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"WORD OVER ALL, BEAUTIFUL AS THE SKY": A HEGELIAN
INTERPRETATION OF WALT WHITMAN'S "DRUM-TAPS"

Middle Tennessee State University

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"Word Over All, Beautiful as the Sky":
A Hegelian Interpretation of
Walt Whitman's Drum-Taps

Adil Jamil

A dissertation presented to the
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"Word Over All, Beautiful as the Sky":

A Hegelian Interpretation of

Walt Whitman's Drum-Taps

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Abstract

"Word Over All, Beautiful as the Sky":

A Hegelian Interpretation of

Walt Whitman's Drum-Taps

by Adil Jamil

The purpose of this study is to explain the effect of Hegel's motifs on Whitman's Drum-Taps. This effect is traceable in the thematic structure of the collection as a whole and in the design of several individual poems. The study is divided into three chapters and a brief conclusion.

Chapter I is subdivided into three sections preceded by a brief introduction of the manner and circumstances in which the poet produced his poems. Section one reviews the ideas of Whitman's major critics in relation to Drum-Taps, his actions and attitudes during the Civil War. Sections two and three attempt to resolve the controversy over Whitman's early initiation into Hegelianism. Section two introduces various external evidences that suggest Whitman's familiarity with Hegel's philosophy during the 1850s. Section three introduces internal evidences found in Whitman's early poetry indicating his faith in Hegel's Absolute

Idealism and arguing against the skeptical attitudes of others towards the poet's Hegelianism before the Civil War.

The threefold movement of the logical technique postulated by Hegel is followed by Whitman in his structuring of Drum-Taps. Therefore, Chapter II is subdivided into three sections: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The thesis section discusses the poems which carry the call for war, the patriotic flush of the North, the rebellious spirit of the South, and the zeal for fighting. The antithesis section discusses the theme of self-negation and the realistic description of war as devastating in its effect on mankind. The synthesis section explores Whitman's reformulation of the thesis of war and his reconciliation of the polarities he cultivated in the thesis and antithesis poems, such as peace and war, life and death, Nature and city, and Northerners and Southerners.

Chapter III investigates the effect of Hegel's motifs on the design of four poems whose themes, images, and structures are clearly imitations of the same logical technique. The final chapter summarizes the conclusions reached in this study, which strongly support the assumption of Whitman's early Hegelianism and indicate the great impact of the logical technique on Drum-Taps.

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To my four brothers, the young
and brave recruits.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The Civil War and the Birth of Drum-Taps

April 13, 1861, signalled the beginning of a bloody era in American history. It was the day of the first attack of the Confederate troops on Fort Sumter and the flag of Union at Charleston Harbor, South Carolina. This incident started the Civil War, which lasted over four years. Like the rest of Americans, writers in the North and the South participated in the war activities and efforts; some joined the troops while others recorded the events, the feelings, the emotions and consciousness of Americans at the time of crisis. Each writer approached the subject of war in his own way. Walt Whitman approached it uniquely. He was deeply moved by the tragic news and responded profoundly to it. In the very first days, he dedicated himself to the crisis and to suffering with his people. In one of his private note books he wrote on April 18, 1861, the following mystic resolution:

I have this hour, this day resolved to inaugurate a sweet, clean-blooded body by ignoring all the drinks but water and pure milk--and all fat meats,

late suppers--a great body--a purged, cleansed, spiritualized invigorated body.¹

Nevertheless, his mystic mission was not practically carried out until his first visit to the front in December 1862, to look for his injured brother George. This visit signalled the beginning of a long, painful career among the suffering soldiers. Whitman did not enlist, yet he volunteered to nurse the wounded and dying soldiers. In these activities, which lasted over three years, he wrote letters for the soldiers, ran errands for them, and frequently gave them money to spend on stamps and tobacco. More important, with his flowing sympathy and love Whitman tried to soothe the pain, renew faith in life for those who lost heart, and reconcile others with death. In these places of pain and death, a cluster of poems called Drum-Taps was born. Whitman once described the manner in which he composed his war poems:

See, here is a little poem itself . . . probably it is included in the Leaves somewhere. I would work in this way when I was out in the crowds, then put the stuff together at home. Drum-Taps was all written in that manner--all of it put together by fits and starts, on the fields, in the hospitals, as I worked with the soldier boys. Some days I was more emotional than others; then I would suffer all the extra horror of my experience; I would² try to write blind, blind, with my own tears.

¹ Quoted in Emory Holloway, Whitman: An Interpretation in Narrative (New York: Knopf, 1924), p. 185.

² Quoted in Walter Lowenfels, ed., Walt Whitman's Civil War (New York: Knopf, 1960), p. 4.

With such intensity of emotions, Whitman wrote his war poems, which are presented as eyewitness accounts of his painful experiences among the dying soldiers; they express his thoughts of anguish, pain, death, and hope, which never faded away despite the horror of war.

Drum-Taps, first published in New York in 1865, is a seventy-two-page pamphlet of fifty-three poems. Then after the death of Lincoln Whitman added a "Sequel," "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd," published in Washington, 1865-1866, of twenty-four more pages. The "Sequel" contains eighteen poems. These two publications, usually known as Drum-Taps and Sequel to Drum-Taps, were added to the 1867 edition of Leaves of Grass as annexes, but in 1870-1871 were incorporated into the main body of Leaves. Throughout the succeeding editions Whitman eliminated some of the poems and added others. In the final 1881 grouping, Whitman retained only twenty-nine of the fifty-three Drum-Taps poems of 1865, and of the eighteen poems of the "Sequel" he retained only nine. In addition, five more poems, originated elsewhere, were transferred to Drum-Taps in 1881 to make the final number forty-three poems. With exception of some very minor revisions, the poems in the final version of Drum-Taps remained unchanged from their original state.

Section One

Review of Literature

Walt Whitman scholars have shown much interest in the poet's personal attitude toward the Civil War, his contribution to the war effort, and his book of war poems, Drum Taps, published in 1865. This book along with Whitman's personal attitudes and actions has received conflicting interpretations from his chief critics. The views of the critics run from the very sympathetic to the very hostile. Most of the criticism written about Drum-Taps, however, is, in fact, seen as inadequate because Whitman's critics have not been aware of the basic philosophy governing the poetic theme and the technique of his war poems. Because of this lack, the critics are unable to interpret accurately one of the major characteristics they note in Drum-Taps: the recurring shifts in the poet's themes, mood, and tone. These shifts are consistently misinterpreted by both sympathetic and unsympathetic critics, because they do not take into account the impact of Hegel's philosophy on Whitman's poetic theme and technique. Though some critics justify the recurring shifts, others see them as exemplifying Whitman's inconsistency and illogicality.

Drum-Taps is a poetic consideration of the American Civil War. Whitman displays, in the beginning poems of the

volume, a great sense of patriotism and dedication to war; he calls for his people to join together to fight for the proclaimed causes of the Civil War--the preservation of the Union and the emancipation of slaves. Then, in another group of poems, he negates his former theme and points out the devastating effect of the war on his nation, focusing on tragedies and human sufferings while his patriotic call fades away. In the third group of poems, Whitman shows, in a very reconciliatory tone, that the war has been as important as peace to the growth of the American nation. Most critics are confused by these changes, but they are illuminated and well defined when viewed from the standpoint of the dialectic of Hegel, something that Whitman himself kept silent about when referring to Drum-Taps.

One may notice, in surveying the literature written about Drum-Taps, that Whitman himself was the first person to evaluate these war poems of his. On January 6, 1865, before publication of this volume, Whitman issued his fullest critical statement about Drum-Taps in a letter to his friend William D. O'Connor:

It is in my opinion superior to Leaves of Grass--
certainly more perfect as a work of art, being
adjusted in all its proportions and its passion
having all the indispensable merit that though
to the ordinary reader let loose with wildest

abandon, the true artist can see that it is yet under control.³

In 1888, Whitman emphasized the importance and influence of the Civil War on his poetic career. Casting a backward glance over these bloody years, he wrote:

I went down to the war fields of Virginia (end of 1862), lived thenceforward in camp--saw great battles. . . . Without those three or four years and the experiences they gave, Leaves of Grass would not now be existing.⁴

Despite the fact that Whitman himself acknowledges the great impact of the Civil War on his poetic career and the high regard he had for Drum-Taps as a vital part of Leaves of Grass, several critics have taken exception to his evaluation.

In a 1903 lecture at the Lowell Institute, Thomas W. Higginson attacked Drum-Taps and Whitman's personal attitude and actions during the Civil War. Higginson saw Whitman as one who was willing to sound the drum taps but unwilling to respond to them. This biased understanding led Higginson to judge the poems of Drum-Taps as "hollow," in that Whitman

³ Quoted in F. DeWolfe Miller, "Introduction" to Drum-Taps, by Walt Whitman (1865-6; rpt. Gainesville, Fla.: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1963), p. xxviii.

⁴ Quoted in Roger Asselineau, The Evolution of Walt Whitman, 2nd ed. (Boston: Harvard Univ. Press, 1970), p. 170.

called for men to rouse themselves and fight while he, himself, stayed away from the battlefield.⁵

Both William Dean Howells and Henry James focused their criticism of Drum-Taps on craftsmanship. Howells said that "there is no indecent thing in Drum-Taps. The artistic method of the poet remains, however, the same, and we must think it mistaken. . . . It is unspeakably inartistic."⁶ Because of this, Drum-Taps seems to Howells a "failure." Henry James, like Howells, reproached Whitman for a lack of art. For James, "it [had] been a melancholy task to read this book";⁷ and James showed no sympathy whatever with Whitman.

Richard Chase, a contemporary critic, agrees with Howells and James. Chase says that "despite the fact that Whitman thought himself to be ranging along the high plateau of his literary career, the truth is that, as a poet, he was already on the downgrade."⁸ Chase adds, "With the exception of 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd,'" and one or two of the Drum-Taps poems, Whitman's poetry shows that during and after the war he was living on his literary

⁵ F. DeWolfe Miller, p. xiv.

⁶ Asselineau, pp. 166-67.

⁷ Asselineau, p. 167.

⁸ Richard Chase, Walt Whitman Reconsidered (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1955), p. 133.

capital."⁹ In other words, Chase sees no reason for Whitman to have considered Drum-Taps as "superior" poetry.

Such critics as Higginson, Howells, James, or even Chase, not only seem ignorant of the very grounds of Whitman's theme and technique in Drum-Taps but seem also to deny the novel poetic ideals Whitman had set forth in the 1855 preface of Leaves of Grass:

The poetic quality is not marshal'd in rhyme or uniformity, or abstract addresses to things, nor in melancholy complaints, or good precepts, but is the₁₀ life of these and much else, and is in the soul.

These revolutionary ideals apparently do not attract Howells and James, who insist on the form rather than "the soul."

In opposition to the hostile views, John Burroughs was the first to defend Whitman as man and as poet, particularly against Higginson's criticism. In response to Higginson's lecture in 1903, in which he had degraded Whitman's person and poems, Burroughs wrote in his journal:

Think of belittling him because he did not enlist as a soldier and carry a musket in the ranks! Could there be anything more shocking and incongruous than Whitman killing people? . . .

⁹ Chase, p. 133.

¹⁰ Walt Whitman, The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman, ed. Richard M. Bucke, Thomas B. Harned, and Horace L. Traubel (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1902), Vol. V, p. 166. Cited henceforth as Complete Writings.

Whitman was the lover, the healer, the reconciler, and the only thing in character for him to do in the War was what he did do--nurse the wounded and sick soldiers--Union men and Rebels alike, showing no preference. He was not an athlete, or a rough, but a great tender mother-man, to whom the martial spirit was utterly foreign.¹¹

Then Burroughs called for finding new criteria by which to measure Whitman's poetry. He states, "I am fully persuaded that he belongs to an entirely new class of geniuses which has no type in the past; and that he is justified and explained on entirely new grounds."¹²

John Bailey, in his discussion of the war poems, concurs with what Whitman and his disciple Burroughs said about Drum-Taps and the impact of the Civil War on Whitman's poetic career. Bailey wrote:

Without the war and the part played in it and the influence it had upon him, and without these poems which he owed to its inspiration, it is doubtful whether his name would ever have been known outside a small circle of enthusiasts.¹³

It might be an exaggeration to say that the Civil War was the making of Whitman as a poet; in fact, Whitman was very well established in his career a few years before the war. But Bailey emphasizes the great effect of the Civil War on

¹¹ F. DeWolfe Miller, p. xiv.

¹² Quoted by Chase, p. 131.

¹³ John Bailey, Walt Whitman (New York: Macmillan, 1970), pp. 167-68.

Whitman's poetic career as related to the merit and perfection of Drum-Taps: "the war taught him . . . to give shape to his thoughts and experience in some of the noblest war poems which have ever been written."¹⁴

James Miller agrees that "Drum-Taps comprises one of the greatest bodies of war poetry ever written. It not only introduces a new subject into the Leaves but represents a radical change in the mood, tone, and themes."¹⁵ And it is evident that Miller does not agree with Howells or James who reproached Drum-Taps for lack of art; Miller sees that the sound-image that parallels the shifting mood and feeling of the hero gives the cluster some unity.¹⁶ However, both Miller and Bailey focus on the artistic devices of the war poems and avoid any discussion of the philosophical grounds that might govern Whitman's theme and technique.

Unlike Bailey and Miller, Henry Binns tries to find some such grounds that might have molded the poet's attitudes and theme during the war. Binns speculates:

Whitman's attitude towards war is not obvious, but it is, I believe, logical and consistent. On one side it approximated to the Quaker position, but

¹⁴ Bailey, p. 168.

¹⁵ James E. Miller, Jr., Walt Whitman (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962), p. 83.

¹⁶ James E. Miller, Jr., Walt Whitman, p. 83.

only on one side. Or rather, perhaps, the Quaker position approximates to one side of Whitman's. He was devoted to a social order, or republic, which could not be realized by deeds of arms. He had no hatred for any of his fellows, and recognized in his political enemy a man divine as himself.¹⁷

Clearly Binns sees no necessary illogicality or inconsistency in Whitman's attitudes toward the war, and he explains that it is true Whitman shared the spirit of patriotism with his people and encouraged the rest to fight for the moral cause; but, as Binns puts it, "The call to arms is one thing; the actual fighting, which converts men, to use his own phrase, into 'devils and butchers' is another."¹⁸ Thus the shifting, Binns sees, in Whitman's tone and theme is due to the poet's own experience during the war. What the poet had seen and heard throughout the years of war affected greatly his attitudes and molded his themes and tone in the war poems which it took him four years to complete.

F. DeWolfe Miller sees Whitman's shifts in the mood, tone, and themes in Drum-Taps as due to the fact that the poet was "fundamentally disturbed." Miller insists that

¹⁷ Henry Bryan Binns, A Life of Walt Whitman (London, 1905; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1969), p. 205.

¹⁸ Binns, p. 207.

"Whitman, after the first flush of patriotism felt by so many at the time, suffered a period of bewilderment which he did not afterwards admit even perhaps to himself."¹⁹

Miller based his proposition on Whitman's writings, which during the first years of war, suggested to him the confused state of Whitman's mind. Miller also says that an indication of Whitman's dilemma is his withdrawal from Manhattan to go to Brooklyn to live in peace with his mother and to occupy himself with journalism.²⁰

Hugh Fausset agrees with F. DeWolfe Miller and gives a better explanation of what had bewildered the poet. Fausset believes that Whitman was overwhelmed and bewildered by what he had seen of the corrupt politics that caused the Civil War, a clash of the apparently irreconcilable material interests of the North and the South. But that material conflict had worn a moral mask. The politicians purposefully kept the issue of the material interests in the background, whereas other moral issues, the preservation of the Union and the emancipation of slaves, were placed squarely in the foreground. The politicians in that way could mobilize the public to fight their war. As a result,

¹⁹ F. DeWolfe Miller, p. xi.

²⁰ F. DeWolfe Miller, p. xi.

thousands of young Americans were driven to the inferno of war.²¹

Faussett says that the consequences of the war threw Whitman into a painful conflict. Undoubtedly he was aware of the fact that America, "the nation of nations," was falling apart. Democracy and Union, likewise, were seriously threatened, and the dreams of the poet of a great America were diminished by that devastating crisis. Thus, Whitman suffered severely during the war years. Whitman's sufferings and bewilderment, according to Fausset, are unmistakably present in Drum-Taps. Neither DeWolfe Miller nor Fausset, however, made reference to the optimistic views of Absolute Idealism of Hegel which kept the poet from falling apart during this crisis.²²

Roger Asselineau is the only critic to make even a brief reference to the basic Hegelian logical technique in which Whitman was involved when he constructed the poems of Drum-Taps. Asselineau wrote:

. . . at the end of the war, after a period of disillusion, doubt, and despair, he recovered the fervor by which he had been carried away in 1861, but this was mingled with sadness and the memory of the sufferings he had witnessed and shared

²¹ Hugh l'Anson Fausset, Walt Whitman: Poet of Democracy (Essex, 1942; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), pp. 172-83.

²² Fausset, pp. 172-83.

vicariously. In short, his evolution had followed a Hegelian pattern: thesis, antithesis, synthesis; and he was probably aware of such a threefold movement when he constructed about this time three sides of his "Square Deific."²³

Despite such a recognition, Asselineau avoided, as many other critics have, going into further detail about the direct influence of Hegel's philosophy on Whitman's thinking. Asselineau's views and those of many other critics toward Whitman's early Hegelianism are mostly skeptical. However, the great effect of the Hegelian motifs on Whitman's writings during the 1870s and after is very well documented by many scholars and by the poet's editors; even the poet himself admitted in his old days his high regard for Hegel's philosophy. But whether this philosophy had affected his early writings of the 1850s and 1860s remained a matter of speculation and debate among Whitman scholars.

