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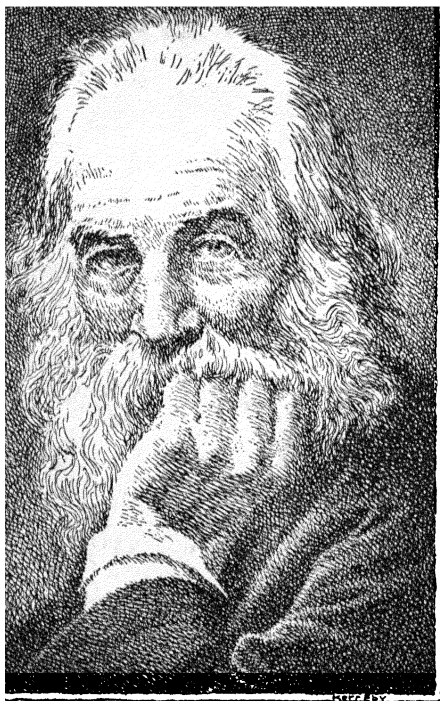
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*Pen drawing by Kerr Fby, after
a photograph by Pearsall, 1872*

WALT WHITMAN

ÆT 53

Walt Whitman

REPRESENTATIVE SELECTIONS, WITH
INTRODUCTION, BIBLIOGRAPHY, AND NOTES

BY

FLOYD STOVALL

*Director of the Department of English
North Texas State Teachers College*

REVISED EDITION



AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY

~~New York~~ • Cincinnati • Chicago
Boston • Atlanta • St. Louis

PREFACE

This volume aims to make available to the student and general reader the best of Whitman's poetry, together with representative selections of his prose, so presented as to illustrate his development as man and poet and the comprehensive reach of his thought. The introduction and notes, which are intended to be suggestive rather than final in their conclusions, have been written with this aim in mind.

The poems are arranged as nearly as possible in chronological order. The date of first publication is placed at the end of each poem at the right side of the page; if the date of composition is known to be materially different, that date is placed at the left side of the page in italics.

By special arrangement with Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., publishers, I have been permitted to use the following texts: for the poems and "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," the 1891-2 edition of *Leaves of Grass*; for the Preface of 1855, the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* of that date; and for all other prose selections, the *Complete Prose Works* of 1892.

My obligations are many. I wish, in particular, to thank Professor Killis Campbell, of the University of Texas, for his critical reading of the introduction and notes, though I assume sole responsibility for the views there expressed, and for advice in the selection of the poems. I am also much indebted to the general editor of this series, Professor Harry H. Clark, of the University of Wisconsin, for his valuable assistance and unfailing sympathy.

FLOYD STOVALL

PREFACE TO REVISED EDITION

In this edition the only change in the text is the inclusion of *Democratic Vistas* complete. The selections from *Leaves of Grass* remain the same as in the first edition. The introduction is of such a nature that it would be difficult to alter it unless it were rewritten altogether. The bibliography has been expanded and brought up to date, and a few minor changes and corrections have been made in the notes.

F. S.

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INTRODUCTION

I. GENERAL QUALITIES

Whitman, like the age that produced him, was both a culmination and a beginning. In him was the flower of romantic idealism in America, which had its roots in the eighteenth-century philosophy of progress, and in him also the seed of scientific realism, which throws its maze of branches about contemporary thought. He bridges the chasm made by the Civil War between the idealism of the past and the materialism of the present and thus becomes the representative of united America.

Yet he was never popular. In the passionate conflicts of a changing civilization, the advocate of harmony is liable to be suspected by all factions. So it was with Whitman. The realist distrusted his faith in humanity, and the idealist was shocked because he extolled the animalism of man. On the one hand, he allowed his readers no escape from the imperfections of the world, while on the other he required them to transcend these imperfections. The popular writer, however, must be one who enables his readers to retain their faith in the actual world by obscuring its imperfections in the twilight of sentiment and fancy.

Another reason for Whitman's unpopularity is the anomalous quality of his verse. Form in poetry, as in all the arts, is an aid to the communication of thought and feeling, and the more familiar the form, the more complete the communication. A new form is a barrier between the poet and his reader until the latter learns and approves it. The form of *Leaves of Grass* is so complex and strange that it distracts and annoys the uncritical reader as well as the formalist. In renouncing rhyme and meter he gave hostages to fame, and in following nature into

monotonous repetitions and chaotic details he flouted the gods of patience and proportion. It is as though he tempted the muse by offering her the world with complete descriptive catalogues.

He did not pass unnoticed by the critics, who dealt with him in various ways: he was made the butt of endless jokes among the smug and damned by the rule of three, he was hailed by the sages as a sage and by the rebels as a rebel, and in the end he was apotheosized by the faithful and veiled with a legend. Gradually, however, the real Whitman is being restored; and though one cannot place him in any known category, one can at least venture to name him without encomium or oburgation. It is therefore an excellent time for a critical study of his work.

Such a study, to be fully satisfying, would have to answer three questions: What is Walt Whitman? Whence does he come? and Whither does he lead? In other words, it would seek to make known his personality, his antecedents, and his purpose. So great an undertaking is obviously beyond the scope of any single essay or any single book except as a summary, and the time for summaries, perhaps, has not yet arrived. Only after he has been tested by the varied experience and accumulated knowledge of many generations can his final worth become known. In the meantime, the critic can do no better than to examine him afresh, being careful not to make the mistake of supposing that he will yield anything to a restricted and superficial research; for he looks before and after across the span of two centuries and more, to compass which requires of the critic a bold and curious glance.

Since it must be restricted, this essay attempts primarily to find for the third question such an answer as may be of use to the reader who recognizes Whitman as "a great big something" and cannot rest content until he discovers what that something is. It is desirable, nevertheless, to take some notice of the first two questions and to record a few hints towards answering

them. Only in this way can we secure that perspective which is necessary to the examination of so large a subject.

What, then, is the personality of Walt Whitman? The answer is to be sought in criticism rather than in biography, and in the work of his genius more than in the commonplaces of his daily life. The complaint is sometimes made, and not without reason, that the interpreters of literature do not sufficiently distinguish between the function of biography and the function of criticism. In their curiosity about the man they neglect the work he produced. Whitman attempted to forestall this error by recreating his essential self in his poems and consciously suppressing all else. It has been said that he deliberately withheld from the knowledge of his family and friends some facts of his private life which, most likely, conflicted with the character he had created for himself in his writings.¹ He realized that his true self was immortalized in *Leaves of Grass* and that all else was irrelevant and vain; consequently, to understand his personality is to understand his poems, of which he proudly boasted,

Camerado, this is no book,
Who touches this touches a man.²

There is, however, one difficulty. He sometimes identified himself imaginatively with persons whose dominant traits were quite opposite to his own. His object was to establish a basis for faith in democracy by demonstrating in his own person the theory that all human qualities are latent in each individual. Thus the "I" of the poems is often the potential rather than the actual Whitman. Thence arise many of the apparent contradictions. One must distinguish the authentic "I" from the imaginative "I" in order to discover the personal qualities that give character to his work.

¹ Bliss Perry, *Walt Whitman*, pp. 212-213.

² "So Long!" *Complete Writings*, II, 289. All references to Whitman's poems and prose, unless otherwise stated, are made to the *Complete Writings*, in 10 vols., 1902.

In spite of the apparent contradictions which he so complacently acknowledged, he is essentially consistent with himself. The contradictions arise from his effort to reconcile such ancient antinomies as good and evil, law and impulse, reason and faith. His unity lies beneath these surface appearances. For he is a true primitive, the archetypal man, simple, universal, bisexual—the primordial Adam, Eve being yet unremoved.¹ But he is also the new Adam with the curse upon him, ashamed, unsatisfied, passionate. Yearning towards Eve with an unappeasable desire, he is forever reminded of that vague undivided Self, that Unity, on the re-attainment of which he feels depends the hope of perfection. Herein lies the problem: to be one, apart, independent, egoistic, yet to feel with all, to act with all, to comprehend all. It is ultimately, as he clearly saw, the problem of democracy, and indeed of humanity itself.

In the multiform personality that branches from this generic stem there is also a principle of consistency. This principle is not unitary, like the "ruling passion" formula of Pope's day, but triune rather, and consists in those primary and inherent attributes of individual nature from which his passions emerge. These attributes that give consistency to Whitman's personality were egotism, sensuousness, and sentiment, and from them all the qualities that distinguish his life and work were derived.³

If it be assumed that Whitman's personal attributes were inherited, the answer to the second question—Whence does he come?—would include some consideration of his ancestry. No more need be said here, however, than that he was of mixed

³ These qualities may be classified according to their derivation thus: (a) egotistic qualities are pride, self-reliance, determination, audacity, crudeness, unconventionality, prudence, sincerity; (b) sensuous qualities are grossness, amativeness, adhesiveness, affection, sympathy; (c) sentimental qualities are imagination, faith, idealism, spirituality. The terms "amativeness" and "adhesiveness," much used by Whitman, were borrowed from the language of phrenology. Most of the qualities here named he claimed for himself in his early anonymous reviews of *Leaves of Grass*, three of which are reprinted in *In Re Walt Whitman*, pp. 13-32.

English, Dutch, and Welsh stock, and that his family, long resident on Long Island, had been for two generations much under the influence of the Quaker preacher, Elias Hicks.⁴ An important but incalculable influence may be found in the diffused thought and speculation of the age, which he would inevitably come to know in the course of his intellectual development. For the source of this influence one must go back to the Renaissance in Western Europe with its awakening consciousness of the value of the individual man and its discovery of the marvels of the physical universe. From this beginning the movement towards the establishment of a democratic society founded on scientific knowledge was advanced in turn by the rationalism of the seventeenth century, by the intellectual and social enlightenment of the eighteenth, and by the empiricism of the nineteenth, which seems to have been its culmination. The aspects of this movement that are most clearly reflected in the thought of Walt Whitman were (1) the philosophy of progress, with its *a priori* method of reform and neglect of history; (2) faith in the innate goodness of man and the idealization of nature, illustrated in the revolutionary theories of Rousseau; (3) the idealism of German philosophy, particularly the Hegelian doctrine of a cosmic consciousness that unfolds through conflict and contradiction to divine ends;⁵ and (4) the scientific conception of nature as a reality independent of cosmic reason but determined by the processes of historical evolution. Much of the ambiguity of Whitman's writing is due to his uncritical acceptance of all these philosophies, which, though interrelated

⁴William Sloane Kennedy has pointed out the Dutch and Quaker traits in Whitman in two essays in *In Re Walt Whitman*, pp. 195-199, 213-214. See also his *Reminiscences of Walt Whitman*, pp. 85-91. Henry Seidel Canby makes much of the Quaker influence in his essay on Whitman in *Classic Americans*.

⁵Some parallels in the thought of Whitman and Hegel are pointed out in Mody C. Boatright's "Whitman and Hegel," in the *University of Texas Studies in English*, No. 9, pp. 134-150 (July, 1929). See also Kennedy, *Reminiscences*, pp. 130, 137-146.

and developed one out of the other, are in many ways inconsistent.

Before the middle of the nineteenth century these ideas, with the exception of the theory of evolution, had been so completely interwoven with native elements in the popular ideals of the American people as to form an inseparable part of their social and political philosophy. They mingled easily with the transcendentalism of New England, the Quakerism of the middle states, and the individualism of the frontier, and they acquired a kind of sanctity in the less aristocratic circles because they were associated with the Revolution. Though modified as they filtered down to the average citizen by varying degrees of ignorance and self-interest, they found congenial society even there, lightening a life of sordid materialism with the leaven of romantic idealism. For the dominant attributes of character in the people of the United States during the period of emergent nationality between the administration of Jackson and the Civil War, were, as in the character of Whitman, egotism, sensuousness, and sentiment. From them flowed the marvelous creative energy that transformed half a continent with a blind, ruthless purpose. The pioneers of those days were a self-centered, raucous, and fleshly lot, but they were also sentimentalists and dreamers, and they were sustained by an unquestioning faith in their divine mission to possess and improve the world.

Though a product of his age, Whitman was not to be confined within its intellectual and moral periphery. He approved it as a gain over the past, but not as an end in itself; on the contrary, he held that it was only the beginning of a new order of progress in the affairs of men. As he grew older, his certainty of the need of change increased, but his confidence in his knowledge of the process was somewhat diminished. He discovered that he must anchor himself firmly to the past if he was not to lose his balance in reaching towards the future. Thus anchored, he was able to expand freely in all directions, enriching his per-

sonality without endangering its stability.; He developed both as a man and as a poet, not only before the inception of *Leaves of Grass* but steadily afterwards, through the Civil War and beyond until his powers failed.⁶ It is only by tracking the course of this development that we can hope to understand him and the purport of his poems.

II. EARLY PROSE AND POETRY

The few records of Whitman's childhood that survive do not reveal clearly whether he displayed at that time the personal attributes that distinguish him as a man. He was born, the second of nine children, on May 31, 1819, on a farm near Huntington, Long Island. When he was four years old the family moved to Brooklyn, then a small town. At five he was picked up and kissed by the great Lafayette at a public gathering, and at eleven or twelve he was through with formal schooling and ready to begin his life work. From that time until he was past thirty, except for an interval of teaching in the country schools of Long Island in his youth, he was almost constantly engaged in newspaper work, as printer's devil, apprentice, typesetter, reporter, contributor, or editor, in and around Brooklyn and in New Orleans.

He was an omnivorous reader, active in debating societies, and fond of the theatre and the opera.⁷ According to the testimony of one who knew him at twenty, he was "inordinately indolent and lazy" and somewhat untidy in his personal appearance.⁸ Another acquaintance, however, recalls him as some-

⁶It is an error all too common yet to suppose that Whitman did not grow. John Bailey says in his *Walt Whitman*, p. 51, "Except from the war he learnt nothing all his life." The present writer's essay, "Main Drifts in Whitman's Poetry," in *American Literature*, IV, 3-21 (March, 1932), is partly an effort to correct this error by indicating the extent of his development after 1855.

⁷"Specimen Days," IV, 19.

⁸*The Uncollected Poetry and Prose of Walt Whitman*, ed. by Emory Holloway, I, xxxiii, n.

thing of a "swell" at twenty-two, wearing a high hat and a frock coat with boutonnière and carrying a cane.⁹ This description agrees with the statement of his brother George that he was rather stylish when young, though slow to establish an acquaintance and never attentive to girls. Even the enthusiasm of planning the first *Leaves of Grass* did not alter his leisurely habits, for still, as George put it, he "wrote a little, worked a little, loafed a little."¹⁰

He was actively interested in politics and public affairs, having been as early as the summer of 1841 selected by the Tammany organization as one of the speakers at a mass meeting in the park.¹¹ Always a loyal member of "the good old Democratic Party—the party of the sainted Jefferson and Jackson,"¹² he could not admit that its principles "are either wrong in themselves, or deserve the least disfavor from the public."¹³ In March, 1846, he was chosen to edit the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle*, an organ of the Democratic Party,¹⁴ through the columns of which he carried on a vigorous campaign in defense of his own and his party's principles.

While denouncing the "mad fanaticism" of some of the abolitionists,¹⁵ he was firm in his opposition to the extension of slavery in new territory. It was through his editorial support of the Wilmot Proviso, which would have prohibited slavery in the territory to be acquired from Mexico, that he came into conflict with the policies of his employer and lost his place early in 1848.¹⁶ During the following spring he worked a while on

⁹ Perry, pp. 22–23.

¹⁰ From conversations reported by Horace L. Traubel in *In Re Walt Whitman*, pp. 33–35. Cf. Whitman's essay in praise of loafing in the *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, I, 44–46.

¹¹ *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, I, xxxv.

¹² *The Gathering of the Forces*, ed. by Cleveland Rodgers and John Black, I, 219.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I, 217.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, I, xiv.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 191.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, xxx–xxx1; also see *Complete Writings*, V, 35.

the New Orleans *Crescent*; but returning soon to Brooklyn, he joined the "Free-Soil" movement, with which he was naturally sympathetic, and became editor of the short-lived local party paper, the *Freeman*.¹⁷

He called himself a strict-constructionist and a states' rights man, but he held that the constitution vested sovereignty in the Union and that the Union is sacred and indissoluble.¹⁸ He was an enthusiastic patriot and expansionist. His passion for nationality was supported by his belief in the excellence of the American way of life. He wrote commemorative editorials on Revolutionary notables, hailed General Taylor as a national hero, advocated annexing most of Mexico "for the interest of mankind," was impatient in his desire for Oregon, and boasted the military superiority of the United States over England.¹⁹ Having absolute confidence in the ability of America to absorb an unlimited population, he welcomed all home seekers from other lands, even the paupers and criminals, and believed it was both futile and unjust to try to regulate immigration by law.²⁰ He prophesied that within thirty years America would be, beyond comparison, the greatest nation on earth.²¹

In his conception of the function of government he was a thorough Jeffersonian. "The true office of government," he declared, "is simply to preserve the rights of each citizen from spoliation: when it attempts to go beyond this, it is intrusive and does more harm than good."²² He believed in the maxim that "the best government is that which governs least."²³ Consequently, he was bitterly opposed to the protective tariff, holding that it paralyzed trade and injured the workingman.²⁴ He warned against the dangers of taxation, and recommended the tax on real estate as the simplest and most just because it "is

¹⁷ *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, I, lii.

¹⁸ *Gathering of the Forces*, I, 229-239.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 75-93; 240-272.

²¹ *Ibid.*, I, 27.

²³ *Ibid.*, I, 57.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 159-165.

²² *Ibid.*, I, 54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 68.

filtered through upon all business, upon operatives, upon work, upon consumption, upon capital, upon the strength of the poor man's sinews, and the industry of the farmer in the fields."²⁵ It follows, as a matter of course, that he was opposed to all legislative interference with the personal life of the individual. "You cannot legislate men into virtue!" he wrote at the head of an editorial.²⁶ He was quite outspoken in his opposition to proposed laws against seduction, intemperance, and the free operation of public carriers and other enterprises on Sunday, pointing out that "man is sovereign of his individual self," and may be reformed by persuasion, but never by compulsion.²⁷

Among other reforms, he advocated the protection of women's separate property rights, the regulation of working conditions for women, the multiplication and improvement of free public schools, and the abolition of capital punishment.²⁸ His humanitarianism is evident in his criticism of the teacher who has no other means than blows to induce students to obedience,²⁹ in his condemnation of the brutality of prize fights,³⁰ in his protests against the cruel treatment of domestic animals, and in his scorn for the American passion for wealth with its consequent disregard of human life.³¹

If in his editorial writings Whitman employs the usual tools of political journalism, he is scarcely less conventional in his literary contributions. The vapid moralizing of his essays and the sentimental didacticism of his stories are in the worst tradition of American popular literature. At their best, the tales are watery imitations of Poe and Hawthorne. His long temperance "novel," *Franklin Evans*, is a pot-boiler written by a

²⁵ *Ibid.*, II, 73-74.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 59.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 62-72. See also Perry, pp. 57-61.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 74, 148-157, 136-141, 97-120.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 144.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, II, 226.

³¹ *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, I, 223. Hearing that J. J. Astor had given \$500.00 to the fund for firemen's widows and orphans, he remarked ironically, "How on earth could he spare it?" (*Gathering of the Forces*, II, 130-135, 231.)

capable journalist without the least talent as a novelist. The main themes of these stories, love and death, are also important in *Leaves of Grass*, but in the stories everything is morbid and fanciful, whereas in the poems everything is wholesome and natural.

Whitman published hardly more than a dozen poems before 1847, all of which are poor in quality and conventional in form. They owe something to Bryant's melancholy chants, but are crudely amateurish, emotionally hollow, and leaden with homiletic pessimism. They have nothing in common with *Leaves of Grass* except the recurring theme of death, and they show no promise of poetic power.

In his writing thus far, the ideals of character that Whitman set before his readers were ascetic rather than robust. His zeal for temperance led him, for example, to inveigh against the use of tea, coffee, and tobacco.³² The inherent sensuousness of his nature was perhaps held in abeyance by puritan inhibitions,³³ and his egotism had only begun to appear in the stubborn independence with which he maintained his editorial prerogatives. Between 1847 and 1855, however, he passed through a critical period of revolt and self-discovery, a kind of belated adolescence, from which he emerged a different person. The man of morals and sentiment gave place, temporarily at least, to the "natural" man, contemptuous of restraint, sensual, and frankly egotistic.

Materials for a complete history of this change do not exist, but much may be learned from his notebooks, in which as early as 1847 he recorded some of the ideas and rough drafts for the poems of 1855.³⁴ Two poems that in their style represent a transitional stage between the crude conventionality of his early poems and the carefully designed freedom of *Leaves of Grass*

³² *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, I, 32-34.

³³ *Ibid.*, I, xxxvii. Holloway says "it was the puritan in him challenging to a long and tragic struggle the 'caresser of life.'"

³⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 63-90.

were published in the New York *Tribune* in 1850.³⁵ The strange volume of 1855 was not, then, as puzzled critics once supposed, an inspired improvisation, but an ambitious work planned and developed with patient care through a period of probably seven or eight years. It was the product of that physical, intellectual, and spiritual upheaval in which the liberated ego first looked upon its own divinity unveiled and was dazzled but unashamed.

Although this self-discovery was a normal step in the unfolding of his character, it came late and was intensified by the unloosing of powerful impulses that had been long frustrated or dormant. It may have been precipitated by some passionate love-entanglement in New Orleans in the spring of 1848,³⁶ but it would eventually have arrived anyway, one feels, through the quickening influence of his intense and varied experiences in New York, which ranged from the joyous animalism of the omnibus drivers with whom he freely mingled to the rich voluptuousness of the Italian opera. At the same time his egoism must have been stirred by the heroic proportions of the characters of the Homeric epics and the Shakespearean tragic histories, which were his favorite reading.³⁷ Already in 1846 he had felt the keen edge of Carlyle's mind, though he did not approve his style,³⁸ and he had found, perhaps, in the *Autobiography* of the many-sided Goethe the first suggestion for a book of his own that should incorporate a personality.³⁹ One who knew him in his middle age has said that the prophetic parts of the Bible "stirred in him a vague desire to be the bard or prophet of his own time and country."⁴⁰ The free rhythms

³⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 25-30.

³⁶ Cf. H. B. Binns, *Life of Walt Whitman*, pp. 49-53, 349-350, and Emory Holloway, *Whitman: an Interpretation in Narrative*, pp. 39-71.

³⁷ *Complete Writings*, IV, 16, 24-27.

³⁸ *Gathering of the Forces*, II, 290-293. Curiously, he objected to Carlyle's unconventionality.

³⁹ So Holloway thinks. See *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, I, lxxix.

⁴⁰ J. T. Trowbridge, "Reminiscences of Walt Whitman," in *Atlantic Monthly*, LXXXIX, 163-175 (Feb., 1902).

and bold rhetoric of *Leaves of Grass*, highly original as they are, doubtless owe something, as has often been pointed out, to the King James translation of the Bible. They may owe something, also, to Macpherson's Ossianic poems, which were still popular in Whitman's youth.⁴¹ The germ at least of their thought was available to Whitman in the serious literature of his own and the preceding generation. Though it seems probable that he had made no systematic study either of poetry or of philosophy before 1855, it is evident that he had absorbed a great deal indirectly. He was acquainted with the work of such disseminators of the romantic philosophy as Rousseau, Coleridge, and Carlyle.⁴² And the influence of Emerson, in particular, is apparent in the early editions of the *Leaves*.⁴³ Whitman told Trowbridge in 1860 that Emerson had helped him to find himself. "I was simmering, simmering, simmering; Emerson brought me to a boil."⁴⁴ ✓✓

III. LEAVES OF GRASS

While the laborious process of creating and revising his poems was going on, he was assisting his father in building frame houses in Brooklyn; but in the spring of 1855 he laid down his pen and saw and carried his manuscript to the printing

⁴¹ See, however, "Notes and Fragments," *Complete Writings*, IX, 95, where Whitman warns himself against the misty, diffuse style of Macpherson. "Don't fall into the Ossianic, by any chance."

⁴² *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, I, 126-136. According to C. J. Furness ("Walt Whitman's Politics," *American Mercury*, XVI, 456-466, April, 1929), Whitman made a close study of Rousseau's *Social Contract*. He does not state when this study was made. Whitman probably read a good deal of Thomas Paine, also, during his journalistic period.

⁴³ See John B. Moore, "The Master of Whitman," *Studies in Philology*, XXIII, pp. 77 f. (Jan., 1926) and C. L. G. Gohdes, "Whitman and Emerson," *Sewanee Review*, XXXVII, pp. 79 f. (Jan., 1929). The evidence is thoroughly examined in an unpublished dissertation, *Whitman's Debt to Emerson*, by Ruth Peyton Pressley, in the library of the University of Texas. Miss Pressley believes that Whitman owed much more to Emerson than in his later years he or his friends were willing to admit. Somewhere, possibly through Emerson, Whitman learned a good deal of the mystic philosophy of the Orient.

⁴⁴ Trowbridge, *loc. cit.*

shop of his friends, Andrew and James Rome, where he set the type with his own hands.⁴⁵ In July he finished the book, a thin quarto with the author's portrait but no name on the title-page, and sent copies to prominent men of letters. Many of these gift copies were returned to the author, and Whittier is said to have thrown his into the fire;⁴⁶ but Emerson read the book and wrote generously to the author that it was "the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed." Whitman was "set up," as his brother George put it, by this letter,⁴⁷ which, to Emerson's chagrin, he reprinted in the edition of 1856, together with an effusive answer in which he addressed Emerson as "Master."

In a long preface, not retained in later editions,⁴⁸ he explains in a somewhat difficult style his conception of the poets and poetry of the future. The greatest poet, he affirms, is the most complete lover of the universe; he draws his materials directly from nature. He must be a seer in whom his own age is transfigured and to whom is revealed the cosmic plan which gives similitude to all periods and unites the past, the present, and the future in harmonious sequence. He must be commensurate with his nation and must incarnate it historically, geographically, and biologically. In this country the poet will be one of the common people, in whom the genius of America is to be found, and he will differ from them only in his superior vision. He must be endowed with organic health and a perfect sense of the unity of man and nature, and his personal character must be representative of the national character. It is significant that the qualities of American character which Whitman names are the qualities that predominate in his own personality.

⁴⁵ *Complete Writings*, IV, 27. See also Perry, pp. 67-68.

⁴⁶ Perry, p. 100.

⁴⁷ See *In Re Walt Whitman*, p. 35.

⁴⁸ The principal ideas and many of the phrases were incorporated in the poems of 1856, and especially in "By Blue Ontario's Shore" and "Song of the Answerer."

It is the function of the poet to perceive what is permanent in the flux of things and to explain the law of its development. He is the voice of liberty, the exemplar of equality, and the fulfillment of the laws of science. In him are reconciled the measureless pride of the soul, which acknowledges no lessons but its own, and the equally measureless sympathy of the soul, which gives itself freely to all. In his art he is a realist, but he knows that beauty inheres in each object or condition or combination or process, and that he must not only reveal this beauty but help his reader to possess it. To this end, the best style is that which is simplest and most natural, without rhyme, meter, or other ornament. The form of the perfect poem, like that of a perfect animal or tree, is a free and organic growth in which each part is in proportion and harmonious with the whole design. In short, the whole purpose of the poet is to make poems that "tally nature."

Such a poet he hoped to be, and such poems, tallying nature, he set out to compose. The unifying purpose of *Leaves of Grass* throughout, though mostly unconscious at first,⁴⁹ was to show how man might achieve for himself the most complete freedom possible within the limits of natural law.⁵⁰ His plan as finally articulated provides three channels for the consummation of this purpose: Democracy, Love, and Religion.⁵¹ These become the dominant themes of all the poems. The book is consequently a trilogy, showing how freedom may be secured for the body through democracy, for the heart through love, and for the soul through religion.⁵² By such channels the primary attributes of Whitman's character, which, as we have seen, were egotism, sensuousness, and sentiment, found a natural

⁴⁹ "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," *Complete Writings*, III, 41.

⁵⁰ Cf. "To Thee Old Cause," I, 4-5.

⁵¹ First specifically named in "Starting from Paumanok" (1860), I, 23.

⁵² Kennedy described the book as a trilogy celebrating the Body, Democracy, and Religion. (*Reminiscences*, pp. 100-102.)

outlet. Sentiment, which appeared in his early writing as sentimentality, eventually developed into a deep sense of the spiritual and the ideal.

1. *Physical Freedom*

Thorough Jeffersonian that he was, he was pledged to democracy first of all because he believed it would safeguard the freedom of the individual, on whom the greatness of the state depends. "Produce great Persons," he said, "the rest follows."⁵³ Hence egotism was a part of his rôle as the poet of an individualistic democracy, but it was also an inherent trait in his character.⁵⁴ The "I" in *Leaves of Grass* is both the microcosmic Walt Whitman, citizen of the Universe, and the actual Walt Whitman, citizen of Brooklyn; the poet of great persons must himself be a great person. He was fairly intoxicated with admiration of his own form and flesh;⁵⁵ and when he writes, "I know perfectly well my own egotism," he is not making a confession so much as a boast.⁵⁶ Admitting that the old gods did the work of their days, he affirms that the modern man is potentially a greater god, and offers himself as exemplary evidence.⁵⁷ He promises to make New York illustrious,⁵⁸ and is confident that he will leave his mark as ineffaceably on the modern world as Christ, his co-worker and equal, left his on the past.⁵⁹

But the individual cannot effectually assert his freedom until he has overthrown the past with its lumber of tradition and its web of restraints. Whitman is therefore the advocate of revolt; he is the arch-rebel. His is the pioneer's boundless impatience of restraint,⁶⁰ and his the revolutionist's hatred of kings and

⁵³ "By Blue Ontario's Shore" (1860), II, 108.

⁵⁴ Kennedy says (p. 116): "His egotism (not that of his books, but of his private life) was rather repellent at times to his friends."

⁵⁵ "Song of Myself" (1855), I, 36, 56, 64.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 94.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 91.

⁵⁸ "City of Orgies" (1860), I, 151-152.

⁵⁹ "To Him That Was Crucified" (1860), II, 159.

⁶⁰ "Song of the Broad-Axe" (1856), I, 225.

priests.⁶¹ He takes no account of man-made laws, and where others give duties he gives impulses.⁶² His motto was, "*Resist much, obey little.*"⁶³ The social conventions were among the first to be discarded; and to prove his independence he sounded his barbaric yawp in defiance of the schools⁶⁴ and wore his hat indoors or out as he pleased.⁶⁵ "I see that the elementary laws never apologize," he remarked with evident satisfaction.⁶⁶ Neither would he apologize; he would be audacious, even with the elements. "Say, old top-knot," he cried, addressing the earth, "what do you want?"⁶⁷

Unless he heard amiss, the earth wanted a prophet of democracy, and offered him the grass as a symbol.⁶⁸ He accepted the symbol and made it the banner of a crusade for the establishment of a new order of society in which all should be equal and all great. "By God!" he cried, "I will accept nothing which all cannot have their counterpart of on the same terms."⁶⁹ He does not, however, abrogate his own superiority as seer and spokesman. The equality is potential, not actual. To attempt to reduce all people at once to a condition of equality would mean degeneration for the more advanced. Democracy requires only that each individual be left free to grow; his equality with other individuals consists in his freedom, not in any identity of qualities. Whitman acknowledges that eventually the "little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and tail'd coats" may reach his level, but at present he dismisses them contemptuously as "positively not worms or fleas."⁷⁰ It is indispensable to the protection of his own rights that others shall possess the same,⁷¹ equality being a corollary of divinity, and he admitted no God but what waits intrinsically in each person.⁷² He shouts to every

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, I, 233

⁶³ "To the States" (1860), I, 10.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 56.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 89.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 62.

⁷¹ "Thought" (1860), II, 38.

⁶² "Myself and Mine" (1860), I, 290.

⁶⁴ "Song of Myself," I, 108.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 57.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 39.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 94.

⁷² "To You" (1856), I, 285.

individual the challenge that he himself has already accepted, "Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard!"⁷³

With all his enthusiasm for equality, he was sometimes shocked by the incompetence of elected officials and the lassitude of the people as they drifted towards disunion and civil war. He could not help observing that many men went about as though "with dimes on the eyes walking,"⁷⁴ and that the government at Washington seemed incapable and asleep in the presence of impending tragedy.⁷⁵ When on the point of losing faith in himself and his mission, he is reassured by the thought that he can do no work but his own; that the great play of life goes on and he must contribute a verse,⁷⁶ without which, however poor, the play would be incomplete. Inevitably he learned the meanness of which human nature is capable, and inevitably, in time, he lost much of his own arrogant self-confidence; yet the trials of war fully confirmed his faith in the common people and in the ultimate success of democracy.⁷⁷

As in his journalistic youth Whitman had been a patriot and expansionist, so he continued to the end of his life. He was not content with the annexation of Texas and a part of Mexico. "Come," he said, "I will make the continent indissoluble."⁷⁸ Of necessity he was a unionist, for without union his nation could not hope to grow into the power and grandeur which he had dreamed for it; but up to 1860 he had thought of the United States as a union of Democracies,⁷⁹ each sovereign in matters that pertained to itself, and submitting to the central authority only for legislation affecting their diverse interests. Neither the state nor the nation, he had supposed, was the guardian of

⁷³ *Ibid.*, I, 286.

⁷⁴ "Song of Myself," I, 93.

⁷⁵ "To the States" (1860), II, 39.

⁷⁶ "O Me! O Life!" (1865-6), II, 33.

⁷⁷ "Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps" (1865), II, 54-56; see also "Long, Too Long America" (1865), II, 77.

⁷⁸ "For You O Democracy" (1860), I, 142.

⁷⁹ "Thoughts" (1860), II, 275-277.

democracy, but the individual, strong in self-esteem and personality,⁸⁰ for whose convenience the state was created. When he heard America singing, the songs were varied, and he mentions no choir-leader!⁸¹ The Civil War convinced him, however, that if democracy was to survive it must have the support of a strong national government; and when the drums beat their imperious message down the land, Whitman was among the first to call upon the citizen to forget his individual interest and devote himself unquestioningly to the cause of union.⁸² For him the victory of the North over the South was the victory of liberty over the feudal past.⁸³ Thenceforth he looked to the nation as well as to the individual to advance the cause of democracy, and warned the rest of the world that these American shores are inviolable.⁸⁴ The new respect with which he regarded the nation led him to call it by the name that was to him most sacred—the name of mother, whose children are the states.⁸⁵

Thrilled with the victory, he dreamed of the world led to democracy through the leadership of the United States,⁸⁶ of liberty sweeping the world away from the past and into a glorious future, of singers that ignore the trailing glories of the feudal world for the triumphs of the new world of democracy.⁸⁷ He heard prophetic whispers of world-wide revolution in

⁸⁰ "Thoughts" (1860), II, 262.

⁸¹ "I Hear America Singing" (1860), I, 13-14.

⁸² "Beat! Beat! Drums!" (1865), II, 44-45; "Song of the Banner at Daybreak" (1865), II, 46-53. Though not published until 1865, these poems were probably written in 1861 or 1862, as their tone indicates.

⁸³ "Lo, Victress on the Peaks" (1865-6), II, 89-90.

⁸⁴ "World Take Good Notice" (1865), II, 86. Perhaps this poem was written while the country was alarmed by the attempt of Napoleon III to set up an empire in Mexico under French protection.

⁸⁵ See "Pensive on Her Dead Gazing" (1865), II, 282, "Delicate Cluster" (1871), II, 88, and "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood" (1872), II, 235-242, etc.

⁸⁶ "Thick-Sprinkled Bunting" (1865), II, 267.

⁸⁷ "Turn O Libertad" (1865), II, 92.

which organized humanity shall unite in one harmonious democratic state.

What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of you,
passing under the seas?

Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one
heart to the globe?⁸⁸

The enthusiasm did not last, and he continued to be primarily a nationalist, yet always with persistent leanings towards some kind of international unity.⁸⁹ He became in many respects less radical in old age, but particularly in his attitude towards the past, the value of which he came to understand better than he did in the years of his revolt.⁹⁰ When pressed by some of his friends for commitments on social and other radical theories he escaped into generalities.⁹¹ With age he grew to have more respect for law, perceiving not only that law is a necessary correlative of freedom,⁹² but that the elements themselves, the aboriginal home of freedom, submit to irrevocable law and from this limitation derive their power.⁹³

2. *Emotional Freedom*

Whitman's pursuit of physical freedom through the channel of democracy was not more zealous than his pursuit of emotional freedom through the channel of love. In him more than in others emotion was directly allied with sense perception; hence the extreme sensuousness of his nature was the source

⁸⁸ "Years of the Modern" (1865), II, 271-273.

⁸⁹ See "The United States to Old World Critics" (1888), II, 312-313, and "On, On the Same, Ye Jocund Twain!" (1891), III, 8-9.

⁹⁰ See, for example, "Old Chants" (1891), III, 15-16.

⁹¹ See in particular Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, III, 478-481.

⁹² As appears in "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood" (1872), II, 240, in "The Prairie States" (1880), II, 177, and in "America" (1888), II, 297. Perhaps this recognition of law partly accounts for the tendency of his later verse to follow the conventions of poetry.

⁹³ "With Husky-Haughty Lips, O Sea!" (1884), II, 303-304.

and final determinant of his songs of love. All sounds, whether of art or nature, were as music to him from childhood,⁹⁴ all sights lovely, all contact intoxicating.

Mine is no callous shell,

I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop,

.

To touch my person to some one else's is about as much as
I can stand.⁹⁵

He had also something of the intuitive and mystic faculty that frequently accompanies such ecstasy of the senses and relied much upon it for guidance: the damp of night was more convincing to him than logic and sermons.⁹⁶ His descriptions of nature are rich with the imagery of sense, as in the beautiful passage beginning "Press close bare-bosom'd night."⁹⁷ He called himself the "caresser of life" in all its aspects,⁹⁸ the gross as well as the refined, and he frankly announced that he was no sentimentalist, but a believer in the flesh and the appetites, turbulent and sensual.⁹⁹ That his sensual grossness was not merely theoretical is shown by the fact that it pervades all his early *Leaves*, even where it is not at all necessary to his rôle as a cosmic personality.¹⁰⁰

The sensual realism of the poems of sex, the most characteristic of which were published in the edition of 1856,¹⁰¹ is

⁹⁴ "Proud Music of the Storm" (1869), II, 180-181.

