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“FIT FOR WAR”: RHYTHM AND BODILY HEALTH IN WALT WHITMAN’S *DRUM-TAPS*

JAMIE FENTON



AT THE END OF THE SHORT-LIVED FIRST EDITION of *Drum-Taps* (1865), Walt Whitman looks back over the last few years of war, as if from the end of a long life:

Not youth pertains to me,
 Nor delicatessen—I cannot beguile the time with talk;
 Awkward in the parlor, neither a dancer nor elegant;
 In the learn’d coterie sitting constrain’d and still—for learning inures not to me;
 Beauty, knowledge, fortune, inure not to me—yet there are two things inure to me;
 I have nourish’d the wounded, and sooth’d many a dying soldier;
 And at intervals I have strung together a few songs,
 Fit for war, and the life of the camp.¹

The posture of the poem is familiar. This is Whitman the rough, awkward in the confined spaces of polite society, “constrain’d” by etiquette. It forms a counterpart to earlier poems similarly intent on eschewing establishment mores and looks all the way back to the frontispiece of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, which shows a Whitman facing the reader, his face almost a sneer of derision at the staid author portraits from which this likeness emphatically diverts. The poem itself operates on a willfully obtuse grammatical bending. Initially controlled by the “Not [x] pertains to me” construction, this is replaced in line 4 by the contorted syntax of “[x] inures not to me.” The standard sense of “inure to,” i.e., to habituate by exposure, is present but upended. We expect the subject to inure themselves to an object or quality. Webster, for example, suggests “we *inure* ourselves to cold.”² Whitman reverses this formation, so that he himself is the undesirable thing to which the ideals of “Beauty, knowledge, fortune” cannot accustom themselves. Also present is the legal sense of inure: to take effect, as in the transferal of property via a will. In this case the subjects of the sentence become objects of exchange. The lines are syntactically clumsy and fidget with their grammar.

When we emerge from the slew of negatives (Not, Nor, cannot, neither, not, not), it is as if a knot has been untied. Whitman takes on a simple, declar-

ative tone, presenting openly for consideration the things which he thinks have made themselves part of his way of living:

I have nourish'd the wounded, and sooth'd many a dying soldier;
And at intervals I have strung together a few songs,
Fit for war, and the life of the camp.

The first of these statements is demonstrably true. From January 1863 until the end of the Civil War, Whitman went almost daily to the army hospitals in Washington, and there practiced a unique form of care based on close personal attention to the wounded and sick. Notably, the poem's speaker is not claiming to have *treated* any of the soldiers, as does the speaker in "The Dresser" (later retitled "The Wound-Dresser"). Instead, he claims only what is true of the personal Whitman: he "nourish'd" them, with both physical and emotional provisions, and "sooth'd" them, both through conversation, touch, and by acting as amanuensis, ensuring they could contact their families. Following this acknowledgment of his contribution to the war effort, Whitman downplays the contribution of the book itself: "And at intervals I have strung together a few songs, / Fit for war, and the life of the camp." This is the last poem in the first issue of *Drum-Taps* and concludes a book which is anything but "strung together." Instead, *Drum-Taps* presents an almost novelistic journey through the Civil War, from its clangorous patriotic inception to its weary, wounded close. We then learn that these songs are, apparently, "Fit for war, and the life of the camp." What are we meant to take from this boast? "Fit for" wavers between several possible senses. In the context of the poem's opening lines, it carries a sense of etiquette, of "fitting in." Whitman's poems, he seems to boast, are as fit for war as his demeanor is unfit for the parlour. But in the context of "war, and the life of the camp," the phrase has a meaning closer to "fit for service." This is a bodily fitness, a guarantee that the subject can complete certain physical tasks.

Either way, this "fitness" is quite the claim to make to a reader with the evidence in their hands. The first sense of "Fit" can easily be put to the test. We can compare the contents of *Drum-Taps* to Julia Ward Howe's "Battle Hymn of the Republic," a Civil War poem with a rich history of fitting in. Howe and her companions were returning from watching a review of troops near Washington, D.C. in November 1861, where they had heard a group of soldiers singing "John Brown's Body."³ The minister James Freeman Clark challenged Howe to write "good words" for the tune; he clearly judged the present text and its lines describing John Brown "a-mouldering in the grave" to be uncouth. Howe took the suggestion and in the dim light of the next morning she fit her new

words to the tune of the old hymn, in an act of contrafactum. The reworking was a remarkable success: the text was widely reprinted and “Battle Hymn of the Republic” became the Union’s unofficial anthem. Howe later recalled that she “knew, and was content to know, that the poem soon found its way to the camps, as I heard from time to time of its being sung in chorus by the soldiers” (276). Here, then, is a text demonstrably “Fit for war, and the life of the camp.” While the sentiments of Howe’s lyrics undoubtedly aided their wide uptake in comparison to “John Brown’s Body,” they worked in partnership with a rhythmical closeness and familiarity.

Drum-Taps, by comparison, can only be designated unfit for the camp. Whitman did not submit to the rhythmical trends of the period and there are no poems in *Drum-Taps* which could be fit to a rousing martial tune. Whitman quietly admitted this in time via a small alteration to the text of “Not youth pertains to me” when the poem appeared in the “Drum-Taps” cluster of the 1871 *Leaves of Grass*:

I have nourish’d the wounded, and sooth’d many a dying soldier.
And at intervals, waiting, or in the midst of camp,
Composed these songs.⁴

Where before Whitman claimed his poems were written *for* the camp, here they are only written *in* the camp. And they are no longer “strung together,” with the *ad hoc* sense of a soldier darning socks, but “Composed.” Whitman recognizes his essential distance from the lives of the soldiers and changes the status of the poems in *Drum-Taps* from rough and ready wartime materiel to refined literary material.

