

THE ORIGINAL  
1855 EDITION

LEAVES  
*of*  
GRASS



WALT  
WHITMAN

The Project Gutenberg EBook of Leaves of Grass, by Walt Whitman

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# LEAVES OF GRASS

# By Walt Whitman

Come, said my soul,  
Such verses for my Body let us write, (for we are one,)   
That should I after return,  
Or, long, long hence, in other spheres,  
There to some group of mates the chants resuming,  
(Tallying Earth's soil, trees, winds, tumultuous waves,)   
Ever with pleas'd smile I may keep on,  
Ever and ever yet the verses owning—as, first, I here and  
now  
Signing for Soul and Body, set to them my name,

Walt Whitman

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# **BOOK I. INSCRIPTIONS**

# One's-Self I Sing

One's-self I sing, a simple separate person,  
Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse.

Of physiology from top to toe I sing,  
Not physiognomy alone nor brain alone is worthy for the  
Muse, I say  
the Form complete is worthier far,  
The Female equally with the Male I sing.

Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power,  
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine,  
The Modern Man I sing.

# As I Ponder'd in Silence

As I ponder'd in silence,  
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,  
A Phantom arose before me with distrustful aspect,  
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,  
The genius of poets of old lands,  
As to me directing like flame its eyes,  
With finger pointing to many immortal songs,  
And menacing voice, What singest thou? it said,  
Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring  
bards?  
And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles,  
The making of perfect soldiers.

Be it so, then I answer'd,  
I too haughty Shade also sing war, and a longer and greater  
one than any,  
Waged in my book with varying fortune, with flight, advance  
and retreat, victory deferr'd and wavering,  
(Yet methinks certain, or as good as certain, at the last,)  
the  
field the world,  
For life and death, for the Body and for the eternal Soul,  
Lo, I too am come, chanting the chant of battles,  
I above all promote brave soldiers.

# In Cabin'd Ships at Sea

In cabin'd ships at sea,  
The boundless blue on every side expanding,  
With whistling winds and music of the waves, the large  
imperious waves,  
Or some lone bark buoy'd on the dense marine,  
Where joyous full of faith, spreading white sails,  
She cleaves the ether mid the sparkle and the foam of day,  
or under  
many a star at night,  
By sailors young and old haply will I, a reminiscence of  
the land, be read,  
In full rapport at last.

Here are our thoughts, voyagers' thoughts,  
Here not the land, firm land, alone appears, may then by  
them be said,  
The sky o'erarches here, we feel the undulating deck  
beneath our feet,  
We feel the long pulsation, ebb and flow of endless motion,  
The tones of unseen mystery, the vague and vast suggestions  
of the  
briny world, the liquid-flowing syllables,  
The perfume, the faint creaking of the cordage, the  
melancholy rhythm,  
The boundless vista and the horizon far and dim are all  
here,  
And this is ocean's poem.

Then falter not O book, fulfil your destiny,  
You not a reminiscence of the land alone,  
You too as a lone bark cleaving the ether, purpos'd I know  
not  
whither, yet ever full of faith,  
Consort to every ship that sails, sail you!



Bear forth to them folded my love, (dear mariners, for you  
I fold it  
here in every leaf;)  
Speed on my book! spread your white sails my little bark  
athwart the  
imperious waves,  
Chant on, sail on, bear o'er the boundless blue from me to  
every sea,  
This song for mariners and all their ships.

# To Foreign Lands

I heard that you ask'd for something to prove this puzzle  
the New World,  
And to define America, her athletic Democracy,  
Therefore I send you my poems that you behold in them what  
you wanted.

# To a Historian

You who celebrate bygones,  
Who have explored the outward, the surfaces of the races,  
the life  
that has exhibited itself,  
Who have treated of man as the creature of politics,  
aggregates,  
rulers and priests,  
I, habitan of the Alleghanies, treating of him as he is in  
himself  
in his own rights,  
Pressing the pulse of the life that has seldom exhibited  
itself,  
(the great pride of man in himself,)  
Chanter of Personality, outlining what is yet to be,  
I project the history of the future.

# To Thee Old Cause

To thee old cause!  
Thou peerless, passionate, good cause,  
Thou stern, remorseless, sweet idea,  
Deathless throughout the ages, races, lands,  
After a strange sad war, great war for thee,  
(I think all war through time was really fought, and ever  
will be  
really fought, for thee,)  
These chants for thee, the eternal march of thee.

(A war O soldiers not for itself alone,  
Far, far more stood silently waiting behind, now to advance  
in this book.)

Thou orb of many orbs!  
Thou seething principle! thou well-kept, latent germ! thou  
centre!  
Around the idea of thee the war revolving,  
With all its angry and vehement play of causes,  
(With vast results to come for thrice a thousand years,)  
These recitatives for thee,—my book and the war are one,  
Merged in its spirit I and mine, as the contest hinged on  
thee,  
As a wheel on its axis turns, this book unwitting to  
itself,  
Around the idea of thee.

# Eidolons

I met a seer,  
Passing the hues and objects of the world,  
The fields of art and learning, pleasure, sense,  
To glean eidolons.

Put in thy chants said he,  
No more the puzzling hour nor day, nor segments, parts, put  
in,  
Put first before the rest as light for all and entrance-  
song of all,  
That of eidolons.

Ever the dim beginning,  
Ever the growth, the rounding of the circle,  
Ever the summit and the merge at last, (to surely start  
again,)  
Eidolons! eidolons!

Ever the mutable,  
Ever materials, changing, crumbling, re-cohering,  
Ever the ateliers, the factories divine,  
Issuing eidolons.

Lo, I or you,  
Or woman, man, or state, known or unknown,  
We seeming solid wealth, strength, beauty build,  
But really build eidolons.

The ostent evanescent,  
The substance of an artist's mood or savan's studies long,  
Or warrior's, martyr's, hero's toils,  
To fashion his eidolon.

Of every human life,

(The units gather'd, posted, not a thought, emotion, deed,  
left out,)

The whole or large or small summ'd, added up,  
In its eidolon.

The old, old urge,  
Based on the ancient pinnacles, lo, newer, higher  
pinnacles,  
From science and the modern still impell'd,  
The old, old urge, eidolons.

The present now and here,  
America's busy, teeming, intricate whirl,  
Of aggregate and segregate for only thence releasing,  
To-day's eidolons.

These with the past,  
Of vanish'd lands, of all the reigns of kings across the  
sea,  
Old conquerors, old campaigns, old sailors' voyages,  
Joining eidolons.

Densities, growth, facades,  
Strata of mountains, soils, rocks, giant trees,  
Far-born, far-dying, living long, to leave,  
Eidolons everlasting.

Exalte, rapt, ecstatic,  
The visible but their womb of birth,  
Of orbic tendencies to shape and shape and shape,  
The mighty earth-eidolon.

All space, all time,  
(The stars, the terrible perturbations of the suns,  
Swelling, collapsing, ending, serving their longer, shorter  
use,)  
Fill'd with eidolons only.

The noiseless myriads,

The infinite oceans where the rivers empty,  
The separate countless free identities, like eyesight,  
The true realities, eidolons.

Not this the world,  
Nor these the universes, they the universes,  
Purport and end, ever the permanent life of life,  
Eidolons, eidolons.

Beyond thy lectures learn'd professor,  
Beyond thy telescope or spectroscope observer keen, beyond  
all mathematics,  
Beyond the doctor's surgery, anatomy, beyond the chemist  
with his chemistry,  
The entities of entities, eidolons.

Unfix'd yet fix'd,  
Ever shall be, ever have been and are,  
Sweeping the present to the infinite future,  
Eidolons, eidolons, eidolons.

The prophet and the bard,  
Shall yet maintain themselves, in higher stages yet,  
Shall mediate to the Modern, to Democracy, interpret yet to  
them,  
God and eidolons.

And thee my soul,  
Joys, ceaseless exercises, exaltations,  
Thy yearning amply fed at last, prepared to meet,  
Thy mates, eidolons.

Thy body permanent,  
The body lurking there within thy body,  
The only purport of the form thou art, the real I myself,  
An image, an eidolon.

Thy very songs not in thy songs,  
No special strains to sing, none for itself,

But from the whole resulting, rising at last and floating,  
A round full-orb'd eidolon.



# For Him I Sing

For him I sing,  
I raise the present on the past,  
(As some perennial tree out of its roots, the present on  
the past,)  
With time and space I him dilate and fuse the immortal  
laws,  
To make himself by them the law unto himself.



# When I Read the Book

When I read the book, the biography famous,  
And is this then (said I) what the author calls a man's  
life?  
And so will some one when I am dead and gone write my life?  
(As if any man really knew aught of my life,  
Why even I myself I often think know little or nothing of  
my real life,  
Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clews and  
indirections  
I seek for my own use to trace out here.)

# Beginning My Studies

Beginning my studies the first step pleas'd me so much,  
The mere fact consciousness, these forms, the power of  
motion,  
The least insect or animal, the senses, eyesight, love,  
The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,  
I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,  
But stop and loiter all the time to sing it in ecstatic  
songs.

# Beginners

How they are provided for upon the earth, (appearing at intervals,)  
How dear and dreadful they are to the earth,  
How they inure to themselves as much as to any-what a paradox  
appears their age,  
How people respond to them, yet know them not,  
How there is something relentless in their fate all times,  
How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation and reward,  
And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for the same great purchase.

# To the States

To the States or any one of them, or any city of the  
States, Resist  
much, obey little,  
Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved,  
Once fully enslaved, no nation, state, city of this earth,  
ever  
afterward resumes its liberty.

# On Journeys Through the States

On journeys through the States we start,  
(Ay through the world, urged by these songs,  
Sailing henceforth to every land, to every sea,) We willing learners of all, teachers of all, and lovers of all.

We have watch'd the seasons dispensing themselves and passing on,  
And have said, Why should not a man or woman do as much as the seasons, and effuse as much?

We dwell a while in every city and town,  
We pass through Kanada, the North-east, the vast valley of the Mississippi, and the Southern States,  
We confer on equal terms with each of the States,  
We make trial of ourselves and invite men and women to hear,  
We say to ourselves, Remember, fear not, be candid, promulge the body and the soul,  
Dwell a while and pass on, be copious, temperate, chaste, magnetic,  
And what you effuse may then return as the seasons return,  
And may be just as much as the seasons.

# To a Certain Cantatrice

Here, take this gift,  
I was reserving it for some hero, speaker, or general,  
One who should serve the good old cause, the great idea,  
the  
progress and freedom of the race,  
Some brave confronter of despots, some daring rebel;  
But I see that what I was reserving belongs to you just as  
much as to any.



# Me Imperturbe

Me imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,  
Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst of  
irrational things,  
Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they,  
Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes,  
less  
important than I thought,  
Me toward the Mexican sea, or in the Mannahatta or the  
Tennessee,  
or far north or inland,  
A river man, or a man of the woods or of any farm-life of  
these  
States or of the coast, or the lakes or Kanada,  
Me wherever my life is lived, O to be self-balanced for  
contingencies,  
To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents,  
rebuffs, as  
the trees and animals do.

# Savantism

Thither as I look I see each result and glory retracing  
itself and  
nestling close, always obligated,  
Thither hours, months, years—thither trades, compacts,  
establishments, even the most minute,  
Thither every-day life, speech, utensils, politics,  
persons, estates;  
Thither we also, I with my leaves and songs, trustful,  
admirant,  
As a father to his father going takes his children along  
with him.

# The Ship Starting

Lo, the unbounded sea,  
On its breast a ship starting, spreading all sails,  
carrying even  
her moonsails.  
The pennant is flying aloft as she speeds she speeds so  
stately—  
below emulous waves press forward,  
They surround the ship with shining curving motions and  
foam.

# I Hear America Singing

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be  
blithe and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves  
off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the  
deckhand  
singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter  
singing as  
he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the  
morning,  
or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife  
at work,  
or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day—at night the party of young  
fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

# What Place Is Besieged?

What place is besieged, and vainly tries to raise the  
siege?

Lo, I send to that place a commander, swift, brave,  
immortal,

And with him horse and foot, and parks of artillery,

And artillery-men, the deadliest that ever fired gun.

# Still Though the One I Sing

Still though the one I sing,  
(One, yet of contradictions made,) I dedicate to  
Nationality,  
I leave in him revolt, (O latent right of insurrection! O  
quenchless, indispensable fire!)

# Shut Not Your Doors

Shut not your doors to me proud libraries,  
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd shelves,  
yet  
needed most, I bring,  
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,  
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every thing,  
A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt by the  
intellect,  
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page.

# Poets to Come

Poets to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!  
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,  
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental,  
greater than  
before known,  
Arouse! for you must justify me.

I myself but write one or two indicative words for the  
future,  
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the  
darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping,  
turns a  
casual look upon you and then averts his face,  
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,  
Expecting the main things from you.



# To You

Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me,  
why  
should you not speak to me?  
And why should I not speak to you?

# Thou Reader

Thou reader throbbest life and pride and love the same as  
I,  
Therefore for thee the following chants.



# BOOK II

## Starting from Paumanok

1  
Starting from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born,  
Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother,  
After roaming many lands, lover of populous pavements,  
Dweller in Mannahatta my city, or on southern savannas,  
Or a soldier camp'd or carrying my knapsack and gun, or a  
miner  
in California,  
Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat, my  
drink from  
the spring,  
Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,  
Far from the clank of crowds intervals passing rapt and  
happy,  
Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri, aware  
of  
mighty Niagara,  
Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the hirsute  
and  
strong-breasted bull,  
Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month flowers experienced, stars,  
rain, snow,  
my amaze,  
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones and the flight of  
the  
mountain-hawk,  
And heard at dawn the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush  
from the  
swamp-cedars,  
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

2  
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.

How curious! how real!  
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.

See revolving the globe,  
The ancestor-continent away group'd together,  
The present and future continents north and south, with the  
isthmus  
between.

See, vast trackless spaces,  
As in a dream they change, they swiftly fill,  
Countless masses debouch upon them,  
They are now cover'd with the foremost people, arts,  
institutions, known.

See, projected through time,  
For me an audience interminable.

With firm and regular step they wend, they never stop,  
Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions,  
One generation playing its part and passing on,  
Another generation playing its part and passing on in its  
turn,  
With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards me to  
listen,  
With eyes retrospective towards me.

3  
Americanos! conquerors! marches humanitarian!  
Foremost! century marches! Libertad! masses!  
For you a programme of chants.

Chants of the prairies,  
Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the  
Mexican sea,  
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and  
Minnesota,  
Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence  
equidistant,  
Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

4

Take my leaves America, take them South and take them  
North,  
Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own  
off-spring,  
Surround them East and West, for they would surround you,  
And you precedents, connect lovingly with them, for they  
connect  
lovingly with you.

I conn'd old times,  
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters,  
Now if eligible O that the great masters might return and  
study me.

In the name of these States shall I scorn the antique?  
Why these are the children of the antique to justify it.

5

Dead poets, philosophers, priests,  
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,  
Language-shapers on other shores,  
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or desolate,  
I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have  
left  
wafted hither,  
I have perused it, own it is admirable, (moving awhile  
among it,)  
Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever deserve

more  
than it deserves,  
Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it,  
I stand in my place with my own day here.

Here lands female and male,  
Here the heir-ship and heiress-ship of the world, here the  
flame of  
materials,  
Here spirituality the translatress, the openly-avow'd,  
The ever-tending, the finale of visible forms,  
The satisfier, after due long-waiting now advancing,  
Yes here comes my mistress the soul.

6  
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,  
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,  
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my  
soul and  
of immortality.

I will make a song for these States that no one State may  
under any  
circumstances be subjected to another State,  
And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day  
and by  
night between all the States, and between any two of them,  
And I will make a song for the ears of the President, full  
of  
weapons with menacing points,  
And behind the weapons countless dissatisfied faces;  
And a song make I of the One form'd out of all,  
The fang'd and glittering One whose head is over all,

Resolute warlike One including and over all,  
(However high the head of any else that head is over all.)

I will acknowledge contemporary lands,  
I will trail the whole geography of the globe and salute  
courteously  
every city large and small,  
And employments! I will put in my poems that with you is  
heroism  
upon land and sea,  
And I will report all heroism from an American point of  
view.

I will sing the song of companionship,  
I will show what alone must finally compact these,  
I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly love,  
indicating it in me,  
I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that  
were  
threatening to consume me,  
I will lift what has too long kept down those smouldering  
fires,  
I will give them complete abandonment,  
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,  
For who but I should understand love with all its sorrow  
and joy?  
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?

7  
I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races,  
I advance from the people in their own spirit,  
Here is what sings unrestricted faith.

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.)

I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a  
religion, I  
descend into the arena,  
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there,  
the  
winner's pealing shouts,  
Who knows? they may rise from me yet, and soar above every  
thing.)

Each is not for its own sake,  
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for  
religion's sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,  
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,  
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how  
certain  
the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States  
must be  
their religion,  
Otherwise there is just no real and permanent grandeur;  
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,  
Nor land nor man or woman without religion.)

8

What are you doing young man?  
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science,  
art, amours?  
These ostensible realities, politics, points?  
Your ambition or business whatever it may be?

It is well—against such I say not a word, I am their poet  
also,  
But behold! such swiftly subside, burnt up for religion's

sake,  
For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame, the  
essential  
life of the earth,  
Any more than such are to religion.

9  
What do you seek so pensive and silent?  
What do you need camerado?  
Dear son do you think it is love?

Listen dear son—listen America, daughter or son,  
It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess, and  
yet it  
satisfies, it is great,  
But there is something else very great, it makes the whole  
coincide,  
It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous hands  
sweeps and  
provides for all.

10  
Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a  
greater religion,  
The following chants each for its kind I sing.

My comrade!  
For you to share with me two greatnesses, and a third one  
rising  
inclusive and more resplendent,  
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness of  
Religion.

Melange mine own, the unseen and the seen,  
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,  
Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering  
around me,  
Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air  
that we

know not of,  
Contact daily and hourly that will not release me,  
These selecting, these in hints demanded of me.

Not he with a daily kiss onward from childhood kissing me,  
Has winded and twisted around me that which holds me to  
him,  
Any more than I am held to the heavens and all the  
spiritual world,  
After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes—equalities! O divine average!  
Warblings under the sun, usher'd as now, or at noon, or  
setting,  
Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching hither,  
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to them,  
and  
cheerfully pass them forward.

11  
As I have walk'd in Alabama my morning walk,  
I have seen where the she-bird the mocking-bird sat on her  
nest in  
the briers hatching her brood.

I have seen the he-bird also,  
I have paus'd to hear him near at hand inflating his throat  
and  
joyfully singing.

And while I paus'd it came to me that what he really sang  
for was  
not there only,  
Nor for his mate nor himself only, nor all sent back by the  
echoes,  
But subtle, clandestine, away beyond,  
A charge transmitted and gift occult for those being born.

Democracy! near at hand to you a throat is now inflating  
itself and  
joyfully singing.

Ma femme! for the brood beyond us and of us,  
For those who belong here and those to come,  
I exultant to be ready for them will now shake out carols  
stronger  
and haughtier than have ever yet been heard upon earth.

I will make the songs of passion to give them their way,  
And your songs outlaw'd offenders, for I scan you with  
kindred eyes,  
and carry you with me the same as any.

I will make the true poem of riches,  
To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres and goes  
forward  
and is not dropt by death;  
I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all, and I  
will be the  
bard of personality,  
And I will show of male and female that either is but the  
equal of  
the other,  
And sexual organs and acts! do you concentrate in me, for I  
am determin'd  
to tell you with courageous clear voice to prove you  
illustrious,  
And I will show that there is no imperfection in the  
present, and  
can be none in the future,  
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be  
turn'd to  
beautiful results,  
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than  
death,  
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and  
events are

compact,  
And that all the things of the universe are perfect  
miracles, each  
as profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts,  
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to  
ensemble,  
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with  
reference to  
all days,  
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.

13

Was somebody asking to see the soul?  
See, your own shape and countenance, persons, substances,  
beasts,  
the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.

All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them;  
How can the real body ever die and be buried?

Of your real body and any man's or woman's real body,  
Item for item it will elude the hands of the corpse-  
cleaners and  
pass to fitting spheres,  
Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth to  
the  
moment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their  
impression, the  
meaning, the main concern,

Any more than a man's substance and life or a woman's  
substance and  
life return in the body and the soul,  
Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main  
concern and  
includes and is the soul;  
Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your body, or  
any part  
of it!

14

Whoever you are, to you endless announcements!

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet?  
Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth and indicative  
hand?  
Toward the male of the States, and toward the female of the  
States,  
Exulting words, words to Democracy's lands.

Interlink'd, food-yielding lands!  
Land of coal and iron! land of gold! land of cotton, sugar,  
rice!  
Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and hemp! land of  
the apple  
and the grape!  
Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world!  
land of  
those sweet-air'd interminable plateaus!  
Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of adobie!  
Lands where the north-west Columbia winds, and where the  
south-west  
Colorado winds!  
Land of the eastern Chesapeake! land of the Delaware!  
Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan!  
Land of the Old Thirteen! Massachusetts land! land of  
Vermont and

Connecticut!  
Land of the ocean shores! land of sierras and peaks!  
Land of boatmen and sailors! fishermen's land!  
Inextricable lands! the clutch'd together! the passionate  
ones!  
The side by side! the elder and younger brothers! the bony-  
limb'd!  
The great women's land! the feminine! the experienced  
sisters and  
the inexperienced sisters!  
Far breath'd land! Arctic braced! Mexican breez'd! the  
diverse! the  
compact!  
The Pennsylvanian! the Virginian! the double Carolinian!  
O all and each well-loved by me! my intrepid nations! O I  
at any  
rate include you all with perfect love!  
I cannot be discharged from you! not from one any sooner  
than another!  
O death! O for all that, I am yet of you unseen this hour  
with  
irrepressible love,  
Walking New England, a friend, a traveler,  
Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer ripples on  
Paumanok's sands,  
Crossing the prairies, dwelling again in Chicago, dwelling  
in every town,  
Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,  
Listening to orators and oratresses in public halls,  
Of and through the States as during life, each man and  
woman my neighbor,  
The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as near  
to him and her,  
The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet with  
any of them,  
Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river, yet in my  
house of adobie,  
Yet returning eastward, yet in the Seaside State or in  
Maryland,

Yet Kanadian cheerily braving the winter, the snow and ice  
welcome to me,  
Yet a true son either of Maine or of the Granite State, or  
the  
Narragansett Bay State, or the Empire State,  
Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet  
welcoming every  
new brother,  
Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the hour  
they  
unite with the old ones,  
Coming among the new ones myself to be their companion and  
equal,  
coming personally to you now,  
Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

15

With me with firm holding, yet haste, haste on.  
For your life adhere to me,  
(I may have to be persuaded many times before I consent to  
give  
myself really to you, but what of that?  
Must not Nature be persuaded many times?)

No dainty dolce affettuoso I,  
Bearded, sun-burnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have  
arrived,  
To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes of the  
universe,  
For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.

16

On my way a moment I pause,  
Here for you! and here for America!  
Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the  
States I  
harbinger glad and sublime,  
And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of the red  
aborigines.



The red aborigines,  
Leaving natural breaths, sounds of rain and winds, calls as  
of birds  
and animals in the woods, syllabled to us for names,  
Okonee, Koosa, Ottawa, Monongahela, Sauk, Natchez,  
Chattahoochee,  
Kaqueta, Oronoco,  
Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla,  
Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charging  
the  
water and the land with names.

17

Expanding and swift, henceforth,  
Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick and  
audacious,  
A world primal again, vistas of glory incessant and  
branching,  
A new race dominating previous ones and grander far, with  
new contests,  
New politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions  
and arts.

These, my voice announcing—I will sleep no more but arise,  
You oceans that have been calm within me! how I feel you,  
fathomless, stirring, preparing unprecedented waves and  
storms.

18

See, steamers steaming through my poems,  
See, in my poems immigrants continually coming and landing,  
See, in arriere, the wigwam, the trail, the hunter's hut,  
the flat-boat,  
the maize-leaf, the claim, the rude fence, and the  
backwoods village,  
See, on the one side the Western Sea and on the other the  
Eastern Sea,  
how they advance and retreat upon my poems as upon their

own shores,  
See, pastures and forests in my poems—see, animals wild and tame—see,  
beyond the Kaw, countless herds of buffalo feeding on short curly grass,  
See, in my poems, cities, solid, vast, inland, with paved streets,  
with iron and stone edifices, ceaseless vehicles, and commerce,  
See, the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press—see, the electric  
telegraph stretching across the continent,  
See, through Atlantica's depths pulses American Europe reaching,  
pulses of Europe duly return'd,  
See, the strong and quick locomotive as it departs,  
panting, blowing  
the steam-whistle,  
See, ploughmen ploughing farms—see, miners digging mines—  
see,  
the numberless factories,  
See, mechanics busy at their benches with tools—see from among them  
superior judges, philosophers, Presidents, emerge, drest in working dresses,  
See, lounging through the shops and fields of the States,  
me  
well-belov'd, close-held by day and night,  
Hear the loud echoes of my songs there—read the hints come at last.

19

O camerado close! O you and me at last, and us two only.  
O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!  
O something ecstatic and undemonstrable! O music wild!  
O now I triumph—and you shall also;  
O hand in hand—O wholesome pleasure—O one more desirer and lover!  
O to haste firm holding—to haste, haste on with me.





# BOOK III

Song of Myself

1  
I celebrate myself, and sing myself,  
And what I assume you shall assume,  
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,  
I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer  
grass.

My tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil,  
this air,  
Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and  
their  
parents the same,  
I, now thirty-seven years old in perfect health begin,  
Hoping to cease not till death.

Creeds and schools in abeyance,  
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never  
forgotten,  
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every  
hazard,  
Nature without check with original energy.

2  
Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are  
crowded with  
perfumes,  
I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it,  
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not  
let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the  
distillation, it is odorless,  
It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it,  
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised  
and naked,  
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,  
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk-thread,  
crotch and vine,  
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart,  
the passing  
of blood and air through my lungs,  
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore  
and  
dark-color'd sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,

The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the  
eddies of  
the wind,  
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of  
arms,  
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple  
boughs wag,  
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along  
the fields  
and hill-sides,  
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me  
rising  
from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? have you reckon'd  
the earth much?  
Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?  
Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the  
origin of  
all poems,  
You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are  
millions  
of suns left,)  
You shall no longer take things at second or third hand,  
nor look through  
the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books,  
You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things

From me,

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your  
self.

3

I have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the  
beginning and the end,

But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,  
Nor any more youth or age than there is now,  
And will never be any more perfection than there is now,  
Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,  
Always the procreant urge of the world.

Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always  
substance and

increase, always sex,

Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a  
breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail, learn'd and unlearn'd feel that  
it is so.

Sure as the most certain sure, plumb in the uprights, well  
entretied, braced in the beams,

Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,

I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that  
is not my soul.

Lack one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,  
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes  
age,

Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while



they  
discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man  
hearty and clean,  
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none  
shall be  
less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied—I see, dance, laugh, sing;  
As the hugging and loving bed-fellow sleeps at my side  
through the night,  
and withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread,  
Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the  
house with  
their plenty,  
Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream  
at my eyes,  
That they turn from gazing after and down the road,  
And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,  
Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and  
which is ahead?

4  
Trippers and askers surround me,  
People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the  
ward and  
city I live in, or the nation,  
The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies,  
authors old and new,  
My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues,  
The real or fancied indifference of some man or woman I  
love,  
The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing  
or loss  
or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations,  
Battles, the horrors of fratricidal war, the fever of  
doubtful news,  
the fitful events;

Ihese come to me days and nights and go from me again,  
But they are not the Me myself.

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,  
Stands amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary,  
Looks down, is erect, or bends an arm on an impalpable  
certain rest,  
Looking with side-curved head curious what will come next,  
Both in and out of the game and watching and wondering at  
it.

Backward I see in my own days where I sweated through fog  
with  
linguists and contenders,  
I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

5  
I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase  
itself to you,  
And you must not be abased to the other.

Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your  
throat,  
Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or  
lecture, not  
even the best,  
Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning,  
How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd  
over upon me,  
And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your  
tongue  
to my bare-stript heart,  
And reach'd till you felt my beard, and reach'd till you  
held my feet.

Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge  
that pass

all the argument of the earth,  
And I know that the hand of God is the promise of my own,  
And I know that the spirit of God is the brother of my own,  
And that all the men ever born are also my brothers, and  
the women  
my sisters and lovers,  
And that a kelson of the creation is love,  
And limitless are leaves stiff or drooping in the fields,  
And brown ants in the little wells beneath them,  
And mossy scabs of the worm fence, heap'd stones, elder,  
mullein and  
poke-weed.

6

A child said What is the grass? fetching it to me with full  
hands;  
How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any  
more than he.

I guess it must be the flag of my disposition, out of  
hopeful green  
stuff woven.

Or I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord,  
A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt,  
Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we  
may see  
and remark, and say Whose?

Or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe  
of the vegetation.

Or I guess it is a uniform hieroglyphic,  
And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow  
zones,  
Growing among black folks as among white,  
Kanuck, Tuckahoe, Congressman, Cuff, I give them the same,  
I  
receive them the same.

And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves.

Tenderly will I use you curling grass,  
It may be you transpire from the breasts of young men,  
It may be if I had known them I would have loved them,  
It may be you are from old people, or from offspring taken  
soon out  
of their mothers' laps,  
And here you are the mothers' laps.

This grass is very dark to be from the white heads of old  
mothers,  
Darker than the colorless beards of old men,  
Dark to come from under the faint red roofs of mouths.

O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues,  
And I perceive they do not come from the roofs of mouths  
for nothing.

I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men  
and women,  
And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring  
taken  
soon out of their laps.

What do you think has become of the young and old men?  
And what do you think has become of the women and children?

They are alive and well somewhere,  
The smallest sprout shows there is really no death,  
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does not  
wait at the  
end to arrest it,  
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,  
And to die is different from what any one supposed, and  
luckier.

Has any one supposed it lucky to be born?  
I hasten to inform him or her it is just as lucky to die,  
and I know it.

I pass death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd  
babe, and  
am not contain'd between my hat and boots,  
And peruse manifold objects, no two alike and every one  
good,  
The earth good and the stars good, and their adjuncts all  
good.

I am not an earth nor an adjunct of an earth,  
I am the mate and companion of people, all just as immortal  
and  
fathomless as myself,  
(They do not know how immortal, but I know.)

Every kind for itself and its own, for me mine male and  
female,  
For me those that have been boys and that love women,  
For me the man that is proud and feels how it stings to be  
slighted,  
For me the sweet-heart and the old maid, for me mothers and  
the  
mothers of mothers,  
For me lips that have smiled, eyes that have shed tears,  
For me children and the begetters of children.

Undrape! you are not guilty to me, nor stale nor discarded,  
I see through the broadcloth and gingham whether or no,  
And am around, tenacious, acquisitive, tireless, and cannot  
be shaken away.

The little one sleeps in its cradle,  
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush

away flies  
with my hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the  
bushy hill,  
I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,  
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where  
the pistol  
has fallen.

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles,  
talk of  
the promenaders,  
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb,  
the  
clank of the shod horses on the granite floor,  
The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-  
balls,  
The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs,  
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne  
to the hospital,  
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and  
fall,  
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly  
working his  
passage to the centre of the crowd,  
The impassive stones that receive and return so many  
echoes,  
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck  
or in fits,  
What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry home  
and  
give birth to babes,  
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here,  
what howls  
restrain'd by decorum,  
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made,

acceptances,  
rejections with convex lips,  
I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come and I  
depart.

9

The big doors of the country barn stand open and ready,  
The dried grass of the harvest-time loads the slow-drawn  
wagon,  
The clear light plays on the brown gray and green  
intertinged,  
The armfuls are pack'd to the sagging mow.

I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load,  
I felt its soft jolts, one leg reclined on the other,  
I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and  
timothy,  
And roll head over heels and tangle my hair full of wisps.

10

Alone far in the wilds and mountains I hunt,  
Wandering amazed at my own lightness and glee,  
In the late afternoon choosing a safe spot to pass the  
night,  
Kindling a fire and broiling the fresh-kill'd game,  
Falling asleep on the gather'd leaves with my dog and gun  
by my side.

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the  
sparkle and scud,  
My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout  
joyously from the deck.

The boatmen and clam-diggers arose early and stopt for me,  
I tuck'd my trowser-ends in my boots and went and had a  
good time;  
You should have been with us that day round the chowder-  
kettle.

I saw the marriage of the trapper in the open air in the  
far west,  
the bride was a red girl,  
Her father and his friends sat near cross-legged and dumbly  
smoking,  
they had moccasins to their feet and large thick blankets  
hanging from their shoulders,  
On a bank lounged the trapper, he was drest mostly in  
skins, his luxuriant  
beard and curls protected his neck, he held his bride by  
the hand,  
She had long eyelashes, her head was bare, her coarse  
straight locks  
descended upon her voluptuous limbs and reach'd to her  
feet.

The runaway slave came to my house and stopt outside,  
I heard his motions crackling the twigs of the woodpile,  
Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy  
and weak,  
And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured  
him,  
And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and  
bruise'd feet,  
And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him  
some  
coarse clean clothes,  
And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his  
awkwardness,  
And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and  
ankles;  
He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and  
pass'd north,  
I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the  
corner.

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,  
Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly;



Twenty-eight years of womanly life and all so lonesome.

She owns the fine house by the rise of the bank,  
She hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window.

Which of the young men does she like the best?  
Ah the homeliest of them is beautiful to her.

Where are you off to, lady? for I see you,  
You splash in the water there, yet stay stock still in your room.

Dancing and laughing along the beach came the twenty-ninth bather,  
The rest did not see her, but she saw them and loved them.

The beards of the young men glisten'd with wet, it ran from their long hair,  
Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

An unseen hand also pass'd over their bodies,  
It descended tremblingly from their temples and ribs.

The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the sun,  
they do not ask who seizes fast to them,  
They do not know who puffs and declines with pendant and bending arch,  
They do not think whom they souse with spray.

12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his knife  
at the stall in the market,  
I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and breakdown.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,

Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is a  
great heat in  
the fire.

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their movements,  
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their  
massive arms,  
Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand so  
sure,  
They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the  
block swags  
underneath on its tied-over chain,  
The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard,  
steady and  
tall he stands pois'd on one leg on the string-piece,  
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and  
loosens over  
his hip-band,  
His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of  
his hat  
away from his forehead,  
The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the  
black of  
his polish'd and perfect limbs.

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not  
stop there,  
I go with the team also.

In me the caresser of life wherever moving, backward as  
well as  
forward sluing,  
To niches aside and junior bending, not a person or object  
missing,  
Absorbing all to myself and for this song.

Oxen that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy  
shade, what  
is that you express in your eyes?  
It seems to me more than all the print I have read in my  
life.

My tread scares the wood-drake and wood-duck on my distant  
and  
day-long ramble,  
They rise together, they slowly circle around.

I believe in those wing'd purposes,  
And acknowledge red, yellow, white, playing within me,  
And consider green and violet and the tufted crown  
intentional,  
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not  
something else,  
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet  
trills pretty well to me,  
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

14

The wild gander leads his flock through the cool night,  
Ya-honk he says, and sounds it down to me like an  
invitation,  
The pert may suppose it meaningless, but I listening close,  
Find its purpose and place up there toward the wintry sky.

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-  
sill, the  
chickadee, the prairie-dog,  
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats,  
The brood of the turkey-hen and she with her half-spread  
wings,  
I see in them and myself the same old law.

The press of my foot to the earth springs a hundred  
affections,  
They scorn the best I can do to relate them.

I am enamour'd of growing out-doors,  
Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or  
woods,  
Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of  
axes and  
mauls, and the drivers of horses,  
I can eat and sleep with them week in and week out.

What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me,  
Me going in for my chances, spending for vast returns,  
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will  
take me,  
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,  
Scattering it freely forever.

15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,  
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his  
foreplane  
whistles its wild ascending lisp,  
The married and unmarried children ride home to their  
Thanksgiving dinner,  
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong  
arm,  
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon  
are ready,  
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,  
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,  
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the  
big wheel,  
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day  
loafe and  
looks at the oats and rye,  
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd  
case,  
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his  
mother's  
bed-room;)

The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his  
case,  
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the  
manuscript;  
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,  
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;  
The quadron girl is sold at the auction-stand, the  
drunkard nods by  
the bar-room stove,  
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels  
his beat,  
the gate-keeper marks who pass,  
The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him,  
though I do  
not know him;)  
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the  
race,  
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean  
on their  
rifles, some sit on logs,  
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position,  
levels his piece;  
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or  
levee,  
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer  
views them  
from his saddle,  
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for  
their  
partners, the dancers bow to each other,  
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks  
to the  
musical rain,  
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the  
Huron,  
The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering  
moccasins and  
bead-bags for sale,  
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with

half-shut  
eyes bent sideways,  
As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is  
thrown for  
the shore-going passengers,  
The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister  
winds it  
off in a ball, and stops now and then for the knots,  
The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago  
borne  
her first child,  
The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine  
or in the  
factory or mill,  
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the  
reporter's lead  
flies swiftly over the note-book, the sign-painter is  
lettering  
with blue and gold,  
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts  
at his  
desk, the shoemaker waxes his thread,  
The conductor beats time for the band and all the  
performers follow him,  
The child is baptized, the convert is making his first  
professions,  
The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how  
the white  
sails sparkle!)

The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would  
stray,  
The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser  
higgling  
about the odd cent;)

The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the  
clock  
moves slowly,  
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd  
lips,

The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her  
tipsy and  
pimpled neck,  
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and  
wink to  
each other,  
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;)  
The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by  
the great  
Secretaries,  
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with  
twined arms,  
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut  
in the hold,  
The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his  
cattle,  
As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives  
notice by the  
jingling of loose change,  
The floor-men are laying the floor, the tanners are tanning  
the  
roof, the masons are calling for mortar,  
In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the  
laborers;  
Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is  
gather'd, it  
is the fourth of Seventh-month, (what salutes of cannon and  
small arms!)

Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the mower  
mows,  
and the winter-grain falls in the ground;  
Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the  
hole in  
the frozen surface,  
The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter  
strikes deep  
with his axe,  
Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-wood or  
pecan-trees,

Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or  
through  
those drain'd by the Tennessee, or through those of the  
Arkansas,  
Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche or  
Altamahaw,  
Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-  
grandsons  
around them,  
In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and  
trappers after  
their day's sport,  
The city sleeps and the country sleeps,  
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their  
time,  
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband  
sleeps by his wife;  
And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,  
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,  
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.

16

I am of old and young, of the foolish as much as the wise,  
Regardless of others, ever regardful of others,  
Maternal as well as paternal, a child as well as a man,  
Stuff'd with the stuff that is coarse and stuff'd with the  
stuff  
that is fine,  
One of the Nation of many nations, the smallest the same  
and the  
largest the same,  
A Southerner soon as a Northerner, a planter nonchalant and  
hospitable down by the Oconee I live,  
A Yankee bound my own way ready for trade, my joints the  
limberest  
joints on earth and the sternest joints on earth,  
A Kentuckian walking the vale of the Elkhorn in my deer-  
skin  
leggings, a Louisianian or Georgian,



A boatman over lakes or bays or along coasts, a Hoosier,  
Badger, Buckeye;  
At home on Kanadian snow-shoes or up in the bush, or with  
fishermen  
off Newfoundland,  
At home in the fleet of ice-boats, sailing with the rest  
and tacking,  
At home on the hills of Vermont or in the woods of Maine,  
or the  
Texan ranch,  
Comrade of Californians, comrade of free North-Westerners,  
(loving  
their big proportions,)  
Comrade of raftsmen and coalmen, comrade of all who shake  
hands  
and welcome to drink and meat,  
A learner with the simplest, a teacher of the  
thoughtfullest,  
A novice beginning yet experient of myriads of seasons,  
Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion,  
A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker,  
Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest.

I resist any thing better than my own diversity,  
Breathe the air but leave plenty after me,  
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

(The moth and the fish-eggs are in their place,  
The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see are in  
their place,  
The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its  
place.)

17

These are really the thoughts of all men in all ages and  
lands, they  
are not original with me,  
If they are not yours as much as mine they are nothing, or  
next to nothing,

If they are not the riddle and the untying of the riddle  
they are nothing,  
If they are not just as close as they are distant they are  
nothing.

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the  
water is,  
This the common air that bathes the globe.

18  
With music strong I come, with my cornets and my drums,  
I play not marches for accepted victors only, I play  
marches for  
conquer'd and slain persons.

Have you heard that it was good to gain the day?  
I also say it is good to fall, battles are lost in the same  
spirit  
in which they are won.

I beat and pound for the dead,  
I blow through my embouchures my loudest and gayest for  
them.

Vivas to those who have fail'd!  
And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!  
And to those themselves who sank in the sea!  
And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome  
heroes!  
And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest  
heroes known!

19  
This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural  
hunger,  
It is for the wicked just same as the righteous, I make  
appointments  
with all,  
I will not have a single person slighted or left away,

The kept-woman, sponger, thief, are hereby invited,  
The heavy-lipp'd slave is invited, the venerealee is  
invited;

There shall be no difference between them and the rest.

This is the press of a bashful hand, this the float and  
odor of hair,

This the touch of my lips to yours, this the murmur of  
yearning,

This the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face,  
This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

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.

Do you take it I would astonish?

Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart  
twittering  
through the woods?

Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,

I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

20

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;

How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat?

What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you?

All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own,  
Else it were time lost listening to me.

I do not snivel that snivel the world over,

That months are vacuums and the ground but wallow and  
filth.

Whimpering and truckling fold with powders for invalids,  
conformity  
goes to the fourth-remov'd,  
I wear my hat as I please indoors or out.

Why should I pray? why should I venerate and be  
ceremonious?

Having pried through the strata, analyzed to a hair,  
counsel'd with  
doctors and calculated close,  
I find no sweeter fat than sticks to my own bones.

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-  
corn less,  
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

I know I am solid and sound,  
To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually  
flow,  
All are written to me, and I must get what the writing  
means.

I know I am deathless,  
I know this orbit of mine cannot be swept by a carpenter's  
compass,  
I know I shall not pass like a child's carlacue cut with a  
burnt  
stick at night.

I know I am august,  
I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be  
understood,  
I see that the elementary laws never apologize,  
(I reckon I behave no prouder than the level I plant my  
house by,  
after all.)

I exist as I am, that is enough,

If no other in the world be aware I sit content,  
And if each and all be aware I sit content.

One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that  
is myself,  
And whether I come to my own to-day or in ten thousand or  
ten  
million years,  
I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I  
can wait.

My foothold is tenon'd and mortis'd in granite,  
I laugh at what you call dissolution,  
And I know the amplitude of time.

21

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,  
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell  
are with me,  
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I  
translate  
into new tongue.

I am the poet of the woman the same as the man,  
And I say it is as great to be a woman as to be a man,  
And I say there is nothing greater than the mother of men.

I chant the chant of dilation or pride,  
We have had ducking and deprecating about enough,  
I show that size is only development.

Have you outstript the rest? are you the President?  
It is a trifle, they will more than arrive there every one,  
and  
still pass on.

I am he that walks with the tender and growing night,  
I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night.

Press close bare-bosom'd night-press close magnetic  
nourishing night!  
Night of south winds-night of the large few stars!  
Still nodding night-mad naked summer night.

Smile O voluptuous cool-breath'd earth!  
Earth of the slumbering and liquid trees!  
Earth of departed sunset-earth of the mountains misty-topt!  
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged  
with blue!  
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!  
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for  
my sake!  
Far-swooping elbow'd earth-rich apple-blossom'd earth!  
Smile, for your lover comes.

Prodigal, you have given me love-therefore I to you give  
love!  
O unspeakable passionate love.

22

You sea! I resign myself to you also-I guess what you mean,  
I behold from the beach your crooked fingers,  
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me,  
We must have a turn together, I undress, hurry me out of  
sight of the land,  
Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse,  
Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you.

Sea of stretch'd ground-swells,  
Sea breathing broad and convulsive breaths,  
Sea of the brine of life and of unshovell'd yet always-  
ready graves,  
Howler and scooper of storms, capricious and dainty sea,  
I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of all  
phases.

Partaker of influx and efflux I, extoller of hate and  
conciliation,

Extoller of amies and those that sleep in each others' arms.

I am he attesting sympathy,  
(Shall I make my list of things in the house and skip the house that supports them?)

I am not the poet of goodness only, I do not decline to be the poet of wickedness also.

What blurt is this about virtue and about vice?  
Evil propels me and reform of evil propels me, I stand indifferent,  
My gait is no fault-finder's or rejecter's gait,  
I moisten the roots of all that has grown.

Did you fear some scrofula out of the unflagging pregnancy?  
Did you guess the celestial laws are yet to be work'd over and rectified?

I find one side a balance and the antipedal side a balance,  
Soft doctrine as steady help as stable doctrine,  
Thoughts and deeds of the present our rouse and early start.

This minute that comes to me over the past decillions,  
There is no better than it and now.

What behaved well in the past or behaves well to-day is not such wonder,  
The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean man or an infidel.

23

Endless unfolding of words of ages!  
And mine a word of the modern, the word En-Masse.

A word of the faith that never balks,  
Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept  
Time absolutely.

It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes  
all,  
That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all.

I accept Reality and dare not question it,  
Materialism first and last imbuing.

Hurrah for positive science! long live exact demonstration!  
Fetch stonecrop mixt with cedar and branches of lilac,  
This is the lexicographer, this the chemist, this made a  
grammar of  
the old cartouches,  
These mariners put the ship through dangerous unknown seas.  
This is the geologist, this works with the scalper, and  
this is a  
mathematician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honors always!  
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,  
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

Less the reminders of properties told my words,  
And more the reminders they of life untold, and of freedom  
and extrication,  
And make short account of neuters and geldings, and favor  
men and  
women fully equipt,  
And beat the gong of revolt, and stop with fugitives and  
them that  
plot and conspire.

24

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,  
Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,  
No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart



from them,  
No more modest than immodest.

Unscrew the locks from the doors!  
Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!

Whoever degrades another degrades me,  
And whatever is done or said returns at last to me.

Through me the afflatus surging and surging, through me the  
current  
and index.

I speak the pass-word primeval, I give the sign of  
democracy,  
By God! I will accept nothing which all cannot have their  
counterpart of on the same terms.

Through me many long dumb voices,  
Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners and  
slaves,  
Voices of the diseases'd and despairing and of thieves and  
dwarfs,  
Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,  
And of the threads that connect the stars, and of wombs and  
of the  
father-stuff,  
And of the rights of them the others are down upon,  
Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,  
Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,  
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the  
veil,  
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

I do not press my fingers across my mouth,  
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and  
heart,

Copulation is no more rank to me than death is.

I believe in the flesh and the appetites,  
Seeing, hearing, feeling, are miracles, and each part and  
tag of me  
is a miracle.

Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I  
touch or am  
touch'd from,  
The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer,  
This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds.

If I worship one thing more than another it shall be the  
spread of  
my own body, or any part of it,  
Translucent mould of me it shall be you!  
Shaded ledges and rests it shall be you!  
Firm masculine colter it shall be you!  
Whatever goes to the tilth of me it shall be you!  
You my rich blood! your milky stream pale strippings of my  
life!  
Breast that presses against other breasts it shall be you!  
My brain it shall be your occult convolutions!  
Root of wash'd sweet-flag! timorous pond-snipe! nest of  
guarded  
duplicate eggs! it shall be you!  
Mix'd tussled hay of head, beard, brawn, it shall be you!  
Trickling sap of maple, fibre of manly wheat, it shall be  
you!  
Sun so generous it shall be you!  
Vapors lighting and shading my face it shall be you!  
You sweaty brooks and dews it shall be you!  
Winds whose soft-tickling genitals rub against me it shall  
be you!  
Broad muscular fields, branches of live oak, loving lounge  
in my  
winding paths, it shall be you!  
Hands I have taken, face I have kiss'd, mortal I have ever

touch'd,  
it shall be you.

I dote on myself, there is that lot of me and all so  
luscious,  
Each moment and whatever happens thrills me with joy,  
I cannot tell how my ankles bend, nor whence the cause of  
my faintest wish,  
Nor the cause of the friendship I emit, nor the cause of  
the  
friendship I take again.

That I walk up my stoop, I pause to consider if it really  
be,  
A morning-glory at my window satisfies me more than the  
metaphysics  
of books.

To behold the day-break!  
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,  
The air tastes good to my palate.

Hefts of the moving world at innocent gambols silently  
rising  
freshly exuding,  
Scooting obliquely high and low.

Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs,  
Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven.

The earth by the sky staid with, the daily close of their  
junction,  
The heav'd challenge from the east that moment over my  
head,  
The mocking taunt, See then whether you shall be master!

25

Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would kill  
me,

If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me.

We also ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun,  
We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the  
daybreak.

My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach,  
With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes  
of worlds.

Speech is the twin of my vision, it is unequal to measure  
itself,  
It provokes me forever, it says sarcastically,  
Walt you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?

Come now I will not be tantalized, you conceive too much of  
articulation,  
Do you not know O speech how the buds beneath you are  
folded?

Waiting in gloom, protected by frost,  
The dirt receding before my prophetic screams,  
I underlying causes to balance them at last,  
My knowledge my live parts, it keeping tally with the  
meaning of all things,  
Happiness, (which whoever hears me let him or her set out  
in search  
of this day.)

My final merit I refuse you, I refuse putting from me what  
I really am,  
Encompass worlds, but never try to encompass me,  
I crowd your sleekest and best by simply looking toward  
you.

Writing and talk do not prove me,  
I carry the plenum of proof and every thing else in my  
face,  
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.

Now I will do nothing but listen,  
To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds  
contribute toward it.

I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing wheat, gossip  
of flames,  
clack of sticks cooking my meals,  
I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice,  
I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or  
following,  
Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city, sounds of  
the day and night,  
Talkative young ones to those that like them, the loud  
laugh of  
work-people at their meals,  
The angry base of disjointed friendship, the faint tones of  
the sick,  
The judge with hands tight to the desk, his pallid lips  
pronouncing  
a death-sentence,  
The heave'e'yo of stevedores unlading ships by the wharves,  
the  
refrain of the anchor-lifters,  
The ring of alarm-bells, the cry of fire, the whirr of  
swift-streaking  
engines and hose-carts with premonitory tinkles and color'd  
lights,  
The steam-whistle, the solid roll of the train of  
approaching cars,  
The slow march play'd at the head of the association  
marching two and two,  
(They go to guard some corpse, the flag-tops are draped  
with black muslin.)

I hear the violoncello, ('tis the young man's heart's  
complaint,)  
I hear the key'd cornet, it glides quickly in through my  
ears,

It shakes mad-sweet pangs through my belly and breast.

I hear the chorus, it is a grand opera,  
Ah this indeed is music--this suits me.

A tenor large and fresh as the creation fills me,  
The orbic flex of his mouth is pouring and filling me full.

I hear the train'd soprano (what work with hers is this?)  
The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies,  
It wrenches such ardors from me I did not know I possess'd  
them,  
It sails me, I dab with bare feet, they are lick'd by the  
indolent waves,  
I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath,  
Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in  
fakes of death,  
At length let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles,  
And that we call Being.

27

To be in any form, what is that?  
(Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back  
thither,)  
If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous  
shell were enough.

Mine is no callous shell,  
I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or  
stop,  
They seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.

I merely stir, press, feel with my fingers, and am happy,  
To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as I  
can stand.

28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,  
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins,

Teacherous tip of me reaching and crowding to help them,  
My flesh and blood playing out lightning to strike what is  
hardly  
different from myself,  
On all sides prurient provokers stiffening my limbs,  
Straining the udder of my heart for its withheld drip,  
Behaving licentious toward me, taking no denial,  
Depriving me of my best as for a purpose,  
Unbuttoning my clothes, holding me by the bare waist,  
Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and  
pasture-fields,  
Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,  
They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the  
edges of me,  
No consideration, no regard for my draining strength or my  
anger,  
Fetching the rest of the herd around to enjoy them a while,  
Then all uniting to stand on a headland and worry me.

The sentries desert every other part of me,  
They have left me helpless to a red marauder,  
They all come to the headland to witness and assist against  
me.

I am given up by traitors,  
I talk wildly, I have lost my wits, I and nobody else am  
the  
greatest traitor,  
I went myself first to the headland, my own hands carried  
me there.

You villain touch! what are you doing? my breath is tight  
in its throat,  
Unclench your floodgates, you are too much for me.

29

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd  
touch!  
Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of perpetual  
loan,

Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and  
vital,

Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

30

All truths wait in all things,  
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,  
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon,  
The insignificant is as big to me as any,  
(What is less or more than a touch?)

Logic and sermons never convince,  
The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul.

(Only what proves itself to every man and woman is so,  
Only what nobody denies is so.)

A minute and a drop of me settle my brain,  
I believe the soggy clods shall become lovers and lamps,  
And a compend of compends is the meat of a man or woman,  
And a summit and flower there is the feeling they have for  
each other,  
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until  
it  
becomes omnific,  
And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.

31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey work  
of the stars,  
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand,  
and the egg  
of the wren,  
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'oeuvre for the highest,



And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors of  
heaven,  
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn all  
machinery,  
And the cow crunching with depress'd head surpasses any  
statue,  
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of  
infidels.

I find I incorporate gneiss, coal, long-threaded moss,  
fruits,  
grains, esculent roots,  
And am stucco'd with quadrupeds and birds all over,  
And have distanced what is behind me for good reasons,  
But call any thing back again when I desire it.

In vain the speeding or shyness,  
In vain the plutonic rocks send their old heat against my  
approach,  
In vain the mastodon retreats beneath its own powder'd  
bones,  
In vain objects stand leagues off and assume manifold  
shapes,  
In vain the ocean settling in hollows and the great  
monsters lying low,  
In vain the buzzard houses herself with the sky,  
In vain the snake slides through the creepers and logs,  
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,  
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,  
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of  
the cliff.

32

I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so  
placid and  
self-contain'd,  
I stand and look at them long and long.

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,

They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,  
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,  
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania  
of  
owning things,  
Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived  
thousands of  
years ago,  
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

So they show their relations to me and I accept them,  
They bring me tokens of myself, they evince them plainly in  
their  
possession.

I wonder where they get those tokens,  
Did I pass that way huge times ago and negligently drop  
them?

Myself moving forward then and now and forever,  
Gathering and showing more always and with velocity,  
Infinite and omnigenous, and the like of these among them,  
Not too exclusive toward the reachers of my remembrancers,  
Picking out here one that I love, and now go with him on  
brotherly terms.

A gigantic beauty of a stallion, fresh and responsive to my  
caresses,  
Head high in the forehead, wide between the ears,  
Limbs glossy and supple, tail dusting the ground,  
Eyes full of sparkling wickedness, ears finely cut,  
flexibly moving.

His nostrils dilate as my heels embrace him,  
His well-built limbs tremble with pleasure as we race  
around and return.

I but use you a minute, then I resign you, stallion,  
Why do I need your paces when I myself out-gallop them?

Even as I stand or sit passing faster than you.

33

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at,  
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,  
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,  
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars of  
the morning.

My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,  
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents,  
I am afoot with my vision.

By the city's quadrangular houses—in log huts, camping with  
lumber-men,  
Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and  
rivulet bed,  
Weeding my onion-patch or hosing rows of carrots and  
parsnips,  
crossing savannas, trailing in forests,  
Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new  
purchase,  
Scorch'd ankle-deep by the hot sand, hauling my boat down  
the  
shallow river,  
Where the panther walks to and fro on a limb overhead,  
where the  
buck turns furiously at the hunter,  
Where the rattlesnake suns his flabby length on a rock,  
where the  
otter is feeding on fish,  
Where the alligator in his tough pimples sleeps by the  
bayou,  
Where the black bear is searching for roots or honey, where  
the  
beaver pats the mud with his paddle-shaped tail;  
Over the growing sugar, over the yellow-flower'd cotton  
plant, over  
the rice in its low moist field,

Over the sharp-peak'd farm house, with its scallop'd scum  
and  
slender shoots from the gutters,  
Over the western persimmon, over the long-leav'd corn, over  
the  
delicate blue-flower flax,  
Over the white and brown buckwheat, a hummer and buzzer  
there with  
the rest,  
Over the dusky green of the rye as it ripples and shades in  
the breeze;  
Scaling mountains, pulling myself cautiously up, holding on  
by low  
scragged limbs,  
Walking the path worn in the grass and beat through the  
leaves of the brush,  
Where the quail is whistling betwixt the woods and the  
wheat-lot,  
Where the bat flies in the Seventh-month eve, where the  
great  
goldbug drops through the dark,  
Where the brook puts out of the roots of the old tree and  
flows to  
the meadow,  
Where cattle stand and shake away flies with the tremulous  
shuddering of their hides,  
Where the cheese-cloth hangs in the kitchen, where andirons  
straddle  
the hearth-slab, where cobwebs fall in festoons from the  
rafters;  
Where trip-hammers crash, where the press is whirling its  
cylinders,  
Wherever the human heart beats with terrible throes under  
its ribs,  
Where the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating  
in it  
myself and looking composedly down,)  
Where the life-car is drawn on the slip-noose, where the  
heat

hatches pale-green eggs in the dented sand,  
Where the she-whale swims with her calf and never forsakes  
it,  
Where the steam-ship trails hind-ways its long pennant of  
smoke,  
Where the fin of the shark cuts like a black chip out of  
the water,  
Where the half-burn'd brig is riding on unknown currents,  
Where shells grow to her slimy deck, where the dead are  
corrupting below;  
Where the dense-starr'd flag is borne at the head of the  
regiments,  
Approaching Manhattan up by the long-stretching island,  
Under Niagara, the cataract falling like a veil over my  
countenance,  
Upon a door-step, upon the horse-block of hard wood  
outside,  
Upon the race-course, or enjoying picnics or jigs or a good  
game of  
base-ball,  
At he-festivals, with blackguard gibes, ironical license,  
bull-dances, drinking, laughter,  
At the cider-mill tasting the sweets of the brown mash,  
sucking the  
juice through a straw,  
At apple-peelings wanting kisses for all the red fruit I  
find,  
At musters, beach-parties, friendly bees, huskings, house-  
raisings;  
Where the mocking-bird sounds his delicious gurgles,  
cackles,  
screams, weeps,  
Where the hay-rick stands in the barn-yard, where the dry-  
stalks are  
scatter'd, where the brood-cow waits in the hovel,  
Where the bull advances to do his masculine work, where the  
stud to  
the mare, where the cock is treading the hen,  
Where the heifers browse, where geese nip their food with

short jerks,  
Where sun-down shadows lengthen over the limitless and  
lonesome prairie,  
Where herds of buffalo make a crawling spread of the square  
miles  
far and near,  
Where the humming-bird shimmers, where the neck of the  
long-lived  
swan is curving and winding,  
Where the laughing-gull scoots by the shore, where she  
laughs her  
near-human laugh,  
Where bee-hives range on a gray bench in the garden half  
hid by the  
high weeds,  
Where band-neck'd partridges roost in a ring on the ground  
with  
their heads out,  
Where burial coaches enter the arch'd gates of a cemetery,  
Where winter wolves bark amid wastes of snow and icicled  
trees,  
Where the yellow-crown'd heron comes to the edge of the  
marsh at  
night and feeds upon small crabs,  
Where the splash of swimmers and divers cools the warm  
noon,  
Where the katy-did works her chromatic reed on the walnut-  
tree over  
the well,  
Through patches of citrons and cucumbers with silver-wired  
leaves,  
Through the salt-lick or orange glade, or under conical  
firs,  
Through the gymnasium, through the curtain'd saloon,  
through the  
office or public hall;  
Pleas'd with the native and pleas'd with the foreign,  
pleas'd with  
the new and old,

Pleas'd with the homely woman as well as the handsome,  
Pleas'd with the quakeress as she puts off her bonnet and  
talks melodiously,  
Pleas'd with the tune of the choir of the whitewash'd  
church,  
Pleas'd with the earnest words of the sweating Methodist  
preacher,  
impress'd seriously at the camp-meeting;  
Looking in at the shop-windows of Broadway the whole  
forenoon,  
flatting the flesh of my nose on the thick plate glass,  
Wandering the same afternoon with my face turn'd up to the  
clouds,  
or down a lane or along the beach,  
My right and left arms round the sides of two friends, and  
I in the middle;  
Coming home with the silent and dark-cheek'd bush-boy,  
(behind me  
he rides at the drape of the day,)  
Far from the settlements studying the print of animals'  
feet, or the  
moccasin print,  
By the cot in the hospital reaching lemonade to a feverish  
patient,  
Nigh the coffin'd corpse when all is still, examining with  
a candle;  
Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure,  
Hurrying with the modern crowd as eager and fickle as any,  
Hot toward one I hate, ready in my madness to knife him,  
Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from  
me a long while,  
Walking the old hills of Judaea with the beautiful gentle  
God by my side,  
Speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the  
stars,  
Speeding amid the seven satellites and the broad ring, and  
the  
diameter of eighty thousand miles,  
Speeding with tail'd meteors, throwing fire-balls like the

rest,  
Carrying the crescent child that carries its own full  
mother in its belly,  
Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning,  
Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing,  
I tread day and night such roads.

I visit the orchards of spheres and look at the product,  
And look at quintillions ripen'd and look at quintillions  
green.

I fly those flights of a fluid and swallowing soul,  
My course runs below the soundings of plummets.

I help myself to material and immaterial,  
No guard can shut me off, no law prevent me.

I anchor my ship for a little while only,  
My messengers continually cruise away or bring their  
returns to me.

I go hunting polar furs and the seal, leaping chasms with a  
pike-pointed staff, clinging to topples of brittle and  
blue.

I ascend to the foretruck,  
I take my place late at night in the crow's-nest,  
We sail the arctic sea, it is plenty light enough,  
Through the clear atmosphere I stretch around on the  
wonderful beauty,  
The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them, the  
scenery is  
plain in all directions,  
The white-topt mountains show in the distance, I fling out  
my  
fancies toward them,  
We are approaching some great battle-field in which we are  
soon to  
be engaged,



We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment, we pass  
with still  
feet and caution,  
Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and ruin'd  
city,  
The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the living  
cities  
of the globe.

I am a free companion, I bivouac by invading watchfires,  
I turn the bridegroom out of bed and stay with the bride  
myself,  
I tighten her all night to my thighs and lips.

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of  
the stairs,  
They fetch my man's body up dripping and drown'd.

I understand the large hearts of heroes,  
The courage of present times and all times,  
How the skipper saw the crowded and rudderless wreck of the  
steamship, and Death chasing it up and down the storm,  
How he knuckled tight and gave not back an inch, and was  
faithful of  
days and faithful of nights,  
And chalk'd in large letters on a board, Be of good cheer,  
we will  
not desert you;  
How he follow'd with them and tack'd with them three days  
and  
would not give it up,  
How he saved the drifting company at last,  
How the lank loose-gown'd women look'd when boated from the  
side of their prepared graves,  
How the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and  
the  
sharp-lipp'd unshaved men;  
All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it  
becomes mine,

I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there.

The disdain and calmness of martyrs,  
The mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry  
wood, her  
children gazing on,  
The hounded slave that flags in the race, leans by the  
fence,  
blowing, cover'd with sweat,  
The twinges that sting like needles his legs and neck, the  
murderous  
buckshot and the bullets,  
All these I feel or am.

I am the hounded slave, I wince at the bite of the dogs,  
Hell and despair are upon me, crack and again crack the  
marksmen,  
I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd  
with the  
ooze of my skin,  
I fall on the weeds and stones,  
The riders spur their unwilling horses, haul close,  
Taunt my dizzy ears and beat me violently over the head  
with whip-stocks.

Agonies are one of my changes of garments,  
I do not ask the wounded person how he feels, I myself  
become the  
wounded person,  
My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and  
observe.

I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken,  
Tumbling walls buried me in their debris,  
Heat and smoke I inspired, I heard the yelling shouts of my  
comrades,  
I heard the distant click of their picks and shovels,  
They have clear'd the beams away, they tenderly lift me  
forth.

I lie in the night air in my red shirt, the pervading hush  
is for my sake,  
Painless after all I lie exhausted but not so unhappy,  
White and beautiful are the faces around me, the heads are  
bared  
of their fire-caps,  
The kneeling crowd fades with the light of the torches.

Distant and dead resuscitate,  
They show as the dial or move as the hands of me, I am the  
clock myself.

I am an old artillerist, I tell of my fort's bombardment,  
I am there again.

Again the long roll of the drummers,  
Again the attacking cannon, mortars,  
Again to my listening ears the cannon responsive.

I take part, I see and hear the whole,  
The cries, curses, roar, the plaudits for well-aim'd shots,  
The ambulanza slowly passing trailing its red drip,  
Workmen searching after damages, making indispensable  
repairs,  
The fall of grenades through the rent roof, the fan-shaped  
explosion,  
The whizz of limbs, heads, stone, wood, iron, high in the  
air.

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general, he furiously  
waves  
with his hand,  
He gasps through the clot Mind not me—mind—the  
entrenchments.

Now I tell what I knew in Texas in my early youth,  
(I tell not the fall of Alamo,

Not one escaped to tell the fall of Alamo,  
The hundred and fifty are dumb yet at Alamo,) 'Tis the tale of the murder in cold blood of four hundred and twelve young men.

Retreating they had form'd in a hollow square with their baggage for breastworks,  
Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemies, nine times their number, was the price they took in advance,  
Their colonel was wounded and their ammunition gone,  
They treated for an honorable capitulation, receiv'd writing and seal, gave up their arms and march'd back prisoners of war.

They were the glory of the race of rangers,  
Matchless with horse, rifle, song, supper, courtship,  
Large, turbulent, generous, handsome, proud, and affectionate,  
Bearded, sunburnt, drest in the free costume of hunters,  
Not a single one over thirty years of age.

The second First-day morning they were brought out in squads and massacred, it was beautiful early summer,  
The work commenced about five o'clock and was over by eight.

None obey'd the command to kneel,  
Some made a mad and helpless rush, some stood stark and straight,  
A few fell at once, shot in the temple or heart, the living and dead lay together,  
The maim'd and mangled dug in the dirt, the new-comers saw them there,  
Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,

These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the  
blunts of muskets,  
A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till  
two more  
came to release him,  
The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.

At eleven o'clock began the burning of the bodies;  
That is the tale of the murder of the four hundred and  
twelve young men.

35

Would you hear of an old-time sea-fight?  
Would you learn who won by the light of the moon and stars?  
List to the yarn, as my grandmother's father the sailor  
told it to me.

Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you, (said he,)  
His was the surly English pluck, and there is no tougher or  
truer,  
and never was, and never will be;  
Along the lower'd eve he came horribly raking us.

We closed with him, the yards entangled, the cannon  
touch'd,  
My captain lash'd fast with his own hands.

We had receiv'd some eighteen pound shots under the water,  
On our lower-gun-deck two large pieces had burst at the  
first fire,  
killing all around and blowing up overhead.

Fighting at sun-down, fighting at dark,  
Ten o'clock at night, the full moon well up, our leaks on  
the gain,  
and five feet of water reported,  
The master-at-arms loosing the prisoners confined in the  
after-hold  
to give them a chance for themselves.

The transit to and from the magazine is now stopt by the sentinels,  
They see so many strange faces they do not know whom to trust.

Our frigate takes fire,  
The other asks if we demand quarter?  
If our colors are struck and the fighting done?

Now I laugh content, for I hear the voice of my little captain,  
We have not struck, he composedly cries, we have just begun our part  
of the fighting.

Only three guns are in use,  
One is directed by the captain himself against the enemy's main-mast,  
Two well serv'd with grape and canister silence his musketry and  
clear his decks.

The tops alone second the fire of this little battery,  
especially  
the main-top,  
They hold out bravely during the whole of the action.

Not a moment's cease,  
The leaks gain fast on the pumps, the fire eats toward the powder-magazine.

One of the pumps has been shot away, it is generally thought we are sinking.

Serene stands the little captain,  
He is not hurried, his voice is neither high nor low,  
His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns.

l toward twelve there in the beams of the moon they surrender  
to us.

36

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,  
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness,  
Our vessel riddled and slowly sinking, preparations to pass  
to the  
one we have conquer'd,  
The captain on the quarter-deck coldly giving his orders  
through a  
countenance white as a sheet,  
Near by the corpse of the child that serv'd in the cabin,  
The dead face of an old salt with long white hair and  
carefully  
curl'd whiskers,  
The flames spite of all that can be done flickering aloft  
and below,  
The husky voices of the two or three officers yet fit for  
duty,  
Formless stacks of bodies and bodies by themselves, dabs of  
flesh  
upon the masts and spars,  
Cut of cordage, dangle of rigging, slight shock of the  
soothe of waves,  
Black and impassive guns, litter of powder-parcels, strong  
scent,  
A few large stars overhead, silent and mournful shining,  
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and  
fields by  
the shore, death-messages given in charge to survivors,  
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his  
saw,  
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream,  
and long,  
dull, tapering groan,  
These so, these irretrievable.

