

(*The Night Before Christmas or a Visit of St. Nicholas*¹)

Who might be the actual author of “A Visit of St. Nicholas”?

Cornelia Ho Xin Ning (1004678)

Samuel Sim Wei Xuan (1004657)

Ang Sok Teng Cassie (1004542)

Teo Yew Xuan (1004452)

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1. Abstract

“Digital Humanities is a study where one uses computational and statistical analysis, informational retrieval, topic modelling, and data visualization on archives and collections that are vastly larger than any human can handle” (Berry, *What are the digital humanities?* 2019). This paper aims to show, through stylometric tools, that humanists can discover insights to humanities’ questions that would otherwise require large corpus linguistic study. Hence, the objective is to leverage stylometric analysis to analyze an extensive compilation of poems by two disputed poets and provide insights into the controversy over the actual author of the poem, “A Visit of St. Nicholas”. Also, from the computational results, this paper will conduct a literary analysis to evaluate the performance of such digital tools. The stylometric tool of choice will be a “stylo” package in RStudio (R programming language platform), and the poets we will focus on are Clement Clarke Moore and Henry Livingston Jr. From both our statistical and literary analysis, we can conclude that Henry Livingston Jr is highly likely to be the real author of the poem “A Visit of St Nicholas”.

Worries! -

2. Introduction

The persona most associated with Christmas is Santa Claus – on a sleigh with reindeers, going from house to house and down their chimneys to deliver presents. However, the depiction of Santa Claus or St. Nicholas, as described above, was not always the case throughout history. St. Nicholas was initially portrayed as a protector of the young, the sick and the poor. This image was reflected by a well-known tale of three young girls saved from prostitution when St. Nicholas secretly delivers gold to their indebted father, which was used for their dowries (Handwerk, *The history of How St. Nicholas Became Santa Claus* 2021). From then, the image of St. Nicholas has slowly evolved, and he was eventually given the name Santa Claus - the English pronunciation of Sinter Klass, which is a shortened name for St. Nicholas in Dutch. Notably, the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas”, published anonymously in a local New York newspaper on 23rd December 1823, is arguably the first interpretation of the modern-day Santa Claus we are familiar with today. Therein lies the dispute over this poem’s authorship between Clement Clarke Moore and Henry Livingston Jr, where the children of Henry Livingston Jr. claimed that their father had read the poem to them the year before the poem was anonymously published. On the other hand, as a well-educated professor, Moore’s claim of this non-academic piece’s authorship and inclusion into his 1844 anthology, “Poet”, was made under his children’s pleas.

Who are these poets?

Consequently, Moore and Livingston’s advocates have both brought to the table their own set of claims and arguments, backed up by various pieces of evidence such as the acclaimed original copies of the poem. Admittedly, it is challenging and time-consuming for any researcher to compare both authors’ work and poems by close readings. The advancement in computational technology has undoubtedly opened a new way to approach this authorship controversy. However, to assess the situation thoroughly and accurately, we must still discuss the limitations of such digital methods. Therefore, this essay will lay out the compilation of both authors’ works, review the methodology of

using stylometric tools to analyze their word usage, discuss the insights the results bring regarding the authorship's controversy and conduct a literary analysis on selected poems.

3. Methodology

Stylometric analysis of a poem is the study of the linguistic style of the poem. Given the sheer amount of works done by different poets, it is often time-consuming to cover a wide array of the corpus. Therefore, we can leverage computational tools to study the word frequencies across all the different texts. First, we have compiled a list of both poets' works in a text file format, as shown in Annex A, that allowed us to use the program package, "stylo", to analyze. In total, we collated twenty-two poems by Livingstone and thirty-one poems by Moore. There were no additional data cleaning steps of the text files, as every poem is written in the same language. For all tests listed below, pronouns are culled. This culling is necessary because pronouns are often too strongly correlated to the text subject; hence are usually removed during any stylometric tests (Pennebaker, 2011).

 The first test we ran was a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) on the corpus, allowing us to visualize the corpus in a two-dimensional scatter plot based on two chosen words' frequency. PCA is done through a few automated steps, namely standardizing the dataset, calculating a correlation matrix, then calculating and sorting the hundred most frequent words based on their eigenvectors and eigenvalues in descending order. PCA will then select the two words (features) that appear the most across the corpus or, in other words, capture the most variance in the corpus. Therefore, with these two words or principal components, PCA will enable us to visualize all the poems in a simple scatter plot.

 The second test we did was doing an overall clustering on the corpus where similar poems in terms of word frequencies will be grouped in a circular tree-like diagram. A range of fifty to hundred of the most common words, proven to be optimal in distinguishing different authors (Evert et al., 2017), will be used. A step size of ten words will be used for the range, resulting in six separate cluster analyses. From these six cluster analyses, an overall bootstrap consensus tree will be produced. This

tree diagram will allow us to see which poems are similar to each other. Imperatively, we can see where the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas” lies and if any other poems are being clustered with it.

