a great question are sometimes discussed, in full blast, at the same moment, by twenty different voices. Invariably there is a German and a French speaker at some of these stands—sometimes others, of other languages, particularly Italian and Spanish. As the evening advances, the talkers and listeners both grow more impassioned—the first bringing forward their stoutest points and most eloquent appeals, and the others responding with such shouts as make one feel how grand is the voice a human myriad! A few lights are brought to each stand, but they seem only as a drop in the ocean—you can do nothing but *hear*; and the excited voices, the flickering and darkness, and the impressible multitude around, make up a strangely picturesque scene.

MANAHATTA.



[July 27, 1848, p. 2]

NORTHERN CORRESPONDENCE.

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NEW YORK CITY, July 17, 1848

*Eds. Crescent*—Whatever may be said of the “horrible state of society” in Paris, it certainly affords glorious times for newspaper editors and correspondents. How beautiful! every week some plot or counter-plot—some *émeute*—some danger to Government and public safety. Why, they will soon turn up their noses in Paris, at a disturbance that involves the destruction of less than a thousand or two lives!—“Blessed is that people,” says some very big philosopher whose name I forget, “who have no annals to write”—meaning, I suppose, that nothing bad, at least, can be said about said people. But that’s questionable philosophy. Human nature looks best when developed by struggles, and changes of circumstances. Lethargy and stagnation, you know, are not only connected together, but are the most uninteresting qualities in the world.

Our good city of New York, now-a-time, is blessed with hardly any annals to write. Editors, it is true, *are* writing, every day; and the people read what they write. But the latter is merely created, for the most part, “to fill up.” (Alas, that some process equally handy could’nt be hit upon to produce the same effect on

the poorer children of Old Ireland!) The situation of New York precludes her daily journals from making an important ingredient of that melange of miscellaneous news, which is so desirable to the papers of other places. We have to eke out something original; something that *looks* fresh, at any rate—even though it is like a new quilt made of old materials. Readers' appetites here will no more be satisfied with any thing less than dishes on a great scale, and of the latest style of dressing. Yet there is a wondrous amount of superficiality in the daily disquisitions spread before that hydra-headed creature "the public," by the daily and weekly gazettes. "Flat, stale, and unprofitable," are, indeed, more than half the "leaders" (particularly during summer) of the Northern newspapers. I will say nothing of the Southern ones, because you have them among you to speak for themselves.

[“]It is now a settled and irrevocable fact that the democrats of New York,” yclept Barnburners, have broken away utterly and altogether from “the party,” as organized in the Baltimore Convention, and developed in the nominations of Cass and Butler. Martin Van Buren, from his farm at Kinderhook, looks out upon the troubled waves, but evinces no inclination to say, “Peace, be still.” It is understood that he was violently opposed to accepting the nomination of the Convention at Utica; but things took such an enthusiastic turn there, and his oldest and truest friends had so committed themselves, and his name, that he will now, it is said, allow matters to take their own course. The Radicals here, confidently expect, in his name, to carry the State of New York.

John Van Buren, as soon as the nomination was made, wrapped himself up in lavender, and laid his political body on the shelf—swearing with an oath of the old sort, that he would spout no more during this campaign. John will keep good, though, for future use; and that, before many seasons, he must be “brought out,” is as certain as that the morning star will rise. All the young fellows of the North, cotton to John; there is such a buoyancy, frankness, and such a charming abandon, in his sayings and doings. Shrewd judges of mankind say that Master John has the making of a better man, than the man who made him. In the way of amusements, New York is yet unflagging. Hamblin has taken the Park Theatre, which he will carry on in conjunction with the Bowery. Heaven send him success; for the “old man’s” stout heart deserves it. Burton’s Theatre, (Palmo’s old place in Chambers street,) has had the Viennoise dancing children. At the Astor Place Opera House, have been performed during the summer, comedies and vaudevilles—to-morrow night, they present some music, with a Mons. and Madame Laborde, from Paris. The Monplaisiers are at the Broadway—and “the “B”hoys” at the Chatham. Besides all these, we have Castle

Garden, Museums, Concerts, Shows, etc., without end.

Our streets and public places present, at intervals, something connected with the “late war,” as it must now be called—something in the way of a soldier or officer in his yet worn uniform, or a mutilated relic of what *was* a stalwart man, but whom disease, or bullet or bayonet, has shorn of his fair proportions. Will it not be a little curious to see what effect, over and athwart the land, the bringing home whence they started, and rediffusing among us, a *real army*, will have on the affairs of the Republic? You remember, through the war, the anti-fighting folks predicted all sorts of dangers, when peace should make it necessary to disband out army. It is difficult, though, to perceive any likelihood of such dangers in any circumstances at present existing.

MANAHATTA.



[October 10, 1848, p.2]

NORTHERN CORRESPONDENCE.

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NEW YORK. Sept. 30, 1848.

Broadway, now-a-days, presents its most attractive and splendid appearance of all the year. Talk a walk with me, up that far-famed thoroughfare. Cross we over from the Battery gates, to the corner where stands the residence of Mr. Ex-Mayor Mickle; an ancient pile, (ancient for America,) built originally for the colonial gubernatorial palace, and occupied as such by Sir Henry Clinton, and by the British commanders during their occupation of New York, from the disastrous week following the battle of Long Island, down to

“Evacuation day  
When the British ran away,”

as the old school-boy rhyme hath it. The architecture of those days was of a more permanent character than marks our hasty times. The brick walls of this old house, for instance, keep their truest perpendicular, and the ceiling their exact horizontal, without a need of repair; while many structures of far later date and more ambitious pretensions, have long since become quite dilapidated. Just off at our back is the stately row that faces the Bowling Green, and looks so superciliously up Broadway, as if announcing to the world in general that there

was nothing “up there” that could hold a candle to the more time-honored dignity of houses standing on the oldest settled spots of Manhattan.

The Bowling Green Fountain—what think you of it? Ah, judge not by its present dry and desolate look. When the water gushes out and rolls over the rocks in cascading little rills, and the big spout lifts itself as high as the tallest trees, *then* you might have a better opinion of this fountain. People’s judgments yet remain divided about its merits; some approve the design, and others pretending to equal taste, condemn it as a vile blotch. One thing must be acknowledged by all; that what left arid and bare, the dull gray rocks, and dry bed of the surrounding excavation, make one of the most unsightly spectacles that a pair of eyes need look upon.

As we pass up Broadway, we behold numerous happy bits of solid and tasty architecture. Some eight or ten doors from Battery place, that tall dwelling’s entrance is guarded by the same big lines, bronzed over, that held watch on the spot ere the former house was burnt down in the great fire of ’45. Here, a few doors further, where Mrs. David Hale formerly kept an excellent boarding house, stands Delmonico’s, with its gorgeous furniture, fit for a palace. Then comes a long row of houses, (on the left,) venerable and not over fashionable, but still inhabited by remnants of old Knickerbocker families, and of rich proprietors and merchants. To the right hand,

[*missing line*]

commercial men. The U.S. Bonded Warehouse occupied the site of the old Waverly Hotel, and some beautiful stores have been put up still further down.

Now we begin to meet the tide of fashion. Our New York belles fit along so gracefully; you may know them by that lithe and easy walk, and unmistakable dash of style and elegance. You may always confidently count on seeing a greater proportion of feminine beauty, on the Venus of Medici model, during an hour’s walk along Broadway, than any where else out of Paradise. 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.

Trinity Church here lifts its head; a majestic and somber pile, whose proportions are so true and chaste that the beholder, at first, does not realize its magnitude—for that’s one of the results of an exact proportion of parts, in architecture. The interior of this church is even nobler than the outside; there is a *sermon* even in the arched inner roof; I have often spent half an hour in roaming my eyes over that roof, and along the great rear window, which portrays the Saviour and Apostles, of life-size. Come along here any Sunday



morning, and you will hear the bells chiming merrily; it is a pity they don't get some competent player upon them, however. Merely trolling over an octave of tones, and repeating that continually, is but a poor substitute for the real music that might be drawn from the bells. There at the entrance, just to the left, is the brave *Lawrence's* burial place and monument, a marble sarcophagus above the surface, with several cannons half buried perpendicularly around, and supporting as iron chain. On one side of the monument is the following inscription:

"The Hero whose remains are here deposited, with his dying breath expressed his devotion to his country. Neither the fury of battle—the anguish of a mortal wound—nor the horrors of approaching death, could subdue his gallant spirit. His dying words were—*Don't give up the ship!*"

Still wending our way onward, the current increased, becoming more dense, and its elements affords study enough just to walk Broadway, and behold the mixture of character and appearance spread over the sidewalks. The shops and their glittering wares—the foreign sights—"the fashions"—both masculine and feminine, are all together of inferior interest to the *humanity* one sees in Broadway:

"Youth, with pale brow and slender frame,  
And dreams of greatness in thine eye,  
Go'st thou to build an early name,  
Or, early in thy task, to die?

"Keen son of trade, with eager brow,  
Who is now fluttering in thy snare?  
Thy golden fortunes, tower they now,  
Or melt the glittering shapes to air?

"Who of this crowd to-night shall tread  
The dance, till daylight gleam again?  
Who sorrow o'er the untimely dead?  
Who writhe in throes of mortal pain?

"Some famine-struck, shall think how long  
The cold dark hours, how slow the light ;  
And some who flaunt amid the throng,  
Shall hide in shame to-night."

Expressed verses those, a'int they? and in Bryant's own concise, smooth, sculptuary style.

At our left hand and right, the windows are of thick plate glass, that seems like varnished air. Some of those panes cost hundreds of dollars; and, inside, behold the riches of all climes and arts and nations! Hats of a gloss darker than the still waters that lie in the shade of mountain chasms—patent-leather boots, ditto—garments with the royal signet of Broadway in every seam and fold—books, and *such* books, O *they* indeed are to be envied, particularly if one looks in at Wiley’s or Putnam’s, or Appleton’s—jewelry more beautiful than Shas and Sultans ever wore, because arranged with civilized taste—and five hundred other things, and et ceteras far, far too many to mention—these line the sides of Broadway, fenced in from the operation of “communist principles” by iron sticks and the aforesaid plate glass.

Let us pause a moment on the flagging before St. Paul’s. This crowd, which surrounds us, as you see, is composed mostly of foreigners and country-folk. They are curiously gazing at the pictures which placard the walls of the American Museum opposite—pictures of fish, flesh and fowl, and of some objects which surely were never before seen in earth, sea or air. The “Mammoth Boys,” and the “Real Tong-Gong Minstrels,” are, doubtless, especially attractive—though their “counterfeit presentments” there would hardly enrapture an artist.

Perhaps the noisiest part of Broadway is from the Astor House to Chambers street. There resounds an incessant clang, like the roar of an endless battle, with dust to match, sometimes—opposite, lies the Park, with its thrifty trees, and its lovely fountain, ever gushing. Amid the rumbling, you from moment to moment distinguish the dull click of the iron gates of the Park, falling to from the myriad of in and out-goers. The massive square walls of the Astor, which ages to come will probably look upon as we look now, are adorned here and there, by the glancing out of pleasant faces from the windows—women’s and children’s faces. Just beyond, glimpses of it appearing through the trees, shows the dirty white of the City Hall; Justice, up aloft, as far out of the way as it was possible to put her, and where not one human being out of a thousand could possibly reach her.

So much for even a hasty transcript of a part of one’s impressions in Broadway. We will reserve the rest for another epistle.

MANHATTAN.



[January 16, 1849, p. 1]

*Correspondence of the Crescent.*

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Something about New York Editors—M.M. Noah—Col. Webb, of the Courier—Mr. Inman, of the Commercial Advertiser—Mr. Beach, of the Sun.

NEW YORK, Jan. 5, 1849.