37

You laggards there on guard! look to your arms!  
In at the conquer'd doors they crowd! I am possess'd!  
Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,  
See myself in prison shaped like another man,  
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and  
keep watch,  
It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

Not a mutineer walks handcuff'd to jail but I am handcuff'd  
to him  
and walk by his side,  
(I am less the jolly one there, and more the silent one  
with sweat  
on my twitching lips.)

Not a youngster is taken for larceny but I go up too, and  
am tried  
and sentenced.

Not a cholera patient lies at the last gasp but I also lie  
at the last gasp,  
My face is ash-color'd, my sinews gnarl, away from me  
people retreat.

Askers embody themselves in me and I am embodied in them,  
I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg.

38

Enough! enough! enough!  
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back!  
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers,  
dreams, gaping,  
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults!  
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of  
the



bludgeons and hammers!

That I could look with a separate look on my own  
crucifixion and  
bloody crowning.

I remember now,  
I resume the overstaid fraction,  
The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it,  
or to any graves,  
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an  
average  
unending procession,  
Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,  
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,  
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of  
years.

Eleves, I salute you! come forward!  
Continue your annotations, continue your questionings.

39

The friendly and flowing savage, who is he?  
Is he waiting for civilization, or past it and mastering  
it?

Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors? is he Kanadian?  
Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon,  
California?  
The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor from the  
sea?

Wherever he goes men and women accept and desire him,  
They desire he should like them, touch them, speak to them,  
stay with them.

Behavior lawless as snow-flakes, words simple as grass,  
uncomb'd

head, laughter, and naivete,  
Slow-stepping feet, common features, common modes and  
emanations,  
They descend in new forms from the tips of his fingers,  
They are wafted with the odor of his body or breath, they  
fly out of  
the glance of his eyes.

40

Flaunt of the sunshine I need not your bask—lie over!  
You light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also.

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,  
Say, old top-knot, what do you want?

Man or woman, I might tell how I like you, but cannot,  
And might tell what it is in me and what it is in you, but  
cannot,  
And might tell that pining I have, that pulse of my nights  
and days.

Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity,  
When I give I give myself.

You there, impotent, loose in the knees,  
Open your scarf'd chops till I blow grit within you,  
Spread your palms and lift the flaps of your pockets,  
I am not to be denied, I compel, I have stores plenty and  
to spare,  
And any thing I have I bestow.

I do not ask who you are, that is not important to me,  
You can do nothing and be nothing but what I will infold  
you.

To cotton-field drudge or cleaner of privies I lean,  
On his right cheek I put the family kiss,  
And in my soul I swear I never will deny him.

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler babes.

(This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics.)

To any one dying, thither I speed and twist the knob of the door.

Turn the bed-clothes toward the foot of the bed,  
Let the physician and the priest go home.

I seize the descending man and raise him with resistless will,  
O despairer, here is my neck,  
By God, you shall not go down! hang your whole weight upon me.

I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up,  
Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force,  
Lovers of me, bafflers of graves.

Sleep—I and they keep guard all night,  
Not doubt, not decease shall dare to lay finger upon you,  
I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to myself,  
And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell you is so.

41

I am he bringing help for the sick as they pant on their backs,  
And for strong upright men I bring yet more needed help.

I heard what was said of the universe,  
Heard it and heard it of several thousand years;  
It is middling well as far as it goes—but is that all?

Magnifying and applying come I,  
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,  
Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,  
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his

grandson,  
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha,  
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the  
crucifix  
engraved,  
With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and  
image,  
Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent  
more,  
Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,  
(They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to  
rise and fly  
and sing for themselves,)  
Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in  
myself,  
bestowing them freely on each man and woman I see,  
Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,  
Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up  
sleeves  
driving the mallet and chisel,  
Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of  
smoke or  
a hair on the back of my hand just as curious as any  
revelation,  
Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no  
less to me  
than the gods of the antique wars,  
Minding their voices peal through the crash of destruction,  
Their brawny limbs passing safe over charr'd laths, their  
white  
foreheads whole and unhurt out of the flames;  
By the mechanic's wife with her babe at her nipple  
interceding for  
every person born,  
Three scythes at harvest whizzing in a row from three lusty  
angels  
with shirts bagg'd out at their waists,  
The snag-tooth'd hostler with red hair redeeming sins past  
and to come,

Selling all he possesses, traveling on foot to fee lawyers  
for his  
brother and sit by him while he is tried for forgery;  
What was strewn in the amplest strewing the square rod  
about me, and  
not filling the square rod then,  
The bull and the bug never worshipp'd half enough,  
Dung and dirt more admirable than was dream'd,  
The supernatural of no account, myself waiting my time to  
be one of  
the supremes,  
The day getting ready for me when I shall do as much good  
as the  
best, and be as prodigious;  
By my life-lumps! becoming already a creator,  
Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the  
shadows.

A call in the midst of the crowd,  
My own voice, orotund sweeping and final.

Come my children,  
Come my boys and girls, my women, household and intimates,  
Now the performer launches his nerve, he has pass'd his  
prelude on  
the reeds within.

Easily written loose-finger'd chords—I feel the thrum of  
your  
climax and close.

My head slues round on my neck,  
Music rolls, but not from the organ,  
Folks are around me, but they are no household of mine.

Ever the hard unsunk ground,  
Ever the eaters and drinkers, ever the upward and downward  
sun, ever  
the air and the ceaseless tides,  
Ever myself and my neighbors, refreshing, wicked, real,  
Ever the old inexplicable query, ever that thorn'd thumb,  
that  
breath of itches and thirsts,  
Ever the vexer's hoot! hoot! till we find where the sly one  
hides  
and bring him forth,  
Ever love, ever the sobbing liquid of life,  
Ever the bandage under the chin, ever the trestles of  
death.

Here and there with dimes on the eyes walking,  
To feed the greed of the belly the brains liberally  
spooning,  
Tickets buying, taking, selling, but in to the feast never  
once going,  
Many sweating, ploughing, thrashing, and then the chaff for

payment  
receiving,  
A few idly owning, and they the wheat continually claiming.

This is the city and I am one of the citizens,  
Whatever interests the rest interests me, politics, wars,  
markets,  
newspapers, schools,  
The mayor and councils, banks, tariffs, steamships,  
factories,  
stocks, stores, real estate and personal estate.

The little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars  
and tail'd coats  
I am aware who they are, (they are positively not worms or  
fleas,)  
I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest and  
shallowest  
is deathless with me,  
What I do and say the same waits for them,  
Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders in  
them.

I know perfectly well my own egotism,  
Know my omnivorous lines and must not write any less,  
And would fetch you whoever you are flush with myself.

Not words of routine this song of mine,  
But abruptly to question, to leap beyond yet nearer bring;  
This printed and bound book—but the printer and the  
printing-office boy?  
The well-taken photographs—but your wife or friend close  
and solid  
in your arms?  
The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in her  
turrets—but  
the pluck of the captain and engineers?  
In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture—but the  
host and

hostess, and the look out of their eyes?  
The sky up there—yet here or next door, or across the way?  
The saints and sages in history—but you yourself?  
Sermons, creeds, theology—but the fathomless human brain,  
And what is reason? and what is love? and what is life?

43

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,  
My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,  
Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between  
ancient and modern,  
Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five  
thousand years,  
Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting  
the sun,  
Making a fetich of the first rock or stump, powowing with  
sticks in  
the circle of obis,  
Helping the llama or brahmin as he trims the lamps of the  
idols,  
Dancing yet through the streets in a phallic procession,  
rapt and  
austere in the woods a gymnosophist,  
Drinking mead from the skull-cap, to Shastas and Vedas  
admirant,  
minding the Koran,  
Walking the teokallis, spotted with gore from the stone and  
knife,  
beating the serpent-skin drum,  
Accepting the Gospels, accepting him that was crucified,  
knowing  
assuredly that he is divine,  
To the mass kneeling or the puritan's prayer rising, or  
sitting  
patiently in a pew,  
Ranting and frothing in my insane crisis, or waiting dead-  
like till  
my spirit arouses me,  
Looking forth on pavement and land, or outside of pavement



and land,  
Belonging to the winders of the circuit of circuits.

One of that centripetal and centrifugal gang I turn and  
talk like  
man leaving charges before a journey.

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,  
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd,  
atheistical,  
I know every one of you, I know the sea of torment, doubt,  
despair  
and unbelief.

How the flukes splash!  
How they contort rapid as lightning, with spasms and spouts  
of blood!

Be at peace bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers,  
I take my place among you as much as among any,  
The past is the push of you, me, all, precisely the same,  
And what is yet untried and afterward is for you, me, all,  
precisely  
the same.

I do not know what is untried and afterward,  
But I know it will in its turn prove sufficient, and cannot  
fail.

Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is  
consider'd, not  
single one can it fall.

It cannot fall the young man who died and was buried,  
Nor the young woman who died and was put by his side,  
Nor the little child that peep'd in at the door, and then  
drew back  
and was never seen again,  
Nor the old man who has lived without purpose, and feels it

with  
bitterness worse than gall,  
Nor him in the poor house tubercled by rum and the bad  
disorder,  
Nor the numberless slaughter'd and wreck'd, nor the brutish  
koboo  
call'd the ordure of humanity,  
Nor the sacs merely floating with open mouths for food to  
slip in,  
Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of  
the earth,  
Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads of  
myriads  
that inhabit them,  
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

44

It is time to explain myself—let us stand up.

What is known I strip away,  
I launch all men and women forward with me into the  
Unknown.

The clock indicates the moment—but what does eternity  
indicate?

We have thus far exhausted trillions of winters and  
summers,  
There are trillions ahead, and trillions ahead of them.

Births have brought us richness and variety,  
And other births will bring us richness and variety.

I do not call one greater and one smaller,  
That which fills its period and place is equal to any.

Were mankind murderous or jealous upon you, my brother, my  
sister?

I am sorry for you, they are not murderous or jealous upon

me,  
All has been gentle with me, I keep no account with  
lamentation,  
(What have I to do with lamentation?)  
  
I am an acme of things accomplish'd, and I an encloser of  
things to be.  
  
My feet strike an apex of the apices of the stairs,  
On every step bunches of ages, and larger bunches between  
the steps,  
All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.  
  
Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,  
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even  
there,  
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic  
mist,  
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.  
  
Long I was hugg'd close—long and long.  
  
Immense have been the preparations for me,  
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.  
  
Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful  
boatmen,  
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,  
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.  
  
Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,  
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.  
  
For it the nebula cohered to an orb,  
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,  
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,  
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and  
deposited it  
with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and  
delight me,

Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

45

O span of youth! ever-push'd elasticity!

O manhood, balanced, florid and full.

My lovers suffocate me,

Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,

Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked  
to me at night,

Crying by day, Ahoy! from the rocks of the river, swinging  
and

chirping over my head,

Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled  
underbrush,

Lighting on every moment of my life,

Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,

Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving  
them to be mine.

Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace of  
dying days!

Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges  
what grows

after and out of itself,

And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled  
systems,

And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but  
the rim of

the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,

Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,  
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,  
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest  
inside them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,  
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their  
surfaces,  
were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would  
not avail the long run,  
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,  
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and  
farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic  
leagues, do  
not hazard the span or make it impatient,  
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,  
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,  
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect  
terms,  
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be  
there.

46

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never  
measured and  
never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)  
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut  
from the woods,  
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,  
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,  
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,

But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,  
My left hand hooking you round the waist,  
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the  
public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,  
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not  
know,  
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds dear son, and I will mine, and let us  
hasten forth,  
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of  
your hand  
on my hip,  
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,  
For after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the  
crowded heaven,  
And I said to my spirit When we become the enfolders of  
those orbs,  
and the pleasure and knowledge of every thing in them,  
shall we  
be fill'd and satisfied then?  
And my spirit said No, we but level that lift to pass and  
continue beyond.

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,  
I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for  
yourself.

Sit a while dear son,  
Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,

But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet  
clothes, I kiss you  
with a good-by kiss and open the gate for your egress  
hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,  
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,  
You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of  
every  
moment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,  
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,  
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me,  
shout,  
and laughingly dash with your hair.

47

I am the teacher of athletes,  
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the  
width of my own,  
He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the  
teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through derived  
power,  
but in his own right,  
Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,  
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,  
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than sharp  
steel cuts,  
First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to  
sail a  
skiff, to sing a song or play on the banjo,  
Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with small-  
pox over  
all latherers,  
And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?  
I follow you whoever you are from the present hour,  
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the  
time while  
I wait for a boat,  
(It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the  
tongue of you,  
Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd.)

I swear I will never again mention love or death inside a  
house,  
And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to  
him or her  
who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-  
shore,  
The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of  
waves key,  
The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,  
But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,  
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take  
me with  
him all day,  
The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound  
of my voice,  
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and  
seamen  
and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,  
On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and I do  
not fail them,



On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that know  
me seek me.  
My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone  
in his blanket,  
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his  
wagon,  
The young mother and old mother comprehend me,  
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget  
where they are,  
They and all would resume what I have told them.

48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,  
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,  
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his  
own  
funeral drest in his shroud,  
And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of  
the earth,  
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod  
confounds the  
learning of all times,  
And there is no trade or employment but the young man  
following it  
may become a hero,  
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the  
wheel'd universe,  
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and  
composed  
before a million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,  
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God  
and  
about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God

not in the least,

Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?

I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,

In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,

I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd

by God's name,

And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,

Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to

try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes,

I see the elder-hand pressing receiving supporting,

I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,

And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that does not

offend me,

I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,

I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons.

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,

(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,

O suns—O grass of graves—O perpetual transfers and

promotions,  
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing?

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,  
Of the moon that descends the steep of the southing  
twilight,  
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk-toss on the black stems that  
decay  
in the muck,  
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,  
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams  
reflected,  
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring  
great or small.

50  
There is that in me—I do not know what it is—but I know it  
is in me.

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body becomes,  
I sleep—I sleep long.

I do not know it—it is without name—it is a word unsaid,  
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,  
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me.

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my  
brothers and sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?  
It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is  
eternal  
life—it is Happiness.

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them.  
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?  
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,  
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a  
minute longer.)

Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the  
door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through  
with his supper?  
Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too  
late?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of  
my gab  
and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,  
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the  
shadow'd wilds,  
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I

love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.



# BOOK IV. CHILDREN OF ADAM

## To the Garden the World

To the garden the world anew ascending,  
Potent mates, daughters, sons, preluding,  
The love, the life of their bodies, meaning and being,  
Curious here behold my resurrection after slumber,  
The revolving cycles in their wide sweep having brought me  
again,  
Amorous, mature, all beautiful to me, all wondrous,  
My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through  
them, for  
reasons, most wondrous,  
Existing I peer and penetrate still,  
Content with the present, content with the past,  
By my side or back of me Eve following,  
Or in front, and I following her just the same.

# From Pent-Up Aching Rivers

From pent-up aching rivers,  
From that of myself without which I were nothing,  
From what I am determin'd to make illustrious, even if I  
stand sole  
among men,  
From my own voice resonant, singing the phallus,  
Singing the song of procreation,  
Singing the need of superb children and therein superb  
grown people,  
Singing the muscular urge and the blending,  
Singing the bedfellow's song, (O resistless yearning!  
O for any and each the body correlative attracting!  
O for you whoever you are your correlative body! O it, more  
than all  
else, you delighting!)

From the hungry gnaw that eats me night and day,  
From native moments, from bashful pains, singing them,  
Seeking something yet unfound though I have diligently  
sought it  
many a long year,  
Singing the true song of the soul fitful at random,  
Renascent with grossest Nature or among animals,  
Of that, of them and what goes with them my poems  
informing,  
Of the smell of apples and lemons, of the pairing of birds,  
Of the wet of woods, of the lapping of waves,  
Of the mad pushes of waves upon the land, I them chanting,  
The overture lightly sounding, the strain anticipating,  
The welcome nearness, the sight of the perfect body,  
The swimmer swimming naked in the bath, or motionless on  
his back  
lying and floating,  
The female form approaching, I pensive, love-flesh  
tremulous aching,



The divine list for myself or you or for any one making,  
The face, the limbs, the index from head to foot, and what  
it arouses,  
The mystic deliria, the madness amorous, the utter  
abandonment,  
(Hark close and still what I now whisper to you,  
I love you, O you entirely possess me,  
O that you and I escape from the rest and go utterly off,  
free and lawless,  
Two hawks in the air, two fishes swimming in the sea not  
more  
lawless than we;)  
The furious storm through me careering, I passionately  
trembling.  
The oath of the inseparableness of two together, of the  
woman that  
loves me and whom I love more than my life, that oath  
swearing,  
(O I willingly stake all for you,  
O let me be lost if it must be so!  
O you and I! what is it to us what the rest do or think?  
What is all else to us? only that we enjoy each other and  
exhaust  
each other if it must be so;)  
From the master, the pilot I yield the vessel to,  
The general commanding me, commanding all, from him  
permission taking,  
From time the programme hastening, (I have loiter'd too  
long as it is,)  
From sex, from the warp and from the woof,  
From privacy, from frequent repinings alone,  
From plenty of persons near and yet the right person not  
near,  
From the soft sliding of hands over me and thrusting of  
fingers  
through my hair and beard,  
From the long sustain'd kiss upon the mouth or bosom,  
From the close pressure that makes me or any man drunk,  
fainting

with excess,  
From what the divine husband knows, from the work of  
fatherhood,  
From exultation, victory and relief, from the bedfellow's  
embrace in  
the night,  
From the act-poems of eyes, hands, hips and bosoms,  
From the cling of the trembling arm,  
From the bending curve and the clinch,  
From side by side the pliant coverlet off-throwing,  
From the one so unwilling to have me leave, and me just as  
unwilling  
to leave,  
(Yet a moment O tender waiter, and I return,)  
From the hour of shining stars and dropping dews,  
From the night a moment I emerging flitting out,  
Celebrate you act divine and you children prepared for,  
And you stalwart loins.

# I Sing the Body Electric

1

I sing the body electric,  
The armies of those I love engirth me and I engirth them,  
They will not let me off till I go with them, respond to  
them,  
And discurrpt them, and charge them full with the charge  
of the soul.

Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies  
conceal themselves?  
And if those who defile the living are as bad as they who  
defile the dead?  
And if the body does not do fully as much as the soul?  
And if the body were not the soul, what is the soul?

2

The love of the body of man or woman balks account, the  
body itself  
balks account,  
That of the male is perfect, and that of the female is  
perfect.

The expression of the face balks account,  
But the expression of a well-made man appears not only in  
his face,  
It is in his limbs and joints also, it is curiously in the  
joints of  
his hips and wrists,  
It is in his walk, the carriage of his neck, the flex of  
his waist  
and knees, dress does not hide him,  
The strong sweet quality he has strikes through the cotton  
and broadcloth,  
To see him pass conveys as much as the best poem, perhaps

more,  
You linger to see his back, and the back of his neck and  
shoulder-side.

The sprawl and fulness of babes, the bosoms and heads of  
women, the  
folds of their dress, their style as we pass in the street,  
the  
contour of their shape downwards,  
The swimmer naked in the swimming-bath, seen as he swims  
through  
the transparent green-shine, or lies with his face up and  
rolls  
silently to and from the heave of the water,  
The bending forward and backward of rowers in row-boats,  
the  
horse-man in his saddle,  
Girls, mothers, house-keepers, in all their performances,  
The group of laborers seated at noon-time with their open  
dinner-kettles, and their wives waiting,  
The female soothing a child, the farmer's daughter in the  
garden or  
cow-yard,  
The young fellow hosing corn, the sleigh-driver driving his  
six  
horses through the crowd,  
The wrestle of wrestlers, two apprentice-boys, quite grown,  
lusty,  
good-natured, native-born, out on the vacant lot at sundown  
after work,  
The coats and caps thrown down, the embrace of love and  
resistance,  
The upper-hold and under-hold, the hair rumpled over and  
blinding the eyes;  
The march of firemen in their own costumes, the play of  
masculine  
muscle through clean-setting trowsers and waist-straps,  
The slow return from the fire, the pause when the bell  
strikes

suddenly again, and the listening on the alert,  
The natural, perfect, varied attitudes, the bent head, the  
curv'd  
neck and the counting;  
Such-like I love—I loosen myself, pass freely, am at the  
mother's  
breast with the little child,  
Swim with the swimmers, wrestle with wrestlers, march in  
line with  
the firemen, and pause, listen, count.

3  
I knew a man, a common farmer, the father of five sons,  
And in them the fathers of sons, and in them the fathers of  
sons.

This man was a wonderful vigor, calmness, beauty of person,  
The shape of his head, the pale yellow and white of his  
hair and  
beard, the immeasurable meaning of his black eyes, the  
richness  
and breadth of his manners,  
These I used to go and visit him to see, he was wise also,  
He was six feet tall, he was over eighty years old, his  
sons were  
massive, clean, bearded, tan-faced, handsome,  
They and his daughters loved him, all who saw him loved  
him,  
They did not love him by allowance, they loved him with  
personal love,  
He drank water only, the blood show'd like scarlet through  
the  
clear-brown skin of his face,  
He was a frequent gunner and fisher, he sail'd his boat  
himself, he  
had a fine one presented to him by a ship-joiner, he had  
fowling-pieces presented to him by men that loved him,  
When he went with his five sons and many grand-sons to hunt  
or fish,

you would pick him out as the most beautiful and vigorous  
of the gang,  
You would wish long and long to be with him, you would wish  
to sit  
by him in the boat that you and he might touch each other.

4

I have perceiv'd that to be with those I like is enough,  
To stop in company with the rest at evening is enough,  
To be surrounded by beautiful, curious, breathing, laughing  
flesh is enough,  
To pass among them or touch any one, or rest my arm ever so  
lightly  
round his or her neck for a moment, what is this then?  
I do not ask any more delight, I swim in it as in a sea.

There is something in staying close to men and women and  
looking  
on them, and in the contact and odor of them, that pleases  
the soul well,  
All things please the soul, but these please the soul well.

5

This is the female form,  
A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot,  
It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction,  
I am drawn by its breath as if I were no more than a  
helpless vapor,  
all falls aside but myself and it,  
Books, art, religion, time, the visible and solid earth,  
and what  
was expected of heaven or fear'd of hell, are now consumed,  
Mad filaments, ungovernable shoots play out of it, the  
response  
likewise ungovernable,  
Hair, bosom, hips, bend of legs, negligent falling hands  
all  
diffused, mine too diffused,  
Ebb stung by the flow and flow stung by the ebb, love-flesh

swelling  
and deliciously aching,  
Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering  
jelly of  
love, white-blow and delirious nice,  
Bridegroom night of love working surely and softly into the  
prostrate dawn,  
Undulating into the willing and yielding day,  
Lost in the cleave of the clasping and sweet-flesh'd day.

This the nucleus—after the child is born of woman, man is  
born of woman,  
This the bath of birth, this the merge of small and large,  
and the  
outlet again.

Be not ashamed women, your privilege encloses the rest, and  
is the  
exit of the rest,  
You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the  
soul.

The female contains all qualities and tempers them,  
She is in her place and moves with perfect balance,  
She is all things duly veil'd, she is both passive and  
active,  
She is to conceive daughters as well as sons, and sons as  
well as daughters.

As I see my soul reflected in Nature,  
As I see through a mist, One with inexpressible  
completeness,  
sanity, beauty,  
See the bent head and arms folded over the breast, the  
Female I see.

6  
The male is not less the soul nor more, he too is in his  
place,

He too is all qualities, he is action and power,  
The flush of the known universe is in him,  
Scorn becomes him well, and appetite and defiance become  
him well,  
The wildest largest passions, bliss that is utmost, sorrow  
that is  
utmost become him well, pride is for him,  
The full-spread pride of man is calming and excellent to  
the soul,  
Knowledge becomes him, he likes it always, he brings every  
thing to  
the test of himself,  
Whatever the survey, whatever the sea and the sail he  
strikes  
soundings at last only here,  
(Where else does he strike soundings except here?)

The man's body is sacred and the woman's body is sacred,  
No matter who it is, it is sacred—is it the meanest one in  
the  
laborers' gang?  
Is it one of the dull-faced immigrants just landed on the  
wharf?  
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 a procession with measured and perfect  
motion.)

Do you know so much yourself that you call the meanest  
ignorant?  
Do you suppose you have a right to a good sight, and he or  
she has  
no right to a sight?  
Do you think matter has cohered together from its diffuse  
float, and



the soil is on the surface, and water runs and vegetation  
sprouts,  
For you only, and not for him and her?

7

A man's body at auction,  
(For before the war I often go to the slave-mart and watch  
the sale,)  
I help the auctioneer, the sloven does not half know his  
business.

Gentlemen look on this wonder,  
Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high enough  
for it,  
For it the globe lay preparing quintillions of years  
without one  
animal or plant,  
For it the revolving cycles truly and steadily roll'd.

In this head the all-baffling brain,  
In it and below it the makings of heroes.

Examine these limbs, red, black, or white, they are cunning  
in  
tendon and nerve,  
They shall be stript that you may see them.

Exquisite senses, life-lit eyes, pluck, volition,  
Flakes of breast-muscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh  
not flabby,  
good-sized arms and legs,  
And wonders within there yet.

Within there runs blood,  
The same old blood! the same red-running blood!  
There swells and jets a heart, there all passions, desires,  
reachings, aspirations,  
(Do you think they are not there because they are not  
express'd in

parlors and lecture-rooms?)

This is not only one man, this the father of those who  
shall be  
fathers in their turns,  
In him the start of populous states and rich republics,  
Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments  
and enjoyments.

How do you know who shall come from the offspring of his  
offspring  
through the centuries?  
(Who might you find you have come from yourself, if you  
could trace  
back through the centuries?)

8  
A woman's body at auction,  
She too is not only herself, she is the teeming mother of  
mothers,  
She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to  
the mothers.

Have you ever loved the body of a woman?  
Have you ever loved the body of a man?  
Do you not see that these are exactly the same to all in  
all nations  
and times all over the earth?

If any thing is sacred the human body is sacred,  
And the glory and sweet of a man is the token of manhood  
untainted,  
And in man or woman a clean, strong, firm-fibred body, is  
more  
beautiful than the most beautiful face.

Have you seen the fool that corrupted his own live body? or  
the fool  
that corrupted her own live body?

For they do not conceal themselves, and cannot conceal themselves.

9

O my body! I dare not desert the likes of you in other men  
and  
women, nor the likes of the parts of you,  
I believe the likes of you are to stand or fall with the  
likes of  
the soul, (and that they are the soul,)  
I believe the likes of you shall stand or fall with my  
poems, and  
that they are my poems,  
Man's, woman's, child, youth's, wife's, husband's,  
mother's,  
father's, young man's, young woman's poems,  
Head, neck, hair, ears, drop and tympan of the ears,  
Eyes, eye-fringes, iris of the eye, eyebrows, and the  
waking or  
sleeping of the lids,  
Mouth, tongue, lips, teeth, roof of the mouth, jaws, and  
the jaw-hinges,  
Nose, nostrils of the nose, and the partition,  
Cheeks, temples, forehead, chin, throat, back of the neck,  
neck-slue,  
Strong shoulders, manly beard, scapula, hind-shoulders, and  
the  
ample side-round of the chest,  
Upper-arm, armpit, elbow-socket, lower-arm, arm-sinews,  
arm-bones,  
Wrist and wrist-joints, hand, palm, knuckles, thumb,  
forefinger,  
finger-joints, finger-nails,  
Broad breast-front, curling hair of the breast, breast-  
bone, breast-side,  
Ribs, belly, backbone, joints of the backbone,  
Hips, hip-sockets, hip-strength, inward and outward round,  
man-balls, man-root,  
Strong set of thighs, well carrying the trunk above,

Leg-fibres, knee, knee-pan, upper-leg, under-leg,  
Ankles, instep, foot-ball, toes, toe-joints, the heel;  
All attitudes, all the shapeliness, all the belongings of  
my or your  
body or of any one's body, male or female,  
The lung-sponges, the stomach-sac, the bowels sweet and  
clean,  
The brain in its folds inside the skull-frame,  
Sympathies, heart-valves, palate-valves, sexuality,  
maternity,  
Womanhood, and all that is a woman, and the man that comes  
from woman,  
The womb, the teats, nipples, breast-milk, tears, laughter,  
weeping,  
love-looks, love-perturbations and risings,  
The voice, articulation, language, whispering, shouting  
aloud,  
Food, drink, pulse, digestion, sweat, sleep, walking,  
swimming,  
Poise on the hips, leaping, reclining, embracing, arm-  
curving and tightening,  
The continual changes of the flex of the mouth, and around  
the eyes,  
The skin, the sunburnt shade, freckles, hair,  
The curious sympathy one feels when feeling with the hand  
the naked  
meat of the body,  
The circling rivers the breath, and breathing it in and  
out,  
The beauty of the waist, and thence of the hips, and thence  
downward  
toward the knees,  
The thin red jellies within you or within me, the bones and  
the  
marrow in the bones,  
The exquisite realization of health;  
O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only,  
but of the soul,  
O I say now these are the soul!



# A Woman Waits for Me

A woman waits for me, she contains all, nothing is lacking,  
Yet all were lacking if sex were lacking, or if the  
moisture of the  
right man were lacking.

Sex contains all, bodies, souls,  
Meanings, proofs, purities, delicacies, results,  
promulgations,  
Songs, commands, health, pride, the maternal mystery, the  
seminal milk,  
All hopes, benefactions, bestowals, all the passions,  
loves,  
beauties, delights of the earth,  
All the governments, judges, gods, follow'd persons of the  
earth,  
These are contain'd in sex as parts of itself and  
justifications of itself.

Without shame the man I like knows and avows the  
deliciousness of his sex,  
Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers.

Now I will dismiss myself from impassive women,  
I will go stay with her who waits for me, and with those  
women that  
are warm-blooded and sufficient for me,  
I see that they understand me and do not deny me,  
I see that they are worthy of me, I will be the robust  
husband of  
those women.

They are not one jot less than I am,  
They are tann'd in the face by shining suns and blowing  
winds,

Their flesh has the old divine suppleness and strength,  
They know how to swim, row, ride, wrestle, shoot, run,  
strike,  
retreat, advance, resist, defend themselves,  
They are ultimate in their own right—they are calm, clear,  
well-possess'd of themselves.

I draw you close to me, you women,  
I cannot let you go, I would do you good,  
I am for you, and you are for me, not only for our own  
sake, but for  
others' sakes,  
Envelop'd in you sleep greater heroes and bards,  
They refuse to awake at the touch of any man but me.

It is I, you women, I make my way,  
I am stern, acrid, large, undissuadable, but I love you,  
I do not hurt you any more than is necessary for you,  
I pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these  
States, I  
press with slow rude muscle,  
I brace myself effectually, I listen to no entreaties,  
I dare not withdraw till I deposit what has so long  
accumulated within me.

Through you I drain the pent-up rivers of myself,  
In you I wrap a thousand onward years,  
On you I graft the grafts of the best-beloved of me and  
America,  
The drops I distil upon you shall grow fierce and athletic  
girls,  
new artists, musicians, and singers,  
The babes I beget upon you are to beget babes in their  
turn,  
I shall demand perfect men and women out of my love-  
spendings,  
I shall expect them to interpenetrate with others, as I and  
you  
inter-penetrate now,

I shall count on the fruits of the gushing showers of them,  
as I  
count on the fruits of the gushing showers I give now,  
I shall look for loving crops from the birth, life, death,  
immortality, I plant so lovingly now.



# Spontaneous Me

Spontaneous me, Nature,  
The loving day, the mounting sun, the friend I am happy  
with,  
The arm of my friend hanging idly over my shoulder,  
The hillside whiten'd with blossoms of the mountain ash,  
The same late in autumn, the hues of red, yellow, drab,  
purple, and  
light and dark green,  
The rich coverlet of the grass, animals and birds, the  
private  
untrimm'd bank, the primitive apples, the pebble-stones,  
Beautiful dripping fragments, the negligent list of one  
after  
another as I happen to call them to me or think of them,  
The real poems, (what we call poems being merely pictures,)  
The poems of the privacy of the night, and of men like me,  
This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry, and  
that all  
men carry,  
(Know once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men  
like me, are  
our lusty lurking masculine poems,)  
Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yielding, love-  
climbers,  
and the climbing sap,  
Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of  
love, breasts  
of love, bellies press'd and glued together with love,  
Earth of chaste love, life that is only life after love,  
The body of my love, the body of the woman I love, the body  
of the  
man, the body of the earth,  
Soft forenoon airs that blow from the south-west,  
The hairy wild-bee that murmurs and hankers up and down,

that gripes the  
full-grown lady-flower, curves upon her with amorous firm  
legs, takes  
his will of her, and holds himself tremulous and tight till  
he is  
satisfied;  
The wet of woods through the early hours,  
Two sleepers at night lying close together as they sleep,  
one with  
an arm slanting down across and below the waist of the  
other,  
The smell of apples, aromas from crush'd sage-plant, mint,  
birch-bark,  
The boy's longings, the glow and pressure as he confides to  
me what  
he was dreaming,  
The dead leaf whirling its spiral whirl and falling still  
and  
content to the ground,  
The no-form'd stings that sights, people, objects, sting me  
with,  
The hubb'd sting of myself, stinging me as much as it ever  
can any  
one,  
The sensitive, orbic, underlapp'd brothers, that only  
privileged  
feelers may be intimate where they are,  
The curious roamer the hand roaming all over the body, the  
bashful  
withdrawing of flesh where the fingers soothingly pause and  
edge themselves,  
The limpid liquid within the young man,  
The vex'd corrosion so pensive and so painful,  
The torment, the irritable tide that will not be at rest,  
The like of the same I feel, the like of the same in  
others,  
The young man that flushes and flushes, and the young woman  
that  
flushes and flushes,

The young man that wakes deep at night, the hot hand  
seeking to  
repress what would master him,  
The mystic amorous night, the strange half-welcome pangs,  
visions, sweats,  
The pulse pounding through palms and trembling encircling  
fingers,  
the young man all color'd, red, ashamed, angry;  
The souse upon me of my lover the sea, as I lie willing and  
naked,  
The merriment of the twin babes that crawl over the grass  
in the  
sun, the mother never turning her vigilant eyes from them,  
The walnut-trunk, the walnut-husks, and the ripening or  
ripen'd  
long-round walnuts,  
The continence of vegetables, birds, animals,  
The consequent meanness of me should I skulk or find myself  
indecent,  
while birds and animals never once skulk or find themselves  
indecent,  
The great chastity of paternity, to match the great  
chastity of maternity,  
The oath of procreation I have sworn, my Adamic and fresh  
daughters,  
The greed that eats me day and night with hungry gnaw, till  
I saturate  
what shall produce boys to fill my place when I am through,  
The wholesome relief, repose, content,  
And this bunch pluck'd at random from myself,  
It has done its work—I toss it carelessly to fall where it  
may.



# One Hour to Madness and Joy

One hour to madness and joy! O furious! O confine me not!  
(What is this that frees me so in storms?  
What do my shouts amid lightnings and raging winds mean?)  
O to drink the mystic deliria deeper than any other man!  
O savage and tender achings! (I bequeath them to you my  
children,  
I tell them to you, for reasons, O bridegroom and bride.)

O to be yielded to you whoever you are, and you to be  
yielded to me  
in defiance of the world!  
O to return to Paradise! O bashful and feminine!  
O to draw you to me, to plant on you for the first time the  
lips of  
a determin'd man.

O the puzzle, the thrice-tied knot, the deep and dark pool,  
all  
untied and illumin'd!  
O to speed where there is space enough and air enough at  
last!  
To be absolv'd from previous ties and conventions, I from  
mine and  
you from yours!  
To find a new unthought-of nonchalance with the best of  
Nature!  
To have the gag remov'd from one's mouth!  
To have the feeling to-day or any day I am sufficient as I  
am.

O something unprov'd! something in a trance!  
To escape utterly from others' anchors and holds!  
To drive free! to love free! to dash reckless and  
dangerous!

To court destruction with taunts, with invitations!

To ascend, to leap to the heavens of the love indicated to me!

To rise thither with my inebriate soul!

To be lost if it must be so!

To feed the remainder of life with one hour of fulness and freedom!

With one brief hour of madness and joy.



# Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd

Out of the rolling ocean the crowd came a drop gently to me,

Whispering I love you, before long I die,

I have travel'd a long way merely to look on you to touch you,

For I could not die till I once look'd on you,

For I fear'd I might afterward lose you.

Now we have met, we have look'd, we are safe,

Return in peace to the ocean my love,

I too am part of that ocean my love, we are not so much separated,

Behold the great rondure, the cohesion of all, how perfect!

But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us,

As for an hour carrying us diverse, yet cannot carry us diverse forever;

Be not impatient—a little space—know you I salute the air, the

ocean and the land,

Every day at sundown for your dear sake my love.



# Ages and Ages Returning at Intervals

Ages and ages returning at intervals,  
Undestroy'd, wandering immortal,  
Lusty, phallic, with the potent original loins, perfectly  
sweet,  
I, chanter of Adamic songs,  
Through the new garden the West, the great cities calling,  
Deliriate, thus prelude what is generated, offering these,  
offering myself,  
Bathing myself, bathing my songs in Sex,  
Offspring of my loins.

# We Two, How Long We Were Fool'd

We two, how long we were fool'd,  
Now transmuted, we swiftly escape as Nature escapes,  
We are Nature, long have we been absent, but now we return,  
We become plants, trunks, foliage, roots, bark,  
We are bedded in the ground, we are rocks,  
We are oaks, we grow in the openings side by side,  
We browse, we are two among the wild herds spontaneous as  
any,  
We are two fishes swimming in the sea together,  
We are what locust blossoms are, we drop scent around lanes  
mornings  
and evenings,  
We are also the coarse smut of beasts, vegetables,  
minerals,  
We are two predatory hawks, we soar above and look down,  
We are two resplendent suns, we it is who balance ourselves  
orbic  
and stellar, we are as two comets,  
We prowl fang'd and four-footed in the woods, we spring on  
prey,  
We are two clouds forenoons and afternoons driving  
overhead,  
We are seas mingling, we are two of those cheerful waves  
rolling  
over each other and interwetting each other,  
We are what the atmosphere is, transparent, receptive,  
pervious, impervious,  
We are snow, rain, cold, darkness, we are each product and  
influence  
of the globe,  
We have circled and circled till we have arrived home  
again, wetwo,

We have voided all but freedom and all but our own joy.

# O Hymen! O Hymeneee!

O hymen! O hymeneee! why do you tantalize me thus?

O why sting me for a swift moment only?

Why can you not continue? O why do you now cease?

Is it because if you continued beyond the swift moment you  
would

soon certainly kill me?

# I Am He That Aches with Love

I am he that aches with amorous love;  
Does the earth gravitate? does not all matter, aching,  
attract all matter?  
So the body of me to all I meet or know.

# Native Moments

Native moments—when you come upon me—ah you are here now,  
Give me now libidinous joys only,  
Give me the drench of my passions, give me life coarse and  
rank,  
To-day I go consort with Nature's darlings, to-night too,  
I am for those who believe in loose delights, I share the  
midnight  
orgies of young men,  
I dance with the dancers and drink with the drinkers,  
The echoes ring with our indecent calls, I pick out some  
low person  
for my dearest friend,  
He shall be lawless, rude, illiterate, he shall be one  
condemn'd by  
others for deeds done,  
I will play a part no longer, why should I exile myself  
from my companions?  
O you shunn'd persons, I at least do not shun you,  
I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,  
I will be more to you than to any of the rest.

# Once I Pass'd Through a Populous City

Once I pass'd through a populous city imprinting my brain  
for future  
use with its shows, architecture, customs, traditions,  
Yet now of all that city I remember only a woman I casually  
met  
there who detain'd me for love of me,  
Day by day and night by night we were together—all else has  
long  
been forgotten by me,  
I remember I say only that woman who passionately clung to  
me,  
Again we wander, we love, we separate again,  
Again she holds me by the hand, I must not go,  
I see her close beside me with silent lips sad and  
tremulous.

# I Heard You Solemn-Sweet Pipes of the Organ

I heard you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ as last Sunday  
morn I  
pass'd the church,  
Winds of autumn, as I walk'd the woods at dusk I heard your  
long-  
stretch'd sighs up above so mournful,  
I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera, I  
heard the  
soprano in the midst of the quartet singing;  
Heart of my love! you too I heard murmuring low through one  
of the  
wrists around my head,  
Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little  
bells last  
night under my ear.



# Facing West from California's Shores

Facing west from California's shores,  
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet unfound,  
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards the house of  
maternity,  
the land of migrations, look afar,  
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the circle almost  
circled;  
For starting westward from Hindustan, from the vales of  
Kashmere,  
From Asia, from the north, from the God, the sage, and the  
hero,  
From the south, from the flowery peninsulas and the spice  
islands,  
Long having wander'd since, round the earth having  
wander'd,  
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and joyous,  
(But where is what I started for so long ago?  
And why is it yet unfound?)

# As Adam Early in the Morning

As Adam early in the morning,  
Walking forth from the bower refresh'd with sleep,  
Behold me where I pass, hear my voice, approach,  
Touch me, touch the palm of your hand to my body as I pass,  
Be not afraid of my body.



# BOOK V. CALAMUS

## In Paths Untrodden

In paths untrodden,  
In the growth by margins of pond-waters,  
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,  
From all the standards hitherto publish'd, from the  
pleasures,  
profits, conformities,  
Which too long I was offering to feed my soul,  
Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to me  
that my soul,  
That the soul of the man I speak for rejoices in comrades,  
Here by myself away from the clank of the world,  
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,  
No longer abash'd, (for in this secluded spot I can respond  
as I  
would not dare elsewhere,)  
Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself, yet  
contains  
all the rest,  
Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly  
attachment,  
Projecting them along that substantial life,  
Bequeathing hence types of athletic love,  
Afternoon this delicious Ninth-month in my forty-first  
year,  
I proceed for all who are or have been young men,  
To tell the secret my nights and days,  
To celebrate the need of comrades.



# Scented Herbage of My Breast

Scented herbage of my breast,  
Leaves from you I glean, I write, to be perused best  
afterwards,  
Tomb-leaves, body-leaves growing up above me above death,  
Perennial roots, tall leaves, O the winter shall not freeze  
you  
delicate leaves,  
Every year shall you bloom again, out from where you  
retired you  
shall emerge again;  
O I do not know whether many passing by will discover you  
or inhale  
your faint odor, but I believe a few will;  
O slender leaves! O blossoms of my blood! I permit you to  
tell in  
your own way of the heart that is under you,  
O I do not know what you mean there underneath yourselves,  
you are  
not happiness,  
You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn and  
sting me,  
Yet you are beautiful to me you faint tinged roots, you  
make me  
think of death,  
Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally  
beautiful  
except death and love?)  
O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of  
lovers,  
I think it must be for death,  
For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the  
atmosphere of lovers,  
Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines to  
prefer,

(I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes death  
most,)  
Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the  
same as  
you mean,  
Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see! grow up out of  
my breast!  
Spring away from the conceal'd heart there!  
Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots timid  
leaves!  
Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my breast!  
Come I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of mine, I  
have  
long enough stifled and choked;  
Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you serve  
me not,  
I will say what I have to say by itself,  
I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never again  
utter a  
call only their call,  
I will raise with it immortal reverberations through the  
States,  
I will give an example to lovers to take permanent shape  
and will  
through the States,  
Through me shall the words be said to make death  
exhilarating,  
Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord with  
it,  
Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now above  
all, and  
are folded inseparably together, you love and death are,  
Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I was  
calling life,  
For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports  
essential,  
That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons,  
and that  
they are mainly for you,

That you beyond them come forth to remain, the real  
reality,  
That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no  
matter how long,  
That you will one day perhaps take control of all,  
That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of  
appearance,  
That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not  
last so very long,  
But you will last very long.



# Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand

Whoever you are holding me now in hand,  
Without one thing all will be useless,  
I give you fair warning before you attempt me further,  
I am not what you supposed, but far different.

Who is he that would become my follower?  
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?

The way is suspicious, the result uncertain, perhaps  
destructive,  
You would have to give up all else, I alone would expect to  
be your  
sole and exclusive standard,  
Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,  
The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to  
the lives  
around you would have to be abandon'd,  
Therefore release me now before troubling yourself any  
further, let  
go your hand from my shoulders,  
Put me down and depart on your way.

Or else by stealth in some wood for trial,  
Or back of a rock in the open air,  
(For in any roof'd room of a house I emerge not, nor in  
company,  
And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn, or  
dead,)  
But just possibly with you on a high hill, first watching  
lest any  
person for miles around approach unawares,  
Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the

sea or  
some quiet island,  
Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,  
With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss or the new husband's  
kiss,  
For I am the new husband and I am the comrade.

Or if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,  
Where I may feel the throbs of your heart or rest upon your  
hip,  
Carry me when you go forth over land or sea;  
For thus merely touching you is enough, is best,  
And thus touching you would I silently sleep and be carried  
eternally.

But these leaves conning you con at peril,  
For these leaves and me you will not understand,  
They will elude you at first and still more afterward, I  
will  
certainly elude you.  
Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught  
me, behold!  
Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have  
written this book,  
Nor is it by reading it you will acquire it,  
Nor do those know me best who admire me and vauntingly  
praise me,  
Nor will the candidates for my love (unless at most a very  
few)  
prove victorious,  
Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as much  
evil,  
perhaps more,  
For all is useless without that which you may guess at many  
times  
and not hit, that which I hinted at;  
Therefore release me and depart on your way.



# For You, O Democracy

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,  
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,  
I will make divine magnetic lands,  
With the love of comrades,  
With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the  
rivers of America,  
and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the  
prairies,  
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each  
other's necks,  
By the love of comrades,  
By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme!  
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

# These I Singing in Spring

These I singing in spring collect for lovers,  
(For who but I should understand lovers and all their  
sorrow and joy?  
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)  
Collecting I traverse the garden the world, but soon I pass  
the gates,  
Now along the pond-side, now wading in a little, fearing  
not the wet,  
Now by the post-and-rail fences where the old stones thrown  
there,  
pick'd from the fields, have accumulated,  
(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up through the  
stones and  
partly cover them, beyond these I pass,)  
Far, far in the forest, or sauntering later in summer,  
before I  
think where I go,  
Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and then  
in the silence,  
Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop gathers around me,  
Some walk by my side and some behind, and some embrace my  
arms or neck,  
They the spirits of dear friends dead or alive, thicker  
they come, a  
great crowd, and I in the middle,  
Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I wander with them,  
Plucking something for tokens, tossing toward whoever is  
near me,  
Here, lilac, with a branch of pine,  
Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pull'd off a  
live-oak in  
Florida as it hung trailing down,  
Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,  
And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the

pondside,

(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and returns again

never to separate from me,

And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades, this

calamus-root shall,

Interchange it youths with each other! let none render it back!)

And twigs of maple and a bunch of wild orange and chestnut,

And stems of currants and plum-blows, and the aromatic cedar,

These I compass'd around by a thick cloud of spirits,

Wandering, point to or touch as I pass, or throw them loosely from me,

Indicating to each one what he shall have, giving something to each;

But what I drew from the water by the pond-side, that I reserve,

I will give of it, but only to them that love as I myself am capable

of loving.

# Not Heaving from My Ribb'd Breast Only

Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only,  
Not in sighs at night in rage dissatisfied with myself,  
Not in those long-drawn, ill-supprest sighs,  
Not in many an oath and promise broken,  
Not in my wilful and savage soul's volition,  
Not in the subtle nourishment of the air,  
Not in this beating and pounding at my temples and wrists,  
Not in the curious systole and diastole within which will  
one day cease,  
Not in many a hungry wish told to the skies only,  
Not in cries, laughter, defiancies, thrown from me when  
alone far in  
the wilds,  
Not in husky pantings through clinch'd teeth,  
Not in sounded and resounded words, chattering words,  
echoes, dead words,  
Not in the murmurs of my dreams while I sleep,  
Nor the other murmurs of these incredible dreams of every  
day,  
Nor in the limbs and senses of my body that take you and  
dismiss you  
continually—not there,  
Not in any or all of them O adhesiveness! O pulse of my  
life!  
Need I that you exist and show yourself any more than in  
these songs.





# Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,  
Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,  
That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after  
all,  
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable  
only,  
May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men,  
hills,  
shining and flowing waters,  
The skies of day and night, colors, densities, forms, may-  
be these  
are (as doubtless they are) only apparitions, and the real  
something has yet to be known,  
(How often they dart out of themselves as if to confound me  
and mock me!  
How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows, aught  
of them,)  
May-be seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they  
indeed but seem)  
as from my present point of view, and might prove (as of  
course they  
would) nought of what they appear, or nought anyhow, from  
entirely  
changed points of view;  
To me these and the like of these are curiously answer'd by  
my  
lovers, my dear friends,  
When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while  
holding me  
by the hand,  
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words  
and reason

hold not, surround us and pervade us,  
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I am  
silent, I  
require nothing further,  
I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of  
identity  
beyond the grave,  
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,  
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

# The Base of All Metaphysics

And now gentlemen,  
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,  
As base and finale too for all metaphysics.

(So to the students the old professor,  
At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic  
systems,  
Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and  
Hegel,  
Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,  
And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine  
having  
studied long,  
I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,  
See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets  
see,  
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ  
the divine I see,  
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of  
friend to friend,  
Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and  
parents,  
Of city for city and land for land.

# Recorders Ages Hence

Recorders ages hence,  
Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive  
exterior, I  
will tell you what to say of me,  
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the  
tenderest lover,  
The friend the lover's portrait, of whom his friend his  
lover was fondest,  
Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless  
ocean of love  
within him, and freely pour'd it forth,  
Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking of his dear  
friends, his lovers,  
Who pensive away from one he lov'd often lay sleepless and  
dissatisfied at night,  
Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one he  
lov'd might  
secretly be indifferent to him,  
Whose happiest days were far away through fields, in woods,  
on hills,  
he and another wandering hand in hand, they twain apart  
from other men,  
Who oft as he saunter'd the streets curv'd with his arm the  
shoulder  
of his friend, while the arm of his friend rested upon him  
also.

# When I Heard at the Close of the Day

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been  
receiv'd  
with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a happy  
night for  
me that follow'd,  
And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were  
accomplish'd, still  
I was not happy,  
But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect  
health,  
refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,  
When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and  
disappear in the  
morning light,  
When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing  
bathed,  
laughing with the cool waters, and saw the sun rise,  
And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his  
way  
coming, O then I was happy,  
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food  
nourish'd me more, and the beautiful day pass'd well,  
And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at  
evening came  
my friend,  
And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll  
slowly  
continually up the shores,  
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as  
directed to me  
whispering to congratulate me,  
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same

cover in  
the cool night,  
In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was  
inclined toward me,  
And his arm lay lightly around my breast—and that night I  
was happy.

# Are You the New Person Drawn Toward Me?

Are you the new person drawn toward me?

To begin with take warning, I am surely far different from  
what you suppose;

Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?

Do you think it so easy to have me become your lover?

Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd  
satisfaction?

Do you think I am trusty and faithful?

Do you see no further than this facade, this smooth and  
tolerant  
manner of me?

Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a  
real heroic man?

Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all maya,  
illusion?

# Roots and Leaves Themselves Alone

Roots and leaves themselves alone are these,  
Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods and  
pond-side,  
Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind around  
tighter  
than vines,  
Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage of  
trees as the  
sun is risen,  
Breezes of land and love set from living shores to you on  
the living  
sea, to you O sailors!  
Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs offer'd fresh  
to young  
persons wandering out in the fields when the winter breaks  
up,  
Love-buds put before you and within you whoever you are,  
Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,  
If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will open  
and bring  
form, color, perfume, to you,  
If you become the aliment and the wet they will become  
flowers,  
fruits, tall branches and trees.



# Not Heat Flames Up and Consumes

Not heat flames up and consumes,  
Not sea-waves hurry in and out,  
Not the air delicious and dry, the air of ripe summer,  
bears lightly  
along white down-balls of myriads of seeds,  
Waited, sailing gracefully, to drop where they may;  
Not these, O none of these more than the flames of me,  
consuming,  
burning for his love whom I love,  
O none more than I hurrying in and out;  
Does the tide hurry, seeking something, and never give up?  
O I the same,  
O nor down-balls nor perfumes, nor the high rain-emitting  
clouds,  
are borne through the open air,  
Any more than my soul is borne through the open air,  
Wafted in all directions O love, for friendship, for you.

# Trickle Drops

Trickle drops! my blue veins leaving!  
O drops of me! trickle, slow drops,  
Candid from me falling, drip, bleeding drops,  
From wounds made to free you whence you were prison'd,  
From my face, from my forehead and lips,  
From my breast, from within where I was conceal'd, press  
forth red  
drops, confession drops,  
Stain every page, stain every song I sing, every word I  
say, bloody drops,  
Let them know your scarlet heat, let them glisten,  
Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet,  
Glow upon all I have written or shall write, bleeding  
drops,  
Let it all be seen in your light, blushing drops.

# City of Orgies

City of orgies, walks and joys,  
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will one  
day make  
Not the pageants of you, not your shifting tableaux, your  
spectacles, repay me,  
Not the interminable rows of your houses, nor the ships at  
the wharves,  
Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows  
with  
goods in them,  
Nor to converse with learn'd persons, or bear my share in  
the soiree  
or feast;  
Not those, but as I pass O Manhattan, your frequent and  
swift flash  
of eyes offering me love,  
Offering response to my own—these repay me,  
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.

# Behold This Swarthy Face

Behold this swarthy face, these gray eyes,  
This beard, the white wool unclipt upon my neck,  
My brown hands and the silent manner of me without charm;  
Yet comes one a Manhattanese and ever at parting kisses me  
lightly  
on the lips with robust love,  
And I on the crossing of the street or on the ship's deck  
give a  
kiss in return,  
We observe that salute of American comrades land and sea,  
We are those two natural and nonchalant persons.

# I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,  
All alone stood it and the moss hung down from the  
branches,  
Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous of dark  
green,  
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of  
myself,  
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves standing  
alone there  
without its friend near, for I knew I could not,  
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon  
it and  
twined around it a little moss,  
And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight in my  
room,  
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,  
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them,)  
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think of  
manly love;  
For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in  
Louisiana  
solitary in a wide in a wide flat space,  
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a  
lover near,  
I know very well I could not.



# To a Stranger

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon  
you,  
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it  
comes to me  
as of a dream,)  
I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,  
All is recall'd as we flit by each other, fluid,  
affectionate,  
chaste, matured,  
You grew up with me, were a boy with me or a girl with me,  
I ate with you and slept with you, your body has become not  
yours  
only nor left my body mine only,  
You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we  
pass, you  
take of my beard, breast, hands, in return,  
I am not to speak to you, I am to think of you when I sit  
alone or  
wake at night alone,  
I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again,  
I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

# This Moment Yearning and Thoughtful

This moment yearning and thoughtful sitting alone,  
It seems to me there are other men in other lands yearning  
and thoughtful,  
It seems to me I can look over and behold them in Germany,  
Italy,  
France, Spain,  
Or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or talking other  
dialects,  
And it seems to me if I could know those men I should  
become  
attached to them as I do to men in my own lands,  
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,  
I know I should be happy with them.



# I Hear It Was Charged Against Me

I hear it was charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions,

But really I am neither for nor against institutions,  
(What indeed have I in common with them? or what with the destruction of them?)

Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city of these

States inland and seaboard,

And in the fields and woods, and above every keel little or large

that dents the water,

Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,

The institution of the dear love of comrades.

# The Prairie-Grass Dividing

The prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing,  
I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,  
Demand the most copious and close companionship of men,  
Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,  
Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh,  
nutritious,  
Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with freedom  
and  
command, leading not following,  
Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those with sweet and  
lusty  
flesh clear of taint,  
Those that look carelessly in the faces of Presidents and  
governors,  
as to say Who are you?  
Those of earth-born passion, simple, never constrain'd,  
never obedient,  
Those of inland America.

# When I Peruse the Conquer'd Fame

When I peruse the conquer'd fame of heroes and the  
victories of  
mighty generals, I do not envy the generals,  
Nor the President in his Presidency, nor the rich in his  
great house,  
But when I hear of the brotherhood of lovers, how it was  
with them,  
How together through life, through dangers, odium,  
unchanging, long  
and long,  
Through youth and through middle and old age, how  
unfaltering, how  
affectionate and faithful they were,  
Then I am pensive—I hastily walk away fill'd with the  
bitterest envy.

# We Two Boys Together Clinging

We two boys together clinging,  
One the other never leaving,  
Up and down the roads going, North and South excursions  
making,  
Power enjoying, elbows stretching, fingers clutching,  
Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving.  
No law less than ourselves owning, sailing, soldiering,  
thieving,  
threatening,  
Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing, water  
drinking, on  
the turf or the sea-beach dancing,  
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking,  
feebleness chasing,  
Fulfilling our foray.

# A Promise to California

A promise to California,  
Or inland to the great pastoral Plains, and on to Puget  
sound and Oregon;  
Sojourning east a while longer, soon I travel toward you,  
to remain,  
to teach robust American love,  
For I know very well that I and robust love belong among  
you,  
inland, and along the Western sea;  
For these States tend inland and toward the Western sea,  
and I will also.

# Here the Frailest Leaves of Me

Here the frailest leaves of me and yet my strongest  
lasting,  
Here I shade and hide my thoughts, I myself do not expose  
them,  
And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

# No Labor-Saving Machine

No labor-saving machine,  
Nor discovery have I made,  
Nor will I be able to leave behind me any wealthy bequest  
to found  
hospital or library,  
Nor reminiscence of any deed of courage for America,  
Nor literary success nor intellect; nor book for the book-  
shelf,  
But a few carols vibrating through the air I leave,  
For comrades and lovers.

# A Glimpse

A glimpse through an interstice caught,  
Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room around the  
stove  
late of a winter night, and I unremark'd seated in a  
corner,  
Of a youth who loves me and whom I love, silently  
approaching and  
seating himself near, that he may hold me by the hand,  
A long while amid the noises of coming and going, of  
drinking and  
oath and smutty jest,  
There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking  
little,  
perhaps not a word.



# A Leaf for Hand in Hand

A leaf for hand in hand;  
You natural persons old and young!  
You on the Mississippi and on all the branches and bayous  
of  
the Mississippi!  
You friendly boatmen and mechanics! you roughs!  
You twain! and all processions moving along the streets!  
I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it common for  
you to  
walk hand in hand.

# Earth, My Likeness

Earth, my likeness,  
Though you look so impassive, ample and spheric there,  
I now suspect that is not all;  
I now suspect there is something fierce in you eligible to  
burst forth,  
For an athlete is enamour'd of me, and I of him,  
But toward him there is something fierce and terrible in me  
eligible  
to burst forth,  
I dare not tell it in words, not even in these songs.

# I Dream'd in a Dream

I dream'd in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks  
of the  
whole of the rest of the earth,  
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,  
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love,  
it led the rest,  
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that  
city,  
And in all their looks and words.

# What Think You I Take My Pen in Hand?

What think you I take my pen in hand to record?  
The battle-ship, perfect-model'd, majestic, that I saw pass  
the  
offing to-day under full sail?  
The splendors of the past day? or the splendor of the night  
that  
envelops me?  
Or the vaunted glory and growth of the great city spread  
around me? —no;  
But merely of two simple men I saw to-day on the pier in  
the midst  
of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends,  
The one to remain hung on the other's neck and passionately  
kiss'd him,  
While the one to depart tightly prest the one to remain in  
his arms.

# To the East and to the West

To the East and to the West,  
To the man of the Seaside State and of Pennsylvania,  
To the Kanadian of the north, to the Southerner I love,  
These with perfect trust to depict you as myself, the germs  
are in all men,  
I believe the main purport of these States is to found a  
superb  
friendship, exalte, previously unknown,  
Because I perceive it waits, and has been always waiting,  
latent in all men.

# Sometimes with One I Love

Sometimes with one I love I fill myself with rage for fear  
I effuse  
unreturn'd love,  
But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is  
certain one  
way or another,  
(I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not  
return'd,  
Yet out of that I have written these songs.)

# To a Western Boy

Many things to absorb I teach to help you become eleven of mine;

Yet if blood like mine circle not in your veins,

If you be not silently selected by lovers and do not  
silently select lovers,

Of what use is it that you seek to become eleven of mine?

# Fast Anchor'd Eternal O Love!

Fast-anchor'd eternal O love! O woman I love!  
O bride! O wife! more resistless than I can tell, the  
thought of you!

Then separate, as disembodied or another born,  
Ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation,  
I ascend, I float in the regions of your love O man,  
O sharer of my roving life.





# Among the Multitude

Among the men and women the multitude,  
I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,  
Acknowledging none else, not parent, wife, husband,  
brother, child,  
any nearer than I am,  
Some are baffled, but that one is not—that one knows me.

Ah lover and perfect equal,  
I meant that you should discover me so by faint  
indirections,  
And I when I meet you mean to discover you by the like in  
you.

# O You Whom I Often and Silently Come

O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I  
may be with you,  
As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the same  
room with you,  
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake  
is  
playing within me.

# That Shadow My Likeness

That shadow my likeness that goes to and fro seeking a  
livelihood,  
chattering, chaffering,  
How often I find myself standing and looking at it where it  
flits,  
How often I question and doubt whether that is really me;  
But among my lovers and caroling these songs,  
O I never doubt whether that is really me.

# Full of Life Now

Full of life now, compact, visible,  
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,  
To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,  
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.

When you read these I that was visible am become invisible,  
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems,  
seeking me,  
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and  
become your comrade;  
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am  
now with you.)



# BOOK VI

## Salut au Monde!

1  
O take my hand Walt Whitman!  
Such gliding wonders! such sights and sounds!  
Such join'd unended links, each hook'd to the next,  
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.

What widens within you Walt Whitman?  
What waves and soils exuding?  
What climes? what persons and cities are here?  
Who are the infants, some playing, some slumbering?  
Who are the girls? who are the married women?  
Who are the groups of old men going slowly with their arms  
about  
each other's necks?  
What rivers are these? what forests and fruits are these?  
What are the mountains call'd that rise so high in the  
mists?  
What myriads of dwellings are they fill'd with dwellers?

2  
Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens,  
Asia, Africa, Europe, are to the east—America is provided  
for in the west,  
Banding the bulge of the earth winds the hot equator,  
Curiously north and south turn the axis-ends,  
Within me is the longest day, the sun wheels in slanting  
rings, it  
does not set for months,  
Stretch'd in due time within me the midnight sun just rises  
above  
the horizon and sinks again,

Within me zones, seas, cataracts, forests, volcanoes,  
groups,  
Malaysia, Polynesia, and the great West Indian islands.

3

What do you hear Walt Whitman?

I hear the workman singing and the farmer's wife singing,  
I hear in the distance the sounds of children and of  
animals early  
in the day,  
I hear emulous shouts of Australians pursuing the wild  
horse,  
I hear the Spanish dance with castanets in the chestnut  
shade, to  
the rebeck and guitar,  
I hear continual echoes from the Thames,  
I hear fierce French liberty songs,  
I hear of the Italian boat-sculler the musical recitative  
of old poems,  
I hear the locusts in Syria as they strike the grain and  
grass with  
the showers of their terrible clouds,  
I hear the Coptic refrain toward sundown, pensively falling  
on the  
breast of the black venerable vast mother the Nile,  
I hear the chirp of the Mexican muleteer, and the bells of  
the mule,  
I hear the Arab muezzin calling from the top of the mosque,  
I hear the Christian priests at the altars of their  
churches, I hear  
the responsive base and soprano,  
I hear the cry of the Cossack, and the sailor's voice  
putting to sea  
at Okotsk,  
I hear the wheeze of the slave-coffle as the slaves march  
on, as the  
husky gangs pass on by twos and threes, fasten'd together  
with wrist-chains and ankle-chains,



I hear the Hebrew reading his records and psalms,  
I hear the rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the strong  
legends of  
the Romans,  
I hear the tale of the divine life and bloody death of the  
beautiful  
God the Christ,  
I hear the Hindoo teaching his favorite pupil the loves,  
wars,  
adages, transmitted safely to this day from poets who wrote  
three  
thousand years ago.

4

What do you see Walt Whitman?  
Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute  
you?  
I see a great round wonder rolling through space,  
I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, graveyards, jails,  
factories,  
palaces, hovels, huts of barbarians, tents of nomads upon  
the surface,  
I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers are  
sleeping,  
and the sunlit part on the other side,  
I see the curious rapid change of the light and shade,  
I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of  
them as  
my land is to me.

I see plenteous waters,  
I see mountain peaks, I see the sierras of Andes where they  
range,  
I see plainly the Himalayas, Chian Shahs, Altays, Ghauts,  
I see the giant pinnacles of Elbruz, Kazbek, Bazardjusi,  
I see the Styrian Alps, and the Karnac Alps,  
I see the Pyrenees, Balks, Carpathians, and to the north  
the  
Dofrafields, and off at sea mount Hecla,

I see Vesuvius and Etna, the mountains of the Moon, and the Red  
mountains of Madagascar,  
I see the Lybian, Arabian, and Asiatic deserts,  
I see huge dreadful Arctic and Antarctic icebergs,  
I see the superior oceans and the inferior ones, the Atlantic and  
Pacific, the sea of Mexico, the Brazilian sea, and the sea of Peru,  
The waters of Hindustan, the China sea, and the gulf of Guinea,  
The Japan waters, the beautiful bay of Nagasaki land-lock'd in its  
mountains,  
The spread of the Baltic, Caspian, Bothnia, the British shores, and  
the bay of Biscay,  
The clear-sunn'd Mediterranean, and from one to another of its islands,  
The White sea, and the sea around Greenland.

I behold the mariners of the world,  
Some are in storms, some in the night with the watch on the lookout,  
Some drifting helplessly, some with contagious diseases.

I behold the sail and steamships of the world, some in clusters in  
port, some on their voyages,  
Some double the cape of Storms, some cape Verde, others capes  
Guardafui, Bon, or Bajadore,  
Others Dondra head, others pass the straits of Sunda, others cape  
Lopatka, others Behring's straits,  
Others cape Horn, others sail the gulf of Mexico or along Cuba or  
Hayti, others Hudson's bay or Baffin's bay,  
Others pass the straits of Dover, others enter the Wash,

others the  
firth of Solway, others round cape Clear, others the Land's  
End,  
Others traverse the Zuyder Zee or the Scheld,  
Others as comers and goers at Gibraltar or the Dardanelles,  
Others sternly push their way through the northern winter-  
packs,  
Others descend or ascend the Obi or the Lena,  
Others the Niger or the Congo, others the Indus, the  
Burampooter  
and Cambodia,  
Others wait steam'd up ready to start in the ports of  
Australia,  
Wait at Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Marseilles, Lisbon,  
Naples,  
Hamburg, Bremen, Bordeaux, the Hague, Copenhagen,  
Wait at Valparaiso, Rio Janeiro, Panama.

5

I see the tracks of the railroads of the earth,  
I see them in Great Britain, I see them in Europe,  
I see them in Asia and in Africa.

I see the electric telegraphs of the earth,  
I see the filaments of the news of the wars, deaths,  
losses, gains,  
passions, of my race.

I see the long river-stripes of the earth,  
I see the Amazon and the Paraguay,  
I see the four great rivers of China, the Amour, the Yellow  
River,  
the Yiang-tse, and the Pearl,  
I see where the Seine flows, and where the Danube, the  
Loire, the  
Rhône, and the Guadalquiver flow,  
I see the windings of the Volga, the Dnieper, the Oder,  
I see the Tuscan going down the Arno, and the Venetian  
along the Po,

I see the Greek seaman sailing out of Egina bay.

6

I see the site of the old empire of Assyria, and that of  
Persia, and  
that of India,  
I see the falling of the Ganges over the high rim of  
Saukara.

I see the place of the idea of the Deity incarnated by  
avatars in  
human forms,  
I see the spots of the successions of priests on the earth,  
oracles,  
sacrificers, brahmins, sabians, llamas, monks, muftis,  
exhorters,  
I see where druids walk'd the groves of Mona, I see the  
mistletoe  
and vervain,  
I see the temples of the deaths of the bodies of Gods, I  
see the old  
signifiers.