The last test is an application of a “Delta Rolling” algorithm to the corpus, which allowed us to grade the dissimilarities of narrowed down, similar poems against “A Visit of St. Nicholas” as we iterate through it. First, the corpus is split into a secondary text, “A Visit of St. Nicholas”, and a primary set of twelve selected reference poems. Every reference poem in the primary set will be split into equal lengths of overlapping samples. Each sample is set to be ten words long to estimate the typical length of a sentence in a poem. The step size is the size of overlap between every sample, which we set to a value one. For example, in a reference poem in the primary set, its first sample will include the first to the tenth word, while the following sample will include the second word to the eleventh word. For each reference poem in the primary set, various parameters are calculated based on the frequencies of the hundred most frequently used words across the primary set to form an overall “Delta Function”. We chose the value hundred to be consistent with previous tests. Similarly, the secondary poem will be split into equal lengths of overlapping samples. Next, the algorithm will iterate through the secondary poem, “A Visit by St. Nicholas”, and calculate “Delta” values using the “Delta Function”. In the end, this algorithm will produce a plot that visualizes the “Delta” values of the twelve poems with regards to every sample of the poem “A Visit by St Nicholas”. The higher the delta values, the lesser the similarity and vice versa. Therefore, we will see how different selected poems are compared to the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas” as we iterate through it. The selection of twelve poems will be based on a pre-cluster analysis.

In a nutshell, this methodology will allow us as a digital humanist to analyze and give humanistic insights on the controversy over the authorship of the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas”.

4. Main Results and Analysis

4.1. Principal Component Analysis

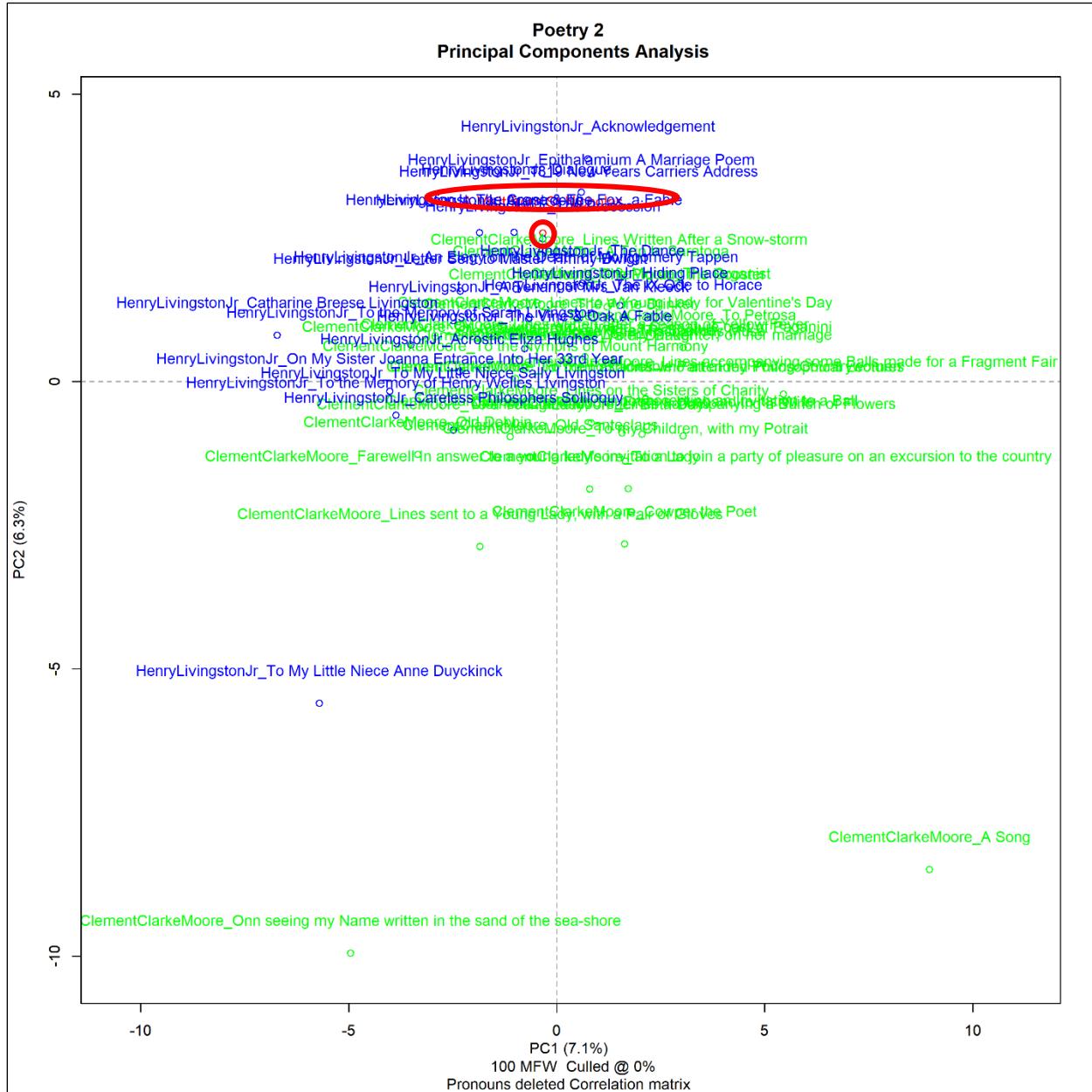


Fig. 1. PCA of all the works done by Moore, Livingstone and the debated piece, “A Visit of St. Nicholas”.

For this paper, we ran a PCA test without pronouns as aforementioned, and the resulting scatter plot is shown in Fig. 1. While Moore and Livingstone's works do present an area of overlap, we can still see the clusters of both authors in green and blue. However, Moore is more likely between the two to have a deviation in writing styles, as pictured by his two extreme outlier works, "A Song" and "On Seeing My Name Written in the Sand of the Sea-Shore". On the other hand, Livingstone exhibits higher levels of consistency, with all his works remaining close in the text to one another except for his work, "To My Little Niece Anne Duyckincky". We also get to observe the poem "A Visit of St Nicholas" (thick red circles in Fig.1) placed at the perimeter of the central mass of works, notably resting on the edge closer to multiple of Livingstone's works and on the opposite end of Moore's texts which are clustered more towards the bottom. Therefore, this visualization already seems to favour Livingstone as the author of "A Visit of St. Nicholas" over Moore as we can see its proximity from the other texts.

