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## The Disorder of Drum-Taps

Ted Genoways

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# The Disorder of Drum-Taps

Ted Genoways

## **Abstract**

Examines the printing history of Drum-Taps, comparing “the March 1865 advertising placard to the final table of contents,” establishing “the high cost of paper in the late Civil War and Whitman’s financial concerns,” identifying “the different type designs in Drum-Taps,” showing “how each change reveals a new stage in the production process,” and reexamining “the surviving documentary evidence of the printing process to create a more complete chronology of the process of revision and publication”; concludes that the book was largely arranged to economize space and save paper and that Drum-Taps becomes a “poignant reflection of the war, embodying in its very arrangements the wounds and scars of April 1865.”

## THE DISORDER OF *DRUM-TAPS*

TED GENOWAYS

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WHEN WALT WHITMAN received word that his brother George had arrived home in Brooklyn after months on the edge of death in Confederate prison camps, he quickly made arrangements to go to New York, arriving on March 18 or 19, 1865.<sup>1</sup> Some time in the next two weeks, Whitman drew up an announcement and table of contents for his new book *Drum-Taps* and took it to the Rome Brothers to be printed (see Figure 1). The manuscript copy of the broadside, now in the Van Sinderen collection at Yale, is inscribed on the back, "Mr. Romes statement: The printed form of this circular was a little larger than the MS. and only about 50 copies were printed for use in the bookstores as placards."<sup>2</sup> Several months earlier, Whitman had resigned himself to print the book at his own expense rather than continue to seek a publisher, and he apparently decided to use his comparative free time, while George recuperated, to see it done.

Whitman visited several printers to determine the cost of publication. Presumably, he sought a bid from the Rome Brothers, who had printed the 1855 and 1856 editions of *Leaves of Grass*. He visited George McDougal on Beekman Street, whose firm of Smith & McDougal eventually electrotyped the 1871 edition of *Leaves of Grass* and *Passage to India*. He checked to see who had printed Charlotte M. Yonge's *A Book of Golden Deeds* but found that the book, which had been published simultaneously in New York and Cambridge, Massachusetts, was "printed in Boston" (NUPM 71). None of the bids he received appears to have met Whitman's expectations. On April 1, Whitman entered into a contract with Peter Eckler on Fulton Street for \$254 for the printing of five hundred copies of *Drum-Taps*, "to be done in new Long Primer type & make one hundred & twenty pages consisting altogether of one hundred & twenty thousand ems."<sup>3</sup>

Why *Drum-Taps*, when it finally arrived from the binder in mid May, so little resembled Whitman's original estimation of its size and content has the subject of surprisingly little debate. Most scholars have chosen to accept the various explanations offered by F. DeWolfe Miller in his introduction to his facsimile edition of *Drum-Taps* and *Sequel to Drum-Taps*, published in 1959. However, many of Miller's assertions

Walt Whitman's New Volume of Poems.

# DRUM TAPS.

To be issued immediately in a small handsome volume, good paper and print. The following is the

## TABLE OF CONTENTS:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Drum-Taps.                                      | As I lay with my head in your lap, comrade.     |
| Song of the Drumer at Day-Break.                | I dream, I dream, I dream.                      |
| 1861.   | As tellous I wander'd Virginia's woods.         |
| The Centenaria's Story.                         | As I in vision surface piercing.                |
| Plumors: O Plumors!                             | From Plumors starting I fly like a bird.        |
| The Drumer.                                     | Turn O Liberator.                               |
| Rise O Days from your fatherless sleep.         | You foes that in conflict have overcome me.     |
| Come up from the fields, fathers.               | A soldier returns, he will stand by home.       |
| Best! best! deems!                              | Quadrant years that wait me I have not whitens. |
| Vivid strange I kept on the hill one night.     | Over sea-lithar from Nippon.                    |
| A man in the crabs herd-press, and the road un- | Beginning my studies.                           |
| known.  | When I heard the hear'd astronomer.             |
| Shut not your doors to me, ye of libraries.     | Aboard in a ship's helm.                        |
| A sight in camp in the day-break grey and blue. | Bar of weapon'd men.                            |
| By the boy's wife's soft face.                  | Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd.            |
| Give us the splendid silent son.                | I heard you solemn sweet pipes of the organ.    |
| Cate of Slips.                                  | Cavalry crossing a ford.                        |
| Spirit with mothering voice.                    | Weave in, weave in, my lordly life.             |
| Years of meters.                                | I saw the old General at bay.                   |
| Tears of the unperforated.                      | Work take good notice.                          |
| A battle. (sights, sounds, &c.)                 | The bronze hat.                                 |
| Angry cloth, I see these leaping.               | Peck on her dead grazing.                       |
| Flag of stars' thick-angled knitting.           | Reconciliation.                                 |
| Lo, the camps of the tents of green.            | Not youth portals to me.                        |

Also, will soon be issued, a new edition of

## LEAVES OF GRASS,

Entirely revised and much changed from the last edition of 1860-61.

Figure 1. The placard printed by the Rome Brothers in March 1865.

about the process by which *Drum-Taps* was conceived and created are directly contradicted by manuscript evidence. By relying on this evidence and coupling it with study of the printed text, a startling new scenario emerges.

It now appears that the arrangement of the poems in *Drum-Taps* was not of Whitman's own choosing. Indeed, the poems were radically reorganized in the midst of typesetting in order to accommodate his typical shortage of money and resultant inability to buy the most basic material he needed—paper. Thus, Whitman was forced to scrap his original order in favor of an arrangement that simply allowed the greatest number of poems in the seventy-two pages—three 12mo signatures—he could afford. These facts help explain Eldrid Herrington's recent observation that, with only one exception, "Whitman never begins a poem [in *Drum-Taps*] in the middle of a page unless the poem ends *on* that page," thus suggesting that "Whitman's 1865 poems are placed in sequence for spatial reasons, more than for coherence or complementarity."<sup>4</sup>

In order to consider these factors systematically, I will first compare the March 1865 placard to the final table of contents; I will then establish the high cost of paper in the late Civil War and Whitman's financial concerns; third, I will identify the different type designs in *Drum-Taps* and show how each change reveals a new stage in the production process; and, finally, I will reexamine the surviving documentary evidence of the printing process to create a more complete chronology of the process of revision and publication.

