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Christopher Preston Burrigh
Brigham Young University

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Walt Before Leaves: Complicating Whitman's Authorship Through Jack Engle

Christopher Preston Burrigh

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Dennis Ralph Perry, Chair
Edward Smith Cutler
Mary Kathleen Eyring

Department of English
Brigham Young University

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ABSTRACT

Walt Before Leaves: Complicating Whitman's Authorship Through Jack Engle

Christopher Preston Burreight
Department of English, BYU
Master of Arts

The rediscovery of a number of Walt Whitman's early fictions prompts a discussion of where they belong within the larger web of Whitman scholarship. Though we have been aware of the existence of these writings for quite some time, frequently these works return to obscurity soon after being discovered due to the lack of research regarding them. This thesis presents an alternative framework whereby these novels can be integrated into a hypertextual model centered on *Leaves of Grass* (1855) and Whitman's overall authorial identity. I build on Ed Folsom and Kenneth Price's work creating a hypertext archive incorporating Whitman's works, allowing constraints associated with traditional print form to be overcome. My analysis centers on the recently rediscovered novel *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* (1852) due to its unique publication date. Because we possess so little of Whitman's public writing from the immediate leadup to his first publication of *Leaves of Grass*, I focus on tracing linguistic and thematic development across the two works. With the help of digital textual analytical tools, I find specific links between the works and argue that Whitman used the novel to experiment with transcendental language and themes that would characterize his later poetic voice. Based on this connection, novels like *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* thrive due to their ability to offer new perspectives on the source text of *Leaves of Grass*. Within this model, *Leaves of Grass* also gains new importance due to highlighting the value of the satellite texts like *The Life and Adventure of Jack Engle*, remedying their previous ambiguous value when isolated. I then discuss how this hypertextual model aids scholars to more easily incorporate Whitman's fiction into future research due to the increased accessibility it provides. Finally, the thesis discusses how this model repositions the role of the archive as more than simply a receptacle of preservation. Instead, it now operates as a source of redefinition by providing artifacts that reimagine period and authorial narratives through this hypertextual model.

Keywords: Walt Whitman, hypertext, *Leaves of Grass*, *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*

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Walt Before Leaves: Complicating Whitman's Authorship through Jack Engle

Discussing the large amount of his popular writing, Walt Whitman expressed that his “serious wish were to have all those crude and boyish pieces quietly dropp’d in oblivion” (*Prose Works* 2:360). It is clear that Whitman was no fan of his fiction writing and considered it to be only an historical footnote to his poetry, meant to be lost to history. Elsewhere, Whitman described one of his novels as “damned rot—rot of the worst sort” (Traubel 93) claiming it was written under “the influence of port, gin, or whiskey” (Blake 109). Though he viewed his novels in an unflattering light, Whitman utilized his early fiction as a means to both develop as a writer and earn some much-needed money. Philip Gura outlines how in the antebellum period, “new technologies transformed how books were published and sold” (75). As bookbinding became more mechanized and the printing process became more efficient, the public responded with a surge of demand for novels and stories. This resulted in new journals capitalizing on this popularity by publishing serialized novels and other new literature, “taking it upon themselves to foster their own notions of a native literary culture” (76). This shift soon enacted a demand for fiction “written in America, by an author born in America, published first in America, set in America, concerned with issues that are specifically grounded in the new country and not simply transplanted from England” (Davidson 85). With an expanding market and increased access to publishing venues, Whitman and his contemporaries took advantage of the new means to publish their writing. Many of Hawthorne's stories from *Twice-Told Tales* (1837) first appeared in the popular periodical *The Token* (Wineapple 90) and Melville published numerous selections from *The Piazza Tales* (1856) in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine* (Sealts 458). Whitman followed suit, publishing his fiction in the *New York Sunday Dispatch* and the *New-York Mirror*.

Also like his contemporaries, Whitman sought to distance himself from this early fiction in the fear that it would distract from his later work. In most cases, this meant publishing stories anonymously or under a pseudonym, though at times the methods were more destructive. In 1828, Nathaniel Hawthorne completed *Fanshawe*, his first novel, and circulated it himself. Shortly after this, Hawthorne became embarrassed with the book and “attempted to collect and destroy every printed copy” (Means 1). Edgar Allan Poe published his first edition of *Tamerlane and Other Poems* anonymously in 1827, introducing them with an apologetic note, claiming the poems were of low quality and stating they “were of course not intended for publication” (Hayes 20). Melville followed this pattern, extinguishing or hiding all manuscripts of his unpublished work *Isle of the Cross*. As detailed by Hershel Parker, Melville may have been embarrassed by Harper & Brothers’ refusal to publish the book after the critical and commercial failure of *Moby Dick*, prompting him to ask the question whether it would “not matter that no earthly transcription of *The Isle of the Cross* survived” (Parker 160-161). In short, hiding potentially embarrassing work was a staple feature of this period.

