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## Drum taps: a performance guide to the song cycle by Richard Pearson Thomas

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*DRUM TAPS:*  
A PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO THE  
SONG CYCLE BY RICHARD PEARSON THOMAS

A Written Document

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
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in

The School of Music

by  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	ii
Abstract.....	v
Introduction.....	1
Chapter One: <i>Drum Taps</i> .....	3
Chapter Two: “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy”.....	25
Chapter Three: “Beat! Beat! Drums!”.....	39
Chapter Four: “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim”.....	64
Chapter Five: “Dirge for Two Veterans”.....	80
Chapter Six: “Vigil”.....	102
Conclusion.....	129
Bibliography.....	131
Appendix: Complete Listing of Richard Pearson Thomas’s Compositions.....	133
Vita.....	142

## ABSTRACT

Composer Richard Pearson Thomas has gained recognition from his art song “I Never Saw a Moor” and his participation in the *AIDS Quilt Songbook*, but his song cycle *Drum Taps* has often been overlooked. This document examines the baritone song cycle which was completed in 1990. The study begins with biographical synopses of the composer and the poet, Walt Whitman, as well as brief information about the poetry from which *Drum Taps* is drawn. Subsequent chapters focus on the five songs of the cycle, studying each song’s text, sound, harmony, melody, rhythm, growth throughout the piece, and performance practice. The information is presented as an aid to preparing and performing the work. Additionally, an appendix presents the composer’s complete works.

KEYWORDS: Richard Pearson Thomas, Drum Taps, Walt Whitman

## INTRODUCTION

Richard Pearson Thomas has written many songs over his lifetime, one of which is a setting of Emily Dickinson's poem "I Never Saw a Moor." While this particular song has gained recognition and fame through its frequent performances on recital stages around the world, many of his other songs have been overlooked in study and performance. His song cycle "Drum Taps," based on Walt Whitman poems and written for baritone and piano, is an example of this kind of oversight, as the only critical commentary on this work is found in the *Journal of Singing* review by Judith Carman.<sup>1</sup> The lack of performances may be explained in part because of the difficulty of the work. Carman writes, "It is a work for professional performers in all respects: the subject matter, the difficulty of the music, and the technical demands on both singer and pianist." She elaborates, "The baritone who sings this work should probably be at home in Verdi baritone parts."<sup>2</sup> Thomas would likely agree, as he stated that the reviewer, "clearly understood the music and the intent behind it."<sup>3</sup> This was further supported in an interview with Thomas as he explained why it was likely the piece had not been performed in a great number of master classes. Thomas explained, "This is a big sing. I think it scares off a lot of people."<sup>4</sup> In spite of the grand size of the work, the subtle nuances that display musical depth support the need for musical analysis and performance. In this document, analysis of the piece and information about its composer will be compiled and shared in hopes of aiding future performers of the cycle.

The document will begin with an overview of the cycle which addresses its compositional origins, provides biographical sketches of its composer and poet, and offers an

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<sup>1</sup> Judith E. Carman, review of *Drum Taps*, by Richard Pearson Thomas, *Journal of Singing* 64, no. 5 (May/June 2008), 653-654.

<sup>2</sup> Carman, 654.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Pearson Thomas to author, 10 June 2008, e-mail.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Pearson Thomas, Interview by author, MP3 recording, New York, NY, 13 March 2008.

overview of the poetry. Following will be musical analysis of each of the five songs of the cycle using Jan LaRue's "SHMRG method" as a guide.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, this will focus on the sound, harmony, melody, rhythm, and growth of each piece; however, the format will also be expanded to include each song's text and performance practice. An appendix will include the most recent and thorough list of Thomas's compositions to date.

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<sup>5</sup> Jan LaRue, *Guidelines for Style Analysis* (New York: W. W Norton, 1970).



## CHAPTER ONE

### *DRUM TAPS*

#### **The Song Cycle**

Thomas copyrighted his song cycle, *Drum Taps*, in the year 1990, after which it received its first printing, which was published in 2004 by Portage Press Publishing.<sup>6</sup> The piece was previewed in Great Falls, Montana under the sponsorship of a local music teacher's association and then continued to its major premiere in March of 1992 at Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall where Mark Moliterno, baritone, performed with Thomas accompanying.

Thomas was not sure how long it had taken him to write the cycle and said, "I don't know if I wrote it all consecutively, or there might have been spaces of time between the writing of the different movements. Generally speaking, I write very quickly. Once I get the impulse, I go... That would have been in the late '80's, I think, because the premiere was '92. And I definitely finished it at least two years before that because it took Mark and I a full year to get a date at Weill [Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall] and to set up the recital hall. We worked on it for a long time. So I'd say '89, '90 – that's when I was writing it."<sup>7</sup>

This project was one of the only times that Thomas has had the opportunity to collaborate with Moliterno. Thomas said about the collaboration, "He brought a high level of commitment to the project - his time, his money, and his artistry... He really treated it with love and respect, so I was really very thankful for that."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Carman, 653.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas, Interview, 13 March 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

When deciding to compose *Drum Taps*, Thomas said, “I knew Whitman. I read the poetry here and there over the years, and I knew I wanted to do something based on that Civil War poetry. So it was really a matter of deciding...which poems.” He went on to say that what drew him to the poetry was how Whitman wrote about the Civil War, “It’s as much Whitman as it is Civil War because it’s how he writes about the experience. I mean, maybe he would have written the same poems if it’d been World War I...Probably not, because it’s the whole idea of a nation conflicted.”<sup>9</sup>

As much as Thomas was drawn to Whitman’s poetry, he found it very difficult to set to music. He said, “If you go look at the original poem for the ‘Vigil,’ you’ll see that I’ve cut out quite a bit. Whitman’s poetry is very prosaic in the sense that there’s no meter to it. Unlike a lot of Emily Dickinson [poetry] where there’s...a natural rhythm to the music. So, once I did this set, I haven’t set a Whitman poem - except one small poem that I did for chorus...Whitman is a little hard...There’s a lot of words, but these, the ‘Drum Taps,’ are so full of life...and color. Even so, it was a challenge.”<sup>10</sup>

In working with Whitman’s text, Thomas did not extract text without great care. He said, “I was at a point where if you set a poem, you had to set the whole poem. I realized to create an effective musical piece, I had to edit it. I had to subtract some of the poem, because otherwise it would have just been too long...Like I was saying earlier, Whitman is very wordy, so you can get bogged down. And since then...if I need to leave some lines out of a poem, I no longer feel guilty. I just do it, because you’re creating another art form. I’m interpreting it – using it as the basis for a song.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas, Interview, 13 March 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Richard Pearson Thomas, Interview by author, tape recording, New York, NY, 6 February 2009.

The cycle was originally written for baritone and voice; however, Thomas had orchestrations in mind from the beginning. He orchestrated the set around 1995. “I’m really thinking of the piano as an orchestra...In fact, there are certain sections of that piece, when that piece is performed by orchestra, will work better – like in the ‘Sight in Camp at Daybreak,’ where you have long sustained...chords.”<sup>12</sup>

Thomas was quick to point out that the accompaniment doesn’t serve as another character, and he was uncomfortable saying it simply created the atmosphere. “It’s [the accompaniment] not another character,” Thomas said, “It’s the world in which the singer is standing. It’s not just the air. It’s like it’s the earth, it’s everything all around.” He also stated, “It’s really creating a whole world of color.”<sup>13</sup>

Regarding future revisions to the orchestration, Thomas said, “I think the challenge is going to be not to overwhelm the singer...especially in the second movement. But it kind of has to be...it should be. The music should overwhelm the singer because it’s overwhelming. And in the ‘Dirge for Two Veterans,’ the same thing. It needs to build to such a point where you see the band – the funeral march across the stage. It should have that sort of impact.”<sup>14</sup>

### **The Composer**

On August 2, 1957, Thomas was born in Great Falls, Montana. His father, Tom Thomas, was a civil engineer in his own firm and his mother, Marillyn Thomas worked for a brief period as a school teacher, but later gave this up to work as a volunteer with several charitable organizations. Growing up, Thomas had an older sister, Marlie, who never really succumbed to the same musical fever that her younger brother did. “She started, maybe took a year or two of piano lessons when she was a child, but I think she sort of felt like she was being overshadowed

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

by her little brother, and she was just was not going to fight that battle.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Richard would be the child who would become most accomplished in the area of music.

Thomas began gravitating toward music at an early age, in spite of the fact that his parents demonstrated no real musical abilities - just musical sensibilities. “I think my early musical interest came because they had records...When I was really little, I would put them on and dance around all the time. So I think that was my early sort of kinetic relationship to music...I had to relate to it somehow, so that’s what I did. From a very early age, I was a real listener - a real avid listener to music.”<sup>16</sup> As Thomas grew, so did his tastes in music, as he specifically recalls a turning point in the music that he sought. “I think I went through a period, when I was maybe ten, when I was really into pop music. And so in my estimation, pop music basically appeals to the ‘ten year old’ in most people’s musical lives, and most people get stopped there. By the time I was eleven or twelve, that music no longer spoke to me in the same way - I was much more drawn to something more complex. It’s interesting, but that one year - every week the top 40...I had to listen to the whole thing on the radio.”<sup>17</sup>

After this year of popular music, he turned to classical music. This was a partial result of taking piano lessons, but Thomas is quick to clarify that this shift was driven by his own motivations. “That wasn’t driven by anybody saying I should listen to this stuff. I was just curious. I belonged to something - this is like dating myself - but I belonged to something called the Columbia Record Club. That was the only way to get classical music albums in Montana because the stores would have a few, but I picked through those in no time. It was a big deal waiting to see that cardboard box in the mailbox with the LP in it.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Thomas, Interview, 13 March 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

Thomas began taking piano lessons at the age of seven and soon began studying with Claire Domke, who he would study with through high school. Thomas remembers her in this way, “She was a real task-master. We butted heads at first, because I was nine, and no nine year old wants to practice. I wanted to play, but I didn’t want to practice, and so there was the big difference...She was like, ‘You’ve got to learn your technique. You’ve got to get the foundation. You’ve got to learn the scales.’”<sup>19</sup>

It was during the early years of his lessons that Thomas began experimenting with composition. Thomas remembers his first written composition being at the age of ten. “I was certainly making up music way before then, but I remember actually writing a piece down called ‘The Waterfall’ when I was ten...I would spend hours noodling around on the piano but most of it just never got written down.”<sup>20</sup> He acknowledges that this urge to make music was always there. “You know...if anything, it hindered my development as a pianist because I would sit and noodle around for hours and my parents would think I was practicing. But I’m sure at some point...I began to think of myself, even at a very young age, as a composer, therefore I had to figure out how to get it on paper. ‘Cause that’s a whole other aspect of the job. It’s like figuring out how to get it on paper so other people could do it the way I hear it. So probably by the time I was 10, I thought I better get started on this. And my memory’s vague. I must have had some sort of help from her [Domke] or from somebody, but I don’t really remember specifically.”<sup>21</sup>

Thomas’s budding talents in writing music was again evidenced when Thomas wrote a set of études because of his love for the Chopin études. He brought them to Domke, and because they were written according to what Thomas could already play, her response was, “That’s fine,

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

but you've still got to learn how to play the piano just like everybody else.'"<sup>22</sup> In spite of the fact that Domke directed Thomas away from playing his own compositions and toward discipline in his piano technique, Thomas was quick to point out that Domke was very encouraging overall.<sup>23</sup>

Looking back, he can see influences that impacted his musical life. When asked about these influences he replied, "That's a moving target. When I was younger...a lot of the music that generally speaks to me continues to do so...I can usually say Beethoven and Mahler, and some Wagner. These were big influences on me. When I was young, Chopin, when I was trying to write piano music...You have to begin imitating somehow. Copland, American school. Bernstein, naturally, because that was a combination of theatrical and classical – which always appealed to me."<sup>24</sup> Thomas also explains that his theatrical interest likely developed out of his involvement in plays, calling it "another aspect of my artistic growth."<sup>25</sup>

After graduating from high school, Thomas decided to go to the University of Montana, where he studied composition and piano. He studied piano under George Hummel, a teacher from the Rosina Levine school of piano pedagogy at Juilliard, which traces its history back to Liszt. The impact that Hummel had on Thomas was great, and Thomas recalls a typical conversation, "He [Hummel] probably, of all my teachers, has been the most influential because I would be playing something and he'd say, 'Well, you see Chopin does this here, but this sounds like Wagner. This anticipates *Tristan und Isolde* by 20 years. Have you heard that?' 'No.' 'You'd better go across the hall and listen to *Tristan und Isolde* cause you need to know what

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

that music is.’ So it was the whole ‘gestalt’ of music, which, as a composer, is essential. You have to know the big picture.”<sup>26</sup>

George Hummel was also the influence that directed his focus away from pursuing a career as a concert pianist. “One thing Mr. Hummel said was... ‘I think you can do anything in music except be a solo concert pianist,’ which was a little hard to hear at the time because there’s a part of me that wanted that. But he understood me well enough, what it takes, and the temperament it takes and knew I didn’t have that.”<sup>27</sup>

Thomas spent two years studying at the University of Montana, and then, in 1977, under the encouragement of his University of Montana composition professor, Donald Johnston, decided to transfer to The Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. Donald Johnston was a graduate of Eastman and encouraged his student toward the school because he had been a beneficiary of a period of time at Eastman where Howard Hanson was the head of the school. Hanson, according to Thomas, was really fostering a generation of American composers during this period. “Every composer got to write an orchestra piece every year and have it played,” Thomas says. The experiences of Johnston and Thomas were quite different. “He’d studied there probably in the 50's, maybe 60's, when it was really the composers’ school,” Thomas explained. In a later interview, Thomas added, “In its heyday, every year, the composition majors wrote a piece for orchestra that was played by orchestra – so you had that experience.” He explains that when he got there, “It was like every other music school. You had to scramble to get players to play your pieces. So you were sort of on your own, whereas before...the players that went there knew that they were going to be doing that.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas, Interview, 6 February 2009.

Thomas graduated magna cum laude from The Eastman School of Music in 1979 with the equivalent of a double major, composition and piano. He was a composition major, studying composition under Samuel Adler and Warren Benson and orchestration under Adler; but because of his diverse abilities, he was able to complete a major in piano as well. While at Eastman, he studied piano under Frank Glazer and collaborative piano under Robert Spillman.

In transitioning from college to New York City, he decided to return to a summer stock program at Cape Cod College Light Opera for his second consecutive summer with the company. After the summer, he took time to travel. “I did the backpack thing. I went through Europe and the Middle East. And then I went back to Eastman in the spring of ’80 - not as a student. The opera department there actually produced a cabaret show of my songs – which was a good experience.”<sup>29</sup>

Following this cabaret show, he went to the Aspen Music Festival, again not as a student. “I had friends that were going and they said, ‘Oh, just come along. You can get a job as a busboy’... Within two days, the musical school had hired me as an accompanist.”<sup>30</sup> His connections at the festival proved valuable in making contacts before his move to New York. “I was playing for all of these studios, and one of my first students that I worked with was Dawn Upshaw – a little college sophomore ‘whatever,’ not the star. Which is the great thing about working at a place like that – you make contacts.”<sup>31</sup>

Immediately upon arriving in New York City, he got a call from the Banff Center in Canada, so he went in September of 1980 to be a part of the pilot project for their music theater program. Thomas said, “The Banff Centre was the most significant connection of my early

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



career because I went back up there, between 1980 and 1985...every year for an extended time, both as a coach and as a composer. And they commissioned several shows for me.”<sup>32</sup>

He then returned to New York in 1981 where he continued his education by studying collaborative piano under Martin Katz and opera coaching under Joan Dornemann. His studies in coaching also led to French language studies in New York in 1983 to 1984, and Italian studies in Florence, Italy in 1987.

The year 1987 also marked the beginning of a lengthy relationship with the Richard Gold Opera Life Project. As Thomas describes in his curriculum vitae, “I work with New York City Public School students to create opera librettos which I then set to music; operas are staged and presented in auditorium performances.”<sup>33</sup> This relationship led to a featured segment on CBS’ *The Early Show* in 2002 as well as Young Audiences/New York Children’s Arts Medal Benefit Galas honoring First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, Peter Max, Wynton Marsalis, and Brian Stokes Mitchell. Thomas still works with the Richard Gold Opera Life Project in residencies in New York.<sup>34</sup>

In 1991, the same year that he completed the song cycle *Drum Taps*, Thomas also completed his most popular work to date, the art song entitled “I Never Saw a Moor.” This setting of the Emily Dickinson poem is written for soprano with piano accompaniment and is lyrical with a sweeping melody. Thomas calls it his “hit tune” and when asked why it gained such fame, Thomas responded, “That’s an intangible thing. The only thing I can say about that song is that it’s relatively simple. Harmonically, it’s very simple. And I think singers like it because the melody sort of outlines the harmony – the melody and the harmony sort of go

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Pearson Thomas, Curriculum Vitae, 2008.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas, Interview, 6 February 2009.

together so it feels satisfying to sing. But other than that, I really can't say. But it's good...it's opened a lot of doors.”<sup>35</sup>

In 1992, Thomas also had the opportunity to compose a song for the project *The AIDS Quilt Songbook*. The noted American baritone Will Parker organized the project, but Thomas was not originally one of the composers recruited. Thomas had this to say, “I ran into him [Will Parker] at a party...and I said, ‘Oh, I’d love to write something for your AIDS Quilt Program’ (cause I’d read about it). He said, ‘Oh, I have too much stuff as it is’...Then about a day later, he called me because another composer had backed out. And the reason he backed out is because Will desperately needed something in the program that was funny or lighter and this composer said he just couldn’t do it. And Will had been talking to a mutual friend of ours, and he said, ‘Oh, Richard could do that.’ He said, ‘Oh, that’s funny, I just ran into him the other day. I’ll give him a call.’ So that’s what came about. It had not been pre-ordained and it was very last minute.”<sup>36</sup>

Thomas also briefly considered film scoring as a possible career alternative in the mid 1990’s. He went to Los Angeles and attended the University of Southern California, receiving an Advanced Studies Certificate in Scoring for Motion Pictures and Television in 1995. “I really thought of that as a potential career alternative...I sort of realized through the process that it was not the right fit for me, but the program was great. I really enjoyed doing it. But I could just see that already by the time I went, I had my voice – I knew who I was as a composer. And...I realized I was not going to be as flexible as some people who don’t have that and can do whatever any director asks them to do.”<sup>37</sup> He continued explaining that he foresaw that there were going to be fewer and fewer mixed scores written with the expansion of electronic music

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

and pop songs being inserted into soundtracks. Regardless, he continued, “What was really ironic is that what was really valuable about the program was that we were writing. I think we did twenty recording sessions with live players. I mean, they were short cues, but that’s a lot of experience writing for players and finding out what works. In terms of orchestration...I really learned a lot.”<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the years, Thomas has developed a process for his work as a composer. Rather than hearing the music in his head and then transcribing the music onto the page, he takes a more hands-on approach. “I’m more of a sit-at-the-piano kind of guy, and a lot of times it’s like improvising. I sit down and improvise and see what comes out – sort of trust my intuition for that initial stage, to find ideas...The best analogy I can think of is like some painters. I basically have a canvas and I sketch out. I may even have the whole harmonic gesture, the whole harmonic piece sketched out. And then I go back and I fill in and I take away. And then that’s the whole process. That’s where it’s no longer inspiration. That’s where it’s really the work. So that’s what then takes time.”<sup>39</sup>

As he composes vocal music, he pays careful attention to the text. “I really want the text to be intelligible...I want the audience, the listener, to understand the text on first listening. So that means I’m not going to write outrageous high notes and tessitura and all that stuff...I think that’s the most important thing.”<sup>40</sup> Thomas also commented, “When I’m setting a text, I’m trying to express the meaning of the emotion behind it. I’m not intellectually devising a way to set notes. I mean, there still needs to be structure, but that comes with experience and craft. You learn how to do that. Something can be very emotionally compelling, but still have an

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas, Interview, 13 March 2008.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

overarching structure that makes it musically cohesive.”<sup>41</sup> Continuing this idea of the combination of emotion and music, Thomas said, “If you want something real dramatic and operatic, most singers can’t give that to you because they’re trained to sing. That is an age old dilemma – what comes first, the words or the music? And I’ve always been a little bit more on the side of the words so that opera singers just making sounds don’t really speak with me.”<sup>42</sup>

With Thomas’s music, the expression of emotion doesn’t begin and end with the vocalist, but actually begins with the composer and follows through to the audience. “I find that if I feel something when I’m writing it [a musical work], the audience will feel something when they hear it. I can’t think of very many pieces where...I feel like I’ve ‘phoned it in’ and the audience swooned over it...Usually, if I feel some connection to it, then that’s what they react to.”<sup>43</sup>

Since 1999, Thomas has also taught classes and given master classes at such institutions as Barnard College at Columbia University, Yale University, University of Central Florida Masters Program (in partnership with the Seaside Music Theatre), Lee University in Cleveland Tennessee, Otterbein College in Westerville, Ohio, and Teachers College of Columbia University. As Thomas prepares for the future, he has several projects in development, including a commission to write art songs for high school girls. Thomas said, “I wanted to write some things that are a little simpler with simpler accompaniments that would be appealing to younger singers because I think there’s a huge need for that.”<sup>44</sup> He is also in the midst of negotiating a commission for an orchestral piece to be performed in 2010.<sup>45</sup> Finally, one of his life goals is to compose an opera. “That’s one thing I have to do before I die. And I have an idea, but I’ve dragged my feet because I don’t want to write an opera unless it’s going to be produced. But as I

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas, Interview, 6 February 2009.

grow older, and if that doesn't look like it's going to happen, I still feel like I need to do it, because chances are it'll be produced after I die."<sup>46</sup>

### **The Poet**

Walter Whitman, Jr. (1819-1892) was born on May 31, 1819 in West Hills on New York's Long Island. He was the second-born child of nine children belonging to a carpenter named Walter Whitman, Sr. and his wife Louisa Van Velsor.

In 1823, Walter Whitman, Sr. moved his family to Brooklyn in order to capitalize on the construction boom of new houses and places of business being built during this time.<sup>47</sup>

Regardless of the prosperity for which was hoped, little transpired.