### *The March 1865 Advertising Placard*

If, indeed, the Rome Brothers printed fifty copies of the *Drum-Taps* broadside, very few survive. Miller identified one copy in the Library of Congress, the reverse of which Whitman used for a diary entry about Abraham Lincoln—evidence that the placard had outlived its usefulness even before *Drum-Taps* was offered for sale. Miller found two other copies in the private collections of Charles E. Feinberg (now at the Library of Congress) and Gay Wilson Allen. I have located only two additional copies, now in the collections at Yale, the reverse of each used for early drafts of Whitman's 1885 poem "Fancies at Navesink." It appears, then, that Whitman retained these broadsides for manuscript paper but never placed them in bookstores, as the contents they advertised were no longer correct.

To appreciate the extent of Whitman's last-minute changes, we must first consider the following list. Each poem is numbered in the left column according to its projected position on the March placard; in the right column a second number (introduced with a "DT") indicates the same poem's position in the published version of *Drum-Taps*. Poems held for

*Sequel to Drum-Taps* or the 1867 edition of *Leaves of Grass* are marked in the right column with “[SDT]” or “[LG 1867].” Those poems not published in Whitman’s lifetime have no entries in the right column. In cases where a variant title appears, the title in the published version is provided in brackets:

Drum-Taps *Projected Table of Contents, March 1865*

|     |   |       |
|-----|---|-------|
| 1.  | Drum-Taps   | DT1   |
| 2.  | Song of the Banner at Day-Break   | DT4   |
| 3.  | 1861  | DT6   |
| 4.  | The Centenarian’s Story   | DT9   |
| 5.  | Pioneers! O Pioneers!   | DT10  |
| 6.  | The Dresser   | DT12  |
| 7.  | Rise O Days from your fathomless deeps!   | DT14  |
| 8.  | Come up from the fields, father   | DT17  |
| 9.  | Beat! beat! drums!  | DT16  |
| 10. | Vigil strange I kept on the field one night   | DT20  |
| 11. | A march in the ranks hard-press’d and the road unknown  | DT22  |
| 12. | Shut not your doors to me, proud libraries  | DT2   |
| 13. | A sight in camp in the day-break grey and dim   | DT24  |
| 14. | By the bivouac’s fitful flame   | DT5   |
| 15. | Give me the splendid silent sun   | DT26  |
| 16. | City of Ships   | DT18  |
| 17. | Spirit with muttering voice<br>[early version of “Spirit whose work is done”]   | [SDT] |
| 18. | Year of meteors   | DT29  |
| 19. | Years of the unperformed  | DT31  |
| 20. | A battle, (sights, sounds, &c.)<br>[early version of “The Veteran’s Vision”]  | DT33  |
| 21. | Angry cloth, I see there leaping<br>[never published, apparently related to manuscript<br>“Rise, lurid stars,” which contains the line “Change,<br>angry cloth—weft of the silver stars no more”] |       |
| 22. | Flag of stars! thick-spangled bunting<br>[as “Flag of Stars, Thick-Sprinkled Bunting”]  | DT40  |
| 23. | Lo, the camps of the tents of green<br>[as “Camps of Green”]  | DT35  |
| 24. | As I lay with my head in your lap, camerado   | [SDT] |
| 25. | I dream, I dream, I dream<br>[early version of “In Clouds Descending,<br>in Midnight Sleep,” which uses the refrain,<br>“I dream, I dream, I dream”]  | [SDT] |
| 26. | As toilsome I wander’d Virginia’s woods   | DT36  |
| 27. | As I in vision surfaces piercing<br>[unknown, perhaps related to “The Veteran’s Vision”]  |       |
| 28. | From Paumanok starting I fly like a bird  | DT7   |
| 29. | Turn O Libertad   | DT50  |
| 30. | You foes that in conflict have overcome me<br>[early version of “Ah Poverties, Wincings, and Sulky<br>Retreats,” which contains the line, “Ah you foes that<br>in conflict have overcome me”]     | [SDT] |

|     |   |           |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 31. | A soldier returns, he will soon be home<br>[unknown, perhaps related to “A Carol of Harvest for<br>1867,” later retitled as “Return of the Heroes”] |           |
| 32. | Quicksand years that whirl me I know not whither  | DT11      |
| 33. | Over sea hither from Niphon<br>[as “A Broadway Pageant”]  | DT39      |
| 34. | Beginning my studies  | DT8       |
| 35. | When I heard the learn’d astronomer   | DT13      |
| 36. | Aboard at a ship’s helm   | [LG 1867] |
| 37. | Race of weapon’d men<br>[early version of “Race of Veterans”]   | [SDT]     |
| 38. | Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd   | DT43      |
| 39. | I heard you solemn sweet pipes of the organ   | [SDT]     |
| 40. | Cavalry crossing a ford   | DT3       |
| 41. | Weave in, weave in, my hardy life   | DT49      |
| 42. | I saw the old General at bay<br>[as “I saw old General at bay”]   | DT45      |
| 43. | World take good notice  | DT44      |
| 44. | The bivouac halt<br>[early version of “Bivouac on a Mountain Side”]   | DT51      |
| 45. | Pensive on her dead gazing  | DT52      |
| 46. | Reconciliation  | [SDT]     |
| 47. | Not youth pertains to me  | DT53      |

Faced with these discrepancies, Miller notes only that “the broadside Whitman prepared for advertising the volume was printed apparently even before Eckler began the book itself, for there are several changes in the final table of contents” (xxxix). In fact, the placard lists ten poems withdrawn from *Drum-Taps*—six of which later appeared in *Sequel to Drum-Taps*, one in the 1867 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, and three never published during Whitman’s lifetime (two of which are still unknown). At least one poem, “A battle, (sights, sounds, &c.),” we know from manuscript evidence was significantly revised. Seventeen poems not listed on the March placard appeared in the printed edition, including Whitman’s first Lincoln memorial poem, “Hush’d be the camps to-day,” inserted after typesetting was completed. Another four poems were re-titled for *Drum-Taps*, and the title of the book itself appears as “Drum Taps,” without the hyphen. Most importantly, only one poem—the first poem—remains in the position Whitman had originally assigned it. Despite this seeming disarray, two patterns immediately emerge from this comparison: 1.) the first eight poems remain in their original positions relative to each other, but shorter poems are intercollated; 2.) of the final seven poems in the original table of contents, six remain in the final ten positions of the printed book. In short, briefer poems appear to have been moved from the middle of the book toward the front wherever space was available, allowing Whitman to maximize the number of lines on each page.