In reviewing the literature of Whitman's sympathetic and unsympathetic critics, one may identify two major problems. First, though the sympathetic critics suggest giving the most serious consideration to Drum-Taps, they ignore the essential philosophy that greatly affected the technique and themes of the war poems. Second, the unsympathetic critics not only ignore the philosophical grounds on which Whitman

²³ Asselineau, p. 161.

based his theme but seem to reject his new poetic theory which insists on the soul of poetry, rather than form.

In respect to Drum-Taps, Whitman emphasized "the human merit" of his poems, which certainly stems from a basic philosophy, as will be established later in this study.

In 1888, Whitman revealed to his friend Traubel:

The merit of the war pieces is not chiefly literary--if they have merit, it is chiefly human; it is a presence-statement reduced to its last simplicity--sometimes a mere recital of names, dates, incidents--no dress put on anywhere to complicate or beautify it.²⁴

Yet even the merely "human merit" of these poems may be misinterpreted or overlooked when critics take no notice of the vital element of the war poems, the Absolute Idealism, the philosophy that Whitman based his human ideals on and presented in Drum-Taps.

It can be shown that understanding Whitman's relationship to Hegel illuminates any discussion or interpretation of the war poems. This study will discuss and analyze these poems in the light of Hegel's philosophy. But before indulging in such a task, one needs to bring into focus all the avenues and channels which were available for Whitman to Hegel's philosophy as early as the 1850s. A study of

²⁴ Walter Lowenfels, introd., Walt Whitman's Civil War (New York: Knopf, 1960), p. x.

pertinent scholarly efforts and of a number of internal and external evidences will link Whitman's major theme and technique to Hegel's Absolute Idealism and establish the premises of the poet's Hegelianism before the Civil War.

Section Two

Whitman's Familiarity with Hegel
During the 1850s

Only Hegel is fit for America--
is large enough and free enough.²⁵

With such a statement, which occurs in his "Sunday Evening Lecture," and other statements, as "In my opinion the . . . formulas of Hegel are an essential crowning justification of New World democracy in the creative realms of time and space,"²⁶ which occurs in his essay "Carlyle From American Points of View," Whitman demonstrated his high admiration for Hegel's philosophy, and at the same time the poet gave impetus to scholars to trace the basic philosophy that he incorporates in his works. Evidently Whitman's Hegelianism has been well documented and established by a considerable number of scholars, especially after he gave a few clues later in his life; but there remains a closely related issue that has created a perpetual debate among Whitman scholars. When did Whitman start his study of Hegel? This question has not as yet had a final and authoritative answer.

²⁵ Complete Writings, Vol. IX, p. 170. The lectures were dated by the editors as late 1860s or early 1870s.

²⁶ Complete Writings, Vol. IV, p. 322, dated by the editors as 1882.

This section proposes to show Whitman's familiarity with Hegel and reveal his adherence to the philosophy of Absolute Idealism during the period prior to the Civil War. As several scholars have shown, there is a striking correlation and correspondence between Whitman's main theme and modes of discourse, and the motifs of Hegel's philosophy. Considerable numbers of Hegelian images and vision are observable throughout the verses of Leaves of Grass that were published before the outbreak of the Civil War. Before discussing the internal evidence of Whitman's Hegelianism, however, one should introduce some biographical facts that suggest the availability of Hegelian literature in America during the 1850s and the familiarity of the poet with such literature.

Scholars have determined that Whitman received his Hegelian legacy primarily from Joseph Gostwick's German Literature and Fredric Hedge's The Prose Writers of Germany. Gostwick's book was originally published in Edinburgh and London in 1849, with the American edition, published in Philadelphia in 1854, being generally agreed to be the edition used by Whitman. Hedge's book was first published in Edinburgh in 1847, reprinted in 1849 and 1852, and a revised edition published in Philadelphia in 1870. Scholars initially concentrated their research on these two books because in a footnote in his Notes and Fragments, Whitman specified them as his sources. He wrote, "See Aristotle,

Descart, Locke, Hume, Hegel, German Literature, Prose Writers of Germany."²⁷ This footnote is the first clue for scholars who seek any type of resolution of the issue of Whitman's relation to Hegel, and it played an integral role in determining the course of the debate on this issue.

The editors of Whitman's Complete Writings, Richard Bucke, Thomas Harned, and Horace Traubel, recognized Hegel's influence on Whitman, yet they created a major problem for scholars interested in Whitman's Hegelianism. The editors suggest that Whitman's initial study of Hegel started during the late 1860s or early 1870s. A footnote to "Sunday Evening Lectures" (where the Hegelian influence is evident), says:

All his life Whitman planned to deliver lectures, and occasionally he did deliver one, as for instance that on the assassination of Lincoln. Those in question here, on the great German metaphysicians were never completed and, of course, never delivered. The MS. in my hands is simply a series of fragments which are here given word for word as they stand. They [the lectures] were probably written in the late sixties or very early seventies.²⁸

In effect, Gay Wilson Allen, Robert Falk, and Henry A. Pochmann agree with the editor's conclusion about the date of the of the poet's initial study of Hegel. Other critics

²⁷ Complete Writings, Vol. X, p. 16.

²⁸ Complete Writings, Vol. IX, p. 160.

advance by a decade the time in question; Mody Boatright has taken the lead in such scholarship.

William Sloane Kennedy preceded Boatright by more than three decades in pointing out Whitman's debt to Hegel. In his book, Reminiscences of Walt Whitman, published in 1896, Kennedy states: "In a word Whitman's religious philosophy is Hegelian."²⁹ Yet, in defining Whitman's major debts to Hegel, Kennedy depended on only the internal evidences he found in Whitman's verses. He did not address the issue of the available sources or suggest any certain or even approximate date for Whitman's initiation into Hegelianism. Boatright went further in his study and attempted to specify the time and the source of Whitman's initial study of Hegel.

In a widely reprinted article, "Whitman and Hegel," originally published in 1929, Mody Boatright says that Whitman must have known something of Hegel before he published his first edition of Leaves of Grass in 1855.³⁰ Furthermore, he identifies the source of Whitman's knowledge as German Literature and insists that Whitman had read Gostwick's book in 1854, the year of its publication in

²⁹ William Sloane Kennedy, Reminiscences, Walt Whitman (Belmont, Mass., 1896; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1973), p. 137.

³⁰ Mody Boatright, "Whitman and Hegel," Texas University Studies in English, 9 (1923), p. 147.

Philadelphia. Boatright had three reasons on which to base his inference. First, he points out close resemblances in Whitman's and Hegel's thought. Second, he discovers several passages in Whitman's "Sunday Evening Lectures" that are taken word for word from Gostwick's book, with no reference to the source whatsoever by the poet. Third, Boatright lists as supporting evidence the fact that Whitman follows the 1854 edition in the erroneous spelling of the author's name. Whitman's reference is to "Gostick," which is the way the name appeared on the 1854 title page, while in other editions it is the correct "Gostwick."

Regardless of the plausibility of Boatright's interpretation, other critics disagree with it and say that the resemblances of thought and phraseology, though quite evident, are not enough to confirm Boatright's point. Robert Falk, for example, postulates, "While Whitman may well have used 'Gostick's' first [American] edition, there is no evidence that he read it in the year of its publication, 1854, and the lecture notes . . . weren't prepared until nearly 1870,"³¹ the same date which was suggested by Whitman's editors. However, Falk seems to ignore quite a few evidences that might sustain Boatright's arguments.

³¹ Robert P. Falk, "Walt Whitman and German Thought," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 40 (1951), p. 319.

In harmony with Boatright, W. R. Fulghum reinforces the proposition of the poet's enormous debt to Gostwick's German Literature. He considers this book as "Whitman's chief single source for biographical and critical materials . . . for his exposition of the essential ideas not only of Hegel but also of the other important German philosophers and writers."³² Like Boatright, but with more instances, Fulghum exhibits passages from Gostwick and from Whitman's lecture notes, showing a very close resemblance between the two, something which, he holds, could never occur accidentally. Fulghum, therefore, argues that the poet, undoubtedly, must have had access to Gostwick's book when he prepared his "Sunday Evening Lectures." It is worth mentioning here that Fulghum accepts the editors' date for the lectures, although he is aware of the fact that one sentence which Whitman copied from Gostwick was dated by the poet 1857, a fact that may be taken as evidence against the editors' conclusion concerning Whitman's first studies of Hegel.

The controversial sentence was originally discovered by Boatright and then brought up again by Fulghum. The sentence which Whitman wrote on Frederick Schlegel is as follows:

³² W. B. Fulghum, Jr., "Whitman's Debt to Joseph Gostwick," American Literature, 12 (January 1941), p. 496.

Wrote Philosophy of History, most valuable tenet of which is,--"the inexpediency of destroying old institutions before new ideas develop themselves in consistency with the order of society."³³

It is a fact that Whitman's editors indicated in a footnote to this sentence that it was "dated by W.W. 57." But another fact the editors ignored was that this same sentence is "simply an italicizing of Gostwick's own summary of what he calls 'the only valuable argument of these lectures.'"³⁴ And it is appropriate to quote it as it is in Gostwick:

Perhaps the only valuable argument in these lectures [Schlegel's] is that which expresses the danger of "negative" reform; or, in other words, the inexpediency of destroying Old Institutions before new ideas are prepared to develop themselves in consistency with the order of society.³⁵

And as has been mentioned before, Whitman's sentence was footnoted by Bucke as dated by Whitman in 1857; surprisingly, Fulghum did not emphasize the relevance of Bucke's footnote to the question of the time of Whitman's access to Gostwick. Besides, Boatright did not find this sentence and its footnote as support for his assumption of a time three years earlier than 1857.

³³ Complete Writings, Vol. IX, pp. 120-21.

³⁴ Fulghum, p. 424.

³⁵ Quoted in Boatright, p. 147.

Unlike Fulghum, who did not dare to question the conclusion of Whitman's editors concerning the poet's initial study of Hegel, Millie D. Jensen used Bucke's own footnote as evidence to disagree with his conclusion. Jensen argues that if we agree with Bucke's footnote to the sentence taken word for word from Gostwick, then we must accept the assumption that Whitman had access to Gostwick's book in 1857. But Bucke, as Jensen indicated, had neither realized that the sentence was taken from Gostwick nor understood the extent to which Whitman had depended upon the handbook for preparing his lectures. Jensen, therefore, says: "If he had realized all this, Bucke would have advanced by a decade the time at which Whitman did some of his study of German philosophers, including Hegel."³⁶ And Jensen's interpretation, if accepted, will bring the reader closer to the time suggested by Boatright.

W. A. Little brings to light more evidence which works strongly in favor of Boatright's assumption. In his article "Walt Whitman and Nibelungenlied," Little suggests that Whitman may have had access to Gostwick's book during the early 1850s.³⁷ Little's only ground is "Whitman's free

³⁶ Millie D. Jensen, "Whitman and Hegel: The Curious Triplicate Process," Walt Whitman Review, 10 (June 1964), 29.

³⁷ W. A. Little, "Walt Whitman and the Nibelungenlied," PMLA, 80 (December 1965), pp. 562-70.

verse paraphrase, in nine lines, of Gostwick's literal unrhymed English translation of 12 lines of the Nibelungelied which he quotes in the original and in a modern German translation."³⁸ Gostwick's German Literature of 1854 "contains about 350 lines of the Nibelungelied, whereas the 1873 Outlines of German Literature contains none."³⁹

German Literature is not the only book cited by scholars as a source of Whitman's German philosophy. The Prose Writers of Germany by Fredric Hedge is another. Newton Arvin first raised this possibility in his Whitman: "Very possibly he had actually read, in this case, the selections from the Philosophy of History [of Hegel] in Hedge's book."⁴⁰ However, although Arvin identifies the source of Whitman's knowledge of Hegel's philosophy, he shows no interest in disputing the editors' conclusion in regard to the particular decade of Whitman's study of German thought. On the contrary, Arvin speculates that the magnetic reputation of the German philosophers during the 1860s aroused the poet's insatiable appetite for knowledge; thus he started looking around for any avenue available to the study of German philosophy.

³⁸ Floyd Stovall, The Foreground of Leaves of Grass (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), p. 196.

³⁹ Stovall, p. 186.

⁴⁰ Newton Arvin, Whitman (New York: Macmillan, 1938), p. 193.

In accord with Arvin's speculations, Sister Mary Eleanor worked out a thorough study in which she compares the text of Whitman's lecture notes and Hedge's section on Hegel.⁴¹ In these two texts Sister Mary Eleanor discovers a considerable number of striking resemblances "which extend beyond thought to phraseology"; these resemblances "are too close to be accidental,"⁴² she thinks. Sister Mary Eleanor considers the several identical passages she found in the two texts as an indication only of Whitman's familiarity with Hedge's book, "but they do not necessarily testify to the influence of that book on the formation of Leaves of Grass."⁴³

As to the relative extent of Whitman's reliance on the two cited sources, Hedge and Gostwick, Sister Mary Eleanor believes that German Literature "appeared rather late to have much effect on the first edition of Leaves of Grass";⁴⁴ thus she speculates there was a stronger possibility that Whitman received his German legacy from Hedge's book, which appeared seven years earlier than Gostwick's, and she concludes that "this cumbersome closely-printed volume had a

⁴¹ Sister Mary Eleanor, "Hedge's Prose Writers of Germany, as a Source of Whitman's Knowledge of German Philosophy," MLN, 61 (January 1946), 381-388.

⁴² Sister Mary Eleanor, p. 381.

⁴³ Sister Mary Eleanor, p. 383.

⁴⁴ Sister Mary Eleanor, p. 381.

real part in the shaping of Leaves of Grass."⁴⁵ However, in inspecting carefully Sister Mary Eleanor's study, one sees that her findings are generally supportive of the assumption that suggests Whitman's early familiarity with Hegel.

In addition to the two major sources in question, Prose Writers of Germany and German Literature, there were several other sources available during the 1850s in America that might have been Whitman's mediums of contact with German thought. It is well acknowledged among scholars that Whitman made considerable use of encyclopedias, especially the Encyclopaedia Britannica, eighth edition, published from 1853 to 1860, and the New American Cyclopaedia, published from 1858 to 1862.⁴⁶ Stovall believes that Whitman might have relied more on the New American Cyclopaedia articles to form his ideas of Hegel, rather than on the Encyclopaedia Britannica article which "was strongly anti-Hegelian."⁴⁷

Carlyle's work is also considered to be one of the mediums available to Whitman during the 1840s and 1850s. Whitman's own words in respect to Carlyle suggest such a possibility. In his Notes and Fragments, Whitman wrote,

⁴⁵ Sister Mary Eleanor, p. 388.

⁴⁶ Stovall, p. 196.

⁴⁷ Stovall, p. 196.

"Carlyle certainly introduced the German style, writers, sentimentalism, transcendentalism etc. etc. etc. from 1826 to 1840--through the great reviews and magazines--and through his own works and example."⁴⁸ Such testimony of Whitman may encourage the observer to suppose that Whitman was somehow familiar with German thought early in his poetic career. Such a suggestion is more acceptable if it is acknowledged that Whitman was fond of Carlyle's work, having published several reviews of Carlyle's writings in The Eagle. The latest review was dated April 14, 1847.⁴⁹ And it is worth mentioning that The Critical and Miscellaneous Essays of Carlyle was published in book form in Boston in 1838, and it is possible that Whitman read a great deal in this book.

Floyd Stovall, after reviewing most of the literature on Whitman's German legacy and investigating the possibilities, finally decided to accept Boatright's assumptions about the date of Whitman's initial study of Hegel. Stovall says,

It is my opinion, however, admittedly based on inconclusive evidence, that he got his first taste of Hegel's philosophy in Gostwick's German Literature or in Hedge's Prose Writers of Germany about 1854 and later developed his own ideas of it from

⁴⁸ Complete Writings, Vol. IX, p. 123.

⁴⁹ Stovall, p. 200.

more extensive reading,⁵⁰ perhaps including some of Hegel's own writing.

Furthermore, Stovall raises another possibility concerning Whitman's sources. He speculates that Whitman might have read Victor Cousin's History of Modern Philosophy, where many ideas were drawn from Hegel, especially the dialectic of history, which is discussed thoroughly. Yet Whitman nowhere mentions Cousin's name.⁵¹

In conclusion, there were many mediums of contact with German philosophy available to the American reader during the 1850s and even the 1840s. Whitman, the voracious reader, must have been familiar with a few of these. As the evidence discussed in this section indicates, two major sources, Gostwick and Hedge, were used extensively by Whitman in preparing the "Sunday Evening Lectures," probably during the 1850s, rather than the time set by the editors of Whitman. This conclusion will be much more firmly established after a discussion of evidence that will show close correlations of Whitman's theme and the Absolute Idealism of Hegel.

⁵⁰ Stovall, p. 197.

⁵¹ Stovall, p. 197.

Section Three

Hegelian Verses

External evidence suggests that Whitman had access to the philosophy of Hegel in the early 1850s. There is also internal evidence that supports the assumption of Whitman's early adherence to Hegel's Absolute Idealism. In this section some verses will be introduced with reference to the poet's Hegelianism. Most of these verses were written during the 1850s, and others were written during the 1860s prior to the Civil War. The selected verses contain many themes, images, and views analogous to Hegel's central principles. This evident analogy may support the assumption of Whitman's early faith in Hegel's philosophy.

According to Hegel's system of absolute or monistic idealism, "life is the self-development of the Absolute, and nature that through which it realizes itself,--its 'objectivation,'"⁵² as Kennedy puts it. In other words, all parts of the universe are included in one all-embracing order, and of course the unity and order are attributed to the ideas and purposes of the Absolute Mind in its unfolding process. This intelligent and purposive universe resembles to Hegel, as it does to Whitman, a "living organism." In this organic

⁵² Kennedy, p. 137.

body there is order, therefore, consistency, and intelligence, "and the seeming discords of time are 'But stumbling steps of the one persistent life/ That struggles up through mists to heights sublime.'"⁵³

Boatright comments on another similarity of Hegel's and Whitman's universes. He notes that, for each, the universe resembles "a vast organism exhibiting at once the greatest possible unity and the greatest conceivable diversity."⁵⁴ This characteristic is well illustrated in Whitman's poem "On the Beach at Night Alone," first published in 1856:

A vast similitude interlocks all,
 All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns,
 moons, planets,
 All distances of place however wide,
 All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
 All souls, all living bodies though they be ever
 so different, or in different worlds,
 All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral
 processes, the fishes, the brutes,
 All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations,
 languages,
 All identities that have existed or may exist on
 this globe, or any globe,
 All lives and deaths, all of the past, present,
 future,
 This vast similitude spans them, and always has
 spann'd,

⁵² Kennedy, p. 137.