⁹⁵ "Song of Myself," I, 68.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 70. See also I, 40-41, for description of a mystic experience.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 58-59.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 46.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 62.

¹⁰⁰ Numerous examples might be cited from the poems of 1855 and 1856. His conversation, on the other hand, was singularly free from coarseness. Ellen M. Calder (Mrs. W. D. O'Connor) in her "Personal Recollections of Walt Whitman" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, XCIX, 832 (June, 1907), says: "No man ever lived who loathed coarseness and vulgarity in speech more than he, and I am witness that on two occasions he reproved men, supposed to be gentlemen, for their license in that respect."

¹⁰¹ These poems were grouped together in 1860 and given the title *Enfans d'Adam*, which was changed in 1867 to *Children of Adam*.

notorious. Whether these passionate poems were the record of Whitman's actual experience, as most biographers believe, or the product of sheer imagination is of no consequence to the critical study of the poet; for undoubtedly he conceived the experiences they describe to be proper for the poet of democracy and would have wished to have them if he did not. They were written to destroy the literary taboo by which the facts of sex were in his time obscured and distorted and to uphold the contention that whatever is natural is good and a suitable theme for poetry. Though their realism was obviously overdone, Whitman resisted all efforts to persuade him to alter them materially. It is noticeable, however, that in later poems he limited himself to the usual generalizations in dealing with the subject of sex relations, being satisfied, apparently, to have asserted once for all the right of sexual love to free and literal expression in poetry.

The poet of 1855 was something of a savage, but he was a friendly and magnetic savage,¹⁰² one who wished to be loved by strangers as he passed;¹⁰³ for was not adhesiveness one of the requirements of the new order of American bards? Apparently, however, it was not until 1859 that Whitman began to write the *Calamus* group of poems specially devoted to friendship and the establishment of the love of comrades as an institution.¹⁰⁴ The sense of touch, so vital to sexual love, has also its place in manly love, for the proper salute of comrades is a light kiss on the lips.¹⁰⁵ This type of love is indeed so definitely physical, as of an electric fire within,¹⁰⁶ that when he is not in the near presence of his lovers he doubts the reality of his own body.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² "Song of Myself," I, 88.

¹⁰³ "Song of the Open Road" (1856), I, 182.

¹⁰⁴ See "In Paths Untrodden" (1860), I, 137, and "I Hear It Was Charged Against Me" (1860), I, 154.

¹⁰⁵ "Behold This Swarthy Face" (1860), I, 152.

¹⁰⁶ "O You Whom I Often and Silently Come" (1860), I, 161.

¹⁰⁷ "That Shadow My Likeness" (1860), I, 161.

He is jealous and sleepless when his comrade is away,¹⁰⁸ and is at times so terrified by the power and strangeness of his emotion that he does not dare tell it.¹⁰⁹ He warns the new person drawn to him that he is a difficult lover and perhaps not all that he seems.¹¹⁰ "You would have to give up all else," he explains; "I alone would expect to be your sole and exclusive standard."¹¹¹ Here the man Whitman is identified with his book, so that the word "lover" is made to include his devoted reader as well as his devoted friend.

Evidently Whitman made a distinction between his disciples and intimate friends and those who knew him only casually in person or book. He who is capable of becoming his lover or disciple will recognize the divine relationship immediately and acknowledge him as nearer than parent, wife, or child. "Some are baffled, but that one is not—that one knows me."¹¹² To others he gives tokens indicative of friendship—lilac, laurel, moss—but to him alone and to such as love in like manner he gives the calamus-root, symbol of special love.¹¹³ It is difficult not to believe that Whitman dreamed at this time of being the prophet of a new religion around whom should gather a group of disciples dedicated to the work of evangelizing the world. He was convinced that the love of comrades would advance American democracy by reconciling the conflicting interests of the individual and the nation.¹¹⁴ Perhaps the main purport of the United States is to develop a new and exalted type of friendship, latent in all men, yet previously unknown.¹¹⁵ "Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems of freedom yet," for when men from different sections of the country learn to

¹⁰⁸ "Recorders Ages Hence" (1860), I, 147–148.

¹⁰⁹ "Earth, My Likeness" (1860), I, 158.

¹¹⁰ "Are You the New Person Drawn Toward Me?" (1860), I, 149.

¹¹¹ "Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand" (1860), I, 140.

¹¹² "Among the Multitude" (1860), I, 161.

¹¹³ "These I Singing in Spring" (1860), I, 142–144.

¹¹⁴ "For You O Democracy" (1860), I, 142.

¹¹⁵ "To the East and to the West" (1860), I, 159.

love and understand one another, they will be able to love and understand united America.¹¹⁶

Another order of love, more spiritual yet indirectly connected with sense too, is seen in Whitman's imaginative faculty of sympathetic identification of himself with others physically and emotionally. "I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there . . . My hurts turn livid upon me as I lean on a cane and observe."¹¹⁷ This was in 1855, when his experience of suffering was probably limited to inactive observation; but a few years later his sympathy was translated into action in the hospitals of New York, where he often served as volunteer nurse to soldier and sailor patients and to his friends, the stage-drivers, when they were sick.¹¹⁸ It is not strange that when in December, 1862, he became acquainted with the needs of the wounded soldiers in the camps of Virginia and the hospitals of Washington he remained to satisfy them as well as he could.

In 1859 he was suffering from dejection, the cause of which is unknown; possibly some one particularly dear to him had died or was in distress.¹¹⁹ The poems written at this time show an interest in death so profound that one is almost compelled to think it was the consequence of some personal bereavement. He is now able to understand how death is inseparably folded with love.¹²⁰ In the beautiful dirge "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" it is revealed to him how in death the creative power of love is made free from the biological law of procreation and sublimated to the loftier uses of the poetic imagination.

Healing the bodies and souls of crippled young men was

¹¹⁶ "Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice" (1867), II, 81-82. Most of the lines of this poem, including the one quoted, appeared in *Calamus*, No. 5, in 1860.

¹¹⁷ "Song of Myself," I, 81. Numerous similar illustrations can be found in this and other early poems.

¹¹⁸ Perry, pp. 130-131. See also Charles I. Glicksberg, *Walt Whitman and the Civil War*, pp. 15-46.

¹¹⁹ Holloway, *Whitman*, p. 164.

¹²⁰ "Scented Herbage of My Breast" (1860), I, 138-139.

itself a work of creation no less than the making of poems, and he was equally proud of both.¹²¹ His service was given as freely to the boys from the South as to the boys from the North, and after the carnage he would, like Lincoln, have leashed the wolves of prejudice and revenge and left the stricken land to the purifying hands of death and night. For, as he says in "Reconciliation,"

For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—
I draw near,
Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face
in the coffin.

Through compassion love had been released from the bounds of sense and was growing to the breadth of benevolence. He now hoped that as his songs had been nourished in the North, they might ripen in the sun of Southern favor.¹²² The songs did indeed ripen, not however in the warmth of the South, but in the fervor of his own aroused emotions. One of the first of these ripened songs was the threnody, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd," which shows how a diverse people are united in their common love of Lincoln, through whose death that love is made perfect and immortal. For the completion of the growth of Whitman's love from the sensual and particular to the spiritual and universal it only remained for the benevolent compassion born of the tragedy of war to be extended beyond the shores of America and enfold the world. Evidence is not lacking in the poems to show that he went part of the way in this last stage of development,¹²³ but his affections were too firmly rooted in the soil of nationalism, and universal love was for him rather an ideal than a consummation.

¹²¹ "Not Youth Pertains to Me" (1865), II, 85.

¹²² "To the Leaven'd Soil They Trod" (1865-6), II, 92-93.

¹²³ See for examples the following: "The Base of All Metaphysics" (1871), I, 146-147; "The Mystic Trumpeter" (1872), II, 249-253; "Years of the Modern" (1865), II, 271-273.

3. *Religious Freedom*

It is an inspiring prospect, this vision of a benevolent world-democracy cradled in the all-enclosing arms of love, but it leaves man unsatisfied so long as he feels earthbound and temporal. His soul is landlocked and confined, and cannot rest until it finds an outlet to the ocean. "It is a terrible sign of the human soul," Whitman wrote,¹²⁴ "that it will not own any limit, even the widest." On this premise he based his calculations, and by this sign he steered his soul's bark of faith towards illimitable seas of freedom and immortality. Its course lay through the turbulent waters of speculative philosophy, where it was buffeted between the Scylla and Charybdis of materialism and pantheism, but it passed safely and sailed boldly to its destiny. Perhaps it was guided by some undercurrent of elemental wisdom; for his affinity was with matter more than with spirit, and sentiment, the matrix of his religion, was inseparably bound to sense. One must look to nature, therefore, for the canons of his faith.

Though not reverent, he had a genuine love of nature, and his indolent, dreamy youth, apparently so barren, must have been rich with stored sensations of earth, sea, and sky. Fortunately he lived in the formative period of American national life, before the idealism of the Revolution had degenerated into political opportunism. It was also fortunate, perhaps, that he was denied the formal intellectual discipline which so often makes thought a prisoner of the mind, for his "fluid and swallowing soul"¹²⁵ was thereby free to penetrate all substances and assume all shapes. From the many philosophies he absorbed, he created an original and dynamic religion which found expression in his individual personality.

¹²⁴ In his notes for the lectures on religion, dated 1876. See *Walt Whitman's Workshop*, p. 50.

¹²⁵ "Song of Myself," I, 78.

Weary of the bigotry of parties and creeds, Whitman turned for sanctions to the amplitude of nature and found them abundantly in the newly discovered wonders of geology and physics. He looked through the abyss of space and saw the far-sprinkled systems, circuit beyond circuit, expanding outward forever, and he looked back through the abyss of time and saw the primitive nebulae cohering to orbs and the slow piling of strata upon strata for incalculable ages.¹²⁶ He was filled with wonder at the "vast similitude" that spans and harmonizes this multitude of worlds,¹²⁷ among which, though unplanned as the architect plans,¹²⁸ the round earth moves invariably in its proper orbit without jolt or the untruth of a single second.¹²⁹

(He saw that creation is a continuous organic growth, not a work that is begun or finished, and the creative force is the procreative impulse in nature.¹³⁰ Progress is the infallible consequence of this creative force in nature, and though the universe is perfect at any given moment, it is growing constantly towards higher orders of perfection.¹³¹) If new forms are needed they are produced as surely as if designed from the beginning. "When the materials are all prepared and ready, the architects shall appear."¹³² Every moment is a consummation developed from endless past consummations and preparing for endless consummations in the future.¹³³ Thus the universe is "a procession with measured and perfect motion," and each object has its place.¹³⁴ No one thing is more perfect than another: "a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the stars."¹³⁵ That

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 100.

¹²⁷ "On the Beach at Night Alone" (1856), II, 21-22.

¹²⁸ "Who Learns My Lesson Complete?" (1855), II, 169.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, II, 168.

¹³⁰ "Song of Myself," I, 35.

¹³¹ "A Song of the Rolling Earth" (1856), I, 269.

¹³² *Ibid.*, I, 275.

¹³³ "Song of Prudence" (1856), II, 148.

¹³⁴ "I Sing the Body Electric" (1855), I, 119.

¹³⁵ "Song of Myself," I, 70.

which fills its place is as great as any,¹³⁶ and the majesty and beauty of the whole are latent in each part.¹³⁷

(Nature is not only perfect but also divine. Indeed, it is perfect because it is divine. There is no division in nature, no irreconcilable feud between matter and spirit; and there is no separate deity looking down from some detached Heaven upon a temporal world that his hand created and may destroy at pleasure. That which is at all is of God, and though it may change in place and form, it can never lose its divine character. The earth is a "divine ship sailing a divine sea."¹³⁸ Whatever is is well, and whatever will be will be well;¹³⁹ evil, or what seems evil, no less than good, is permitted by the celestial laws, which are finished and perfect.¹⁴⁰ God is in every object,¹⁴¹ because every object has an eternal soul¹⁴² and passes eventually into spiritual results.¹⁴³ God is therefore coextensive with the universe and like the universe is in process of continuous development through the creative force in nature. There is no God except what waits intrinsically in each individual,¹⁴⁴ and the true God is typified in the ideal man.¹⁴⁵

This is so because man stands at the head of creation: he is "an acme of things accomplish'd" and "an encloser of things to be."¹⁴⁶ Out of the "huge first Nothing" he rose through the lethargic mist and the fetid carbon until he stood upon the topmost step of the stairs of creation;¹⁴⁷ yet, looking back along the way he has come, he can recall at will any stage through which he has passed and so, in a sense, incorporates all matter and all life.¹⁴⁸ Having come so far, he must surely go on until

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 97.

¹³⁷ "Assurances" (1856), II, 227-228.

¹³⁸ "A Song of the Rolling Earth," I, 272. Cf. also "You Tides with Ceaseless Swell" (1885), II, 299-300.

¹³⁹ "To Think of Time," II, 217.

¹⁴⁰ "Song of Myself," I, 60.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, I, 105.

¹⁴² "To Think of Time," II, 220.

¹⁴³ "Think of the Soul" (1856, later rejected). See *Inclusive Edition*, p. 469.

¹⁴⁴ "To You" (1856), I, 285.

¹⁴⁵ "Song of Myself," I, 100.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 98.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 98.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, I, 71.

in due time he becomes one of the supremes.¹⁴⁹ The seed of perfection is in each person,¹⁵⁰ but no matter how far he advances, his desire for further advancement remains insatiable.¹⁵¹

The final purpose of this restlessness of spirit in man and nature is the continuity of life. Nothing is real or valid, not even God, except in relation to this purpose. It is not supernatural,¹⁵² yet it is not stopped by death, for the dead advance as much as the living.¹⁵³ As we know that the sun lives on through the night because we see its light reflected in the moon, so we know that life continues, transformed, through death—that from corpses white roses grow.¹⁵⁴ For like night, death is magnetic, nourishing, restorative,¹⁵⁵ and life is the leavings of many deaths.¹⁵⁶ (The law of nature is the same in man and animals: it is the law of love, of life, of continuity¹⁵⁷—it is the law of promotion and transformation and cannot be eluded.¹⁵⁸ Something, Whitman perceives, drives man forward along the way to perfection, which passes through birth, life, death, and burial;¹⁵⁹ he does not fully understand what it is, but he knows that it is form, union, plan—that it is happiness and eternal life.¹⁶⁰)

Whitman calls it soul, this mysterious something, strangely linked with the procreative impulse, that gives form and continuity to the life of nature and impels man towards happiness and immortality. It is omnipresent in the substance of the universe, the "float forever held in solution," from which a portion is struck off at the birth of the individual and given identity in his body.¹⁶¹ "Something long preparing and formless," he

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 92.

¹⁵¹ "Song of Myself," I, 102.

¹⁵³ "Song of the Broad-Axe" (1856), I, 228.

¹⁵⁴ "Song of Myself," I, 106.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 58, 88.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, I, 48.

¹⁵⁹ "To You," I, 287.

¹⁶¹ "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (1856), I, 195, 197.

¹⁵⁰ "Faces" (1855), II, 247.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, I, 92.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 106.

¹⁵⁸ "To Think of Time," II, 218.

¹⁶⁰ "Song of Myself," I, 107.

says, "is arrived and form'd in you."¹⁶² Henceforth wherever the individual goes he becomes a part of all he meets and it becomes a part of him.¹⁶³ Everywhere he goes he feels the latent presence of unseen existences that impart to him something of themselves and call from diffusion his own meanings and give shape to them.¹⁶⁴ This "efflux of the soul" is love, which draws men together and makes them happy.¹⁶⁵ His relation with nature is no less close, for he can hear his lovers, the rocks and trees and flowers, calling his name and caressing him gently all over.¹⁶⁶

The soul is not merely resident in the body; it is the body for the duration of the physical life,¹⁶⁷ and one is no more divine or sacred than the other.¹⁶⁸ Immortality is not more wonderful than birth and growth;¹⁶⁹ in fact, it is only through growth that the reality of the soul has been established.¹⁷⁰ Yet whatever affects the body also affects the soul, whether it is disease, passion, or charity, and its results go beyond death; therefore "charity and personal force are the only investments worth while,"¹⁷¹ for nothing endures in life or death except personal qualities.¹⁷² In these is the wealth or poverty of the soul,¹⁷³ and these, as we have seen, it scatters wherever it goes as spiritual influences that never die. The poet laughs at what is called dissolution,¹⁷⁴ for he knows that it is but another transformation, a new birth, and that in this birth through death God is the

¹⁶² "To Think of Time," II, 217.

¹⁶³ "There Was A Child Went Forth" (1855), II, 135-138.

¹⁶⁴ "Song of the Open Road" (1856), I, 178.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 182-183.

¹⁶⁶ "Song of Myself," I, 99.

¹⁶⁷ "I Sing the Body Electric," I, 124.

¹⁶⁸ "Song of Myself," I, 63.

¹⁶⁹ "Who Learns My Lesson Complete?" II, 169-170.

¹⁷⁰ "A Song of the Rolling Earth," I, 274.

¹⁷¹ "Song of Prudence," II, 147.

¹⁷² "Song of the Broad-Axe," I, 228.

¹⁷³ "Great Are the Myths" (1855, later rejected). See *Inclusive Edition*,

p. 465.

¹⁷⁴ "Song of Myself," I, 57.

accoucheur.¹⁷⁵ He lives on, "alive and well somewhere,"¹⁷⁶ but now diffused in nature, returned to the "float" from which he came. Why should he fear death, the nourishing night of life, the growing time of the soul?

The pantheistic tone of these early poems is unmistakable. There is little in them to indicate a belief in personal identity after death.¹⁷⁷ Whitman's views changed somewhat as he grew older, though the base of his religion remained pantheistic. Even in old age the principle of continuity through transformation seemed to him the great secret of life in nature.¹⁷⁸

About 1859 or 1860, during the period of despondency already mentioned, he sometimes doubted the permanence of anything but matter;¹⁷⁹ yet this mood was not characteristic, for during the same period he wrote, among other optimistic songs, the song of joys, including the joy of death as well as the joy of life, and recorded his sure belief that the real body, the soul, "will elude the hands of the corpse-cleaners and pass to fitting spheres," carrying with it all that has accrued to it since birth.¹⁸⁰ This real body, or soul, which is the permanent life of every object and the source of the "efflux" mentioned in the early poems, he afterwards calls an "eidolon," a term borrowed from ancient philosophy, which suggests the continuation of personal identity after death.¹⁸¹ Other suggestions of the continued identity of the soul may be seen in the figure of the grave as a temporary camp breaking the forward march of the soul,¹⁸²

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 106.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 40.

¹⁷⁷ Some passages in his early work indicate a possible belief in reincarnation. See "Song of Myself," I, 95, 106, and "The Sleepers," II, 211; see also "Notes and Fragments," IX, 150-151, in which he says our immortality is located here on earth.

¹⁷⁸ "Continuities" (1884), II, 309-310.

¹⁷⁹ "Yet, Yet, Ye Downcast Hours" (1860), II, 226.

¹⁸⁰ "A Song of Joys," I, 221. See also "Starting from Paumanok," I, 26.

¹⁸¹ "Eidólons" (1876), I, 5-9.

¹⁸² "Camps of Green" (1865), II, 283-284.

and in the figure, very common, of death as the soul's embarkation on a long anticipated voyage from which there is no return.¹⁸³ When questioned in old age by his friends at Camden, he always expressed his faith in the survival of personal identity, though he acknowledged the absence of proof.¹⁸⁴

Whitman's increased confidence in personal immortality is an evidence of his deepening religious experience. Though at the outset he had announced himself as the poet of the soul no less than the poet of the body, he devoted the first editions of *Leaves of Grass*, as we have seen, largely to the celebration of the body and its material environment, content in the main to state the theory of the soul and its spiritual relations. He said afterwards that it was his original intention to write one volume of songs of the body and a separate volume of songs of the soul,¹⁸⁵ but there is no evidence of such an intention in the first edition or its preface. From the beginning, however, he was firm in his demand that the immortal soul of man shall be subject to no discipline except its own. Hence there shall be no more formulas,¹⁸⁶ no priests,¹⁸⁷ no prayer;¹⁸⁸ the man of the future shall include all gods and all faiths and be himself greater than any.¹⁸⁹ He shall understand that all truths wait in all things,¹⁹⁰ and that from them he shall make new bibles suited to new conditions.¹⁹¹

Emotionally and aesthetically matured by his experiences during the Civil War, he set forth about 1867 with renewed

¹⁸³ For examples, see "Joy, Shipmate, Joy!" (1871), II, 285, "Old Salt Kowabone" (1888), II, 308, and "Sail Out for Good, Eidólon Yacht!" (1891), III, 7.

¹⁸⁴ See *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, I, 397, III, 166, etc.

¹⁸⁵ Preface of 1876, V, 194, n.

¹⁸⁶ "Song of the Open Road," I, 184.

¹⁸⁷ "By Blue Ontario's Shore," II, 120.

¹⁸⁸ "Song of Myself," I, 56.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, I, 90, 95.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 70. See also "A Song of the Rolling Earth," I, 268.

¹⁹¹ See "A Song for Occupations," I, 261-262, and "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood," II, 240.

enthusiasm to discover these truths. He realized as never before that he must return to the past with its mysteries, its barbaric splendors, and its poignant sorrows; that from these realities he must build the ideal world of the future; that he must bridge the chasm between the transient life of the body and the permanent life of the soul.¹⁹² New and more religious poems must be written to accomplish this purpose. One of the first of these poems was "Passage to India," in which he has a vision of the human race regenerated in the union of the spiritual wisdom of the East with the enlightened materialism of the West, and of the soul made free at last through this regeneration for continued development and eventual union with God. The poem soars to inspiring heights, but Whitman's powers were inadequate to sustain him in such spiritual elevation. It remains the noblest and only adequate expression of his religious aspiration.¹

IV. LATER PROSE

Whitman continued to write a good deal of prose after he began the composition of *Leaves of Grass*, first to earn a living, and afterwards mainly to advertise and explain his poetry. From May, 1857, until June, 1859, he was editor of the independent Brooklyn *Daily Times*,¹⁹³ where he seems to have taken care to avoid controversial topics. He discusses capital punishment and temperance reform, but takes no positive stand on either subject;¹⁹⁴ he is opposed to free academies for girls, believing that girls should be educated at home to become good wives and mothers;¹⁹⁵ he is lukewarm in his opposition to slavery, allowing it another hundred years of life, and is sympathetic with the

¹⁹² See "Proud Music of the Storm" (1869), II, 178-185, and "Song of the Universal" (1874), I, 276-279.

¹⁹³ *I Sit and Look Out*, a collection of editorials from the Brooklyn *Daily Times*, ed. by Emory Holloway and Vernolian Schwarz. Introduction, pp. 15-19.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 49.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-55.

movement in the West to exclude negroes altogether;¹⁹⁶ and while cautiously hinting that it would be desirable to license houses of prostitution in the cities, he condemns such "loose popular literature" as the novels of Balzac, Sand, and Bulwer for "debauching the popular mind" and causing increased marital infidelity.¹⁹⁷ His crusade for freedom is limited to a protest against the arrest of young men bathing on the beach *au naturel* and to a defense of preachers who hold meetings in the city streets.¹⁹⁸ He is, however, still a reformer; but he feels that there must be a change in the individual before there can be a change in society.¹⁹⁹ It is for the poet, not the editor, to effect this change.

Except an unimportant series of articles on the history of Brooklyn,²⁰⁰ a few anonymous reviews of *Leaves of Grass*,²⁰¹ and some letters written from Washington to New York papers in 1863 and 1864,²⁰² he published no other prose until after the Civil War. In 1871 appeared *Democratic Vistas*, his most pretentious prose work, in which he calls for an original American literature devoted to the task of educating the masses for ideal democracy. *Specimen Days* came out in 1882. It is a collection of notes consisting principally of *Memoranda of the War* (first published separately in 1875) and notes for a nature poem (never composed)²⁰³ made while he was convalescing at Timber Creek, near Camden, from the paralysis of 1873. Besides these

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 87-89. Furness says, however, in his essay on "Whitman's Politics," already referred to, that "The underlying motive which prompted Whitman to undertake a detailed study of the theory of government was evidently his intense desire to cope with the problem of slavery sanely, and to be able to base his arguments upon premises of legal certainty, rather than sentiment."

¹⁹⁷ *I Sit and Look Out*, pp. 113-120.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

²⁰⁰ Published in the *Brooklyn Standard*, 1861-1862. See *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, II, pp. 222 f.

²⁰¹ See *In Re Walt Whitman*, pp. 13-32.

²⁰² See *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, II, 26-41.

²⁰³ *Complete Writings*, V, 40-42.

major works, he published three important prefaces in which he attempted to explain the plan and purpose of *Leaves of Grass*,²⁰⁴ and several essays dealing with poets and poetry.²⁰⁵

A notable feature of this later prose is its cautious and conservative tone. Whitman perceived as he grew in experience of the world that improvements are much slower than he had at first expected, and that he must look to the remote future for the fulfillment of his dreams. He learned patience, no doubt, from the study of history, especially geologic history, and from his personal observation of the limitations of human nature. He was not afraid to say the worst that could be said of democracy in America. Everywhere he looked he found sectarianism, hypocrisy, and unbelief in religion; depravity, corruption, and scoundrelism in business and public life; vulgarity, shallowness, and disease in all classes.²⁰⁶

Politics, though established on permanent and sound principles in the United States, cannot remedy these evils.²⁰⁷ Parties ruled by the caucus have often placed the meanest men in office. He advises the young man to enter politics actively, but to avoid parties or else master them.²⁰⁸ He has grave doubts whether the masses are yet capable through general elections to select the best qualified men for public office, but since we have gone so far already, he favors extending the suffrage to the widest possible limit, believing in spite of all alarms that the will of the whole people, the average, will in the end prove to be right.²⁰⁹ He himself always followed national elections with great interest. Nominally a Republican after 1860, he could

²⁰⁴ These were the prefaces to *As A Strong Bird on Pinions Free* (1872), *Two Rivulets* (1876), and *November Boughs* (1888). The last mentioned preface was called "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads."

²⁰⁵ The most important of these essays are "Poetry To-day in America," (1882), "Robert Burns as Poet and Person" (1886), and "A Word about Tennyson" (1888).

²⁰⁶ "Democratic Vistas," V, 62, 65, 86-87, 143-144.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 123.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 106.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 88; "Notes Left Over," V, 289-290.

never be reconciled to the protective tariff. He considered it "a damnable imposition upon the masses."²¹⁰ Its benefits "go altogether to a few score select persons—who, by favors of Congress, State legislatures, the banks, and other special advantages, are forming a vulgar aristocracy, full as bad as anything in the British or European castes, of blood, or the dynasties there of the past."²¹¹ He also objected to the tariff as a barrier to international co-operation and good will.²¹² He felt that perhaps the greatest danger to democracy is poverty, with its consequent class antagonisms and moral degradation. Unless all citizens are prosperous and the owners of property there can be no successful democratic state.²¹³ "If the United States," he said, "like the countries of the Old World, are also to grow vast crops of poor, desperate, dissatisfied, nomadic, miserably-waged populations, such as we see looming upon us of late years . . . then our republican experiment, notwithstanding all its surface-successes, is at heart an unhealthy failure."²¹⁴ He wanted the masses, the whole people, to have what belongs to them, but his native caution made him shy away from the socialistic theories of his Camden friends.²¹⁵ He was radical so far as it was safe to be, but he preferred evolution to revolution, and his advice to Horace Traubel was, "Be radical—be radical—be not too damned radical!"²¹⁶

The desire of Whitman was to secure for the individual the maximum of freedom with the minimum of risk, and this, he was convinced, the American plan of government was best able to do. Democracy, with all its weaknesses, is the only safe and preservative formula for coming times because it alone promises

²¹⁰ *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, III, 207. He seems to have had more faith in Cleveland in 1888 than in Harrison. See *Ibid.*, II, 317.

²¹¹ "Notes Left Over," V, 290-291.

²¹² *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, I, 6.

²¹³ "Democratic Vistas," V, 82-83.

²¹⁴ "Notes Left Over," V, 286.

²¹⁵ *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, III, 478-481.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 200, 216, 223.

to the individual that highest possible freedom in which he becomes a law unto himself.²¹⁷ Such freedom is not license or a fixed concession, but a harmonious relationship with the cosmic will; for law is the unshakable order of the universe, and the law of laws is the law of successions—of the superior supplanting the inferior.²¹⁸ Only when the individual is free and society fluid can the law of successions operate without obstruction. Against all doubts and fears he placed the bulwark of his faith that “indirectly, but surely, goodness, virtue, law (of the very best,) follow freedom.”²¹⁹

But the individual is ineffectual when isolated, and his freedom has no vitality unless protected by a strong national organization.²²⁰ Individuality and nationality balance one another like the centripetal and centrifugal forces in nature, and in the maintenance of this balance is the only hope for life and progress.²²¹ The welding of a vast number of diverse individuals into a homogeneous nation is possible only with the aid of comradely love and common ideals.²²² Whitman hoped that the Civil War would help to develop these aids to a democratic state. His enthusiasm for national expansion was as strong as ever, and he looked forward to the time when the United States, having absorbed Canada and Cuba, should become master of the Pacific and Atlantic oceans and assume its destined rôle as the leading nation of the world.²²³

From this expectation of a paramount American democracy he advances, as in “Passage to India,” to the dream of a world united and democratized under the leadership of the United

²¹⁷ “Democratic Vistas,” V, 69–70, 78–79.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, V, 79.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, V, 82.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, V, 67.

²²¹ “Notes Left Over,” V, 262–263.

²²² “Democratic Vistas,” V, 80.

²²³ See “Specimen Days,” IV, 296–297, and “Democratic Vistas,” V, 84–85, 130. He considered it the duty of democratic America to accept all immigrants without restriction. See *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, II, 34–35.

States. "I have thought that . . . we have adhered too long to petty limits, and that the time has come to enfold the world."²²⁴ America is not to remain separate and different, as he once thought, but to fuse "inseparably with the East, and with all, as time does," and to enlarge and complete the old civilization instead of trying to overthrow it.²²⁵

Before this dream can be realized, democracy must pervade and govern the social, religious, and aesthetic life of the people as well as the political, and the only means by which this result can be accomplished is a great democratic literature, with its poets, artists, and teachers all dedicated to the same work. Since the old world is already committed to a feudalistic tradition, such a literature can be produced only in America, the "inheritor of the past" and the "custodian of the future of humanity."²²⁶ The wealth of America must not blind her to the fact that material success is excellent only when it tends to the ideal and supports the soul in its progress towards the perfect.²²⁷ The facts of science must not be permitted to vitiate man's faith in the divine purpose behind the law of change, "the unseen thread which holds the whole congeries of things, all history and time, and all events, however trivial, however momentous, like a leash'd dog in the hand of the hunter."²²⁸

He accepts Darwinism as an advance, but is unwilling to admit that it finally answers the question of origins or destinies.²²⁹ The most satisfactory answer thus far made, he thinks, is Hegel's theory of the cosmic consciousness advancing through conflict and contradiction towards some purposed objective;²³⁰ but Hegel, like Darwin, is cold and intellectual,

²²⁴ "Poetry To-day in America," V, 222.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 212. See also *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, II, 317, 349.

²²⁶ "Notes Left Over," V, 263.

²²⁷ "Democratic Vistas," V, 135; "Poetry To-day in America," V, 224-225.

²²⁸ "Specimen Days," IV, 317-318.

²²⁹ "Notes Left Over," V, 278-279.

²³⁰ "Specimen Days," IV, 319.

whereas Whitman demands the warmth and exaltation of the ancient prophets.²³¹ It is his faith that the true poet, when he comes, will be able to reconcile all these contradictions, and from the result of such reconciliation discover that law of laws, the law of liberty, which grows from "the fusion and combination of the conscious will or partial individual law, with those universal, eternal, unconscious ones, which run through all time, pervade history, prove immortality, give moral purpose to the entire objective world, and the last dignity to human life."²³²

This future poet must be bold, modern, and cosmic.²³³ He must accept the idealism of Hegel, the scientific realism of Darwin, and the faith of Christ; he must have the dramatic power of Shakespeare, the epic breadth of Homer, and the religious fire of Isaiah.²³⁴ And he must have the genius to give consistency and effectiveness to all these. At the time he was writing "Democratic Vistas" and "Passage to India" Whitman hoped that he himself might be this great poet, but after a few exploratory flights he decided that such high, religious poetry, although he might lay the foundation for it, was beyond his powers.²³⁵

As Whitman grew more certain of his place among the poets, his interest in literary criticism increased. His own modest opinion was, "I am a hell of a critic";²³⁶ yet there is no doubt but that in his recorded conversations and occasional prefaces and essays he displayed unusual acumen in appraising his own work as well as the work of his contemporaries.²³⁷ One result, perhaps, of his critical studies was the modification of his own

²³¹ *Ibid.*, IV, 322-323; see also V, 278-279.

²³² "Notes Left Over," V, 298.

²³³ "Democratic Vistas," V, 127-128.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, V, 141.

²³⁵ See Preface, 1876, V, 194, n.

²³⁶ *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, I, 56.

²³⁷ See Norman Foerster's essay on Walt Whitman in his *American Criticism* for a full discussion of Whitman as a critic.

early radical position.²³⁸ His early view was that a "plate-glassy" and boldly realistic style is best for the new American poetry.²³⁹ Without meter, rhyme, or other ornament, it shall be without other form than that which belongs to the free growth of organic nature, which it reflects as a mirror. It must secure its effects mainly through indirection and suggestion. This last theory he reiterated and elaborated as he grew more and more towards the spiritual and away from the material in nature. "Poetic style," he said in the preface of 1876, "when address'd to the Soul, is less definite form, outline, sculpture, and becomes vista, music, half-tints, and even less than half-tints."²⁴⁰ Through Tennyson he discovered the beauty of verbal melody and the advantage of pictorial and dramatic art in poetry, and he acknowledged that the lack of these in his own poetry is perhaps a defect.²⁴¹ His revolt against conformity gradually subsided. Many of his later poems—especially those written during and just following the War, such as "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" and "O Captain! My Captain!" and "Ethiopia Saluting the Colors"—are quite regular in structure. He also discovered that there are objections to pure realism. The poet of the future, as he finally visualized him, must not merely reflect nature and the material, but absorb and spiritualize them; he must make "no useless attempt to repeat the material creation," but through imagination project and transcend it.²⁴² Like Wordsworth, he felt that art must endow the facts of

²³⁸ His own explanation was that the arrogance of the youthful poems would have been inappropriate to the poems of a later date. See *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, II, 225.

²³⁹ Preface to the 1855 edition of *Leaves of Grass, Inclusive Edition*, pp. 491, 495-496, 500-501. See also "Notes and Fragments," IX, 32-35. Needless to say, the most poetic portions of these first poems are far from "plate-glassy" in style.

²⁴⁰ *Complete Writings*, V, 202-203. See also "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," III, 58, and "Democratic Vistas," V, 147-148.

²⁴¹ "A Word About Tennyson," VI, 146. See also "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," III, 49-50.

²⁴² "Democratic Vistas," V, 138-139.

science with something of the glow of a deeper, imaginative reality.²⁴³ He was aware that in such matters American poets might yet learn much from the study and imitation of the poets of the old world, and that for the present and a long time to come "a certain humility would well become us."²⁴⁴

Nevertheless, Whitman clung persistently to his original belief that since nature is different in America, it will eventually produce a different race of people for whom a new and autochthonous literature shall be created.²⁴⁵ So far American poetry has been purely imitative and trivial—a "copious dribble" of piano songs and tinkling rhymes.²⁴⁶ Let the poet of the future beware of too much refinement and conformity and trust to his instincts;²⁴⁷ nature looks on all "fixed-up poetry and art as something almost impertinent."²⁴⁸ Whitman's formula for style is to have no style,²⁴⁹ and the burden of his aesthetics is, "Be natural, be natural, be natural!"²⁵⁰ He would break down the barriers of form between prose and poetry and restrict the use of rhyme and meter to comic verse.²⁵¹ Yet his verse is as different from ordinary prose as from ordinary poetry. His unit of rhythm is the phrase instead of the foot, and his unit of thought is the line instead of the sentence. The most notable features of his verse are repetition, parallelism, and a high rhetorical tone. The form and movement of his own poetry he compared to the form and movement of the ocean:

Its verses are the liquid, billowy waves, ever rising and falling, perhaps sunny and smooth, perhaps wild with storm, always moving, always alike in their nature as rolling waves, but hardly any two exactly alike in size or measure (meter), never

²⁴³ "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," III, 45-46.

²⁴⁴ "Poetry To-day in America," V, 228.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, V, 223-224.

²⁴⁶ "Democratic Vistas," V, 121.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, V, 99-100.

²⁴⁸ "Specimen Days," V, 42.

²⁴⁹ *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, I, 105.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 194.

²⁵¹ "Notes Left Over," V, 271-272.

having the sense of something finished and fixed, always suggesting something beyond.²⁵²

In short, the one cardinal principle that he has tried to illustrate in *Leaves of Grass* is that the only fitting poetry for democratic America is that which shall "tally and express" nature in its cosmic fullness, including its spiritual as well as its material aspects; for, after all, nature is the only complete and actual poem.²⁵³

From this brief survey of Whitman's work it should be apparent that he grew continuously through youth and middle age in all the qualities of mind, heart, and soul. Indeed, it would have been a strange contradiction of his faith and philosophy if he had not. And yet that faith and philosophy, as well as his personal character, remained essentially the same throughout. His passion for freedom, his belief in nature, and his faith in immortality, though modified from time to time by increasing respect for the laws of society, of science, and of art, are so interwoven in the texture of his life as to give it unity and strength above all diversity and seeming contradiction. The course of his development is marked by two major crises, one of which belongs to the years 1847-1855 and the other to the period of the Civil War. In the first, through the elevation of self he attained freedom for the body and the mind; in the second, through the abnegation of self he attained freedom for the heart and the soul. The direction of his evolution was always from the real to the ideal and from the material to the spiritual, and it was his conviction that such was also the direction of evolution in nature.