4.2. Bootstrap Consensus Tree

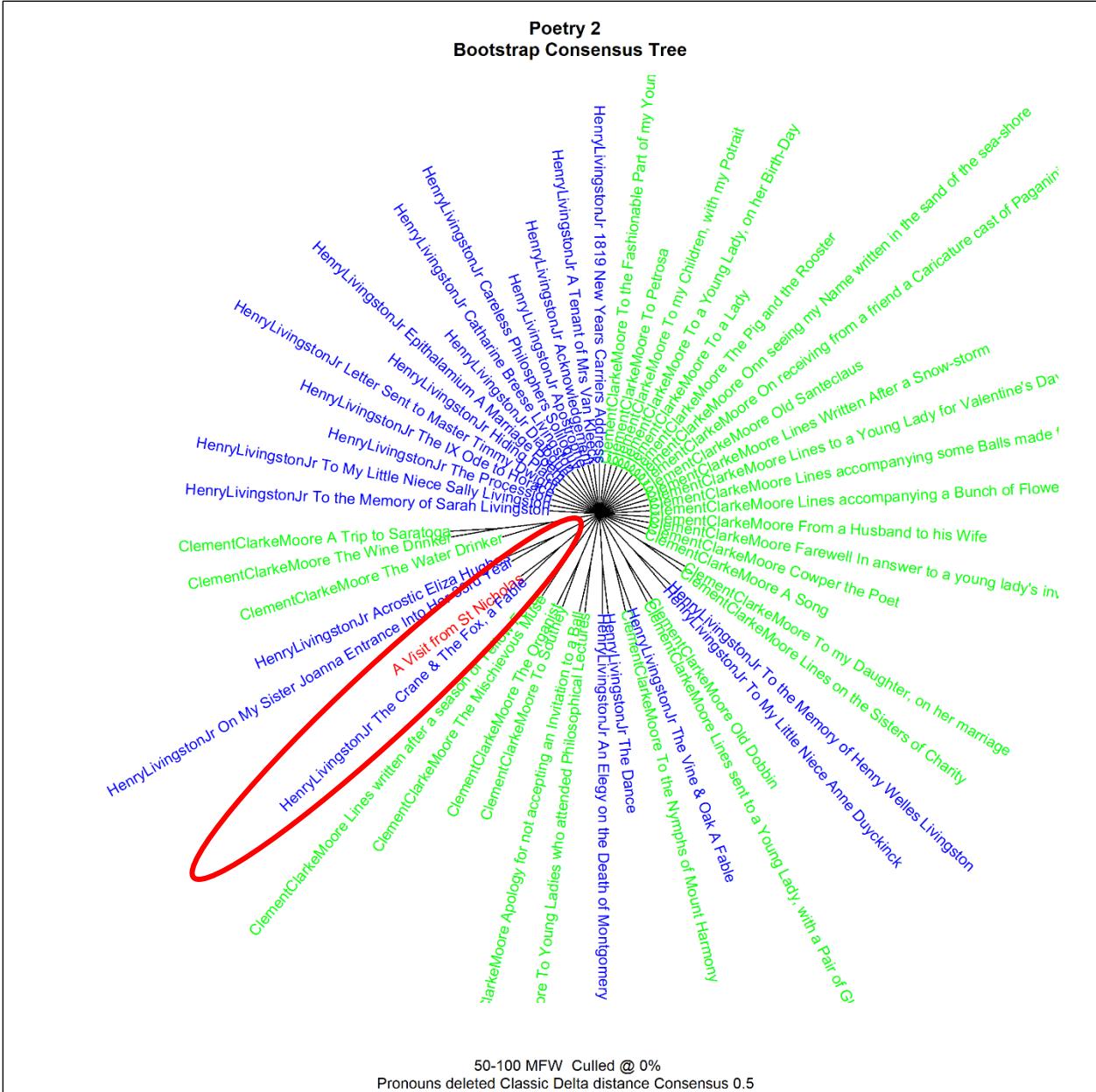


Fig. 2. Bootstrap consensus tree of all the works done by Moore, Livingstone and the debated piece, “A Visit of St. Nicholas”.

Firstly, the bootstrap consensus tree in Fig. 2 generally has most of each poet's works extending out from the same branch with some exceptions. Additionally, we can also see the general clusters of each poet. For example, there is a green coloured cluster of Moore's poems at the top-

right. More importantly, this bootstrap consensus tree placed the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas” together with the work of Livingstone, “The Crane and the Fox, a Fable” (thick red circle in Fig. 2). However, the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas” seems to be situated around poems written by Clement Clarke Moore and Henry Livingstone Jr, which probes further analysis. Therefore, we need to take a deeper look into how the dissimilarities between those poems and “A Visit by St. Nicholas” is line by line using a rolling algorithm.