⁵³ Kennedy, pp. 137-38.

⁵⁴ Boatright, p. 136.

And shall forever span them and compactly hold and
enclose them.⁵⁵

This vast, yet organic universe is progressing through conflict toward divine ends. The universe is not a fixed and finished order, but it is fluid-like, in the eternal process of becoming; this Hegelian image is well presented in Whitman's poem "I Sing the Body Electric," first published in 1855,

Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as
the well-off, just as much as you,
Each has his or her place in the procession.
(All is a procession,
The universe is procession with measured and
perfect motion.) (p. 98, ll. 87-90)

There is a clear reference in these lines to the Absolute mind that displays its purposiveness and intelligence throughout the particular and the universal. Thus, the constant flux or the unfolding process of the universe is not chaotic, but is an orderly development with, as Boatright says, "the seeds of the future being contained in the past."⁵⁶ Likewise the present is implicit in the past, and the future in the present. To Whitman, as Boatright

⁵⁵ "On the Beach at Night Alone," Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York: Knopf, 1965), pp. 261-62, ll. 4-14. All further references to poems in this work will be cited in the text.

⁵⁶ Boatright, p. 135.

observes, "Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what grows after and out of itself" (p. 82, 45:1181). Also, in the poem "Starting From Paumanok," composed in 1856, the same image of the constant flux of the universe recurs:

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern
reports.
This then is life,
Here is what has come to the surface after
so many throes and convulsions.
(p. 16, 2:15-19)

Whitman further intensifies the impression that the dynamic system of "throes and convulsions" is not chaotic, but consistent and purposive, in this verse from "Song of Myself," as it appeared in the 1855 edition: "It is not chaos or death--it is eternal life--it is happiness" (p. 88, 50:1318). In another place in "Song of Myself," Whitman reinforces the same impression:

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?
Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have,
and the mica on the side of a rock has.
(p.46, 19:82-83)

To Hegel and Whitman the universe is essentially one. Harold H. Titus explains the concept of the oneness of Hegel's universe: "Instead of the fixed or static reality and the separate and complete self of traditional philosophy, Hegel sets forth a dynamic conception of a

self and its environment so interrelated that a clear-cut distinction cannot be drawn between the two."⁵⁷ Likewise the universal is present in all particular experiences of the dynamic system and "draws together all the manifold isolated unities into a higher unity."⁵⁸ The universal stands always for the Higher Synthesis or the Absolute. In the same manner Whitman declares "if any thing is sacred the human body is sacred" (p. 99, 8:124). And elsewhere the poet says, "all things of the universe are perfect miracles, each as profound as any" (p. 22, 12:171).

In Hegel and Whitman's world, the spiritual and the material are merged, though all the universe in its ultimate reality is of the nature of thought--i.e., spiritual; the material world is, thus, in the last analysis spiritual. Whitman exhibits full espousal of such ideas in his early poetry. In his poem "To Think of Time," published in 1855, he says, "I swear I see now that every thing without exception has an eternal soul" (p. 440, 9:117). And in "Song for Occupation," Whitman emphasizes "Objects gross and the unseen soul are one" (p. 216, 5:102). In "Starting from

⁵⁷ Harold Titus et al., Living Issues in Philosophy (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1979), p. 274.

⁵⁸ Harold P. Kainz, Hegel's Phenomenology, Part I; Analysis and Commentary (Alabama: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1974), p. 193.

Paumanok," the poet intensifies the same impression--the spiritual nature of the universe; he says:

The soul,
 Forever and forever--longer than soil is brown
 and solid--longer than water ebbs and flows.
 I will make the poems of materials, for I think
 they are to be the most spiritual poems.
 (p. 18, 6:69-72)

and

I will not make a poem nor the least part of
 a poem but has reference to the soul,
 Because having look'd at the objects of the
 universe, I find there is no one nor any
 particle of one but has reference to the
 Soul. (p. 23, 12:172-75)

The import of these verses is that everything in the universe, animate or inanimate, is seen by Whitman as spiritual or having a soul.

Another major debt of Whitman to Hegel is one first cited by William Sloane Kennedy. It is "Hegel's central principle, the reconciliation of opposites."⁵⁹ As Kennedy points out, in Hegel's world "all antinomies are reconciled,"⁶⁰ because everything proceeds ultimately from the Absolute; good and evil are also merged in the Absolute; evil is not real, but only evil to our vision. Everything

⁵⁹ Kennedy, p. 138.

⁶⁰ Kennedy, p. 138.

in Hegel's evolutionary universe, including evil, tends irresistibly toward the good. Whitman was fond of such a doctrine from the very beginning of his poetic career. In an 1855 poem Whitman says, "What is called good is perfect, and what is called sin is just as perfect" (p. 439, 8:114); and in the concluding poem of the 1855 edition of Leaves of Grass, "Great Are the Myths," the poet reveals the paradox of good and evil, "Great is Wickedness--I find I often admire it, just as much as I admire goodness" (p. 588, l. 62). In "Starting from Paumanok," Whitman dwells on the theme of evil in Hegelian fashion too:

Omnes! omnes, let others ignore what they may,
I make the poem of evil also,
 I commemorate that part also,
I am myself just as much evil as good, and
 my nation is--and I say there is in
 fact no evil,
(Or if there is I say it is just as important
 to you, to the land or to me, as any thing
 else.) (p. 19, 7:97-101)

And as the "soul" is equivalent to the "Real Me," evil in Hegel's world is analogous to the "Not Me," which will be, through conflict, conquered by the Self and converted into Me. Such ideas Whitman embraced without reservation. Henry Binns believes that "it was because Hegel saw Life, both the Me and the Not Me, as a single Whole, and found

a place for evil in his world purpose, that Whitman hailed him as the one truly 'American' thinker of the age."⁶¹

Boatright notes that both Hegel and Whitman view the eternal struggle of the Self against the Not Self as essential for the development and growth of the universe.⁶² The following verse explicitly suggests the significance to Whitman of this eternal struggle:

Have the past struggles succeeded?
 What has succeeded? yourself? your nation? Nature?
 Now understand me well--it is provided in the
 essence of things that from any fruition
 of success, no matter what, shall come forth
 something to make a greater struggle
 necessary. (p. 158, 14:208-210)

This also suggests that Whitman fully accepted Hegelian logic concerning the eternal struggle. Hegel insists that the continual process of self-development is dialectical--that is, changes in the universe proceed through a thesis to an antithesis, to an integration or synthesis. Or as Titus explains,

All development, both of things and of ideas, is brought about through the overcoming of contradictions. For example, the idea of "being" leads logically to the idea of "nonbeing." Nonbeing and being, when united, logically entail the concept "becoming."⁶³

⁶¹ Binns, p. 298.

⁶² Boatright, p. 140.

⁶³ Titus, p. 257.

And when one reads the following resume Whitman wrote of Hegel's cosmology in his "Sunday evening lectures," the reader concludes that Whitman was fully aware of the dialectic. His resume says:

Penetrating beneath the shows and materials of the objective world we find, according to Hegel (though the thought by itself is not new but very antique and both Indian and Grecian) that in respect to human cognition of them, all and several are pervaded by the only absolute substance which is SPIRIT, endued with the eternal impetus of development, and producing from itself the opposing powers and forces of the universe. A curious, triplicate process seems the resultant action; first the Positive, then the Negative, then the product of mediation between them; from which product the process is repeated and so goes on without end.⁶⁴

Alfred Marks sees that Whitman's resume of Hegel "is strikingly similar to what one might suppose the poet's own philosophy to be after careful examination of Leaves of Grass."⁶⁵

As with Hegel, in Whitman's world all elements and aspects of life consist of the triad, which is basic to the dialectic; the changes in the universe are brought about through such a dialectical process. Human personality

⁶⁴ Complete Writings, Vol. IX, pp. 172-173.

⁶⁵ Alfred Marks, "Whitman's Triadic Imagery," American Literature, 23 (1951), 105.

consists also of a triad: soul, thesis; body, antithesis; I, synthesis. In "Pioneers, O Pioneers!" Whitman draws the lines of his Hegelian personality:

I too with my soul and body,
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering
on our way. (p. 231, ll. 69-70)

However, it should be considered here, as Francis Murphy notes, that "The 'I' of Whitman . . . is not always a person; it is often the personal image of the idealistic absolute."⁶⁶ This identification of Whitman and the Absolute, who become images of each other, is an explanation of why Whitman seems to "contain multitudes--and contradictions."⁶⁷ The poet talks with no strain about the contradictory elements in his personality:

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)
(p. 88, 51:1324-26)

This statement, as Marks sees it, is not

exemplifying his imputed arrogance and illogicality. When viewed from the standpoint of the Dialectic, it becomes one of Whitman's more

⁶⁶ Francis Murphy, ed., Walt Whitman: A Critical Anthology (Hammondspport, N.Y.: Penguin, 1964), p. 296.

⁶⁷ Murphy, p. 296.

logical utterances, meaning: "Although I may seem to contradict myself, there are so many circumstances mitigating those contradictions within me that within my size and complexity they are resolved and synthesized."⁶⁸

Or in more strictly Hegelian terms, since "all antinomies are reconciled"⁶⁹ in the Higher Synthesis--the Absolute--, and since Whitman and the Absolute are images of each other, contradictions, or what others see as inconsistent elements, are also synthesized and reconciled in the personality of Whitman.

Alfred Marks has discovered that the triad is "reproduced very frequently in Leaves of Grass. Characteristically, it presents a grouping in which what might be understood as two separate parts appear actually to be three (and yet one is that the 'third' synthesizes and contains 'one' and 'two')." ⁷⁰ Marks introduces many examples of triadic imagery, such as

I [synthesis] am the poet of
the Body [antithesis] and I am
the poet of the Soul [thesis].
 (p. 48, 21:422)

⁶⁸ Marks, pp. 99-100.

⁶⁹ Kennedy, p. 138.

⁷⁰ Marks, p. 100.

and

I [synthesis] am not the poet of
goodness [thesis] only,
 I do not decline to be the poet
 of wickedness [antithesis] also.
 (p. 50, 22:463)

or

I [synthesis] find one side [thesis] a balance
 and the antipodal side [antithesis] a
 balance. (p. 50, 22:470)

In a sense, Whitman the person contains the "Body" and the "Soul," "goodness" and "wickedness" and then as poet synthesizes the two extremes within his personality, or balances each extreme with its opposite.

Another Hegelian idea is seen by Floyd Stovall as prominent in Whitman's poems of the 1860s. This idea is originally suggested by Hegel in his Philosophy of History.⁷¹ The philosopher explains that "History is the manifestation of God's supervision of Humanity."⁷² For Hegel, world history consists of three geographical epochs representing the triadic elements of thought: the infinite, the finite, and the relation of these two. In Hegel's views, Asia represents the infinite, Europe the finite, and the American

⁷¹ George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, The Philosophy of History (Chicago: William Benton, 1982), pp. 190-203.

⁷² Stovall, p. 201.

epoch is the relation and the fusion of the other two. The process of relating or fusing the finite and the infinite is to be completed in America, so that it is to become the theater of man's highest development and greatest achievement in the realms of the intellect and spirit. This conception is evident in several of Whitman's poems, such as "With Antecedents" (1860), "A Broadway Pageant" (1860), and "Passage to India" (1869). In "With Antecedents," Whitman says:

With antecedents
 With my fathers and mothers and the accumu-
 lations of past ages,
 With all which, had it not been, I would not
 be here, as I am,

 With Egypt, India, Phenicia [sic], Greece, and
 Rome,
 With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb
 and the Saxon.

 With those old continents whence we have come
 to this new continent,

 You and me arrived--America arrived and
 making this year,
 This year! sending itself ahead countless
 years to come. (p. 240, l:1-15)

Harold Aspiz has discovered reference to the same Hegelian idea in another poem, "Unfolded Out of the Folds," which first appeared in Leaves of Grass in 1856 as "Poem of Women." Aspiz holds that "This poem may be read as a paean to the evolution of the human soul and to the race of perfect beings destined to appear upon American

shores."⁷³ And what Gay Wilson Allen says about this poem supports Aspiz's interpretation; Allen summarized its essential meaning as follows:

The theme is both maternity and self-reliance: 'First the man is shaped in the woman; he can then be shaped in himself.' The treatment is abstract, ethical, and ideal; only physically and morally strong women can produce a strong race. It is one aspect of Whitman's dream of the future glory of America.⁷⁴

And it does not seem to be too far-fetched to suggest that "Whitman's dream of the future glory of America" was based on and confirmed by Hegel's philosophy of history. In this philosophy, he later found a logical rationalization for the bloody war that engulfed all America and split the nation into two hostile parties. Despite the crisis, Whitman never lost faith in his nation's future and kept dreaming of a better America--counterbalancing the painful conflict which the war brought about with the optimistic views of Hegel's metaphysic. And as is generally acknowledged, his Hegelianism deepened after the experience of war, to the point that the larger ideas and results of the dialectic became unmistakable in his writings after the Civil War.

⁷³ Harold Aspiz, "Unfolding the Folds," Walt Whitman Review, 12 (December 1966), p. 81.

⁷⁴ Gay Wilson Allen, Walt Whitman Handbook (New York: Hendricks House, 1957), p. 131.

Summary

In chapter one, three main points are established. First, though Whitman critics disagree on the artistic merit of his war poems, they totally agree that the shifting in the feeling, mood, and themes is persistent in Drum-Taps. This is always misinterpreted, because the critics largely ignore the basic philosophy on which Whitman based his poetic themes and technique in his war poems. Second, the chapter points out that the Absolute Idealism of Hegel is the basic philosophy to which the poet adhered from the very beginning of his poetic career. This philosophy determined greatly his themes as well as his poetic technique. Also, the poet's access and adherence to Absolute Idealism is documented with reference to several biographical factors. Third, in reviewing various poems of the 1850s and early 1860s, three of the Hegelian concepts stand out. One of these concepts is the doctrine of opposites in which good and evil are merged in the Higher Synthesis, or the Absolute; the other concept is the evolutionary state of the universe progressing through conflict toward divine ends. The third concept is the Hegelian prophecy which indicates that through the process of relating and fusing the finite and the infinite epochs of world history, America will be the theater of man's highest development and greatest achievement in the realms of intellect and spirit.

The Hegelian concepts are intensified and thoroughly developed by the poet in his war poems, Drum-Taps. Such intensity and development stemmed from the fact that the optimistic thrust of Absolute Idealism became more appealing to the poet during the time of crisis. Thus, it is not surprising to see the dialectic not only influence the theme but extend to determine the design of the whole collection and several individual poems of Drum-Taps. The dialectic is also present in the imagery of many poems. In order to clarify the impact of Hegel's philosophy on Whitman, Drum Taps will be viewed from the standpoint of the dialectic.

Chapter II

Drum-Taps: A Hegelian Terminology

Chapter I established two facts concerning Whitman's relationship to Hegel: first, the poet had access to the philosopher's writings during the 1850s and after; second, Hegelian themes, images, and views are discovered in Whitman's early verses. In this chapter the discussion will concentrate on Whitman's poetic use of the logical technique, the dialectic, in an attempt to show to what degree Whitman was dependent upon the dialectic when he constructed his war poems, Drum-Taps. It is suggested that the poet was aware of the dialectic then and gave the whole collection a Hegelian pattern: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Yet, before discussing the triadic structure of the whole volume, one should define certain Hegelian terms used in this study:

1. The Universal (das Allgemeine): a negative medium which draws together manifold isolated unities into a higher unity.
2. The Particular (das Besondere): an isolated unity superseded by the higher unity of a universal, and thus set in the context of some manifold.
3. The Abstract (das Abstrakte): particularity insofar as it innately resists being drawn

into the higher unity of the universal; "das Absrakte" as an adjective signifies "isolation from context"; a particular human being (e.g., a hermit) who withdrew from his social context would be living an "abstract" existence.

4. The Concrete (das konkrete): particularity completely synthesized with its congruent universal under the agency of thought; "das kankrete" as an adjective signifies "united with its context."
5. The Absolute (das Absolute): is a complete union of objectivity with subjectivity.
6. The Individual (das Einzelne): a particular being which actively and manifestly affirms its relationship to the universal. For example, a particular person is truly an "individual" when he actively demonstrates that he embodies the cultural traits of his society in some unique way.¹
7. Thesis: is some starting point in life.
8. Antithesis: is some obstacle in life which threatens the validity of the thesis in the form in which it is presented.
9. Synthesis: is a reformulation of the thesis in such a way as to allow it to survive its encounter with the² antithesis, without being lost or destroyed.

¹ Howard P. Kainz, Hegel's Phenomenology, Part 1; Analysis and Commentary (University: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1976), pp. 193-94. Definitions 1-6 are taken from this book.

² Howard P. Kainz, Hegel's Philosophy of Right, with Marx's Commentary (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974), p. 7. Definitions 7-9 are taken from this book.

There are three more terms used in this study in a special manner:

1. Thesis of War: the idea of settling the dispute between the North and the South by deed of arms; the patriotic flush of the North versus the rebellious spirit of the South.

2. Antithesis of War: all the elements antithetical to the idea of war, such as the feeling of repose, hardship of war, human suffering, and loss of lives.

3. Whitman's Synthesis: the reformulation of the thesis of war in such a way as to intensify the impression that it is as important for the growth of the nation as peace and repose are.