Among the New York editors, your and my old friend M. M. Noah, the Nestor of the band, leads the list—in point of age and experience, at any rate. What a successful editor he has been! Good-hearted, always willing to do a kindness, liberal handed, not too nice in his political morality, true to his friends, and not very spiteful toward his foes, desirous to live well, and almost equally desirous that others also should live well—such are some of the characteristics of Major Noah. He has seen New York grow up, as it were; at any rate he has seen the growth of what we possess in the way of literature and classic refinement. For some forty years he has trod the stage—and life, that has proved a tragedy to so many, has been to him an even drama. Long may it be ere the curtain drops upon his last act!

Major Noah still retains his portliness of form, activity of limb, and benevolence of feature. He mixes much with the world, and is acceptable everywhere. You may see him of an evening, for a stray hour, on a back bench in the first tier of the Olympic—or perhaps the Broadway. He has excellent taste as a critic of the drama, and has written some by no means bad pieces himself. When he condescends to talk in the gossiping vein, of past times, then you get a treat indeed. We know few persons who are more entertaining in conversation than Major Noah. He is always lively, with French vivacity and grace in his style—and always brings up something interesting. He is now a proprietor and editor of the “Sunday Times,” and it is said, likes a little dab in the editorial columns of some other prints, too. Few men have more personal friends, and few men have done as much good, according to their means.

Col. James Watson Webb, may perhaps, without in propriety, stand next upon our list. His journal undoubtedly exercises a good deal of influence—at least it does, if those appalling large advertising sheets ever exercise any influence. The style of Col. Webb’s writing is forcible, almost dictatorial, with many dashes of self opinion, scorn, and impatience of opposing argument. Col. W. is

considered as the head, among editors, of “the other side” of the whigs, than Horace Greeley. He lives in style, and always among the “upper ten.” He used to have town houses and country houses; but alas! such things seem not intended for editors; and so they have failed him. Col. Webb, in person, is full and healthy looking; he limps a little, from the effects of a wound in a well-known rencontre.

Since the death of Col. Stone, Mr. John Inman has been principal editor of the Commercial Advertiser. By most persons it is considered a still better paper under his management than formerly. Col. Stone was remarkably conservative; he inherited the notions of the old federalists, or rather shared them, and was, in politics, somewhat of a thorn in the whig side, for he never deigned to “soft soap” the people. Mr. Inman is more genial in ideas and sentiments. He possesses considerable literary talent, and was for some time the principal editor of the “Columbian Magazine.” His writings, however, are not deep; their principal merits are a flowing style, and an opportune choice of subject. Mr. Inman labors under an infirm state of health consequent upon too continued application.

Mr. Beach, you know, has retired from the “Sun,” and left it to his boys. That was a lucky “spec” of his, in getting hold of the little rickety, dingy concern that few expected to live six months! Perhaps the records of newspaper experience furnish no instance of a more rapidly growing and widely flourishing newspaper. Mr. Beach had his good and his indifferent qualities. I cannot say I think he possessed *bad* ones, decidedly. One of these days I intend to give you a description of the “Sun” establishment. Should you like, these sketches of New York editors will be continued from time to time.

Manhattan.



[January 19, 1849, p. 3]

*Correspondence of the Crescent.*

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NEW YORK, January 7th.

The weather here still continues excessively cold—the earth being covered with snow and ice, from an inch to six inches thick. Day and night we are saluted by merry sleigh-bells, all along the streets. The omnibuses vie with each other in the gayety and flutter of their turn-outs, and it is one of the sights worth looking at, to stand on the side-walk and see them pass along. Not even the private vehicles,

sleigh-fashion, rich as some of their caparisonings are, can compete with those same omnibuses. With their superb white horses—the rims of the dash-boards arching over like the necks of serpents—and from twenty to a hundred ladies and gents “inside”—you may imagine what a show they present!

Just after dark sets in, Broadway presents the appearance of an illuminated carnival—even the fancy dresses are made up by the grotesque look of many of the sleighs. Outredom seems ransacked to furnish patterns for the “fancy” to put on runners. I have noticed several sea-serpents, a mer-maid or two and dolphins are quite common.

We are much concerned at the sad accounts from New Orleans respecting the cholera. It is, however, the confident supposition that before this date, this disease must have subsided, if not left you entirely. Thousands of anxious hearts listen here with eager interest to each successive instalment of the news on this melancholy matter.

In our neighborhood—the Quarantine station at Staten Island—no cases of the cholera occurred during Thursday and Friday last, and the Health Officer has ceased making any reports. Not the least alarm is felt here on the subject. Next summer I fear it will be a different affair; but let next summer take care of itself.

Ice begins to make its appearance in the East river, floating along in “pretty considerable” masses, too, at times. Some of the weather-wise predict a continuation of the sever cold, and, as a natural consequence, a hard winter. Heaven knows, if the weather lasts like it has been for the past week, the coal-yards and the provision-dealers will haul in lots of money. All work for out-of-door mechanics has completely stopped; immense rows of buildings in the “burnt district” of Brooklyn having been embargoed in the suddenest manner possible. And oh! what noses you may see, early in the morning, at the street corners!

MANHATTAN.



## NOTES



WAS WHITMAN “BETRAYED” IN BRAZIL?:  
GEIR CAMPOS, ANA CRISTINA CESAR,  
AND THE 1983 CHOPPING UP OF *LEAVES OF GRASS*

“The idea of translating Whitman’s poetry had never crossed my mind . . . the original language of the poet was enough for me to understand and love him well.”<sup>1</sup> But Brazilian poet Geir Campos nevertheless decided to translate Whitman’s poetry, and not only once. In 1964, just a few weeks before Brazil fell under the rule of a right-wing military regime, Campos published *Fôlhas de Relva*, the first substantial selection of poems from Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* to be translated into Brazilian Portuguese.<sup>2</sup> Nineteen years later, just two years before the collapse of the twenty-one-year regime, Campos revisited this selection and republished it by tacking on a “leafy pun”: *Fôlhas de Relva (Leaves of Grass)* became *Folhas das Folhas de Relva (Leaves of Leaves of Grass)* in 1983.<sup>3</sup>

Why did Campos decide that his 1964 *Fôlhas de Relva* was *not* “enough to understand and love” the American poet in 1983? Why not simply republish his former translation as it was? In this brief commentary, I offer a new view of *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* through a reading and critique of “O Rosto, o Corpo, a Voz” (“The Face, the Body, the Voice”), Brazilian poet Ana Cristina Cesar’s contemporaneous review of Campos’s retranslation. Besides briefly discussing the contribution of Cesar’s early critical piece to the reception of *Leaves of Grass* within the cultural and historical circuits of 1980s Brazil, I also offer, along with US American translator and poet Reginald Gibbons, a translation of “O Rosto, o Corpo, a Voz” into English for the first time. Such tasks must begin by evidencing how Campos transformed *Fôlhas de Relva* into *Folhas das Folhas de Relva*.

The readers who glance through the 1964 and the 1983 editions easily notice what both have in common: the same overall organization and number of poems (twenty-three in total, some complete, others in fragments), displayed according to Whitman’s arrangements of clusters and sequences in the 1891-

1892 final, or “death bed” edition of *Leaves of Grass*. A more detailed look at them, however, could leave readers bewildered. To start with, and in radical contrast with the 1964 volume, *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* features Campos’s inclusion of extensive paratexts—a pen-and-ink portrait of Whitman drawn by Japanese-descent artist Joji Kusunoki; a biographical note summarizing Campos’s life and professional achievements; a preface written by countercultural Brazilian poet Paulo Leminski; a list of other books published in the same series, accompanied by blurbs and reviews; and Campos’s own “Esta Tradução” (“This Translation”), a combining of a critical introduction with a quasi-theory of translation that opens with a suggestive epigraph, “I too am untranslatable,” Whitman’s verse 52 in “Song of Myself.”

It is in “Esta Tradução” that Campos attempted an explanation of his second change in the 1983 edition: the title itself. He writes, “this is a translation of selected poems of *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman which, by parodying the title *Flores das ‘Flores do Mal’* (*The Flowers of ‘The Flowers of Evil’*), quite a find by Guilherme de Almeida for his translation of selected poems of Charles Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du Mal*, could only be titled *Folhas das Folhas de Relva*” (141).<sup>4</sup> Campos’s play on de Almeida’s translation of Baudelaire’s original title, as well as on Whitman’s and his own in 1964, added more layers to emphasize the rewritings that his 1983 edition had gone through. The reader holding *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* was left with no doubt that the *Leaves of Grass* s/he was about to get acquainted with was, for better or for worse, “loose leaves.”

The most crucial and substantive change is on the level of poetics. Campos drastically remodeled Whitman’s poetry: he rearranged the original syntax and the typographical position of the poems on the page, deleted his old punctuation, added some that was new, used altered typefaces and fonts, and updated, so to speak, Whitman’s diction so as to fit it into the 1980s Brazilian countercultural ethos and imaginary. Most blatantly, he dismembered Whitman’s stretched-out lines into halves of roughly equal length, rendering the original poems almost unrecognizable. Campos’s gesture, in sum, conventionalized—or “remodernized”—the greatest novelty of Whitman’s lineation, what Brazilian critic Ivo Barroso has described as his “versicular-liturgical outpouring” (Barroso).<sup>5</sup>

Campos justifies these radical changes in “Esta Tradução” under Czech translation theorist Josef Cermák’s rubrics “sous-interpretée” and “sur-interpretée.” *Folhas das Folhas de Relva*, Campos explains, is “an ‘over-interpretation’ of selected poems and fragments of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* . . . whereas the ‘under-interpretation’ moves the translation toward the writer, the ‘over-interpretation’ moves it toward the reader.”<sup>6</sup> That is, whereas in 1964

Campos attempted to preserve, as he put it, “what the original has in terms of strangeness” by strictly creating a translational equivalence of Whitman’s source language, culture, and poetics, in 1983 he went “beyond-the-limit” and “over-interpreted” the poet by “erasing (Whitman’s) exotic characteristics,” radically minimizing the 1964 equivalence.<sup>7</sup>

Not convinced by Campos’s justification, the Brazilian poet Ana Cristina Cesar—to whom Whitman was an acknowledged forefather and a holistic presence in her works—grabs a pen and writes “O Rosto, o Corpo, a Voz” (“The Face, the Body, the Voice”), the first review of Campos’s “leafy choppings-up.” Published in the leftist Brazilian newspaper *Jornal do Brasil* just a few weeks after *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* had made its *entrée* into the Brazilian cultural landscape in 1983, the review reflects Cesar’s strong disapproval of Campos’s gesture. She argues, “no goal of popularizing—and no theoretical option concerning translation itself—seems to justify these abrupt choppings-up of the original line that unnecessarily betray the literary intention of the American poet.”<sup>8</sup> And, borrowing Portuguese poet Álvaro de Campos’s epithets when describing Whitman’s verses in his own “Saudação a Walt Whitman”<sup>9</sup> (“Salute to Walt Whitman”), Cesar is quite direct about what makes Whitman distinctively Whitman, at least formally: “where are the jump-verses, the leap-verses, the spasm-poems for the Brazilian reader—be he erudite or not?”<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult not to partly agree with Cesar’s remarks, especially when form is taken into account. Campos—some might argue—visually updated *Leaves of Grass* “backward” in *Folhas das Folhas de Relva*: Whitman’s poems appear less idiosyncratic and constrained; and Whitman, in turn, seems a stylistically conservative poet. But rather than “betraying Whitman’s literary intention” with his “loose poems” (i.e. translations), as Cesar put it, I read Campos’s gesture in 1983 as his attempt to retranslate Whitman’s “content” rather than Whitman’s “form,” a dichotomy that Cesar is somewhat oblivious to in her review, but that Campos himself was quite aware of. Proof of this is the answer he gives to Brazilian scholar Maria Clara Bonetti Paro after being questioned in a personal letter whether *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* would have met with less success had Whitman’s verses not been fragmented: “I think Whitman’s ‘content’ does not depend on the ‘form’ of his verse. . . .”<sup>11</sup>

The explanation I have given elsewhere for Campos’s assertion that “Whitman’s content does not depend on the form of his verse” goes beyond Cesar’s remarks concerning formal equivalences in translation.<sup>12</sup> I have read *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* as a paragon of what I called inter-creation: a translation practice in which the translator aims at preserving and balancing the

complexities of the cultural encounter between the source and target languages and texts while incorporating them into his/her work. What Campos attempted to balance in his inter-created *Leaves of Grass* was the cultural correspondence that Brazil and the United States shared at that time. Domestically, this correspondence was represented by the 1970s *Udigrudi/Marginal* subculture; transnationally, by the US hippie life-style and its modes of thought.<sup>13</sup>

As such, Campos's inter-creation of *Leaves of Grass* was highly revisionist at a political and cultural level. It offered Brazilian readers a tangible imaginative window to the kind of freedom and revolutionary spirit on which they could base their reading and acting during the most ferocious period of Brazil's political history: the military regime (1964-1985). Much like Whitman, the comrade of all rebellious souls, Brazilians could also be libidinous, defiant, subversive, all-encompassing, and gender-inclusive; and much like the United States, Brazil could also be, as *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* proved, an insurgent, military-free, and youth-based nation. In this way, and here is what Cesar mostly failed to acknowledge in her review, Campos did contribute to globalizing Brazil not only at a linguistic, but also at a cultural and political level.