²⁵² *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, I, 414-415.

²⁵³ "Democratic Vistas," V, 140. There is doubtless more to Whitman's prosody than he has chosen to acknowledge. Yet, whatever artistic devices he may have used, his final purpose was to reproduce in his poems the rhythms of nature. It is impossible to say how well he succeeded unless the rhythms of nature could be definitely known. That most of his verse is not free of conventional forms is certain. The problem is too complicated to be treated here in detail.

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

1819. Walt Whitman is born May 31, at West Hills, Long Island.
1823. The family moves to Brooklyn in May.
1830. Whitman secures his first job as office boy for a lawyer named Clarke.
- 1831-32. Works as printer's devil in the office of the *Long Island Patriot* and the *Long Island Star*.
- 1833-36. Probably works in printing and newspaper offices in Brooklyn and New York, though no definite information on this period is available.
- 1836-39. Teaches school in the country.
1839. Establishes the *Long Islander*, a newspaper in Huntington, Long Island.
- 1839-41. Teaches school and works part time as compositor and contributor for the *Long Island Democrat*, at Jamaica, Long Island.
- 1842-44. Successively edits the *Aurora*, the *Tattler*, the *Statesman*, and the *Democrat*, all of New York City.
1845. Writes for the *Democratic Review* and other periodicals.
- 1846-47. Edits the Brooklyn *Daily Eagle* from February, 1846, to January, 1848.
1848. Leaves Brooklyn February 11, 1848, for New Orleans, where he works for a while on the New Orleans *Crescent*, and returns to Brooklyn June 15, by way of Chicago and Niagara Falls.
1849. Edits the Brooklyn *Freeman*, an organ of the Free-Soil party.
- 1850-51. Contributes to various periodicals.
- 1852-54. Builds and sells houses with his father in Brooklyn.
1855. First edition of *Leaves of Grass*.
1856. Second edition of *Leaves of Grass*.
- 1857-59. Edits the Brooklyn *Daily Times*.
1860. Third edition of *Leaves of Grass*.

- 1862. Whitman goes to Virginia in December to see his brother George, a captain of infantry, who has been reported wounded.
- 1863-64. Becomes a volunteer nurse in the army hospitals of Washington, supporting himself by part-time work in the office of Major Hapgood, an army paymaster.
- 1865. Is appointed in February to a clerkship in the Indian Bureau of the Department of the Interior. Is dismissed by Secretary Harlan on the ground that *Leaves of Grass* is an indecent book. Re-employed soon afterwards in the Attorney General's office. Publication of *Drum-Taps*.
- 1867. Fourth regular edition of *Leaves of Grass*.
- 1868. Rossetti's selected *Poems of Walt Whitman* published in England.
- 1871. Fifth regular edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Publication of *Democratic Vistas*.
- 1872. Reads "As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free" (later entitled "Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood") as the commencement poem at Dartmouth College in June.
- 1873. Is partially paralyzed on January 23. On May 23 he is present at the death of his beloved mother at the home of George Whitman, in Camden, New Jersey. Remains in Camden to live with George.
- 1876. *Author's Edition* of Whitman's works, in two volumes: *Leaves of Grass* and *Two Rivulets*. In the summer of this year he spends several weeks at the Stafford farm on Timber Creek, a few miles from Camden, where his health is much improved. He continues to return there every summer for several years. Mrs. Gilchrist comes to live in America and settles at Philadelphia, where Whitman sees her often during the next two years.
- 1879. Whitman makes an extensive trip through the West, visits Denver and the Rocky Mountain region of Colorado, and returns by way of St. Louis for a visit of several months with his brother Jeff.
- 1880. Visits Dr. R. M. Bucke in Canada.

- 1881. Revisits the scenes of his childhood and youth in Long Island and in New York City. Goes to Boston to superintend the publication by James R. Osgood and Co. of a new and much revised edition of *Leaves of Grass*.
- 1882. Publication of *Specimen Days and Collect*.
- 1883. Publication of Dr. R. M. Bucke's *Life of Whitman*.
- 1884. Purchases a small house in Mickle Street, Camden, which becomes his home for the rest of his life.
- 1888. Publication of *November Boughs*.
- 1891-92. Final edition of *Leaves of Grass* under his personal supervision.
- 1892. Publication of the *Complete Prose Works*. Dies on March 26, and is buried, March 30, in Harleigh Cemetery, Camden.

*

Selections from
WALT WHITMAN

*

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, 10
Retiring back a while sufficed at what they are, but never
forgotten,
I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard,
Nature without check with original energy.

2

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

The atmosphere is not a perfume, it has no taste of the distilla-
tion, 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. 20

3

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? 30

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 have heard what the talkers were talking, the talk of the begin-
 ning and the end,
 But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

Song of Myself

5

There was never any more inception than there is now, 40
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 en-
tretied, braced in the beams,
Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical, 50
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, 60

Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the
 house with their plenty,
 Shall I postpone my acceptation and realization and scream at
 my eyes,
 That they turn from gazing after and down the road,
 And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,
 Exactly the value of one and exactly the value of two, and which
 is ahead?

4

Trippers and askers surround me,
 People I meet, the effect upon me of my early life or the ward
 and city I live in, or the nation,
 The latest dates, discoveries, inventions, societies, authors old
 and new,
 My dinner, dress, associates, looks, compliments, dues, 69
 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, 80
 I have no mockings or arguments, I witness and wait.

5

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

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

90

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

6

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

100

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. 110

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. 120

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.

130

7

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, 140
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.

8

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, 150
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, 160
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.

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. 170

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

10

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

The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the sparkle
and scud, 180
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, 190
 Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy
 and weak,
 And went where he sat on a log and led him in and assured him,
 And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and
 bruise'd feet,
 And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him
 some coarse clean clothes,
 And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his
 awkwardness,
 And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and
 ankles;
 He staid with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd
 north,
 I had him sit next me at table, my fire-lock lean'd in the corner.

II

Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore,
 Twenty-eight young men and all so friendly; 200
 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, 210
 Little streams pass'd all over their bodies.

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

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

12

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

220

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

13

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

I behold the picturesque giant and love him, and I do not stop
there, 230
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, 240
And consider green and violet and the tufted crown intentional,
And do not call the tortoise unworthy because she is not some-
thing else,
And the jay in the woods never studied the gamut, yet trills
pretty well to me,
And the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me.

14

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

The sharp-hoof'd moose of the north, the cat on the house-sill,
the chickadee, the prairie-dog,
The litter of the grunting sow as they tug at her teats, 250
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, 260
Adorning myself to bestow myself on the first that will take me,
Not asking the sky to come down to my good will,
Scattering it freely forever.

15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane
 whistles its wild ascending lisp,
The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanks-
 giving 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, 270
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big
 wheel,
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loafe and
 looks at the oats and rye,
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his mother's
 bed-room;)
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his
 case,
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the
 manuscript;

The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;
The quadron girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard
nods by the bar-room stove,
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his
beat, the gate-keeper marks who pass, 280
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 moc-
casins and bead-bags for sale, 290
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!) 300
The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would
stray,
The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser
higgling about the odd cent;)
The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the
clock moves slowly,
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy
and pimpled neck,
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink
to each other,
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;)
The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the
great Secretaries,
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with
twined arms,
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the
hold, 310
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 tinner 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, 320
 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. 329

16

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

A boatman over lakes or bays or along coasts, a Hoosier, Badger,
Buckeye;
At home on Kanadian snow-shoes or up in the bush, or with
fishermen off Newfoundland, 339
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, 350
And am not stuck up, and am in my place.

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

17

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

This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is,
This is the common air that bathes the globe. 360

18

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

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

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

Vivas to those who have fail'd!
 And to those whose war-vessels sank in the sea!
 And to those themselves who sank in the sea!
 And to all generals that lost engagements, and all overcome
 heroes! 370
 And the numberless unknown heroes equal to the greatest
 heroes known!

19

This is the meal equally set, this the meat for natural hunger,
 It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous, I make ap-
 pointments 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, 380
 This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again.

Do you guess I have some intricate purpose?
 Well I have, for the Fourth-month showers have, and the mica
 on the side of a rock has.

Do you take it I would astonish?
Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twittering
 through the woods?
Do I astonish more than they?

This hour I tell things in confidence,
I might not tell everybody, but I will tell you.

20

Who goes there? hankering, gross, mystical, nude;
How is it I extract strength from the beef I eat? 390

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, con-
 formity 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. 400

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, 411
(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, 420
And I know the amplitude of time.

21

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,
The pleasures of heaven are with me and the pains of hell are
with me,
The first I graft and increase upon myself, the latter I translate
into a 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. 430

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 nourish-
ing 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! 439
Earth of departed sunset—earth of the mountains misty-topt!
Earth of the vitreous pour of the full moon just tinged with blue!
Earth of shine and dark mottling the tide of the river!
Earth of the limpid gray of clouds brighter and clearer for
my sake!
Far-swooping elbow'd earth—rich apple-blossom'd earth!
Smile, for your lover comes.

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

22

You sea! I resign myself to you also—I guess what you mean,
I behold from the beach your crooked inviting fingers,
I believe you refuse to go back without feeling of me, 450
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. 460

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 indif-
 ferent,
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 antipodal side a balance, 470
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 a wonder,

The wonder is always and always how there can be a mean man
or an infidel.

23

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

A word of the faith that never balks,
Here or henceforward it is all the same to me, I accept Time
absolutely. 480

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 scalpel, and this is a
mathematician.

Gentlemen, to you the first honors always! 490
Your facts are useful, and yet they are not my dwelling,
I but enter by them to an area of my dwelling.

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

24

Walt Whitman, a kosmos, of Manhattan the son,
 Turbulent, fleshy, sensual, eating, drinking and breeding,
 No sentimentalist, no stander above men and women or apart
 from them,
 No more modest than immodest. 500

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, 511
 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. 521

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! 530
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! 540
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! 550
The little light fades the immense and diaphanous shadows,
The air tastes good to my palate.

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

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

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

25

Dazzling and tremendous how quick the sun-rise would kill me,
If I could not now and always send sun-rise out of me. 561

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? 570

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, 580
With the hush of my lips I wholly confound the skeptic.

26

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 pro-
nouncing a death-sentence, 590
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.

600

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.

610

27

To be in any form, what is that?
(Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back
thither,)

If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous shell
were enough.

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

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

28

Is this then a touch? quivering me to a new identity,
Flames and ether making a rush for my veins, 620
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 pas-
ture-fields,
Immodestly sliding the fellow-senses away,
They bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the
edges of me, 630
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, 640
Unclench your floodgates, you are too much for me.

29

Blind loving wrestling touch, sheath'd hooded sharp-tooth'd
touch!

Did it make you ache so, leaving me?

Parting track'd by arriving, perpetual payment of perpetual
loan,
Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward.

Sprouts take and accumulate, stand by the curb prolific and vital,
Landscapes projected masculine, full-sized and golden.

30

All truths wait in all things,
They neither hasten their own delivery nor resist it,
They do not need the obstetric forceps of the surgeon, 650
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, 660
And they are to branch boundlessly out of that lesson until it
becomes omnific,
And until one and all shall delight us, and we them.

31

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the journey-work of the
stars,
And the pismire is equally perfect, and a grain of sand, and the
egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'œuvre 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, 670
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, 680
In vain the elk takes to the inner passes of the woods,
In vain the razor-bill'd auk sails far north to Labrador,
I follow quickly, I ascend to the nest in the fissure of the cliff.

32

I think I could turn and live with animals, they're 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, 690
 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. 700

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.

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd at, 710
 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
lumbermen,
Along the ruts of the turnpike, along the dry gulch and rivulet
bed,
Weeding my onion-patch or hoeing rows of carrots and pars-
nips, crossing savannas, trailing in forests,
Prospecting, gold-digging, girdling the trees of a new pur-
chase, 720
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; 730
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
gold-bug 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,) 740
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 cor-
rupting 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 coun-
tenance,
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, 751
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-raising;
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 lone-
some prairie, 760
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, 770
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 fore-
noon, flattening 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, 780
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, (be-
hind 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 Judæa with the beautiful gentle God by
my side, 790
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, 800
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, 810
The enormous masses of ice pass me and I pass them, the scenery
is plain in all directions,
The white-topt mountains show in the distance, I fling out my
fancies toward them,
We are approaching some great battle-field in which we are
soon to be engaged,
We pass the colossal outposts of the encampment, we pass with
still feet and caution,
Or we are entering by the suburbs some vast and ruin'd city,
The blocks and fallen architecture more than all the living cities
of the globe.

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

My voice is the wife's voice, the screech by the rail of the
 stairs, 820
 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 steam-ship, 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; 830
 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 mur-
 derous 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 marks-
 men,

Song of Myself

41

I clutch the rails of the fence, my gore dribs, thinn'd with the
ooze of my skin, 840
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, 850
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, 860
Again the attacking cannon, mortars,
Again to my listening ears the cannon responsive.

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

Again gurgles the mouth of my dying general, he furiously
 waves with his hand,
 He gasps through the clot *Mind not me—mind—the entrench-
 ments.* 870

34

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 bag-
 gage for breastworks,
 Nine hundred lives out of the surrounding enemy's, 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, 880
 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, 890
Some half-kill'd attempted to crawl away,
These were despatch'd with bayonets or batter'd with the blunts
of muskets,
A youth not seventeen years old seiz'd his assassin till two more
came to release him,
The three were all torn and cover'd with the boy's blood.

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

35

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

Our foe was no skulk in his ship I tell you, (said he,) 900
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, 910
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, 920
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 pow-
der-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.

36

Stretch'd and still lies the midnight,
Two great hulls motionless on the breast of the darkness, 930
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, 940
Delicate sniffs of sea-breeze, smells of sedgy grass and fields by
the shore, death-messages given in charge to survivors,
The hiss of the surgeon's knife, the gnawing teeth of his saw,
Wheeze, cluck, swash of falling blood, short wild scream, and
long, dull, tapering groan,
These so, these irretrievable.

37

You laggards there on guard! look to your arms!
In at the conquer'd doors they crowd! I am possess'd!
Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering,

See myself in prison shaped like another man,
And feel the dull unintermitted pain.

For me the keepers of convicts shoulder their carbines and keep
watch, 950
It is I let out in the morning and barr'd at night.

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

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

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

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

38

Enough! enough! enough!
Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back! 960
Give me a little time beyond my cuff'd head, slumbers, dreams,
gaping,
I discover myself on the verge of a usual mistake.

That I could forget the mockers and insults!
That I could forget the trickling tears and the blows of the
bludgeons and hammers!
That I could look with a separate look on my own crucifixion
and bloody crowning!

I remember now,
I resume the overstaid fraction,

The grave of rock multiplies what has been confided to it, or to
any graves,
Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastenings roll from me.

I troop forth replenish'd with supreme power, one of an
average unending procession, 970
Inland and sea-coast we go, and pass all boundary lines,
Our swift ordinances on their way over the whole earth,
The blossoms we wear in our hats the growth of thousands of
years.

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

39

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

Is he some Southwesterner rais'd out-doors? is he Kanadian?
Is he from the Mississippi country? Iowa, Oregon, California?
The mountains? prairie-life, bush-life? or sailor from the sea? 980

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

40

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

Earth! you seem to look for something at my hands,
Say, old top-knot, what do you want? 990

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. 1000

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. 1010

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 disease 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. 1020

41

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

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

Magnifying and applying come I,
Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters,
Taking myself the exact dimensions of Jehovah,
Lithographing Kronos, Zeus his son, and Hercules his grandson,
Buying drafts of Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha, 1030
In my portfolio placing Manito loose, Allah on a leaf, the crucifix
engraved,
With Odin and the hideous-faced Mexitli and every idol and
image,
Taking them all for what they are worth and not a cent more,
Admitting they were alive and did the work of their days,
(They bore mites as for unfledg'd birds who have now to rise
and fly and sing for themselves,)
Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself,
bestowing them freely on each man and woman I see,
Discovering as much or more in a framer framing a house,
Putting higher claims for him there with his roll'd-up sleeves
driving the mallet and chisel,

Not objecting to special revelations, considering a curl of smoke
 or a hair on the back of my hand just as curious as any
 revelation,
 Lads ahold of fire-engines and hook-and-ladder ropes no less to
 me than the gods of the antique wars, 1040
 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, 1050
 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.

42

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 inti-
 mates,
 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, 1060
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, 1070
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, 1080
 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? 1090
 In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture—but the host
 and hostess, and the look out of their eyes?
 The sky up there—yet here or next door, or across the way?
 The saints and sages in history—but you yourself?
 Sermons, creeds, theology—but the fathomless human brain,
 And what is reason? and what is love? and what is life?

43

I do not despise you priests, all time, the world over,
 My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths,
 Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient
 and modern,
 Believing I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand
 years,
 Waiting responses from oracles, honoring the gods, saluting the
 sun, 1100
 Making a fetch 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-cup, to Shastas and Vedas admir-
ant, 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, know-
ing 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. 1110

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

Down-hearted doubters dull and excluded,
Frivolous, sullen, moping, angry, affected, dishearten'd, athe-
istical,
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, pre-
cisely the same. 1120

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
a single one can it fail.

It cannot fail 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, 1130
Nor any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of the
earth,
Nor any thing in the myriads of spheres, nor the myriads of
myriads that inhabit them,
Nor the present, nor the least wisp that is known.

44

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

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

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

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

Births have brought us richness and variety, 1140
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 brotner, 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, 1150
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, 1160
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited
it with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

45

O span of youth! ever-push'd elasticity! 1170
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! 1180

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, 1190
If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces,
were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would
not avail in 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. 1200

46

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

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from
the woods,
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,
My left hand hooking you round the waist,
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the
public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you, 1210
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, 1220
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. 1230

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

47

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

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through derived
power, but in his own right,
Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than sharp steel
cuts, 1240
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, 1250
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 a 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. 1260

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 moiment and forget where
 they are,
They and all would resume what I have told them.

48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul, 1270
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 follow-
ing 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.)

1280

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not
in the least,
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than
myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each
moment then,
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face
in the glass,
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is
sign'd by God's name,
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I
go,
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle
to try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes, 1290
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 pro-
 motions, 1300
 If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing?

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

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

50

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

Wrench'd and sweaty—calm and cool then my body becomes,
 I sleep—I sleep long. 1311

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.

51

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future. 1320

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? 1330

52

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

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

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

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

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles. 1340

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.

1855

A SONG FOR OCCUPATIONS

I

A song for occupations!
In the labor of engines and trades and the labor of fields I find
the developments,
And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen!
Were all educations practical and ornamental well display'd out
of me, what would it amount to?
Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise states-
man, what would it amount to?
Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would
that satisfy you?

The learn'd, virtuous, benevolent, and the usual terms,
A man like me and never the usual terms.

Neither a servant nor a master I, 10
I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will have my
own whoever enjoys me,
I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop I stand as nigh as the nighest in
the same shop,
If you bestow gifts on your brother or dearest friend I demand
as good as your brother or dearest friend,
If your lover, husband, wife, is welcome by day or night, I must
be personally as welcome,
If you become degraded, criminal, ill, then I become so for your
sake,
If you remember your foolish and outlaw'd deeds, do you think
I cannot remember my own foolish and outlaw'd deeds?
If you carouse at the table I carouse at the opposite side of the
table,
If you meet some stranger in the streets and love him or her, why
I often meet strangers in the street and love them.

Why what have you thought of yourself? 20
Is it you then that thought yourself less?
Is it you that thought the President greater than you?
Or the rich better off than you? or the educated wiser than you?

(Because you are greasy or pimpled, or were once drunk, or a
thief,
Or that you are diseas'd, or rheumatic, or a prostitute,
Or from frivolity or impotence, or that you are no scholar and
never saw your name in print,
Do you give in that you are any less immortal?)

2

Souls of men and women! it is not you I call unseen, unheard,
untouchable and untouching,
It is not you I go argue pro and con about, and to settle whether
you are alive or no,
I own publicly who you are if nobody else owns. 30

Grown, half-grown and babe, of this country and every country,
in-doors and out-doors, one just as much as the other, I see,
And all else behind or through them.

The wife, and she is not one jot less than the husband,
 The daughter, and she is just as good as the son,
 The mother, and she is every bit as much as the father.

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,
 Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working on
 farms,
 Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,
 All these I see, but nigher and farther the same I see,
 None shall escape me and none shall wish to escape me. 40

I bring what you much need yet always have,
 Not money, amours, dress, eating, erudition, but as good,
 I send no agent or medium, offer no representative of value, but
 offer the value itself.

There is something that comes to one now and perpetually,
 It is not what is punted, preach'd, discussed, it eludes discussion
 and print,
 It is not to be put in a book, it is not in this book,
 It is for you whoever you are, it is no farther from you than
 your hearing and sight are from you,
 It is hinted by nearest, commonest, readiest, it is ever provoked
 by them.

You may read in many languages, yet read nothing about it,
 You may read the President's message and read nothing about
 it there, 50
 Nothing in the reports from the State department or Treasury
 department, or in the daily papers or weekly papers,
 Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or any ac-
 counts of stock.

3

The sun and stars that float in the open air,
 The apple-shaped earth and we upon it, surely the drift of them
 is something grand,

I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and that it is
happiness,
And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a speculation or
bon-mot or reconnoissance,
And that it is not something which by luck may turn out well
for us, and without luck must be a failure for us,
And not something which may yet be retracted in a certain con-
tingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and identity, the
greed that with perfect complaisance devours all things,
The endless pride and outstretching of man, unspeakable joys
and sorrows, 60
The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees, and the
wonders that fill each minute of time forever,
What have you reckon'd them for, camerado?
Have you reckon'd them for your trade or farm-work? or for
the profits of your store?
Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's leisure,
or a lady's leisure?

Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance and form
that it might be painted in a picture?
Or men and women that they might be written of, and songs sung?
Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and harmonious
combinations and the fluids of the air, as subjects for the
savans?
Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts?
Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy names?
Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables, or agricul-
ture itself? 70

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, legends, collections, and the
practice handed along in manufactures, will we rate them
so high?
Will we rate our cash and business high? I have no objection,
I rate them as high as the highest—then a child born of a
woman and man I rate beyond all rate.

We thought our Union grand, and our Constitution grand,
 I do not say they are not grand and good, for they are,
 I am this day just as much in love with them as you,
 Then I am in love with You, and with all my fellows upon the
 earth.

We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say they are
 not divine,
 I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you
 still,
 It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life, 80
 Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the earth,
 than they are shed out of you.

4

The sum of all known reverence I add up in you whoever you are,
 The President is there in the White House for you, it is not you
 who are here for him,
 The Secretaries act in their bureaus for you, not you here for them,
 The Congress convenes every Twelfth-month for you,
 Laws, courts, the forming of States, the charters of cities, the
 going and coming of commerce and mails, are all for you.

List close my scholars dear,
 Doctrines, politics and civilization exurge from you,
 Sculpture and monuments and any thing inscribed anywhere are
 tallied in you,
 The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records reach
 is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same, 90
 If you were not breathing and walking here, where would they
 all be?
 The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and plays
 would be vacuums.

All architecture is what you do to it when you look upon it,
 (Did you think it was in the white or gray stone? or the lines
 of the arches and cornices?)

All music is what awakes from you when you are reminded by
the instruments,

It is not the violins and the cornets, it is not the oboe nor the
beating drums, nor the score of the baritone singer singing
his sweet romanza, nor that of the men's chorus, nor that
of the women's chorus,

It is nearer and farther than they.

5

Will the whole come back then?

Can each see signs of the best by a look in the looking-glass? is
there nothing greater or more?

Does all sit there with you, with the mystic unseen soul? 100

Strange and hard that paradox true I give,
Objects gross and the unseen soul are one.

House-building, measuring, sawing the boards,
Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering, tin-
roofing, shingle-dressing,

Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, flagging of sidewalks
by flaggers,

The pump, the pile-driver, the great derrick, the coal-kiln and
brick-kiln,

Coal-mines and all that is down there, the lamps in the darkness,
echoes, songs, what meditations, what vast native thoughts
looking through smutch'd faces,

Iron-works, forge-fires in the mountains or by river-banks, men
around feeling the melt with huge crowbars, lumps of ore,
the due combining of ore, limestone, coal,

The blast-furnace and the puddling-furnace, the loup-lump at
the bottom of the melt at last, the rolling-mill, the stumpy
bars of pig-iron, the strong clean-shaped T-rail for
railroads,

Oil-works, silk-works, white-lead-works, the sugar-house,
steam-saws, the great mills and factories, 110

Stone-cutting, shapely trimmings for façades or window or door-lintels, the mallet, the tooth-chisel, the jib to protect the thumb,
The calking-iron, the kettle of boiling vault-cement, and the fire under the kettle,
The cotton-bale, the stevedore's hook, the saw and buck of the sawyer, the mould of the moulder, the working-knife of the butcher, the ice-saw, and all the work with ice,
The work and tools of the rigger, grappler, sail-maker, block-maker,
Goods of gutta-percha, papier-maché, colors, brushes, brush-making, glazier's implements,
The veneer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments, the decanter and glasses, the shears and flat-iron,
The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart measure, the counter and stool, the writing-pen of quill or metal, the making of all sorts of edged tools,
The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, every thing that is done by brewers, wine-makers, vinegar-makers,
Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-twisting, distilling, sign-painting, lime-burning, cotton-picking, electroplating, electrotyping, stereotyping,
Stave-machines, planing-machines, reaping-machines, ploughing-machines, thrashing-machines, steam wagons, 120
The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray, Pyrotechny, letting off color'd fireworks at night, fancy figures and jets;
Beef on the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the butcher, the butcher in his killing-clothes,
The pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook, the scalding tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the packer's maul, and the plenteous winterwork of pork-packing,
Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice, the barrels and the half and quarter barrels, the loaded barges, the high piles on wharves and levees,
The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroads, coasters, fish-boats, canals;

The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the shop,
yard, store, or factory,
These shows all near you by day and night—workman! who-
ever you are, your daily life!
In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that and them far
more than you estimated, (and far less also,)
In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you and me,
In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all things,
regardless of estimation, 131
In them the development good—in them all themes, hints,
possibilities.

I do not affirm that what you see beyond is futile, I do not advise
you to stop,
I do not say leadings you thought great are not great,
But I say that none lead to greater than these lead to.

6

Will you seek afar off? you surely come back at last,
In things best known to you finding the best, or as good as the
best,
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest, lov-
ingest,
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place, not
for another hour but this hour,
Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend, brother,
highest neighbor—woman in mother, sister, wife, 140
The popular tastes and employments taking precedence in
poems or anywhere,
You workwomen and workmen of these States having your
own divine and strong life,
And all else giving place to men and women like you.

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver that
carved the supporting desk,

When I can touch the body of books by night or by day, and
 when they touch my body back again,
 When a university course convinces like a slumbering woman
 and child convince,
 When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-watch-
 man's daughter,
 When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are my
 friendly companions, 150
 I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much of them as I
 do of men and women like you.

1855

TO THINK OF TIME

I

To think of time—of all that retrospection,
 To think of to-day, and the ages continued henceforward.

Have you guess'd you yourself would not continue?
 Have you dreaded these earth-beetles?
 Have you fear'd the future would be nothing to you?

Is to-day nothing? is the beginningless past nothing?
 If the future is nothing they are just as surely nothing.

To think that the sun rose in the east—that men and women
 were flexible, real, alive—that every thing was alive,
 To think that you and I did not see, feel, think, nor bear our
 part,
 To think that we are now here and bear our part. 10

2

Not a day passes, not a minute or second without an accouche-
 ment,
 Not a day passes, not a minute or second without a corpse.

The dull nights go over and the dull days also,
The soreness of lying so much in bed goes over,
The physician after long putting off gives the silent and terrible
look for an answer,
The children come hurried and weeping, and the brothers and
sisters are sent for,
Medicines stand unused on the shelf, (the camphor-smell has
long pervaded the rooms,)
The faithful hand of the living does not desert the hand of the
dying,
The twitching lips press lightly on the forehead of the dying,
The breath ceases and the pulse of the heart ceases, 20
The corpse stretches on the bed and the living look upon it,
It is palpable as the living are palpable.

The living look upon the corpse with their eyesight,
But without eyesight lingers a different living and looks curi-
ously on the corpse.

3

To think the thought of death merged in the thought of ma-
terials,
To think of all these wonders of city and country, and others
taking great interest in them, and we taking no interest
in them.

To think how eager we are in building our houses,
To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite indifferent.

(I see one building the house that serves him a few years, or
seventy or eighty years at most,
I see one building the house that serves him longer than that.) 30

Slow-moving and black lines creep over the whole earth—they
never cease—they are the burial lines,
He that was President was buried, and he that is now President
shall surely be buried.

4

A reminiscence of the vulgar fate,
A frequent sample of the life and death of workmen,
Each after his kind.

Cold dash of waves at the ferry-wharf, posh and ice in the river,
half-frozen mud in the streets,
A gray discouraged sky overhead, the short last daylight of
December,
A hearse and stages, the funeral of an old Broadway stage-
driver, the cortege mostly drivers.

Steady the trot to the cemetery, duly rattles the death-bell,
The gate is pass'd, the new-dug grave is halted at, the living
alight, the hearse uncloses, 40
The coffin is pass'd out, lower'd and settled, the whip is laid on
the coffin, the earth is swiftly shovel'd in,
The mound above is flatted with the spades—silence,
A minute—no one moves or speaks—it is done,
He is decently put away—is there any thing more?

He was a good fellow, free-mouth'd, quick-temper'd, not bad-
looking,
Ready with life or death for a friend, fond of women, gambled,
ate hearty, drank hearty,
Had known what it was to be flush, grew low-spirited toward
the last, sicken'd, was help'd by a contribution,
Died, aged forty-one years—and that was his funeral.

Thumb extended, finger uplifted, apron, cape, gloves, strap,
wet-weather clothes, whip carefully chosen,
Boss, spotter, starter, hostler, somebody loafing on you, you
loafing on somebody, headway, man before and man be-
hind, 50
Good day's work, bad day's work, pet stock, mean stock, first
out, last out, turning-in at night,
To think that these are so much and so nigh to other drivers,
and he there takes no interest in them.

5

The markets, the government, the working-man's wages, to
think what account they are through our nights and days,
To think that other working-men will make just as great ac-
count of them, yet we make little or no account.

The vulgar and the refined, what you call sin and what you call
goodness, to think how wide a difference,
To think the difference will still continue to others, yet we lie
beyond the difference.

To think how much pleasure there is,
Do you enjoy yourself in the city? or engaged in business? or
planning a nomination and election? or with your wife and
family?
Or with your mother and sisters? or in womanly housework?
or the beautiful maternal cares?
These also flow onward to others, you and I flow onward, 60
But in due time you and I shall take less interest in them.

Your farm, profits, crops—to think how engross'd you are,
To think there will still be farms, profits, crops, yet for you of
what avail?

6

What will be will be well, for what is is well,
To take interest is well, and not to take interest shall be well.

The domestic joys, the daily housework or business, the build-
ing of houses, are not phantasms, they have weight, form,
location,
Farms, profits, crops, markets, wages, government, are none of
them phantasms,
The difference between sin and goodness is no delusion,
The earth is not an echo, man and his life and all the things
his life are well-consider'd.

You are not thrown to the winds, you gather certainly and
safely around yourself, 70
Yourself! yourself! yourself, for ever and ever!

7

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother and
father, it is to identify you,
It is not that you should be undecided, but that you should be
decided,
Something long preparing and formless is arrived and form'd in
you,
You are henceforth secure, whatever comes or goes.

The threads that were spun are gather'd, the weft crosses the
warp, the pattern is systematic.

The preparations have every one been justified,
The orchestra have sufficiently tuned their instruments, the
baton has given the signal.

The guest that was coming, he waited long, he is now housed,
He is one of those who are beautiful and happy, he is one of
those that to look upon and be with is enough. 80

The law of the past cannot be eluded,
The law of the present and future cannot be eluded,
The law of the living cannot be eluded, it is eternal,
The law of promotion and transformation cannot be eluded,
The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be eluded,
The law of drunkards, informers, mean persons, not one iota
thereof can be eluded.

8

Slow moving and black lines go ceaselessly over the earth,
Northerner goes carried and Southerner goes carried, and they
on the Atlantic side and they on the Pacific,
And they between, and all through the Mississippi country, and
all over the earth.

The great masters and kosmos are well as they go, the heroes
and good-doers are well, 90
The known leaders and inventors and the rich owners and pious
and distinguish'd may be well,
But there is more account than that, there is strict account of
all.

The interminable hordes of the ignorant and wicked are not
nothing,
The barbarians of Africa and Asia are not nothing,
The perpetual successions of shallow people are not nothing as
they go.

Of and in all these things,
I have dream'd that we are not to be changed so much, nor the
law of us changed,
I have dream'd that heroes and good-doers shall be under the
present and past law,
And that murderers, drunkards, liars, shall be under the present
and past law,
For I have dream'd that the law they are under now is
enough. 100

And I have dream'd that the purpose and essence of the known
life, the transient,
Is to form and decide identity for the unknown life, the per-
manent.

If all came but to ashes of dung,
If maggots and rats ended us, then Alarum! for we are be-
tray'd,
Then indeed suspicion of death.

Do you suspect death? if I were to suspect death I should die
now,
Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited toward
annihilation?

Pleasantly and well-suited I walk,
 Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good,
 The whole universe indicates that it is good, 110
 The past and the present indicate that it is good.

How beautiful and perfect are the animals!
 How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon it!
 What is called good is perfect, and what is called bad is just as
 perfect,
 The vegetables and minerals are all perfect, and the imponder-
 able fluids perfect;
 Slowly and surely they have pass'd on to this, and slowly and
 surely they yet pass on.

9

I swear I think now that every thing without exception has an
 eternal soul!
 The trees have, rooted in the ground! the weeds of the sea have!
 the animals!

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!
 That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is for
 it, and the cohering is for it! 120
 And all preparation is for it—and identity is for it—and life
 and materials are altogether for it!

1855

SONG OF THE ANSWERER

I

Now list to my morning's romanza, I tell the signs of the
 Answerer,
 To the cities and farms I sing as they spread in the sunshine
 before me.

A young man comes to me bearing a message from his brother,
 How shall the young man know the whether and when of his
 brother?
 Tell him to send me the signs.

And I stand before the young man face to face, and take his
right hand in my left hand and his left hand in my right
hand,

And I answer for his brother and for men, and I answer for
him that answers for all, and send these signs.

Him all wait for, him all yield up to, his word is decisive and
final,

Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves as
amid light, 10

Him they immerse and he immerses them.

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the landscape,
people, animals,

The profound earth and its attributes and the unquiet ocean, (so
tell I my morning's romanza,)

All enjoyments and properties and money, and whatever money
will buy,

The best farms, others toiling and planting and he unavoidably
reaps,

The noblest and costliest cities, others grading and building and
he domiciles there,

Nothing for any one but what is for him, near and far are for
him, the ships in the offing,

The perpetual shows and marches on land are for him if they
are for anybody.

He puts things in their attitudes,

He puts to-day out of himself with plasticity and love,

He places his own times, reminiscences, parents, brothers and
sisters, associations, employment, politics, so that the rest
never shame them afterward, nor assume to command
them. 20

He is the Answerer,

What can be answer'd he answers, and what cannot be answer'd
he shows how it cannot be answer'd.

A man is a summons and challenge,
(It is vain to skulk—do you hear that mocking and laughter?
do you hear the ironical echoes?)

Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action, pleasure,
pride, beat up and down seeking to give satisfaction,
He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat up
and down also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he may go
freshly and gently and safely by day or by night,
He has the pass-key of hearts, to him the response of the prying
of hands on the knobs.

His welcome is universal, the flow of beauty is not more wel-
come or universal than he is,
The person he favors by day or sleeps with at night is blessed. 30

Every existence has its idiom, every thing has an idiom and
tongue,
He resolves all tongues into his own and bestows it upon men,
and any man translates, and any man translates himself
also,
One part does not counteract another part, he is the joiner, he
sees how they join.

He says indifferently and alike *How are you friend?* to the
President at his levee,
And he says *Good-day my brother*, to Cudge that hoes in the
sugar-field,
And both understand him and know that his speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the capitol,
He walks among the Congress, and one Representative says to
another, *Here is our equal appearing and new.*

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,
And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier, and the sailors that
he has follow'd the sea,

And the authors take him for an author, and the artists for an
artist,
And the laborers perceive he could labor with them and love
them,
No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow it or
has follow'd it,
No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers and
sisters there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,
A Jew to the Jew he seems, a Russ to the Russ, usual and near,
removed from none.

Whoever he looks at in the traveler's coffee-house claims him,
The Italian or Frenchman is sure, the German is sure, the
Spaniard is sure, and the island Cuban is sure,
The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on the
Mississippi or St. Lawrence or Sacramento, or Hudson
or Paumanok sound, claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect
blood, 50
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar, see
themselves in the ways of him, he strangely transmutes
them,
They are not vile any more, they hardly know themselves they
are so grown.

2

The indications and tally of time;
Perfect sanity shows the master among philosophers,
Time, always without break, indicates itself in parts,
What always indicates the poet is the crowd of the pleasant
company of singers, and their words,
The words of the singers are the hours or minutes of the light
or dark, but the words of the maker of poems are the
general light and dark,

The maker of poems settles justice, reality, immortality,
 His insight and power encircle things and the human race,
 He is the glory and extract thus far of things and of the human
 race. 60

The singers do not beget, only the Poet begets,
 The singers are welcom'd, understood, appear often enough,
 but rare has the day been, likewise the spot, of the birth of
 the maker of poems, the Answerer,
 (Not every century nor every five centuries has contain'd such
 a day, for all its names.)

The singers of successive hours of centuries may have ostensi-
 ble names, but the name of each of them is one of the
 singers,
 The name of each is, eye-singer, ear-singer, head-singer, sweet-
 singer, night-singer, parlor-singer, love-singer, weird-
 singer, or something else.

All this time and at all times wait the words of true poems,
 The words of true poems do not merely please,
 The true poets are not followers of beauty but the august mas-
 ters of beauty;
 The greatness of sons is the exuding of the greatness of mothers
 and fathers,
 The words of true poems are the tuft and final applause of
 science. 70

Divine instinct, breadth of vision, the law of reason, health,
 rudeness of body, withdrawnness,
 Gayety, sun-tan, air-sweetness, such are some of the words of
 poems.