Fortunately, many of these early pieces have resurfaced due to the efforts of diligent archivists and scholars. With the rediscovery of *Franklin Evans* (1842), *Manly Health and Training* (1858), and most recently *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* (1852) in 2017, we now possess physical artifacts that help deepen our understanding of Whitman’s creative process and development. This thesis examines the role that these novels can play within the larger hypertextual web of Whitman’s identity and work. After tracing important literary development across the fiction to Whitman’s later poetry, I suggest that these works can redefine the tradition surrounding *Leaves of Grass* and Whitman’s identity as poet while simultaneously respecting his legacy. In this new role, these recovered artifacts also reimagine the archive as a critical tool that

expands and reimagines this hypertextual network instead of simply reinforcing historical narratives surrounding Whitman's writing.

The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle is especially interesting because we possess so little of Whitman's public writing from the years immediately preceding his first publication of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855. Paul Zweig describes Whitman as working "hard to erase these years—not, I think, out of personal delicacy or fear of later scandal (his was always apparently a fairly blameless life), but because he wanted to keep intact the mystery of his poetic origins" (112). This early fiction grants insight into these poetic origins and builds on earlier informal writing to further develop the palimpsest of Whitman's poetic development; however, though a large number of his stories have been recovered in recent years and scholars recognize the importance of this fiction, there remains a lack of scholarship analyzing the early experimentation Whitman performed in these writings. In their introduction to *Franklin Evans*, Stephanie Blalock and Nicole Gray argue that the novel "stands as a revealing glimpse into Whitman's own development as a writer" (Blalock). In his 2008 review of *Franklin Evans*, Alexander Wulff echoes this sentiment, noting that even though the work shows some of the development of political and aesthetic concerns that would later surface in *Leaves of Grass*, only "a handful of articles since the mid-90s and an occasional chapter" have touched on this connection. Zachary Turpin, the Whitman scholar responsible for *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*'s recovery, argues that it was during these "tale-writing years" of the 1840s that Whitman "cut his writerly teeth, first with a temperance novel, *Franklin Evans* (1842), and later with a regular succession of stories and novellas from which he made a decent living" (97). Because these works have historically been underexamined, it appears that as we recover them from the archive, we document their existence and then simply return them to the obscurity from whence they came.

Is *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* doomed to fall prey to this pattern? I fear that it, like *Franklin Evans*, will become yet another hopeful, but neglected footnote in our scholarship.

If we are to take up Whitman's fiction and incorporate it into our understanding of this multi-faceted figure, how do we start? Understandably, Whitman's poetry remains the source of his strong legacy and continues to command our attention when discussing his imprint on American literary history; however, by examining the linguistic development in this early fiction and observing the cultural market in which it operated, we deepen the hypertextual nature of *Leaves of Grass*. Kenneth M. Price and *The Walt Whitman Archive* understand that "Whitman's writings defy the constraints of the book" and that reading his work without access to the images, external writings, and various editions of his poetry only hinders our understanding of how Whitman integrated so many aspects of his previous writing as well as his cultural surroundings into his greatest work (29). Rather than distract from the creative genius of his poetry, Whitman's fiction develops the hypertextual depth of *Leaves of Grass* while uncovering a crucial layer in the complex palimpsest of the poet's unique development.

The initial impulse that led Whitman and his contemporaries to invest more in their image and suppress these valuable early writings stemmed from the birth of a culture of celebrity as "authors became advertisements for themselves" (Blake 39). This new feature led Whitman to distance himself from his fiction and methodically craft an identity fitting for the public. Whitman thoughtfully researched other poets who had historically achieved similar fame, including Chaucer, Shelley, and Wordsworth. While Whitman certainly drew poetic inspiration from these three, it is important to acknowledge that in his notes he seemed to focus primarily on the celebrity and personal charm of the poets, observing "very little about the verse," (Blake 42). Whitman also noted that he should "think poorly of myself if I should be even a few days with

any community either of sane or insane people, and not make them convinced, whether they acknowledged it or not, of my truth, my sympathy, and my dignity” (*Walt Whitman Papers* 25). With a booming five-hundred and forty percent increase in the number of books published between 1820 and 1856, authors (like Whitman) had a justifiable reason in ensuring every facet of their identity and origin was appealing to a celebrity-obsessed public (Blake 38).