In addition to these definitions, one observation about Whitman's application of the Hegelian dialectic technique in Drum-Taps must be made. For Hegel, the dialectic, depending on the context, can be applied from three different "points of view": from that of an external object, or being; from that of consciousness, or the ego; and from that of the spirit.³ In Drum-Taps, Whitman is speaking of the point of view of the dialectical growth of the second of these points of view, that of his consciousness and the collective consciousness of his nation.

³ Kainz, Hegel's Philosophy, p. 7.

Whitman, therefore, speaks in the first group of his poems of the American consciousness and his own, in which the thesis of war is held explicitly by the ego; "War! an arm'd race is advancing! the welcome for battle, no turning away," as the poet describes in "First O Songs for a Prelude";⁴ in these poems, the contrary of the valid thesis, the antithetical elements and opinions are present but they are suppressed or concealed in the background. The poems of this group will be called the thesis poems throughout this study.

In the second group of poems, Whitman brings to the surface these previously suppressed elements and ideas. These antithetical aspects become dominant in the poet's consciousness, worthy of serious consideration. In this second movement the poet even denies and rejects his former attitude. The poems of this group will be called the antithesis poems.

In the light of the experiences gained in the first two groups and of his growing self-examination, Whitman, in the third group, brings forth his new awareness. He reveals that in a certain sense the thesis of war is not necessarily

⁴ "First O Songs for a Prelude," Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1965), p. 281, l. 46. All further references to poems in this work will appear in the text.

incompatible with its antithesis, and exhibits a new insight in which both extremes are merged and reconciled.

In accord with the threefold movement that is perceptible in the thematic structuring of Drum-Taps, this chapter will be divided into three sections, first, thesis; second, antithesis; and third, synthesis.

Section One

Thesis

In this section, Whitman's poetic use of the dialectic and his compatibility with Hegel's views will be closely examined in the thesis poems. In these the poet first establishes the outbreak of the war as a starting point in the life of the Americans and speaks of their state of consciousness at that time. Predictably in the thesis poems, the fervor of war, the patriotic flush of the Northerners, the rebellious spirit of the Southerners, and the strong conviction to settle the dispute by military means will be focal points of the poet.

The opening poem, "First O Songs for a Prelude," serves as a prologue to the drama of war. In this poem, Whitman marks the beginning of a bloody era that replaces a former state of peace and solidarity. The poet appears as if he were bewildered to see a rapid, drastic change, a nation split into two hostile parties working desperately to settle their conflict by the deeds of arms; he therefore wonders "How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue" (p. 279, l. 3) and "How your soft opera-music changed, and the drums and fife were heard in their stead" (p. 280, l. 8). The war and its activities are exhibited as realities in Manhattan, a city which could be an example of the

rest of the American cities. In Manhattan, all kinds of people are viewed as receptive to the call of war. The young men, the mechanics, the lawyers, the drivers, and the salesmen respond boldly to join in the march to war. The enthusiastic responses of the Northerners reveal that the idea of war is explicitly held by their ego, and this state is certainly a clear indication of the new-born thesis, the thesis of war.

The thesis of war prevails at the expense of peace and order. The theme of the former peace is brought to light by the employment of the poet's memory; here he casts a backward thought over the past "forty years" when he used to see "soldiers parading," peacefully of course, with their "guns bright as gold," guns used for "salutes for courtesies merely" (p. 282, ll. 51-52). This former state of the soldiers and their machines is merely a memory. Now both have a new role to play. The soldiers are not for peaceful parade anymore, and the guns are not for saluting courtesies. The soldiers need to "put in something now besides powder and wadding" (p. 282, l. 53) in order to carry out the task of war which becomes the only valid aspiration in their city:

War! an arm'd race is advancing! the welcome for
battle, no turning away;
War! be it weeks, months, or years, an arm'd race
is advancing to welcome it.
(p. 281, ll. 46-47)

These lines show that the thesis of war is residing deeply in the American consciousness now and excluding all other elements from consideration. Furthermore, the war is finally viewed as a source of joy, while peace is presented as inspiring displeasure and even fear:

Often in peace and wealth you were pensive or
covertly frown'd amid all your children,
But now you smile with joy exulting old
Mannahatta. (p. 282, ll. 56-57)

In his allusion to the former state of peace and other antithetical elements, Whitman appears in sound agreement with Hegel's analysis of phenomena. Whitman understood that the Hegelian dialectic indicates that any finite idea or object--thesis--contains within itself the principles of its own destruction;⁵ Whitman here uses the same logical technique. Implicitly he includes several antithetical elements, yet he keeps them in the background, suppressed. Such antithetical elements as the merit of the peaceful past, the mother, the symbol of love, and the father, the symbol of reason, are present in this poem but not in a central position. The old men appear showing the recruits "how to wear their accoutrements" (p. 281, l. 28), and the mother is "Loth . . . to part, yet not a word does she speak to detain him" (281, l. 37). The thesis is strongly

⁵ William Sloane Kennedy, Reminiscences of Walt Whitman (New York: Haskell House, 1973), p. 138.

dominant, and the antithetical elements are either powerless or swayed by the new aspirations of Manhattan. However, one should keep in mind that the contradictory elements will grow progressively in all the poems of thesis and work from within to form in time a real threat to the valid thesis.

In his second poem "Eighteen Sixty-One," Whitman emphasizes his thesis of the validity of the war and its spread over the country. The patriotic fervor and the strong desire for fighting engulf the land and the soul of the American nation. All the parts, the prairies, the Alleghanies, the great lakes, the the rivers respond zealously to the voice of the "Arm'd year." Even the national bard appears to be taken by the flush of patriotism; he, thus, ought to clothe "in blue clothes" and advance with his people "carrying a rifle on your shoulder, / With well-gristled body and sunburnt face and hands, with a knife in the belt at your side" (p. 282, ll. 3-4). It is important here to notice that these lines present the voice of the "Arm'd year" which imposes such a bloody role on the poet whose former "dainty rhymes and sentimental love verses" (p. 282, l. 2) have been repudiated and rejected by the voice of the "Arm'd year," a voice which is sung now not by the bard but by "the round-lipp'd cannon" (p. 283, l. 15). These images strongly suggest the continuity of the valid thesis and the exclusion of all the contradictory elements from consideration. However, although Whitman is

reflecting clearly the warlike state of 1861, he does not appear to adopt the role imposed on him by the "Arm'd year"; and to indicate his discomfort with that voice he sets forth his own definition of the warlike year: "I repeat you, hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted year" (p. 283, l. 16).

But regardless of his definition of the year eighteen sixty-one, the poet, after a course of mental training, will change his tone and theme to represent closely the aspiration of his city. The course of his training starts in "First O Songs for a Prelude" when his consciousness is exposed to the vigorous patriotic flush that rapidly comes to prevail among his people, and the task of living that state of consciousness continues throughout "Eighteen Sixty-One," and "Beat! Beat! Drums!" to his final conforming to and confirming of the idea of fighting, in "Song of the Banner at Daybreak."

In his third poem "Beat! Beat! Drums!" Whitman further intensifies the impression that the thesis of war is valid in his city and effective enough to exclude all other contradictory elements from consideration. Here the sound of the drums is introduced as a symbol and embodiment of the thesis. This sound is capable of attracting all Americans to respond fervently to its call, despite the fact that the sound of the drums jeopardizes most social institutions and conventions. But one can see no explicit denial of the sound of the drums. On the contrary the sound appears as

a "ruthless" and inevitable "force" gathering the nation around it and moving forward with no obstacles. Parenthetically, the drums of war undermine the order and peace of the nation; for instance, this "ruthless force" breaks the holiness of "church" and scatters the "congregation," repudiates the flow of knowledge, undermines the union of the smallest unit in society, the family, and even shatters the peace of nature and disgraces its goodness:

--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.
(p. 283, ll. 2-6)

In the theme of this thesis, which is presented in an explicitly martial tone, Whitman embeds the antithesis. This theme is implicitly indicated when the poet speaks of the sound of drums and its negative impact on society. Here the merit and joys of the peaceful life are suggested in the disorder and turmoil which are caused by the thesis of war. In addition to this, another antithetical element is advanced to reveal its negation of the valid thesis. The father who has appeared in "First O Songs for the Prelude" as somewhat supportive of war, becomes here passive and silently discontented with the sound of the drums. Yet despite his passive negation, the "ruthless force" remains

in effect and too powerful to be stopped by any "expostulation" or by the "weeper or prayer," or by the petition of the old men and women. The final stanza is dedicated to affirm the invincibility of the thesis of war:

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
 other's entreaties,
 Make even the trestles to shake the dead where
 they lie awaiting the hearses,
 So strong you thump O terrible drums--so loud you
 bugles blow. (p. 284, ll. 15-21)

Clearly, the verses in this final stanza, as well as in the other two, have a twofold function: first, they reveal that the idea of war is explicitly held by the Americans' ego; second, they indicate a group of antithetical elements, obvious but passive. With such a technique the poet meant to sow seeds of a new denial that will grow progressively throughout the next few poems. In Hegelian terms, the antithesis is still implicit and suppressed within the body of the dominant thesis, and it will eventually form an obstacle to threaten the validity of the thesis.

In "From Paumanok Starting I Fly Like a Bird," Whitman presents another previously suppressed idea, "the idea of all," or the oneness of the "Western world"; however, this image is to be found in a realm other than Manhattan. The first line specifies this fact by suggesting a symbolic

departure from the concrete world of Manhattan: "From Paumanok starting I fly like a bird," and as he "flies," the "idea of all" presents itself to him, as though it could be sketched out only in the abstract world, rather than in the concrete world which is engulfed by the idea of war and animosity. However, in his abstract realm, Whitman projects himself as an absolute where all contradictions are reconciled:

To sing first, (to the tap of the war-drum if
 need be,)
The idea of all, of the Western world one and
 inseparable,
And then the song of each member of these States.
 (p. 284, ll. 9-11)

Like all other antithetical elements, the "idea of all," which stands at cross purposes to the "ruthless force," is still beyond the reach of people's consciousness. But later it will be developed and become effective enough to penetrate the American consciousness.

His next poem, "Song of the Banner at Daybreak," signals a new beginning in terms of the struggle between the thesis and antithesis. This may be suggested first by the title word "Daybreak," and then by the exploration of the poem's theme. The word "Daybreak" is associated with a new revelation and beginning and when Whitman composed his title he could have used the word to refer to his new thematic approach and reflections. An exploration of theme will

indicate a new growth of the antithesis and a new conviction that will be held by the poet.

Thematically, Whitman emphasizes on one hand the prevalence of the thesis of war, and on the other hand he exhibits a marked development of a significant antithetical element. To accomplish his twofold purpose, Whitman has the validity of the thesis tested against the antithesis in a vigorous combat in which each side puts forth its utmost force and strongest argument. This climactic combat is carried out by five diverse symbols: the Pennant and the Banner as representatives of the thesis, the Child as a symbol of the young "recruits," the Father as the embodiment of the antithesis, and finally the Poet, who appears to represent the American conscience that is troubled and confused by the present conflict.

In their dispute against the Father, the Pennant and Banner reveal the theme of their song: "Demon and death then I sing,/ Put in all, aye all will I, sword-shaped pennant for war" (p. 289, ll. 105-106). Their song embodies distinctively the patriotic flush and the fervor of war which were felt by all people and personified in the Banner's song. In the poem, their song is viewed as persuasive and attractive enough to recruit the Child, who joyfully admits:

O my father I like not the houses,
They will never to me be any thing, nor do I like
money,

But to mount up there I would like, O father dear,
 that banner I like,
 That pennant I would be and must be.
 (p. 288, ll. 95-98)

In opposition to the Father's will, the Child speaks words that suggest complete adherence to the song of war which seems to be held dearly by the young generation's ego.

Not only the Child, but also the Poet finally conforms to the Banner and Pennant's song, although he appears at the beginning of the poem more troubled and confused than the Child. In his first utterances, the Poet reveals his caution and awareness of what the bloody song may lead to:

(As one carrying a symbol and menace far into the
 future,
 Crying with trumpet voice, Arouse and beware!
Beware and arouse!) (p. 285, ll. 16-17)

But, regardless of his fear, the Poet is finally persuaded to adapt his own song and fuse it into the Banner and Pennant's. The Poet, thus, declares,

I'll pour the verse with streams of blood, full of
 volition, full of joy,
 Then loosen, launch forth, to go and compete,
 With the banner and pennant a-flapping.
 (p. 285, ll. 18-20)

Then throughout the dispute the Poet is strongly influenced by the call of the symbols of war; thus he says:

I too leave the rest--great as it is, it is
 nothing--houses, machines are nothing--I see
 them not,

I see but you, O warlike pennant! O banner so
 broad, with stripes, I sing you only,
 Flapping up there in the wind.
 (p. 291, ll. 142-44)

Here it is important to notice that the Poet's dedication to the song of war is not born in this poem, as a result of the five-figure dispute, but it is an outcome of the training course that his consciousness has gone through in previous poems. His new song and attitude must have been molded by what he has seen and heard now and before. He, therefore, becomes more receptive to what the "Arm'd year" has imposed on him as a role to play in "Eighteen Sixty-One":

Not you as some pale poetling seated at a desk
 lisping cadenza piano,
 But as a strong man erect, clothed in blue
 clothes, advancing, carrying a rifle on your
 shoulder. (p. 282, ll. 2-3)

Equally important, one should observe that despite his dedication to the symbols of war the Poet is still unable to disregard completely the idea of union and peace; thus he says:

I do not deny the precious results of peace,
 I see populous cities with wealth
 incalculable,

 See the Identity formed out of thirty-eight
 spacious and haughty States, (and many
 more to come). (pp. 287-88, ll. 67, 74)

The existence of two extremes in the Poet's voice may suggest that he is a clear reflection of his city, which contains all the contradictions, and that his triadic personality carries in one side the thesis of war and in the other its antithesis. Because he considers himself an image of his city, the thesis of war is more dominant and obvious than the antithesis, which is suppressed now in his subconsciousness.

In addition to the suppressed thought of the Poet, the antithesis comes to the surface through the voice of the Father, who might be considered as another image of the old man who appeared in "Beat! Beat! Drums!"--discontented yet silent. Here his voice grows solid and contrasts vigorously with the voices of the Banner and Pennant. The Father explicitly defies the Child's enthusiasm for war:

Cease, cease, my foolish babe,
 What you are saying is sorrowful to me, much it
 displeases me;
 Behold with the rest again I say, behold not
 banners and pennants aloft,
 But the well-prepared pavements behold, and mark
 the solid-wall'd houses.

(p. 287, ll. 52-55)

Then the Father's voice grows stronger in an attempt to shake the very foundation of the thesis:

Child of mine you fill me with anguish,
 To be that pennant would be too fearful,
 Little you know what it is this day, and after
 this day, forever,

It is to gain nothing, but risk and defy every
 thing,
 Forward to stand in front of wars--and O, such
 wars! --what have you to do with them?
 With passions of demons, slaughter, premature
 death? (p. 289, ll. 99-104)

But the Father fails to convince either the Child or the Poet; both are carried away by the spirit of war, which still prevails despite the obvious growth of the antithesis.

In "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps," Whitman emphasizes his dedication to his city and its aspirations. Here the city and its warlike activities become his main interest and concern. To explain his point, the poet describes his soul's growth from the very beginning up to the time of the war. In the abstract world, the wilderness here, his soul was fed and became an only half-grown soul, yet he was not aware of such deficiency and concluded his experience there as follows: "Yet there with my soul I fed, I fed content, supercilious" (p. 291, l. 15). And as the war drags him from his abstract world to one more concrete, "the mightier cities," the poet begins to recognize the insufficiency of his past experience in that he advances to "receive what the earth and sea never gave." In "the mightier cities" he completes his personality with "the raw materials of the Democratic Identity."⁶

⁶ Edward E. Sullivan, Jr., "Thematic Unfolding in Whitman's Drum Taps," Emerson Society Quarterly, 31, Part 2 (1963), 46.

Yet even the democratic identity is characterized as a personification of the thesis of war. It is viewed as "deadly and savage," associated with revenge rather than with human love, even though it still holds the primary fascination in the poet's consciousness who joyfully bids it to

Thunder on! stride on, Democracy! strike with
 vengeful stroke!
 And do you rise higher than ever yet O days,
 O cities!
 Crash heavier, heavier yet O storms! you have done
 me good. (pp. 292-93, ll. 33-35)

And the finding of his new identity in his "mightier cities" makes him think that only now his personal experience is completed: "But now I no longer wait, I am fully satisfied, I am glutted" (p. 293, l. 44).

Clearly, the verses of the three stanzas suggest that the thesis of war is still on the rise while the antithesis is still fragile and forming no threat to the valid thesis. Lines 31 and 32, "(Yet a mournful wail and low sob I fancied I heard through the dark,/ In a lull of the deafening confusion)," carry the only reference to the ongoing denial to the fervor of war, yet this denial is not active and could not be seen but in the poet's fancy.

After he emphasizes the patriotic zeal and the savage characteristics of the new identity which seem to exist in the North only, Whitman in his next poem, "Virginia--The West," turns toward the South to exhibit its state of

consciousness in an attempt to link the two parts of his one nation in a certain sense. As he pictures it, the South, like the North, is engulfed by the spirit of war. In his reference to the rebellion of the South, the poet views the sons of the noble ancestors as slaughterers threatening the Union with an "insane knife":

The noble sire fallen on evil days,
I saw with hand uplifted, menacing, brandishing,
(Memories of old in abeyance, love and faith in
abeyance,)
The insane knife toward the Mother of All.
(p. 293, ll. 1-4)

These words which describe the insane and slaughter-like tendencies of the South might be said to echo what the Father has said to the Northern Child in "Song of the Banner at Daybreak":

Forward to stand in front of wars--and O, such
wars!--what have you to do with them?
With passions of demons, slaughter, premature
death? (p. 289, ll. 103-104)

The echo, which is perceptible here, reveals the poet's design to link the insanity of the South to the irrationality of the North, a design that emphasizes his Hegelian analysis of the Civil War. From a dialectic point of view the war is a natural phenomenon that contains simultaneously the whole body of an organic nation, not only one part. Thus the thesis of war must prevail in both sides of the nation, North and South.