I see Christ eating the bread of his last supper in the  
midst of  
youths and old persons,  
I see where the strong divine young man the Hercules toil'd  
faithfully and long and then died,  
I see the place of the innocent rich life and hapless fate  
of the  
beautiful nocturnal son, the full-limb'd Bacchus,  
I see Kneph, blooming, drest in blue, with the crown of  
feathers on  
his head,  
I see Hermes, unsuspected, dying, well-belov'd, saying to  
the people  
Do not weep for me,  
This is not my true country, I have lived banish'd from my  
true

country, I now go back there,  
I return to the celestial sphere where every one goes in  
his turn.

7

I see the battle-fields of the earth, grass grows upon them  
and  
blossoms and corn,  
I see the tracks of ancient and modern expeditions.

I see the nameless masonries, venerable messages of the  
unknown  
events, heroes, records of the earth.

I see the places of the sagas,  
I see pine-trees and fir-trees torn by northern blasts,  
I see granite boulders and cliffs, I see green meadows and  
lakes,  
I see the burial-cairns of Scandinavian warriors,  
I see them raised high with stones by the marge of restless  
oceans,  
that the dead men's spirits when they wearied of their  
quiet  
graves might rise up through the mounds and gaze on the  
tossing  
billows, and be refresh'd by storms, immensity, liberty,  
action.

I see the steppes of Asia,  
I see the tumuli of Mongolia, I see the tents of Kalmucks  
and Baskirs,  
I see the nomadic tribes with herds of oxen and cows,  
I see the table-lands notch'd with ravines, I see the  
jungles and deserts,  
I see the camel, the wild steed, the bustard, the fat-  
tail'd sheep,  
the antelope, and the burrowing wolf

I see the highlands of Abyssinia,

I see flocks of goats feeding, and see the fig-tree,  
tamarind, date,  
And see fields of teff-wheat and places of verdure and  
gold.

I see the Brazilian vaquero,  
I see the Bolivian ascending mount Sorata,  
I see the Wacho crossing the plains, I see the incomparable  
rider of  
horses with his lasso on his arm,  
I see over the pampas the pursuit of wild cattle for their  
hides.

8  
I see the regions of snow and ice,  
I see the sharp-eyed Samoiede and the Finn,  
I see the seal-seeker in his boat poising his lance,  
I see the Siberian on his slight-built sledge drawn by  
dogs,  
I see the porpoise-hunters, I see the whale-crews of the  
south  
Pacific and the north Atlantic,  
I see the cliffs, glaciers, torrents, valleys, of  
Switzerland—I  
mark the long winters and the isolation.

I see the cities of the earth and make myself at random a  
part of them,  
I am a real Parisian,  
I am a habitan of Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin,  
Constantinople,  
I am of Adelaide, Sidney, Melbourne,  
I am of London, Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh, Limerick,  
I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyons, Brussels,  
Berne,  
Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Florence,  
I belong in Moscow, Cracow, Warsaw, or northward in  
Christiania or  
Stockholm, or in Siberian Irkutsk, or in some street in

Iceland,  
I descend upon all those cities, and rise from them again.

10

I see vapors exhaling from unexplored countries,  
I see the savage types, the bow and arrow, the poison'd  
splint, the  
fetich, and the obi.

I see African and Asiatic towns,  
I see Algiers, Tripoli, Derne, Mogadore, Timbuctoo,  
Monrovia,

I see the swarms of Pekin, Canton, Benares, Delhi,  
Calcutta, Tokio,

I see the Kruman in his hut, and the Dahoman and Ashantee-  
man in their huts,

I see the Turk smoking opium in Aleppo,  
I see the picturesque crowds at the fairs of Khiva and  
those of Herat,

I see Teheran, I see Muscat and Medina and the intervening  
sands,

see the caravans toiling onward,

I see Egypt and the Egyptians, I see the pyramids and  
obelisks.

I look on chisell'd histories, records of conquering kings,  
dynasties, cut in slabs of sand-stone, or on granite-  
blocks,

I see at Memphis mummy-pits containing mummies embalm'd,  
swathed in linen cloth, lying there many centuries,

I look on the fall'n Theban, the large-ball'd eyes, the  
side-drooping neck, the hands folded across the breast.

I see all the menials of the earth, laboring,

I see all the prisoners in the prisons,

I see the defective human bodies of the earth,

The blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks, lunatics,  
The pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-makers of  
the earth,

The helpless infants, and the helpless old men and women.

I see male and female everywhere,  
I see the serene brotherhood of philosophers,  
I see the constructiveness of my race,  
I see the results of the perseverance and industry of my  
race,  
I see ranks, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, I go among  
them, I  
mix indiscriminately,  
And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.

11

You whoever you are!  
You daughter or son of England!  
You of the mighty Slavic tribes and empires! you Russ in  
Russia!  
You dim-descended, black, divine-soul'd African, large,  
fine-headed,  
nobly-form'd, superbly destin'd, on equal terms with me!  
You Norwegian! Swede! Dane! Iceland! you Prussian!  
You Spaniard of Spain! you Portuguese!  
You Frenchwoman and Frenchman of France!  
You Belge! you liberty-lover of the Netherlands! (you stock  
whence I  
myself have descended;)  
You sturdy Austrian! you Lombard! Hun! Bohemian! farmer of  
Styria!  
You neighbor of the Danube!  
You working-man of the Rhine, the Elbe, or the Weser! you  
working-woman too!  
You Sardinian! you Bavarian! Swabian! Saxon! Wallachian!  
Bulgarian!  
You Roman! Neapolitan! you Greek!  
You lithe matador in the arena at Seville!  
You mountaineer living lawlessly on the Taurus or Caucasus!  
You Bokh horse-herd watching your mares and stallions  
feeding!  
You beautiful-bodied Persian at full speed in the saddle  
shooting  
arrows to the mark!



You Chinaman and Chinawoman of China! you Tartar of  
Tartary!  
You women of the earth subordinated at your tasks!  
You Jew journeying in your old age through every risk to  
stand once  
on Syrian ground!  
You other Jews waiting in all lands for your Messiah!  
You thoughtful Armenian pondering by some stream of the  
Euphrates!  
you peering amid the ruins of Nineveh! you ascending mount  
Ararat!  
You foot-worn pilgrim welcoming the far-away sparkle of the  
minarets  
of Mecca!  
You sheiks along the stretch from Suez to Bab-el-mandeb  
ruling your  
families and tribes!  
You olive-grower tending your fruit on fields of Nazareth,  
Damascus,  
or lake Tiberias!  
You Thibet trader on the wide inland or bargaining in the  
shops of Lassa!  
You Japanese man or woman! you liver in Madagascar, Ceylon,  
Sumatra, Borneo!  
All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia,  
indifferent  
of place!  
All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes of  
the sea!  
And you of centuries hence when you listen to me!  
And you each and everywhere whom I specify not, but include  
just the same!  
Health to you! good will to you all, from me and America  
sent!

Each of us inevitable,  
Each of us limitless—each of us with his or her right upon  
the earth,  
Each of us allow'd the eternal purports of the earth,

Each of us here as divinely as any is here.

12

You Hottentot with clicking palate! you woolly-hair'd hordes!

You own'd persons dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops!

You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive countenances of brutes!

You poor koboo whom the meanest of the rest look down upon for all

your glimmering language and spirituality!

You dwarf'd Kamtschatkan, Greenlander, Lapp!

You Austral negro, naked, red, sooty, with protrusive lip, groveling, seeking your food!

You Caffre, Berber, Soudanese!

You haggard, uncouth, untutor'd Bedowee!

You plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul, Cairo!

You benighted roamer of Amazonia! you Patagonian! you Feejeeman!

I do not prefer others so very much before you either,

I do not say one word against you, away back there where you stand,

(You will come forward in due time to my side.)

13

My spirit has pass'd in compassion and determination around the whole earth,

I have look'd for equals and lovers and found them ready for me in

all lands,

I think some divine rapport has equalized me with them.

You vapors, I think I have risen with you, moved away to distant

continents, and fallen down there, for reasons,

I think I have blown with you you winds;

You waters I have finger'd every shore with you,

I have run through what any river or strait of the globe has run through,

I have taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas and on the  
high  
embedded rocks, to cry thence:

What cities the light or warmth penetrates I penetrate  
those cities myself,  
All islands to which birds wing their way I wing my way  
myself.

Toward you all, in America's name,  
I raise high the perpendicular hand, I make the signal,  
To remain after me in sight forever,  
For all the haunts and homes of men.



# BOOK VII

## Song of the Open Road

1

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-  
fortune,  
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need  
nothing,  
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous  
criticisms,  
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,  
I do not want the constellations any nearer,  
I know they are very well where they are,  
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,  
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever  
I go,  
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,  
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.)

2

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are  
not all  
that is here,  
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference nor

denial,

The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd,  
the  
illiterate person, are not denied;  
The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's  
tramp, the  
drunkard's stagger, the laughing party of mechanics,  
The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the  
eloping couple,  
The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture  
into the  
town, the return back from the town,  
They pass, I also pass, any thing passes, none can be  
interdicted,  
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!  
You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give  
them shape!  
You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable  
showers!  
You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!  
I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so  
dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the  
edges!  
You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-  
lined  
side! you distant ships!  
You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd facades! you roofs!  
You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!  
You windows whose transparent shells might expose so much!  
You doors and ascending steps! you arches!  
You gray stones of interminable pavements! you trodden  
crossings!  
From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted  
to

yourself, and now would impart the same secretly to me,  
From the living and the dead you have peopled your  
impassive surfaces,  
and the spirits thereof would be evident and amicable with  
me.

4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,  
The picture alive, every part in its best light,  
The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping where  
it is  
not wanted,  
The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay fresh  
sentiment of the road.

O highway I travel, do you say to me Do not leave me?  
Do you say Venture not-if you leave me you are lost?  
Do you say I am already prepared, I am well-beaten and  
undenied,  
adhere to me?

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to leave you, yet  
I love you,  
You express me better than I can express myself,  
You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air,  
and all  
free poems also,  
I think I could stop here myself and do miracles,  
I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and  
whoever  
beholds me shall like me,  
I think whoever I see must be happy.

5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and  
imaginary lines,  
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,

Listening to others, considering well what they say,  
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,  
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the  
holds that  
would hold me.

I inhale great draughts of space,  
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south  
are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,  
I did not know I held so much goodness.

All seems beautiful to me,  
can repeat over to men and women You have done such good to  
me  
I would do the same to you,  
I will recruit for myself and you as I go,  
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,  
I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,  
Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,  
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall  
bless me.

6  
Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear it would not  
amaze me,  
Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd it  
would not  
astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,  
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the  
earth.

Here a great personal deed has room,  
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race of  
men,  
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and mocks



all  
authority and all argument against it.)

Here is the test of wisdom,  
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,  
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not  
having it,  
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its  
own proof,  
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is  
content,  
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things,  
and the  
excellence of things;  
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that  
provokes  
it out of the soul.

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,  
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove at all  
under the  
spacious clouds and along the landscape and flowing  
currents.

Here is realization,  
Here is a man tallied—he realizes here what he has in him,  
The past, the future, majesty, love—if they are vacant of  
you, you  
are vacant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;  
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me?  
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for you  
and me?

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it is  
apropos;  
Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by  
strangers?

Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?

7

Here is the efflux of the soul,  
The efflux of the soul comes from within through embower'd  
gates,  
ever provoking questions,  
These yearnings why are they? these thoughts in the  
darkness why are they?  
Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me the  
sunlight  
expands my blood?  
Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink flat and  
lank?  
Why are there trees I never walk under but large and  
melodious  
thoughts descend upon me?  
(I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees  
and always  
drop fruit as I pass;)  
What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?  
What with some driver as I ride on the seat by his side?  
What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the shore as  
I walk by  
and pause?  
What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's good-will?  
what  
gives them to be free to mine?

8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,  
I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,  
Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,  
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and  
sweetness of  
man and woman,  
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter

every day  
out of the roots of themselves, than it sprouts fresh and  
sweet  
continually out of itself.)

Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat  
of the  
love of young and old,  
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and  
attainments,  
Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of contact.

9  
Allons! whoever you are come travel with me!  
Traveling with me you find what never tires.

The earth never tires,  
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first,  
Nature is rude  
and incomprehensible at first,  
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well  
envelop'd,  
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than  
words can tell.

Allons! we must not stop here,  
However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient this  
dwelling  
we cannot remain here,  
However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters  
we must  
not anchor here,  
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are  
permitted  
to receive it but a little while.

10  
Allons! the inducements shall be greater,  
We will sail pathless and wild seas,

We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,  
Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity;  
Allons! from all formules!  
From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests.

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the burial waits no longer.

Allons! yet take warning!  
He traveling with me needs the best blood, thews,  
endurance,  
None may come to the trial till he or she bring courage and  
health,  
Come not here if you have already spent the best of  
yourself,  
Only those may come who come in sweet and determin'd  
bodies,  
No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or venereal taint is  
permitted here.

(I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes,  
We convince by our presence.)

11

Listen! I will be honest with you,  
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new  
prizes,  
These are the days that must happen to you:  
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,  
You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or  
achieve,  
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, you  
hardly  
settle yourself to satisfaction before you are call'd by an  
irresistible call to depart,

You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings of  
those  
who remain behind you,  
What beckonings of love you receive you shall only answer  
with  
passionate kisses of parting,  
You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their  
reach'd hands  
toward you.

12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!  
They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic  
men—they  
are the greatest women,  
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,  
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,  
Habitués of many distant countries, habitués of far-distant  
dwellings,  
Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary  
toilers,  
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the  
shore,  
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender  
helpers of  
children, bearers of children,  
Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-  
down of coffins,  
Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years, the  
curious  
years each emerging from that which preceded it,  
Journeyers as with companions, namely their own diverse  
phases,  
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days,  
Journeyers gayly with their own youth, journeyers with  
their bearded  
and well-grain'd manhood,  
Journeyers with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd,  
content,

Journeyers with their own sublime old age of manhood or womanhood,  
Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of the universe,  
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of death.

13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,  
To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,  
To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights  
they tend to,  
Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,  
To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass it,  
To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may reach it and pass it,  
To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for you,  
however long but it stretches and waits for you,  
To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,  
To see no possession but you may possess it, enjoying all without  
labor or purchase, abstracting the feast yet not abstracting one  
particle of it,  
To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich man's elegant  
villa, and the chaste blessings of the well-married couple,  
and  
the fruits of orchards and flowers of gardens,  
To take to your use out of the compact cities as you pass through,  
To carry buildings and streets with you afterward wherever you go,  
To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you encounter  
them, to gather the love out of their hearts,

To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that you  
leave  
them behind you,  
To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as  
roads for  
traveling souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls,  
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that  
was or is  
apparent upon this globe or any globe, falls into niches  
and corners  
before the procession of souls along the grand roads of the  
universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along the  
grand roads of  
the universe, all other progress is the needed emblem and  
sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,  
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbulent,  
feeble,  
dissatisfied,  
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected by  
men,  
They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where  
they go,  
But I know that they go toward the best—toward something  
great.

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or woman come forth!  
You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house,  
though  
you built it, or though it has been built for you.

Out of the dark confinement! out from behind the screen!  
It is useless to protest, I know all and expose it.

Behold through you as bad as the rest,  
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of people,  
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd and  
trimm'd faces,  
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to hear the  
confession,  
Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulking and hiding  
it goes,  
Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities,  
polite and  
bland in the parlors,  
In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in the public  
assembly,  
Home to the houses of men and women, at the table, in the  
bedroom,  
everywhere,  
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death  
under the  
breast-bones, hell under the skull-bones,  
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and  
artificial flowers,  
Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable of  
itself,  
Speaking of any thing else but never of itself.

14  
Allons! through struggles and wars!  
The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

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.



My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,  
He going with me must go well arm'd,  
He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry  
enemies,  
desertions.

15

Allons! the road is before us!  
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—  
be not  
detain'd!  
Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on  
the  
shelf unopen'd!  
Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain  
unearn'd!  
Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!  
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead  
in the  
court, and the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precious than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law;  
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?



# BOOK VIII

## Crossing Brooklyn Ferry

1

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!  
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you  
also face  
to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how  
curious  
you are to me!  
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross,  
returning  
home, are more curious to me than you suppose,  
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence  
are more  
to me, and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all  
hours of the day,  
The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself  
disintegrated, every  
one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,  
The similitudes of the past and those of the future,  
The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and  
hearings, on  
the walk in the street and the passage over the river,  
The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far  
away,  
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and  
them,  
The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of

others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from  
shore to shore,  
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,  
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west,  
and the  
heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,  
Others will see the islands large and small;  
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the  
sun half  
an hour high,  
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence,  
others  
will see them,  
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide,  
the  
falling-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

3

It avails not, time nor place-distance avails not,  
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever  
so many  
generations hence,  
Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I  
felt,  
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a  
crowd,  
Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and  
the  
bright flow, I was refresh'd,  
Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the  
swift  
current, I stood yet was hurried,  
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the  
thick-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,  
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the

air  
floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,  
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies  
and left  
the rest in strong shadow,  
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward  
the south,  
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,  
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,  
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the  
shape of my  
head in the sunlit water,  
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-  
westward,  
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with  
violet,  
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,  
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,  
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships  
at anchor,  
The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the  
spars,  
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the  
slender  
serpentine pennants,  
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their  
pilotheuses,  
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous  
whirl of the wheels,  
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,  
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups,  
the  
frolicsome crests and glistening,  
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls  
of the  
granite storehouses by the docks,  
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely  
flank'd on  
each side by the barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,

On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry  
chimneys burning  
high and glaringly into the night,  
Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and  
yellow  
light over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts of  
streets.

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,  
I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid  
river,  
The men and women I saw were all near to me,  
Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd  
forward  
to them,  
(The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-  
night.)

5

What is it then between us?  
What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years  
between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and  
place avails not,  
I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,  
I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in  
the  
waters around it,  
I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,  
In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon  
me,  
In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they  
came upon me,  
I too had been struck from the float forever held in  
solution,  
I too had receiv'd identity by my body,  
That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I

knew I  
should be of my body.

6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,  
The dark threw its patches down upon me also,  
The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,  
My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in  
reality meagre?

Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,  
I am he who knew what it was to be evil,  
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,  
Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,  
Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,  
Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly,  
malignant,  
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me.  
The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish,  
not wanting,

Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of  
these wanting,

Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,  
Was call'd by my highest name by clear loud voices of young  
men as

they saw me approaching or passing,  
Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent  
leaning of

their flesh against me as I sat,  
Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public  
assembly, yet

never told them a word,

Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing,  
gnawing, sleeping,

Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or  
actress,

The same old role, the role that is what we make it, as  
great as we like,

Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

7

Closer yet I approach you,  
What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I  
laid in my  
stores in advance,  
I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were  
born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?  
Who knows but I am enjoying this?  
Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as  
looking at you  
now, for all you cannot see me?

8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than  
mast-hemm'd Manhattan?  
River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?  
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the  
twilight, and the belated lighter?  
What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and  
with voices I  
love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as  
approach?  
What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or  
man that  
looks in my face?  
Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?

We understand then do we not?  
What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not  
accepted?  
What the study could not teach—what the preaching could not  
accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not?

9

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the  
ebb-tide!



Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!  
Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor  
me, or the  
men and women generations after me!  
Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!  
Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful  
hills of Brooklyn!  
Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and  
answers!  
Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!  
Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or  
public assembly!  
Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call  
me by my  
nighest name!  
Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor  
or actress!  
Play the old role, the role that is great or small  
according as one  
makes it!  
Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown  
ways be  
looking upon you;  
Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean  
idly, yet  
haste with the hasting current;  
Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles  
high in the air;  
Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it  
till all  
downcast eyes have time to take it from you!  
Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head,  
or any  
one's head, in the sunlit water!  
Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-  
sail'd  
schooners, sloops, lighters!  
Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at  
sunset!

Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows  
at  
nightfall! cast red and yellow light over the tops of the  
houses!  
Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are,  
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,  
About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our  
divinest aromas,  
Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample  
and  
sufficient rivers,  
Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more  
spiritual,  
Keep your places, objects than which none else is more  
lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful  
ministers,  
We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate  
henceforward,  
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold  
yourselves from us,  
We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you  
permanently within us,  
We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you  
also,  
You furnish your parts toward eternity,  
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.



# BOOK IX

Song of the Answerer

1  
Now list to my morning's romanza, I tell the signs of the  
Answerer,  
To the cities and farms I sing as they spread in the  
sunshine before me.

A young man comes to me bearing a message from his brother,  
How shall the young man know the whether and when of his  
brother?  
Tell him to send me the signs. And I stand before the young  
man  
face to face, and take his right hand in my left hand and  
his  
left hand in my right hand,  
And I answer for his brother and for men, and I answer for  
him that  
answers for all, and send these signs.

Him all wait for, him all yield up to, his word is decisive  
and final,  
Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves as  
amid light,  
Him they immerse and he immerses them.

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the  
landscape,  
people, animals,  
The profound earth and its attributes and the unquiet  
ocean, (so  
tell I my morning's romanza,)  
All enjoyments and properties and money, and whatever money  
will buy,  
The best farms, others toiling and planting and he  
unavoidably reaps,  
The noblest and costliest cities, others grading and  
building and he  
domiciles there,  
Nothing for any one but what is for him, near and far are  
for him,

the ships in the offing,  
The perpetual shows and marches on land are for him if they  
are for anybody.

He puts things in their attitudes,  
He puts to-day out of himself with plasticity and love,  
He places his own times, reminiscences, parents, brothers  
and  
sisters, associations, employment, politics, so that the  
rest  
never shame them afterward, nor assume to command them.

He is the Answerer,  
What can be answer'd he answers, and what cannot be  
answer'd he  
shows how it cannot be answer'd.

A man is a summons and challenge,  
(It is vain to skulk—do you hear that mocking and laughter?  
do you  
hear the ironical echoes?)

Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action,  
pleasure, pride,  
beat up and down seeking to give satisfaction,  
He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat  
up and  
down also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he may go  
freshly  
and gently and safely by day or by night,  
He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of the  
prying of  
hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more  
welcome or  
universal than he is,

The person he favors by day or sleeps with at night is blessed.

Every existence has its idiom, every thing has an idiom and tongue,  
He resolves all tongues into his own and bestows it upon men, and  
any man translates, and any man translates himself also,  
One part does not counteract another part, he is the joiner, he sees  
how they join.

He says indifferently and alike How are you friend? to the President  
at his levee,  
And he says Good-day my brother, to Cudge that hoes in the sugar-field,  
And both understand him and know that his speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the capitol,  
He walks among the Congress, and one Representative says to another,  
Here is our equal appearing and new.

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,  
And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier, and the sailors that  
he has follow'd the sea,  
And the authors take him for an author, and the artists for an artist,  
And the laborers perceive he could labor with them and love them,  
No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow it or has  
follow'd it,  
No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers and  
sisters there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,  
A Jew to the Jew he seems, a Russ to the Russ, usual and  
near,  
removed from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveler's coffee-house claims  
him,  
The Italian or Frenchman is sure, the German is sure, the  
Spaniard  
is sure, and the island Cuban is sure,  
The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on the  
Mississippi  
or St. Lawrence or Sacramento, or Hudson or Paumanok sound,  
claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect  
blood,  
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar,  
see  
themselves in the ways of him, he strangely transmutes  
them,  
They are not vile any more, they hardly know themselves  
they are so grown.

2  
The indications and tally of time,  
Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophers,  
Time, always without break, indicates itself in parts,  
What always indicates the poet is the crowd of the pleasant  
company  
of singers, and their words,  
The words of the singers are the hours or minutes of the  
light or dark,  
but the words of the maker of poems are the general light  
and dark,  
The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immortality,  
His insight and power encircle things and the human race,  
He is the glory and extract thus far of things and of the  
human race.



The singers do not beget, only the Poet begets,  
The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear often enough,  
but rare  
has the day been, likewise the spot, of the birth of the  
maker  
of poems, the Answerer,  
(Not every century nor every five centuries has contain'd  
such a  
day, for all its names.)

The singers of successive hours of centuries may have  
ostensible  
names, but the name of each of them is one of the singers,  
The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer,  
sweet-singer, night-singer, parlor-singer, love-singer,  
weird-singer, or something else.

All this time and at all times wait the words of true  
poems,  
The words of true poems do not merely please,  
The true poets are not followers of beauty but the august  
masters of beauty;  
The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of  
mothers  
and fathers,  
The words of true poems are the tuft and final applause of  
science.

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason,  
health,  
rudeness of body, withdrawnness,  
Gayety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are some of the words  
of poems.

The sailor and traveler underlie the maker of poems, the  
Answerer,  
The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist,  
artist, all

these underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer.

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,  
They give you to form for yourself poems, religions,  
politics, war,  
peace, behavior, histories, essays, daily life, and every  
thing else,  
They balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes,  
They do not seek beauty, they are sought,  
Forever touching them or close upon them follows beauty,  
longing,  
fain, love-sick.

They prepare for death, yet are they not the finish, but  
rather the outset,  
They bring none to his or her terminus or to be content and  
full,  
Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of  
stars, to  
learn one of the meanings,  
To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the  
ceaseless  
rings and never be quiet again.



# BOOK X

## Our Old Feuillage

Always our old feuillage!  
Always Florida's green peninsula—always the priceless delta  
of  
Louisiana—always the cotton-fields of Alabama and Texas,  
Always California's golden hills and hollows, and the  
silver  
mountains of New Mexico—always soft-breath'd Cuba,  
Always the vast slope drain'd by the Southern sea,  
inseparable with  
the slopes drain'd by the Eastern and Western seas,  
The area the eighty-third year of these States, the three  
and a half  
millions of square miles,  
The eighteen thousand miles of sea-coast and bay-coast on  
the main,  
the thirty thousand miles of river navigation,  
The seven millions of distinct families and the same number  
of dwellings—  
always these, and more, branching forth into numberless  
branches,  
Always the free range and diversity—always the continent of  
Democracy;  
Always the prairies, pastures, forests, vast cities,  
travelers,  
Kanada, the snows;  
Always these compact lands tied at the hips with the belt  
stringing  
the huge oval lakes;  
Always the West with strong native persons, the increasing  
density there,  
the habitans, friendly, threatening, ironical, scorning

invaders;  
All sights, South, North, East—all deeds, promiscuously  
done at all times,  
All characters, movements, growths, a few noticed, myriads  
unnoticed,  
Through Mannahatta's streets I walking, these things  
gathering,  
On interior rivers by night in the glare of pine knots,  
steamboats  
wooding up,  
Sunlight by day on the valley of the Susquehanna, and on  
the valleys  
of the Potomac and Rappahannock, and the valleys of the  
Roanoke  
and Delaware,  
In their northerly wilds beasts of prey haunting the  
Adirondacks the  
hills, or lapping the Saginaw waters to drink,  
In a lonesome inlet a sheldrake lost from the flock,  
sitting on the  
water rocking silently,  
In farmers' barns oxen in the stable, their harvest labor  
done, they  
rest standing, they are too tired,  
Afar on arctic ice the she-walrus lying drowsily while her  
cubs play around,  
The hawk sailing where men have not yet sail'd, the  
farthest polar  
sea, ripply, crystalline, open, beyond the floes,  
White drift spooning ahead where the ship in the tempest  
dashes,  
On solid land what is done in cities as the bells strike  
midnight together,  
In primitive woods the sounds there also sounding, the howl  
of the  
wolf, the scream of the panther, and the hoarse bellow of  
the elk,  
In winter beneath the hard blue ice of Moosehead lake, in  
summer

visible through the clear waters, the great trout swimming,  
In lower latitudes in warmer air in the Carolinas the large  
black  
buzzard floating slowly high beyond the tree tops,  
Below, the red cedar festoon'd with tylandria, the pines  
and  
cypresses growing out of the white sand that spreads far  
and flat,  
Rude boats descending the big Pedee, climbing plants,  
parasites with  
color'd flowers and berries enveloping huge trees,  
The waving drapery on the live-oak trailing long and low,  
noiselessly waved by the wind,  
The camp of Georgia wagoners just after dark, the supper-  
fires and  
the cooking and eating by whites and negroes,  
Thirty or forty great wagons, the mules, cattle, horses,  
feeding  
from troughs,  
The shadows, gleams, up under the leaves of the old  
sycamore-trees,  
the flames with the black smoke from the pitch-pine curling  
and rising;  
Southern fishermen fishing, the sounds and inlets of North  
Carolina's coast, the shad-fishery and the herring-fishery,  
the  
large sweep-seines, the windlasses on shore work'd by  
horses, the  
clearing, curing, and packing-houses;  
Deep in the forest in piney woods turpentine dropping from  
the  
incisions in the trees, there are the turpentine works,  
There are the negroes at work in good health, the ground in  
all  
directions is cover'd with pine straw;  
In Tennessee and Kentucky slaves busy in the coalings, at  
the forge,  
by the furnace-blaze, or at the corn-shucking,  
In Virginia, the planter's son returning after a long

absence,  
joyfully welcom'd and kiss'd by the aged mulatto nurse,  
On rivers boatmen safely moor'd at nightfall in their boats  
under  
shelter of high banks,  
Some of the younger men dance to the sound of the banjo or  
fiddle,  
others sit on the gunwale smoking and talking;  
Late in the afternoon the mocking-bird, the American mimic,  
singing  
in the Great Dismal Swamp,  
There are the greenish waters, the resinous odor, the  
plenteous  
moss, the cypress-tree, and the juniper-tree;  
Northward, young men of Mannahatta, the target company from  
an  
excursion returning home at evening, the musket-muzzles all  
bear bunches of flowers presented by women;  
Children at play, or on his father's lap a young boy fallen  
asleep,  
(how his lips move! how he smiles in his sleep!)  
The scout riding on horseback over the plains west of the  
Mississippi, he ascends a knoll and sweeps his eyes around;  
California life, the miner, bearded, dress'd in his rude  
costume,  
the stanch California friendship, the sweet air, the graves  
one  
in passing meets solitary just aside the horse-path;  
Down in Texas the cotton-field, the negro-cabins, drivers  
driving  
mules or oxen before rude carts, cotton bales piled on  
banks  
and wharves;  
Encircling all, vast-darting up and wide, the American  
Soul, with  
equal hemispheres, one Love, one Dilation or Pride;  
In arriere the peace-talk with the Iroquois the aborigines,  
the  
calumet, the pipe of good-will, arbitration, and

Indorsement,  
The sachem blowing the smoke first toward the sun and then  
toward  
the earth,  
The drama of the scalp-dance enacted with painted faces and  
guttural  
exclamations,  
The setting out of the war-party, the long and stealthy  
march,  
The single file, the swinging hatchets, the surprise and  
slaughter  
of enemies;  
All the acts, scenes, ways, persons, attitudes of these  
States,  
reminiscences, institutions,  
All these States compact, every square mile of these States  
without  
excepting a particle;  
Me pleas'd, rambling in lanes and country fields,  
Paumanok's fields,  
Observing the spiral flight of two little yellow  
butterflies  
shuffling between each other, ascending high in the air,  
The darting swallow, the destroyer of insects, the fall  
traveler  
southward but returning northward early in the spring,  
The country boy at the close of the day driving the herd of  
cows and  
shouting to them as they loiter to browse by the roadside,  
The city wharf, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore,  
Charleston, New  
Orleans, San Francisco,  
The departing ships when the sailors heave at the capstan;  
Evening-me in my room-the setting sun,  
The setting summer sun shining in my open window, showing  
the  
swarm of flies, suspended, balancing in the air in the  
centre  
of the room, darting athwart, up and down, casting swift



shadows in specks on the opposite wall where the shine is;  
The athletic American matron speaking in public to crowds  
of listeners,  
Males, females, immigrants, combinations, the copiousness,  
the  
individuality of the States, each for itself—the  
moneymakers,  
Factories, machinery, the mechanical forces, the windlass,  
lever,  
pulley, all certainties,  
The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity,  
In space the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars—on  
the firm  
earth, the lands, my lands,  
O lands! all so dear to me—what you are, (whatever it is,) I  
putting it  
at random in these songs, become a part of that, whatever  
it is,  
Southward there, I screaming, with wings slow flapping,  
with the  
myriads of gulls wintering along the coasts of Florida,  
Otherways there atwixt the banks of the Arkansaw, the Rio  
Grande,  
the Nueces, the Brazos, the Tombigbee, the Red River, the  
Saskatchewan or the Osage, I with the spring waters  
laughing  
and skipping and running,  
Northward, on the sands, on some shallow bay of Paumanok, I  
with  
parties of snowy herons wading in the wet to seek worms and  
aquatic plants,  
Retreating, triumphantly twittering, the king-bird, from  
piercing  
the crow with its bill, for amusement—and I triumphantly  
twittering,  
The migrating flock of wild geese alighting in autumn to  
refresh  
themselves, the body of the flock feed, the sentinels  
outside

move around with erect heads watching, and are from time to time  
reliev'd by other sentinels—and I feeding and taking turns  
with the rest,  
In Kanadian forests the moose, large as an ox, corner'd by  
hunters,  
rising desperately on his hind-feet, and plunging with his  
fore-feet, the hoofs as sharp as knives—and I, plunging at  
the  
hunters, corner'd and desperate,  
In the Mannahatta, streets, piers, shipping, store-houses,  
and the  
countless workmen working in the shops,  
And I too of the Mannahatta, singing thereof—and no less in  
myself  
than the whole of the Mannahatta in itself,  
Singing the song of These, my ever-united lands—my body no  
more  
inevitably united, part to part, and made out of a thousand  
diverse contributions one identity, any more than my lands  
are inevitably united and made ONE IDENTITY;  
Nativities, climates, the grass of the great pastoral  
Plains,  
Cities, labors, death, animals, products, war, good and  
evil—these me,  
These affording, in all their particulars, the old  
feuillage to me  
and to America, how can I do less than pass the clew of the  
union  
of them, to afford the like to you?  
Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine leaves,  
that you  
also be eligible as I am?  
How can I but as here chanting, invite you for yourself to  
collect  
bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of these States?





# BOOK XI

## A Song of Joys

O to make the most jubilant song!  
Full of music—full of manhood, womanhood, infancy!  
Full of common employments—full of grain and trees.

O for the voices of animals—O for the swiftness and balance  
of fishes!

O for the dropping of raindrops in a song!  
O for the sunshine and motion of waves in a song!

O the joy of my spirit—it is uncaged—it darts like  
lightning!

It is not enough to have this globe or a certain time,  
I will have thousands of globes and all time.

O the engineer's joys! to go with a locomotive!  
To hear the hiss of steam, the merry shriek, the steam-  
whistle, the  
laughing locomotive!  
To push with resistless way and speed off in the distance.

O the gleesome saunter over fields and hillsides!  
The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds, the moist  
fresh  
stillness of the woods,  
The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak, and all  
through the forenoon.

O the horseman's and horsewoman's joys!  
The saddle, the gallop, the pressure upon the seat, the  
cool  
gurgling by the ears and hair.

O the fireman's joys!  
I hear the alarm at dead of night,  
I hear bells, shouts! I pass the crowd, I run!  
The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.

O the joy of the strong-brawn'd fighter, towering in the  
arena in  
perfect condition, conscious of power, thirsting to meet  
his opponent.

O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only the  
human soul is  
capable of generating and emitting in steady and limitless  
floods.

O the mother's joys!  
The watching, the endurance, the precious love, the  
anguish, the  
patiently yielded life.

O the of increase, growth, recuperation,  
The joy of soothing and pacifying, the joy of concord and  
harmony.

O to go back to the place where I was born,  
To hear the birds sing once more,  
To ramble about the house and barn and over the fields once  
more,  
And through the orchard and along the old lanes once more.

O to have been brought up on bays, lagoons, creeks, or  
along the coast,  
To continue and be employ'd there all my life,  
The briny and damp smell, the shore, the salt weeds exposed  
at low water,  
The work of fishermen, the work of the eel-fisher and clam-  
fisher;  
I come with my clam-rake and spade, I come with my eel-

spear,  
Is the tide out? I Join the group of clam-diggers on the  
flats,  
I laugh and work with them, I joke at my work like a  
mettlesome young man;  
In winter I take my eel-basket and eel-spear and travel out  
on foot  
on the ice—I have a small axe to cut holes in the ice,  
Behold me well-clothed going gayly or returning in the  
afternoon,  
my brood of tough boys accompanying me,  
My brood of grown and part-grown boys, who love to be with  
no  
one else so well as they love to be with me,  
By day to work with me, and by night to sleep with me.

Another time in warm weather out in a boat, to lift the  
lobster-pots  
where they are sunk with heavy stones, (I know the buoys,)  
O the sweetness of the Fifth-month morning upon the water  
as I row  
just before sunrise toward the buoys,  
I pull the wicker pots up slantingly, the dark green  
lobsters are  
desperate with their claws as I take them out, I insert  
wooden pegs in the 'oints of their pincers,  
I go to all the places one after another, and then row back  
to the shore,  
There in a huge kettle of boiling water the lobsters shall  
be boil'd  
till their color becomes scarlet.

Another time mackerel-taking,  
Voracious, mad for the hook, near the surface, they seem to  
fill the  
water for miles;  
Another time fishing for rock-fish in Chesapeake bay, I one  
of the

brown-faced crew;

Another time trailing for blue-fish off Paumanok, I stand  
with braced body,  
My left foot is on the gunwale, my right arm throws far out  
the  
coils of slender rope,  
In sight around me the quick veering and darting of fifty  
skiffs, my  
companions.

O boating on the rivers,  
The voyage down the St. Lawrence, the superb scenery, the  
steamers,  
The ships sailing, the Thousand Islands, the occasional  
timber-raft  
and the raftsmen with long-reaching sweep-oars,  
The little huts on the rafts, and the stream of smoke when  
they cook  
supper at evening.

(O something pernicious and dread!  
Something far away from a puny and pious life!  
Something unproved! something in a trance!  
Something escaped from the anchorage and driving free.)

O to work in mines, or forging iron,  
Foundry casting, the foundry itself, the rude high roof,  
the ample  
and shadow'd space,  
The furnace, the hot liquid pour'd out and running.

O to resume the joys of the soldier!  
To feel the presence of a brave commanding officer—to feel  
his sympathy!  
To behold his calmness—to be warm'd in the rays of his  
smile!  
To go to battle—to hear the bugles play and the drums beat!  
To hear the crash of artillery—to see the glittering of the  
bayonets



and musket-barrels in the sun!

To see men fall and die and not complain!  
To taste the savage taste of blood—to be so devilish!  
To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the enemy.

O the whaleman's joys! O I cruise my old cruise again!  
I feel the ship's motion under me, I feel the Atlantic  
breezes fanning me,  
I hear the cry again sent down from the mast-head, There—  
she blows!  
Again I spring up the rigging to look with the rest—we  
descend,  
wild with excitement,  
I leap in the lower'd boat, we row toward our prey where he  
lies,  
We approach stealthy and silent, I see the mountainous  
mass,  
lethargic, basking,  
I see the harpooneer standing up, I see the weapon dart  
from his  
vigorous arm;  
O swift again far out in the ocean the wounded whale,  
settling,  
running to windward, tows me,  
Again I see him rise to breathe, we row close again,  
I see a lance driven through his side, press'd deep, turn'd  
in the wound,  
Again we back off, I see him settle again, the life is  
leaving him fast,  
As he rises he spouts blood, I see him swim in circles  
narrower and  
narrower, swiftly cutting the water—I see him die,  
He gives one convulsive leap in the centre of the circle,  
and then  
falls flat and still in the bloody foam.

O the old manhood of me, my noblest joy of all!  
My children and grand-children, my white hair and beard,

My largeness, calmness, majesty, out of the long stretch of my life.

O ripen'd joy of womanhood! O happiness at last!  
I am more than eighty years of age, I am the most venerable mother,  
How clear is my mind-how all people draw nigh to me!  
What attractions are these beyond any before? what bloom more  
than the bloom of youth?  
What beauty is this that descends upon me and rises out of me?

O the orator's joys!  
To inflate the chest, to roll the thunder of the voice out from the  
ribs and throat,  
To make the people rage, weep, hate, desire, with yourself,  
To lead America-to quell America with a great tongue.

O the joy of my soul leaning pois'd on itself, receiving identity through  
materials and loving them, observing characters and absorbing them,  
My soul vibrated back to me from them, from sight, hearing, touch,  
reason, articulation, comparison, memory, and the like,  
The real life of my senses and flesh transcending my senses and flesh,  
My body done with materials, my sight done with my material eyes,  
Proved to me this day beyond cavil that it is not my material eyes  
which finally see,  
Nor my material body which finally loves, walks, laughs, shouts,  
embraces, procreates.

O the farmer's joys!

Ohioan's,        Illinoisian's,        Wisconsin's,        Kanadian's,  
Iowan's,  
Kansian's, Missourian's, Oregonese' joys!  
To rise at peep of day and pass forth nimbly to work,  
To plough land in the fall for winter-sown crops,  
To plough land in the spring for maize,  
To train orchards, to graft the trees, to gather apples in  
the fall.

O to bathe in the swimming-bath, or in a good place along  
shore,  
To splash the water! to walk ankle-deep, or race naked  
along the shore.

O to realize space!  
The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,  
To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and flying  
clouds, as one with them.

O the joy a manly self-hood!  
To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any tyrant  
known or unknown,  
To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and elastic,  
To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye,  
To speak with a full and sonorous voice out of a broad  
chest,  
To confront with your personality all the other  
personalities of the earth.

Knowist thou the excellent joys of youth?  
Joys of the dear companions and of the merry word and  
laughing face?  
Joy of the glad light-beaming day, joy of the wide-breath'd  
games?  
Joy of sweet music, joy of the lighted ball-room and the  
dancers?  
Joy of the plenteous dinner, strong carouse and drinking?

Yet O my soul supreme!

Knowest thou the joys of pensive thought?  
Joys of the free and lonesome heart, the tender, gloomy  
heart?  
Joys of the solitary walk, the spirit bow'd yet proud, the  
suffering  
and the struggle?  
The agonistic throes, the ecstasies, joys of the solemn  
musings day  
or night?  
Joys of the thought of Death, the great spheres Time and  
Space?  
Prophetic joys of better, loftier love's ideals, the divine  
wife,  
the sweet, eternal, perfect comrade?  
Joys all thine own undying one, joys worthy thee O soul.

O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a slave,  
To meet life as a powerful conqueror,  
No fumes, no ennui, no more complaints or scornful  
criticisms,  
To these proud laws of the air, the water and the ground,  
proving  
my interior soul impregnable,  
And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me.

For not life's joys alone I sing, repeating—the joy of  
death!  
The beautiful touch of Death, soothing and benumbing a few  
moments,  
for reasons,  
Myself discharging my excrementitious body to be burn'd, or  
render'd  
to powder, or buried,  
My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres,  
My voided body nothing more to me, returning to the  
purifications,  
further offices, eternal uses of the earth.

O to attract by more than attraction!

How it is I know not—yet behold! the something which obeys  
none  
of the rest,  
It is offensive, never defensive—yet how magnetic it draws.

O to struggle against great odds, to meet enemies  
undaunted!  
To be entirely alone with them, to find how much one can  
stand!  
To look strife, torture, prison, popular odium, face to  
face!  
To mount the scaffold, to advance to the muzzles of guns  
with  
perfect nonchalance!  
To be indeed a God!

O to sail to sea in a ship!  
To leave this steady unendurable land,  
To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the  
sidewalks and the  
houses,  
To leave you O you solid motionless land, and entering a  
ship,  
To sail and sail and sail!

O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys!  
To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on,  
float on!  
To be a sailor of the world bound for all ports,  
A ship itself, (see indeed these sails I spread to the sun  
and air,)  
A swift and swelling ship full of rich words, full of joys.



# BOOK XII

## Song of the Broad-Axe

1

Weapon shapely, naked, wan,  
Head from the mother's bowels drawn,  
Wooded flesh and metal bone, limb only one and lip only  
one,  
Gray-blue leaf by red-heat grown, helve produced from a  
little seed sown,  
Resting the grass amid and upon,  
To be lean'd and to lean on.

Strong shapes and attributes of strong shapes, masculine  
trades,  
sights and sounds.  
Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music,  
Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys of  
the great organ.

2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind,  
Welcome are lands of pine and oak,  
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig,  
Welcome are lands of gold,  
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize, welcome those of the  
grape,  
Welcome are lands of sugar and rice,  
Welcome the cotton-lands, welcome those of the white potato  
and  
sweet potato,  
Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies,  
Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, openings,  
Welcome the measureless grazing-lands, welcome the teeming

soil of  
orchards, flax, honey, hemp;  
Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands,  
Lands rich as lands of gold or wheat and fruit lands,  
Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores,  
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc,  
Lands of iron—lands of the make of the axe.

3  
The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it,  
The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space  
clear'd for garden,  
The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves after the  
storm is lull'd,  
The walling and moaning at intervals, the thought of the  
sea,  
The thought of ships struck in the storm and put on their  
beam ends,  
and the cutting away of masts,  
The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd houses  
and barns,  
The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a venture  
of men,  
families, goods,  
The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,  
The voyage of those who sought a New England and found it,  
the outset  
anywhere,  
The settlements of the Arkansas, Colorado, Ottawa,  
Willamette,  
The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-  
bags;  
The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,  
The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men with their clear  
untrimm'd faces,  
The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on  
themselves,  
The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies, the  
boundless



impatience of restraint,  
The loose drift of character, the inkling through random  
types, the  
solidification;  
The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard  
schooners and  
sloops, the raftsmen, the pioneer,  
Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the woods,  
stripes of  
snow on the limbs of trees, the occasional snapping,  
The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry song,  
the natural  
life of the woods, the strong day's work,  
The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the  
talk, the  
bed of hemlock-boughs and the bear-skin;  
The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,  
The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,  
The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places,  
laying them  
regular,  
Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises according  
as they  
were prepared,  
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men,  
their  
curv'd limbs,  
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins,  
holding on by  
posts and braces,  
The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the  
axe,  
The floor-men forcing the planks close to be nail'd,  
Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the  
bearers,  
The echoes resounding through the vacant building:  
The huge storehouse carried up in the city well under way,  
The six framing-men, two in the middle and two at each end,  
carefully

bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick for a cross-beam,  
The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right  
hands rapidly  
laying the long side-wall, two hundred feet from front to  
rear,  
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of  
the  
trowels striking the bricks,  
The bricks one after another each laid so workmanlike in  
its place,  
and set with a knock of the trowel-handle,  
The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-boards,  
and the  
steady replenishing by the hod-men;  
Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of well-  
grown apprentices,  
The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log shaping it  
toward  
the shape of a mast,  
The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly into  
the pine,  
The butter-color'd chips flying off in great flakes and  
slivers,  
The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in easy  
costumes,  
The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-heads,  
floats,  
stays against the sea;  
The city fireman, the fire that suddenly bursts forth in  
the  
close-pack'd square,  
The arriving engines, the hoarse shouts, the nimble  
stepping and daring,  
The strong command through the fire-trumpets, the falling  
in line,  
the rise and fall of the arms forcing the water,  
The slender, spasmic, blue-white jets, the bringing to bear  
of the  
hooks and ladders and their execution,

the crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or through  
floors  
if the fire smoulders under them,  
The crowd with their lit faces watching, the glare and  
dense shadows;  
The forger at his forge-furnace and the user of iron after  
him,  
The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder and  
temperer,  
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel and  
trying the  
edge with his thumb,  
The one who clean-shapes the handle and sets it firmly in  
the socket;  
The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past users  
also,  
The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,  
The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,  
The Roman lictors preceding the consuls,  
The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,  
The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted  
head,  
The death-howl, the limpsy tumbling body, the rush of  
friend and foe  
thither,  
The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,  
The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates,  
the truce  
and parley,  
The sack of an old city in its time,  
The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously and  
disorderly,  
Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,  
Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of  
women in the  
gripe of brigands,  
Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old  
persons despairing,  
The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,

The list of all executive deeds and words just or unjust,  
The power of personality just or unjust.

4

Muscle and pluck forever!

What invigorates life invigorates death,  
And the dead advance as much as the living advance,  
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,  
For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much  
as the  
delicacies of the earth and of man,  
And nothing endures but personal qualities.

What do you think endures?

Do you think a great city endures?

Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared  
constitution? or the  
best built steamships?  
Or hotels of granite and iron? or any chef-d'oeuvres of  
engineering,  
forts, armaments?

Away! these are not to be cherish'd for themselves,  
They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians play  
for them,  
The show passes, all does well enough of course,  
All does very well till one flash of defiance.

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,  
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in  
the  
whole world.

5

The place where a great city stands is not the place of  
stretch'd  
wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of produce merely,  
Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the  
anchor-lifters of the departing,

Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or  
shops  
selling goods from the rest of the earth,  
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the  
place where  
money is plentiest,  
Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators  
and bards,  
Where the city stands that is belov'd by these, and loves  
them in  
return and understands them,  
Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words  
and deeds,  
Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,  
Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,  
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases,  
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending  
audacity of  
elected persons,  
Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the  
whistle of  
death pours its sweeping and unript waves,  
Where outside authority enters always after the precedence  
of inside  
authority,  
Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and  
President,  
Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for pay,  
Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to  
depend on  
themselves,  
Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,  
Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,  
Where women walk in public processions in the streets the  
same as the men,  
Where they enter the public assembly and take places the  
same as the men;

Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,  
Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,  
Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,  
Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,  
There the great city stands.

6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed!  
How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels  
before a  
man's or woman's look!

All waits or goes by default till a strong being appears;  
A strong being is the proof of the race and of the ability  
of the universe,  
When he or she appears materials are overaw'd,  
The dispute on the soul stops,  
The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd back, or  
laid away.

What is your money-making now? what can it do now?  
What is your respectability now?  
What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions,  
statute-books, now?  
Where are your jibes of being now?  
Where are your cavils about the soul now?

7

A sterile landscape covers the ore, there is as good as the  
best for  
all the forbidding appearance,  
There is the mine, there are the miners,  
The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd, the  
hammersmen  
are at hand with their tongs and hammers,  
What always served and always serves is at hand.

Than this nothing has better served, it has served all,  
Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and long

ere the Greek,  
Served in building the buildings that last longer than any,  
Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient  
Hindustanee,  
Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi, served those  
whose  
relics remain in Central America,  
Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn  
pillars and  
the druids,  
Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the  
snow-cover'd hills of Scandinavia,  
Served those who time out of mind made on the granite walls  
rough  
sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships, ocean waves,  
Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths, served the  
pastoral  
tribes and nomads,  
Served the long distant Kelt, served the hardy pirates of  
the Baltic,  
Served before any of those the venerable and harmless men  
of Ethiopia,  
Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure and  
the  
making of those for war,  
Served all great works on land and all great works on the  
sea,  
For the mediaeval ages and before the mediaeval ages,  
Served not the living only then as now, but served the  
dead.

8

I see the European headsman,  
He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs and strong  
naked arms,  
And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately European headsman?  
Whose is that blood upon you so wet and sticky?)

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs,  
I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,  
Ghosts of dead lords, uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd  
ministers, rejected kings,  
Rivals, traitors, poisoners, disgraced chieftains and the  
rest.

I see those who in any land have died for the good cause,  
The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run  
out,  
(Mind you O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall never  
run out.)

I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe,  
Both blade and helve are clean,  
They spirt no more the blood of European nobles, they clasp  
no more  
the necks of queens.

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless,  
I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy, I see no longer  
any axe upon it,

I see the mighty and friendly emblem of the power of my own  
race,  
the newest, largest race.

9

(America! I do not vaunt my love for you,  
I have what I have.)

The axe leaps!  
The solid forest gives fluid utterances,  
They tumble forth, they rise and form,  
Hut, tent, landing, survey,  
Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade,  
Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, lamb, lath, panel, gable,  
Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ, exhibition-house,



library,  
Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, turret, porch,  
Hoe, rake, pitchfork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-  
plane, mallet,  
wedge, rounce,  
Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,  
Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame, and what  
not,  
Capitols of States, and capitol of the nation of States,  
Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans or for  
the poor or sick,  
Manhattan steamboats and clippers taking the measure of all  
seas.

The shapes arise!

Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users and all  
that  
neighbors them,  
Cutters down of wood and haulers of it to the Penobscot or  
Kenebec,  
Dwellers in cabins among the Californian mountains or by  
the little  
lakes, or on the Columbia,  
Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande,  
friendly  
gatherings, the characters and fun,  
Dwellers along the St. Lawrence, or north in Kanada, or  
down by the  
Yellowstone, dwellers on coasts and off coasts,  
Seal-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages  
through the ice.

The shapes arise!

Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets,  
Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads,  
Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks,  
girders, arches,  
Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal craft,  
river craft,

Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western  
seas, and in  
many a bay and by-place,  
The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the  
hackmatack-roots for knees,  
The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds,  
the  
workmen busy outside and inside,  
The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger,  
the adze,  
bolt, line, square, gouge, and bead-plane.

10

The shapes arise!  
The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,  
The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his shroud,  
The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the  
posts of  
the bride's bed,  
The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers  
beneath,  
the shape of the babe's cradle,  
The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for  
dancers' feet,  
The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of the  
friendly  
parents and children,  
The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young man  
and  
woman, the roof over the well-married young man and woman,  
The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste  
wife, and joyously  
eaten by the chaste husband, content after his day's work.

The shapes arise!  
The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room, and of  
him or  
her seated in the place,  
The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the young

rum-drinker  
and the old rum-drinker,  
The shape of the shamed and angry stairs trod by sneaking  
foot- steps,  
The shape of the sly settee, and the adulterous unwholesome  
couple,  
The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish winnings  
and losings,  
The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and  
sentenced  
murderer, the murderer with haggard face and pinion'd arms,  
The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and  
white-lipp'd  
crowd, the dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise!  
Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances,  
The door passing the dissever'd friend flush'd and in  
haste,  
The door that admits good news and bad news,  
The door whence the son left home confident and puff'd up,  
The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous  
absence,  
diseas'd, broken down, without innocence, without means.

11  
Her shape arises,  
She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever,  
The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her gross  
and soil'd,  
She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is conceal'd  
from her,  
She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor,  
She is the best belov'd, it is without exception, she has  
no reason  
to fear and she does not fear,  
Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions, are  
idle to  
her as she passes,

She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do not  
offend her,  
She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them, she  
is strong,  
She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger than  
she is.

12

The main shapes arise!

Shapes of Democracy total, result of centuries,  
Shapes ever projecting other shapes,  
Shapes of turbulent manly cities,  
Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole earth,  
Shapes bracing the earth and braced with the whole earth.





# BOOK XIII

## Song of the Exposition

1

(Ah little reck's the laborer,  
How near his work is holding him to God,  
The loving Laborer through space and time.)

After all not to create only, or found only,  
But to bring perhaps from afar what is already founded,  
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free,  
To fill the gross the torpid bulk with vital religious  
fire,  
Not to repel or destroy so much as accept, fuse,  
rehabilitate,  
To obey as well as command, to follow more than to lead,  
These also are the lessons of our New World;  
While how little the New after all, how much the Old, Old  
World!

Long and long has the grass been growing,  
Long and long has the rain been falling,  
Long has the globe been rolling round.

2

Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,  
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,  
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Aeneas',  
Odysseus' wanderings,  
Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy  
Parnassus,  
Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on jaffa's gate  
and on  
Mount Moriah,

The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish  
castles,  
and Italian collections,  
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried  
domain  
awaits, demands you.

3

Responsive to our summons,  
Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,  
Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,  
She comes! I hear the rustling of her gown,  
I scent the odor of her breath's delicious fragrance,  
I mark her step divine, her curious eyes a-turning,  
rolling,  
Upon this very scene.

The dame of dames! can I believe then,  
Those ancient temples, sculptures classic, could none of  
them retain her?  
Nor shades of Virgil and Dante, nor myriad memories, poems,  
old  
associations, magnetize and hold on to her?  
But that she's left them all—and here?

Yes, if you will allow me to say so,  
I, my friends, if you do not, can plainly see her,  
The same undying soul of earth's, activity's, beauty's,  
heroism's  
expression,  
Out from her evolutions hither come, ended the strata of  
her former themes,  
Hidden and cover'd by to-day's, foundation of to-day's,  
Ended, deceas'd through time, her voice by Castaly's  
fountain,  
Silent the broken-lipp'd Sphynx in Egypt, silent all those  
century-  
baffling tombs,  
Ended for aye the epics of Asia's, Europe's helmeted



warriors, ended  
the primitive call of the muses,  
Calliope's call forever closed, Clio, Melpomene, Thalia  
dead,  
Ended the stately rhythmus of Una and Oriana, ended the  
quest of the  
holy Graal,  
Jerusalem a handful of ashes blown by the wind, extinct,  
The Crusaders' streams of shadowy midnight troops sped with  
the sunrise,  
Amadis, Tancred, utterly gone, Charlemagne, Roland, Oliver  
gone,  
Palmerin, ogre, departed, vanish'd the turrets that Usk  
from its  
waters reflected,  
Arthur vanish'd with all his knights, Merlin and Lancelot  
and  
Galahad, all gone, dissolv'd utterly like an exhalation;  
Pass'd! pass'd! for us, forever pass'd, that once so mighty  
world,  
now void, inanimate, phantom world,  
Embroider'd, dazzling, foreign world, with all its gorgeous  
legends, myths,  
Its kings and castles proud, its priests and warlike lords  
and  
courtly dames,  
Pass'd to its charnel vault, coffin'd with crown and armor  
on,  
Blazon'd with Shakspeare's purple page,  
And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

I say I see, my friends, if you do not, the illustrious  
emigre, (having it  
is true in her day, although the same, changed, journey'd  
considerable,)  
Making directly for this rendezvous, vigorously clearing a  
path for  
herself, striding through the confusion,  
By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismay'd,

Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial  
fertilizers,  
Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,  
She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware!

4

But hold—don't I forget my manners?  
To introduce the stranger, (what else indeed do I live to  
chant  
for?) to thee Columbia;  
In liberty's name welcome immortal! clasp hands,  
And ever henceforth sisters dear be both.

Fear not O Muse! truly new ways and days receive, surround  
you,  
I candidly confess a queer, queer race, of novel fashion,  
And yet the same old human race, the same within, without,  
Faces and hearts the same, feelings the same, yearnings the  
same,  
The same old love, beauty and use the same.

5

We do not blame thee elder World, nor really separate  
ourselves from thee,  
(Would the son separate himself from the father?)  
Looking back on thee, seeing thee to thy duties, grandeurs,  
through  
past ages bending, building,  
We build to ours to-day.

Mightier than Egypt's tombs,  
Fairer than Grecia's, Roma's temples,  
Prouder than Milan's statued, spired cathedral,  
More picturesque than Rhenish castle-keeps,  
We plan even now to raise, beyond them all,  
Thy great cathedral sacred industry, no tomb,  
A keep for life for practical invention.

As in a waking vision,

E'en while I chant I see it rise, I scan and prophesy  
outside and in,  
Its manifold ensemble.

Around a palace, loftier, fairer, ampler than any yet,  
Earth's modern wonder, history's seven outstripping,  
High rising tier on tier with glass and iron facades,  
Gladdening the sun and sky, enhued in cheerfulest hues,  
Bronze, lilac, robin's-egg, marine and crimson,  
Over whose golden roof shall flaunt, beneath thy banner  
Freedom,  
The banners of the States and flags of every land,  
A brood of lofty, fair, but lesser palaces shall cluster.

Somewhere within their walls shall all that forwards  
perfect human  
life be started,  
Tried, taught, advanced, visibly exhibited.

Not only all the world of works, trade, products,  
But all the workmen of the world here to be represented.

Here shall you trace in flowing operation,  
In every state of practical, busy movement, the rills of  
civilization,  
Materials here under your eye shall change their shape as  
if by magic,  
The cotton shall be pick'd almost in the very field,  
Shall be dried, clean'd, ginn'd, baled, spun into thread  
and cloth  
before you,  
You shall see hands at work at all the old processes and  
all the new ones,  
You shall see the various grains and how flour is made and  
then  
bread baked by the bakers,  
You shall see the crude ores of California and Nevada  
passing on and  
on till they become bullion,

You shall watch how the printer sets type, and learn what a composing-stick is,  
You shall mark in amazement the Hoe press whirling its cylinders,  
shedding the printed leaves steady and fast,  
The photograph, model, watch, pin, nail, shall be created before you.

In large calm halls, a stately museum shall teach you the infinite  
lessons of minerals,  
In another, woods, plants, vegetation shall be illustrated—in  
another animals, animal life and development.

One stately house shall be the music house,  
Others for other arts—learning, the sciences, shall all be here,  
None shall be slighted, none but shall here be honor'd, help'd, exempl'd.

6  
(This, this and these, America, shall be your pyramids and obelisks,  
Your Alexandrian Pharos, gardens of Babylon,  
Your temple at Olympia.)

The male and female many laboring not,  
Shall ever here confront the laboring many,  
With precious benefits to both, glory to all,  
To thee America, and thee eternal Muse.

And here shall ye inhabit powerful Matrons!  
In your vast state vaster than all the old,  
Echoed through long, long centuries to come,  
To sound of different, prouder songs, with stronger themes,  
Practical, peaceful life, the people's life, the People themselves,  
Lifted, illumin'd, bathed in peace—elate, secure in peace.

Away with themes of war! away with war itself!  
Hence from my shuddering sight to never more return that  
show of  
blacken'd, mutilated corpses!  
That hell unpent and raid of blood, fit for wild tigers or  
for  
lop-tongued wolves, not reasoning men,  
And in its stead speed industry's campaigns,  
With thy undaunted armies, engineering,  
Thy pennants labor, loosen'd to the breeze,  
Thy bugles sounding loud and clear.

Away with old romance!  
Away with novels, plots and plays of foreign courts,  
Away with love-verses sugar'd in rhyme, the intrigues,  
amours of idlers,  
Fitted for only banquets of the night where dancers to late  
music slide,  
The unhealthy pleasures, extravagant dissipations of the  
few,  
With perfumes, heat and wine, beneath the dazzling  
chandeliers.

To you ye reverent sane sisters,  
I raise a voice for far superber themes for poets and for  
art,  
To exalt the present and the real,  
To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and  
trade,  
To sing in songs how exercise and chemical life are never  
to be baffled,  
To manual work for each and all, to plough, hoe, dig,  
To plant and tend the tree, the berry, vegetables, flowers,  
For every man to see to it that he really do something, for  
every woman too;  
To use the hammer and the saw, (rip, or cross-cut,)  
To cultivate a turn for carpentering, plastering, painting,

To work as tailor, tailoress, nurse, hostler, porter,  
To invent a little, something ingenious, to aid the  
washing, cooking,  
cleaning,  
And hold it no disgrace to take a hand at them themselves.

I say I bring thee Muse to-day and here,  
All occupations, duties broad and close,  
Toil, healthy toil and sweat, endless, without cessation,  
The old, old practical burdens, interests, joys,  
The family, parentage, childhood, husband and wife,  
The house-comforts, the house itself and all its  
belongings,  
Food and its preservation, chemistry applied to it,  
Whatever forms the average, strong, complete, sweet-blooded  
man or  
woman, the perfect longeve personality,  
And helps its present life to health and happiness, and  
shapes its soul,  
For the eternal real life to come.

With latest connections, works, the inter-transportation of  
the world,  
Steam-power, the great express lines, gas, petroleum,  
These triumphs of our time, the Atlantic's delicate cable,  
The Pacific railroad, the Suez canal, the Mont Cenis and  
Gothard and  
Hoosac tunnels, the Brooklyn bridge,  
This earth all spann'd with iron rails, with lines of  
steamships  
threading in every sea,  
Our own rondure, the current globe I bring.

8

And thou America,  
Thy offspring towering e'er so high, yet higher Thee above  
all towering,  
With Victory on thy left, and at thy right hand Law;  
Thou Union holding all, fusing, absorbing, tolerating all,

Thee, ever thee, I sing.

Thou, also thou, a World,  
With all thy wide geographies, manifold, different,  
distant,  
Rounded by thee in one—one common orbic language,  
One common indivisible destiny for All.

And by the spells which ye vouchsafe to those your  
ministers in earnest,  
I here personify and call my themes, to make them pass  
before ye.

Behold, America! (and thou, ineffable guest and sister!)  
For thee come trooping up thy waters and thy lands;  
Behold! thy fields and farms, thy far-off woods and  
mountains,  
As in procession coming.

Behold, the sea itself,  
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships;  
See, where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle  
the  
green and blue,  
See, the steamers coming and going, steaming in or out of  
port,  
See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.

Behold, in Oregon, far in the north and west,  
Or in Maine, far in the north and east, thy cheerful  
axemen,  
Wielding all day their axes.

Behold, on the lakes, thy pilots at their wheels, thy  
oarsmen,  
How the ash writhes under those muscular arms!

There by the furnace, and there by the anvil,  
Behold thy sturdy blacksmiths swinging their sledges,

Overhand so steady, overhand they turn and fall with joyous  
clank,  
Like a tumult of laughter.

Mark the spirit of invention everywhere, thy rapid patents,  
Thy continual workshops, foundries, risen or rising,  
See, from their chimneys how the tall flame-fires stream.

Mark, thy interminable farms, North, South,  
Thy wealthy daughter-states, Eastern and Western,  
The varied products of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri,  
Georgia, Texas,  
and the rest,  
Thy limitless crops, grass, wheat, sugar, oil, corn, rice,  
hemp, hops,  
Thy barns all fill'd, the endless freight-train and the  
bulging store-house,  
The grapes that ripen on thy vines, the apples in thy  
orchards,  
Thy incalculable lumber, beef, pork, potatoes, thy coal,  
thy gold  
and silver,  
The inexhaustible iron in thy mines.

All thine O sacred Union!  
Ships, farms, shops, barns, factories, mines,  
City and State, North, South, item and aggregate,  
We dedicate, dread Mother, all to thee!

Protectress absolute, thou! bulwark of all!  
For well we know that while thou givest each and all,  
(generous as God,)  
Without thee neither all nor each, nor land, home,  
Nor ship, nor mine, nor any here this day secure,  
Nor aught, nor any day secure.

9

And thou, the Emblem waving over all!  
Delicate beauty, a word to thee, (it may be salutary,)



Remember thou hast not always been as here to-day so  
comfortably  
ensovereign'd,  
In other scenes than these have I observ'd thee flag,  
Not quite so trim and whole and freshly blooming in folds  
of  
stainless silk,  
But I have seen thee bunting, to tatters torn upon thy  
splinter'd staff,  
Or clutch'd to some young color-bearer's breast with  
desperate hands,  
Savagely struggled for, for life or death, fought over  
long,  
'Mid cannons' thunder-crash and many a curse and groan and  
yell, and  
rifle-volleys cracking sharp,  
And moving masses as wild demons surging, and lives as  
nothing risk'd,  
For thy mere remnant grimed with dirt and smoke and sopp'd  
in blood,  
For sake of that, my beauty, and that thou might'st dally  
as now  
secure up there,  
Many a good man have I seen go under.

Now here and these and hence in peace, all thine O Flag!  
And here and hence for thee, O universal Muse! and thou for  
them!  
And here and hence O Union, all the work and workmen thine!  
None separate from thee—henceforth One only, we and thou,  
(For the blood of the children, what is it, only the blood  
maternal?  
And lives and works, what are they all at last, except the  
roads to  
faith and death?)

While we rehearse our measureless wealth, it is for thee,  
dear Mother,  
We own it all and several to-day indissoluble in thee;

Think not our chant, our show, merely for products gross or  
lucre—

it is for thee, the soul in thee, electric, spiritual!

Our farms, inventions, crops, we own in thee! cities and  
States in thee!

Our freedom all in thee! our very lives in thee!



# BOOK XIV

## Song of the Redwood-Tree

1  
A California song,  
A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to breathe  
as air,  
A chorus of dryads, fading, departing, or hamadryads  
departing,  
A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the earth and  
sky,  
Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest dense.

Farewell my brethren,  
Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighboring waters,  
My time has ended, my term has come.

Along the northern coast,  
Just back from the rock-bound shore and the caves,  
In the saline air from the sea in the Mendocino country,  
With the surge for base and accompaniment low and hoarse,  
With crackling blows of axes sounding musically driven by  
strong arms,  
Riven deep by the sharp tongues of the axes, there in the  
redwood  
forest dense,  
I heard the might tree its death-chant chanting.

The choppers heard not, the camp shanties echoed not,  
The quick-ear'd teamsters and chain and jack-screw men  
heard not,  
As the wood-spirits came from their haunts of a thousand  
years to  
join the refrain,

But in my soul I plainly heard.