Whitman certainly wasn't the first to take measures such as these to promote and preserve his celebrity. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau capitalized on the growing lecture circuit which would become “crucial to the emergence of literary celebrity” (Moran 17). Once straightforward speeches soon transformed into dynamic performances containing stage costumes and rehearsed emotional delivery crafted to draw in a large crowd. Washington Irving executed an elaborate hoax to generate interest in his early work *A History of New-York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty*, by *Diedrich Knickerbocker* (1809) in which he distributed missing persons posters for his title character and published a false note from a hotel proprietor stating he would publish Knickerbocker's left-behind manuscript if he failed to return and pay his bill (Jones 118-127). Whitman famously utilized this new cult of personality, attaching Emerson's praise to *Leaves of Grass* and cultivating a persona through the various photographs preceding the work that illustrated his transcendent lifestyle. In an effort to preserve this perception, Whitman ensured the public's focus would remain on his poetry by removing any distraction from these later writings, including his initial fiction.

This tendency illustrates the powerful effects of an author-created identity in subverting any attempt to move away from that constructed narrative. Stephen Greenblatt's notion that subversion can be “genuine and radical,” but is necessarily “at the same time, contained by the

power it would appear to threaten” (48) seems to describe the inherent struggle to integrate this new material while avoiding the pull of the Ur-identity created by Whitman originally. “I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,” remarks Whitman in his later edition of *Leaves of Grass*, though we know his development began much earlier than this, and that it contained more than just his poetry (188). While he was certainly aware of the damaging role that his fiction could have had on his immediate celebrity, Whitman also carefully prepared a legacy ensuring that he would be considered as an influential author of the era. By hiding his midlife prose efforts, Whitman played an integral role in grooming an image of himself that F. O. Matthiessen would later promote in his rendition of the most important figures of this period. Matthiessen notes that of the five authors he selected to define the American Renaissance, “nor were any of them best sellers” (x). Under this classification, Whitman certainly could not fit the pattern as *Franklin Evans* sold many copies and became quite popular. Later, in his justification of choosing these five, Matthiessen quotes Ezra Pound’s statement that “the history of an art...is the history of masterwork, not of failure or mediocrity” (xi). Just as Matthiessen created a narrative for the American Renaissance and ignored any author that didn’t fit his narrative, so Whitman too created a narrative for his identity as poet, removing any writings that could be seen as failures and cloud his poetic legacy. He actively participates in what Louis Montrose calls the “textuality of history,” (8) not fifty or one hundred years after his lifetime, but immediately during it.

To better understand the role *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* plays both within this era of celebrity as well as in the larger hypertextual model surrounding Whitman’s authorial identity, it is important to first analyze the conditions in which it was written. Whitman published the novel in a distinctly un-romantic time in his life marked by a personal struggle to

define the unique voice that would later emerge in his poetry. Beyond using his fiction to experiment with style, Whitman also needed cash to provide for his struggling family. From mortgage payments to food and clothing, Whitman was expected to provide where he could, and his novels were a quick way to fund these needs. The “Brooklyn housing market was at high tide and Whitman was having trouble staying afloat, a situation that would last until the end of the decade,” (Turpin xii) and Whitman’s struggle to break out from the mundane life of “middle-class homebuyers, is probably one of the inspirations behind the story of *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*” (Turpin xii). In addition to the cash received for his serialized stories, Whitman may have initially conceived of fiction as a gateway to begin his climb towards celebrity. Many of Whitman’s contemporaries, such as Herman Melville, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Edgar Allan Poe received widespread recognition through their serialized stories; perhaps Whitman recognized this as an opportunity to join their ranks. The 1850s was also a time marked by the beginnings of mass journalism and publication, and Whitman understood the value of utilizing this medium to further his own public image through his experiences as a journalist in his youth. By writing for the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* and *New Orleans Daily Crescent* in the late 1840s through the 1850s, Whitman absorbed the “world’s current times and deeds” while simultaneously gaining an understanding on how to insert himself into that social fabric (*Prose Works* 1:473). Zweig notes that “In America, only Whitman among our great writers grasped the possibilities of the new journalistic culture and, all his life, used newspapers to publicize himself” (8). In a time where the nation itself was experimenting with its own identity, a culture of celebrity grew rapidly, and authors that were able to distinguish themselves as fitting of that celebrity gained the fame and money that Whitman sought.