The sailor and traveler underlie the maker of poems, the
 Answerer,
 The builder, geometer, chemist, anatomist, phrenologist, artist,
 all these underlie the maker of poems, the Answerer.

The words of the true poems give you more than poems,
They give you to form for yourself poems, religions, politics,
war, peace, behavior, histories, essays, daily life, and every
thing else,

They balance ranks, colors, races, creeds, and the sexes,
They do not seek beauty, they are sought,
Forever touching them or close upon them follows beauty,
longing, fain, love-sick.

They prepare for death, yet they are not the finish, but rather
the outset, 80

They bring none to his or her terminus or to be content and
full,

Whom they take they take into space to behold the birth of
stars, to learn one of the meanings,

To launch off with absolute faith, to sweep through the cease-
less rings and never be quiet again.

1855

✓ THERE WAS A CHILD WENT FORTH

There was a child went forth every day,
And the first object he look'd upon, that object he became,
And that object became part of him for the day or a certain
part of the day,
Or for many years or stretching cycles of years.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass and white and red morning-glories, and white and
red clover, and the song of the phœbe-bird, 11
And the Third-month lambs and the sow's pink-faint litter, and
the mare's foal and the cow's calf,
And the noisy brood of the barnyard or by the mire of the
pondside,
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there,
and the beautiful curious liquid,
And the water-plants with their graceful flat heads, all became
part of him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became
part of him,
Winter-grain sprouts and those of the light-yellow corn, and
the esculent roots of the garden,
And the apple-trees cover'd with blossoms and the fruit after-
ward, and wood-berries, and the commonest weeds by the
road,
And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of
the tavern whence he had lately risen,
And the schoolmistress that pass'd on her way to the school,
And the friendly boys that pass'd, and the quarrelsome boys,
And the tidy and fresh-check'd girls, and the barefoot negro
boy and girl,
And all the changes of city and country wherever he went.

His own parents, he that had father'd him and she that had
conceiv'd him in her womb and birth'd him,
They gave this child more of themselves than that, 20
They gave him afterward every day, they became part of him.

The mother at home quietly placing the dishes on the supper-
table,
The mother with mild words, clean her cap and gown, a whole-
some odor falling off her person and clothes as she walks
by,
The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, anger'd,
unjust,
The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty
lure,
The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture,
the yearning and swelling heart,
Affection that will not be gainsay'd, the sense of what is real,
the thought if after all it should prove unreal,
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time, the
curious whether and how,
Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and
specks?

Men and women crowding fast in the streets, if they are not
flashes and specks what are they? 30
The streets themselves and the façades of houses, and goods in
the windows,
Vehicles, teams, the heavy-plank'd wharves, the huge crossing
at the ferries,
The village on the highland seen from afar at sunset, the river
between,
Shadows, aureola and mist, the light falling on roofs and gables
of white or brown two miles off,
The schooner near by sleepily dropping down the tide, the
little boat slack-tow'd astern,
The hurrying tumbling waves, quick-broken crests, slapping,
The strata of color'd clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint away
solitary by itself, the spread of purity it lies motionless in,
The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt
marsh and shore mud,
These became part of that child who went forth every day, and
who now goes, and will always go forth every day.

1855

WHO LEARNS MY LESSON COMPLETE?

Who learns my lesson complete?
Boss, journeyman, apprentice, churchman and atheist,
The stupid and the wise thinker, parents and offspring, mer-
chant, clerk, porter and customer,
Editor, author, artist, and schoolboy—draw nigh and com-
mence;
It is no lesson—it lets down the bars to a good lesson,
And that to another, and every one to another still.
The great laws take and effuse without argument,
I am of the same style, for I am their friend,
I love them quits and quits, I do not halt and make salaams.
I lie abstracted and hear beautiful tales of things and the reasons
of things, 10
They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.

I cannot say to any person what I hear—I cannot say it to myself—it is very wonderful.

It is no small matter, this round and delicious globe moving so exactly in its orbit for ever and ever, without one jolt or the untruth of a single second,

I do not think it was made in six days, nor in ten thousand years, nor ten billions of years,

Nor plann'd and built one thing after another as an architect plans and builds a house.

I do not think seventy years is the time of a man or woman, Nor that seventy millions of years is the time of a man or woman,

Nor that years will ever stop the existence of me, or any one else.

Is it wonderful that I should be immortal? as every one is immortal;

I know it is wonderful, but my eyesight is equally wonderful, and how I was conceived in my mother's womb is equally wonderful,

And pass'd from a babe in the creeping trance of a couple of summers and winters to articulate and walk—all this is equally wonderful.

And that my soul embraces you this hour, and we affect each other without ever seeing each other, and never perhaps to see each other, is every bit as wonderful.

And that I can think such thoughts as these is just as wonderful, And that I can remind you, and you think them and know them to be true, is just as wonderful.

And that the moon spins round the earth and on with the earth, is equally wonderful,

And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars is equally wonderful.

THIS COMPOST

I

Something startles me where I thought I was safest,
I withdraw from the still woods I loved,
I will not go now on the pastures to walk,
I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover the
 sea,
I will not touch my flesh to the earth as to other flesh to renew
 me.

O how can it be that the ground itself does not sicken?
How can you be alive you growths of spring?
How can you furnish health you blood of herbs, roots, orchards,
 grain?
Are they not continually putting distemper'd corpses within
 you?
Is not every continent work'd over and over with sour dead? 10
Where have you disposed of their carcasses?
Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations?
Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat?
I do not see any of it upon you to-day, or perhaps I am deceiv'd,
I will run a furrow with my plough, I will press my spade
 through the sod and turn it up underneath,
I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.

2

Behold this compost! behold it well!
Perhaps every mite has once form'd part of a sick person—yet
 behold!
The grass of spring covers the prairies,
The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden, 20
The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,
The apple-buds cluster together on the apple-branches,
The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of
 its graves,

The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-tree,
The he-birds carol mornings and evenings while the she-birds
sit on their nests,
The young of poultry break through the hatch'd eggs,
The new-born of animals appear, the calf is dropt from the cow,
the colt from the mare,
Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark green
leaves,
Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk, the lilacs bloom in
the dooryards,
The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all those
strata of sour dead. 30

What chemistry!
That the winds are really not infectious,
That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of the sea
which is so amorous after me,
That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all over with its
tongues,
That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have deposited
themselves in it,
That all is clean forever and forever,
That the cool drink from the well tastes so good,
That blackberries are so flavorful and juicy,
That the fruits of the apple-orchard and the orange-orchard,
that melons, grapes, peaches, plums, will none of them
poison me,
That when I recline on the grass I do not catch any disease, 40
Though probably every spear of grass rises out of what was
once a catching disease.

Now I am terrified at the Earth, it is that calm and patient,
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,
It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless suc-
cessions of diseases'd corpses,
It distills such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,

It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual,
sumptuous crops,
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings
from them at last.

1856

TO YOU

Whoever you are, I fear you are walking the walks of dreams,
I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your feet
and hands,
Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade, manners,
troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from you,
Your true soul and body appear before me,
They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops, work,
farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling, eating, drinking,
suffering, dying.

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you be
my poem,
I whisper with my lips close to your ear,
I have loved many women and men, but I love none better than
you.

O I have been dilatory and dumb,
I should have made my way straight to you long ago, 10
I should have blabb'd nothing but you, I should have chanted
nothing but you.

I will leave all and come and make the hymns of you,
None has understood you, but I understand you,
None has done justice to you, you have not done justice to your-
self,
None but has found you imperfect, I only find no imperfection
in you,
None but would subordinate you, I only am he who will never
consent to subordinate you,
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better,
God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups and the centre-figure of all,
From the head of the centre-figure spreading a nimbus of gold-color'd light,
But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-color'd light, 20
From my hand from the brain of every man and woman it streams, effulgently flowing forever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you!
You have not known what you are, you have slumber'd upon yourself all your life,
Your eyelids have been the same as closed most of the time,
What you have done returns already in mockeries,
(Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return in mockeries, what is their return?)

The mockeries are not you,
Underneath them and within them I see you lurk,
I pursue you where none else has pursued you,
Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night, the accustomed'd routine, if these conceal you from others or from yourself, they do not conceal you from me, 30
The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if these balk others they do not balk me,
The pert apparel, the deform'd attitude, drunkenness, greed, premature death, all these I part aside.

There is no endowment in man or woman that is not tallied in you,
There is no virtue, no beauty in man or woman, but as good is in you,
No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you,
No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure waits for you.

As for me, I give nothing to any one except I give the like carefully to you,

I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner than I
sing the songs of the glory of you.

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard!

These shows of the East and West are tame compared to you,
These immense meadows, these interminable rivers, you are
immense and interminable as they, 41

These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes of
apparent dissolution, you are he or she who is master or
mistress over them,

Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, elements,
pain, passion, dissolution.

The hobbles fall from your ankles, you find an unfailing
sufficiency,

Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by the rest,
whatever you are promulges itself,

Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided, nothing
is scanted,

Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what you
are picks its way.

1856

CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY

I

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!

Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you
also face to face.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how
curious you are to me!

On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, re-
turning home, are more curious to me than you suppose,

And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are
more to me, and more in my meditations, than you might
suppose.

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of
 the day,
 The simple, compact, well-join'd scheme, myself disintegrated,
 every one disintegrated yet part of the scheme,
 The similitudes of the past and those of the future,
 The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings,
 on the walk in the street and the passage over the river,
 The current rushing so swiftly and swimming with me far
 away, 10
 The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and
 them,
 The certainty of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to
 shore,
 Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,
 Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and
 the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,
 Others will see the islands large and small;
 Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun
 half an hour high,
 A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence,
 others will see them,
 Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the fall-
 ing-back to the sea of the ebb-tide.

3

It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not, 20
 I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so
 many generations hence,
 Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt,
 Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a
 crowd,
 Just as you are refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the
 bright flow, I was refresh'd,

Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift
current, I stood yet was hurried,
Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-
stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air
floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and
left the rest in strong shadow,
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward
the south, 30
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of
my head in the sunlit water,
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-westward,
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,
Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,
Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at
anchor,
The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,
The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender
serpentine pennants, 40
The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-
houses,
The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of
the wheels,
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the
frolicsome crests and glistening,
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls
of the granite storehouses by the docks,
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely
flank'd on each side by the barges, the hay-boat, the be-
lated lighter,

On the neighboring shore, the fires from the foundry chimneys
 burning high and glaringly into the night,
 Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and yellow
 light over the tops of houses, and down into the clefts
 of streets.

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,
 I loved well those cities, loved well the stately and rapid river, 50
 The men and women I saw were all near to me,
 Others the same—others who look back on me because I look'd
 forward to them,
 (The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.)

5

What is it then between us?
 What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?
 Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place
 avails not,
 I too lived, Brooklyn of ample hills was mine,
 I too walk'd the streets of Manhattan island, and bathed in the
 waters around it,
 I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me,
 In the day among crowds of people sometimes they came upon
 me, 60
 In my walks home late at night or as I lay in my bed they came
 upon me,
 I too had been struck from the float forever held in solution,
 I too had receiv'd identity by my body,
 That I was I knew was of my body, and what I should be I knew
 I should be of my body.

6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,
 The dark threw its patches down upon me also,
 The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,

My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality
meagre?

Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil,

I am he who knew what it was to be evil,

70

I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,

Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,

Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,

Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,

The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,

The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not
wanting,

Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of
these wanting,

Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,

Was call'd by my highest name by clear loud voices of young
men as they saw me approaching or passing,

Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning
of their flesh against me as I sat,

80

Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly,
yet never told them a word,

Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnaw-
ing, sleeping,

Play'd the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,

The same old rôle, the rôle that is what we make it, as great as
we like,

Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

7

Closer yet I approach you,

What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I
laid in my stores in advance,

I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?

Who knows but I am enjoying this?

90

Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at
you now, for all you cannot see me?

8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than
mast-hemm'd Manhattan?

River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves of flood-tide?

The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the
twilight, and the belated lighter?

What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with
voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my highest
name as I approach?

What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or
man that looks in my face?

Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into
you?

We understand then do we not?

What I promis'd without mentioning it, have you not ac-
cepted?

What the study could not teach—what the preaching could not
accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not? 100

9

Flow on, river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-
tide!

Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!

Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench with your splendor me,
or the men and women generations after me!

Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!

Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta! stand up, beautiful hills
of Brooklyn!

Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and
answers!

Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!

Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house or street or public
assembly!

Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me
by my highest name!

Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or
actress! 110

Play the old rôle, the rôle that is great or small according as one
makes it!

Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown
ways be looking upon you;

Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet
haste with the hasting current;

Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in
the air;

Receive the summer sky, you water, and faithfully hold it till
all downcast eyes have time to take it from you!

Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any
one's head, in the sunlit water!

Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-
sail'd schooners, sloops, lighters!

Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lower'd at sunset!

Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at
nightfall! cast red and yellow light over the tops of the
houses!

Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are, 120
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul,

About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our
divinest aromas,

Thrive, cities—bring your freight, bring your shows, ample
and sufficient rivers,

Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more
spiritual,

Keep your places, objects than which none else is more
lasting.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful min-
isters,

We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate hence-
forward,

Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold your-
selves from us,

We use you, and do not cast you aside—we plant you per-
 manently within us,
 We fathom you not—we love you—there is perfection in you
 also, 130
 You furnish your parts toward eternity,
 Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.
 1856

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 noth-
 ing,
 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, 10
 I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

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

2

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

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference nor denial,
The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the illiterate person, are not denied;
The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's tramp, the drunkard's stagger, the laughing party of mechanics, 20
The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the eloping couple,
The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture into the town, the return back from the town,
They pass, I also pass, any thing passes, none can be interdicted, None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

3

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

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the edges! 30
You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-lined sides! you distant ships!
You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd façades! 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.

4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,
 The picture alive, every part in its best light, 40
 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 un-*
 denied, 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, 50
 I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and who-
 ever beholds me shall like me,
 I think whoever I see must be happy.

5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary
 lines,
 Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,
 Listening to others, considering well what they say,
 Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
 Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds
 that would hold me.

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

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

60

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

6

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

70

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 pro-
vokes it out of the soul.

81

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? 90

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it is apropos;
 Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by strangers?
 Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?

7

Here is the efflux of the soul,
 The efflux of the soul comes from within through embower'd
 gates, ever provoking questions,
 These yearnings why are they? these thoughts in the darkness
 why are they?
 Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me the
 sunlight expands my blood?
 Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink flat and
 lank?
 Why are there trees I never walk under but large and melodious
 thoughts descend upon me?
 (I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees and
 always drop fruit as I pass;) 100
 What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?
 What with some driver as I ride on the seat by his side?
 What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the shore as I
 walk by and pause?
 What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's good-will?
 what gives them to be free to mine?

8

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

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and sweetness
of man and woman,
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter every
day out of the roots of themselves, than it sprouts fresh
and sweet continually out of itself.) 110
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 attain-
ments,
Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of contact.

9

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

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

Allons! we must not stop here, 120
However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient this
dwelling we cannot remain here,
However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters we
must not anchor here,
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are
permitted to receive it but a little while.

10

Allons! the inducements shall be greater,
 We will sail pathless and wild seas,
 We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee
 clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,
 Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity;
 Allons! from all formules!
 From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests. 130

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 per-
 mitted here.

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

11

Listen! I will be honest with you, 140
 I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new prizes,
 These are the days that must happen to you:
 You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,
 You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve,
 You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, you
 hardly settle yourself to satisfaction before you are call'd
 by an irresistible call to depart,

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

12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!
They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic men
 —they are the greatest women, 150
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,
Habitué of many distant countries, habitués of far-distant
 dwellings,
Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary
 toilers,
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the
 shore,
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender helpers of
 children, bearers of children,
Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-down
 of coffins,
Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years, the curious
 years each emerging from that which preceded it,
Journeyers as with companions, namely their own diverse
 phases,
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days, 160
Journeyers gayly with their own youth, journeyers with their
 bearded and well-grain'd manhood,
Journeyers with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd, content,
Journeyers with their own sublime old age of manhood or
 womanhood,
Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of the
 universe,
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of
 death.

13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,
 To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,
 To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights
 they tend to,
 Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,
 To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass
 it, 170
 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 with-
 out labor or purchase, abstracting the feast yet not ab-
 stracting 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. 180

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. 190

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, 200
Home to the houses of men and women, at the table, in the
bedroom, everywhere,
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death under
the breast-bones, hell under the skull-bones,

Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and artificial flowers,
 Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable of itself,
 Speaking of any thing else but never of itself.

14

Allons! through struggles and wars!
 The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

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

210

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,
 He going with me must go well arm'd,
 He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry enemies, desertions.

15

Allons! the road is before us!
 It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—be not detain'd!
 Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on the shelf unopen'd!
 Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain unearn'd!
 Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!
 Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead in the court, and the judge expound the law.

Camerado, I give you my hand!
 I give you my love more precious than money,
 I give you myself before preaching or law;
 Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?
 Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?

220

ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT ALONE

On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the
clef of the universes and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or
in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the
brutes,
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages, 10
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any
globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose
them.

1856

SONG OF PRUDENCE

Manhattan's streets, I saunter'd pondering,
On Time, Space, Reality—on such as these, and abreast with
them Prudence.

The last explanation always remains to be made about prudence,
Little and large alike drop quietly aside from the prudence that
suits immortality.

The soul is of itself,
All verges to it, all has reference to what ensues,
All that a person does, says, thinks, is of consequence,

Not a move can a man or woman make, that affects him or her
in a day, month, any part of the direct lifetime, or the
hour of death,

But the same affects him or her onward afterward through the
indirect lifetime.

The indirect is just as much as the direct, 10
The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to the
body, if not more.

Not one word or deed, not venereal sore, discoloration, privacy
of the onanist,
Putridity of gluttons or rum-drinkers, speculation, cunning,
betrayal, murder, seduction, prostitution,
But has results beyond death as really as before death.

Charity and personal force are the only investments worth any
thing.

No specification is necessary, all that a male or female does, that
is vigorous, benevolent, clean, is so much profit to him or
her,
In the unshakable order of the universe and through the whole
scope of it forever.

Who has been wise receives interest,
Savage, felon, President, judge, farmer, sailor, mechanic, literat,
young, old, it is the same,
The interest will come round—all will come round. 20

Singly, wholly, to affect now, affected their time, will forever
affect, all of the past and all of the present and all of the
future,

All the brave actions of war and peace,
All help given to relatives, strangers, the poor, old, sorrowful,
young children, widows, the sick, and to shunn'd persons,
All self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks, and saw
others fill the seats of the boats,

All offering of substance or life for the good old cause, or for a
friend's sake, or opinion's sake,
All pains of enthusiasts scoff'd at by their neighbors,
All the limitless sweet love and precious suffering of mothers,
All honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded,
All the grandeur and good of ancient nations whose fragments
we inherit,
All the good of the dozens of ancient nations unknown to us by
name, date, location, 30
All that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or no,
All suggestions of the divine mind of man or the divinity of his
mouth, or the shaping of his great hands,
All that is well thought or said this day on any part of the globe,
or on any of the wandering stars, or on any of the fix'd
stars, by those there as we are here,
All that is henceforth to be thought or done by you whoever
you are, or by any one,
These inure, have inured, shall inure, to the identities from
which they sprang, or shall spring.

Did you guess any thing lived only its moment?
The world does not so exist, no parts palpable or impalpable so
exist,
No consummation exists without being from some long pre-
vious consummation, and that from some other,
Without the farthest conceivable one coming a bit nearer the
beginning than any.

Whatever satisfies souls is true; 40
Prudence entirely satisfies the craving and glut of souls,
Itself only finally satisfies the soul,
The soul has that measureless pride which revolts from every
lesson but its own.

Now I breathe the word of the prudence that walks abreast with
time, space, reality,
That answers the pride which refuses every lesson but its own.

What is prudence is indivisible,
Declines to separate one part of life from every part,
Divides not the righteous from the unrighteous or the living
from the dead,
Matches every thought or act by its correlative,
Knows no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement, 50
Knows that the young man who composedly peril'd his life
and lost it has done exceedingly well for himself without
doubt,
That he who never peril'd his life, but retains it to old age in
riches and ease, has probably achiev'd nothing for himself
worth mentioning,
Knows that only that person has really learn'd who has learn'd
to prefer results,
Who favors body and soul the same,
Who perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct,
Who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries
nor avoids death.

1856

SONG OF THE BROAD-AXE

I

Weapon shapely, naked, wan,
Head from the mother's bowels drawn,
Wooded flesh and metal bone, limb only one and lip only one,
Gray-blue leaf by red-heat grown, helve produced from a little
seed sown,
Resting the grass amid and upon,
To be lean'd and to lean on.

Strong shapes and attributes of strong shapes, masculine trades,
sights and sounds,
Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music,
Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys of the
great organ.

2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind, 10
Welcome are lands of pine and oak,
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig,
Welcome are lands of gold,
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize, welcome those of the
grape,
Welcome are lands of sugar and rice,
Welcome the cotton-lands, welcome those of the white potato
and sweet potato,
Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies,
Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, openings,
Welcome the measureless grazing-lands, welcome the teeming
soil of orchards, flax, honey, hemp;
Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands, 20
Lands rich as lands of gold or wheat and fruit lands,
Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores,
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc,
Lands of iron—lands of the make of the axe.

3

The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it,
The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space clear'd for
a garden,
The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves after the storm
is lull'd,
The wailing and moaning at intervals, the thought of the sea,
The thought of ships struck in the storm and put on their beam
ends, and the cutting away of masts,
The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd houses and
barns, 30
The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a venture of
men, families, goods,
The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,
The voyage of those who sought a New England and found it,
the outset anywhere,

The settlements of the Arkansas, Colorado, Ottawa, Willamette,
The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-bags;
The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,
The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men with their clear
untrimm'd faces,
The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on
themselves,
The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies, the bound-
less impatience of restraint,
The loose drift of character, the inkling through random types,
the solidification; 40
The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard schooners
and sloops, the raftsmen, the pioneer,
Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the woods, stripes
of snow on the limbs of trees, the occasional snapping,
The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry song, the
natural life of the woods, the strong day's work,
The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the talk, the
bed of hemlock-boughs and the bear-skin;
The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,
The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,
The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places, laying
them regular,
Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises according as
they were prepared,
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men,
their curv'd limbs,
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, holding on
by posts and braces, 50
The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the axe,
The floor-men forcing the planks close to be nail'd,
Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the
bearers,
The echoes resounding through the vacant building;
The huge storehouse carried up in the city well under way,
The six framing-men, two in the middle and two at each end,
carefully bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick for a
cross-beam,

The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right hands
 rapidly laying the long side-wall, two hundred feet from
 front to rear,
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of the
 trowels striking the bricks,
The bricks one after another each laid so workmanlike in its
 place, and set with a knock of the trowel-handle,
The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-boards, and the
 steady replenishing by the hod-men; 60
Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of well-grown
 apprentices,
The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log shaping it
 toward the shape of a mast,
The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly into the
 pine,
The butter-color'd chips flying off in great flakes and slivers,
The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in easy
 costumes,
The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-heads, floats,
 stays against the sea;
The city fireman, the fire that suddenly bursts forth in the close-
 pack'd square,
The arriving engines, the hoarse shouts, the nimble stepping
 and daring,
The strong command through the fire-trumpets, the falling in
 line, the rise and fall of the arms forcing the water,
The slender, spasmic, blue-white jets, the bringing to bear of
 the hooks and ladders and their execution, 70
The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or through
 floors if the fire smoulders under them,
The crowd with their lit faces watching, the glare and dense
 shadows;
The forger at his forge-furnace and the user of iron after
 him,
The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder and
 temperer,
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel and trying
 the edge with his thumb,

The one who clean-shapes the handle and sets it firmly in the
 socket;
 The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past users
 also,
 The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,
 The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,
 The Roman lictors preceding the consuls, 80
 The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,
 The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted head,
 The death-howl, the limpsy tumbling body, the rush of friend
 and foe thither,
 The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,
 The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates, the
 truce and parley,
 The sack of an old city in its time,
 The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously and
 disorderly,
 Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,
 Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of women
 in the gripe of brigands,
 Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old per-
 sons despairing, 90
 The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,
 The list of all executive deeds and words just or unjust,
 The power of personality just or unjust.

4

Muscle and pluck forever!
 What invigorates life invigorates death,
 And the dead advance as much as the living advance,
 And the future is no more uncertain than the present,
 For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much as
 the delicatessen of the earth and of man,
 And nothing endures but personal qualities.

What do you think endures?
 Do you think a great city endures?

Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared constitution?
or the best built steamships?
Or hotels of granite and iron? or any chef-d'œuvres of engi-
neering, forts, armaments?

Away! these are not to be cherish'd for themselves,
They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians play for
them,
The show passes, all does well enough of course,
All does very well till one flash of defiance.

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole
world.

5

The place where a great city stands is not the place of stretch'd
wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of produce
merely, 110
Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the anchor-
lifters of the departing,
Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops sell-
ing goods from the rest of the earth,
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place
where money is plentiest,
Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and
bards,
Where the city stands that is lov'd by these, and loves them
in return and understands them,
Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words
and deeds,
Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,
Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases, 120
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending
audacity of elected persons,

Where fierce men and women pour forth as the sea to the whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves,
 Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority,
 Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and President, Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for pay,
 Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to depend on themselves,
 Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,
 Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,
 Where women walk in public processions in the streets the same as the men,
 Where they enter the public assembly and take places the same as the men;
 Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands, 130
 Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,
 Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,
 Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,
 There the great city stands.

6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed!
 How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels before a man's or woman's look!

All waits or goes by default till a strong being appears;
 A strong being is the proof of the race and of the ability of the universe,
 When he or she appears materials are overaw'd,
 The dispute on the soul stops, 140
 The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd back, or laid away.

What is your money-making now? what can it do now?
 What is your respectability now?
 What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions, statute-books, now?
 Where are your jibes of being now?
 Where are your cavils about the soul now?

7

A sterile landscape covers the ore, there is as good as the best
for all the forbidding appearance,
There is the mine, there are the miners,
The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd, the ham-
mers-men are at hand with their tongs and hammers,
What always served and always serves is at hand. 150

Than this nothing has better served, it has served all,
Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and long
ere the Greek,
Served in building the buildings that last longer than any,
Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient Hindustanee,
Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi, served those whose
relics remain in Central America,
Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn pillars
and the druids,
Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the snow-cover'd
hills of Scandinavia,
Served those who time out of mind made on the granite walls
rough sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships, ocean waves,
Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths, served the
pastoral tribes and nomads,
Served the long distant Kelt, served the hardy pirates of the
Baltic, 160
Served before any of those the venerable and harmless men of
Ethiopia,
Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure and the
making of those for war,
Served all great works on land and all great works on the sea,
For the mediæval ages and before the mediæval ages,
Served not the living only then as now, but served the dead.

8

I see the European headsman,
He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs and strong
naked arms,
And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately European headsman?
Whose is that blood upon you so wet and sticky?) 170

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs,
I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,
Ghosts of dead lords, uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd ministers,
rejected kings,
Rivals, traitors, poisoners, disgraced chieftains and the rest.

I see those who in any land have died for the good cause,
The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run out,
(Mind you O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall never run
out.)

I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe,
Both blade and helve are clean,
They spirt no more the blood of European nobles, they clasp
no more the necks of queens. 180

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless,
I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy, I see no longer any axe
upon it,
I see the mighty and friendly emblem of the power of my own
race, the newest, largest race.

9

(America! I do not vaunt my love for you,
I have what I have.)

The axe leaps!
The solid forest gives fluid utterances,
They tumble forth, they rise and form,
Hut, tent, landing, survey,
Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade, 190
Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, jamb, lath, panel, gable,
Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ, exhibition-house, library,
Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, turret, porch,

Hoe, rake, pitchfork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-plane,
mallet, wedge, rounce,
Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,
Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame, and what not,
Capitols of States, and capitol of the nation of States,
Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans or for the
poor or sick,
Manhattan steamboats and clippers taking the measure of all seas.

The shapes arise! 200
Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users and all that
neighbors them,
Cutters down of wood and haulers of it to the Penobscot or
Kennebec,
Dwellers in cabins among the Californian mountains or by the
little lakes, or on the Columbia,
Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande, friendly
gatherings, the characters and fun,
Dwellers along the St. Lawrence, or north in Kanada, or down
by the Yellowstone, dwellers on coasts and off coasts,
Seal-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages through
the ice.

The shapes arise!
Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets,
Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads,
Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks, girders,
arches, 210
Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal craft, river
craft,
Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western seas,
and in many a bay and by-place,
The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the hackma-
tack-roots for knees,
The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds, the
workmen busy outside and inside,
The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger, the
adze, bolt, line, square, gouge, and bead-plane.

10

The shapes arise!
The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,
The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his shroud,
The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the posts of
the bride's bed,
The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers beneath,
the shape of the babe's cradle, 220
The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for dancers'
feet,
The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of the
friendly parents and children,
The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young man and
woman, the roof over the well-married young man and
woman,
The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste wife, and
joyously eaten by the chaste husband, content after his
day's work.

The shapes arise!
The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room, and of him
or her seated in the place,
The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the young rum-
drinker and the old rum-drinker,
The shape of the shamed and angry stairs trod by sneaking foot-
steps,
The shape of the sly settee, and the adulterous unwholesome
couple,
The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish winnings and
losings, 230
The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and sentenced
murderer, the murderer with haggard face and pinion'd
arms,
The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and white-lipp'd
crowd, the dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise!
Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances,
The door passing the dis sever'd friend flush'd and in haste,
The door that admits good news and bad news,
The door whence the son left home confident and puff'd up,
The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous absence, diseas'd, broken down, without innocence, without means.

II

Her shape arises,
She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever, 240
The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her gross and soil'd,
She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is conceal'd from her,
She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor,
She is the best lov'd, it is without exception, she has no reason to fear and she does not fear,
Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions, are idle to her as she passes,
She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do not offend her,
She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them, she is strong,
She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger than she is.

12

The main shapes arise!
Shapes of Democracy total, result of centuries, 250
Shapes ever projecting other shapes,
Shapes of turbulent manly cities,
Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole earth,
Shapes bracing the earth and braced with the whole earth.

A SONG OF THE ROLLING EARTH

I

A song of the rolling earth, and of words according,
Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright
lines? those curves, angles, dots?
No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in the
ground and sea,
They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words, those delicious
sounds out of your friends' mouths?
No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,
(In the best poems re-appears the body, man's or woman's,
well-shaped, natural, gay,
Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or the need of
shame.)

Air, soil, water, fire—those are words, 10
I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate
with theirs—my name is nothing to them,
Though it were told in the three thousand languages, what
would air, soil, water, fire, know of my name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture, are
words, sayings, meanings,
The charms that go with the mere looks of some men and
women, are sayings and meanings also.

The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words of the
earth,
The masters know the earth's words and use them more than
audible words.

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,
The earth neither lags nor hastens,

It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself from the
jump,

It is not half beautiful only, defects and excrescences show just
as much as perfections show. 20

The earth does not withhold, it is generous enough,
The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not so conceal'd
either,

They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print,
They are imbued through all things conveying themselves
willingly,

Conveying a sentiment and invitation, I utter and utter,
I speak not, yet if you hear me not of what avail am I to you?
To bear, to better, lacking these of what avail am I?

(Accouche! accouchez!

Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there?

Will you squat and stifle there?) 30

The earth does not argue,
Is not pathetic, has no arrangements,
Does not scream, haste, persuade, threaten, promise,
Makes no discriminations, has no conceivable failures,
Closes nothing, refuses nothing, shuts none out,
Of all the powers, objects, states, it notifies, shuts none out.

The earth does not exhibit itself nor refuse to exhibit itself,
possesses still underneath,

Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus of heroes,
the wail of slaves,

Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying, laughter of
young people, accents of bargainers,

Underneath these possessing words that never fail. 40

To her children the words of the eloquent dumb great mother
never fail,

The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail and reflec-
tion does not fail,

Also the day and night do not fail, and the voyage we pursue
does not fail.

Of the interminable sisters,
Of the ceaseless cotillions of sisters,
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder and younger
sisters,
The beautiful sister we know dances on with the rest.

With her ample back towards every beholder,
With the fascinations of youth and the equal fascinations of age,
Sits she whom I too love like the rest, sits undisturb'd, 50
Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror, while
her eyes glance back from it,
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her own face.

Seen at hand or seen at a distance,
Duly the twenty-four appear in public every day,
Duly approach and pass with their companions or a companion,
Looking from no countenances of their own, but from the countenances of those who are with them,
From the countenances of children or women or the manly countenance,
From the open countenances of animals or from inanimate things,
From the landscape or waters or from the exquisite apparition of the sky, 60
From our countenances, mine and yours, faithfully returning them,
Every day in public appearing without fail, but never twice with the same companions.

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three hundred and sixty-five resistlessly round the sun;
Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three hundred and sixty-five offsets of the first, sure and necessary as they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,
Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, forever withstanding, passing, carrying,
The soul's realization and determination still inheriting,

The fluid vacuum around and ahead still entering and dividing,
No balk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on no rock striking,
Swift, glad, content, unbereav'd, nothing losing, 70
Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,
The divine ship sails the divine sea.

2

Whoever you are! motion and reflection are especially for you,
The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is solid
and liquid,
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the sky,
For none more than you are the present and the past,
For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself and each woman to herself, is the word of
the past and present, and the true word of immortality;
No one can acquire for another—not one, 80
Not one can grow for another—not one.

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him,
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him,
The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most to him,
The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him,
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him,
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him—it cannot
fail,
The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor and actress
not to the audience,
And no man understands any greatness or goodness but his own,
or the indication of his own.

3

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who
shall be complete, 90
The earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who
remains jagged and broken.

I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate
those of the earth,
There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate the
theory of the earth,
No politics, song, religion, behavior, or what not, is of account,
unless it compare with the amplitude of the earth,
Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude of the
earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than that which
responds love,
It is that which contains itself, which never invites and never
refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,
All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings of
the earth,
Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the truths
of the earth, 100
Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print
cannot touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best,
It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot,
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,
I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow, all or any is best,
It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper, easier, nearer,
Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before, 110
The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,
Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as real as
before,
But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,
No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,
Undeniable growth has establish'd it.

4

These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what were they then?
If they had not reference to you in especial what were they then?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith that
tells the best,
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best untold.

Say on, sayers! sing on, singers! 121
Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth!
Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,
It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use,
When the materials are all prepared and ready, the architects
shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,
I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,
The greatest among them shall be he who best knows you, and
encloses all and is faithful to all,
He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive that you
are not an iota less than they,
You shall be fully glorified in them. 130

1856

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, 10
 Or in front, and I following her just the same.

1860

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! 10

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! 20
 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. 1860

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 condemned
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, 10

I come forthwith in your midst, I will be your poet,

I will be more to you than to any of the rest. 1860

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.

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?)

1860

OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING ♪

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
 Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
 Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
 Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond where the child
 leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
 Down from the shower'd halo,
 Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting as if
 they were alive,
 Out from the patches of briers and blackberries,
 From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,
 From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and
 fallings I heard,
 From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen as if
 with tears,

10

From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in the
 mist,
 From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,
 From the myriad thence-arous'd words,

From the word stronger and more delicious than any,
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter, 20
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond them,
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok, **r**
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass was
growing,
Up this seashore in some briers,
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown,
And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent, with
bright eyes,
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never disturbing
them, 30
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great sun!
While we bask, we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow south, or winds blow north,
Day come white, or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on the nest,
Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd again.

And thenceforward all summer in the sound of the sea,
 And at night under the full of the moon in calmer weather,
 Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
 Or flitting from brier to brier by day,
 I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining one, the he-bird, 50
 The solitary guest from Alabama.

Blow! blow! blow!

*Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;
 I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to me.*

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
 All night long on the prong of a moss-scallop'd stake,
 Down almost amid the slapping waves,
 Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,
 He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know. 60

Yes my brother I know,
 The rest might not, but I have treasur'd every note,
 For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,
 Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending myself with the
 shadows,
 Recalling now the obscure shapes, the echoes, the sounds and
 sights after their sorts,
 The white arms out in the breakers tirelessly tossing,
 I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
 Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the notes,
 Following you my brother. 70

Soothe! soothe! soothe!

*Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
 And again another behind embracing and lapping, every one
 close,
 But my love soothes not me, not me.*

*Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.*

*O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love.*

*O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?* 80

*Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!
High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my love.*

*Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.*

Land! land! O land! 90
*Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate
back again if you only would,
For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.*

*O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will rise with some of
you.*

*O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.*

*Shake out carols!
Solitary here, the night's carols!* 100
*Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon!
O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea!
O reckless despairing carols.*

*But soft! sink low!
 Soft, let me just murmur,
 And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,
 For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,
 So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,
 But not altogether still, for then she might not come immediately
 to me.*

110

*Hither my love!
 Here I am! here!
 With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,
 This gentle call is for you my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
 That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,
 That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,
 Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness! O in vain!
 O I am very sick and sorrowful.*

120

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea!
 O troubled reflection in the sea!
 O throat! O throbbing heart!
 And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

*O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
 In the air, in the woods, over fields,
 Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
 But my mate no more, no more with me!
 We two together no more.*

*The aria sinking,
 All else continuing, the stars shining,
 The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,
 With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning,
 On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray and rustling,*

130

The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the
face of the sea almost touching,
The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the
atmosphere dallying,
The love in the heart long pent, now loose, now at last tumultu-
ously bursting,
The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul, swiftly depositing,
The strange tears down the cheeks coursing,
The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering, 140
The undertone, the savage old mother incessantly crying,
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing, some drown'd
secret hissing,
To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really to me?
For I, that was a child, my tongue's use sleeping, now I have
heard you,
Now in a moment I know what I am for, I awake,
And already a thousand singers, a thousand songs, clearer,
louder and more sorrowful than yours,
A thousand warbling echoes have started to life within me,
never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me, 150
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease perpetuating
you,
Never more shall I escape, never more the reverberations,
Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
Never again leave me to be the peaceful child I was before what
there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here somewhere,)
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,) 160
 The word final, superior to all,
 Subtle, sent up—what is it?—I listen;
 Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-waves?
 Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,
 Delaying not, hurrying not,
 Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before day-
 break,

Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word death, >
 And again death, death, death, death, /
 Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd
 child's heart, 170

But edging near as privately for me rustling at my feet,
 Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and laving me softly
 all over,
 Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
 But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,
 That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray beach,
 With the thousand responsive songs at random,
 My own songs awaked from that hour,
 And with them the key, the word up from the waves,
 The word of the sweetest song and all songs, 180
 That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
 (Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet
 garments, bending aside,)
 The sea whisper'd me.