For political, historical, cultural, and disciplinary reasons, creative encounters of Brazilian writers with Whitman's works in translation such as Campos's have yet to receive serious historical and critical attention in literary and cultural scholarship, both within and outside Brazil. Not to mention the scarce terrain of translations of Whitman's works themselves—his early poems, experimental essays, prefaces, journals, short stories, journalistic series, and all the other editions of *Leaves of Grass* are still awaiting “translations to come” in Brazil. Given these yet incipient fields, Cesar's unique piece on Campos's 1983 translation is thus remarkable—hence her final comment in “O Rosto, o Corpo, a Voz.” “Leafing through” Campos's chopped-up *Leaves* is indeed “indispensable” to open “a much-needed discussion on translation of poetry” among us, either in Brazil, the U.S., or elsewhere.

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“THE FACE, THE BODY, THE VOICE”

ANA CRISTINA CESAR

*Jornal do Brasil*, “Caderno B”  
April 23, 1983<sup>14</sup>

Walt Whitman has the power to unsettle poets and readers. Reading Whitman is almost like becoming Whitman’s lover. It was Álvaro de Campos who took notice of this more radically in his “Salutation to Walt Whitman.” In this poem, Campos celebrates him sensually, kisses his portrait, and speaks of a “love erection,” although “abstract and indirect deep in his soul.” Other great poets, in a loving celebration, have sung him in verses that seemingly adopt—unreasonably, as the always restrained lover Borges would say—the style of his poems: García Lorca, in his “Ode to Walt Whitman,” and Vicente Huidobro, in his epic “Altazor.” It is symptomatic that this loving celebration reveals Whitman’s figure itself—the face, the beard, the body, the voice—disclosing true shudders of desire.

This shuddering does not come from a fascination with Whitman’s life. It matters little to write a biography of the great American poet (1819-1889), author of one of the most compelling books of poetry ever written, the bulky *Leaves of Grass*, “a song of the great collective individual, the common man or woman,” that has now made its appearance among us with a compilation titled *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* (*Leaves of Leaves of Grass*). “Whitman is to America what Dante is to Italy,” said Pound in unequivocal recognition of his vitality. Paradise is the word that emerges when one speaks of this vitality, and when Borges, in a classic text about the poet, shrewdly mentions that “to move from the paradisaic orb of his verses to the insipid chronicle of his days is a melancholic transition.”

Whitman himself used to point out that his life was only “a few faint traces” of which he knew little or nothing. In reality, the fascination with the figure of this poet arises from his radical poetics. A true inventor, he affirms the foundation of the real on the word: the book is the poet. The final farewell—the key—of *Leaves of Grass*, is his saying that it is not a book: “It is I you hold and who holds you,” and he springs with desire into the arms of those who read it—that is, of those who *touch* it.



This is what is fascinating about him—the other side of modernity, that which reinvents happiness. Whitman breaks with the metaphysics that imposes yet weeps over the distance between the world and language. Álvaro de Campos, a genius tortured by metaphysics, captured the great Whitman question most precisely: “In your lines, at a certain point, I don’t know if I’m reading or living./ I don’t know if my place is in the world or in your lines.”

*Leaves of Grass* realizes, within the book and *as* a book, “one of the few great things of modern literature: the figure of oneself.” This grand mythic figure establishes an intimate relationship with every reader, present and future, merges itself with the reader, and affirms itself as sensorially present. Thus, for those who apprehend Whitman’s poetics, to read *Leaves of Grass* is to kiss and be kissed by Whitman himself. The mediation of the portrait in Álvaro de Campos would not even be necessary. Poetically, the revolutionary euphoria of Whitman’s poetics abolishes the issue of representation as detachment.

The current Brazilian edition of *Leaves of Grass* is a selection of poems intended to either promote or vulgarize the book to the “non-erudite reader” (a singular contradiction: Whitman is precisely the poet who writes to the non-erudite reader, to the reader who is all Readers). Without a doubt, what is lost in it is the Whitmanian intention, which gives *Leaves of Grass* its form as a Book of Books, a Book physically present that says it is the poet himself. When leafing through these beautiful poems, it is worth keeping in mind that the original is not a compilation of loose poems: it is a book, which, like any book, wants to be an archetype, and this itself is a fundamental theme of Whitman’s poetry. If this collection can be justified by its purpose of promoting Whitman’s work, the same cannot be said of the translator’s option to break his originally long and captivating lines into two, three short verses in the translation. The rhythm, now choppy and modest, makes Whitman’s exclamatory, emotional, and *rhetorical* fluency disappear (rhetorical as in the original Greek sense of *rétor*, to convince, dissuade, or persuade the interlocutor, as Paulo Leminski rightly notes in the introduction to the edition). It also considerably reduces the level of emotion so intimately linked to the feverish pace of the long line, which imitates the intention of the text, its euphoric sensual affirmation, rhetoric of love, and recurrent metaphor of the word’s embrace. This metaphor traverses and shapes his country from end to end.

No goal of popularizing—and no theoretical option concerning translation itself—seems to justify the abrupt choppings-up of the original lines, which unnecessarily betray the literary intention of the American poet. Simply compare the current Brazilian translation with Borges’s translation, which faithfully

maintains the original versification and rhythm, even though he knew that the “longitude” of Whitman’s verses is not in itself so much a fundamental virtue of the poet as it is the “delicate verbal adjustment, affection and differences” of his long enumerations. Where are, as the poet Álvaro de Campos put it, “the leap-verses, the jump-verses, the spasm-verses” to the Brazilian reader, be this reader erudite or not? Where are the “hysterical attack verses” that “drag the wagon of our exalted nerves onto the floor, disorderedly, barely allowing us to breathe, bursting from living?”

One acknowledges this position perhaps to open a much-needed discussion on translation of poetry among us while not preventing the welcoming of these *Leaves*. Leafing through them is, in any case, indispensable.

TRANSLATED BY PATRÍCIA ANZINI AND REGINALD GIBBONS

## Notes

1 In the original, “Nunca me havia passado pela cabeça a ideia de traduzir a poesia de Whitman . . . a língua original do poeta já me bastava para entendê-lo e amá-lo bem.” Campos’s statement can be found in an interview he gave to the Brazilian newspaper *O Diário de Notícias* on May 31, 1964, and which was titled “Meu Encontro com Walt Whitman” (“My Encounter with Walt Whitman”). Except where otherwise noted, all translations into Brazilian Portuguese are our own. The original quotations in Portuguese always come in the endnotes.

2 Whitman, Walt. *Fôlhas de Relva*, trans. Geir Campos (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Civilização Brasileira, 1964).

3 Whitman, Walt. *Folhas das Folhas de Relva*, trans. Geir Campos (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1983).

4 In the original, “. . . esta é uma tradução de poemas escolhidos das *Leaves of Grass* de Walt Whitman, e que, parodiando o título de *Flores das Flores do Mal*, bem achado por Guilherme de Almeida para a sua tradução de poemas escolhidos das *Fleurs du Mal* de Charles Baudelaire, não teria por que não se intitular *Folhas das Folhas de Relva*.” Guilherme de Almeida (1890–1969) was an acclaimed writer and influential figure during the Brazilian modernist period. He would take eight years to translate twenty-one poems of Charles Baudelaire’s *Fleurs du Mal*. His translation was published in 1944 by José Olympio.

5 See “A Voz Oceânica de Walt Whitman,” available in [gavetadoivo.wordpress.com/2011/07/08/a-voz-oceanica-de-walt-whitman/](http://gavetadoivo.wordpress.com/2011/07/08/a-voz-oceanica-de-walt-whitman/)

6 In the original, “uma superinterpretação de poemas e fragmentos selecionados de *Leaves of Grass*” . . . a subinterpretação aproxima a tradução do autor, a superinterpretação aproxima-a do leitor.” Geir Campos, trans., *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1983), 140.

7 In the original, “o que o original tem de estranho” and “retirar-lhe as características exóticas.” Geir Campos, trans., *Folhas das Folhas de Relva* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1983), 141.

8 In the original, “nenhum objetivo divulgatório—e nenhuma opção teórica da própria tradução—parece justificar esses cortes breves do verso original, que traem, sem necessidade, a intenção literária do poeta americano.” Ana Cristina Cesar, *Crítica e Tradução*, ed. Fernando Paixão (São Paulo: Ática/Instituto Moreira Sales, 199), 253.

9 “Saudação a Walt Whitman” was written in 1915 by Álvaro de Campos, one of Portuguese poet Fernando Pessoa’s heteronyms.

10 In the original, “Onde estão, para o leitor brasileiro, erudito ou não, os ‘versos saltos, versos pulos, versos espasmos?” Ana Cristina Cesar, *Crítica e Tradução*, ed. Fernando Paixão (São Paulo: Ática/Instituto Moreira Sales, 199), 253.

11 In the original, “O senhor acha que se o verso de Whitman não tivesse sido dividido a aceitação do público à Folhas das folhas de relva (sic) teria sido menor?;” “Acho que o ‘conteúdo’ não depende da ‘forma’ do verso em Whitman . . . (sic).” Campos sent his letter to Bonetti Paro in 1993. The scholar herself sent me a digitalized copy of Campos’s letter by email in 2018.

12 Campos’s 1983 translation was the object of the second chapter of my unpublished 2018 doctoral dissertation (Northwestern University) titled “‘Welcome, *American Brother*’: Cultural Encounters between Walt Whitman and Brazilian Writers.”

13 “Udigrudi” is a mocking reference, and an exaggerated transcription, of the way Brazilians mispronounce the word “underground” in Portuguese.

14 Cesar’s review has been published in *Crítica e Tradução* (São Paulo: Ática, 1999), a book edited by Fernando Paixão that compiles most of her work on translation and cultural and literary criticism.

## REVIEWS

MARK EDMUNDSON. *Song of Ourselves: Walt Whitman and the Fight for Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2021. xiii + 217 pp.