Walt Junior began his formal schooling when he was six years old, but his formal education was ended at the age of eleven. As times were difficult, it had become necessary for Walt to help his family with added income.<sup>48</sup> He began working as an office boy for a law firm in Brooklyn, but after a year, switched to being a "printer's devil" for the *Long Island Patriot* newspaper. As Marinacci points out, this was the beginning of "his lifelong intimacy with words, type, ink, and paper."<sup>49</sup>

In about 1833, Walt's family moved back from Brooklyn to Long Island; however, Walt remained in Brooklyn as he boarded with a family.<sup>50</sup> He stayed in Brooklyn until May of 1836, when he moved back to Long Island with his family. Throughout this period, he held an apprentice position with the *Long Island Star* and started his own weekly newspaper, the *Long*

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Barbara Marinacci, *O Wondrous Singer! An Introduction to Walt Whitman* (Cornwall, New York: The Cornwall Press, Inc., 1970), 15.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 27.

*Islander*.<sup>51</sup> Eight months later it was sold and Whitman continued on to work as a writer and typesetter for the *Long Island Democrat*.<sup>52</sup>

Walt continued his journalistic pursuits as he worked as a staff writer and editor of a morning paper called the *Aurora*. Walt followed this with a position as editor of the *Brooklyn Eagle*. He moved to New Orleans in 1848 to work for a newspaper called the *Crescent*, but this venture proved short-lived.<sup>53</sup> He returned to Brooklyn by mid-June of 1848 where he then started a weekly paper called the *Freeman* to promote Martin Van Buren in his race against Lewis Cass and Zachary Taylor for president of the United States.<sup>54</sup>

From 1849 to 1855, Whitman then focused on writing poetry which resulted in his first edition of *Leaves of Grass*.<sup>55</sup> As he began the process of becoming a “poet,” he joined his brothers in intermittent work with his father’s carpentry business.<sup>56</sup> On or about July 4, 1855, about a thousand copies of *Leaves of Grass* were released, each selling for two dollars.<sup>57</sup> This marked the “birth” of Walt Whitman: the poet.<sup>58</sup> The work was printed at Whitman’s expense and contained twelve different poems. In these poems, Whitman discussed human anatomy and sexuality in frank and honest terms; thus, stirring up controversy among readers. Many found these topics crude and inappropriate while others found them honest and inspiring.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Roger Asselineau, *The Evolution of Walt Whitman: The Creation of a Personality* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), 36-37.

<sup>54</sup> Marinacci, 93.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>58</sup> Asselineau, 47-48.

After publishing *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman returned to journalism, but continued writing poems for *Leaves of Grass*, eventually adding twenty new poems. He published this expanded second edition in September of 1856, again at his own expense.<sup>59</sup>

Walt received a letter from the publishing firm Thayer & Eldridge in February of 1860 enthusiastically requesting that he allow them to publish his works.<sup>60</sup> Thayer & Eldridge worked hard to make sure Whitman's requests were followed regarding the publishing of the third edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which was released in May of 1860. In this third edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman added "Calamus," which was a set of forty-five numbered poems in which topics of intense male affection were discussed, including hints at homoerotic feelings. It is commonly discussed whether Whitman was heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or even androgynous;<sup>61</sup> but thus far, no concrete evidence to prove any of these theories has been found.

After the battle of First Fredericksburg in mid-December of 1862, Walt spotted the name, "George W. Whitmore" listed among the wounded of the 51<sup>st</sup> New York Volunteers. This was his brother's regiment and Walt thought it was his brother's name misspelled.<sup>62</sup> He immediately set out for Washington and Virginia to locate him and found his brother with merely a gash in his cheek.<sup>63</sup> Upon arrival, he quickly became involved in making rounds at the camp hospitals to attend to the soldiers' physical and emotional needs.<sup>64</sup> It was the sights and experiences of this period that undoubtedly influenced the writing of his book of poems entitled *Drum-Taps*.

In January of 1865, Whitman returned to Washington and became a clerk in the Department of the Interior. He took a leave of absence soon thereafter to travel to New York to

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 212.

oversee the printing of *Drum-Taps*,<sup>65</sup> which was published in May of 1865 and contained 53 new poems.

Whitman's most famous poem, "O Captain, My Captain," was written following the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in 1865. It would be the only poem written by Whitman that became popular during his lifetime.<sup>66</sup>

He returned to Washington and continued his job at the Department of the Interior, but was fired in May of 1865 by the new secretary of the interior, James Harlan.<sup>67</sup> Speculation suggests that Harlan found a copy of *Leaves of Grass* in Whitman's desk and did not approve of Whitman's "moral character;"<sup>68</sup> however, this was not detrimental for Whitman, as he was simply transferred to the Attorney General's office.

While in Washington, Whitman began a close companionship with a horse-car conductor named Peter Doyle.<sup>69</sup> In 1866, Whitman helped supervise a fourth edition of *Leaves of Grass* which included *Drum-Taps* and its sequel as appendages.<sup>70</sup> This edition was followed in 1871 by his fifth edition of *Leaves of Grass*.<sup>71</sup>

In 1873, Walt was struck with two major setbacks. First he suffered a debilitating stroke in January. In May his beloved mother died.<sup>72</sup>

In 1869, Whitman began correspondence with Anne Gilchrist, a widowed mother of three living in England. Gilchrist professed her love for Whitman in her letters and expressed her desire to be with him. In 1876, Anne Gilchrist was finally able to turn this desire into reality as she moved to America. There is little doubt that Gilchrist had high hopes for marrying Whitman,

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 248.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 254.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 287.



but upon meeting Whitman, it became clear that marriage would not be likely; however, a close friendship was possible, and this is what Whitman and Gilchrist developed rather quickly.<sup>73</sup>

Their relationship moved into a deep friendship; however, her wish to be near her grandchildren in London outweighed her wish to be near Whitman and she moved back to England in the spring of 1879.<sup>74</sup>

In 1879 and 1880, Whitman decided to travel. He was invited out west to be the “guest-poet” at Kansas’s Quarter-Centennial celebration. He gladly accepted the invitation and his trip went through several states including Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado. In the summer of 1880, Whitman traveled to Ontario, Canada.<sup>75</sup>

August of 1881 found Whitman traveling to Boston to oversee the printing of a seventh edition of *Leaves of Grass*.<sup>76</sup> According to Marinacci, what was most notable about this edition was the “rearrangement of the existing poems; most of them were placed in ‘final’ groups or clusters according to the poet’s scheme of gathering poems together by similarities in subject or mood, instead of a sequence according to dates of composition or focus on particular stages in his external and internal lives.”<sup>77</sup> This edition was released late in 1881.

Whitman’s later years found him remaining close to the home that he bought in Camden, New Jersey. Another stroke in 1888 left Whitman to spend the last four years of his life confined to his upstairs room under the care of a nurse.<sup>78</sup>

The eighth edition of *Leaves of Grass* was published in 1889 in honor of Whitman’s seventieth birthday, and in 1881, with the help of a man named Horace Traubel, Whitman

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 314.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 335.

prepared a ninth and final edition of *Leaves of Grass*. This is often called the “deathbed” edition and is considered by many to be the “official version.”<sup>79</sup> Whitman was quoted as saying of this final edition, “L. of G. *at last complete* – after 33 y’rs of hackling at it, all times & moods of my life, fair weather & foul, all parts of the land, and peace & war, young & old.”<sup>80</sup> After seventy-two years of a life filled with poetry, Whitman died on March 26, 1892.

### **The Poetry**

The songs in Thomas’s song cycle, *Drum Taps*, are settings of Walt Whitman’s poems found in the previously discussed book of poetry entitled *Drum-Taps*. These poems were first published in 1865 as a set, but they were later added to Whitman’s oft-revised book *Leaves of Grass*.<sup>81</sup> The first edition of this book included fifty-three poems; however, Whitman added eighteen more poems in the second edition. These additional poems became known as *Sequel to Drum-Taps*.

Subjects of these poems were inspired by his interactions with soldiers, particularly those he visited in the hospitals. Miller writes, “The Civil War was a turning point not only in Whitman’s life but in the nation’s. Whitman’s glimpses of the battlefields in his search for his brother, together with his intimate knowledge of the hospitals filled with the wounded of both the Blue and the Gray, impressed themselves vividly on his imagination. Out of his deep emotional involvement he found material for new poems.”<sup>82</sup>

As these poems are largely about the Civil War, a larger idea arises from Whitman’s words. Gutman writes, “Written ten years after ‘Song of Myself,’ these poems are more

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 340.

<sup>80</sup> David S. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman’s America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 586.

<sup>81</sup> Huck Gutman, “Drum-Taps (1865)” in *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia*, ed. J.R. LeMaster and Donald D. Kummings (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 190.

<sup>82</sup> James E. Miller, Jr., *Walt Whitman: Updated Edition* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1990), 16.

concerned with history than the self, more aware of the precariousness of America's present and future than of its expansive promise."<sup>83</sup> He continues, "Whitman projects himself as a mature poet, directly touched by human suffering, in clear distinction to the ecstatic, naïve, electric voice which marked the original edition of *Leaves of Grass*."<sup>84</sup> *Drum-Taps* became evidence of a maturing poet.

This set of poems did not remain an individual entity, however, as Whitman quickly incorporated them into his 1867 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Folsom writes that Whitman "decided that his book [*Leaves of Grass*] would not be honest or complete if it did not assimilate the nation's great trauma, and so he literally sewed the books together, binding *Drum-Taps* into the back of the chaotic 1867 *Leaves*."<sup>85</sup> From this point forward, *Drum-Taps* had a permanent place in *Leaves of Grass*.<sup>86</sup>

Whitman had a very personal attachment to *Drum-Taps*, as it expressed many of his experiences in aiding soldiers. The first-person narratives of "Drum-Taps" lend themselves to be easily misinterpreted as autobiographical anecdotes of Whitman's interactions with soldiers. Miller supports this idea saying that these should not be read as strict biographical accounts, "Although these poems embody at some levels Whitman's feeling or emotions, they are dramatic soliloquies spoken by invented characters."<sup>87</sup>

Regardless, it is unquestioned that his experiences tending to soldiers influenced the emotional content of these works. Whitman creates a journey for the reader as they progress through the set. M. Wynn Thomas indicates that the dramatic arc that is achieved in *Drum-Taps*

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<sup>83</sup> Gutman, 190.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ed Folsom, "Lucifer and Ethiopia: Whitman, Race, and Poetics before the Civil War and After" in *A Historical Guide to Walt Whitman*, ed. David S. Reynolds (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2000), 74.

<sup>86</sup> Miller, 37.

<sup>87</sup> Miller, 94.

includes an initiation from innocence into the experiences of war.<sup>88</sup> Miller also writes, “The opening poems reflect a kind of thrill and excitement in anticipation of the adventure of war...But gradually this attitude shifts and the mood deepens, as the poet draws closer to the reality of war...and the emotional involvement reaches a poignant climax in the moving dramatic soliloquy for a dead comrade-soldier in ‘Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night.’ In the latter part of the cluster, there is not only a rising feeling of waste and tragedy but also a detachment that embraces the misery of foe as well as friend.”<sup>89</sup>

Robert Roper similarly analyzes the themes of these poems as tragic loss when he writes, “Like the all-seeing moon, Walt registered with great dignity the carnage, the mad waste. Part of his originality as a poet was his willingness to let the facts speak for themselves at times, and surely it does the soldiers’ corpses a better honor to let them *be* corpses than to enlist them always as metaphors.”<sup>90</sup>

Here, when Roper discusses Whitman’s “willingness to let the facts speak for themselves,” he is connecting with more than just the emotion of the poetry. He also understands the stylistic choices that Whitman makes through this set. While Whitman undoubtedly communicates deep emotional struggles in the poems, often his style in presenting these struggles merely suggests a report of events. Daniel Epstein also recognizes this style as he writes, “So much of his verse, particularly the war poetry of Drum-Taps, has the immediacy of an eyewitness account.”<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> M. Wynn Thomas, *The Lunar Light of Whitman’s Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 193.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>90</sup> Robert Roper, *Now the Drum of War: Walt Whitman and His Brothers in the Civil War* (New York: Walker Publishing Co., 2008), 149.

<sup>91</sup> Daniel Mark Epstein, *Lincoln and Whitman: Parallel Lives in Civil War Washington* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2004), 281.

Thomas also suggests that Whitman's mission in writing these poems was not to illuminate the atrocities of war, but instead to demonstrate the power of human relationships and return to the soldiers their lost identities. He writes, "He [Whitman] gazes into the ghastly faces of the dead, and so restores to them their individual features, their human identities... It is Whitman's attempt to humanize an inhuman situation and to enact his own little private 'ceremony' to demonstrate a continuing, human solidarity between the living and the dead... There were, however, more darkly compelling reasons than this for discharging the duty of remembering... He was trying to admit the dead into the community of the living; trying to stare the ghastly faces of the dead back into answerable, human shape, by recognizing their sacrifice."<sup>92</sup>

Whitman felt passionately about this set of poems. As he was preparing these poems for publication, he wrote to his friend William O'Connor and said, "It is in my opinion superior to *Leaves of Grass* – certainly more perfect as a work of art, being adjusted in all its proportions, & its passion having the indispensable merit that though to the ordinary reader let loose with wildest abandon, the true artist can see it is yet under control. But I am perhaps mainly satisfied with *Drum-Taps* because it delivers my ambition of the task that has haunted me, namely, to express in a poem (& in the way I like, which is not at all by directly stating it) the pending action of this *Time & Land we swim in*, with all their large and conflicting fluctuations of despair & hope, the shiftings, masses, & the whirl & deafening din... but it also has the blast of the trumpet, & the drum pounds & whirrs in it, & then an undertone of sweetest comradeship & human love, threading its steady thread inside the chaos, & heard at every lull & interstice

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<sup>92</sup> M. Wynn Thomas, 216.

thereof – truly, also it has clear notes of faith & triumph.”<sup>93</sup> Epstein captures Whitman’s opinions of the role of *Drum-Taps* in *Leaves of Grass* as he wrote, “In the end the poet came to believe that *Drum-Taps* (with its sequel) was the narrative climax of the complete opera of *Leaves of Grass*.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Bliss Perry, *Walt Whitman: His Life and Work* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1906), 150.

<sup>94</sup> Epstein, 200.

## CHAPTER TWO

### “O TAN-FACED PRAIRIE BOY”

#### **“O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy”**

**Range: C3-F4**

**Tessitura: Medium**

**Tempo: Slow; Quarter = 64**

**Meters: Changing; 4/4, 5/4, 3/4**

**Difficulty: Vocal - Medium; Piano - Medium**

Thomas makes an unexpected choice to open his cycle *Drum Taps* with a setting of Walt Whitman’s poem “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy.” At a mere three minutes in length and five simple lines of text, this song sets up the journey of Thomas’s cycle. Dramatically, this “beginning of the journey” presents a clear setting as well as introduces characters found throughout the story. This is the audience’s introduction to the story-teller, presented first by the narrator in the vocal line, who will usher them through the story. This poem presents the simple, yet eloquent, expression from the narrator to his comrade recounting the joy brought by the comrade upon arriving at camp. In a straightforward dialogue, the narrator discusses the gifts and nourishing foods that were brought to the camp before the comrade’s arrival, and then states that his comrade’s arrival outshone all of these gifts of the world.

#### **Text**

O tan-faced prairie boy,  
Before you came to camp came many a welcome gift,  
Praises and presents came and nourishing food, till at last among the recruits,  
You came taciturn, with nothing to give, we but look’d on each other,  
When lo! More than all the gifts of the world you gave me.

One might wonder why Thomas chooses to open his large, dramatic cycle with such a light and simple poem and song. The cycle *Drum Taps* dwells largely in heavy thoughts surrounding battles and casualties of war, yet the opening is focused on friendship, affection, and

the joys of companionship. The answer lies in “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy’s” subtleties and nuances. Thomas’s considerable experience in writing drama is evidenced from the beginning through his use of character development, story arc, and fluidity of motion. Thomas is keenly aware that any story with building action must first present characters for whom the audience feels attachments or emotions. These emotions, of course, can run the gamut from endearment to repulsion with various gradients in between. In the case of “Prairie Boy,” both the narrator of the story and the new recruit are presented with highly favorable qualities.

Much can be deduced about the narrator in these opening lines. He is already experiencing life in the war as a soldier. Gratitude fills the narrator as he recalls the presenting of new supplies and food, as well as the praise that accompanied it. While he remembers this fondly, it pales in comparison to the companionship of his fellow comrade who arrives thereafter. His aesthetic is tuned to appreciating relational gifts more than material gifts, which include “sustaining food.”

What is learned about the “new recruit” is discovered through the eyes and voice of the narrator. His initial views and opinions are transferred to those of the audience. The first impression of this recruit is summed up in the word “taciturn.” This quiet and unassuming way was the first attribute noticed by the narrator. First impressions tend to reveal what sets a character’s personality apart from those around him. They display what becomes memorable and unique about a person.

It is uncertain if there is a lengthy lapse of time that has occurred between this recruit’s arrival and the narrator’s recollection of this meeting. The narrator opens the poem speaking directly to this recruit, “O tan-faced prairie boy,” and proceeds to recount the event in the past



tense. The final phrase, “When lo! more than all the gifts of the world you gave me,” would indicate a heightened sense of camaraderie - likely developed through time spent together.

### **Sound**

In this opening song, Thomas creates music that can be generalized as simplistic, clear, and contemplative. Thomas is not limited in presentation of characters and setting through his choice of poem and text. Rather, he is responsible for enhancing the rhythms and sounds of the text with the music, further dramatizing the story. The piece is straightforward recitative in its presentation. There are no flashy runs in the vocal or accompaniment parts, and an intentional legato line is expressed in both the voice and accompaniment.

An exception to this legato line occurs in the beginning bars of the cycle with introductory ornamental flourishes in the piano (Example 2.1). Thomas uses these flourishes to further establish the setting for the story. This cycle is set in the midst of the Civil War, and the heart of this poetry resides in the situations stemming from it. Thus, it is fitting to begin the cycle with these percussive flourishes, communicating a sense of tension, agitation, and an explosive environment, contrasted immediately with depictions of calm and quiet. These beginning ornamentations are also quite successful in setting up a strong contrast for the vocal line, which is gentle and lyrical.

Each time the flourish in m. 2 is repeated, the dynamic marking has decreased in volume, clearly denoting that this flourish is being echoed. This echo effect is not only demonstrated through decreasing dynamics, but also in the octave placement and the diminution of each succeeding flourish. The echoes in mm. 3 and 4 are exact duplications of the original. M. 5 also includes two of these echoes, but shifted down an octave, most likely to denote sound traveling

off into the distance. Finally, in m. 8, the audience hears in the accompaniment the last semblance of the original flourish two octaves below the original.

**Example 2.1.** “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy,” mm. 1-5.

The musical score for measures 1-5 of "O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy" is presented in two systems. The first system covers measures 1 and 2, and the second system covers measures 3, 4, and 5. The piece is in 5/4 time and marked "Slow" with a tempo of 64. The vocal line is written in a single staff, while the piano accompaniment is written in two staves (treble and bass clef). The piano part includes various dynamic markings: *ff freely sfz* in measure 1, *rit.* in measure 2, *a tempo* in measure 3, *mf* in measure 4, *dim.* in measure 5, and *p* in measure 5. There are also performance instructions like "Red." and "R.H." (Right Hand) in measure 4. The score includes a variety of musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and articulation marks.

The accompaniment in “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” presents the bigger picture, while the vocal line presents an intimate monologue. Throughout the piece it appears that the vocal line and the accompaniment are often quite disconnected. The accompaniment presents a picture of the setting, while the vocal line develops character and story. Only in mm. 15 through 17 and repeated in 24 through 26, is it even suggested that the accompaniment is tied to the vocal line. In particular, mm. 10 through 14 (Example 2.2) present a picture of continual “sameness” in the accompaniment. The hypnotic use of quarter note chords in the accompaniment creates the

atmosphere. Thomas is, likewise, effective in creating a sparse atmosphere in which a suspension of time is experienced by the two soldiers.

**Example 2.2.** “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy,” mm. 10-14.

The musical score for measures 10-14 of "O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy" is presented in a three-staff format. The top staff is the vocal line, the middle staff is the piano accompaniment, and the bottom staff is the piano accompaniment. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. Measure 10 is marked "A little faster" and "pp dolce". The lyrics are: "e gift, Prai-ses and pre-sents came and nour-ish-ing food, till at last a-mong the re-cruits,". The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings.

While the song is largely homophonic in texture, there are two monophonic-inspired moments that appear in the piece. While mm. 6 through 9 are technically homophonic, as the accompaniment sustains chords under the vocal line, a case could be made that the vocal line is almost left unaccompanied, thus creating a single melodic line. This is further supported in mm. 15 through 18 (Example 2.3), as a single melodic line is incorporated, with the accompaniment also presenting this line (albeit, slightly delayed), with a parallel line attached below. While this is not monophonic texture in its strictest definition, it is focused on a single melodic line and thus can be labeled as monophonic-inspired.

Tempo 1

15 *mf*

16

17

18

You came, ta - ci-turn, with

no - thing to give we but

*pp*

## Harmony

30

immediately creates tension and setting with the following war-like flourish. This flourish alternates between consonant intervals of a fourth and dissonant intervals of a second, finally landing on the dissonance. M. 2 demonstrates movement of parallel fourths being interrupted by another flourish – this time comprised of fifths and thirds. Thomas uses this particular flourish again four more times in mm. 3, 4, and 5 (Example 2.1). The flourish in m. 2 also demonstrates dissonant spirit. Looking strictly at intervals, Thomas begins the measure with the consonant and placid perfect fourths. These quickly give way to the percussive flourish that ends on the slightly more dissonant interval of an imperfect third. This flourish also represents conflict in the contrast it provides in motion, moving in contrary motion as opposed to the parallel motion set before it.

Dissonance and consonance are created in this introduction through Thomas's emphasis on the cluster of notes that range from the tonic to dominant notes of the key of C. This begins in m. 2 with the flourish, emphasizing C, D, F, and G (Example 2.1). The missing E is quickly found in m. 3 in the left hand, where D, C, E, F, and G are spelled out twice – including the C in the right hand of m. 5.

