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Research/Criticism: “The Half-Breed”*

- **Novella:** first published in *The Aristidean*, March 1845 as “Arrow-Tip”
- Reprinted with its current title in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 1-6, 8, 9 June 1846
- Whitman’s second-longest piece of fiction, second to his 1842 novel *Franklin Evans*
- **Structure:** nine chapters, building towards the climax; later action is dependent on early-established character traits

“Whitman strives for some depth, especially in his depictions of Native Americans, whom he seems to take special care in humanizing. Arrow-Tip’s teasing sense of humor leads to the confrontation that is his undoing. Accused first of theft and then murder, Arrow-Tip is as silent as Jesus, even as he is hanged. Boddo, the half-breed, is the story’s villain, but he is evil because society has made him evil; ostracism has made him antisocial and vengeful. Folsom sees Arrow-Tip as anticipating Whitman’s “friendly and flowing savage” in “Song of Myself” (section 39), and William Scheick uses Boddo’s physical and moral deformities as evidence of Whitman’s strong opposition to miscegenation. In that light, the Native American of “The Fireman’s Dream” (1844) may be viewed as Boddo’s precursor.”
- Possibly written as an implicit attack on capital punishment, or just sensationalism

“All criticism derived from J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings’ "Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia" (1998).”

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Images taken from microfilm on Inter-Library Loan, Purdue University.