It was with this in mind that Whitman wrote *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* to conform closely with popular sentimental conventions. Jack, the subject of the novel, is an orphan with mysterious origins that nearly falls prey to a stereotypically evil lawyer appropriately named Covert. Throughout the course of the novel, Jack falls in love with a woman of similarly mysterious origins who is also connected to Covert. With the help of an old legal clerk, Jack discovers the true nature of his companion's and his own heritage, bringing him fortune and happiness as Covert is left to flee the country. The twists and turns of the novel adhere to the structure of other serialized novels of the time by engaging readers to hunger for the rest of the story. Phrases marking the ends of sections such as "In the next chapter I shall fill in the blank," (22) and "I doubted whether I should ever see him alive again" (101) demonstrate Whitman's awareness of period tactics encouraging readers to buy the next edition of the paper and discover the resolution of these conflicts and mysteries. *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* also provides evidence of Whitman's power to capitalize on the print tools available to him that could further his career as he delivered the novel into the hungry hands of *The Sunday Dispatch* with the understanding that it could aid in projecting his authorial persona into public consciousness.

Though Whitman may have used *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* as a means to get some needed funds or secure his immediate fame, a digital textual analysis I conducted also reveals important linguistic connections between the novel and *Leaves of Grass*. Whether he meant to or not, the analysis revealed that Whitman engaged in linguistic and thematic experimentation within the novel that prefigures his later, more poetic voice. Whitman most frequently used words are similar in both works, including "Man" and "Old" though their connotations and usage are different. In *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*, these words

function primarily as simple adjectives for specific people or events such as “Old Wigglesworth” (1) or “he was a devout man” (58). This matches prose preceding *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* such as *Franklin Evans* where the words are used in a similar fashion in phrases such as “a man of middle age” (26). In *Leaves of Grass* these terms are utilized in metaphorical and ethereal senses in phrases such as “What is a man?” (45) and “man and his life and all the things of his life are well-considered” (103). This pattern continues with usage of the terms “Life” and “Time” which also frequent both works. In *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*, these two terms are used in a pragmatic sense, usually in relation to the narrator’s own experience. They appear in phrasing such as “the affairs of my life” (16) and “for the first time almost in our lives,” (17) being used in a conventional way. Once again, this usage matches that of *Franklin Evans* where the terms are used in sentences such as “I told them my whole life” (20) and “for the first time since I was a little child” (6). In *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman has shifted from this usage, instead utilizing a symbolic and cosmic version of these two concepts to drive his poetry through lines such as “I know the amplitude of time” (46) and “And as to you life, I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths” (86). There is a clear distinction between the basic language of these early novels and Whitman’s later poetic tone. Where *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* provides interesting insight into Whitman’s development is in one chapter which stands unique in terms of its literary and thematic experimentation. Placed right in the crux of the narrative, the chapter involves Jack contemplating life, death, and legacy in the Trinity Church graveyard. My analysis reveals that Whitman begins to shift from his traditional novelistic tone and verbiage towards a more unconventional one prefiguring *Leaves of Grass*.

The first method I use to trace Whitman’s linguistic development across the three samples (*Leaves of Grass*, *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*, and chapter 19, hereafter

referred to as XIX) is to trace the usage of the term “I” and observe which words (specifically verbs) Whitman used after the subject pronoun. I wanted to see whether XIX adhered more closely to *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*, *Leaves of Grass*, or whether it contained elements of both in this respect. In *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*, Whitman followed “I” most often with verbs in the past tense that were related to either knowledge or the narrative itself. Examples of the most common words include “was” “had” “knew” and “found.”

Whitman’s voice in *Leaves of Grass* is starkly different: rather than past tense verbs, Whitman follows “I” with present tense verbs related to feeling, such as “see” “hear” and “love.” The linguistic shift is clear among the two works, this being evident in XIX. One sign of this change is in the word that most frequently follows “I” in this chapter: “felt.” Though still in the past tense, Whitman begins to move towards a tone of feeling and sense rather than utilize a word related to knowledge. Other indicators of his development include the usage of other sensory words such as “saw” and “lived.” Additionally, Whitman oscillates between using “was” and “am” following the subject pronoun in this chapter, indicating an experimentation with tense. This fluctuation prefigures Whitman’s full transition into primary usage of present tense verbs in *Leaves of Grass*, a defining characteristic of his distinctive poetic voice.