Thomas sets the vocal line to a series of expanded triads. He begins the vocal line in m. 6 with an extended F major triad, which is then developed (but not structurally changed) through m. 10. M. 11 finds the same structure elaborating an extended E minor triad through m. 14. Continuing, mm. 15 through 20 return to F where they predictably follow the pattern of three outlined tonic chords. However, a full tonal shift takes place in mm. 20 through 22 to B $\flat$  minor, breaking its pattern of three tonic chords. It soon moves on to C major, and the piece concludes in the dominant.

Thomas also uses parallel motion to draw focus and create a unique sound. In the midst of tense flourishes in the introduction, Thomas creates an eerie calm in m. 2 through his use of parallel fourths. This parallel motion is later used to bring emphasis to the “Prairie Boy” theme in mm. 15 through 17 (Example 2.3), which will be discussed more under “Melody.” While this parallel motion of fourths provides a sense of focus, the fact that these are not presented in perfect octaves only creates a sense of being slightly askew. This is intensified in the end of the song where the accompaniment once again presents this theme, only separated by the interval of a dissonant seventh.

### **Melody**

Melodically, “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” revolves around a single motive that Thomas assigns to the “Prairie Boy” himself. We find this motive at the onset of the vocal line with the text, “O tan-faced prairie boy” (Example 2.4). This slow descent from the submediant of the scale to the tonic, with augmented rhythms on the submediant and the mediant pitches, will prove to be thematic throughout Thomas’s cycle as he repeats and modifies this theme frequently.

**Example 2.4.** “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy,” mm. 6-8.

The musical score for Example 2.4 is written in 5/4 time. It consists of a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a slow descent from the submediant (B4) to the tonic (C5). The piano accompaniment features parallel motion in the right hand and a more active bass line. The lyrics are: "O tan-faced prairie boy, Be-fore you came to".

This original presentation of the motive is given added emphasis through the diminished echo of the accompaniment in m. 8. In m. 15, as the vocalist turns his attention back to this new recruit with the text, “You came taciturn,” Thomas reprises this motive in the vocal line, slightly altering the rhythm and removing the subdominant note. Thomas emphasizes this further in the accompaniment, having the pianist present a rhythmically-altered rendering of the motive in the right hand. Thomas also parallels this motive with a transposed version in the left hand. These parallel fourths create an open and hollow sound. The accompaniment again uses this melody in mm. 20 and 21 in the middle voice of the right hand as it directly quotes the original theme (Example 2.5). Again in mm. 24 through 26, the accompaniment transposes the original theme up a whole step, so as to lend itself better for ending with the dominant chord (C). The left hand also presents this theme in parallel motion a seventh below the right hand. This creates sharp dissonance and lends an ethereal quality to the end of the song.

Of note is Thomas’s use of the B in the second beat of m. 12, only to be topped climactically at the end of m. 13 by the C (Example 2.2). This C not only serves climactic purposes, but also provides the modulatory chord of C major (with the prominent E and G in m. 13), leading as the dominant toward the key of F major. M. 15 through 19 present an almost identical repetition of the previous vocal line (mm. 6 through 10) until it climaxes in mm. 20 to 21. Following this climax, a quick conclusion is reached as the melody descends to its lowest pitch.

This ending is quite reflective of one of the most notable characteristics of the piece. Thomas sets the overall arc of the melody as an alternating series of stepwise descending, and disjunct ascending motions. The opening vocal line descends down the scale to F and is immediately followed with two recharging motives. This sequence is repeated in mm. 11

through 14 and again in 15 through 19. The piece concludes with a final descent of the vocal line in mm. 21 through 24 (Example 2.5).

**Example 2.5.** “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy,” mm. 20-26.

The musical score for "O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy" (mm. 20-26) is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 20-22) shows the vocal line in treble clef and piano accompaniment in bass and treble clefs. The vocal line has lyrics: "lo! more than all the gifts of the world you". The piano part includes dynamics like *f* and markings like *Ped.* and *\*.* The second system (mm. 23-26) shows the vocal line in treble clef and piano accompaniment in bass and treble clefs. The vocal line has lyrics: "gave me." and "Gua". The piano part includes dynamics like *p* and *sfz*, and markings like *Ped.* and *attacca*.

Thomas also chooses to set the text of “Prairie Boy” to a monosyllabic melody. The melody spans a range of an octave and a fourth, from C3 to F4. The melody also rests in a medium tessitura with most of the melodic action taking place between F3 and C4.

The overall mood of Thomas’s opening song is pensive. It becomes clear through the musical setting that the narrator is experiencing a time of reflection, and one can also sense a bit of longing within the narrator’s melodic line to go back in time to relive this moment. The



buildup and climax of this emotion occurs in the crescendo from m. 20 to m. 21's F4 on the word "more" (Example 2.5).

## **Rhythm**

Thomas uses the alternation of slow and fast phrases to create variety in this opening song. In the piano introduction, the opening slow, sustained moments are quickly interrupted by quick flourishes. The rhythms are indicative of the movement of the environment, and quick flourishes likely represent sudden war-like activity.

The vocal melody demonstrates the alternating of slow and fast phrases. Mm. 6 and 7 open with slow, sustained phrases followed immediately in mm. 8 and 9 with hurried sixteenth and sixteenth triplet notes. The alternation of the two paces gives varied interest.

Thomas also sets these two paces against each other in mm. 11 through 13 (Example 2.2). The accompaniment uses only slow, steady quarter notes against the quickened triplets and sixteenth notes. This is used to dramatic effect and supports the idea that the accompaniment is a separate entity in and of itself through these measures.

The pattern of slow and sustained rhythms alternating with quickened rhythms is evidenced again even in the final phrase, the pick-up to m. 20 through m. 23. It presents a pattern of slow (mm. 20 and 21), fast (m. 22), and a return to slow again (m. 23). This pattern becomes a unifying element in the song (Example 2.5).

The tempi of the song should be carefully observed, as these are used to enhance and draw out specific "moments" in the piece. For example, the pianist should be careful to observe the *ritardando* in the second measure that leads into the fourth beat flourish. The slowing of the tempo will build tension toward the return of the original tempo, with the attacked thirty-second

notes. This will also enhance the pattern of alternating slow and quick paces throughout the song. It foreshadows what is to come.

The *poco ritardando* in the vocal line of m. 9 should be noted as it leads into a new section with m. 10 (Example 2.6). The new section in m. 10 is not only introduced through harmonic chord change, but also through the *ritardando* leading into a faster tempo.

**Example 2.6.** “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy,” mm. 9-11.

The image shows a musical score for three staves (vocal, piano, and bass) covering measures 9, 10, and 11. The vocal line begins in measure 9 with the lyrics "camp came ma-ny a wel-come gift," and continues in measure 10 with "Prai-ses and pre-sents came— and". Measure 11 is partially visible. The score includes tempo markings: "poco rit." above measure 9, "A little faster" above measure 10, and "pp dolce" below measure 10. There are also handwritten notes: "faster" in measure 10 and "ritardando" in measure 11. The piano and bass lines provide harmonic support, with the piano line featuring a prominent bass line in measure 10. The bass line has a double bar line and a repeat sign at the end of measure 10.

It should be noted that the return to the original tempo in m. 15 is not a return to the tempo originally set for the vocalist in m. 6, but instead goes back to the introductory tempo, slightly slower than the opening vocal line. It slows even more in m. 19 with the vocal line leading the tempo.

Thomas chooses to incorporate three different meters throughout the song, 4/4, 3/4, and 5/4. It is interesting to note how Thomas uses these varying meters. Common meter tends to be the default meter throughout the piece. Triple meter is used frequently in the sections of quicker pace, giving these sections an increased sense of propulsion. On the other hand, the 5/4 meter is used in the opposite way. When Thomas desires to stretch time, he chooses to use 5/4 meter, utilizing the extra beat in the measure to prolong this passing of time.

## **Growth**

“O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy,” even at just twenty-six measures long, can still be divided into four short sections, an introduction from mm. 1 through 5, an A section from mm. 6 through 9, a B section from mm. 10 through 14, and an expanded A' section from 15 through 26. The most distinguishable of sections here is the A section, characterized by the opening “Prairie Boy” motive, performed to sparse accompaniment, that eventually leads up to the dominant pitch. The similar section in 15 through 26 also displays these characteristics, but expands further through the climax and finally descends to the dominant pitch.

## **Performance Practice**

Observing Thomas’s indication at the beginning of the vocal line, the vocalist should be careful to present the line in a “simple” and “straightforward” manner. The vocalist should communicate the text in a conversational manner with little bravura. Instead, the performer would be wise to simply “report the facts.” The text and mood of this song lend themselves to contemplative reflection and should not veer into the tempting world of self-glorification, particularly in the climactic measures of 20 and 21 (Example 2.5). Connection with the text should be maintained throughout.

The vocalist must also work to maintain legato with the disjunct phrases (mm. 8 through 9). It is easier to find the singer’s legato with the smooth and step-wise phrases (m. 6). The entire piece must maintain a sense of connectedness. The singer must ensure to maintain legato even in the rushed measures, such as are found in m. 13.

Three unaccompanied words make up a distinctive feature not to be overlooked: the word “you” in m. 15 and the words “gave me” in m. 23. Greater meaning can be gained by thinking of

this phrase as a summary of the text. Simple. Direct. Focused on the recruit. “You gave me.” One might be wise to lean subtly into these words for enhanced meaning in the delivery.

The singer must plan his breathing carefully in mm. 20 through 23 (Example 2.5) to retain the optimal meaning of the text. Thus, it is advisable for the vocalist to make choices in mm. 20 through 23 regarding breathing. The phrase “When lo! more than all the gifts of the world you gave me” would ideally be sung in one phrase, but being so lengthy, this is hardly an option. The best option for the singer would be to carry the momentum of the word “lo” through “more” to enhance the climax. Choosing this option, the singer would then take a breath after “world” and give added emphasis to the text “you gave me,” which again, gives special emphasis to this important phrase of text.

## CHAPTER THREE

### “BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!”

**“Beat! Beat! Drums!”**

**Range: C3 – G4**

**Tessitura: Medium to High**

**Tempo: Freely; Fast and wild; Dotted-Quarter = 126**

**Meters: 6/8, 4/16, 9/16, 9/8, 3/8, 5/8**

**Difficulty: Vocal – Difficult; Piano – Difficult**

After Thomas defines character through “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy,” the next song, “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” continues with pure action. For most of the piece, “Fast and wild” well describes the storyline.

#### Text

Beat, beat drums!  
Blow, bugles blow!  
Through the windows through doors burst like a ruthless force,  
Into the solemn church and scatter the congregation,  
Into the school where the scholar is studying;  
Leave not the bridegroom quiet  
no happiness must he have now with his bride,  
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace,  
ploughing his field or gathering his grain,  
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums  
so shrill you bugles blow.

Beat, beat drums!  
Blow, bugles blow!  
Over the traffic of cities  
over the rumble of wheels in the streets;  
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses?  
no sleepers must sleep in those beds,  
No bargainers’ bargains by day  
no brokers or speculators  
would they continue?  
Would the talkers be talking?  
Would the singer attempt to sing?  
Would the lawyer rise in the court  
to state his case before the judge?

Then rattle quicker, heavier drums  
you bugles wilder blow.

Beat, beat drums!  
Blow, bugles blow!  
Make no parley  
stop for no expostulation,  
Mind not the timid  
mind not the weeper or prayer  
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,  
Let not the child's voice be heard,  
nor the mother's entreaties,  
Make even the trestles shake the dead where they lie  
awaiting the hearses  
So strong you thump O terrible drums  
so loud you bugles blow.

The purveyance of the Civil War into the everyday lives of all Americans is strongly portrayed in the text of "Beat! Beat! Drums!" The narrator speaks a definitive and direct "call of war" throughout the poem, and Whitman chooses to address this purveyance in the first and third verses through a series of strong, imperative statements. Analysis of these statements reveals a bitter and angry tone projecting through the voice of the narrator. These statements are all commands to disrupt peaceful and happy characters and settings. The commands are articulated in strong statements such as, "Through windows, through doors burst like a ruthless force, into the solemn church and scatter the congregation" and "Leave not the bridegroom quiet, no happiness must he have now with his bride." This first verse focuses on the action that the "call of war" takes against people. Contrasting the imperative statements found throughout the verse, this verse ends with a phrase of commentary, "So fierce you whirr and pound you drums, so shrill you bugles blow."

This change from imperative commands to commentarial statements serves as an effective transition from the first verse into the second, where Whitman predominantly uses statements of commentary as well as rhetorical questions to continue the angry discourse with

the “call of war.” Giving focus to the power of war over everyday life, the second verse trivializes the events of typical life – even asking how these events could continue with war bursting through the city. The second verse also proves to be the direct complement to the first, as its final phrase switches back to an imperative statement, “Then rattle quicker, heavier drums, you bugles, wilder blow!”

The final verse follows the pattern of the first, as it uses exclusively imperative statements until the final phrase, where commentary once again returns: “So strong you thump O terrible drums, so loud you bugles blow.” Adding intensity to this final verse, Whitman focuses the text on stronger images, including people weeping and praying, children crying out, mothers pleading, and the dead (the souls who would be at ultimate peace) being shaken by the war. “Mind not the weeper or prayer...Let not the child’s voice be heard, nor the mother’s entreaties. Make even the trestles shake the dead where they lie awaiting the hearses.”

Whitman also uses alliteration to great effect in the first verse of this poem. The opening lines of each verse focus on the [b] consonant as it proclaims, “Beat, beat drums! Blow, bugles blow!” The third line of text uses visible alliteration, “solemn church and scatter the congregation.” The fourth line of text, “school where the scholar is studying” emphasizes the [s] sound. Alliteration continues in lines like, “peaceful farmer any pease, ploughing his field or gathering his grain.” Whitman continues to utilize the [p] and [f] sounds in the next line, “So fierce you whirr and pound you drums.”

### **Sound**

It becomes obvious rather quickly that “Beat! Beat! Drums!” contrasts its predecessor, “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” in a number of ways. The most obvious is that “Beat! Beat! Drums” is the most aggressive of all of the songs in the cycle. Accented, fast, and loud, “Beat! Beat!

Drums!” provides a strength and movement that thrusts the cycle forward. The piece revolves around the agitated emotions of the narrator, but is expressed in the vocal line in forceful and near-neurotic cries of “Beat, beat, drums!” Agitation is found in the accompaniment’s partnership with the voice, and is even present among the more calm passages. The agitation in the accompaniment is ever-present, like a menacing force that will not be defeated.

This accompanimental agitation is exhibited in its dissonances and tight harmonies. While “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” lays in sparse and open-chorded texture, “Beat! Beat! Drums” often drives itself through very dense and angry clusters. These elements will be addressed later in greater detail under the section “Harmony.”

Another characteristic differentiating “Drums” from “Prairie Boy” is that “Drums” incorporates much interaction between the piano and the voice, whereas “Prairie Boy” finds moments of separation between the voice and accompaniment. In “Drums,” there is a strong camaraderie between the piano and the voice, as the piano almost always gives commentary on the phrase that the voice has just completed. The voice performs a line and the piano is given increased movement or melodic activity directly following – commenting on the text. An example is clearly seen in mm. 36 through 41.

This can also be observed twice in mm. 68 through 72 (Example 3.1). After the vocal line cries, “So fierce you whirr,” the piano jumps in with the low-pitched and very dense chordal strike. The vocal line continues, “and pound you drums,” which is accented with two additional low strikes, further painting the text and creating union between the accompaniment and the voice.



**Example 3.1.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 68-72.

This musical score excerpt shows measures 68 through 72. The vocal line is written in a single staff at the top, with lyrics underneath. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves below the vocal line. Measure 68 starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The lyrics are "fierce— you whirr— and". Measure 69 continues the vocal line. Measure 70 has the lyrics "pound— you drums—". Measure 71 has the lyrics "so". Measure 72 ends with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and chords, with some measures marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. There are also some markings like "8vb" and "8va" indicating octave shifts.

One of the most emphasized repetitions of this vocal and accompanimental partnership is seen between mm. 100 and 119 where the pattern occurs no less than seven times. The pattern occurs so frequently that it becomes a call and response between the voice and the piano. Considering the interrogative text, one might even think of this “call and response” section as “question and answer.” M. 101 begins with the accompaniment dropping out from under the voice, leaving the voice open and vulnerable. Immediately after the voice finishes in m. 103, the accompaniment jumps in with three accented strikes (Example 3.2).

**Example 3.2.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 101-104.

This musical score excerpt shows measures 101 through 104. The vocal line is written in a single staff at the top, with lyrics underneath. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves below the vocal line. Measure 101 starts with a *marcato* marking. The lyrics are "sleep-ers must sleep in those beds,". Measure 102 continues the vocal line. Measure 103 has the lyrics "No". Measure 104 continues the vocal line. The piano accompaniment is mostly silent in measures 101 and 102, then enters in measure 103 with a forte (*f*) dynamic, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes. There are also some markings like "8vb" and "8va" indicating octave shifts.

Again, “No bargainers’ bargains by day,” follows unaccompanied, with a strong, accented chordal cluster immediately following in the accompaniment. “No brokers” is followed by a three note comment in the accompaniment (Example 3.3). This is particularly noteworthy as it parallels the number of syllables just sung. The piano is almost literally repeating the vocal line, hinting at subtle mockery. “Or speculators” is followed by a rapid, flourish in the accompaniment. “Would they continue” is followed by a bugle-like call.

**Example 3.3.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 106-111.

The musical score for Example 3.3 spans measures 106 to 111. The vocal line is written in a single staff, and the piano accompaniment is written in two staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The lyrics are: "day no bro-kers or spe-cu-la-tors — would they con - tin-ue? Would the". The piano accompaniment includes a forte (f) dynamic in measure 106, a rapid flourish in measure 109, and a mezzo-forte (mf) dynamic in measure 110. The score is written in G major and 2/4 time.

“Would the talkers be talking” is followed with an echo of the idea of the drum strikes. “Would the singer attempt to sing” is followed with the piano’s answer of a singing, melodic line.

This call and response technique is particularly useful in building to a climax. When call and response is used in increasingly terse phrases, added intensity naturally occurs. The piano interrupts the voice with its encouragement with increased frequency. As this occurs, momentum is built through the climactic “sing” of m. 116. This momentum is only enhanced with the variety of what is occurring in the voice and accompaniment. When this momentum is at its strongest in m. 109 (Example 3.3), Thomas changes the vocal line to an intensely questioning “would they continue?” Then he draws the voice back from a forte volume to a piano volume as the intensity continues with “would the talkers be talking.” This achieves two

goals. First, this again maintains variety for the audience, keeping the element of surprise. It is also useful in preparing the crescendo found in mm. 113 to 116.

Occasionally, Thomas chooses to have the accompaniment complement the vocal line while it is being sung, instead of following after the voice. During the line, “Into the solemn church and scatter the congregation,” the piano joins in with the action in m. 34, as the “wild” flourish paints the text of scattering the congregation (Example 3.4).

**Example 3.4.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 32-36.

Throughout the song, the accompaniment lingers in a middle range. The flourishes in the accompaniment are generally found to be in extreme high and low registers. Of particular note also is Thomas’s use of the piano accompaniment to represent bugle calls and drum blows. Throughout the song, there are frequent reminders of the drums and bugles that are introduced in the opening two phrases. The bugle call is generally set in a higher register and demonstrates agility. The drums are typically presented in a low register with an accented pattern in which each beat is strongly emphasized. This “drum representation” is clearly seen in mm. 71 to 72 (Example 3.5) and also in 103 to 104. The “trumpet representation” is seen in mm. 40 to 42 and 110 to 111 (Example 3.5).

**Example 3.5.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 71-72 and 110-111.

The image displays two musical excerpts. The left excerpt covers measures 71 and 72. Measure 71 features a vocal line with a fermata and a drum line with a 'drums' label. Measure 72 features a vocal line with a fermata and a drum line with a 'drums' label. The right excerpt covers measures 110 and 111. Measure 110 features a vocal line with a fermata and a drum line with a 'drums' label. Measure 111 features a vocal line with a fermata and a drum line with a 'drums' label.

The important bugle call in the accompaniment is even imitated in segments of the vocal line. In the vocal line of mm. 101 through 103 (Example 3.2), an  $F\flat$  major seventh chord is presented in a high vocal register. This is immediately followed with a similar bugle imitation in mm. 105 to 106 with an outlined  $B\flat$  chord.

This idea is directly tied to the opening lines of text, “Beat, beat drums, blow, bugles blow,” and thus, Thomas chooses to introduce these “instrument accompaniments.” Curiously, he presents the opening introduction of this in reverse order. The vocalist sings, “Beat, beat drums” and immediately the audience hears, not the beating of the drums, but instead the call of the bugle in mm. 5 to 9. The vocalist then sings, “Blow, bugles blow,” immediately followed by the pounding of the drums in the accompaniment, not the bugles. Thomas may have intended for these to be arranged in such a way that both instrumental ideas are presented in the scene from the very beginning; thus, creating a teamwork between the bugles and drums.

It is interesting that Thomas reverses the order in the beginning because in mm. 71 to 75, Thomas matches the bugle call with text about the bugle and the pounding of the drum with text about the drum. Under the text “pound you drums” the accompaniment represents pounding

drums. Below “so shrill you bugles blow,” Thomas sets a rapid moving, higher-registered bugle call.

Not only does Thomas use register shifts to illustrate specific instruments, but he also uses these shifts to clearly designate changes in section. This communicates to the audience that new material has arrived. The shift from the middle register found in m. 17 to the low register in 18 clearly denotes a shift in sections (Example 3.6).

**Example 3.6.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 17-20.

The musical score for Example 3.6 shows measures 17 through 20. Measure 17 is in a middle register. Measure 18 shows a shift to a low register, marked 'p sub.'. Measures 19 and 20 continue in the low register, marked 'agitato'.

As occurred in the first verse, each new verse begins with “Beat, beat drums, blow bugles blow.” Thomas uses this shift of register to begin each subsequent verse, and is evidenced in mm. 84 to 85. As the repeating refrain reaches its conclusion, the accompaniment immediately shifts from a middle-high register to a low register.

**Example 3.7.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 152-159.

The musical score for Example 3.7 shows measures 152 through 159. Measure 152 is marked 'A tempo'. Measure 153 is marked 'blow!'. Measures 154-158 are marked 'f' and 'marcato'. Measure 159 is marked 'sharply rhythmic from here to the'.

This also occurs one final time with the third verse. In mm. 153 to 158, the accompaniment builds in an intense and high-registered frenzy until it suddenly drops to a middle register in 159, again indicating the beginning of the new material of the final verse (Example 3.7).