It has long been noted, though, that the poems of *Drum-Taps* come nearer to rhythmical regularity than the work which preceded them. Daniel Aaron writes that *Drum-Taps* “is more calculating and concessive than the earlier *Leaves*, not so verbally daring or radical or spontaneous.”⁵ Gay Wilson Allen observes that “*Drum-Taps* and *Sequel to Drum-Taps* are a great deal more conventional in form and style than earlier poems in the *Leaves*.”⁶ And Lawrence Kramer in his 2015 edition of *Drum-Taps* refers to a “formalizing impulse” which adds “a note of ritual” and aligns the poems with “the Civil War era’s popular verse.”⁷ Despite this apparent consensus, it is worth taking a moment to assess how exactly this “formalizing impulse” manifests. Allen goes too far by claiming that *Drum-Taps* is “a great deal more conventional” than earlier publications. Besides the metrical “O Captain! my Captain!” and the metrical-looking “Pioneers! O Pioneers!” and “Dirge for two veterans,” the instances of rhythm in *Drum-Taps*

are just that: instances. We encounter individual lines or pockets of rhythm with some frequency but little regularity. It would be wrong to call these instances of *meter* because meter is the opposite of an instance.⁸ They are, instead, moments when a pattern of alternation continues long enough to be experienced but not long enough to become predictable. Sometimes, these patterns recur multiple times in the same poem, and we might say that these poems have a rhythmical feel or motive: the recurring three beat phrases of “Cavalry Crossing a Ford,” for example.⁹ None of the critics above, however, attempt to explain *why* Whitman’s War poems were newly motivated by rhythm. Allen suggests that Whitman might have “found more conventional metrics either convenient or necessary for the expression of his experiences and emotions connected with the war.”¹⁰ His offerings of “convenient or necessary” both open up interesting paths: convenient plays nicely on “conventional” and asks what kind of poetic work requires convenience, perhaps the kind written as “impromptu jottings” or “at intervals in the midst of camp.”¹¹ For metrics to be “necessary” implies Whitman was called into a position of wartime service, no longer vagrant and free. But Allen does not push much further and ends his paragraph with a vague, Romantic gesture towards the poems as an echo of Whitman’s heartbeat throbbing “to the beat of the rhythms of marching feet.”

I am going to argue here that in order to understand Whitman’s reasons for embracing rhythm during the Civil War, however gingerly, we need to explore the bodily, physical sense of “Fit for war.” While Whitman was never convinced by metered rhythm in poetic structure, there is a large body of evidence suggesting he believed deeply in the importance of rhythm as an element of a healthy, democratic existence. The richest vein of this evidence can be found in the recently re-discovered journalistic series, “Manly Health and Training, With Off-Hand Hints Toward Their Conditions,” which Whitman wrote under the pseudonym Mose Velsor. Across this long, often idiosyncratic text, we find a desire for a way of living based, at its heart, on rhythm.¹² I propose that Whitman sketched out an ideal rhythmical figure in this text and then saw this figure marching into existence in the form of the Union soldier. *Drum-Taps* is in large part an ode to this figure, and simultaneously an account of Whitman facing up to the realities of war, especially to the fact that steady rhythm had a dark counterpart in the military discipline which sent thousands of men to their deaths. This article will explore “Manly Health and Training” as an untapped source of Whitman’s rhythmical theories and then follow these theories into the Civil War, where they were tested by Whitman’s encounters with upright marching soldiers and then with their opposite—the prostrate, convulsive bodies of the wounded.

Rhythmical Living

Any text which offers an alternative route into Whitman's thoughts on rhythm must be given space, because Whitman's more direct writings on form lead us swiftly into a mire of contradiction. We might, for instance, try out a passage from Horace Traubel's *With Walt Whitman in Camden* as a potential key to Whitman's prosodic theory:

Well—the lilt is all right: yes, right enough: but there's something anterior—more imperative. The first thing necessary is the thought—the rest may follow if it chooses—may play its part—but must not be too much sought after. The two things being equal I should prefer to have the lilt present with the idea, but if I got down my thought and the rhythm was not there I should not work to secure it.¹³

Here, rhythm and thought are set apart: thought is “imperative” while rhythm seems a latecomer without whom the party could still go ahead. But if we turn away from Traubel's volumes, we find Whitman giving a totally contradictory account. William Thayer recalls Whitman declaring: “Nobody could write in my way unless he had a melody singing in his ears. . . . I always had a tune before I began to write.”¹⁴ Here, the acoustic hook of a poem precedes its thought. Both statements as to what is “anterior” in Whitman's compositional process seem equally sincere but they cancel each other out. In order to get some handle on Whitman's opinion on rhythmicality, and avoid his potentially deliberate obfuscation, we must approach him while his back is turned.

In 2016, Zachary Turpin made the largest discovery of new Whitman writing in decades: a column written by Whitman for the *New York Atlas* under one of his favorite pen names, “Mose Velsor.”¹⁵ The column, which ran from September to December 1858, was entitled “Manly Health and Training, With Off-Hand Hints Toward Their Conditions” and promised to show its male readers the path to “a perfect body.”¹⁶ Over the weeks, Whitman, as Velsor, gave instruction on diet, exercise, and routine, all of which amounted to a total theory of soundness in all aspects of life. From cold baths to calisthenics, Velsor would have his readers submitting entirely to his regime and thus fulfilling the promise of American manhood. The column's literary mode and texture is that of repetition. Reading the pieces as they have been collected can be a trying experience because Whitman covers the same ground again and again, and admitted as such: “We place the greater reliance upon the forming of the habit [of training], and therefore repeat it many times in these articles.”¹⁷ Read with breakfast each Sunday morning (which should be a small portion of meat, a

nearly raw egg, a slice of dry bread, and a cold cup of tea), the articles would themselves come to form a habit, within which Whitman repeats his instruction to be repetitious in all things.

“Manly Health and Training,” then, is both a handbook and a metronome, teaching readers to live a rhythmical life. It also teaches them how to read poetry. In the October 17th column, after instruction on the value of baseball, hurling, and swimming, Whitman turns to “Training the Voice” (241). As with all the training he proposes, vocal exercise should be “systematic and daily,” and if done right, will provoke “the habit of electricity through the frame.” The particular exercise he recommends is that of declaiming texts. This is not declamation as promoted by the elocution manuals so popular in nineteenth-century America, though. Those manuals required students to perform their exercises carefully, and preferably in front of a tutor. Whitman’s exercises, meanwhile, are raw and natural:

We would recommend every young man to select a few favorite poetical or other passages, of an animated description, and get in the habit of declaiming them, on all convenient occasions—especially when out upon the water, or by the sea-shore, or rambling over the hills on the country.

There is no tutor here to correct pronunciation and posture, only the hills to echo back the voice. Whitman’s advice on declamation is unusually disordered. We should declaim whenever, wherever, with none of the temporal consistency characterizing the other regimes in the column. The declamations themselves, though, should be entirely rhythmical:

Careful, however, not to overstrain his voice, or scream, for that is not the object that is aimed after. A loud, slow, firm tone, as long as it can be sustained without fatigue, and agreeably to the ear, is the test.