*The Price of Paper and the Number of Ems per Page*

On March 26, while he was still searching for a printer, Whitman wrote to William D. and Ellen M. O'Connor:

I find myself perplexed about printing my book. All the printers tell me I could not pick a more inopportune time—that in ten days prices of paper, composition &c will be very much lower &c.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, the price of paper in April 1865 was at a record high. In his contract with Eckler, Whitman provided an upfront payment of \$63 “for three reams of 60 lb. paper.” Paper of roughly the same quality used for *Sequel to Drum-Taps* six months later cost of \$5.75 per ream, leading Miller to assert that “the price would scarcely drop 75% in a half year of peace. Therefore we must conjecture that the receipt for \$63 may have covered expenses beyond the paper specified” (xlix).

Miller’s conjecture is simply incorrect. On February 8, 1865, the *New York Times* reported on the soaring cost of paper and its devastating effects on the government’s ability to print official documents through the Washington Printing Bureau. The writer reports that “the price per ream of uncalendared (50 pounds) in 1864 was \$8.87 1/2; for the current year it will be \$15.50.”<sup>6</sup> Considering that Whitman ordered higher quality paper (60-pound stock, rather than 50 pound) and that he would have been paying the commercial rate on a small job, rather than receiving the government discount for more than a million dollars worth of business, it is not unreasonable to assume he paid \$21 per ream—exactly as the original bill states. Were this not enough, when Eckler issued Whitman a revised bill on April 22, he itemized each expense, including a line for “3 Reams of paper \$63.00.”

With paper prices at record-breaking highs, it does not seem unreasonable that Whitman should try to cut costs by fitting the poems into fewer pages. Consider again the April 1 contract, wherein Eckler and Whitman agree that the book will not only be 120 pages in length but will consist of “one hundred & twenty thousand ems.” Miller argues that “since the book as printed contained only 72 pages but had roughly the specified 120,000 ems of Long Primer, Whitman had at first settled on a much smaller page” (xxxv). Rollo G. Silver debated that claim by noting that the *American Encyclopaedia of Printing* estimates that “one thousand ems of Long Primer will occupy 18.20 square inches. If this is true, a page 5 1/2 x 3 1/4 [the size of the type bed] (approximately 17.9 square inches) would contain less than a thousand ems and 72-page book less than 72,000 ems.”<sup>7</sup> Until now, however, no one has actually gone to the trouble of counting the number of ems in the printed book: 79,962.<sup>8</sup>

The average page contains roughly 1,100 ems, though this number



is skewed slightly by the four pages of front matter (which average only 437 ems) included in the original bid. The pages of the main text average 1,150 ems. Why, then, did Whitman and Eckler both expect that an average printed page would contain 1,000 ems, when the design they selected allowed a much denser page? For example, the second page of the poem “Drum-Taps” contains 1,505 ems, one page of “Song of the Banner at Day-Break” contains 1,475 ems, and one page of “A Broadway Pageant” contains 1,456 ems. Even the barest pages of the book, the first four pages of “Pioneers! O Pioneers!”, contain an average of 897 ems. The only explanation is that both men were anticipating blank spaces at the ends of poems when the original estimate was made.

*The Evolving Type Design*

*Drum-Taps* features three distinct type designs which, taken collectively, help elucidate the order in which the poems were set. For the sake of clarity, these designs will be designated designs A, B, and C.

Design A features a one-inch drop from the top of the type bed, an all-capital display type (an 18-point primer, the standard accompanying face for long primer), a single decorative element below the title. All samples of Design A begin on the recto, so the running head is dropped in favor of a parenthetical page number in the lower right-hand corner (see Figure 2). When poems in this style run onto additional pages, the running head is “Drum-Taps” on the verso and the poem’s title on the recto (see Figure 3). The style also accommodated several variants. When titles exceed a single line, sometimes the title is arranged aesthetically on two lines, sometimes drop capitals are used, and on one occasion lines of variable sizes are used (see Figure 4). The one true deviation from this design occurs in the poem “1861,” which is set in the 18-point type and features an ornament, but the “Drum-Taps” running head here

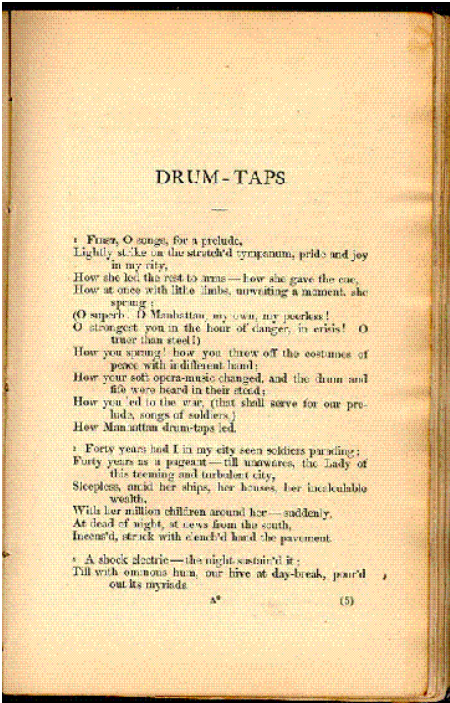


Figure 2. The first page of the poem “Drum-Taps,” establishing Design A.

appears on the recto page and the page number appears in the upper right rather than in the lower right in parenthesis (see Figure 5).