According to Mark Edmundson, Whitman's "Song of Myself" is an onanistic dream in which the poet, or speaker of this vision, is, among other things, angry at the sun. Although masturbation is his "characteristic sexual mode," Whitman is distressed "by the fact that some, or even all, of the figures he's fantasizing about . . . are male" (64-65). Later (110) Edmundson says he is "agnostic" on the question of Whitman's alleged homosexuality. Whitman's imagined "fight for democracy" in this volume—intended for "general readers"—centers upon his autoerotic encounter of Self and Soul and a "duel with the sun" ("There are millions of suns left"), which represents the patriarchal or aristocratic forces that continue to threaten the fragile democracy on the verge of civil war. The vernacular "you" in the poem is no longer primarily the reader, or "divine average," but "another part of Walt himself" (17). The sun and the grass serve in this rather private, if not "New Critical," reading of *Leaves of Grass* as the age-old opponents in the people's war against kings and aristocracy.

In this fight, Whitman was responding to what Emerson called for in his essays: "a vision of what being a democratic man or woman *felt* like at its best, day to day, moment to moment" (3). It seems that Thoreau might be the preferred Transcendentalist to get down in the dirt with Whitman and his omnibus drivers, not Emerson, who allegedly complained of the "fire-engine" society he encountered when Whitman took him to a restaurant in New York City at the end of 1855. Indeed, for all the Emerson that Edmundson calls upon in this monograph on Whitman, he seems oblivious to the Transcendentalist or logocentric context for "Song of Myself" and in fact all of *Leaves of Grass*. As we know and as Edmundson acknowledges, Whitman claimed that he was "simmering, simmering, simmering," and that Emerson—along with opera and the King James version of the Bible—"brought [him] to a boil" (5).

And just what was it that turned this mediocre poet/journalist/fiction writer (whose humble beginnings Edmundson exaggerates, ignoring the importance of Whitman's having edited the *Brooklyn Eagle* from 1846 to 1848) into America's greatest poet? It was the Emersonian idea that everybody and everything was

an emblem and a microcosm of God; hence, his Divine Average. Emerson made it possible for Whitman to make something as common as the grass into Transcendental evidence. It probably doesn't represent "individuals" with its leaves or blades, as Edmundson suggests, but the ubiquity of God's emblem in Nature (with a capital "N"). Like the coy lady who drops her handkerchief to attract a suitor, God drops the monogrammed gift of Nature to attract ours:

A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropped,  
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see  
and remark, and say Whose?

And when the poet says at the outset of "Song of Myself" (the full text of its first 1855 version is included in *Song of Ourselves*), "there are millions of suns left," Whitman is reflecting the Emersonian idea of the endless multiplicity of Nature as emblems of God: "They come to me days and nights and go from me again, / But they are not the Me myself."

At one point (39), Edmundson states that the "jour" in "jour printer" means "journal," instead of "journeyman," a rank at which Whitman as a former printer most likely was, not only in fact but in poetic fantasy, somewhere between life's "apprentice" and its "master." There is also the erroneous assumption that Lincoln and Whitman nodded to each other as the president rode to the Soldiers' Home north of Washington to escape the summer heat. As I tried to demonstrate in *Walt Whitman: The Song of Himself*, Whitman made such claims of Lincoln actively acknowledging him only after the president's assassination. There is nothing of this sort, for example, in his article about Lincoln in the *New York Times* of August 16, 1863; such claims stem mainly from the poet's oft-repeated Lincoln lectures, given long after Lincoln's murder. It was probably for that reason that the most authoritative biography of the sixteenth president, *Lincoln* (1995), by David Herbert Donald, contains no mention of the poet. Fortunately, David S. Reynolds in his recent *Abe: Abraham Lincoln in His Times* (2021) does include Whitman as part of the politician's American culture. Surely, Lincoln was at least aware of the poet because of his wartime essays in the *Times*—if not because of *Leaves of Grass*, which Lincoln allegedly read aloud to his law partner in Illinois (as suggested by merely one unreliable source). Moreover, there is no evidence that auditors of the Lincoln lectures "would clamor for" the reading of "O Captain! My Captain!" (137) as the poet approached the end of each presentation. Granted, this poem, atypical for Whitman, was—and may still be—Whitman's best-known work.

Edmundson's study improves as the narrative moves from the analysis of



“Song of Myself” to a discussion of Whitman as a hospital “visitor” during the war. Edmundson credits *The Better Angel: Walt Whitman’s Civil War* by Roy Morris, Jr., for some of his inspiration. In reviewing that book in these pages more than twenty years ago, I admired the way Morris interwove the poet’s letters to soldiers, his *Drum-Taps* poems, and his diary observations into the whirlwind of the war and its terrible consequences. Part 2 of Edmundson’s study, “In the Hospitals,” recounts how Whitman rushed to Falmouth, Virginia, following the Battle of Fredericksburg in December of 1862 in search of his soldier-brother George, who was slightly wounded. There the poet found “the kinds of Americans [he] had dreamed of in ‘Song of Myself,’ proud and self-reliant—a people, he believed, like none other in the world.” These soldiers, Edmundson writes, “were not the product of Homer and Virgil but of the Declaration and the Constitution” (118-19).

Edmundson has an easy way with words, and his finest sentence is his opening one: it best describes, or sums up, the uniqueness of the 1855 poem that would later be entitled “Song of Myself”: “*Song of Myself* genuinely begins not with words but with an image” (15). That, of course, is Whitman’s frontispiece—the 1854 steel engraving of the “rough” standing with his hand on hip, hat cocked to one side, unjacketed and shirt open at the neck, celebrating “ourselves” as he celebrates himself.

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JEROME LOVING



BETSY ERKKILA. *The Whitman Revolution: Sex, Poetry, and Politics*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2020. xvi + 276 pp. Iowa Whitman Series.

For many years now Betsy Erkkila has been deservedly recognized as one of the most distinguished, and one of the most venturesomely ground-breaking, of our contemporary Whitman scholars. Her consistent interest has been in exploring the radical aspects of his poetics and his politics, and in crusadingly demonstrating their relevance to the social, cultural, and political circumstances of the present, particularly in the U.S.A. Her early work on *Whitman Among the French* (1980) alerted her to the impact of the revolutionary political movements in France on Whitman’s writing career, from the Year of Revolutions of

1848 through to the Paris Commune of 1871 (there's a whole chapter on the Commune and on 'the formative influence' of French politics on his poetry in this new book), and she has continued to view Whitman accordingly as, at bottom, a truly revolutionary writer. Her latest study, a collection of key essays and lectures from the last few years, continues to present him in this light and includes an interesting chapter—"Whitman, Marx, and the American 1848"—that juxtaposes Whitman and Marx and argues that their respective work "has a pressing relevance and urgency to the ongoing struggles over capitalist dominance, democratic freedom, world union—and peace—today" (125).

Given that Whitman studies have long acted as a reasonably accurate barometer of the state of American society at large, repeatedly calling into focus such aspects of his case as most interestingly correspond to changes in the U.S.A. itself, it is surprising that no attempt seems to have been made by scholars to demonstrate the obvious affinities between Walt and "The Donald." Both are world-class braggarts and narcissists with a genius for ruthless self-promotion; both created powerful avatars crafted to seem empowering while identifying with an underclass fallen victim to capitalism's latest incarnation; both are arch-individualists and share a visceral mistrust of state intervention; both are brilliant manipulators of the mass-media of their day, newspapers in Walt's case, Twitter in Trump's, and are classic products of the showbiz performance cultures of the States; both project alluring images of themselves as "representative Americans" who are America-obsessed and accordingly treat the rest of the world as wannabe America, and so on and so forth.

A grotesque misrepresentation of course, but perhaps one with sufficient disturbing truth buried somewhere within it to at least challenge prevailing scholarly orthodoxy. It shows Trumpism to be the foul dust floating in the wake of Whitman's version of the American dream, and reminds us how slippery is Whitman's rhetoric (often as nebulous as it is sweeping), how open to ambivalence are his positions, and how fascinatingly compact he is of contradictions that need to be taken seriously. In short, it may be time to recognize the possibility that Whitman may have been speaking an important truth (for once!) about himself, when he warned Edward Carpenter in his old age that there was something in his nature "furtive like an old hen." It may be timely to recognize and respect the strong, ineradicable strain of conservatism in him, a strain that, while increasingly obvious after the war, had nevertheless been there from the very beginning. Furthermore (though whisper it not in Gath), rather a lot of his poetry is standard-issue fustian, and vapidly vaticinatory, which makes the startling originality of his best writing all the more breathtakingly remarkable

and intriguingly puzzling.

That these are matters not pertinent to the approach adopted by my old friend Betsy Erkkila is unsurprising. She, like me, is an intellectual product of the 1960s and 1970s, and while my reading of Whitman was influenced by the thinking of Raymond Williams and the European New Left of that long ago era, hers was inalterably shaped by the major reform movements in the areas of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation in the States whose origins can be traced back to that period. Not for nothing is her arresting new study subtitled *Sex, Poetry, and Politics*, given that so much of her outstanding work in the field of Whitman studies has attended to the interface between these different aspects of his writing.

Her writing glints with original insights, as when, discussing Whitman's treatment of women in his poetry and informatively setting it in the context of the times, she suggests that in his "poetic iconography the male figure is associated with democratic individualism, the female figure is associated with the federal union." Whitman, she adds, "invokes the woman not only as the source of creative energy but as the generative force of justice and sympathy in the world"—an invocation clearly congruent with, yet different from, the sentimentalizing and confining Victorian treatment of the female figure. How, one is stimulated to speculate, does Whitman's use of the female to embody crucial aspects of the desired national character of America compare with the contemporaneous use in France of Marianne for the same purpose (as in Delacroix's famous painting *Liberty Leading the People*), or of Britannia in Britain?

In her striking chapter on Whitman and the politics of language, already a well-worn subject of course, she perceptively distinguishes between the stilted, limited, and generalising way he used words from the French to express his feelings for women and the spectrum of French terms he employed to suggest the nuanced variety of emotional and sexual bonds between males. The best poems in *Calamus* (and there are plenty of duds) could profitably be read as a language experiment, an attempt to demonstrate that male-male relationships could be every bit as richly various in character as male-female relationships, and an attempt to develop the new "language of love" needed to encompass that truth. In that respect, *Calamus* asks to be compared with the great heterosexual English love-poetry of the Elizabethan period.

Erkkila also reflects on the language war of the period, between those who thought American English should be strictly aligned with the very best of British English and those of Whitman's opinion that the aim should be "always to keep language open, flexible, and responsive to the changing contours of

the American experience.” This was and is an exhilaratingly admirable goal. But it is not without its ambivalent aspects, as perhaps needs to be stressed in the light of present circumstances, when, as the prominent Japanese novelist Minae Mizumura argues in *The Fall of Language in the Age of English*, so many languages (including French) and linguistic cultures all over the world are in ever-increasing danger of being eventually killed by the global domination of English. Whitman’s interest in French, for example, was, as Erkkila demonstrates, not only creatively enabling for him but generously inclusive in intent. But from the point of view of today’s language wars, it was a “contributionist interest.” His concern was to enrich English, and thus to Americanize it, by assimilating terms from the French and other “foreign” languages. Whitman never demonstrated an interest in learning any of the many languages that immigrants brought to the New York of his day, nor did he ever show an interest in seriously familiarizing himself with any of the distinctive and rich cultures from which those immigrants originated. His was a melting pot model of the States understandable in his period, not the mosaic model which seems far better suited to the cultural situation in the America of our present. Multiculturalism and Whitman seem to me to make somewhat uncomfortable bedfellows.