This is an injunction towards a rhythmical performance. While certainly not a theory of versification, the specific qualities of the reading Whitman proposes do imply a stance on prosody. They might look back, for instance, to Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Poetic Principle*. Poe argues, facetiously, that “a long poem does not exist.”¹⁸ A poem must excite, he claims, but can excite only for so long (half an hour to be precise), after which “it flags—fails—a revulsion ensues.” Such a flagging and failing is what Whitman’s instructions are designed to help us avoid; we must declaim only while we have the energy and while the sound pleases us. While we declaim, though, we must be rhythmical: “loud, slow, firm.” The instructions also look back to another part of Whitman’s own text: his advice

on walking. “A pretty long walk” is good exercise, Whitman advises, but must be approached carefully.¹⁹ We should work up our step till “it takes the power of locomotion pretty well,” and then keep up that pace “as it can be well endured—not to the extent of fatigue however, for it is a law of training that a man must not exercise so hard at any time as to overdo and tire himself.” Walking, like reading poetry, must have a tempo, but must never exhaust itself, as that tempo would then be lost. In “rambling over the hills” and declaiming poetry, then, we reach the height of rhythmicity, all our body involved in maintaining a pace both sustainable and pleasing.

In “Manly Health and Training,” Whitman talks about rhythm without his own rhythmically problematic poetry forcing him to hedge his bets. Velsor’s column shows a writer deeply enamored with rhythmicity, even metricality, as a property of all parts of life, which must include poetry. I suggest that readers can carefully employ the theory of rhythmicity presented in “Manly Health and Training” when encountering *Leaves of Grass*. Instead of reading the long lines of Whitman’s early poems as exhausting themselves, perhaps we should read them as measured, tempered exertions. Whitman’s lines always end with punctuation: they very rarely stumble into enjambment. Many sections of “Song of Myself” seem to set up their own regime, picking up a grammatical structure and repeating it steadily to a point, not of fatigue, but of purposeful conclusion.

Leaves of Grass’s rhythmic scheme, though, is fiercely independent—centered on the statuesque figure of a single man—as seems the physical training regimen it matches. But is “Manly Health and Training” purely interested in the individual, or does it place that individual in a community of like-minded and like-bodied brethren? Or, to rephrase this in a way which applies also to Whitman’s poetic rhythm, is it enough to be fit or do we also have to fit in? Over its length, “Manly Health and Training” ends up promoting the latter. Whitman is enamored with the male body not just individually, but *en masse*, where it has the potential to be America’s great contribution to the world:

We are not insensible to the triumphs of the demonstrative sciences and philosophy—to the explanation of the subtleties of mind—to the accomplishment of such wonders as the Atlantic Telegraph, the great feat of the age; but for all that, we are clear in the opinion of the still greater importance of all these researches and statements directly affecting individual happiness and health—the development of a superb race of men, large-bodied, clean-blooded, and with all the attributes of the best material humanity. (195)

This sentence runs on to exhaustion, in contradiction of Whitman's own advice, but out of it rises the true American man. Past and future technologies are laid out: the development of "a superb race of men" is to be the next step after innovations like "the Atlantic Telegraph, the great feat of the age." American manhood is a technology which will outdo even the telegraph in its capacity to span and bridge. A "great feat" is to be replaced with great feet which will move in powerful, cohesive locomotion over the country, for in human motion we find "the whole expression of life, the passions, and the outshewing of active beauty."²⁰

It is impossible to read "Manly Health and Training" without it seeming to predict, even eagerly to await, the Civil War and the teleology which Whitman built around it. In 1858, under a pseudonym, we find a Whitman primed to welcome the Civil War as a consummation of the devout hopes he had for America as a rhythmical nation. Strong rhythm was not mere ornamentation or frippery, but an intentional way of existing in the world, of instantiating the potential of the American man as a strong, aesthetic individual. Whitman only had to wait a few years before this conception was seemingly manifested entire, in the ranks of men marching out of New York to defend the Union. What he soon found, though, was that his teleology was to be tested, over and again, against the reality of war. The rhythmical utopia prophesied by his newspaper column was soon to encounter a real column of marching men, being drummed on their way towards slaughter.

Marching Soldiers, Wounded Soldiers

The rhythmical story of Whitman's Civil War is recorded in the title of *Drum-Taps*. Immediately available is the tapping or beating of a drum. This beating sounds a reveille for the nation: a motivation to war and the setting of an army on the march. But the title also refers to a specific drumbeat. Before the final tattoo which sent soldiers in camp to bed, the drum corps would tap three times signaling a move from activity to rest, motion to prostration. One of the bugle calls played for this evening tattoo became known, after the drums which preceded it, as "Taps." During the War, this bugle tune became a traditional feature of military funerals. So in *Drum-Taps* we might hear three different rhythms: a patriotic stirring, a signal of stasis, and a cry of mourning.²¹ Before we even begin to read the poems, we are faced with a rising up as well as a laying down and a laying out. We find the body in motion, the body prostrate, and the body mourned. The remainder of this essay will trace Whitman's encounters

with the first two of these forms, showing that while the rhythms of his poems are not necessarily mimetic of his wartime environment, they do betray an immersion in rhythmicality, one result of which was the more frequent appearance of recognizably patterned poetic lines. This is not an enquiry which sets out to prove that the poems of *Drum-Taps* “sound like” their environment; rather that they are a sounded part *of* that environment.

From the first reactionary musters in New York to the columns moving daily through Washington, the tramp of marching soldiers followed Whitman throughout the War. This is the rhythm that has been theorized as motivating Whitman’s own turn towards regularity in his poems. An early review in *Watson’s Weekly Art Journal* claimed that the poems of *Drum-Taps* are not “the elaborate martial strains of the parade-ground, but the vigorous ‘drum taps’ of the column in march.”²² Allen follows this response, claiming that it was natural that “the poet’s heartbeat would throb to the rhythms of marching feet.”²³ Do these passages, though, describe the actual experience of reading *Drum-Taps*, or are their comments a way of fitting Whitman into a role as unifying American poet which he does not actually fill? The *Watson’s* reviewer is keen from the start to make something monumental of Whitman: “for the first time”, they argue, “the full strength of our American life receives expression—receives assertion.”²⁴ Would it not be wonderful if we found in this newly-American poet a transcription of the column in march?