1859

IN PATHS UNTRODDEN

In paths untrodden,
 In the growth by margins of pond-waters,
 Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,
 From all the standards hitherto publish'd, from the pleasures,
 profits, conformities,

Which too long I was offering to feed my soul,
Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to me that
 my soul,
That the soul of the man I speak for rejoices in comrades,
Here by myself away from the clank of the world,
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,
No longer abash'd, (for in this secluded spot I can respond as I
 would not dare elsewhere,) 10
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 of my nights and days,
To celebrate the need of comrades.

1860

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, 10

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; 21

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 call-
ing life, 30

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,

Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand 141

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.

1860

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, 10
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. 21

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! 30
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! 10
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

1860

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, 10
 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
 pond-side,
 (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, 20
 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.

1860

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, 10
When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while hold-
ing 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.

1860

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.

10

1860

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, 10
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.

1860

CITY OF ORGIES

City of orgies, walks and joys,
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will one
day make you illustrious,
Not the pageants of you, not your shifting tableaux, your spec-
tacles, 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.

1860

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 leaves 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; 10

For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana
 solitary in a wide flat space,
 Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a lover
 near,

I know very well I could not.

1860

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 Japan, 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.

1860

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.

1860

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.

1860

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.

1860

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, exaltè, previously unknown,
 Because I perceive it waits, and has been always waiting, latent
 in all men.

1860

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.)

1860

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.

1860

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.

1860

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.

1860

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.

1860

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.

1860

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 con-
 tingencies,
 To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs,
 as the trees and animals do.

1860

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 deck-
 hand 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, 10
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

1860

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.

1860

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, 10
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 dusk the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush from
the swamp-cedars,
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

2

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.

This then is life,
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and
convulsions.

How curious! how real! 20
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.

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

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

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

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

3

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

Chants of the prairies, 40
Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the
Mexican sea,
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and
Minnesota,
Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence
equidistant,
Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

4

Take my leaves America, take them South and take them North,
Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own
offspring,
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, 50
Now if eligible O that the great masters might return and
study me.

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

5

Dead poets, philosophers, priests,
 Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,
 Language-shapers on other shores,
 Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or desolate,
 I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left
 wafted hither,
 I have perused it, own it is admirable, (moving awhile among it,)
 Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever deserve
 more than it deserves, 60
 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 finalè of visible forms,
 The satisfier, after due long-waiting now advancing,
 Yes here comes my mistress the soul.

6

The soul,
 Forever and forever—longer than soil is brown and solid—
 longer than water ebbs and flows. 70

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, 80
(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 courte-
 ously every city large and small,
And employments! I will put in my poems that with you is
 heroism upon land and sea,
And I will report all heroism from an American point of view.

I will sing the song of companionship,
I will show what alone must finally compact these,
I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly love,
 indicating it in me,
I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that were
 threatening to consume me,
I will lift what has too long kept down those smouldering fires,
I will give them complete abandonment, 91
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,
For who but I should understand love with all its sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?

7

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

Omnes! omnes! let others ignore what they may,
I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also,
I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation is—and I
 say there is in fact no evil, 100
(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, 110
 Otherwise there is no real and permanent grandeur;
 (Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,
 Nor land nor man or woman without religion.)

8

What are you doing young man?
 Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science, art, amours?

These ostensible realities, politics, points?
 Your ambition or business whatever it may be?

It is well—against such I say not a word, I am their poet also,
 But behold! such swiftly subside, burnt up for religion's sake,
 For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame, the essential life of the earth, 120

Any more than such are to religion.

9

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

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

IO

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater
 religion,
The following chants each for its kind I sing. 130

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. 139

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.

II

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, 150
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.

12

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, 160
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, 170
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each
as profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts,
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to
ensemble,
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference
to all days,
And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem but has
reference to the soul,
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find there
is no one nor any particle of one but has reference to the
soul.

13

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

All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them;
How can the real body ever die and be buried? 180

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 sub-
 stance and life return in the body and the soul,
 Indifferently before death and after death.

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

14

Whoever you are, to you endless announcements!

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet? 190
 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! 200
 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! 210

I cannot be discharged from you! not from one any sooner than
another!

O death! O for all that, I am yet of you unseen this hour with
irrepressible love,

Walking New England, a friend, a traveler,

Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer ripples on
Paumanok's sands,

Crossing the prairies, dwelling again in Chicago, dwelling in
every town,

Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,

Listening to orators and oratresses in public halls,

Of and through the States as during life, each man and woman
my neighbor,

The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as near to
him and her,

The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet with
any of them, 220

Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river, yet in my house of
adobie,

Yet returning eastward, yet in the Seaside State or in Maryland,

Yet Kanadian cheerily braving the winter, the snow and ice
welcome to me,

Yet a true son either of Maine or of the Granite State, or the
Narragansett Bay State, or the Empire State,

Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet welcoming
every new brother,

Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the hour
they unite with the old ones,

Coming among the new ones myself to be their companion and
 equal, coming personally to you now,
 Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

15

With me with firm holding, yet haste, haste on.

For your life adhere to me, 230
 (I may have to be persuaded many times before I consent to give
 myself really to you, but what of that?
 Must not Nature be persuaded many times?)

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

16

On my way a moment I pause,
 Here for you! and here for America!
 Still the present I raise aloft, still the future of the States I har-
 binger glad and sublime,
 And for the past I pronounce what the air holds of the red
 aborigines. 240

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, Chatta-
 hoochee, Kaqueta, Oronoco,
 Wabash, Miami, Saginaw, Chippewa, Oshkosh, Walla-Walla,
 Leaving such to the States they melt, they depart, charging the
 water and the land with names.

17

Expanding and swift, henceforth,
 Elements, breeds, adjustments, turbulent, quick and audacious,
 A world primal again, vistas of glory incessant and branching,

A new race dominating previous ones and grander far, with new
contests,
New politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions and
arts. 250

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

18

See, steamers, steaming through my poems,
See, in my poems immigrants continually coming and
landing,
See, in arriere, the wigwam, the trail, the hunter's hut, the flat-
boat, the maize-leaf, the claim, the rude fence, and the
backwoods village,
See, on the one side the Western Sea and on the other the
Eastern Sea, how they advance and retreat upon my poems
as upon their own shores,
See, pastures and forests in my poems—see, animals wild and
tame—see, beyond the Kaw, countless herds of buffalo
feeding on short curly grass,
See, in my poems, cities, solid, vast, inland, with paved streets,
with iron and stone edifices, ceaseless vehicles, and com-
merce,
See, the many-cylinder'd steam printing-press—see, the electric
telegraph stretching across the continent,
See, through Atlantica's depths pulses American Europe reach-
ing, pulses of Europe duly return'd, 260
See, the strong and quick locomotive as it departs, panting,
blowing the steam-whistle,
See, ploughmen ploughing farms—see, miners digging mines—
see, the numberless factories,
See, mechanics busy at their benches with tools—see from among
them superior judges, philosophers, Presidents, emerge, drest
in working dresses,

See, lounging through the shops and fields of the States, me well-belov'd, close-held by day and night,
Hear the loud echoes of my songs there—read the hints come at last.

19

O camerado close! O you and me at last, and us two only.
O a word to clear one's path ahead endlessly!
O something ecstatic and undemonstrable! O music wild!
O now I triumph—and you shall also;
O hand in hand—O wholesome pleasure—O one more desirer
and lover! 270
O to haste firm holding—to haste, haste on with me.

1860

OUR OLD FEUILLAGE

Always our old feuillage!
Always Florida's green peninsula—always the priceless delta of
Louisiana—always the cotton-fields of Alabama and Texas,
Always California's golden hills and hollows, and the silver
mountains of New Mexico—always soft-breath'd Cuba,
Always the vast slope drain'd by the Southern sea, inseparable
with the slopes drain'd by the Eastern and Western seas,
The area the eighty-third year of these States, the three and a
half millions of square miles,
The eighteen thousand miles of sea-coast and bay-coast on the
main, the thirty thousand miles of river navigation,
The seven millions of distinct families and the same number of
dwellings—always these, and more, branching forth into
numberless branches,
Always the free range and diversity—always the continent of
Democracy;
Always the prairies, pastures, forests, vast cities, travelers,
Kanada, the snows;
Always these compact lands tied at the hips with the belt string-
ing the huge oval lakes; 10

Always the West with strong native persons, the increasing
density there, the habitants, friendly, threatening, ironical,
scorning invaders;
All sights, South, North, East—all deeds promiscuously done at
all times,
All characters, movements, growths, a few noticed, myriads
unnoticed,
Through Mannahatta's streets I walking, these things gathering,
On interior rivers by night in the glare of pine knots, steamboats
wooding up,
Sunlight by day on the valley of the Susquehanna, and on the
valleys of the Potomac and Rappahannock, and the valleys
of the Roanoke and Delaware,
In their northerly wilds beasts of prey haunting the Adirondacks
the hills, or lapping the Saginaw waters to drink,
In a lonesome inlet a sheldrake lost from the flock, sitting on the
water rocking silently,
In farmers' barns oxen in the stable, their harvest labor done,
they rest standing, they are too tired,
Afar on arctic ice, the she-walrus lying drowsily while her cubs
play around, 20
The hawk sailing where men have not yet sail'd, the farthest
polar sea, ripply, crystalline, open, beyond the floes,
White drift spooning ahead where the ship in the tempest dashes,
On solid land what is done in cities as the bells strike midnight
together,
In primitive woods the sounds there also sounding, the howl of
the wolf, the scream of the panther, and the hoarse bellow
of the elk,
In winter beneath the hard blue ice of Moosehead lake, in sum-
mer visible through the clear waters, the great trout
swimming,
In lower latitudes in warmer air in the Carolinas the large black
buzzard floating slowly high beyond the tree tops,
Below, the red cedar festoon'd with tylandria, the pines and
cypresses growing out of the white sand that spreads far
and flat,

Rude boats descending the big Pedee, climbing plants, parasites
with color'd flowers and berries enveloping huge trees,
The waving drapery on the live-oak trailing long and low,
noiselessly waved by the wind,
The camp of Georgia wagoners just after dark, the supper-fires
and the cooking and eating by whites and negroes, 30
Thirty or forty great wagons, the mules, cattle, horses, feeding
from troughs,
The shadows, gleams, up under the leaves of the old sycamore-
trees, the flames with the black smoke from the pitch-pine
curling and rising;
Southern fishermen fishing, the sounds and inlets of North
Carolina's coast, the shad-fishery and the herring-fishery,
the large sweep-seines, the windlasses on shore work'd by
horses, the clearing, curing, and packing-houses;
Deep in the forest in piny woods turpentine dropping from the
incisions in the trees, there are the turpentine works,
There are the negroes at work in good health, the ground in
all directions is cover'd with pinestraw;
In Tennessee and Kentucky slaves busy in the coalings, at the
forge, by the furnace-blaze, or at the corn-shucking,
In Virginia, the planter's son returning after a long absence,
joyfully welcom'd and kiss'd by the aged mulatto nurse,
On rivers boatmen safely moor'd at nightfall in their boats under
shelter of high banks,
Some of the younger men dance to the sound of the banjo or
fiddle, others sit on the gunwale smoking and talking;
Late in the afternoon the mocking-bird, the American mimic,
singing in the Great Dismal Swamp, 40
There are the greenish waters, the resinous odor, the plenteous
moss, the cypress-tree, and the juniper-tree;
Northward, young men of Mannahatta, the target company
from an excursion returning home at evening, the
musket-muzzles all bear bunches of flowers presented by
women;
Children at play, or on his father's lap a young boy fallen asleep,
(how his lips move! how he smiles in his sleep!)

The scout riding on horseback over the plains west of the
Mississippi, he ascends a knoll and sweeps his eyes around;
California life, the miner, bearded, dress'd in his rude costume,
the stanch California friendship, the sweet air, the graves
one in passing meets solitary just aside the horse-path;
Down in Texas the cotton-field, the negro-cabins, drivers driving
mules or oxen before rude carts, cotton bales piled on
banks and wharves;
Encircling all, vast-darting up and wide, the American Soul,
with equal hemispheres, one Love, one Dilation or Pride;
In arriere the peace-talk with the Iroquois the aborigines, the
calumet, the pipe of good-will, arbitration, and indorse-
ment,
The sachem blowing the smoke first toward the sun and then
toward the earth,
The drama of the scalp-dance enacted with painted faces and
guttural exclamations, 50
The setting out of the war-party, the long and stealthy march,
The single file, the swinging hatchets, the surprise and slaughter
of enemies;
All the acts, scenes, ways, persons, attitudes of these States,
reminiscences, institutions,
All these States compact, every square mile of these States
without excepting a particle;
Me pleas'd, rambling in lanes and country fields, Paumanok's
fields,
Observing the spiral flight of two little yellow butterflies shuffling
between each other, ascending high in the air,
The darting swallow, the destroyer of insects, the fall traveler
southward but returning northward early in the spring,
The country boy at the close of the day driving the herd of cows
and shouting to them as they loiter to browse by the
roadside,
The city wharf, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston,
New Orleans, San Francisco,
The departing ships when the sailors heave at the capstan; 60
Evening—me in my room—the setting sun,

The setting summer sun shining in my open window, showing
the swarm of flies, suspended, balancing in the air in the
centre of the room, darting athwart, up and down, casting
swift shadows in specks on the opposite wall where the
shine is;
The athletic American matron speaking in public to crowds of
listeners,
Males, females, immigrants, combinations, the copiousness, the
individuality of the States, each for itself—the money-
makers,
Factories, machinery, the mechanical forces, the windlass, lever,
pulley, all certainties,
The certainty of space, increase, freedom, futurity,
In space the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars—on the
firm earth, the lands, my lands,
O lands! all so dear to me—what you are, (whatever it is,) I
putting it at random in these songs, become a part of that,
whatever it is,
Southward there, I screaming, with wings slow flapping, with
the myriads of gulls wintering along the coasts of Florida,
Otherways there atwixt the banks of the Arkansas, the Rio
Grande, the Nueces, the Brazos, the Tombigbee, the Red
River, the Saskatchewan or the Osage, I with the spring
waters laughing and skipping and running, 70
Northward, on the sands, on some shallow bay of Paumanok, I
with parties of snowy herons wading in the wet to seek
worms and aquatic plants,
Retreating, triumphantly twittering, the king-bird, from piercing
the crow with its bill, for amusement—and I triumphantly
twittering,
The migrating flock of wild geese alighting in autumn to refresh
themselves, the body of the flock feed, the sentinels outside
move around with erect heads watching, and are from
time to time reliev'd by other sentinels—and I feeding
and taking turns with the rest,
In Kanadian forests the moose, large as an ox, corner'd by
hunters, rising desperately on his hind-feet, and plunging

with his fore-feet, the hoofs as sharp as knives—and I,
plunging at the hunters, corner'd and desperate,
In the Mannahatta, streets, piers, shipping, store-houses, and the
countless workmen working in the shops,
And I too of the Mannahatta, singing thereof—and no less in
myself than the whole of the Mannahatta in itself,
Singing the song of These, my ever-united lands—my body
no more inevitably united, part to part, and made out
of a thousand diverse contributions one identity, any
more than my lands are inevitably united and made ONE
IDENTITY;
Nativities, climates, the grass of the great pastoral Plains,
Cities, labors, death, animals, products, war, good and evil—
these me,
These affording, in all their particulars, the old feuillage to me
and to America, how can I do less than pass the clew
of the union of them, to afford the like to you? 80
Whoever you are! how can I but offer you divine leaves, that
you also be eligible as I am?
How can I but as here chanting, invite you for yourself to collect
bouquets of the incomparable feuillage of these States?

1860

A SONG OF JOYS

O to make the most jubilant song!
Full of music—full of manhood, womanhood, infancy!
Full of common employments—full of grain and trees.

O for the voices of animals—O for the swiftness and balance of
fishes!
O for the dropping of raindrops in a song!
O for the sunshine and motion of waves in a song!

O the joy of my spirit—it is uncaged—it darts like lightning!
It is not enough to have this globe or a certain time,
I will have thousands of globes and all time.

O the engineer's joys! to go with a locomotive! 10
To hear the hiss of steam, the merry shriek, the steam-whistle,
the laughing locomotive!
To push with resistless way and speed off in the distance.

O the gleesome saunter over fields and hillsides!
The leaves and flowers of the commonest weeds, the moist fresh
stillness of the woods,
The exquisite smell of the earth at daybreak, and all through the
forenoon.

O the horseman's and horsewoman's joys!
The saddle, the gallop, the pressure upon the seat, the cool
gurgling by the ears and hair.

O the fireman's joys!
I hear the alarm at dead of night,
I hear bells, shouts! I pass the crowd, I run! 20
The sight of the flames maddens me with pleasure.

O the joy of the strong-brawn'd fighter, towering in the arena
in perfect condition, conscious of power, thirsting to meet
his opponent.

O the joy of that vast elemental sympathy which only the human
soul is capable of generating and emitting in steady and
limitless floods.

O the mother's joys!
The watching, the endurance, the precious love, the anguish,
the patiently yielded life.

O the joy of increase, growth, recuperation,
The joy of soothing and pacifying, the joy of concord and
harmony.

O to go back to the place where I was born,
To hear the birds sing once more,
To ramble about the house and barn and over the fields once
more, 30
And through the orchard and along the old lanes once more.

O to have been brought up on bays, lagoons, creeks, or along
the coast,

To continue and be employ'd there all my life,

The briny and damp smell, the shore, the salt weeds exposed
at low water,

The work of fishermen, the work of the eel-fisher and clam-
fisher;

I come with my clam-rake and spade, I come with my eel-spear,
Is the tide out? I join the group of clam-diggers on the flats,
I laugh and work with them, I joke at my work like a mettlesome
young man;

In winter I take my eel-basket and eel-spear and travel out on
foot on the ice—I have a small axe to cut holes in the ice,
Behold me well-clothed going gayly or returning in the after-
noon, my brood of tough boys accompanying me, 40

My brood of grown and part-grown boys, who love to be with
no one else so well as they love to be with me,

By day to work with me, and by night to sleep with me.

Another time in warm weather out in a boat, to lift the lobster-
pots where they are sunk with heavy stones, (I know the
buoys,)

O the sweetness of the Fifth-month morning upon the water as
I row just before sunrise toward the buoys,

I pull the wicker pots up slantingly, the dark green lobsters are
desperate with their claws as I take them out, I insert
wooden pegs in the joints of their pincers,

I go to all the places one after another, and then row back to the
shore,

There in a huge kettle of boiling water the lobsters shall be
boil'd till their color becomes scarlet.

Another time mackerel-taking,

Voracious, mad for the hook, near the surface, they seem to fill
the water for miles;

Another time fishing for rock-fish in Chesapeake bay, I one of
the brown-faced crew; 50

Another time trailing for blue-fish off Paumanok, I stand with
braced body,
My left foot is on the gunwale, my right arm throws far out the
coils of slender rope,
In sight around me the quick veering and darting of fifty skiffs,
my companions.

O boating on the rivers,
The voyage down the St. Lawrence, the superb scenery, the
steamers,
The ships sailing, the Thousand Islands, the occasional timber-
raft and the raftsmen with long-reaching sweep-oars,
The little huts on the rafts, and the stream of smoke when they
cook supper at evening.

(O something pernicious and dread!
Something far away from a puny and pious life!
Something unproved! something in a trance!
Something escaped from the anchorage and driving free.)

O to work in mines, or forging iron,
Foundry casting, the foundry itself, the rude high roof, the
ample and shadow'd space,
The furnace, the hot liquid pour'd out and running.

O to resume the joys of the soldier!
To feel the presence of a brave commanding officer—to feel his
sympathy!
To behold his calmness—to be warm'd in the rays of his
smile!
To go to battle—to hear the bugles play and the drums
beat!
To hear the crash of artillery—to see the glittering of the
bayonets and musket-barrels in the sun!
To see men fall and die and not complain!
To taste the savage taste of blood—to be so devilish!
To gloat so over the wounds and deaths of the enemy.

O the whaleman's joys! O I cruise my old cruise again!
I feel the ship's motion under me, I feel the Atlantic breezes
fanning me,
I hear the cry again sent down from the mast-head, *There—she
blows!*
Again I spring up the rigging to look with the rest—we descend,
wild with excitement,
I leap in the lower'd boat, we row toward our prey where he lies,
We approach stealthy and silent, I see the mountainous mass,
lethargic, basking,
I see the harpooner standing up, I see the weapon dart from his
vigorous arm;
O swift again far out in the ocean the wounded whale, settling,
running to windward, tows me, 80
Again I see him rise to breathe, we row close again,
I see a lance driven through his side, press'd deep, turn'd in the
wound,
Again we back off, I see him settle again, the life is leaving him
fast,
As he rises he spouts blood, I see him swim in circles narrower
and narrower, swiftly cutting the water—I see him die,
He gives one convulsive leap in the centre of the circle, and then
falls flat and still in the bloody foam.

O the old manhood of me, my noblest joy of all!
My children and grand-children, my white hair and beard,
My largeness, calmness, majesty, out of the long stretch of my
life.

O ripen'd joy of womanhood! O happiness at last!
I am more than eighty years of age, I am the most venerable
mother, 90
How clear is my mind—how all people draw nigh to me!
What attractions are these beyond any before? what bloom more
than the bloom of youth?
What beauty is this that descends upon me and rises out
of me?

O the orator's joys!

To inflate the chest, to roll the thunder of the voice out from
the ribs and throat,

To make the people rage, weep, hate, desire, with yourself,

To lead America—to quell America with a great tongue.

O the joy of my soul leaning pois'd on itself, receiving identity
through materials and loving them, observing characters
and absorbing them,

My soul vibrated back to me from them, from sight, hearing,
touch, reason, articulation, comparison, memory, and the
like,

The real life of my senses and flesh transcending my senses and
flesh, 100

My body done with materials, my sight done with my material
eyes,

Proved to me this day beyond cavil that it is not my material
eyes which finally see,

Nor my material body which finally loves, walks, laughs, shouts,
embraces, procreates.

O the farmer's joys!

Ohioan's, Illinoisian's, Wisconsinese', Kanadian's, Iowan's,
Kansian's, Missourian's, Oregonese' joys!

To rise at peep of day and pass forth nimbly to work,

To plough land in the fall for winter-sown crops,

To plough land in the spring for maize,

To train orchards, to graft the trees, to gather apples in the fall.

O to bathe in the swimming-bath, or in a good place along
shore, 110

To splash the water! to walk ankle-deep, or race naked along
the shore.

O to realize space!

The plenteousness of all, that there are no bounds,

To emerge and be of the sky, of the sun and moon and flying
clouds, as one with them.

O the joy of a manly self-hood!
To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any tyrant known
or unknown,
To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and elastic,
To look with calm gaze or with a flashing eye,
To speak with a full and sonorous voice out of a broad
chest,
To confront with your personality all the other personalities of
the earth.

120

Know'st thou the excellent joys of youth?
Joys of the dear companions and of the merry word and laugh-
ing face?
Joy of the glad light-beaming day, joy of the wide-breath'd
games?
Joy of sweet music, joy of the lighted ball-room and the dancers?
Joy of the plenteous dinner, strong carouse and drinking?

Yet O my soul supreme!
Know'st thou the joys of pensive thought?
Joys of the free and lonesome heart, the tender, gloomy heart?
Joys of the solitary walk, the spirit bow'd yet proud, the suffer-
ing and the struggle?
The agonistic throes, the ecstasies, joys of the solemn musings
day or night?
Joys of the thought of Death, the great spheres Time and
Space?
Prophetic joys of better, loftier love's ideals, the divine wife, the
sweet, eternal, perfect comrade?
Joys all thine own undying one, joys worthy thee O soul.

130

O while I live to be the ruler of life, not a slave,
To meet life as a powerful conqueror,
No fumes, no ennui, no more complaints or scornful criticisms,
To these proud laws of the air, the water and the ground, prov-
ing my interior soul impregnable,
And nothing exterior shall ever take command of me.

For not life's joys alone I sing, repeating—the joy of death!
The beautiful touch of Death, soothing and benumbing a few
 moments, for reasons, 140
Myself discharging my excrementitious body to be burn'd, or
 render'd to powder, or buried,
My real body doubtless left to me for other spheres,
My voided body nothing more to me, returning to the purifications,
 further offices, eternal uses of the earth.

O to attract by more than attraction!
How it is I know not—yet behold! the something which obeys
 none of the rest,
It is offensive, never defensive—yet how magnetic it draws.

O to struggle against great odds, to meet enemies undaunted!
To be entirely alone with them, to find how much one can
 stand!
To look strife, torture, prison, popular odium, face to face!
To mount the scaffold, to advance to the muzzles of guns with
 perfect nonchalance! 150
To be indeed a God!

O to sail to sea in a ship!
To leave this steady unendurable land,
To leave the tiresome sameness of the streets, the sidewalks and
 the houses,
To leave you O you solid motionless land, and entering a
 ship,
To sail and sail and sail!

O to have life henceforth a poem of new joys!
To dance, clap hands, exult, shout, skip, leap, roll on, float on!
To be a sailor of the world bound for all ports,
A ship itself, (see indeed these sails I spread to the sun and
 air,) 160
A swift and swelling ship full of rich words, full of joys.

MYSELF AND MINE

Myself and mine gymnastic ever,
To stand the cold or heat, to take good aim with a gun, to sail
a boat, to manage horses, to beget superb children,
To speak readily and clearly, to feel at home among common
people,
And to hold our own in terrible positions on land and sea.

Not for an embroiderer,
(There will always be plenty of embroiderers, I welcome them
also,)
But for the fibre of things and for inherent men and women.

Not to chisel ornaments,
But to chisel with free stroke the heads and limbs of plenteous
supreme Gods, that the States may realize them walking
and talking.

Let me have my own way, 10
Let others promulge the laws, I will make no account of the
laws,
Let others praise eminent men and hold up peace, I hold up
agitation and conflict,
I praise no eminent man, I rebuke to his face the one that was
thought most worthy.

(Who are you? and what are you secretly guilty of all your life?
Will you turn aside all your life? will you grub and chatter all
your life?
And who are you, blabbing by rote, years, pages, languages,
reminiscences,
Unwitting to-day that you do not know how to speak properly
a single word?)

Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does, fresh and
modern continually.

I give nothing as duties, 20
 What others give as duties I give as living impulses,
 (Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

Let others dispose of questions, I dispose of nothing, I arouse
 unanswerable questions,
 Who are they I see and touch, and what about them?
 What about these likes of myself that draw me so close by tender
 directions and indirections?

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends, but
 listen to my enemies, as I myself do,
 I charge you forever reject those who would expound me, for I
 cannot expound myself,
 I charge that there be no theory or school founded out of me,
 I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.

After me, vista! 30
 O I see life is not short, but immeasurably long,
 I henceforth tread the world chaste, temperate, an early riser, a
 steady grower,
 Every hour the semen of centuries, and still of centuries.

I must follow up these continual lessons of the air, water, earth,
 I perceive I have no time to lose.

1860

WITH ANTECEDENTS

I

With antecedents,
 With my fathers and mothers and the accumulations of past
 ages,
 With all which, had it not been, I would not now be here, as I
 am,
 With Egypt, India, Phenicia, Greece and Rome,
 With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb and the Saxon,

With antique maritime ventures, laws, artisanship, wars and
journeys,
With the poet, the skald, the saga, the myth, and the oracle,
With the sale of slaves, with enthusiasts, with the troubadour,
the crusader, and the monk,
With those old continents whence we have come to this new
continent,
With the fading kingdoms and kings over there, 10
With the fading religions and priests,
With the small shores we look back to from our own large and
present shores,
With countless years drawing themselves onward and arrived
at these years,
You and me arrived—America arrived and making this year,
This year! sending itself ahead countless years to come.

2

O but it is not the years—it is I, it is You,
We touch all laws and tally all antecedents,
We are the skald, the oracle, the monk and the knight, we easily
include them and more,
We stand amid time beginningless and endless, we stand amid
evil and good,
All swings around us, there is as much darkness as light, 20
The very sun swings itself and its system of planets around us,
Its sun, and its again, all swing around us.
As for me, (torn, stormy, amid these vehement days,)
I have the idea of all, and am all and believe in all,
I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true, I reject no
part.
(Have I forgotten any part? any thing in the past?
Come to me whoever and whatever, till I give you recognition.)
I respect Assyria, China, Teutonia, and the Hebrews,
I adopt each theory, myth, god, and demi-god,
I see that the old accounts, bibles, genealogies, are true, without
exception, 30

I assert that all past days were what they must have been,
 And that they could no-how have been better than they were,
 And that to-day is what it must be, and that America is,
 And that to-day and America could no-how be better than they
 are.

3

In the name of these States and in your and my name, the Past,
 And in the name of these States and in your and my name, the
 Present time.

I know that the past was great and the future will be great,
 And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present time,
 (For the sake of him I typify, for the common average man's
 sake, your sake if you are he,)
 And that where I am or you are this present day, there is the
 centre of all days, all races, 40
 And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of races
 and days, or ever will come.

1860

AS I EBB'D WITH THE OCEAN OF LIFE

I

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life,
 As I wended the shores I know,
 As I walk'd where the ripples continually wash you Paumanok,
 Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant,
 Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her castaways,
 I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,
 Held by this electric self out of the pride of which I utter poems,
 Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,
 The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and all the
 land of the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to follow
 those slender windrows, 10
 Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,

Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left by
the tide,
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side
of me,
Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought of
likenesses,
These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,
As I wended the shores I know,
As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types.

2

As I wend to the shores I know not,
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me, 20
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,
I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.

O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon me
I have not once had the least idea who or what I am,
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet
untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs
and bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have
written, 30
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand
beneath.

I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a single
object, and that no man ever can,
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to dart
upon me and sting me,
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

3

You oceans both, I close with you,
We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift, know-
ing not why,
These little shreds indeed standing for you and me and all.

You friable shore with trails of debris,
You fish-shaped island, I take what is underfoot,
What is yours is mine my father.

40

I too Paumanok,
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and been
wash'd on your shores,
I too am but a trail of drift and debris,
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island.

I throw myself upon your breast my father,
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,
I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me my father,
Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,
Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the murmur-
ing I envy.

50

4

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)
Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,
Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny not me,
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I touch
you or gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,
I gather for myself and for this phantom looking down where
we lead, and following me and mine.

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,
(See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,
See, the prismatic colors glistening and rolling,) 60
Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,
Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another,
From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,
Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid or
soil,
Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and
thrown,
A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves floating,
drifted at random,
Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,
Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-trumpets,
We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence, spread out
before you,
You up there walking or sitting, 70
Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.

1860

THE WORLD BELOW THE BRINE

The world below the brine,
Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,
Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds, the thick
tangle, openings, and pink turf,
Different colors, pale gray and green, purple, white, and gold,
the play of light through the water,
Dumb swimmers there among the rocks, coral, gluten, grass,
rushes, and the aliment of the swimmers,
Sluggish existences grazing there suspended, or slowly crawling
close to the bottom,
The sperm-whale at the surface blowing air and spray, or dis-
porting with his flukes,
The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy sea-
leopard, and the sting-ray,

Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those ocean-
 depths, breathing that thick-breathing air, as so many do,
 The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air
 breathed by beings like us who walk this sphere, 10
 The change onward from ours to that of beings who walk other
 spheres.

1860

A HAND-MIRROR

Hold it up sternly—see this it sends back, (who is it? is it you?)
 Outside fair costume, within ashes and filth,
 No more a flashing eye, no more sonorous voice or springy
 step,
 Now some slave's eye, voice, hands, step,
 A drunkard's breath, unwholesome eater's face, veneralee's
 flesh,
 Lungs rotting away piecemeal, stomach sour and cankerous,
 Joints rheumatic, bowels clogged with abomination,
 Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams,
 Words babble, hearing and touch callous,
 No brain, no heart left, no magnetism of sex; 10
 Such from one look in this looking-glass ere you go hence,
 Such a result so soon—and from such a beginning!

1860

I SIT AND LOOK OUT

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon
 all oppression and shame,
 I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish with
 themselves, remorseful after deeds done,
 I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying,
 neglected, gaunt, desperate,
 I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacherous
 seducer of young women,
 I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love attempted
 to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,

I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see martyrs
and prisoners,
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots who
shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons
upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting
look out upon,
See, hear, and am silent.

10

1860

UNNAMED LANDS

Nations ten thousand years before these States, and many times
ten thousand years before these States,
Garner'd clusters of ages that men and women like us grew up
and travel'd their course and pass'd on,
What vast-built cities, what orderly republics, what pastoral
tribes and nomads,
What histories, rulers, heroes, perhaps transcending all others,
What laws, customs, wealth, arts, traditions,
What sort of marriage, what costumes, what physiology and
phrenology,
What of liberty and slavery among them, what they thought of
death and the soul,
Who were witty and wise, who beautiful and poetic, who brut-
ish and undevelop'd,
Not a mark, not a record remains—and yet all remains.

O I know that those men and women were not for nothing, any
more than we are for nothing, 10
I know that they belong to the scheme of the world every bit as
much as we now belong to it.

Afar they stand, yet near to me they stand,
Some with oval countenances learn'd and calm,
Some naked and savage, some like huge collections of insects,

Some in tents, herdsmen, patriarchs, tribes, horsemen,
 Some prowling through woods, some living peaceably on
 farms, laboring, reaping, filling barns,
 Some traversing paved avenues, amid temples, palaces, fac-
 tories, libraries, shows, courts, theatres, wonderful monu-
 ments.

Are those billions of men really gone?
 Are those women of the old experience of the earth gone?
 Do their lives, cities, arts rest only with us? 20
 Did they achieve nothing for good for themselves?

I believe of all those men and women that fill'd the unnamed
 lands, every one exists this hour here or elsewhere, invis-
 ble to us,
 In exact proportion to what he or she grew from in life, and
 out of what he or she did, felt, became, loved, sinn'd,
 in life.

I believe that was not the end of those nations or any person of
 them, any more than this shall be the end of my nation,
 or of me;
 Of their languages, governments, marriage, literature, prod-
 ucts, games, wars, manners, crimes, prisons, slaves, heroes,
 poets,
 I suspect their results curiously await in the yet unseen world,
 counterparts of what accrued to them in the seen world,
 I suspect I shall meet them there,
 I suspect I shall there find each old particular of those unnamed
 lands.

1860

TO HIM THAT WAS CRUCIFIED

My spirit to yours dear brother,
 Do not mind because many sounding your name do not under-
 stand you, .
 I do not sound your name, but I understand you,

I specify you with joy O my comrade to salute you, and to
salute those who are with you, before and since, and those
to come also,
That we all labor together transmitting the same charge and
succession,
We few equals indifferent of lands, indifferent of times,
We, enclosers of all continents, all castes, allowers of all the-
ologies,
Compassionaters, perceivers, rapport of men,
We walk silent among disputes and assertions, but reject not the
disputers nor any thing that is asserted,
We hear the bawling and din, we are reach'd at by divisions,
jealousies, recriminations on every side, 10
They close peremptorily upon us to surround us, my comrade,
Yet we walk unheld, free, the whole earth over, journeying up
and down till we make our ineffaceable mark upon time
and the diverse eras,
Till we saturate time and eras, that the men and women of races,
ages to come, may prove brethren and lovers as we are.

1860

LAWS FOR CREATIONS

Laws for creations,
For strong artists and leaders, for fresh broods of teachers and
perfect literats for America,
For noble savans and coming musicians.
All must have reference to the ensemble of the world, and the
compact truth of the world,
There shall be no subject too pronounced—all works shall
illustrate the divine law of indirections.
What do you suppose creation is?
What do you suppose will satisfy the soul, except to walk free
and own no superior?
What do you suppose I would intimate to you in a hundred
ways, but that man or woman is as good as God?

And that there is no God any more divine than Yourself? 9
 And that that is what the oldest and newest myths finally mean?
 And that you or any one must approach creations through such
 laws?

1860

I WAS LOOKING A LONG WHILE

I was looking a long while for Intentions,
 For a clew to the history of the past for myself, and for these
 chants—and now I have found it,
 It is not in those paged fables in the libraries, (them I neither
 accept nor reject,)
 It is no more in the legends than in all else,
 It is in the present—it is this earth to-day,
 It is in Democracy—(the purport and aim of all the past,)
 It is the life of one man or one woman to-day—the average man
 of to-day,
 It is in languages, social customs, literatures, arts,
 It is in the broad show of artificial things, ships, machinery,
 politics, creeds, modern improvements, and the inter-
 change of nations,
 All for the modern—all for the average man of to-day. 10

1860

KOSMOS

Who includes diversity and is Nature,
 Who is the amplitude of the earth, and the coarseness and sexu-
 ality of the earth, and the great charity of the earth, and
 the equilibrium also,
 Who has not look'd forth from the windows the eyes for noth-
 ing, or whose brain held audience with messengers for
 nothing,
 Who contains believers and disbelievers, who is the most
 majestic lover,
 Who holds duly his or her triune proportion of realism,
 spiritualism, and of the æsthetic or intellectual,

Who having consider'd the body finds all its organs and parts
good,
Who, out of the theory of the earth and of his or her body un-
derstands by subtle analogies all other theories,
The theory of a city, a poem, and of the large politics of these
States;
Who believes not only in our globe with its sun and moon, but
in other globes with their suns and moons,
Who, constructing the house of himself or herself, not for a day
but for all time, sees races, eras, dates, generations, 10
The past, the future, dwelling there, like space, inseparable
together.

1860

YET, YET, YE DOWNCAST HOURS

Yet, yet, ye downcast hours, I know ye also,
Weights of lead, how ye clog and cling at my ankles,
Earth to a chamber of mourning turns—I hear the o'erweening,
mocking voice,
Matter is conqueror—matter, triumphant only, continues onward.