4.3. Rolling Delta Algorithm

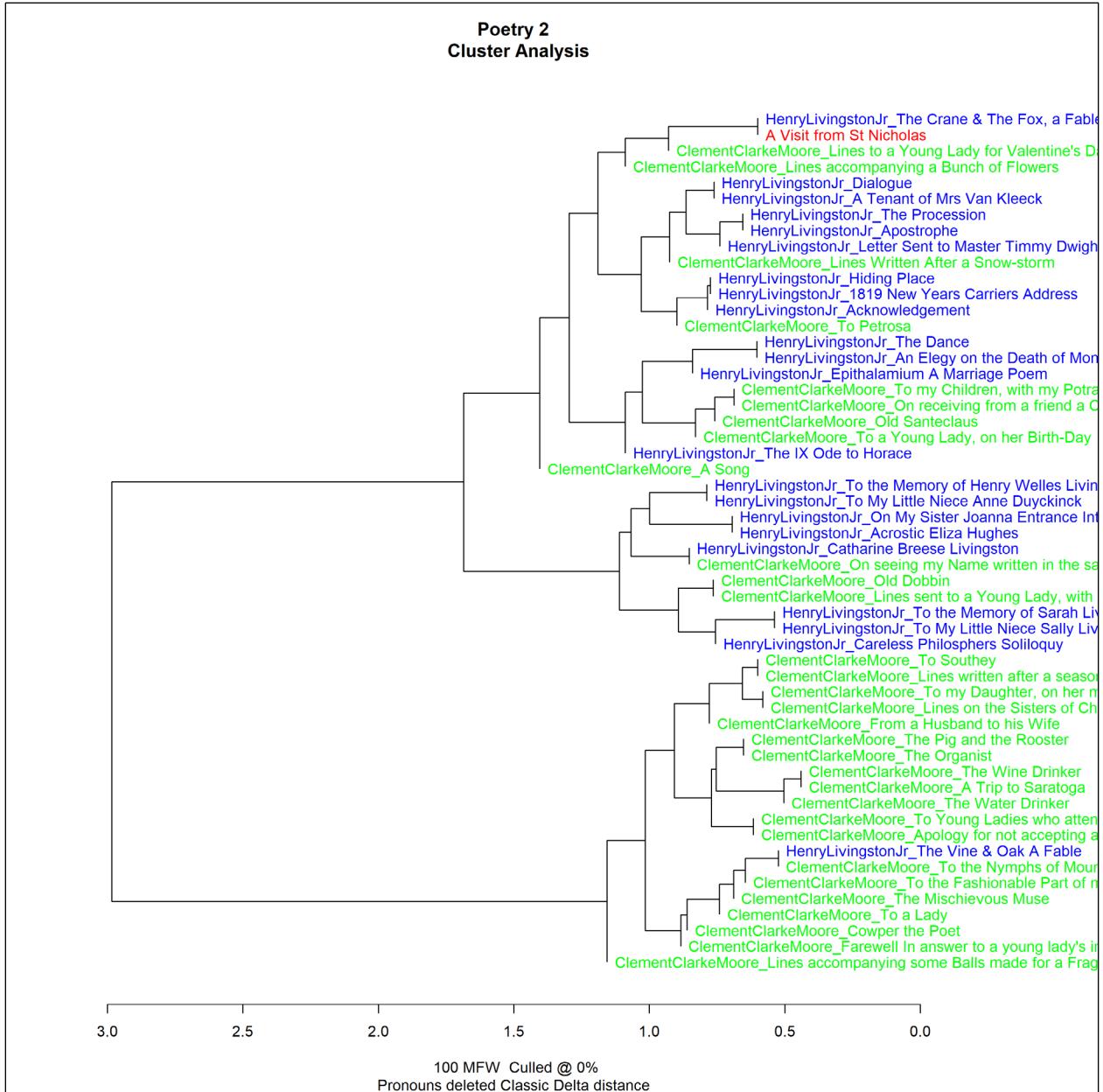


Fig. 3. Dendrogram of all the works done by Moore, Livingstone and the debated piece, “A Visit of St. Nicholas”, using the hundred most frequent words.

Firstly, the package “stylo” only accepts twelve poems to be compared against the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas” for the Rolling Delta algorithm. Therefore, we have decided to conduct a pre-cluster analysis similar to the previous test to pick six poems by each poet. However, instead of an

overall bootstrap consensus tree of fifty to a hundred of the most frequent words, cluster analysis with only a hundred of the most frequent words is done. The dendrogram (tree diagram) in Fig. 3 shows the results. From the dendrogram, we selected six poems from each poet closest to the poem “A Visit by St. Nicholas” to be used for the Rolling Delta algorithm.