As an interlocutor to these questions, we can turn to a type of poetry which spoke out its rhythms in a clear, unambiguous voice: children’s verse. A popular book appeared in 1862, written by one “Cousin John,” called *The Drummer Boy*²⁵ and subtitled “A story of the war in verse for the young folks at home.” Edwin Haviland Miller suggests that the book was written by Whitman’s friend John Townsend Trowbridge and that it passed through Whitman’s hands when Trowbridge sent him a package of books to distribute to the soldiers in the hospitals and with it had included two copies of this publication.²⁶ The story is one of the Civil War’s favorite: a young boy, Bill, frustrated he cannot join up as a soldier, heads to war as a drummer and charms all he encounters with his innocence and patriotism. He has his adventures, sees the glories and horrors of war, and is converted entirely to the godly cause of the Union. The poem was published with the thick of the war ahead of it, and it ends with Bill marching on under the banner of freedom:

Armed with this truth,
Bill, noble youth,
Is marching while you read;

You'll not be slow
 To bid, I know,
 Him "Onward, and God-speed!"
 These simple rhymes,
 Of these great times,
 May give your heart a joy,
 For now you know
 To war doth go
 Your friend, the Drummer Boy. (48)

The sudden turn to the reader in the third line above makes manifest a rhythmical communication which was already in play. A child reading on the home front, perhaps even reading out loud, is given access to Bill the drummer boy via the poem's "simple rhymes" and simple rhythms. The poem is in ballad stanzas, made more digestible by splitting the four beat lines into two rhyming lines of two beats. The patterning is tight: we never have to travel far between rhymes. We read about Bill setting the tempo for the soldiers marching with him and do so in a poetic tempo which asserts itself from start to finish (see figure 1). Part of the reason the reader is able to "know / To war doth go / Your friend, the Drummer Boy" is that reading the poem instantiates that going in its rhythm. He is "marching while you read," but also marching *because* we read. Transfer the poem to the army hospital and the conversation becomes even richer. A wounded soldier, taken from marching to prostration, would be invited to imagine a child imagining marching soldiers. He may be static in his hospital bed but is put in motion by eavesdropping on the child's encounter with martial rhythm.

This children's poem, then, is the kind of reading experience in which poetic rhythm and the rhythm of marching might be said to coincide. This is not the reading experience we find in *Drum-Taps*. With the exception of "O Captain! my Captain!"—and even then, shakily—Whitman's poems surely cannot be said to march. Allen, however, disagreed, calling "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" a "marching poem."²⁷ This is an odd declaration. It is certainly a poem *about* marching, but it is impossible to march to. Surfacing now and again across the stanzas is the promise of a falling rhythm echoing Poe's *The Raven*:

O you youths, western youths,
 So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,
 Plain I see you, western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!



Figure 1: Bill marching beside Union soldiers, from *The Drummer Boy: A Story of the War in Verse* (29).

Here the poem begins to tramp, in strong trochees, but elsewhere it stumbles. For example, when we come to a stanza about the entire world beating in the same rhythm, that stanza loses its own beat:

All the pulses of the world,
 Falling in, they beat for us, with the western movement beat;
 Holding single or together, steady moving, to the front, all for us,
 Pioneers! O Pioneers!

The caesura in the second line intrudes but can be navigated. The third line, though, goes awry. We are asked to pronounce “to” of “to the front” with a stress, which after its unstressed appearance in “together” is uncomfortable, and then the line carries on past its eighth beat, with a double stress across “front, all.” Certainly this is not “steady moving.”

This veering towards-then-away-from meter suggests that Whitman had a suspicion of total submission to a pre-ordained pattern. It is a suspicion that runs deep within Whitman’s war writing and leads him repeatedly into paradox. The Civil War confirmed his belief in the importance of the common man sacrificing themselves to America’s greatness:

We have seen the alacrity with which the American-born populace, the peaceablest and most good-natured race in the world, and the most personally independent and intelligent, and the least fitted to submit to the irksomeness and exasperation of regimental discipline, sprang, at the first tap of the drum, to arms—not for gain, nor even glory, nor to repel invasion—but for an emblem, a mere abstraction—for the life, *the safety of the flag*.²⁸

While Whitman did not himself exhibit this alacrity, he did imagine himself joining the army if pressed. While discussing conscription in an 1863 letter to his brother, he mused:

I would like to see the people embodied *en-masse*—I am very sure I shall see that my name is in its place on the lists, and my body in the ranks, if they do it that way—for *that* will be something like our nation getting itself up in shape.²⁹

These passages show Whitman embracing military order but simultaneously remind his reader that the army is an army of individuals. In the first passage, Whitman paints the American populace as averse to controlling structures: they are “least fitted to submit to the irksomeness and exasperation of regimental discipline.” In the letter, we get the doubled “my”: “my name,” “my body.” Whitman is keen to index himself in this imagined scenario. The list of names will be long and total, but within it will shine the name of “Walt Whitman.” His body will be part of the mass, but will still be his body, inviolate and unique. Whitman’s support for enlistment and regimental discipline relied on the American individual remaining intact within the throng.

Marching was a metonym for this stance. Unified movement could only be sanctioned if the soldier remained, at the same time, an independent locomotive force. In describing the “actual soldier of 1862-’65” in *Specimen Days*, Whitman highlights a number of qualities, among which is his “lawless gait.”³⁰ The paradox of Whitman’s support for enlistment and discipline is crystallized in this phrase. How can a soldier’s gait, drilled into them and forced to fit to the tap of the drum, at the same time be “lawless”? It is worth noting that the role of the drum in marching was, in fact, a constant negotiation between the human body and artificial rhythm. Columns of soldiers marched to a tempo set by the drum corps. What should be emphasized, though, is that the tempo the drum corps set was *itself* set by the natural tempos of human walking. The tempo was not measured in an arbitrary amount of beats per minute, but in steps per minute. Eric Spall, in his excellent survey of the role of the drum in the Civil War, finds that Silas Casey’s *Infantry Tactics* specified “three standard tempos: common time was to be played at 90 steps per minute, quickstep at 110 steps, and double quick at 140.”³¹ The drum might seem tyrannical, an artificial check on a natural movement, but that check emerges from the pace a group of American infantry in the 1860s would naturally fall into. Haun Sassy in *Critical Rhythm* argues that marching rhythms are distinctly national, a bodily technique which emerges from societal rules, not merely an idiosyncrasy.³² I would further argue that the societal rules imposed on our bodies emerge from their

natural operation. Somewhere underneath the cultural layers of marching is the palimpsest of walking.