Despairing cries float ceaselessly toward me,
The call of my nearest lover, putting forth, alarm'd, uncertain,
The sea I am quickly to sail, come tell me,
Come tell me where I am speeding, tell me my destination.

I understand your anguish, but I cannot help you,
I approach, hear, behold, the sad mouth, the look out of the
eyes, your mute inquiry, 10
Whither I go from the bed I recline on, come tell me;
Old age, alarm'd, uncertain—a young woman's voice, appealing
to me for comfort;
A young man's voice, *Shall I not escape?*

1860

AS IF A PHANTOM CARESS'D ME

As if a phantom caress'd me,
I thought I was not alone walking here by the shore;
But the one I thought was with me as now I walk by the shore,
the one I loved that caress'd me,
As I lean and look through the glimmering light, that one has
utterly disappear'd,
And those appear that are hateful to me and mock me.

1860

NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIES

Night on the prairies,
The supper is over, the fire on the ground burns low,
The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapt in their blankets;
I walk by myself—I stand and look at the stars, which I think
now I never realized before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,
I admire death and test propositions.

How plenteous! how spiritual! how resumé!
The same old man and soul—the same old aspirations, and the
same content.

I was thinking the day most splendid till I saw what the not-day
exhibited,
I was thinking this globe enough till there sprang out so noise-
less around me myriads of other globes. 10

Now while the great thoughts of space and eternity fill me I will
measure myself by them,
And now touch'd with the lives of other globes arrived as far
along as those of the earth,
Or waiting to arrive, or pass'd on farther than those of the earth,
I henceforth no more ignore them than I ignore my own life,

Or the lives of the earth arrived as far as mine, or waiting to arrive.

O I see now that life cannot exhibit all to me, as the day cannot,

I see that I am to wait for what will be exhibited by death.

1860

O MAGNET-SOUTH

O Magnet-South! O glistening perfumed South! my South!
O quick mettle, rich blood, impulse and love! good and evil! O
all dear to me!

O dear to me my birth-things—all moving things and the trees
where I was born—the grains, plants, rivers,

Dear to me my own slow sluggish rivers where they flow, distant,
over flats of silver sands or through swamps,

Dear to me the Roanoke, the Savannah, the Altamahaw, the
Pedee, the Tombigbee, the Santee, the Coosa and the
Sabine,

O pensive, far away wandering, I return with my soul to haunt
their banks again,

Again in Florida I float on transparent lakes, I float on the
Okeechobee, I cross the hummock-land or through
pleasant openings or dense forests,

I see the parrots in the woods, I see the papaw-tree and the blossoming titi;

Again, sailing in my coaster on deck, I coast off Georgia, I
coast up the Carolinas,

I see where the live-oak is growing, I see where the yellow-pine,
the scented bay-tree, the lemon and orange, the cypress,
the graceful palmetto,

10

I pass rude sea-headlands and enter Pamlico sound through an
inlet, and dart my vision inland;

O the cotton plant! the growing fields of rice, sugar, hemp!

The cactus guarded with thorns, the laurel-tree with large
white flowers,

The range afar, the richness and barrenness, the old woods
 charged with mistletoe and trailing moss,
 The piney odor and the gloom, the awful natural stillness, (here
 in these dense swamps the freebooter carries his gun, and
 the fugitive has his conceal'd hut;)

O the strange fascination of these half-known half-impassable
 swamps, infested by reptiles, resounding with the bellow
 of the alligator, the sad noises of the night-owl and the
 wild-cat, and the whirr of the rattlesnake,

The mocking-bird, the American mimic, singing all the fore-
 noon, singing through the moon-lit night,

The humming-bird, the wild turkey, the raccoon, the opossum;
 A Kentucky corn-field, the tall, graceful, long-leav'd corn,
 slender, flapping, bright green, with tassels, with beautiful
 ears each well-sheath'd in its husk;

O my heart! O tender and fierce pangs, I can stand them not, I
 will depart; 20

O to be a Virginian where I grew up! O to be a Carolinian!
 O longings irrepressible! O I will go back to old Tennessee and
 never wander more.

1860

MANNAHATTA

I was asking for something specific and perfect for my city,
 Whereupon lo! upsprang the aboriginal name.

Now I see what there is in a name, a word, liquid, sane, unruly,
 musical, self-sufficient,

I see that the word of my city is that word from of old,
 Because I see that word nested in nests of water-bays, superb,
 Rich, hemm'd thick all around with sailships and steamships,
 an island sixteen miles long, solid-founded,

Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender,
 strong, light, splendidly uprising toward clear skies,
 Tides swift and ample, well-loved by me, toward sundown,
 The flowing sea-currents, the little islands, larger adjoining
 islands, the heights, the villas,

The countless masts, the white shore-steamers, the lighters, the
ferry-boats, the black sea-steamers, well-model'd, 10
The down-town streets, the jobbers' houses of business, the
houses of business of the ship-merchants and money-
brokers, the river-streets,
Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thousand in a week,
The carts hauling goods, the manly race of drivers of horses, the
brown-faced sailors,
The summer air, the bright sun shining, and the sailing clouds
aloft,
The winter snows, the sleigh-bells, the broken ice in the river,
passing along up or down with the flood-tide or ebb-tide,
The mechanics of the city, the masters, well-form'd, beautiful-
faced, looking you straight in the eyes,
Trottoirs throng'd, vehicles, Broadway, the women, the shops
and shows,
A million people—manners free and superb—open voices—
hospitality—the most courageous and friendly young
men, 18
City of hurried and sparkling waters! city of spires and masts!
City nested in bays! my city!

1860

SONG AT SUNSET

Splendor of ended day floating and filling me,
Hour prophetic, hour resuming the past,
Inflating my throat, you divine average,
You earth and life till the last ray gleams I sing.

Open mouth of my soul uttering gladness,
Eyes of my soul seeing perfection,
Natural life of me faithfully praising things,
Corroborating forever the triumph of things.

Illustrious every one! 9
Illustrious what we name space, sphere of unnumber'd spirits,
Illustrious the mystery of motion in all beings, even the tiniest
insect,

Illustrious the attribute of speech, the senses, the body,
 Illustrious the passing light—illustrious the pale reflection on
 the new moon in the western sky,
 Illustrious whatever I see or hear or touch, to the last.

Good in all,
 In the satisfaction and aplomb of animals,
 In the annual return of the seasons,
 In the hilarity of youth,
 In the strength and flush of manhood,
 In the grandeur and exquisiteness of old age, 20
 In the superb vistas of death.

Wonderful to depart!
 Wonderful to be here!
 The heart, to jet the all-alike and innocent blood!
 To breathe the air, how delicious!
 To speak—to walk—to seize something by the hand!
 To prepare for sleep, for bed, to look on my rose-color'd flesh!
 To be conscious of my body, so satisfied, so large!
 To be this incredible God I am!
 To have gone forth among other Gods, these men and women I
 love. 30

Wonderful how I celebrate you and myself!
 How my thoughts play subtly at the spectacles around!
 How the clouds pass silently overhead!
 How the earth darts on and on! and how the sun, moon, stars,
 dart on and on!
 How the water sports and sings! (surely it is alive!)
 How the trees rise and stand up, with strong trunks, with
 branches and leaves!
 (Surely there is something more in each of the trees, some living
 soul.)

O amazement of things—even the least particle!
 O spirituality of things!

O strain musical flowing through ages and continents, now
reaching me and America! 40

I take your strong chords, intersperse them, and cheerfully pass
them forward.

I too carol the sun, usher'd or at noon, or as now, setting,
I too throb to the brain and beauty of the earth and of all the
growths of the earth,
I too have felt the resistless call of myself.

As I steam'd down the Mississippi,
As I wander'd over the prairies,
As I have lived, as I have look'd through my windows my eyes,
As I went forth in the morning, as I beheld the light breaking
in the east,
As I bathed on the beach of the Eastern Sea, and again on the
beach of Western Sea,
As I roam'd the streets of inland Chicago, whatever streets I
have roam'd, 50
Or cities or silent woods, or even amid the sights of war,
Wherever I have been I have charged myself with contentment
and triumph.

I sing to the last the equalities modern or old,
I sing the endless finales of things,
I say Nature continues, glory continues,
I praise with electric voice,
For I do not see one imperfection in the universe,
And I do not see one cause or result lamentable at last in the
universe.

O setting sun! though the time has come, 59
I still warble under you, if none else does, unmitigated adora-
tion.

A BROADWAY PAGEANT

I

Over the Western sea hither from Nippon come,
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, im-
passive,
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

Libertad! I do not know whether others behold what I
behold,
In the procession along with the nobles of Nippon, the errand-
bearers,
Bringing up the rear, hovering above, around, or in the ranks
marching,
But I will sing you a song of what I behold Libertad.

When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to her
pavements,
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud
roar I love, 10
When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and smell I
love spit their salutes,
When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and heaven-
clouds canopy my city with a delicate thin haze,
When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests at the
wharves, thicken with colors,
When every ship richly drest carries her flag at the peak,
When pennants trail and street-festoons hang from the win-
dows,
When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers and
foot-stnaders, when the mass is densest,
When the façades of the houses are alive with people, when eyes
gaze riveted tens of thousands at a time,
When the guests from the islands advance, when the pageant
moves forward visible,

When the summons is made, when the answer that waited
thousands of years answers,
I too arising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge with
the crowd, and gaze with them. 20

2

Superb-faced Manhattan!
Comrade Americanos! to us, then at last the Orient comes.

To us, my city,
Where our tall-topt marble and iron beauties range on opposite
sides, to walk in the space between,
To-day our Antipodes comes.

The Originatress comes,
The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race
of eld,
Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion,
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,
With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering eyes, 30
The race of Brahma comes.

See my cantabile! these and more are flashing to us from the
procession,
As it moves changing, a kaleidoscope divine it moves changing
before us.

For not the envoys nor the tann'd Japanee from his island
only,
Lithe and silent the Hindoo appears, the Asiatic continent it-
self appears, the past, the dead,
The murky night-morning of wonder and fable inscrutable,
The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-bees,
The north, the sweltering south, eastern Assyria, the Hebrews,
the ancient of ancients,
Vast desolated cities, the gliding present, all of these and more
are in the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it, 40
 The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia, the coast
 beyond,
 The coast you henceforth are facing—you Libertad! from your
 Western golden shores,
 The countries there with their populations, the millions en-
 masse are curiously here,
 The swarming market-places, the temples with idols ranged
 along the sides or at the end, bonze, brahmin, and llama,
 Mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman,
 The singing-girl and the dancing-girl, the ecstatic persons, the
 secluded emperors,
 Confucius himself, the great poets and heroes, the warriors,
 the castes, all,
 Trooping up, crowding from all directions, from the Altay
 mountains,
 From Thibet, from the four winding and far-flowing rivers of
 China,
 From the southern peninsulas and the demi-continental islands,
 from Malaysia, 50
 These and whatever belongs to them palpable show forth to
 me, and are seiz'd by me,
 And I am seiz'd by them, and friendly held by them,
 Till as here them all I chant, Libertad! for themselves and for
 you.

For I too raising my voice join the ranks of this pageant,
 I am the chanter, I chant aloud over the pageant,
 I chant the world on my Western sea,
 I chant copious the islands beyond, thick as stars in the sky,
 I chant the new empire grander than any before, as in a vision it
 comes to me,
 I chant America the mistress, I chant a greater supremacy,
 I chant projected a thousand blooming cities yet in time on
 those groups of sea-islands, 60
 My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archipelagoes,
 My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,

Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its work,
races reborn, refresh'd,
Lives, works resumed—the object I know not—but the old, the
Asiatic renew'd as it must be,
Commencing from this day surrounded by the world.

3

And you Libertad of the world!
You shall sit in the middle well-pois'd thousands and thousands
of years,
As to-day from one side the nobles of Asia come to you,
As to-morrow from the other side the queen of England sends
her eldest son to you.

The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed, 70
The ring is circled, the journey is done,
The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd, nevertheless the perfume
pours copiously out of the whole box.

Young Libertad! with the venerable Asia, the all-mother,
Be considerate with her now and ever hot Libertad, for you are
all,
Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother now sending
messages over the archipelagoes to you,
Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

Were the children straying westward so long? so wide the
tramping?
Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward from Para-
dise so long?
Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all the while
unknown, for you, for reasons?

They are justified, they are accomplish'd, they shall now be
turn'd the other way also, to travel toward you thence, so
They shall now also march obediently eastward for your sake
Libertad.

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.

1865

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.

1865

✓ PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

Come my tan-faced children,
 Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,
 Have you your pistols? have you your sharp-edged axes?
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry here,
 We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger,
 We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend, ✓
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western youths,
 So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,
 Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the
 foremost,

11

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond
the seas?
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave behind,
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world, \\
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the
march,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

20

We detachments steady throwing,
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains steep,
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the unknown
ways,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests felling,
We the rivers stemming, vexing we and piercing deep the
mines within,
We the surface broad surveying, we the virgin soil upheaving,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the high
plateaus,
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail we
come,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

30

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the continental
blood intervein'd,
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all the
Northern,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless restless race!
 O beloved race in all! O my breast aches with tender love for
 all!
 O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,
 Pioneers! O pioneers! 40

Raise the mighty mother mistress,
 Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mistress,
 (bend your heads all,)
 Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive, weap-
 on'd mistress,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children, resolute children,
 By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or
 falter,
 Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us urging,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact ranks,
 With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead
 quickly fill'd, 50
 Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never
 stopping,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!
 Are there some of us to droop and die? has the hour come?
 Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap is
 fill'd,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the world,
 Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement beat,
 Holding single or together, steady moving to the front, all for
 us,
 Pioneers! O pioneers! 60

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,
All the seamen and the landsmen, all the masters with their
slaves,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent lovers,
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the
wicked,
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and body,
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way, 70
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions
pressing,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Lo, the darting bowling orb!
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns and
planets,
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

These are of us, they are with us,
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in em-
bryo wait behind,
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel clear-
ing,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

80

O you daughters of the West!
O you young and elder daughters! O you mothers and you
wives!
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Minstrels latent on the prairies!
 (Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have done
 your work,)
 Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp
 amid us,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Not for delectations sweet,
 Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the
 studious, 90
 Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Do the feasters gluttonous feast?
 Do the corpulent sleepers sleep? have they lock'd and bolted
 doors?
 Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Has the night descended?
 Was the road of late so toilsome? did we stop discouraged nod-
 ding on our way?
 Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause oblivious,
 Pioneers! O pioneers! 100

Till with sound of trumpet,
 Far, far off the daybreak call—hark! how loud and clear I hear
 it wind,
 Swift! to the head of the army!—swift! spring to your places,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

1865

WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before
 me,
 When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and
 measure them,

When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with
much applause in the lecture-room,
How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself, "
In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars. }

1865

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, 10
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.

1865

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.

1865?

1865-6

TO A CERTAIN CIVILIAN

Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?
 Did you seek the civilian's peaceful and languishing rhymes?
 Did you find what I sang erewhile so hard to follow?
 Why I was not singing erewhile for you to follow, to under-
 stand—nor am I now;
 (I have been born of the same as the war was born,
 The drum-corps' rattle is ever to me sweet music, I love well
 the martial dirge,
 With slow wail and convulsive throb leading the officer's
 funeral;)
 What to such as you anyhow such a poet as I? therefore leave
 my works,
 And go lull yourself with what you can understand, and with
 piano-tunes,
 For I lull nobody, and you will never understand me.

10

1865

OLD IRELAND

Far hence amid an isle of wondrous beauty,
 Crouching over a grave an ancient sorrowful mother,
 Once a queen, now lean and tatter'd seated on the ground,
 Her old white hair drooping dishevel'd round her shoulders,
 At her feet fallen an unused royal harp,
 Long silent, she too long silent, mourning her shrouded hope
 and heir,
 Of all the earth her heart most full of sorrow because most full
 of love.

Yet a word ancient mother,
You need crouch there no longer on the cold ground with fore-
head between your knees,
O you need not sit there veil'd in your old white hair so dis-
hevel'd, 10
For know you the one you mourn is not in that grave,
It was an illusion, the son you love was not really dead,
The Lord is not dead, he is risen again young and strong in
another country,
Even while you wept there by your fallen harp by the grave,
What you wept for was translated, pass'd from the grave,
The winds favor'd and the sea sail'd it,
And now with rosy and new blood,
Moves to-day in a new country.

1865

QUICKSAND YEARS

Quicksand years that whirl me I know not whither,
Your schemes, politics, fail, lines give way, substances mock
and elude me,
Only the theme I sing, the great and strong-possess'd soul,
eludes not,
One's-self must never give way—that is the final substance—
that out of all is sure,
Out of politics, triumphs, battles, life, what at last finally
remains?
When shows break up what but One's-Self is sure?

1865

BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
Through the windows—through doors—burst like a ruthless
force,
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,
Into the school where the scholar is studying;

Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he have
 now with his bride,
 Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or
 gathering his grain,
 So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you bugles
 blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
 Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the
 streets;
 Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no sleepers
 must sleep in those beds, 10
 No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators—
 would they continue?
 Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to sing?
 Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before the
 judge?
 Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!
 Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,
 Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,
 Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,
 Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's entreaties,
 Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie awaiting
 the hearses, 20
 So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you bugles
 blow.

1865

FROM PAUMANOK STARTING I FLY LIKE A BIRD

From Paumanok starting I fly like a bird,
 Around and around to soar to sing the idea of all,
 To the north betaking myself to sing their arctic songs,
 To Kanada till I absorb Kanada in myself, to Michigan then,
 To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs, (they are
 inimitable;)

Rise O Days from Your Fathomless Deeps 211

Then to Ohio and Indiana to sing theirs, to Missouri and Kansas and Arkansas to sing theirs,
To Tennessee and Kentucky, to the Carolinas and Georgia to sing theirs,
To Texas and so along up toward California, to roam accepted everywhere;
To sing first, (to the tap of the war-drum if need be,)
The idea of all, of the Western world one and inseparable, 10
And then the song of each member of these States.

1865

RISE O DAYS FROM YOUR FATHOMLESS DEEPS

I

Rise O days from your fathomless deeps, till you loftier, fiercer sweep,
Long for my soul hungering gymnastic I devour'd what the earth gave me,
Long I roam'd the woods of the north, long I watch'd Niagara pouring,
I travel'd the prairies over and slept on their breast, I cross'd the Nevadas, I cross'd the plateaus,
I ascended the towering rocks along the Pacific, I sail'd out to sea,
I sail'd through the storm, I was refresh'd by the storm,
I watch'd with joy the threatening maws of the waves,
I mark'd the white combs where they career'd so high, curling over,
I heard the wind piping, I saw the black clouds,
Saw from below what arose and mounted, (O superb! O wild as my heart, and powerful!) 10
Heard the continuous thunder as it bellow'd after the lightning,
Noted the slender and jagged threads of lightning as sudden and fast amid the din they chased each other across the sky;
These, and such as these, I, elate, saw—saw with wonder, yet pensive and masterful,
All the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me,
Yet there with my soul I fed, I fed content, supercilious.

2

'Twas well, O soul—'twas a good preparation you gave me,
Now we advance our latent and ampler hunger to fill,
Now we go forth to receive what the earth and the sea never
gave us,
Not through the mighty woods we go, but through the mightier
cities,
Something for us is pouring now more than Niagara pouring, 20
Torrents of men, (sources and rills of the Northwest are you
indeed inexhaustible?)
What, to pavements and homesteads here, what were those
storms of the mountains and sea?
What, to passions I witness around me to-day? was the sea
risen?

Was the wind piping the pipe of death under the black clouds?
Lo! from deeps more unfathomable, something more deadly
and savage,
Manhattan rising, advancing with menacing front—Cincinnati,
Chicago, unchain'd;
What was that swell I saw on the ocean? behold what comes
here,
How it climbs with daring feet and hands—how it dashes!
How the true thunder bellows after the lightning—how bright
the flashes of lightning!
How Democracy with desperate vengeful port strides on,
shown through the dark by those flashes of lightning! 30
(Yet a mournful wail and low sob I fancied I heard through the
dark,
In a lull of the deafening confusion.)

3

Thunder on! stride on, Democracy! strike with vengeful
stroke!
And do you rise higher than ever yet O days, O cities!
Crash heavier, heavier yet O storms! you have done me good,

My soul prepared in the mountains absorbs your immortal
strong nutriment,
Long had I walk'd my cities, my country roads through farms,
only half satisfied,
One doubt nauseous undulating like a snake, crawl'd on the
ground before me,
Continually preceding my steps, turning upon me oft, ironically
hissing low;
The cities I loved so well I abandon'd and left, I sped to the
certainties suitable to me, 40
Hungering, hungering, hungering, for primal energies and
Nature's dauntlessness,
I refresh'd myself with it only, I could relish it only,
I waited the bursting forth of the pent fire—on the water and air
I waited long;
But now I no longer wait, I am fully satisfied, I am gluttoned,
I have witness'd the true lightning, I have witness'd my cities
electric,
I have lived to behold man burst forth and warlike America
rise,
Hence I will seek no more the food of the northern solitary
wilds,
No more the mountains roam or sail the stormy sea.

1865

CITY OF SHIPS

City of ships!
(O the black ships! O the fierce ships!
O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steam-ships and sail-ships!)
City of the world! (for all races are here,
All the lands of the earth make contributions here;)
City of the sea! city of hurried and glittering tides!
City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede, whirling in
and out with eddies and foam!
City of wharves and stores—city of tall façades of marble and
iron!

Proud and passionate city—mettlesome, mad, extravagant city!
 Spring up O city—not for peace alone, but be indeed yourself,
 warlike! 10

Fear not—submit to no models but your own O City!
 Behold me—incarnate me as I have incarnated you!
 I have rejected nothing you offer'd me—whom you adopted I
 have adopted,
 Good or bad I never question you—I love all—I do not con-
 demn anything,
 I chant and celebrate all that is yours—yet peace no more,
 In peace I chanted peace, but now the drum of war is mine,
 War, red war is my song through your streets, O city!

1865

BY THE BIVOUAC'S FITFUL FLAME

By the bivouac's fitful flame,
 A procession winding around me, solemn and sweet and slow—
 but first I note,
 The tents of the sleeping army, the fields' and woods' dim out-
 line,
 The darkness lit by spots of kindled fire, the silence,
 Like a phantom far or near an occasional figure moving,
 The shrubs and trees, (as I lift my eyes they seem to be stealthily
 watching me,)
 While wind in procession thoughts, O tender and wondrous
 thoughts,
 Of life and death, of home and the past and loved, and of those
 that are far away;
 A solemn and slow procession there as I sit on the ground,
 By the bivouac's fitful flame.

10

1865

COME UP FROM THE FIELDS FATHER

Come up from the fields father, here's a letter from our Pete,
 And come to the front door mother, here's a letter from thy dear
 son.

Lo, 'tis autumn,
Lo, where the trees, deeper green, yellower and redder,
Cool and sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering in the
moderate wind,
Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on the trel-
lis'd vines,
(Smell you the smell of the grapes on the vines?
Smell you the buckwheat where the bees were lately buzzing?)
Above all, lo, the sky so calm, so transparent after the rain, and
with wondrous clouds,
Below too, all calm, all vital and beautiful, and the farm prospers
well. 10

Down in the fields all prospers well,
But now from the fields come father, come at the daughter's
call,
And come to the entry mother, to the front door come right
away.

Fast as she can she hurries, something ominous, her steps
trembling,
She does not tarry to smooth her hair nor adjust her cap.

Open the envelope quickly,
O this is not our son's writing, yet his name is sign'd,
O a strange hand writes for our dear son, O stricken mother's
soul!

All swims before her eyes, flashes with black, she catches the
main words only,
Sentences broken, *gunshot wound in the breast, cavalry skirmish,*
taken to hospital, 20

At present low, but will soon be better.

Ah now the single figure to me,
Amid all teeming and wealthy Ohio with all its cities and
farms,
Sickly white in the face and dull in the head, very faint,
By the jamb of a door leans.

*Grieve not so, dear mother, (the just-grown daughter speaks
through her sobs,
The little sisters huddle around speechless and dismay'd,)
See, dearest mother, the letter says Pete will soon be better.*

Alas poor boy, he will never be better, (nor may-be needs to be
better, that brave and simple soul,)
While they stand at home at the door he is dead already, 30
The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be better,
She with thin form presently drest in black,
By day her meals untouch'd, then at night fitfully sleeping,
often waking,
In the midnight waking, weeping, longing with one deep
longing,
O that she might withdraw unnoticed, silent from life escape
and withdraw,
To follow, to seek, to be with her dear dead son.

1865

VIGIL STRANGE I KEPT ON THE FIELD ONE NIGHT

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

Vigil Strange I Kept on the Field One Night 217

Long there and then in vigil I stood, dimly around me the
battlefield spreading,
Vigil wondrous and vigil sweet there in the fragrant silent
night,
But not a tear fell, not even a long-drawn sigh, long, long I
gazed,
Then on the earth partially reclining sat by your side leaning my
chin in my hands,
Passing sweet hours, immortal and mystic hours with you
dearest comrade—not a tear, not a word,
Vigil of silence, love and death, vigil for you my son and my
soldier,
As onward silently stars aloft, eastward new ones upward
stole,
Vigil final for you brave boy, (I could not save you, swift was
your death,
I faithfully loved you and cared for you living, I think we shall
surely meet again,)
Till at latest lingering of the night, indeed just as the dawn
appear'd,
My comrade I wrapt in his blanket, envelop'd well his form,
Folded the blanket well, tucking it carefully over head and
carefully under feet,
And there and then and bathed by the rising sun, my son in his
grave, in his rude-dug grave I deposited,
Ending my vigil strange with that, vigil of night and battle-
field dim,
Vigil for boy of responding kisses, (never again on earth re-
sponding,)
Vigil for comrade swiftly slain, vigil I never forget, how as day
brighten'd,
I rose from the chill ground and folded my soldier well in his
blanket,
And buried him where he fell.

A SIGHT IN CAMP IN THE DAYBREAK GRAY
AND DIM

A sight in camp in the daybreak gray and dim,
As from my tent I emerge so early sleepless,
As slow I walk in the cool fresh air the path near by the hospital
tent,
Three forms I see on stretchers lying, brought out there un-
tended lying,
Over each the blanket spread, ample brownish woolen blanket,
Gray and heavy blanket, folding, covering all.

Curious I halt and silent stand,
Then with light fingers I from the face of the nearest the first
just lift the blanket;
Who are you elderly man so gaunt and grim, with well-gray'd
hair, and flesh all sunken about the eyes?
Who are you my dear comrade? 10

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

Then to the third—a face nor child nor old, very calm, as of
beautiful yellow-white ivory;
Young man I think I know you—I think this face is the face of
the Christ himself,
Dead and divine and brother of all, and here again he lies.
1865

AS TOILSOME I WANDER'D VIRGINIA'S WOODS

As toilsome I wander'd Virginia's woods,
To the music of rustling leaves kick'd by my feet, (for 'twas
autumn,)
I mark'd at the foot of a tree the grave of a soldier;

Mortally wounded he and buried on the retreat, (easily all could
I understand,)
The halt of a mid-day hour, when up! no time to lose—yet this
sign left,
On a tablet scrawl'd and nail'd on the tree by the grave,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

Long, long I muse, then on my way go wandering,
Many a changeful season to follow, and many a scene of life,
Yet at times through changeful season and scene, abrupt, alone,
or in the crowded street, 10
Comes before me the unknown soldier's grave, comes the in-
scription rude in Virginia's woods,
Bold, cautious, true, and my loving comrade.

1865

YEAR THAT TREMBLED AND REEL'D
BENEATH ME

Year that trembled and reel'd beneath me!
Your summer wind was warm enough, yet the air I breathed
froze me,
A thick gloom fell through the sunshine and darken'd me,
Must I change my triumphant songs? said I to myself,
Must I indeed learn to chant the cold dirges of the baffled?
And sullen hymns of defeat?

1865

THE WOUND-DRESSER

I

An old man bending I come among new faces,
Years looking backward resuming in answer to children,
Come tell us old man, as from young men and maidens that
love me,
(Arous'd and angry, I'd thought to beat the alarum, and urge
relentless war,

But soon my fingers fail'd me, my face droop'd and I resign'd
 myself,
 To sit by the wounded and soothe them, or silently watch the
 dead;) 11
 Years hence of these scenes, of these furious passions, these
 chances,
 Of unsurpass'd heroes, (was one side so brave? the other was
 equally brave;) 11
 Now be witness again, paint the mightiest armies of earth,
 Of those armies so rapid so wondrous what saw you to tell us?
 What stays with you latest and deepest? of curious panics,
 Of hard-fought engagements or sieges tremendous what deep-
 est remains?

2

O maidens and young men I love and that love me,
 What you ask of my days those the strangest and sudden your
 talking recalls,
 Soldier alert I arrive after a long march cover'd with sweat and
 dust,
 In the nick of time I come, plunge in the fight, loudly shout in
 the rush of successful charge,
 Enter the captur'd works—yet lo, like a swift-running river
 they fade,
 Pass and are gone they fade—I dwell not on soldiers' perils or
 soldiers' joys,
 (Both I remember well—many the hardships, few the joys,
 yet I was content.)

But in silence, in dreams' projections, 20
 While the world of gain and appearance and mirth goes on,
 So soon what is over forgotten, and waves wash the imprints off
 the sand,
 With hinged knees returning I enter the doors, (while for you
 up there,
 Whoever you are, follow without noise and be of strong
 heart.)

Bearing the bandages, water and sponge,
Straight and swift to my wounded I go,
Where they lie on the ground after the battle brought in,
Where their priceless blood reddens the grass the ground,
Or to the rows of the hospital tent, or under the roof'd hospital,
To the long rows of cots up and down each side I return, 30
To each and all one after another I draw near, not one do I miss,
An attendant follows holding a tray, he carries a refuse pail,
Soon to be filled with clotted rags and blood, emptied, and
fill'd again.

I onward go, I stop,
With hinged knees and steady hand to dress wounds,
I am firm with each, the pangs are sharp yet unavoidable,
One turns to me his appealing eyes—poor boy! I never knew
you,
Yet I think I could not refuse this moment to die for you, if that
would save you.

3

On, on I go, (open doors of time! open hospital doors!)
The crush'd head I dress, (poor crazed hand tear not the band-
age away,) 40
The neck of the cavalry-man with the bullet through and
through I examine,
Hard the breathing rattles, quite glazed already the eye, yet life
struggles hard,
(Come sweet death! be persuaded O beautiful death!
In mercy come quickly.)

From the stump of the arm, the amputated hand,
I undo the clotted lint, remove the slough, wash off the matter
and blood,
Back on his pillow the soldier bends with curv'd neck and side-
falling head,
His eyes are closed, his face is pale, he dares not look on the
bloody stump,
And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side, deep, deep, 50
 But a day or two more, for see the frame all wasted and sinking,
 And the yellow-blue countenance see.

I dress the perforated shoulder, the foot with the bullet-wound,
 Cleanse the one with a gnawing and putrid gangrene, so sick-
 ening, so offensive,
 While the attendant stands behind aside me holding the tray
 and pail.

I am faithful, I do not give out,
 The fractur'd thigh, the knee, the wound in the abdomen,
 These and more I dress with impassive hand, (yet deep in my
 breast a fire, a burning flame.)

4

Thus in silence in dreams' projections,
 Returning, resuming, I thread my way through the hos-
 pitals, 60
 The hurt and wounded I pacify with soothing hand,
 I sit by the restless all the dark night, some are so young,
 Some suffer so much, I recall the experience sweet and sad,
 (Many a soldier's loving arms about this neck have cross'd and
 rested,
 Many a soldier's kiss dwells on these bearded lips.)

1865

OVER THE CARNAGE ROSE PROPHETIC A VOICE

Over the carnage rose prophetic a voice,
 Be not dishearten'd, affection shall solve the problems of free-
 dom yet,
 Those who love each other shall become invincible,
 They shall yet make Columbia victorious.

Sons of the Mother of All, you shall yet be victorious,
 You shall yet laugh to scorn the attacks of all the remainder of
 the earth.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers,
If need be a thousand shall sternly immolate themselves for
one.

One from Massachusetts shall be a Missourian's comrade,
From Maine and from hot Carolina, and another an Oregonese,
shall be friends triune, 10
More precious to each other than all the riches of the earth.

To Michigan, Florida perfumes shall tenderly come,
Not the perfumes of flowers, but sweeter, and wafted beyond
death.

It shall be customary in the houses and streets to see manly
affection,
The most dauntless and rude shall touch face to face lightly,
The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,
The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

These shall tie you and band you stronger than hoops of iron,
I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! with the love of lovers tie you.

(Were you looking to be held together by lawyers? 20
Or by an agreement on a paper? or by arms?
Nay, nor the world, nor any living thing, will so cohere.)

1865

TURN O LIBERTAD

Turn O Libertad, for the war is over,
From it and all henceforth expanding, doubting no more, reso-
lute, sweeping the world,
Turn from lands retrospective recording proofs of the past,
From the singers that sing the trailing glories of the past,
From the chants of the feudal world, the triumphs of kings,
slavery, caste,
Turn to the world, the triumphs reserv'd and to come—give up
that backward world,

Leave to the singers of hitherto, give them the trailing past,
 But what remains remains for singers for you—wars to come
 are for you,
 (Lo, how the wars of the past have duly inured to you, and the
 wars of the present also inure;)
 Then turn, and be not alarm'd O Libertad—turn your undying
 face, 10
 To where the future, greater than all the past,
 Is swiftly, surely preparing for you.

1865

THICK-SPRINKLED BUNTING

Thick-sprinkled bunting! flag of stars!
 Long yet your road, fateful flag—long yet your road, and lined
 with bloody death,
 For the prize I see at issue at last is the world,
 All its ships and shores I see interwoven with your threads
 greedy banner;
 Dream'd again the flags of kings, highest borne, to flaunt
 unrival'd?
 O hasten flag of man—O with sure and steady step, passing
 highest flags of kings,
 Walk supreme to the heavens mighty symbol—run up above
 them all,
 Flag of stars! thick-sprinkled bunting!

1865

YEARS OF THE MODERN

Years of the modern! years of the unperform'd!
 Your horizon rises, I see it parting away for more august dramas,
 I see not America only, not only Liberty's nation but other
 nations preparing,
 I see tremendous entrances and exits, new combinations, the
 solidarity of races,
 I see that force advancing with irresistible power on the world's
 stage,

(Have the old forces, the old wars, played their parts? are the acts suitable to them closed?)

I see Freedom, completely arm'd and victorious and very haughty, with Law on one side and Peace on the other, A stupendous trio all issuing forth against the idea of caste; What historic denouements are these we so rapidly approach? I see men marching and countermarching by swift millions, 10 I see the frontiers and boundaries of the old aristocracies broken, I see the landmarks of European kings removed, I see this day the People beginning their landmarks, (all others give way;)

Never were such sharp questions ask'd as this day,
Never was average man, his soul, more energetic, more like a God,

Lo, how he urges and urges, leaving the masses no rest!
His daring foot is on land and sea everywhere, he colonizes the Pacific, the archipelagoes,
With the steamship, the electric telegraph, the newspaper, the wholesale engines of war,
With these and the world-spreading factories he interlinks all geography, all lands;
What whispers are these O lands, running ahead of you, passing under the seas? 20

Are all nations communing? is there going to be but one heart to the globe?

Is humanity forming en-masse? for lo, tyrants tremble, crowns grow dim,

The earth, restive, confronts a new era, perhaps a general divine war,

No one knows what will happen next, such portents fill the days and nights;

Years prophetic! the space ahead as I walk, as I vainly try to pierce it, is full of phantoms,

Unborn deeds, things soon to be, project their shapes around me,

This incredible rush and heat, this strange ecstatic fever of dreams O years!

Your dreams O years, how they penetrate through me! (I know
not whether I sleep or wake;)
The perform'd America and Europe grow dim, retiring in
shadow behind me,
The unperform'd, more gigantic than ever, advance, advance
upon me.

30
1865

ASHES OF SOLDIERS

Ashes of soldiers South or North,
As I muse retrospective murmuring a chant in thought,
The war resumes, again to my sense your shapes,
And again the advance of the armies.

Noiseless as mists and vapors,
From their graves in the trenches ascending,
From cemeteries all through Virginia and Tennessee,
From every point of the compass out of the countless graves,
In wafted clouds, in myriads large, or squads of twos or threes
or single ones they come,
And silently gather round me.

10

Now sound no note O trumpeters,
Not at the head of my cavalry parading on spirited horses,
With sabres drawn and glistening, and carbines by their thighs,
(ah my brave horsemen!
My handsome tan-faced horsemen! what life, what joy and
pride,
With all the perils were yours.)

Nor you drummers, neither at reveillé at dawn,
Nor the long roll alarming the camp, nor even the muffled beat
for a burial,
Nothing from you this time O drummers bearing my warlike
drums.

But aside from these and the marts of wealth and the crowded
promenade,
Admitting around me comrades close unseen by the rest and
voiceless, 20
The slain elate and alive again, the dust and debris alive,
I chant this chant of my silent soul in the name of all dead
soldiers.

Faces so pale with wondrous eyes, very dear, gather closer yet,
Draw close, but speak not.

Phantoms of countless lost,
Invisible to the rest henceforth become my companions,
Follow me ever—desert me not while I live.

Sweet are the blooming cheeks of the living—sweet are the
musical voices sounding,
But sweet, ah sweet, are the dead with their silent eyes.

Dearest comrades, all is over and long gone, 30
But love is not over—and what love, O comrades!
Perfume from battle-fields rising, up from the foetor arising..

Perfume therefore my chant, O love, immortal love,
Give me to bathe the memories of all dead soldiers,
Shroud them, embalm them, cover them all over with tender
pride.

Perfume all—make all wholesome,
Make these ashes to nourish and blossom,
O love, solve all, fructify all with the last chemistry.

Give me exhaustless, make me a fountain,
That I exhale love from me wherever I go like a moist perennial
dew, 40
For the ashes of all dead soldiers South or North.