### **Harmony**

As is typical of Thomas's style, "Beat! Beat! Drums!" also incorporates much use of tone clusters, chromaticism, and highly dissonant passages. By using these devices, this setting of the second poem achieves much of its harmonic coherence through emphasis on intervallic patterns. Thomas sets forth five primary intervals at the beginning of the song that will be developed throughout.

Upon first examination, mm. 5 through 7 appear to present two main intervals, a minor second in the left hand and a major second in the right hand; however, close examination reveals five intervals that will be manipulated throughout the song (Example 3.8). In addition to the minor and major second, there is a perfect fifth between the A and E, a perfect fourth between the A and D, and a tritone between the B and E.

**Example 3.8.** "Beat! Beat! Drums!," mm. 1-7.

The musical score for measures 1-7 of "Beat! Beat! Drums!" is presented in 6/8 time. The vocal line (soprano) begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and the instruction *con forza*. The lyrics "Beat! beat! drums!" are written above the vocal line. The piano accompaniment consists of two staves. The bass staff features a series of notes that create a minor second interval, while the treble staff features a series of notes that create a major second interval. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, ties, and dynamic markings.

The significance of the perfect fifth actually begins earlier in the opening vocal declamation in mm. 1 to 4. This vocal line outlines a perfect fifth which is, in essence, repeated

again in mm. 10 to 13. The vocal line of mm. 14 through 17 also presents perfect fifths (A to E and G to D), major seconds (E $\flat$  to F and F to G), and a tritone (F to B) (Example 3.9).

**Example 3.9.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 14-20.

This musical score shows measures 14 through 20. The top staff is a bass line with whole rests. The middle staff is a vocal line in treble clef, starting with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a *sub.* (subito) marking at measure 18, which is also labeled *agitato*. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment in treble clef, featuring a steady eighth-note pattern. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C).

M. 18 continues the perfect fourth interval in the right hand (G to D). It is important to remember that the interval of the perfect fourth is directly related to the perfect fifth as the fourth is simply an inversion of the fifth. The minor second also takes precedence here, as the grace note G to A $\flat$  creates the minor second. The G in the right hand also hints at a minor second relationship with the A $\flat$  in the left, even though it is a major seventh, as the major seventh also acts as the inverted minor second. Mm. 21 through 24 create rocking fourths in the right and left hands (Example 3.10).

**Example 3.10.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 21-26.

This musical score shows measures 21 through 26. The top staff is a vocal line in bass clef with lyrics: "Through the win-dows through doors burst like a". The middle staff is a piano accompaniment in bass clef, and the bottom staff is another piano accompaniment in bass clef. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). Dynamics include *p* (piano) at measure 22. The score features a rocking pattern of perfect fourths in the piano accompaniment.

Interestingly, in m. 26, as the right hand stretches the interval by a minor second, the perfect fourth becomes a tritone. Reinforcing the importance of the minor second here is a major seventh in the left hand, which again is the inversion of the minor second.

The accompaniment in m. 39 presents left and right hand intervals which, if one is inverted, becomes a major second apart (Example 3.11). For example, if the fourth (B $\flat$  to E $\flat$ ) is inverted, a perfect fifth a major second below the F to C is created. Not only does this measure show the importance of the intervals of a perfect fifth and perfect fourth, but it also demonstrates how Thomas is using the other important intervals (in this case, the major second) to connect the two together. This idea is only reinforced in mm. 59 through 60 (Example 3.11) as the bass uses the minor second in an expanded, melodic role as it moves from F $\sharp$  to F $\natural$ . In 59, Thomas also creates a C major triad above the F $\sharp$ . Note the tritone interval from the F $\sharp$  to the C. This use of a major triad builds a tritone above a lower note that will also recur later in the song (m. 202). The F $\sharp$  and F in the bass tied to the E in the right hand also present both major and minor seconds.

**Example 3.11.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 39 and 59-60.

The image displays musical notation for three measures of the song "Beat! Beat! Drums!".  
 Measure 39: The vocal line (treble clef) has the lyrics "scho-lar is". The piano accompaniment (bass clef) begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The right hand plays a series of notes, and the left hand plays a series of notes, creating intervals that are discussed in the text.  
 Measures 59 and 60: The vocal line (treble clef) has the lyrics "peace - ful farm-er a-ny". The piano accompaniment (bass clef) continues with a piano (*p*) dynamic and a *poco pesante* marking. The right hand plays a series of notes, and the left hand plays a series of notes, including a C major triad above the F# in the bass.  
 The piano part in measures 59-60 features a C major triad above the F# in the bass.



Again, Thomas incorporates the key intervals in m. 68 with a tritone (B $\flat$  to E), a perfect fifth (B $\flat$  to F), a minor second (E to F), and an inverted major second (E to D) (Example 3.12).

The “drum cluster” following in m. 69 (and again in mm. 71 and 72), also utilizes these intervals enharmonically as it is constructed of a tritone, a perfect fourth, three minor seconds, and four major seconds. M. 75 also uses a perfect fourth, a tritone, and a major seventh (which, again, inverts to a minor second).

**Example 3.12.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 68-72.

Mm. 85 through 92 take a previously established pattern, and modify it by a key interval to form another key interval. What Thomas had previously established in mm. 18 and following is adjusted in m. 85 by lowering the D by a half step (enharmonic equivalent of a minor second) to D $\flat$ , thus forming a tritone between the G and D $\flat$ .

In mm. 121 and following, Thomas pits the tritone of the right hand against the minor second in the left hand. M. 131 switches to the major second in the left hand, and mm. 132 and following switch to the perfect fifth in the right hand (Example 3.13). Here, Thomas is taking each of these important intervals and pitting them against one another. M. 133 then adds echoes

of the minor second as the major seventh occurs between the A $\flat$  in the right hand and the A $\flat$  in the left.

**Example 3.13.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 121 and 131-133.

This musical score shows measures 121, 131, 132, and 133. Measure 121 features a single note in the right hand. Measures 131-133 show a vocal line with lyrics: "Then rat-tle quick-er, heav-i-er drums". The accompaniment consists of two staves, with the right hand playing a melody and the left hand providing a rhythmic accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/8.

M. 153 also explores the key intervallic content as the accompaniment presents a tritone, perfect fifth, minor second, and a major second (Example 3.14). In m. 154, Thomas develops these intervals further by expanding the major second to the perfect fifth in the right hand. Meanwhile, Thomas compresses the perfect fourth interval in the left hand to become the unison B $\flat$ . The tritone appears again in m. 157 as the right hand alternates between the tritone and the major second. The left hand ascends a tritone from the B $\flat$  to E $\flat$ .

**Example 3.14.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 153-157.

This musical score shows measures 153, 154, 155, 156, and 157. Measure 153 features a single note in the right hand. Measures 154-157 show a vocal line with lyrics: "Then rat-tle quick-er, heav-i-er drums". The accompaniment consists of two staves, with the right hand playing a melody and the left hand providing a rhythmic accompaniment. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/8.

Mm. 159 through the end of the piece incorporate these intervals in increasing frequency until the song's climactic final statements. It moves through minor seconds, perfect fourths (m. 162), tritones (m. 163), tritones against perfect fifths (mm. 173 through 174), tritones against tritones (m. 175), and tritones against major seconds (m. 182). The intervals continue to accumulate through the final chords of the piece. In m. 202, Thomas brings everything together with all intervals present as well as the major triad sitting a tritone above the lower pitch of C (as mentioned above) (Example 3.15).

**Example 3.15.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 200-205.

While intervallic relationships are the primary unifying element in the harmony, Thomas also uses modes, major, and chromatic scales throughout the song to create a common thread. Thomas sets this forth by building an ascending chromatic scale in mm. 7 through 9. The upper notes in this urgent flourish rise by half steps from G up to B $\flat$ . Thomas also incorporates a use of the G $\flat$  major scale in mm. 94 through 99.

In m. 34, a quick Mixolydian mode is inserted into the left hand of the accompaniment from B to B (Example 3.16).

**Example 3.16.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” m. 34.

3/4 *f*  
scat-ter the con - gre -  
*f* wild 7

There are two instances of the Lydian mode in “Beat! Beat! Drums!” The first occurs in mm. 66 through 67 as the bass line ascends the first five notes of an F Lydian mode (Example 3.17).

**Example 3.17.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 66-67.

6/8  
grain, So  
7

This mode returns in mm. 73 to 74 in the descending E $\flat$  Lydian mode (Example 3.18).

The Phrygian mode, also utilized, is found beginning on the G in m. 87 through 88 in the vocal line (Example 3.19). Hints of this mode also appear in mm. 162 through 166 as the determinate lowered second (E $\flat$ ) is heard in the vocal melody (Example 3.20).

**Example 3.18.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 73-74.

73 74

shrill — you bu-gles —

**Example 3.19.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 87-88.

87 88

O-ver the traf-fic of ci-ties —

**Example 3.20.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 162-166.

162 163 164 165 166

Make — no par-ley — stop for no ex - pos-tu - la-tion, —

## Melody

Thomas also uses chromaticism, modes, and intervallic-play to enhance the melodies found within “Beat! Beat! Drums!” He sets the vocal line apart as the solitary melody in the beginning by presenting the opening texts unaccompanied. When the accompaniment interrupts, the clustered accompaniment presents no clear melodic content, but rather a quick and passing flourish of sound. It is presented more for effect than melodic material. This sets the standard for the accompaniment throughout the song. The accompaniment, as it often portrays the drums and bugle, rarely presents any fresh melodic material. The only exception to this occurs in mm. 43 to 48 and 116 to 120 (Example 3.21).

**Example 3.21.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 116-120.

The musical score for measures 116-120 of "Beat! Beat! Drums!" is presented in three systems. The top system shows measures 116, 117, 118, 119, and 120. Measure 116 begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody is a descending scale starting on G4. Measures 117 and 118 continue the scale. Measure 119 is a whole rest. Measure 120 is a whole rest. The middle system shows the vocal line (soprano) and the piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins in measure 116 with a "sing?" marking and a descending scale. The piano accompaniment begins in measure 116 with a "cresc." marking and a descending scale. The piano accompaniment continues in measures 117 and 118. In measure 119, the piano accompaniment has a "più f" marking and a descending scale. In measure 120, the piano accompaniment has a "il basso pesante" marking and a descending scale. The bottom system shows the piano accompaniment continuing in measures 116, 117, 118, 119, and 120.

With a melodic line descending the scale and beginning with an elongated first note, both accompaniments present a melody that is reminiscent of the “O tan-faced prairie boy” motive found in the opening song of the cycle.

Thomas plays with the primary interval of a major sixth, found in the original “Prairie Boy” motive. Not only is this interval found in the accompanimental reference in mm. 116 to 120, but it is also important in the “blow, bugles blow” vocal lines throughout the song. This is

never more pronounced than in mm. 150 through 152. In the two previous “blow bugles, blow” repetitions (mm. 10 through 13 and 81 to 84), the interval of a major sixth is briefly heard before reaching the successive note. In 150 to 152, Thomas only confirms that the sixth is the projected goal, as the vocal line rises climactically from B $\flat$ 3 to G4, the highest note of the entire cycle, firmly establishing the importance of this interval of a sixth.

The melody is also composed in such a way that its arc exhibits wave patterns. This is evidenced in both short and long passages. The short passages occur as two examples in the vocal line of mm. 87 to 88 (Example 3.19) and again in mm. 94 through 98. The longer, more extended waves are seen in mm. 22 through 35 and again in 36 through 57 as the pitches slowly ascend and descend again.

The melody of the second verse consists largely of shorter waves and broken triads. These triads begin in mm. 101 through 103 with an F $\flat$  major seventh chord. The broken triads continue in 105 with the B $\flat$  major chord. The B $\flat$  chord appears again in 108, but the chord switches to a D major arpeggiated chord in 113 to 118.

The melody then transitions through a pair of sequenced chromatic phrases in 122 through 131 (Example 3.22). Mm. 122 through the first beat of 127 present the first chromatic idea which is then imitated from the end of m. 127 through 130. Close observation will also reveal that the first three pitches of these ideas are imitated in intervallic content by the next three pitches. Mm. 122 to 124 present G, G $\flat$ , and F - three notes descending by half-steps. These are followed immediately by D $\flat$ , C, and C $\flat$  – again, half-step descents. Also of interest is the tritone separation of the G/D $\flat$ , G $\flat$ /C, and F/C $\flat$  in this idea. This sequential pattern

appears again as 127 through 128 present G, G $\flat$ , and F followed by D, D $\flat$ , and C. Concluding the second verse, Thomas recaps the waving arc in mm. 131 to 133 as well as the broken triad in 135.

**Example 3.22.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 122-131.

122 *mp* incredulous 123 124

Would the law - yer rise in the

*mp*

125 126 127 128 129 130 *cresc. poco a poco* 131

court to state his case be - fore the judge? - Then

*cresc. poco a poco*

For the third verse (mm. 162 through 204), instead of a wave, Thomas sets the melody in a climactic slow and expanded ascent with subtle, melodic hitches. The verse begins on D (m. 162) and ascends to E $\flat$  (163), F (166), G (169), A (173), B $\flat$  (175), B (180), C (185), D $\flat$  (201), E $\flat$  (203), and G $\flat$  (204). Thomas prolongs the C in mm. 188 to 197.

Modes play a key role in the final verse as Thomas sets the melody of 162 to 179 in the D Phrygian mode. From 198 through the end, Thomas brings back the Phrygian mode, this time centering around F, as is clearly seen in the ascent up the beginning of this mode in mm. 198 through 201 (Example 3.23).



**Example 3.23.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 198-201.

The image shows a musical score for measures 198-201 of the song "Beat! Beat! Drums!". The score is written for a four-part vocal ensemble (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) and piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The melody is monosyllabic and set to the lyrics: "strong you thump O ter - ri - ble drums so". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and dotted-quarter notes, with some measures containing triplets. The score is divided into two systems: measures 198-199 on the left and measures 200-201 on the right.

Melodically, “Beat! Beat! Drums!” resides within a range of a perfect twelfth, ranging from C3 to G4. The song does not sit in one area of the range, but instead fully covers the range. The text is also set to a monosyllabic melody.

The mood of the melody would best be characterized as intense and urgent. As the melody gets higher in volume and pitch, the intensity also grows. The melody is also rather cold in its static-nature and menacing in its chromatic turns, expressing well the menacing calls of war.

### **Rhythm**

Rhythmic patterns are used to enhance the tense and urgent mood of this song. Throughout the piece, there is undoubtedly a tension that is built through resistance between slower, elongated rhythms and quicker, more frantic eighth notes. In the first verse, a pattern emerges of elongated, stretched rhythms as each phrase builds. This stretched feeling is achieved through lengthened dotted-quarter notes and stretched quarter notes (as in m. 30) (Example 3.24). Occasionally, eighth notes appear to reveal the underlying resistance against such a slow pace. Toward the end of each stretched phrase, the resistance finally gives way to the frantic eighth notes, as evidenced in m. 34.

**Example 3.24.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 30-34.

The image shows a musical score for measures 30-34 of the piece "Beat! Beat! Drums!". The score is written for voice and piano. The vocal line is in the upper staff, and the piano accompaniment is in the lower staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 6/8. The vocal line begins with the lyrics "In - to the so - lemn church and scat-ter the con - gre -". The piano accompaniment features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, with a hemiola effect in measures 32-34. The score includes dynamic markings such as *p sub.*, *pp*, and *f*, as well as articulation marks like slurs and accents. The measures are numbered 30, 31, 32, 33, and 34.

Many of these phrases demonstrate this pattern of stretched resistance giving way to quickened eighth notes. Thomas often uses measures of three quarter notes in the 6/8 meter to reign in the quicker pace, which gives an immediate shift from two beats per measure to three. This hemiola creates the effect of a sudden stretching of the phrase.

The battle between stretched and frantic rhythms is clearly seen in mm. 101 through 116. The vocal line of 101 to 103 also demonstrates this elongated quarter note idea, immediately followed by a similar melodic line with quickened eighth note rhythms. This eighth note pattern continues until 113 when the vocal line again shifts to expanded quarter and dotted-quarter rhythms.

The frantic-paced notes are only intensified in the second and third verses as Thomas adds occasional quadruplets (m. 139) and sixteenth notes (mm. 156 through 158). These correspond with the flourish appearance of these sections. Grace notes are used throughout the piece as well, but particularly in the accompaniment of the third verse. These grace notes add extra percussive strength to the notes that succeed the grace notes. In this way, Thomas also illustrates the drum discussed in the text.

The accompaniment in this third verse also revolves around an accented, beat-driven pattern. From m. 159 through 204, the accompaniment falls into the role of keeping the beat. Only occasionally (mm. 173, 174, 176, 183, 185, and 186) the accompaniment gives off-beat accents. The steady drive of this accompaniment is particularly useful in reminding of the drum beat.

As Thomas describes, the tempo of the piece should be fast and wild. The majority of the song is set in the tempo of a dotted-quarter note equaling 126. This driving, steady, and quick tempo propels the piece forward. There are four exceptions to this tempo and the first three are found in the presentation of the text, “Beat, beat drums” and “blow, bugles blow.” Each time this refrain returns, the motion comes to a halt for the pronouncement of this command. The last change in tempo is found in the final measures of the song as the piano flies through an *accelerando* into the next song, “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim.”

### **Growth**

“Beat! Beat! Drums” can best be divided into three verses. Each verse begins with the similar refrain of “Beat, beat drums” and “blow, bugles blow.” Each verse builds to its own climax before halting again at the next refrain. The final verse contains the strongest climax as the vocal line ascends until the explosive blow in m. 204.

### **Performance Practice**

While the flourishes written for the accompaniment are often harried and frenzied, the pianist should be careful to keep this line crisp. The beat should remain precise and the pianist would find it helpful to keep these flourishes light.

Intensity should be the motto for the vocal line throughout. This intensity should not only be present in the loud declamations, but should especially be present in the soft sections.

This quiet intensity will only aid the crescendos into the stronger sections. There should also be a sense of defiance in the voice and mood of the narrator as he speaks angrily of the infiltration of war into the everyday lives of mankind. The performer must remember that this piece is not a literal call to war, but is instead angrily bemoaning the interruption of common life by the horrors of war.

The vocalist must also be certain to draw out the distinction between the elongated rhythms and the quickened eighth notes. This is particularly true when the rhythms suddenly switch to three quarter notes in a measure. The stretched nature of these rhythms must be felt in contrast to the frenzied eighths.

This particular song requires uninhibited acting to match the emotional “breakdown” that is happening in the music. In mm. 101 through 110 (Example 3.25), short exasperated phrases build the frustration of the text, culminating in the spoken outcry, “Would they continue?” Yet it immediately pulls back to a *piano* volume. The schizophrenic nature of the elongated and quickened rhythms, as well as the sudden changes in dynamic level, lends themselves to creating a harried and unstable mood.

**Example 3.25.** “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” mm. 101-111.

101 *marcato* 102 103 104 105 106

sleep-ers must sleep in those beds, No bar-gain-ers' bar-gains by day no

*f* *f*

107 108 109 parlando 110 111 *p*

bro-kers or spe-cu-la-tors — would they con-tin-ue? Would the

*mf*

All these must be observed and performed for the performer to achieve the desired effect. The schizophrenic nature of the elongated and quickened rhythms, as well as the sudden changes in dynamic level, lends themselves to creating a harried and unstable mood. All these must be observed and performed for the performer to achieve the desired effect.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### “A SIGHT IN CAMP IN THE DAYBREAK GRAY AND DIM”

#### “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim”

**Range:** B $\flat$ 2 – E4

**Tessitura:** Medium

**Tempo:** Slow, contemplative; Quarter note = 104

**Meters:** 4/4, 3/4, 5/4, 2/2, 2/4, 6/4

**Difficulty:** Vocal – Difficult; Piano – Moderate

Exhibiting a quiet strength as it halts the explosive action of “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim” returns the cycle’s focus from combat to the mundane. This song, the second longest in the cycle, returns to the introspective mood originally presented in “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy.” War is occurring and the aftereffects are beginning to be felt...

#### Text

A sight in camp in the daybreak gray and dim,  
As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,  
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the hospital tent,

Three forms I see on the stretchers lying,  
Brought out there untended lying,  
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woolen blanket,  
Gray and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.  
Curious I halt and silent stand,  
Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest the first just lift the blanket;

Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim,  
with well-gray’d hair, and flesh all sunken about the eyes?  
Who are you? Who are you? Who are you my dear comrade?

Then to the second I step  
And who are you my child and darling?  
Who are you, you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?

Then to the third a face nor child nor old,  
Very calm, as of beautiful yellow-white ivory;  
Young man I think I know you  
I think that this is the face of the Christ himself,  
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.

Whitman begins the poem with setting and visual imagery, as he sets the sleepless narrator in early morning wanderings. Throughout the poem, Whitman uses visual colors to paint his picture: “Ample brownish woolen blanket, gray and heavy blanket.” “With well-gray’d hair.” “Very calm, as of beautiful yellow-white ivory.” This distinctive color palette enhances the scene and implants specific images in the minds of the audience.

Setting the poem at “daybreak” also gives an immediate sense of quiet and peace as the narrator walks through the camp. As the narrator encounters three bodies, all assumed dead from the war, the narrator first notices the blankets spread over each, then curiously halts and stands silently. This halting and silent standing demonstrates the pensive thought of the narrator as he considers these three forms. Then with reverence the narrator gently lifts the blanket on each of the three. This may be viewed more symbolically as the “pulling back of the veils of war” to see the death lying beneath.

As the narrator explores these figures, one question keeps flooding his mind, “Who are you?” Looking upon the face of the elderly man, in the poem he asks his identity twice. Again, with the face of the young man, two times the narrator asks the identity of the young boy. Curiously, he never asks this question of the third figure. Instead, the narrator immediately seems to recognize his identity. Perhaps it is because of his journey of seeing the previous two anonymous forms that the narrator is actually able to recognize this identity of the last.

Each of the three forms represents deeper characterizations. The first, the elderly man, represents wisdom and maturity. The second, the young boy, represents innocence, youth, and

naïveté. These two combined represent the span of all ages. Finally, the narrator comes upon a young man whose face is the face of Christ himself. The identity of this final figure could also represent the effects of human violence on the Christ figure. “Dead and Divine, and brother of all, and here again he lies.” It is perhaps in this last line that we see Whitman presenting the idea that through the horrors of war, man continues to kill Christ.