Whitman also experiments thematically in this pseudo-transcendental scene. One example of this change lies in Whitman’s usage of the word “Old” across the three bodies of text. In *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*, Whitman primarily connotes death and decay when using the word, it frequently appearing as an adjective immediately preceding “Wigglesworth,” an older gentleman in the novel who mentors the young narrator and eventually dies. This usage evolves towards signaling nostalgia and legacy in *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman inserting “old” as an adjective to describe “old martyrs” (17) “old mothers” (32) and “the old

hills of Judea” (62). As seen in the last phrase (among others), “old” can describe religious emblems or imagery as well in the poem. Pragmatic use of “old” in *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* shifts in XIX to directly contrast the practical language used throughout the rest of the novel. “Old” appears as the most frequent word in the chapter and in many instances, the word describes the location of the narrator’s meditations: the “old New-York church-yard,” (117) “old grave-yards” (118) and “old edifice” (124). Though this usage may not be quite as poetic as in *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman shifts from using “old” to denote death towards “old” representing a legacy and valuable past as embodied by the locale of the chapter. The connotation of the word in XIX becomes more ethereal and historical, evoking a sentiment that contrasts traditional usage of the word in the rest of the novel.

Whitman also plays with pastoral imagery and symbolism in XIX in a way that anticipates *Leaves of Grass*; one evidence of this is in his use of the word “city.” The word appears a total of eighteen times across *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* and one-third of those instances are in XIX. “City” appears less frequently in *Leaves of Grass*, but when it does, it is juxtaposed with scenes of the ideal countryside that appear frequently in Whitman’s imagery. Graphing the frequency of the word across XIX shows heavy usage at the beginning and end of the chapter when the narrator is removed from his transcendental meditations in the church yard. Interestingly, it shows almost no usage when actually immersed in his ethereal surroundings. This may be the beginnings of the contrast of city/country that appears frequently throughout the poetry of *Leaves of Grass* where “city” rarely appears alone, instead remaining in contrast to countryside imagery or language. “The city sleeps and the country sleeps,” writes Whitman, “The living sleep for their time. . . . the dead sleep for their time” (42). The parallelism between the city/country and living/dead pairings match the physical scene presented in XIX. As Jack

reflects on death, he stands at the meeting point of city and country in the churchyard, contemplating the life of the bustling city around him and the death of his old friend. In both instances, Whitman plays with the contrast of these two ideals and XIX is one crucial proving ground for that experimentation.

Thematically, Whitman's continues this play with the imagery and symbolism of the city and country in XIX. While Jack is surveying the surrounding cemetery at the beginning of the chapter, he describes how some cemeteries sit "at a proper distance from the turmoil of the town," claiming this gives it a "chaste and appropriately sober beauty" (117). The graveyard in which Jack stands does not benefit from this seclusion, instead being in one of the "busiest parts of our city" (118). Over the course of the chapter as Jack wanders through the graves, his pastoral perspective evolves as he gains a greater appreciation for his urban surroundings and the capacity to find that same beauty within them. As he walks along the wall separating the churchyard from the city street, Jack observes "how bustling was life, and how jauntily it wandered close along the side of those wanderings of its inevitable end" (124). Whitman presents a stark contrast between vivid life and tragic death, but notes that the living "troubled themselves not yet with gloomy thoughts; and that showed more philosophy in them perhaps than such sentimental meditations as any the reader has been perusing" (126). Whitman is playing on traditional pastoral themes, utilizing the city as a symbol for life and vivid youth rather than simply privileging the solitude of countryside life over the bustling town. The scene presents a juxtaposition of the quiet, somber country graveyard with the alive city, Whitman once again using the physical imagery to further his motif of the contrast of life and death; however, he also pushes the two together to confound his audience's traditional privileging of the country over the city.

Whitman continues this symbolic imagery in *Leaves of Grass* by employing a similar strategy in “To Think of Time.” After reflecting on death and asking if the reader has “dreaded those earth-beetles” (100), Whitman describes the living as looking “upon the corpse with their eyesight, but without eyesight lingers a different living and looks curiously on the corpse” (101). Just as in XIX where casual citizens do not possess the same understanding that Jack does to understand the transcendental significance of their juxtaposition with the churchyard, these lines present a similar confusion as the living look curiously on the dead without understanding the extent of their own mortality. The next lines describe the rivers, snow, and other natural wonders surrounding the living, Whitman remarking how others take great interest “of all these wonders of city and country” while those that understand the cycle of life and death take “small interest in them” (101). Just as in XIX, Whitman uses city and country for symbols of life and death, observing how the living either avoid contemplating or are unable to comprehend their inevitable end. Whitman notes how “eager we are in building houses” while “slowmoving and black lines creep over the whole earth . . . they never cease . . . they are burial lines” (101). The physical imagery of the black lines mirrors the imagery of the church surrounded by an urban landscape, utilizing symbol to juxtapose this metaphorical situation. Just as in XIX, Whitman favors natural imagery in contrast with urban cityscapes to illustrate the divide between the living and the dead.