PENSIVE ON HER DEAD GAZING

Pensive on her dead gazing I heard the Mother of All,
Desperate on the torn bodies, on the forms covering the battle-
fields gazing,
(As the last gun ceased, but the scent of the powder-smoke
linger'd,)
As she call'd to her earth with mournful voice while she
stalk'd,
Absorb them well O my earth, she cried, I charge you lose not
my sons, lose not an atom,
And you streams absorb them well, taking their dear blood,
And you local spots, and you airs that swim above lightly
impalpable,
And all you essences of soil and growth, and you my rivers'
depths,
And you mountain sides, and the woods where my dear chil-
dren's blood trickling redden'd,
And you trees down in your roots to bequeath to all future
trees, 10
My dead absorb or South or North—my young men's bodies
absorb, and their precious precious blood,
Which holding in trust for me faithfully back again give me
many a year hence,
In unseen essence and odor of surface and grass, centuries
hence,
In blowing airs from the fields back again give me my darlings,
give my immortal heroes,
Exhale me them centuries hence, breathe me their breath, let
not an atom be lost,
O years and graves! O air and soil! O my dead, an aroma
sweet!
Exhale them perennial sweet death, years, centuries hence.

CAMPS OF GREEN

Not alone those camps of white, old comrades of the wars,
When as order'd forward, after a long march,
Footsore and weary, soon as the light lessens we halt for the
 night,
Some of us so fatigued carrying the gun and knapsack, dropping
 asleep in our tracks,
Others pitching the little tents, and the fires lit up begin to
 sparkle,
Outposts of pickets posted surrounding alert through the dark,
And a word provided for countersign, careful for safety,
Till to the call of the drummers at daybreak loudly beating the
 drums,
We rise up refresh'd, the night and sleep pass'd over, and
 resume our journey,
Or proceed to battle. 10

Lo, the camps of the tents of green,
Which the days of peace keep filling, and the days of war keep
 filling,
With a mystic army, (is it too order'd forward? is it too only
 halting awhile,
Till night and sleep pass over?)

Now in those camps of green, in their tents dotting the
 world,
In the parents, children, husbands, wives, in them, in the old
 and young,
Sleeping under the sunlight, sleeping under the moonlight, con-
 tent and silent there at last,
Behold the mighty bivouac-field and waiting-camp of all,
Of the corps and generals all, and the President over the corps
 and generals all,
And of each of us O soldiers, and of each and all in the ranks we
 fought, 20
(There without hatred we all, all meet.)

For presently O soldiers, we too camp in our place in the
 bivouac-camps of green,
 But we need not provide for outposts, nor word for the countersign,
 Nor drummer to beat the morning drum.

1865

RECONCILIATION

Word over all, beautiful as the sky,
 Beautiful that war and all its deeds of carnage must in time be
 utterly lost,
 That the hands of the sisters Death and Night incessantly softly
 wash again, and ever again, this soil'd world;
 For my enemy is dead, a man divine as myself is dead,
 I look where he lies white-faced and still in the coffin—I draw
 near,
 Bend down and touch lightly with my lips the white face in the
 coffin.

1865

1865-6

AS I LAY WITH MY HEAD IN YOUR LAP
 CAMERADO

As I lay with my head in your lap camerado,
 The confession I made I resume, what I said to you and the
 open air I resume,
 I know I am restless and make others so,
 I know my words are weapons full of danger, full of death,
 For I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws, to un-
 settle them,
 I am more resolute because all have denied me than I could ever
 have been had all accepted me,
 I heed not and have never heeded either experience, cautions,
 majorities, nor ridicule,
 And the threat of what is call'd hell is little or nothing to
 me,

To the Leaven'd Soil They Trod

231

And the lure of what is call'd heaven is little or nothing
to me;

Dear camerado! I confess I have urged you onward with me,
and still urge you, without the least idea what is our
destination,

10

Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly quell'd and de-
feated.

1865?

1865-6

TO THE LEAVEN'D SOIL THEY TROD

To the leaven'd soil they trod calling I sing for the last,
(Forth from my tent emerging for good, loosing, untying the
tent-ropes,)

In the freshness the forenoon air, in the far-stretching circuits
and vistas again to peace restored,

To the fiery fields emanative and the endless vistas beyond, to
the South and the North,

To the leaven'd soil of the general Western world to attest my
songs,

To the Alleghanian hills and the tireless Mississippi,

To the rocks I calling sing, and all the trees in the woods,

To the plains of the poems of heroes, to the prairies spreading
wide,

To the far-off sea and the unseen winds, and the sane impalpable
air;

And responding they answer all, (but not in words,) 10

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

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

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

But the hot sun of the South is to fully ripen my songs.

1865

1865-6

WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD BLOOM'D

I

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,
 And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,
 I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring,
symbolic of regeneration
 Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,
 Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,
 And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen star!
 O shades of night—O moody, tearful night!
 O great star disappear'd—O the black murk that hides the star!
 O cruel hands that hold me powerless—O helpless soul of me!
 O harsh surrounding cloud that will not free my soul. 11

3

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-
 wash'd palings,
 Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of
 rich green,
 With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume
 strong I love,
 With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the dooryard,
 With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich
 green,
 A sprig with its flower I break.

4

In the swamp in secluded recesses,
 A shy and hidden bird is warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,
 The hermit withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,
 Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,
Death's outlet song of life, (for well dear brother I know,
If thou wast not granted to sing thou would'st surely die.)

5

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,
Amid lanes and through old woods, where lately the violets
 peep'd from the ground, spotting the gray debris,
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes, passing the
 endless grass,
Passing the yellow-spear'd wheat, every grain from its shroud
 in the dark-brown fields uprisen,
Passing the apple-tree blows of white and pink in the orchards,
Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave, 31
Night and day journeys a coffin.

6

Coffin that passes through lanes and streets, . . .
Through day and night with the great cloud darkening the land,
With the pomp of the inloop'd flags with the cities draped in
 black, *Colors of mourning*
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veil'd women
 standing,
With processions long and winding and the flambeaus of the
 night,
With the countless torches lit, with the silent sea of faces and the
 unbare heads,
With the waiting depot, the arriving coffin, and the sombre faces,
With dirges through the night, with the thousand voices rising
 strong and solemn, 40
With all the mournful voices of the dirges pour'd around the
 coffin,
The dim-lit churches and the shuddering organs—where amid
 these you journey,
With the tolling tolling bells' perpetual clang,
Here, coffin that slowly passes,
I give you my sprig of lilac.

7

(Nor for you, for one alone,
 Blossoms and branches green to coffins all I bring,
 For fresh as the morning, thus would I chant a song for you O
sane and sacred death. *Death is sanctified*

All over bouquets of roses,
 O death, I cover you over with roses and early lilies, 50
 But mostly and now the lilac that blooms the first,
 Copious I break, I break the sprigs from the bushes,
 With loaded arms I come, pouring for you,
 For you and the coffins all of you O death.)

8

O western orb sailing the heaven,
 Now I know what you must have meant as a month since I
 walk'd,
 As I walk'd in silence the transparent shadowy night,
 As I saw you had something to tell as you bent to me night after
 night,
 As you droop'd from the sky low down as if to my side, (while
 the other stars all look'd on,)
 As we wander'd together the solemn night, (for something I
 know not what kept me from sleep,) 60
 As the night advanced, and I saw on the rim of the west how full
 you were of woe,
 As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze in the cool trans-
 parent night,
 As I watch'd where you pass'd and was lost in the nether-
 ward black of the night,
 As my soul in its trouble dissatisfied sank, as where you sad orb,
 Concluded, dropt in the night, and was gone.

9

Sing on there in the swamp,
 O singer bashful and tender, I hear your notes, I hear your call,

I hear, I come presently, I understand you,
But a moment I linger, for the lustrous star has detain'd me,
The star my departing comrade holds and detains me. 70

10

O how shall I warble myself for the dead one there I loved?
And how shall I deck my song for the large sweet soul that has
gone?
And what shall my perfume be for the grave of him I love?

Sea-winds blown from east and west,
Blown from the Eastern sea and blown from the Western sea,
till there on the prairies meeting,
These and with these and the breath of my chant,
I'll perfume the grave of him I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the chamber walls?
And what shall the pictures be that I hang on the walls,
To adorn the burial-house of him I love? 80

Pictures of growing spring and farms and homes,
With the Fourth-month eve at sundown, and the gray smoke
lucid and bright,
With floods of the yellow gold of the gorgeous, indolent,
sinking sun, burning, expanding the air,
With the fresh sweet herbage under foot, and the pale green
leaves of the trees prolific,
In the distance the flowing glaze, the breast of the river, with a
wind-dapple here and there,
With ranging hills on the banks, with many a line against the
sky, and shadows,
And the city at hand with dwellings so dense, and stacks of
chimneys,
And all the scenes of life and the workshops, and the workmen
homeward returning.

12

Lo, body and soul—this land,
 My own Manhattan with spires, and the sparkling and hurrying
 tides, and the ships, 90
 The varied and ample land, the South and the North in the light,
 Ohio's shores and flashing Missouri,
 And ever the far-spreading prairies cover'd with grass and
 corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so calm and haughty,
 The violet and purple morn with just-felt breezes,
 The gentle soft-born measureless light, { ' ' ' }
 The miracle spreading bathing all, the fulfill'd noon,
 The coming eve delicious, the welcome night and the stars,
 Over my cities shining all, enveloping man and land.

13

Sing on, sing on you gray-brown bird,
 Sing from the swamps, the recesses, pour your chant from the
 bushes, 100
 Limitless out of the dusk, out of the cedars and pines.

Sing on dearest brother, warble your reedy song,
 Loud human song, with voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!
 O wild and loose to my soul—O wondrous singer!
 You only I hear—yet the star holds me, (but will soon depart,)
 Yet the lilac with mastering odor holds me.

14

Now while I sat in the day and look'd forth,
 In the close of the day with its light and the fields of spring, and
 the farmers preparing their crops,
 In the large unconscious scenery of my land with its lakes and
 forests, 110

When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd 237

In the heavenly aerial beauty, (after the perturb'd winds and the storms,)

Under the arching heavens of the afternoon swift passing, and the voices of children and women,

The many-moving sea-tides, and I saw the ships how they sail'd, And the summer approaching with richness, and the fields all busy with labor,

And the infinite separate houses, how they all went on, each with its meals and minutia of daily usages,

And the streets how their throbblings throb'd, and the cities pent—lo, then and there,

Falling upon them all and among them all, enveloping me with the rest,

Appear'd the cloud, appear'd the long black trail,

And I knew death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of death.

Then with the knowledge of death as walking one side of me, 120

And the thought of death close-walking the other side of me, And I in the middle as with companions, and as holding the hands of companions,

I fled forth to the hiding receiving night that talks not,

Down to the shores of the water, the path by the swamp in the dimness,

To the solemn shadowy cedars and ghostly pines so still. 121

And the singer so shy to the rest receiv'd me,

The gray-brown bird I know receiv'd us comrades three,

And he sang the carol of death, and a verse for him I love.

From deep secluded recesses,

From the fragrant cedars and the ghostly pines so still, 130

Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol rapt me,

As I held as if by their hands my comrades in the night,

And the voice of my spirit tallied the song of the bird.

*Come lovely and soothing death,
Undulate round the world, serenely arriving, arriving,
In the day, in the night, to all, to each,
Sooner or later delicate death.*

*Prais'd be the fathomless universe,
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious, 140
And for love, sweet love—but praise! praise! praise!
For the sure-enwinding arms of cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding near with soft feet,
Have none chanted for thee a chant of fullest welcome?
Then I chant it for thee, I glorify thee above all,
I bring thee a song that when thou must indeed come, come
unfalteringly.*

*Approach strong deliveress,
When it is so, when thou hast taken them I joyously sing the dead,
Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,
Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death. 150*

*From me to thee glad serenades,
Dances for thee I propose saluting thee, adornments and feastings
for thee,
And the sights of the open landscape and the high-spread sky are
fitting,
And life and the fields, and the huge and thoughtful night.*

*The night in silence under many a star,
The ocean shore and the husky whispering wave whose voice I
know,
And the soul turning to thee O vast and well-veil'd death,
And the body gratefully nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a song,
Over the rising and sinking waves, over the myriad fields and
the prairies wide, 160
~~Over the dense-pack'd cities all and the teeming wharves and~~
ways,
I float this carol with joy, with joy to thee O death.*

15

To the tally of my soul,
Loud and strong kept up the gray-brown bird,
With pure deliberate notes spreading filling the night.

Loud in the pines and cedars dim,
Clear in the freshness moist and the swamp-perfume,
And I with my comrades there in the night.

While my sight that was bound in my eyes unclosed,
As to long panoramas of visions.
Recapitulating the life of the Centurion 170
And I saw askant the armies,
I saw as in noiseless dreams hundreds of battle-flags,
Borne through the smoke of the battles and pierc'd with missiles
I saw them,
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and
bloody,
And at last but a few shreds left on the staffs, (and all in silence,)
And the staffs all splinter'd and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,
And the white skeletons of young men, I saw them,
I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war,
But I saw they were not as was thought, 180
They themselves were fully at rest, they suffer'd not,
The living remain'd and suffer'd, the mother suffer'd,
And the wife and the child and the musing comrade suffer'd,
And the armies that remain'd suffer'd.

16

Passing the visions, passing the night,
Passing, unloosing the hold of my comrades' hands,
Passing the song of the hermit bird and the tallying song of my
soul,
Victorious song, death's outlet song, yet varying ever-altering
song,

As low and wailing, yet clear the notes, rising and falling,
 flooding the night,
 Sadly sinking and fainting, as warning and warning, and yet
 again bursting with joy, 190
 Covering the earth and filling the spread of the heaven,
 As that powerful psalm in the night I heard from recesses,
 Passing, I leave thee lilac with heart-shaped leaves,
 I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with
 spring.

I cease from my song for thee,
 From my gaze on thee in the west, fronting the west, commun-
 ing with thee, *W. S. L.*
 O comrade lustrous with silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all, retrievments out of the night,
 The song, the wondrous chant of the gray-brown bird,
 And the tallying chant, the echo arous'd in my soul, 200
 With the lustrous and drooping star with the countenance full of
 woe,

With the holders holding my hand nearing the call of the bird,
 Comrades mine and I in the midst, and their memory ever to
 keep, for the dead I loved so well,
 For the sweetest, wisest soul of all my days and lands—and this
 for his dear sake,

Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul,
 There in the fragrant pines and the cedars dusk and dim.

1865

1865-6

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
 The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
 The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
 While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
 But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills, 10
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores
a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won; 20
Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
But I with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

1865

1865-6

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY

(*May 4, 1865*)

Hush'd be the camps to-day,
And soldiers let us drape our war-worn weapons,
And each with musing soul retire to celebrate,
Our dear commander's death.

No more for him life's stormy conflicts,
Nor victory, nor defeat—no more time's dark events,
Charging like ceaseless clouds across the sky.

But sing poet in our name,
Sing of the love we bore him—because you, dweller in camps,
know it truly.

As they invault the coffin there, 10
Sing—as they close the doors of earth upon him—one verse,
For the heavy hearts of soldiers.

1865

AH POVERTIES, WINCINGS, AND SULKY RETREATS

Ah poverties, wincings, and sulky retreats,
 Ah you foes that in conflict have overcome me,
 (For what is my life or any man's life but a conflict with foes,
 the old, the incessant war?)
 You degradations, you tussle with passions and appetites,
 You smarts from dissatisfied friendships, (ah wounds the
 sharpest of all!)
 You toil of painful and choked articulations, you meannesses,
 You shallow tongue-talks at tables, (my tongue the shallowest
 of any;)
 You broken resolutions, you racking angers, you smother'd
 ennuis!
 Ah think not you finally triumph, my real self has yet to come
 forth,
 It shall yet march forth o'ermastering, till all lies beneath me, 10
 It shall yet stand up the soldier of ultimate victory.
 1865 1865-6

CHANTING THE SQUARE DEIFIC

I

Chanting the square deific, out of the One advancing, out of
 the sides,
 Out of the old and new, out of the square entirely divine,
 Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed,) from this side Jehovah
 am I,
 Old Brahm I, and I Saturnius am;
 Not Time affects me—I am Time, old, modern as any,
 Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments,
 As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos, with laws,
 Aged beyond computation, yet ever new, ever with those mighty
 laws rolling,
 Relentless I forgive no man—whoever sins dies—I will have
 that man's life;

Therefore let none expect mercy—have the seasons, gravitation,
the appointed days, mercy? no more have I, 10
But as the seasons and gravitation, and as all the appointed days
that forgive not,
I dispense from this side judgments inexorable without the least
remorse.

2

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,
With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,
Foretold by prophets and poets in their most rapt prophecies
and poems,
From this side, lo! the Lord Christ gazes—lo! Hermes I—lo!
mine is Hercules' face,
All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in myself,
Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison, and
crucified, and many times shall be again,
All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and sisters'
sake, for the soul's sake,
Wending my way through the homes of men, rich or poor,
with the kiss of affection, 20
For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing God, with hope and
all-enclosing charity,
With indulgent words as to children, with fresh and sane words,
mine only,
Young and strong I pass knowing well I am destin'd myself to
an early death;
But my charity has no death—my wisdom dies not, neither early
nor late,
And my sweet love bequeath'd here and elsewhere never dies.

3

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,
Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,
Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,
With sudra face and worn brow, black, but in the depths of my
heart, proud as any,

Lifted now and always against whoever scorning assumes to
 rule me, 30
 Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences, brooding, with
 many wiles,
 ('Though it was thought I was baffled and dispel'd, and my wiles
 done, but that will never be,)
 Defiant, I, Satan, still live, still utter words, in new lands duly
 appearing, (and old ones also,)
 Permanent here from my side, warlike, equal with any, real as
 any,
 Nor time nor change shall ever change me or my words.

4

Santa Spirita, breather, life,
 Beyond the light, lighter than light,
 Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,
 Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,
 Including all life on earth, touching, including God, including
 Saviour and Satan, 40
 Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all? what
 were God?)
 Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent, positive,
 (namely the unseen,)
 Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, I,
 the general soul,
 Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,
 Breathe my breath also through these songs.

1865-6

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.

1867

TEARS

Tears! tears! tears!

In the night, in solitude, tears,

On the white shore dripping, dripping, suck'd in by the sand,

Tears, not a star shining, all dark and desolate,

Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head;

O who is that ghost? that form in the dark, with tears?

What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouch'd there on the sand?

Streaming tears, sobbing tears, throes, choked with wild cries;

O storm, embodied, rising, careering with swift steps along the
beach!

O wild and dismal night storm, with wind—O belching and
desperate! 10

O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm countenance
and regulated pace,

But away at night as you fly, none looking—O then the un-
loosen'd ocean,

Of tears! tears! tears!

1867

THE CITY DEAD-HOUSE

By the city dead-house by the gate,

As idly sauntering wending my way from the clangor,

I curious pause, for lo, an outcast form, a poor dead prostitute
brought,

Her corpse they deposit unclaim'd, it lies on the damp brick
pavement,

The divine woman, her body, I see the body, I look on it alone,

That house once full of passion and beauty, all else I notice not,

Nor stillness so cold, nor running water from faucet, nor odors
morbific impress me,

But the house alone—that wondrous house—that delicate fair
 house—that ruin!
 That immortal house more than all the rows of dwellings ever
 built!
 Or white-domed capitol with majestic figure surmounted, or all
 the old high-spired cathedrals, 10
 That little house alone more than them all—poor, desperate
 house!
 Fair, fearful wreck—tenement of a soul—itself a soul,
 Unclaim'd, avoided house—take one breath from my tremulous
 lips,
 Take one tear dropt aside as I go for thought of you,
 Dead house of love—house of madness and sin, crumbled,
 crush'd,
 House of life, erewhile talking and laughing—but ah, poor
 house, dead even then,
 Months, years, an echoing, garnish'd house—but dead, dead,
 dead.

1867

DAREST THOU NOW O SOUL

Darest thou now O soul,
 Walk out with me toward the unknown region,
 Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?

 No map there, nor guide,
 Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,
 Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

 I know it not O soul,
 Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,
 All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land.

 Till when the ties loosen, 10
 All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,
 Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil
O soul.

1868

WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH

Whispers of heavenly death murmur'd I hear,
Labial gossip of night, sibilant chorals,
Footsteps gently ascending, mystical breezes wafted soft and low,
Ripples of unseen rivers, tides of a current flowing, forever
flowing,
(Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of human
tears?)

I see, just see skyward, great cloud-masses,
Mournfully slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing,
With at times a half-dimm'd sadden'd far-off star,
Appearing and disappearing.

(Some parturition rather, some solemn immortal birth;
On the frontiers to eyes impenetrable,
Some soul is passing over.)

1868

A NOISELESS PATIENT SPIDER

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament, out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres
to connect them,

Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor
 hold,
 Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul. 10
 1868

THE LAST INVOCATION

At the last, tenderly,
 From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,
 From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-
 closed doors,
 Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;
 With the key of softness unlock the locks—with a whisper,
 Set ope the doors O soul.

Tenderly—be not impatient,
 (Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,
 Strong is your hold O love.)

10
 1868

PENSIVE AND FALTERING

Pensive and faltering,
 The words *the Dead* I write,
 For living are the Dead,
 (Haply the only living, only real,
 And I the apparition, I the spectre.)

1868

PROUD MUSIC OF THE STORM

I

Proud music of the storm,
 Blast that careers so free, whistling across the prairies,
 Strong hum of forest tree-tops—wind of the mountains,
 Personified dim shapes—you hidden orchestras,

You serenades of phantoms with instruments alert,
Blending with Nature's rhythmus all the tongues of nations;
You chords left as by vast composers—you choruses,
You formless, free, religious dances—you from the Orient,
You undertone of rivers, roar of pouring cataracts,
You sounds from distant guns with galloping cavalry, 10
Echoes of camps with all the different bugle-calls,
Trooping tumultuous, filling the midnight late, bending me
powerless,
Entering my lonesome slumber-chamber, why have you seiz'd me?

2

Come forward O my soul, and let the rest retire,
Listen, lose not, it is toward thee they tend,
Parting the midnight, entering my slumber-chamber,
For thee they sing and dance O soul.

A festival song,
The duet of the bridegroom and the bride, a marriage-march,
With lips of love, and hearts of lovers fill'd to the brim with
love, 20
The red-flush'd cheeks and perfumes, the cortege swarming full
of friendly faces young and old,
To flutes' clear notes and sounding harps' cantabile.

Now loud approaching drums,
Victoria! see'st thou in powder-sinoke the banners torn but
flying? the rout of the baffled?
Hearest those shouts of a conquering army?

(Ah soul, the sobs of women, the wounded groaning in agony,
The hiss and crackle of flames, the blacken'd ruins, the embers
of cities,
The dirge and desolation of mankind.)

Now airs antique and mediæval fill me,
I see and hear old harpers with their harps at Welsh festivals, 30
I hear the minnesingers singing their lays of love,
I hear the minstrels, gleemen, troubadours, of the middle ages.

Now the great organ sounds,
Tremulous, while underneath, (as the hid footholds of the earth,
On which arising rest, and leaping forth depend,
All shapes of beauty, grace and strength, all hues we know,
Green blades of grass and warbling birds, children that gambol
and play, the clouds of heaven above,)
The strong base stands, and its pulsations intermits not,
Bathing, supporting, merging all the rest, maternity of all the
rest, 40
And with it every instrument in multitudes,
The players playing, all the world's musicians,
The solemn hymns and masses rousing adoration,
All passionate heart-chants, sorrowful appeals,
The measureless sweet vocalists of ages,
And for their solvent setting earth's own diapason,
Of winds and woods and mighty ocean waves,
A new composite orchestra, binder of years and climes, ten-fold
renewer,
As of the far-back days the poets tell, the Paradiso,
The straying thence, the separation long, but now the wandering
done, 50
The journey done, the journeyman come home,
And man and art with Nature fused again.

Tutti! for earth and heaven;
(The Almighty leader now for once has signal'd with his wand.)

The manly strophe of the husbands of the world,
And all the wives responding.

The tongues of violins,
(I think O tongues ye tell this heart, that cannot tell itself,
This brooding yearning heart, that cannot tell itself.)

3

Ah from a little child,
Thou knowest soul how to me all sounds became music, 60
My mother's voice in lullaby or hymn,

(The voice, O tender voices, memory's loving voices,
Last miracle of all, O dearest mother's, sister's, voices;)
The rain, the growing corn, the breeze among the long-leav'd
corn,
The measur'd sea-surf beating on the sand,
The twittering bird, the hawk's sharp scream,
The wild-fowl's notes at night as flying low migrating north or
south,
The psalm in the country church or mid the clustering trees, the
open air camp-meeting,
The fiddler in the tavern, the glee, the long-strung sailor-song,
The lowing cattle, bleating sheep, the crowing cock at dawn.

All songs of current lands come sounding round me, 70
The German airs of friendship, wine and love,
Irish ballads, merry jigs and dances, English warbles,
Chansons of France, Scotch tunes, and o'er the rest,
Italia's peerless compositions.

Across the stage with pallor on her face, yet lurid passion,
Stalks Norma brandishing the dagger in her hand.

I see poor crazed Lucia's eyes' unnatural gleam,
Her hair down her back falls loose and dishevel'd.

I see where Ernani walking the bridal garden,
Amid the scent of night-roses, radiant, holding his bride by the
hand, 80
Hears the infernal call, the death-pledge of the horn.

To crossing swords and gray hairs bared to heaven,
The clear electric base and baritone of the world,
The trombone duo, Libertad forever!

From Spanish chestnut trees' dense shade,
By old and heavy convent walls a wailing song,
Song of lost love, the torch of youth and life quench'd in despair,
Song of the dying swan, Fernando's heart is breaking.

Awaking from her woes at last retriev'd Amina sings,
 Copious as stars and glad as morning light the torrents of her
 joy. 90

(The teeming lady comes,
 The lustrous orb, Venus contralto, the blooming mother,
 Sister of loftiest gods, Alboni's self I hear.)

4

I hear those odes, symphonies, operas,
 I hear in the *William Tell* the music of an arous'd and angry
 people,
 I hear Meyerbeer's *Huguenots*, the *Prophet*, or *Robert*,
 Gounod's *Faust*, or Mozart's *Don Juan*.

I hear the dance-music of all nations,
 The waltz, some delicious measure, lapsing, bathing me in bliss,
 The bolero to tinkling guitars and clattering castanets. 100

I see religious dances old and new,
 I hear the sound of the Hebrew lyre,
 I see the crusaders marching bearing the cross on high, to the
 martial clang of cymbals,
 I hear dervishes monotonously chanting, interspers'd with
 frantic shouts, as they spin around turning always towards
 Mecca,
 I see the rapt religious dances of the Persians and the Arabs,
 Again, at Eleusis, home of Ceres, I see the modern Greeks
 dancing,
 I hear them clapping their hands as they bend their bodies,
 I hear the metrical shuffling of their feet.

I see again the wild old Corybantian dance, the performers
 wounding each other,
 I see the Roman youth to the shrill sound of flageolets throwing
 and catching their weapons, 110
 As they fall on their knees and rise again.

I hear from the Mussulman mosque the muezzin calling,
I see the worshippers within, nor form nor sermon, argument
nor word,
But silent, strange, devout, rais'd, glowing heads, ecstatic
faces.

I hear the Egyptian harp of many strings,
The primitive chants of the Nile boatmen,
The sacred imperial hymns of China,
To the delicate sounds of the king, (the stricken wood and
stone,)
Or to Hindu flutes and the fretting twang of the vina,
A band of bayaderes.

120

5

Now Asia, Africa leave me, Europe seizing inflates me,
To organs huge and bands I hear as from vast concourses of
voices,
Luther's strong hymn *Eine feste Burg ist unser Gott*,
Rossini's *Stabat Mater dolorosa*,
Or floating in some high cathedral dim with gorgeous color'd
windows,
The passionate *Agnus Dei* or *Gloria in Excelsis*.

Composers! mighty maestros!
And you, sweet singers of old lands, soprani, tenori, bassi!
To you a new bard caroling in the West,
Obeisant sends his love.

130

(Such led to thee O soul,
All senses, shows and objects, lead to thee,
But now it seems to me sound leads o'er all the rest.)

I hear the annual singing of the children in St. Paul's cathedral,
Or, under the high roof of some colossal hall, the symphonies,
oratorios of Beethoven, Handel, or Haydn,
The *Creation* in billows of godhood laves me.

Give me to hold all sounds, (I madly struggling cry,)
 Fill me with all the voices of the universe,
 Endow me with their throbbings, Nature's also,
 The tempests, waters, winds, operas and chants, marches and
 dances, 140
 Utter, pour in, for I would take them all!

6

Then I woke softly,
 And pausing, questioning awhile the music of my dream,
 And questioning all those reminiscences, the tempest in its fury,
 And all the songs of sopranos and tenors,
 And those rapt oriental dances of religious fervor,
 And the sweet varied instruments, and the diapason of organs,
 And all the artless plaints of love and grief and death,
 I said to my silent curious soul out of the bed of the slumber-
 chamber,
 Come, for I have found the clew I sought so long, 150
 Let us go forth refresh'd amid the day,
 Cheerfully tallying life, walking the world, the real,
 Nourish'd henceforth by our celestial dream.

And I said, moreover,
 Haply what thou hast heard O soul was not the sound of winds,
 Nor dream of raging storm, nor sea-hawk's flapping wings nor
 harsh scream,
 Nor vocalism of sun-bright Italy,
 Nor German organ majestic, nor vast concourse of voices, nor
 layers of harmonies,
 Nor strophes of husbands and wives, nor sound of marching
 soldiers,
 Nor flutes, nor harps, nor the bugle-calls of camps, 160
 But to a new rhythmus fitted for thee,
 Poems bridging the way from Life to Death, vaguely wafted in
 night air, uncaught, unwritten,
 Which let us go forth in the bold day and write.

PASSAGE TO INDIA

I

Singing my days,
Singing the great achievements of the present,¹
Singing the strong light works of engineers,
Our modern wonders, (the antique ponderous Seven outvied,)
In the Old World the east the Suez canal,
The New by its mighty railroad spann'd,
The seas inlaid with eloquent gentle wires;
Yet first to sound, and ever sound, the cry with thee O soul,
The Past! the Past! the Past!

The Past—the dark unfathom'd retrospect! 10
The teeming gulf—the sleepers and the shadows!
The past—the infinite greatness of the past! ¹¹
For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?
(As a projectile form'd, impell'd, passing a certain line, still
keeps on,
So the present, utterly form'd, impell'd by the past.)

2

Passage O soul to India!
Eclaircise the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.

Not you alone proud truths of the world,
Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,
But myths and fables of eld, Asia's, Africa's fables, 20
The far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,
The deep diving bibles and legends,
The daring plots of the poets, the elder religions;
O you temples fairer than lilies pour'd over by the rising sun!
O you fables spurning the known, eluding the hold of the
known, mounting to heaven!
You lofty and dazzling towers, pinnacled, red as roses, bur-
nish'd with gold!

Towers of fables immortal fashion'd from mortal dreams!
 You too I welcome and fully the same as the rest!
 You too with joy I sing.

Passage to India! 30
 Lo, soul, seest thou not God's purpose from the first? /
 The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,
 The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage, //
 The oceans to be cross'd, the distant brought near,
 The lands to be welded together.

A worship new I sing,
 You captains, voyagers, explorers, yours,
 You engineers, you architects, machinists, yours,
 You, not for trade or transportation only,
 But in God's name, and for thy sake O soul. / 40

3

Passage to India!
 Lo soul for thee of tableaus twain,
 I see in one the Suez canal initiated, open'd,
 I see the procession of steamships, the Empress Eugenie's leading
 the van,
 I mark from on deck the strange landscape, the pure sky, the
 level sand in the distance,
 I pass swiftly the picturesque groups, the workmen gather'd,
 The gigantic dredging machines.

In one again, different, (yet thine, all thine, O soul, the same,)
 I see over my own continent the Pacific railroad surmounting
 every barrier,
 I see continual trains of cars winding along the Platte carrying
 freight and passengers, 50
 I hear the locomotives rushing and roaring, and the shrill
 steam-whistle,
 I hear the echoes reverberate through the grandest scenery in
 the world,

I cross the Laramie plains, I note the rocks in grotesque shapes, //
the buttes,
I see the plentiful larkspur and wild onions, the barren, colorless,
sage-deserts,
I see in glimpses afar or towering immediately above me the
great mountains, I see the Wind river and the Wahsatch
mountains,
I see the Monument mountain and the Eagle's Nest, I pass the
Promontory, I ascend the Nevadas,
I scan the noble Elk mountain and wind around its base,
I see the Humboldt range, I thread the valley and cross the river,
I see the clear waters of lake Tahoe, I see forests of majestic
pines,
Or crossing the great desert, the alkaline plains, I behold en-
chanting mirages of waters and meadows, 60
Marking through these and after all, in duplicate slender lines,
Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,
Tying the Eastern to the Western sea, //
The road between Europe and Asia. //

(Ah Genoese thy dream! thy dream!
Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,
The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream.)

4

Passage to India!

Struggles of many a captain, tales of many a sailor dead, //
Over my mood stealing and spreading they come, 70
Like clouds and cloudlets in the unreach'd sky.

Along all history, down the slopes,
As a rivulet running, sinking now, and now again to the surface
rising,
A ceaseless thought, a varied train—lo, soul, to thee, thy sight,
they rise,
The plans, the voyages again, the expeditions;
Again Vasco da Gama sails forth, //

Again the knowledge gain'd, the mariner's compass,
 Lands found and nations born, thou born America,
 For purpose vast, man's long probation fill'd,
 Thou rondure of the world at last accomplish'd. 80

5

O vast Rondure, swimming in space,
 Cover'd all over with visible power and beauty,
 Alternate light and day and the teeming spiritual darkness,
 Unspeakable high processions of sun and moon and countless
 stars above,
 Below, the manifold grass and waters, animals, mountains, trees,
 With inscrutable purpose, some hidden prophetic intention,
 Now first it seems my thought begins to span thee.

Down from the gardens of Asia descending radiating,
 Adam and Eve appear, then their myriad progeny after them,
 Wandering, yearning, curious, with restless explorations, 90
 With questionings, baffled, formless, feverish, with never-happy
 hearts,
 With that sad incessant refrain, *Wherefore unsatisfied soul?* and //
 Whither O mocking life?

Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?
 Who justify these restless explorations?
 Who speak the secret of impassive earth?
 Who bind it to us? what is this separate Nature so unnatural? //
 What is this earth to our affections? (unloving earth, without a
 throb to answer ours,
 Cold earth, the place of graves.)

Yet soul be sure the first intent remains, and shall be carried out,
 Perhaps even now the time has arrived. 100

After the seas are all cross'd, (as they seem already cross'd,)
 After the great captains and engineers have accomplish'd their
 work,

After the noble inventors, after the scientists, the chemist, the
geologist, ethnologist,
Finally shall come the poet worthy that name,
The true son of God shall come singing his songs.

Then not your deeds only O voyagers, O scientists and in-
ventors shall be justified, //
All these hearts as of fretted children shall be sooth'd,
All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret shall be
told,
All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook'd and
link'd together,
The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth, shall be
completely justified, 110
Trinitas divine shall be gloriously accomplish'd and compacted 't
by the true son of God, the poet,
(He shall indeed pass the straits and conquer the mountains
He shall double the cape of Good Hope to some purpose,)
Nature and Man shall be disjoin'd and diffused no more,
The true son of God shall absolutely fuse them.

6

Year at whose wide-flung door I sing! /
Year of the purpose accomplish'd!
Year of the marriage of continents, climates and oceans! |
(No mere doge of Venice now wedding the Adriatic,)
I see O year in you the vast terraqueous globe given and giving |
all, 120
Europe to Asia, Africa join'd, and they to the New World, /
The lands, geographies, dancing before you, holding a festival
garland,
As brides and bridegrooms hand in hand.

Passage to India! /
Cooling airs from Caucasus far, soothing cradle of man, /
The river Euphrates flowing, the past lit up again. /

Lo soul, the retrospect brought forward,
 The old, most populous, wealthiest of earth's lands,
 The streams of the Indus and the Ganges and their many
 affluents, 129
 (I my shores of America walking to-day behold, resuming all,)
 The tale of Alexander on his warlike marches suddenly dying,
 On one side China and on the other side Persia and Arabia,
 To the south the great seas and the bay of Bengal,
 The flowing literatures, tremendous epics, religions, castes,
 Old occult Brahma interminably far back, the tender and junior,
 Buddha,
 Central and southern empires and all their belongings, possessors,
 The wars of Tamerlane, the reign of Aurungzebe,
 The traders, rulers, explorers, Moslems, Venetians, Byzantium,
 the Arabs, Portuguese,
 The first travelers famous yet, Marco Polo, Batouta the Moor,
 Doubts to be solv'd, the map incognita, blanks to be fill'd, 140
 The foot of man unstay'd, the hands never at rest,
 Thyself O soul that will not brook a challenge.

The mediæval navigators rise before me,
 The world of 1492, with its awaken'd enterprise,
 Something swelling in humanity now like the sap of the earth in
 spring,
 The sunset splendor of chivalry declining.

And who art thou sad shade?
 Gigantic, visionary, thyself a visionary,
 With majestic limbs and pious beaming eyes,
 Spreading around with every look of thine a golden world, 150
 Enhuing it with gorgeous hues.

As the chief histrion,
 Down to the footlights walks in some great scena,
 Dominating the rest I see the Admiral himself,
 (History's type of courage, action, faith,)
 Behold him sail from Palos leading his little fleet,

His voyage behold, his return, his great fame,
His misfortunes, calumniators, behold him a prisoner, chain'd,
Behold his dejection, poverty, death.

(Curious in time I stand, noting the efforts of heroes, 160
Is the deferment long? bitter the slander, poverty, death? //
Lies the seed unreck'd for centuries in the ground? lo, to God's
due occasion,
Uprising in the night, it sprouts, blooms, //
And fills the earth with use and beauty.) //

7

Passage indeed O soul to primal thought, /
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,
The young maturity of brood and bloom,
To realms of budding bibles. /

O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,
Thy circumnavigation of the world begin, / 170
Of man, the voyage of his mind's return,
To reason's early paradise,
Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
Again with fair creation.

