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*A Tribute to William Hartshorne: Unrecorded Whitman*

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IN SECTION 15 of "Song of Myself," Whitman writes: "The journey printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case, / He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the manuscript."<sup>1</sup> When these lines appeared on page 21 of the first (1855) edition of *Leaves of Grass*, the man who inspired them, William Hartshorne, was still alive, eighty years old. Whitman spoke of Hartshorne many times. For example, in *Specimen Days* in 1882, under the heading "Printing Office.—Old Brooklyn," the poet wrote: "An old printer in the office [of the *Long Island Patriot*], William Hartshorne, a revolutionary character, who had seen Washington, was a special friend of mine, and I had many a talk with him about long past times."<sup>2</sup> As an apprentice printer, Whitman boarded with Hartshorne's granddaughter.

Gay Wilson Allen's *Solitary Singer* devotes a full page to Hartshorne and the lasting impression he made on Whitman;<sup>3</sup> the source of the biographer's information is Emory Holloway's edition of *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman*,<sup>4</sup> where Whitman's "Brooklyniana" sketches are reprinted from the *Brooklyn Standard* of 1861-1862, of which the one dealing with Hartshorne is Number 6, from the *Standard* on January 11, 1862. However, much of the material on the old patriot and printer was originally published in a hitherto unrecorded and uncollected tribute to Hartshorne in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* of December 31, 1859, just under the masthead on page 1. When Whitman edited the *Eagle*, 1846-1848, his editorials and other matter were unsigned; but this 1859 piece is signed "W. W." We know it is Whitman's because of the personal references in the article, because some of it was

<sup>1</sup> Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, Comprehensive Reader's Edition, Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York, 1965), p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Walt Whitman, *Prose Works 1892*: Vol. I, *Specimen Days*, ed. Floyd Stovall (New York, 1963), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> Gay Wilson Allen, *The Solitary Singer: A Critical Biography of Walt Whitman*, rev. ed. (New York, 1967), pp. 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> Emory Holloway, ed., *The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman* (Garden City, N.Y., 1921), II, 245-249; see also p. 294.

printed verbatim in "Brooklyniana," and because Whitman's own copy of the December 31 *Eagle* (Feinberg Collection) has clipped out the very paragraphs used in "Brooklyniana."

### Death of the Veteran Brooklyn Printer.

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#### NEWSPAPERS IN OLD TIMES HERE—A MAN OF THE DAYS OF WASHINGTON AND FRANKLIN—OUR TOWN THIRTY YEARS AGO—TRAITS—FRUITS—OFFICIALS—FIRST OUTSET IN THE CRAFT OF COMPOSITION.

A few days since, died, here in Brooklyn, one of the oldest practical printers in the United States—very possibly *the* oldest one. He followed his trade long ago in the offices of this city (then village), and was at one time Corporation Printer. William Hartshorne, aged 84 years,—a link between the days and usages past or passing away, and these we live in.

He came here nearly sixty years since, from Philadelphia, where he served his apprenticeship, and where, from personal observation, he remembered well (often described to the writer hereof,) the appearance and demeanor of Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, and other of the great historical persons of the earlier Presidentiads.

Born previous to the Republic, this man, my old friend and master, that died only ten or twelve days ago, had not only lived under all the Presidents, but I think he told me that he had seen every one of them, from Washington to Buchanan, inclusive.

Mr. Hartshorne, though unknown now in Brooklyn to the vast majority of those who read this, will be clear enough in the recollection of such old citizens as ex-Mayors Hall, Cyrus P. Smith, and Samuel Smith—and of Nathan B. Morse, John Dikeman, Conklin Brush, Gabriel Furman, Evan M. Johnson, Clarence D. Sackett, Stephen Haynes, and others. He had the old school manner, rather sedate, not fast, never too familiar, always restraining his temper, always cheerful, benevolent, friendly, observing all the decorums of language and action, square and honest, invariably temperate, careful in his diet and costume, a keeper of regular hours,—in bodily appearance a small man, hair not very grey, and though not at all of robust habit of body (indeed rather fragile), and of a trade considered unhealthy, he lived to the extended age of eighty-four years.

He had a very good memory, with an intellect bright, even in his old age, and was willing, to an appreciative listener, to give copious reminiscences of the personages, things, and occurrences, of 70, 60, or 50 years ago, and so on downward to later times. He knew of the first printing

office established in Brooklyn (1799), and the first paper published thence, *The Courier and New York and Long Island Advertiser*. This was discontinued, at the end of three or four years, but by-and-by the proprietor, Thomas Kirk, tried another enterprise, the weekly *Long Island Star*, which he shortly afterward sold out to Alden Spooner.

Mr. Kirk, some years afterwards, commenced still another paper, *The Long Island Patriot*. All these papers were printed on old-fashioned wooden hand-presses, an edition of a few hundred copies being considered fairly satisfactory. It was not an uncommon thing for the editor and proprietor of the paper to serve them with care to the subscribers through the town, with his own hands. Every subscriber's name was written on the margin of the paper. I remember in 1829 and '30, to have seen my father's name written every week on the white rim of the *Patriot*, as it was left at the house in Tillary street.