Design B deviates from Design A in several important ways. The title face always uses small caps, though the capitalization of the titles is highly irregular and occasionally differs between the table of contents and the corresponding page. This design discards the poem title for the recto running heads in favor of a “Drum-Taps” running head for all pages; the page number, likewise, always appears at the top of the page as part of the running head (see Figure 6). The two significant exceptions to this style appear on the first pages of “Give me the splendid silent sun,” which uses a title face more consistent with Design A, and “A Broadway Pageant,” which uses the one-inch drop before the title and the page number position of Design A but the title face and running heads of Design B (see Figures 7 and 8). As such, these poems may represent transition points from Design A to B. The other significant variation in Design B occurs three times (and thus has been assigned B<sub>2</sub>). Design B<sub>2</sub> is identical to Design B, except that the ornament below the title is dropped (see Figure 9). On all three occasions the ornament appears to have been dropped to save a line or two, preventing the poem from overlapping onto the next page. I have chosen to give this design a separate designation, because it points toward the final design.

Design C is the most utilitarian design. It uses a 12-point, all-capital display face with no ornaments between the title and text. When titles are long enough to require two lines, the title is simply divided and the text centered. In some cases, no space exists between the title and text, demonstrating that this design was chosen for its maximum efficiency (see Figure 10).

Each design appears in the following chart, with its significant variants identified with asterisks. The poems are listed in the order according to which they are printed in the published book:

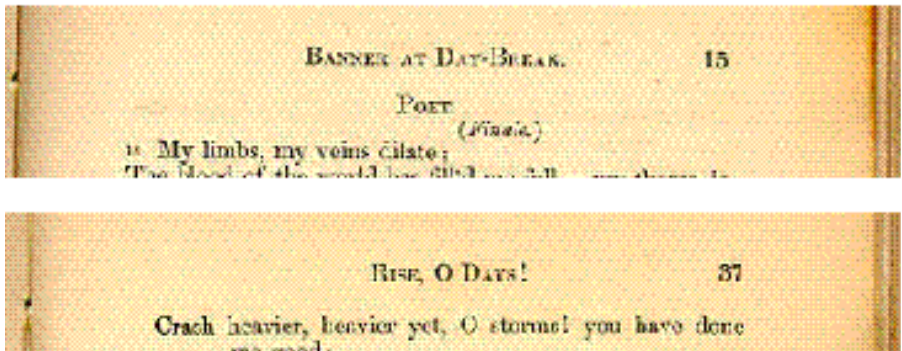


Figure 3. Examples of the recto running heads in Design A.

Design A

Drum-Taps  
Song of the Banner at Day-Break  
1861 (\*)

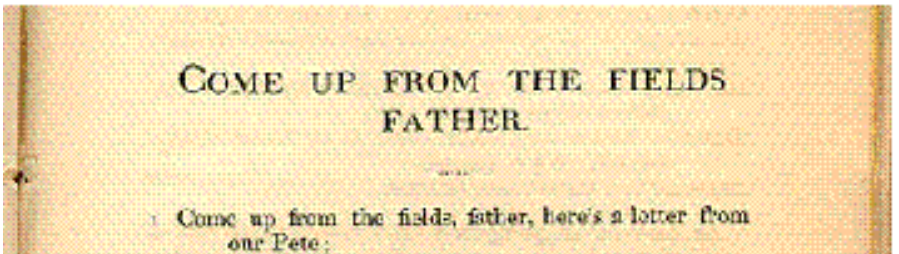
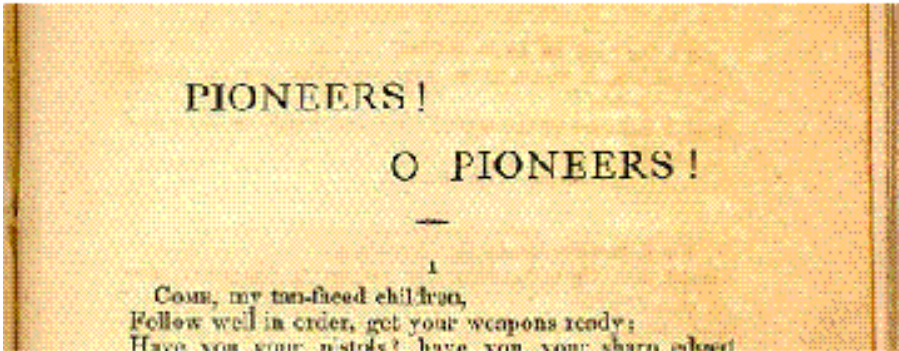
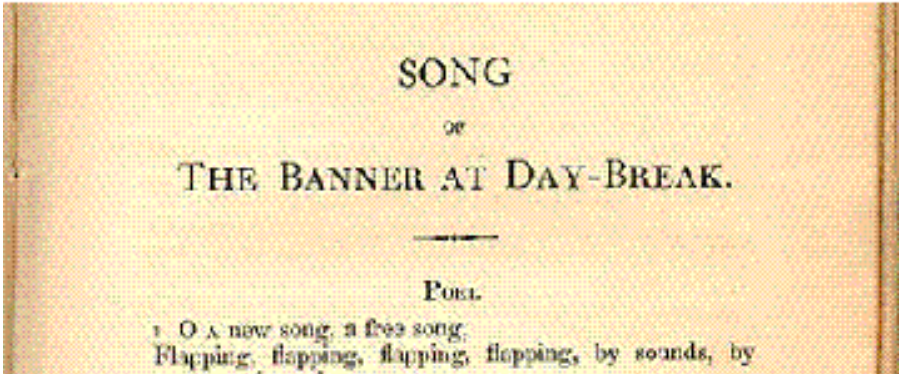


Figure 4. Examples of how Eckler's typesetters accommodated long titles under Design A. "Song of the Banner at Daybreak" employed variable type sizes, and "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" places the text on two overlapping lines. "Come up from the fields father" uses small capitals. All other features of these poems' design is consistent with Design A.

