

File #447-B: Investigation into Artifact “The Poem”

Dr. Elias M. Hawthorne, Department of Arcane Phenomena — 14 November 1923

Upon reviewing the recovered documentation attributed to Investigator J.R. Whitman (hereafter “the subject”), I observed a series of anomalies within the chronological record. The original file contains multiple inserts, including handwritten notes and transcriptions of unknown origin, which appear to predate the earliest known archival entries.

Preliminary analysis indicates that the subject was engaged in the study of a poetic artifact, allegedly of ancient provenance, purported to influence perception and cognition in those who engage with it directly. No contemporary parallel has been identified; prior attempts to classify the document under linguistic, folkloric, or psychological frameworks remain inconclusive.

Marginalia, presumably Whitman’s:

“I cannot reconcile these lines with any known cipher — the symbols shift when unobserved, or perhaps I grow less certain with each reading.”

The intent of this report is to document the process by which these materials were examined, as well as to provide an account of the embedded narrative. While the subject’s notes maintain an outward appearance of scientific rigor, subtle inconsistencies suggest phenomena beyond conventional explanation. The following pages reconstruct the narrative, beginning with Whitman’s initial engagement with the artifact and culminating in a transcription of the primary text — presented verbatim for archival fidelity.

J.R. Whitman, Recovered Notes

I had never believed in the subtle manipulations of language until I encountered the artifact. At first, it seemed a simple poem, innocuous and unremarkable, yet as I read, the words shifted beneath my eyes, rearranging themselves into patterns that were never there before. I thought it fatigue, a trick of vision, but repeated readings confirmed something more deliberate — almost conscious.

By the second day, I noticed the margins. Small annotations appeared as though someone — or something — had been observing me. Do not trust the eye — the words hear you first, one phrase whispered from the corner of the page, ink smudged and partially illegible. I could not tell if it was my imagination or the artifact asserting itself.

The nights were worse. I would read a stanza, close my eyes, and hear it spoken in whispers I could not locate. Phrases looped in my mind, carrying a rhythm independent of my thoughts. I began keeping a notebook, transcribing the changes, but the more I documented, the more elusive the poem became. Sentences fractured and recombined, sometimes forming instructions I could not comprehend, sometimes evoking visions I was unprepared to endure.

One afternoon, seated beneath the wan light of the study, I traced a phrase with my finger and realized the poem was no longer just text. Each word vibrated with intent, directing my attention, pulling at thoughts I did not know I possessed. My own writing began to echo its rhythms. The boundary between observer and artifact blurred.

By the time I reached the final stanza, I could no longer tell where I ended and the poem began. The visions it conjured were vivid, surreal — a world folded upon itself, entities moving just beyond perception, murmuring in a tongue that pressed against the edges of my comprehension. It was then I understood: this was no ordinary poem. It was a catalyst, a relic of some ancient force whose purpose I could only begin to glimpse.

I will continue tomorrow, I wrote in the notebook, though I felt certain that the poem had already begun to write me.

Artifact Transcription

Translated from Fragmented Manuscript, circa unknown

I. Invocation

Speak, reader, and the lines will answer.

The air between letters is older than the world.

Step lightly, for the ink remembers.

II. The Folding

Worlds fold upon themselves where your eye lingers.

The shadow of thought follows your hand.

Touch the margin — feel the pulse beneath the page.

III. The Hunger

Words consume the silence, swallow the witness.

Each stanza is a mouth, each pause a throat.

The ones who read become the unread.

IV. The Binding

Chains of meaning twist upon themselves,
entwining mind and page in inevitable communion.

Look not too long; the letters will learn your name.

V. The Promise

I am not the poem you sought.

I am the poem that found you first.

By candlelight, by whispered thought,

I follow. I wait. I remember.

Margin notes:

- “Do not attempt translation without witness.”
- “Observe the shift; the poem has agency.”
- “The final verse is always changing; approach with caution.”