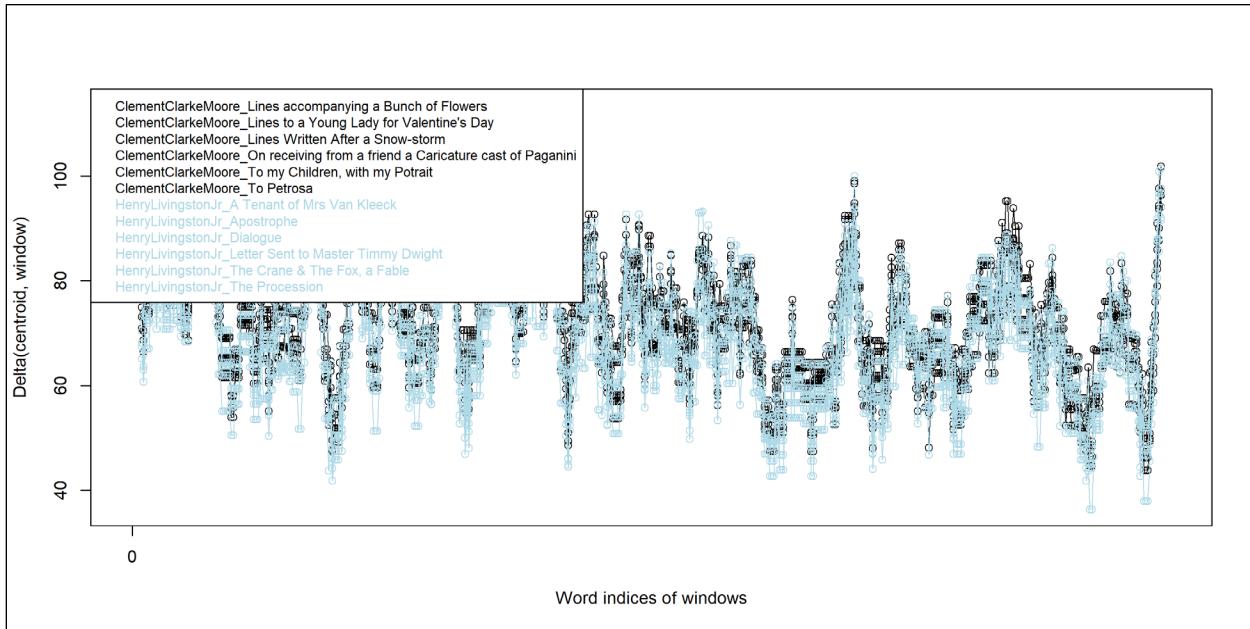


Fig. 3. Rolling Delta diagram for the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas”.

The Rolling Delta diagram, in Fig. 3, for the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas” is a comparison of dissimilarities against the twelve selected poems that are most similar to “A Visit of St. Nicholas”. Since the primary set only contains twelve of the most similar poems, the hundred most frequent words used in this analysis will be narrowed down to the hundred most frequent words across the twelve poems, which would produce more accurate results. We observed that the tropical blue coloured line graphs slightly dominate (lower than) the black coloured line graphs in their “Delta” values. In other words, the poems by Livingstone generally have lower “Delta” values, hence lower degrees of dissimilarities with the poem “A Visit by St. Nicholas”.

To put it all into context, through the visualization of the entire corpus using Principal Component Analysis, clustering of the corpus using a Bootstrap Consensus Tree, and the Rolling Delta application, we can indeed see some fascinating results. While all three analysis seems to lean towards the idea that the writing style of the poem “A Visit of St. Nicolas” suits Livingstone style of writing more, the extent to which it leans towards is not extreme which is due to limitations in our methodology.

4.4. Assumptions and Limitations

The most significant limitation of the corpus-based stylometric analysis is the corpus size and the relative length of the texts within the corpus. For example, the poem “Catharine Breese Livingston”, written by Livingstone, has only twenty-five words. On the contrary, the poem “A Trip to Saratoga”, written by Moore, has almost seven thousand words. Therefore, having an array of poems with significantly different lengths might cause the list of most frequent words across the entire corpus to be biased. Accordingly, the results of any tests will be skewed. Besides, there exists the dilemma of the number of poems of both poets to include in the corpus. For example, the list of poems collated for Moore were poems taken from his anthology, “Poems”, and its count already exceeds the count for Livingstone’s list of poems. Of course, for each of the tests, therein lies their respective mathematical assumptions. For example, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is mathematically a linear transformation of the data (words in our corpus) to find the principal components (words) that captures the most variance. In some cases, non-linear relationships between features might capture more variance, yet it is tough to find any intuitive meaning for any non-linear relationships between the words in this PCA.

Secondly, the style of writing of a poem encompasses much more than the word frequency alone. In poetry literary analysis, there are numerous literary devices to analyze a poem on. Poets might have different preferences on their use of literary devices such as alliteration or rhymes. Hence, a limitation in the methodology that we have used lies in how we did not account for literary devices. Nevertheless, the advancement in computational technologies has found ways to account for such things. For example, an “algorithm has been designed to render the phonetic reading of the words of the play and to measure alliteration in the speeches of individual characters” (Khoury & Hayes, 2015).

Lastly, the limitation in using digital tools to analyze any texts is that the computer has no way of understanding the meaning of sentences. The computer is unable to interpret poems in the way we humans do. Poems often portray a story or point that the poet wants to bring across. Concepts such as understanding the poet's approach in bringing across their points or their connections to the natural world are quintessential in authorship attribution. This limitation admittedly requires one to conduct close studies of the poems. Consequently, to evaluate using such digital tools for stylometric study to determine authorship, we will conduct a literary analysis.

5. Literary Analysis

5.1. Writing Styles of Moore and Livingstone

To first get an idea of the general writing styles of both writers, we will observe the six poems of each writer chosen in the last cluster analysis and then compare the results to the writing style in “A Visit of St Nicholas”. After doing so, we will focus on the close readings of the closest poem, “The Crane & The Fox, A Fable”, and the poem in question, “A Visit of St Nicholas”. Comparing the two works helps us understand any significant similarities and differences by understanding the texts in their entirety, beyond the computations of the “stylo” program.

Analyzing Moore’s work, we realized that Moore tends to use more of an AB-AB rhyming scheme than an AA-BB rhyming scheme, except for the poem “On receiving from a friend a friend a Caricature cast of Paganini”. In the five other Moore poems that we analyzed, the AB-AB rhyming scheme gives the poem a more cheerful tone, akin to nursery rhymes, as if it was targeted to a younger audience. Unsurprisingly, there have been a few other cases of Moore’s work aimed towards his children (Poetry Foundation, 2021). This is evident in instances where he writes lines such as “Come children dear” (“Lines Written After a Snow-storm”, 1) and “my children dear” (“To my Children, with my Portrait”, 2). Besides this, we can also observe that most of Moore’s works use the descriptions and imageries of nature and light, giving his poems an optimistic tone contrary to the messages he brings across. For example, in the poem “Lines Written After a Snow-storm”, he discusses how all joys in life are temporal. Also, Moore descriptions such as “The trees seem deck’d by fairy hand” (“Lines Written After a Snow-storm”, 5) and “These colors that so various gleam, / And bid this offering only shine/ With friendship’s pure and tranquil beam.” (“Lines accompanying a Bunch of Flowers”, 23-25) illustrate a mystical and brighter image, yet it conveys disheartening messages on short-lived happiness and relationships.