One of the most intriguing features of Whitman’s poetry is the profligacy with which it varies its accounts of its wellspring. His foundation myths as a poet are many, and accordingly bewildering but inviting. Erkkila has long been attracted to the Whitman of the Body, and the book’s chapter on “Whitman and the Homosexual Republic” shows her at her most intensely engaged, subtle, and illuminating. Particularly valuable is her premise that in *Calamus* the language of same-sex love “intersects with other languages, including the languages of temperance, sexual reform, artisan republicanism, labor radicalism, phrenology, heterosexual love, familial and especially father-son relationships, and spirituality.” Whitman’s process of thinking, like that of his poetics, is “schizo” in character, to adopt Félix Guattari’s suggestive model. They might both be compared to a rhizome, the root-creeping plant that sends up shoots as it moves invisibly along underground. In structure, “Song of Myself” is a perfect example of just such a procedure. Erkkila is adept at noticing how similar subterranean links connect Whitman with his seeming polar opposite, Emily Dickinson, another poet in whose work she is expert. Chapter five’s focus on Whitman and Dickinson’s “Radical Imaginaries” neatly encapsulates the common devotion of New Yorker and New Englander alike to the challengingly unconventional in the realms of politics, poetics, and sexuality, and their envisaging of alternative states of both individual and collective forms of human existence.

Erkkila's useful strategy of twinning Whitman with other leading figures of his age continues via the comparison in chapter eight, "Whitman, Melville, and the Tribulations of Democracy": both writers were children of families "that suffered losses as the result of an increasingly volatile capitalist marketplace," and both resultantly found themselves cut adrift, left to find their own ways forward. Eventually, of course, they adjusted in dramatically different ways, Whitman's temperament, basically sanguine though periodically streaked with such misgivings as found crude exasperated expression in poems like "Respondez!," strongly contrasted with the weathered and seasoned ironies of Melville's mature outlook. Whitman saw the cupola recently installed above the American Capitol as gleaming with the whiteness of democratic promise; Melville sardonically observed that there was rust on the iron dome. But the turmoil of their times moved them both to culturally transformative experimentations in style and voice, and to the production of what Erkkila nicely calls "Epics of Democracy" (171). Melville's *Battle-Pieces* was an artfully constructed chamber of echoes, designed to represent the Civil War as just the latest tragic example of the tedious and futile human passion for conflict, while for all its chastened tragic tone, *Drum-Taps* was designed to represent the war as an entirely new kind of struggle for the future of a humanely tolerant and inclusive democratic order. Then, in war's aftermath Melville, like Whitman, "looked to non-state forms of democratic affection and community as a means of countering the increasing use of military force and law to achieve social order."

Her final chapter, "Public Love: Whitman and political Theory," sees Erkkila challenging the political theorists and philosophers of democracy who have of late taken an interest in Whitman's writings. According to her, "their work is . . . characteristic of a long tradition of liberal literary and political criticism that has bracketed or erased the collective, adhesive, and homoerotic dimensions of Whitman's theory of democracy." From her point of view, these academics are failing to recognize and respond to that which is truly revolutionary and accordingly valuable about Whitman's achievement, and of her course her entire book has been explicitly designed to draw attention to these crucial and challenging aspects of his case.

Reading this excellent book made one thing clear to me: Betsy Erkkila trusts much more in Whitman's self-proclaimed universalism than I do. Product as I am of one of the world's many marginalized and endangered cultures, I always remember the familiar story of the Elephant and the Mouse. The best of friends, they share everything together—or almost everything. Short as they are of a second bed on one of their travels, the kindly elephant suggests that they



share one. The mouse politely, firmly—and wisely—refuses. One unconscious turn of the vast bulk of his amiable friend's body in its sleep, he points out, and he would be a goner. Quite. As one of this world's little mice, I am always suspicious when Walt comes on strong!

But Erkkila's book is a first-class study by a first-rate scholar, an accomplished and beautifully written demonstration of Whitman's continuing relevance, and a heartening one in the light of the present rather parlous condition of the post-Trump United States. In it the better angels of America's nature are once more encouraged to spread their wings. And in closing, let me draw attention to the remarkable series to which this book is a valuable addition. Surely, a critical essay surveying this body of work in its entirety is long overdue. Would it not be a good idea for the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* to commission a promising young scholar to write it?

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ED FOLSOM AND CHRISTOPHER MERRILL. "*The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up*": *Walt Whitman's Civil War Writings*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2021. vi + 227 pp. Iowa Whitman Series.

We live in an age of eclectic anthologies. Take Whitman Studies, which, in the last two decades, has welcomed several volumes of writers talking back to Walt. These include *Walt Whitman: The Measure of His Song* (2019), now in its third edition; *Visiting Walt: Poems Inspired by the Life & Work of Walt Whitman* (2003); *Lovejets: Queer Male Poets on 200 Years of Whitman* (2019), and *Walt Whitman hom(m)age 2005/1855*, an avant-garde, Anglo-French affair that includes works by John Ashbery, Eleni Sikelianos, and Jorie Graham, among many others. Whitman himself gets in on the game too, with new editions of his journalism (*Walt Whitman's Selected Journalism*, 2015), his late life talks with Horace Traubel (*Walt Whitman Speaks*, 2019), his early notebooks and manuscript fragments (*Every Hour, Every Atom*, 2020), and his writings on the sea (*The Sea Is a Continual Miracle: Sea Poems and Other Writings by Walt Whitman*, 2017). The vast Whitman oeuvre—and its chatty afterlife—has never felt more accessible, navigable, or fun.

Ed Folsom and Christopher Merrill's *"The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up": Walt Whitman's Civil War Writings* shares much with these earlier titles, and others besides. The most recent book to anthologize and contextualize Whitman's Civil War writings, it seeks, like this spate of selected editions, to elevate a Whitmanic subtopic. Like the anthologies of homage, it treats reader response as a relevant form of critique. The book's co-editors embody this approach. Folsom is one of America's foremost Whitman scholars; Merrill is a poet, non-fiction writer, and the director of the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa. The two are colleagues, and their joint commentary represents a continued warming of relations between English Departments' Cold War rivals, literary studies and creative writing. Warming might be putting it mildly. This is post-glasnost. This is a START-Treaty partnership applied to a grim, if timely, subject: American disunion.

We see this in the book's form. There are forty entries—poems, excerpts from *Memoranda During the War*, and three letters—representing Whitman's Civil War writing. Each entry receives a pair of commentaries (first Folsom, then Merrill) that create, over the course of the book, a twinned and (mostly) chronological analysis of the primary texts. This reminds me of Whitman's *Two Rivulets* (1875-76), an oft-forgotten book that Folsom describes as "a typographical and stylistic experiment that positions both poetry and prose on each page—'two rivulets' of words running next to each other, the poetry at the top and the prose at the bottom" (4). *"The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up"* is, in its own way, *three* rivulets: one from the 19th century and two from the 21st. It's criticism in stereo. It's parallel play, as when two kids—in this case a professor and a poet—each learn something new from the looks they throw toward the other's toy.

There are obvious benefits to this approach. *"The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up"* is wonderfully browsable, even without an index, and I often found myself reading the entries out of order. If the average critical study risks encumbrance, by notation and the long arc of a thesis unwinding across a handful of chapters, this book feels agile. I thought of Helen Vendler's *Dickinson: Selected Poems and Commentaries* (2010) or *The Art Shakespeare's Sonnets* (1997)—two studies that make their own art from a discrete series of attentive essays. I thought of the Unsung Masters Series, a recuperative enterprise from Pleiades Press and Gulf Coast that reissues overlooked poets with a selection of work and accompanying commentaries by poets and scholars alike.

This form also expands the book's possible uses. It is, first and foremost, a reassessment of Whitman's Civil War writing—a reassessment I didn't

think necessary until I started reading. As Folsom writes, Whitman's war texts "seldom have received sustained and detailed reading" (7); that's because the war marked, for many critics, Whitman's decline. This book's existence is an argument for the opposite. It's also a generous aid for future research, ending with an eighteen-page annotated bibliography, arranged chronologically from newest to oldest. I was shocked to see the paucity of pre-1960s articles or the preponderance of those post-2000. This is a volume designed to launch new dissertations and seminars but *also* new stories (see Chris Adrian's fictionalized take on Whitman's hospice work, "Every Night for a Thousand Years," 1997); plays (see Christopher Dwyer's one-man show, *Leaves of America*, 2002); or poems. I can imagine it scanned or assigned to graduates and undergraduates alike, to young scholars and advanced creative writers looking, as Whitman writes, "to answer what I am for" ("Poets to Come").

Folsom's introduction begins that process, foregrounding the existential dilemma that the Civil War posed for Whitman's democratic poetics. How, Folsom asks, can a poetry based "on a union of its diverse parts" (2) survive that union's split? His framework is textual, his metaphors surgical. Folsom notes, as he has elsewhere, that the Civil War divides the first three editions of *Leaves of Grass* (1855, 1856, and 1860-61) from the last (1867, 1871-72, and 1881). He shows how Whitman's postwar revisions "involved his decision to open [*Leaves*] up," like a patient (3). Whitman starts by sewing unbound copies of *Drum-Taps*—his stand-alone, fifty-three-poem book of war poems—into the 1867 *Leaves*; Folsom describes this as a "bibliographic suturing." Later, in the 1870s, the poet "bleed[s] his Civil War poems into the very fabric of *Leaves*" (3). Poems like blood stains, revision like incision—the metaphors are apt when "this is no book, / Who touches this touches a man" ("So Long!"). Like Whitman, Folsom reads the body as congruous with the body politic.

Folsom's subsequent commentaries are a delight. Drawing on a lifetime immersed in Whitman, his era, and the scholarship that followed, Folsom paints a detailed picture of Whitman's Civil War. His critical lenses are historical, biographical, and textual, but it's his formalist chops that drew my check marks of approval. Consider the book's titular phrase, a section title from *Memoranda* that precedes "the longest sentence [Whitman] would ever compose" (11). Folsom analyzes that sentence, with its "seven parenthetical insertions," "phrasal trenches," and "thirty-some dashes," as a purposefully "undiagrammable utterance" that lurches and pauses, absorbing the bodies of the dead as it moves (11). It's a Whitmanic catalogue, familiar enough, but it ends as a sentence fragment. Whitman had no way, Folsom writes, "to predicate *this* war" (11). It is a death

sentence, necessarily truncated, like so many soldiers' lives and limbs.

Other, surprisingly granular readings caught my attention too. Take the word "compost" in "This Compost"; consider the word "composition," which pops up when critics and poets alike talk shop. The words don't just share an etymological root, Folsom argues, but an idea: all writing, like all nature, originates in a breaking down. In the latter, that includes bodies—of flora, fauna, and homo sapiens. In the former, it's sentences and words. Whitman's linguistic experimentation, then, is part and parcel with his belief in pastoral regeneration. Both bring renewal. Bodies recur once more in the repetition of "arms," "arming," and "arm'd" in "Drum-Taps" (the poem), a subtle reference, Folsom argues, to amputation. Whitman's contractions—which I'd always read as a regrettable archaism—remind us of amputation too. Their elision leads to double meanings. "Summ'd," for instance, can be read as "summoned" or "summed." Whitman intends both—and does both—but it's the former, the giving voice to, that evokes, in absentia, the unity in what's left out: "one."

Folsom's commentaries go beyond diction, though; they teach and inform. I now know that "Cavalry Crossing a Ford" is, at least by today's standards, partially plagiarized. I know too that Whitman got into a bar fight with a Southerner after reciting "Beat! Beat! Drums!" These revelations draw on recent biographical and archival scholarship, but the anecdotal and surprising never eclipse the historical. This is a book that keeps the events of 1861-1865 front and center without, thank goodness, devolving into a battlefield tour. The inflection point that was 1863—Stones River, Gettysburg, Chickamauga—gives new meaning to "Year That Trembled and Reel'd Beneath Me." The ominous meteor showers in "the fall of 1859 and the summer of 1860" inform Whitman's "Year of Meteors (1859-60)" as well as Melville's poem "The Portent" and Thoreau's image of John Brown, whose attack on Harpers Ferry Armory he described as "meteor-like" (28).