In fact, the drum did not even maintain its control over the column for very long. Once the column had been set going, it would often march in silence, in a rhythm maintained by common physical consent. This negotiation between the individual and the column is on display in “A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown.” The poem begins in motion:

A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown;
 A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the darkness;
 Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant retreating; (44)

The first line has a readily available rhythm:

x / x x / \ / x x / x /
 A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown,³³

We get five beats in a rising pattern, alternating unobtrusively between duple and triple. The triple stress across “ranks hard-prest” is as close as we can get to a rhythm which could be called mimetic. The stresses are crammed hard together, forced to move forwards under pressure. Line 2, though, drops this rhythm. We are led into to the poem’s world by a rhythmical line, made part of its story of heavy discipline, but then left to wander more freely. Rising rhythms, both duple and triple, sound out now and again as vestiges of the momentum which inaugurated the poem (“Our army foil’d with loss severe” . . . “We come to an open space in the woods”), but the steady going of the first line falls away.

The column comes to a halt at a church which has been made into an “impromptu hospital.” The scene Whitman describes within is one of infernal chaos:

Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving candles and lamps,
 And by one great pitchy torch, stationary, with wild red flames, and clouds of
 smoke; (44)

Whitman is clearly most interested in how this scene reaches the eye, but a moment of soundscaping slips in between his visual noticings: “An occasional scream or cry, the doctor’s shouted orders or calls . . .” (45). The sound is as disordered and unperiodized as the sights. In the doctor’s “calls” we can find a distorted parallel to the drum calls which controlled army life, as described in “Camps of Green.” Where those calls are regulated and predictable, the doctor’s

calls are but one element of the chaotic action of the hospital. The speaker manages to draw himself out of this chaotic mass by ministering to a particular wounded soldier, whom he can single out “more distinctly” at his feet. His act of staunching the young man’s blood is entirely voluntary, and thus in opposition to the disciplined march which brought him to the hospital. Discipline is soon reasserted, though, and with it comes a return of precise rhythm:

Then hear outside the orders given, *Fall in, my men, Fall in;*
 But first I bend to the dying lad—his eyes open—a half-smile gives he me;

There is a work of counterpoint going on here between the soldier’s duty to continue marching and his desire to tend to the wounded youngster. The speaker takes up the rising rhythm begun by the first line above (‘Then *hear outside the orders given*), but applies it to his own mission of ministration: “But *first I bend to the dying lad.*” The rhythm then disappears as the poem turns to pay close, intimate attention to the soldier: “his eyes open—a half-smile gives he me.” There is a negotiation between the speaker as member of a grand column marching towards a fight for freedom, and his individual project of care and mercy. Importantly, both projects are presented as worthy subjects of rhythmical lines. Whitman seems to believe that the column is only worth having if it is made up of soldiers who would leave its strictures in a moment to look into the eyes of a dying boy far from home.

Whitman’s invocation of the marching body in “Manly Health and Training,” sketched out before the War began, was doomed to fail when it encountered war’s realities. That body in “Manly Health and Training” is a precursor for the vibrant, healthful figure who arrived in *Drum-Taps* as a “strong man, erect, clothed in blue clothes, advancing” (“1861,” 17). This soldier might stride, with “springy gait,” but he does so as an independent figure, not as a piece in a military machine. As the War went on, Whitman became uncomfortable with the prospect of an artificial drum motivating the natural step of this American soldier. We learn in “Manly Health and Training” that no motion should be continued unto exhaustion, yet the soldiers in *Drum-Taps* are frequently tired, hard-pressed, and pushed to their limits. In “Spirit whose work is done,” published in the *Sequel to Drum-Taps*, the drum has lost all its patriotic timbre and readers are left with “the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the last.” Once Whitman has seen what the drum drives to, it lands differently on his ear. The drum in “Dirge for Two Veterans,” another later war poem, sounds “convulsive.” At this late stage, rhythmicality has itself become spasmodic, an unwelcome intrusion on the more enduring, democratic rhythms to

which Whitman wishes the nation could return. He reaches again for the word “convulsive” at the close of his war chapters in *Specimen Days*:

“Convulsiveness”

As I have look'd over the proof-sheets of the preceding pages, I have once or twice fear'd that my diary would prove, at best, but a batch of convulsively written reminiscences. Well, be it so. They are but parts of the actual distraction, heat, smoke and excitement of those times. The war itself, with the temper of society preceding it, can indeed be best described by that very word *convulsiveness*.³⁴

While used here to speak about writing and politics, “convulsiveness” is a word which looks originally to the body in a state inverse to the erect, healthful figure which strides through *Drum-Taps*. It takes the body from fit to fits, and it is to this inverse we must now turn. While Whitman listened closely to the rhythms controlling soldiers and thought hard about their paradoxes, his own time among active soldiers in the camp was sporadic and curtailed, and he was never truly inured to army discipline. Whitman's war was structured by his work in the army hospitals, among the convulsive wounded.

From its bureaucracy to its soundscape, the Civil War hospital was experienced as an arhythmic institution. This is apparent in Whitman's sulphuric rendition of the “impromptu hospital” in “A march in the ranks hard-press,” but the more established hospitals were not significantly more periodized. Even the large Washington hospitals were still basically impromptu, established in requisitioned buildings with layouts which did not lend themselves to the work of tending the wounded. Early in the War, Whitman visited a hospital set up in the Patent Office, which impressed itself on him as a “curious scene.”³⁵ He describes an ensemble of elements which interact but do not cohere:

The glass cases, the beds, the forms lying there, the gallery above, and the marble pavement under foot—the suffering, and the fortitude to bear it in various degrees—occasionally, from some, the groan that could not be repress'd—sometimes a poor fellow dying, with emaciated face and glassy eye [...]

The “glass cases” of the patent office, which are “crowded with models in miniature,” find their way into Whitman's description of the wounded man's “glassy eye,” turning the human body into a sterile display case of machinery. The different forms collide: the groan that cannot be repressed rings out in a space somewhere between museum, theatre, and mausoleum, all of which should remain hushed. To sum up this chaos, Whitman coins the phrase “Hospital

Perplexity.”³⁶ It is virtually impossible, he claims, for a family member arriving in Washington to track down the location of a wounded relative among these hospitals, because the directories “are nothing like complete; they are never up to date, and, as things are, with the daily stream of coming and going and changing, cannot be.” He relates an anecdote of a farmer arriving from New York in search of a wounded brother, giving up after a week, and then arriving back home to find a letter from his brother detailing his location. Everything is out of kilter.