### **Sound**

Following “Beat! Beat! Drums!,” Thomas uses “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim” to rein in the pace of the cycle. With this, he brings back memories of “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” in its sparseness and exposed vocal lines; however, in this case, Thomas enhances the intensity of these effects.

The sparseness of the song is manifested in the consolidation of its pitches. A minimalistic style emerges as Thomas eliminates all unnecessary notes, resulting in heightened importance for each pitch. There emerges a presence and voice for every pitch that is presented; thus, each note becomes absolutely necessary in the progression of the piece.

This consolidation of pitches also is evidenced in Thomas’s choice of creating exposed vocal lines. Thomas brings the text to the forefront as he strips away all unnecessary pitches in the accompaniment. Occasionally, as seen in mm. 22 through 25 and again in 32 through 37 (Example 4.1), chords are sustained for enough time that the sound of the accompaniment completely dissipates, leaving the vocalist singing *a cappella*. Simplicity becomes the overall effect from the piece. A mysterious, yet peaceful quality exudes from the work. Because the voice is often left to sing a single melodic line, the piece is categorized as a mixture of monophonic and homophonic textures.



**Example 4.1.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 32-36.

As Thomas changes musical sections in m. 51, a simple ostinato begins (Example 4.2). The ostinato revolves around the tonic E and the dominant B. Interestingly, the right hand portion of the first three measures is exactly repeated in the next three measures; however, the order of the pitches, specifically in m. 53, gives a false repeat of the beginning, as it doesn't truly repeat until the next measure.

**Example 4.2.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 51-55.

## Harmony

The introductory bars in “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim” again uncover harmonic ideas that are used throughout the piece. Thomas drives through the transition between “Beat! Beat! Drums!” into “A Sight in Camp.” The agitation and density of the intervallic clusters ending “Beat! Beat! Drums” only enhances the sudden peace of the octave D’s. The sudden transition gives a sense of greater clarity as if the smoke were beginning to clear.

In the first five measures, Thomas consecutively moves through each of the intervals: seconds, thirds, fourths, fifths, sixths, and sevenths (Example 4.3). The first three measures are used to give focus to this as Thomas presents the octave (unison) in the first measure, the second in the second, and the third in the third. Mm. 4 and 5 compress the progression of the other intervals into quarter note movement.

**Example 4.3.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 1-7.

The image shows a musical score for three staves, measures 1 through 7. The top staff is a bass line in C major, starting with a whole note C4 and moving up stepwise to a whole note C5 in measure 7. The middle staff is a treble line, starting with a whole note C4, followed by a half note D4 (marked *espress.*), and then a series of eighth notes ascending to a whole note C5 in measure 7. The bottom staff is a treble line, starting with a whole note C4, followed by a half note D4, and then a series of eighth notes ascending to a whole note C5 in measure 7. The score includes dynamic markings such as *sfz* (sforzando) and *f* (forte), and a tempo marking *slow, contemplative* at the beginning. The key signature is one flat (Bb), and the time signature is common time (C).

Interestingly, Thomas follows the ascending melodic minor scale to compose the first five measures. Mm. 8 through 10 again demonstrate this melodic minor scale in the bass line; however, the following mm. 11 and 12 work through a B $\flat$  Lydian mode as it moves from B $\flat$  up

to D in the left hand, which paired with the E, F, and G of the right hand create six of the seven notes in the Lydian mode (Example 4.4).

**Example 4.4.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 8-13.

Mm. 18 and 19 exhibit two interesting chords in the accompaniment. In 18, Thomas places a quartal chord to support the highest and final note of the phrase. This is immediately followed in m. 19 by a D major chord with the added sixth (B). The G appoggiatura carries over from the previous measure (Example 4.5).

**Example 4.5.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 18-19.

This chord will again appear in 21. Thomas places a third inversion C major seventh chord in m. 22 which is imitated in m. 26 as the tonality temporarily shifts from D to E $\flat$  (Example 4.6). In this instance, Thomas adds an A $\flat$ , creating an F minor chord with an added fourth.

**Example 4.6.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 21-22 and 26-28.

21 merge so ear-ly sleep-less, 22

26 path near by the hos-pi-tal tent, Three 27 28

*mf* *p*

In measures 24 through 38, Thomas plays with the interval of a perfect fifth. This is also evidenced in the endings of the first two phrases (mm. 27 through 28 and m. 30) as they descend perfect fifths. The third phrase slightly modifies this by diminishing the perfect fifth interval by a half step and ends the phrase in m. 33 with a tritone (Example 4.7).

**Example 4.7.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 30-33.

30 stretch-ers ly-ing, 31 brought out there 32 un-tend-ed 33 ly-ing, O-ver

*pp*

The fourth phrase ends with a more scale-like descent down a perfect fifth. Thomas continues to play with this as he begins the next phrase by again diminishing this interval to a tritone (E $\sharp$  to B $\flat$ ) (Example 4.8). The next leap (m. 38) reveals an augmented alteration of the perfect fifth from B $\flat$  to G $\flat$ , which is again intervallically repeated in the next leap from F to C $\sharp$ .

**Example 4.8.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 37-40.

Gray and heav-y blan-ket, fold-ing, cov-er-ing all.

*pp*

*pp*

*colla voce*

*p*

Thomas again utilizes the perfect fifth in the next section of the music (mm. 51 through 82) as he sets the accompaniment in a continuous staccato between the perfect fifth of E and B. He also manipulates the perfect fifth in the left hand of the accompaniment in mm. 68 through 72. He alternates between the perfect fifth and the augmented fifth [or minor sixth]. Mm. 65 through 67 also demonstrate play on the use of the perfect fifth as Thomas composes a line that begins with a focus on the perfect fourth above an E and moves up the chromatic scale from the perfect fourth through the minor seventh above E, using every pitch except for the B $\sharp$ , which would be the perfect fifth. The perfect fifth is the only missing interval (Example 4.9).

**Example 4.9.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 65-67.

well-gray'd hair, and flesh all sunk-en a-bout the eyes?

*colla voce*

*p*

*p*

The third section (mm. 83 through 111) again gives focus to the perfect fifth, but it also reveals a focus on the interval of a second. M. 84 exhibits both the major second and the inverted perfect fifth (Example 4.10). The hymn-like accompaniment in mm. 86 through 88 progresses through a series of almost exclusively perfect fifths, perfect fourths, and major seconds (Example 4.10). The final section gives even greater focus to the major second as the melody moves using seconds with only occasional perfect fourths.

**Example 4.10.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 83-88.

### Melody

While the majority of “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim” moves in step-wise motion, Thomas also incorporates several disjunct segments throughout the piece to create emphasis and to give accent to the text. In the first vocal section of the song (mm. 14 through 50), Thomas chooses to generally incorporate two skips or leaps per phrase. All other intervals use conjunct movement.

The accompaniment presents the first melodic material of the piece in the introduction (Example 4.3). As the piano opens the piece with octave D’s, the soprano line continues with a motive that reappears throughout the song. The second measure temporarily moves to C on the downbeat, but immediately returns to the original D. The third measure temporarily moves to B♭, again on the downbeat, but is also restored to D. This idea is directly echoed in later

portions of the song. A second portion of the motive appears in mm. 4 through 6. This consists of an ascending melodic line culminating at the top with a sustained pitch, followed by a descending quarter note step and immediate return to the top sustained pitch.

This motive is also used in mm. 8 through 10 (Example 4.4). This time the melodic line begins a third above the tonic D and returns to it in m. 9. It again makes a return to the D in m. 10. While the pitches play a role in the identification of the relationship to the original motive, it is the rhythm that most draws out the relationship. The sustained whole note of the first measure, the quarter followed by the dotted-half note in the second, and the quarter followed by a sustained note again relate the second phrase to the first.

The vocal line immediately picks up on this motive in its opening bars as it echoes exactly the opening soprano line of the piano introduction. The accompaniment also enhances this as it echoes the vocal line in block form in 15 through 18 (Example 4.11). The ascending line in the soprano of the accompaniment in mm. 26 through 28 also echoes the ascending portion of the motive (Example 4.11).

Throughout the second portion of the song, mm. 51 through 82, Thomas composes the melody in very short vocal phrases. It is as if Thomas is portraying through the music a sense of breathlessness for the singer as he takes in this first viewing of the dead body. The vocal melody in this section is strongly centered around E, as it returns to this pitch frequently. The melody is disjunct and contains more dissonance through this portion and reveals uneasiness throughout. Thomas moves the phrase “flesh all sunken about the eyes” toward the next question of “Who are you?” This question in short melodic fragments is repeated twice with increased urgency as it alternates largely between the tonic E $\flat$  and the dominant B $\flat$ . The repetition of this line implies deeper philosophical questions than simple identity.

**Example 4.11.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 15-18 and 26-28.

The image displays a musical score for a vocal and piano piece. It is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 15 to 18. The vocal line is in bass clef, and the piano accompaniment consists of two staves in treble and bass clefs. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics for measures 15-18 are: "sight in camp— in the day-break gray and dim,". The second system covers measures 26 to 28. The vocal line continues with the lyrics: "path near by the hos - pi - tal tent, Three". The piano accompaniment continues with the same instrumentation. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *pp*.

The third section of the song is warm and lyrical as the text focuses on the young boy. The melody in this section is conjunct and interacts closely with the accompaniment's melody. The accompaniment and the vocal line often hand the melody back and forth. The voice rests on an E $\flat$  in 98 which the accompaniment picks up in 99 and moves up to A $\flat$ . The voice then picks up the A $\flat$  and continues. The accompaniment again follows the vocal melody in m. 107 as it emerges from the E $\flat$  in the vocal line (Example 4.12).

The final section, focusing on the Christ-like figure, is reminiscent of the opening section as the melody is free with much rubato. The phrases in this section also remain highly concentrated around a single pitch. Mm. 114 through 116 focus around E, mm. 117 through 123 focus on A, and mm. 128 through 130 focus on D. Finally, the piece comes full circle in the



concluding measures. Thomas repeats the motive from mm. 8 through 10 in mm. 137 through 140.

**Example 4.12.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 98-108.

The musical score for Example 4.12, "A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim," measures 98-108. The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has two flats (B-flat major), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins at measure 98 with the lyrics "dar - ling?" and continues through measure 108 with the lyrics "Who are you, you sweet boy with cheeks yet bloom - ing?". The piano accompaniment features a sustained bass line and a more active treble line. Key markings include "poco rit. espress." at measure 104, "colla voce" at measure 105, and "p a tempo" at measure 107.

The song ranges from B $\flat$ 2 to E4. The vocal melody frequently spans the full range, but the tessitura remains largely in the middle range. The melody is free and pensive in mood. An aching “search for understanding” is heard in the ventures away from, and the return to, the tonal centers of the phrases.

### **Rhythm**

The rhythm of “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim” gives as much focus to sustained pitches and silence as it does to movement and pitches. In the accompaniment’s introduction, there is as much silence and stillness as there is music. Each note of the introduction carries a great deal of weight as Thomas allows for each chord not only to be heard,

but also for it to resound. There is a definite calm achieved through the sustained chords and the silences found throughout the piece. This speaks to the calmness of the piece, but also represents the openness of time and space. It captures the atmosphere and environment.

The rhythm of the opening motive also should be used in identifying future illustrations of this motive. The whole note in the first measure, the quarter with a dotted half note in the second and third measures, and the quarter note ascension to the sustained high pitch (A) with the quarter note turn (G, A) is used again later (Example 4.3). The next phrase reveals rhythmic ties to the preceding phrase. M. 26 through 28 alludes to the opening phrase through the sustained E $\flat$  (Example 4.11).

Contrary to the first section with its phrases filled with rubato, the section surrounding the second figure (mm. 51 through 82) should strive for a steady beat with only slight flexibility. This gives the contrast necessary for new discovery. The constant quarter note ostinato in the accompaniment provides subtle motion. The phrases of the third section incorporate much use of forward motion with quarter notes concluding in a sustained final chord. This creates a sense of both motion and rest. The final section (mm. 112 through 145) consists largely of accompanimental chords that are firmly planted in the first beat. These strong chords aid in propelling the vocal line forward. This gives a sense of realization and discovery as the accompaniment (indicating the environment and setting) leads the narrator into a deeper meaning through these figures.

Thomas uses rhythm also in emphasizing text in the song. M. 48 is a subtle example of this. The use of the dotted quarter with the eighth note in the triplet gives emphasis to the word “first” on the half note. This rhythmic text emphasis occurs again in mm. 71 through 73 as

Thomas sets the repeating “Who are you” questions to quick and choppy eighth note segments (Example 4.13).

**Example 4.13.** “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” mm. 71-75.

The musical score for Example 4.13 consists of three staves. The top staff is a bass line with measures 71 through 75 numbered above it. The middle staff is a vocal line with the lyrics "are you? Who are you? Who are you my dear" written below it. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. A mezzo-piano (mp) dynamic marking is present in measure 73 of the piano accompaniment.

This jolts the listener out of the smooth and lyrical groove that had previously been set and gives extra desperation to this search for understanding.

The text through this first section also is expressed through varying meters – 4/4, 3/4, 5/4, and 2/2. This keeps the beat slightly obscured and brings even more focus to the text. The succeeding sections where the narrating soldier is examining the first and second figures is composed in almost strictly 3/4 meter. This gives a tender and lilting softness to these sections. The final section, examining the Christ-like figure, returns to the original idea of changing meters.

### **Growth**

“A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim” is comprised of four sections. The first section centers around the text giving the introductory setting and atmosphere. This occurs in mm. 1 through 50. This section has a sparse and open accompaniment.

The next contrasting section spans from mm. 51 through 82. This hymn-like, third section, is found in mm. 83 through 111.

The final section, mm. 113 through 145, is actually quite similar to the first section in its sparse accompaniment and harmonies. When assigning letters to these sections, the form would best be labeled as ABCA'.

### **Performance Practice**

Curiosity must fill the vocal timbre throughout “A Sight in Camp.” The soldier wandering through camp is seeking meaning. Sleepless, perhaps from a troubled mind, he wanders the camp. As he comes upon three covered figures, he analyzes each one and compares the final to Christ Himself. This musical moment must be always tied to the dramatic element. The performer must be constantly seeking the curiosity, discovery, and wonderment of each figure as the tale unfolds. As the final figure becomes the embodiment of all good of humanity in the form of “Christ himself,” the uncovering of the first two figures must change the narrator as each discovery leads toward that final culmination. Each word must become new territory for the performer, as is exemplified in mm. 35 through 37 as the narrator clarifies the details of the blanket, “ample brownish woolen blanket...gray and heavy blanket.” The contradiction in colors is exemplary of life. It’s an expression of being “in the moment.”

Supporting the drama of the story is the silence of the music. The performer must not fear this silence, as it greatly heightens the emotion of the story. Do not rush the rests, but instead, settle into the silence and let it become comfortable. Relish it.

Caution should be given to pitch as well. As mentioned earlier, the accompaniment is sparse and leaves the vocalist exposed. Mm. 37 through 39 (Example 4.8) exemplify difficult interval leaps that are not supported by robust accompaniment.

Tempo should also be carefully approached. Too much rubato might cause the singer to become inappropriately melodramatic. Slight tempo adjustments are acceptable, but a sense of a steady beat moving through the piece is necessary.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### “DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS”

#### “Dirge for Two Veterans”

**Range:** B $\flat$ 2 – G4

**Tessitura:** Moderately High

**Tempo:** Andante; Quarter note = 116

**Meters:** 6/4, 3/4, 7/4, 10/4, 9/4, 6/8, 9/8

**Difficulty:** Vocal – Difficult; Piano – Moderately Difficult

Continuing the solemn and pensive mood created in “A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim,” “Dirge for Two Veterans” moves the narrator through a return visit in the study of the environment of war and its effect on two more fallen soldiers. The piece also sets the tone for the following “Vigil” as the narrator gives focus to what he can offer to the dead.

#### Text

The last sunbeam lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath, on the pavement here,  
And there beyond it is looking, down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending, up from the east the silvery round moon,  
Beautiful over the housetops, ghastly, phantom moon, immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession, And I hear the sound of coming full-key'd bugles,  
All the channels of the city street are flooding, As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding, and the small drums steady whirring,  
And every blow of the great convulsive drums strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father (In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault  
they fell,  
Two veterans son and father dropt together, And the double-grave awaits them).

Now nearer blow the bugles, And the drums strike more convulsive,  
and the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,

And the strong dead-march enwraps me.  
O strong dead-march you please me!

O moon immense with silvery face you soothe me!  
O my soldiers twain!  
O my veterans passing to burial! What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light, and the bugles and the drums give you music,  
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans My heart gives you love.

In setting Whitman's poem, Thomas chose to omit the seventh stanza: "In the eastern sky  
up-buoying, The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd; ('Tis some mother's large,  
transparent face, In heaven, brighter growing.)."

Whitman enhances the mood of his poem with multiple adjectives to describe visible objects. The moon is described in the opening lines of the poem with seven different adjectives, some of which appear to be contradictory in nature: silver, round, beautiful, ghastly, phantom, immense, and silent. This gives added presence to the picture. Whitman pairs very different adjectives together such as following "beautiful" with "ghastly." Thomas captures this brilliantly in his musical setting as he gives musical space after the phrase "beautiful over the housetops," giving time for thought before trudging into "ghastly." Pitching this adjective a perfect fifth below the foundation of the previous phrase, the adjective becomes completely separated from the preceding.

Whitman also uses personification as he describes the effect of the drums – "every blow of the great convulsive drums strikes me through and through." Each blow hits the narrator hard as if it resounds through his body. The use of the word "strikes," with its percussive sound, carries an aggressive and hurtful connotation. Whitman also charges the poem with added intensity in the looming phrase "Now nearer blow the bugles, and the drums strike more convulsive." He intensifies the coming fear and anticipation of the approaching battle, and he intensifies the action stating that it has become "convulsive," implying chaos and disorder.

Whitman also creates a unique shift in tone as the narrator reaches a point of peace with the chaos surrounding him. The fear, lack of safety, and darkness becomes encompassing with phrases like, “the daylight o’er the pavement quite has faded” and “the strong dead-march enwraps me;” however, immediately thereafter, Whitman throws a twist into the poem with the phrase, “O strong dead-march you please me.” One might wonder from where this change comes? Perhaps it is a shift in the narrator’s perspective as he realizes that the dead-march honors the veterans’ passing to burial. The verbs following this shift also support this change from ominous and encroaching (“strike,” “faded,” “pounding,” and “whirring”) to peaceful and contented (“sooth,” “enwraps,” and “please”). It reveals that the narrator has come to a sense of peace in the situation.

### **Sound**

Similar to “Beat, Beat Drums,” stasis again appears in “Dirge for Two Veterans;” however, the stasis is different in its style. Instead of resembling a machine, as “Beat, Beat Drums” often accomplishes through its relentless and driving motion, the stasis found in “Dirge for Two Veterans” has a warmth and hypnotic softness.

The beginning of “Dirge for Two Veterans” reveals a narrator that reports the scene. The opening lines of the voice are quite simple in its presentation, while the accompaniment and vocal lines with their gentle and sentimental repetitions stimulate a high emotional air.

It is with this “Dirge” that Thomas brings back the sound of the bugles and drums. The bugle calls again are represented in the higher register and the drums remain in the lower bass accompaniment. The bugle appears in mm. 29 through 51, as it is ushered in by the text: “And I hear the sound of coming full-key’d bugles.” Continuing the text painting, Thomas has the



drums appear in m. 52 with the text: “I hear the great drums pounding, and the small drums steady whirring.”

M. 114 finds the piano bursting into a new color with the unison octave trumpet call (Example 5.1).

**Example 5.1.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” m. 114.



This charges a new section and changes the mood from a reporting of the scene to action full of urgency and forward motion. The text with its declaration of “Now nearer blow the bugles” begins the sharp and contrasting movement into more powerful territory. With the text, “And the drums strike,” the accompaniment begins to unravel an agitated growth through dissonant harmony.

As mentioned above, the text has a sharp shift in perspective after the phrase, “And the strong dead-march enwraps me.” Thomas is perceptive of this shift as he changes the setting of the music after this line. From the menacing and dissonant section in mm. 114 through 144, Thomas revives the lightness found earlier in the song in m. 145 (Example 5.2).

Thomas creates the climax in m. 180, with Thomas labeling this and the three succeeding measures as “shrill” (Example 5.3). Strangely, the shrillness doesn’t come from the dissonance as the notes are C and G with an added sixth (A $\flat$ ).

**Example 5.2.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 145-151.

145 *f* 146

wraps

8va

147 148 149 150 151

(8va) me.

**Example 5.3.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 180-183.

*ff* 180 181 182 183

you.

8va

*fff* shrill

Instead, it comes from the very high register and the loud, percussive beating of the accompaniment. A sudden descent in pitch and emotion occurs in m. 184 where an undulating presence of the repeated low F accompanies a “quiet after the storm” (Example 5.4).

**Example 5.4.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 184-188.

184 185 186 187 188

*ff sfz sfz sfz sfz*

Finally, Thomas brings back the drums and bugle in m. 217 as he brings the piece to a close. The concluding six measures bring these two into sharp contrast as the drum and bugle appear in direct alternation (Example 5.5).

**Example 5.5.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 222-225 and 230-235.

222 223 224 225

*f sfz sfz sfz sfz*

*(8va)*

230 231 232 233 234 235

*short pause, then attacca*

The piece is composed in almost exclusive homophonic texture with occasional moments of monophonic texture. Mm. 23 through 28 utilize several moments where the accompaniment

drops out from under the vocal line, leaving the single melodic line. The *a cappella* moments fall under monophonic texture.

### **Harmony**

As “Dirge for Two Veterans” begins, it quickly becomes apparent that Thomas incorporates only four notes in the first five measures: D $\flat$ , E $\flat$ , F, and A $\flat$  (Example 5.6). These notes create a tonic chord with the added second (E $\flat$ ). As these first measures unfold, the chord expands outward, first moving into low bass territory in m. 3 and then upward in 4 and 5. After this extended pattern, Thomas adds a B $\flat$  and C in m. 6, implying a Lydian mode.