Murmuring out of its myriad leaves,  
Down from its lofty top rising two hundred feet high,  
Out of its stalwart trunk and limbs, out of its foot-thick  
bark,  
That chant of the seasons and time, chant not of the past  
only but  
the future.

You untold life of me,  
And all you venerable and innocent joys,  
Perennial hardy life of me with joys 'mid rain and many a  
summer sun,  
And the white snows and night and the wild winds;  
O the great patient rugged joys, my soul's strong joys  
unreck'd by man,  
(For know I bear the soul befitting me, I too have  
consciousness, identity,  
And all the rocks and mountains have, and all the earth,)  
Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,  
Our time, our term has come.

Nor yield we mournfully majestic brothers,  
We who have grandly fill'd our time,  
With Nature's calm content, with tacit huge delight,  
We welcome what we wrought for through the past,  
And leave the field for them.

For them predicted long,  
For a superb race, they too to grandly fill their time,  
For them we abdicate, in them ourselves ye forest kings.'  
In them these skies and airs, these mountain peaks, Shasta,  
Nevadas,  
These huge precipitous cliffs, this amplitude, these  
valleys, far Yosemite,  
To be in them absorb'd, assimilated.

Then to aloftier strain,

Still prouder, more ecstatic rose the chant,  
As if the heirs, the deities of the West,  
Joining with master-tongue bore part.

Not wan from Asia's fetiches,  
Nor red from Europe's old dynastic slaughter-house,  
(Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of  
wars and  
scaffolds everywhere,  
But come from Nature's long and harmless throes, peacefully  
builded thence,  
These virgin lands, lands of the Western shore,  
To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new,  
You promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate.

You occult deep volitions,  
You average spiritual manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on  
yourself,  
giving not taking law,  
You womanhood divine, mistress and source of all, whence  
life and  
love and aught that comes from life and love,  
You unseen moral essence of all the vast materials of  
America, age  
upon age working in death the same as life,)  
You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really shape  
and mould  
the New World, adjusting it to Time and Space,  
You hidden national will lying in your abysms, conceal'd  
but ever alert,  
You past and present purposes tenaciously pursued, may-be  
unconscious of yourselves,  
Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations of the  
surface;  
You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds,  
arts,  
statutes, literatures,  
Here build your homes for good, establish here, these areas  
entire,

lands of the Western shore,  
We pledge, we dedicate to you.

For man of you, your characteristic race,  
Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower  
proportionate to Nature,  
Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck'd by  
wall or roof,  
Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently  
inure,  
Here heed himself, unfold himself, (not others' formulas  
heed,)  
here fill his time,  
To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,  
To disappear, to serve.

Thus on the northern coast,  
In the echo of teamsters' calls and the clinking chains,  
and the  
music of choppers' axes,  
The falling trunk and limbs, the crash, the muffled shriek,  
the groan,  
Such words combined from the redwood-tree, as of voices  
ecstatic,  
ancient and rustling,  
The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, withdrawing,  
All their recesses of forests and mountains leaving,  
From the Cascade range to the Wahsatch, or Idaho far, or  
Utah,  
To the deities of the modern henceforth yielding,  
The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming humanity,  
the  
settlements, features all,  
In the Mendocino woods I caught.

2

The flashing and golden pageant of California,  
The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny and ample lands,  
The long and varied stretch from Puget sound to Colorado

south,  
Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air, valleys and  
mountain cliffs,  
The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow, the silent,  
cyclic chemistry,  
The slow and steady ages plodding, the unoccupied surface  
ripening,  
the rich ores forming beneath;  
At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession,  
A swarming and busy race settling and organizing  
everywhere,  
Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going out  
to the  
whole world,  
To India and China and Australia and the thousand island  
paradises  
of the Pacific,  
Populous cities, the latest inventions, the steamers on the  
rivers,  
the railroads, with many a thrifty farm, with machinery,  
And wool and wheat and the grape, and diggings of yellow  
gold.

3

But more in you than these, lands of the Western shore,  
(These but the means, the implements, the standing-ground,)  
I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands of  
years,  
till now deferr'd,  
Promis'd to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the race.

The new society at last, proportionate to Nature,  
In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or stalwart  
trees imperial,  
In woman more, far more, than all your gold or vines, or  
even vital air.

Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,  
I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and



ideal,  
Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America,  
heir of  
the past so grand,  
To build a grander future.



# BOOK XV

## A Song for Occupations

1

A song for occupations!

In the labor of engines and trades and the labor of fields

I find

the developments,

And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen!

Were all educations practical and ornamental well display'd

out of

me, what would it amount to?

Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise

statesman,

what would it amount to?

Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would

that satisfy you?

The learn'd, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms,

A man like me and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master I,

I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will

have my

own whoever enjoys me,

I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop I stand as high as the

highest in the

same shop,

If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend I

demand as

good as your brother or dearest friend,  
If your lover, husband, wife, is welcome by day or night, I  
must be  
personally as welcome,  
If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for  
your sake,  
If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do you  
think I  
cannot remember my own foolish and outlaw'd deeds?  
If you carouse at the table I carouse at the opposite side  
of the table,  
If you meet some stranger in the streets and love him or  
her, why  
I often meet strangers in the street and love them.

Why what have you thought of yourself?  
Is it you then that thought yourself less?  
Is it you that thought the President greater than you?  
Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than  
you?

(Because you are greasy or pimples, or were once drunk, or  
a thief,  
Or that you are diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute,  
Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar  
and never  
saw your name in print,  
Do you give in that you are any less immortal?)

2

Souls of men and women! it is not you I call unseen,  
unheard,  
untouchable and untouching,  
It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle  
whether  
you are alive or no,  
I own publicly who you are, if nobody else owns.

Grown, half-grown and babe, of this country and every

country,  
in-doors and out-doors, one just as much as the other, I  
see,  
And all else behind or through them.

The wife, and she is not one jot less than the husband,  
The daughter, and she is just as good as the son,  
The mother, and she is every bit as much as the father.

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,  
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working on  
farms,  
Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,  
All these I see, but nigher and farther the same I see,  
None shall escape me and none shall wish to escape me.

I bring what you much need yet always have,  
Not money, amours, dress, eating, erudition, but as good,  
I send no agent or medium, offer no representative of  
value, but  
offer the value itself.

There is something that comes to one now and perpetually,  
It is not what is printed, preach'd, discussed, it eludes  
discussion  
and print,  
It is not to be put in a book, it is not in this book,  
It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther from you  
than your  
hearing and sight are from you,  
It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest, it is ever  
provoked by them.

You may read in many languages, yet read nothing about it,  
You may read the President's message and read nothing about  
it there,  
Nothing in the reports from the State department or  
Treasury  
department, or in the daily papers or weekly papers,

Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or any  
accounts  
of stock.

3

The sun and stars that float in the open air,  
The apple-shaped earth and we upon it, surely the drift of  
them is  
something grand,  
I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and that  
it is happiness,  
And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a  
speculation or  
bon-mot or reconnoissance,  
And that it is not something which by luck may turn out  
well for us,  
and without luck must be a failure for us,  
And not something which may yet be retracted in a certain  
contingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and  
identity, the  
greed that with perfect complaisance devours all things,  
The endless pride and outstretching of man, unspeakable  
joys and sorrows,  
The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees, and  
the wonders  
that fill each minute of time forever,  
What have you reckon'd them for, camerado?  
Have you reckon'd them for your trade or farm-work? or for  
the  
profits of your store?  
Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's  
leisure,  
or a lady's leisure?

Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance and  
form that it  
might be painted in a picture?

Or men and women that they might be written of, and songs sung?

Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and harmonious combinations

and the fluids of the air, as subjects for the savans?

Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts?

Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy names?

Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables, or agriculture itself?

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, legends, collections, and

the practice handed along in manufactures, will we rate them so high?

Will we rate our cash and business high? I have no objection,

I rate them as high as the highest—then a child born of a woman and

man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and our Constitution grand,

I do not say they are not grand and good, for they are,

I am this day just as much in love with them as you,

Then I am in love with You, and with all my fellows upon the earth.

We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say they are not divine,

I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still,

It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life,

Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the earth,

than they are shed out of you.

are,  
The President is there in the White House for you, it is  
not you who  
are here for him,  
The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you, not you here  
for them,  
The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month for you,  
Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters of  
cities, the  
going and coming of commerce and malls, are all for you.

List close my scholars dear,  
Doctrines, politics and civilization exurge from you,  
Sculpture and monuments and any thing inscribed anywhere  
are tallied in you,  
The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the  
records  
reach is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same,  
If you were not breathing and walking here, where would  
they all be?  
The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and plays  
would  
be vacuums.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon  
it,  
(Did you think it was in the white or gray stone? or the  
lines of  
the arches and cornices?)

All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded by  
the instruments,  
It is not the violins and the cornets, it is not the oboe  
nor the  
beating drums, nor the score of the baritone singer singing  
his  
sweet romanza, nor that of the men's chorus, nor that of  
the  
women's chorus,



It is nearer and farther than they.

5

Will the whole come back then?

Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-glass? is

there nothing greater or more?

Does all sit there with you, with the mystic unseen soul?

Strange and hard that paradox true I give,

Objects gross and the unseen soul are one.

House-building, measuring, sawing the boards,

Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering, tin-roofing,

shingle-dressing,

Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, flagging of sidewalks by flaggers,

The pump, the pile-driver, the great derrick, the coal-kiln and brickkiln,

Coal-mines and all that is down there, the lamps in the darkness,

echoes, songs, what meditations, what vast native thoughts looking through smutch'd faces,

Iron-works, forge-fires in the mountains or by river-banks, men

around feeling the melt with huge crowbars, lumps of ore, the

due combining of ore, limestone, coal,

The blast-furnace and the puddling-furnace, the loup-lump at the

bottom of the melt at last, the rolling-mill, the stumpy bars

of pig-iron, the strong clean-shaped Trail for railroads,

Oil-works, silk-works, white-lead-works, the sugar-house,

steam-saws, the great mills and factories,

Stone-cutting, shapely trimmings for facades or window or door-lintels,

the mallet, the tooth-chisel, the jib to protect the thumb,

the calking-iron, the kettle of boiling vault-cement, and  
the fire  
under the kettle,  
The cotton-bale, the stevedore's hook, the saw and buck of  
the  
sawyer, the mould of the moulder, the working-knife of the  
butcher, the ice-saw, and all the work with ice,  
The work and tools of the rigger, grappler, sail-maker,  
block-maker,  
Goods of gutta-percha, papier-mache, colors, brushes,  
brush-making,  
glazier's implements,  
The veneer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments, the  
decanter  
and glasses, the shears and flat-iron,  
The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart measure,  
the  
counter and stool, the writing-pen of quill or metal, the  
making  
of all sorts of edged tools,  
The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, every thing that  
is done  
by brewers, wine-makers, vinegar-makers,  
Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-  
twisting,  
distilling, sign-painting, lime-burning, cotton-picking,  
electroplating, electrotyping, stereotyping,  
Stave-machines, planing-machines, reaping-machines,  
ploughing-machines, thrashing-machines, steam wagons,  
The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray,  
Pyrotechny, letting off color'd fireworks at night, fancy  
figures and jets;  
Beef on the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the  
butcher, the  
butcher in his killing-clothes,  
The pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook,  
the  
scalding's tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the packer's  
maul,

and the plenteous winterwork of pork-packing,  
Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice, the  
barrels and  
the half and quarter barrels, the loaded barges, the high  
piles  
on wharves and levees,  
The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroads,  
coasters,  
fish-boats, canals;  
The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the shop,  
yard,  
store, or factory,  
These shows all near you by day and night-workman! whoever  
you  
are, your daily life!

In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that and them  
far more  
than you estimated, (and far less also,)  
In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you and  
me,  
In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all things,  
regardless of estimation,  
In them the development good—in them all themes, hints,  
possibilities.

I do not affirm that what you see beyond is futile, I do  
not advise  
you to stop,  
I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,  
But I say that none lead to greater than these lead to.

6

Will you seek afar off? you surely come back at last,  
In things best known to you finding the best, or as good as  
the best,  
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest,  
lovingest,  
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place,

not for  
another hour but this hour,  
Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend,  
brother,  
nighest neighbor—woman in mother, sister, wife,  
The popular tastes and employments taking precedence in  
poems or anywhere,  
You workwomen and workmen of these States having your own  
divine  
and strong life,  
And all else giving place to men and women like you.  
When the psalm sings instead of the singer,  
  
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,  
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver  
that carved  
the supporting desk,  
When I can touch the body of books by night or by day, and  
when they  
touch my body back again,  
When a university course convinces like a slumbering woman  
and child  
convince,  
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-  
watchman's daughter,  
When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are my  
friendly  
companions,  
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much of them as  
I do  
of men and women like you.



# BOOK XVI

## A Song of the Rolling Earth

1  
A song of the rolling earth, and of words according,  
Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright  
lines?  
those curves, angles, dots?  
No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in  
the ground  
and sea,  
They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words, those  
delicious sounds  
out of your friends' mouths?  
No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,  
(In the best poems re-appears the body, man's or woman's,  
well-shaped, natural, gay,  
Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or the  
need of shame.)

Air, soil, water, fire—those are words,  
I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate  
with  
theirs—my name is nothing to them,  
Though it were told in the three thousand languages, what  
would  
air, soil, water, fire, know of my name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture, are  
words,

sayings, meanings,  
The charms that go with the mere looks of some men and  
women,  
are sayings and meanings also.

The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words of the  
earth,  
The masters know the earth's words and use them more than  
audible words.

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,  
The earth neither lags nor hastens,  
It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself  
from the jump,  
It is not half beautiful only, defects and excrescences  
show just as  
much as perfections show.

The earth does not withhold, it is generous enough,  
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not so  
conceal'd either,  
They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print,  
They are imbued through all things conveying themselves  
willingly,  
Conveying a sentiment and invitation, I utter and utter,  
I speak not, yet if you hear me not of what avail am I to  
you?  
To bear, to better, lacking these of what avail am I?

(Accouche! accouchez!  
Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there?  
Will you squat and stifle there?)

The earth does not argue,  
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,  
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,  
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,  
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,  
Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies, shuts none

out.

The earth does not exhibit itself nor refuse to exhibit  
itself,  
possesses still underneath,  
Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus of  
heroes, the  
wail of slaves,  
Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying, laughter  
of young  
people, accents of bargainers,  
Underneath these possessing words that never fall.

To her children the words of the eloquent dumb great mother  
never fail,  
The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail and  
reflection  
does not fall,  
Also the day and night do not fall, and the voyage we  
pursue does not fall.

Of the interminable sisters,  
Of the ceaseless cotillions of sisters,  
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder and  
younger sisters,  
The beautiful sister we know dances on with the rest.

With her ample back towards every beholder,  
With the fascinations of youth and the equal fascinations  
of age,  
Sits she whom I too love like the rest, sits undisturb'd,  
Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror,  
while her  
eyes glance back from it,  
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,  
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her own  
face.

Seen at hand or seen at a distance,



Duly the twenty-four appear in public every day,  
Duly approach and pass with their companions or a  
companion,  
Looking from no countenances of their own, but from the  
countenances  
of those who are with them,  
From the countenances of children or women or the manly  
countenance,  
From the open countenances of animals or from inanimate  
things,  
From the landscape or waters or from the exquisite  
apparition of the sky,  
From our countenances, mine and yours, faithfully returning  
them,  
Every day in public appearing without fall, but never twice  
with the  
same companions.

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three hundred and  
sixty-five resistlessly round the sun;  
Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three  
hundred and  
sixty-five offsets of the first, sure and necessary as  
they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,  
Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, forever withstanding, passing,  
carrying,  
The soul's realization and determination still inheriting,  
The fluid vacuum around and ahead still entering and  
dividing,  
No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on no rock  
striking,  
Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing losing,  
Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,  
The divine ship sails the divine sea.

you,  
The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is  
solid and liquid,  
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the  
sky,  
For none more than you are the present and the past,  
For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself, is the word  
of the  
past and present, and the true word of immortality;  
No one can acquire for another—not one,  
Not one can grow for another—not one.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him,  
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him,  
The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most to him,  
The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,  
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,  
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—it  
cannot fail,  
The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor  
and actress  
not to the audience,  
And no man understands any greatness or goodness but his  
own, or  
the indication of his own.

3  
I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her  
who shall  
be complete,  
The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who  
remains  
jagged and broken.

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not

emulate those  
of the earth,  
There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate  
the  
theory of the earth,  
No politics, song, religion, behavior, or what not, is of  
account,  
unless it compare with the amplitude of the earth,  
Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality,  
rectitude of  
the earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than that  
which  
responds love,  
It is that which contains itself, which never invites and  
never refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,  
All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings  
of the earth,  
Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the  
truths of the earth,  
Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print  
cannot touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best,  
It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot,  
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,  
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,  
I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow, all or any is  
best,  
It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper, easier,  
nearer,  
Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before,

The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,  
Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as  
real as before,  
But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,  
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,  
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

4

These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,  
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what were they  
then?  
If they had not reference to you in especial what were they  
then?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith  
that tells  
the best,  
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best  
untold.

Say on, sayers! sing on, singers!  
Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth!  
Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,  
It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in  
use,  
When the materials are all prepared and ready, the  
architects shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,  
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,  
The greatest among them shall be he who best knows you, and  
encloses  
all and is faithful to all,  
He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive  
that you  
are not an iota less than they,  
You shall be fully glorified in them.



# Youth, Day, Old Age and Night

Youth, large, lusty, loving—youth full of grace, force, fascination,

Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal grace,  
force, fascination?

Day full-blown and splendid—day of the immense sun, action, ambition, laughter,

The Night follows close with millions of suns, and sleep and  
restoring darkness.



# BOOK XVII. BIRDS OF PASSAGE

## Song of the Universal

1

Come said the Muse,  
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,  
Sing me the universal.

In this broad earth of ours,  
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,  
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,  
Nestles the seed perfection.

By every life a share or more or less,  
None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd the seed  
is waiting.

2

Lo! keen-eyed towering science,  
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking,  
Successive absolute fiats issuing.

Yet again, lo! the soul, above all science,  
For it has history gather'd like husks around the globe,  
For it the entire star-myriads roll through the sky.

In spiral routes by long detours,  
(As a much-tacking ship upon the sea,)  
For it the partial to the permanent flowing,  
For it the real to the ideal tends.

For it the mystic evolution,  
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also  
justified.



Forth from their masks, no matter what,  
From the huge festering trunk, from craft and guile and  
tears,  
Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.

Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,  
Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds of men  
and states,  
Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,  
Only the good is universal.

3  
Over the mountain-growths disease and sorrow,  
An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering,  
High in the purer, happier air.

From imperfection's murkiest cloud,  
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,  
One flash of heaven's glory.

To fashion's, custom's discord,  
To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,  
Soothing each lull a strain is heard, just heard,  
From some far shore the final chorus sounding.

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,  
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,  
Along the mighty labyrinth.

4  
And thou America,  
For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its reality,  
For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived.

Thou too surroundest all,  
Embracing carrying welcoming all, thou too by pathways  
broad and new,  
To the ideal tendest.

The measure'd faiths of other lands, the grandeurs of the  
past,  
Are not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own,  
Deific faiths and amplitudes, absorbing, comprehending all,  
All eligible to all.

All, all for immortality,  
Love like the light silently wrapping all,  
Nature's amelioration blessing all,  
The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,  
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images  
ripening.

Give me O God to sing that thought,  
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,  
In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not from  
us,  
Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,  
Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream?  
Nay but the lack of it the dream,  
And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,  
And all the world a dream.



# Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Come my tan-faced children,  
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,  
Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,  
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of  
danger,  
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,  
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and  
friendship,  
Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the  
foremost,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?  
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there  
beyond the seas?  
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,  
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,  
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the  
march,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We detachments steady throwing,  
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,  
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown  
ways,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,  
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the  
mines within,  
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil  
upheaving,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,  
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the  
high plateaus,  
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail we  
come,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,  
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the  
continental  
blood intervein'd,  
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all  
the Northern,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless restless race!  
O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender love  
for all!  
O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Raise the mighty mother mistress,  
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry  
mistress,  
(bend your heads all,)  
Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive,  
weapon'd mistress,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children, resolute children,

By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or  
falter,  
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us  
urging,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks,  
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead  
quickly fill'd,  
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never  
stopping,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!  
Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?  
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap  
is fill'd.  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the world,  
Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement  
beat,  
Holding single or together, steady moving to the front, all  
for us,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,  
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,  
All the seamen and the landmen, all the masters with their  
slaves,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent lovers,  
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the  
wicked,  
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the  
dying,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and body,  
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,  
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions  
pressing,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Lo, the darting bowling orb!  
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns and  
planets,  
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

These are of us, they are with us,  
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in  
embryo wait behind,  
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel  
clearing,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you daughters of the West!  
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you  
wives!  
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Minstrels latent on the prairies!  
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have done  
your work,)  
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp  
amid us,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Not for delectations sweet,  
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the  
studious,  
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame  
enjoyment,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?

Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd and bolted doors?

Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Has the night descended?

Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged  
nodding

on our way?

Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause  
oblivious,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Till with sound of trumpet,

Far, far off the daybreak call-hark! how loud and clear I  
hear it wind,

Swift! to the head of the army!—swift! spring to your  
places,

Pioneers! O pioneers!



# To You

Whoever you are, I fear you are walking the walks of  
dreams,  
I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your  
feet and hands,  
Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade,  
manners,  
troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from  
you,  
Your true soul and body appear before me.  
They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops,  
work,  
farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling, eating,  
drinking,  
suffering, dying.

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you be  
my poem,  
I whisper with my lips close to your ear.  
I have loved many women and men, but I love none better  
than you.

O I have been dilatory and dumb,  
I should have made my way straight to you long ago,  
I should have blabb'd nothing but you, I should have  
chanted nothing  
but you.

I will leave all and come and make the hymns of you,  
None has understood you, but I understand you,  
None has done justice to you, you have not done justice to  
yourself,  
None but has found you imperfect, I only find no  
imperfection in you,  
None but would subordinate you, I only am he who will never

consent  
to subordinate you,  
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better,  
God,  
beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups and the centre-figure of all,  
From the head of the centre-figure spreading a nimbus of gold-color'd light,  
But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus  
of gold-color'd light,  
From my hand from the brain of every man and woman it streams,  
effulgently flowing forever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you!  
You have not known what you are, you have slumber'd upon yourself  
all your life,  
Your eyelids have been the same as closed most of the time,  
What you have done returns already in mockeries,  
(Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return in mockeries, what is their return?)

The mockeries are not you,  
Underneath them and within them I see you lurk,  
I pursue you where none else has pursued you,  
Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night, the accustom'd routine, if these conceal you from others or from  
yourself, they do not conceal you from me,  
The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if these  
balk others they do not balk me,  
The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness, greed,  
premature death, all these I part aside.

There is no endowment in man or woman that is not tallied  
in you,  
There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but as good  
is in you,  
No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you,  
No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure waits  
for you.

As for me, I give nothing to any one except I give the like  
carefully  
to you,  
I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner than  
I sing  
the songs of the glory of you.

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard!  
These shows of the East and West are tame compared to you,  
These immense meadows, these interminable rivers, you are  
immense  
and interminable as they,  
These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes  
of apparent  
dissolution, you are he or she who is master or mistress  
over them,  
Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, elements,  
pain,  
passion, dissolution.

The hopples fall from your ankles, you find an unfailing  
sufficiency,  
Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by the  
rest,  
whatever you are promulges itself,  
Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided,  
nothing  
is scanted,  
Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what  
you are

picks its way.

# France [the 18th Year of these States

A great year and place  
A harsh discordant natal scream out-sounding, to touch the  
mother's  
heart closer than any yet.

I walk'd the shores of my Eastern sea,  
Heard over the waves the little voice,  
Saw the divine infant where she woke mournfully wailing,  
amid the  
roar of cannon, curses, shouts, crash of falling buildings,  
Was not so sick from the blood in the gutters running, nor  
from the single  
corpses, nor those in heaps, nor those borne away in the  
tumbrils,  
Was not so desperate at the battues of death—was not so  
shock'd at  
the repeated fusillades of the guns.

Pale, silent, stern, what could I say to that long-accrued  
retribution?  
Could I wish humanity different?  
Could I wish the people made of wood and stone?  
Or that there be no justice in destiny or time?

O Liberty! O mate for me!  
Here too the blaze, the grape-shot and the axe, in reserve,  
to fetch  
them out in case of need,  
Here too, though long repress, can never be destroy'd,  
Here too could rise at last murdering and ecstatic,  
Here too demanding full arrears of vengeance.

Hence I sign this salute over the sea,  
And I do not deny that terrible red birth and baptism,  
But remember the little voice that I heard wailing, and  
wait with  
perfect trust, no matter how long,  
And from to-day sad and cogent I maintain the bequeath'd  
cause, as  
for all lands,  
And I send these words to Paris with my love,  
And I guess some chansonniers there will understand them,  
For I guess there is latent music yet in France, floods of  
it,  
O I hear already the bustle of instruments, they will soon  
be  
drowning all that would interrupt them,  
O I think the east wind brings a triumphal and free march,  
It reaches hither, it swells me to Joyful madness,  
I will run transpose it in words, to justify  
I will yet sing a song for you ma femme.

# Myself and Mine

Myself and mine gymnastic ever,  
To stand the cold or heat, to take good aim with a gun, to  
sail a  
boat, to manage horses, to beget superb children,  
To speak readily and clearly, to feel at home among common  
people,  
And to hold our own in terrible positions on land and sea.

Not for an embroiderer,  
(There will always be plenty of embroiderers, I welcome  
them also,)  
But for the fibre of things and for inherent men and women.

Not to chisel ornaments,  
But to chisel with free stroke the heads and limbs of  
plenteous  
supreme Gods, that the States may realize them walking and  
talking.

Let me have my own way,  
Let others promulge the laws, I will make no account of the  
laws,  
Let others praise eminent men and hold up peace, I hold up  
agitation  
and conflict,  
I praise no eminent man, I rebuke to his face the one that  
was  
thought most worthy.

(Who are you? and what are you secretly guilty of all your  
life?  
Will you turn aside all your life? will you grub and  
chatter all  
your life?

And who are you, blabbing by rote, years, pages, languages,  
reminiscences,  
Unwitting to-day that you do not know how to speak properly  
a single word?)

Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,  
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does, fresh and  
modern  
continually.

I give nothing as duties,  
What others give as duties I give as living impulses,  
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

Let others dispose of questions, I dispose of nothing, I  
arouse  
unanswerable questions,  
Who are they I see and touch, and what about them?  
What about these likes of myself that draw me so close by  
tender  
directions and indirections?

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends,  
but  
listen to my enemies, as I myself do,  
I charge you forever reject those who would expound me, for  
I cannot  
expound myself,  
I charge that there be no theory or school founded out of  
me,  
I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.

After me, vista!  
O I see life is not short, but immeasurably long,  
I henceforth tread the world chaste, temperate, an early  
riser, a  
steady grower,  
Every hour the semen of centuries, and still of centuries.



I must follow up these continual lessons of the air, water,  
earth,  
I perceive I have no time to lose.

# Year of Meteors [1859-60]

Year of meteors! brooding year!

I would bind in words retrospective some of your deeds and signs,

I would sing your contest for the 19th Presidentiad,

I would sing how an old man, tall, with white hair, mounted the

scaffold in Virginia,

(I was at hand, silent I stood with teeth shut close, I watch'd,

I stood very near you old man when cool and indifferent, but trembling

with age and your unheal'd wounds you mounted the scaffold;)

I would sing in my copious song your census returns of the States,

The tables of population and products, I would sing of your ships

and their cargoes,

The proud black ships of Manhattan arriving, some fill'd with

immigrants, some from the isthmus with cargoes of gold,

Songs thereof would I sing, to all that hitherward comes would welcome give,

And you would I sing, fair stripling! welcome to you from me, young

prince of England!

(Remember you surging Manhattan's crowds as you pass'd with your

cortege of nobles?

There in the crowds stood I, and singled you out with attachment;)

Nor forget I to sing of the wonder, the ship as she swam up my bay,

Well-shaped and stately the Great Eastern swam up my bay,

she was  
600 feet long,  
Her moving swiftly surrounded by myriads of small craft I  
forget not  
to sing;  
Nor the comet that came unannounced out of the north  
flaring in heaven,  
Nor the strange huge meteor-procession dazzling and clear  
shooting  
over our heads,  
(A moment, a moment long it sail'd its balls of unearthly  
light over  
our heads,  
Then departed, dropt in the night, and was gone;)  
Of such, and fitful as they, I sing—with gleams from them  
would  
gleam and patch these chants,  
Your chants, O year all mottled with evil and good—year of  
forebodings!  
Year of comets and meteors transient and strange—lo! even  
here one  
equally transient and strange!  
As I flit through you hastily, soon to fall and be gone,  
what is this chant,  
What am I myself but one of your meteors?

# With Antecedents

1

With antecedents,  
With my fathers and mothers and the accumulations of past  
ages,  
With all which, had it not been, I would not now be here,  
as I am,  
With Egypt, India, Phenicia, Greece and Rome,  
With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb and the Saxon,  
With antique maritime ventures, laws, artisanship, wars and  
journeys,  
With the poet, the skald, the saga, the myth, and the  
oracle,  
With the sale of slaves, with enthusiasts, with the  
troubadour, the  
crusader, and the monk,  
With those old continents whence we have come to this new  
continent,  
With the fading kingdoms and kings over there,  
With the fading religions and priests,  
With the small shores we look back to from our own large  
and present shores,  
With countless years drawing themselves onward and arrived  
at these years,  
You and me arrived—America arrived and making this year,  
This year! sending itself ahead countless years to come.

2

O but it is not the years—it is I, it is You,  
We touch all laws and tally all antecedents,  
We are the skald, the oracle, the monk and the knight, we  
easily  
include them and more,  
We stand amid time beginningless and endless, we stand amid  
evil and good,

All swings around us, there is as much darkness as light,  
The very sun swings itself and its system of planets around  
us,

Its sun, and its again, all swing around us.

As for me, (torn, stormy, amid these vehement days,) I  
have the idea of all, and am all and believe in all,  
I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true, I  
reject no part.

(Have I forgotten any part? any thing in the past?  
Come to me whoever and whatever, till I give you  
recognition.)

I respect Assyria, China, Teutonia, and the Hebrews,  
I adopt each theory, myth, god, and demigod,  
I see that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies, are true,  
without  
exception,

I assert that all past days were what they must have been,  
And that they could no-how have been better than they were,  
And that to-day is what it must be, and that America is,  
And that to-day and America could no-how be better than  
they are.

3  
In the name of these States and in your and my name, the  
Past,  
And in the name of these States and in your and my name,  
the Present time.

I know that the past was great and the future will be  
great,  
And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present  
time,  
(For the sake of him I typify, for the common average man's  
sake,  
your sake if you are he,)  
And that where I am or you are this present day, there is

the centre  
of all days, all races,  
And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of  
races  
and days, or ever will come.



# BOOK XVIII

## A Broadway Pageant

1

Over the Western sea hither from Nippon come,  
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,  
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed,  
impassive,  
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

Libertad! I do not know whether others behold what I  
behold,  
In the procession along with the nobles of Nippon, the  
errand-bearers,  
Bringing up the rear, hovering above, around, or in the  
ranks marching,  
But I will sing you a song of what I behold Libertad.

When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to her  
pavements,  
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud  
roar love,  
When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and smell I  
love  
spit their salutes,  
When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and  
heaven-clouds canopy my city with a delicate thin haze,  
When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests at  
the  
wharves, thicken with colors,  
When every ship richly drest carries her flag at the peak,  
When pennants trail and street-festoons hang from the  
windows,  
When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers and



foot-standers, when the mass is densest,  
When the facades of the houses are alive with people, when  
eyes  
gaze riveted tens of thousands at a time,  
When the guests from the islands advance, when the pageant  
moves  
forward visible,  
When the summons is made, when the answer that waited  
thousands  
of years answers,  
I too arising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge  
with the  
crowd, and gaze with them.

2  
Superb-faced Manhattan!  
Comrade Americanos! to us, then at last the Orient comes.  
To us, my city,  
Where our tall-topt marble and iron beauties range on  
opposite  
sides, to walk in the space between,  
To-day our Antipodes comes.

The Originatress comes,  
The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race of  
eld,  
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with  
passion,  
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,  
With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering  
eyes,  
The race of Brahma comes.

See my cantabile! these and more are flashing to us from  
the procession,  
As it moves changing, a kaleidoscope divine it moves  
changing before us.  
For not the envoys nor the tann'd Japanee from his island  
only,

Lithe and silent the Hindoo appears, the Asiatic continent  
itself  
appears, the past, the dead,  
The murky night-morning of wonder and fable inscrutable,  
The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-bees,  
The north, the sweltering south, eastern Assyria, the  
Hebrews, the  
ancient of ancients,  
Vast desolated cities, the gliding present, all of these  
and more  
are in the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it,  
The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia, the coast  
beyond,  
The coast you henceforth are facing—you Libertad! from your  
Western  
golden shores,  
The countries there with their populations, the millions  
en-masse  
are curiously here,  
The swarming market-places, the temples with idols ranged  
along the  
sides or at the end, bonze, brahmin, and llama,  
Mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman,  
The singing-girl and the dancing-girl, the ecstatic  
persons, the  
secluded emperors,  
Confucius himself, the great poets and heroes, the  
warriors, the castes,  
all,  
Trooping up, crowding from all directions, from the Altay  
mountains,  
From Thibet, from the four winding and far-flowing rivers  
of China,  
From the southern peninsulas and the demi-continental  
islands, from  
Malaysia,  
These and whatever belongs to them palpable show forth to

me, and  
are seiz'd by me,  
And I am seiz'd by them, and friendlily held by them,  
Till as here them all I chant, Libertad! for themselves and  
for you.

For I too raising my voice join the ranks of this pageant,  
I am the chanter, I chant aloud over the pageant,  
I chant the world on my Western sea,  
I chant copious the islands beyond, thick as stars in the  
sky,  
I chant the new empire grander than any before, as in a  
vision it  
comes to me,  
I chant America the mistress, I chant a greater supremacy,  
I chant projected a thousand blooming cities yet in time on  
those  
groups of sea-islands,  
My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archipelagoes,  
My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,  
Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its work,  
races  
reborn, refresh'd,  
Lives, works resumed—the object I know not—but the old, the  
Asiatic  
renew'd as it must be,  
Commencing from this day surrounded by the world.

3  
And you Libertad of the world!  
You shall sit in the middle well-pois'd thousands and  
thousands of years,  
As to-day from one side the nobles of Asia come to you,  
As to-morrow from the other side the queen of England sends  
her  
eldest son to you.

The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed,  
The ring is circled, the journey is done,

The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd, nevertheless the  
perfume  
pours copiously out of the whole box.

Young Libertad! with the venerable Asia, the all-mother,  
Be considerate with her now and ever hot Libertad, for you  
are all,  
Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother now sending  
messages  
over the archipelagoes to you,  
Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

Here the children straying westward so long? so wide the  
tramping?  
Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward from  
Paradise so long?  
Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all the  
while  
unknown, for you, for reasons?

They are justified, they are accomplish'd, they shall now  
be turn'd  
the other way also, to travel toward you thence,  
They shall now also march obediently eastward for your sake  
Libertad.



# BOOK XIX. SEA-DRIFT

## Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,  
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,  
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the  
child  
leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,  
Down from the shower'd halo,  
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as  
if they  
were alive,  
Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,  
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,  
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and  
fallings I heard,  
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as  
if with tears,  
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in  
the mist,  
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,  
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,  
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,  
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,  
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,  
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,  
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,  
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,  
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,  
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond  
them,  
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,  
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass  
was growing,  
Up this seashore in some briers,  
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,  
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with  
brown,  
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,  
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent,  
with bright eyes,  
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never  
disturbing  
them,  
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! shine! shine!  
Pour down your warmth, great sun.'  
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!  
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,  
Day come white, or night come black,  
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,  
Singing all time, minding no time,  
While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,  
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,  
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,  
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,  
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,  
And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,  
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,  
Or flitting from brier to brier by day,  
I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird,  
The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!

Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;

I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,

All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,

Down almost amid the slapping waves,

Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,

He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

Yes my brother I know,

The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,

For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,

Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the shadows,

Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and sights

after their sorts,

The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,

I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,

Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,

Following you my brother.

Soothe! soothe! soothe!

Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,

And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one close,

But my love soothes not me, not me.

Low hangs the moon, it rose late,

It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.

O madly the sea pushes upon the land,

With love, with love.



O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the  
breakers?

What is that little black thing I see there in the white?

Loud! loud! loud!

Loud I call to you, my love!

High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,

Surely you must know who is here, is here,

You must know who I am, my love.

Low-hanging moon!

What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?

O it is the shape, the shape of my mate.'

O moon do not keep her from me any longer.

Land! land! O land!

Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate  
back again

if you only would,

For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.

O rising stars!

Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with  
some of you.

O throat! O trembling throat!

Sound clearer through the atmosphere!

Pierce the woods, the earth,

Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.

Shake out carols!

Solitary here, the night's carols!

Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!

Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!

O under that moon where she droops almost down into the  
sea!

O reckless despairing carols.

But soft! sink low!

Soft! let me just murmur,  
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,  
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,  
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,  
But not altogether still, for then she might not come  
immediately to me.

Hither my love!  
Here I am! here!  
With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,  
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.

Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,  
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,  
That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,  
Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!  
O I am very sick and sorrowful

O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the  
sea!  
O troubled reflection in the sea!  
O throat! O throbbing heart!  
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!  
In the air, in the woods, over fields,  
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!  
But my mate no more, no more with me!  
We two together no more.

The aria sinking,  
All else continuing, the stars shining,  
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous  
echoing,  
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,  
On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,  
The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the

face of  
the sea almost touching,  
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his  
hair the  
atmosphere dallying,  
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last  
tumultuously  
bursting,  
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,  
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,  
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,  
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,  
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd  
secret hissing,  
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)  
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to  
me?  
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I  
have heard you,  
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,  
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer,  
louder  
and more sorrowful than yours,  
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me,  
never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,  
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease  
perpetuating you,  
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,  
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,  
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before  
what  
there in the night,  
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,  
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell  
within,

The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clue! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)  
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,)  
The word final, superior to all,  
Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;  
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-  
waves?  
Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,  
Delaying not, hurrying not,  
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before  
daybreak,  
Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death,  
And again death, death, death, death  
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my  
arous'd child's heart,  
But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,  
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly  
all over,  
Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget.  
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,  
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray  
beach,  
With the thousand responsive songs at random,  
My own songs awaked from that hour,  
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,  
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,  
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,  
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in  
sweet  
garments, bending aside,)  
The sea whisper'd me.



# As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life

1

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd where the ripples continually wash you  
Paumanok,  
Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant,  
Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her  
castaways,  
I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,  
Held by this electric self out of the pride of which I  
utter poems,  
Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines  
underfoot,  
The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and all  
the land  
of the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to  
follow those  
slender windrows,  
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,  
Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce,  
left by the tide,  
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side  
of me,  
Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought of  
likenesses,  
These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,  
As I wended the shores I know,  
As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types.

2

As I wend to the shores I know not,  
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women

wreck'd,

As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,  
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and  
closer,  
I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,  
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,  
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,  
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,  
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon  
me I have  
not once had the least idea who or what I am,  
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands  
yet  
untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,  
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs  
and bows,  
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I  
have written,  
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand  
beneath.

I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a  
single  
object, and that no man ever can,  
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to  
dart upon  
me and sting me,  
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

3

You oceans both, I close with you,  
We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift,  
knowing not why,  
These little shreds indeed standing for you and me and all.

You friable shore with trails of debris,  
You fish-shaped island, I take what is underfoot,

What is yours is mine my father.

I too Paumanok,  
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and  
been  
wash'd on your shores,  
I too am but a trail of drift and debris,  
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island.

I throw myself upon your breast my father,  
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,  
I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me my father,  
Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,  
Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the  
murmuring I envy.

4  
Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)   
Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,  
Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny not  
me,  
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I  
touch you or  
gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,  
I gather for myself and for this phantom looking down where  
we lead,  
and following me and mine.

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,  
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,  
(See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,  
See, the prismatic colors glistening and rolling,)  
Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,  
Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another,  
From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,



Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid  
or soil,  
Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and  
thrown,  
A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves  
floating,  
drifted at random,  
Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,  
Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-  
trumpets,  
We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence, spread  
out before you,  
You up there walking or sitting,  
Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.

# Tears

Tears! tears! tears!

In the night, in solitude, tears,

On the white shore dripping, dripping, suck'd in by the sand,

Tears, not a star shining, all dark and desolate,

Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head;

O who is that ghost? that form in the dark, with tears?

What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouch'd there on the sand?

Streaming tears, sobbing tears, throes, choked with wild cries;

O storm, embodied, rising, careering with swift steps along the beach!

O wild and dismal night storm, with wind—O belching and desperate!

O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm countenance and

regulated pace,

But away at night as you fly, none looking—O then the unloosen'd ocean,

Of tears! tears! tears!

# To the Man-of-War-Bird

Thou who hast slept all night upon the storm,  
Waking renew'd on thy prodigious pinions,  
(Burst the wild storm? above it thou ascended'st,  
And rested on the sky, thy slave that cradled thee,)  
Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating,  
As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,  
(Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating vast.)

Far, far at sea,  
After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the shore with  
wrecks,  
With re-appearing day as now so happy and serene,  
The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,  
The limpid spread of air cerulean,  
Thou also re-appearest.

Thou born to match the gale, (thou art all wings,)  
To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurricane,  
Thou ship of air that never furl'st thy sails,  
Days, even weeks untired and onward, through spaces, realms  
gyrating,  
At dusk that lookist on Senegal, at morn America,  
That sport'st amid the lightning-flash and thunder-cloud,  
In them, in thy experiences, had'st thou my soul,  
What joys! what joys were thine!

# Aboard at a Ship's Helm

Aboard at a ship's helm,  
A young steersman steering with care.

Through fog on a sea-coast dolefully ringing,  
An ocean-bell—O a warning bell, rock'd by the waves.

O you give good notice indeed, you bell by the sea-reefs  
ringing,  
Ringing, ringing, to warn the ship from its wreck-place.

For as on the alert O steersman, you mind the loud  
admonition,  
The bows turn, the freighted ship tacking speeds away under  
her gray sails,  
The beautiful and noble ship with all her precious wealth  
speeds  
away gayly and safe.

But O the ship, the immortal ship! O ship aboard the ship!  
Ship of the body, ship of the soul, voyaging, voyaging,  
voyaging.

# On the Beach at Night

On the beach at night,  
Stands a child with her father,  
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,  
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses  
spreading,  
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,  
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the  
east,  
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,  
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,  
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,  
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious soon to devour  
all,  
Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not, child,  
Weep not, my darling,  
With these kisses let me remove your tears,  
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,  
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars  
only in  
apparition,  
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another  
night, the  
Pleiades shall emerge,  
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden  
shall  
shine out again,  
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again,  
they endure,

The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive moons  
shall  
again shine.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for jupiter?  
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,  
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,  
I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and  
indirection,)  
Something there is more immortal even than the stars,  
(Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing away,)  
Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous  
Jupiter  
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,  
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

# The World below the Brine

The world below the brine,  
Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,  
Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds, the  
thick  
tangle openings, and pink turf,  
Different colors, pale gray and green, purple, white, and  
gold, the  
play of light through the water,  
Dumb swimmers there among the rocks, coral, gluten, grass,  
rushes,  
and the aliment of the swimmers,  
Sluggish existences grazing there suspended, or slowly  
crawling  
close to the bottom,  
The sperm-whale at the surface blowing air and spray, or  
disporting  
with his flukes,  
The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy  
sea-leopard, and the sting-ray,  
Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those  
ocean-depths,  
breathing that thick-breathing air, as so many do,  
The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air  
breathed  
by beings like us who walk this sphere,  
The change onward from ours to that of beings who walk  
other spheres.





# On the Beach at Night Alone

On the beach at night alone,  
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky  
song,  
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of  
the clef  
of the universes and of the future.

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

# Song for All Seas, All Ships

1

To-day a rude brief recitative,  
Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag or  
ship-signal,  
Of unnamed heroes in the ships—of waves spreading and  
spreading  
far as the eye can reach,  
Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,  
And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations,  
Fitful, like a surge.

Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of all  
intrepid sailors,  
Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never  
surprise nor  
death dismay.  
Pick'd sparingly without noise by thee old ocean, chosen by  
thee,  
Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time, and  
unitest nations,  
Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,  
Indomitable, untamed as thee.

(Ever the heroes on water or on land, by ones or twos  
appearing,  
Ever the stock preserv'd and never lost, though rare,  
enough for  
seed preserv'd.)

2

Flaunt out O sea your separate flags of nations!  
Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-signals!  
But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the soul  
of man

one flag above all the rest,  
A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man  
elate above death,  
Token of all brave captains and all intrepid sailors and  
mates,  
And all that went down doing their duty,  
Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains  
young or old,  
A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er all brave  
sailors,  
All seas, all ships.

# Patroling Barnegat

Wild, wild the storm, and the sea high running,  
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant undertone  
muttering,  
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully piercing and pealing,  
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing,  
Out in the shadows there milk-white combs careering,  
On beachy slush and sand spirts of snow fierce slanting,  
Where through the murk the easterly death-wind breasting,  
Through cutting swirl and spray watchful and firm  
advancing,  
(That in the distance! is that a wreck? is the red signal  
flaring?)  
Slush and sand of the beach tireless till daylight wending,  
Steadily, slowly, through hoarse roar never remitting,  
Along the midnight edge by those milk-white combs  
careering,  
A group of dim, weird forms, struggling, the night  
confronting,  
That savage trinity warily watching.

# After the Sea-Ship

After the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,  
After the white-gray sails taut to their spars and ropes,  
Below, a myriad myriad waves hastening, lifting up their  
necks,  
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship,  
Waves of the ocean bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,  
Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven, emulous waves,  
Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant, with  
curves,  
Where the great vessel sailing and tacking displaced the  
surface,  
Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the ocean  
yearnfully flowing,  
The wake of the sea-ship after she passes, flashing and  
frolicsome  
under the sun,  
A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and many  
fragments,  
Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake  
following.



# BOOK XX. BY THE ROADSIDE

## A Boston Ballad 1854

To get betimes in Boston town I rose this morning early,  
Here's a good place at the corner, I must stand and see the  
show.

Clear the way there Jonathan!  
Way for the President's marshal-way for the government  
cannon!  
Way for the Federal foot and dragoons, (and the apparitions  
copiously tumbling.)

I love to look on the Stars and Stripes, I hope the fifes  
will play  
Yankee Doodle.

How bright shine the cutlasses of the foremost troops!  
Every man holds his revolver, marching stiff through Boston  
town.

A fog follows, antiques of the same come limping,  
Some appear wooden-legged, and some appear bandaged and  
bloodless.

Why this is indeed a show—it has called the dead out of the  
earth!

The old graveyards of the hills have hurried to see!  
Phantoms! phantoms countless by flank and rear!  
Cock'd hats of mothly mould—crutches made of mist!  
Arms in slings—old men leaning on young men's shoulders.

What troubles you Yankee phantoms? what is all this  
chattering of  
bare gums?

Does the age convulse your limbs? do you mistake your  
crutches for  
firelocks and level them?

If you blind your eyes with tears you will not see the  
President's marshal,  
If you groan such groans you might balk the government  
cannon.

For shame old maniacs—bring down those toss'd arms, and let  
your  
white hair be,  
Here gape your great grandsons, their wives gaze at them  
from the windows,  
See how well dress'd, see how orderly they conduct  
themselves.

Worse and worse—can't you stand it? are you retreating?  
Is this hour with the living too dead for you?

Retreat then—pell-mell!  
To your graves—back-back to the hills old limpers!  
I do not think you belong here anyhow.

But there is one thing that belongs here—shall I tell you  
what it  
is, gentlemen of Boston?

I will whisper it to the Mayor, he shall send a committee  
to England,  
They shall get a grant from the Parliament, go with a cart  
to the  
royal vault,  
Dig out King George's coffin, unwrap him quick from the  
graveclothes, box up his bones for a journey,  
Find a swift Yankee clipper—here is freight for you, black-  
bellied clipper,  
Up with your anchor—shake out your sails—steer straight  
toward



Boston bay.

Now call for the President's marshal again, bring out the  
government cannon,  
Fetch home the roarers from Congress, make another  
procession,  
guard it with foot and dragoons.

This centre-piece for them;  
Look, all orderly citizens—look from the windows, women!

The committee open the box, set up the regal ribs, glue  
those that  
will not stay,  
Clap the skull on top of the ribs, and clap a crown on top  
of the skull.  
You have got your revenge, old buster—the crown is come to  
its own,  
and more than its own.

Stick your hands in your pockets, Jonathan—you are a made  
man from  
this day,  
You are mighty cute—and here is one of your bargains.

# Europe [The 72d and 73d Years of These States]

Suddenly out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of slaves,  
Like lightning it le'pt forth half startled at itself,  
Its feet upon the ashes and the rags, its hands tight to the throats  
of kings.

O hope and faith!  
O aching close of exiled patriots' lives!  
O many a sicken'd heart!  
Turn back unto this day and make yourselves afresh.

And you, paid to defile the People—you liars, mark!  
Not for numberless agonies, murders, lusts,  
For court thieving in its manifold mean forms, worming from his  
simplicity the poor man's wages,  
For many a promise sworn by royal lips and broken and  
laugh'd at in  
the breaking,

Then in their power not for all these did the blows strike  
revenge,  
or the heads of the nobles fall;  
The People scorn'd the ferocity of kings.

But the sweetness of mercy brew'd bitter destruction, and the  
frighten'd monarchs come back,  
Each comes in state with his train, hangman, priest, tax-gatherer,  
Soldier, lawyer, lord, jailer, and sycophant.

Yet behind all lowering stealing, lo, a shape,  
Vague as the night, draped interminably, head, front and  
form, in  
scarlet folds,  
Whose face and eyes none may see,  
Out of its robes only this, the red robes lifted by the  
arm,  
One finger crook'd pointed high over the top, like the head  
of a  
snake appears.

Meanwhile corpses lie in new-made graves, bloody corpses of  
young men,  
The rope of the gibbet hangs heavily, the bullets of  
princes are  
flying, the creatures of power laugh aloud,  
And all these things bear fruits, and they are good.

Those corpses of young men,  
Those martyrs that hang from the gibbets, those hearts  
pierc'd by  
the gray lead,  
Cold and motionless as they seem live elsewhere with  
unslaughter'd vitality.

They live in other young men O kings!  
They live in brothers again ready to defy you,  
They were purified by death, they were taught and exalted.

Not a grave of the murder'd for freedom but grows seed for  
freedom,  
in its turn to bear seed,  
Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and  
the snows nourish.

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let  
loose,  
But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering,

counseling, cautioning.

Liberty, let others despair of you—I never despair of you.

Is the house shut? is the master away?

Nevertheless, be ready, be not weary of watching,

He will soon return, his messengers come anon.

# A Hand-Mirror

Hold it up sternly—see this it sends back, (who is it? is  
it you?)  
Outside fair costume, within ashes and filth,  
No more a flashing eye, no more a sonorous voice or springy  
step,  
Now some slave's eye, voice, hands, step,  
A drunkard's breath, unwholesome eater's face, venerea-  
lee's  
flesh,  
Lungs rotting away piecemeal, stomach sour and cankerous,  
Joints rheumatic, bowels clogged with abomination,  
Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams,  
Words babble, hearing and touch callous,  
No brain, no heart left, no magnetism of sex;  
Such from one look in this looking-glass ere you go hence,  
Such a result so soon—and from such a beginning!

# Gods

Lover divine and perfect Comrade,  
Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,  
Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,  
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,  
Complete in body and dilate in spirit,  
Be thou my God.

O Death, (for Life has served its turn,)  
Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion,  
Be thou my God.

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or know,  
(To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O soul,)  
Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,  
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,  
Be ye my Gods.

Or Time and Space,  
Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,  
Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,  
Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,  
Be ye my Gods.

# Germes

Forms, qualities, lives, humanity, language, thoughts,  
The ones known, and the ones unknown, the ones on the  
stars,  
The stars themselves, some shaped, others unshaped,  
Wonders as of those countries, the soil, trees, cities,  
inhabitants,  
whatever they may be,  
Splendid suns, the moons and rings, the countless  
combinations and effects,  
Such-like, and as good as such-like, visible here or  
anywhere, stand  
provided for a handful of space, which I extend my arm and  
half enclose with my hand,  
That containing the start of each and all, the virtue, the  
germes of all.

# Thoughts

Of ownership—as if one fit to own things could not at  
pleasure enter  
upon all, and incorporate them into himself or herself;  
Of vista—suppose some sight in arriere through the  
formative chaos,  
presuming the growth, fulness, life, now attain'd on the  
journey,  
(But I see the road continued, and the journey ever  
continued;)  
Of what was once lacking on earth, and in due time has  
become  
supplied—and of what will yet be supplied,  
Because all I see and know I believe to have its main  
purport in  
what will yet be supplied.

## When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before  
me,  
When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide,  
and measure them,  
When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with  
much  
applause in the lecture-room,  
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.





# Perfections

Only themselves understand themselves and the like of  
themselves,  
As souls only understand souls.

# O Me! O Life!

O me! O life! of the questions of these recurring,  
Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd  
with the foolish,  
Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish  
than I,  
and who more faithless?)  
Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects mean,  
of the  
struggle ever renew'd,  
Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and sordid  
crowds I see  
around me,  
Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the rest  
me intertwined,  
The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid these,  
O me, O life?

Answer.

That you are here—that life exists and identity,  
That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a  
verse.

# To a President

All you are doing and saying is to America dangled mirages,  
You have not learn'd of Nature—of the politics of Nature  
you have  
not learn'd the great amplitude, rectitude, impartiality,  
You have not seen that only such as they are for these  
States,  
And that what is less than they must sooner or later lift  
off from  
these States.

# I Sit and Look Out

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and  
upon all  
oppression and shame,  
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish  
with  
themselves, remorseful after deeds done,  
I see in low life the mother misused by her children,  
dying,  
neglected, gaunt, desperate,  
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the  
treacherous seducer  
of young women,  
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love  
attempted to be  
hid, I see these sights on the earth,  
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see  
martyrs and  
prisoners,  
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting  
lots who  
shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,  
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant  
persons upon  
laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;  
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting  
look out upon,  
See, hear, and am silent.



# To Rich Givers

What you give me I cheerfully accept,  
A little sustenance, a hut and garden, a little money, as I  
rendezvous with my poems,  
A traveler's lodging and breakfast as journey through the  
States,—  
why should I be ashamed to own such gifts? why to advertise  
for them?  
For I myself am not one who bestows nothing upon man and  
woman,  
For I bestow upon any man or woman the entrance to all the  
gifts of  
the universe.

# The Dalliance of the Eagles

Skirting the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest,) Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the eagles,  
The rushing amorous contact high in space together,  
The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating wheel,  
Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling,  
In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward falling,  
Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's lull,  
A motionless still balance in the air, then parting, talons loosing,  
Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their separate diverse flight,  
She hers, he his, pursuing.



# Roaming in Thought [After reading Hegel]

Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that  
is Good  
steadily hastening towards immortality,  
And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to  
merge itself  
and become lost and dead.

# A Farm Picture

Through the ample open door of the peaceful country barn,  
A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding,  
And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away.

# A Child's Amaze

Silent and amazed even when a little boy,  
I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God in his  
statements,  
As contending against some being or influence.

# The Runner

On a flat road runs the well-train'd runner,  
He is lean and sinewy with muscular legs,  
He is thinly clothed, he leans forward as he runs,  
With lightly closed fists and arms partially rais'd.

# Beautiful Women

Women sit or move to and fro, some old, some young,  
The young are beautiful—but the old are more beautiful than  
the young.

# Mother and Babe

I see the sleeping babe nestling the breast of its mother,  
The sleeping mother and babe—hush'd, I study them long and  
long.

# Thought

Of obedience, faith, adhesiveness;  
As I stand aloof and look there is to me something  
profoundly  
affecting in large masses of men following the lead of  
those who  
do not believe in men.

# Visor'd

A mask, a perpetual natural disguiser of herself,  
Concealing her face, concealing her form,  
Changes and transformations every hour, every moment,  
Falling upon her even when she sleeps.



# Thought

Of justice—as If could be any thing but the same ample law,  
expounded by natural judges and saviors,  
As if it might be this thing or that thing, according to  
decisions.

# Gliding O'er all

Gliding o'er all, through all,  
Through Nature, Time, and Space,  
As a ship on the waters advancing,  
The voyage of the soul—not life alone,  
Death, many deaths I'll sing.

# Hast Never Come to Thee an Hour

Hast never come to thee an hour,  
A sudden gleam divine, precipitating, bursting all these  
bubbles,  
fashions, wealth?  
These eager business aims—books, politics, art, amours,  
To utter nothingness?

# Thought

Of Equality—as if it harm'd me, giving others the same chances and rights as myself—as if it were not indispensable to my own rights that others possess the same.

# To Old Age

I see in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads itself  
grandly as  
it pours in the great sea.

# Locations and Times

Locations and times—what is it in me that meets them all,  
whenever  
and wherever, and makes me at home?  
Forms, colors, densities, odors—what is it in me that  
corresponds  
with them?

# Offerings

A thousand perfect men and women appear,  
Around each gathers a cluster of friends, and gay children  
and  
youths, with offerings.

# To The States [To Identify the 16th, 17th, or 18th Presidentiad]

Why reclining, interrogating? why myself and all drowsing?  
What deepening twilight-scum floating atop of the waters,  
Who are they as bats and night-dogs askant in the capitol?  
What a filthy Presidentiad! (O South, your torrid suns! O  
North,  
your arctic freezings!)

Are those really Congressmen? are those the great Judges?  
is that  
the President?

Then I will sleep awhile yet, for I see that these States  
sleep, for  
reasons;

(With gathering murk, with muttering thunder and lambent  
shoots we  
all duly awake,  
South, North, East, West, inland and seaboard, we will  
surely awake.)





# BOOK XXI. DRUM-TAPS

## First O Songs for a Prelude

First O songs for a prelude,  
Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum pride and joy in  
my city,  
How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue,  
How at once with lithe limbs unwaiting a moment she sprang,  
(O superb! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless!  
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis! O truer  
than steel!)

How you sprang—how you threw off the costumes of peace with  
indifferent hand,  
How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and fife  
were heard  
in their stead,  
How you led to the war, (that shall serve for our prelude,  
songs of  
soldiers,)

How Manhattan drum-taps led.

Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers parading,  
Forty years as a pageant, till unawares the lady of this  
teeming and  
turbulent city,  
Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her incalculable  
wealth,  
With her million children around her, suddenly,  
At dead of night, at news from the south,  
Incens'd struck with clinch'd hand the pavement.

A shock electric, the night sustain'd it,  
Till with ominous hum our hive at daybreak pour'd out its  
myriads.

From the houses then and the workshops, and through all the doorways,

Leapt they tumultuous, and lo! Manhattan arming.

To the drum-taps prompt,

The young men falling in and arming,

The mechanics arming, (the trowel, the jack-plane, the blacksmith's

hammer, tost aside with precipitation,)

The lawyer leaving his office and arming, the judge leaving the court,

The driver deserting his wagon in the street, jumping down, throwing

the reins abruptly down on the horses' backs,

The salesman leaving the store, the boss, book-keeper, porter, all leaving;

Squads gather everywhere by common consent and arm,

The new recruits, even boys, the old men show them how to wear their

accoutrements, they buckle the straps carefully,

Outdoors arming, indoors arming, the flash of the musket-barrels,

The white tents cluster in camps, the arm'd sentries around, the

sunrise cannon and again at sunset,

Arm'd regiments arrive every day, pass through the city, and embark

from the wharves,

(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!)

The blood of the city up-arm'd! arm'd! the cry everywhere,

The flags flung out from the steeples of churches and from all the

public buildings and stores,

The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son  
kisses his mother,  
(Loth is the mother to part, yet not a word does she speak  
to detain him,)  
The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen preceding,  
clearing the way,  
The unpent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the crowd for  
their favorites,  
The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold, drawn  
along,  
rumble lightly over the stones,  
(Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,  
Soon unlimber'd to begin the red business;)  
All the mutter of preparation, all the determin'd arming,  
The hospital service, the lint, bandages and medicines,  
The women volunteering for nurses, the work begun for in  
earnest, no  
mere parade now;  
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.

Mannahatta a-march-and it's O to sing it well!  
It's O for a manly life in the camp.

And the sturdy artillery,  
The guns bright as gold, the work for giants, to serve well  
the guns,  
Unlimber them! (no more as the past forty years for salutes  
for  
courtesies merely,  
Put in something now besides powder and wadding.)

And you lady of ships, you Mannahatta,  
Old matron of this proud, friendly, turbulent city,  
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.

# Eighteen Sixty-One

Arm'd year-year of the struggle,  
No dainty rhymes or sentimental love verses for you  
terrible year,  
Not you as some pale poetling seated at a desk lisping  
cadenzas piano,  
But as a strong man erect, clothed in blue clothes,  
advancing,  
carrying rifle on your shoulder,  
With well-gristled body and sunburnt face and hands, with a  
knife in  
the belt at your side,  
As I heard you shouting loud, your sonorous voice ringing  
across the  
continent,  
Your masculine voice O year, as rising amid the great  
cities,  
Amid the men of Manhattan I saw you as one of the workmen,  
the  
dwellers in Manhattan,  
Or with large steps crossing the prairies out of Illinois  
and Indiana,  
Rapidly crossing the West with springy gait and descending  
the Allghanies,  
Or down from the great lakes or in Pennsylvania, or on deck  
along  
the Ohio river,  
Or southward along the Tennessee or Cumberland rivers, or  
at  
Chattanooga on the mountain top,  
Saw I your gait and saw I your sinewy limbs clothed in  
blue, bearing  
weapons, robust year,  
Heard your determin'd voice launch'd forth again and again,  
Year that suddenly sang by the mouths of the round-lipp'd

cannon,

I repeat you, hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted year.

# Beat! Beat! Drums!

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

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

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!  
Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,  
Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,  
Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,  
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's



entreaties,

Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie  
awaiting the

hearses,

So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles  
blow.

# From Paumanok Starting I Fly Like a Bird

From Paumanok starting I fly like a bird,  
Around and around to soar to sing the idea of all,  
To the north betaking myself to sing there arctic songs,  
To Kanada till I absorb Kanada in myself, to Michigan then,  
To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs, (they  
are inimitable;)  
Then to Ohio and Indiana to sing theirs, to Missouri and  
Kansas and  
Arkansas to sing theirs,  
To Tennessee and Kentucky, to the Carolinas and Georgia to  
sing theirs,  
To Texas and so along up toward California, to roam  
accepted everywhere;  
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.

# Song of the Banner at Daybreak

Poet:

O A new song, a free song,  
Flapping, flapping, flapping, flapping, by sounds, by  
voices clearer,  
By the wind's voice and that of the drum,  
By the banner's voice and child's voice and sea's voice and  
father's voice,  
Low on the ground and high in the air,  
On the ground where father and child stand,  
In the upward air where their eyes turn,  
Where the banner at daybreak is flapping.

Words! book-words! what are you?  
Words no more, for hearken and see,  
My song is there in the open air, and I must sing,  
With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

I'll weave the chord and twine in,  
Man's desire and babe's desire, I'll twine them in, I'll  
put in life,  
I'll put the bayonet's flashing point, I'll let bullets and  
slugs whizz,  
(As one carrying a symbol and menace far into the future,  
Crying with trumpet voice, Arouse and beware! Beware and  
arouse!)

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.

Pennant:

Come up here, bard, bard,  
Come up here, soul, soul,  
Come up here, dear little child,

To fly in the clouds and winds with me, and play with the measureless light.

Child:  
Father what is that in the sky beckoning to me with long  
finger?  
And what does it say to me all the while?

Father:  
Nothing my babe you see in the sky,  
And nothing at all to you it says-but look you my babe,  
Look at these dazzling things in the houses, and see you  
the money-  
shops opening,  
And see you the vehicles preparing to crawl along the  
streets with goods;  
These, ah these, how valued and toil'd for these!  
How envied by all the earth.

Poet:  
Fresh and rosy red the sun is mounting high,  
On floats the sea in distant blue careering through its  
channels,  
On floats the wind over the breast of the sea setting in  
toward land,  
The great steady wind from west or west-by-south,  
Floating so buoyant with milk-white foam on the waters.

But I am not the sea nor the red sun,  
I am not the wind with girlish laughter,  
Not the immense wind which strengthens, not the wind which  
lashes,  
Not the spirit that ever lashes its own body to terror and  
death,  
But I am that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings,  
Which babbles in brooks and scoots in showers on the land,  
Which the birds know in the woods mornings and evenings,  
And the shore-sands know and the hissing wave, and that  
banner and pennant,

Aloft there flapping and flapping.

Child:

O father it is alive—it is full of people—it has children,  
O now it seems to me it is talking to its children,  
I hear it—it talks to me—O it is wonderful!  
O it stretches—it spreads and runs so fast—O my father,  
It is so broad it covers the whole sky.

Father:

Cease, cease, my foolish babe,  
What you are saying is sorrowful to me, much 't 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.

Banner and Pennant:

Speak to the child O bard out of Manhattan,  
To our children all, or north or south of Manhattan,  
Point this day, leaving all the rest, to us over all—and  
yet we know  
not why,  
For what are we, mere strips of cloth profiting nothing,  
Only flapping in the wind?

Poet:

I hear and see not strips of cloth alone,  
I hear the tramp of armies, I hear the challenging sentry,  
I hear the jubilant shouts of millions of men, I hear  
Liberty!  
I hear the drums beat and the trumpets blowing,  
I myself move abroad swift-rising flying then,  
I use the wings of the land-bird and use the wings of the  
sea-bird,  
and look down as from a height,  
I do not deny the precious results of peace, I see populous  
cities  
with wealth incalculable,

I see numberless farms, I see the farmers working in their  
fields or barns,  
I see mechanics working, I see buildings everywhere  
founded, going  
up, or finish'd,  
I see trains of cars swiftly speeding along railroad tracks  
drawn by  
the locomotives,  
I see the stores, depots, of Boston, Baltimore, Charleston,  
New Orleans,  
I see far in the West the immense area of grain, I dwell  
awhile hovering,  
I pass to the lumber forests of the North, and again to the  
Southern  
plantation, and again to California;  
Sweeping the whole I see the countless profit, the busy  
gatherings,  
earn'd wages,  
See the Identity formed out of thirty-eight spacious and  
haughty  
States, (and many more to come,)  
See forts on the shores of harbors, see ships sailing in  
and out;  
Then over all, (aye! aye!) my little and lengthen'd pennant  
shaped  
like a sword,  
Runs swiftly up indicating war and defiance—and now the  
halyards  
have rais'd it,  
Side of my banner broad and blue, side of my starry banner,  
Discarding peace over all the sea and land.

Banner and Pennant:

Yet louder, higher, stronger, bard! yet farther, wider  
cleave!  
No longer let our children deem us riches and peace alone,  
We may be terror and carnage, and are so now,  
Not now are we any one of these spacious and haughty  
States, (nor

any five, nor ten,)

Nor market nor depot we, nor money-bank in the city,  
But these and all, and the brown and spreading land, and  
the mines  
below, are ours,  
And the shores of the sea are ours, and the rivers great  
and small,  
And the fields they moisten, and the crops and the fruits  
are ours,  
Bays and channels and ships sailing in and out are ours—  
while we over all,  
Over the area spread below, the three or four millions of  
square  
miles, the capitals,  
The forty millions of people,—O bard! in life and death  
supreme,  
We, even we, henceforth flaunt out masterful, high up  
above,  
Not for the present alone, for a thousand years chanting  
through you,  
This song to the soul of one poor little child.

Child:

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.

Father:

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?

Banner:

Demons and death then I sing,  
Put in all, aye all will I, sword-shaped pennant for war,  
And a pleasure new and ecstatic, and the prattled yearning  
of children,  
Blent with the sounds of the peaceful land and the liquid  
wash of the sea,  
And the black ships fighting on the sea envelop'd in smoke,  
And the icy cool of the far, far north, with rustling  
cedars and pines,  
And the whirr of drums and the sound of soldiers marching,  
and the  
hot sun shining south,  
And the beach-waves combing over the beach on my Eastern  
shore,  
and my Western shore the same,  
And all between those shores, and my ever running  
Mississippi with  
bends and chutes,  
And my Illinois fields, and my Kansas fields, and my fields  
of Missouri,  
The Continent, devoting the whole identity without  
reserving an atom,  
Pour in! whelm that which asks, which sings, with all and  
the yield of all,  
Fusing and holding, claiming, devouring the whole,  
No more with tender lip, nor musical labial sound,  
But out of the night emerging for good, our voice  
persuasive no more,  
Croaking like crows here in the wind.