Folsom, in other words, knows *a lot*, and his commentaries, at their best, feel like vibrant lectures. After all, he and Merrill developed this book after co-teaching a MOOC (massive open online course) at the University of Iowa. He tempers his smarts, however, with generosity. These essays shout out to fellow critics—Peter Coviello, Kerry Larson, Ted Genoways—introducing the reader to a field's scholastic milieu. As a poet and critic writing about Whitman from the belletristic periphery—my last project was a series of essays on Bell's Brewery's *Leaves of Grass* beers—I found this gesture welcoming. I learned new names; I felt like I was "one of a living crowd" ("Crossing Brooklyn"). Folsom doesn't inhabit "the Me myself" professor persona—despite his subject matter—



but says “Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither” (“Song of Myself”).

If Folsom’s commentaries look inward, then Merrill’s look outward. If Folsom is a close-reading Americanist, then Merrill is a global comparativist. He reads Whitman in D.C. alongside Miłosz in Warsaw. He quotes Guillaume Apollinaire (“I love art so much [...] that I joined the artillery”) and Charles Simic (“The sole function of the epic poet [...] is to find excuses for the butcheries of the innocent”). His commentaries take more liberties than Folsom’s—the spice, if you will, to Folsom’s soup—but draw on a wider panoply of influences and interests. His experience writing about the Balkan Wars, front-page news in the 1990s, helps him meditate on the relationship between poetry and armed conflict. He dabbles in what’s come to be called—despite the term’s slippery imprecision—the poetry of witness.

This is all to say that Merrill’s internationalism is key. It backgrounds the first-hand experiences, which often open or end a commentary, and that I grew to cherish. Merrill’s essays are shorter than Folsom’s, but they blend—and I count this a blessing—the personal and the poetic. In his reading of “When I Heard a Learn’d Astronomer,” he stares with “utter incomprehension” at the “stars above the Adriatic Sea” after surviving a ride in an ill-fated APC (60). A blood-stained Gettysburg bullet in his grandparents’ living room, and a family falling out over that grandfather’s estate, opens a short essay on war-torn siblings (“Two Brothers, One South, One North”). A telling quote from the Greek poet, Yannis Ritsos, closes it. Walt Whitman is often credited with, if not inventing, at least promoting reader response criticism; Christopher Merrill extends it admirably.

It is Merrill’s commentary on “Mother and Babe,” a two-line poem about nursing, that struck me most. Folsom characterizes this poem as one of Whitman’s “proto-imagist” lyrics—this book includes a healthy sampling—and both commentators think hard about juxtaposition. Why add *this* subject matter to *Drum-Taps*? How do short poems (“Cavalry Crossing a Ford,” “Hush’d Be the Camps Tonight,” and “Reconciliation”) talk to the long ones (“When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”)? How, in other words, do poets put books together? It’s a question relevant to critics and creative writers alike, and it leads Merrill to a paragraph-long disquisition on sequence and assembly. It’s a paragraph that I’ll soon be photocopying for my undergraduate poets, but it’s Merrill’s *own* juxtaposition that I’ll remember. Some years ago, his father-in-law died on the morning of his daughter’s fifth birthday. Merrill quotes his father-in-law’s chaplain on the coincidence: “This is everything, isn’t it?” Whitman



would approve.

What shortcomings I find in “*The Million Dead, Too, Summ’d Up*,” are mostly sins of omission. If, as Folsom writes, Whitman “experienced [the war] *in the body, on the body, and by the body*” (his italics)—and lived long enough to see his own body fail—how might disability studies sharpen commentaries committed to tropes of amputation (206)? (Robert J. Scholnick’s essay, “How Dare a Sick Man or an Obedient Man Write Poems?": Whitman and the Dis-ease of the Perfect Body,” warrants a mention.) Two or three of Merrill’s commentaries end in cliché (“Love conquers all” [175]; “that made all the difference” [183]); most rely, for their comparativist touchstones, on canonical (i.e. white male) European and American authors. This might lead some readers—I was initially among them—to question this book’s willingness to ask hard questions about Whitman and race.

To those readers I advise patience. There are five or six thoughtful commentaries that address race, but they appear late in the text. Folsom, for instance, rereads “Reconciliation”—that famous poem of graveside kissing—as spoken by a Black soldier. (“[T]he main duty of black soldiers at the end of the war,” he points out, was “burying the corpses” [185]). The analysis is a tour de force. Both commentators deserve praise for their takes on “Results South—Now and Hence,” a cringe-worthy passage from *Memoranda* that Whitman suppressed when he folded *Memoranda* into *Specimen Days*, in which he ascribes Reconstruction’s failures to “black domination.” For Merrill, it “occupies a singular place in the history of American literary racism” (196). For Folsom it highlights “what is powerfully *absent* in Whitman’s voluminous writings about the war—the issue of race” (194).

Many readers might recoil too at “Ethiopia Saluting the Colors,” a poem, as Folsom notes, that “[o]ften reads as betraying Whitman’s racism” (198). The truth is more complicated, and I appreciated the evenhanded work Folsom does here to unlock and analyze this poem’s persona. The main speaker, one of Sherman’s soldiers, cannot fathom a formerly enslaved woman saluting his colors. That woman seeks, in Folsom’s reading, someone “to guide her out of her objecthood and into her selfhood” (199). Neither gets what they hoped for; both walk off incomplete. This failure of perspective, of empathy really, is part and parcel to Whitman’s own. He saw the war as a battle for the union. With Lost Cause histories on the wane, and initiatives like the 1619 Project on the rise, more and more Americans (one hopes) see the war for what it was: a contest over slavery. This commentary, and this book, will contribute to that awareness as well as the larger conversation that the field of Whitman Studies is now

having—in the wake of Whitman’s Bicentennial, *Black Spring*, and the publication of *Whitman Noir: Black America and the Good Gray Poet* (2014)—about Walt Whitman’s racial attitudes. It’s a conversation that is long overdue.

Overall, “*The Million Dead, Too, Summ’d Up*” is a worthy sequel to Folsom and Merrill’s first foray into collaborative commentary, *Song of Myself: With a Complete Commentary* (2016). It also arrives, as its authors well know—and as articles in *Harper’s* and the *Times* have explored—at a time when we’re asking “if in fact the Civil War [...] ever ended” (Folsom 205). Whitman watched, in real time, the Capitol’s construction. On January 6, 2021, we watched it face an insurrection. Whitman basked, in an 1864 letter to his mother (not included here), in that building’s “great bronze figure, the Genius of Liberty.” We have reason now to fear for Liberty’s vouchsafe: free and fair elections.

Were you looking to be held together by the lawyers?  
Or by an agreement on paper? or by arms?  
—Nay—nor the world, nor any living things, will so cohere.

So ends “Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice,” a poem written for the “Calamus” section *before* the war but revised for “Drum-Taps” *after* it. The title, like these lines, poses a question that plagues America today: what *will* help us cohere? What voice—or idea or challenge—will rise over our current carnage? Whitman’s answer is manly affection, what he calls “adhesiveness” elsewhere; it feels outdated today. Still, this poem, this book, and U.S. history remind us that we have cohered, however imperfectly, in the past. They also remind us that the cost for doing so, in Whitman’s time and our own, is often paid in blood. It seems entirely apt then that Whitman’s birthday fell on Memorial Day this year: May 31, 2021. There was reason to celebrate and reason to mourn.

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ZACHARY TURPIN AND MATT MILLER, EDS. *Every Hour, Every Atom: A Collection of Walt Whitman's Early Notebooks and Fragments*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2020. xxxiv + 376 pp. Iowa Whitman Series.

Zachary Turpin and Matt Miller fittingly allude to a scrap of famous text for the title of their edited book of transcribed Whitman notebooks and fragments newly published in the Iowa Whitman Series. For the book's epigram, they quote more expansively from their manuscript fragment source and include a strike-through edit by Whitman: "Every hour, every atom, every where is chock with ~~beautiful~~ miracles." Turpin and Miller's book of transcriptions of Whitman pre-Civil War notebooks is just that—chock full of beautiful miracles. Every hour, every atom—every comma and dash, every entry made in a mish mash of time, written by Whitman in small notebooks he carried with him and used to record everything under stars and sun, from the titles of books he was reading, to his framing and reframing (much as he did walls and doorways and stairways as a carpenter renovating a house) of ideas for his soon to be emergent publications.

Through their transcriptions Turpin and Miller provide the reader with nuances that can be detected from penciled half-words and smudges, interlineations, and texts written up or down a page, turned sideways, changing pen strokes and handwriting—all translated into readily readable type. We find in the transcribed pages from the 1850s Whitman's musings and formulation of future poems, often disguised in prose paragraphs or in experimental long prose-like lines or drafted in spurts and later crossed over.

Taken together, the notebook pages and fragments in *Every Hour, Every Atom* are dynamic, immediate, changing, evolving, and different in nature at different times. In them Whitman borrows, observes, and struggles with his material. We see crucially in the pages the hints and genesis of his published work to come—poems like "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," "Song of the Open Road," "Miracles," "The Sleepers," "Song of the Broad-Axe," "Salut au Monde!," "I Sing the Body Electric," "A Woman Waits for Me," "Starting from Paumanok," and of course "Song of Myself." We also see elements of his private self not necessarily revealed in the finished products and ideas for creative work that were never fully rendered.

The notebooks and fragments Turpin and Miller have selected and transcribed in *Every Hour, Every Atom* come from a variety of archival repositories, including special collections at the Boston Public Library, Duke University, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, Rutgers University, the

University of Tulsa, the University of Virginia, and Yale University. The edited book thus gives readers the gift of being able to compare unpublished notes and fragments from the pivotal years just proximate to the first 1855 publication of *Leaves of Grass* and further into the 1850s, as if they, too, were mining the various archives, and to have these disparate texts available in composite fashion for cross-study in terms of the inter-relation of their themes and elusions.

Unlike the earlier and in many ways evergreen six-volume edition of *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts* edited by Edward F. Grier (New York: New York University Press, 1984), this one-volume edition offers us notebooks and fragments from the various repository sources transcribed to include deleted portions and fits and starts of partial words as integral to the texts, rather than as deleted changes relegated to subtext as if dropped to the waste paper basket or the print shop floor. *Every Hour, Every Atom* thus successfully conveys the semi-chaos of the original pages in dynamically integrated textual fashion, mirroring the texts as they were constructed and saved and modified by Whitman.

It is significant in respect to this project that Whitman was such an appreciator and master of the printed word and the printing process and that he spent a lifetime tackling the challenge of converting his handwritten poems into printed publications. It can be hard to transform handwritten documents like his notebooks into printed transcriptions that are easy to read and accessible, and also painstakingly rendered and accurate—and at the same time maintain and convey a sense of their original material manifestations and generative energy. Turpin and Miller have succeeded in doing so.

We see evidenced as a result in the content presented what Miller has described elsewhere as the “hot boil” of Whitman’s creative mind just before the first July 4, 1855, publication of *Leaves of Grass* with its untitled, later to be further reworked, poems; rakish working man frontispiece (the poet Whitman refers to with mud on his boots); and democratic opus of a prose introduction. Most importantly, in the literal transcription of notebooks that Whitman often constructed from recycled paper into tiny tomes, and stitched with thread or tied with laces, and written in with a stub of a pencil easily fitted into a pocket, we are provided close witness to the hard-working craftsmanship of Whitman as a wordsmith and writer.

This one-volume edition is divided into two parts. The largest features a set of nineteen transcribed notebooks, named for first lines, beginning with the undated “Poem incarnating the mind” (pre-1855, from the Thomas Harned collection of Walt Whitman Papers at the Library of Congress) and ending with

“excerpt from *Words*” (ca. 1856-1860, from the Charles E. Feinberg collection of Walt Whitman Papers at the Library of Congress). These are followed in part two by fifty-three transcribed fragments drawn from many different archival collections. The book concludes with brief source and content notes from the editors.