To emphasize the analogy between the South and the North, he makes the treatment directed to each side almost the same. With a motherly hand he approaches the South, a hand that is equal and complementary to the father's hand which is employed to reach to the Northerners. Together the hands of the father and mother work desperately to abate the malice of the North and the South. In addition to this, Whitman approaches both sides with the same idea, the idea of union. The "Idea of All" which occurs in "From Paumanok Starting I Fly Like a Bird" is succeeded by the "Mother of All" in "Virginia--The West." Both ideas emphasize the feeling of old solidarity. To the South, the "Mother of All" directs her words:

As to you Rebellious, (I seemed to hear her say,)
 why strive against me, and why seek my life?
 When you yourself forever provide to defend me?
 For you provided me Washington--and now these
 also. (p. 294, ll. 10-12)

In considering these similarities in this poem and their echo in other poems, one might conclude that the poet added this poem to Drum-Taps in 1881 (p. 293, footnote) to make a Hegelian point: what was valid in the North as thesis was valid in the South too. Without "Virginia--the West," one would have to assume that the dialectic is applicable only to the North.

In the poem "City of Ships," Whitman renews his dedication to his city and appears more receptive to its warlike aspirations:

Behold me--incarnate me as I have incarnated you!
I have rejected nothing you offer'd me--whom you
 adopted I have adopted,
Good or bad I never question you--I love all--I do
 not condemn any thing. (p. 294, ll. 12-14)

Explicitly these lines suggest Whitman's integration and interaction with his city. He accepts his city's thesis without questioning it; yet his acceptance is partly Hegelian in that to Whitman good and evil are reconciled, and everything in his universe is tending toward a divine end. Also his unique relationship with his city is based upon a Hegelian thought. In Hegel, "a particular person is truly an individual when he actively demonstrates that he embodies the cultural traits of his society in some unique way."⁷ Whitman as a true individual adopts his city's aspirations and adapts his song to them too; "War, red war is my song through your streets, O city!" (p. 294, l. 17).

Together with his dedication to his city and its thesis, Whitman implicitly includes the theme of union as reference to the progression of the antithesis in his consciousness. The theme of union is suggested by the formulation of his city as a universe exhibits "the greatest

⁷ Kainz, Hegel's Philosophy, p. 10.

possible unity and the greatest conceivable diversity,"⁸ Here the city is introduced as a melting pot containing all races and ideas, yet all the seemingly contradictory elements are reconciled. But despite this recognition, or allusion to the Union, the thesis of war remains the only valid aspiration as the poet reflects, "In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of war is mine" (p. 294, l. 16).

In "City of Ships" as in all the thesis poems, the poet's attitude in terms of his responses to the antithetical elements remains unchanged. He brings to the surface only the antithetical elements but never apparently accepts them. And his song is always "War," particularly after he adopts the bloody song of the Banner in the "Song of the Banner at Daybreak." To the contrary, the poet signals a turning point, through his response to the rational voice of the "old Revolutionary" in "The Centenarian's Story." Definitely the "old Revolutionary" represents another aspect of the antithesis, and his image is more developed than that of either the old man or the Father who appeared earlier in the poems of thesis.

In "The Centenarian's Story," the thesis is still proceeding: "On the plain below recruits drilling and exercising,/ There is the camp, one regiment departs to-morrow"

⁸ Mody Boatright, "Whitman and Hegel," Texas University Studies in English, 9 (1929), 136.

(p. 295, ll. 7-8), and one can hear or see nothing in the city, but "the approval of hands" to the march of war. As a contrast to the insane city, the poet and the "old Revolutionary" isolate themselves physically from the crowd, and their physical isolation results in a mental one. The "old Revolutionary" implies in his words to the poet his disapproval of the ongoing conflict among the people of what used-to-be one nation, and the poet appears more receptive to the voice of the antithesis--the "old Revolutionary"--that is trying to waken the feelings of American brotherhood and offset the feelings of animosity and antipathy which are seemingly dominant in both camps. Influenced by the voice of the "old Revolutionary," the poet, for the first time, conforms enthusiastically to the implication of the voice and shows willingness to propagate the lesson of the old story throughout the nation; he says, "I must copy the story, and send it eastward and westward" (p. 299, l. 100).

His acceptance of this story and his willingness to popularize it "eastward and westward" reveal ideas and attitudes previously kept from coming to the surface. His new commitment implies a denial to the thesis of war, however, more obvious and manifest than his feeble concern with "the mournful wail and low sob" he fancied in "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps." His new fancy with the "old Revolutionary" and the lesson he heard have deeply touched his conscience and then been held explicitly by his ego.

And since this denial of the thesis of war envelops his consciousness, predictably the ecstasy and fervor of war will be excluded from consideration in his new group of poems; in their stead the theme of anti-war will be dominant.

Section Two

Antithesis

The reader of "The Centenarian's Story" senses that a transition or reversal in the poet's theme is imminent. The poet in this last poem of the thesis group has made a strong commitment to the "old Revolutionary" to change the tone of his bloody songs, to sing instead psalms of peace and repose, and to negate the war. However, to avoid an immediate shift in his theme, Whitman uses three short poems to serve as a transitional medium between the thesis of war and its antithesis. When the transition takes place, Whitman concentrates heavily in this next group of poems on the antithetical elements, such as the hardships of war, human suffering, and loss of lives, in an attempt to shake the very foundation of the thesis of war, which becomes in this moment less worthy of consideration than its antithesis.

In the three poems of transition, "Cavalry Crossing a Ford," "Bivouac on a Mountain Side," and "An Army Corps on the March," the poet describes vividly the gradual movement of the troops heading toward the battlefield, making the shift in the soldiers' feeling parallel with their movement: the closer they move to the front, the less enthusiasm they show for fighting. The ecstasy and fervor of war are declining,

and more realistic images become the focal points here. Also, there is no real confrontation between the thesis and antithesis; it is a time of a slow transition that will give birth to a new revelation.

The poem "Cavalry Crossing a Ford" marks the very first decline of the enthusiasm and zeal for fighting. Instead of being active and determined, the soldiers are introduced as partly "negligent" resting on the saddle, an image that draws attention to the fading fervor of war and brings to light the hardship of war.

And as the troops move closer to the battlefield in "Bivouac on a Mountain Side," the negligence which is evident in the first poem becomes here hesitation and uncertainty. Whitman describes the army as if it is not sure of its destination: "I see before me now a traveling army halting" (p. 300, l. 1).

In "An Army Corps on the March," the impression of hesitation and uncertainty is further intensified. Likewise, the hardship of war and its privation become unmistakably thematic in this poem. Also, there is no reference whatsoever to the ecstasy or zeal for fighting and the troops are pictured as moving with some difficulty:

The swarming ranks press on and on, the dense
brigades press on,
Glittering dimly, toiling under the sun--the
dust-cover'd men,
In columns rise and fall to the undulations of the
ground,

With artillery interspers'd--the wheels rumble,
 the horses sweat,
 As the army corps advances. (p. 301, ll. 3-7)

In these lines one may see the increase in the amount of realistic detail in description of this military operation; the movement of the troops is not as spectacular as it was pictured before: "In columns [the troops] rise and fall." The state of the machines and animals is analogous to the state of the soldiers: "the wheels rumble" and "the horses sweat,/ As the army corps advances."

In brief, the presentations of the troops in these three poems is an obvious contrast to the presentation of the former march to the sound of the drums at the outbreak of the war. There the troops were led by a "ruthless force" moving toward the front vigorously with no obstacle that could withstand their procession. Now the image of this procession is totally different. The spectacular nature of their march is declining, replaced by more realistic detail.

As an initial transition in theme is established in the opening poems of the antithesis, Whitman in his next poem, "By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame," appears alone, sitting in a field camp:

By the bivouac's fitful flame,
 A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet
 and slow--but first I note,
 The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and
 woods' dim outline. (p. 301, ll. 1-3)

As he is watching this dimly outlined camp, the sight does not inspire him with any warlike thought; to the contrary, his consciousness is deeply affected by "tender and wondrous thoughts,/ Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, and of those that are far away" (p. 301, ll. 6-7). These lines can express "some of the elementary psychological effects on the individual that accompany life in an active military operation."⁹ No doubt, the whole image is melancholy and inspires feelings of "fear and stealthiness" rather than zeal or fervor which are purposefully discarded in this poem.

The general implication of "By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame" and of the other three poems is that the romantic zeal for fighting, or what is called the thesis of war, is in decline, while all other antithetical elements are rising rapidly on the scene and preoccupying the consciousness of the poet; this fact indicates that the thesis of war is less worthy of consideration than was previously attached to it. In accordance one may predict here that the next poems in this grouping will be a presentation of the antithesis of war.

In the very next poem, "Come Up from the Fields Father," which depicts the effect of the tragic news of war on the young recruit's parents, Whitman clearly presents the

⁹ Sullivan, p. 44.

antithesis as dominant and worthy of more serious consideration than he has previously given it. The focal point of this poem is the hardship and tragedies of war rather than patriotic fervor and unrestrained enthusiasm. In accordance with strong emergence of the antithesis, the poet brings to the surface what had been suppressed or relegated to the background. Likewise, the mere prediction of the Father to the Child, the symbol of zealous recruit, in "Song of the Banner at Daybreak," becomes a concrete reality here. There the Father warned the Child of an imminent fatal ending: "Forward to stand in front of wars--and O, such wars!-- what have you to do with them?/ With passions of demons, slaughter, premature death?" (p. 289, ll. 103-104). This prediction turns out to be real in the letter that carries the tragic news to a family of a dying soldier:

Come up from the fields father, here's a letter
 from our Pete,
 And come to the front door mother, here's a letter
 from thy dear son. (p. 302, ll. 1-2)

And though the letter indicates "'gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry skirmish, taken to hospital,/ At present low, but will be better'" (p. 303, ll. 20-21), Pete, the young recruit, meets his fate, almost exactly as it has been predicted by the Father. Pete "will never be better, . . ./ While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,/ The only son is dead" (p. 303, ll. 29-31), leaving to his

mother only the hardship and affliction of midnight:

In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one
 deep longing,
 O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from
 life escape and withdraw,
 To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.
 (p. 303, ll. 35-37)

With such intensity of emotion upon the tragic loss of a young Pete, the poem ends.

In examining the images and the theme of "Come Up from the Fields Father," one may observe that the tragic reality of Pete's premature death completely dismisses from consciousness the ecstasy and fervor of war which used to be predominant in the poems of the thesis. The poem has a solemn and tragic tone, and all the details contribute thoroughly to the antithesis, the horror and miseries of war. There is no expression of bravery or boldness of the victimized soul, nor any mention of the other romantic ideals of war. Those formerly dominant ideals have been abandoned and excluded from consideration. What is dominant is the antithesis of the good war.

In the poem "Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night," the impression of the tragedy of war is intensified. As Whitman focused on the effect of war on the parents in the previous poem, he focuses here on its devastation of the young recruits in the battlefield, much worse than of the father and mother. Whitman's purpose is to legitimize

his negation of the thesis of war, then to shake up its very foundations. He presents in this poem a battlefield image of another unlucky comrade, who--like Pete, symbolic of young recruits--faces his ultimate destiny in this tragic war.

The denunciation of war is further reinforced as the poet depicts the final state of the comrade who has been "dropt" by his side--apparently with no real care; his dead body became a useless and neglected object. This object is then "wrapt in his blanket" and "deposited" in a "rude-dug grave." With these images of the miserable ending of a dead comrade, Whitman marks explicitly his denunciation of war which undermines the divinity of the human body. The poet always believes that a human body is divine and an incarnation of God.¹⁰ And this may shed light on the pain that the Civil War inflicted on him.

The presentation of the soldiers' death here contrasts sharply with the prior description of the recruits as marching to the beat of drums in "First O Songs for a Prelude." There Whitman emphasized the beauty and physical perfection of all the young soldiers. Joyfully, the poet describes

¹⁰ Hugh l'Anson Fausset, Walt Whitman: Poet of Democracy (Essex, 1940; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), p. 83.

(How good they look as they tramp down to the
 river, sweaty, with their guns on their
 shoulders!
 How I love them! how I could hug them, with their
 brown faces,
 And their clothes and knapsacks cover'd with
 dust!) (p. 281, ll. 32-33)

The joyful image, which prevailed before the real confrontation between the troops of the two forces, is changing entirely from now on, no more glamour or ecstasy will be sensed, and the state of the young soldiers inspires pity and sympathy rather than delight or enthusiastic approval.

In his next poem, "A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown," Whitman describes further the tragic aspects of war. Here in his visual images the war becomes terribly devastating in its effects on human beings; its tragedies are "beyond all description." In the battlefield he sees a "sight beyond all the pictures and poems ever made"; there he sees "groups of forms vaguely . . . on the floor" and "Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in obscurity, some of them dead" (p. 305, ll. 7, 10, 14). Because of the war, the young recruits who were pictured as appealing and exulting in Manhattan become now "crowd of bloody forms." Clearly this agonizing image of war is designed to lead the reader gradually to conform to the poet's convictions, which become a strong negation of the thesis of war.

After describing these horrible images of war in his next descriptive poem, "A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray

and Dim," Whitman meditates upon another tragic scene of three dead soldiers. All the details of this poem are designed to carry the same impact the previous poems have, the human pain, suffering, and loss of lives. Yet in his solemn images the poet reaches a climactic point in terms of his attitude against war. The scenes of human death lead him to regard war as "crucifixion of Christ." While facing one of his dead comrades, Whitman says:

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 this face
 is the face of the Christ himself,
 Dead and divine and brother of all, and here
 again he lies. (p. 307, ll. 13-15)

Unmistakably the purpose of the poet is to denounce the spirit of war as a valid thesis. Therefore, he stresses the fact that his comrade is as divine as Christ and should not be subject to such a tragic war. And the fallen comrade is not only divine, but "brother of all." Whitman's emphasis on the loss of divinity of man and brotherhood because of the war may represent an obvious denial of the thesis of war, and then form a real threat to its validity. Evidently, the comradeship and divinity of man will become the major themes in the synthesis poems, taking the place of animosity and revenge, the dominant traits of the thesis.

The drama of death and human suffering ends in this volume in his poem "As Toilsome I Wander'd Virginia's

Woods," which may be considered as an epilogue to this section of tragedies. Here the young soldier becomes a mere memory on a plain tombstone placed at the side of his "rude-dug grave." "'Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade'" (p. 307, l. 7) are words written in the memory of the fallen soldier who lies now "unknown" in the realm of the dead as an innocent victim of this distracting war.

The descriptive poems in which the poet exhibits fully the hardship of war and human suffering represent elements obviously antithetical to the former thesis of war. Now these elements are all-important and occupy the poet's thought to the point of excluding the thesis of war from consideration. His deep and genuine involvement in picturing the aspects of the antithesis prohibits him from emphasizing the soldiers' bravery or valor, or any other romantic ideals for which the young soldiers died. The war and its romantic ideals as a thesis are now unimportant in the poet's ego, and what is rising at their expense is the antithesis, the reality of the horror and anguish of war.

Certainly with the vision of Christ in the face of a dead soldier and all other painful aspects of war "comes the realization that war is not 'a manly life in the camp' but a life of human suffering and agony as terrible as it is senseless, as personally tragic for the foe as for the

friend."¹¹ As an individual, the poet matures in his reflection, and he therefore feels the necessity to revise his old concepts and refine them in accord with his new awareness. In other words, as he becomes fully aware of the realities of war, he reaches a stage of conscious self-examination which results in his discarding his old concepts. However, his self-examination and self-negation are not optional decisions. They are dialectical and they must happen. In accord with such logic, self-negation could become the central theme in his next poems.

In "Not the Pilot," Whitman explicitly repudiates his own self. Regretfully, he explains, ". . . I have charged myself, heeded or unheeded, to compose a march for these States,/ For a battle-call, rousing to arms if need be, years, centuries hence" (p. 308, ll. 4-5). This self-negation is more logical when viewed from the standpoint of the dialectic in respect to the development of an individual's consciousness:

One comes to a relative degree of certitude about certain objects, then in the light of further experience comes to revise these preliminary notions, and in this way gradually approximates to concepts of reality which are so satisfactory as to require less and less revision.¹²

¹¹ James E. Miller, Jr., A Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 223.

¹² Kainz, Hegel's Phenomenology, p. 23.

In "Year that Trembled and Reel'd Beneath Me," Whitman emphasizes that his own self-negation is induced by a dialectical necessity in hopes that the reversal in his theme might not be considered as inconsistency or illogicality; he says here

Must I change my triumphant songs? said I to
myself,
Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges
of the baffled?
And sullen hymns of defeat? (p. 308, ll. 4-6)

The use of the verb "must" is to suggest that there is a necessity that dictates the reversal of theme and tone in his songs. However, in this poem the poet appears to be merely dwelling upon the thought, not yet fully adopting or conforming to it.

In "The Wound-Dresser," Whitman explicitly pictures the new reversal in theme and the shifting feeling and mood in his song. Here he adopts a new role and emphasizes that he is fully aware that a transition is taking place within his own self:

(Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the
alarum, and urge relentless war,
But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd
and I resign'd myself,
To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently
watch the dead.) (p. 309, ll. 4-6)

In brief, what the poet exhibits and intensifies in the poems of the antithesis are the hardship, horror, human

suffering, and anguish of war. And the more tragedies he witnesses, the deeper the idea of denouncing and debunking war is established in his consciousness. As a result of his tragic experiences among the dead and wounded, a theme of self-negation becomes dominant in his songs. He negates his old patriotic songs that he had composed for war in the first movement. His songs in the poems of the antithesis counterbalance his former songs of the thesis, and in these two groupings of poems a great number of polarities are purposefully cultivated by the poet in hopes that in the third group, the synthesis poems, he will resolve the paradoxes and synthesize the contradictions he has initiated in his first two movements.