Poet:

My limbs, my veins dilate, my theme is clear at last,  
Banner so broad advancing out of the night, I sing you  
haughty and resolute,  
I burst through where I waited long, too long, deafen'd and  
blinded,  
My hearing and tongue are come to me, (a little child



taught me,) I hear from above O pennant of war your ironical call and demand,  
Insensate! insensate! (yet I at any rate chant you,) O banner!  
Not houses of peace indeed are you, nor any nor all their prosperity, (if need be, you shall again have every one of those houses to destroy them,  
You thought not to destroy those valuable houses, standing fast,  
full of comfort, built with money,  
May they stand fast, then? not an hour except you above them and all stand fast;)  
O banner, not money so precious are you, not farm produce you, nor the material good nutriment,  
Nor excellent stores, nor landed on wharves from the ships,  
Not the superb ships with sail-power or steam-power, fetching and carrying cargoes,  
Nor machinery, vehicles, trade, nor revenues—but you as henceforth  
I see you,  
Running up out of the night, bringing your cluster of stars,  
(ever-enlarging stars,) Divider of daybreak you, cutting the air, touch'd by the sun,  
measuring the sky,  
(Passionately seen and yearn'd for by one poor little child,  
While others remain busy or smartly talking, forever teaching thrift, thrift;)  
O you up there! O pennant! where you undulate like a snake hissing so curious,

Out of reach, an idea only, yet furiously fought for,  
risking bloody  
death, loved by me,  
So loved—O you banner leading the day with stars brought  
from the night!  
Valueless, object of eyes, over all and demanding all—  
(absolute  
owner of all)—O banner and pennant!  
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,  
sing you only,  
Flapping up there in the wind.



# Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps

1  
Rise O days from your fathomless deeps, till you loftier,  
fiercer sweep,  
Long for my soul hungering gymnastic I devour'd what the  
earth gave me,  
Long I roam'd amid the woods of the north, long I watch'd  
Niagara pouring,  
I travel'd the prairies over and slept on their breast, I  
cross'd  
the Nevadas, I cross'd the plateaus,  
I ascended the towering rocks along the Pacific, I sail'd  
out to sea,  
I sail'd through the storm, I was refresh'd by the storm,  
I watch'd with joy the threatening maws of the waves,  
  
I mark'd the white combs where they career'd so high,  
curling over,  
I heard the wind piping, I saw the black clouds,  
Saw from below what arose and mounted, (O superb! O wild as  
my  
heart, and powerful!)  
Heard the continuous thunder as it bellow'd after the  
lightning,  
Noted the slender and jagged threads of lightning as sudden  
and  
fast amid the din they chased each other across the sky;  
These, and such as these, I, elate, saw-saw with wonder,  
yet pensive  
and masterful,  
All the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me,  
Yet there with my soul I fed, I fed content, supercilious.

2  
'Twas well, O soul--'twas a good preparation you gave me,  
Now we advance our latent and ampler hunger to fill,  
Now we go forth to receive what the earth and the sea never  
gave us,  
Not through the mighty woods we go, but through the  
mightier cities,  
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?  
What, to passions I witness around me to-day? was the sea  
risen?  
Was the wind piping the pipe of death under the black  
clouds?  
Lo! from depths more unfathomable, something more deadly and  
savage,  
Manhattan rising, advancing with menacing front--Cincinnati,  
Chicago,  
unchain'd;  
What was that swell I saw on the ocean? behold what comes  
here,  
How it climbs with daring feet and hands--how it dashes!  
How the true thunder bellows after the lightning--how bright  
the  
flashes of lightning!  
How Democracy with desperate vengeful port strides on,  
shown  
through the dark by those flashes of lightning!  
(Yet a mournful wall and low sob I fancied I heard through  
the dark,  
In a lull of the deafening confusion.)

3  
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,  
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 satisfied,  
One doubt nauseous undulating like a snake, crawl'd on the  
ground before me,  
Continually preceding my steps, turning upon me oft,  
ironically hissing low;  
The cities I loved so well I abandon'd and left, I sped to  
the  
certainties suitable to me,  
Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal energies and  
Nature's  
dauntlessness,  
I refresh'd myself with it only, I could relish it only,  
I waited the bursting forth of the pent fire—on the water  
and air  
waited long;  
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.

# Virginia—The West

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.

The noble son on sinewy feet advancing,  
I saw, out of the land of prairies, land of Ohio's waters  
and of Indiana,  
To the rescue the stalwart giant hurry his plenteous  
offspring,  
Drest in blue, bearing their trusty rifles on their  
shoulders.

Then the Mother of All with calm voice speaking,  
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.

# City of Ships

City of ships!

(O the black ships! O the fierce ships!

O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steam-ships and sail-ships!)

City of the world! (for all races are here,

All the lands of the earth make contributions here;)

City of the sea! city of hurried and glittering tides!

City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede,  
whirling in and

out with eddies and foam!

City of wharves and stores—city of tall facades of marble  
and iron!

Proud and passionate city—mettlesome, mad, extravagant  
city!

Spring up O city—not for peace alone, but be indeed  
yourself, warlike!

Fear not—submit to no models but your own O city!

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,

I chant and celebrate all that is yours—yet peace no more,

In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of war is mine,

War, red war is my song through your streets, O city!



# The Centenarian's Story

[Volunteer of 1861-2, at Washington Park, Brooklyn,  
assisting  
the Centenarian.]

Give me your hand old Revolutionary,  
The hill-top is nigh, but a few steps, (make room  
gentlemen,)  
Up the path you have follow'd me well, spite of your  
hundred and  
extra years,  
You can walk old man, though your eyes are almost done,  
Your faculties serve you, and presently I must have them  
serve me.

Rest, while I tell what the crowd around us means,  
On the plain below recruits are drilling and exercising,  
There is the camp, one regiment departs to-morrow,  
Do you hear the officers giving their orders?  
Do you hear the clank of the muskets?  
Why what comes over you now old man?  
Why do you tremble and clutch my hand so convulsively?  
The troops are but drilling, they are yet surrounded with  
smiles,  
Around them at hand the well-drest friends and the women,  
While splendid and warm the afternoon sun shines down,  
Green the midsummer verdure and fresh blows the dallying  
breeze,  
O'er proud and peaceful cities and arm of the sea between.

But drill and parade are over, they march back to quarters,  
Only hear that approval of hands! hear what a clapping!

As wending the crowds now part and disperse—but we old man,  
Not for nothing have I brought you hither—we must remain,  
You to speak in your turn, and I to listen and tell.

[The Centenarian]

When I clutch'd your hand it was not with terror,  
But suddenly pouring about me here on every side,  
And below there where the boys were drilling, and up the  
slopes they ran,  
And where tents are pitch'd, and wherever you see south and  
south-  
east and south-west,  
Over hills, across lowlands, and in the skirts of woods,  
And along the shores, in mire (now fill'd over) came again  
and  
suddenly raged,  
As eighty-five years ago no mere parade receiv'd with  
applause of friends,  
But a battle which I took part in myself—aye, long ago as  
it is, I  
took part in it,  
Walking then this hilltop, this same ground.

Aye, this is the ground,  
My blind eyes even as I speak behold it re-peopled from  
graves,  
The years recede, pavements and stately houses disappear,  
Rude forts appear again, the old hoop'd guns are mounted,  
I see the lines of rais'd earth stretching from river to  
bay,  
I mark the vista of waters, I mark the uplands and slopes;  
Here we lay encamp'd, it was this time in summer also.

As I talk I remember all, I remember the Declaration,  
It was read here, the whole army paraded, it was read to us  
here,  
By his staff surrounded the General stood in the middle, he  
held up  
his unsheath'd sword,  
It glitter'd in the sun in full sight of the army.

Tw'as a bold act then—the English war-ships had just

arrived,  
We could watch down the lower bay where they lay at anchor,  
And the transports swarming with soldiers.

A few days more and they landed, and then the battle.

Twenty thousand were brought against us,  
A veteran force furnish'd with good artillery.

I tell not now the whole of the battle,  
But one brigade early in the forenoon order'd forward to  
engage the  
red-coats,  
Of that brigade I tell, and how steadily it march'd,  
And how long and well it stood confronting death.

Who do you think that was marching steadily sternly  
confronting death?  
It was the brigade of the youngest men, two thousand  
strong,  
Rais'd in Virginia and Maryland, and most of them known  
personally  
to the General.

Jauntily forward they went with quick step toward Gowanus'  
waters,  
Till of a sudden unlook'd for by defiles through the woods,  
gain'd at night,  
The British advancing, rounding in from the east, fiercely  
playing  
their guns,  
That brigade of the youngest was cut off and at the enemy's  
mercy.

The General watch'd them from this hill,  
They made repeated desperate attempts to burst their  
environment,  
Then drew close together, very compact, their flag flying  
in the middle,

But O from the hills how the cannon were thinning and  
thinning them!

It sickens me yet, that slaughter!  
I saw the moisture gather in drops on the face of the  
General.  
I saw how he wrung his hands in anguish.

Meanwhile the British manoeuvr'd to draw us out for a  
pitch'd battle,  
But we dared not trust the chances of a pitch'd battle.

We fought the fight in detachments,  
Sallying forth we fought at several points, but in each the  
luck was  
against us,  
Our foe advancing, steadily getting the best of it, push'd  
us back  
to the works on this hill,  
Till we turn'd menacing here, and then he left us.

That was the going out of the brigade of the youngest men,  
two thousand  
strong,  
Few return'd, nearly all remain in Brooklyn.

That and here my General's first battle,  
No women looking on nor sunshine to bask in, it did not  
conclude  
with applause,  
Nobody clapp'd hands here then.

But in darkness in mist on the ground under a chill rain,  
Wearied that night we lay foil'd and sullen,  
While scornfully laugh'd many an arrogant lord off against  
us encamp'd,  
Quite within hearing, feasting, clinking wineglasses  
together over  
their victory.

So dull and damp and another day,  
But the night of that, mist lifting, rain ceasing,  
Silent as a ghost while they thought they were sure of him,  
my  
General retreated.

I saw him at the river-side,  
Down by the ferry lit by torches, hastening the  
embarcation;  
My General waited till the soldiers and wounded were all  
pass'd over,  
And then, (it was just ere sunrise,) these eyes rested on  
him for  
the last time.

Every one else seem'd fill'd with gloom,  
Many no doubt thought of capitulation.

But when my General pass'd me,  
As he stood in his boat and look'd toward the coming sun,  
I saw something different from capitulation.

[Terminus]  
Enough, the Centenarian's story ends,  
The two, the past and present, have interchanged,  
I myself as connector, as chansonnier of a great future, am  
now speaking.

And is this the ground Washington trod?  
And these waters I listlessly daily cross, are these the  
waters he cross'd,  
As resolute in defeat as other generals in their proudest  
triumphs?

I must copy the story, and send it eastward and westward,  
I must preserve that look as it beam'd on you rivers of  
Brooklyn.

See—as the annual round returns the phantoms return,  
It is the 27th of August and the British have landed,  
The battle begins and goes against us, behold through the  
smoke  
Washington's face,  
The brigade of Virginia and Maryland have march'd forth to  
intercept  
the enemy,  
They are cut off, murderous artillery from the hills plays  
upon them,  
Rank after rank falls, while over them silently droops the  
flag,  
Baptized that day in many a young man's bloody wounds.  
In death, defeat, and sisters', mothers' tears.

Ah, hills and slopes of Brooklyn! I perceive you are more  
valuable  
than your owners supposed;  
In the midst of you stands an encampment very old,  
Stands forever the camp of that dead brigade.

# Cavalry Crossing a Ford

A line in long array where they wind betwixt green islands,  
They take a serpentine course, their arms flash in the sun-  
hark to  
the musical clank,  
Behold the silvery river, in it the splashing horses  
loitering stop  
to drink,  
Behold the brown-faced men, each group, each person a  
picture, the  
negligent rest on the saddles,  
Some emerge on the opposite bank, others are just entering  
the ford-while,  
Scarlet and blue and snowy white,  
The guidon flags flutter gayly in the wind.

# Bivouac on a Mountain Side

I see before me now a traveling army halting,  
Below a fertile valley spread, with barns and the orchards  
of summer,  
Behind, the terraced sides of a mountain, abrupt, in places  
rising high,  
Broken, with rocks, with clinging cedars, with tall shapes  
dingily seen,  
The numerous camp-fires scatter'd near and far, some away  
up on the  
mountain,  
The shadowy forms of men and horses, looming, large-sized,  
flickering,  
And over all the sky—the sky! far, far out of reach,  
studded,  
breaking out, the eternal stars.



# An Army Corps on the March

With its cloud of skirmishers in advance,  
With now the sound of a single shot snapping like a whip,  
and now an  
irregular volley,  
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.

# By the Bivouac's Fitful Flame

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,  
The darkness lit by spots of kindled fire, the silence,  
Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving,  
The shrubs and trees, (as I lift my eyes they seem to be  
stealthily  
watching me,)   
While wind in procession thoughts, O tender and wondrous  
thoughts,  
Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, and of  
those that  
are far away;  
A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the ground,  
By the bivouac's fitful flame.

# Come Up from the Fields Father

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.

Lo, 'tis autumn,  
Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,  
Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering in the  
moderate wind,  
Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on the  
trellis'd vines,  
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?  
Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were lately  
buzzing?)

Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the  
rain, and  
with wondrous clouds,  
Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the farm  
prosperes well.

Down in the fields all prosperes well,  
But now from the fields come father, come at the daughter's  
call.  
And come to the entry mother, to the front door come right  
away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous, her steps  
trembling,  
She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,  
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,

O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O stricken

mother's soul!

All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches  
the main  
words only,

Sentences broken, gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry  
skirmish,

taken to hospital,

At present low, but will soon be better.

Ah now the single figure to me,

Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all its cities and  
farms,

Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,

By the jamb of a door leans.

Grieve not so, dear mother, (the just-grown daughter speaks  
through

her sobs,

The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd,)

See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be  
better.

Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may-be needs  
to be

better, that brave and simple soul,)

While they stand at home at the door he is dead already,

The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,

She with thin form presently drest in black,

By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully  
sleeping, often waking,

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.



# Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night

Vigil strange I kept on the field one night;  
When you my son and my comrade dropt at my side that day,  
One look I but gave which your dear eyes return'd with a  
look I  
shall never forget,  
One touch of your hand to mine O boy, reach'd up as you lay  
on the ground,  
Then onward I sped in the battle, the even-contested  
battle,  
Till late in the night reliev'd to the place at last again  
I made my way,  
Found you in death so cold dear comrade, found your body  
son of  
responding kisses, (never again on earth responding,)  
Bared your face in the starlight, curious the scene, cool  
blew the  
moderate night-wind,  
Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the  
battlefield spreading,  
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent  
night,  
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long, long  
I gazed,  
Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side  
leaning my  
chin in my hands,  
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you  
dearest  
comrade—not a tear, not a word,  
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you my son and  
my soldier,  
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward

stole,  
Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift  
was your death,  
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we  
shall  
surely meet again,)  
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the  
dawn appear'd,  
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his form,  
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and  
carefully under feet,  
And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son in  
his  
grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,  
Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and  
battle-field dim,  
Vigil for boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth  
responding,)  
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how  
as day  
brighten'd,  
I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in  
his blanket,  
And buried him where he fell.

# A March in the Ranks Hard-Prest, and the Road Unknown

A march in the ranks hard-prest, and the road unknown,  
A route through a heavy wood with muffled steps in the  
darkness,  
Our army foil'd with loss severe, and the sullen remnant  
retreating,  
Till after midnight glimmer upon us the lights of a dim-  
lighted building,  
We come to an open space in the woods, and halt by the dim-  
lighted building,  
'Tis a large old church at the crossing roads, now an  
impromptu hospital,  
Entering but for a minute I see a sight beyond all the  
pictures and  
poems ever made,  
Shadows of deepest, deepest black, just lit by moving  
candles and lamps,  
And by one great pitchy torch stationary with wild red  
flame and  
clouds of smoke,  
By these, crowds, groups of forms vaguely I see on the  
floor, some  
in the pews laid down,  
At my feet more distinctly a soldier, a mere lad, in danger  
of  
bleeding to death, (he is shot in the abdomen,)  
I stanch the blood temporarily, (the youngster's face is  
white as a lily,)  
Then before I depart I sweep my eyes o'er the scene fain to  
absorb it all,  
Faces, varieties, postures beyond description, most in  
obscurity,  
some of them dead,



Surgeons operating, attendants holding lights, the smell of  
ether,  
odor of blood,  
The crowd, O the crowd of the bloody forms, the yard  
outside also fill'd,  
Some on the bare ground, some on planks or stretchers, some  
in the  
death-spasm sweating,  
An occasional scream or cry, the doctor's shouted orders or  
calls,  
The glisten of the little steel instruments catching the  
glint of  
the torches,  
These I resume as I chant, I see again the forms, I smell  
the odor,  
Then hear outside the orders given, Fall in, my men, fall  
in;  
But first I bend to the dying lad, his eyes open, a half-  
smile gives he me,  
Then the eyes close, calmly close, and I speed forth to the  
darkness,  
Resuming, marching, ever in darkness marching, on in the  
ranks,  
The unknown road still marching.

# A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim

A sight in camp in the daybreak gray and dim,  
As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,  
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the  
hospital tent,  
Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there  
untended lying,  
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woolen  
blanket,  
Gray and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.

Curious I halt and silent stand,  
Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest the  
first  
just lift the blanket;  
Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim, with well-gray'd  
hair,  
and flesh all sunken about the eyes?  
Who are you my dear comrade?  
Then to the second I step—and who are you my child and  
darling?  
Who are you sweet boy with cheeks yet blooming?  
Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very calm, as  
of  
beautiful yellow-white ivory;  
Young man I think I know you—I think this face is the face  
of the  
Christ himself,  
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.



# As Toilsome I Wander'd Virginia's Woods

As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,  
To the music of rustling leaves kick'd by my feet, (for  
'twas autumn,) I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of a soldier;  
Mortally wounded he and buried on the retreat, (easily all  
could understand,) The halt of a mid-day hour, when up! no time to lose—yet  
this sign left, On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree by the grave,  
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

Long, long I muse, then on my way go wandering,  
Many a changeful season to follow, and many a scene of  
life, Yet at times through changeful season and scene, abrupt,  
alone, or in the crowded street,  
Comes before me the unknown soldier's grave, comes the  
inscription rude in Virginia's woods,  
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

# Not the Pilot

Not the pilot has charged himself to bring his ship into  
port,  
though beaten back and many times baffled;  
Not the pathfinder penetrating inland weary and long,  
By deserts parch'd, snows chill'd, rivers wet, perseveres  
till he  
reaches his destination,  
More than I have charged myself, heeded or unheeded, to  
compose  
march for these States,  
For a battle-call, rousing to arms if need be, years,  
centuries hence.

# Year That Trembled and Reel'd Beneath Me

Year that trembled and reel'd beneath me!  
Your summer wind was warm enough, yet the air I breathed  
froze me,  
A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and darken'd me,  
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?

# The Wound-Dresser

1

An old man bending I come among new faces,  
Years looking backward resuming in answer to children,  
Come tell us old man, as from young men and maidens that  
love me,  
(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;)  
Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions,  
these chances,  
Of unsurpass'd heroes, (was one side so brave? the other  
was equally brave;)  
Now be witness again, paint the mightiest armies of earth,  
Of those armies so rapid so wondrous what saw you to tell  
us?  
What stays with you latest and deepest? of curious panics,  
Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous what  
deepest remains?

2

O maidens and young men I love and that love me,  
What you ask of my days those the strangest and sudden your  
talking recalls,  
Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with  
sweat and dust,  
In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly  
shout in the  
rush of successful charge,  
Enter the captur'd works—yet lo, like a swift-running river  
they fade,  
Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not on soldiers' perils

or  
soldiers' joys,  
(Both I remember well—many the hardships, few the joys, yet  
I was content.)

But in silence, in dreams' projections,  
While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,  
So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints  
off the sand,  
With hinged knees returning I enter the doors, (while for  
you up there,  
Whoever you are, follow without noise and be of strong  
heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,  
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,  
Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought in,  
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass the ground,  
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the roof'd  
hospital,  
To the long rows of cots up and down each side I return,  
To each and all one after another I draw near, not one do I  
miss,  
An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries a refuse  
pail,  
Soon to be fill'd with clotted rags and blood, emptied, and  
fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,  
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,  
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoidable,  
One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy! I never knew  
you,  
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for you,  
if that  
would save you.

3  
On, on I go, (open doors of time! open hospital doors!)



The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed hand tear not the  
bandage away,)  
The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through and  
through examine,  
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye,  
yet life  
struggles hard,  
(Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death!  
In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,  
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the  
matter and blood,  
Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd neck and  
side falling head,  
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look on  
the  
bloody stump,  
And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep,  
But a day or two more, for see the frame all wasted and  
sinking,  
And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet-  
wound,  
Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so  
sickening,  
so offensive,  
While the attendant stands behind aside me holding the tray  
and pail.

I am faithful, I do not give out,  
The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,  
These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in my  
breast  
a fire, a burning flame.)

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,  
Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hospitals,  
The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,  
I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so  
young,  
Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad,  
(Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd  
and rested,  
Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)

# Long, Too Long America

Long, too long America,  
Traveling roads all even and peaceful you learn'd from joys  
and  
prosperity only,  
But now, ah now, to learn from crises of anguish,  
advancing,  
grappling with direst fate and recoiling not,  
And now to conceive and show to the world what your  
children  
en-masse really are,  
(For who except myself has yet conceiv'd what your children  
en-masse  
really are?)

# Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun

1

Give me the splendid silent sun with all his beams full  
dazzling,  
Give me autumnal fruit ripe and red from the orchard,  
Give me a field where the unmow'd grass grows,  
Give me an arbor, give me the trellis'd grape,  
Give me fresh corn and wheat, give me serene-moving animals  
teaching  
content,  
Give me nights perfectly quiet as on high plateaus west of  
the  
Mississippi, and I looking up at the stars,  
Give me odorous at sunrise a garden of beautiful flowers  
where I can  
walk undisturb'd,  
Give me for marriage a sweet-breath'd woman of whom I  
should never tire,  
Give me a perfect child, give me away aside from the noise  
of the  
world a rural domestic life,  
Give me to warble spontaneous songs recluse by myself, for  
my own ears only,  
Give me solitude, give me Nature, give me again O Nature  
your primal  
sanities!

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 gluttoned, enrich'd of soul, you give  
me forever faces;  
(O I see what I sought to escape, confronting, reversing my  
cries,  
see my own soul trampling down what it ask'd for.)

2

Keep your splendid silent sun,  
Keep your woods 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;  
Give me faces and streets—give me these phantoms incessant  
and  
endless along the trottoirs!  
Give me interminable eyes—give me women—give me comrades  
and  
lovers by the thousand!  
Let me see new ones every day—let me hold new ones by the  
hand every day!  
Give me such shows—give me the streets of Manhattan!  
Give me Broadway, with the soldiers marching—give me the  
sound of  
the trumpets and drums!  
(The soldiers in companies or regiments—some starting away,  
flush'd  
and reckless,  
Some, their time up, returning with thinn'd ranks, young,  
yet very  
old, worn, marching, noticing nothing;)  
Give me the shores and wharves heavy-fringed with black  
ships!  
O such for me! O an intense life, full to repletion and  
varied!  
The life of the theatre, bar-room, huge hotel, for me!

The saloon of the steamer! the crowded excursion for me!  
the  
torchlight procession!  
The dense brigade bound for the war, with high piled  
military wagons  
following;  
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,)  
Manhattan crowds, with their turbulent musical chorus!  
Manhattan faces and eyes forever for me.

# Dirge for Two Veterans

The last sunbeam  
Lightly falls from the finish'd Sabbath,  
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,  
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,  
Up from the east the silvery round moon,  
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,  
Immense and silent moon.

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

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

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

Now nearer blow the bugles,  
And the drums strike more convulsive,  
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,  
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,  
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumin'd,  
('Tis some mother's large transparent face,  
In heaven brighter growing.)

O strong dead-march you please me!  
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!  
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!  
What I have I also give you.

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



# Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice

Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice,  
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.

Sons of the Mother of All, you shall yet be victorious,  
You shall yet laugh to scorn the attacks of all the  
remainder of the earth.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers,  
If need be a thousand shall sternly immolate themselves for  
one.

One from Massachusetts shall be a Missourian's comrade,  
From Maine and from hot Carolina, and another an Oregonese,  
shall  
be friends triune,  
More precious to each other than all the riches of the  
earth.

To Michigan, Florida perfumes shall tenderly come,  
Not the perfumes of flowers, but sweeter, and wafted beyond  
death.

It shall be customary in the houses and streets to see  
manly affection,  
The most dauntless and rude shall touch face to face  
lightly,  
The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,  
The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

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.

(Were you looking to be held together by lawyers?  
Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?  
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.)

# I Saw Old General at Bay

I saw old General at bay,  
(Old as he was, his gray eyes yet shone out in battle like  
stars,)  
His small force was now completely hemm'd in, in his works,  
He call'd for volunteers to run the enemy's lines, a  
desperate emergency,  
I saw a hundred and more step forth from the ranks, but two  
or three  
were selected,  
I saw them receive their orders aside, they listen'd with  
care, the  
adjutant was very grave,  
I saw them depart with cheerfulness, freely risking their  
lives.

# The Artilleryman's Vision

While my wife at my side lies slumbering, and the wars are  
over long,  
And my head on the pillow rests at home, and the vacant  
midnight passes,  
And through the stillness, through the dark, I hear, just  
hear, the  
breath of my infant,  
There in the room as I wake from sleep this vision presses  
upon me;  
The engagement opens there and then in fantasy unreal,  
The skirmishers begin, they crawl cautiously ahead, I hear  
the  
irregular snap! snap!  
I hear the sounds of the different missiles, the short t-h-  
t! t-h-t!  
of the rifle-balls,  
I see the shells exploding leaving small white clouds, I  
hear the  
great shells shrieking as they pass,  
The grape like the hum and whirr of wind through the trees,  
(tumultuous now the contest rages,)  
All the scenes at the batteries rise in detail before me  
again,  
The crashing and smoking, the pride of the men in their  
pieces,  
The chief-gunner ranges and sights his piece and selects a  
fuse of  
the right time,  
After firing I see him lean aside and look eagerly off to  
note the effect;  
Elsewhere I hear the cry of a regiment charging, (the young  
colonel  
leads himself this time with brandish'd sword,)  
I see the gaps cut by the enemy's volleys, (quickly fill'd

up, no delay,)  
I breathe the suffocating smoke, then the flat clouds hover  
low  
concealing all;  
Now a strange lull for a few seconds, not a shot fired on  
either side,  
Then resumed the chaos louder than ever, with eager calls  
and  
orders of officers,  
While from some distant part of the field the wind wafts to  
my ears  
a shout of applause, (some special success,)  
And ever the sound of the cannon far or near, (rousing even  
in  
dreams a devilish exultation and all the old mad joy in the  
depths of my soul,)  
And ever the hastening of infantry shifting positions,  
batteries,  
cavalry, moving hither and thither,  
(The falling, dying, I heed not, the wounded dripping and  
red  
heed not, some to the rear are hobbling,)  
Grime, heat, rush, aide-de-camps galloping by or on a full  
run,  
With the patter of small arms, the warning s-s-t of the  
rifles,  
(these in my vision I hear or see,)  
And bombs bursting in air, and at night the vari-color'd  
rockets.

# Ethiopia Saluting the Colors

Who are you dusky woman, so ancient hardly human,  
With your woolly-white and turban'd head, and bare bony  
feet?

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

('Tis while our army lines Carolina's sands and pines,  
Forth from thy hovel door thou Ethiopia com'st to me,  
As under doughty Sherman I march toward the sea.)

Me master years a hundred since from my parents sunder'd,  
A little child, they caught me as the savage beast is  
caught,

Then hither me across the sea the cruel slaver brought.

No further does she say, but lingering all the day,  
Her high-borne turban'd head she wags, and rolls her  
darkling eye,

And courtesies to the regiments, the guidons moving by.

What is it fateful woman, so blear, hardly human?

Why wag your head with turban bound, yellow, red and green?  
Are the things so strange and marvelous you see or have  
seen?

# Not Youth Pertains to Me

Not youth pertains to me,  
Nor delicatessen, I cannot beguile the time with talk,  
Awkward in the parlor, neither a dancer nor elegant,  
In the learn'd coterie sitting constrain'd and still, for  
learning  
inures not to me,  
Beauty, knowledge, inure not to me—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.

# Race of Veterans

Race of veterans—race of victors!

Race of the soil, ready for conflict—race of the conquering  
march!

(No more credulity's race, abiding-temper'd race,)

Race henceforth owning no law but the law of itself,

Race of passion and the storm.



# World Take Good Notice

World take good notice, silver stars fading,  
Milky hue ript, wet of white detaching,  
Coals thirty-eight, baleful and burning,  
Scarlet, significant, hands off warning,  
Now and henceforth flaunt from these shores.



# O Tan-Faced Prairie-Boy

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

# Look Down Fair Moon

Look down fair moon and bathe this scene,  
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.

# Reconciliation

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,  
Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in  
time be  
utterly lost,  
That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly  
softly  
wash again, and ever again, this solid world;  
For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,  
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I  
draw near,  
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in  
the coffin.

# How Solemn As One by One [Washington City, 1865]

How solemn as one by one,  
As the ranks returning worn and sweaty, as the men file by  
where stand,  
As the faces the masks appear, as I glance at the faces  
studying the masks,  
(As I glance upward out of this page studying you, dear  
friend,  
whoever you are,)  
How solemn the thought of my whispering soul to each in the  
ranks,  
and to you,  
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;  
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.

# As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap Camerado

As I lay with my head in your lap camerado,  
The confession I made I resume, what I said to you and the  
open air  
I resume,  
I know I am restless and make others so,  
I know my words are weapons full of danger, full of death,  
For I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws,  
to  
unsettle them,  
I am more resolute because all have denied me than I could  
ever have  
been had all accepted me,  
I heed not and have never heeded either experience,  
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;  
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.

# Delicate Cluster

Delicate cluster! flag of teeming life!  
Covering all my lands—all my seashores lining!  
Flag of death! (how I watch'd you through the smoke of  
battle pressing!  
How I heard you flap and rustle, cloth defiant!)  
Flag cerulean—sunny flag, with the orbs of night dappled!  
Ah my silvery beauty—ah my woolly white and crimson!  
Ah to sing the song of you, my matron mighty!  
My sacred one, my mother.



# To a Certain Civilian

Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?  
Did you seek the civilian's peaceful and languishing  
rhymes?  
Did you find what I sang erewhile so hard to follow?  
Why I was not singing erewhile for you to follow, to  
understand—nor  
am I now;  
(I have been born of the same as the war was born,  
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;)  
What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I? therefore  
leave my works,  
And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and with  
piano-tunes,  
For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.

# Lo, Victress on the Peaks

Lo, Victress on the peaks,  
Where thou with mighty brow regarding the world,  
(The world O Libertad, that vainly conspired against thee,)  
Out of its countless beleaguering toils, after thwarting  
them all,  
Dominant, with the dazzling sun around thee,  
Flauntest now unharm'd in immortal soundness and bloom-lo,  
in  
these hours supreme,  
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.

# Spirit Whose Work Is Done [Washington City, 1865]

Spirit whose work is done—spirit of dreadful hours!  
Ere departing fade from my eyes your forests of bayonets;  
Spirit of gloomiest fears and doubts, (yet onward ever  
unfaltering  
pressing,)   
Spirit of many a solemn day and many a savage scene—  
electric spirit,  
That with muttering voice through the war now closed, like  
a  
tireless phantom flitted,  
Rousing the land with breath of flame, while you beat and  
beat the drum,  
Now as the sound of the drum, hollow and harsh to the last,  
reverberates round me,  
As your ranks, your immortal ranks, return, return from the  
battles,  
As the muskets of the young men yet lean over their  
shoulders,  
As I look on the bayonets bristling over their shoulders,  
As those slanted bayonets, whole forests of them appearing  
in the  
distance, approach and pass on, returning homeward,  
Moving with steady motion, swaying to and fro to the right  
and left,  
Evenly lightly rising and falling while the steps keep  
time;  
Spirit of hours I knew, all hectic red one day, but pale as  
death next day,  
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.

# Adieu to a Soldier

Adieu O soldier,  
You of the rude campaigning, (which we shared,)  
The rapid march, the life of the camp,  
The hot contention of opposing fronts, the long manoeuvre,  
Red battles with their slaughter, the stimulus, the strong  
terrific game,  
Spell of all brave and manly hearts, the trains of time  
through you  
and like of you all fill'd,  
With war and war's expression.

Adieu dear comrade,  
Your mission is fulfill'd—but I, more warlike,  
Myself and this contentious soul of mine,  
Still on our own campaigning bound,  
Through untried roads with ambushes opponents lined,  
Through many a sharp defeat and many a crisis, often  
baffled,  
Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight out—aye here,  
To fiercer, weightier battles give expression.

# Turn O Libertad

Turn O Libertad, for the war is over,  
From it and all henceforth expanding, doubting no more,  
resolute,  
sweeping the world,  
Turn from lands retrospective recording proofs of the past,  
From the singers that sing the trailing glories of the  
past,  
From the chants of the feudal world, the triumphs of kings,  
slavery, caste,  
Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come—give  
up that  
backward world,  
Leave to the singers of hitherto, give them the trailing  
past,  
But what remains remains for singers for you—wars to come  
are for you,  
(Lo, how the wars of the past have duly inured to you, and  
the wars  
of the present also inure;)  
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.

# To the Leaven'd Soil They Trod

To the leaven'd soil they trod calling I sing for the last,  
(Forth from my tent emerging for good, loosing, untying the  
tent-ropes,)  
In the freshness the forenoon air, in the far-stretching  
circuits  
and vistas again to peace restored,  
To the fiery fields emanative and the endless vistas  
beyond, to the  
South and the North,  
To the leaven'd soil of the general Western world to attest  
my songs,  
To the Alleghanian hills and the tireless Mississippi,  
To the rocks I calling sing, and all the trees in the  
woods,  
To the plains of the poems of heroes, to the prairies  
spreading wide,  
To the far-off sea and the unseen winds, and the sane  
impalpable air;  
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.





# BOOK XXII. MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN

## When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd

1

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the  
night,  
I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,  
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,  
And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star!  
O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!  
O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that hides the  
star!  
O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me!  
O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul.

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-  
wash'd palings,  
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves  
of rich green,  
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the  
perfume strong I love,  
With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the  
dooryard,  
With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of  
rich green,  
A sprig with its flower I break.

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,  
A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,  
The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,  
Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,  
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,  
If thou wast not granted to sing thou wouldst surely die.)

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,  
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets  
peep'd  
from the ground, spotting the gray debris,  
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes,  
passing the  
endless grass,  
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its  
shroud in the  
dark-brown fields uprisen,  
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the  
orchards,  
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,  
Night and day journeys a coffin.

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets,  
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the  
land,  
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped  
in black,  
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd  
women standing,  
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the  
night,

With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of  
faces and the  
unbared heads,  
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre  
faces,  
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices  
rising strong  
and solemn,  
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around  
the coffin,  
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where amid  
these  
you journey,  
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,  
Here, coffin that slowly passes,  
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7

(Nor for you, for one alone,  
Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,  
For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you  
O sane  
and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,  
O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies,  
But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,  
Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,  
With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,  
For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

8

O western orb sailing the heaven,  
Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I  
walk'd,  
As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,  
As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night  
after night,  
As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side,

(while the  
other stars all look'd on,)  
As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I  
know not  
what kept me from sleep,)  
As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how  
full you  
were of woe,  
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool  
transparent night,  
As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the  
netherward black  
of the night,  
As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you  
sad orb,  
Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

9

Sing on there in the swamp,  
O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your  
call,  
I hear, I come presently, I understand you,  
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd  
me,  
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me.

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?  
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that  
has gone?  
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,  
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea,  
till  
there on the prairies meeting,  
These and with these and the breath of my chant,  
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?  
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,  
To adorn the burial-house of him I love?  
Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,  
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke  
lucid and bright,  
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent,  
sinking  
sun, burning, expanding the air,  
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green  
leaves  
of the trees prolific,  
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river,  
with a  
wind-dapple here and there,  
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against  
the sky,  
and shadows,  
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of  
chimneys,  
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the  
workmen  
homeward returning.

12

Lo, body and soul—this land,  
My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and  
hurrying tides,  
and the ships,  
The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the  
light,  
Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,  
And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and  
corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,  
The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,  
The gentle soft-born measureless light,

The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,  
The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,  
Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

13

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,  
Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from  
the bushes,  
Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,  
Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!  
O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!  
You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon  
depart,)  
Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

14

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,  
In the close of the day with its light and the fields of  
spring, and  
the farmers preparing their crops,  
In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes  
and forests,  
In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds  
and the storms,)  
Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing,  
and the  
voices of children and women,  
The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they  
sail'd,  
And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields  
all busy  
with labor,  
And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on,  
each with  
its meals and minutia of daily usages,

And the streets how their throbbings throb'd, and the  
cities pent-  
lo, then and there,  
Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me  
with the rest,  
Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,  
And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of  
death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me,  
And the thought of death close-walking the other side of  
me,  
And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the  
hands of  
companions,  
I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,  
Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in  
the dimness,  
To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,  
The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,  
And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,  
From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still,  
Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,  
As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,  
And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

Come lovely and soothing death,  
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,  
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,  
Sooner or later delicate death.

Prais'd be the fathomless universe,  
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious,

And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!  
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.

Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,  
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?  
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,  
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come  
unfalteringly.

Approach strong deliveress,  
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing  
the dead,  
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,  
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death.

From me to thee glad serenades,  
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and  
feastings for thee,  
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread  
shy are fitting,  
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.

The night in silence under many a star,  
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I  
know,  
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,  
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.

Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,  
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields  
and the  
prairies wide,  
Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves  
and ways,  
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.

To the tally of my soul,  
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,



With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,  
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,  
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,  
As to long panoramas of visions.

And I saw askant the armies,  
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,  
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with  
missiles I saw them,  
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and  
bloody,  
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all  
in silence,)  
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,  
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,  
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of  
the war,  
But I saw they were not as was thought,  
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,  
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,  
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,  
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

16

Passing the visions, passing the night,  
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,  
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song  
of my soul,  
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-  
altering song,  
As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and  
falling,  
flooding the night,

Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet again  
bursting with joy,  
Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,  
As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,  
Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,  
I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning  
with spring.

I cease from my song for thee,  
From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west,  
communing with thee,  
O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievements out of the night,  
The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,  
And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul,  
With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance  
full of woe,  
With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the  
bird,  
Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to  
keep, for  
the dead I loved so well,  
For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and  
this for  
his dear sake,  
Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,  
There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

# O Captain! My Captain!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,  
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;  
But O heart! heart! heart!  
O the bleeding drops of red,  
Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;  
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,  
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,  
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;  
Here Captain! dear father!  
This arm beneath your head!  
It is some dream that on the deck,  
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,  
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,  
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;  
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!  
But I with mournful tread,  
Walk the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.



# Hush'd Be the Camps To-Day

## [May 4, 1865]

Hush'd be the camps to-day,  
And soldiers let us drape our war-worn weapons,  
And each with musing soul retire to celebrate,  
Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts,  
Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's dark events,  
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.  
But sing poet in our name,

Sing of the love we bore him—because you, dweller in camps,  
know it truly.

As they invault the coffin there,  
Sing—as they close the doors of earth upon him—one verse,  
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

# This Dust Was Once the Man

This dust was once the man,  
Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose cautious  
hand,  
Against the foulest crime in history known in any land or  
age,  
Was saved the Union of these States.



# BOOK XXIII

## By Blue Ontario's Shore

By blue Ontario's shore,  
As I mused of these warlike days and of peace return'd, and  
the  
dead that return no more,  
A Phantom gigantic superb, with stern visage accosted me,  
Chant me the poem, it said, that comes from the soul of  
America,  
chant me the carol of victory,  
And strike up the marches of Libertad, marches more  
powerful yet,  
And sing me before you go the song of the throes of  
Democracy.

(Democracy, the destin'd conqueror, yet treacherous lip-  
smiles everywhere,  
And death and infidelity at every step.)

2  
A Nation announcing itself,  
I myself make the only growth by which I can be  
appreciated,  
I reject none, accept all, then reproduce all in my own  
forms.

A breed whose proof is in time and deeds,  
What we are we are, nativity is answer enough to  
objections,  
We wield ourselves as a weapon is wielded,  
We are powerful and tremendous in ourselves,  
We are executive in ourselves, we are sufficient in the  
variety of



ourselves,

We are the most beautiful to ourselves and in ourselves,  
We stand self-pois'd in the middle, branching thence over  
the world,  
From Missouri, Nebraska, or Kansas, laughing attacks to  
scorn.

Nothing is sinful to us outside of ourselves,  
Whatever appears, whatever does not appear, we are  
beautiful or  
sinful in ourselves only.

(O Mother—O Sisters dear!  
If we are lost, no victor else has destroy'd us,  
It is by ourselves we go down to eternal night.)

3  
Have you thought there could be but a single supreme?  
There can be any number of supremes—one does not  
countervail  
another any more than one eyesight countervails another, or  
one life countervails another.

All is eligible to all,  
All is for individuals, all is for you,  
No condition is prohibited, not God's or any.

All comes by the body, only health puts you rapport with  
the universe.

Produce great Persons, the rest follows.

4  
Piety and conformity to them that like,  
Peace, obesity, allegiance, to them that like,  
I am he who tauntingly compels men, women, nations,  
Crying, Leap from your seats and contend for your lives!

I am he who walks the States with a barb'd tongue,

questioning every

one I meet,

Who are you that wanted only to be told what you knew  
before?

Who are you that wanted only a book to join you in your  
nonsense?

(With pangs and cries as thine own O bearer of many  
children,

These clamors wild to a race of pride I give.)

O lands, would you be freer than all that has ever been  
before?

If you would be freer than all that has been before, come  
listen to me.

Fear grace, elegance, civilization, delicatessen,

Fear the mellow sweet, the sucking of honey-juice,

Beware the advancing mortal ripening of Nature,

Beware what precedes the decay of the ruggedness of states  
and men.

5

Ages, precedents, have long been accumulating undirected  
materials,

America brings builders, and brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia and Europe have done their work  
and

pass'd to other spheres,

A work remains, the work of surpassing all they have done.

America, curious toward foreign characters, stands by its  
own at all

hazards,

Stands removed, spacious, composite, sound, initiates the  
true use

of precedents,

Does not repel them or the past or what they have produced

under  
their forms,  
Takes the lesson with calmness, perceives the corpse slowly  
borne  
from the house,  
Perceives that it waits a little while in the door, that it  
was  
fittest for its days,  
That its life has descended to the stalwart and well-shaped  
heir who  
approaches,  
And that he shall be fittest for his days.

Any period one nation must lead,  
One land must be the promise and reliance of the future.

These States are the amplest poem,  
Here is not merely a nation but a teeming Nation of  
nations,  
Here the doings of men correspond with the broadcast doings  
of the  
day and night,  
Here is what moves in magnificent masses careless of  
particulars,  
Here are the roughs, beards, friendliness, combativeness,  
the soul loves,  
Here the flowing trains, here the crowds, equality,  
diversity, the  
soul loves.

6  
Land of lands and bards to corroborate!  
Of them standing among them, one lifts to the light a west-  
bred face,  
To him the hereditary countenance bequeath'd both mother's  
and father's,  
His first parts substances, earth, water, animals, trees,  
Built of the common stock, having room for far and near,  
Used to dispense with other lands, incarnating this land,

Attracting it body and soul to himself, hanging on its neck  
with  
incomparable love,  
Plunging his seminal muscle into its merits and demerits,  
Making its cities, beginnings, events, diversities, wars,  
vocal in him,  
Making its rivers, lakes, bays, embouchure in him,  
Mississippi with yearly freshets and changing chutes,  
Columbia,  
Niagara, Hudson, spending themselves lovingly in him,  
If the Atlantic coast stretch or the Pacific coast stretch,  
he  
stretching with them North or South,  
Spanning between them East and West, and touching whatever  
is between them,  
Growths growing from him to offset the growths of pine,  
cedar, hemlock,  
live-oak, locust, chestnut, hickory, cottonwood, orange,  
magnolia,  
Tangles as tangled in him as any canebrake or swamp,  
He likening sides and peaks of mountains, forests coated  
with  
northern transparent ice,  
Off him pasturage sweet and natural as savanna, upland,  
prairie,  
Through him flights, whirls, screams, answering those of  
the  
fish-hawk, mocking-bird, night-heron, and eagle,  
His spirit surrounding his country's spirit, unclosed to  
good and evil,  
Surrounding the essences of real things, old times and  
present times,  
Surrounding just found shores, islands, tribes of red  
aborigines,  
Weather-beaten vessels, landings, settlements, embryo  
stature and muscle,  
The haughty defiance of the Year One, war, peace, the  
formation of  
the Constitution,

The separate States, the simple elastic scheme, the  
immigrants,  
The Union always swarming with blatherers and always sure  
and impregnable,  
The unsurvey'd interior, log-houses, clearings, wild  
animals,  
hunters, trappers,  
Surrounding the multiform agriculture, mines, temperature,  
the  
gestation of new States,  
Congress convening every Twelfth-month, the members duly  
coming  
up from the uttermost parts,  
Surrounding the noble character of mechanics and farmers,  
especially  
the young men,  
Responding their manners, speech, dress, friendships, the  
gait they  
have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the  
presence of superiors,  
The freshness and candor of their physiognomy, the  
copiousness and  
decision of their phrenology,  
The picturesque looseness of their carriage, their  
fierceness when wrong'd,  
The fluency of their speech, their delight in music, their  
curiosity,  
good temper and open-handedness, the whole composite make,  
The prevailing ardor and enterprise, the large amativeness,  
The perfect equality of the female with the male, the fluid  
movement  
of the population,  
The superior marine, free commerce, fisheries, whaling,  
gold-digging,  
Wharf-hemm'd cities, railroad and steamboat lines  
intersecting all points,  
Factories, mercantile life, labor-saving machinery, the  
Northeast,  
Northwest, Southwest,

Manhattan firemen, the Yankee swap, southern plantation  
life,  
Slavery—the murderous, treacherous conspiracy to raise it  
upon the  
ruins of all the rest,  
On and on to the grapple with it—Assassin! then your life  
or ours  
be the stake, and respite no more.

7  
(Lo, high toward heaven, this day,  
Libertad, from the conqueress' field return'd,  
I mark the new aureola around your head,  
No more of soft astral, but dazzling and fierce,  
With war's flames and the lambent lightnings playing,  
And your port immovable where you stand,  
With still the inextinguishable glance and the clinch'd and  
lifted fist,  
And your foot on the neck of the menacing one, the scorner  
utterly  
crush'd beneath you,  
The menacing arrogant one that strode and advanced with his  
senseless scorn, bearing the murderous knife,  
The wide-swelling one, the braggart that would yesterday do  
so much,  
To-day a carrion dead and damn'd, the despised of all the  
earth,  
An offal rank, to the dunghill maggots spurn'd.)

8  
Others take finish, but the Republic is ever constructive  
and ever  
keeps vista,  
Others adorn the past, but you O days of the present, I  
adorn you,  
O days of the future I believe in you—I isolate myself for  
your sake,  
O America because you build for mankind I build for you,  
O well-beloved stone-cutters, I lead them who plan with

decision

and science,

Lead the present with friendly hand toward the future.

(Bravas to all impulses sending sane children to the next age!

But damn that which spends itself with no thought of the stain,

pains, dismay, feebleness, it is bequeathing.)

9

I listened to the Phantom by Ontario's shore,

I heard the voice arising demanding bards,

By them all native and grand, by them alone can these States be

fused into the compact organism of a Nation.

To hold men together by paper and seal or by compulsion is no account,

That only holds men together which aggregates all in a living principle,

as the hold of the limbs of the body or the fibres of plants.

Of all races and eras these States with veins full of poetical stuff most

need poets, and are to have the greatest, and use them the greatest,

Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their

poets shall.

(Soul of love and tongue of fire!

Eye to pierce the deepest deeps and sweep the world!

Ah Mother, prolific and full in all besides, yet how long barren, barren?)

10

Of these States the poet is the equable man,

Not in him but off from him things are grotesque,

eccentric, fail of  
their full returns,  
Nothing out of its place is good, nothing in its place is  
bad,  
He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportion,  
neither  
more nor less,  
He is the arbiter of the diverse, he is the key,  
He is the equalizer of his age and land,  
He supplies what wants supplying, he checks what wants  
checking,  
In peace out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large,  
rich,  
thrifty, building populous towns, encouraging agriculture,  
arts,  
commerce, lighting the study of man, the soul, health,  
immortality, government,  
In war he is the best backer of the war, he fetches  
artillery as  
good as the engineer's, he can make every word he speaks  
draw blood,  
The years straying toward infidelity he withholds by his  
steady faith,  
He is no arguer, he is judgment, (Nature accepts him  
absolutely,)  
He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun failing  
round  
helpless thing,  
As he sees the farthest he has the most faith,  
His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things,  
In the dispute on God and eternity he is silent,  
He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and  
denouement,  
He sees eternity in men and women, he does not see men and  
women  
as dreams or dots.

For the great Idea, the idea of perfect and free  
individuals,



For that, the bard walks in advance, leader of leaders,  
The attitude of him cheers up slaves and horrifies foreign despots.

Without extinction is Liberty, without retrograde is  
Equality,  
They live in the feelings of young men and the best women,  
(Not for nothing have the indomitable heads of the earth  
been always  
ready to fall for Liberty.)

11

For the great Idea,  
That, O my brethren, that is the mission of poets.

Songs of stern defiance ever ready,  
Songs of the rapid arming and the march,  
The flag of peace quick-folded, and instead the flag we  
know,  
Warlike flag of the great Idea.

(Angry cloth I saw there leaping!  
I stand again in leaden rain your flapping folds saluting,  
I sing you over all, flying beckoning through the fight—O  
the  
hard-contested fight!  
The cannons ope their rosy-flashing muzzles—the hurtled  
balls scream,  
The battle-front forms amid the smoke—the volleys pour  
incessant  
from the line,  
Hark, the ringing word Charge!—now the tussle and the  
furious  
maddening yells,  
Now the corpses tumble curl'd upon the ground,  
Cold, cold in death, for precious life of you,  
Angry cloth I saw there leaping.)

12

Are you he who would assume a place to teach or be a poet  
here in  
the States?  
The place is august, the terms obdurate.

Who would assume to teach here may well prepare himself  
body and mind,  
He may well survey, ponder, arm, fortify, harden, make  
lithesome himself,  
He shall surely be question'd beforehand by me with many  
and stern questions.

Who are you indeed who would talk or sing to America?  
Have you studied out the land, its idioms and men?  
Have you learn'd the physiology, phrenology, politics,  
geography,  
pride, freedom, friendship of the land? its substratums and  
objects?  
Have you consider'd the organic compact of the first day of  
the  
first year of Independence, sign'd by the Commissioners,  
ratified  
by the States, and read by Washington at the head of the  
army?  
Have you possess'd yourself of the Federal Constitution?  
Do you see who have left all feudal processes and poems  
behind them,  
and assumed the poems and processes of Democracy?  
Are you faithful to things? do you teach what the land and  
sea, the  
bodies of men, womanhood, amateness, heroic angers,  
teach?  
Have you sped through fleeting customs, popularities?  
Can you hold your hand against all seductions, follies,  
whirls,  
fierce contentions? are you very strong? are you really of  
the  
whole People?  
Are you not of some coterie? some school or mere religion?

Are you done with reviews and criticisms of life? animating  
now to  
life itself?  
Have you vivified yourself from the maternity of these  
States?  
Have you too the old ever-fresh forbearance and  
impartiality?  
Do you hold the like love for those hardening to maturity?  
for the  
last-born? little and big? and for the errant?

What is this you bring my America?  
Is it uniform with my country?  
Is it not something that has been better told or done  
before?  
Have you not imported this or the spirit of it in some  
ship?  
Is it not a mere tale? a rhyme? a prettiness?—Is the good  
old cause in it?  
Has it not dangled long at the heels of the poets,  
politicians,  
literats, of enemies' lands?  
Does it not assume that what is notoriously gone is still  
here?  
Does it answer universal needs? will it improve manners?  
Does it sound with trumpet-voice the proud victory of the  
Union in  
that secession war?  
Can your performance face the open fields and the seaside?  
Will it absorb into me as I absorb food, air, to appear  
again in my  
strength, gait, face?  
Have real employments contributed to it? original makers,  
not mere  
amanuenses?  
Does it meet modern discoveries, calibres, facts, face to  
face?  
What does it mean to American persons, progresses, cities?  
Chicago,

Kanada, Arkansas?

Does it see behind the apparent custodians the real custodians

standing, menacing, silent, the mechanics, Manhattanese, Western

men, Southerners, significant alike in their apathy, and in the

promptness of their love?

Does it see what finally befalls, and has always finally befallen,

each temporizer, patcher, outsider, partialist, alarmist, infidel, who has ever ask'd any thing of America?

What mocking and scornful negligence?

The track strew'd with the dust of skeletons,

By the roadside others disdainfully toss'd.

13

Rhymes and rhymers pass away, poems distill'd from poems pass away,

The swarms of reflectors and the polite pass, and leave ashes,

Admirers, importers, obedient persons, make but the soil of literature,

America justifies itself, give it time, no disguise can deceive it

or conceal from it, it is impassive enough,

Only toward the likes of itself will it advance to meet them,

If its poets appear it will in due time advance to meet them, there

is no fear of mistake,

(The proof of a poet shall be sternly deferr'd till his country

absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorb'd it.)

He masters whose spirit masters, he tastes sweetest who results

sweetest in the long run,

The blood of the brawn beloved of time is unconstraint;

In the need of songs, philosophy, an appropriate native  
grand-opera,  
shipcraft, any craft,  
He or she is greatest who contributes the greatest original  
practical example.

Already a nonchalant breed, silently emerging, appears on  
the streets,  
People's lips salute only doers, lovers, satisfiers,  
positive knowers,  
There will shortly be no more priests, I say their work is  
done,  
Death is without emergencies here, but life is perpetual  
emergencies here,  
Are your body, days, manners, superb? after death you shall  
be superb,  
Justice, health, self-esteem, clear the way with  
irresistible power;  
How dare you place any thing before a man?

14

Fall behind me States!  
A man before all-myself, typical, before all.

Give me the pay I have served for,  
Give me to sing the songs of the great Idea, take all the  
rest,  
I have loved the earth, sun, animals, I have despised  
riches,  
I have given aims to every one that ask'd, stood up for the  
stupid  
and crazy, devoted my income and labor to others,  
Hated tyrants, argued not concerning God, had patience and  
indulgence  
toward the people, taken off my hat to nothing known or  
unknown,  
Gone freely with powerful uneducated persons and with the  
young,  
and with the mothers of families,

Read these leaves to myself in the open air, tried them by  
trees,  
stars, rivers,  
Dismiss'd whatever insulted my own soul or defiled my body,  
Claim'd nothing to myself which I have not carefully  
claim'd for  
others on the same terms,  
Sped to the camps, and comrades found and accepted from  
every State,  
(Upon this breast has many a dying soldier lean'd to  
breathe his last,  
This arm, this hand, this voice, have nourish'd, rais'd,  
restored,  
To life recalling many a prostrate form;)  
I am willing to wait to be understood by the growth of the  
taste of myself,  
Rejecting none, permitting all.

(Say O Mother, have I not to your thought been faithful?  
Have I not through life kept you and yours before me?)

15

I swear I begin to see the meaning of these things,  
It is not the earth, it is not America who is so great,  
It is I who am great or to be great, it is You up there, or  
any one,  
It is to walk rapidly through civilizations, governments,  
theories,  
Through poems, pageants, shows, to form individuals.

Underneath all, individuals,  
I swear nothing is good to me now that ignores individuals,  
The American compact is altogether with individuals,  
The only government is that which makes minute of  
individuals,  
The whole theory of the universe is directed unerringly to  
one  
single individual—namely to You.

(Mother! with subtle sense severe, with the naked sword in  
your hand,  
I saw you at last refuse to treat but directly with  
individuals.)

16

Underneath all, Nativity,  
I swear I will stand by my own nativity, pious or impious  
so be it;  
I swear I am charm'd with nothing except nativity,  
Men, women, cities, nations, are only beautiful from  
nativity.

Underneath all is the Expression of love for men and women,  
(I swear I have seen enough of mean and impotent modes of  
expressing  
love for men and women,  
After this day I take my own modes of expressing love for  
men and  
women.) in myself,

I swear I will have each quality of my race in myself,  
(Talk as you like, he only suits these States whose manners  
favor  
the audacity and sublime turbulence of the States.)

Underneath the lessons of things, spirits, Nature,  
governments,  
ownerships, I swear I perceive other lessons,  
Underneath all to me is myself, to you yourself, (the same  
monotonous old song.)

17

O I see flashing that this America is only you and me,  
Its power, weapons, testimony, are you and me,  
Its crimes, lies, thefts, defections, are you and me,  
Its Congress is you and me, the officers, capitols, armies,  
ships,  
are you and me,

Its endless gestations of new States are you and me,  
The war, (that war so bloody and grim, the war I will  
henceforth  
forget), was you and me,  
Natural and artificial are you and me,  
Freedom, language, poems, employments, are you and me,  
Past, present, future, are you and me.

I dare not shirk any part of myself,  
Not any part of America good or bad,  
Not to build for that which builds for mankind,  
Not to balance ranks, complexions, creeds, and the sexes,  
Not to justify science nor the march of equality,  
Nor to feed the arrogant blood of the brawn below'd of  
time.

I am for those that have never been master'd,  
For men and women whose tempers have never been master'd,  
For those whom laws, theories, conventions, can never  
master.

I am for those who walk abreast with the whole earth,  
Who inaugurate one to inaugurate all.

I will not be outfaced by irrational things,  
I will penetrate what it is in them that is sarcastic upon  
me,  
I will make cities and civilizations defer to me,  
This is what I have learnt from America—it is the amount,  
and it I  
teach again.

(Democracy, while weapons were everywhere aim'd at your  
breast,  
I saw you serenely give birth to immortal children, saw in  
dreams  
your dilating form,  
Saw you with spreading mantle covering the world.)



I will confront these shows of the day and night,  
I will know if I am to be less than they,  
I will see if I am not as majestic as they,  
I will see if I am not as subtle and real as they,  
I will see if I am to be less generous than they,  
I will see if I have no meaning, while the houses and ships  
have meaning,  
I will see if the fishes and birds are to be enough for  
themselves,  
and I am not to be enough for myself.

I match my spirit against yours you orbs, growths,  
mountains, brutes,  
Copious as you are I absorb you all in myself, and become  
the master myself,  
America isolated yet embodying all, what is it finally  
except myself?  
These States, what are they except myself?

I know now why the earth is gross, tantalizing, wicked, it  
is for my sake,  
I take you specially to be mine, you terrible, rude forms.

(Mother, bend down, bend close to me your face,  
I know not what these plots and wars and deferments are  
for,  
I know not fruition's success, but I know that through war  
and crime  
your work goes on, and must yet go on.)

19

Thus by blue Ontario's shore,  
While the winds fann'd me and the waves came trooping  
toward me,  
I thrill'd with the power's pulsations, and the charm of my  
theme  
was upon me,  
Till the tissues that held me parted their ties upon me.

And I saw the free souls of poets,  
The loftiest bards of past ages strode before me,  
Strange large men, long unwaked, undisclosed, were  
disclosed to me.

20

O my rapt verse, my call, mock me not!  
Not for the bards of the past, not to invoke them have I  
launch'd  
you forth,  
Not to call even those lofty bards here by Ontario's  
shores,  
Have I sung so capricious and loud my savage song.

Bards for my own land only I invoke,  
(For the war the war is over, the field is clear'd,)  
Till they strike up marches henceforth triumphant and  
onward,  
To cheer O Mother your boundless expectant soul.

Bards of the great Idea! bards of the peaceful inventions!  
(for the  
war, the war is over!)

Yet bards of latent armies, a million soldiers waiting  
ever-ready,  
Bards with songs as from burning coals or the lightning's  
fork'd stripes!  
Ample Ohio's, Kanada's bards—bards of California! inland  
bards—  
bards of the war!  
You by my charm I invoke.

# Reversals

Let that which stood in front go behind,  
Let that which was behind advance to the front,  
Let bigots, fools, unclean persons, offer new propositions,  
Let the old propositions be postponed,  
Let a man seek pleasure everywhere except in himself,  
Let a woman seek happiness everywhere except in herself



# BOOK XXIV. AUTUMN RIVULETS

## As Consequent, Etc.

As consequent from store of summer rains,  
Or wayward rivulets in autumn flowing,  
Or many a herb-lined brook's reticulations,  
Or subterranean sea-rills making for the sea,  
Songs of continued years I sing.

Life's ever-modern rapids first, (soon, soon to blend,  
With the old streams of death.)

Some threading Ohio's farm-fields or the woods,  
Some down Colorado's canons from sources of perpetual snow,  
Some half-hid in Oregon, or away southward in Texas,  
Some in the north finding their way to Erie, Niagara,  
Ottawa,  
Some to Atlantica's bays, and so to the great salt brine.

In you whoe'er you are my book perusing,  
In I myself, in all the world, these currents flowing,  
All, all toward the mystic ocean tending.

Currents for starting a continent new,  
Overtures sent to the solid out of the liquid,  
Fusion of ocean and land, tender and pensive waves,  
(Not safe and peaceful only, waves rous'd and ominous too,  
Out of the depths the storm's abysmic waves, who knows  
whence?  
Raging over the vast, with many a broken spar and tatter'd  
sail.)

Or from the sea of Time, collecting vasting all, I bring,  
A windrow-drift of weeds and shells.

O little shells, so curious-convolute, so limpid-cold and  
voiceless,  
Will you not little shells to the tympan of temples held,  
Murmurs and echoes still call up, eternity's music faint  
and far,  
Wafted inland, sent from Atlantica's rim, strains for the  
soul of  
the prairies,  
Whisper'd reverberations, chords for the ear of the West  
joyously sounding,  
Your tidings old, yet ever new and untranslatable,  
Infinitesimals out of my life, and many a life,  
(For not my life and years alone I give—all, all I give,)  
These waifs from the deep, cast high and dry,  
Wash'd on America's shores?

# The Return of the Heroes

1

For the lands and for these passionate days and for myself,  
Now I awhile retire to thee O soil of autumn fields,  
Reclining on thy breast, giving myself to thee,  
Answering the pulses of thy sane and equable heart,  
Turning a verse for thee.

O earth that hast no voice, confide to me a voice,  
O harvest of my lands—O boundless summer growths,  
O lavish brown parturient earth—O infinite teeming womb,  
A song to narrate thee.

2

Ever upon this stage,  
Is acted God's calm annual drama,  
Gorgeous processions, songs of birds,  
Sunrise that fullest feeds and freshens most the soul,  
The heaving sea, the waves upon the shore, the musical,  
strong waves,  
The woods, the stalwart trees, the slender, tapering trees,  
The liliput countless armies of the grass,  
The heat, the showers, the measureless pasturages,  
The scenery of the snows, the winds' free orchestra,  
The stretching light-hung roof of clouds, the clear  
cerulean and the  
silvery fringes,  
The high-dilating stars, the placid beckoning stars,  
The moving flocks and herds, the plains and emerald  
meadows,  
The shows of all the varied lands and all the growths and  
products.

3

Fecund America—today,



Thou art all over set in births and joys!  
Thou groan'st with riches, thy wealth clothes thee as a  
swathing-garment,  
Thou laughest loud with ache of great possessions,  
A myriad-twining life like interlacing vines binds all thy  
vast demesne,  
As some huge ship freighted to water's edge thou ridest  
into port,  
As rain falls from the heaven and vapors rise from earth,  
so have  
the precious values fallen upon thee and risen out of thee;  
Thou envy of the globe! thou miracle!  
Thou, bathed, choked, swimming in plenty,  
Thou lucky Mistress of the tranquil barns,  
Thou Prairie Dame that sittest in the middle and lookest  
out upon  
thy world, and lookest East and lookest West,  
Dispensatress, that by a word givest a thousand miles, a  
million  
farms, and missest nothing,  
Thou all-acceptress—thou hospitable, (thou only art  
hospitable as  
God is hospitable.)

4

When late I sang sad was my voice,  
Sad were the shows around me with deafening noises of  
hatred and  
smoke of war;  
In the midst of the conflict, the heroes, I stood,  
Or pass'd with slow step through the wounded and dying.

But now I sing not war,  
Nor the measur'd march of soldiers, nor the tents of camps,  
Nor the regiments hastily coming up deploying in line of  
battle;  
No more the sad, unnatural shows of war.

Ask'd room those flush'd immortal ranks, the first forth-

stepping armies?

Ask room alas the ghastly ranks, the armies dread that follow'd.

(Pass, pass, ye proud brigades, with your tramping sinewy legs,

With your shoulders young and strong, with your knapsacks and your muskets;

How elate I stood and watch'd you, where starting off you march'd.

Pass—then rattle drums again,

For an army heaves in sight, O another gathering army,

Swarming, trailing on the rear, O you dread accruing army,

O you regiments so piteous, with your mortal diarrhoea, with your fever,

O my land's maim'd darlings, with the plenteous bloody bandage and

the crutch,

Lo, your pallid army follows.)

5

But on these days of brightness,

On the far-stretching beauteous landscape, the roads and lanes the

high-piled farm-wagons, and the fruits and barns,

Should the dead intrude?

Ah the dead to me mar not, they fit well in Nature,

They fit very well in the landscape under the trees and grass,

And along the edge of the sky in the horizon's far margin.

Nor do I forget you Departed,

Nor in winter or summer my lost ones,

But most in the open air as now when my soul is rapt and at peace,

like pleasing phantoms,

Your memories rising glide silently by me.

6

I saw the day the return of the heroes,  
(Yet the heroes never surpass'd shall never return,  
Them that day I saw not.)

I saw the interminable corps, I saw the processions of  
armies,  
I saw them approaching, defiling by with divisions,  
Streaming northward, their work done, camping awhile in  
clusters of  
mighty camps.

No holiday soldiers—youthful, yet veterans,  
Worn, swart, handsome, strong, of the stock of homestead  
and workshop,  
Harden'd of many a long campaign and sweaty march,  
Inured on many a hard-fought bloody field.

A pause—the armies wait,  
A million flush'd embattled conquerors wait,  
The world too waits, then soft as breaking night and sure  
as dawn,  
They melt, they disappear.

Exult O lands! victorious lands!  
Not there your victory on those red shuddering fields,  
But here and hence your victory.

Melt, melt away ye armies—disperse ye blue-clad soldiers,  
Resolve ye back again, give up for good your deadly arms,  
Other the arms the fields henceforth for you, or South or  
North,  
With saner wars, sweet wars, life-giving wars.

7

Loud O my throat, and clear O soul!  
The season of thanks and the voice of full-yielding,  
The chant of joy and power for boundless fertility.

All till'd and untill'd fields expand before me,  
I see the true arenas of my race, or first or last,  
Man's innocent and strong arenas.

I see the heroes at other toils,  
I see well-wielded in their hands the better weapons.

I see where the Mother of All,  
With full-spanning eye gazes forth, dwells long,  
And counts the varied gathering of the products.

Busy the far, the sunlit panorama,  
Prairie, orchard, and yellow grain of the North,  
Cotton and rice of the South and Louisianian cane,  
Open unseeded fallows, rich fields of clover and timothy,  
Kine and horses feeding, and droves of sheep and swine,  
And many a stately river flowing and many a jocund brook,  
And healthy uplands with herby-perfumed breezes,  
And the good green grass, that delicate miracle the ever-  
recurring grass.

8

Toil on heroes! harvest the products!  
Not alone on those warlike fields the Mother of All,  
With dilated form and lambent eyes watch'd you.

Toil on heroes! toil well! handle the weapons well!  
The Mother of All, yet here as ever she watches you.

Well-pleased America thou beholdest,  
Over the fields of the West those crawling monsters,  
The human-divine inventions, the labor-saving implements;  
Beholdest moving in every direction imbued as with life the  
revolving hay-rakes,  
The steam-power reaping-machines and the horse-power  
machines  
The engines, thrashers of grain and cleaners of grain, well  
separating the straw, the nimble work of the patent

pitchfork,  
Beholdest the newer saw-mill, the southern cotton-gin, and the  
rice-cleanser.