**Example 5.6.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 1-6.

The image displays a musical score for measures 1 through 6 of the piece "Dirge for Two Veterans". The score is written for a string quartet, with four staves. The tempo is marked "Adagio" and the time signature is 4/4. The key signature has three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). Measures 1-4 are marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic, and measures 5-6 are marked with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The first staff is labeled "tre corde" in measure 1. The score shows a progression of chords and intervals across the measures, with the first five measures focusing on the notes D-flat, E-flat, F, and A-flat.

This harmony lingers, floating until mm. 14 through 16. As observed in previous songs of the cycle, specific intervals play a key role in the harmonic identity of the song. “Dirge for

Two Veterans” is no exception, as the perfect fifth and the tritone take precedence. Thomas brings this to the forefront in the vocal line of 15 and 16 as he alternates tritones and perfect fifths (tritones – E $\flat$  to B $\flat\flat$  and C to G $\flat$ ; enharmonic perfect fifths – B $\flat\flat$  to D $\sharp$  and G $\flat$  to C $\flat$ ) (Example 5.7).

**Example 5.7.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 14-16.

Example 5.7 shows measures 14, 15, and 16 of the piece. The vocal line (top staff) is in 6/4 time. Measure 14 has the lyrics "there be-yond it is". Measure 15 has "look-ing, Down— a". Measure 16 has "new-made doub-le grave." The accompaniment consists of two staves below the vocal line. The key signature has two flats (B $\flat$  and E $\flat$ ).

Also worth noting is Thomas’s use of the chromatic scale in mm. 19 through 24. The E $\flat$  descends to C in 20 and remains there until it continues its descent in m. 22 to G $\flat$  in 24 (Example 5.8).

**Example 5.8.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 19-24.

Example 5.8 shows measures 19 through 24. The vocal line (top staff) starts in measure 19 with a forte (*f*) dynamic and continues through measure 24. The lyrics are "Lo, the moon— as - cend-ing, — Up from the". The accompaniment consists of two staves below the vocal line, starting in measure 19 with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The key signature has two flats (B $\flat$  and E $\flat$ ).

21 22 23 24

east the sil-ver-y round moon, Beau-ti-ful o-ver the house-tops,

This chromatic harmony also appears in mm. 43 through 48 as the descent along the chromatic scale, when compressed, is in thirds (Example 5.9). The line begins with D and moves to the pairing of D $\flat$  with B $\flat$ . The line continues with the pairing of C and A in 45, and B and G $\sharp$  in 46.

**Example 5.9.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 43-52.

43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52

All the chan-nels of the ci-ty street are flood-ing, As with voi-ces and with tears.

*sfz* *p* *pp* *ma marcato*

tempo di ma

Beginning in m. 29, a section of polytonality begins as the accompaniment and vocal line branch into different keys. Mm. 29 through 50 find the accompaniment firmly rooted in E

Major. In mm. 41 through 42 Thomas adds a bugle call in F major in the left hand. The melody in this section begins in C Dorian mode. This mode is particularly useful in creating a tritone between the lowered second and the fifth scale degrees which is exploited in m. 39. The melody then shifts to C Major in m. 40.

The inner voices also add increased interest in mm. 62 through 64 as the tenor line ascends through increased dissonance, first moving to a major second, then a minor second, and finally reaching a point of consonance in m. 64 as it moves into the alto line with a minor third (Example 5.10). In return, the alto then seems to search for consonance in mm. 68 through 71. It only comes upon extreme dissonance with two tritones in m. 70 before it finally reaches its consonance in m. 71 (Example 5.10).

**Example 5.10.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 62-64 and 68-71.

The image displays a musical score for the piece "Dirge for Two Veterans," specifically focusing on measures 62-64 and 68-71. The score is written for voice and piano. The top system shows measures 62, 63, and 64. The vocal line (soprano) has the lyrics "pound-ing. And the small drums" under these measures. The piano accompaniment features a complex texture with multiple staves. The bottom system shows measures 68, 69, 70, and 71. The vocal line has the word "And" under measure 71. The piano accompaniment continues with intricate harmonic and melodic patterns. The score is written in a key with one sharp (F#) and a common time signature.

The tonality of mm. 52 through 79 remains largely in D major, particularly in the accompaniment. In m. 80, the tonality then shifts to E $\flat$  major with a lingering D in the accompaniment (Example 5.11). The D seems to be out of place, but in fact, is acting as a pedal tone as it creates tension.

**Example 5.11.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” m. 80.



Beginning in m. 94, the alto line displays melodic flair. Mm. 94 and 95 reveal a menacing motive that is repeated in 97 and 98 (Example 5.12). In 103 through 106, the alto begins to mimic the vocal line.

In m. 107, Thomas shifts the harmony to give added dissonance. M. 90 through 106 find an E $\flat$  pitted against an F, and in m. 107, the F becomes flatted to create harsh dissonance.

Thomas then uses this F $\flat$  with the other notes in the mode (B $\flat$ , A $\flat$ , and G $\flat$ ) in building the intensity through m. 114.

The new beginning in m. 114 simultaneously displays great unity as well as great dissonance as the accompaniment shifts up to octave B $\sharp$ 's above octave C's in the bass (Example 5.13). This new section expands through a minor third in m. 118 to a full B major chord in 120.



**Example 5.12.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 94-95, 97-98, and 103-108.

Example 5.12 shows measures 94-108 of the piece. Measures 94 and 95 are in the upper system, with measure 94 containing a whole note and measure 95 a whole rest. Measures 97 and 98 are in the lower system, with measure 97 containing a whole note and measure 98 a whole note. The lyrics "fore - most ranks of the" are written below measure 97. Measures 103-108 are in the lower system, with measure 103 containing a whole note and measure 104 a whole note. The lyrics "vet-erans son and fa-ther dropt to - ge-ther, And the" are written below measure 103. The score includes a piano (*p*) dynamic marking in measure 107.

**Example 5.13.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 114-120.

Example 5.13 shows measures 114-120 of the piece. Measures 114 and 115 are in the upper system, with measure 114 containing a whole note and measure 115 a whole note. Measures 116-120 are in the lower system, with measure 116 containing a whole note and measure 117 a whole note. The lyrics "Now near - er blow the bu-gles," are written below measure 116. The score includes a forte (*f*) dynamic marking in measure 116, a *marcato* marking in measure 117, a *meno f* marking in measure 118, and a *con ped.* marking in measure 119.

The tritone makes its reappearance in mm. 132 through 138. The tritone of B to F is first explored with eighth notes as B in the bass is placed against F, but it takes full prominence as both pitches are pounded out simultaneously three measures later (Example 5.14).

**Example 5.14.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 134-135.

Example 5.14 shows measures 134 and 135. Measure 134 features a vocal line starting on a whole note B4, followed by a half note F#4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment consists of a single quarter note B4. Measure 135 features a vocal line starting on a whole note F#4, followed by a half note G4, and a quarter note A4. The piano accompaniment consists of a single quarter note F#4. The lyrics "And the day - light" are written below the vocal line. The dynamic marking *f* is present above measure 134, and *mf* is present below measure 135.

This tritone “assault” lasts for four measures. The tritone returns in the vocal line of mm. 144 through 145 in the ascent from B to F# (Example 5.15).

**Example 5.15.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 144-145.

Example 5.15 shows measures 144 and 145. Measure 144 features a vocal line starting on a whole note B4, followed by a half note F#4, and a quarter note G4. The piano accompaniment consists of a single quarter note B4. Measure 145 features a vocal line starting on a whole note F#4, followed by a half note G4, and a quarter note A4. The piano accompaniment consists of a single quarter note F#4. The lyrics "dead - march en - wraps" are written below the vocal line. The dynamic marking *f* is present above measure 145. The tempo marking "Drum Taps" is present above measure 144.

The B/F tritone appears again in the right hand of the accompaniment in mm. 160 through 162.

The tritones finally appear in mm. 222 between the F and B# in the alto. It also appears between the soprano and alto in 223 with the simultaneous playing of C# and G. The alto in 222 through 225 also exhibits much chromaticism, particularly in its descent from E to C (Example 5.5).

In 147 through 151 (Example 5.2), Thomas takes the last few notes of the bugle call and replays them three times in a cyclical mode. This bugle call is brought back in m. 217 and remains through the end of the piece (Example 5.5).

In 191 through 199, the vocal line weaves through an F minor seventh chord. This is countered in the accompaniment by a descending chromatic line in the left hand (Example 5.16). The line then inverts into an ascending chromatic line in 199 through 201. The chromatic descent is again found in 208 through 214.

**Example 5.16.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 191-201.

The musical score for measures 191-201 of "Dirge for Two Veterans" is presented in three systems. The first system (measures 191-194) shows the vocal line in treble clef with lyrics "moon gives you light, And the". The piano accompaniment is in bass clef, featuring a descending chromatic line in the left hand and a melody in the right hand with three *sfz* markings. The second system (measures 195-198) continues the vocal line with lyrics "bu-gles and the drums give you mu-sic, And my heart, O my". The piano accompaniment continues with the descending chromatic line in the left hand and a melody in the right hand. The third system (measures 199-201) shows the vocal line with lyrics "sol-diers,". The piano accompaniment continues with the descending chromatic line in the left hand and a melody in the right hand.

Just as Thomas used a cyclical mode in mm. 147 through 151, he again uses a repeating mode in mm. 225 through 230 (Example 5.17). This overlapping series aids in the movement toward the final chords of the piece. The motion moves the final measures toward the conclusion.

**Example 5.17.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 225-230.

**Melody**

The first melodic material in “Dirge for Two Veterans” is found in the accompaniment. Serving as a sign of upcoming melodic ideas, the accompaniment starts the piece with a stagnant repetition of the tonic D $\flat$  (Example 5.18).

**Example 5.18.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 1-3 and 9-11.

This sets up and leads into the vocal melody in m. 9, as the vocal line imitates the stagnancy originally found in the accompaniment, this time pitched on the mediant F. These static lines that open the piece create a pensive mood.

The opening measures reveal a melody that is chant-like as it revolves around F. This chant-like melody remains smooth and even until it becomes troubled in mm. 15 and 16 with the mention of the “new-made double-grave” (Example 5.19).

**Example 5.19.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 13-16.

13 14 15 16

— and there be-yond it is looking, Down— a new-made doub - le grave.

*p*

One interpretation of this is that this is text-painting where calmness pervades the atmosphere except for this troubled double-grave.

This line almost avoids the tonic D $\flat$  entirely in the opening section. In fact, the only D $\flat$  of major significance occurs in m. 21. It then picks up and progresses back into its wandering melodic path.

It is important to note that the melody in mm. 9 to 13, 14 through 16 (Example 5.19), and again in 21 through 24 follows the pattern of being a winding descent. These each display melodic ideas that descend, but Thomas incorporates deceptive ascending leaps before leaping back to the descending line. At the end of each descent, the melody recharges with a leap back

to the higher register where another descent is presented. This pattern is reversed to an ascending line in mm. 25 through 28 (Example 5.20).

**Example 5.20.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 25-28.

Example 5.20 shows measures 25 through 28 of the piece. The vocal line (top staff) begins in measure 25 with a piano (*p*) dynamic, featuring a triplet of eighth notes. The lyrics are "ghast-ly, phan-tom moon, Im - mense and si - lent moon." The accompaniment consists of two staves below the vocal line. The left staff has a piano (*p*) dynamic and a triplet of eighth notes. The right staff has a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 6/8.

Surrounding the triadic and chromatic descent of mm. 43 through 46 (see above “Harmony” section) are melodies that revolve largely around the tonic to dominant five-note scales. Mm. 35 through 41 abide predominantly in the notes between C and G in the C Dorian mode (Example 5.21), and mm. 60 through 67 consistently remain between D and A in the D major scale.

**Example 5.21.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 35-41.

Example 5.21 shows measures 35 through 41. The vocal line (top staff) begins in measure 35 with a piano (*p*) dynamic and the instruction "hushed". The lyrics are "I see a sad pro - ces-sion, And I hear the sound of com-ing full-key'd bu-gles, a tem". The accompaniment consists of two staves below the vocal line. The left staff has a piano (*p*) dynamic and a forte (*sfz*) dynamic. The right staff has a piano (*p*) dynamic and a forte (*sfz*) dynamic. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats), and the time signature is 6/8.

Thomas captures well the emotion behind the succeeding text, “and every blow of the great convulsive drums strikes me through and through.” The melody in mm. 72 through 75

sounds trite, which is particularly noticeable as it is set directly before the more grounded, thoughtful, and even somber, “strikes me through and through” in mm. 76 through 81.

Thomas chooses to create a dramatic climb beginning in m. 90 as he pitches the melody in a slow ascent from E $\flat$  to B $\flat$  in m. 101. Following this ascent is a series of pitch waves in mm. 102 through 111 (Example 5.12). These “waves” follow a direct sequence as they descend and ascend. Even more significant, the ascents become build-ups to a slightly sustained climax, which is followed by a diminished drop-off in the descent. This pattern is witnessed again three times in mm. 124 through 148.

Beginning in m. 152, the vocal line, while again exhibiting this “wave pattern,” becomes very melodically focused as the line becomes more sustained and lyrical, as opposed to the previous lines which focused on the text with declamatory lines. This sustained line reaches its peak in mm. 175 through 183 as the line only completes half of the “wave pattern” thus reaching an ultimate climax on G4.

The concluding section of the vocal line presents a recapitulation of the chant-like melody found in the opening of the vocal line, again revolving around F as it unravels its F minor seventh chord.

**Example 5.22.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 199-208.

heart, O my

201 202 203 204 205 206 poco rit. espress. 207 208

sol - diers, my vet - erans, My heart gives you love.

poco rit. colla voce

*sfz*  
*ff*

Fittingly, Thomas uses the wave pattern one final time to draw the vocal line to its close with a gradual descent from the section's climax in m. 199 through the end of the vocal line (Example 5.22).

### **Rhythm**

Thomas sets the rhythms of “Dirge for Two Veterans” in an alternating series of long (L) and short (S) durations. The opening accompaniment line begins with this series: [L SSS L; LL SS L L SSS L L SSSSS LL S L SSSS LL]. This pattern of alternating long and short rhythms induces a sense of propulsion countered by a recurringly subtle, but sudden halt. This gentle halt, having been propelled by multiple shorter rhythms gives a sense of sudden floating.

The song also ventures through moderate tempo fluctuations. The piece begins labeled “Andante” with a quarter note marking of 116, but slightly accelerates in m. 29 to dotted quarter note beats of 120 as it is marked “Allegro.” The tempo continues to increase in m. 52 to the dotted quarter beat of 126. Thomas marks this new section *Tempo di marcia, non troppo* meaning a march tempo and moderately (“not too much”).

Another rhythmic characteristic in the song becomes the quick, eighth note drop-offs that appear in the closing portion of each musical phrase. These drop-offs begin appearing in m. 103



and return in mm. 105 and 106 (Example 5.12), mm. 110 and 111, m. 120, and mm. 131 and 132.

Added tension is created through a pitting of rhythms featuring two beats per measure against rhythms featuring three beats per measure beginning in m. 91 and continuing through 111 (Example 5.12). These two against three rhythms set up additional conflict between the vocal line and the accompaniment, but also keep variety in the vocal line as these alternate between individual measures. Rhythmic interplay between the vocal line and the accompaniment continues to be evidenced in mm. 114 through 144. The varying rhythms in the octave B's of the accompaniment again contrast against the changing rhythms of the vocal line.

### **Growth**

The form of “Dirge for Two Veterans” can best be labeled as ABCA'. The opening section, A, spans from mm. 1 through 28, where it is characterized by the stagnant vocal and accompanimental lines as well as the slow, mysterious lines. Section B is found in mm. 29 through 113. This portion of the song focuses on the “dead-march” that is discussed in the text and is musically represented by a “trumpet call” motive that is initially found in the accompaniment in mm. 29 through 34 (Example 5.23).

**Example 5.23.** “Dirge for Two Veterans,” mm. 29-34.

The musical score for Example 5.23, "Dirge for Two Veterans," measures 29-34, is presented in 8/8 time. It consists of three staves. The top staff is a bass line with measures 29-34. The middle staff is a vocal line with measures 29-34, starting with a *sfz* dynamic and the instruction "shrill, but from a distance". The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment line with measures 29-34, starting with a *p* dynamic and an *sfz* dynamic. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

This “dead-march” motive is not only used extensively through this section, but is also referenced in the following Section C in mm. 145 through 159. This motive enters in the middle of the phrase “And the strong dead-march enwraps me” and continues to repeat as it becomes temporarily caught in a repetitive pattern. Section C is found in mm. 114 through 183. This section is characterized by a strong marcato, as its percussive relentlessness leads directly to the violent pounding of the climax. The concluding section, A', stretches from mm. 184 through the concluding measure, 235. This section begins by echoing the stagnancy of the accompaniment and vocal lines in the opening section of the song. Interestingly, Thomas chooses to begin this stagnancy by using the rhythms of the “dead-march” motive from Section B. This stagnancy continues until the concluding piano lines which once again draw on the “dead-march” motive.

The overarching journey of “Dirge for Two Veterans” is a broad crescendo that stretches across the majority of the piece. The song builds from its calm and pensive introduction through the intensifying “dead-march” motives and ends with a shrill explosion in mm. 180 through 183 (Example 5.3). The measures following the climax project the resounding calm (which only brings added attention to the full strength of the climax).

### **Performance Practice**

In performing “Dirge for Two Veterans,” the vocalist must work to create an even legato through the opening phrases. As the line remains stagnant on the F, the vocalist must enhance the text through diction and slight accentuation. The chromatic moments that are found in the vocal line may require extra attention from the vocalist as many of the intervals are unexpected, and making the maneuvering of these intervals even more difficult is the bareness of the accompaniment under several of these (i.g. mm. 25 through 28, Example 5.20). Efforts should also be made by the vocalist to maintain the legato through these chromatic segments.

In Section B, the vocalist should add marcato to the vocal line to give added presence and to indicate a change in mood. Mm. 43 through 52 (Example 5.9) call for a temporary return of the legato line. This marcato should remain a presence in Section C as well until m. 152.

Caution should also be given to avoid reaching a false climax in m. 145. This is a strong point most assuredly, but the singer should withhold enough to give a stronger climax in m. 180. The measures in the concluding section should be sung in a restrained manner, with a slightly mysterious timbre for the phrase, “The moon gives you light, and the bugles and the drums give you music.” The vocalist can warm the sound with the phrase, “And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans, My heart gives you love.”

## CHAPTER SIX

### “VIGIL”

#### “Vigil”

**Range:** A $\flat$ 2 – G $\flat$ 4

**Tessitura:** Covering Range

**Tempo:** Dotted-half note = 66

**Meters:** 6/4, 9/4, 12/4, 3/2, 2/2, 5/4, 4/2, 7/4, 3/4, 4/4,

**Difficulty:** Vocal – Difficult; Piano – Difficult

Concluding “Drum Taps” is the highly dramatic “Vigil.” The song is the emotional climax of the piece, even as this is achieved in a quiet affectivity. As the piece centers on an ethereal middle section, a “vigil,” Thomas brings the narrator, and thus the audience, to the brink of the vigil, through the healing of the vigil, and finally moving on after the vigil is complete. This piano interlude, which lasts approximately three minutes and forty seconds, represents the vigil and is highly unusual in its length. It is rare for an art song to give such lengthy emphasis to the accompaniment in an interlude. This gives evidence that the song embodies more than the voice, the music, or even the text, but instead is an amalgamation of all three. They all join together in serving the story, which is the ultimate connection with the audience, and in this, the audience also has opportunity to attend the vigil.

#### Text

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night,  
When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side that day,  
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a look I shall never forget,  
One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as you lay on the ground,  
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested battle,  
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again I made my way,  
Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body son of responding kisses,  
(never again on earth responding,)...  
...Long there and then in vigil I stood,

Dimly around me the battlefield spreading,  
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet  
there in the fragrant silent night,  
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh,  
long, long I gazed...  
...Passing sweet hours,  
Immortal and mystic hours with you dearest comrade  
not a tear, not a word,  
Vigil of silence, love and death,...

...Till at latest lingering of the night,  
Indeed just as the dawn appear'd,  
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket...  
...and bathed by the rising sun,  
my son in his grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,  
Ending my vigil strange with that,  
vigil of night and battlefield dim,  
Vigil for boy of responding kisses,  
(never again on earth responding,)  
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain,  
Vigil I never forget, how as day brighten'd,  
I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in his blanket,  
And buried him where he fell,  
where he fell.

Certainly Whitman captures the emotion and raw spontaneity of a battlefield vigil in his poem "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night." The narrator begins the poem speaking in the first person, but the narrator's audience changes between the opening and the conclusion of the poem. The opening finds the speaker talking directly to the comrade. This then blooms into a strange, but peaceful monologue as it immediately becomes apparent that the narrator is speaking, in the past tense, to a comrade that has died in a previous battle. The concluding phrases shift to find the narrator speaking to the reader about the comrade and the vigil.

The opening phrases also reveal relational information between the narrator and the soldier. The first name given to the soldier is "my son." This reference is very personal and suggests the narrator served as a mentor and father figure in his relationship with the dead

soldier. Immediately thereafter, the narrator names the soldier as “my comrade” implying also a fraternal relationship and a bond developed in battle.

The only direct interaction between the narrator and the comrade occurs in the following line, one of the most gripping lines of the poem, “One look I but gave which your dear eyes returned with a look I shall never forget.” The line has greater meaning than a simple exchange of looks. The emotion and feeling in the eyes of the falling soldier becomes an expression mingled with grief, sadness, fear, surprise, and utter disappointment. The visual interaction between these two characters then progresses to a physical one as the touch of the hand follows.

Whitman’s repetitions reveal what he desires to emphasize. His phrase “onward I sped in the battle” is directly followed by “the even-contested battle.” It appears that the original line doesn’t fully capture the nature of the situation. Whitman then expounds upon the battle situation. As Whitman describes this battle as “even-contested,” he is giving another clue of the high stakes occurring in the conflict.

The phrase “son of responding kisses (never again on earth responding,)” carries great weight as this name is mentioned not only in the opening lines, but is restated in the concluding section. The phrase carries great intimacy and while never fully explained by Whitman, could indicate either a father and son relationship or perhaps the connotation of a lover. It is after this phrase that Thomas chooses to remove “Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool blew the moderate night-wind” from Whitman’s poem.