Samuel E. Clements, a very tall and eagle-nosed Southerner, who was also appointed Postmaster, and occupied for his printing establishment and his Post-office, a quaint old Dutch building on the east side of Fulton street, four doors north of Nassau. The *Patriot*, (the name was changed not long after to the *Brooklyn Advocate*.) was the Democratic and Jackson organ. Political excitement, and partisan fury, ran just as high then as now. It was the time of "the great contest between Old Hickory and the United States Bank." As to local matters, Brooklyn then existed as a village, with 15,000 inhabitants. Its propriety was cared for by a Board of Trustees, with Joseph Sprague for President: his salary was \$150. The Street Commissioner had \$200 a year, and the Clerk \$150. The Justices of the Municipal Court had \$500 each. The whole annual expenses of Brooklyn were \$10,000; (the Trustees were prohibited by law from going beyond that amount.) What is now our vast wealthy and competent city, (regardless of expense,) was then a beautiful semi-rural place, with few streets but plenty of winding roads, shaded by old trees, and with numerous fine gardens. *One* ox-cart was owned by the authorities, to transport the garbage and refuse dirt from the streets; and a proposition in 1829 to purchase a second cart was cautiously considered, and, after being found not to endanger the public credit on account of expense, was adopted. Over the whole of the towns of Kings county, Jeremiah Johnson was Supervisor; with John Doughty Town Clerk—and he was succeeded, about 1830, by Adrian Hegeman.

But instead of writing a brief notice of the man who first taught me how to hold a printer's composing stick, I am running off into a chronicle of our city, in 1829, '30, and '31.

It was in the latter year that the writer of this, (then a boy of 12

years,) under the patient instruction of old Mr. Hartshorne, duly took his first lessons in the craft. It was in that old brick Dutch building previously alluded to, where Mr. Clements had his Newspaper and Post Office. Those were up a narrow and high side-stoop; but on the basement floor Mr. Hartshorne had two or three stands, racks, &c., with type-cases—and there he worked as a compositor, and kept a little stationery shop,—and acted as foreman of the office.

What compositor running his eye over these lines, but will easily realize the whole modus of that initiation?—the half eager, half bashful beginning—the awkward holding of the stick—the type-box, or perhaps two or three old cases, put under his feet for the novice to stand on, to raise him high enough—the thumb in the stick—the compositor's rule—the upper case almost out of reach—the lower case spread out handier before him—learning the boxes—the pleasing mystery of the different letters, and their divisions—the great 'e' box—the box for spaces right by the boy's breast—the 'a' box, 'l' box, 'o' box, and all the rest—the box for quads away off in the right hand corner—the slow and laborious formation, type by type, of the first line—its unlucky bursting by the too nervous pressure of the thumb—the first experience in 'pi,' and the distributing thereof—all this, I say, what jour. typo cannot go back in his own experience and easily realize?

I would almost like to give in detail full particulars of my old foreman's life; but space and occasion do not allow. Still his life would bring in quite a running history of Brooklyn for the whole of the present century.

Some time after, Mr. Clements left the paper, (the late Judge Rockwell succeeded him as its editor) and a few years afterward—Brooklyn having become an incorporated city in 1831—Mr. Hartshorne received the appointment of City Printer, to print the pamphlets, blanks, handbills, &c. He then had a respectable job office in Fulton street, opposite High.

The last portions of his life were spent somewhat secluded, but quietly, and as happily as can be expected to fall our lot. He was quite alone, having long since lost his wife by death. For the last twelve or fifteen years, the little old man was often to be seen walking slowly in pleasant weather, through Fulton street, or some neighboring thoroughfare, with his broad-brim hat, his cane, and chewing his quid of tobacco. For my part, I used always to stop and salute him, with good-will and reverence. And so, age and decay creeping on, after a stretch of longevity very unusual for a printer, about two weeks ago, here in Brooklyn the veteran died.

His life was surely a good one and a noble one for all its unobtrusive-

ness. I could not let the old man go to the grave, without, in my way some such hastily scribbled offering as this, to signify that I loved him.

W. W.<sup>5</sup>

## *Another Possible Origin of Howells's The Shadow of a Dream*

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THE SHADOW OF A DREAM is unique among the works of William Dean Howells's middle years. Its psychological symbolism and metaphysical overtones have more affinity with Hawthornian romance than with the realistic novel typical of Howells during the 1880's.<sup>1</sup>

Even the title was apparently borrowed from a romantic poet. According to Edwin H. Cady, Howells used a line from Keats's *Endymion*.<sup>2</sup> In this meandering Platonic poem, the hero at one point describes the pleasures of friendship and physical love and then voices his ultimate desire—immortal love—which diminishes the importance of all that earthly existence covets. He has dreamed of love in many forms and has often been frustrated in quest of love, but “with a hope beyond the shadow of a dream,” he asserts his continuing search for the immortal. Yet the optimism of Keats's poem, particularly the context of the quotation above, is not sustained by *The Shadow of a Dream*. Another romantic poem—Shelley's “The Sensitive Plant”—also contains a line with the essential words of Howells's title. More important, there are certain key images in the poem that reappear, appropriately modified, in

<sup>5</sup>I am indebted to the Brooklyn Public Library for sending a reproduction of the page from the *Daily Eagle*, and especially to Mr. Charles E. Feinberg for calling to my attention the copy of the issue of the *Eagle* found among the Whitman papers; it is now in the Library of Congress with the other Feinberg material.

<sup>1</sup>See Edwin H. Cady, *The Realist at War* (Syracuse, 1958), pp. 117–118; and Elaine Hedges, “Howells on a Hawthornesque Theme,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, III (Spring, 1961), 129–143.

<sup>2</sup>*The Realist at War*, p. 118. Miss Hedges, on the other hand, offers lines from *Hamlet* and *The Scarlet Letter* as possible origins of the title, though the narrative and theme of neither are similar to those of *The Shadow of a Dream*.