From the linguistic shifts to Whitman playing with the pastoral, my focus in this analysis centers on *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*'s value as another satellite text within the larger hypertextual network of Whitman's work. The novel evidences a transition from Whitman's use of traditional tone and form in his earlier story and newspaper writing toward the experimental and ethereal tone he would stun his contemporaries with in *Leaves of Grass*. This textual analysis shows that *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* is not simply “a damned rot—

rot of the worst sort” (Traubel 93) as Whitman would have us believe; it is a crucial layer of the palimpsest of Whitman’s literary growth, displaying his creative development in these formative years. In turn, it shows us just how masterfully the poet utilized fiction to mature his poetic voice, reimagining Whitman’s mysterious poetic origins. Both *Leaves of Grass* and *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* strongly benefit from a hypertextual model precisely because they can be read in terms of the other, providing critical insight into the production and development of both. As shown previously, my analysis of the experimentation in XIX clues us into how Whitman masterfully began playing with cosmic language and symbolism in his fiction in a way that anticipated his later poetry. Interestingly, by reversing this chronological flow of literary influence, we also understand how *Leaves of Grass* is crucial to understanding the role Whitman’s fiction plays. Without the later poetry, *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* and *Franklin Evans* are simply two more popular novels in a sea of sentimental and temperance fiction. On their own, the works are insufficient in providing insight into their author or the greater literary period surrounding them. Alternatively, when paired with *Leaves of Grass*, the two stories illuminate how developing print technology and lower barriers to publication fostered an environment in which Whitman could begin experimenting with his writing in the public sphere. Additionally, the hidden nature of the works demonstrates the importance public image and celebrity had on an author’s consideration of their relationship with their early writing.

While we have had access to portions of Whitman’s fiction for some time, only recent advancements in digital analytical tools have enabled a new methodology allowing us to trace this mutual literary influence more deeply. Without the use of such tools, a cursory read of *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* would certainly highlight the unique nature of XIX, but one would find difficulty in directly tracking Whitman’s linguistic experimentation in this chapter

and comparing it to his later poetry. One major reason behind the apprehension to take up *Franklin Evans* or *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* as the subject of our scholarship may have simply been our lack of access to the tools necessary to conduct this type of analysis. The previously impractical practice of tracing linguistic patterns by looking at individual word use can now happen almost instantaneously, allowing scholars to pair their qualitative analytical ability with new valuable quantitative data. Additionally, these tools enable us to look at entire bodies of texts (categorized either by author or literary era) to trace these patterns, providing a previously impossible perspective.

Innovations in digital technology also redefine the way these texts and this data is received. Digital archives allow scholars like Zachary Turpin to have access to primary images that allowed him to confirm the authorship of *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle*. These archives also remedy the issue of editions when looking at larger reprinted works like *Leaves of Grass*. Kenneth Price notes that a hypertext model alleviates the “economics of print publication [that] have led previous editors to privilege one edition or another of Whitman’s writings—usually the first or last edition of *Leaves of Grass*” (30). Projects like the *Walt Whitman Hypertext Archive* foster a venue for integrating Whitman’s fiction into the body of criticism surrounding his work. By integrating these novels into the larger framework of his poetry, scholars can incorporate Whitman’s nascent writings to provide interesting new perspectives on Whitman’s life and work. This approach reconciles quantitative and qualitative approaches, confirming that “archival research and aesthetic interpretation are not mutually exclusive,” (Hyde, 156) but are instead complimentary of each other in deepening our understanding of these authors and eras. Though quantitative analysis clearly delineated a connection between *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* and *Leaves of Grass*, it required deep reading to interpret that data

and pair it with knowledge of Whitman's life and the context of the works. This pairing has already greatly benefited Whitman scholars in their recovery efforts and will continue to benefit us as we incorporate these recovered works into the larger web of Whitman's artistry.

Forming this network starts with defining the hypertext at the center of it; in this specific case, the source text would be *Leaves of Grass*. Because Whitman's authorial identity is so strongly linked to this book of poetry, it is also part of the center of the hypertextual web. We can layer the various editions of *Leaves of Grass* onto each other, tracking the changes and additions Whitman made as he developed this book of poetry. Along with this, different covers, pictures, and accompanying materials of the different editions provide us with a production history of the text as well. Because of the freedom a digital platform provides, these images and editions can exist as overlays to create digital palimpsest of the work. Projects like *The Walt Whitman Archive* are already engaging in this type of layered approach by creating databases of this information, allowing scholars to access a variety of these materials in one location.