Another removal of text appears after the phrase “long, long I gazed” where Whitman’s poem continues, “Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side leaning my chin in my hands.” Shortly thereafter, following the line, “Vigil of silence, love, and death,” Thomas chooses to remove this section of text, “vigil for you my son and my soldier, As onward silently

stars aloft, eastward new ones upward stole, Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift was your death, I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we shall surely meet again).”

The phrase “long there and then in vigil I stood” reveals that the vigil itself didn’t start as soon as the soldier returned. “Long there” implies time spent before the actual vigil began. This vigil did not progress as one would expect. With the phrases “vigil wondrous” and “vigil sweet,” Whitman is contradicting the readers’ ideas that this was a time of great sorrow and bitterness. “Not a tear fell,” supports the idea as well, but Whitman enhances this as he adds, “not even a long-drawn sigh.” The vigil itself is summarized in three words: “Vigil of silence, love, and death.” This statement summarizes the elements of the vigil: silence for the inner spirit, love for the emotional connection, and death - not carrying connotations of grief, but simply the element of reality.

Whitman’s original text also reads, “My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop’d well his form, Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and carefully under feet, And there and then and bathed by the rising sun...” Thomas cuts directly from “My comrade I wrapt in his blanket” to “and bathed by the rising sun.” Thomas seems to understand that in cutting these lines he is simply cutting additional burial preparation. The phrase “bathed by the rising sun” carries the idea of a ceremonial cleansing. The body is prepared for burial.

The word “vigil” is used in the concluding lines five times within six short phrases. The entire song uses the word ten times, and Whitman’s original poem uses the term twelve times. The constant return of the term gives great emphasis to the word. The conclusion of the physical vigil occurs as the body is deposited in the “rude-dug grave,” but the idea of the vigil is continually remembered throughout the concluding section.

## Sound

The opening of “Vigil” opens with strong, heavy octave D’s which are placed in middle to low registers. This prepares the piece for the largely monophonic texture that occurs in the opening section, lasting through m. 22. In fact, the accompaniment and vocal line move in Puccini-like fashion almost exclusively in parallel octaves (Example 6.1). There are sustained pitches which break the strict definition of monophony; nevertheless, it becomes apparent that Thomas is setting these opening bars specifically with a monophonic texture in mind.

**Example 6.1.** “Vigil,” mm. 1-6.

The image displays a musical score for the first six measures of the piece "Vigil". The score is written for three staves: a vocal line and two piano accompaniment staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 6/4. The vocal line begins with a rest in measure 1, followed by the lyrics "Vi - gil strange I kept on the field. — one night, — When" in measures 2 and 3. The piano accompaniment features sustained octaves in the right hand and moving lines in the left hand. Dynamic markings include *sfz*, *ff*, *mf sub.*, and *f*. The score continues with measures 5 and 6, with lyrics "you my son and my com-rade dropt at my side — that day, — One". The piano accompaniment continues with sustained octaves and moving lines, with dynamic markings *mf* and *f*.

Mm. 23 through 71 create a languid atmosphere, not unlike calm after a storm. This is created through sparse accompaniment, elongated phrases, stretched rhythms, and an abundance



of descending melody. These characteristics all combine in expressing the exhausted state of the narrator, emotionally and physically.

As is frequent in Thomas's music, he moves between sparse and dense textures in "Vigil." This is seen in a small segment in mm. 45 through 49 (Example 6.2), as the accompaniment opens out into a very hollow and open chord in m. 47. This immediately begins its return to a tighter, denser texture found in 48 and 49.

**Example 6.2.** "Vigil," mm. 45-49.

45 *p* But not a tear—fell, 46 47 not e-ven a long-drawn sigh, 48 49

Thomas begins to move the piece into a rocking motion in mm. 50 through 51. This rocking (detailed under Melody and Rhythm) section, continues through m. 66. The accompaniment in m. 64 gives slightly added movement toward 65, dropping out and leaving the vocalist exposed before it comments again in 65 and 66 (Example 6.3).

**Example 6.3.** "Vigil," mm. 64-70.

64 not a tear, 65 not a word, 66 67 Vi-gil of si-lence, love and death,... 69 70

*pp*  
*rall.*  
*u. c.*  
*molto rit.*

Thomas makes a bold choice in mm. 71 through 129. He chooses to paint the vigil itself with a lengthy piano interlude. As it lasts approximately three minutes, forty seconds, the vigil interlude becomes the focus point of the song. One of the ways that Thomas speaks through this vigil is by presenting varied melodic material in one hand while the other hand presents a static line. An interpretation of this idea is that the melodic material represents the thoughts of the narrator as he thinks about the life of his comrade and the static line represents the passing of time that occurs during this vigil.

These lines (static and melodic) are shifted between the right and left hands in the vigil. For example, the melodic material is found in the left hand in mm. 75 through 85 (Example 6.4).

**Example 6.4.** “Vigil,” mm. 75-80.

The musical score for Example 6.4, "Vigil," mm. 75-80, is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 75 through 78, and the second system contains measures 79 through 80. The right hand, indicated by a treble clef, plays a static line of whole notes. The left hand, indicated by a bass clef, plays a melodic line consisting of eighth and sixteenth notes. The key signature features one flat (B-flat), and the time signature transitions from 3/4 to 4/4 between measures 76 and 77. The score begins with a piano (p) dynamic and an expressive (espress.) marking. A double bar line with repeat dots is placed at the end of measure 80.

A shift occurs in mm. 87 and 88 as the right hand takes the melodic material in 89 through 106. Mm. 107 through 112 again find the melodic material in the left hand. Through these melodic shifts, the line that represents the passing of time also shifts to the opposite hand. Interestingly, mm. 114 through 128 reveal mostly melodic interaction between both the right and left hands (Example 6.5).

**Example 6.5.** “Vigil,” mm. 114-119.

114 115 116 117 118 119

*ppp molto espress.*

*pp*

(D) u. c.

(B)

Reo.

This could, perhaps, be representative of the loss of all time awareness as the narrator becomes more enraptured in the thoughts of the life of his comrade. M. 128 finds the halt of this motion with a full five beats of silence following this halt. This “return to reality” is then depicted in the return of the rocking figure in m. 130 (Example 6.6). The static nature of the rocking also reminds of the return of the “passing of time.”

**Example 6.6.** “Vigil,” mm. 130-132.

130 131 132

**Rocking** 56

*p*

(u. c.)

Thomas draws upon elements of the beginning of the cycle to conclude the work as he brings back the opening war-like flourish of “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” in mm. 173 and 175

(Example 6.7). This return of previous material becomes a unifying device and brings the cycle to a fitting close.

**Example 6.7.** “Vigil,” mm. 173-175.

The image shows a musical score for three measures, 173, 174, and 175. At the top, there are three empty staves labeled 173, 174, and 175. Below these are three systems of staves. Each system consists of a vocal line (soprano, alto, and tenor) and a piano accompaniment (right and left hands). The vocal lines are marked with '8va' and '8va' with a dashed line, indicating octave transposition. The piano accompaniment is marked with 'f' (forte) and 'sfz' (sforzando). The music features a mix of eighth and sixteenth notes, with some rests and dynamic markings.

### **Harmony**

Opening the song in the D Mixolydian mode, Thomas begins with octave tonic D's. These immediately give way to the D Mixolydian scale in the vocal and accompanimental lines. The vocal line joins one note into the mode as the accompaniment begins the scale and the vocal line joins on the E (Example 6.1).

As discussed previously, the opening bars of “Vigil” open with largely monophonic texture. The accompaniment chases the melody through much of this; however, Thomas presents subtle harmonies or non-chord tones that add depth to the sound. M. 5 introduces a pedal tone on octave E's in both the right and left hands. This pedal tone lasts through m. 15.

The scalar passages shift in m. 15 to begin on the submediant B. It is also in this section that Thomas moves through the consonance of a submediant seventh chord in m. 19 through strong passing tone dissonance of the C and G against the B and F# in the bass to reach the consonance of the submediant chord in 20 (Example 6.8).

**Example 6.8.** “Vigil,” mm. 15-20.

Example 6.8 shows measures 15 through 20 of the piece "Vigil". The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins in measure 15 with the lyrics "on-ward I sped in the bat-tle, the e-ven-con-test-ed bat-tle, Till". The piano accompaniment consists of a steady eighth-note bass line in the left hand and a more melodic line in the right hand, often using half notes and quarter notes. Measure 19 begins with the lyrics "late in the night re-liev'd to the". The score includes measure numbers 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20.

Mm. 23 through 29 also reveal scalar motion in both the vocal line and accompaniment (Example 6.9). In the vocal line, this is once again found in the descending D Mixolydian mode.

**Example 6.9.** “Vigil,” mm. 23-29.

Example 6.9 shows measures 23 through 29 of the piece "Vigil". The score is written for voice and piano. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4. The vocal line begins in measure 23 with the lyrics "Found you in death so cold dear com-rade, found your bo-dy son of re-spond-ing kis-ses,". The piano accompaniment features a strong, rhythmic bass line in the left hand, often using half notes and quarter notes, and a more melodic line in the right hand. The score includes measure numbers 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29. Dynamic markings include *f* (forte) in measures 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29.



In this descent, however, all notes are sung except for the dominant A. In the “tenor” voice of the accompaniment, Thomas composes a slow, hitched ascent from F# to G, where it begins again, rising through G, B, C, and D to arrive on E in m. 29.

Thomas uses accented non-chord tones which lead to consonant chords to release tension beginning in m. 29 (Example 6.10). As Thomas directs for this section, “Gradually letting the intensity relax,” the five repetitions of this accented dissonance moving to a sustained consonance creates a calming effect. This pattern serves as a beginning point for the vocal line, as it echoes this tension release, but immediately keeps progressing, only to return to this release again in m. 35.

**Example 6.10.** “Vigil,” mm. 29-36.



33 *poco a poco dim.* 34 35 36

...Long there— and then in vi - gil I stood,——

*poco a poco dim.*

This musical score shows measures 33 through 36. The vocal line (bass clef) begins at measure 33 with a half note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3 in measure 34. Measure 35 continues with quarter notes D3, E3, and F3, and measure 36 with a half note G3. The lyrics are "...Long there— and then in vi - gil I stood,——". The piano accompaniment (treble and bass clefs) features a slow ascent with sustained chords and moving lines, marked *poco a poco dim.*

It also becomes apparent in the vocal line of mm. 33 through 47 that Thomas is creating a slow ascent with key notes (Example 6.11). Mm. 33 to 34 emphasize the F#. Mm. 37 to 40 prolong harmony that lingers on G. Mm. 41 through 45 are clearly focused on A. M. 46 draws in the B, and the climax of this ascent is reached in 47 with the C#. This ascent is immediately countered with a quickened descent in mm. 50 through 52.

**Example 6.11.** “Vigil,” mm. 33-51.

33 *poco a poco dim.* 34 35 36 37

...Long there— and then in vi - gil I stood,—— dim-ly a-round me——

*poco a poco dim.*

38 39 40 41 *mp* 42

— the bat-tle-field spread - ing,—— Vi-gil won-drous— and vi - gil sweet

*mp*

This musical score shows measures 33 through 42. The vocal line continues from measure 36 with a half note G3 in measure 37, followed by quarter notes A3, B3, and C4 in measure 38. Measure 39 has a half note D4, and measure 40 has a half note E4. Measure 41 begins with a half note F4, and measure 42 with a half note G4. The lyrics are "...Long there— and then in vi - gil I stood,—— dim-ly a-round me—— the bat-tle-field spread - ing,—— Vi-gil won-drous— and vi - gil sweet". The piano accompaniment continues with sustained chords and moving lines, marked *poco a poco dim.* and *mp*.

43 44 45 46

there in the fra-grant si-lent night, But not a tear fell,

47 48 49 50 51

not e-ven a long-drawn sigh, long, long I

Mm. 41 through 42 display harmonies consisting of two contrasting chords. In 41, an A minor chord is pitted against a G major chord. M. 42 reveals an F# major chord against a G major chord. These contrasting harmonies move into m. 44 where increased dissonance is picked up as D, D#, E, and F# are sounded simultaneously. Thomas chooses to resolve this tension in mm. 48 and 49 by moving the soprano and tenor through a minor second (G against F#) to a major second (F# and E), a major third (F# and D), and finally landing on a perfect fourth (F# and C#).

In mm. 52 and following, the accompaniment falls into the rocking pattern discussed in the “Sound” section (Example 6.12). Interestingly, this rocking is something already heard in the piece, with different rhythmic values. The “tension release” of mm. 29 through 40 revolves around the resolution from F# to E (Example 6.10). Mm. 52 through 59 also revolve around the resolution of F#. In 52 through 59, the F# resolution exactly mirrors this, as the F# resolves to E



(in the right hand through 54 and switching to the left hand in 55). This idea is intensified in m. 55 in the right hand by adding the third above the F# and using that rocking pattern in resolution to the G#. This intensifies this section as the opening F# to E resolution is whole step movement, but the A to G# movement becomes more menacing as it uses half step movement.

**Example 6.12.** “Vigil,” mm. 52-64.

The musical score for "Vigil" (mm. 52-64) is presented in three systems. The first system (mm. 52-57) features a vocal line in the upper staff and a piano accompaniment in the lower staves. The vocal line begins with the word "gazed..." and continues with a long note. The piano accompaniment consists of a bass line and a treble line. The second system (mm. 58-61) continues the vocal line with the lyrics "...Pass-ing sweet hours, im - mor - tal and my - stic hours with". The piano accompaniment continues with a bass line and a treble line. The third system (mm. 62-64) continues the vocal line with the lyrics "you dear-est com - rade not a tear,". The piano accompaniment continues with a bass line and a treble line. The score is written in a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C).

Just as the opening “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” utilizes an accompaniment that acted as a separate entity (mm. 10 through 14), mm. 52 through 70 use this rocking theme in the

accompaniment to become a separate entity from the vocal line (Example 6.12). The rocking figure also begins low and continues to weave its way higher. Thomas begins the figure in the right hand, and while keeping the figure moving, shifts this to the left hand in m. 55, adding the more intense rocking figure in the right hand above it. This figure then gets taken over by the left hand again in 62, forcing the right hand even higher. Thomas sets the last phrase before the vigil in a unique fashion as the vocal line in m. 67 begins by moving chromatically, but quickly spreads to whole steps and finally ends in a leap down in the interval of a perfect fifth.

Through the “Vigil” section (mm. 71 through 129), Thomas centers the static line, previously analyzed by this author as the “passing of time,” around F from mm. 71 to 86. This changes in mm. 87 and 88, as this line shifts to the left hand. The static line becomes more supple as it fluctuates between the B and B $\flat$ . The left hand of the accompaniment in mm. 87 through 94 (Example 6.13) becomes reminiscent of the “Vigil of silence, love, and death” phrase in mm. 67 through 70 (Example 6.3) as the line descends through half-steps and whole steps to finish with a leap.

**Example 6.13.** “Vigil,” mm. 87-94.

Thomas suspends the vigil temporarily in m. 112, resting temporarily on the uncertainty of C, which is then followed by a measure of rest. This C is important as it leads to the resolution to the key center, D, in m. 114. The succeeding section draws to a close in m. 128 with a concluding tone cluster comprised of three pitches: G, A $\flat$ , and B $\flat$ . While these pitches are placed directly against each other in the middle of the chord, the B $\flat$  a major sixth below the G, and the G, a major sixth above the B $\flat$ , create stability and create a more open texture.

**Example 6.14.** “Vigil,” mm. 128-130.

M. 130 finds the return of the rocking motive. This time, Thomas is using the more intensified half-step motion in the soprano line, but gives heightened consonance overall as he moves from perfect fifths to major thirds. As previously seen in mm. 52 through 66 (Example 6.12), the rocking motion progresses from perfect fifths and major thirds to major seconds.

**Example 6.15.** “Vigil,” mm. 138-144.

141 3 3 142 143 144

*pp* *rit.* *ppp*

son in his grave, in his rude-dug grave I de - po - sit - ed,

The heightened consonance gives greater stability and a sense of peace. In m. 138, the rocking motion finally moves to major seconds (Example 6.15). M. 143 begins the initial ascent of this rocking motion, as it moves from F to F#. This corresponds with the upcoming section beginning in m. 145, as the accompaniment presents rocking motion in contrary motion as the right hand moves down while the left hand ascends (Example 6.16).

**Example 6.16.** “Vigil,” m. 145.

145 **A tempo**

*p*

*tre corde*

The rocking ends in 150, but is picked up again in m. 154 as the piece builds toward its climax.

**Melody**

Thomas chooses to open “Vigil” with a melodic line that is conjunct, moving only in step-wise motion. With a few disjunct interruptions, this conjunct melodic movement predominantly continues through m. 29. Mm. 33 through 70 incorporate an interesting conjunctive line which is completed with a leap. This is evidenced in such phrases as mm. 50

through 52. Mm. 58 through 60 also illustrate micro versions of this pattern as the two phrase segments begin with conjunct lines, but incorporate leaps in the end (Example 6.17).

**Example 6.17.** “Vigil,” mm. 50-60.

50 51

long, long I

52 53 54 55 56 57

gazed...

58 59 60

...Pass-ing sweet hours, im - mor - tal and my - stic hours

Thomas also uses the shapes of the melodic lines to enhance the expression of the text. An example of this occurs in mm. 9 and 10 as they create a melodic climax that is only outdone by the final climax of the song (in m. 163). This “sub-climax” corresponds well with the

emotional climax of the phrase, “One look I but gave which your dear eyes returned with a look I shall never forget” (Example 6.18).

**Example 6.18.** “Vigil,” mm. 7-10.

This musical score shows measures 7 through 10 of the piece "Vigil". It is written for voice and piano. The voice part is in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The piano accompaniment consists of two staves, treble and bass, in the same key signature. The lyrics are: "look I but gave which your dear eyes re-turn'd with a look I shall ne-ver for-get, One". The melody features a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, with a crescendo leading into measure 10 which ends with a fermata. The piano part provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands.

In a similar painting of the text, mm. 23 through 29 express the wilting text, “Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body son of responding kisses, (never again on earth responding),” in descending melodic lines (Example 6.9).

Thomas finds expression through static melodic lines as well, as seen in mm. 41 through 46 (Example 6.11). This line, which centers on A, heightens the legato of the phrase and puts the focus of the line on the text. This elevates the one word that is placed on the heightened B in m. 46, “tear.” The melody of m. 47 also plays with the text as Thomas paints the words “long-drawn” to the slightly elongated rhythms of dotted quarter notes.

In the midst of the vigil section, Thomas brings back the “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” theme in the left hand of mm. 107 through 112 (Example 6.19).

**Example 6.19.** “Vigil,” mm. 107-112.

This musical score shows measures 107 through 112 of the piece "Vigil". It is written for piano. The score features a treble staff and a bass staff. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked "p espress.". The melody in the treble staff is characterized by long, horizontal lines, indicating a slow, sustained melody. The bass staff contains a more active line, with a prominent theme in measures 107-112. Dynamics include "p" (piano) and "ppp" (pianissimo). The piece concludes with a fermata in the final measure.

Melodically, the vigil also begins with a static focus and calculated melody. The early bars of this vigil melody lack warmth; however, in mm. 114 through 120, the melodic line blossoms into a line of great warmth and sentimentality as it moves through sweeping phrases and descending lines that overarch into higher descending lines (Example 6.20).

**Example 6.20.** “Vigil,” mm. 114-120.

The musical score for Example 6.20, "Vigil," mm. 114-120, is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 114, 115, 116, and 117. The second system contains measures 118, 119, and 120. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked *ppp molto espress.* and the dynamics range from *ppp* to *pp*. The score includes a repeat sign at the end of measure 120. The melodic line in the treble clef is characterized by sweeping phrases and descending lines that overarch into higher descending lines.

This is where the vigil becomes “wondrous” and “sweet.” Thomas also uses the melody to draw the narrator back out of this entranced state. Mm. 122 through 128 move the melody in an ascending line, but the ascent travels through a decrescendo as the warmth of the memories begins to trail away (Example 6.21).

**Example 6.21.** “Vigil,” mm. 121-129.

The musical score for Example 6.21, "Vigil," mm. 121-129, is presented in two systems. The first system contains measures 121, 122, and 123. The second system contains measures 124 and 125. The key signature is one sharp (F#). The tempo/mood is marked *p* and the dynamics range from *p* to *mf*. The score includes a repeat sign at the end of measure 125. The melodic line in the treble clef is characterized by an ascending line that travels through a decrescendo as the warmth of the memories begins to trail away.



The following melodic material, as the narrator is drawn out of his vigil, displays a great deal of emphasis on the minor sixth. Between mm. 133 and 140, the melody abides between D $\flat$  and F, giving much emphasis to both. This sixth then gets transferred to the right hand of the accompaniment as it presents another direct quote of the “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” theme (Example 6.22).

**Example 6.22.** “Vigil,” mm. 141-142.

Just as themes from “O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy” are recapitulated, Thomas also inserts a melodic fragment in mm. 161 through 162 that is reminiscent of the bugle call that was previously found in mm. 32 through 34 in “Dirge for Two Veterans” (Example 6.23). This melodic turn of the submediant moving to the sustained dominant, succeeded by quick movement through the mediant, dominant, and submediant to finally land again on the dominant is a direct echo of the pattern originally found in “Dirge.”



**Example 6.23.** “Vigil,” mm. 161-162 and 32-34.

The image displays two musical excerpts from the piece "Vigil". The left excerpt covers measures 161 and 162, featuring a vocal line with lyrics "sol-dier well in his blan-ket" and an accompaniment with triplets and a "And" marking. The right excerpt covers measures 32, 33, and 34, showing a vocal line with a "sfz" (sforzando) marking and an accompaniment with a "V" marking.

The conclusion of the piece continues the motion set forth by the vocal climax in m. 163. In 165, the accompaniment embodies a sense of released freedom as it ascends to its peak in “Vigil,” and the subsequent measures are the settling of this climax. The pitches  $A\flat$ ,  $B\flat$ , and  $E\flat$  are presented repeatedly in the accompaniment as the vocal line joins this pitch set for its final echo of the last phrase, “where he fell.” This is interrupted by the war-like flourish from the opening song, and the piece relaxes into the rocking motion found previously.