The Centenarian's Story  
 Pioneers! O Pioneers!  
 The Dresser  
 Rise O Days from your fathom-  
 less Deeps  
 Come up from the fields father

Design B

Shut not your Doors to me proud  
 Libraries  
 Calvary Crossing a Ford  
 By the Bivouac's fitful flame  
 From Paumanok starting I fly like  
 a bird  
 Beginning my studies  
 Quicksand years that whirl me I  
 know not whither  
 When I heard the learn'd As-  
 tronomer  
 Rise O Days from your fathom-  
 less Deeps  
 City of Ships  
 Vigil strange I kept on the field  
 one night  
 A march in the ranks hard-press'd  
 and the road unknown  
 Give me the splendid silent sun  
 (\*)  
 A sight in camp in the day-break  
 grey and dim  
 Over the carnage rose prophetic  
 a voice  
 Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?  
 Year of Meteors  
 Years of the unperform'd  
 The Veteran's Vision  
 Camps of Green  
 As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods  
 Hymn of Dead Soldiers  
 A Broadway Pageant (\*)  
 Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd

Design B<sub>2</sub>

A child's amaze  
 Beat! Beat! Drums!  
 Long, too long, O land

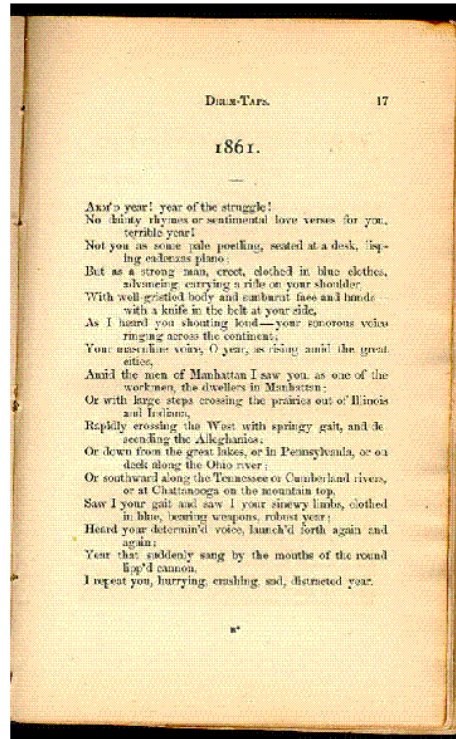


Figure 5. "1861" deviates from Design A by including the recto running head and page number in the upper right corner.



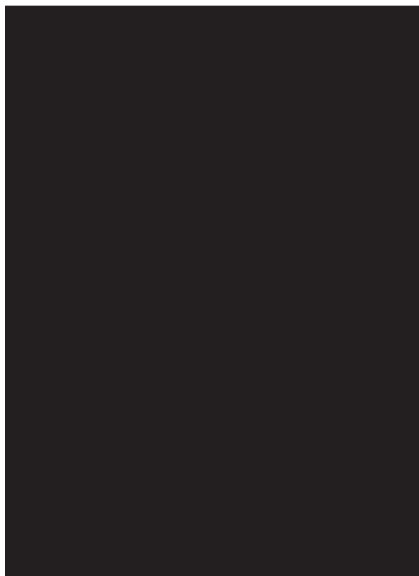


Figure 6. ...

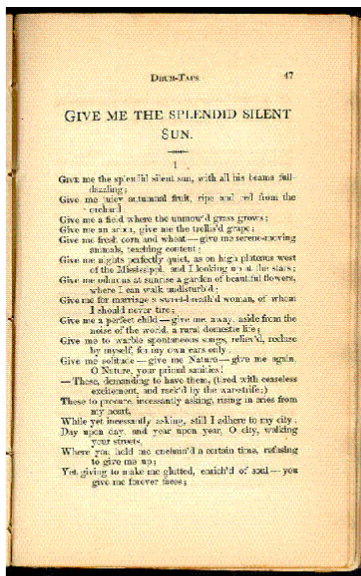


Figure 7. Note that the type style for "Give me the splendid silent Sun" matches the display face for "Come up from the fields father."

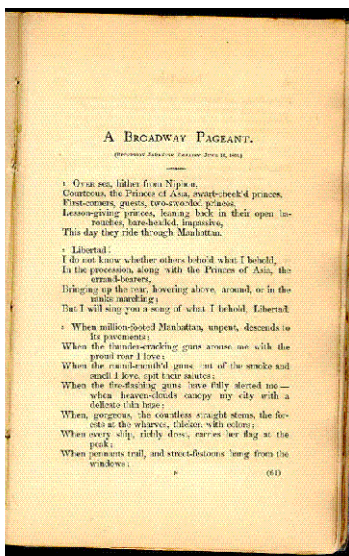


Figure 8. The design of "A Broadway Pageant" bears an inexplicable similarity to Design A.

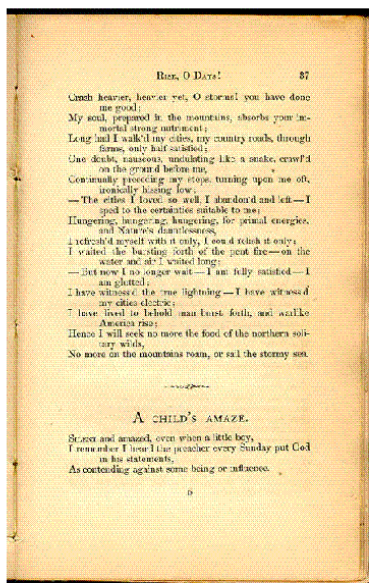


Figure 9. "A child's amaze" is the first poem in Design B<sub>2</sub>, followed by "Beat! Beat! Drum!" on the following page, and "Long, too long, O land!" on page 85.