Section Three

Synthesis

In the beginning of Drum-Taps, Whitman established the thesis of war as dominant and described the Americans' consciousness as accepting the idea of war as the only means to settle the dispute between the two hostile parties. As affected and trained by the new aspirations, the poet himself sounded in total agreement with his people: "War, red war is my song through your streets, O city!" (p. 294, l. 17), he says in "City of Ships."

In opposition to the thesis of war, Whitman in the second movement brought forth the other side of war. He described the hardship and calamities, human suffering, and loss of lives; he went so far as to resent all the songs he wrote for war. Likewise the poems of the second group became an accurate presentation of the tragic side of war and antithesis to the former thesis.

In this third group of poems, Whitman reformulates the thesis of war in such a way as to allow it to survive its encounter with its antithesis without being lost or destroyed. Thus in the poems of synthesis war will not be viewed as devastating to society as it was in the second movement; on the contrary war will be exhibited as virtuous and beneficial as peace is. War, in this third phase, will

be reconciled with peace; likewise many of the polarities described before will be resolved. The reader of Drum-Taps encounters several sets of polarities, such as life and death, good and evil, Unionists and Secessionists, rural and urban, and the North and the South; however, all these polarities derive from and contribute to the major polarity of peace and war. All polarities will be resolved in the synthesis poems.

Before discussing the poems, one should point out that Whitman finds justification and philosophical rationale in Hegel for the transition that is taking place in his consciousness and then exhibited in the poems. Initially, the evolution of his themes shows an exact knowledge of the use of the dialectic as defined here by Howard Kainz:

The individual's insights, after they have become well-defined and concretized, prove to be insufficiently comprehensive, to be one-sided, i.e. to be relatively false in the light of the ever widening context of knowledge. This situation leads us on naturally--not just to any other but specifically to those other insights which would counterbalance the insufficiency of the former, i.e. to complement them. Those other insights are the result of what Hegel calls "determinate negations," negations determined precisely by the positive determinations accruing to former insights. This moment of determinate negation is, then, the springboard leading to the various transitions in the Phenomenology.¹³

¹³ Kainz, Hegel's Phenomenology, p. 25.

Though Whitman bases the transition on the logical technique of Hegel, "he was in no technical sense a philosopher."¹⁴ He hoped to present a logical technique in his poetry, yet his manifestations imitate Hegel's work as poetry, not as philosophy.¹⁵ Thus it is necessary to note here that the synthesis of the opposites, the reconciliation of polarities, is reached by his poetic intuition, not by any application of scientific logic or analysis. We are dealing with poetic manifestations, not a pure text of philosophy.

The insufficiency of his former insights, however, is evident as he changes his tone and attitudes toward peace and war in "Long, Too Long America." In this poem the experience of war is viewed as equally important as that of peace. Both are essential and complement each other in the process of the nation's development. In the poem, the line "Traveling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from joys and prosperity only" (p. 311, l. 2), the word "only" is used to suggest a certain incompleteness in the "lessons learn'd from joys and prosperity." And this incompleteness becomes a noticeable deficiency in the very next line, "But now, ah

¹⁴ Boatright, p. 144.

¹⁵ Alfred Marks, "Whitman's Triadic Imagery," American Literature, 23 (1951), 105.

now, to learn from crises of anguish, advancing, grappling with direct fate and recoiling not" (p. 312, l. 3). Then, when the lessons of both peace and war are "learned," the nation will flourish and "conceive" its new conception of Democracy: "And now to conceive and show to the world what your children en-masse really are" (p. 312, l. 4).

Democracy as a new conception, shaped out of the ordeal, will be the new Identity of the American people, and the novelty of this concept may also dictate his concluding parenthetical line, "(For who except myself had yet conceiv'd what your children en-mass really are?)" (p. 312, l. 5). According to the implication of theme of this poem, war is not as negative as it was described in the second movement. It is as beneficial to America as peace is.

In his very next poem, Whitman reconciles another polarity, Nature and City. In "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun," he views his experience of Nature as complementary to his experience in his city. At the beginning he describes his life in the wilderness when he has received the "primal sanities" of nature and enjoyed the quiet organic life away "from the noise of the world" (p. 312, l. 9). But his acquaintance with nature is interrupted by the war, which is pictured as an effective force dragging the poet out of his abstract world to a more concrete realm, Manhattan. In this new world, he starts counterbalancing his former experiences and insights, thinking that only in the city he sees that

his "soul [is] trampling down what it ask'd for" (p. 313, l. 19). Moreover, he rejects the "splendid silent sun" and all the virtues of nature, such as the richness of organic life, the quiet harmony, the fertility, the beauty, and the music of nature. His rejection of these virtues, as Gay Allen explains, is based upon the discovery of compensating values in the city.¹⁶ The new patterns he finds in the city are opposite to those of Nature in every detail. The all-embracing unity of the "splendid silent sun" is replaced by the multiplicity of his city:

People, endless, streaming, with strong voices,
 passions, pageants,
 Manhattan streets with their powerful throbs, with
 beating drums as now,
 The endless and noisy chorus, the rustle and clank
 of muskets, (even the sight of the wounded,)
 (p. 314, ll. 36-38)

After he established the more attractive virtues of his city that clearly oppose those of Nature, the poet begins in the third movement to reconcile the two elements of the paradox he created here, Nature and City. He uses the theme of music as a means of reconciliation: "the fact of Nature and the fact of city life are both inherently musical."¹⁷ In the realm of nature the poet is able to

¹⁶ Guy Wilson Allen and Charles T. Davis, eds. Walt Whitman's Poems (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1955), p. 205.

¹⁷ Allen and Davis, p. 206.

"warble spontaneous songs," songs which suggest somewhat more "than internal harmony"; as Allen says, they indicate "spiritual content too, an evidence of divine authority."¹⁸ And if we consider such an assumption as valid, then "Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus" (p. 314, l. 39) will be a natural growth of what originally existed in and was given by Nature. Accordingly, city life is not in contrast with life in Nature, yet each complements the other.

As the initial reconciliations of war and peace, Nature and City are established, Whitman, in "Dirge for Two Veterans," turns to settle another polarity, life and death, using here not the music but the moonlight as a vehicle. In this narrative poem, Whitman tells the story of the deaths of two veterans, a father and son:

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.)
 (pp. 314-15, ll. 17-20)

And in order to intensify the impression of the tragic moment and dramatize the scene, Whitman pictures the natural phenomena of the sun and moon as corresponding with the progress of the tragic event. At "the last sunbeam" Whitman, likewise, discovers the "new-made double grave" (p. 314, l. 4), as prepared for both the

father and son. Then, as "the moon ascending" (p. 314, l. 5), the tragic moment becomes more prominent; the persona's consciousness, like the road facing him, is soon enveloped by "a sad procession," and "the strong dead-march enwraps" his soul (p. 315, l. 24).

In the middle of this tragic and depressing image, the moon is asked to carry out a spiritual task, to "soothe" the pain of the poet and reconcile him with death. However, one needs to know here that the poet has initiated his reconciliation with death in earlier poems in Drum-Taps. In "The Wound-Dresser," for example, Whitman asks "death" to put an end to some of the terrible suffering of dying soldiers: "(Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death! In mercy come quickly)" (p. 310, l. 44). In "Dirge for Two Veterans," death begins to furnish pleasure to the poet, "O strong dead-march you please me!" (p. 315, l. 29). And what seems to cause such a transition in his feelings is certainly the moonlight. "The moon," as Miller says, "serves in some mystic way to reconcile the poet to the tragic deaths he witnesses."¹⁹ It "soothes" him and transfigures death and diminishes its horror.²⁰ And finally, the

¹⁸ Allen and Davis, p. 206.

¹⁹ James E. Miller, Jr., Walt Whitman (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962), p. 128.

²⁰ James E. Miller, Jr., Walt Whitman, p. 129.

moon's spiritual light stimulates the concluding reconciliatory image in which the heart of the poet and the music of the drums and bugles join together with their mediator, the moon, eulogizing the dead soldiers:

The moon gives you light,
And the bugles and drums give you music,
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,
My heart gives you love.
(p. 315, ll. 32-36)

In harmony with this reconciliation, Whitman in "Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice" turns to resolve another controversy; he thus dismisses animosity implicitly and strongly presses American camaraderie as a medium of bringing together the two hostile parties, the Unionists and Secessionists:

Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the
problems of freedom yet,
Those who love each other shall become invincible,
They shall yet make Columbia victorious.
(p. 315, ll. 2-4)

Clearly it is new to see love and affection attached to the American Identity, formerly described as revengeful and bloody, particularly in the thesis poem "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps." Here the case is different. This new Identity, shaped out of the flame, fury, and tragedy of the Civil War, must undress its former garment and flourish now in the dress of love and affection or, to use Whitman's term, American camaraderie. With these new traits, America

will compete with the rest of the world and excel. So in his last line he implies that the American union will certainly be fragile if it is not based upon camaraderie:

These shall tie you and band you stronger than
hoops of iron,
I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love
of lovers tie you. (p. 316, ll. 18-19)

The theme of American camaraderie is further intensified in "I Saw Old General at Bay." In it, Whitman introduces self-denial as the very embodiment of old comradeship. In this narrative poem, when the old General--"a prototype, not to be identified" (p. 316, footnote)--"call'd for volunteers to run the enemy's lines, . . . / . . . a hundred and more step forth from the ranks, but two or three were selected" (p. 316, ll. 4-5). The chosen volunteers then receive the honor of self-sacrifice with joy: "I saw them depart with cheerfulness, freely risking their lives" (p. 317, l. 7). This lesson from the past might be designed to suggest that American camaraderie was behind all the victories accomplished before.

American comradeship which is based on love, self-denial, and brotherhood, must have no place for racism or slavery. Therefore, in his poem "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors," Whitman stresses the concept of equality as complementary to the other traits of the new democratic society. Here Ethiopia the "dusky woman" is presented as

equal to the rest of the American citizens. She merges with the others in the procession of welcoming for the victorious soldiers. Ethiopia and all the other slaves who were "caught" in the past "as the savage beast is caught" appear as free and active participants in the victorious army and also among the greeting public. This new type of liberty amazes even the poet, who does not cease wondering:

Why rising by the roadside here, do you the
 colors greet?

 Why wag your head with turban bound, yellow,
 red and green
 Are the things so strange and marvelous you
 see or have seen?
 (pp. 319-18, ll. 3, 14-15)

Ethiopia's saluting the flag of the Union and her enthusiasm are references to the blacks' loyalty and dedication to the Republic and to their sacrifices in the war of liberty.

In "Not Youth Pertains to Me," Whitman marks another virtue of this good war. He begins the poem by declaring his preference to stay in the middle of the battles; therefore, he denies the life of "youth," "delicatesse," "parlor," "dancer," and "elegant," in order to interact and absorb the lessons of the new experience. Then he reveals that his experience is essential to him as a poet in that it finally gave birth to great poems where his veins and those of the soldiers appear to flow and drip together:

--yet there are two or three things
 inure to me,
 I have nourish'd the wounded and sooth'd many a
 dying soldier,
 And at intervals waiting or in the midst of camp,
 Composed these songs. (p. 319, ll. 5-8)

Thus Whitman's loyalty to the cause and his war experiences broaden his horizon as a man and improve his craft as a poet.

Yet the war experience not only inspires the poet to compose great "songs" but creates a great race of veterans. In his poem "Race of Veterans," Whitman emphasizes that there will be "(No more credulity's race, abiding-temper'd race)" (p. 319, l. 3). This new race that forged its personality in the flame of the battle will be subject to "no law but the law of itself." This law is well defined in all other poems as the democratic law. Also the race of veterans is linked through "passion" to the traits that belong to the new identity; these traits are established earlier in many poems, particularly in "Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice."

In another poem, "O Tan-Faced Prairie-Boy," Whitman intensifies further the impression that war experience is beneficial for the new race. The prairie-boy who "came, taciturn, with nothing to give" (p. 320, l. 4) learned how to give and share passion and love with others simply, how to be a real comrade, in Whitman's terms.

The recognition of such "primal sanities" of the war experience strongly motivated the poet to celebrate that experience's importance in creating a strong America. In "World Take Good Notice," he shows what the lessons of war have afforded:

World take good notice, silver stars fading,
 Milky hue ript, weft of white detaching,
 Coals thirty-eight, baleful and burning,
 Scarlet, significant, hands off warning,
 Now and henceforth flaunt from these shores.
 (p. 320, ll. 1-5)

As the merit of war is established in the previous poems, Whitman now indulges in another reconciliatory task. In his next poem, "Look Down Fair Moon," Whitman prepares a kind of purgatory for all the participants in the carnage, in an attempt to "bathe" the nation and cleanse it of the impurities of war. The vehicle for such purification is again the moonlight.

As in "Dirge for Two Veterans," the moon here is employed to carry out a mystic mission. The moon is asked by the poet to "bathe" the scene of the battle:

Pour softly down night's nimbus floods on faces
 ghastly, swollen, purple,
 On the dead on their backs with arms toss'd wide,
 Pour down your unstinted nimbus sacred moon.
 (pp. 320-21, ll. 2-4)

Clearly, the mission of the moon is intensified in this poem; it is not only to transfigure death and diminish its

horror, but to purify and cleanse the dead bodies of the victims. The terms "unstinted sacred moon" may suggest that the moonlight has spiritual contents, an evidence of divine authority. Shedding this sacred nimbus on the dead bodies alludes to the infusion of the men into the Absolute, particularly if we know that "death" to Whitman is fulfillment of the moment in the Absolute."²¹ The divinity of man will be further emphasized in the very next poem.

When the mystic mission of the moon is carried out, the poet declares in his opening line of the next poem, "Reconciliation," "Word over all" becomes "beautiful as the sky" (p. 321, l. 1), that the "war and all its deeds of carnage" are over, and the two hostile parties are merged in the Higher Synthesis. The image of divine victims which is initiated in "Look Down Fair Moon" is broadened and intensified in this poem, and used to reconcile and synthesize the two major elements of the national crisis--the Southerners and the Northerners. In one image the dead soldiers of both camps appear essentially equal and sacred: "For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead" (p. 321, l. 4). In a sense, all are men, and all men are divine.

Whitman's treatment of the polarity of the Southerners and the Northerners is based to a great extent on the Hegelian

²¹ E. Fred Carlisle, The Uncertain Self: Whitman's Drama of Identity (E. Lansing: Michigan State Univ. Press, 1973), p. 151.

motifs. First, man is sacred and divine because he is "an incarnation of the Absolute."²² Second, Whitman is always eliminating the problem of evil by giving it a Hegelian solution, and here he did the same. To both Hegel and Whitman there is no evil, and everything tends irresistibly toward the good. Thus, even if the South is at fault, it is in the process of becoming good. And since both good and evil are reconciled in and proceed from the Absolute, Whitman sees his enemy as "a man divine" as himself. Finally, Whitman physically joins the two conflicting parties. "With his kiss upon the face of the dead enemy, Whitman is intimately involved in a reunification which has epochal and universal echoes."²³

The theme of unreal evil recurs in his next poem, "How Solemn as One by One," an attempt to intensify the impression that despite the carnage, "all is well." Here Whitman pictures the evil tendencies displayed by the soldiers in the years of war as unreal. The mask they wore was only to hide the essence of their character, and the poet can see the potential good in them:

I see behind each mask that wonder a kindred soul,
O the bullet could never kill what you really are,
 dear friend,
Nor the bayonet stab what you really are.
 (p. 322, ll. 6-8)

²² Fausset, p. 83.

²³ Sullivan, p. 44.

And what soothes the poet and pleases him is that death, which is caused by the so-called evil deeds, is less tragic and horrible than commonly supposed. To Whitman, "Death provides a passage to a spiritual 'other world.' Death is the fulfillment of the moment-in-the-Absolute. It marks the instant of the final disappearance of the phenomenal into the ideal,"²⁴ as Carlisle explains. Also, to Whitman, "the soul cannot be defeated by matter, for matter is but the objectivation of itself."²⁵ Thus despite people's tragic view of death, in Whitman's universe the soul remains immortal, regardless of the death of the body:

The soul! yourself I see, great as any, good
 as the best,
 Waiting secure and content, which the bullet
 could never kill,
 Nor the bayonet stab O friend. (p. 322, ll. 9-11)

The question of unreal evil is linked to the question of Heaven and Hell in his very next poem. "As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap Camerado," intensifies the impression of his strong adherence to Hegel's Absolute Idealism. To Hegel life, or all the phenomenal, is the self-development of the Absolute. And since everything tends irresistibly towards the good, and since evil and good are merged in the

²⁴ Carlisle, p. 151.

²⁶ Kennedy, p. 138.

Absolute, Whitman consequently sees no real "threat" of Hell or feels any "lure" of Heaven:

I heed not and have never heeded either experi-
ence, cautions, majorities, nor ridicule,
And the threat of what is call'd hell is little
or nothing to me;
And the lure of what is call'd heaven is little
or nothing to me. (p. 322, ll. 7-9)

Together with his comrades, Whitman is riding the "highway of despair,"²⁶ knowing nothing about his destination. The only thing he grasps is that he and his comrades are fractional and imperfect expression of one central and underlying truth:

Dear camerado! I confess I have urged you onward
with me, and still urge you, without the
least idea what is our destination,
Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly
quell'd and defeated. (p. 322, ll. 10-11)

The one central and underlying truth of America is then symbolized by the image of the flags. In "Delicate Cluster," the flag becomes a symbol in which all the opposites are reconciled. In part, the flag is "covering all my land" and enveloping the whole nation in time of peace, as a symbol of both life and union:

Delicate cluster! flag of teeming life!
Covering all my lands--all my seashores lining!
(p. 323, ll. 1-2)

²⁶ Kainz, Hegel's Phenomenology, pp. 25-27.

