

# **LEAVES OF GRASS**

**Walt Whitman**

**InfoBooks.org**



## LEAVES OF GRASS SYNOPSIS

Leaves of Grass is a book of poems written by Walt Whitman and published in 1855. The work, written over 40 years, is a tribute to freedom, beauty, poetry, individuality, and life itself. It is one of the most representative poetic collections of American poetry and a literary reference for the promoters of nationalism.

The book is replete with first-person expressions in the tone of praise or rejoicing, something that was considered immoral at the time. While the influential poetry of the time was based on the symbolic, the meditative, and the allegorical, Whitman glorified the material, the body, and the role of the individual in the physical world.

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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 hut 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.

## E I D O L O N S

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

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 idolons.

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

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

Lo, I or you,

Or woman, man, or state, known or unknown, We seeming solid  
wealth, strength, beauty build,

But really build idolons.

The ostent evanescent,

The substance of an artist's mood or savor's studies long, Or  
warrior's, martyr's, hero's toils,

To fashion his idolon.

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 idolon.

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  
math- ematics,

Beyond the doctor's surgery, anatomy, beyond the chemist with  
his chemistry,

The entities of entities, idolons.

Unfix'd yet fix'd,

Ever shall be, ever have been and are, Sweeping the present to the  
infinite future,

Idolons, idolons, idolons. 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 idolons.

And thee my soul,

Joys, ceaseless exercises, exaltations,

Thy yearning amply fed at last, prepared to meet, Thy mates,  
idolons.

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

#### I

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 unrivalled one, the hermit thrush from the  
swamp-cedars,  
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

## II

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-continents 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.

### I I I

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.

## I V

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.

## V

Dead poets, philosophs, 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.

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 smoldering 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?

## VI

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.)

## V I I I

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.

## **I X**

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.

X

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.

## XI

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.

## X I I

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.

### X I I I

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!

## X I V

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 irrepress- ible 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.

## **X V**

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.

## XVI

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 harbinge  
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.

## XVII

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.

## XVIII

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.

## XIX

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

I

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.

## I I

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.

### **I I I**

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?

## I V

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;  
These 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.

V

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.

## VI

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.

## V I I

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.

## V I I I

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.

## I X

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.

## X

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 bruised 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 piasters 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.

## XI

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.

## **X I I**

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 break-down.

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.

### X I I I

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 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.

## XIV

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.

## X V

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 quadroon 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 unrumpled 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 tinnners are tinning 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.

## XVI

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 thoughtfulest, 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.)

## XVII

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.

## XVIII

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!

## XIX

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.

XX

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.

## XXI

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.

## XXII

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.

### **XXIII**

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  
mathema- tician.

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.

## XXIV

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 diseas'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!

## XXV

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.

## XXVI

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.

## XXVII

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.

## XXVIII

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

Treacherous 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.

## XXIX

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.

X X X

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.

### XXXI

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.

## XXXII

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.

**XXXIII**

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 bridgroom 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 ambulance 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.

## XXXIV

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.

### XXXV

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 sulk 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.

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

## XXXVI

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.

## XXXVII

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.

## XXXVII

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  
unend- ing 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.

## XXXIX

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.

X L

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.

## **X L I**

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,  
bestow- ing 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.

## XLII

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?

### XLIII

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.

#### **X L I V**

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.

**X L V**

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 his 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.

## XLVI

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.

## XLVII

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.

## XLVIII

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.

## XLIX

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 steeps of the souging 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.

L

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.

L I

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?

## L I I

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 yawps 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

### I

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 discorrput 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?

### II

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 basks 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 rumped 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.

### **I I I**

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.

#### I V

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.

## V

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.

## **V I**

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?

## V I I

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?)

## V I I I

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.

## I X

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, we  
two, We have voided all but freedom and all but our own joy.

O HYMEN! O HYMENE!

O hymen! O hymenee! 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 lite  
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,

Wafted, 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 PERSUE 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 eleve 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 eleve 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!

I

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?

## I I

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.

## I I I

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.

#### **I V**

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.

## V

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  
Rhone, 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.

## **V I**

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.

## V I I

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.

## V I I I

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.

X

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.

## X I I

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.

## X I I

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.)

### XIII

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

I

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.)

## I I

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.

### I I I

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 yourselves, 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.

#### I V

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.

## V

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.

## VI

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?

## V I I

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 sun  
light 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?

## V I I I

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  
continu- ally 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.

## **I X**

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.

X

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.)

## XI

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.

## X I I

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,

Habitues of many distant countries, habitues 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, Journeymen over consecutive seasons, over the years, the  
curious years

each emerging from that which preceded it,

Journeymen as with companions, namely their own diverse phases,  
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days,

Journeymen gayly with their own youth, journeymen with their  
bearded and well-grain'd manhood,

Journeymen with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd, content,  
Journeymen 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.

### X I I I

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.

#### **X I V**

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.

## X V

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?

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