Next, we add materials like Whitman's notebooks, sketches, and correspondence directly connected to *Leaves of Grass* into the network. Specific allusions or developments in relation to the text appear as digital notes linked directly to the lines they correspond to. These pieces add another layer to the palimpsest, showing the direct developmental progress Whitman engaged in in the leadup to publication of the poems. Through this layer, we can trace specific poems and lines as they evolve and shift across his notebooks into the different versions. Even small details like placement within the book and small linguistic shifts are not lost in this complete web.

Building off of the direct material, we now add the satellite texts to trace the indirect work that influences our understanding of the source. It is in this step that works such as *Franklin Evans* and *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* gain new significance as they are

incorporated into this powerful network. These published novels furnish a public perspective on the development of *Leaves of Grass* and elements of Whitman's poetry that appeared early on in this sphere. Along with digital notes showing language and themes that Whitman experimented with in his private notebooks, these works enable additional notes showing prototypical use of linguistic and thematic experimentation provided to a public audience. Through this layer, we better understand how Whitman interacted with the cult of celebrity around him and how that cultural force shaped his writing practices.

In this model, the source text and satellite texts also grant insight into each other through their mutual influence. Linguistic and thematic experimentation from the early fiction (like that which was shown earlier) can be traced to direct lines of *Leaves of Grass*, showing how Whitman played with language in his early career and carefully developed his poetic voice. This network also visualizes the reverse flow of literary influence to analyze how *Leaves of Grass* directs our reading of the early fiction to contextualize it within the larger body of Whitman's writing. For example, the transcendental imagery and manipulation of pastoral form and theme in *Leaves of Grass* allows us to read sections like XIX through a new lens, allowing us to dive deeper into a novel that may appear bland at first glance. Once integrated into the larger hypertextual model accompanied by these digital notes, works like *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* thrive through a provided artistic and cultural context that adds depth to their significance, a depth that either once required considerable work to access or that readers simply could not acquire.

With Whitman's writing finding a place within this network, we can now add important cultural contextual information provided by these recovered works into the larger web of information connected to the source text. This is the step in which Whitman's authorial identity

begins to be reimagined as we consider how culture operated on the author and lead him to act in certain ways. Additionally, we begin to consider how Whitman was an expert in other areas beyond his writing. *Franklin Evans* and *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* highlight Whitman's ability to recognize shifting technological advancements that enabled increased access to publication. This knowledge can be paired with Whitman's background in journalism and understanding of power of mass media, all of which facilitated his competence in creating a strong public image for himself. By juxtaposing biographical details directly with these recovered texts, they are situated within the larger arc of Whitman's career while actively revising that narrative.

Whitman's public image continuously grew as he published popular fiction in the various journals hungry for a native literature. This contextual information aids us in understanding the discrepancy between *The Life and Adventure of Jack Engle's* genre-conforming nature and *Leaves of Grass's* genre-bending essence even though their publication dates are so close. Rather than simply write off Whitman's early fiction as a mundane footnote in his long career, the network reframes it as crucial evidence of Whitman's active participation in a new cultural marketplace. It was precisely in this arena that Whitman began to understand the rising notion of celebrity and the importance of cultivating and securing one's image. Whitman's persisted in trying to fashion himself not as a scribbling novelist trying to live "from the products of his or her pen" (Jackson, 9), but as a poet of the people, disconnected from economy. This is reminiscent of Nathaniel Hawthorne's efforts to hide or destroy much of his early correspondence and writing to erase any evidence of the early development he believed would be detrimental to his later reception. Whitman and his contemporaries understood the power they possessed in shaping their celebrity by controlling what portion of their amateur work they

allowed the public to view. Armed with this crucial perspective, notes on the function of Whitman's suppression of *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* or *Manly Health and Training* aid us in understanding Whitman's motive behind this decision and the apprehension he must have experienced towards being associated with this popular writing. Once again, when placed within the larger hypertextual network of Whitman's writing and life, this information directly alters the way we critically approach these novels by understanding them as more than just simple fictions; instead they exist as tokens of a significant decision that secured a strong legacy.

This model incorporates Cathy Davidson's notion that books possess much more than their written contents. Viewing a work as "an artifact, a product of the printer's art as well as the author's or, for that matter, the reader's" refocuses attention on the physical history of the work as we consider the extraliterary decisions surrounding these objects (5). The fact that most of *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* contains bland prose might deter scholars from considering it a crucial entry into Walt Whitman scholarship; however, utilizing Davidson's framework, the novel becomes decisively meaningful through its production history. By nature of its suppression, the book alerts us to the effort Whitman underwent to shroud this potentially embarrassing work containing early experimentation from public view. Without this knowledge, we would not know to look for traces of this experimentation in the prose, and XIX's impact would remain hidden, leaving a gap in the hypertextual network.