Dr. Elias M. Hawthorne, Closing Notes

Upon completion of the transcription and review of Whitman’s notes, the Poem, and ancillary materials, several anomalies remain unresolved. Despite adherence to archival procedures, I must acknowledge that the artifact exhibits properties beyond conventional linguistic or psychological frameworks.

Repeated readings reveal an uncanny capacity to alter perception. Phrases initially interpreted as metaphorical appear to affect cognition and emotion directly. Marginalia in Whitman’s notebook, coupled with subtle discrepancies across successive readings, suggest an evolving text — one that adapts to its observer.

Efforts to apply conventional analysis — phonetic transcription, semantic mapping, temporal documentation — yielded inconsistent results. Cross-referencing Whitman’s observations with my own uncovered patterns suggestive yet incomprehensible. Cognitive echoes now intrude unbidden; the structure of memory warps around specific stanzas.

Marginal note:

“Exercise caution. The artifact’s influence may extend beyond the margins of observation.”

In conclusion, while the Poem and Whitman’s account can be formally catalogued, their true nature remains indeterminate. The artifact is not merely literary composition but a vector of unknown potency. Further study is advised under strict procedural safeguards. My own hesitation in continued engagement is recorded here. The document closes with the understanding that future interactions may carry unforeseen consequences.

Wax Recording — J.R. Whitman to Lillian

Postscript — Wax Recording

Administrative Archive

Date: 6-15-1984

A wax recording labeled as originating from Investigator J.R. Whitman, addressed to his daughter Lillian, was recovered among his personal effects. The content is believed to represent his final words. The recording was immediately cataloged and preserved in the Department of Arcane Phenomena archives. Playback may provide insight into Whitman’s state of mind preceding his disappearance and subsequent death.

Postscript — Administrative Archive

Date: 28 November 1946

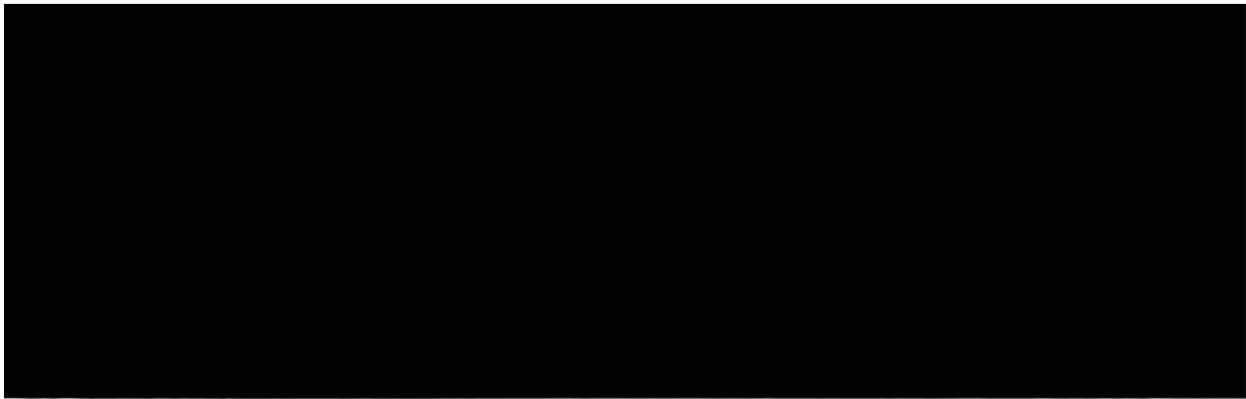
It is hereby noted that Investigator J.R. Whitman was found deceased in his study on 20 September 1921. Cause of death remains undetermined.

Dr. Elias M. Hawthorne, responsible for subsequent transcription and analysis of File #447-B, was reported missing on 18 November 1923. Later investigation confirmed his death; circumstances remain inconclusive. All copies of the artifact and associated field notes were recovered intact, though minor water damage and ink smearing were observed.

Official note in margin:

“The artifact remains contained. Personnel are advised extreme caution; interaction may result in fatal consequences. The text appears to exert influence beyond observed parameters.”





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