Then in time of war, it becomes a symbol of death:

Flag of death! (how I watch'd you through
the smoke of battle pressing!
How I heard you flap and rustle, cloth
defiant!) (p. 323, ll. 3-4)

Finally the flag as personified in the song of Whitman becomes a great synthesis and symbol that stands for life and death, day and night, motherly love, and American strength:

Flag cerulean--sunny flag, with the orbs
of night dappled!
.....
Ah to sing the song of you, my matron
mighty!
My sacred one, my mother.
(p. 323, ll. 5, 7-8)

Furthermore, just as his song represents carefully all the contradictory elements the flag stands for, the poet himself in his next poem, "To a Certain Civilian," affirms that he is most willing to include the major polarity of life and death persistently in his poem regardless of what others think. He stresses, "The drum-corps' rattle is ever to me sweet music, I love well the martial dirge,/ With slow wail and convulsive throb leading the officer's funeral" (p. 323, ll. 6-7). Both life and death are "sweet music" to the poet and loved by him. However, Whitman is rather uncomfortable to be asked by others to sing only "dulcet

rhymes" or "languishing rhymes." They are, unlike Whitman, unable to recognize that

death and life exist simultaneously and are in essence inextricable. One cannot be meaningfully divorced from the other, and quite clearly the throb of the drum is both the pulsation of the human heart and the²⁷ drum corps' rattle . . . the martial dirge.

In his next poem, "Lo, Victress on the Peaks," the poet indicates that out of the pain and conflict America is rising victoriously to "the peaks." Here he is celebrating the ending of the bloody ordeal which gives birth to a great conception, "Libertad," a conception that is deeply rooted in the American consciousness now:

Dominant, with the dazzling sun around thee,
Flauntest now unharm'd in immortal soundness and
bloom--lo, in these hours supreme.
(p. 324, ll. 5-6)

And in the concluding lines the poet makes purposeful allusion to the pain and conflict which gave shape to his songs and molded the concept of "Libertad":

No poem proud, I chanting bring to thee, nor
mastery's rapturous verse,
But a cluster containing night's darkness and
blood-dripping wounds,
And psalms of the dead. (p. 324, ll. 7-9)

²⁷ Sam Toperoff, "Reconciliation of Polarity in Whitman's Drum-Taps," Emerson Society Quarterly, 31, Part 2 (1963), 47.

And as "Libertad" is well-established and deeply rooted, the spirit of war must depart. However, in its departure, it is depicted as more positive in its impact on the poet and on society. Thus the poet in "Spirit Whose Work Is Done" emphasizes a significant virtue of war, the "electric spirit." He asks "the spirit of the dreadful hours" to infuse him with its finest element--electricity--before it departs:

Touch my mouth ere you depart, press my lips
close,
Leave me your pulses of rage--bequeath them to
me--fill me with currents convulsive,
Let them scorch and blister out of my chants when
you are gone,
Let them identify you to the future in these
songs. (p. 325, ll. 15-18)

Furthermore, in his farewell poem to the soldiers, "Adieu to a Soldier," Whitman intensifies the impression of his final infusion by the "electric spirit" of war. Now its desired element is imbedded deeply in the consciousness of the poet who, unlike the veterans whose "mission is fulfilled," sees himself "more warlike" than them. Because of his infusion with the spirit of war, he sees himself as follows:

Myself and this contentious soul of mine,
Still on our campaigning bound,
Through untried rounds with ambushes opponents
lined. (p. 325, ll. 10-12)

Then the poet proceeds, preparing himself for "fiercer, weightier battles" which he will face in the future.

In "Turn O Libertad," Whitman defines the identity of the future battles: "Wars to come are for you [Libertad]," not of that "backward world," but of "the future" which is to Whitman "greater than all the past." Whitman's thought here could be illuminated by the Hegelian dialectic which insists that the universe is in eternal struggle moving toward a divine end. And here the battle for freedom has been won by the people, yet this phase of victory will logically lead to more battles in the near future, battles for "the great idea of perfect and free individuals," as Briggs explains.²⁸ The idea "of perfect race of individuals" certainly has Hegelian germs. According to Hegel's analysis of history, America will be the theater of man's highest development and greatest achievement in the realm of intellect and spirit; likewise a free and perfect race of individuals is destined to appear upon the American shores.²⁹ Whitman enjoys this idea and celebrates it in many poems of the 1860s. Here he concludes his "Turn O

²⁸ Arthur E. Briggs, Walt Whitman, Thinker and Artist (New York: Philosophical Library, 1952), p. 129.

²⁹ Floyd Stovall, The Foreground of Leaves of Grass (Charlottesville: Univ. Press of Virginia, 1974), pp. 201-204.

Libertad," whispering his Hegelian prophecy to his
 "Libertad":

Then turn, and be not alarm'd O Libertad--turn
 your undying face,
 To where the future, greater than all the past,
 Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.
 (p. 326, ll. 9-11)

In his concluding poem, "To the Leaven'd Soil They Trod," Whitman attempts to resolve completely all the polarities he presented in Drum-Taps. At the beginning the dead bodies of the soldiers, the agents of the "dreadful spirit," are unified with their "leaven'd Soil," probably to reincarnate into other leaves. On the other side the luckier veterans are going back to work in their cities, on farms, and on seacoast, "for the war is over."

The sound of the drums, the embodiment of the "dreadful spirit," loses its invincibility, and becomes "hollow" and "harsh." Society, which is first interrupted by its sound, resumed its peaceful order and united in its response to Whitman's new song of love, equality, and liberty, considering here that these three traits are shaped out of and forged in the flame and fury of battle. Now these three traits become the major characteristics of the new American identity, and the theme of Whitman's songs. These songs become a symbol of reunification between the North and the South whose differences are reconciled here:

And responding they answer all, (but not in
 words,)

The average earth, the witness of war and peace,
 acknowledges mutely,

The prairie draws me close, as the father to
 bosom broad the son,

The Northern ice and rain that began me nourish
 me to the end,

But the hot sun of the South is to fully ripen
 my songs. (p. 327, ll. 10-14)

To summarize this whole chapter, one may point out that the evolution of Whitman's theme follows a Hegelian pattern: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Whitman sets forth his thesis in the first movement; then in the second movement he negates and counterbalances all the views and attitudes he formerly established. The implications of his theme in the antithesis poems give the reader the impression that the former thesis has been diminished and lost entirely. But in the third movement Whitman reformulates his former thesis in such a way that it survives its encounter with its antithesis. Accordingly in the poems of synthesis Whitman intensifies the merits and virtues of war. The lessons learned from the experiences of war are viewed by him as beneficial and essential for the American growth as those of peace. But one should never consider Whitman is equating war with morality; "the warlike virtues are not a necessary accompaniment of war but only an incident of it."³⁰

³⁰ Briggs, p. 131.

Chapter III

Triadic Imagery and Structure

Only a few scholars have taken the trouble to determine whether the Hegelian logical technique had any impact on the imagery or the design of Whitman's poems. Most critics have compared the poet to Hegel "from one principal standpoint. They show an evolutionary conception of a universe exhibiting conflict and struggle, yet tending toward a vague divine culmination in the return of the individual souls to the Absolute."¹ Alfred Marks studied thoroughly this neglected issue in his article, "Whitman's Triadic Imagery," and found that "there are several hundred examples of triadic imagery in Leaves of Grass."² He showed that there are numerous examples in different poems from the very beginning of Whitman's poetic career and many are in Drum-Taps. In addition to the triadic imagery, Marks sees that many poems in Leaves of Grass depend greatly upon the logical technique for their structure. For example, Marks regards "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" as a poem that depicts chiefly the

¹ Alfred Marks, "Whitman's Triadic Imagery," American Literature, 23 (1951), 99.

² Marks, p. 110.

triad of life, death and consolation;³ however, his statement is left without any supportive explanation. The poem that receives his major attention is "Chanting the Square Deific," which Marks strongly believes "the single poem perhaps most strikingly dependent on the triadic method."⁴ He then explains that "a strict dialectical reading taking the elements in order of their appearance would result in the abstract progressive pattern: Law (thesis), Love (antithesis), Law-Love (synthesis); Law-Love (thesis), Pride (antithesis), Law-Love-Pride (synthesis); Law-Love-Pride (thesis), Spirit (antithesis), Law-Love-Pride-Spirit (synthesis)."⁵

James L. Livingston published in 1969 a very concise article entitled "With Whitman and Hegel Around the Campfire" where he examines only one poem of Drum-Taps, "By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame"; and his brief conclusion suggests that "the structure of this poem obeys surprisingly well the laws of the Hegelian dialectic."⁶ In his analysis of the poem's phrase division, Livingston shows that the very

³ Marks, p. 111.

⁴ Marks, p. 112.

⁵ Marks, p. 112.

⁶ James L. Livingston, "With Whitman and Hegel Around the Campfire," Walt Whitman Review, 15 (1969), 122.

thought pattern which gives this poem a triadic shape is Hegelian.⁷

Marks' and Livingston's studies are the only ones that deal with the pure influence of the Hegelian logical technique on the images or structures of Whitman's poems. Most scholars are very skeptical about these concerns.

In this chapter, the design and imagery of four poems will be examined in an attempt to show to what extent Whitman relied upon Hegel's dialectic for methods and techniques that affected the design of these four individual poems. The new findings may contribute to the purpose of this study as a whole, which is to suggest that Whitman was greatly dependent on the philosophy of the Absolute Idealism of Hegel. The previous chapter has shown Whitman's full awareness of Hegel's dialectic, particularly in the final arrangement of the poems of Drum-Taps, in which the poet made the central theme develop as thesis, antithesis, synthesis.

The individual poems that will be examined here are "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps," "Give Me Your Splendid Silent Sun," "Long, Too Long America," and "Delicate Cluster." However, before delving into these poems, one should note that this study develops from Alfred Marks' assumption that Whitman's triadic structure and imagery are

⁷ Livingston, p. 121.

not in themselves devices for determining and proving philosophical truths. They operate rather in the realm of poetic imagery and form, and such a study might prove nothing to a skeptical reader.⁸ Also, this study in its general strategy agrees with Boatright that "Whitman was in no technical sense a philosopher, but he did look at life from one habitual point of view, and this point of view, in the main, is in accord with the Absolute Idealism of Hegel."⁹ It is true that Whitman is not a philosopher; he is a great poet. But in the design of the poems to be discussed here, his serious attempt to mimic the Hegelian logical technique is obvious.

One of the poems that depends greatly upon the triadic technique for its structure is "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps" (pp. 291-93). This poem, structurally, consists of three well-defined stanzas, the first as thesis, the second as antithesis, and the third as synthesis. In stanzas one and two Whitman exhibits the dualism of his own personality as unfolding in its evolution into two opposing realms, and he limits each of the two stanzas to only one realm, Nature or city. Then in the third stanza Whitman

⁸ Marks, p. 105.

⁹ Mody C. Boatright, "Whitman and Hegel," Texas University Studies in English, 9 (1929), 134.

unifies and synthesizes the two contradictory realms into one unifying concept.

In stanza one, Whitman focuses on only one realm, his abstract experience of Nature; his preoccupation with Nature may be considered as a thesis. As the verse of this stanza explicitly suggests, the poet is preoccupied here with the description of his old solitary confrontations with Nature, recognizing that in this particular experience his own Self is fixated on an abstract world. That is, "it absolutized its abstract self apart from the concrete world,"¹⁰ which in this case is Manhattan and its happenings. His mind seems to concentrate on this experience of his soul, away from the troubles and worries of the real world. And this abstract task is reflected as all-important and essential for the development of his soul. The detailed references to all elements of Nature, such as rain, rivers, mountains, meadows, thunder and lightning, suggest with no doubt the strength and depth of his abstract experience. As he explains, his soul when acquainted with Nature was "content" yet "supercilious"; his concluding line of stanza one reads, "I fed content, supercilious." But this cheerfully satisfied soul will soon reject its own conviction and experience another world rather than its former realm, and

¹⁰ Clark Butler, G. W. F. Hegel (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), p. 23.

this new experience will dialectically lead to a sense of self-negation. The sense of self-negation will be deeply intensified in stanza two.

The conversion in his convictions that takes place in stanza two obeys to a very great extent the laws of Hegelian dialectic. In Hegelian terms, at the beginning his soul absolutizes its abstract self apart from the world; then afterwards it begins to feel that it is inseparably bound up with its concrete environment, and thus it fails to escape it. Yet it has to experience it as something essentially other than itself.¹¹ Therefore, we see that his own self begins to negate its own conviction in stanza two.

In stanza two the impression of self-negation is intensified. Here the poet deserts Nature and turns toward the concrete world--"the mightier cities" showing his new experience as necessary and all-important to the growth of his soul. The poet is impelled by the feeling of necessity to "advance [his] latent and ampler hunger to fill" and "go forth to receive what the earth and sea never gave us." Of course, the earth and sea stand for Nature, which he feels now to be insufficient. However, at the beginning of the second stanza Whitman is slow to leave completely behind his former experience with the natural world, providing a gradual transition to the real world of the city. Thus he

¹¹ Butler, p. 23.

begins with "'Twas well, O soul--'twas a good preparation you gave me." But soon his experience with the concrete world--Manhattan--becomes the only valid conviction in his consciousness. The attraction of Nature is counterbalanced by the attraction of "the mightier cities," and the whole body of stanza two becomes a direct negation of what was held as conviction by the poet's consciousness before. In this antithetical stanza he says:

Something for us is pouring now more than
 Niagara pouring,
 Torrents of men, (sources and rills of the
 Northwest are you indeed inexhaustible?)
 What, to pavements and homesteads here, what
 were those storms of the mountains and sea?
 (p. 292, ll. 20-22)

Then the process of negating his former thesis reaches a climactic point as he sees only "Manhattan rising, advancing with menacing front," disregarding the "piping" of the wind, the "swell" of the ocean, and the brightness of lightning. And the antithetical manifestations of Manhattan become dominant, taking the place of the former conviction in his consciousness; and subsequently "the mournful wail and low sob" of his soul for the peaceful past is immediately forgotten as he continues in stanza three, "Thunder on! Stride on, Democracy! Strike with vengeful stroke!"¹²

¹² Hugh l'Anson Fausset, Walt Whitman: Poet of Democracy (Essex, 1940; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), p. 192.

In stanza three, however, there is a noticeable sense of interpenetration of both the thesis and antithesis, and this is what gives the synthetical thought its final shape. The new concept of Democracy that comes into existence in "the mightier cities" carries the germs of the poet's former initiation that took place in the abstract world, Nature. Democracy for Whitman is, therefore, labeled with primitive and wild traits, the same as those he had obtained while with nature. To bring this point closer to the listener's mind, Whitman, after establishing these traits of his Democracy, maintains:

My soul prepared in the mountains absorbs
 your immortal strong nutriment,
 Long had I walk'd my cities, my country
 roads through farms, only half satis-
 fied,
 One doubt nauseous undulating like a snake,
 crawl'd on the ground before me,

 Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal
 energies and Nature's dauntlessness,
 I refresh'd myself with it only, I could
 relish it only.
 (p. 293, ll. 36-38, 41-42)

The repetition of his experience with nature in stanza three is merely to emphasize the idea of interaction, and this may suggest his full awareness of the Hegelian dialectic. Consider the following definition of that dialectic:

The examination of a certain category leads us to the conclusion that, if we predicate it of any subject, we are compelled by consistency to predicate of the same subject the logical

contrary of the category. This brings us to an absurdity, since the prediction of the two contrary attributes of the same thing at the same time violates the law of contradiction. On examining the two contrary predicates further, they are seen to be capable of reconciliation in a higher category, which combines the contents of both of them, not merely placed side by side, but absorbed into a wider idea, as moments or aspects of which they can exist without contradiction.¹³

In accord with such logic, in the third moment the poet, or true individual, comes to see that in a certain sense Nature is not necessarily incompatible with "the mightier cities," and he, therefore, to use Kainz's words, "manages to reconcile his new insight with his former vantage point, thus attaining to a synthesis," Democracy, in the third stanza.¹⁴ Democracy, as a higher synthesis, is part of the realm of Nature by virtue of its primitive and wild traits; and it is part of the "mightier cities" by virtue of its main elements, people. If Whitman is an image of such a concept, he, thus, carries the traits of both realms. And the moment of combining is presented by a beautiful triadic image in line 43, "I waited the bursting forth of the pent fire--on the water and air I waited long." However, he witnesses the "true lightning" in the city so that the growth of his

¹³ John McTaggart and Ellis McTaggart, Studies in Hegelian Dialectic (Cambridge, Eng.: n.p., 1896), p. 1.

¹⁴ Howard P. Kainz, Hegel's Philosophy of Right, with Marx's Commentary: A Handbook for Students (The Hague: Martin Nijhoff, 1979), p. 8.

Democratic soul is perfected, of course, by the collaboration of the two experiences. Thus he proceeds:

But now I no longer wait, I am fully satisfied,
 I am glutted,
 I have witness'd the true lightning, I have
 witness'd my cities electric,
 I have lived to behold man burst forth and
 warlike America rise,
 Hence I will seek no more the food of the
 northern solitary wilds,
 No more the mountains roam or sail the
 stormy sea. (p. 293, ll. 44-48)

In brief, his soul completed a whole cycle of its growth. At first it absolutized itself apart from the concrete world; then it turned to negate its own self; afterwards it overcame its self-negation by surrendering its fixation on an abstract self-concept and by coming to redefine itself less abstractly and more concretely, as essentially related to its world, Manhattan.

"Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun" (pp. 312-14) is another poem that depends greatly upon the triadic technique for its structure; and the whole design, after examination, seems to comply surprisingly well with the laws of the Hegelian dialectic. Like the previous poem, "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps," this poem is based on the dualism of the poet's personality and its triadic growth that may be considered more or less as reflection of his nation's collective growth. Yet, unlike the former poem,

"Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun" has only two interrelated sections, a design that makes it harder for the examiner to determine a point of clear-cut distinction, particularly between the antithesis and synthesis. Here the synthesis is implied in stanza two rather than clearly stated in a separate section, as was the case in "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps."