Whitman’s own interactions with the hospitals have been presented as arrhythmic, in terms of both criticism and praise. Thomas Wentworth Higginson denigrated Whitman’s wartime service in an article published the same year as *Specimen Days*:

I am one of many to whom Whitman’s “Drum-Taps” have always sounded as hollow as the instrument they counterfeit, simply because their author, with all his fine physique and his freedom from home-ties, never personally followed the drum, but only heard it from the comparatively remote distance of the hospital.³⁷

Higginson opposes “followed” to “heard.” The former implies a submission to rhythmic discipline, the latter only a vague noticing of that rhythm as one sound among others. The hospital, “comparatively remote,” is an acoustic filter which let Whitman ignore the drum and continue his unmanly mission. It is worth noting the possible failure of Higginson’s apparently neat opening analogy. If Whitman’s *Drum-Taps* “have always sounded as hollow as the instrument they counterfeit,” surely Higginson is admitting that the drum itself sounds hollow. In that case, why is it worth following? His simile has wrapped round on itself, leaving us with the impression that the tap of the drum might be counterfeiting something.

Generally, though, Whitman’s spontaneous, self-motivated work in the hospitals has been read as a productive counter to the military hegemony which Higginson’s piece implicitly supports. Whitman lamented that the hospitals failed to extricate themselves from such control:

Of all places in the world, the hospitals of American young men and soldiers, wounded in the volunteer service of their country, ought to be exempt from mere conventional military airs and etiquette of shoulder-straps. But they are not exempt.³⁸

By choosing not to follow the drum, Whitman exempted himself from this etiquette which he elsewhere described as “ill-fitting,” and was thus able pursue his independent mission of nourishing the wounded and soothing the dying.³⁹

Whitman often emphasizes the importance of ministering to each soldier's unique wants. Each case, he writes, "requires some peculiar adaptation to itself," and must be responded to "after its kind or call."⁴⁰ That adaptation ranged from buying them particular candy, to searching out a glass of milk, to sitting by them and writing long letters on their behalf to family. This was exactly the kind of work that nurses were almost always too busy to do, and that religious groups like the Christian Commission did not include in their visits, preferring a catch-all program of delivering religious tracts and praying over the soldiers "without having smiled [...] or dropped a word of comfort or cheer."⁴¹ Where the nurses and preachers were restricted by institutional forms, Whitman could wander where he wished, attending personally to each patient as an individual.⁴² In Robert Leigh Davis's study of Whitman's hospital work, this coalesces into an "erotic mobility unconfined by prescriptive boundaries."⁴³ Whitman's ability to form deep, personal attachments to particular soldiers rewrote the hospital space, dissolving some of its etiquettes.

Lying above and beneath this figure of the mobile, itinerant healer, though, is a history of deep, sustained rhythmicity which is not a mere giving-in to the etiquette Whitman despised, but a layered, productive reaction. This rhythmicity extends from the temporal to the linguistic and can be read back into the poems of *Drum-Taps*. Firstly, we must recognise that while Whitman's work inside the hospitals was characterized by flexibility and adaptation, his wider project of hospital visiting was sustained, periodized, and quasi-institutional. From early in 1863 until mid-1866 Whitman structured his life around his hospital visits.⁴⁴ The paid employment Whitman took as a copyist was essentially a way of funding this project: he figured his wages in terms of how they could be spent in providing for patients. He had an unerring tendency to describe his hospital work in the language of military service and campaigning. It was not just a voluntary, charitable endeavor, but a fixed posting, as shown in lines across his correspondence: "I have been on self-imposed duty some five hours, pretty closely confined"; "I am back again in Washington, on my regular daily and nightly rounds"; "I work somewhere among them every day or in the evening . . . Yesterday I spent nearly all day at Armory Square Hospital. This forenoon I take an intermission, & go again at dusk."⁴⁵ In an 1863 letter to Lewis Brown, a soldier whom Whitman had met as a patient in Armory Square Hospital, Whitman refers to "giving myself a furlough of three or four weeks and going home to Brooklyn."⁴⁶ He is evidently attempting to make himself a comrade to Brown, to figure his hospital work as somehow equivalent to Brown's role as an infantryman. It is odd that despite his distaste for military etiquette, he ended

up adopting a form of that etiquette by assigning himself a posting from which he could not go absent without leave, even if he could grant that leave himself. In a letter to his mother, we find Whitman addressing this bind:

I have not missed a day at Hospital I think for more than three weeks—I get more & more wound round—poor young men—there are some cases that would literally sink & give up, if I did not pass a portion of the time with them.⁴⁷

While Whitman's ministrations were fluid and adaptive, he came to believe the soldiers relied on them, would "sink & give up" if the visits stopped, and so had to form a rhythmical project of visiting. He is "wound round" his own charity. In this letter about hospitals it is almost impossible not also to hear "wound" as in "wounded." And this is exactly what Whitman did: he went on wound rounds, effective exactly because they were round—recurring and predictable.

Whitman's activities on these rounds employed rhythm as cure. He had had a theory of health and healing ready since before the war even began, as displayed in "Manly Health and Training," and he adapted it swiftly to the army hospitals. The patients, prostrate, convulsive and often gravely injured, could not engage in the daily exercise and habits Mose Velsor recommends, so Whitman brought those habits in his own body and hoped to transfer them via a kind of magnetism.⁴⁸ This was a chance to test his theory, espoused five years before he entered the hospitals, that there is "a wonderful medicinal effect in the mere personal presence of a man who was perfectly well."⁴⁹ He thus prepared for his visits by ensuring he had "previous rest, the bath, clean clothes, a good meal, and as cheerful appearance as possible."⁵⁰ So equipped, he would set forth into the hospitals:

I believe my profoundest help to these sick & dying men is probably the soothing invigoration I steadily bear in mind, to infuse in them through affect, cheering love, & the like, between them & me. It has saved more than one life.⁵¹

Across all his individual attentions, Whitman relies on the steadiness of his healthful form to do some of the work of healing. It is a theory deeply intertwined with rhythm. Whitman set a tempo which he hoped the wounded soldiers would begin to fall into or catch up with.