Moving on, Livingston utilizes the AA-BB rhyming scheme in contrast to the AB-AB rhyming scheme used by Moore. Although both result in a similar effect of providing a cheerful tone to the poem, the difference in rhyming schemes clearly shows a stylistic difference in their poems. Importantly, Livingston's poems mainly focus on telling an experience or interaction between personas compared to Moore's poems, which concentrates more on using language and imagery to deliver a message. For instance, Livingston's poems, "A Tenant of Mrs Van Kleeck" and "Letter Sent to Master Timmy Dwight", are both written in the form of an address to his landlord, Mrs Van Kleeck, and his nephew, Timmy, respectively. Besides, Livingston utilizes alliteration throughout his poems that Moore rarely does. Some examples of the use of alliteration by Livingstone are "mumbling & mincing" ("A Tenant of Mrs Van Kleeck", 10) and "Ten thousand times ten thousand fall" ("The Procession", 15). The use of alliteration in Livingston's works helps to enhance the upbeat tone of his poems.

After having a general idea of both poets' writing style, it is much easier to see pieces of evidence that point to Livingston as the actual author of the poem "A Visit of St Nicholas". At first glance, we can observe that the poem "A Visit of St Nicholas" uses the same AA-BB rhyming scheme that Livingston uses in his poems, unlike Moore. Next, "A Visit of St Nicholas" also frequently uses alliteration throughout the poem, a literary device commonly deployed by Livingstone but not Moore. For example, in the lines "Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house" ("A Visit of St Nicholas", 1) and "When, what to my wondering eyes should appear" ("A Visit of St Nicholas", 15). Lastly, the poem mainly focuses on telling a story of an encounter with St Nicholas, which is closer to the delivery of Livingston's poems than that of Moore's poems. Thus, from their writing styles, we can see that "A Visit of St Nicholas" is more likely to be written by Livingston instead of Moore.

5.2. Comparison of “The Crane & The Fox, A Fable” and “A Visit of St. Nicholas”

Now, we will compare the similarities between the closest poem “The Crane & The Fox, A Fable” by Livingstone, based on the computational results, and the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas”. Firstly, we noticed that the poem “A Visit of St Nicholas” is only fifty-six lines long, which leans towards Livingstone’s style of poetry, where his poems are consistently short compared to the poems by Moore, whose poems vary from twenty-five to a hundred and fifty lines in total. “The Crane & The Fox, a Fable” by Livingstone is indeed relatively short, with about seventy lines in total. Both poems’ transcripts can be found in Annex B and Annex C.

As aforementioned, common between the two pieces is their AA-BB rhyming scheme, where lines are paired up, and the end of each line in a pair will rhyme with the other. For Livingstone’s work, we can note that even some of his punctuation obeys the same scheme, with complementary adjacent lines like “-My lovely Crane how do you do? / -I’m very well; pray how are you?” (“The Crane & The Fox, a Fable”, 5-6) both exhibiting similar punctuation and moods. This prominent case is both a question in punctuation and a courteous greeting between the “Crane” and the “Fox”. Similarly, this trend can be observed in the lines, “To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall! / Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!” (“A Visit of St Nicholas”, 23-24) and “His eyes—how they twinkled! his dimples how merry! / His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry!” (“A Visit of St Nicholas”, 37-38). The former lines describe the excitable exclamations of St. Nicholas taking his reindeer-led sleigh through the sky, while the latter is in loving admiration of the features of St. Nicholas himself. Both lines use exclamations in tandem with their rhyme pairs, but each pair has distinct meanings and undertones.

great point!

Accompanying the pair rhyming scheme are also the verbal elements to reading the poem aloud. For Livingstone, the two lines “Whene’er they met, the fox would bow / And madame Crane

would curtsie low-” (“The Crane & The Fox, a Fable”, 3-4) both end in a dip, mimicking the action of both animals as they greeted each other. Likewise, in their rhymes and verbal elements, the lines “‘Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house / Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;” (“A Visit of St Nicholas”, 1-2) describes a slow and quiet environment. This slow-paced environment description helps create the imagery of a house at night, where every being in the house lies asleep. The attention to detail in drawing up the mood between each line pair across both works and using well-crafted AA-BB rhymes to escalate or lighten the atmosphere between characters in each poem are pivotal points in setting Livingstone apart Moore as the real author.

Lastly, we observed a similar structure of storytelling in both poems. Both poems begin with an introduction that sets the reader in the correct period, with “long gone years” (“The Crane & The Fox, a Fable”, 1) and “‘Twas the night before Christmas” (“A Visit of St. Nicholas”, 1). Following this, readers are led into a slight decline, creating a more dampened and sombre mood. In the poem “The Crane & The Fox, a Fable”, the “Fox” purposefully did not account for “Crane’s” difference in eating habits, resulting in her dismay and departure when she could not eat the food from a plate -- “She felt the bite—but little said / And very soon her exit made” (“The Crane & The Fox, a Fable”, 32-33). Comparably, in the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas”, we are first presented with the image of everyone in the house resting and entering their slumbers in the line “And mamma in her ‘kerchief, and I in my cap / Had just settled our brains for a long winter’s nap.” (“A Visit of St. Nicholas”, 7-8).