Beneath thy look O Maternal,  
With these and else and with their own strong hands the  
heroes harvest.

All gather and all harvest,  
Yet but for thee O Powerful, not a scythe might swing as  
now in security,  
Not a maize-stalk dangle as now its silken tassels in  
peace.

Under thee only they harvest, even but a wisp of hay under  
thy great  
face only,  
Harvest the wheat of Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, every  
barbed spear  
under thee,  
Harvest the maize of Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, each  
ear in its  
light-green sheath,  
Gather the hay to its myriad mows in the odorous tranquil  
barns,  
Oats to their bins, the white potato, the buckwheat of  
Michigan, to theirs;  
Gather the cotton in Mississippi or Alabama, dig and hoard  
the  
golden the sweet potato of Georgia and the Carolinas,  
Clip the wool of California or Pennsylvania,  
Cut the flax in the Middle States, or hemp or tobacco in  
the Borders,  
Pick the pea and the bean, or pull apples from the trees or  
bunches  
of grapes from the vines,  
Or aught that ripens in all these States or North or South,  
Under the beaming sun and under thee.



# There Was a Child Went Forth

There was a child went forth every day,  
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,  
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain  
part of the day,  
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,  
And grass and white and red morning-glories, and white and  
red  
clover, and the song of the phoebe-bird,  
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter,  
and the  
mare's foal and the cow's calf,  
And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the  
pond-side,  
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below  
there, and the  
beautiful curious liquid,  
And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all  
became part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became  
part of him,  
Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light-yellow corn,  
and the  
esculent roots of the garden,  
And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and the fruit  
afterward,  
and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds by the road,  
And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of  
the  
tavern whence he had lately risen,  
And the schoolmistress that pass'd on her way to the  
school,

And the friendly boys that pass'd, and the quarrelsome boys,  
And the tidy and fresh-cheek'd girls, and the barefoot negro boy and girl,  
And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that had conceiv'd  
him in her womb and birth'd him,  
They gave this child more of themselves than that,  
They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him.

The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the supper-table,  
The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown, a wholesome  
odor falling off her person and clothes as she walks by,  
The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd, unjust,  
The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure,  
The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture, the  
yearning and swelling heart,  
Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what is real, the  
thought if after all it should prove unreal,  
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the curious  
whether and how,  
Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks?  
Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not flashes  
and specks what are they?  
The streets themselves and the facades of houses, and goods in the windows,  
Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves, the huge crossing at



the ferries,  
The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset, the  
river between,  
Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and  
gables of  
white or brown two miles off,  
The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide, the  
little  
boat slack-tow'd astern,  
The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping,  
The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint  
away  
solitary by itself, the spread of purity it lies motionless  
in,  
The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of  
salt marsh  
and shore mud,  
These became part of that child who went forth every day,  
and who  
now goes, and will always go forth every day.

# Old Ireland

Far hence amid an isle of wondrous beauty,  
Crouching over a grave an ancient sorrowful mother,  
Once a queen, now lean and tatter'd seated on the ground,  
Her old white hair drooping dishevel'd round her shoulders,  
At her feet fallen an unused royal harp,  
Long silent, she too long silent, mourning her shrouded  
hope and heir,  
Of all the earth her heart most full of sorrow because most  
full of love.

Yet a word ancient mother,  
You need crouch there no longer on the cold ground with  
forehead  
between your knees,  
O you need not sit there veil'd in your old white hair so  
dishevel'd,  
For know you the one you mourn is not in that grave,  
It was an illusion, the son you love was not really dead,  
The Lord is not dead, he is risen again young and strong in  
another country,  
Even while you wept there by your fallen harp by the grave,  
What you wept for was translated, pass'd from the grave,  
The winds favor'd and the sea sail'd it,  
And now with rosy and new blood,  
Moves to-day in a new country.

# The City Dead-House

By the city dead-house by the gate,  
As idly sauntering wending my way from the clangor,  
I curious pause, for lo, an outcast form, a poor dead  
prostitute brought,  
Her corpse they deposit unclaim'd, it lies on the damp  
brick pavement,  
The divine woman, her body, I see the body, I look on it  
alone,  
That house once full of passion and beauty, all else I  
notice not,  
Nor stillness so cold, nor running water from faucet, nor  
odors  
morbific impress me,  
But the house alone—that wondrous house—that delicate fair  
house  
—that ruin!  
That immortal house more than all the rows of dwellings  
ever built!  
Or white-domed capitol with majestic figure surmounted, or  
all the  
old high-spired cathedrals,  
That little house alone more than them all—poor, desperate  
house!  
Fair, fearful wreck—tenement of a soul—itself a soul,  
Unclaim'd, avoided house—take one breath from my tremulous  
lips,  
Take one tear dropt aside as I go for thought of you,  
Dead house of love—house of madness and sin, crumbled,  
crush'd,  
House of life, erewhile talking and laughing—but ah, poor  
house,  
dead even then,  
Months, years, an echoing, garnish'd house—but dead, dead,  
dead.



# This Compost

1

Something startles me where I thought I was safest,  
I withdraw from the still woods I loved,  
I will not go now on the pastures to walk,  
I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover  
the sea,  
I will not touch my flesh to the earth as to other flesh to  
renew me.

O how can it be that the ground itself does not sicken?  
How can you be alive you growths of spring?  
How can you furnish health you blood of herbs, roots,  
orchards, grain?  
Are they not continually putting distemper'd corpses within  
you?  
Is not every continent work'd over and over with sour dead?

Where have you disposed of their carcasses?  
Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations?  
Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat?  
I do not see any of it upon you to-day, or perhaps I am  
deceiv'd,  
I will run a furrow with my plough, I will press my spade  
through  
the sod and turn it up underneath,  
I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.

2

Behold this compost! behold it well!  
Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick person—  
yet behold!  
The grass of spring covers the prairies,  
The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the  
garden,

The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,  
The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,  
The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out  
of its graves,  
The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-  
tree,  
The he-birds carol mornings and evenings while the she-  
birds sit on  
their nests,  
The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs,  
The new-born of animals appear, the calf is dropt from the  
cow, the  
colt from the mare,  
Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark  
green leaves,  
Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk, the lilacs  
bloom in  
the dooryards,  
The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all  
those strata  
of sour dead.

What chemistry!

That the winds are really not infectious,  
That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of the  
sea which  
is so amorous after me,  
That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all over  
with its tongues,  
That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have  
deposited  
themselves in it,  
That all is clean forever and forever,  
That the cool drink from the well tastes so good,  
That blackberries are so flavorful and juicy,  
That the fruits of the apple-orchard and the orange-  
orchard, that  
melons, grapes, peaches, plums, will none of them poison  
me,

That when I recline on the grass I do not catch any  
disease,  
Though probably every spear of grass rises out of what was  
once  
catching disease.

Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and  
patient,  
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,  
It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such  
endless  
successions of diseases'd corpses,  
It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,  
It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual,  
sumptuous crops,  
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such  
leavings  
from them at last.

# To a Foil'd European Revolutionaire

Courage yet, my brother or my sister!  
Keep on—Liberty is to be subserv'd whatever occurs;  
That is nothing that is quell'd by one or two failures, or  
any  
number of failures,  
Or by the indifference or ingratitude of the people, or by  
any  
unfaithfulness,  
Or the show of the tushes of power, soldiers, cannon, penal  
statutes.

What we believe in waits latent forever through all the  
continents,  
Invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and  
light, is  
positive and composed, knows no discouragement,  
Waiting patiently, waiting its time.

(Not songs of loyalty alone are these,  
But songs of insurrection also,  
For I am the sworn poet of every dauntless rebel the world  
over,  
And he going with me leaves peace and routine behind him,  
And stakes his life to be lost at any moment.)

The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent  
advance and retreat,  
The infidel triumphs, or supposes he triumphs,  
The prison, scaffold, garrote, handcuffs, iron necklace and  
leadballs do their work,  
The named and unnamed heroes pass to other spheres,  
The greatspeakers and writers are exiled, they lie sick in



distant lands,  
The cause is asleep, the strongest throats are choked with  
their own blood,  
The young men droop their eyelashes toward the ground when  
they meet;  
But for all this Liberty has not gone out of the place, nor  
the  
infidel enter'd into full possession.

When liberty goes out of a place it is not the first to go,  
nor the  
second or third to go,  
It waits for all the rest to go, it is the last.

When there are no more memories of heroes and martyrs,  
And when all life and all the souls of men and women are  
discharged  
from any part of the earth,  
Then only shall liberty or the idea of liberty be  
discharged from  
that part of the earth,  
And the infidel come into full possession.

Then courage European revolter, revoltress!  
For till all ceases neither must you cease.

I do not know what you are for, (I do not know what I am  
for myself,  
nor what any thing is for,)  
But I will search carefully for it even in being foil'd,  
In defeat, poverty, misconception, imprisonment—for they  
too are great.

Did we think victory great?  
So it is—but now it seems to me, when it cannot be help'd,  
that  
defeat is great,  
And that death and dismay are great.



# Unnamed Land

Nations ten thousand years before these States, and many  
times ten  
thousand years before these States,  
 Garner'd clusters of ages that men and women like us grew  
up and  
travel'd their course and pass'd on,  
What vast-built cities, what orderly republics, what  
pastoral tribes  
and nomads,  
What histories, rulers, heroes, perhaps transcending all  
others,  
What laws, customs, wealth, arts, traditions,  
What sort of marriage, what costumes, what physiology and  
phrenology,  
What of liberty and slavery among them, what they thought  
of death  
and the soul,  
Who were witty and wise, who beautiful and poetic, who  
brutish and  
undevelop'd,  
Not a mark, not a record remains—and yet all remains.

O I know that those men and women were not for nothing, any  
more  
than we are for nothing,  
I know that they belong to the scheme of the world every  
bit as much  
as we now belong to it.

Afar they stand, yet near to me they stand,  
Some with oval countenances learn'd and calm,  
Some naked and savage, some like huge collections of  
insects,  
Some in tents, herdsmen, patriarchs, tribes, horsemen,

Some propling through woods, some living peaceably on  
farms,  
laboring, reaping, filling barns,  
Some traversing paved avenues, amid temples, palaces,  
factories,  
libraries, shows, courts, theatres, wonderful monuments.  
Are those billions of men really gone?  
Are those women of the old experience of the earth gone?  
Do their lives, cities, arts, rest only with us?  
Did they achieve nothing for good for themselves?

I believe of all those men and women that fill'd the  
unnamed lands,  
every one exists this hour here or elsewhere, invisible to  
us.  
In exact proportion to what he or she grew from in life,  
and out of  
what he or she did, felt, became, loved, sinn'd, in life.

I believe that was not the end of those nations or any  
person of  
them, any more than this shall be the end of my nation, or  
of me;  
Of their languages, governments, marriage, literature,  
products,  
games, wars, manners, crimes, prisons, slaves, heroes,  
poets,  
I suspect their results curiously await in the yet unseen  
world,  
counterparts of what accrued to them in the seen world,  
I suspect I shall meet them there,  
I suspect I shall there find each old particular of those  
unnamed lands.



# Song of Prudence

Manhattan's streets I saunter'd pondering,  
On Time, Space, Reality—on such as these, and abreast with  
them Prudence.

The last explanation always remains to be made about  
prudence,  
Little and large alike drop quietly aside from the prudence  
that  
suits immortality.

The soul is of itself,  
All verges to it, all has reference to what ensues,  
All that a person does, says, thinks, is of consequence,  
Not a move can a man or woman make, that affects him or her  
in a day,  
month, any part of the direct lifetime, or the hour of  
death,  
But the same affects him or her onward afterward through  
the  
indirect lifetime.

The indirect is just as much as the direct,  
The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives  
to the  
body, if not more.

Not one word or deed, not venereal sore, discoloration,  
privacy of  
the onanist,  
Putridity of gluttons or rum-drinkers, speculation, cunning,  
betrayal, murder, seduction, prostitution,  
But has results beyond death as really as before death.

Charity and personal force are the only investments worth

any thing.

No specification is necessary, all that a male or female  
does, that  
is vigorous, benevolent, clean, is so much profit to him or  
her,  
In the unshakable order of the universe and through the  
whole scope  
of it forever.

Who has been wise receives interest,  
Savage, felon, President, judge, farmer, sailor, mechanic,  
literate,  
young, old, it is the same,  
The interest will come round—all will come round.

Singly, wholly, to affect now, affected their time, will  
forever affect,  
all of the past and all of the present and all of the  
future,  
All the brave actions of war and peace,  
All help given to relatives, strangers, the poor, old,  
sorrowful,  
young children, widows, the sick, and to shunned persons,  
All self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks, and  
saw  
others fill the seats of the boats,  
All offering of substance or life for the good old cause,  
or for a  
friend's sake, or opinion's sake,  
All pains of enthusiasts scoff'd at by their neighbors,  
All the limitless sweet love and precious suffering of  
mothers,  
All honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded,  
All the grandeur and good of ancient nations whose  
fragments we inherit,  
All the good of the dozens of ancient nations unknown to us  
by name,  
date, location,

All that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or  
no,  
All suggestions of the divine mind of man or the divinity  
of his  
mouth, or the shaping of his great hands,  
All that is well thought or said this day on any part of  
the globe,  
or on any of the wandering stars, or on any of the fix'd  
stars,  
by those there as we are here,  
All that is henceforth to be thought or done by you whoever  
you are,  
or by any one,  
These inure, have inured, shall inure, to the identities  
from which  
they sprang, or shall spring.

Did you guess any thing lived only its moment?  
The world does not so exist, no parts palpable or  
impalpable so exist,  
No consummation exists without being from some long  
previous  
consummation, and that from some other,  
Without the farthest conceivable one coming a bit nearer  
the  
beginning than any.

Whatever satisfies souls is true;  
Prudence entirely satisfies the craving and glut of souls,  
Itself only finally satisfies the soul,  
The soul has that measureless pride which revolts from  
every lesson  
but its own.

Now I breathe the word of the prudence that walks abreast  
with time,  
space, reality,  
That answers the pride which refuses every lesson but its  
own.



What is prudence is indivisible,  
Declines to separate one part of life from every part,  
Divides not the righteous from the unrighteous or the  
living from the dead,  
Matches every thought or act by its correlative,  
Knows no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement,  
Knows that the young man who composedly peril'd his life  
and lost it  
has done exceedingly well for himself without doubt,  
That he who never peril'd his life, but retains it to old  
age in  
riches and ease, has probably achiev'd nothing for himself  
worth  
mentioning,  
Knows that only that person has really learn'd who has  
learn'd to  
prefer results,  
Who favors body and soul the same,  
Who perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct,  
Who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries  
nor  
avoids death.

# The Singer in the Prison

0 sight of pity, shame and dole!  
0 fearful thought—a convict soul.

1  
Rang the refrain along the hall, the prison,  
Rose to the roof, the vaults of heaven above,  
Pouring in floods of melody in tones so pensive sweet and  
strong the  
like whereof was never heard,  
Reaching the far-off sentry and the armed guards, who  
ceas'd their pacing,  
Making the hearer's pulses stop for ecstasy and awe.

2  
The sun was low in the west one winter day,  
When down a narrow aisle amid the thieves and outlaws of  
the land,  
(There by the hundreds seated, sear-faced murderers, wily  
counterfeiters,  
Gather'd to Sunday church in prison walls, the keepers  
round,  
Plenteous, well-armed, watching with vigilant eyes,)  
Calmly a lady walk'd holding a little innocent child by  
either hand,  
Whom seating on their stools beside her on the platform,  
She, first preluding with the instrument a low and musical  
prelude,  
In voice surpassing all, sang forth a quaint old hymn.

A soul confined by bars and bands,  
Cries, help! O help! and wrings her hands,  
Blinded her eyes, bleeding her breast,  
Nor pardon finds, nor balm of rest.

Ceaseless she paces to and fro,  
O heart-sick days! O nights of woe!  
Nor hand of friend, nor loving face,  
Nor favor comes, nor word of grace.

It was not I that sinn'd the sin,  
The ruthless body dragg'd me in;  
Though long I strove courageously,  
The body was too much for me.

Dear prison'd soul bear up a space,  
For soon or late the certain grace;  
To set thee free and bear thee home,  
The heavenly pardoner death shall come.

Convict no more, nor shame, nor dole!  
Depart—a God-enfranchis'd soul!

3  
The singer ceas'd,  
One glance swept from her clear calm eyes o'er all those  
upturn'd faces,  
Strange sea of prison faces, a thousand varied, crafty,  
brutal,  
seam'd and beauteous faces,  
Then rising, passing back along the narrow aisle between  
them,  
While her gown touch'd them rustling in the silence,  
She vanish'd with her children in the dusk.

While upon all, convicts and armed keepers ere they  
stirr'd,  
(Convict forgetting prison, keeper his loaded pistol,)  
A hush and pause fell down a wondrous minute,  
With deep half-stifled sobs and sound of bad men bow'd and  
moved to weeping,  
And youth's convulsive breathings, memories of home,  
The mother's voice in lullaby, the sister's care, the happy  
childhood,

The long-pent spirit rous'd to reminiscence;  
A wondrous minute then—but after in the solitary night, to  
many,  
many there,  
Years after, even in the hour of death, the sad refrain,  
the tune,  
the voice, the words,  
Resumed, the large calm lady walks the narrow aisle,  
The wailing melody again, the singer in the prison sings,  
O sight of pity, shame and dole!  
O fearful thought—a convict soul.

# Warble for Lilac-Time

Warble me now for joy of lilac-time, (returning in  
reminiscence,)  
Sort me O tongue and lips for Nature's sake, souvenirs of  
earliest summer,  
Gather the welcome signs, (as children with pebbles or  
stringing shells,)  
Put in April and May, the hylas croaking in the ponds, the  
elastic air,  
Bees, butterflies, the sparrow with its simple notes,  
Blue-bird and darting swallow, nor forget the high-hole  
flashing his  
golden wings,  
The tranquil sunny haze, the clinging smoke, the vapor,  
Shimmer of waters with fish in them, the cerulean above,  
All that is jocund and sparkling, the brooks running,  
The maple woods, the crisp February days and the sugar-  
making,  
The robin where he hops, bright-eyed, brown-breasted,  
With musical clear call at sunrise, and again at sunset,  
Or flitting among the trees of the apple-orchard, building  
the nest  
of his mate,  
The melted snow of March, the willow sending forth its  
yellow-green sprouts,  
For spring-time is here! the summer is here! and what is  
this in it  
and from it?  
Thou, soul, unloosen'd—the restlessness after I know not  
what;  
Come, let us lag here no longer, let us be up and away!  
O if one could but fly like a bird!  
O to escape, to sail forth as in a ship!  
To glide with thee O soul, o'er all, in all, as a ship o'er  
the waters;

Gathering these hints, the preludes, the blue sky, the  
grass, the  
morning drops of dew,  
The lilac-scent, the bushes with dark green heart-shaped  
leaves,  
Wood-violets, the little delicate pale blossoms called  
innocence,  
Samples and sorts not for themselves alone, but for their  
atmosphere,  
To grace the bush I love—to sing with the birds,  
A warble for joy of returning in reminiscence.

# Outlines for a Tomb [G. P., Buried 1870]

1

What may we chant, O thou within this tomb?  
What tablets, outlines, hang for thee, O millionaire?  
The life thou lived'st we know not,  
But that thou walk'dst thy years in barter, 'mid the haunts  
of  
brokers,  
Nor heroism thine, nor war, nor glory.

2

Silent, my soul,  
With drooping lids, as waiting, ponder'd,  
Turning from all the samples, monuments of heroes.

While through the interior vistas,  
Noiseless uprose, phantasmic, (as by night Auroras of the  
north,)  
Lambent tableaux, prophetic, bodiless scenes,  
Spiritual projections.

In one, among the city streets a laborer's home appear'd,  
After his day's work done, cleanly, sweet-air'd, the  
gaslight burning,  
The carpet swept and a fire in the cheerful stove.

In one, the sacred parturition scene,  
A happy painless mother birth'd a perfect child.

In one, at a bounteous morning meal,  
Sat peaceful parents with contented sons.

In one, by twos and threes, young people,

Hundreds concentring, walk'd the paths and streets and  
roads,  
Toward a tall-domed school.

In one a trio beautiful,  
Grandmother, loving daughter, loving daughter's daughter,  
sat,  
Chatting and sewing.

In one, along a suite of noble rooms,  
'Mid plenteous books and journals, paintings on the walls,  
fine statuettes,  
Were groups of friendly journeymen, mechanics young and  
old,  
Reading, conversing.

All, all the shows of laboring life,  
City and country, women's, men's and children's,  
Their wants provided for, hued in the sun and tinged for  
once with joy,  
Marriage, the street, the factory, farm, the house-room,  
lodging-room,  
Labor and toll, the bath, gymnasium, playground, library,  
college,  
The student, boy or girl, led forward to be taught,  
The sick cared for, the shoeless shod, the orphan father'd  
and mother'd,  
The hungry fed, the houseless housed;  
(The intentions perfect and divine,  
The workings, details, haply human.)

3  
O thou within this tomb,  
From thee such scenes, thou stintless, lavish giver,  
Tallying the gifts of earth, large as the earth,  
Thy name an earth, with mountains, fields and tides.

Nor by your streams alone, you rivers,  
By you, your banks Connecticut,



By you and all your teeming life old Thames,  
By you Potomac laving the ground Washington trod, by you  
Patapsco,  
You Hudson, you endless Mississippi—nor you alone,  
But to the high seas launch, my thought, his memory.

# Out from Behind This Mask [To Confront a Portrait]

1

Out from behind this bending rough-cut mask,  
These lights and shades, this drama of the whole,  
This common curtain of the face contain'd in me for me, in  
you for  
you, in each for each,  
(Tragedies, sorrows, laughter, tears—O heaven!  
The passionate teeming plays this curtain hid!)  
This glaze of God's serenest purest sky,  
This film of Satan's seething pit,  
This heart's geography's map, this limitless small  
continent, this  
soundless sea;  
Out from the convolutions of this globe,  
This subtler astronomic orb than sun or moon, than Jupiter,  
Venus, Mars,  
This condensation of the universe, (nay here the only  
universe,  
Here the idea, all in this mystic handful wrapt;)  
These burin'd eyes, flashing to you to pass to future time,  
To launch and spin through space revolving sideling, from  
these to emanate,  
To you whoever you are—a look.

2

A traveler of thoughts and years, of peace and war,  
Of youth long sped and middle age declining,  
(As the first volume of a tale perused and laid away, and  
this the second,  
Songs, ventures, speculations, presently to close,)  
Lingering a moment here and now, to you I opposite turn,  
As on the road or at some crevice door by chance, or open'd

window,

Pausing, inclining, baring my head, you specially I greet,  
To draw and clinch your soul for once inseparably with  
mine,

Then travel travel on.

# Vocalism

1

Vocalism, measure, concentration, determination, and the  
divine

power to speak words;

Are you full-lung'd and limber-lipp'd from long trial? from  
vigorous

practice? from physique?

Do you move in these broad lands as broad as they?

Come duly to the divine power to speak words?

For only at last after many years, after chastity,  
friendship,

procreation, prudence, and nakedness,

After treading ground and breasting river and lake,

After a loosen'd throat, after absorbing eras,  
temperaments, races,

after knowledge, freedom, crimes,

After complete faith, after clarifyings, elevations, and  
removing

obstructions,

After these and more, it is just possible there comes to a  
man,

woman, the divine power to speak words;

Then toward that man or that woman swiftly hasten all—none  
refuse, all attend,

Armies, ships, antiquities, libraries, paintings, machines,  
cities,

hate, despair, amity, pain, theft, murder, aspiration, form  
in

close ranks,

They debouch as they are wanted to march obediently through  
the

mouth of that man or that woman.

2

O what is it in me that makes me tremble so at voices?  
Surely whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her  
I shall follow,  
As the water follows the moon, silently, with fluid steps,  
anywhere  
around the globe.

All waits for the right voices;  
Where is the practis'd and perfect organ? where is the  
develop'd soul?  
For I see every word utter'd thence has deeper, sweeter,  
new sounds,  
impossible on less terms.

I see brains and lips closed, tympan and temples unstruck,  
Until that comes which has the quality to strike and to  
unclose,  
Until that comes which has the quality to bring forth what  
lies  
slumbering forever ready in all words.

# To Him That Was Crucified

My spirit to yours dear brother,  
Do not mind because many sounding your name do not  
understand you,  
I do not sound your name, but I understand you,  
I specify you with joy O my comrade to salute you, and to  
salute  
those who are with you, before and since, and those to come  
also,  
That we all labor together transmitting the same charge and  
succession,  
We few equals indifferent of lands, indifferent of times,  
We, enclosers of all continents, all castes, allowers of  
all theologies,  
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,  
We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but reject  
not the  
disputers nor any thing that is asserted,  
We hear the bawling and din, we are reach'd at by  
divisions,  
jealousies, recriminations on every side,  
They close peremptorily upon us to surround us, my comrade,  
Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over, journeying  
up and  
down till we make our ineffaceable mark upon time and the  
diverse eras,  
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of  
races,  
ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers as we are.



# You Felons on Trial in Courts

You felons on trial in courts,  
You convicts in prison-cells, you sentenced assassins  
chain'd and  
handcuff'd with iron,  
Who am I too that I am not on trial or in prison?  
Me ruthless and devilish as any, that my wrists are not  
chain'd with  
iron, or my ankles with iron?

You prostitutes flaunting over the trottoirs or obscene in  
your rooms,  
Who am I that I should call you more obscene than myself?

O culpable! I acknowledge—I expose!  
(O admirers, praise not me—compliment not me—you make me  
wince,  
I see what you do not—I know what you do not.)

Inside these breast-bones I lie smutch'd and choked,  
Beneath this face that appears so impassive hell's tides  
continually run,  
Lusts and wickedness are acceptable to me,  
I walk with delinquents with passionate love,  
I feel I am of them—I belong to those convicts and  
prostitutes myself,  
And henceforth I will not deny them—for how can I deny  
myself?





# Laws for Creations

Laws for creations,  
For strong artists and leaders, for fresh broods of  
teachers and  
perfect literats for America,  
For noble savans and coming musicians.  
All must have reference to the ensemble of the world, and  
the  
compact truth of the world,  
There shall be no subject too pronounced—all works shall  
illustrate  
the divine law of indirections.

What do you suppose creation is?  
What do you suppose will satisfy the soul, except to walk  
free and  
own no superior?  
What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred  
ways, but  
that man or woman is as good as God?  
And that there is no God any more divine than Yourself?  
And that that is what the oldest and newest myths finally  
mean?  
And that you or any one must approach creations through  
such laws?

# To a Common Prostitute

Be composed—be at ease with me—I am Walt Whitman, liberal  
and  
lusty as Nature,  
Not till the sun excludes you do I exclude you,  
Not till the waters refuse to glisten for you and the  
leaves to  
rustle for you, do my words refuse to glisten and rustle  
for you.

My girl I appoint with you an appointment, and I charge you  
that you  
make preparation to be worthy to meet me,  
And I charge you that you be patient and perfect till I  
come.

Till then I salute you with a significant look that you do  
not forget me.

# I Was Looking a Long While

I was looking a long while for Intentions,  
For a clew to the history of the past for myself, and for  
these  
chants—and now I have found it,  
It is not in those paged fables in the libraries, (them I  
neither  
accept nor reject,)  
It is no more in the legends than in all else,  
It is in the present—it is this earth to-day,  
It is in Democracy—(the purport and aim of all the past,)  
It is the life of one man or one woman to-day—the average  
man of to-day,  
It is in languages, social customs, literatures, arts,  
It is in the broad show of artificial things, ships,  
machinery,  
politics, creeds, modern improvements, and the interchange  
of nations,  
All for the modern—all for the average man of to-day.

# Thought

Of persons arrived at high positions, ceremonies, wealth,  
scholarships, and the like;  
(To me all that those persons have arrived at sinks away  
from them,  
except as it results to their bodies and souls,  
So that often to me they appear gaunt and naked,  
And often to me each one mocks the others, and mocks  
himself or herself,  
And of each one the core of life, namely happiness, is full  
of the  
rotten excrement of maggots,  
And often to me those men and women pass unwittingly the  
true  
realities of life, and go toward false realities,  
And often to me they are alive after what custom has served  
them,  
but nothing more,  
And often to me they are sad, hasty, unwaked sonnambules  
walking the dusk.)

# Miracles

Why, who makes much of a miracle?  
As to me I know of nothing else but miracles,  
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,  
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,  
Or wade with naked feet along the beach just in the edge of  
the water,  
Or stand under trees in the woods,  
Or talk by day with any one I love, or sleep in the bed at  
night  
with any one I love,  
Or sit at table at dinner with the rest,  
Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,  
Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive of a summer  
forenoon,  
Or animals feeding in the fields,  
Or birds, or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,  
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown, or of stars shining so  
quiet  
and bright,  
Or the exquisite delicate thin curve of the new moon in  
spring;  
These with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,  
The whole referring, yet each distinct and in its place.

To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,  
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,  
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread  
with the same,  
Every foot of the interior swarms with the same.

To me the sea is a continual miracle,  
The fishes that swim—the rocks—the motion of the waves—the  
ships with men in them,  
What stranger miracles are there?



# Sparkles from the Wheel

Where the city's ceaseless crowd moves on the livelong day,  
Withdrawn I join a group of children watching, I pause  
aside with them.

By the curb toward the edge of the flagging,  
A knife-grinder works at his wheel sharpening a great  
knife,  
Bending over he carefully holds it to the stone, by foot  
and knee,  
With measur'd tread he turns rapidly, as he presses with  
light but  
firm hand,  
Forth issue then in copious golden jets,  
Sparkles from the wheel.

The scene and all its belongings, how they seize and affect  
me,  
The sad sharp-chinn'd old man with worn clothes and broad  
shoulder-band of leather,  
Myself effusing and fluid, a phantom curiously floating,  
now here  
absorb'd and arrested,  
The group, (an unminded point set in a vast surrounding,)  
The attentive, quiet children, the loud, proud, restive  
base of the streets,  
The low hoarse purr of the whirling stone, the light-  
press'd blade,  
Diffusing, dropping, sideways-darting, in tiny showers of  
gold,  
Sparkles from the wheel.





# To a Pupil

Is reform needed? is it through you?  
The greater the reform needed, the greater the Personality  
you need  
to accomplish it.

You! do you not see how it would serve to have eyes, blood,  
complexion, clean and sweet?  
Do you not see how it would serve to have such a body and  
soul that  
when you enter the crowd an atmosphere of desire and  
command  
enters with you, and every one is impress'd with your  
Personality?

O the magnet! the flesh over and over!  
Go, dear friend, if need be give up all else, and commence  
to-day to  
inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem,  
definiteness,  
elevatedness,  
Rest not till you rivet and publish yourself of your own  
Personality.

# Unfolded out of the Folds

Unfolded out of the folds of the woman man comes unfolded,  
and is  
always to come unfolded,  
Unfolded only out of the superbest woman of the earth is to  
come the  
superbest man of the earth,  
Unfolded out of the friendliest woman is to come the  
friendliest man,  
Unfolded only out of the perfect body of a woman can a man  
be  
form'd of perfect body,  
Unfolded only out of the inimitable poems of woman can come  
the  
poems of man, (only thence have my poems come;)  
Unfolded out of the strong and arrogant woman I love, only  
thence  
can appear the strong and arrogant man I love,  
Unfolded by brawny embraces from the well-muscled woman  
love, only thence come the brawny embraces of the man,  
Unfolded out of the folds of the woman's brain come all the  
folds  
of the man's brain, duly obedient,  
Unfolded out of the justice of the woman all justice is  
unfolded,  
Unfolded out of the sympathy of the woman is all sympathy;  
A man is a great thing upon the earth and through eternity,  
but  
every of the greatness of man is unfolded out of woman;  
First the man is shaped in the woman, he can then be shaped  
in himself.



# What Am I After All

What am I after all but a child, pleas'd with the sound of  
my own  
name? repeating it over and over;  
I stand apart to hear—it never tires me.

To you your name also;  
Did you think there was nothing but two or three  
pronunciations in  
the sound of your name?

# Kosmos

Who includes diversity and is Nature,  
Who is the amplitude of the earth, and the coarseness and  
sexuality of  
the earth, and the great charity of the earth, and the  
equilibrium also,  
Who has not look'd forth from the windows the eyes for  
nothing,  
or whose brain held audience with messengers for nothing,  
Who contains believers and disbelievers, who is the most  
majestic lover,  
Who holds duly his or her triune proportion of realism,  
spiritualism, and of the aesthetic or intellectual,  
Who having consider'd the body finds all its organs and  
parts good,  
Who, out of the theory of the earth and of his or her body  
understands by subtle analogies all other theories,  
The theory of a city, a poem, and of the large politics of  
these States;  
Who believes not only in our globe with its sun and moon,  
but in  
other globes with their suns and moons,  
Who, constructing the house of himself or herself, not for  
a day  
but for all time, sees races, eras, dates, generations,  
The past, the future, dwelling there, like space,  
inseparable together.

# Others May Praise What They Like

Others may praise what they like;  
But I, from the banks of the running Missouri, praise  
nothing in art  
or aught else,  
Till it has well inhaled the atmosphere of this river, also  
the  
western prairie-scent,  
And exudes it all again.

# Who Learns My Lesson Complete?

Who learns my lesson complete?

Boss, journeyman, apprentice, churchman and atheist,  
The stupid and the wise thinker, parents and offspring,  
merchant,  
clerk, porter and customer,  
Editor, author, artist, and schoolboy—draw nigh and  
commence;  
It is no lesson—it lets down the bars to a good lesson,  
And that to another, and every one to another still.

The great laws take and effuse without argument,  
I am of the same style, for I am their friend,  
I love them quits and quits, I do not halt and make  
salaams.

I lie abstracted and hear beautiful tales of things and the  
reasons  
of things,  
They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.

I cannot say to any person what I hear—I cannot say it to  
myself—  
it is very wonderful.

It is no small matter, this round and delicious globe  
moving so  
exactly in its orbit for ever and ever, without one jolt or  
the untruth of a single second,  
I do not think it was made in six days, nor in ten thousand  
years,  
nor ten billions of years,  
Nor plann'd and built one thing after another as an



architect plans  
and builds a house.

I do not think seventy years is the time of a man or woman,  
Nor that seventy millions of years is the time of a man or  
woman,  
Nor that years will ever stop the existence of me, or any  
one else.

Is it wonderful that I should be immortal? as every one is  
immortal;  
I know it is wonderful, but my eyesight is equally  
wonderful, and  
how I was conceived in my mother's womb is equally  
wonderful,  
And pass'd from a babe in the creeping trance of a couple  
of  
summers and winters to articulate and walk—all this is  
equally wonderful.

And that my soul embraces you this hour, and we affect each  
other  
without ever seeing each other, and never perhaps to see  
each other, is every bit as wonderful.

And that I can think such thoughts as these is just as  
wonderful,  
And that I can remind you, and you think them and know them  
to  
be true, is just as wonderful.

And that the moon spins round the earth and on with the  
earth, is  
equally wonderful,  
And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars is  
equally  
wonderful.



# Tests

All submit to them where they sit, inner, secure,  
unapproachable to  
analysis in the soul,  
Not traditions, not the outer authorities are the judges,  
They are the judges of outer authorities and of all  
traditions,  
They corroborate as they go only whatever corroborates  
themselves,  
and touches themselves;  
For all that, they have it forever in themselves to  
corroborate far  
and near without one exception.

# The Torch

On my Northwest coast in the midst of the night a  
fishermen's group  
stands watching,  
Out on the lake that expands before them, others are  
spearing salmon,  
The canoe, a dim shadowy thing, moves across the black  
water,  
Bearing a torch ablaze at the prow.

# O Star of France [1870-71]

O star of France,  
The brightness of thy hope and strength and fame,  
Like some proud ship that led the fleet so long,  
Beseems to-day a wreck driven by the gale, a mastless hulk,  
And 'mid its teeming madden'd half-drown'd crowds,  
Nor helm nor helmsman.

Dim smitten star,  
Orb not of France alone, pale symbol of my soul, its  
dearest hopes,  
The struggle and the daring, rage divine for liberty,  
Of aspirations toward the far ideal, enthusiast's dreams of  
brotherhood,  
Of terror to the tyrant and the priest.

Star crucified—by traitors sold,  
Star panting o'er a land of death, heroic land,  
Strange, passionate, mocking, frivolous land.

Miserable! yet for thy errors, vanities, sins, I will not  
now rebuke thee,  
Thy unexampled woes and pangs have quell'd them all,  
And left thee sacred.

In that amid thy many faults thou ever aimedst highly,  
In that thou wouldst not really sell thyself however great  
the price,  
In that thou surely wakedst weeping from thy drugg'd sleep,  
In that alone among thy sisters thou, giantess, didst rend  
the ones  
that shamed thee,  
In that thou couldst not, wouldst not, wear the usual  
chains,  
This cross, thy livid face, thy pierced hands and feet,

The spear thrust in thy side.

O star! O ship of France, beat back and baffled long!  
Bear up O smitten orb! O ship continue on!

Sure as the ship of all, the Earth itself,  
Product of deathly fire and turbulent chaos,  
Forth from its spasms of fury and its poisons,  
Issuing at last in perfect power and beauty,  
Onward beneath the sun following its course,  
So thee O ship of France!

Finish'd the days, the clouds dispel'd  
The travail o'er, the long-sought extrication,  
When lo! reborn, high o'er the European world,  
(In gladness answering thence, as face afar to face,  
reflecting ours  
Columbia,)  
Again thy star O France, fair lustrous star,  
In heavenly peace, clearer, more bright than ever,  
Shall beam immortal.

# The Ox-Tamer

In a far-away northern county in the placid pastoral region,  
Lives my farmer friend, the theme of my recitative, a  
famous tamer of oxen,  
There they bring him the three-year-olds and the four-year-olds to  
break them,  
He will take the wildest steer in the world and break him  
and tame him,  
He will go fearless without any whip where the young  
bullock  
chafes up and down the yard,  
The bullock's head tosses restless high in the air with  
raging eyes,  
Yet see you! how soon his rage subsides—how soon this tamer  
tames him;  
See you! on the farms hereabout a hundred oxen young and  
old,  
and he is the man who has tamed them,  
They all know him, all are affectionate to him;  
See you! some are such beautiful animals, so lofty looking;  
Some are buff-color'd, some mottled, one has a white line  
running  
along his back, some are brindled,  
Some have wide flaring horns (a good sign)—see you! the  
bright hides,  
See, the two with stars on their foreheads—see, the round  
bodies  
and broad backs,  
How straight and square they stand on their legs—what fine  
sagacious eyes!  
How straight they watch their tamer—they wish him near them  
—how  
they turn to look after him!

What yearning expression! how uneasy they are when he moves  
away from them;  
Now I marvel what it can be he appears to them, (books,  
politics,  
poems, depart—all else departs,)  
I confess I envy only his fascination—my silent, illiterate  
friend,  
Whom a hundred oxen love there in his life on farms,  
In the northern county far, in the placid pastoral region.  
An Old Man's Thought of School  
[For the Inauguration of a Public School, Camden, New  
Jersey, 1874]

An old man's thought of school,  
An old man gathering youthful memories and blooms that  
youth itself cannot.

Now only do I know you,  
O fair auroral skies—O morning dew upon the grass!

And these I see, these sparkling eyes,  
These stores of mystic meaning, these young lives,  
Building, equipping like a fleet of ships, immortal ships,  
Soon to sail out over the measureless seas,  
On the soul's voyage.

Only a lot of boys and girls?  
Only the tiresome spelling, writing, ciphering classes?  
Only a public school?

Ah more, infinitely more;  
(As George Fox rais'd his warning cry, "Is it this pile of  
brick and  
mortar, these dead floors, windows, rails, you call the  
church?  
Why this is not the church at all—the church is living,  
ever living  
souls.")



And you America,

Cast you the real reckoning for your present?

The lights and shadows of your future, good or evil?

To girlhood, boyhood look, the teacher and the school.

# Wandering at Morn

Wandering at morn,  
Emerging from the night from gloomy thoughts, thee in my  
thoughts,  
Yearning for thee harmonious Union! thee, singing bird  
divine!  
Thee coil'd in evil times my country, with craft and black  
dismay,  
with every meanness, treason thrust upon thee,  
This common marvel I beheld—the parent thrush I watch'd  
feeding its young,  
The singing thrush whose tones of joy and faith ecstatic,  
Fail not to certify and cheer my soul.

There ponder'd, felt I,  
If worms, snakes, loathsome grubs, may to sweet spiritual  
songs be turn'd,  
If vermin so transposed, so used and bless'd may be,  
Then may I trust in you, your fortunes, days, my country;  
Who knows but these may be the lessons fit for you?  
From these your future song may rise with joyous trills,  
Destin'd to fill the world.  
Italian Music in Dakota  
["The Seventeenth—the finest Regimental Band I ever  
heard."]

Through the soft evening air enwinding all,  
Rocks, woods, fort, cannon, pacing sentries, endless wilds,  
In dulcet streams, in flutes' and cornets' notes,  
Electric, pensive, turbulent, artificial,  
(Yet strangely fitting even here, meanings unknown before,  
Subtler than ever, more harmony, as if born here, related  
here,  
Not to the city's fresco'd rooms, not to the audience of  
the opera house,

Sounds, echoes, wandering strains, as really here at home,  
Sonnambula's innocent love, trios with Norma's anguish,  
And thy ecstatic chorus Poliuto;)  
Ray'd in the limpid yellow slanting sundown,  
Music, Italian music in Dakota.

While Nature, sovereign of this gnarl'd realm,  
Lurking in hidden barbaric grim recesses,  
Acknowledging rapport however far remov'd,  
(As some old root or soil of earth its last-born flower or  
fruit,)  
Listens well pleas'd.

# With All Thy Gifts

With all thy gifts America,  
Standing secure, rapidly tending, overlooking the world,  
Power, wealth, extent, vouchsafed to thee—with these and  
like of  
these vouchsafed to thee,  
What if one gift thou lackest? (the ultimate human problem  
never solving,)  
The gift of perfect women fit for thee—what if that gift of  
gifts  
thou lackest?  
The towering feminine of thee? the beauty, health,  
completion, fit for thee?  
The mothers fit for thee?

# My Picture-Gallery

In a little house keep I pictures suspended, it is not a  
fix'd house,  
It is round, it is only a few inches from one side to the  
other;  
Yet behold, it has room for all the shows of the world, all  
memories!  
Here the tableaux of life, and here the groupings of death;  
Here, do you know this? this is cicerone himself,  
With finger rais'd he points to the prodigal pictures.

# The Prairie States

A newer garden of creation, no primal solitude,  
Dense, joyous, modern, populous millions, cities and farms,  
With iron interlaced, composite, tied, many in one,  
By all the world contributed—freedom's and law's and  
thrift's society,  
The crown and teeming paradise, so far, of time's  
accumulations,  
To justify the past.



# BOOK XXV

## Proud Music of the Storm

1

Proud music of the storm,  
Blast that careers so free, whistling across the prairies,  
Strong hum of forest tree-tops—wind of the mountains,  
Personified dim shapes—you hidden orchestras,  
You serenades of phantoms with instruments alert,  
Blending with Nature's rhythmus all the tongues of nations;  
You chords left as by vast composers—you choruses,  
You formless, free, religious dances—you from the Orient,  
You undertone of rivers, roar of pouring cataracts,  
You sounds from distant guns with galloping cavalry,  
Echoes of camps with all the different bugle-calls,  
Trooping tumultuous, filling the midnight late, bending me  
powerless,  
Entering my lonesome slumber-chamber, why have you seiz'd  
me?

2

Come forward O my soul, and let the rest retire,  
Listen, lose not, it is toward thee they tend,  
Parting the midnight, entering my slumber-chamber,  
For thee they sing and dance O soul.

A festival song,  
The duet of the bridegroom and the bride, a marriage-march,  
With lips of love, and hearts of lovers fill'd to the brim  
with love,  
The red-flush'd cheeks and perfumes, the cortege swarming  
full of  
friendly faces young and old,  
To flutes' clear notes and sounding harps' cantabile.



Now loud approaching drums,  
Victoria! seest thou in powder-smoke the banners torn but  
flying?  
the rout of the baffled?  
Hearest those shouts of a conquering army?

(Ah soul, the sobs of women, the wounded groaning in agony,  
The hiss and crackle of flames, the blacken'd ruins, the  
embers of cities,  
The dirge and desolation of mankind.)

Now airs antique and mediaeval fill me,  
I see and hear old harpers with their harps at Welsh  
festivals,  
I hear the minnesingers singing their lays of love,  
I hear the minstrels, gleemen, troubadours, of the middle  
ages.

Now the great organ sounds,  
Tremulous, while underneath, (as the hid footholds of the  
earth,  
On which arising rest, and leaping forth depend,  
All shapes of beauty, grace and strength, all hues we know,  
Green blades of grass and warbling birds, children that  
gambol and  
play, the clouds of heaven above,)  
The strong base stands, and its pulsations intermits not,  
Bathing, supporting, merging all the rest, maternity of all  
the rest,  
And with it every instrument in multitudes,  
The players playing, all the world's musicians,  
The solemn hymns and masses rousing adoration,  
All passionate heart-chants, sorrowful appeals,  
The measureless sweet vocalists of ages,  
And for their solvent setting earth's own diapason,  
Of winds and woods and mighty ocean waves,  
A new composite orchestra, binder of years and climes, ten-  
fold renewer,  
As of the far-back days the poets tell, the Paradiso,

The straying thence, the separation long, but now the  
wandering done,  
The journey done, the journeyman come home,  
And man and art with Nature fused again.

Tutti! for earth and heaven;  
(The Almighty leader now for once has signal'd with his  
wand.)

The manly strophe of the husbands of the world,  
And all the wives responding.

The tongues of violins,  
(I think O tongues ye tell this heart, that cannot tell  
itself,  
This brooding yearning heart, that cannot tell itself.)

3  
Ah from a little child,  
Thou knowest soul how to me all sounds became music,  
My mother's voice in lullaby or hymn,  
(The voice, O tender voices, memory's loving voices,  
Last miracle of all, O dearest mother's, sister's, voices;)  
The rain, the growing corn, the breeze among the long-  
leav'd corn,  
The measur'd sea-surf beating on the sand,  
The twittering bird, the hawk's sharp scream,  
The wild-fowl's notes at night as flying low migrating  
north or south,  
The psalm in the country church or mid the clustering  
trees, the  
open air camp-meeting,  
The fiddler in the tavern, the glee, the long-strung  
sailor-song,  
The lowing cattle, bleating sheep, the crowing cock at  
dawn.

All songs of current lands come sounding round me,  
The German airs of friendship, wine and love,

Irish ballads, merry jigs and dances, English warbles,  
Chansons of France, Scotch tunes, and o'er the rest,  
Italia's peerless compositions.

Across the stage with pallor on her face, yet lurid  
passion,  
Stalks Norma brandishing the dagger in her hand.

I see poor crazed Lucia's eyes' unnatural gleam,  
Her hair down her back falls loose and dishevel'd.

I see where Ernani walking the bridal garden,  
Amid the scent of night-roses, radiant, holding his bride  
by the hand,  
Hears the infernal call, the death-pledge of the horn.

To crossing swords and gray hairs bared to heaven,  
The clear electric base and baritone of the world,  
The trombone duo, Libertad forever!  
From Spanish chestnut trees' dense shade,  
By old and heavy convent walls a wailing song,  
Song of lost love, the torch of youth and life quench'd in  
despair,  
Song of the dying swan, Fernando's heart is breaking.

Awaking from her woes at last retriev'd Amina sings,  
Copious as stars and glad as morning light the torrents of  
her joy.

(The teeming lady comes,  
The lustrous orb, Venus contralto, the blooming mother,  
Sister of loftiest gods, Alboni's self I hear.)

4

I hear those odes, symphonies, operas,  
I hear in the William Tell the music of an arous'd and  
angry people,  
I hear Meyerbeer's Huguenots, the Prophet, or Robert,  
Gounod's Faust, or Mozart's Don Juan.

I hear the dance-music of all nations,  
The waltz, some delicious measure, lapsing, bathing me in  
bliss,  
The bolero to tinkling guitars and clattering castanets.

I see religious dances old and new,  
I hear the sound of the Hebrew lyre,  
I see the crusaders marching bearing the cross on high, to  
the  
martial clang of cymbals,  
I hear dervishes monotonously chanting, interspers'd with  
frantic  
shouts, as they spin around turning always towards Mecca,  
I see the rapt religious dances of the Persians and the  
Arabs,  
Again, at Eleusis, home of Ceres, I see the modern Greeks  
dancing,  
I hear them clapping their hands as they bend their bodies,  
I hear the metrical shuffling of their feet.

I see again the wild old Corybantian dance, the performers  
wounding  
each other,  
I see the Roman youth to the shrill sound of flageolets  
throwing and  
catching their weapons,  
As they fall on their knees and rise again.

I hear from the Mussulman mosque the muezzin calling,  
I see the worshippers within, nor form nor sermon, argument  
nor word,  
But silent, strange, devout, rais'd, glowing heads,  
ecstatic faces.

I hear the Egyptian harp of many strings,  
The primitive chants of the Nile boatmen,  
The sacred imperial hymns of China,  
To the delicate sounds of the king, (the stricken wood and

stone,)

Or to Hindu flutes and the fretting twang of the vina,  
A band of bayaderes.

5

Now Asia, Africa leave me, Europe seizing inflates me,  
To organs huge and bands I hear as from vast concourses of  
voices,  
Luther's strong hymn Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott,  
Rossini's Stabat Mater dolorosa,  
Or floating in some high cathedral dim with gorgeous  
color'd windows,  
The passionate Agnus Dei or Gloria in Excelsis.

Composers! mighty maestros!

And you, sweet singers of old lands, soprani, tenori,  
bassi!

To you a new bard caroling in the West,  
Obeisant sends his love.

(Such led to thee O soul,  
All senses, shows and objects, lead to thee,  
But now it seems to me sound leads o'er all the rest.)

I hear the annual singing of the children in St. Paul's  
cathedral,  
Or, under the high roof of some colossal hall, the  
symphonies,  
oratorios of Beethoven, Handel, or Haydn,  
The Creation in billows of godhood laves me.

Give me to hold all sounds, (I madly struggling cry,)  
Fill me with all the voices of the universe,  
Endow me with their throbbings, Nature's also,  
The tempests, waters, winds, operas and chants, marches and  
dances,  
Utter, pour in, for I would take them all!

6

Then I woke softly,  
And pausing, questioning awhile the music of my dream,  
And questioning all those reminiscences, the tempest in its  
fury,  
And all the songs of sopranos and tenors,  
And those rapt oriental dances of religious fervor,  
And the sweet varied instruments, and the diapason of  
organs,  
And all the artless plaints of love and grief and death,  
I said to my silent curious soul out of the bed of the  
slumber-chamber,  
Come, for I have found the clew I sought so long,  
Let us go forth refresh'd amid the day,  
Cheerfully tallying life, walking the world, the real,  
Nourish'd henceforth by our celestial dream.

And I said, moreover,  
Haply what thou hast heard O soul was not the sound of  
winds,  
Nor dream of raging storm, nor sea-hawk's flapping wings  
nor harsh scream,  
Nor vocalism of sun-bright Italy,  
Nor German organ majestic, nor vast concourse of voices,  
nor layers  
of harmonies,  
Nor strophes of husbands and wives, nor sound of marching  
soldiers,  
Nor flutes, nor harps, nor the bugle-calls of camps,  
But to a new rhythmus fitted for thee,  
Poems bridging the way from Life to Death, vaguely wafted  
in night  
air, uncaught, unwritten,  
Which let us go forth in the bold day and write.



# BOOK XXVI

## Passage to India

1  
Singing my days,  
Singing the great achievements of the present,  
Singing the strong light works of engineers,  
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven outvied,)  
In the Old World the east the Suez canal,  
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,  
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires;  
Yet first to sound, and ever sound, the cry with thee O  
soul,  
The Past! the Past! the Past!

The Past—the dark unfathom'd retrospect!  
The teeming gulf—the sleepers and the shadows!  
The past—the infinite greatness of the past!  
For what is the present after all but a growth out of the  
past?  
(As a projectile form'd, impell'd, passing a certain line,  
still keeps on,  
So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past.)

2  
Passage O soul to India!  
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.

Not you alone proud truths of the world,  
Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,  
But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables,  
The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,  
The deep diving bibles and legends,  
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;



O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the rising  
sun!  
O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of the  
known,  
mounting to heaven!  
You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as roses,  
burnish'd  
with gold!  
Towers of fables immortal fashion'd from mortal dreams!  
You too I welcome and fully the same as the rest!  
You too with joy I sing.

Passage to India!

Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first?  
The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,  
The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,  
The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,  
The lands to be welded together.

A worship new I sing,  
You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours,  
You engineers, you architects, machinists, yours,  
You, not for trade or transportation only,  
But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul.

3

Passage to India!

Lo soul for thee of tableaux twain,  
I see in one the Suez canal initiated, open'd,  
I see the procession of steamships, the Empress Engenie's  
leading the van,  
I mark from on deck the strange landscape, the pure sky,  
the level  
sand in the distance,  
I pass swiftly the picturesque groups, the workmen  
gather'd,  
The gigantic dredging machines.

In one again, different, (yet thine, all thine, O soul, the

same,) I see over my own continent the Pacific railroad surmounting every barrier, I see continual trains of cars winding along the Platte carrying freight and passengers, I hear the locomotives rushing and roaring, and the shrill steam-whistle, I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest scenery in the world, I cross the Laramie plains, I note the rocks in grotesque shapes, the buttes, I see the plentiful larkspur and wild onions, the barren, colorless, sage-deserts, I see in glimpses afar or towering immediately above me the great mountains, I see the Wind river and the Wahsatch mountains, I see the Monument mountain and the Eagle's Nest, I pass the Promontory, I ascend the Nevadas, I scan the noble Elk mountain and wind around its base, I see the Humboldt range, I thread the valley and cross the river, I see the clear waters of lake Tahoe, I see forests of majestic pines, Or crossing the great desert, the alkaline plains, I behold enchanting mirages of waters and meadows, Marking through these and after all, in duplicate slender lines, Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel, Tying the Eastern to the Western sea, The road between Europe and Asia.

(Ah Genoese thy dream! thy dream!  
Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,  
The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream.)

4  
Passage to India!

Struggles of many a captain, tales of many a sailor dead,  
Over my mood stealing and spreading they come,  
Like clouds and cloudlets in the unreach'd sky.

Along all history, down the slopes,  
As a rivulet running, sinking now, and now again to the  
surface rising,  
A ceaseless thought, a varied train—lo, soul, to thee, thy  
sight,  
they rise,  
The plans, the voyages again, the expeditions;  
Again Vasco de Gama sails forth,  
Again the knowledge gain'd, the mariner's compass,  
Lands found and nations born, thou born America,  
For purpose vast, man's long probation fill'd,  
Thou rondure of the world at last accomplish'd.

5

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,  
Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,  
Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,  
Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and countless  
stars above,  
Below, the manifold grass and waters, animals, mountains,  
trees,  
With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention,  
Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.

Down from the gardens of Asia descending radiating,  
Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them,  
Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations,  
With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-  
happy hearts,  
With that sad incessant refrain, Wherefore unsatisfied  
soul? and  
Whither O mocking life?

Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?  
Who Justify these restless explorations?  
Who speak the secret of impassive earth?  
Who bind it to us? what is this separate Nature so  
unnatural?  
What is this earth to our affections? (unloving earth,  
without a  
throb to answer ours,  
Cold earth, the place of graves.)

Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be  
carried out,  
Perhaps even now the time has arrived.

After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already  
cross'd,)  
After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd  
their work,  
After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the  
chemist, the  
geologist, ethnologist,  
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,  
The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

Then not your deeds only O voyagers, O scientists and  
inventors,  
shall be justified,  
All these hearts as of fretted children shall be sooth'd,  
All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret shall  
be told,  
All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook'd  
and  
link'd together,  
The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth,  
shall be  
completely Justified,  
Trinitas divine shall be gloriously accomplish'd and  
compacted by  
the true son of God, the poet,

(He shall indeed pass the straits and conquer the mountains,  
He shall double the cape of Good Hope to some purpose,) Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more,  
The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them.

6

Year at whose wide-flung door I sing!  
Year of the purpose accomplish'd!  
Year of the marriage of continents, climates and oceans!  
(No mere doge of Venice now wedding the Adriatic,)  
I see O year in you the vast terraqueous globe given and giving all,  
Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New World,  
The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding a festival garland,  
As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand.

Passage to India!  
Cooling airs from Caucasus far, soothing cradle of man,  
The river Euphrates flowing, the past lit up again.

Lo soul, the retrospect brought forward,  
The old, most populous, wealthiest of earth's lands,  
The streams of the Indus and the Ganges and their many affluents,  
(I my shores of America walking to-day behold, resuming all,)  
The tale of Alexander on his warlike marches suddenly dying,  
On one side China and on the other side Persia and Arabia,  
To the south the great seas and the bay of Bengal,  
The flowing literatures, tremendous epics, religions, castes,  
Old occult Brahma interminably far back, the tender and junior Buddha,  
Central and southern empires and all their belongings, possessors,  
The wars of Tamerlane, the reign of Aurungzebe,

The traders, rulers, explorers, Moslems, Venetians,  
Byzantium, the  
Arabs, Portuguese,  
The first travelers famous yet, Marco Polo, Batouta the  
Moor,  
Doubts to be solv'd, the map incognita, blanks to be  
fill'd,  
The foot of man unstay'd, the hands never at rest,  
Thyself O soul that will not brook a challenge.

The mediaeval navigators rise before me,  
The world of 1492, with its awaken'd enterprise,  
Something swelling in humanity now like the sap of the  
earth in spring,  
The sunset splendor of chivalry declining.

And who art thou sad shade?  
Gigantic, visionary, thyself a visionary,  
With majestic limbs and pious beaming eyes,  
Spreading around with every look of thine a golden world,  
Enhuing it with gorgeous hues.

As the chief histrion,  
Down to the footlights walks in some great scena,  
Dominating the rest I see the Admiral himself,  
(History's type of courage, action, faith,)  
Behold him sail from Palos leading his little fleet,  
His voyage behold, his return, his great fame,  
His misfortunes, calumniators, behold him a prisoner,  
chain'd,  
Behold his dejection, poverty, death.

(Curious in time I stand, noting the efforts of heroes,  
Is the deferment long? bitter the slander, poverty, death?  
Lies the seed unreck'd for centuries in the ground? lo, to  
God's due  
occasion,  
Uprising in the night, it sprouts, blooms,  
And fills the earth with use and beauty.)

7

Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,  
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,  
The young maturity of brood and bloom,  
To realms of budding bibles.

O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,  
Thy circumnavigation of the world begin,  
Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,  
To reason's early paradise,  
Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,  
Again with fair creation.

8

O we can wait no longer,  
We too take ship O soul,  
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas,  
Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to sail,  
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee  
to me, O soul,)   
Caroling free, singing our song of God,  
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration.

With laugh and many a kiss,  
(Let others deprecate, let others weep for sin, remorse,  
humiliation,)   
O soul thou pleasest me, I thee.

Ah more than any priest O soul we too believe in God,  
But with the mystery of God we dare not dally.

O soul thou pleasest me, I thee,  
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,  
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death,  
like waters flowing,  
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite,  
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,  
Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,

I and my soul to range in range of thee.

O Thou transcendent,  
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,  
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre  
of them,  
Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving,  
Thou moral, spiritual fountain—affection's source—thou  
reservoir,  
(O pensive soul of me—O thirst unsatisfied—waitest not  
there?  
Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the Comrade  
perfect?)  
Thou pulse—thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,  
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,  
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,  
How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak,  
if, out  
of myself,  
I could not launch, to those, superior universes?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,  
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,  
But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual Me,  
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,  
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death,  
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

Greater than stars or suns,  
Bounding O soul thou journeyest forth;  
What love than thine and ours could wider amplify?  
What aspirations, wishes, outvie thine and ours O soul?  
What dreams of the ideal? what plans of purity, perfection,  
strength?  
What cheerful willingness for others' sake to give up all?  
For others' sake to suffer all?

Reckoning ahead O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,  
The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done,



Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim  
attain'd,  
As fill'd with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother  
found,  
The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

9

Passage to more than India!  
Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights?  
O soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyages like those?  
Disportest thou on waters such as those?  
Soundest below the Sanscrit and the Vedas?  
Then have thy bent unleash'd.

Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas!  
Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling  
problems!  
You, strew'd with the wrecks of skeletons, that, living,  
never reach'd you.

Passage to more than India!  
O secret of the earth and sky!  
Of you O waters of the sea! O winding creeks and rivers!  
Of you O woods and fields! of you strong mountains of my  
land!  
Of you O prairies! of you gray rocks!  
O morning red! O clouds! O rain and snows!  
O day and night, passage to you!

O sun and moon and all you stars! Sirius and Jupiter!  
Passage to you!

Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins!  
Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!

Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!  
Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long  
enough?  
Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking  
like mere brutes?  
Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long  
enough?

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,  
Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,  
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,  
And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!  
O farther farther sail!  
O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?  
O farther, farther, farther sail!



# BOOK XXVII

## Prayer of Columbus

A batter'd, wreck'd old man,  
Thrown on this savage shore, far, far from home,  
Pent by the sea and dark rebellious brows, twelve dreary  
months,  
Sore, stiff with many toils, sicken'd and nigh to death,  
I take my way along the island's edge,  
Venting a heavy heart.

I am too full of woe!  
Haply I may not live another day;  
I cannot rest O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep,  
Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee,  
Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune with Thee,  
Report myself once more to Thee.

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,  
My long and crowded life of active work, not adoration  
merely;  
Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth,  
Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary meditations,  
Thou knowest how before I commenced I devoted all to come  
to Thee,  
Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows and  
strictly kept them,  
Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy in  
Thee,  
In shackles, prison'd, in disgrace, repining not,  
Accepting all from Thee, as duly come from Thee.

All my emprises have been fill'd with Thee,  
My speculations, plans, begun and carried on in thoughts of

Thee,  
Sailing the deep or journeying the land for Thee;  
Intentions, purports, aspirations mine, leaving results to  
Thee.

O I am sure they really came from Thee,  
The urge, the ardor, the unconquerable will,  
The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words,  
A message from the Heavens whispering to me even in sleep,  
These sped me on.

By me and these the work so far accomplish'd,  
By me earth's elder cloy'd and stifled lands uncloy'd,  
unloos'd,  
By me the hemispheres rounded and tied, the unknown to the  
known.

The end I know not, it is all in Thee,  
Or small or great I know not—haply what broad fields, what  
lands,  
Haply the brutish measureless human undergrowth I know,  
Transplanted there may rise to stature, knowledge worthy  
Thee,  
Haply the swords I know may there indeed be turn'd to  
reaping-tools,  
Haply the lifeless cross I know, Europe's dead cross, may  
bud and  
blossom there.

One effort more, my altar this bleak sand;  
That Thou O God my life hast lighted,  
With ray of light, steady, ineffable, vouchsafed of Thee,  
Light rare untellable, lighting the very light,  
Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages;  
For that O God, be it my latest word, here on my knees,  
Old, poor, and paralyzed, I thank Thee.

My terminus near,  
The clouds already closing in upon me,

The voyage balk'd, the course disputed, lost,  
I yield my ships to Thee.

My hands, my limbs grow nerveless,  
My brain feels rack'd, bewilder'd,  
Let the old timbers part, I will not part,  
I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves buffet  
me,  
Thee, Thee at least I know.

Is it the prophet's thought I speak, or am I raving?  
What do I know of life? what of myself?  
I know not even my own work past or present,  
Dim ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,  
Of newer better worlds, their mighty parturition,  
Mocking, perplexing me.

And these things I see suddenly, what mean they?  
As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes,  
Shadowy vast shapes smile through the air and sky,  
And on the distant waves sail countless ships,  
And anthems in new tongues I hear saluting me.



# BOOK XXVIII

## The Sleepers

1  
I wander all night in my vision,  
Stepping with light feet, swiftly and noiselessly stepping  
and stopping,  
Bending with open eyes over the shut eyes of sleepers,  
Wandering and confused, lost to myself, ill-assorted,  
contradictory,  
Pausing, gazing, bending, and stopping.

How solemn they look there, stretch'd and still,  
How quiet they breathe, the little children in their  
cradles.

The wretched features of ennuyes, the white features of  
corpses, the  
livid faces of drunkards, the sick-gray faces of onanists,  
The gash'd bodies on battle-fields, the insane in their  
strong-door'd rooms, the sacred idiots, the new-born  
emerging  
from gates, and the dying emerging from gates,  
The night pervades them and infolds them.

The married couple sleep calmly in their bed, he with his  
palm on  
the hip of the wife, and she with her palm on the hip of  
the husband,  
The sisters sleep lovingly side by side in their bed,  
The men sleep lovingly side by side in theirs,  
And the mother sleeps with her little child carefully  
wrapt.



The blind sleep, and the deaf and dumb sleep,  
The prisoner sleeps well in the prison, the runaway son  
sleeps,  
The murderer that is to be hung next day, how does he  
sleep?  
And the murder'd person, how does he sleep?

The female that loves unrequited sleeps,  
And the male that loves unrequited sleeps,  
The head of the money-maker that plotted all day sleeps,  
And the enraged and treacherous dispositions, all, all  
sleep.

I stand in the dark with drooping eyes by the worst-  
suffering and  
the most restless,  
I pass my hands soothingly to and fro a few inches from  
them,  
The restless sink in their beds, they fitfully sleep.

Now I pierce the darkness, new beings appear,  
The earth recedes from me into the night,  
I saw that it was beautiful, and I see that what is not the  
earth is  
beautiful.

I go from bedside to bedside, I sleep close with the other  
sleepers  
each in turn,  
I dream in my dream all the dreams of the other dreamers,  
And I become the other dreamers.

I am a dance-play up there! the fit is whirling me fast!

I am the ever-laughing—it is new moon and twilight,  
I see the hiding of douceurs, I see nimble ghosts whichever  
way look,  
Cache and cache again deep in the ground and sea, and where  
it is

neither ground nor sea.

Well do they do their jobs those journeymen divine,  
Only from me can they hide nothing, and would not if they  
could,  
I reckon I am their boss and they make me a pet besides,  
And surround me and lead me and run ahead when I walk,  
To lift their cunning covers to signify me with stretch'd  
arms, and  
resume the way;  
Onward we move, a gay gang of blackguards! with mirth-  
shouting  
music and wild-flapping pennants of joy!

I am the actor, the actress, the voter, the politician,  
The emigrant and the exile, the criminal that stood in the  
box,  
He who has been famous and he who shall be famous after to-  
day,  
The stammerer, the well-form'd person, the wasted or feeble  
person.

I am she who adorn'd herself and folded her hair  
expectantly,  
My truant lover has come, and it is dark.

Double yourself and receive me darkness,  
Receive me and my lover too, he will not let me go without  
him.

I roll myself upon you as upon a bed, I resign myself to  
the dusk.

He whom I call answers me and takes the place of my lover,  
He rises with me silently from the bed.

Darkness, you are gentler than my lover, his flesh was  
sweaty and panting,  
I feel the hot moisture yet that he left me.

My hands are spread forth, I pass them in all directions,  
I would sound up the shadowy shore to which you are  
journeying.

Be careful darkness! already what was it touch'd me?  
I thought my lover had gone, else darkness and he are one,  
I hear the heart-beat, I follow, I fade away.

2  
I descend my western course, my sinews are flaccid,  
Perfume and youth course through me and I am their wake.

It is my face yellow and wrinkled instead of the old  
woman's,  
I sit low in a straw-bottom chair and carefully darn my  
grandson's  
stockings.

It is I too, the sleepless widow looking out on the winter  
midnight,  
I see the sparkles of starshine on the icy and pallid  
earth.

A shroud I see and I am the shroud, I wrap a body and lie  
in the coffin,  
It is dark here under ground, it is not evil or pain here,  
it is  
blank here, for reasons.

(It seems to me that every thing in the light and air ought  
to be happy,  
Whoever is not in his coffin and the dark grave let him  
know he has enough.)

3  
I see a beautiful gigantic swimmer swimming naked through  
the eddies  
of the sea,

His brown hair lies close and even to his head, he strikes  
out with  
courageous arms, he urges himself with his legs,  
I see his white body, I see his undaunted eyes,  
I hate the swift-running eddies that would dash him head-  
foremost on  
the rocks.

