

**PERTAINS TO ME:**

**I HEARD THE MOTHER OF ALL NOT DEAD YOUTH, A MOUNTAIN PENSIVE, ON HER SIDE, GAZING**

I

Day-break, 1861: bird song, a bivouac's banner, drum  
-taps...drum-taps, the cavalry fly (proud pioneers),  
the centenarian's libraries starting to flame.

II

Know when not heard, O the beat of your  
drums! Come astronomer, father, child's  
days, fathomless fields...O, I whirl!

III

Ships, strange ships...the land bathed in a grey  
perfume. And the wars march on, the ranks  
long, long kept.

IV

And trembled the torch (splendid, dulcet,  
prophetic) and did give of meteors.  
And from beneath the carnage, a silent me.

V

Of woods wandered, green pageant; rolling  
out of camps tan-faced. Look! Broadway! bunting!  
stars! me! me! Ireland! ship!...dead hymn.

VI

Ocean, good ocean, O what hush'd rolling!  
Praise be! I saw my Libertad in today, in others,  
like on old.

**NOTE ON THE TEXT**

This piece was composed for the "Music, the Civil War, and American Memory" conference held at Fordham University, Lincoln Center, April 18, 2015, and was constructed from the titles of the fifty-three poems in Walt Whitman's Drum-Taps. These were formed into a text block in the order in which they appear in the book. Counting from the beginning of the block, the 1st, 8th, 6th, 1st words were removed, generating line one, stanza one. Counting anew, the 1st, 8th, 6th, 2nd words were removed, generating line two...1st, 8th, 6th, 3rd...1st, 8th, 6th, 4th...1st, 8th, 6th, 5th. The cycle then begins again, the 1st, 8th, 6th, 1st words generating line one, stanza two...and so on through the entire block of text, yielding in the end the following six stanzas of twenty words each:

drum-taps proud to drum-taps  
libraries the song cavalry  
banner flame bivouac's day-break  
1861 a fly starting  
bird pioneers centenarian's the

O I whirl O  
know heard when not  
the your days astronomer  
fathomless drums beat child's  
come of father fields

ships kept strange ships  
on wars bathed the  
perfume and ranks march  
the land long long  
a grey the in

and the give and  
splendid prophetic carnage silent  
a from dulcet did  
me of torch meteors  
the beneath and trembled

me camps tan-faced me  
of woods wandered green  
hymn Broadway ship dead  
pageant Ireland bunting stars  
look rolling of out

ocean I good ocean  
saw praise others old  
what hush'd rolling like  
be in in to-day  
my on Libertad O

The final nineteen words of the block failed to fit the foregoing pattern and were thus used to generate the title:

a mountain side pensive on her dead gazing I heard the mother of all not youth pertains to me

Rules of composition: use every word (no deletions, no additions); maintain stanza sequence and structure as is but allow free word order within stanzas, likewise for title; allow free punctuation, italicization, etc., throughout.

*by Terrence Chiusano*