This tempo burst into sound through Whitman's emphasis on the voice as part of his healing process. Civil War hospitals had a distinct soundscape, as displayed in a recollection by *New York Herald* reporter George Townsend:

There were some who had been shot in the bowels, and now and then they were frightfully convulsed, breaking into shrieks and shouts. Some of them iterated a single word, as, “doctor,” or “help,” or “God,” or “oh!” commencing with a loud spasmodic cry, and continuing the same word till it died away in cadence. The act of calling seemed to lull the pain.⁵²

What begins as arhythmical and “spasmodic” turns into rhythm as a way of soothing. Whitman took this potential for rhythmical sound to lull and delivered it like a tonic. He would talk to the soldiers constantly, whether or not they were well enough to talk back. He also read to them from whatever they requested, even from the Bible, though he admits “I see my friends smiling at this confession.”⁵³ In particular, though, the soldiers were fond of “declamatory poetical pieces,” so fond that “the whole ward that can walk gathers around me and listens” to such performances. Here, then, we have “Manly Health and Training” fulfilled. In speaking out hearty, rhythmical poems in the wards, Whitman worked to counter the spasm and convulsion, and instantiated his belief that declamation fortifies “the bodily system.”⁵⁴ It is notable that he did not make his own poems part of this cure. While he was describing his project of reading to soldiers, Traubel asked him if he ever brought out his own books. The reply: “No, I don’t think so: I can’t recall a single case in which I gave away *Leaves of Grass*.”⁵⁵ The poems he turned to were “declamatory,” the sort of thing to be found in the elocution manuals which eschewed Whitman in favor of established figures writing in established forms. In Whitman’s hospital work, we can find a belief that traditional metrics did have their purpose: they motivated, stirred, and got going.

Just as Whitman’s poems did not play a part in his hospital work, so the hospital plays only a small part in his poems. Army hospitals appear now and again in *Drum-Taps*, but they are certainly not the focus as they are across Whitman’s prose notes and especially his letters home, in which he has to apologize to his mother for talking about them at the expense of other news. Whitman claimed the wounded soldier in his perseverance was the ultimate manifestation of American manhood, but *Drum-Taps* prefers to give us soldiers either in motion or stilled in death. The in-between form of the wounded soldier seems to pose a unique problem, and emerges in only a handful of poems: we find it in one line of “Not youth pertains to me,” in the central vision of “A march in the ranks hard-prest,” and across the entirety of “The Dresser,” Whitman’s only long poem set in a hospital. It is a poem which, like many in *Drum-Taps*, makes sure to declare what kind of poem it isn’t. As a framing device, Whitman inhabits a speaker addressing an enquiring crowd of children in some far-off future, where the Civil War is a story told by old men. The crowd asks him to speak of “armies

so rapid so wondrous,” and of “hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous.” They ask, essentially, for a ballad. The speaker begins to assemble the necessary materials for such a tale, but they slip through his fingers:

Soldier alert I arrive, after a long march, cover'd with sweat and dust;
In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly shout in the rush of
successful charge;
Enter the captur'd works . . . yet lo, like a swift running river they fade,
Pass and are gone they fade; (31)

The scene disappears, and we enter on another:

But in silence, in dreams' projections
While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints off the sand,
With hinged knees returning I enter the doors—(while for you up there,
Whoever you are, follow without noise and be of strong heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go, (32)

There are two stories being told in this transition from battlefield to hospital, war to ward. First there is the story of the movement of a soldier's memories; the tales of “furious passions” and “chances / Of unsurpassed heroes” which the crowd want to hear are not the path of least resistance for the teller, whose thoughts flow inevitably to the terrible sights of the hospital. Overlaid on this story, though, is that of Whitman's own war. The fading out of the scene of battle seems to be an admission that such battles were something Whitman never actually experienced. As an old man, Whitman would be unable to tell tales of heroic charges and the wild chaos of combat because he spent his war on a different mission. Instead, he told tales of the hospitals—in letters and articles, in *Memoranda During the War* and *Specimen Days*, and then to Horace Traubel in Camden.

As the speaker enters the ward, the site of Whitman's real, visceral experience, a neat dactylic rhythm also makes an entrance:

/ x x / x x / x x / [x x]
Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
/ x / x x / x x / [x x]
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,

This is a rare instance of rhythm being visually present on the page: the lines are shorter than those that have come before and are aligned with each other on the right, where previous lines have roamed. It seems to be a brief submission to meter. Why here, though? I read these lines as Whitman attempting to motivate his poem into action. In the first stanza, the speaker describes how his “fingers fail’d,” presumably leaving him unable to pull a trigger and explaining why he was reassigned as a hospital orderly. We soon find more fingers in the form of the neat dactyls shown above, which seem to be trying hard to achieve something: to help the poem steal itself as it advances into the hard work of presenting to the reader the fetid wards filled with convulsive patients. We have been asked to “follow without noise,” and Whitman gets straight to the work of poem-making as signaled by the quick lapse into meter. The unusually precise dactylic rhythm gives way almost immediately to Whitman’s usual style (the fingers quickly fail), but the poem continues to be textured with rhythmical phraseology. Twice Whitman gives us the peculiar image of “hinged knees.” It is an emphasis on anatomy with the potential for steady, back-and-forth motion, where the rest of the anatomy in the poem has had this potential erased: “crush’d head”; “amputated hand”; “perforated shoulder”; “fractur’d thigh.” The soldiers, which throughout *Drum-Taps* are shown in motion, are here laid low and broken down. The dresser must thus take on the responsibility of movement: “I onward go, I stop”; “On, on I go”; “I am faithful, I do not give out.” The poem is a transcription of Whitman’s motion-by-example approach to his hospital work, where the pendulum is set going by a brief moment of steady rhythm.

Reading *Drum-Taps* via “Manly Health and Training” allows us to see how Whitman’s interest in healthy, rhythmical bodies shaped his response to the Civil War. Union soldiers, both upright and prostrate, marching and wounded, became sites of intense scrutiny, where Whitman’s physiological and poetic ideals were tested. Whitman did not set out to make his poems sound like the tramp of the marching soldier he loved so dearly, but the War let him instantiate his belief that rhythm might strengthen the body, while confirming his suspicion that discipline can lead to catastrophe. This negotiation found its way into the poems of *Drum-Taps*, which are often set going by a brisk beat, but then head out under their own rhythms to perform works of radical humanitarian care.