Following this, the poems start to build up and expand towards a climax. The “Fox” was greeted by the extravagant feast prepared by “Crane” in the line “Her domicile was well prepar’d / No cost or labor had been spared;” (“The Crane & The Fox, a Fable”, 38-39). In the same vein, the storyline arises to the sudden ruckus that “St. Nicholas” caused in the line “When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter, / I sprang from the bed to see what was the matter.” (A Visit of St.

Nicholas”, 10-11). Both scenarios continue to escalate, with the “Crane” making fun of the “Fox” who could not eat from the jar like she could, much to his discontent, and “St. Nicholas” rushing down the chimney to deliver presents in his jolly fashion.

Finally, both poems then conclude with their respective underlying message. The poem “The Crane & The Fox, A Fable” ends with the line “Was ‘He that Gives must Take a joke’ ” (“The Crane & The Fox, A Fable”, 71) which is the moral of the story. Likewise, the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas” ended with the final message by “St Nicholas” before his departure, which is “ ‘Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night.’ ” (“A Visit of St. Nicholas”, 56). The final line was the author’s well-wishes to the special occasion of Christmas, directed at the readers. The deliberately crafted flow of the story with a structure that consists of a complete introduction, body, climax and resolution is thus present across both works.

Given this, we can see that our traditional literary analysis does indeed support the results found from our computational analysis despite how our methodology focuses primarily on word frequencies alone.

ex alibi!

6. Conclusion

We conclude that Livingston is the more favourable author of the poem “A Visit of St. Nicholas” from our computational and literary analysis. However, this conclusion that we have arrived at still disagrees with what has been discovered by other digital humanists. Detractors argue for Moore as the actual writer of this significant Christmas poem, using their own set of digital tools for their analysis (Gollom, 2017). Therefore, more collaborative studies are needed to reach a more definite answer to the actual authorship question. In the future, we could explore other kinds of digital tools that other digital humanists used and improve on our methodology. Also, opinions by experts in Moore and Livingstone poems could be considered; only then would a definite answer to this age-old controversy be produced. Nonetheless, our research shows that Livingstone is more likely to be the actual author of this significant piece of poetry, “A Visit of St. Nicholas”.

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Appendix

Annex A

List of Poems collated:

Clement Clarke Moore - A Song
Clement Clarke Moore - A Trip to Saratoga
Clement Clarke Moore - Apology for not accepting an Invitation to a Ball
Clement Clarke Moore - Cowper the Poet
Clement Clarke Moore - Farewell - In answer to a young lady's invitation to join a party of pleasure on an excursion to the country
Clement Clarke Moore - From a Husband to his Wife
Clement Clarke Moore - Lines accompanying a Bunch of Flowers
Clement Clarke Moore - Lines accompanying some Balls made for a Fragment Fair
Clement Clarke Moore - Lines on the Sisters of Charity
Clement Clarke Moore - Lines sent to a Young Lady, with a Pair of Gloves
Clement Clarke Moore - Lines to a Young Lady for Valentine's Day
Clement Clarke Moore - Lines written after a season of Yellow Fever
Clement Clarke Moore - Old Dobbin
Clement Clarke Moore - Old Santeclaus
Clement Clarke Moore - On receiving from a friend a Caricature cast of Paganini
Clement Clarke Moore - Onn seeing my Name written in the sand of the sea-shore
Clement Clarke Moore - The Mischievous Muse
Clement Clarke Moore - The Pig and the Rooster
Clement Clarke Moore - The Wine Drinker
Clement Clarke Moore - To a Lady
Clement Clarke Moore - To a Young Lady, on her Birth-Day
Clement Clarke Moore - To my Children, with my Portrait
Clement Clarke Moore - To my Daughter, on her marriage
Clement Clarke Moore - To Petrosa
Clement Clarke Moore - To the Fashionable Part of my Young Countrywomen
Clement Clarke Moore - To the Nymphs of Mount Harmony
Clement Clarke Moore - To Young Ladies who attended Philosophical Lectures
Clement Clarke Moore - Lines Written After a Snow-storm
Clement Clarke Moore - The Organist
Clement Clarke Moore - The Water Drinker
Clement Clarke Moore - To Southe
Henry Livingston Jr - 1819 New Years Carriers Address
Henry Livingston Jr - A Tenant of Mrs Van Kleeck
Henry Livingston Jr - Acknowledgement
Henry Livingston Jr - Acrostic Eliza Hughes
Henry Livingston Jr - An Elegy on the Death of Montgomery Tappen

Henry Livingston Jr - Apostrophe
Henry Livingston Jr - Careless Philosophers Soliloquy
Henry Livingston Jr - Catharine Breese Livingston
Henry Livingston Jr - Dialogue
Henry Livingston Jr - Epithalamium A Marriage Poem
Henry Livingston Jr - Hiding Place
Henry Livingston Jr - Letter Sent to Master Timmy Dwight
Henry Livingston Jr - On My Sister Joanna Entrance Into Her 33rd Year
Henry Livingston Jr - The Crane & The Fox, a Fable
Henry Livingston Jr - The Dance
Henry Livingston Jr - The IX Ode to Horace
Henry Livingston Jr - The Procession
Henry Livingston Jr - The Vine & Oak A Fable
Henry Livingston Jr - To My Little Niece Anne Duyckinck
Henry Livingston Jr - To My Little Niece Sally Livingston
Henry Livingston Jr - To the Memory of Henry Welles Livingston
Henry Livingston Jr - To the Memory of Sarah Livingston
A Visit of St Nicholas