In section one Whitman establishes his thesis by the use of several imperative statements. These statements suggest on the one side the poet's deep involvement with the abstract world, and furnish on the other side a precise physical picture of a serene organic life--apart, however, from the "noise of the world." This purposeful separation from the concrete world is meant to intensify the impression of his own initial fixation on the abstract world. In this abstract realm the "sun" becomes the center of gravity and source of vitality, and all the elements of life are elaborations upon this vital source. Its "dazzling beams" are to be the source of all organic life, to provide the primal heat to breathe life into all living things. Besides being a source of vitality, it is a symbol of unity that underlies all the processes of Nature. The adjective "splendid" embraces the image of "autumnal ripeness, of rich maturity

in fruit and corn";¹⁵ and "silent" suggests the poet's strong conviction of the sufficiency of this abstract realm as outside of the society and the institutions of the "noisy world," as Gay Wilson Allen says.¹⁶ His dazzling conviction of its sufficiency is also suggested in "the serene-moving animals teaching content," in his "looking up at the stars" in "nights perfectly quiet" and in his walking "undisturb'd" in "a garden of beautiful flowers." Then his soul attained its maturity when acquainted with these natural phenomena, and his perfection is soon achieved by marrying "a sweet-breath'd woman" and fathering a "perfect child." He seems to be "fully satisfied" and "glutted" with this realm. In his natural life music is inherent; he is able to "warble spontaneous songs," songs that may be reference not only to internal harmony but also to spiritual content, "an evidence of divine authority," as Allen comments.¹⁷ This implied theme of divine music will recur at the end of section two to be a means of reconciliation of the conflicting realms of Nature and city.

Before the imperatives cease, the poet refers to his indulgence in the abstract world and reinforces his

¹⁵ Gay Wilson Allen and Charles T. Davis, eds., Walt Whitman's Poems (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1955), p. 206.

¹⁶ Allen and Davis, p. 206.

¹⁷ Allen and Davis, p. 206.

insatiable longing for the primal sanities of Nature. He asks: "Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me again O nature your primal sanities!" (p. 312, l. 11). However, soon after this last appeal to Nature, the poet changes his tone in line twelve. The imperatives capriciously cease, and he turns to express a sense of an internal conflict, maybe confusion, caused by "ceaseless excitement and rack'd by the war-strife," an image that may suggest that the dominant spirit of war is strong enough to pull him out of his abstract realm into the real and concrete world:

These demanding to have them, (tired with
ceaseless excitement, and rack'd by the
war-strife,)
These to procure incessantly asking, rising
in cries from my heart,
While yet incessantly asking still I adhere
to my city,
Day upon day and year upon year O city, walking
your streets,
Where you hold me enchain'd a certain time
refusing to give me up,
Yet giving to make me glutt'd, enrich'd of
soul, you give me forever faces.
(pp. 312-13, ll. 12-17)

Clearly his nostalgia for his city is intensified in these lines; and, likewise, the moment of complete transition in his conviction becomes more imminent now. However, this coming transition could be understood as a dialectical necessity, if we agree with Hegel's logic that indicates the individual's soul "is inseparably bound up with its

environment"¹⁸ and thus it cannot escape it. And the concluding lines of the first section of the poem intensify the impression of his inseparable bond with his city:

(O I see what I sought to escape, confronting,
reversing my cries,
I see my own soul trampling down what it asked
for.) (p. 313, ll. 18-19)

Here the poet marks his failure to escape his city; therefore, he will express his experience in Manhattan as all-important and worthy of serious consideration. This task he carries out explicitly in section two.

After he recognizes his strong bond with Manhattan, Whitman begins his second section by rejecting the "splendid silent sun," the central emblem of his former realm. He uses four emphatic statements to achieve his rejection. But despite the antithetical tone of these four statements, they explicitly suggest the richness of that former realm:

Keep your splendid silent sun,
Keep your words O Nature, and the quiet places
by the woods,
Keep your fields of clover and timothy, and
your corn-fields and orchards,
Keep the blossoming buckwheat fields where
the Ninth-month bees hum.
(p. 313, ll. 20-23)

¹⁸ Butler, p. 23.

Without doubt the poet still acknowledges the quiet harmony, the fertility, the beauty and the music of Nature, although he rejects these values and counterbalances them by other compensating values he finds more appealing in Manhattan.

The conversion that takes place in his consciousness is obviously an experience of self-negation. The impression of self-negation is intensified by the use of the same imperative phrase "Give me," that introduced the design of life in Nature, and further by making his new pattern oppose Nature in nearly every detail. Manhattan, the multiple city with its multiple "faces," "streets," "women," "comrades," and "lovers" counterbalances the "silent sun," the symbol of unity in the natural world. The "phantoms incessant" and "such shows" negate the landscape of the harvest season. The "sound of the trumpets and drums" negates the "serene-moving animals" and "nights perfectly quiet." His strong desire for "the life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel," counterbalances his former spiritual communion with the stars. And the sense of self-negation prevails throughout section two.

However, as Whitman is advancing the theme of self-negation in section two, he implicitly plants the germs of another theme, hoping to use this new theme as a vehicle of reconciliation between the two conflicting realms, Nature and Manhattan. This reconciling theme is definitely the spiritual music, which was included in section one to

suggest not only internal harmony but spiritual content. In section two, specifically from line 26 to the end of the poem, the theme of music becomes progressively more evident. As Allen says, music begins in the harsh rhythms of the "soldiers marching" to the sound of the trumpets and drums, and continues in the "torchlight procession," the "dense brigade" and the "military wagons."¹⁹ Then after a momentary diminishing of the harsh rhythm, another strong rhythm rises up: the "strong voices" of the people and the "powerful throbs" engulf Manhattan's streets. "These references to a crude meter, beat, or throb suggest a latent spiritual content in the varied scenes of city life," Allen says.²⁰ And the impression of the spiritual content of music is further intensified in lines 38, 39, and 40, as the poet finally recognizes the multiple activities of Manhattan as musical. "'The endless and noisy chorus,' and the 'turbulent musical chorus' are as much of the soul as are 'spontaneous songs'--as capable of providing sanities."²¹ In other words, Nature and Manhattan merge in a higher synthesis--Music--in which all the contradictions of the two realms are resolved. Thus, Nature is not necessarily incompatible with Manhattan; rather, they are in a certain

¹⁹ Allen and Davis, p. 207.

²⁰ Allen and Davis, p. 207.

²¹ Allen and Davis, p. 208.

sense reconcilable, a major point that Whitman is leading his reader to see.

In the poem "Long, Too Long America," Whitman pictures another dualism of the American consciousness as consisting of two major streams, both heading irresistibly toward the mystic ocean of Democracy. The structure of the poem, though, embraces this triadic thought and at the same time illustrates it.

The first structural feature one notices in the opening lines is the hugeness and the multiplicity of the object the poet deals with, "America." However, the multiplicity is merely defined without indulging in any detail. In this hemisphere the American consciousness has grown up out of two different experiences. Line two is designed to bear only one experience: "Traveling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from joys and prosperity only." And here it does not seem to be too far-fetched to suggest the poet is concerned with the American consciousness, not the land. Apparently the consciousness, but not the land, is meant to learn from "joys and prosperity." But the lessons of "joys and prosperity" that the consciousness absorbed in the past seem insufficient; therefore, he calls upon the other extreme to complement that "curious triplicate process," to use Whitman's words.

As he finishes with the experience of the past, Whitman in line three defines the other antipodal experience,

involving time as a transitional vehicle. Here time changes from the past to the present, and the verse is designed to stress the other opposing experience: "But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish, advancing, grappling with direst fate and recoiling not." Line four indicates that the two opposing lessons of peace and war that the American consciousness has been exposed to will soon interact and integrate in the mind, which will be able to relate the elements of the two experiences, realize the whole, and return to itself to meditate on the unique experience produced. Here, as a result of a metaphorical marriage between the two experiences, the national consciousness will "conceive" and give birth to a new concept of Democracy: "And now to conceive and show to the world what your children en-masse really are." And this new concept becomes a synthesis in that the two opposing experiences were essential, a fact Whitman boldly claims that only he can see, as his closing line suggests. The word "en-masse" is always associated with Democracy in Whitman's poetry and prose. For example, in the opening poem of Leaves of Grass, he writes,

Ones-Self I sing, a simple separate person,
 Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.
 (p. 1, ll. 1-2)

The poem "Delicate Cluster" (p. 323) is a duplication of the structural features and images the poet employed in "Long, Too Long America." Yet America here is symbolized by

the image of the flag that seems throughout Drum-Taps to "represent not only the entire people and geography, but an Identity, an Identity of the whole, transcending the material realm of the intellect and the spirit."²² The formulation of this symbol is also triadic, as the imagery and the structure of the poem suggest.

Structurally, like the opening words of the previous poem, "Long, Too Long America," the words "Delicate Cluster" that open up the poem, suggest with no doubt the multiplicity of the Americans that unify around the central symbol, the flag. In one part this symbol is pictured as "flag of teeming life" that covers "all my lands" and "seashores," an image that may refer to the prosperity and joys of the peaceful past and the former unity as suggested by the use of the word "all" which occurs twice in line two.

In line three, Whitman gives the flag another opposing identity. It becomes "the flag of death," an image which certainly counterbalances the past identity of the same symbol, "the flag of teeming life"; and, accordingly, the allusion to peace and prosperity is replaced by the allusion to war and destruction: "Flag of death! (how I watch'd you through the smoke of battle pressing!/ How I heard you flap and rustle, cloth defiant!)" (p. 323, ll. 3-4).

²² Edward E. Sullivan, Jr., "Thematic Unfolding in Whitman's Drum-Taps," Emerson Society Quarterly, 31, Part 2 (1963), 42.

The terms "pressing," "flap," "smoke of battle," "rustle," "defiant" which link the flag to boldness and strength and deepen the contrast between its opposing traits, appear in lines one and two.

In line five, the poet intensifies the impression of the existence of the two opposing traits or images by the physical description of the substance, the flag. The contrast is obvious in the image of the "sunny flag" which is associated with day and light, and the image of the "orbs of night," which image is associated with night and dark: "Flag cerulean--sunny flag, with the orbs of night dappled!" In lines seven and eight Whitman settles the contradiction of the images of peace and war into one synthesizing image. He uses his own song to be a vehicle of such mediation between them. Thus in his song the flag receives a new identity which carries both traits associated with peace and war at one time. The flag is viewed as a great synthesis that combines the contents of both life and death, peace and war. In the concluding lines seven and eight, the flag in Whitman's song becomes the symbol of power and strength, traits that were obtained from the experience of war, a symbol of divine and motherly love, traits that were associated with peace and shaped up in the flame and tragedies of battle: "Ah to sing the song of you, my matron mighty!/
My sacred one, my mother."

In brief, throughout the study of the structure and imagery of these poems, one may notice the great impact of the Hegelian logical technique on the overall design of the verses. As is evident throughout the exploration of his theme and images, all the phenomena around Whitman are triadic in their formulation and evolution, starting from his own assertion of the triad of his own personality, "I too with my soul and body/ We, a curious trio" (p. 231, ll. 69-70), to a triadic consciousness of the individual, to a triadic universe. All the symbols that represent his universe are pictured as triadic too.

In the poem "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps," the Poet-Self that he created for himself is designed to contain two opposing realms, Nature and city; then in the third moment it absorbs them and unites them into a higher synthesis. In "Give Me Your Splendid Silent Sun," Whitman's universe is seen as a great sphere holding in unity two hemispheres, the ideal that circles in the realm of the "silent sun" and the real that resides in Manhattan streets, yet both realms are later synthesized by the spiritual music. In "Long, Too Long America" and "Delicate Cluster," Whitman pictures the multitudes in America and its flag, then moves to the unity that contains contradictions, a design which may encourage the examiner to conclude that Whitman tended to cultivate the attainment of

both poles simultaneously in order to mediate dramatically between the two extremes.

This frequently occurring technique of cultivating polarities and synthesis in his poems might have stemmed from his strong adherence to the primary thought of Hegel that suggests the essential truth of the universe lies in the progressive realization of the dialectical scheme: the triad, thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

The implications of this study testify to the fact that Walt Whitman not only had access to the Absolute Idealism of Hegel during the 1850s and early 1860s but was fond of this philosophy and adhered to it. Although Whitman kept his fondness and adherence rather concealed, several biographical factors suggest his familiarity with Hegel's Dialectic, and many verses written during the 1850s and early 1860s reveal the poet's compatibility with and faith in the manifestation of Absolute Idealism.

This study further implies that one should not over-emphasize the issue of Whitman's specific sources of German philosophy to confirm the poet's Hegelianism, basically because there were various channels and avenues available during the 1850s and even in the 1840s that a voracious reader like Whitman could take to familiarize himself with the German thought. As generally agreed on, the German idealists during the 19th century prevailed with their thoughts over the old continent, and then their ideals reached America during the 1840s and prevailed among American writers, especially the New Englanders, during the 1850s and 1860s. Whitman, whether he admitted it or

not, must have read here and there a great deal of the German philosophy during the 1850s, and thenceforward that philosophy became firmly established in his consciousness and arose as novel manifestations in his early verses.

The verses of the 1850s testify to the fact that Whitman embraced two major concepts of Hegel: first, the evolutionary state of the universe progressing through the overcoming of contradictions toward divine ends; and second, the doctrine of opposites in which good and evil are merged and reconciled in the Higher Synthesis, or the Absolute. Then in the poems of the early 1860s another grand idea recurred frequently; it is the Hegelian prophecy which predicted that America would be the theater of man's highest accomplishment in the realms of spirit and intellect. These three concepts were held explicitly by the poet's consciousness. He, therefore, repeatedly celebrated America as a domain of contradictions, yet all these were synthesized and reconciled in the free and unified nation. However, Whitman's celebration was entirely wiped out by the Civil War. It terrified him and might have seriously threatened the validity of his faith in the future of his nation.

One can say that few men in America were more threatened by the Civil War than the self-appointed national bard, Whitman, because he always believed that his poetry depended completely upon his nation's destiny. Now the dream of the

future glory of America was shattered; the sacred Union and democracy which the poet had previously celebrated were seriously threatened by the war. And an intense conflict in the poet's soul was created by that war; he could find no other way to resolve this conflict than to embrace the optimism of the Absolute Idealism, giving more credence to this philosophy than he had previously. His Hegelianism, therefore, was deeply rooted and well-established in his consciousness, and his strong conviction was finally revealed by the implications of his war poems, Drum-Taps. In other words, Whitman found in the dialectic of Hegel a philosophical rationale for the on-going national crisis.

In accordance with Hegel's motifs, Whitman considered America as an organic body with order, consistency, and purpose; and "the seeming discords and the ebbs of time [of which the war is an example] are 'But stumbling steps of one persistent life,/ That struggles up through mists to heights sublime.'"¹ America would finally prevail after many "throes and convulsions," in Whitman's terms. Whitman's strong conviction and involvement in these Hegelian motifs are revealed and expressed by the evolution of his theme in Drum-Taps. Unmistakably the evolution of theme

¹ William Sloane Kennedy, Reminiscences, Walt Whitman (Belmont, Mass., 1896; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1973), pp. 136-37.

followed Hegelian pattern: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. Briefly, the theme of enthusiastic call for fighting, which is explicitly evident in the thesis poems, is negated entirely by the poet's realistic description of the tragic side of war. Then, in the third movement, the poems of synthesis, the poet reformulates the thesis of war in such a way that it survives its encounter with the antithesis. The thesis of war is not lost or destroyed; it gives up its savage and vengeful traits, which were attached to it in the first movement, and it keeps its electric spirit in the synthesis poems.

There is another issue this study emphasizes here: one should not think that only in the final 1881 arrangement of the poems of Drum-Taps Whitman was successful in making his theme an accurate presentation of the logical technique. In fact, the threefold movement is traceable in the original arrangement of Drum-Taps poems of 1865-66, though somewhat distracted by a number of poems which Whitman transferred to other groupings in the 1867 edition of Leaves of Grass. In the second version of Drum-Taps which appeared as annexes to the 1867 edition of Leaves of Grass, the dialectical evolution of the theme became more obvious than before. Likewise the addition of five more poems to the final 1881 version of Drum-Taps did contribute to the logicity of the evolution of its theme. But one should keep in mind that even without these five poems, the logical

technique would remain perceptible in the thematic structure of the war book. In 1881 Whitman added the following poems to Drum-Taps: "Virginia--the West" to the thesis poems; "Not the Pilot" to the antithesis poems; and "Adieu to a Soldier," "Delicate Cluster," and "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors" to the synthesis poems.

The triadic structures and imagery of "Square Deific," "By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame," "Long, Too Long America," "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps," "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun," and "Delicate Cluster," which are cited and discussed in Chapter III, form striking reference to Whitman's early attempts to imitate the logical technique of Hegel. With the exception of "Delicate Cluster," which was first published in the group "Bathed in War's Perfume" of the 1871 edition of Leaves of Grass, and added to Drum-Taps in 1881, the other five poems first appeared in the original edition of Drum-Taps, published in 1865-66. The six poems in question, with only slight revision, remained unchanged throughout the other editions of Leaves of Grass. The minor revision of punctuation or change of a few words had nothing to do with their being triadic presentations.

The study of Drum-Taps suggests that the experience of the Civil War had deepened and strengthened Whitman's involvement and faith in Hegel's Absolute Idealism. This philosophy showed Whitman the potential greatness

of America, and Hegel's logical technique provided him with a poetic means to express his convictions. In the war poems, Whitman appeared more willing to imitate and present the threefold movement of the logical technique. He cultivated polarities of life and death, city and nature, and Northerners and Southerners in the first and second movements. Then in the third movement, Whitman reconciled and synthesized all the polarities he previously sowed.

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