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NOTES

- 1 Walt Whitman, *Drum-Taps and Sequel to Drum-Taps* (New York; Washington, D.C., 1865–1866), 72. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.
- 2 Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol. I (Amherst: J. S. & C. Adams, 1844), 928.
- 3 Julia Ward Howe, *Reminiscences 1819-1899* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1899), 276.
- 4 Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (Washington, D.C.: 1871), 297. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*.
- 5 Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973), 66.
- 6 Gay Wilson Allen, *The New Walt Whitman Handbook* (New York: New York University Press, 1986), 241-242.
- 7 Walt Whitman, *Drum-Taps: The Complete 1865 Edition*, ed. Lawrence Kramer (New York: New York Review Books, 2015), xviii.
- 8 Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics,” *Style in Language*, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Cambridge: The Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960), 364.
- 9 Space does not permit a full survey of criticism of Whitman’s prosody. My own reading is most indebted Annie Finch’s *The Ghost of Meter: Culture and Prosody in American Free Verse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993).
- 10 Allen, 241-242.
- 11 Walt Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1996), 713. We might look to the scene of sonnet-writing in *Parade’s End* for another example of the convenience of form in wartime. It is near to hand, and near to ear: an acoustic pattern to retreat to in an otherwise chaotic soundscape.
- 12 Mose Velsor [Walt Whitman], “Manly Health and Training, With Off-Hand Hints Toward Their Conditions,” ed. Zachary Turpin, *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 33 (2016), 184-310. Hereafter, “Manly Health and Training”.
- 13 Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1915), 1:163. Hereafter, *WWC*.
- 14 William Thayer, “Personal Recollections of Walt Whitman,” *Scribner’s Magazine* 65 (June 1919), 682. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: med.00574.
- 15 Jennifer Schuessler, “Found: Walt Whitman’s Guide to Manly Health,” *New York Times* (April 29, 2016), nytimes.com.
- 16 “Manly Health and Training,” 184.
- 17 “Manly Health and Training,” 206.

- 18 Edgar Allen Poe, "The Poetic Principle," *Home Journal* 36 (August 31, 1850), 1.
- 19 "Manly Health and Training," 200.
- 20 "Manly Health and Training," 282.
- 21 For more on how Whitman's title inaugurates his project, see John M. Picker, "The Union of Music and Text in Whitman's *Drum-Taps* and Higginson's *Army Life in a Black Regiment*," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 12 (1995), 231-245.
- 22 Anonymous, "Drum Taps—Walt Whitman," *Watson's Weekly Art Journal* 4 (November 1864), 34-35. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: anc.00052.
- 23 Allen, 242.
- 24 The review is anonymous, and it is tempting to suggest that it was written by Whitman himself.
- 25 "Cousin John," *The Drummer Boy* (Boston: Crosby & Nichols, 1862).
- 26 *WWC*, 4:290. See Miller's note in Walt Whitman, *The Correspondence*, Vol. 1, ed. Edwin Haviland Miller (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 195. Miller is probably mistaken in this identification, since I have found no evidence that Trowbridge, though he often used pseudonyms, was in fact "Cousin John." Trowbridge did write a novel for juveniles called *The Drummer Boy* and subtitled "A Story of Burnside's Expedition," published in 1863 by J. E. Tilton & Co., and this is no doubt the book Trowbridge sent to Whitman. I am grateful to the editors of *WWQR* for their noticing of this probable error by Miller.
- 27 Allen, 242.
- 28 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 968.
- 29 Whitman, *Correspondence*, 1:76. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: wwh.00005.
- 30 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 803.
- 31 Eric Spall, *The Tongue of the Camp: Drumming and Drummers of the America Civil War* (Honors Thesis, Ball State University, 2010), 13.
- 32 Haun Sassy, "Contagious Rhythm: Verse as a Technique of the Body," *Critical Rhythm*, ed. Ben Glaser & Jonathan Culler (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019), 106-127.
- 33 My own scansion uses the method set out in Derek Attridge's *Poetic rhythm: An introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- 34 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 799.
- 35 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 741.
- 36 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 763.
- 37 Thomas Wentworth Higginson, 'Unmanly Manhood', *The Woman's Journal* 4 (February 1882), 1.
- 38 "The Great Army of the Sick," *New-York Times* (February 26, 1863), 2. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: per.00195.
- 39 "The Great Washington Hospitals," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* (March 19, 1863), 2. Available on the

Walt Whitman Archive, ID: per.00210.

40 “‘Tis But Ten Years Since (Sixth Paper.),” *New York Weekly Graphic* 7 March 1874, 46. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: per.00215.

41 From a soldier quoted in Roy Morris, Jr., *The Better Angel: Walt Whitman in the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 108.

42 Many nurses, of course, spent as much time as possible performing individual ministrations for patients, as shown in Alcott’s *Hospital Sketches*. But what the *Sketches* also show is that each nurse was part of a larger machine, which pulled them to certain duties in a rhythm which could not often be broken to give special attention to particular cases. Louisa May Alcott, *Hospital Sketches* (1863; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 2006).

43 Robert Leigh Davis, *Whitman and the Romance of Medicine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 15.

44 Whitman’s letters from 1866 show the work gradually petering out around him: May 7th: “My hospitals are dwindled to a small force—but there are plenty of cases to occupy me a couple of visits a week”; May 14th: “I spent yesterday afternoon at the Quarter Master’s hospital—it is the old dregs & leavings of the war.”; September 27th: “Washington is rather dull—no more soldiers around like there used to be—no more patrols marching around the streets—no more great racks of hospitals.”

45 *Memoranda During the War*, 7; *Memoranda*, 30; Walt Whitman to Moses Lane, 11 May 1863, available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.00769.

46 Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.00886.

47 Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.00774.

48 Lawrence Kramer, note to *Drum-Taps: The Complete 1865 Edition* (New York: New York Review Books, 2015), 51.

49 “Manly Health and Training,” 185.

50 Whitman, *Poetry and Prose*, 751.

51 Walt Whitman to Nicholas Wyckoff or Daniel L. Northrup, May 14, 1863. Available on the *Walt Whitman Archive*, ID: loc.00885.

52 In Henry Steele Commager, ed., *The Blue and the Gray* (1950; New York: The Fairfax Press, 1982), 771.

53 *Memoranda During the War*, 31.

54 “Manly Health and Training,” 241.

55 *WWC*, 4:63.