**Rhythm**

As is common in Thomas’s works, “Vigil” also possesses rhythmic tension created by setting duple against triple rhythms. This creates a sense of elongation and propulsion of motion which enhances the contrast in the piece. In mm. 7 through 10 (Example 6.18), the quarter notes propel the line with increased velocity. The dotted-quarter notes and the half note put a rein on this motion.

The stretched moments become even more suspended following segments of propelled motion, as is exemplified in the admixture of these two elements in mm. 41 through 48 (Example 6.11). M. 43 begins with three quarter notes moving the line into the stretched dotted-quarter

notes on “fragrant,” once again giving added emphasis to the syllables of text that become elongated.

Thomas is also detailed in matching the musical rhythms of the vocal line with the natural speech rhythms of the text. This is seen throughout “Drum Taps,” but mm. 58 through 65 specifically support this (Example 6.24). The rhythms of “immortal and mystic hours” match the smooth and even contour of “immortal” but also capture the broken pattern of “mystic” as the rhythms linger on the first syllable and pass quickly through the second. The narrator also lingers in mm. 64 and 65 on the words “tear” and “word” to allow for the absorption of these phrases. This mimics how an effective reading of these lines would be presented.

**Example 6.24.** “Vigil,” mm. 58-66.

58 3 59 60 3 3 61

...Pass-ing sweet hours, im - mor - tal and my - stic hours with

62 63 64 65 66

you dear-est com - rade not a tear, not a word,

*pp*  
*rall.*  
u. c.

To add intensity to the rocking that is occurring in mm. 52 through 54, the right and left hands shift to alternating rhythms in mm. 55 through 59 (Example 6.17). This increases the

motion of the section and leads toward the vocal entrance. This alternation of rocking rhythms occurs again in mm. 168 through 175 as the piece draws to its conclusion.

*A poco accelerando* is indicated in mm. 99 through 104. In a recording of the cycle in which Thomas accompanies, he chooses to increase the tempo of these measures, but also allows these measures to remain rhythmically free.<sup>95</sup> A sense of steady beat is deferred until m. 107, where the tempo is labeled “Twice as slow.” Even in this case, there is room for subtle, nuanced rubato.

M. 155 and following create a strong shift from the duple rocking to a triplet feel (Example 6.25). This adds intensity and, again, adds forward motion in building toward the climax.

**Example 6.25.** “Vigil,” mm. 154-156.

The rhythmic rocking also reappears in m. 166 as it draws the piece to a close (Example 6.26).

The vocal line participates in this melodic figure in 170 and 171, but fits on an alternate rhythmic plane. The vocal line becomes elongated and stretched.

<sup>95</sup> Richard Pearson Thomas, *Drum Taps*, Mark Moliterno and Richard Pearson Thomas, CD Recording, 1992.

**Example 6.26.** “Vigil,” mm. 166-171.

The musical score for Example 6.26, "Vigil," mm. 166-171, is presented in a three-staff format. The top staff is the vocal line, and the bottom two staves are the piano accompaniment. The key signature has two flats, and the time signature is 3/4. The tempo is marked "a tempo". The score includes measures 166 through 171. The vocal line has lyrics "where he" and "fell.". The piano accompaniment includes markings "a tempo" and "dim. poco a poco".

**Growth**

The vigil section of music is introduced to enhance the scene of the poem. With the placement of the vigil in the music, Thomas is also supporting the narrator's shift of focus to the audience. Prior to the vigil, the narrator is speaking largely to the comrade, "passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you dearest comrade, not a tear, not a word, vigil of silence, love, and death." After the vigil, the narrator distances himself slightly from the scene by speaking of the comrade in the third person, "My comrade I wrapt in his blanket."

Undoubtedly, there is a growth that occurs through the vigil itself. It begins softly, with a contemplative sparseness, but as the narrator is "caught up" in his thoughts, the accompaniment builds and becomes more triumphant and majestic. Mm. 114 through 120 (Example 6.20) embody the climax of this idea. Just as the narrator becomes enveloped in his thoughts, the vigil also demonstrates the return to reality. Mm. 121 through 129 (Example 6.21) demonstrate this

retracting of emotion. The register shift of m. 145 (Example 6.27), as the rocking figure moves down an octave, designates a shift to the “world of reality” rather than the previous “world of the past.” It represents being more present in mind as it concludes the story.

**Example 6.27.** “Vigil,” mm. 143-145.

M. 145 also begins the final build to the climactic moment of the entire piece. This build is accomplished as Thomas presents a note that is in an ascending line and prolongs it through passing notes which lie as much as a fifth below it. This ascending line moves from F in 146 through B $\flat$  and C in 152, D $\flat$  in 154, E $\flat$  in 158, F in 160, and reaches its climax on G in 163.

Thomas also uses the texture of the accompaniment to build toward the climax in 164.

Beginning in m. 154, Thomas begins to add density and fullness to the texture of the accompaniment and continues this increase until the beginning of m. 165.

**Performance Practice**

As the cycle comes to conclusion in “Vigil,” the vocalist must be aware of the arch of the song, and should be careful to create a structured and elongated growth throughout the piece, reaching the climax at the proper moment. Thomas sets the poem in such a way that the journey to the peak is just as important as the peak itself. The music enhances the story and therefore, the text must be given careful attention.

In this regard, it is imperative that the vocalist brings out the text in such mm. 41 through 48 (Example 6.11), as the stasis of the melodic line mandates vitality and variance in the diction of the text. The singer should linger on consonants, lean into specific syllables, and enjoy the text of this passage. The vocalist can also give variety here by adjusting vocal timbre. Relaxing into a warmer tone, the voice can be surrounded by breath, as it still maintains an energized intensity. This quasi-romantic timbre heightens the drama of the text and gives variety to the song.

If performed correctly, mm. 71 through 129 should elicit a vigil in the minds of the audience members. The acting from the vocalist should be simple, creating a placid emotion within the character and the venue. This allows the piano to take predominance and lead everyone through the journey of the narrator's thoughts, and ideally stirring the audience's minds in a similar journey.

As the vocalist emerges from this serene state in the measures following 130, the vocalist must present evidence of having been "changed" by the preceding vigil. The narrator should transform his voice and presentation as he shifts his discourse from the dead soldier to the audience. If preceding the vigil, he spoke to his comrade with a timbre that embodied a personal, intimate quality; then following the vigil, the timbre might convert to a richer, more full-bodied expression. Regardless, the voice should be full-bodied and resonant by m. 154 as the emotional tribute begins its final push toward the climax. The piano is instructed to be "rich" and "sonorous," but these terms equally apply to the voice.

## CONCLUSION

*Drum Taps* becomes an emotionally moving piece of art for both audience and performer through its sweeping music and dramatic story-telling. The size and difficulty of the piece testify to Thomas's choice to create a work that was not built for the masses, but instead draws focus to the story of Walt Whitman's *Drum-Taps*. Thomas is sensitive to Whitman's writings as he sets the texts to both straightforward, reporter-like stasis as well as warm, emotional outpourings of the heart.

As was seen throughout the cycle, but particularly in "Dirge for Two Veterans" and "Vigil," Thomas uses silence and stillness to communicate almost as much as the music, giving the listener a heightened sense of intimacy. It is this intimacy that gives the relationships found in the poems greater meaning, yet also magnifies the tragic surroundings of the poems.

As Thomas's music is frequently lyrical, melodic, beautiful, and sonorous, this is achieved in intelligent design. The intervallic content and manipulation in this work is complex and shifts from song to song. He seems to choose intervals that he believes will give focus and then uses them and their inversions in the development of the piece, as is clearly observed in "Beat! Beat! Drums!" He also uses these intervals in dynamic ways as he creates consonance even through his use of dissonance. This is accomplished simply through passages progressing from harsh dissonances to decreased levels of dissonance, thus implying a level of consonance.

Tension is not only created through the pitch dissonance, but also the conflict of rhythms supporting those pitches. As is observed in "O Tan-Faced Prairie Boy," "Dirge for Two Veterans," and "Vigil," Thomas adds tension and rhythmic interest by frequently pairing duple

rhythms against triple. He also uses a struggle between quickened motions with sudden stretches of time to build contrast in “Beat! Beat! Drums!”

The likelihood that this cycle will maintain longevity in the world of art song is favorable. Based on the ability to relate these songs to current events, it would appear that the cycle will not be losing relevance in the near future. As Judith Carman summarized in her review, “It is a work that is appropriate to our time and yet another reminder of the folly and senseless destruction of war.”<sup>96</sup> This idea seems to flow urgently out of Whitman’s writings, and beautifully out of Thomas’s music. Where the two entwine, art is created.

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<sup>96</sup> Carman, 654.



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Available from interviewer.

\_\_\_\_\_. Interview by author, 6 February 2009, New York. Tape Recording.  
Available from interviewer.

# APPENDIX

## COMPLETE LISTING OF RICHARD PEARSON THOMAS'S COMPOSITIONS

### CONCERT WORKS<sup>97</sup>

<b>The Quangle Wangle's Hat</b> For soprano, flute, cello, and piano.	<b>Edward Lear</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Young Love</b> Cycle of songs for young singers.	<b>Sara Teasdale</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Bring Back the World</b> <b>What Went Wrong</b> Choral pieces with texts by students commissioned and premiered by Stephanie Park and students at King and Low-Heywood Thomas School, Greenwich, CT.	<b>Texts by Students</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>My House</b> Commissioned by Marble Collegiate Church for the Cherub Choir, Karie Brown, director; premiered May, 2008.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Twilight</b> Song cycle for soprano and piano.	<b>Christina Rossetti</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Beeping Sleauty</b> A musical fairy tale for quartet of mixed voices.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Camino Real Redux</b> For tenor and piano-four hands.	<b>Tennessee Williams</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Adagietto/Presto for Violin and Piano</b> Premiere: Stephanie Chase, violin and Richard Pearson Thomas, piano.		<b>2007</b>
<b>Tunes for Tots</b> Fantasia on children's' melodies for soprano and piano.	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Jungle Songs</b> For tenor, piano, and percussion.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Spring Rain</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Sara Teasdale</b>	<b>2006</b>

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<sup>97</sup> Many of Thomas's compositions are published through Portage Press Publishing and may be ordered from Classical Vocal Reprints.

<b>Morning Light</b> For clarinet and piano.		<b>2006</b>
<b>Concerto in C-E-G</b> For piano and orchestra.		<b>2006</b>
<b>Letter From Tobé</b> For soprano, tenor, baritone and piano.	<b>Tobé Malawista</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>A Clear Midnight</b> For quartet of mixed voices and piano.	<b>Walt Whitman</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>The Stricken City</b> <b>All the Wide World</b> Premiered by Robert Trentham as part of <i>America: 1900</i> , Pella Opera House, Pella, Iowa, May, 2006.	<b>Ella Wheeler Wilcox</b> <b>John Muir</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>Three Kisses</b> For soprano, viola and piano.	<b>Sara Teasdale and Sylvia Plath</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Race for the Sky</b> Orchestral version.		<b>2002</b>
<b>The Butterfly Tree</b> For soprano, tenor, baritone and piano.	<b>Linda Pastan</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>The Wiregrass Symphony</b> For symphony orchestra.		<b>2004</b>
<b>Midnight Ballet</b> Commissioned for the Tappan Zee High School Concert Choir by the Arts Council of Rockland County, Russell Wagoner, Conductor, Orangeburg, NY, May, 2005.	<b>Allie Rosenwasser</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Remembering the Call from the Mountains</b> For solo bass flute.		<b>2005</b>
<b>Burlesque</b> For trumpet and piano.		<b>2005</b>
<b>Hi-Line</b> For cello and piano.		<b>2005</b>
<b>The Letters</b> Song cycle for tenor and piano.	<b>Marilyn Nelson</b>	<b>2005</b>

<b>Musicus Cartoonus</b> For symphony orchestra.		<b>2004</b>
<b>Ascension</b> For quartet of mixed voices and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>My Beloved Is Mine</b> For soprano, flute, and piano.	<b>Francis Quarles</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>Droplets</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>C.K. Williams</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings</b> For women's chorus.	<b>Paul Laurence Dunbar</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>A Wicked Girl</b> For soprano, cello and piano.	<b>Edna St. Vincent Millay</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>Why Can't I Let You Go?</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1992</b>
<b>I'm Gonna Sail Away</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>the star to every wandering bark</b> For solo piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>I never saw a Moor</b> Arrangement for soprano, oboe and women's choir.	<b>Emily Dickinson</b>	<b>2003</b>
<b>It's A Wonderful Time!</b> For symphony orchestra and choir.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>To Coulanges</b> For soprano, tenor, baritone and piano.	<b>Madame de Sévigne</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Iryna</b>		<b>2002</b>
<b>Quasi Sonatine (A Swiss Girl in Paris)</b> Suite for flute and piano.		<b>2002</b>
<b>The Flies</b> For soprano, tenor, baritone, flute and piano.	<b>Benjamin Franklin</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>Race for the Sky</b> For soprano, violin and piano; based on poems left on the streets in the wake of 9/11).	<b>Various</b>	<b>2002</b>

<b>With Wings Like Eagles</b> Anthem for mixed chorus and organ.	<b>Biblical</b>	<b>2002</b>
<b>The Ghosts of Alder Gulch</b> For symphony orchestra.		<b>2002</b>
<b>Harmonia Sacra</b> For mixed chorus, soloists and symphony orchestra; inspired by hymn tunes and texts of the American Mennonite Church.	<b>Various</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>The Thought of Him</b> For mezzo-soprano and piano; premiere, Audra McDonald and Ted Sperling.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>My German Boyfriend</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>Wild Rose</b> Piano solo.		<b>2001</b>
<b>The Nash Menagerie</b> A capella song cycle for soprano, tenor and baritone.	<b>Ogden Nash</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>Fish ‘n Chicks</b> For soprano, tenor, baritone and piano.	<b>Various</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>Sweet Like a Crow</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>Michael Ondaatje</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>Two Victorian Ladies</b> For soprano, mezzo-soprano and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>The Beach</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Anne Morrow Lindbergh</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Vermilion</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Linda Pastan</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Ineffable Joy</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>Jordan</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>The History of the Seven Young Parrots</b> For soprano, tenor, baritone and piano.	<b>Edward Lear</b>	<b>2000</b>

<b>I Will Lift My Voice</b> For mezzo-soprano and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2000</b>
<b>By Strauss (Literally!)</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>piano after war</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>Gwendolyn Brooks</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>The American Song</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b>Letter From Camp</b> Songs for soprano and piano.	<b>Bodenweber</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b>Vergin, Tutt' Amor</b> For soprano and chamber orchestra.	<b>Inspired by F. Durante</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b>Ossessione</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>Inspired by <i>Arie Antiche</i></b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, Abridged and Condensed</b> For baritone and piano.		<b>1997</b>
<b>Just Another Hour</b> For tenor and piano; choral version premiere: New Theatre Dedication Ceremony, Second Stage Theatre, New York City, March, 1999.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>Gertie's Head</b> For soprano, clarinet, cello and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1997</b>
<b>They Don't Speak English in Paris</b> For soprano, tenor, and singing pianist.	<b>Ogden Nash</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>Seeing a Woman as in a Painting by Berthe Morisot</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>Lawrence Ferlinghetti</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>Conversation Overheard</b> For baritone and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1995</b>
<b>Portraits of Imagined Love</b> Song cycle for soprano and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1995</b>
<b>Of Astronauts and Stars</b> For soprano and tenor.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1995</b>

<b>When I Kiss You</b> For tenor and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1994</b>
<b>Why Can't I Let You Go?</b> For tenor and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1994</b>
<b>She is Overheard Singing</b> For soprano, mezzo-soprano, violin, cello and piano.	<b>Edna St. Vincent Millay</b>	<b>1994</b>
<b>The Childrens' Hour</b> For baritone and symphony orchestra; arrangement of the song by Charles Ives.	<b>Henry Wadsworth Longfellow</b>	<b>1994</b>
<b>The Little Black Boy</b> For tenor and piano.	<b>William Blake</b>	<b>1993</b>
<b>Ballad of the Boy Who Went to Sea</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1993</b>
<b>Sonnets and Song for Orchestra</b> For symphony orchestra.		<b>1992</b>
<b>Songs to Poems of Edna St. Vincent Millay</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Edna St. Vincent Millay</b>	<b>1992</b>
<b>The Ballad of the Harp-Weaver</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Edna St. Vincent Millay</b>	<b>1992</b>
<b>AIDS Anxiety</b> For three baritones and piano; written for <i>The AIDS Quilt Songbook</i> .	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1992</b>
<b>At last to be identified!</b> Song cycle for soprano and piano.	<b>Emily Dickinson</b>	<b>1992</b>
<b>Drum Taps</b> Song cycle for baritone and piano.	<b>Walt Whitman</b>	<b>1991</b>
<b>Far Off</b> Song cycle for tenor and piano.	<b>Cavafy</b>	<b>1991</b>
<b>I never saw a Moor</b> For soprano and piano.	<b>Emily Dickinson</b>	<b>1991</b>
<b>O Night Divine!</b> Song cycle for soprano and piano.	<b>Traditional</b>	<b>1991</b>



<b>Poison It Doesn't Matter</b>	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1991</b>
For baritone and piano; premiere: Bruce Rameker and Kristin Pankonin, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, May, 1994.		
<b>This House</b>	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1990</b>
Anthem for choir, organ, and brass.		
<b>An Elf's Life</b>	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1990</b>
For men's chorus and piano.		
<b>I'm Yours! Move Into the Light</b>	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1990</b>
For soprano and piano.		
<b>This Is New The Little Things You Do Together September Song</b>	<b>Various</b>	<b>1989</b>
Arrangements commissioned and premiered by Alan Seale, baritone and Arlene Shrut, piano, New York City.		
<b>Miriam's Journey</b>	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1989</b>
For male chorus and two pianos.		
<b>Driving at Night</b>		<b>1988</b>
Trio for violin, cello and piano.		
<b>A Little Nonsense</b>	<b>Edward Lear</b>	<b>1988</b>
For soprano and piano.		
<b>Nightcolors</b>		<b>1988</b>
Suite for piano.		
<b>Queen Bee Soliloquy</b>	<b>Kati Guerra</b>	<b>1987</b>
For soprano, bassoon and piano.		
<b>Nightfall The Peacock Aria</b>	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1987</b>
For soprano and piano.		
<b>Andante</b>	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1986</b>
For soprano and string quartet.		

## THEATRE WORKS

<b>Golden Gate</b> Choral concert version of the musical commissioned for premiere by the Monmouth Civic Chorus, Mark Shapiro, music director.	<b>Book by Joe Calarco</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Jimmy</b> A musical in one act.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>Parallel Lives</b> Musical.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>Golden Gate</b> Musical.	<b>Book by Joe Calarco</b>	<b>1999-2003</b>
<b>America: 1900</b> Original music and arrangements for tenor.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>2006</b>
<b>In Thinking of America</b> Original music and arrangements of Civil War melodies for tenor.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1999</b>
<b>Observation Deck</b> Theatrical concert of original songs.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1998</b>
<b>Ladies in A Maze</b> Musical.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>HeartSongs</b> Original music and songs.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1995</b>
<b>The Big Apple Cabaret</b> Original music and arrangements.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1994</b>
<b>L'Amour Bleu</b> Original music and songs.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1994</b>
<b>Six Degrees of Separation</b> Incidental music.		<b>1993</b>
<b>The Bale of Hay Saloon</b> A musical.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1993</b>
<b>The First Annual King Cole Home for the Aged Benefit Revue -</b> <b>Book by John Znidarsic</b>		<b>1990</b>

<b>Close Harmony Holidays</b> Original music and arrangements.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1989</b>
<b>Cafe Society</b> A musical.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1988</b>
<b>Camino Real</b> Incidental music for the play by Tennessee Williams.		<b>1986</b>
<b>What's the Crime?</b> A musical.	<b>Book by Karen L. Dunn</b>	<b>1985</b>
<b>Spokesong</b> A musical.	<b>Book by Stewart Parker</b>	<b>1984</b>
<b>Style!</b> A musical tribute to the artist Erté.		<b>1984</b>
<b>Cafe Vienna</b> A music theatre play.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1983</b>
<b>Ladies of Their Nights and Days</b> A one-woman music theatre play.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1983</b>
<b>The Music Theatre Machine</b> A children's opera.	<b>Book by Michael Bawtree</b>	<b>1982</b>
<b>The Grimwood Clock</b> A music theatre play.	<b>Book by Leofwin Luke</b>	<b>1981</b>
<b>Twelfth Night</b> Incidental music.		<b>1981</b>
<b>Holiday</b> A short one-act opera.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1980</b>
<b>Theatre Songs for the Cynical Age</b> A cabaret of original songs.	<b>Richard Pearson Thomas</b>	<b>1980</b>

#### FILM

<b>What Became Known as ...The Eleanor Affair</b>	<b>1996</b>
<b>The Sparrow</b>	<b>1996</b>

## VITA

William Clay Smith, a native of Bardstown, Kentucky, received the Bachelor of Arts in Music degree with a vocal emphasis from Campbellsville University in 2000. While attending Campbellsville, Smith performed such roles as Figaro in *The Marriage of Figaro*, Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermaus*, and Curly in *Oklahoma!*. Upon completion of his bachelor degree, he continued studying at Campbellsville, earning a Master of Arts degree with vocal emphasis in 2001. Smith then served on the adjunct faculty of Campbellsville University in the fall of that year.

In August of 2002, Smith began work on a doctor of musical arts degree in vocal performance with a minor in music theory at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. While there, he performed various operatic roles including Gideon March in Mark Adamo's *Little Women*, Fiorello in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Marco in *Gianni Schicchi*. Since leaving Louisiana State University, Smith has performed with such companies as Project Opera of Manhattan, Pensacola Opera, Brooklyn Family Theater, and the Montclair Operetta Club. A selected list of his concert performances include solo work with the Mid-Kentucky Choir, *The Canticles of St. John* at St. Meinrad's Seminary, and soloist at Weill Recital Hall in Carnegie Hall for a gala entitled, "From East to West."

After concluding coursework for the doctoral degree in May 2005, Smith returned to Campbellsville University where he served as substitute instructor until he moved to New York City in January of 2006. In 2008, Smith traveled through much of China with the Asian Tour of *The Sound of Music*, produced by Troika Entertainment and Broadway Asia. He will be preparing the title role for a Brooklyn production of *Sweeney Todd*.