

# WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

*The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song*

## Old War-Dreams

WALT WHITMAN

Page | 1

*As in his previous poem, in this selection by Walt Whitman, published in Sequel to Drum-Taps (1865), a veteran speaks about his remembrances of war, this time as they fill his dreams. Of what precisely does he dream? What is the connection between his dreams of the mortally wounded and newly dead (stanza one) and his dreams of scenes of nature, of beauteous sky and shining moon (stanza two)? What, according to this poem (stanza three), is the relation between battle experienced and battle remembered? Can battle veterans ever be entirely back home again?*

In midnight sleep of many a face of anguish,  
Of the look at first of the mortally wounded, (of that indescribable look,)  
Of the dead on their backs with arms extended wide,  
I dream, I dream, I dream.

Of scenes of Nature, fields and mountains,  
Of skies so beauteous after a storm, and at night the moon so unearthly bright,  
Shining sweetly, shining down, where we dig the trenches and gather the heaps,  
I dream, I dream, I dream.

Long have they pass'd, faces and trenches and fields,  
Where through the carnage I moved with a callous composure, or away from the fallen,  
Onward I sped at the time—but now of their forms at night,  
I dream, I dream, I dream.