The first notebook pages greeting the reader read almost like a series of sketches of scenes for a novel. The opening scene imagines a “Poem incarnating the mind of an old man, whose life has been magnificently developed,” full of “the wildest and most exuberant joy . . . Joy Joy Joy, which underlines and overtops the whole effusion” (3). What an opening! The second scene is about “Crossing the Fulton ferry to-day” and encountering a former acquaintance, a fellow reporter and writer making his living as a lobbyist in Albany and Washington. The third scene is of merchants and tradesmen and the importance of prompt pay. One turns the page of the edition, and suddenly a fourth scene bursts forth with blood and gore and violence. It is about the plight and heroism of the fleeing “black sk[inned]” person or the red brown savage lashed to the stump (4). By page eight of the notebook, Whitman has moved tranquilly on to “the water lily of the Nile” and “the honey-lotus – honey-clover” (5). In the next, we find him launching his soul out into the universe with the nebula and to future ages. By page eighteen of the notebook, he has returned to the theme of the hunted, hounded, persecuted, and executed—the woman accused as a witch burned at the stake, the great queens walking serenely to the chopping block, the fugitive enslaved person who turns to stand and eye defiantly when he can run no longer (9). We can find this material reworked later into portions of “Song of Myself,” notably the “disdain and calmness of martyrs” passage in Section 33, where Whitman adds “All these I feel or am.”

To call the content of the notebooks eclectic is an under-statement. Excitement, political insight, poignancy, empathy, and spiritual persuasion all exude from their pages, as does the amazing promise of future works. The poet who would announce he contained multitudes here claims “Tongue of a million voices” (6). Who could begin reading such pages, and put the book down? Each entry creates a new vision for the reader’s mind. The transcriptions make it all accessible.

In his famous letter to Whitman of July 21, 1855, written after first reading *Leaves of Grass*, Ralph Waldo Emerson referred to the happiness he felt reading the poems—the joy. Whitman refers to Emerson’s blessing upon him in his notebook pages (74). His “long foreground somewhere” as a journalist, editor, printer, and freelance writer come very much into play in the notebooks



and fragments, and sometimes pose challenges for rendering transcription in typographical form. Turpin and Miller show us, for example, Whitman's hand-drawn manicules—a printer's device of a hand with a pointing finger inserted to emphasize to the reader's eye certain sections of an ad or broadside. They note his asterisks, or triple underlining words for extra emphasis, and names or addresses of persons encountered or interviewed.

The fragments Turpin and Miller have selected include substantial pieces, such as *med Cophosis* (ca. 1852-1854) (also known as the "Women" notebook) (322-327), from the Feinberg collection, consisting of detached leaves from a notebook, the content of which resonates closely with fuller notebooks and published pieces. In the transcribed content of the fragments and notebooks, we see Whitman thinking aloud on the page about various things to write—a poem on libraries, on tools, on tears, on insects, on legacies, or, as in a fragment from the University of Tulsa, a perfect school "gymnastic, moral, mental and sentimental," large saloons, "manly exercises" and love and political economy—"the American idea in all its amplitude and comprehensives" (333). In a fragment from the Trent collection at Duke University Whitman speaks of Peruvians and Mexicans and Spanish navigators (332). We see him developing his cataloguing style, even in listing residences where his family has lived in a fragment from the Berg collection at the New York Public Library (336). In a Lion Collection fragment, he writes "The Poet says God and me / What do you want from us [?]" (339). A fragment on being the poet of materialism from Duke University is jotted, incredibly, on the back of a patch of wallpaper perhaps from a residence or job site at which the poet/builder was working (340-341). In the notes, Whitman sometimes gives himself a talking-to about his worth, the power of personality, or the nature of authenticity for a poem. He ponders slavery, caste, and the workings of government, and the relative equality of women and of men. He explores the mysteries of attraction and love and magnetism. He proclaims the importance of the body. He notes the sinner, the criminal, the prisoner in a cell. He turns to the sciences, and to animal, mineral, and vegetable—the very atoms and molecules and chloroform of which make up the elements of the Earth, and a leaf of grass. He ponders the collapse of time and space between individuals and generations. We see rich references to calamus and to moss growing upon the live oak in Louisiana.

In one notebook from the Charles E. Feinberg collection of Walt Whitman Papers at the Library of Congress (known as the "Dick Hunt" notebook, for the name written at the top of its opening, and transcribed by Turpin and Miller on 189-233), Whitman creates a litany of names of men he knew in New York,

sometimes noting their physical characteristics or how he knows them, or their places of employment or encounter, and the types of labor they engaged in, making of his notebook pages a catalog of persons and trades, a song of occupations, a social history roster of (primarily white-ethnic and masculine) working-class democracy. This is Whitman's city of robust love, his cities with their arms around each other's necks that he wrote about in his Calamus work and "For You O Democracy" that can be read in another Iowa Whitman Series publication, Betsy Erkkila's edited *Walt Whitman's Songs of Male Intimacy and Love* (2011).

Turpin and Miller's edition is as versatile in its potential for use as it is in subject matter and content. It makes for delightful and mesmerizing nightstand reading for the dedicated Whitmaniac or for newly intrigued persons previously uninitiated to Whitman. It serves undoubtedly as an important scholarly source and reference work to have on hand for use in combination with archival sources. It can be mined by teachers and scholars as a complement to the study of Whitman's other forms of writing—the draft poems, the correspondence, the various kinds of prose. It can be used by enthusiasts as a base to treasure hunt for echoes in published writings. It is a prime example for teachers to utilize when teaching the fine art of transcription of literary texts to their students.

And there is nothing like comparing transcriptions to images of original texts or creating your own. *Every Hour, Every Atom* includes some select page-image illustrations of original texts as tantalizing examples. As a whole the edition can be beautifully paired with digital humanities resources that depict scanned original notebook pages and fragments, be that through the *Walt Whitman Archive* portal or through dedicated digital presentations based on particular repository collections. The notebooks and fragments featured in *Every Hour, Every Atom* from the Feinberg-Whitman collection and Harned-Whitman collections, for example, are fully available online through the Library of Congress web portal. The Library of Congress *By the People* Walt Whitman crowdsourcing transcription project provides a chance for volunteers to try their hand in experiencing the intimacy that creating transcriptions brings to the study of Whitman's handwritten notebooks and other primary sources (crowd.loc.gov/campaigns/walt-whitman/). As Whitman wrote in his opening lines of *Song of Myself*, "for every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you."

## WALT WHITMAN: AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY



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- Anson, John. "Bolton's Enduring Fascination with American Poet Walt Whitman." *Bolton News* (June 6, 2021), theboltonnews.co.uk. [Summarizes Paul Salveson's work on the Bolton, England, Whitmanites known as the "Eagle Street College," led by an architect's assistant named J. W. Wallace and a physician named John Johnston; offers some details about the lives of the people involved in this group.]
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- Boorse, Michael J., ed. *Conversations* (Spring 2020). [Newsletter of the Walt Whitman Association, Camden, NJ, with news of Association events; this issue contains one article, listed separately in this bibliography, along with all the winning poems in the annual Association High School Poetry Contest.]
- Boorse, Michael J., ed. *Conversations* (Spring 2021). [Newsletter of the Walt Whitman Association, Camden, NJ, with news of Association events and with two articles, each listed separately in this bibliography.]

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- Cunning, Andrew. "A Table, A Cup, A Meowing Cat': Marie Howe's Theopoetics of the Ordinary." *Literature and Theology* 33 (September 2019), 307-320. [Parts of the essay examine how Whitman and others have influenced Marie Howe's poetry, as part of "a specifically American tradition of 'ordinary' writing."]
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- Eckenfelder, Ute. "Gras sing ich, Walt Whitman." *Sinn und Form* 73 (May-June 2021), 330-331. [Poem, concluding "Und bis zum / Horizont hügel auf wuchernd, Walt Whitman, dein Lied—"; in German.]
- Edmundson, Mark. "What Walt Whitman Knew About Democracy." *Wall Street Journal* (April 15, 2021). [Examines how Whitman's central image of the grass is his key democratic trope, allowing him to offer a visual emblem for "e pluribus unum, from many one" ("no two grass blades are alike" and "yet step back and you'll see that the blades are all more like each other than not"), an image suggesting that "the one and the many can merge" and an image allowing Whitman to imagine "a world without significant hierarchy."]

- Edmundson, Mark. *Song of Ourselves: Walt Whitman and the Fight for Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021. [Reprints the 1855 poem eventually titled “Song of Myself” and offers a reading of the poem as “the genesis and development of a democratic spirit, for the individual and the nation” as the persona becomes “an egalitarian individual . . . overcoming the major obstacles to democratic selfhood”; sees Whitman’s tireless work in the Civil War hospitals (“a hellish zone”) seven years after the poem was published as Whitman becoming “more than the poet of *Song of Myself* and begin[ning] to become a manifestation of his poetic vision”: “He became a version of the individual that his poem prophesied.”]
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- Fleck, Jonathan. “‘Strong, manly, and full of human nature’: The Roots of Rubén Darío’s ‘Walt Whitman.’” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 38 (Winter/Spring 2021), 169-188. [Offers an “archival, transnational reading” of Nicaraguan poet Rubén Darío’s influential 1890 sonnet “Walt Whitman” by showing how the poem emerged from an interview with Whitman by two journalists that was printed in several U.S. newspapers and then translated into Spanish and incorporated into an article in *Revista Ilustrad de Nueva York*, where Darío read it and incorporated aspects of it (especially “the poet’s



weakened physique” offset by “the virility of a face that comes to express intersecting anxieties of sexual nonconformity and socioeconomic reordering in continental America”) into his poem.]

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Gray, Nicole. “‘Vivas to those who have failed’: Walt Whitman Electric and the (Digital) Humanities.” *Digital Humanities Quarterly* 14 no. 4 (2020), [digitalhumanities.org/dhq](http://digitalhumanities.org/dhq). [Uses “Whitman’s poems and his material practices” to explore “digital methods in the humanities” that “have helped to create the potential for resurrecting an experimental, recuperative critical mode that approaches literature in terms of its transformability”; examines the “interweaving” of “the transformative logics of poetry and code . . . to illuminate the structural mechanics of each, as well as their mutual dependence on figurative language”; offers a reading of the “dreamspace” of “The Sleepers” as “a transformative, experimental environment” that is “an analogue of namespaces in computer and information science,” and tracks Whitman’s shifting views on race in America through his early “Sleepers” manuscripts and through his changes to the poem over the years, revealing how, by 1881, for Whitman, “the moment for the conjunction of experimental dreamspace with historical possibility had passed.”]

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- Grünzweig, Walter. "The International Whitman: A Review Essay." *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 38 (Winter/Spring 2021), 213-239. [Offers an extensive review and summary of Delphine Rumeau's *Fortunes de Walt Whitman: Enjeux d'une reception transatlantique*, viewed in the context of the history and ongoing critical efforts to understand Whitman's international reputation and his absorption into a wide array of cultures and languages.]
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- Ifill, Matthew L. and Leo D. Blake. "And Yet You Are Not Alone: Whitman's Wisdom in Trying Times." *Conversations* (Spring 2020), 1-5. [Notes how Whitman "essentially spent a year (1888-1889) stuck in the house due to his long-standing health problems" and that we can learn during the current pandemic from his patience and optimism; reviews all the Camden activities of the spring 2019 celebration of Whitman's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday.]
- Ifill, Matthew L., and Leo D. Blake. "*Leaves of Grass* Must Not Be Judged by Isolated Lines: Dr. Kelly Miller and the 'Poet of Humanity.'" *Conversations* (Spring 2021), 8-11. [Discusses Whitman's views on race; recounts an episode told by Lisa Seaman Leggett to Whitman about rapturous comments that Sojourner Truth made to her upon hearing passages from *Leaves of Grass*; offers background information on Kelly Miller (1863-1939), a Black professor and dean at Howard University, who spoke positively about Whitman at the first meeting of the Walt Whitman Fellowship International in Philadelphia in 1895; analyzes his remarks and reprints a section of a poem by Kelly influenced by Whitman.]