What are you doing you ruffianly red-trickled waves?  
Will you kill the courageous giant? will you kill him in  
the prime  
of his middle age?

Steady and long he struggles,  
He is baffled, bang'd, bruise'd, he holds out while his  
strength  
holds out,  
The slapping eddies are spotted with his blood, they bear  
him away,  
they roll him, swing him, turn him,  
His beautiful body is borne in the circling eddies, it is  
continually bruise'd on rocks,  
Swiftly and ought of sight is borne the brave corpse.

4  
I turn but do not extricate myself,  
Confused, a past-reading, another, but with darkness yet.

The beach is cut by the razory ice-wind, the wreck-guns  
sound,  
The tempest lulls, the moon comes floundering through the  
drifts.

I look where the ship helplessly heads end on, I hear the  
burst as  
she strikes, I hear the howls of dismay, they grow fainter  
and fainter.

I cannot aid with my wringing fingers,

I can but rush to the surf and let it drench me and freeze  
upon me.

I search with the crowd, not one of the company is wash'd  
to us alive,  
In the morning I help pick up the dead and lay them in rows  
in a barn.

5  
Now of the older war-days, the defeat at Brooklyn,  
Washington stands inside the lines, he stands on the  
intrench'd  
hills amid a crowd of officers.  
His face is cold and damp, he cannot repress the weeping  
drops,  
He lifts the glass perpetually to his eyes, the color is  
blanch'd  
from his cheeks,  
He sees the slaughter of the southern braves confided to  
him by  
their parents.

The same at last and at last when peace is declared,  
He stands in the room of the old tavern, the well-belov'd  
soldiers  
all pass through,  
The officers speechless and slow draw near in their turns,  
The chief encircles their necks with his arm and kisses  
them on the cheek,  
He kisses lightly the wet cheeks one after another, he  
shakes hands  
and bids good-by to the army.

6  
Now what my mother told me one day as we sat at dinner  
together,  
Of when she was a nearly grown girl living home with her  
parents on  
the old homestead.

A red squaw came one breakfast-time to the old homestead,  
On her back she carried a bundle of rushes for rush-  
bottoming chairs,  
Her hair, straight, shiny, coarse, black, profuse, half-  
envelop'd  
her face,  
Her step was free and elastic, and her voice sounded  
exquisitely as  
she spoke.

My mother look'd in delight and amazement at the stranger,  
She look'd at the freshness of her tall-borne face and full  
and  
pliant limbs,  
The more she look'd upon her she loved her,  
Never before had she seen such wonderful beauty and purity,  
She made her sit on a bench by the jamb of the fireplace,  
she cook'd  
food for her,  
She had no work to give her, but she gave her remembrance  
and fondness.

The red squaw staid all the forenoon, and toward the middle  
of the  
afternoon she went away,  
O my mother was loth to have her go away,  
All the week she thought of her, she watch'd for her many a  
month,  
She remember'd her many a winter and many a summer,  
But the red squaw never came nor was heard of there again.

7  
A show of the summer softness—a contact of something unseen  
—an  
amour of the light and air,  
I am jealous and overwhelm'd with friendliness,  
And will go gallivant with the light and air myself.

O love and summer, you are in the dreams and in me,  
Autumn and winter are in the dreams, the farmer goes with  
his thrift,  
The droves and crops increase, the barns are well-fill'd.  
  
Elements merge in the night, ships make tacks in the  
dreams,  
The sailor sails, the exile returns home,  
The fugitive returns unharm'd, the immigrant is back beyond  
months  
and years,  
The poor Irishman lives in the simple house of his  
childhood with  
the well known neighbors and faces,  
They warmly welcome him, he is barefoot again, he forgets  
he is well off,  
The Dutchman voyages home, and the Scotchman and Welshman  
voyage  
home, and the native of the Mediterranean voyages home,  
To every port of England, France, Spain, enter well-fill'd  
ships,  
The Swiss foots it toward his hills, the Prussian goes his  
way, the  
Hungarian his way, and the Pole his way,  
The Swede returns, and the Dane and Norwegian return.  
  
The homeward bound and the outward bound,  
The beautiful lost swimmer, the ennuye, the onanist, the  
female that  
loves unrequited, the money-maker,  
The actor and actress, those through with their parts and  
those  
waiting to commence,  
The affectionate boy, the husband and wife, the voter, the  
nominee  
that is chosen and the nominee that has fail'd,  
The great already known and the great any time after to-  
day,  
The stammerer, the sick, the perfect-form'd, the homely,

the criminal that stood in the box, the judge that sat and  
sentenced  
him, the fluent lawyers, the jury, the audience,  
The laughter and weeper, the dancer, the midnight widow, the  
red squaw,  
The consumptive, the erysipalite, the idiot, he that is  
wrong'd,  
The antipodes, and every one between this and them in the  
dark,  
I swear they are averaged now—one is no better than the  
other,  
The night and sleep have liken'd them and restored them.

I swear they are all beautiful,  
Every one that sleeps is beautiful, every thing in the dim  
light is  
beautiful,  
The wildest and bloodiest is over, and all is peace.

Peace is always beautiful,  
The myth of heaven indicates peace and night.

The myth of heaven indicates the soul,  
The soul is always beautiful, it appears more or it appears  
less, it  
comes or it lags behind,  
It comes from its embower'd garden and looks pleasantly on  
itself  
and encloses the world,  
Perfect and clean the genitals previously jetting, and  
perfect and  
clean the womb cohering,  
The head well-grown proportion'd and plumb, and the bowels  
and  
joints proportion'd and plumb.

The soul is always beautiful,  
The universe is duly in order, every thing is in its place,  
What has arrived is in its place and what waits shall be in



its place,  
The twisted skull waits, the watery or rotten blood waits,  
The child of the glutton or venerealee waits long, and the  
child of  
the drunkard waits long, and the drunkard himself waits  
long,  
The sleepers that lived and died wait, the far advanced are  
to go on  
in their turns, and the far behind are to come on in their  
turns,  
The diverse shall be no less diverse, but they shall flow  
and unite—  
they unite now.

8  
The sleepers are very beautiful as they lie unclothed,  
They flow hand in hand over the whole earth from east to  
west as  
they lie unclothed,  
The Asiatic and African are hand in hand, the European and  
American  
are hand in hand,  
Learn'd and unlearn'd are hand in hand, and male and female  
are hand  
in hand,  
The bare arm of the girl crosses the bare breast of her  
lover, they  
press close without lust, his lips press her neck,  
The father holds his grown or ungrown son in his arms with  
measureless love, and the son holds the father in his arms  
with  
measureless love,  
The white hair of the mother shines on the white wrist of  
the daughter,  
The breath of the boy goes with the breath of the man,  
friend is  
inarm'd by friend,  
The scholar kisses the teacher and the teacher kisses the  
scholar,

the wrong 'd made right,  
The call of the slave is one with the master's call, and  
the master  
salutes the slave,  
The felon steps forth from the prison, the insane becomes  
sane, the  
suffering of sick persons is reliev'd,  
The sweatings and fevers stop, the throat that was unsound  
is sound,  
the lungs of the consumptive are resumed, the poor  
distress'd  
head is free,  
The joints of the rheumatic move as smoothly as ever, and  
smoother  
than ever,  
Stiflings and passages open, the paralyzed become supple,  
The swell'd and convuls'd and congested awake to themselves  
in condition,  
They pass the invigoration of the night and the chemistry  
of the  
night, and awake.

I too pass from the night,  
I stay a while away O night, but I return to you again and  
love you.

Why should I be afraid to trust myself to you?  
I am not afraid, I have been well brought forward by you,  
I love the rich running day, but I do not desert her in  
whom I lay so long,  
I know not how I came of you and I know not where I go with  
you, but  
I know I came well and shall go well.

I will stop only a time with the night, and rise betimes,  
I will duly pass the day O my mother, and duly return to  
you.



# Transpositions

Let the reformers descend from the stands where they are  
forever

bawling—let an idiot or insane person appear on each of the  
stands;

Let judges and criminals be transposed—let the prison-  
keepers be

put in prison—let those that were prisoners take the keys;

Let them that distrust birth and death lead the rest.



# BOOK XXIX

## To Think of Time

1  
To think of time—of all that retrospection,  
To think of to-day, and the ages continued henceforward.  
  
Have you guess'd you yourself would not continue?  
Have you dreaded these earth-beetles?  
Have you fear'd the future would be nothing to you?  
  
Is to-day nothing? is the beginningless past nothing?  
If the future is nothing they are just as surely nothing.  
  
To think that the sun rose in the east—that men and women  
were  
flexible, real, alive—that every thing was alive,  
To think that you and I did not see, feel, think, nor bear  
our part,  
To think that we are now here and bear our part.  
  
2  
Not a day passes, not a minute or second without an  
accouchement,  
Not a day passes, not a minute or second without a corpse.  
  
The dull nights go over and the dull days also,  
The soreness of lying so much in bed goes over,  
The physician after long putting off gives the silent and  
terrible  
look for an answer,  
The children come hurried and weeping, and the brothers and  
sisters  
are sent for,

Medicines stand unused on the shelf, (the camphor-smell has long pervaded the rooms,) The faithful hand of the living does not desert the hand of the dying, The twitching lips press lightly on the forehead of the dying, The breath ceases and the pulse of the heart ceases, The corpse stretches on the bed and the living look upon it, It is palpable as the living are palpable.

The living look upon the corpse with their eyesight, But without eyesight lingers a different living and looks curiously on the corpse.

3  
To think the thought of death merged in the thought of materials, To think of all these wonders of city and country, and others taking great interest in them, and we taking no interest in them.

To think how eager we are in building our houses, To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite indifferent.

(I see one building the house that serves him a few years, or seventy or eighty years at most, I see one building the house that serves him longer than that.)

Slow-moving and black lines creep over the whole earth—they never cease—they are the burial lines, He that was President was buried, and he that is now President shall

surely be buried.

4

A reminiscence of the vulgar fate,  
A frequent sample of the life and death of workmen,  
Each after his kind.

Cold dash of waves at the ferry-wharf, posh and ice in the  
river,  
half-frozen mud in the streets,  
A gray discouraged sky overhead, the short last daylight of  
December,  
A hearse and stages, the funeral of an old Broadway stage-  
driver,  
the cortege mostly drivers.

Steady the trot to the cemetery, duly rattles the death-  
bell,  
The gate is pass'd, the new-dug grave is halted at, the  
living  
alight, the hearse uncloses,  
The coffin is pass'd out, lower'd and settled, the whip is  
laid on  
the coffin, the earth is swiftly shovel'd in,  
The mound above is flatted with the spades—silence,  
A minute—no one moves or speaks—it is done,  
He is decently put away—is there any thing more?

He was a good fellow, free-mouth'd, quick-temper'd, not  
bad-looking,  
Ready with life or death for a friend, fond of women,  
gambled, ate  
hearty, drank hearty,  
Had known what it was to be flush, grew low-spirited toward  
the  
last, sicken'd, was help'd by a contribution,  
Died, aged forty-one years—and that was his funeral.

Thumb extended, finger uplifted, apron, cape, gloves,  
strap,



wet-weather clothes, whip carefully chosen,  
Boss, spotter, starter, hostler, somebody loafing on you,  
you  
loafing on somebody, headway, man before and man behind,  
Good day's work, bad day's work, pet stock, mean stock,  
first out,  
last out, turning-in at night,  
To think that these are so much and so nigh to other  
drivers, and he  
there takes no interest in them.

5  
The markets, the government, the working-man's wages, to  
think what  
account they are through our nights and days,  
To think that other working-men will make just as great  
account of  
them, yet we make little or no account.

The vulgar and the refined, what you call sin and what you  
call  
goodness, to think how wide a difference,  
To think the difference will still continue to others, yet  
we lie  
beyond the difference.

To think how much pleasure there is,  
Do you enjoy yourself in the city? or engaged in business?  
or  
planning a nomination and election? or with your wife and  
family?  
Or with your mother and sisters? or in womanly housework?  
or the  
beautiful maternal cares?

These also flow onward to others, you and I flow onward,  
But in due time you and I shall take less interest in them.

Your farm, profits, crops—to think how engross'd you are,  
To think there will still be farms, profits, crops, yet for

you of  
what avail?

6

What will be will be well, for what is is well,  
To take interest is well, and not to take interest shall be  
well.

The domestic joys, the dally housework or business, the  
building of  
houses, are not phantasms, they have weight, form,  
location,  
Farms, profits, crops, markets, wages, government, are none  
of them  
phantasms,  
The difference between sin and goodness is no delusion,  
The earth is not an echo, man and his life and all the  
things of his  
life are well-consider'd.

You are not thrown to the winds, you gather certainly and  
safely  
around yourself,  
Yourself! yourself!. yourself, for ever and ever!

7

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother  
and  
father, it is to identify you,  
It is not that you should be undecided, but that you should  
be decided,  
Something long preparing and formless is arrived and form'd  
in you,  
You are henceforth secure, whatever comes or goes.

The threads that were spun are gather'd, the wet crosses  
the warp,  
the pattern is systematic.

The preparations have every one been justified,  
The orchestra have sufficiently tuned their instruments,  
the baton  
has given the signal.

The guest that was coming, he waited long, he is now  
housed,  
He is one of those who are beautiful and happy, he is one  
of those  
that to look upon and be with is enough.

The law of the past cannot be eluded,  
The law of the present and future cannot be eluded,  
The law of the living cannot be eluded, it is eternal,  
The law of promotion and transformation cannot be eluded,  
The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be eluded,  
The law of drunkards, informers, mean persons, not one iota  
thereof  
can be eluded.

8  
Slow moving and black lines go ceaselessly over the earth,  
Northerner goes carried and Southerner goes carried, and  
they on the  
Atlantic side and they on the Pacific,  
And they between, and all through the Mississippi country,  
and all  
over the earth.

The great masters and kosmos are well as they go, the  
heroes and  
good-doers are well,  
The known leaders and inventors and the rich owners and  
pious and  
distinguish'd may be well,  
But there is more account than that, there is strict  
account of all.

The interminable hordes of the ignorant and wicked are not

nothing,  
The barbarians of Africa and Asia are not nothing,  
The perpetual successions of shallow people are not nothing  
as they go.

Of and in all these things,  
I have dream'd that we are not to be changed so much, nor  
the law of  
us changed,  
I have dream'd that heroes and good-doers shall be under  
the present  
and past law,  
And that murderers, drunkards, liars, shall be under the  
present and  
past law,  
For I have dream'd that the law they are under now is  
enough.

And I have dream'd that the purpose and essence of the  
known life,  
the transient,  
Is to form and decide identity for the unknown life, the  
permanent.

If all came but to ashes of dung,  
If maggots and rats ended us, then Alarum! for we are  
betray'd,  
Then indeed suspicion of death.

Do you suspect death? if I were to suspect death I should  
die now,  
Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited toward  
annihilation?

Pleasantly and well-suited I walk,  
Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good,  
The whole universe indicates that it is good,  
The past and the present indicate that it is good.

How beautiful and perfect are the animals!

How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon it!

What is called good is perfect, and what is called bad is just as perfect,

The vegetables and minerals are all perfect, and the imponderable

fluids perfect;

Slowly and surely they have pass'd on to this, and slowly and surely

they yet pass on.

9

I swear I think now that every thing without exception has an eternal soul!

The trees have, rooted in the ground! the weeds of the sea have! the animals!

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!

That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is for

it, and the cohering is for it!

And all preparation is for it—and identity is for it—and life and

materials are altogether for it!



# BOOK XXX. WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH

## Darest Thou Now O Soul

Darest thou now O soul,  
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,  
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to  
follow?

No map there, nor guide,  
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,  
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in  
that land.

I know it not O soul,  
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,  
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible  
land.

Till when the ties loosen,  
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,  
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding  
us.

Then we burst forth, we float,  
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,  
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to  
fulfil O soul.





# Whispers of Heavenly Death

Whispers of heavenly death murmur'd I hear,  
Labial gossip of night, sibilant chorals,  
Footsteps gently ascending, mystical breezes wafted soft  
and low,  
Ripples of unseen rivers, tides of a current flowing,  
forever flowing,  
(Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of  
human tears?)

I see, just see skyward, great cloud-masses,  
Mournfully slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing,  
With at times a half-dimm'd sadden'd far-off star,  
Appearing and disappearing.

(Some parturition rather, some solemn immortal birth;  
On the frontiers to eyes impenetrable,  
Some soul is passing over.)

# Chanting the Square Deific

1

Chanting the square deific, out of the One advancing, out  
of the sides,  
Out of the old and new, out of the square entirely divine,  
Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed,) from this side  
Jehovah am I,  
Old Brahm I, and I Saturnius am;  
Not Time affects me—I am Time, old, modern as any,  
Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments,  
As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos, with laws,  
Aged beyond computation, yet never new, ever with those  
mighty laws rolling,  
Relentless I forgive no man—whoever sins dies—I will have  
that man's life;  
Therefore let none expect mercy—have the seasons,  
gravitation, the  
appointed days, mercy? no more have I,  
But as the seasons and gravitation, and as all the  
appointed days  
that forgive not,  
I dispense from this side judgments inexorable without the  
least remorse.

2

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,  
With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,  
Foretold by prophets and poets in their most rapt  
prophecies and poems,  
From this side, lo! the Lord Christ gazes—lo! Hermes I—lo!  
mine is  
Hercules' face,  
All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in  
myself,  
Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison,

and  
crucified, and many times shall be again,  
All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and  
sisters'  
sake, for the soul's sake,  
Wandering my way through the homes of men, rich or poor, with  
the kiss  
of affection,  
For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing God, with hope  
and  
all-enclosing charity,  
With indulgent words as to children, with fresh and sane  
words, mine only,  
Young and strong I pass knowing well I am destin'd myself  
to an  
early death;  
But my charity has no death—my wisdom dies not, neither  
early nor late,  
And my sweet love bequeath'd here and elsewhere never dies.

3

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,  
Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,  
Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,  
With sudra face and worn brow, black, but in the depths of  
my heart,  
proud as any,  
Lifted now and always against whoever scorning assumes to  
rule me,  
Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences, brooding,  
with many wiles,  
(Though it was thought I was baffled, and dispel'd, and my  
wiles  
done, but that will never be,)  
Defiant, I, Satan, still live, still utter words, in new  
lands duly  
appearing, (and old ones also,)  
Permanent here from my side, warlike, equal with any, real  
as any,

Nor time nor change shall ever change me or my words.

4

Santa Spirita, breather, life,  
Beyond the light, lighter than light,  
Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above  
hell,  
Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,  
Including all life on earth, touching, including God,  
including  
Saviour and Satan,  
Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all?  
what were God?)  
Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent,  
positive,  
(namely the unseen,)  
Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of  
man, I, the  
general soul,  
Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,  
Breathe my breath also through these songs.

# Of Him I Love Day and Night

Of him I love day and night I dream'd I heard he was dead,  
And I dream'd I went where they had buried him I love, but  
he was  
not in that place,  
And I dream'd I wander'd searching among burial-places to  
find him,  
And I found that every place was a burial-place;  
The houses full of life were equally full of death, (this  
house is now,)  
The streets, the shipping, the places of amusement, the  
Chicago,  
Boston, Philadelphia, the Mannahatta, were as full of the  
dead as  
of the living,  
And fuller, O vastly fuller of the dead than of the living;  
And what I dream'd I will henceforth tell to every person  
and age,  
And I stand henceforth bound to what I dream'd,  
And now I am willing to disregard burial-places and  
dispense with them,  
And if the memorials of the dead were put up indifferently  
everywhere,  
even in the room where I eat or sleep, I should be  
satisfied,  
And if the corpse of any one I love, or if my own corpse,  
be duly  
render'd to powder and pour'd in the sea, I shall be  
satisfied,  
Or if it be distributed to the winds I shall be satisfied.



# Yet, Yet, Ye Downcast Hours

Yet, yet, ye downcast hours, I know ye also,  
Weights of lead, how ye clog and cling at my ankles,  
Earth to a chamber of mourning turns—I hear the  
o'erweening, mocking  
voice,

Matter is conqueror-matter, triumphant only, continues  
onward.

Despairing cries float ceaselessly toward me,  
The call of my nearest lover, putting forth, alarm'd,  
uncertain,  
The sea I am quickly to sail, come tell me,  
Come tell me where I am speeding, tell me my destination.

I understand your anguish, but I cannot help you,  
I approach, hear, behold, the sad mouth, the look out of  
the eyes,  
your mute inquiry,

Whither I go from the bed I recline on, come tell me,—  
Old age, alarm'd, uncertain—a young woman's voice,  
appealing to

me for comfort;

A young man's voice, Shall I not escape?

# As If a Phantom Caress'd Me

As if a phantom caress'd me,  
I thought I was not alone walking here by the shore;  
But the one I thought was with me as now I walk by the  
shore, the  
one I loved that caress'd me,  
As I lean and look through the glimmering light, that one  
has  
utterly disappear'd.  
And those appear that are hateful to me and mock me.



# Assurances

I need no assurances, I am a man who is preoccupied of his own soul;  
I do not doubt that from under the feet and beside the hands and face I am cognizant of, are now looking faces I am not cognizant of, calm and actual faces,  
I do not doubt but the majesty and beauty of the world are latent in any iota of the world,  
I do not doubt I am limitless, and that the universes are limitless,  
in vain I try to think how limitless,  
I do not doubt that the orbs and the systems of orbs play their swift sports through the air on purpose, and that I shall one day be eligible to do as much as they, and more than they,  
I do not doubt that temporary affairs keep on and on millions of years,  
I do not doubt interiors have their interiors, and exteriors have their exteriors, and that the eyesight has another eyesight, and the hearing another hearing, and the voice another voice,  
I do not doubt that the passionately-wept deaths of young men are provided for, and that the deaths of young women and the deaths of little children are provided for,  
(Did you think Life was so well provided for, and Death, the purport of all Life, is not well provided for?)  
I do not doubt that wrecks at sea, no matter what the horrors of

them, no matter whose wife, child, husband, father, lover,  
has  
gone down, are provided for, to the minutest points,  
I do not doubt that whatever can possibly happen anywhere  
at any  
time, is provided for in the inferences of things,  
I do not think Life provides for all and for Time and  
Space, but I  
believe Heavenly Death provides for all.

# Quicksand Years

Quicksand years that whirl me I know not whither,  
Your schemes, politics, fail, lines give way, substances  
mock and elude me,  
Only the theme I sing, the great and strong-possess'd soul,  
eludes not,  
One's-self must never give way—that is the final substance—  
that  
out of all is sure,  
Out of politics, triumphs, battles, life, what at last  
finally remains?  
When shows break up what but One's-Self is sure?

# That Music Always Round Me

That music always round me, unceasing, unbeginning, yet long  
untaught I did not hear,  
But now the chorus I hear and am elated,  
A tenor, strong, ascending with power and health, with glad  
notes of  
daybreak I hear,  
A soprano at intervals sailing buoyantly over the tops of  
immense waves,  
A transparent base shuddering lusciously under and through  
the universe,  
The triumphant tutti, the funeral wailings with sweet  
flutes and  
violins, all these I fill myself with,  
I hear not the volumes of sound merely, I am moved by the  
exquisite  
meanings,  
I listen to the different voices winding in and out,  
striving,  
contending with fiery vehemence to excel each other in  
emotion;  
I do not think the performers know themselves—but now I  
think  
begin to know them.

# What Ship Puzzled at Sea

What ship puzzled at sea, cons for the true reckoning?  
Or coming in, to avoid the bars and follow the channel a  
perfect  
pilot needs?  
Here, sailor! here, ship! take aboard the most perfect  
pilot,  
Whom, in a little boat, putting off and rowing, I hailing  
you offer.

# A Noiseless Patient Spider

A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,  
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,  
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament out of  
itself,  
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the  
spheres to  
connect them,  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile  
anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my  
soul.

# O Living Always, Always Dying

O living always, always dying!  
O the burials of me past and present,  
O me while I stride ahead, material, visible, imperious as  
ever;  
O me, what I was for years, now dead, (I lament not, I am  
content;)  
O to disengage myself from those corpses of me, which I  
turn and  
look at where I cast them,  
To pass on, (O living! always living!) and leave the  
corpses behind.

# To One Shortly to Die

From all the rest I single out you, having a message for you,  
You are to die—let others tell you what they please, I cannot prevaricate,  
I am exact and merciless, but I love you—there is no escape for you.

Softly I lay my right hand upon you, you 'ust feel it,  
I do not argue, I bend my head close and half envelop it,  
I sit quietly by, I remain faithful,  
I am more than nurse, more than parent or neighbor,  
I absolve you from all except yourself spiritual bodily,  
that is  
eternal, you yourself will surely escape,  
The corpse you will leave will be but excrementitious.

The sun bursts through in unlooked-for directions,  
Strong thoughts fill you and confidence, you smile,  
You forget you are sick, as I forget you are sick,  
You do not see the medicines, you do not mind the weeping friends,  
I am with you,  
I exclude others from you, there is nothing to be commiserated,  
I do not commiserate, I congratulate you.



# Night on the Prairies

Night on the prairies,  
The supper is over, the fire on the ground burns low,  
The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapt in their blankets;  
I walk by myself—I stand and look at the stars, which I  
think now  
never realized before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,  
I admire death and test propositions.

How plenteous! how spiritual! how resume!  
The same old man and soul—the same old aspirations, and the  
same content.

I was thinking the day most splendid till I saw what the  
not-day exhibited,  
I was thinking this globe enough till there sprang out so  
noiseless  
around me myriads of other globes.

Now while the great thoughts of space and eternity fill me  
I will  
measure myself by them,  
And now touch'd with the lives of other globes arrived as  
far along  
as those of the earth,  
Or waiting to arrive, or pass'd on farther than those of  
the earth,  
I henceforth no more ignore them than I ignore my own life,  
Or the lives of the earth arrived as far as mine, or  
waiting to arrive.

O I see now that life cannot exhibit all to me, as the day  
cannot,

I see that I am to wait for what will be exhibited by death.



# Thought

As I sit with others at a great feast, suddenly while the  
music is playing,  
To my mind, (whence it comes I know not,) spectral in mist  
of a  
wreck at sea,  
Of certain ships, how they sail from port with flying  
streamers and  
wafted kisses, and that is the last of them,  
Of the solemn and murky mystery about the fate of the  
President,  
Of the flower of the marine science of fifty generations  
founder'd  
off the Northeast coast and going down—of the steamship  
Arctic  
going down,  
Of the veil'd tableau—women gather'd together on deck,  
pale, heroic,  
waiting the moment that draws so close—O the moment!  
  
A huge sob—a few bubbles—the white foam spirting up—and  
then the  
women gone,  
Sinking there while the passionless wet flows on—and I now  
pondering, Are those women indeed gone?  
Are souls drown'd and destroy'd so?  
Is only matter triumphant?

# The Last Invocation

At the last, tenderly,  
From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,  
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the  
well-closed doors,  
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;  
With the key of softness unlock the locks—with a whisper,  
Set ope the doors O soul.

Tenderly—be not impatient,  
(Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,  
Strong is your hold O love.)

# As I Watch the Ploughman Ploughing

As I watch'd the ploughman ploughing,  
Or the sower sowing in the fields, or the harvester  
harvesting,  
I saw there too, O life and death, your analogies;  
(Life, life is the tillage, and Death is the harvest  
according.)

# Pensive and Faltering

Pensive and faltering,  
The words the Dead I write,  
For living are the Dead,  
(Haply the only living, only real,  
And I the apparition, I the spectre.)





# BOOK XXXI

## Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood

1

Thou Mother with thy equal brood,  
Thou varied chain of different States, yet one identity  
only,  
A special song before I go I'd sing o'er all the rest,  
For thee, the future.

I'd sow a seed for thee of endless Nationality,  
I'd fashion thy ensemble including body and soul,  
I'd show away ahead thy real Union, and how it may be  
accomplish'd.

The paths to the house I seek to make,  
But leave to those to come the house itself.

Belief I sing, and preparation;  
As Life and Nature are not great with reference to the  
present only,  
But greater still from what is yet to come,  
Out of that formula for thee I sing.

2

As a strong bird on pinions free,  
Joyous, the amplest spaces heavenward cleaving,  
Such be the thought I'd think of thee America,  
Such be the recitative I'd bring for thee.

The conceits of the poets of other lands I'd bring thee  
not,  
Nor the compliments that have served their turn so long,  
Nor rhyme, nor the classics, nor perfume of foreign court

or indoor

library;

But an odor I'd bring as from forests of pine in Maine, or  
breath of

an Illinois prairie,

With open airs of Virginia or Georgia or Tennessee, or from  
Texas

uplands, or Florida's glades,

Or the Saguenay's black stream, or the wide blue spread of  
Huron,

With presentment of Yellowstone's scenes, or Yosemite,

And murmuring under, pervading all, I'd bring the rustling  
sea-sound,

That endlessly sounds from the two Great Seas of the world.

And for thy subtler sense subtler refrains dread Mother,

Preludes of intellect tallying these and thee, mind-  
formulas fitted

for thee, real and sane and large as these and thee,

Thou! mounting higher, diving deeper than we knew, thou  
transcendental Union!

By thee fact to be justified, blended with thought,

Thought of man justified, blended with God,

Through thy idea, lo, the immortal reality!

Through thy reality, lo, the immortal idea!

3

Brain of the New World, what a task is thine,

To formulate the Modern-out of the peerless grandeur of the  
modern,

Out of thyself, comprising science, to recast poems,  
churches, art,

(Recast, may-be discard them, end them-maybe their work is  
done,

who knows?)

By vision, hand, conception, on the background of the  
mighty past, the dead,

To limn with absolute faith the mighty living present.

And yet thou living present brain, heir of the dead, the  
Old World brain,  
Thou that lay folded like an unborn babe within its folds  
so long,  
Thou carefully prepared by it so long-haply thou but  
unfoldest it,  
only maturest it,  
It to eventuate in thee—the essence of the by-gone time  
contain'd in thee,  
Its poems, churches, arts, unwitting to themselves,  
destined with  
reference to thee;  
Thou but the apples, long, long, long a-growing,  
The fruit of all the Old ripening to-day in thee.

4  
Sail, sail thy best, ship of Democracy,  
Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the Present only,  
The Past is also stored in thee,  
Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone, not of the  
Western  
continent alone,  
Earth's resume entire floats on thy keel O ship, is  
steadied by thy spars,  
With thee Time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations  
sink or  
swim with thee,  
With all their ancient struggles, martyrs, heroes, epics,  
wars, thou  
bear'st the other continents,  
Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the destination-port  
triumphant;  
Steer then with good strong hand and wary eye O helmsman,  
thou  
carriest great companions,  
Venerable priestly Asia sails this day with thee,  
And royal feudal Europe sails with thee.

Beautiful world of new superb birth that rises to my  
eyes,  
Like a limitless golden cloud filling the western sky,  
Emblem of general maternity lifted above all,  
Sacred shape of the bearer of daughters and sons,  
Out of thy teeming womb thy giant babes in ceaseless  
procession issuing,  
Acceding from such gestation, taking and giving continual  
strength  
and life,  
World of the real-world of the twain in one,  
World of the soul, born by the world of the real alone, led  
to  
identity, body, by it alone,  
Yet in beginning only, incalculable masses of composite  
precious materials,  
By history's cycles forwarded, by every nation, language,  
hither sent,  
Ready, collected here, a freer, vast, electric world, to be  
constructed here,  
(The true New World, the world of orbic science, morals,  
literatures  
to come,)  
Thou wonder world yet undefined, unform'd, neither do I  
define thee,  
How can I pierce the impenetrable blank of the future?  
I feel thy ominous greatness evil as well as good,  
I watch thee advancing, absorbing the present, transcending  
the past,  
I see thy light lighting, and thy shadow shadowing, as if  
the entire globe,  
But I do not undertake to define thee, hardly to comprehend  
thee,  
I but thee name, thee prophesy, as now,  
I merely thee ejaculate!  
  
Thee in thy future,  
Thee in thy only permanent life, career, thy own unloosen'd  
mind,

thy soaring spirit,  
Thee as another equally needed sun, radiant, ablaze, swift-moving,  
fructifying all,  
Thee risen in potent cheerfulness and joy, in endless great hilarity,  
Scattering for good the cloud that hung so long, that weigh'd so  
long upon the mind of man,  
The doubt, suspicion, dread, of gradual, certain decadence of man;  
Thee in thy larger, saner brood of female, male—thee in thy athletes, moral, spiritual, South, North, West, East,  
(To thy immortal breasts, Mother of All, thy every daughter, son,  
endear'd alike, forever equal,)  
Thee in thy own musicians, singers, artists, unborn yet, but certain,  
Thee in thy moral wealth and civilization, (until which thy proudest  
material civilization must remain in vain,)  
Thee in thy all-supplying, all-enclosing worship—thee in no single  
bible, saviour, merely,  
Thy saviours countless, latent within thyself, thy bibles incessant  
within thyself, equal to any, divine as any,  
(Thy soaring course thee formulating, not in thy two great wars, nor  
in thy century's visible growth,  
But far more in these leaves and chants, thy chants, great Mother!)

Thee in an education grown of thee, in teachers, studies, students,  
born of thee,  
Thee in thy democratic fetes en-masse, thy high original festivals,  
operas, lecturers, preachers,  
Thee in thy ultimate, (the preparations only now completed,

the  
edifice on sure foundations tied,)   
Thee in thy pinnacles, intellect, thought, thy topmost  
rational  
joys, thy love and godlike aspiration,  
In thy resplendent coming literati, thy full-lung'd  
orators, thy  
sacerdotal bards, kosmic savans,  
These! these in thee, (certain to come,) to-day I prophesy.

6

Land tolerating all, accepting all, not for the good alone,  
all good  
for thee,  
Land in the realms of God to be a realm unto thyself,  
Under the rule of God to be a rule unto thyself.

(Lo, where arise three peerless stars,  
To be thy natal stars my country, Ensemble, Evolution,  
Freedom,  
Set in the sky of Law.)

Land of unprecedented faith, God's faith,  
Thy soil, thy very subsoil, all upheav'd,  
The general inner earth so long so sedulously draped over,  
now hence  
for what it is boldly laid bare,  
Open'd by thee to heaven's light for benefit or bale.

Not for success alone,  
Not to fair-sail unintermitted always,  
The storm shall dash thy face, the murk of war and worse  
than war  
shall cover thee all over,  
(Wert capable of war, its tug and trials? be capable of  
peace, its trials,  
For the tug and mortal strain of nations come at last in  
prosperous  
peace, not war;)

In many a smiling mask death shall approach beguiling thee,  
thou in  
disease shalt swelter,  
The livid cancer spread its hideous claws, clinging upon  
thy  
breasts, seeking to strike thee deep within,  
Consumption of the worst, moral consumption, shall rouge  
thy face  
with hectic,  
But thou shalt face thy fortunes, thy diseases, and  
surmount them all,  
Whatever they are to-day and whatever through time they may  
be,  
They each and all shall lift and pass away and cease from  
thee,  
While thou, Time's spirals rounding, out of thyself,  
thyself still  
extricating, fusing,  
Equable, natural, mystical Union thou, (the mortal with  
immortal blent,)  
Shalt soar toward the fulfilment of the future, the spirit  
of the  
body and the mind,  
The soul, its destinies.

The soul, its destinies, the real real,  
(Purport of all these apparitions of the real;)  
In thee America, the soul, its destinies,  
Thou globe of globes! thou wonder nebulous!  
By many a throe of heat and cold convuls'd, (by these  
thyself solidifying,)  
Thou mental, moral orb—thou New, indeed new, Spiritual  
World!  
The Present holds thee not—for such vast growth as thine,  
For such unparallel'd flight as thine, such brood as thine,  
The FUTURE only holds thee and can hold thee.





# A Paumanok Picture

Two boats with nets lying off the sea-beach, quite still,  
Ten fishermen waiting—they discover a thick school of  
mossbonkers  
—they drop the join'd seine-ends in the water,  
The boats separate and row off, each on its rounding course  
to the  
beach, enclosing the mossbonkers,  
The net is drawn in by a windlass by those who stop ashore,  
Some of the fishermen lounge in their boats, others stand  
ankle-deep in the water, pois'd on strong legs,  
The boats partly drawn up, the water slapping against them,  
Strew'd on the sand in heaps and windrows, well out from  
the water,  
the green-back'd spotted mossbonkers.



# BOOK XXXII. FROM NOON TO STARRY NIGHT

## Thou Orb Aloft Full-Dazzling

Thou orb aloft full-dazzling! thou hot October noon!  
Flooding with sheeny light the gray beach sand,  
The sibilant near sea with vistas far and foam,  
And tawny streaks and shades and spreading blue;  
O sun of noon refulgent! my special word to thee.

Hear me illustrious!  
Thy lover me, for always I have loved thee,  
Even as basking babe, then happy boy alone by some wood  
edge, thy  
touching-distant beams enough,  
Or man matured, or young or old, as now to thee I launch my  
invocation.

(Thou canst not with thy dumbness me deceive,  
I know before the fitting man all Nature yields,  
Though answering not in words, the skies, trees, hear his  
voice—and  
thou O sun,  
As for thy throes, thy perturbations, sudden breaks and  
shafts of  
flame gigantic,  
I understand them, I know those flames, those perturbations  
well.)

Thou that with fructifying heat and light,  
O'er myriad farms, o'er lands and waters North and South,  
O'er Mississippi's endless course, o'er Texas' grassy  
plains,

Kanada's woods,  
O'er all the globe that turns its face to thee shining in  
space,  
Thou that impartially enfoldest all, not only continents,  
seas,  
Thou that to grapes and weeds and little wild flowers  
givest so liberally,  
Shed, shed thyself on mine and me, with but a fleeting ray  
out of  
thy million millions,  
Strike through these chants.

Nor only launch thy subtle dazzle and thy strength for  
these,  
Prepare the later afternoon of me myself—prepare my  
lengthening shadows,  
Prepare my starry nights.

# Faces

1

Sauntering the pavement or riding the country by-road,  
faces!

Faces of friendship, precision, caution, suavity, ideality,  
The spiritual-prescient face, the always welcome common  
benevolent face,

The face of the singing of music, the grand faces of  
natural lawyers

and judges broad at the back-top,

The faces of hunters and fishers bulged at the brows, the  
shaved

blanch'd faces of orthodox citizens,

The pure, extravagant, yearning, questioning artist's face,

The ugly face of some beautiful soul, the handsome detested  
or

despised face,

The sacred faces of infants, the illuminated face of the  
mother of

many children,

The face of an amour, the face of veneration,

The face as of a dream, the face of an immobile rock,

The face withdrawn of its good and bad, a castrated face,

A wild hawk, his wings clipp'd by the clipper,

A stallion that yielded at last to the thongs and knife of  
the gelder.

Sauntering the pavement thus, or crossing the ceaseless  
ferry, faces

and faces and faces,

I see them and complain not, and am content with all.

2

Do you suppose I could be content with all if I thought  
them their

own finale?

This now is too lamentable a face for a man,  
Some abject louse asking leave to be, cringing for it,  
Some milk-nosed maggot blessing what lets it wrig to its  
hole.

This face is a dog's snout sniffing for garbage,  
Snakes nest in that mouth, I hear the sibilant threat.

This face is a haze more chill than the arctic sea,  
Its sleepy and wobbling icebergs crunch as they go.

This is a face of bitter herbs, this an emetic, they need  
no label,  
And more of the drug-shelf, laudanum, caoutchouc, or hog's-  
lard.

This face is an epilepsy, its wordless tongue gives out the  
uneearthly cry,  
Its veins down the neck distend, its eyes roll till they  
show  
nothing but their whites,  
Its teeth grit, the palms of the hands are cut by the  
turn'd-in nails,  
The man falls struggling and foaming to the ground, while  
he  
speculates well.

This face is bitten by vermin and worms,  
And this is some murderer's knife with a half-pull'd  
scabbard.

This face owes to the sexton his dismalest fee,  
An unceasing death-bell tolls there.

3

Features of my equals would you trick me with your creas'd  
and

cadaverous march?

Well, you cannot trick me.

I see your rounded never-erased flow,  
I see 'neath the rims of your haggard and mean disguises.

Splay and twist as you like, poke with the tangling fores  
of fishes or rats,  
You'll be unmuzzled, you certainly will.

I saw the face of the most smear'd and slobbering idiot  
they had at  
the asylum,  
And I knew for my consolation what they knew not,  
I knew of the agents that emptied and broke my brother,  
The same wait to clear the rubbish from the fallen  
tenement,  
And I shall look again in a score or two of ages,  
And I shall meet the real landlord perfect and unharm'd,  
every inch  
as good as myself.

4

The Lord advances, and yet advances,  
Always the shadow in front, always the reach'd hand  
bringing up the  
laggards.

Out of this face emerge banners and horses—O superb! I see  
what is coming,  
I see the high pioneer-caps, see staves of runners clearing  
the way,  
I hear victorious drums.

This face is a life-boat,  
This is the face commanding and bearded, it asks no odds of  
the rest,  
This face is flavor'd fruit ready for eating,  
This face of a healthy honest boy is the programme of all

good.

These faces bear testimony slumbering or awake,  
They show their descent from the Master himself.

Off the word I have spoken I except not one—red, white,  
black, are  
all deific,  
In each house is the ovum, it comes forth after a thousand  
years.

Spots or cracks at the windows do not disturb me,  
Tall and sufficient stand behind and make signs to me,  
I read the promise and patiently wait.

This is a full-grown lily's face,  
She speaks to the limber-hipp'd man near the garden  
pickets,  
Come here she blushingly cries, Come nigh to me limber-  
hipp'd man,  
Stand at my side till I lean as high as I can upon you,  
Fill me with albescent honey, bend down to me,  
Rub to me with your chafing beard, rub to my breast and  
shoulders.

5  
The old face of the mother of many children,  
Whist! I am fully content.

Lull'd and late is the smoke of the First-day morning,  
It hangs low over the rows of trees by the fences,  
It hangs thin by the sassafras and wild-cherry and cat-  
brier under them.

I saw the rich ladies in full dress at the soiree,  
I heard what the singers were singing so long,  
Heard who sprang in crimson youth from the white froth and  
the water-blue.



Behold a woman!

She looks out from her quaker cap, her face is clearer and  
more  
beautiful than the sky.

She sits in an armchair under the shaded porch of the  
farmhouse,  
The sun just shines on her old white head.

Her ample gown is of cream-hued linen,  
Her grandsons raised the flax, and her grand-daughters spun  
it with  
the distaff and the wheel.

The melodious character of the earth,  
The finish beyond which philosophy cannot go and does not  
wish to go,  
The justified mother of men.

# The Mystic Trumpeter

1

Hark, some wild trumpeter, some strange musician,  
Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tunes to-night.

I hear thee trumpeter, listening alert I catch thy notes,  
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,  
Now low, subdued, now in the distance lost.

2

Come nearer bodiless one, haply in thee resounds  
Some dead composer, haply thy pensive life  
Was fill'd with aspirations high, uniform'd ideals,  
Waves, oceans musical, chaotically surging,  
That now ecstatic ghost, close to me bending, thy cornet  
echoing, pealing,  
Gives out to no one's ears but mine, but freely gives to  
mine,  
That I may thee translate.

3

Blow trumpeter free and clear, I follow thee,  
While at thy liquid prelude, glad, serene,  
The fretting world, the streets, the noisy hours of day  
withdraw,  
A holy calm descends like dew upon me,  
I walk in cool refreshing night the walks of Paradise,  
I scent the grass, the moist air and the roses;  
Thy song expands my numb'd imbonded spirit, thou freest,  
launchest me,  
Floating and basking upon heaven's lake.

4

Blow again trumpeter! and for my sensuous eyes,  
Bring the old pageants, show the feudal world.

What charm thy music works! thou makest pass before me,  
Ladies and cavaliers long dead, barons are in their castle  
halls,  
the troubadours are singing,  
Arm'd knights go forth to redress wrongs, some in quest of  
the holy Graal;  
I see the tournament, I see the contestants incased in  
heavy armor  
seated on stately champing horses,  
I hear the shouts, the sounds of blows and smiting steel;  
I see the Crusaders' tumultuous armies—hark, how the  
cymbals clang,  
Lo, where the monks walk in advance, bearing the cross on  
high.

5  
Blow again trumpeter! and for thy theme,  
Take now the enclosing theme of all, the solvent and the  
setting,  
Love, that is pulse of all, the sustenance and the pang,  
The heart of man and woman all for love,  
No other theme but love—knitting, enclosing, all-diffusing  
love.

O how the immortal phantoms crowd around me!  
I see the vast alembic ever working, I see and know the  
flames that  
heat the world,  
The glow, the blush, the beating hearts of lovers,  
So blissful happy some, and some so silent, dark, and nigh  
to death;  
Love, that is all the earth to lovers—love, that mocks time  
and space,  
Love, that is day and night—love, that is sun and moon and  
stars,  
Love, that is crimson, sumptuous, sick with perfume,  
No other words but words of love, no other thought but  
love.

6

Blow again trumpeter—conjure war's alarms.

Swift to thy spell a shuddering hum like distant thunder  
rolls,

Lo, where the arm'd men hasten—lo, mid the clouds of dust  
the glint

of bayonets,

I see the grime-faced cannoneers, I mark the rosy flash  
amid the

smoke, I hear the cracking of the guns;

Nor war alone—thy fearful music-song, wild player, brings  
every

sight of fear,

The deeds of ruthless brigands, rapine, murder—I hear the  
cries for help!

I see ships foundering at sea, I behold on deck and below  
deck the

terrible tableaux.

7

O trumpeter, methinks I am myself the instrument thou  
playest,

Thou melt'st my heart, my brain—thou movest, drawest,  
changest

them at will;

And now thy sullen notes send darkness through me,

Thou takest away all cheering light, all hope,

I see the enslaved, the overthrown, the hurt, the oppressed  
of the

whole earth,

I feel the measureless shame and humiliation of my race, it  
becomes

all mine,

Mine too the revenges of humanity, the wrongs of ages,  
baffled feuds

and hatreds,

Utter defeat upon me weighs—all lost—the foe victorious,

(Yet 'mid the ruins Pride colossal stands unshaken to the last,

Endurance, resolution to the last.)

8

Now trumpeter for thy close,

Vouchsafe a higher strain than any yet,

Sing to my soul, renew its languishing faith and hope,

Rouse up my slow belief, give me some vision of the future,

Give me for once its prophecy and joy.

O glad, exulting, culminating song!

A vigor more than earth's is in thy notes,

Marches of victory—man disenthral'd—the conqueror at last,

Hymns to the universal God from universal man—all joy!

A reborn race appears—a perfect world, all joy!

Women and men in wisdom innocence and health—all joy!

Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy!

War, sorrow, suffering gone—the rank earth purged—nothing but joy left!

The ocean fill'd with joy—the atmosphere all joy!

Joy! joy! in freedom, worship, love! joy in the ecstasy of life!

Enough to merely be! enough to breathe!

Joy! joy! all over joy!

# To a Locomotive in Winter

Thee for my recitative,  
Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the  
winter-day declining,  
Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual throbbing and thy  
beat convulsive,  
Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,  
Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods,  
gyrating,  
shuttling at thy sides,  
Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in  
the distance,  
Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,  
Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with  
delicate purple,  
The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-  
stack,  
Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous  
twinkle of  
thy wheels,  
Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,  
Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily  
careering;  
Type of the modern-emblem of motion and power-pulse of the  
continent,  
For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as  
here I see thee,  
With storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling snow,  
By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,  
By night thy silent signal lamps to swing.

Fierce-throated beauty!  
Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy  
swinging lamps  
at night,

Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an  
earthquake,  
rousing all,  
Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding,  
(No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano  
thine,)  
Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,  
Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,  
To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.

# O Magnet-South

O magnet-south! O glistening perfumed South! my South!  
O quick mettle, rich blood, impulse and love! good and  
evil! O all  
dear to me!  
O dear to me my birth-things—all moving things and the  
trees where  
I was born—the grains, plants, rivers,  
Dear to me my own slow sluggish rivers where they flow,  
distant,  
over flats of slivery sands or through swamps,  
Dear to me the Roanoke, the Savannah, the Altamahaw, the  
Pedee, the  
Tombigbee, the Santee, the Coosa and the Sabine,  
O pensive, far away wandering, I return with my soul to  
haunt their  
banks again,  
Again in Florida I float on transparent lakes, I float on  
the  
Okeechobee, I cross the hummock-land or through pleasant  
openings  
or dense forests,  
I see the parrots in the woods, I see the papaw-tree and  
the  
blossoming titi;  
Again, sailing in my coaster on deck, I coast off Georgia,  
I coast  
up the Carolinas,  
I see where the live-oak is growing, I see where the  
yellow-pine,  
the scented bay-tree, the lemon and orange, the cypress,  
the  
graceful palmetto,  
I pass rude sea-headlands and enter Pamlico sound through  
an inlet,



and dart my vision inland;  
O the cotton plant! the growing fields of rice, sugar,  
hemp!  
The cactus guarded with thorns, the laurel-tree with large  
white flowers,  
The range afar, the richness and barrenness, the old woods  
charged  
with mistletoe and trailing moss,  
The piney odor and the gloom, the awful natural stillness,  
(here in  
these dense swamps the freebooter carries his gun, and the  
fugitive has his conceal'd hut;)  
O the strange fascination of these half-known half-  
impassable  
swamps, infested by reptiles, resounding with the bellow of  
the  
alligator, the sad noises of the night-owl and the wild-  
cat, and  
the whirr of the rattlesnake,  
The mocking-bird, the American mimic, singing all the  
forenoon,  
singing through the moon-lit night,  
The humming-bird, the wild turkey, the raccoon, the  
opossum;  
A Kentucky corn-field, the tall, graceful, long-leav'd  
corn,  
slender, flapping, bright green, with tassels, with  
beautiful  
ears each well-sheath'd in its husk;  
O my heart! O tender and fierce pangs, I can stand them  
not, I will depart;  
O to be a Virginian where I grew up! O to be a Carolinian!  
O longings irrepressible! O I will go back to old Tennessee  
and  
never wander more.



# Mannahatta

I was asking for something specific and perfect for my  
city,  
Whereupon lo! upsprang the aboriginal name.

Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane,  
unruly,  
musical, self-sufficient,  
I see that the word of my city is that word from of old,  
Because I see that word nested in nests of water-bays,  
superb,  
Rich, hemm'd thick all around with sailships and  
steamships, an  
island sixteen miles long, solid-founded,  
Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender,  
strong,  
light, splendidly uprising toward clear skies,  
Tides swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown,  
The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger  
adjoining  
islands, the heights, the villas,  
The countless masts, the white shore-steamers, the  
lighters, the  
ferry-boats, the black sea-steamers well-model'd,  
The down-town streets, the jobbers' houses of business, the  
houses  
of business of the ship-merchants and money-brokers, the  
river-streets,  
Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand in a week,  
The carts hauling goods, the manly race of drivers of  
horses, the  
brown-faced sailors,  
The summer air, the bright sun shining, and the sailing  
clouds aloft,  
The winter snows, the sleigh-bells, the broken ice in the

river,  
passing along up or down with the flood-tide or ebb-tide,  
The mechanics of the city, the masters, well-form'd,  
beautiful-faced, looking you straight in the eyes,  
Trottoirs throng'd, vehicles, Broadway, the women, the  
shops and shows,  
A million people-manners free and superb-open voices-  
hospitality-  
the most courageous and friendly young men,  
City of hurried and sparkling waters! city of spires and  
masts!  
City nested in bays! my city!

# All Is Truth

O me, man of slack faith so long,  
Standing aloof, denying portions so long,  
Only aware to-day of compact all-diffused truth,  
Discovering to-day there is no lie or form of lie, and can  
be none,  
but grows as inevitably upon itself as the truth does upon  
itself,  
Or as any law of the earth or any natural production of the  
earth does.

(This is curious and may not be realized immediately, but  
it must be  
realized,  
I feel in myself that I represent falsehoods equally with  
the rest,  
And that the universe does.)

Where has fail'd a perfect return indifferent of lies or  
the truth?  
Is it upon the ground, or in water or fire? or in the  
spirit of man?  
or in the meat and blood?

Meditating among liars and retreating sternly into myself,  
I see  
that there are really no liars or lies after all,  
And that nothing fails its perfect return, and that what  
are called  
lies are perfect returns,  
And that each thing exactly represents itself and what has  
preceded it,  
And that the truth includes all, and is compact just as  
much as  
space is compact,

And that there is no flaw or vacuum in the amount of the  
truth—but  
that all is truth without exception;  
And henceforth I will go celebrate any thing I see or am,  
And sing and laugh and deny nothing.

# A Riddle Song

That which eludes this verse and any verse,  
Unheard by sharpest ear, unform'd in clearest eye or  
cunningest mind,  
Nor lore nor fame, nor happiness nor wealth,  
And yet the pulse of every heart and life throughout the  
world incessantly,  
Which you and I and all pursuing ever ever miss,  
Open but still a secret, the real of the real, an illusion,  
Costless, vouchsafed to each, yet never man the owner,  
Which poets vainly seek to put in rhyme, historians in  
prose,  
Which sculptor never chisel'd yet, nor painter painted,  
Which vocalist never sung, nor orator nor actor ever  
utter'd,  
Invoking here and now I challenge for my song.

Indifferently, 'mid public, private haunts, in solitude,  
Behind the mountain and the wood,  
Companion of the city's busiest streets, through the  
assemblage,  
It and its radiations constantly glide.

In looks of fair unconscious babes,  
Or strangely in the coffin'd dead,  
Or show of breaking dawn or stars by night,  
As some dissolving delicate film of dreams,  
Hiding yet lingering.

Two little breaths of words comprising it,  
Two words, yet all from first to last comprised in it.

How ardently for it!  
How many ships have sail'd and sunk for it!

How many travelers started from their homes and neer  
return'd!  
How much of genius boldly staked and lost for it!  
What countless stores of beauty, love, ventur'd for it!  
How all superbest deeds since Time began are traceable to  
it—and  
shall be to the end!  
How all heroic martyrdoms to it!  
How, justified by it, the horrors, evils, battles of the  
earth!  
How the bright fascinating lambent flames of it, in every  
age and  
land, have drawn men's eyes,  
Rich as a sunset on the Norway coast, the sky, the islands,  
and the cliffs,  
Or midnight's silent glowing northern lights unreachable.  
  
Haply God's riddle it, so vague and yet so certain,  
The soul for it, and all the visible universe for it,  
And heaven at last for it.



# Excelsior

Who has gone farthest? for I would go farther,  
And who has been just? for I would be the most just person  
of the earth,  
And who most cautious? for I would be more cautious,  
And who has been happiest? O I think it is I—I think no one  
was  
ever happier than I,  
And who has lavish'd all? for I lavish constantly the best  
I have,  
And who proudest? for I think I have reason to be the  
proudest son  
alive—for I am the son of the brawny and tall-topt city,  
And who has been bold and true? for I would be the boldest  
and  
truest being of the universe,  
And who benevolent? for I would show more benevolence than  
all the rest,  
And who has receiv'd the love of the most friends? for I  
know what  
it is to receive the passionate love of many friends,  
And who possesses a perfect and enamour'd body? for I do  
not believe  
any one possesses a more perfect or enamour'd body than  
mine,  
And who thinks the amplest thoughts? for I would surround  
those thoughts,  
And who has made hymns fit for the earth? for I am mad with  
devouring ecstasy to make joyous hymns for the whole earth.



# Ah Poverties, Wincings, and Sulky Retreats

Ah poverties, wincings, and sulky retreats,  
Ah you foes that in conflict have overcome me,  
(For what is my life or any man's life but a conflict with  
foes, the  
old, the incessant war?)  
You degradations, you tussle with passions and appetites,  
You smarts from dissatisfied friendships, (ah wounds the  
sharpest of all!)  
You toil of painful and choked articulations, you  
meanesses,  
You shallow tongue-talks at tables, (my tongue the  
shallowest of any;)  
You broken resolutions, you racking angers, you smother'd  
ennuis!  
Ah think not you finally triumph, my real self has yet to  
come forth,  
It shall yet march forth o'ermastering, till all lies  
beneath me,  
It shall yet stand up the soldier of ultimate victory.

# Thoughts

Of public opinion,  
Of a calm and cool fiat sooner or later, (how impassive.  
how certain  
and final!)

Of the President with pale face asking secretly to himself,  
What  
will the people say at last?

Of the frivolous Judge-of the corrupt Congressman,  
Governor,  
Mayor-of such as these standing helpless and exposed,  
Of the mumbling and screaming priest, (soon, soon  
deserted,)

Of the lessening year by year of venerableness, and of the  
dicta of  
officers, statutes, pulpits, schools,  
Of the rising forever taller and stronger and broader of  
the  
intuitions of men and women, and of Self-esteem and  
Personality;

Of the true New World-of the Democracies resplendent en-  
masse,

Of the conformity of politics, armies, navies, to them,  
Of the shining sun by them-of the inherent light, greater  
than the rest,  
Of the envelopment of all by them, and the effusion of all  
from them.

# Mediums

They shall arise in the States,  
They shall report Nature, laws, physiology, and happiness,  
They shall illustrate Democracy and the kosmos,  
They shall be alimentive, amative, perceptive,  
They shall be complete women and men, their pose brawny and  
supple,  
their drink water, their blood clean and clear,  
They shall fully enjoy materialism and the sight of  
products, they  
shall enjoy the sight of the beef, lumber, bread-stuffs, of  
Chicago the great city.  
They shall train themselves to go in public to become  
orators and  
oratrices,  
Strong and sweet shall their tongues be, poems and  
materials of  
poems shall come from their lives, they shall be makers and  
finders,  
Of them and of their works shall emerge divine conveyers,  
to convey gospels,  
Characters, events, retrospections, shall be convey'd in  
gospels,  
trees, animals, waters, shall be convey'd,  
Death, the future, the invisible faith, shall all be  
convey'd.

# Weave in, My Hardy Life

Weave in, weave in, my hardy life,  
Weave yet a soldier strong and full for great campaigns to  
come,  
Weave in red blood, weave sinews in like ropes, the senses,  
sight weave in,  
Weave lasting sure, weave day and night the wet, the warp,  
incessant  
weave, tire not,  
(We know not what the use O life, nor know the aim, the  
end, nor  
really aught we know,  
But know the work, the need goes on and shall go on, the  
death-envelop'd march of peace as well as war goes on,)  
For great campaigns of peace the same the wiry threads to  
weave,  
We know not why or what, yet weave, forever weave.

# Spain, 1873-74

Out of the murk of heaviest clouds,  
Out of the feudal wrecks and heap'd-up skeletons of kings,  
Out of that old entire European debris, the shatter'd  
mummeries,  
Ruin'd cathedrals, crumble of palaces, tombs of priests,  
Lo, Freedom's features fresh undimm'd look forth—the same  
immortal  
face looks forth;  
(A glimpse as of thy Mother's face Columbia,  
A flash significant as of a sword,  
Beaming towards thee.)

Nor think we forget thee maternal;  
Lag'd'st thou so long? shall the clouds close again upon  
thee?  
Ah, but thou hast thyself now appear'd to us—we know thee,  
Thou hast given us a sure proof, the glimpse of thyself,  
Thou waitest there as everywhere thy time.

# By Broad Potomac's Shore

By broad Potomac's shore, again old tongue,  
(Still uttering, still ejaculating, canst never cease this  
babble?)

Again old heart so gay, again to you, your sense, the full  
flush

spring returning,

Again the freshness and the odors, again Virginia's summer  
sky,

pellucid blue and silver,

Again the forenoon purple of the hills,

Again the deathless grass, so noiseless soft and green,

Again the blood-red roses blooming.

Perfume this book of mine O blood-red roses!

Lave subtly with your waters every line Potomac!

Give me of you O spring, before I close, to put between its  
pages!

O forenoon purple of the hills, before I close, of you!

O deathless grass, of you!



# From Far Dakota's Canyons [June 25, 1876]

From far Dakota's canyons,  
Lands of the wild ravine, the dusky Sioux, the lonesome  
stretch, the  
silence,  
Haply to-day a mournful wall, haply a trumpet-note for  
heroes.

The battle-bulletin,  
The Indian ambushade, the craft, the fatal environment,  
The cavalry companies fighting to the last in sternest  
heroism,  
In the midst of their little circle, with their slaughter'd  
horses  
for breastworks,  
The fall of Custer and all his officers and men.

Continues yet the old, old legend of our race,  
The loftiest of life upheld by death,  
The ancient banner perfectly maintain'd,  
O lesson opportune, O how I welcome thee!

As sitting in dark days,  
Lone, sulky, through the time's thick murk looking in vain  
for  
light, for hope,  
From unsuspected parts a fierce and momentary proof,  
(The sun there at the centre though conceal'd,  
Electric life forever at the centre,)  
Breaks forth a lightning flash.

Thou of the tawny flowing hair in battle,  
I erewhile saw, with erect head, pressing ever in front,

bearing a  
bright sword in thy hand,  
Now ending well in death the splendid fever of thy deeds,  
(I bring no dirge for it or thee, I bring a glad triumphal  
sonnet,)  
Desperate and glorious, aye in defeat most desperate, most  
glorious,  
After thy many battles in which never yielding up a gun or  
a color,  
Leaving behind thee a memory sweet to soldiers,  
Thou yieldest up thyself.

# Old War-Dreams

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.



# Thick-Sprinkled Bunting

Thick-sprinkled bunting! flag of stars!  
Long yet your road, fateful flag—long yet your road, and  
lined with  
bloody death,  
For the prize I see at issue at last is the world,  
All its ships and shores I see interwoven with your threads  
greedy banner;  
Dream'd again the flags of kings, highest borne to flaunt  
unrival'd?  
O hasten flag of man—O with sure and steady step, passing  
highest  
flags of kings,  
Walk supreme to the heavens mighty symbol—run up above them  
all,  
Flag of stars! thick-sprinkled bunting!  
What Best I See in Thee  
[To U. S. G. return'd from his World's Tour]

What best I see in thee,  
Is not that where thou mov'st down history's great  
highways,  
Ever undimm'd by time shoots warlike victory's dazzle,  
Or that thou sat'st where Washington sat, ruling the land  
in peace,  
Or thou the man whom feudal Europe feted, venerable Asia  
swarm'd upon,  
Who walk'd with kings with even pace the round world's  
promenade;  
But that in foreign lands, in all thy walks with kings,  
Those prairie sovereigns of the West, Kansas, Missouri,  
Illinois,  
Ohio's, Indiana's millions, comrades, farmers, soldiers,  
all to the front,  
Invisibly with thee walking with kings with even pace the

round  
world's promenade,  
Were all so justified.  
Spirit That Form'd This Scene  
[Written in Platte Canyon, Colorado]

Spirit that form'd this scene,  
These tumbled rock-piles grim and red,  
These reckless heaven-ambitious peaks,  
These gorges, turbulent-clear streams, this naked  
freshness,  
These formless wild arrays, for reasons of their own,  
I know thee, savage spirit—we have communed together,  
Mine too such wild arrays, for reasons of their own;  
Wast charged against my chants they had forgotten art?  
To fuse within themselves its rules precise and  
delicatesse?  
The lyrist's measur'd beat, the wrought-out temple's grace-  
column  
and polish'd arch forgot?  
But thou that revelest here—spirit that form'd this scene,  
They have remember'd thee.

# As I Walk These Broad Majestic Days

As I walk these broad majestic days of peace,  
(For the war, the struggle of blood finish'd, wherein, O  
terrific Ideal,  
Against vast odds erewhile having gloriously won,  
Now thou stridest on, yet perhaps in time toward denser  
wars,  
Perhaps to engage in time in still more dreadful contests,  
dangers,  
Longer campaigns and crises, labors beyond all others,)  
Around me I hear that eclat of the world, politics,  
produce,  
The announcements of recognized things, science,  
The approved growth of cities and the spread of inventions.

I see the ships, (they will last a few years,)  
The vast factories with their foremen and workmen,  
And hear the indorsement of all, and do not object to it.

But I too announce solid things,  
Science, ships, politics, cities, factories, are not  
nothing,  
Like a grand procession to music of distant bugles pouring,  
triumphantly moving, and grander heaving in sight,  
They stand for realities—all is as it should be.

Then my realities;  
What else is so real as mine?  
Libertad and the divine average, freedom to every slave on  
the face  
of the earth,  
The rapt promises and lumine of seers, the spiritual world,  
these

centuries-lasting songs,  
And our visions, the visions of poets, the most solid  
announcements  
of any.



# A Clear Midnight

This is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into the wordless,  
Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson  
done,  
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the  
themes thou  
lovest best,  
Night, sleep, death and the stars.



# BOOK XXXIII. SONGS OF PARTING

## As the Time Draws Nigh

As the time draws nigh glooming a cloud,  
A dread beyond of I know not what darkens me.

I shall go forth,  
I shall traverse the States awhile, but I cannot tell  
whither or how long,  
Perhaps soon some day or night while I am singing my voice  
will  
suddenly cease.

O book, O chants! must all then amount to but this?  
Must we barely arrive at this beginning of us? —and yet it  
is  
enough, O soul;  
O soul, we have positively appear'd—that is enough.

# Years of the Modern

Years of the modern! years of the unperform'd!  
Your horizon rises, I see it parting away for more august  
dramas,  
I see not America only, not only Liberty's nation but other  
nations  
preparing,  
I see tremendous entrances and exits, new combinations, the  
solidarity  
of races,  
I see that force advancing with irresistible power on the  
world's stage,  
(Have the old forces, the old wars, played their parts? are  
the acts  
suitable to them closed?)  
I see Freedom, completely arm'd and victorious and very  
haughty,  
with Law on one side and Peace on the other,  
A stupendous trio all issuing forth against the idea of  
caste;  
What historic denouements are these we so rapidly approach?  
I see men marching and countermarching by swift millions,  
I see the frontiers and boundaries of the old aristocracies  
broken,  
I see the landmarks of European kings removed,  
I see this day the People beginning their landmarks, (all  
others give way;)  
Never were such sharp questions ask'd as this day,  
Never was average man, his soul, more energetic, more like  
a God,  
Lo, how he urges and urges, leaving the masses no rest!  
His daring foot is on land and sea everywhere, he colonizes  
the  
Pacific, the archipelagoes,  
With the steamship, the electric telegraph, the newspaper,

the  
wholesale engines of war,  
With these and the world-spreading factories he interlinks  
all  
geography, all lands;  
What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of you,  
passing under  
the seas?  
Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one  
heart to the globe?  
Is humanity forming en-masse? for lo, tyrants tremble,  
crowns grow dim,  
The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a general  
divine war,  
No one knows what will happen next, such portents fill the  
days and nights;  
Years prophetic! the space ahead as I walk, as I vainly  
try to  
pierce it, is full of phantoms,  
Unborn deeds, things soon to be, project their shapes  
around me,  
This incredible rush and heat, this strange ecstatic fever  
of dreams  
O years!  
Your dreams O years, how they penetrate through me! (I know  
not  
whether I sleep or wake;)  
The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring in  
shadow behind me,  
The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance, advance  
upon me.

# Ashes of Soldiers

Ashes of soldiers South or North,  
As I muse retrospective murmuring a chant in thought,  
The war resumes, again to my sense your shapes,  
And again the advance of the armies.

Noiseless as mists and vapors,  
From their graves in the trenches ascending,  
From cemeteries all through Virginia and Tennessee,  
From every point of the compass out of the countless  
graves,  
In wafted clouds, in myriads large, or squads of twos or  
threes or  
single ones they come,  
And silently gather round me.

Now sound no note O trumpeters,  
Not at the head of my cavalry parading on spirited horses,  
With sabres drawn and glistening, and carbines by their  
thighs, (ah  
my brave horsemen!  
My handsome tan-faced horsemen! what life, what joy and  
pride,  
With all the perils were yours.)

Nor you drummers, neither at reveille at dawn,  
Nor the long roll alarming the camp, nor even the muffled  
beat for burial,  
Nothing from you this time O drummers bearing my warlike  
drums.

But aside from these and the marts of wealth and the  
crowded promenade,  
Admitting around me comrades close unseen by the rest and  
voiceless,

The slain elate and alive again, the dust and debris alive,  
I chant this chant of my silent soul in the name of all  
dead soldiers.

Faces so pale with wondrous eyes, very dear, gather closer  
yet,  
Draw close, but speak not.

Phantoms of countless lost,  
Invisible to the rest henceforth become my companions,  
Follow me ever—desert me not while I live.