Design C

Mother and babe  
 Bathed in war's perfume  
 A farm picture  
 The torch  
 Year that trembled and reel'd  
     beneath me  
 O tan-faced prairie-boy  
 The ship  
 Flag of stars, thick-sprinkled  
     bunting  
 Old Ireland  
 Look down fair moon  
 World, take good notice  
 I saw old general at bay  
 Others may praise what they like  
 Solid, ironical, rolling orb  
 Hush'd be the camps to-day  
 Weave in, weave in, my hardy life  
 Turn O Libertad  
 Bivouac on a mountain side  
 Pensive on her dead gazing, I  
     heard the mother of all  
 Not youth pertains to me

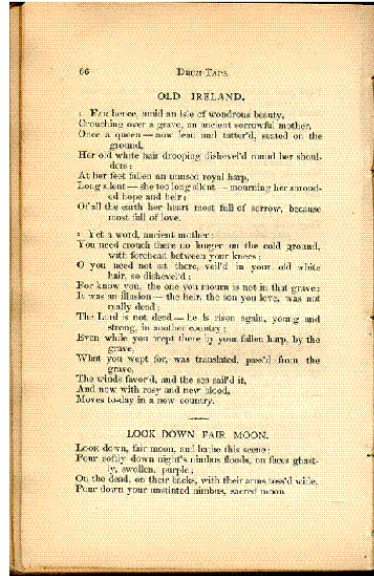


Figure 10. Design C seems to have been chosen solely to allow the maximum number of lines per page.

This chart yields several significant insights. First and foremost, the eight poems that appear in Design A are the first eight poems—in their exact order—on the March 1865 placard. Thus, it would appear that *Drum-Taps* started into type according to the arrangement on the placard but was halted after “Come up from the fields father” (39-40). If so, then Design A specifically called for each poem to begin on a recto, which would have produced not only blank spaces at the ends of poems, but blank pages for poems that ended on versos. Almost as importantly, thirteen of the final fourteen poems appear in Design C, implying that the space-saving design was instituted late in the typesetting process. Of the poems in Design C that appear in other parts of the book, poems added to the table of contents after the placard was printed predominate. The following chart shows the design styles of the seventeen poems added during April:

A child's amaze  
 Mother and babe  
 Bathed in war's perfume  
 Long, too long, O land  
 A farm picture  
 Over the carnage rose a prophetic voice  
 Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?  
 The Torch

B<sub>2</sub>  
 C  
 C  
 B<sub>2</sub>  
 C<sub>2</sub>  
 C  
 B  
 B  
 C

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Year that trembled and reel'd beneath me | C |
| O tan-faced prairie-boy                  | C |
| Hymn of dead soldiers                    | B |
| The Ship                                 | C |
| Old Ireland                              | C |
| Look down fair moon                      | C |
| Others may praise what they like         | C |
| Solid, ironical, rolling orb             | C |
| Hush'd be the camps to-day               | C |

Given their absence from the March placard and their overwhelming appearance in the late type design, we may conclude that the majority of these poems were added while the book was being set to type. Interestingly, the three added poems in Design B are all war-related poems. Of the two poems in Design B<sub>2</sub>, “A child’s amaze” is distinctly not war-related and “Long, too long, O land” takes the post-war period as its subject. “Bathed in war’s perfume,” “Year that trembled and reel’d beneath me,” “O tan-faced prairie boy,” and “Look down fair moon” are the only four war-related poems not included on the placard but printed in Design C. We may conjecture that the three new poems in Design B were added after the end of March but before the Confederate surrender on April 9. If so, of the final fourteen poems added to the book, three speak directly to the post-war experience, and an additional eight have nothing to do with the war at all, suggesting not only that they were inserted between April 9 and 21—into any remaining unused spaces—but also that Whitman was consciously creating a book that would be relevant to post-war readers. In light of these new textual insights, it is worth resurveying the documentary evidence, in order to reach a more complete understanding of Whitman’s revisions and reorderings in April 1865

*Toward a Chronology of Whitman in April 1865*

As has been well established by now, Whitman began the production of *Drum-Taps* on April 1 by writing up a contract with Peter Eckler. With all but the signature and accompanying address in Whitman’s hand, the contract reads in full:

New York, April 1st, 1865.

Received of Walt Whitman, Sixty-Three Dollars, being payment in advance for three reams of 60 lb. paper, for his book “Drum-Taps.”—And it is hereby agreed that the undersigned is to do the composition, stereotyping, press-work, &c. of five hundred copies for Two Hundred & Fifty Four Dollars. Of which sum the foregoing Sixty Three Dollars is part payment & on settlement is to be deducted from the sum of Two Hundred & Fifty-four dollars aforementioned.

The said book called “Drum Taps” is to be done in new Long Primer type



and make one hundred & twenty pages consisting altogether of one hundred & twenty thousand ems—and the workmanship is to be first class in every aspect & to be completed & the printed sheets delivered within one month from this date.

Peter Eckler  
No 40 Fulton street

Some time shortly thereafter, Eckler's men began setting eight poems to type in the order they had appeared in the prepublication advertising placard printed in the weeks before. Whitman may not have been present for the first two days of typesetting, because he spent April 2 and 3 investigating the procedure for extending George's furlough and obtaining the necessary signatures on an extension of leave of absence form he drafted himself.<sup>9</sup> After setting "Drum-Taps," "Song of the Banner at Day-Break," "1861," "The Centenarian's Story," "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" "The Dresser," "Rise O Days from your fathomless Deeps," and "Come up from the fields father" in Design A, the typesetter stopped. The high price of paper coupled with his typically tight finances appear to have caused Whitman to shorten *Drum-Taps* from 120 pages (5 reams of paper) to 72 pages (3 reams). His reluctance to accept these changes surfaces in his letter to William D. O'Connor on April 7: "I have decided to print the book, and am now under way with it. . . . My book will be small & not thick at all—but will be well printed" (*Corr* 1:257-258).