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- McKain, Mark. “Whitman at Anvers Island.” *ISLE* 28 (Spring 2021), 381-382. [Poem, addressed to Whitman, concluding: “Wearing a crown of hairgrass, / gazing out at the ship, bringing / DEATH DEATH DEATH, Walt, / could you sing another song?”]



- Miller, Pauline. "Seeing Whitman through the Eyes of Langston Hughes." *Conversations* (Spring 2021), 1-7, 11. [Discusses Whitman's racial views and looks at Langston Hughes's views on Whitman, including his 1953 pieces in the *Chicago Defender* defending Whitman against the attacks by Lorenzo Turner that claimed Whitman was anti-Negro; offers reprints of both Hughes's and Turner's *Defender* columns (5-7), and reprints Hughes's poem "I, Too" (11).]
- Pardes, Ilana. *The Song of Songs: A Biography*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019. [Offers a detailed cultural "biography" of the Biblical *Song of Songs*, seeking to answer "Why was a daringly sensual poem of love with no reference whatsoever to God or national history included in the Bible?"; Chapter 5, "The Song of America: From Walt Whitman to Toni Morrison" (172-218), "considers the Songs of some of America's greatest literary exegetes—Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and Toni Morrison—highlighting their insistence on interweaving literal and allegorical readings of the ancient love poem."]
- Parsons, Dave. "Dave Parsons Reviews 'The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up' in Advance of Whitman Event." *Houston Chronicle* (May 10, 2021). [Review of Ed Folsom and Christopher Merrill, *"The Million Dead, Too, Summ'd Up": Walt Whitman's Civil War Writings*; also published in *The Courier of Montgomery County* under the same title (May 10, 2021).]
- Price, Kenneth M. "Whitman and the America Yet To Be: Reconceptualizing a Multiracial Democracy." *OUPblog* (July 9, 2021), oup.com. [Suggests that Whitman's "failures, and his successes" to "reconceptualize a multiracial democracy . . . parallel those of the federal government and the Union itself"; offers a reading of Whitman's "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors" as a poem that captures the clashing notions at work in American culture about the possibilities that, "within the American republic, the colors of all the nations could greet each other proudly and courteously."]
- Pung, Alice. *One Hundred Days*. Carlton, Australia: Black Inc., 2021. [Novel about a pregnant sixteen-year-old girl named Karuna, who is isolated in her home with her overprotective mother and immerses herself in reading Whitman's poetry.]
- Radil, Jennifer. "Whitman and the Meandering River." *Art Therapy* 37 no. 2 (2020), 58. [Print of an artwork by Jennifer Radil, representing coils that trace out the various paths the Mississippi River has taken over time, all against the background of a collage of Whitman's poetry manuscripts.]
- Roberts, Kim. *A Literary Guide to Washington, DC: Walking in the Footsteps of American Writers from Francis Scott Key to Zora Neale Hurston*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018. [Chapter 2, "The Civil War Era, 1861-1865" (29-53), offers a "walking tour" of "Walt Whitman's Downtown."]
- Sederat, Roger. Review of Behnam M. Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception*. *Iranian Studies* 54 nos. 3-4 (2021), 647-651.



- See, Sam. *Queer Natures, Queer Mythologies*. Christopher Looby and Michael North, eds. New York: Fordham University Press, 2020. [Argues, through a reading of Charles Darwin, that nature in its aimless variableness can be considered essentially queer; offers a reading of Whitman and Oscar Wilde in this context (“Art for Science’s Sake: Wilde in Whitman’s Wilderness” [90-96]).]
- Shipp Kamibayashi, Kayla. “The Secret Lives of Poems: Digital Inhabitations of Nineteenth-Century American Literature.” PhD Dissertation, Emory University, 2020. [Digital dissertation; Chapter 4, “Collection (My)Self: The Poetics of Virtual Space in Walt Whitman’s *Specimen Days*,” argues that Whitman’s autobiography is “a poem historically failed by print” that is better suited “to live on *digital* surfaces where we can play with [it] instead,” because the work is in fact “intrinsically digital”; *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global*; 28167646.]
- Vafa, Amirhossein. Review of Behnam M. Fomeshi, *The Persian Whitman: Beyond a Literary Reception*. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 53 no. 1 (February 2021), 163-165.
- Vanliew, F. T. *Whitman’s Last Year*. Des Moines, IA: Third Half Publishing, 2020. [Fictional journal of Whitman’s final year, which turns out (thanks to an arrangement brokered by Ralph Waldo Emerson) to be 2019, where he is sent as an anonymous old man to report back on what he learns about twenty-first-century America.]
- Wang, Mai. “Carlos Bulosan, Walt Whitman, and the Transnational Jeremiad.” *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 38 (Winter/Spring 2021), 189-212. [Traces Whitman’s influence on Filipino American writer Carlos Bulosan (1913-1956), as he becomes “the inspiration for Bulosan’s artistic reclamation of his past as a colonial subject in the Philippines”; follows Bulosan’s “shifting portrayal of Whitman” that leads him to bond with Whitman “as lone poets of a future that has yet to be written . . . forming an imaginative bond between them as secular Jeremiahs,” and culminating in Bulosan’s 1946 novel *America Is in the Heart*, in which “Whitman’s critical universalism in *Democratic Vistas*” reappears in the main character’s evocation of Whitman “to repair the psychic damage done to him as a colonized subject and immigrant.”]
- Weisenburg, Michael C. “Immediacy as Periodical Aesthetic in Walt Whitman’s Poems in the *Daily Graphic*.” *American Periodicals* 31 (May 2021), 1-18. [Focuses on the poems that Whitman published in the New York *Daily Graphic* (mostly in 1873) and argues that “reading them in the context of other periodical literature brings into relief Whitman’s initial reactions to specific political moments and reconnects his Reconstruction-era writing with his earlier journalism,” showing how he could “foster meaning and material in the daily political process”: “When read on the pages on which they originally appeared, the full meaning of these poems comes into relief and allows them to stand out as speaking to concerns with which his readers would have been fully engaged,” such as the second presidential inauguration of Ulysses S. Grant and the Credit Mobilier Scandal.]

Unsigned. Review of Mark Edmundson, *Song of Ourselves: Walt Whitman and the Fight for Democracy*. *Publishers Weekly* (April 2019), [publishersweekly.com](http://publishersweekly.com).

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ED FOLSOM

“Walt Whitman: A Current Bibliography,” now covering work on Whitman from 1838 to the present, is available in a fully searchable format online at the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* website ([ir.uiowa.edu/wwqr/](http://ir.uiowa.edu/wwqr/)) and at the *Walt Whitman Archive* ([whitmanarchive.org](http://whitmanarchive.org)).

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*Essays:* Place the author's name two inches below the title and the institutional affiliation at the end of the essay. (Note: this information will be excised for peer review by the editor.)

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### QUOTING AND CITING WALT WHITMAN'S WORK

When quoting from individual editions of *Leaves of Grass* (the 1855, 1856, 1860, 1867, 1870-1871, 1881, 1891), please use the facsimiles available online on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, and cite the edition, date, and page numbers, followed by "Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* ([www.whitmanarchive.org](http://www.whitmanarchive.org))." Do not list the URL of individual page images or the date accessed. After the initial citation, contributors should abbreviate as "LG" followed by the year of the edition and the page number (e.g., LG1855 15).

The standard edition of Whitman's work is the *Walt Whitman Archive* ([www.whitmanarchive.org](http://www.whitmanarchive.org)) in addition to *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*, twenty-two volumes published by the New York University Press under the general editorship of Gay Wilson Allen and Sculley Bradley, and supplemented with volumes published by the University of Iowa Press and Peter Lang. Citations and quotations from Whitman's writings not yet available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* should be keyed to the specific volumes in this edition.

After the initial citation, contributors should abbreviate the titles of the *Collected Writings* in the endnotes as follows:

EPF	<i>The Early Poems and Fiction</i> , edited by Thomas L. Brasher (1963)
PW	<i>Prose Works 1892</i> , edited by Floyd Stovall. Vol. 1: <i>Specimen Days</i> (1963); Vol. 2: <i>Collect and Other Prose</i> (1964). with a Composite Index (1977); Vol. 7, edited by Ted Genoways (2004).
DBN	<i>Daybooks and Notebooks</i> , edited by William White. 3 vols. (1978).

- NUPM      *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts*, edited by Edward F. Grier. 6 vols. (1984).
- Journ      *The Journalism*, edited by Herbert Bergmann, Douglas A. Noverr, and Edward J. Recchia. Vol. 1: 1834-1846 (1998); Vol. 2: 1846-1848 (2003).
- Corr      *The Correspondence*, edited by Edwin Haviland Miller. Vol. 1: 1842-1867 (1961); Vol. 2: 1868-1875 (1961); Vol. 3: 1876-1885 (1964); Vol. 4: 1886-1889 (1969); Vol. 5: 1890-1892 (1969); Vol. 6: A Supplement; Vol. 7: edited by Ted Genoways (2004).

For Whitman's correspondence, letters available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* take precedence over the *The Correspondence* edited by Edwin Haviland Miller. These should be cited in this format: Sender to recipient, month, day, year, followed by "Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: xxx.00000."—e.g., Herbert Gilchrist to Walt Whitman, August 20, 1882. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.02192.

Horace Traubel's *With Walt Whitman in Camden* (9 Vols) is available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*. After an initial citation followed by "Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive* ([www.whitmanarchive.org](http://www.whitmanarchive.org))," it should be abbreviated *WWC*, followed by its volume and page number (e.g. *WWC* 3:45).

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New York, January 7th.

The weather here still continues excessively cold—the earth being covered with snow and ice, from an inch to six inches thick. Day and night we are saluted by merry sleigh-bells, all along the streets. The omnibuses vie with each other in the gayety and glitter of their turn-outs, and it is one of the sights worth looking at, to stand on the side-walk and see them pass along. Not even the private vehicles, sleigh-fashion, rich as some of the caparsonings are, can compete with those same omnibuses. With their superb white horses—the rims of the dash-boards arching over like the necks of serpents—and from twenty to a hundred ladies and gents “inside”—you may imagine what a show they present!

Just after dark sets in, Broadway presents the appearance of an illuminated carnival—even the fancy dresses are made up by the grotesque look of many of the sleighs. Outriders seem ransacked to furnish patterns for the “fancy” to put on runners. I have noticed several sea-serpents, a mer-maid or two and dolphins are quite common.

We are much concerned at the sad accounts from New Orleans respecting the cholera. It is, however, the confident supposition that before this date, the disease must have subsided, if not left you entirely. Thousands of anxious hearts listen here with eager interest to each successive instalment of the news on this melancholy matter.

In our neighborhood—the Quarantine station at Staten Island—no cases of the cholera occurred during Thursday and Friday last, and the Health Officer has ceased making any reports. Not the least alarm is felt here on the subject. Next summer I fear it will be a different affair; but let next summer take care of itself.

Ice begins to make its appearance in the East river, floating along in “petty considerable” masses, too, at times. Some of the weather-wise predict a continuation of the severe cold, and, as a natural consequence, a hard winter. Heaven knows, if the weather lasts like it has been for the past week, the coal-yards and the provision-dealers will haul in lots of money. All work for out-of-door mechanics has completely stopped; immense rows of building in the “burnt district” of Brooklyn having been embargoed in the suddenest manner possible. And oh! what noses you may see, early in the morning, at the street corners!

MANHATTAN.

—❧—

Letter from “Manhattan,” published in “Correspondence of the *Crescent*,” New Orleans *Daily Crescent* (January 19, 1849), page 3. For more information, see pages 1-50.

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