Sweet are the blooming cheeks of the living—sweet are the  
musical  
voices sounding,  
But sweet, ah sweet, are the dead with their silent eyes.

Dearest comrades, all is over and long gone,  
But love is not over—and what love, O comrades!  
Perfume from battle-fields rising, up from the foetor  
arising.

Perfume therefore my chant, O love, immortal love,  
Give me to bathe the memories of all dead soldiers,  
Shroud them, embalm them, cover them all over with tender  
pride.

Perfume all—make all wholesome,  
Make these ashes to nourish and blossom,  
O love, solve all, fructify all with the last chemistry.

Give me exhaustless, make me a fountain,  
That I exhale love from me wherever I go like a moist  
perennial dew,  
For the ashes of all dead soldiers South or North.





# Thoughts

1

Of these years I sing,  
How they pass and have pass'd through convuls'd pains, as  
through  
parturitions,  
How America illustrates birth, muscular youth, the promise,  
the sure  
fulfilment, the absolute success, despite of people—  
illustrates  
evil as well as good,  
The vehement struggle so fierce for unity in one's-self,  
How many hold despairingly yet to the models departed,  
caste, myths,  
obedience, compulsion, and to infidelity,  
How few see the arrived models, the athletes, the Western  
States, or  
see freedom or spirituality, or hold any faith in results,  
(But I see the athletes, and I see the results of the war  
glorious  
and inevitable, and they again leading to other results.)  
  
How the great cities appear—how the Democratic masses,  
turbulent,  
willful, as I love them,  
How the whirl, the contest, the wrestle of evil with good,  
the  
sounding and resounding, keep on and on,  
How society waits unform'd, and is for a while between  
things ended  
and things begun,  
How America is the continent of glories, and of the triumph  
of  
freedom and of the Democracies, and of the fruits of  
society, and

of all that is begun,  
And how the States are complete in themselves—and how all  
triumphs  
and glories are complete in themselves, to lead onward,  
And how these of mine and of the States will in their turn  
be  
convuls'd, and serve other parturitions and transitions,  
And how all people, sights, combinations, the democratic  
masses too,  
serve—and how every fact, and war itself, with all its  
horrors,  
serves,  
And how now or at any time each serves the exquisite  
transition of death.

2  
Of seeds dropping into the ground, of births,  
Of the steady concentration of America, inland, upward, to  
impregnable and swarming places,  
Of what Indiana, Kentucky, Arkansas, and the rest, are to  
be,  
Of what a few years will show there in Nebraska, Colorado,  
Nevada,  
and the rest,  
(Or afar, mounting the Northern Pacific to Sitka or  
Aliaska,)  
Of what the feuillage of America is the preparation for—and  
of what  
all sights, North, South, East and West, are,  
Of this Union welded in blood, of the solemn price paid, of  
the  
unnamed lost ever present in my mind;  
Of the temporary use of materials for identity's sake,  
Of the present, passing, departing—of the growth of  
completer men  
than any yet,  
Of all sloping down there where the fresh free giver the  
mother, the  
Mississippi flows,

Of mighty inland cities yet unsurvey'd and unsuspected,  
Of the new and good names, of the modern developments, of  
inalienable homesteads,  
Of a free and original life there, of simple diet and clean  
and  
sweet blood,  
Of liveness, majestic faces, clear eyes, and perfect  
physique there,  
Of immense spiritual results future years far West, each  
side of the  
Anahuacs,  
Of these songs, well understood there, (being made for that  
area,)  
Of the native scorn of grossness and gain there,  
(O it lurks in me night and day—what is gain after all to  
savageness  
and freedom?)

# Song at Sunset

Splendor of ended day floating and filling me,  
Hour prophetic, hour resuming the past,  
Inflating my throat, you divine average,  
You earth and life till the last ray gleams I sing.

Open mouth of my soul uttering gladness,  
Eyes of my soul seeing perfection,  
Natural life of me faithfully praising things,  
Corroborating forever the triumph of things.

Illustrious every one!

Illustrious what we name space, sphere of unnumber'd  
spirits,

Illustrious the mystery of motion in all beings, even the  
tiniest insect,

Illustrious the attribute of speech, the senses, the body,  
Illustrious the passing light—illustrious the pale  
reflection on

the new moon in the western sky,

Illustrious whatever I see or hear or touch, to the last.

Good in all,

In the satisfaction and aplomb of animals,

In the annual return of the seasons,

In the hilarity of youth,

In the strength and flush of manhood,

In the grandeur and exquisiteness of old age,

In the superb vistas of death.

Wonderful to depart!

Wonderful to be here!

The heart, to jet the all-alike and innocent blood!

To breathe the air, how delicious!

To speak—to walk—to seize something by the hand!

To prepare for sleep, for bed, to look on my rose-color'd  
flesh!  
To be conscious of my body, so satisfied, so large!  
To be this incredible God I am!  
To have gone forth among other Gods, these men and women I  
love.

Wonderful how I celebrate you and myself  
How my thoughts play subtly at the spectacles around!  
How the clouds pass silently overhead!  
How the earth darts on and on! and how the sun, moon,  
stars, dart on and on!  
How the water sports and sings! (surely it is alive!)  
How the trees rise and stand up, with strong trunks, with  
branches  
and leaves!  
(Surely there is something more in each of the trees, some  
living soul.)

O amazement of things—even the least particle!  
O spirituality of things!  
O strain musical flowing through ages and continents, now  
reaching  
me and America!  
I take your strong chords, intersperse them, and cheerfully  
pass  
them forward.

I too carol the sun, usher'd or at noon, or as now,  
setting,  
I too throb to the brain and beauty of the earth and of all  
the  
growths of the earth,  
I too have felt the resistless call of myself.

As I steam'd down the Mississippi,  
As I wander'd over the prairies,  
As I have lived, as I have look'd through my windows my  
eyes,

As I went forth in the morning, as I beheld the light  
breaking in the east,  
As I bathed on the beach of the Eastern Sea, and again on  
the beach  
of the Western Sea,  
As I roam'd the streets of inland Chicago, whatever streets  
I have roam'd,  
Or cities or silent woods, or even amid the sights of war,  
Wherever I have been I have charged myself with contentment  
and triumph.

I sing to the last the equalities modern or old,  
I sing the endless finales of things,  
I say Nature continues, glory continues,  
I praise with electric voice,  
For I do not see one imperfection in the universe,  
And I do not see one cause or result lamentable at last in  
the universe.

O setting sun! though the time has come,  
I still warble under you, if none else does, unmitigated  
adoration.

# As at Thy Portals Also Death

As at thy portals also death,  
Entering thy sovereign, dim, illimitable grounds,  
To memories of my mother, to the divine blending,  
maternity,  
To her, buried and gone, yet buried not, gone not from me,  
(I see again the calm benignant face fresh and beautiful  
still,  
I sit by the form in the coffin,  
I kiss and kiss convulsively again the sweet old lips, the  
cheeks,  
the closed eyes in the coffin;)  
To her, the ideal woman, practical, spiritual, of all of  
earth,  
life, love, to me the best,  
I grave a monumental line, before I go, amid these songs,  
And set a tombstone here.

# My Legacy

The business man the acquirer vast,  
After assiduous years surveying results, preparing for  
departure,  
Devises houses and lands to his children, bequeaths stocks,  
goods,  
funds for a school or hospital,  
Leaves money to certain companions to buy tokens, souvenirs  
of gems  
and gold.

But I, my life surveying, closing,  
With nothing to show to devise from its idle years,  
Nor houses nor lands, nor tokens of gems or gold for my  
friends,  
Yet certain remembrances of the war for you, and after you,  
And little souvenirs of camps and soldiers, with my love,  
I bind together and bequeath in this bundle of songs.



# Pensive on Her Dead Gazing

Pensive on her dead gazing I heard the Mother of All,  
Desperate on the torn bodies, on the forms covering the  
battlefields gazing,  
(As the last gun ceased, but the scent of the powder-smoke  
linger'd,)   
As she call'd to her earth with mournful voice while she  
stalk'd,   
Absorb them well O my earth, she cried, I charge you lose  
not my  
sons, lose not an atom,  
And you streams absorb them well, taking their dear blood,  
And you local spots, and you airs that swim above lightly  
impalpable,   
And all you essences of soil and growth, and you my rivers'  
depths,   
And you mountain sides, and the woods where my dear  
children's  
blood trickling redden'd,   
And you trees down in your roots to bequeath to all future  
trees,   
My dead absorb or South or North—my young men's bodies  
absorb,   
and their precious precious blood,   
Which holding in trust for me faithfully back again give me  
many a  
year hence,   
In unseen essence and odor of surface and grass, centuries  
hence,   
In blowing airs from the fields back again give me my  
darlings, give  
my immortal heroes,   
Exhale me them centuries hence, breathe me their breath,  
let not an  
atom be lost,

O years and graves! O air and soil! O my dead, an aroma  
sweet!

Exhale them perennial sweet death, years, centuries hence.

# Camps of Green

Nor alone those camps of white, old comrades of the wars,  
When as order'd forward, after a long march,  
Footsore and weary, soon as the light lessens we halt for  
the night,  
Some of us so fatigued carrying the gun and knapsack,  
dropping  
asleep in our tracks,  
Others pitching the little tents, and the fires lit up  
begin to sparkle,  
Outposts of pickets posted surrounding alert through the  
dark,  
And a word provided for countersign, careful for safety,  
Till to the call of the drummers at daybreak loudly beating  
the drums,  
We rise up refresh'd, the night and sleep pass'd over, and  
resume our  
journey,  
Or proceed to battle.

Lo, the camps of the tents of green,  
Which the days of peace keep filling, and the days of war  
keep filling,  
With a mystic army, (is it too order'd forward? is it too  
only  
halting awhile,  
Till night and sleep pass over?)

Now in those camps of green, in their tents dotting the  
world,  
In the parents, children, husbands, wives, in them, in the  
old and young,  
Sleeping under the sunlight, sleeping under the moonlight,  
content  
and silent there at last,

Behold the mighty bivouac-field and waiting-camp of all,  
Of the corps and generals all, and the President over the  
corps and  
generals all,  
And of each of us O soldiers, and of each and all in the  
ranks we fought,  
(There without hatred we all, all meet.)

For presently O soldiers, we too camp in our place in the  
bivouac-camps of green,  
But we need not provide for outposts, nor word for the  
countersign,  
Nor drummer to beat the morning drum.

# **The Sobbing of the Bells**

## **[Midnight, Sept. 19-20, 1881]**

The sobbing of the bells, the sudden death-news everywhere,  
The slumberers rouse, the rapport of the People,  
(Full well they know that message in the darkness,  
Full well return, respond within their breasts, their  
brains, the  
sad reverberations,)  
The passionate toll and clang-city to city, joining,  
sounding, passing,  
Those heart-beats of a Nation in the night.

# As They Draw to a Close

As they draw to a close,  
Of what underlies the precedent songs—of my aims in them,  
Of the seed I have sought to plant in them,  
Of joy, sweet joy, through many a year, in them,  
(For them, for them have I lived, in them my work is done,)  
Of many an aspiration fond, of many a dream and plan;  
Through Space and Time fused in a chant, and the flowing  
eternal identity,  
To Nature encompassing these, encompassing God—to the  
joyous,  
electric all,  
To the sense of Death, and accepting exulting in Death in  
its turn  
the same as life,  
The entrance of man to sing;  
To compact you, ye parted, diverse lives,  
To put rapport the mountains and rocks and streams,  
And the winds of the north, and the forests of oak and  
pine,  
With you O soul.

# Joy, Shipmate, Joy!

Joy, shipmate, Joy!  
(Pleas'd to my soul at death I cry,)  
Our life is closed, our life begins,  
The long, long anchorage we leave,  
The ship is clear at last, she leaps!  
She swiftly courses from the shore,  
Joy, shipmate, joy.

# The Untold Want

The untold want by life and land ne'er granted,  
Now voyager sail thou forth to seek and find.



# Portals

What are those of the known but to ascend and enter the Unknown?

And what are those of life but for Death?

# These Carols

These carols sung to cheer my passage through the world I  
see,  
For completion I dedicate to the Invisible World.

# Now Finale to the Shore

Now finale to the shore,  
Now land and life finale and farewell,  
Now Voyager depart, (much, much for thee is yet in store,)  
Often enough hast thou adventur'd o'er the seas,  
Cautiously cruising, studying the charts,  
Duly again to port and hawser's tie returning;  
But now obey thy cherish'd secret wish,  
Embrace thy friends, leave all in order,  
To port and hawser's tie no more returning,  
Depart upon thy endless cruise old Sailor.

# So Long!

To conclude, I announce what comes after me.

I remember I said before my leaves sprang at all,  
I would raise my voice jocund and strong with reference to  
consummations.

When America does what was promis'd,  
When through these States walk a hundred millions of superb  
persons,  
When the rest part away for superb persons and contribute  
to them,  
When breeds of the most perfect mothers denote America,  
Then to me and mine our due fruition.

I have press'd through in my own right,  
I have sung the body and the soul, war and peace have I  
sung, and  
the songs of life and death,  
And the songs of birth, and shown that there are many  
births.

I have offer'd my style to every one, I have journey'd with  
confident step;  
While my pleasure is yet at the full I whisper So long!  
And take the young woman's hand and the young man's hand  
for the last time.

I announce natural persons to arise,  
I announce justice triumphant,  
I announce uncompromising liberty and equality,  
I announce the justification of candor and the  
justification of pride.

I announce that the identity of these States is a single

identity only,  
I announce the Union more and more compact, indissoluble,  
I announce splendors and majesties to make all the previous  
politics  
of the earth insignificant.

I announce adhesiveness, I say it shall be limitless,  
unloosen'd,  
I say you shall yet find the friend you were looking for.

I announce a man or woman coming, perhaps you are the one,  
(So long!)  
I announce the great individual, fluid as Nature, chaste,  
affectionate, compassionate, fully arm'd.

I announce a life that shall be copious, vehement,  
spiritual, bold,  
I announce an end that shall lightly and joyfully meet its  
translation.

I announce myriads of youths, beautiful, gigantic, sweet-  
blooded,  
I announce a race of splendid and savage old men.

O thicker and faster—(So long!)  
O crowding too close upon me,  
I foresee too much, it means more than I thought,  
It appears to me I am dying.

Hasten throat and sound your last,  
Salute me—salute the days once more. Peel the old cry once  
more.

Screaming electric, the atmosphere using,  
At random glancing, each as I notice absorbing,  
Swiftly on, but a little while alighting,  
Curious envelop'd messages delivering,  
Sparkles hot, seed ethereal down in the dirt dropping,  
Myself unknowing, my commission obeying, to question it

never daring,  
To ages and ages yet the growth of the seed leaving,  
To troops out of the war arising, they the tasks I have set  
promulging,  
To women certain whispers of myself bequeathing, their  
affection  
me more clearly explaining,  
To young men my problems offering—no dallier I—I the muscle  
of  
their brains trying,  
So I pass, a little time vocal, visible, contrary,  
Afterward a melodious echo, passionately bent for, (death  
making  
me really undying,)  
The best of me then when no longer visible, for toward that  
I have  
been incessantly preparing.

What is there more, that I lag and pause and crouch  
extended with  
unshut mouth?  
Is there a single final farewell?  
My songs cease, I abandon them,  
From behind the screen where I hid I advance personally  
solely to you.

Camerado, this is no book,  
Who touches this touches a man,  
(Is it night? are we here together alone?)  
It is I you hold and who holds you,  
I spring from the pages into your arms—decease calls me  
forth.

O how your fingers drowse me,  
Your breath falls around me like dew, your pulse lulls the  
tympan  
of my ears,  
I feel immersed from head to foot,  
Delicious, enough.

Enough O deed impromptu and secret,  
Enough O gliding present—enough O summ'd-up past.

Dear friend whoever you are take this kiss,  
I give it especially to you, do not forget me,  
I feel like one who has done work for the day to retire  
awhile,  
I receive now again of my many translations, from my  
avataras  
ascending, while others doubtless await me,  
An unknown sphere more real than I dream'd, more direct,  
darts  
awakening rays about me, So long!  
Remember my words, I may again return,  
I love you, I depart from materials,  
I am as one disembodied, triumphant, dead.





# BOOK XXXIV. SANDS AT SEVENTY

## Mannahatta

My city's fit and noble name resumed,  
Choice aboriginal name, with marvellous beauty, meaning,  
A rocky founded island—shores where ever gayly dash the  
coming,  
going, hurrying sea waves.

# Paumanok

Sea-beauty! stretch'd and basking!  
One side thy inland ocean laving, broad, with copious  
commerce,  
steamers, sails,  
And one the Atlantic's wind caressing, fierce or gentle—  
mighty hulls  
dark-gliding in the distance.  
Isle of sweet brooks of drinking-water—healthy air and  
soil!  
Isle of the salty shore and breeze and brine!

# From Montauk Point

I stand as on some mighty eagle's beak,  
Eastward the sea absorbing, viewing, (nothing but sea and  
sky,)  
The tossing waves, the foam, the ships in the distance,  
The wild unrest, the snowy, curling caps—that inbound urge  
and urge  
of waves,  
Seeking the shores forever.

# To Those Who've Fail'd

To those who've fail'd, in aspiration vast,  
To unnam'd soldiers fallen in front on the lead,  
To calm, devoted engineers—to over-ardent travelers—to  
pilots on  
their ships,  
To many a lofty song and picture without recognition—I'd  
rear  
laurel-cover'd monument,  
High, high above the rest—To all cut off before their time,  
Possess'd by some strange spirit of fire,  
Quench'd by an early death.

# A Carol Closing Sixty-Nine

A carol closing sixty-nine—a resume—a repetition,  
My lines in joy and hope continuing on the same,  
Of ye, O God, Life, Nature, Freedom, Poetry;  
Of you, my Land—your rivers, prairies, States—you, mottled  
Flag I love,  
Your aggregate retain'd entire—Of north, south, east and  
west, your  
items all;  
Of me myself—the jocund heart yet beating in my breast,  
The body wreck'd, old, poor and paralyzed—the strange  
inertia  
falling pall-like round me,  
The burning fires down in my sluggish blood not yet  
extinct,  
The undiminish'd faith—the groups of loving friends.

# The Bravest Soldiers

Brave, brave were the soldiers (high named to-day) who  
lived through  
the fight;  
But the bravest press'd to the front and fell, unnamed,  
unknown.

# A Font of Type

This latent mine—these unlaunch'd voices—passionate powers,  
Wrath, argument, or praise, or comic leer, or prayer  
devout,

(Not nonpareil, brevier, bourgeois, long primer merely,)  
These ocean waves arousable to fury and to death,  
Or sooth'd to ease and sheeny sun and sleep,  
Within the pallid slivers slumbering.

# As I Sit Writing Here

As I sit writing here, sick and grown old,  
Not my least burden is that dulness of the years,  
querilities,  
Ungracious glooms, aches, lethargy, constipation,  
whimpering ennui,  
May filter in my dally songs.



# My Canary Bird

Did we count great, O soul, to penetrate the themes of  
mighty books,  
Absorbing deep and full from thoughts, plays, speculations?  
But now from thee to me, caged bird, to feel thy joyous  
warble,  
Filling the air, the lonesome room, the long forenoon,  
Is it not just as great, O soul?

# Queries to My Seventieth Year

Approaching, nearing, curious,  
Thou dim, uncertain spectre—bringest thou life or death?  
Strength, weakness, blindness, more paralysis and heavier?  
Or placid skies and sun? Wilt stir the waters yet?  
Or haply cut me short for good? Or leave me here as now,  
Dull, parrot-like and old, with crack'd voice harping,  
screeching?

# The Wallabout Martyrs

Greater than memory of Achilles or Ulysses,  
More, more by far to thee than tomb of Alexander,  
Those cart loads of old charnel ashes, scales and splints  
of mouldy bones,  
Once living men—once resolute courage, aspiration,  
strength,  
The stepping stones to thee to-day and here, America.

# The First Dandelion

Simple and fresh and fair from winter's close emerging,  
As if no artifice of fashion, business, politics, had ever  
been,  
Forth from its sunny nook of shelter'd grass—innocent,  
golden, calm  
as the dawn,  
The spring's first dandelion shows its trustful face.

# America

Centre of equal daughters, equal sons,  
All, all alike endear'd, grown, ungrown, young or old,  
Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,  
Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,  
A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,  
Chair'd in the adamant of Time.

# Memories

How sweet the silent backward tracings!  
The wanderings as in dreams—the meditation of old times  
resumed  
—their loves, joys, persons, voyages.

# To-Day and Thee

The appointed winners in a long-stretch'd game;  
The course of Time and nations—Egypt, India, Greece and  
Rome;  
The past entire, with all its heroes, histories, arts,  
experiments,  
Its store of songs, inventions, voyages, teachers, books,  
Garner'd for now and thee—To think of it!  
The heirdom all converged in thee!

# After the Dazzle of Day

After the dazzle of day is gone,  
Only the dark, dark night shows to my eyes the stars;  
After the clangor of organ majestic, or chorus, or perfect  
band,  
Silent, athwart my soul, moves the symphony true.



# Abraham Lincoln, Born Feb. 12, 1809

To-day, from each and all, a breath of prayer—a pulse of  
thought,

To memory of Him—to birth of Him.

# Out of May's Shows Selected

Apple orchards, the trees all cover'd with blossoms;  
Wheat fields carpeted far and near in vital emerald green;  
The eternal, exhaustless freshness of each early morning;  
The yellow, golden, transparent haze of the warm afternoon  
sun;  
The aspiring lilac bushes with profuse purple or white  
flowers.

# Halcyon Days

Not from successful love alone,  
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor victories of  
politics or war;  
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent passions calm,  
As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover the evening sky,  
As softness, fulness, rest, suffuse the frame, like  
freshier, balmier air,  
As the days take on a mellower light, and the apple at last  
hangs  
really finish'd and indolent-ripe on the tree,  
Then for the teeming quietest, happiest days of all!  
The brooding and blissful halcyon days!

## FANCIES AT NAVESINK

[I] The Pilot in the Mist

Steaming the northern rapids—(an old St. Lawrence  
reminiscence,  
A sudden memory-flash comes back, I know not why,  
Here waiting for the sunrise, gazing from this hill;)  
Again 'tis just at morning—a heavy haze contends with  
daybreak,  
Again the trembling, laboring vessel veers me—I press  
through  
foam-dash'd rocks that almost touch me,  
Again I mark where aft the small thin Indian helmsman  
Looms in the mist, with brow elate and governing hand.

[II] Had I the Choice

Had I the choice to tally greatest bards,  
To limn their portraits, stately, beautiful, and emulate at  
will,  
Homer with all his wars and warriors—Hector, Achilles,  
Ajax,

Or Shakspeare's woe-entangled Hamlet, Lear, Othello-  
Tennyson's fair ladies,  
Metre or wit the best, or choice conceit to wield in  
perfect rhyme,  
delight of singers;  
These, these, O sea, all these I'd gladly barter,  
Would you the undulation of one wave, its trick to me  
transfer,  
Or breathe one breath of yours upon my verse,  
And leave its odor there.  
[III] You Tides with Ceaseless Swell

You tides with ceaseless swell! you power that does this  
work!  
You unseen force, centripetal, centrifugal, through space's  
spread,  
Rapport of sun, moon, earth, and all the constellations,  
What are the messages by you from distant stars to us? what  
Sirius'?  
what Capella's?  
What central heart-and you the pulse-vivifies all? what  
boundless  
aggregate of all?  
What subtle indirection and significance in you? what clue  
to all in  
you? what fluid, vast identity,  
Holding the universe with all its parts as one-as sailing  
in a ship?  
[IV] Last of Ebb, and Daylight Waning

Last of ebb, and daylight waning,  
Scented sea-cool landward making, smells of sedge and salt  
incoming,  
With many a half-caught voice sent up from the eddies,  
Many a muffled confession-many a sob and whisper'd word,  
As of speakers far or hid.

How they sweep down and out! how they mutter!  
Poets unnamed-artists greatest of any, with cherish'd lost

designs,

Love's unresponse—a chorus of age's complaints—hope's last words,

Some suicide's despairing cry, Away to the boundless waste,  
and  
never again return.

On to oblivion then!

On, on, and do your part, ye burying, ebbing tide!

On for your time, ye furious debouche!

[V] And Yet Not You Alone

And yet not you alone, twilight and burying ebb,

Nor you, ye lost designs alone—nor failures, aspirations;

I know, divine deceitful ones, your glamour's seeming;

Duly by you, from you, the tide and light again—duly the  
hinges turning,

Duly the needed discord-parts offsetting, blending,

Weaving from you, from Sleep, Night, Death itself,

The rhythmus of Birth eternal.

[VI] Proudly the Flood Comes In

Proudly the flood comes in, shouting, foaming, advancing,  
Long it holds at the high, with bosom broad outswelling,  
All throbs, dilates—the farms, woods, streets of cities—  
workmen at work,  
Mainsails, topsails, jibs, appear in the offing—steamers'  
pennants  
of smoke—and under the forenoon sun,  
Freighted with human lives, gaily the outward bound, gaily  
the  
inward bound,  
Flaunting from many a spar the flag I love.

[VII] By That Long Scan of Waves

By that long scan of waves, myself call'd back, resumed  
upon myself,  
In every crest some undulating light or shade—some  
retrospect,  
Joys, travels, studies, silent panoramas—scenes ephemeral,  
The long past war, the battles, hospital sights, the  
wounded and the dead,  
Myself through every by-gone phase—my idle youth—old age at  
hand,  
My three-score years of life summ'd up, and more, and past,  
By any grand ideal tried, intentionless, the whole a  
nothing,  
And haply yet some drop within God's scheme's ensemble—some  
wave, or part of wave,  
Like one of yours, ye multitudinous ocean.

[VIII] Then Last Of All

Then last of all, caught from these shores, this hill,  
Of you O tides, the mystic human meaning:  
Only by law of you, your swell and ebb, enclosing me the  
same,  
The brain that shapes, the voice that chants this song.



# Election Day, November, 1884

If I should need to name, O Western World, your powerfulest  
scene and show,  
'Twould not be you, Niagara—nor you, ye limitless prairies—  
nor  
your huge rifts of canyons, Colorado,  
Nor you, Yosemite—nor Yellowstone, with all its spasmic  
geyser-loops ascending to the skies, appearing and  
disappearing,  
Nor Oregon's white cones—nor Huron's belt of mighty lakes—  
nor  
Mississippi's stream:  
—This seething hemisphere's humanity, as now, I'd name—the  
still  
small voice vibrating—America's choosing day,  
(The heart of it not in the chosen—the act itself the main,  
the  
quadriennial choosing,)  
The stretch of North and South arous'd—sea-board and inland  
—  
Texas to Maine—the Prairie States—Vermont, Virginia,  
California,  
The final ballot—shower from East to West—the paradox and  
conflict,  
The countless snow-flakes falling—(a swordless conflict,  
Yet more than all Rome's wars of old, or modern  
Napoleon's:) the  
peaceful choice of all,  
Or good or ill humanity—welcoming the darker odds, the  
dross:  
—Foams and ferments the wine? it serves to purify—while the  
heart  
pants, life glows:  
These stormy gusts and winds waft precious ships,  
Swell'd Washington's, Jefferson's, Lincoln's sails.





# With Husky-Haughty Lips, O Sea!

With husky-haughty lips, O sea!  
Where day and night I wend thy surf-beat shore,  
Imaging to my sense thy varied strange suggestions,  
(I see and plainly list thy talk and conference here,) Thy troops of white-maned racers racing to the goal,  
Thy ample, smiling face, dash'd with the sparkling dimples of the sun,  
Thy brooding scowl and murk—thy unloos'd hurricanes,  
Thy unsubduedness, caprices, wilfulness;  
Great as thou art above the rest, thy many tears—a lack from all  
eternity in thy content,  
(Naught but the greatest struggles, wrongs, defeats, could make thee  
greatest—no less could make thee,)  
Thy lonely state—something thou ever seek'st and seek'st, yet  
never gain'st,  
Surely some right withheld—some voice, in huge monotonous rage, of  
freedom-lover pent,  
Some vast heart, like a planet's, chain'd and chafing in those breakers,  
By lengthen'd swell, and spasm, and panting breath,  
And rhythmic rasping of thy sands and waves,  
And serpent hiss, and savage peals of laughter,  
And undertones of distant lion roar,  
(Sounding, appealing to the sky's deaf ear—but now, rapport for once,  
A phantom in the night thy confidant for once,)  
The first and last confession of the globe,  
Outsurging, muttering from thy soul's abysses,  
The tale of cosmic elemental passion,  
Thou tellest to a kindred soul.



# Death of General Grant

As one by one withdraw the lofty actors,  
From that great play on history's stage eterne,  
That lurid, partial act of war and peace—of old and new  
contending,  
Fought out through wrath, fears, dark dismays, and many a  
long suspense;  
All past—and since, in countless graves receding,  
mellowing,  
Victor's and vanquish'd—Lincoln's and Lee's—now thou with  
them,  
Man of the mighty days—and equal to the days!  
Thou from the prairies!—tangled and many-vein'd and hard  
has been thy part,  
To admiration has it been enacted!

# Red Jacket (From Aloft)

Upon this scene, this show,  
Yielded to-day by fashion, learning, wealth,  
(Nor in caprice alone—some grains of deepest meaning,)   
Haply, aloft, (who knows?) from distant sky-clouds' blended  
shapes,  
As some old tree, or rock or cliff, thrill'd with its soul,  
Product of Nature's sun, stars, earth direct—a towering  
human form,  
In hunting-shirt of film, arm'd with the rifle, a half-  
ironical  
smile curving its phantom lips,  
Like one of Ossian's ghosts looks down.

# Washington's Monument

## February, 1885

Ah, not this marble, dead and cold:  
Far from its base and shaft expanding—the round zones  
circling,  
comprehending,  
Thou, Washington, art all the world's, the continents'  
entire—not  
yours alone, America,  
Europe's as well, in every part, castle of lord or  
laborer's cot,  
Or frozen North, or sultry South—the African's—the Arab's  
in his tent,  
Old Asia's there with venerable smile, seated amid her  
ruins;  
(Greets the antique the hero new? 'tis but the same—the  
heir  
legitimate, continued ever,  
The indomitable heart and arm—proofs of the never-broken  
line,  
Courage, alertness, patience, faith, the same—e'en in  
defeat  
defeated not, the same:)  
Wherever sails a ship, or house is built on land, or day or  
night,  
Through teeming cities' streets, indoors or out, factories  
or farms,  
Now, or to come, or past—where patriot wills existed or  
exist,  
Wherever Freedom, pois'd by Toleration, sway'd by Law,  
Stands or is rising thy true monument.



# Of That Blithe Throat of Thine

Of that blithe throat of thine from arctic bleak and blank,  
I'll mind the lesson, solitary bird—let me too welcome  
chilling drifts,  
E'en the profoundest chill, as now—a torpid pulse, a brain  
unnerv'd,  
Old age land-lock'd within its winter bay—(cold, cold, O  
cold!)  
These snowy hairs, my feeble arm, my frozen feet,  
For them thy faith, thy rule I take, and grave it to the  
last;  
Not summer's zones alone—not chants of youth, or south's  
warm tides alone,  
But held by sluggish floes, pack'd in the northern ice, the  
cumulus  
of years,  
These with gay heart I also sing.



# Broadway

What hurrying human tides, or day or night!  
What passions, winnings, losses, ardors, swim thy waters!  
What whirls of evil, bliss and sorrow, stem thee!  
What curious questioning glances—glints of love!  
Leer, envy, scorn, contempt, hope, aspiration!  
Thou portal—thou arena—thou of the myriad long-drawn lines  
and groups!  
(Could but thy flagstones, curbs, facades, tell their  
inimitable tales;  
Thy windows rich, and huge hotels—thy side-walks wide;)   
Thou of the endless sliding, mincing, shuffling feet!  
Thou, like the parti-colored world itself—like infinite,  
teeming,  
mocking life!  
Thou visor'd, vast, unspeakable show and lesson!

# To Get the Final Lilt of Songs

To get the final lilt of songs,  
To penetrate the inmost lore of poets—to know the mighty  
ones,  
Job, Homer, Eschylus, Dante, Shakespere, Tennyson, Emerson;  
To diagnose the shifting-delicate tints of love and pride  
and doubt—  
to truly understand,  
To encompass these, the last keen faculty and entrance-  
price,  
Old age, and what it brings from all its past experiences.

# Old Salt Kossabone

Far back, related on my mother's side,  
Old Salt Kossabone, I'll tell you how he died:  
(Had been a sailor all his life—was nearly 90—lived with  
his  
married grandchild, Jenny;  
House on a hill, with view of bay at hand, and distant  
cape, and  
stretch to open sea;)  
The last of afternoons, the evening hours, for many a year  
his  
regular custom,  
In his great arm chair by the window seated,  
(Sometimes, indeed, through half the day,)  
Watching the coming, going of the vessels, he mutters to  
himself—  
And now the close of all:  
One struggling outbound brig, one day, baffled for long—  
cross-tides  
and much wrong going,  
At last at nightfall strikes the breeze aright, her whole  
luck veering,  
And swiftly bending round the cape, the darkness proudly  
entering,  
cleaving, as he watches,  
"She's free—she's on her destination"—these the last words—  
when  
Jenny came, he sat there dead,  
Dutch Kossabone, Old Salt, related on my mother's side, far  
back.



# The Dead Tenor

As down the stage again,  
With Spanish hat and plumes, and gait inimitable,  
Back from the fading lessons of the past, I'd call, I'd  
tell and own,  
How much from thee! the revelation of the singing voice  
from thee!  
(So firm-so liquid-soft-again that tremulous, manly timbre!  
The perfect singing voice-deepest of all to me the lesson-  
trial  
and test of all:)  
How through those strains distill'd-how the rapt ears, the  
soul of  
me, absorbing  
Fernando's heart, Manrico's passionate call, Ernani's,  
sweet Gennaro's,  
I fold thenceforth, or seek to fold, within my chants  
transmuting,  
Freedom's and Love's and Faith's unloos'd cantabile,  
(As perfume's, color's, sunlight's correlation:)  
From these, for these, with these, a hurried line, dead  
tenor,  
A wafted autumn leaf, dropt in the closing grave, the  
shovel'd earth,  
To memory of thee.

# Continuities

Nothing is ever really lost, or can be lost,  
No birth, identity, form—no object of the world.  
Nor life, nor force, nor any visible thing;  
Appearance must not foil, nor shifted sphere confuse thy  
brain.  
Ample are time and space—ample the fields of Nature.  
The body, sluggish, aged, cold—the embers left from earlier  
fires,  
The light in the eye grown dim, shall duly flame again;  
The sun now low in the west rises for mornings and for  
noons continual;  
To frozen clods ever the spring's invisible law returns,  
With grass and flowers and summer fruits and corn.

# Yonnondio

A song, a poem of itself—the word itself a dirge,  
Amid the wilds, the rocks, the storm and wintry night,  
To me such misty, strange tableaux the syllables calling  
up;

Yonnondio—I see, far in the west or north, a limitless  
ravine, with

plains and mountains dark,

I see swarms of stalwart chieftains, medicine-men, and  
warriors,

As flitting by like clouds of ghosts, they pass and are  
gone in the

twilight,

(Race of the woods, the landscapes free, and the falls!

No picture, poem, statement, passing them to the future:)

Yonnondio! Yonnondio!—unlimn'd they disappear;

To-day gives place, and fades—the cities, farms, factories  
fade;

A muffled sonorous sound, a wailing word is borne through  
the air

for a moment,

Then blank and gone and still, and utterly lost.

# Life

Ever the undiscouraged, resolute, struggling soul of man;  
(Have former armies fail'd? then we send fresh armies—and  
fresh again;)

Ever the grappled mystery of all earth's ages old or new;  
Ever the eager eyes, hurrahs, the welcome-clapping hands,  
the loud  
applause;

Ever the soul dissatisfied, curious, unconvinced at last;  
Struggling to-day the same—battling the same.



# "Going Somewhere"

My science-friend, my noblest woman-friend,  
(Now buried in an English grave—and this a memory-leaf for  
her dear sake,)  
Ended our talk—"The sum, concluding all we know of old or  
modern  
learning, intuitions deep,  
"Of all Geologies—Histories—of all Astronomy—of Evolution,  
Metaphysics all,  
"Is, that we all are onward, onward, speeding slowly,  
surely bettering,  
"Life, life an endless march, an endless army, (no halt,  
but it is  
duly over,)  
"The world, the race, the soul—in space and time the  
universes,  
"All bound as is befitting each—all surely going  
somewhere."

# Small the Theme of My Chant

Small the theme of my Chant, yet the greatest—namely,  
One's-Self—  
a simple, separate person. That, for the use of the New  
World, I sing.  
Man's physiology complete, from top to toe, I sing. Not  
physiognomy alone,  
nor brain alone, is worthy for the Muse;—I say the Form  
complete  
is worthier far. The Female equally with the Male, I sing.  
Nor cease at the theme of One's-Self. I speak the word of  
the  
modern, the word En-Masse.  
My Days I sing, and the Lands—with interstice I knew of  
hapless War.  
(O friend, whoe'er you are, at last arriving hither to  
commence, I  
feel through every leaf the pressure of your hand, which I  
return.  
And thus upon our journey, footing the road, and more than  
once, and  
link'd together let us go.)

# True Conquerors

Old farmers, travelers, workmen (no matter how crippled or bent,)  
Old sailors, out of many a perilous voyage, storm and wreck,  
Old soldiers from campaigns, with all their wounds, defeats and scars;  
Enough that they've survived at all—long life's unflinching ones!  
Forth from their struggles, trials, fights, to have emerged at all—  
in that alone,  
True conquerors o'er all the rest.

# The United States to Old World Critics

Here first the duties of to-day, the lessons of the concrete,

Wealth, order, travel, shelter, products, plenty;

As of the building of some varied, vast, perpetual edifice,  
Whence to arise inevitable in time, the towering roofs, the  
lamps,

The solid-planted spires tall shooting to the stars.

# The Calming Thought of All

That coursing on, whate'er men's speculations,  
Amid the changing schools, theologies, philosophies,  
Amid the bawling presentations new and old,  
The round earth's silent vital laws, facts, modes continue.

# Thanks in Old Age

Thanks in old age—thanks ere I go,  
For health, the midday sun, the impalpable air—for life,  
mere life,  
For precious ever-lingering memories, (of you my mother  
dear—you,  
father—you, brothers, sisters, friends,)  
For all my days—not those of peace alone—the days of war  
the same,  
For gentle words, caresses, gifts from foreign lands,  
For shelter, wine and meat—for sweet appreciation,  
(You distant, dim unknown—or young or old—countless,  
unspecified,  
readers belov'd,  
We never met, and neer shall meet—and yet our souls  
embrace, long,  
close and long;)  
For beings, groups, love, deeds, words, books—for colors,  
forms,  
For all the brave strong men—devoted, hardy men—who've  
forward  
sprung in freedom's help, all years, all lands  
For braver, stronger, more devoted men—(a special laurel  
ere I go,  
to life's war's chosen ones,  
The cannoneers of song and thought—the great artillerists—  
the  
foremost leaders, captains of the soul:)  
As soldier from an ended war return'd—As traveler out of  
myriads,  
to the long procession retrospective,  
Thanks—joyful thanks!—a soldier's, traveler's thanks.



# Life and Death

The two old, simple problems ever intertwined,  
Close home, elusive, present, baffled, grappled.  
By each successive age insoluble, pass'd on,  
To ours to-day—and we pass on the same.



# The Voice of the Rain

And who art thou? said I to the soft-falling shower,  
Which, strange to tell, gave me an answer, as here  
translated:

I am the Poem of Earth, said the voice of the rain,  
Eternal I rise impalpable out of the land and the  
bottomless sea,

Upward to heaven, whence, vaguely form'd, altogether  
changed, and  
yet the same,

I descend to lave the drouths, atomies, dust-layers of the  
globe,

And all that in them without me were seeds only, latent,  
unborn;

And forever, by day and night, I give back life to my own  
origin,

and make pure and beautify it;

(For song, issuing from its birth-place, after fulfilment,  
wandering,

Reck'd or unreck'd, duly with love returns.)

# Soon Shall the Winter's Foil Be Here

Soon shall the winter's foil be here;  
Soon shall these icy ligatures unbind and melt—A little while,  
And air, soil, wave, suffused shall be in softness, bloom and  
growth—a thousand forms shall rise  
From these dead clods and chills as from low burial graves.

Thine eyes, ears—all thy best attributes—all that takes cognizance  
of natural beauty,  
Shall wake and fill. Thou shalt perceive the simple shows, the  
delicate miracles of earth,  
Dandelions, clover, the emerald grass, the early scents and  
flowers,  
The arbutus under foot, the willow's yellow-green, the  
blossoming  
plum and cherry;  
With these the robin, lark and thrush, singing their songs—the  
flitting bluebird;  
For such the scenes the annual play brings on.

# While Not the Past Forgetting

While not the past forgetting,  
To-day, at least, contention sunk entire—peace, brotherhood  
uprisen;  
For sign reciprocal our Northern, Southern hands,  
Lay on the graves of all dead soldiers, North or South,  
(Nor for the past alone—for meanings to the future,)   
Wreaths of roses and branches of palm.

# The Dying Veteran

Amid these days of order, ease, prosperity,  
Amid the current songs of beauty, peace, decorum,  
I cast a reminiscence—(likely 'twill offend you,  
I heard it in my boyhood;)—More than a generation since,  
A queer old savage man, a fighter under Washington himself,  
(Large, brave, cleanly, hot-blooded, no talker, rather  
spiritualistic,  
Had fought in the ranks—fought well—had been all through  
the  
Revolutionary war,)  
Lay dying—sons, daughters, church-deacons, lovingly tending  
him,  
Sharpening their sense, their ears, towards his murmuring,  
half-caught words:  
"Let me return again to my war-days,  
To the sights and scenes—to forming the line of battle,  
To the scouts ahead reconnoitering,  
To the cannons, the grim artillery,  
To the galloping aides, carrying orders,  
To the wounded, the fallen, the heat, the suspense,  
The perfume strong, the smoke, the deafening noise;  
Away with your life of peace!—your joys of peace!  
Give me my old wild battle-life again!"

# Stronger Lessons

Have you learn'd lessons only of those who admired you, and  
were  
tender with you, and stood aside for you?  
Have you not learn'd great lessons from those who reject  
you, and  
brace themselves against you? or who treat you with  
contempt,  
or dispute the passage with you?

# A Prairie Sunset

Shot gold, maroon and violet, dazzling silver, emerald,  
fawn,  
The earth's whole amplitude and Nature's multi-form power  
consign'd  
for once to colors;  
The light, the general air possess'd by them—colors till  
now unknown,  
No limit, confine—not the Western sky alone—the high  
meridian—  
North, South, all,  
Pure luminous color fighting the silent shadows to the  
last.

# Twenty Years

Down on the ancient wharf, the sand, I sit, with a new-comer chatting:  
He shipp'd as green-hand boy, and sail'd away, (took some sudden,  
vehement notion;)  
Since, twenty years and more have circled round and round,  
While he the globe was circling round and round, -and now returns:  
How changed the place—all the old land-marks gone—the parents dead;  
(Yes, he comes back to lay in port for good—to settle—has a well-fill'd purse—no spot will do but this;)  
The little boat that scull'd him from the sloop, now held in leash I see,  
I hear the slapping waves, the restless keel, the rocking in the sand,  
I see the sailor kit, the canvas bag, the great box bound with brass,  
I scan the face all berry-brown and bearded—the stout-strong frame,  
Dress'd in its russet suit of good Scotch cloth:  
(Then what the told-out story of those twenty years? What of the future?)

# Orange Buds by Mail from Florida

A lesser proof than old Voltaire's, yet greater,  
Proof of this present time, and thee, thy broad expanse,  
America,  
To my plain Northern hut, in outside clouds and snow,  
Brought safely for a thousand miles o'er land and tide,  
Some three days since on their own soil live-sprouting,  
Now here their sweetness through my room unfolding,  
A bunch of orange buds by mall from Florida.



# Twilight

The soft voluptuous opiate shades,  
The sun just gone, the eager light dispell'd—(I too will  
soon be  
gone, dispell'd,)  
A haze—nirwana—rest and night—oblivion.

# You Lingering Sparse Leaves of Me

You lingering sparse leaves of me on winter-nearing boughs,  
And I some well-shorn tree of field or orchard-row;  
You tokens diminute and lorn—(not now the flush of May, or  
July  
clover-bloom—no grain of August now;)  
You pallid banner-staves—you pennants valueless—you  
overstay'd of time,  
Yet my soul-dearest leaves confirming all the rest,  
The faithfulest—hardiest—last.

# Not Meagre, Latent Boughs Alone

Not meagre, latent boughs alone, O songs! (scaly and bare,  
like  
eagles' talons,) But haply for some sunny day (who knows?) some future  
spring, some  
summer—bursting forth,  
To verdant leaves, or sheltering shade—to nourishing fruit,  
Apples and grapes—the stalwart limbs of trees emerging—the  
fresh,  
free, open air,  
And love and faith, like scented roses blooming.

# The Dead Emperor

To-day, with bending head and eyes, thou, too, Columbia,  
Less for the mighty crown laid low in sorrow—less for the  
Emperor,  
Thy true condolence breathest, sendest out o'er many a salt  
sea mile,  
Mourning a good old man—a faithful shepherd, patriot.

# As the Greek's Signal Flame

As the Greek's signal flame, by antique records told,  
Rose from the hill-top, like applause and glory,  
Welcoming in fame some special veteran, hero,  
With rosy tinge reddening the land he'd served,  
So I aloft from Mannahatta's ship-fringed shore,  
Lift high a kindled brand for thee, Old Poet.

# The Dismantled Ship

In some unused lagoon, some nameless bay,  
On sluggish, lonesome waters, anchor'd near the shore,  
An old, dismasted, gray and batter'd ship, disabled, done,  
After free voyages to all the seas of earth, haul'd up at  
last and  
hawser'd tight,  
Lies rusting, mouldering.

# Now Precedent Songs, Farewell

Now precedent songs, farewell—by every name farewell,  
(Trains of a staggering line in many a strange procession,  
waggons,  
From ups and downs—with intervals—from elder years, mid-  
age, or youth,)  
"In Cabin'd Ships, or Thee Old Cause or Poets to Come  
Or Paumanok, Song of Myself, Calamus, or Adam,  
Or Beat! Beat! Drums! or To the Leaven'd Soil they Trod,  
Or Captain! My Captain! Kosmos, Quicksand Years, or  
Thoughts,  
Thou Mother with thy Equal Brood," and many, many more  
unspecified,  
From fibre heart of mine—from throat and tongue—(My life's  
hot  
pulsing blood,  
The personal urge and form for me—not merely paper,  
automatic type  
and ink,)  
Each song of mine—each utterance in the past—having its  
long, long  
history,  
Of life or death, or soldier's wound, of country's loss or  
safety,  
(O heaven! what flash and started endless train of all!  
compared  
indeed to that!  
What wretched shred e'en at the best of all!)





# An Evening Lull

After a week of physical anguish,  
Unrest and pain, and feverish heat,  
Toward the ending day a calm and lull comes on,  
Three hours of peace and soothing rest of brain.

# Old Age's Lambent Peaks

The touch of flame—the illuminating fire—the loftiest look  
at last,  
O'er city, passion, sea—o'er prairie, mountain, wood—the  
earth itself,  
The airy, different, changing hues of all, in failing  
twilight,  
Objects and groups, bearings, faces, reminiscences;  
The calmer sight—the golden setting, clear and broad:  
So much i' the atmosphere, the points of view, the  
situations whence  
we scan,  
Bro't out by them alone—so much (perhaps the best) unreck'd  
before;  
The lights indeed from them—old age's lambent peaks.

# After the Supper and Talk

After the supper and talk—after the day is done,  
As a friend from friends his final withdrawal prolonging,  
Good-bye and Good-bye with emotional lips repeating,  
(So hard for his hand to release those hands—no more will  
they meet,  
No more for communion of sorrow and joy, of old and young,  
A far-stretching journey awaits him, to return no more,)  
Shunning, postponing severance—seeking to ward off the last  
word  
ever so little,  
E'en at the exit-door turning—charges superfluous calling  
back—  
e'en as he descends the steps,  
Something to eke out a minute additional—shadows of  
nightfall deepening,  
Farewells, messages lessening—dimmer the forthgoer's visage  
and form,  
Soon to be lost for aye in the darkness—loth, O so loth to  
depart!  
Garrulous to the very last.



# BOOKXXXV. GOOD-BYE MY FANCY

## Sail out for Good, Eidolon Yacht!

Heave the anchor short!

Raise main-sail and jib—steer forth,

O little white-hull'd sloop, now speed on really deep  
waters,

(I will not call it our concluding voyage,

But outset and sure entrance to the truest, best,  
maturest;)

Depart, depart from solid earth—no more returning to these  
shores,

Now on for aye our infinite free venture wending,

Spurning all yet tried ports, seas, hawsers, densities,  
gravitation,

Sail out for good, eidolon yacht of me!

# Lingering Last Drops

And whence and why come you?

We know not whence, (was the answer,)

We only know that we drift here with the rest,

That we linger'd and lagg'd—but were wafted at last, and  
are now here,

To make the passing shower's concluding drops.

# Good-Bye My Fancy

Good-bye my fancy—(I had a word to say,  
But 'tis not quite the time—The best of any man's word or  
say,  
Is when its proper place arrives—and for its meaning,  
I keep mine till the last.)

# On, on the Same, Ye Jocund Twain!

On, on the same, ye jocund twain!  
My life and recitative, containing birth, youth, mid-age  
years,  
Fitful as motley-tongues of flame, inseparably twined and  
merged in  
one—combining all,  
My single soul—aims, confirmations, failures, joys—Nor  
single soul alone,  
I chant my nation's crucial stage, (America's, haply  
humanity's)—  
the trial great, the victory great,  
A strange eclaircissement of all the masses past, the  
eastern world,  
the ancient, medieval,  
Here, here from wanderings, strayings, lessons, wars,  
defeats—here  
at the west a voice triumphant—justifying all,  
A gladsome pealing cry—a song for once of utmost pride and  
satisfaction;  
I chant from it the common bulk, the general average horde,  
(the  
best sooner than the worst)—And now I chant old age,  
(My verses, written first for forenoon life, and for the  
summer's,  
autumn's spread,  
I pass to snow-white hairs the same, and give to pulses  
winter-cool'd the same;)  
As here in careless trill, I and my recitatives, with faith  
and love,  
wafting to other work, to unknown songs, conditions,  
On, on ye jocund twain! continue on the same!





# MY 71st Year

After surmounting three-score and ten,  
With all their chances, changes, losses, sorrows,  
My parents' deaths, the vagaries of my life, the many  
tearing  
passions of me, the war of '63 and '4,  
As some old broken soldier, after a long, hot, wearying  
march, or  
haply after battle,  
To-day at twilight, hobbling, answering company roll-call,  
Here,  
with vital voice,  
Reporting yet, saluting yet the Officer over all.

# Apparitions

A vague mist hanging 'round half the pages:  
(Sometimes how strange and clear to the soul,  
That all these solid things are indeed but apparitions,  
concepts,  
non-realities.)

# The Pallid Wreath

Somehow I cannot let it go yet, funeral though it is,  
Let it remain back there on its nail suspended,  
With pink, blue, yellow, all blanch'd, and the white now  
gray and ashy,  
One wither'd rose put years ago for thee, dear friend;  
But I do not forget thee. Hast thou then faded?  
Is the odor exhaled? Are the colors, vitalities, dead?  
No, while memories subtly play—the past vivid as ever;  
For but last night I woke, and in that spectral ring saw  
thee,  
Thy smile, eyes, face, calm, silent, loving as ever:  
So let the wreath hang still awhile within my eye-reach,  
It is not yet dead to me, nor even pallid.

# **An Ended Day**

The soothing sanity and blitheness of completion,  
The pomp and hurried contest-glare and rush are done;  
Now triumph! transformation! jubilate!

# Old Age's Ship & Crafty Death's

From east and west across the horizon's edge,  
Two mighty masterful vessels sailers steal upon us:  
But we'll make race a-time upon the seas—a battle-contest  
yet! bear  
lively there!  
(Our joys of strife and derring-do to the last!)  
Put on the old ship all her power to-day!  
Crowd top-sail, top-gallant and royal studding-sails,  
Out challenge and defiance—flags and flaunting pennants  
added,  
As we take to the open—take to the deepest, freest waters.

# To the Pending Year

Have I no weapon-word for thee—some message brief and fierce?

(Have I fought out and done indeed the battle?) Is there no shot left,

For all thy affectations, lisps, scorns, manifold silliness?

Nor for myself—my own rebellious self in thee?

Down, down, proud gorge!—though choking thee;

Thy bearded throat and high-borne forehead to the gutter;

Crouch low thy neck to eleemosynary gifts.

# Shakspeare-Bacon's Cipher

I doubt it not—then more, far more;  
In each old song bequeath'd—in every noble page or text,  
(Different—something unreck'd before—some unsuspected  
author,)  
In every object, mountain, tree, and star—in every birth  
and life,  
As part of each—evolv'd from each—meaning, behind the  
ostent,  
A mystic cipher waits infolded.



# Long, Long Hence

After a long, long course, hundreds of years, denials,  
Accumulations, rous'd love and joy and thought,  
Hopes, wishes, aspirations, ponderings, victories, myriads  
of readers,  
Coating, compassing, covering—after ages' and ages'  
encrustations,  
Then only may these songs reach fruition.

# Bravo, Paris Exposition!

Add to your show, before you close it, France,  
With all the rest, visible, concrete, temples, towers,  
goods,  
machines and ores,  
Our sentiment wafted from many million heart-throbs,  
ethereal but solid,  
(We grand-sons and great-grandsons do not forget your  
grandsires,)  
From fifty Nations and nebulous Nations, compacted, sent  
oversea to-day,  
America's applause, love, memories and good-will.

# Interpolation Sounds

Over and through the burial chant,  
Organ and solemn service, sermon, bending priests,  
To me come interpolation sounds not in the show—plainly to  
me,  
crowding up the aisle and from the window,  
Of sudden battle's hurry and harsh noises—war's grim game  
to sight  
and ear in earnest;  
The scout call'd up and forward—the general mounted and his  
aides  
around him—the new-brought word—the instantaneous order  
issued;  
The rifle crack—the cannon thud—the rushing forth of men  
from their  
tents;  
The clank of cavalry—the strange celerity of forming ranks—  
the  
slender bugle note;  
The sound of horses' hoofs departing—saddles, arms,  
accoutrements.



# To the Sun-Set Breeze

Ah, whispering, something again, unseen,  
Where late this heated day thou enterest at my window,  
door,  
Thou, laving, tempering all, cool-freshing, gently  
vitalizing  
Me, old, alone, sick, weak-down, melted-worn with sweat;  
Thou, nestling, folding close and firm yet soft, companion  
better  
than talk, book, art,  
(Thou hast, O Nature! elements! utterance to my heart  
beyond the  
rest—and this is of them,)  
So sweet thy primitive taste to breathe within—thy soothing  
fingers  
my face and hands,  
Thou, messenger—magical strange bringer to body and spirit  
of me,  
(Distances balk'd—occult medicines penetrating me from head  
to foot,)  
I feel the sky, the prairies vast—I feel the mighty  
northern lakes,  
I feel the ocean and the forest—somehow I feel the globe  
itself  
swift—swimming in space;  
Thou blown from lips so loved, now gone—haply from endless  
store,  
God—sent,  
(For thou art spiritual, Godly, most of all known to my  
sense,)  
Minister to speak to me, here and now, what word has never  
told, and  
cannot tell,  
Art thou not universal concrete's distillation? Law's, all  
Astronomy's last refinement?

Hast thou no soul? Can I not know, identify thee?

# Old Chants

An ancient song, reciting, ending,  
Once gazing toward thee, Mother of All,  
Musing, seeking themes fitted for thee,  
Accept me, thou saidst, the elder ballads,  
And name for me before thou goest each ancient poet.

(Of many debts incalculable,  
Haply our New World's chieftest debt is to old poems.)

Ever so far back, preluding thee, America,  
Old chants, Egyptian priests, and those of Ethiopia,  
The Hindu epics, the Grecian, Chinese, Persian,  
The Biblic books and prophets, and deep idyls of the  
Nazarene,  
The Iliad, Odyssey, plots, doings, wanderings of Eneas,  
Hesiod, Eschylus, Sophocles, Merlin, Arthur,  
The Cid, Roland at Roncesvalles, the Nibelungen,  
The troubadours, minstrels, minnesingers, skalds,  
Chaucer, Dante, flocks of singing birds,  
The Border Minstrelsy, the bye-gone ballads, feudal tales,  
essays, plays,  
Shakespeare, Schiller, Walter Scott, Tennyson,  
As some vast wondrous weird dream-presences,  
The great shadowy groups gathering around,  
Darting their mighty masterful eyes forward at thee,  
Thou! with as now thy bending neck and head, with courteous  
hand  
and word, ascending,  
Thou! pausing a moment, drooping thine eyes upon them,  
blent  
with their music,  
Well pleased, accepting all, curiously prepared for by  
them,  
Thou interest at thy entrance porch.





# A Christmas Greeting

Welcome, Brazilian brother—thy ample place is ready;  
A loving hand—a smile from the north—a sunny instant hall!  
(Let the future care for itself, where it reveals its  
troubles,  
impedimentas,  
Ours, ours the present throe, the democratic aim, the  
acceptance and  
the faith;)  
To thee to-day our reaching arm, our turning neck—to thee  
from us  
the expectant eye,  
Thou cluster free! thou brilliant lustrous one! thou,  
learning well,  
The true lesson of a nation's light in the sky,  
(More shining than the Cross, more than the Crown,)  
The height to be superb humanity.

# Sounds of the Winter

Sounds of the winter too,  
Sunshine upon the mountains—many a distant strain  
From cheery railroad train—from nearer field, barn, house,  
The whispering air—even the mute crops, garner'd apples,  
corn,  
Children's and women's tones—rhythm of many a farmer and of  
flail,  
An old man's garrulous lips among the rest, Think not we  
give out yet,  
Forth from these snowy hairs we keep up yet the lilt.

# A Twilight Song

As I sit in twilight late alone by the flickering oak-flame,  
Musing on long-pass'd war-scenes—of the countless buried unknown  
soldiers,  
Of the vacant names, as unindented air's and sea's—the unreturn'd,  
The brief truce after battle, with grim burial-squads, and the  
deep-fill'd trenches  
Of gather'd from dead all America, North, South, East, West, whence  
they came up,  
From wooded Maine, New-England's farms, from fertile Pennsylvania,  
Illinois, Ohio,  
From the measureless West, Virginia, the South, the Carolinas, Texas,  
(Even here in my room-shadows and half-lights in the noiseless  
flickering flames,  
Again I see the stalwart ranks on-filing, rising—I hear the rhythmic tramp of the armies;)  
You million unwrit names all, all—you dark bequest from all the war,  
A special verse for you—a flash of duty long neglected—your mystic  
roll strangely gather'd here,  
Each name recall'd by me from out the darkness and death's ashes,  
Henceforth to be, deep, deep within my heart recording, for many  
future year,  
Your mystic roll entire of unknown names, or North or

South,  
Embalm'd with love in this twilight song.

# When the Full-Grown Poet Came

When the full-grown poet came,  
Out spake pleased Nature (the round impassive globe, with  
all its  
shows of day and night,) saying, He is mine;  
But out spake too the Soul of man, proud, jealous and  
unreconciled,  
Nay he is mine alone;  
—Then the full-grown poet stood between the two, and took  
each  
by the hand;  
And to-day and ever so stands, as blender, uniter, tightly  
holding hands,  
Which he will never release until he reconciles the two,  
And wholly and joyously blends them.

# Osceola

When his hour for death had come,  
He slowly rais'd himself from the bed on the floor,  
Drew on his war-dress, shirt, leggings, and girdled the  
belt around  
his waist,  
Call'd for vermilion paint (his looking-glass was held  
before him,)  
Painted half his face and neck, his wrists, and back-hands.  
Put the scalp-knife carefully in his belt—then lying down,  
resting  
moment,  
Rose again, half sitting, smiled, gave in silence his  
extended hand  
to each and all,  
Sank faintly low to the floor (tightly grasping the  
tomahawk handle,)  
Fix'd his look on wife and little children—the last:  
  
(And here a line in memory of his name and death.)

# A Voice from Death

A voice from Death, solemn and strange, in all his sweep  
and power,  
With sudden, indescribable blow—towns drown'd—humanity by  
thousands slain,  
The vaunted work of thrift, goods, dwellings, forge,  
street, iron bridge,  
Dash'd pell-mell by the blow—yet usher'd life continuing  
on,  
(Amid the rest, amid the rushing, whirling, wild debris,  
A suffering woman saved—a baby safely born!)

Although I come and unannounc'd, in horror and in pang,  
In pouring flood and fire, and wholesale elemental crash,  
(this  
voice so solemn, strange,)  
I too a minister of Deity.

Yea, Death, we bow our faces, veil our eyes to thee,  
We mourn the old, the young untimely drawn to thee,  
The fair, the strong, the good, the capable,  
The household wreck'd, the husband and the wife, the  
engulfed forger  
in his forge,  
The corpses in the whelming waters and the mud,  
The gather'd thousands to their funeral mounds, and  
thousands never  
found or gather'd.

Then after burying, mourning the dead,  
(Faithful to them found or unfound, forgetting not, bearing  
the  
past, here new musing,)  
A day—a passing moment or an hour—America itself bends low,  
Silent, resign'd, submissive.

War, death, cataclysm like this, America,  
Take deep to thy proud prosperous heart.

E'en as I chant, lo! out of death, and out of ooze and  
slime,  
The blossoms rapidly blooming, sympathy, help, love,  
From West and East, from South and North and over sea,  
Its hot-spurr'd hearts and hands humanity to human aid  
moves on;  
And from within a thought and lesson yet.

Thou ever-darting Globe! through Space and Air!  
Thou waters that encompass us!  
Thou that in all the life and death of us, in action or in  
sleep!  
Thou laws invisible that permeate them and all,  
Thou that in all, and over all, and through and under all,  
incessant!  
Thou! thou! the vital, universal, giant force resistless,  
sleepless, calm,  
Holding Humanity as in thy open hand, as some ephemeral  
toy,  
How ill to e'er forget thee!

For I too have forgotten,  
(Wrapt in these little potencies of progress, politics,  
culture,  
wealth, inventions, civilization,)  
Have lost my recognition of your silent ever-swaying power,  
ye  
mighty, elemental throes,  
In which and upon which we float, and every one of us is  
buoy'd.





# A Persian Lesson

For his o'erarching and last lesson the greybeard sufi,  
In the fresh scent of the morning in the open air,  
On the slope of a teeming Persian rose-garden,  
Under an ancient chestnut-tree wide spreading its branches,  
Spoke to the young priests and students.

"Finally my children, to envelop each word, each part of  
the rest,  
Allah is all, all, all-immanent in every life and object,  
May-be at many and many-a-more removes-yet Allah, Allah,  
Allah is there.

"Has the estray wander'd far? Is the reason-why strangely  
hidden?  
Would you sound below the restless ocean of the entire  
world?  
Would you know the dissatisfaction? the urge and spur of  
every life;  
The something never still'd-never entirely gone? the  
invisible need  
of every seed?

"It is the central urge in every atom,  
(Often unconscious, often evil, downfallen,)   
To return to its divine source and origin, however distant,  
Latent the same in subject and in object, without one  
exception."



# The Commonplace

The commonplace I sing;  
How cheap is health! how cheap nobility!  
Abstinence, no falsehood, no gluttony, lust;  
The open air I sing, freedom, toleration,  
(Take here the mainest lesson—less from books—less from the  
schools,)  
The common day and night—the common earth and waters,  
Your farm—your work, trade, occupation,  
The democratic wisdom underneath, like solid ground for  
all.

# "The Rounded Catalogue Divine Complete"

The devilish and the dark, the dying and diseases'd,  
The countless (nineteen-twentieths) low and evil, crude and  
savage,  
The crazed, prisoners in jail, the horrible, rank,  
malignant,  
Venom and filth, serpents, the ravenous sharks, liars, the  
dissolute;  
(What is the part the wicked and the loathesome bear within  
earth's  
orbic scheme?)  
Newts, crawling things in slime and mud, poisons,  
The barren soil, the evil men, the slag and hideous rot.

# Mirages

More experiences and sights, stranger, than you'd think  
for;  
Times again, now mostly just after sunrise or before  
sunset,  
Sometimes in spring, oftener in autumn, perfectly clear  
weather, in  
plain sight,  
Camps far or near, the crowded streets of cities and the  
shopfronts,  
(Account for it or not—credit or not—it is all true,  
And my mate there could tell you the like—we have often  
confab'd  
about it,)  
People and scenes, animals, trees, colors and lines, plain  
as could be,  
Farms and dooryards of home, paths border'd with box,  
lilacs in corners,  
Weddings in churches, thanksgiving dinners, returns of  
long-absent sons,  
Glum funerals, the crape-veil'd mother and the daughters,  
Trials in courts, jury and judge, the accused in the box,  
Contestants, battles, crowds, bridges, wharves,  
Now and then mark'd faces of sorrow or joy,  
(I could pick them out this moment if I saw them again,)  
Show'd to me—just to the right in the sky-edge,  
Or plainly there to the left on the hill-tops.

# L. of G.'s Purport

Not to exclude or demarcate, or pick out evils from their formidable

masses (even to expose them,)

But add, fuse, complete, extend—and celebrate the immortal and the good.

Haughty this song, its words and scope,

To span vast realms of space and time,

Evolution—the cumulative—growths and generations.

Begun in ripen'd youth and steadily pursued,

Wandering, peering, dallying with all—war, peace, day and night

absorbing,

Never even for one brief hour abandoning my task,

I end it here in sickness, poverty, and old age.

I sing of life, yet mind me well of death:

To-day shadowy Death dogs my steps, my seated shape, and has for years—

Draws sometimes close to me, as face to face.

# The Unexpress'd

How dare one say it?

After the cycles, poems, singers, plays,

Vaunted Ionia's, India's—Homer, Shakspeare—the long, long  
times'

thick dotted roads, areas,

The shining clusters and the Milky Ways of stars—Nature's  
pulses reap'd,

All retrospective passions, heroes, war, love, adoration,

All ages' plummet dropt to their utmost depths,

All human lives, throats, wishes, brains—all experiences'  
utterance;

After the countless songs, or long or short, all tongues,  
all lands,

Still something not yet told in poesy's voice or print—  
something lacking,

(Who knows? the best yet unexpress'd and lacking.)



# Grand Is the Seen

Grand is the seen, the light, to me—grand are the sky and stars,  
Grand is the earth, and grand are lasting time and space,  
And grand their laws, so multiiform, puzzling, evolutionary;  
But grander far the unseen soul of me, comprehending,  
endowing all those,  
Lighting the light, the sky and stars, delving the earth,  
sailing  
the sea,  
(What were all those, indeed, without thee, unseen soul? of  
what  
amount without thee?)  
More evolutionary, vast, puzzling, O my soul!  
More multiiform far—more lasting thou than they.

# Unseen Buds

Unseen buds, infinite, hidden well,  
Under the snow and ice, under the darkness, in every square  
or cubic inch,  
Germinal, exquisite, in delicate lace, microscopic, unborn,  
Like babes in wombs, latent, folded, compact, sleeping;  
Billions of billions, and trillions of trillions of them  
waiting,  
(On earth and in the sea—the universe—the stars there in  
the  
heavens,)  
Urging slowly, surely forward, forming endless,  
And waiting ever more, forever more behind.

# Good-Bye My Fancy!

Good-bye my Fancy!  
Farewell dear mate, dear love!  
I'm going away, I know not where,  
Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever see you again,  
So Good-bye my Fancy.

Now for my last—let me look back a moment;  
The slower fainter ticking of the clock is in me,  
Exit, nightfall, and soon the heart-thud stopping.

Long have we lived, joy'd, caress'd together;  
Delightful!—now separation—Good-bye my Fancy.

Yet let me not be too hasty,  
Long indeed have we lived, slept, filter'd, become really  
blended  
into one;  
Then if we die we die together, (yes, we'll remain one,)  
If we go anywhere we'll go together to meet what happens,  
May-be we'll be better off and blither, and learn  
something,  
May-be it is yourself now really ushering me to the true  
songs, (who  
knows?)  
May-be it is you the mortal knob really undoing, turning—so  
now finally,  
Good-bye—and hail! my Fancy.

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