Resigned to the smaller size, Whitman okayed the uses of Design B, and began finding places where shorter poems could be moved to occupy fewer pages. At first, Whitman appears to have arranged the intercolated poems for artistic consistency—inserting a prefatory poem like "Shut not your Doors to me proud Libraries" toward the beginning, for example, and "Cavalry Crossing a Ford," whose final line reads "The guidon flags flutter gaily in the wind," before "Song of the Banner at Day-Break." Soon, however, artistic groupings were scrapped in favor of conserving space. About this time Whitman struck section 5 of the Calamus cluster from his blue book copy of the 1860 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, where he had been making revisions for a new edition; at the top of that page he writes, "out—all—this piece for the present,"<sup>10</sup> and inserted the section as "Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice" into *Drum-Taps*.

On April 9, in the midst of the typesetting in Design B, General Lee signed the surrender at Appomattox Courthouse in Virginia. Apparently in response to the end of the war, Whitman hastily revised several poems. Most notably, "A battle, (sights, sounds, &c.)," a vivid first-hand depiction of battle, was revised and framed as a post-war recollection and retitled "The Veteran's Vision." In a similar gesture, the poem "Race of weapon'd men" was removed and later published in *Sequel to Drum-Taps* as "Race of Veterans." During this time, Whitman began work on an end-of-war poem, which he titled only "April 1865." The poem was

never fully realized but several lines are reworked later for section 6 of the poem “A Carol of Harvest for 1867.” On April 7, Whitman wrote to William D. O’Connor that he would be back in Washington on the “16th or 17th” (*Corr* 2:257), in time for work at his government post on Monday, April 17. In anticipation of leaving town on April 16, the pages of *Drum-Taps* appear to have been set to type by April 14, the final pages and empty spaces filled with poems set in Design C. One surviving manuscript page indicates that Whitman was still furiously revising as the final poems were being set, but with the typesetting complete, he must have gone to sleep believing that *Drum-Taps* was complete (see Figures 11 and 12).

Little did Whitman know that that very night (April 14) Abraham Lincoln was shot at Ford’s Theatre in Washington, D. C., and died the following morning. When word of Lincoln’s death reached New York by wire, everything halted. In his notebook, Whitman recorded, “business public & private all suspended, & shops closed—strange mixture of horror, fury, tenderness, & a stirring wonder brewing,” and “The stores were shut, & no business transacted, no pleasure vehicles, & hardly a cart—only the rumbling base of the heavy Broadway stages incessantly rolling” (*NUPM* 762; 764). Secretary of War Edwin Stanton declared all government offices closed for the week.

Whitman decided to stay in Brooklyn with his mother and brother and quickly set to writing a poem for the funeral of Abraham Lincoln. All the newspapers announced that the funeral would be held in Washington, D.C., on April 19. Manuscript drafts of “Hush’d be the camps to-day” indicate that Whitman was working on the poem on or before that date, for the poem refers to “the lower’d coffin” and “the shovel’d clods that fill the grave” (see Figure 13), apparently unaware that Lincoln was merely to lie in state in the Capitol before being placed on the funeral train so famously memorialized in “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d.” In the upper right-hand corner of the “Hush’d” manuscript, Whitman has indicated “page 69,” showing where the poem was to be inserted

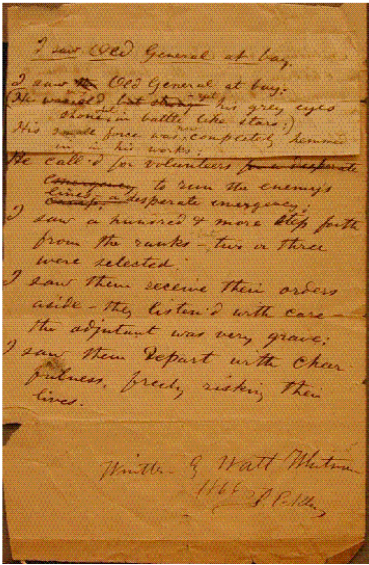


Figure 11. This manuscript, signed by Peter Eckler, shows that Whitman was revising his poems right up until they were set in type. This version of “I saw Old General at bay” contains a variant line 2, and all three first lines are pasted over an earlier draft.

among the pages. No record exists of which poem or poems were removed, but there is a proof sheet of “Not my enemies ever invade me” in Design C in the Feinberg Collection.

Whitman must have delivered the Lincoln elegy to Eckler’s offices to be typeset when commercial businesses reopened on April 20, or on April 21, when he wrote up receipts and took payments to Abraham Simpson and Eckler in preparation for returning to Washington. J. M. Bradstreet endorsed Whitman’s Simpson receipt for \$20, and Eckler signed a receipt torn from the same sheet for \$75. The next day Eckler wrote to Whitman with final corrections: “On page 31 verse 2 line 3 of *Drum Taps* the word ‘recalls’ is spelled ‘recals.’ According to Webster & Worcester it is wrong but before taking the responsibility of altering it I wait for your decision.” Eckler also wrote, “I enclose a proof of ‘O Pioneers!’ I think it is improved,” but then cancelled those sentences. He did enclose, however, a revised and itemized bill:

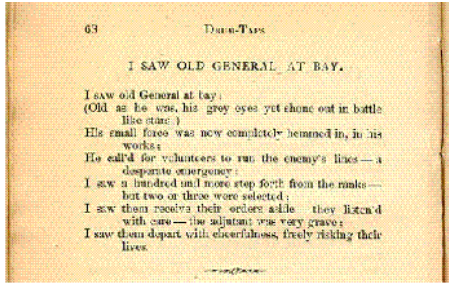


Figure 12. “I saw old general at bay” as it appears in *Drum-Taps*

Printing Office, No. 40 Fulton Street.  
New York, 1865

Mr W. Whitman

To PETER ECKLER, Dr.

|                                     |          |
|-------------------------------------|----------|
| To cover stereotyping & <illegible> | \$114.60 |
| Two taking extra paperwork          | 2.00     |
| Cover & stereotyping & pages        | 3.00     |
| Alteration of plates                | 1.00     |
| One box for plates                  | 1.00     |
| 3 Reams paper                       | 63.00    |
| 7 <illegible> “                     | 8.25     |
|                                     | \$192.85 |
| Cr by cash                          | 138.00   |
|                                     | \$154.85 |
| [Whitman’s annotations]             |          |
| sent \$20 April 26                  |          |
| 20 May 2                            |          |
| leaving (May 2 ’65) \$14.85 due     |          |

The charge for “alteration of plates” indicates that “Hush’d be the camps to-day” was, indeed, inserted after the final typeset pages had been stereotyped.