In a finished form, an interconnected hypertextual web acts as a valuable resource for scholars to continually input new information to deepen our understanding of Whitman's complex development. This framework also highlights the power of the archive to work against outdated narratives rather than reinforce them. The analysis incorporating *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* stems directly from the fruit of Turpin's efforts uncovering the sole

existing copy of the novel through the Library of Congress' digital archive; thus, the process of incorporating this new novel (along with other of Whitman's recovered works) into the hypertext of *Leaves of Grass* and his authorial identity begins in the archive. Recently, the archive has become synonymous with the canon in terms of its contribution to the harmful nature of periodization. Carrie Hyde and Joseph Rezak express concern that "we traded canons for archives" in allowing them to simply reinforce historical narratives (156). By utilizing archival artifacts like *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* to rewrite the developmental history of larger works like *Leaves of Grass*, the archive transforms from solely being a receptacle for preservation towards becoming a critical tool for narrative reimagination. Especially with digital advancements enabling increased accessibility to archival texts, Whitman scholars can utilize this vast resource to recover lost works and contextualize them within the larger network of Whitman's career. In turn, these texts can then redefine the center of this hypertextual web containing Whitman's authorial identity and the nature of his incredible poetry.

Redefinition through archival artifacts poses an interesting option for re-approaching the narrative Whitman self-fashioned while simultaneously honoring the legacy he worked so hard to preserve. Eric Hayot's explanation of why previous efforts against canonization and periodization proves helpful in diagramming why this new method could be especially effective in Whitman scholarship. He defines literary periods and canons as "the product of a set of central characteristics and deviations from them" (155), and claims that trying to reimagine these periods by highlighting their deviations over the central characteristics becomes problematic because "no matter how extensive the deviations are, the central concept or inner essence governing the period remains firmly in place" (155). Just as canons and periods retain their form regardless of the addition of marginal voices we add to them, so too do authorial narratives seem

to stay preserved amid the vast number of recovered works that would seemingly redefine them. Though we possess *Fanshawe*, how much of our conception of Nathaniel Hawthorne's has actually changed as a result? How much do *Franklin Evans*, *Manly Health and Training*, and *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* realistically alter our understanding of Walt Whitman's artistic development on their own? According to Hayot's model, they remain powerless when isolated.

On a practical level, frequently we wonder how to use these seemingly mild rediscoveries. As noted earlier, these works almost immediately return to obscurity after their initial finding. In this alternative mode where they are instead integrated into a larger network, these writings overcome Hayot's problem as they work together to modify the internal narrative of *Leaves of Grass* and by extension, Whitman's overall development. Through this, rather than completely decenter attention away from Whitman's poetry, we are instead able to reimagine the role this fiction had on Whitman's writing process without detracting from his creative ability and the legacy he established.

As Whitman scholars work in the archive to continue unearthing new entries into his authorial legacy, a hypertextual model joins the necessity of preservation of recovered texts with the power of integrating them into the larger body of Whitman's work. Certainly, not every uncovered work will wholly revolutionize our conception of Whitman or interpret his poetry in a radically new way. Unfortunately, past practices tend to only focus on artifacts possessing this characteristic while leaving seemingly tame texts obscured. Fortunately for us, a hypertextual model remedies this issue by allowing these works to exist within a larger network, breathing life into their new perspectives. Portions of the once strict authorial narrative now offer valuable insight into what value these artifacts potentially hold. In turn, these artifacts reopen elements of

Whitman's life and work that may have felt closed to further interpretation and provide reasoning behind some of Whitman's most critical decisions.

As scholars of an artist whose life was as complex and multifaceted as his writing, it can be a complicated endeavor to understand all of the choices Walt Whitman made concerning his writing. Additionally, it can be difficult to untangle the complex web encompassing the enormous body of text contained within his career. Under the hypertextual model, we begin to unpack and reconnect these threads as new entries provide insight where there was once confusion or a gap. Though Whitman's decision to distance himself from *The Life and Adventures of Jack Engle* may seem unimportant, it is one that, understood within the larger historical context, we can sympathize with and diagnose as symptomatic of a meaningful cultural shift. XIX's poetic tone asserts the importance of Whitman's the novel (and by extension, his fiction in general) in his overall development, answering the question of where these works fit in the poet's artistic growth. By building a hypertextual model around *Leaves of Grass* and Whitman's authorial identity, we overcome the notion that new entries into this network must contradict previous scholarship. Instead, we reaffirm the poet's claim that "I am large, I contain multitudes" (246).

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