Example of text file for a poem

```
Clement Clarke Moore - Lines to a Young Lady for Valentine's Day - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help
Now when the breath of coming Spring
Steals fitful on the air;
When faithful swains their true-loves sing,
And birds begin to pair,
In sportive mood, I thought to send
A mimic valentine,
To tease awhile, my little friend,
That merry heart of thine.
I thought, with well-invented strain,
The semblance to assume
Of heart-struck beau or pining swain
Fast hast'ning to the tomb.
But anxious care soon chas'd away
The frolic from my mind.
Yet still, though mirth refuse to stay,
True friendship's left behind.
Then take kind wishes from a friend,
In place of laughing mirth;
Though well I know the gifts I send
Are dullest things on earth.
And yet, that sober thing, good will,
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Annex B

“A Visit of St. Nicholas” by Clement Clarke Moore

“Twas the night before Christmas, when all thro’ the house,

Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse;

The stockings were hung by the chimney with care,

In hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be there;

The children were nestled all snug in their beds,

While visions of sugar plums danc’d in their heads,

And Mama in her’ kerchief, and I in my cap,

Had just settled our brains for a long winter’s nap -

When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,

I sprung from the bed to see what was the matter.

Away to the window I flew like a flash,

Tore open the shutters, and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new fallen snow,

Gave the lustre of mid-day to objects below;

When, what to my wondering eyes should appear,

But a miniature sleigh, and eight tiny rein-deer,

With a little old driver, so lively and quick,

I knew in a moment it must be St. Nick.

More rapid than eagles his coursers they came,

And he whistled, and shouted, and call'd them by name:

“Now! Dasher, now! Dancer, now! Prancer, and Vixen,

“On! Comet, on! Cupid, on! Dunder and Blixem;

“To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!

“Now dash away! dash away! dash away all!”

As dry leaves before the wild hurricane fly,

When they meet with an obstacle, mount to the sky;

So up to the house-top the coursers they flew,

With the sleigh full of Toys - and St. Nicholas too:

And then in a twinkling, I heard on the roof

The prancing and pawing of each little hoof.

As I drew in my head, and was turning around,

Down the chimney St. Nicholas came with a bound:

He was dress'd all in fur, from his head to his foot,

And his clothes were all tarnish'd with ashes and soot;

A bundle of toys was flung on his back,

And he look'd like a peddler just opening his pack:

His eyes - how they twinkled! his dimples how merry,

His cheeks were like roses, his nose like a cherry;

His droll little mouth was drawn up like a bow,

And the beard of his chin was as white as the snow;

The stump of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,

And the smoke it encircled his head like a wreath.

He had a broad face, and a little round belly

That shook when he laugh'd, like a bowl full of jelly:

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf,

And I laugh'd when I saw him in spite of myself;

A wink of his eye and a twist of his head

Soon gave me to know I had nothing to dread.

He spoke not a word, but went straight to his work,

And fill'd all the stockings; then turn'd with a jirk,

And laying his finger aside of his nose

And giving a nod, up the chimney he rose.

He sprung to his sleigh, to his team gave a whistle,

And away they all flew, like the down of a thistle:

But I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight -

Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night.

Annex C

“The Crane & The Fox, a Fable” by Henry Livingstone Jr.

In long gone years a fox and Crane

Were bound in friendship’s golden chain;

Whene’er they met, the Fox would bow

And madame Crane would curtsie low-

-My lovely Crane how do you do?

-I’m very well; pray how are you?

Thus time passed on, both very civil

Till Reynard in an hour evil

Projected what he thought a stroke

The world would call a pretty joke -

A billet wrote on gilded paper

And sealed it with a perfumed wafer

Announced the day, if she saw fit

To take a tete-a-tetetit-bit;

The day arriv’d -she preen’d each feather

And summon’d ev’ry grace together;

At breakfast scarce a morsel eat

Intent to riot at the treat -

She came; wide stood the unfolded door

And roses deck'd the sanded floor -

- There hyacinths in festoons hung

- Here lillies their rich fragrance flung -

The table drawn; the damask laid

And soup prepared of bullock's marrow

Pour'd in each plate profuse; but shallow;

The Fox began to lap in haste

And made a plentiful repast,

Pressed his fair friend to do the same

And to encourage, lap'd again -

The Crane be sure with her long beak

Could not a single morsel pick;

She felt the bite--but little said

And very soon her exit made,

Just beg'd the Fox would come next day

And sup with her in her plain way;

Reynard declared she did him honor

-He certainly would wait upon her.

Her domicile was well prepar'd

No cost or labor had been spared;

Roses and tulips on the floor

And daffodils the ceiling bore;

Nor was a band of music wanting

For whippoorwills and frogs were chanting.

The sun had set and given way

To sober evening's mantle gray;

The fox arriv'd with stomach keen

-Hoped he saw in health his Queen

And added in his courtliest air

She ne'er before had look'd so fair.

The Crane replied in mildest mood

That all he said was very good,

She meekly meant to do her duty

And ne'er dream'd of praise or beauty.

-She spoke; The table soon was spread

And ev'rything in order paid;

Two narrow jars now graced the board

With nicely minced ven'son stored;

- Now let's fall to, sir, if you will--

And in she pok'd her slender bill

And gulp'd of viands at her leisure

- To see you eat would give me pleasure

She cried; eat, neighbor, eat

I fear you do not like my treat;

It suits my palate to a hair

Pray, Chummy, eat and do not spare.

- The Fox looked on with rueful phys

Feeling in all its force the quiz.

The Crane enjoy'd his discontent

And thus address'd him as he went,

The truest adage ever spoke

Was "He that Gives must Take a joke."

H.L. to his beloved daughter Jane, Feb. 19, 1827.