Seeing the book to completion was now the primary concern, and Whitman seems to have expressed concern that by waiting for his reply Eckler may have set production back by several days. Eckler wrote on April 26 that Lincoln's body had lay in state on April 24 and 25 in New York, and "as there was nothing done yesterday & the day before on account of the funeral, my waiting for your reply did not retard the book much." In fact, he delivered the good news that "your book is now to pages & will be ready for the Binder next Monday morning," the May 1 deadline he had agreed to. On May 1, Eckler wrote to say "I have just been to Mr Alvord's and find your Drum taps printed very nicely indeed."

### Conclusion

In a period of less than three weeks, *Drum-Taps*—as a physical object and as a work of art—underwent a series of stunning revisions and iterations. Its relatively slow process of typesetting forced numerous changes on Whitman, but it also allowed the book itself to encompass many changes—from a country at war with itself, to a country newly at peace, to a country wracked by mourning at the loss of its moral and national leader. Therefore, Maire Mullins' theory of the order of *Drum-Taps* as a pair of counter-narratives—one war-torn and the other idyllic, both flowing together and at crosscurrents on the same page—is not necessarily incorrect, but unlike the willful juxtaposition of *Two Rivulets*, the form of *Drum-Taps* appears now to have been imposed, rather than intentional.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Julianne Ramsey's contention that the eventual order of *Drum-Taps* in the 1871 edition of *Leaves of Grass* owes "its essential structure and meaning to Rossetti's editorial pioneering of 1868" and Anthony Szczesiul's examination of the reordering of the poems in the 1871 edition into a "narrative pattern indicat[ing] Whitman's shifting attitude toward the war as it receded from his day-to-day life into the historic past," seems now to misjudge the origin of that later reorganization.<sup>12</sup> While Whitman no doubt benefited from the editorial vision of Rossetti in 1868 and organized the poems more historically in 1871, the reordering of the poems for *Leaves of Grass* does not appear nearly so radical when it is compared to the order projected on the March 1865 placard.

However, when Roberts W. French disputes the viewpoint that the order of *Drum-Taps* is of "dubious significance," I do not believe he is wrong.<sup>13</sup> On the one hand, the material factors that determined the arrangement of *Drum-Taps*, as I have suggested them here, would seem to obliterate any reading of the poems as an artistic expression of the chaos of the war or as an experimental structure meant to yoke competing

narratives of war-time and the difficult peace to follow. However, even if the shape eventually taken by *Drum-Taps* is not an *expression* of the war, I would argue nevertheless that it is the ultimate, poignant *reflection* of the war, embodying in its very arrangements the wounds and scars of April 1865. Any attempt at rough structure and cohesive narrative was again fractured, just as it had been throughout the war. Whitman's acceptance of a provisional, imperfect joining of the disparate parts of his manuscript seems, to me, the quintessential manifestation of the peace the country would have to make with itself. Yes, such concessions—in both cases—must have seemed intolerable at first, requiring as they did that the dreams of total independence or perfect union be set aside for difficult compromise and a crudely improvised patchwork. But Whitman as the author of *Drum-Taps* decided, as did the authors of the war itself, that it would be better to accept this uneasy union—for if the pieces could not be brought into harmony, at least they could be brought together with the knowledge that at some point, perhaps years in the future, they could again be restored and made whole.

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## NOTES

- 1 See Edward F. Grier, *Notebooks and Unpublished Prose Manuscripts* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 753. Hereafter *NUPM*.
- 2 See F. DeWolfe Miller, *Walt Whitman's Drum-Taps (1865) and Sequel to Drum-Taps (1865-6): A Facsimile Reproduction* (Gainesville, FL: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1959), xxxi. Hereafter Miller.
- 3 All receipts and letters from Eckler quoted in this article come from the Charles E. Feinberg Collection at the Library of Congress.
- 4 "Fit Compositions: Whitman's Revisions to Drum-Taps," in Michael Hinds and Stephen Matterson, eds., *Rebound: The American Poetry Book* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 32.
- 5 Edwin Haviland Miller, ed., *The Correspondence* (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 1:257. Hereafter *Corr*.
- 6 "The Public Printing," *New York Times*, February 8, 1865: 4.
- 7 "Drum-Taps in Facsimile," *Walt Whitman Review* 5 (1959): 36.
- 8 This total includes spaces and ornaments, both of which would have been counted as single ems. It also includes the characters on the title page, copyright page, or table of contents, since they are a part of the 72-page total count.
- 9 Martin G. Murray, "A Brother's Love," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 10 (Spring 1993), 209-212.

10 Arthur Golden, ed., *Walt Whitman's Blue Book: The 1860-61 Leaves of Grass Containing His Manuscript Additions and Revisions* (New York: New York Public Library, 1968), 1:349.

11 Maire Mullins, "Stopping History in Walt Whitman's Drum-Taps," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 17 (Summer/Fall 1999), 4-14.

12 Julianne Ramsey, "A British View to an American War: Whitman's 'Drum-Taps' Cluster and the Editorial Influence of William Michael Rossetti," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 14 (Spring 1997), 166-175; and Anthony Szczesiul, "The Maturing Vision of Walt Whitman's 1871 Version of *Drum-Taps*," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 10 (Winter 1993), 127-141. The narrative readings of Ramsey and Szczesiul are echoed in Jeff Sychterz, "'Silently Watch(ing) the Dead': The Modern Disillusioned War Poet and the Crisis of Representation in Whitman's *Drum-Taps*," *Discourse* 25 (Fall 2003), 9-29.

13 "Whitman on War: Four Poems from *Drum-Taps*," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 3 (Summer 1985), 22-24.