8

O we can wait no longer, ,,
We too take ship O soul, /
Joyous we too launch out on trackless seas, //
Fearless for unknown shores on waves of ecstasy to sail,
Amid the wafting winds, (thou pressing me to thee, I thee to me, //
O soul,) ,
Caroling free, singing our song of God, 180
Chanting our chant of pleasant exploration. //

With laugh and many a kiss,
(Let others deprecate, let others weep for sin, remorse, humilia-
tion,)
O soul thou pleassest me, I thee.

Ah more than any priest O soul we too believe in God, /
But with the mystery of God we dare not dally.

O soul thou pleasest me, I thee,
Sailing these seas or on the hills, or waking in the night,
Thoughts, silent thoughts, of Time and Space and Death, like
waters flowing,
Bear me indeed as through the regions infinite, | 190
Whose air I breathe, whose ripples hear, lave me all over,
Bathe me O God in thee, mounting to thee,
I and my soul to range in range of thee. /

O Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of them,
Thou mightier centre of the true, the good, the loving,
Thou moral, spiritual fountain—affection's source—thou reser-
voir,
(O pensive soul of me—O thirst unsatisfied—waitest not there?
Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the Comrade
perfect?) 200
Thou pulse—thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,
How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak, if,
out of myself,
I could not launch, to those, superior universes?

Swiftly I shrivel at the thought of God,
At Nature and its wonders, Time and Space and Death,
But that I, turning, call to thee O soul, thou actual Me,
And lo, thou gently masterest the orbs,
Thou matest Time, smilest content at Death, 210
And fillest, swellest full the vastnesses of Space.

Greater than stars or suns,
Bounding O soul thou journeyest forth; /
What love than thine and ours could wider amplify?

What aspirations, wishes, outvie thine and ours O soul?
What dreams of the ideal? what plans of purity, perfection,
 strength?
What cheerful willingness for others' sake to give up all?
For others' sake to suffer all?

Reckoning ahead O soul, when thou, the time achiev'd,
The seas all cross'd, weather'd the capes, the voyage done, 220
Surrounded, copest, frontest God, yieldest, the aim attain'd,
As filled with friendship, love complete, the Elder Brother
 found,
The Younger melts in fondness in his arms.

9

Passage to more than India! //
Are thy wings plumed indeed for such far flights? //
O soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyages like those?
Disportest thou on waters such as those?
Soundest below the Sanscrit and the Vedas? //
Then have thy bent unleash'd.

Passage to you, your shores, ye aged fierce enigmas! 230
Passage to you, to mastership of you, ye strangling problems!
You, strew'd with the wrecks of skeletons, that, living, never
 reach'd you.

Passage to more than India!
O secret of the earth and sky! //
Of you O waters of the sea! O winding creeks and rivers!
Of you O woods and fields! of you strong mountains of my
 land!
Of you O prairies! of you gray rocks! //
O morning red! O clouds! O rain and snows!
O day and night, passage to you! //

O sun and moon and all you stars! Sirius and Jupiter! 240
Passage to you!

Passage, immediate passage! the blood burns in my veins! //
 Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!
 Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail!
 Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?
 Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking
 like mere brutes?
 Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long
 enough?

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,
 Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me, //
 For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go, 250
 And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!
 O farther farther sail!
 O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?
 O farther, farther, farther sail!

1869

1871

WARBLE FOR LILAC-TIME

Warble me now for joy of lilac-time, (returning in reminiscence,)
 Sort me O tongue and lips for Nature's sake, souvenirs of
 earliest summer,
 Gather the welcome signs, (as children with pebbles or stringing
 shells,)
 Put in April and May, the hylas croaking in the ponds, the
 elastic air,
 Bees, butterflies, the sparrow with its simple notes,
 Blue-bird and darting swallow, nor forget the high-hole flashing
 his golden wings,
 The tranquil sunny haze, the clinging smoke, the vapor,
 Shimmer of waters, with fish in them, the cerulean above,
 All that is jocund and sparkling, the brooks running, 9
 The maple woods, the crisp February days and the sugar-making,
 The robin where he hops, bright-eyed, brown-breasted,

With musical clear call at sunrise, and again at sunset,
 Or flitting among the trees of the apple-orchard, building the
 nest of his mate,
 The melted snow of March, the willow sending forth its yellow-
 green sprouts,
 For spring-time is here! the summer is here! and what is this in
 it and from it?
 Thou, soul, unloosen'd—the restlessness after I know not what;
 Come, let us lag here no longer, let us be up and away!
 O if one could but fly like a bird!
 O to escape, to sail forth as in a ship!
 To glide with thee O soul, o'er all, in all, as a ship o'er the
 waters; 20
 Gathering these hints, the preludes, the blue sky, the grass, the
 morning drops of dew,
 The lilac-scent, the bushes with dark green heart-shaped leaves,
 Wood-violets, the little delicate pale blossoms called innocence,
 Samples and sorts not for themselves alone, but for their
 atmosphere,
 To grace the bush I love—to sing with the birds,
 A warble for joy of lilac-time, returning in reminiscence.

1870

GODS

Lover divine and perfect Comrade,
 Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,
 Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,
 Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,
 Complete in body and dilate in spirit,
 Be thou my God.

O Death, (for Life has served its turn,)
 Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion,
 Be thou my God.

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or know,
 (To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O soul,)
 Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,
 All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,
 Be ye my Gods.

Or Time and Space,
 Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,
 Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,
 Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,
 Be ye my Gods.

20

1871

O STAR OF FRANCE

1870-71

O star of France,
 The brightness of thy hope and strength and fame,
 Like some proud ship that led the fleet so long,
 Beseems to-day a wreck driven by the gale, a mastless hulk,
 And 'mid its teeming madden'd half-drown'd crowds,
 Nor helm nor helmsman.

Dim smitten star,
 Orb not of France alone, pale symbol of my soul, its dearest
 hopes,
 The struggle and the daring, rage divine for liberty,
 Of aspirations toward the far ideal, enthusiast's dreams of
 brotherhood,
 Of terror to the tyrant and the priest.

10

Star crucified—by traitors sold,
 Star panting o'er a land of death, heroic land,
 Strange, passionate, mocking, frivolous land.

Miserable! yet for thy errors, vanities, sins, I will not now
 rebuke thee,
 Thy unexampled woes and pangs have quell'd them all,
 And left thee sacred.

In that amid thy many faults thou ever aimedst highly,
In that thou wouldst not really sell thyself however great the
price,

In that thou surely wakedst weeping from thy drugg'd sleep,
In that alone among thy sisters, thou, giantess, didst rend the
ones that shamed thee, 21

In that thou couldst not, wouldst not, wear the usual chains,
This cross, thy livid face, thy pierced hands and feet,
The spear thrust in thy side.

O star! O ship of France, beat back and baffled long!
Bear up O smitten orb! O ship continue on!

Sure as the ship of all, the Earth itself,
Product of deathly fire and turbulent chaos,
Forth from its spasms of fury and its poisons,
Issuing at last in perfect power and beauty, 30
Onward beneath the sun following its course,
So thee O ship of France!

Finish'd the days, the clouds dispel'd,
The travail o'er, the long-sought extrication,
When lo! reborn, high o'er the European world,
(In gladness answering thence, as face afar to face, reflecting
ours Columbia,)

Again thy star O France, fair lustrous star,
In heavenly peace, clearer, more bright than ever,
Shall beam immortal.

1871

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! 10
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.

1871

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 quench-
less, indispensable fire!)

1871

THE BASE OF ALL METAPHYSICS

And now gentlemen,
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,
As base and final 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, 10
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.

1871

ADIEU TO A SOLDIER

Adieu O soldier,
You of the rude campaigning, (which we shared,)
The rapid march, the life of the camp,
The hot contention of opposing fronts, the long manceuvre,
Red battles with their slaughter, the stimulus, the strong terrific
game,
Spell of all brave and manly hearts, the trains of time through
you and like of you all fill'd,
With war and war's expression.

Adieu dear comrade,
Your mission is fulfill'd—but I, more warlike,
Myself and this contentious soul of mine, 10
Still on our own campaigning bound,
Through untried roads with ambushes opponents lined,
Through many a sharp defeat and many a crisis, often baffled,
Here marching, ever marching on, a war fight out—aye here,
To fiercer, weightier battles give expression.

1871

SPARKLES FROM THE WHEEL

Where the city's ceaseless crowd moves on the livelong day,
Withdrawn I join a group of children watching, I pause aside
with them.

By the curb toward the edge of the flagging,
A knife-grinder works at his wheel sharpening a great knife,

Bending over he carefully holds it to the stone, by foot and knee,
 With measur'd tread he turns rapidly, as he presses with light
 but firm hand,
 Forth issue then in copious golden jets,
 Sparkles from the wheel.

The scene and all its belongings, how they seize and affect me,
 The sad sharp-chinn'd old man with worn clothes and broad
 shoulder-band of leather, 10
 Myself effusing and fluid, a phantom curiously floating, now
 here absorb'd and arrested,
 The group, (an unminded point set in a vast surrounding,)
 The attentive, quiet children, the loud, proud, restive base of
 the streets,
 The low hoarse purr of the whirling stone, the light-press'd
 blade,
 Diffusing, dropping, sideways-darting, in tiny showers of gold,
 Sparkles from the wheel.

1871

OF HIM I LOVE DAY AND NIGHT

Of him I love day and night I dream'd I heard he was dead,
 And I dream'd I went where they had buried him I love, but he
 was not in that place,
 And I dream'd I wander'd searching among burial-places to find
 him,
 And I found that every place was a burial-place;
 The houses full of life were equally full of death, (this house is
 now,)
 The streets, the shipping, the places of amusement, the Chicago,
 Boston, Philadelphia, the Mannahatta, were as full of the
 dead as of the living,
 And fuller, O vastly fuller of the dead than of the living;
 And what I dream'd I will henceforth tell to every person and
 age,
 And I stand henceforth bound to what I dream'd,

And now I am willing to disregard burial-places and dispense
with them, 10
And if the memorials of the dead were put up indifferently
everywhere, even in the room where I eat or sleep, I should
be satisfied,
And if the corpse of any one I love, or if my own corpse, be duly
render'd to powder and pour'd in the sea, I shall be
satisfied,
Or if it be distributed to the winds I shall be satisfied.

1871

ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT

On the beach at night,
Stands a child with her father,
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses
spreading,
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades. 10

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious soon to devour all,
Watching, silently weeps.

Weep not, child,
Weep not, my darling,
With these kisses let me remove your tears,
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars only
in apparition,
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another night, the
Pleiades shall emerge,

They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden shall
shine out again, 20

The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again, they
endure,

The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive moons
shall again shine.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter?
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars?

Something there is,
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,
I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and indirection,)
Something there is more immortal even than the stars,
(Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing away,)
Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous Jupiter, 30
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

1871

AS I WATCH'D THE PLOUGHMAN PLOUGHING

As I watch'd the ploughman ploughing,
Or the sower sowing in the fields, or the harvester harvesting,
I saw there too, O life and death, your analogies;
(Life, life is the tillage, and Death is the harvest according.)

1871

AS THEY DRAW TO A CLOSE

As they draw to a close,
Of what underlies the precedent songs—of my aims in them,
Of the seed I have sought to plant in them,
Of joy, sweet joy, through many a year, in them,
(For them, for them have I lived, in them my work is done,)
Of many an aspiration fond, of many a dream and plan;
Through Space and Time fused in a chant, and the flowing
eternal identity,
To Nature encompassing these, encompassing God—to the
joyous, electric all,

To the sense of Death, and accepting exulting in Death in its
turn the same as life,
The entrance of man to sing;
To compact you, ye parted, diverse lives,
To put rapport the mountains and rocks and streams,
And the winds of the north, and the forests of oak and pine,
With you O soul.

10

1871

JOY, SHIPMATE, JOY!

Joy, shipmate, joy!
(Pleas'd to my soul at death I cry,)
Our life is closed, our life begins,
The long, long anchorage we leave,
The ship is clear at last, she leaps!
She swiftly courses from the shore,
Joy, shipmate, joy!

1871

NOW FINALÈ TO THE SHORE

Now finalè to the shore,
Now, land and life finalè and farewell,
Now Voyager depart, (much, much for thee is yet in store,)
Often enough hast thou adventur'd o'er the seas,
Cautiously cruising, studying the charts,
Duly again to port and hawser's tie returning;
But now obey thy cherish'd secret wish,
Embrace thy friends, leave all in order,
To port and hawser's tie no more returning,
Depart upon thy endless cruise old Sailor.

10

1871

AS I PONDER'D IN SILENCE

As I ponder'd in silence,
Returning upon my poems, considering, lingering long,
A Phantom arose before me with distrustful aspect,
Terrible in beauty, age, and power,

The genius of poets of old lands,
 As to me directing like flame its eyes,
 With finger pointing to many immortal songs,
 And menacing voice, *What singest thou?* it said,
Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring bards?
And that is the theme of War, the fortune of battles, 10
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.

1871

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 imperi-
 ous 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, 10
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! 20
Bear forth to them folded my love, (dear mariners, for you I fold
it here in every leaf;) 20
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.

1871

THOU MOTHER WITH THY
EQUAL BROOD

I

Thou Mother with thy equal brood,
Thou varied chain of different States, yet one identity only,
A special song before I go I'd sing o'er all the rest,
For thee, the future.

I'd sow a seed for thee of endless Nationality,
I'd fashion thy ensemble including body and soul,
I'd show away ahead thy real Union, and how it may be
accomplish'd.

The paths to the house I seek to make,
But leave to those to come the house itself.

Belief I sing, and preparation; 10
 As Life and Nature are not great with reference to the present
 only,
 But greater still from what is yet to come,
 Out of that formula for thee I sing.

2

As a strong bird on pinions free,
 Joyous, the amplest spaces heavenward cleaving,
 Such be the thought I'd think of thee America,
 Such be the recitative I'd bring for thee.

The conceits of the poets of other lands I'd bring thee not,
 Nor the compliments that have served their turn so long,
 Nor rhyme, nor the classics, nor perfume of foreign court or
 indoor library; 20
 But an odor I'd bring as from forests of pine in Maine, or breath
 of an Illinois prairie,
 With open airs of Virginia or Georgia or Tennessee, or from
 Texas uplands, or Florida's glades,
 Or the Saguenay's black stream, or the wide blue spread of
 Huron,
 With presentment of Yellowstone's scenes, or Yosemite,
 And murmuring under, pervading all, I'd bring the rustling
 sea-sound,
 That endlessly sounds from the two Great Seas of the
 world.

And for thy subtler sense subtler refrains dread Mother,
 Preludes of intellect tallying these and thee, mind-formulas fitted
 for thee, real and sane and large as these and thee,
 Thou! mounting higher, diving deeper than we knew, thou
 transcendental Union!
 By thee fact to be justified, blended with thought, 30
 Thought of man justified, blended with God,
 Through thy idea, lo, the immortal reality!
 Through thy reality, lo, the immortal idea!

3

Brain of the New World, what a task is thine,
To formulate the Modern—out of the peerless grandeur of the
modern,
Out of thyself, comprising science, to recast poems, churches, art,
(Recast, may-be discard them, end them—may-be their work
is done, who knows?)
By vision, hand, conception, on the background of the mighty
past, the dead,
To limn with absolute faith the mighty living present.

And yet thou living present brain, heir of the dead, the Old
World brain, 40
Thou that lay folded like an unborn babe within its folds so long,
Thou carefully prepared by it so long—haply thou but unfoldest
it, only maturest it,
It to eventuate in thee—the essence of the by-gone time con-
tain'd in thee,
Its poems, churches, arts, unwitting to themselves, destined
with reference to thee;
Thou but the apples, long, long, long a-growing,
The fruit of all the Old ripening to-day in thee.

4

Sail, sail thy best, ship of Democracy,
Of value is thy freight, 'tis not the Present only,
The Past is also stored in thee,
Thou holdest not the venture of thyself alone, not of the
Western continent alone, 50
Earth's *résumé* entire floats on thy keel O ship, is steadied by thy
spars,
With thee Time voyages in trust, the antecedent nations sink or
swim with thee,
With all their ancient struggles, martyrs, heroes, epics, wars,
thou bear'st the other continents,
Theirs, theirs as much as thine, the destination-port triumphant;

Steer then with good strong hand and wary eye O helmsman,
thou carriest great companions,
Venerable priestly Asia sails this day with thee,
And royal feudal Europe sails with thee.

5

Beautiful world of new superber birth that rises to my eyes,
Like a limitless golden cloud filling the western sky,
Emblem of general maternity lifted above all, 60
Sacred shape of the bearer of daughters and sons,
Out of thy teeming womb thy giant babes in ceaseless procession
issuing,
Acceding from such gestation, taking and giving continual
strength and life,
World of the real—world of the twain in one,
World of the soul, born by the world of the real alone, led to
identity, body, by it alone,
Yet in beginning only, incalculable masses of composite precious
materials,
By history's cycles forwarded, by every nation, language,
hither sent,
Ready, collected here, a freer, vast, electric world, to be con-
structed here,
(The true New World, the world of orbic science, morals, lit-
eratures to come,)
Thou wonder world yet undefined, unform'd, neither do I define
thee, 70
How can I pierce the impenetrable blank of the future?
I feel thy ominous greatness evil as well as good,
I watch thee advancing, absorbing the present, transcending the
past,
I see thy light lighting, and thy shadow shadowing, as if the
entire globe,
But I do not undertake to define thee, hardly to comprehend
thee,
I but thee name, thee prophesy, as now,
I merely thee ejaculate!

Thee in thy future,
Thee in thy only permanent life, career, thy own unloosen'd
mind, thy soaring spirit,
Thee as another equally needed sun, radiant, ablaze, swift-
moving, fructifying all, 80
Thee risen in potent cheerfulness and joy, in endless great
hilarity,
Scattering for good the cloud that hung so long, that weigh'd so
long upon the mind of man,
The doubt, suspicion, dread, of gradual, certain decadence of
man;
Thee in thy larger, saner brood of female, male—thee in thy
athletes, moral, spiritual, South, North, West, East,
(To thy immortal breasts, Mother of All, thy every daughter,
son, endear'd alike, forever equal,)
Thee in thy own musicians, singers, artists, unborn yet, but
certain,
Thee in thy moral wealth and civilization, (until which thy
proudest material civilization must remain in vain,)
Thee in thy all-supplying, all-enclosing worship—thee in no
single bible, saviour, merely,
Thy saviours countless, latent within thyself, thy bibles incessant
within thyself, equal to any, divine as any,
(Thy soaring course thee formulating, not in thy two great
wars, nor in thy century's visible growth, 90
But far more in these leaves and chants; thy chants, great Mother!)
Thee in an education grown of thee, in teachers, studies, stu-
dents, born of thee,
Thee in thy democratic fêtes en-masse, thy high original festivals,
operas, lecturers, preachers,
Thee in thy ultimata, (the preparations only now completed, the
edifice on sure foundations tied,)
Thee in thy pinnacles, intellect, thought, thy topmost rational
joys, thy love and godlike aspiration,
In thy resplendent coming literati, thy full-lung'd orators, thy
sacerdotal bards, kosmic savans,
These! these in thee, (certain to come,) to-day I prophesy.

6

Land tolerating all, accepting all, not for the good alone, all good
for thee,

Land in the realms of God to be a realm unto thyself,
Under the rule of God to be a rule unto thyself. 100

(Lo, where arise three peerless stars,
To be thy natal stars my country, Ensemble, Evolution, Free-
dom,
Set in the sky of Law.)

Land of unprecedented faith, God's faith,
Thy soil, thy very subsoil, all upheav'd,
The general inner earth so long so sedulously draped over, now
hence for what it is boldly laid bare,
Open'd by thee to heaven's light for benefit or bale.

Not for success alone,
Not to fair-sail unintermitted always,
The storm shall dash thy face, the murk of war and worse than
war shall cover thee all over, 110
(Wert capable of war, its tug and trials? be capable of peace its
trials,
For the tug and mortal strain of nations come at last in pros-
perous peace, not war;)
In many a smiling mask death shall approach beguiling thee,
thou in disease shalt swelter,
The livid cancer spread its hideous claws, clinging upon thy
breasts, seeking to strike thee deep within,
Consumption of the worst, moral consumption, shall rouge thy
face with hectic,
But thou shalt face thy fortunes, thy diseases, and surmount
them all,
Whatever they are to-day and whatever through time they
may be,
They each and all shall lift and pass away and cease from thee,

While thou, Time's spirals rounding, out of thyself, thyself still
extricating, fusing,
Equable, natural, mystical Union thou, (the mortal with im-
mortal blent,) 120
Shalt soar toward the fulfilment of the future, the spirit of the
body and the mind,
The soul, its destinies.

The soul, its destinies, the real real,
(Purport of all these apparitions of the real;)
In thee America, the soul, its destinies,
Thou globe of globes! thou wonder nebulous!
By many a throe of heat and cold convuls'd, (by these thyself
solidifying,)
Thou mental, moral orb—thou New, indeed new, Spiritual
World!
The Present holds thee not—for such vast growth as thine,
For such unparallel'd flight as thine, such brood as thine, 130
The FUTURE only holds thee and can hold thee.

1872

THE MYSTIC TRUMPETER

I

Hark, some wild trumpeter, some strange musician,
Hovering unseen in air, vibrates capricious tunes to-night.

I hear thee trumpeter, listening alert I catch thy notes,
Now pouring, whirling like a tempest round me,
Now low, subdued, now in the distance lost.

2

Come nearer bodiless one, haply in thee resounds
Some dead composer, haply thy pensive life
Was fill'd with aspirations high, unform'd ideals,
Waves, oceans musical, chaotically surging,

That now ecstatic ghost, close to me bending, thy cornet echoing, pealing, 10
Gives out to no one's ears but mine, but freely gives to mine,
That I may thee translate.

3

Blow trumpeter free and clear, I follow thee,
While at thy liquid prelude, glad, serene,
The fretting world, the streets, the noisy hours of day withdraw,
A holy calm descends like dew upon me,
I walk in cool refreshing night the walks of Paradise,
I scent the grass, the moist air and the roses;
Thy song expands my numb'd imbonded spirit, thou freest,
launcest me,
Floating and basking upon heaven's lake. 20

4

Blow again trumpeter! and for my sensuous eyes,
Bring the old pageants, show the feudal world.
What charm thy music works! thou makest pass before me,
Ladies and cavaliers long dead, barons are in their castle halls,
the troubadours are singing,
Arm'd knights go forth to redress wrongs, some in quest of the
holy Graal;
I see the tournament, I see the contestants incased in heavy
armor seated on stately champing horses,
I hear the shouts, the sounds of blows and smiting steel;
I see the Crusaders' tumultuous armies—hark, how the cymbals
clang,
Lo, where the monks walk in advance, bearing the cross on high.

5

Blow again trumpeter! and for thy theme, 30
Take now the enclosing theme of all, the solvent and the setting,
Love, that is pulse of all, the sustenance and the pang,
The heart of man and woman all for love,
No other theme but love—knitting, enclosing, all-diffusing love.

O how the immortal phantoms crowd around me!
I see the vast alembic ever working, I see and know the flames
that heat the world,
The glow, the blush, the beating hearts of lovers,
So blissful happy some, and some so silent, dark, and nigh to
death;
Love, that is all the earth to lovers—love, that mocks time and
space,
Love, that is day and night—love, that is sun and moon and
stars, 40
Love, that is crimson, sumptuous, sick with perfume,
No other words but words of love, no other thought but love.

6

Blow again trumpeter—conjure war's alarums.

Swift to thy spell a shuddering hum like distant thunder rolls,
Lo, where the arm'd men hasten—lo, mid the clouds of dust the
glint of bayonets,
I see the grime-faced cannoneers, I mark the rosy flash amid the
smoke, I hear the cracking of the guns;
Nor war alone—thy fearful music-song, wild player, brings
every sight of fear,
The deeds of ruthless brigands, rapine, murder—I hear the cries
for help!
I see ships foundering at sea, I behold on deck and below deck
the terrible tableaux.

7

O trumpeter, methinks I am myself the instrument thou
playest, 50
Thou melt'st my heart, my brain—thou movest, drawest,
changest them at will;
And now thy sullen notes send darkness through me,
Thou takest away all cheering light, all hope,
I see the enslaved, the overthrown, the hurt, the opprest of the
whole earth,

I feel the measureless shame and humiliation of my race, it becomes all mine,
 Mine too the revenges of humanity, the wrongs of ages, baffled feuds and hatreds,
 Utter defeat upon me weighs—all lost—the foe victorious,
 (Yet 'mid the ruins Pride colossal stands unshaken to the last, Endurance, resolution to the last.)

8

Now trumpeter for thy close, 60
 Vouchsafe a higher strain than any yet,
 Sing to my soul, renew its languishing faith and hope,
 Rouse up my slow belief, give me some vision of the future,
 Give me for once its prophecy and joy.

O glad, exulting, culminating song!
 A vigor more than earth's is in thy notes,
 Marches of victory—man disenthral'd—the conqueror at last,
 Hymns to the universal God from universal man—all joy!
 A reborn race appears—a perfect world, all joy!
 Women and men in wisdom innocence and health—all joy! 70
 Riotous laughing bacchanals fill'd with joy!
 War, sorrow, suffering gone—the rank earth purged—nothing
 but joy left!
 The ocean fill'd with joy—the atmosphere all joy!
 Joy! joy! in freedom, worship, love! joy in the ecstasy of life!
 Enough to merely be! enough to breathe!
 Joy! joy! all over joy!

1872

WANDERING AT MORN

Wandering at morn,
 Emerging from the night from gloomy thoughts, thee in my thoughts,
 Yearning for thee harmonious Union! thee, singing bird divine!
 Thee coil'd in evil times my country, with craft and black dismay,
 with every meanness, treason thrust upon thee,

This common marvel I beheld—the parent thrush I watch'd
feeding its young,
The singing thrush whose tones of joy and faith ecstatic,
Fail not to certify and cheer my soul.

There ponder'd, felt I,
If worms, snakes, loathsome grubs, may to sweet spiritual songs
be turn'd,
If vermin so transposed, so used and bless'd may be, 10
Then may I trust in you, your fortunes, days, my country,
Who knows but these may be the lessons fit for you?
From these your future song may rise with joyous trills,
Destin'd to fill the world.

1873

SONG OF THE REDWOOD-TREE

I

A California song,
A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to breathe
as air,
A chorus of dryads, fading, departing, or hamadryads departing,
A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the earth and sky,
Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest dense.

*Farewell my brethren,
Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighboring waters,
My time has ended, my term has come.*

Along the northern coast,
Just back from the rock-bound shore and the caves, 10
In the saline air from the sea in the Mendocino country,
With the surge for base and accompaniment low and hoarse,
With crackling blows of axes sounding musically driven by
strong arms,
Riven deep by the sharp tongues of the axes, there in the red-
wood forest dense,
I heard the mighty tree its death-chant chanting.

The choppers heard not, the camp shanties echoed not,
 The quick-ear'd teamsters and chain and jack-screw men heard
 not,
 As the wood-spirits came from their haunts of a thousand years
 to join the refrain,
 But in my soul I plainly heard.

Murmuring out of its myriad leaves, 20
 Down from its lofty top rising two hundred feet high,
 Out of its stalwart trunk and limbs, out of its foot-thick bark,
 That chant of the seasons and time, chant not of the past only
 but the future.

*You untold life of me,
 And all you venerable and innocent joys,
 Perennial hardy life of me with joys 'mid rain and many a sum-
 mer sun,
 And the white snows and night and the wild winds;
 O the great patient rugged joys, my soul's strong joys unreck'd
 by man,
 (For know I bear the soul befitting me, I too have consciousness,
 identity,
 And all the rocks and mountains have, and all the earth,)* 30
*Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,
 Our time, our term has come.*

*Nor yield we mournfully majestic brothers,
 We who have grandly fill'd our time;
 With Nature's calm content, with tacit huge delight,
 We welcome what we wrought for through the past,
 And leave the field for them.*

*For them predicted long,
 For a superber race, they too to grandly fill their time,
 For them we abdicate, in them ourselves ye forest kings!* 40
*In them these skies and airs, these mountain peaks, Shasta,
 Nevadas,*

*These huge precipitous cliffs, this amplitude, these valleys, far
Yosemite,
To be in them absorb'd, assimilated.*

Then to a loftier strain,
Still prouder, more ecstatic rose the chant,
As if the heirs, the deities of the West,
Joining with master-tongue bore part.

*Not wan from Asia's fetiches,
Nor red from Europe's old dynastic slaughter-house,
(Area of murder-plots of thrones, with scent left yet of wars and
scaffolds everywhere,) 50
But come from Nature's long and harmless throes, peacefully
build'd thence,
These virgin lands, lands of the Western shore,
To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new,
You promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate.*

*You occult deep volitions,
You average spiritual manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on yourself,
giving not taking law,
You womanhood divine, mistress and source of all, whence life
and love and aught that comes from life and love,
You unseen moral essence of all the vast materials of America,
(age upon age working in death the same as life,)
You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really shape and
mould the New World, adjusting it to Time and Space,
You hidden national will lying in your abysses, conceal'd but ever
alert, 60
You past and present purposes tenaciously pursued, may-be uncon-
scious of yourselves,
Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations of the surface;
You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds, arts,
statutes, literatures,
Here build your homes for good, establish here, these areas entire,
lands of the Western shore,
We pledge, we dedicate to you.*

*For man of you, your characteristic race,
 Here may he hardy, sweet, gigantic grow, here tower proportionate
 to Nature,
 Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck'd by wall or
 roof,
 Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently inure,
 Here heed himself, unfold himself, (not others' formulas heed,)
 here fill his time, 70
 To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,
 To disappear, to serve.*

Thus on the northern coast,
 In the echo of teamster's calls and the clinking chains, and the
 music of choppers' axes,
 The falling trunk and limbs, the crash, the muffled shriek, the
 groan,
 Such words combined from the redwood-tree, as of voices
 ecstatic, ancient and rustling,
 The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, withdrawing,
 All their recesses of forests and mountains leaving,
 From the Cascade range to the Wasatch, or Idaho far, or Utah,
 To the deities of the modern henceforth yielding, 80
 The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming humanity, the
 settlements, features all,
 In the Mendocino woods I caught.

2

The flashing and golden pageant of California,
 The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny and ample lands,
 The long and varied stretch from Puget sound to Colorado
 south,
 Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air, valleys and moun-
 tain cliffs,
 The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow, the silent, cyclic
 chemistry,
 The slow and steady ages plodding, the unoccupied surface
 ripening, the rich ores forming beneath;

At last the New arriving, assuming, taking possession,
A swarming and busy race settling and organizing everywhere, 90
Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going out to
the whole world,
To India and China and Australia and the thousand island para-
dises of the Pacific,
Populous cities, the latest inventions, the steamers on the rivers,
the railroads, with many a thrifty farm, with machinery,
And wool and wheat and the grape, and diggings of yellow gold.

3

But more in you than these, lands of the Western shore,
(These but the means, the implements, the standing-ground,)
I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands of years,
till now deferr'd,
Promis'd to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the race.

The new society at last, proportionate to Nature,
In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or stalwart trees
imperial, 100
In woman more, far more, than all your gold or vines, or even
vital air.

Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,
I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and ideal,
Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America, heir
of the past so grand,
To build a grander future.

1874

PRAYER OF COLUMBUS

A batter'd, wreck'd old man,
Thrown on this savage shore, far, far from home,
Pent by the sea and dark rebellious brows, twelve dreary months,
Sore, stiff with many toils, sicken'd and nigh to death,
I take my way along the island's edge,
Venting a heavy heart.

I am too full of woe!
Haply I may not live another day;
I cannot rest O God, I cannot eat or drink or sleep,
Till I put forth myself, my prayer, once more to Thee, 10
Breathe, bathe myself once more in Thee, commune with Thee,
Report myself once more to Thee.

Thou knowest my years entire, my life,
My long and crowded life of active work, not adoration merely;
Thou knowest the prayers and vigils of my youth,
Thou knowest my manhood's solemn and visionary meditations,
Thou knowest how before I commenced I devoted all to come
to Thee,
Thou knowest I have in age ratified all those vows and strictly
kept them,
Thou knowest I have not once lost nor faith nor ecstasy in Thee,
In shackles, prison'd, in disgrace, repining not, 20
Accepting all from Thee, as duly come from Thee.

All my emprises have been fill'd with Thee,
My speculations, plans, begun and carried on in thoughts of
Thee,
Sailing the deep or journeying the land for Thee;
Intentions, purports, aspirations mine, leaving results to Thee.

O I am sure they really came from Thee,
The urge, the ardor, the unconquerable will,
The potent, felt, interior command, stronger than words,
A message from the Heavens whispering to me even in sleep,
These sped me on. 30

By me and these the work so far accomplish'd,
By me earth's elder cloy'd and stifled lands uncloy'd, unloos'd,
By me the hemispheres rounded and tied, the unknown to the
known.

The end I know not, it is all in Thee,
Or small or great I know not—haply what broad fields, what
lands,
Haply the brutish measureless human undergrowth I know,

Transplanted there may rise to stature, knowledge worthy
Thee,
Haply the swords I know may there indeed be turn'd to reaping-
tools,
Haply the lifeless cross I know, Europe's dead cross, may bud
and blossom there.

One effort more, my altar this bleak sand; 40
That Thou O God my life hast lighted,
With ray of light, steady, ineffable, vouchsafed of Thee,
Light rare untellable, lighting the very light,
Beyond all signs, descriptions, languages;
For that O God, be it my latest word, here on my knees,
Old, poor, and paralyzed, I thank Thee.

My terminus near,
The clouds already closing in upon me,
The voyage balk'd, the course disputed, lost,
I yield my ships to Thee. 50

My hands, my limbs grow nerveless,
My brain feels rack'd, bewilder'd,
Let the old timbers part, I will not part,
I will cling fast to Thee, O God, though the waves buffet me,
Thee, Thee at least I know.

Is it the prophet's thought I speak, or am I raving?

What do I know of life? what of myself?

I know not even my own work past or present,
Dim ever-shifting guesses of it spread before me,
Of newer better worlds, their mighty parturition, 60
Mocking, perplexing me.

*Col'd discover'd
a whole new w.*

And these things I see suddenly, what mean they?

As if some miracle, some hand divine unseal'd my eyes, *Rom*
Shadowy vast shapes smile through the air and sky, *process*
And on the distant waves sail countless ships, *exploring*
And anthems in new tongues I hear saluting me. *world + sea*

SONG OF THE UNIVERSAL

I

Come said the Muse,
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,
Sing me the universal.

In this broad earth of ours,
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,
Nestles the seed perfection.

By every life a share or more or less,
None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd the seed is
waiting.

2

Lo! keen-eyed towering science, 10
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking,
Successive absolute flats issuing.

Yet again, lo! the soul, above all science,
For it has history gather'd like husks around the globe,
For it the entire star-myriads roll through the sky.

In spiral routes by long detours,
(As a much-tacking ship upon the sea,)
For it the partial to the permanent flowing,
For it the real to the ideal tends.

For it the mystic evolution, 20
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also justified.

Forth from their masks, no matter what,
From the huge festering trunk, from craft and guile and tears,
Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.

Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,
Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds of men and
states,
Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,
Only the good is universal.

3

Over the mountain-growths disease and sorrow,
An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering, 30
High in the purer, happier air.

From imperfection's murkiest cloud,
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,
One flash of heaven's glory.

To fashion's, custom's discord,
To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,
Soothing each lull a strain is heard, just heard,
From some far shore the final chorus sounding.

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine, 40
Along the mighty labyrinth.

4

And thou America,
For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its reality,
For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived.

Thou too surroundest all,
Embracing carrying welcoming all, thou too by pathways
broad and new,
To the ideal tendest.

The measur'd faiths of other lands, the grandeurs of the past,
Are not for thee, but grandeurs of thine own,
Deific faiths and amplitudes, absorbing, comprehending all, 50
All eligible to all.

All, all for immortality,
 Love like the light silently wrapping all,
 Nature's amelioration blessing all,
 The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,
 Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images ripening.

Give me O God to sing that thought,
 Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,
 In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not from
 us,
 Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space, 60
 Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream?
 Nay but the lack of it the dream,
 And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,
 And all the world a dream.

1874

THE OX-TAMER

In a far-away northern country in the placid pastoral region,
 Lives my farmer friend, the theme of my recitative, a famous
 tamer of oxen,
 There they bring him the three-year-olds and the four-year-
 olds to break them,
 He will take the wildest steer in the world and break him and
 tame him,
 He will go fearless without any whip where the young bullock
 chafes up and down the yard,
 The bullock's head tosses restless high in the air with raging
 eyes,
 Yet see you! how soon his rage subsides—how soon this tamer
 tames him;
 See you! on the farms hereabout a hundred oxen young and
 old, and he is the man who has tamed them,
 They all know him, all are affectionate to him;

See you! some are such beautiful animals, so lofty looking; 10
Some are buff-color'd, some mottled, one has a white line run-
ning along his back, some are brindled,
Some have wide flaring horns (a good sign)—see you! the
bright hides,
See, the two with stars on their foreheads—see, the round bodies
and broad backs,
How straight and square they stand on their legs—what fine
sagacious eyes!
How they watch their tamer—they wish him near them—how
they turn to look after him!
What yearning expression! how uneasy they are when he
moves away from them;
Now I marvel what it can be he appears to them, (books, poli-
tics, poems, depart—all else departs,)
I confess I envy only his fascination—my silent, illiterate
friend,
Whom a hundred oxen love there in his life on farms,
In the northern country far, in the placid pastoral region. 20

1874

EIDÓLONS

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

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 eidólons.

Ever the dim beginning,
Ever the growth, the rounding of the circle, 10
Ever the summit and the merge at last, (to surely start again,)
Eidólons! eidólons!

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

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

20

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

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 eidólon.

The old, old urge,
 Based on the ancient pinnacles, lo, newer, higher pinnacles, 30
 From science and the modern still impell'd,
 The old, old urge, eidólons.

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

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 eidólons.

40

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

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

All space, all time,
(The stars, the terrible perturbations of the suns, 50
Swelling, collapsing, ending, serving their longer, shorter use,)
Fill'd with eidólons only.

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

Not this the world,
Nor these the universes, they the universes,
Purport and end, ever the permanent life of life,
Eidólons, eidólons. 60

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

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

The prophet and the bard,
Shall yet maintain themselves, in higher stages yet, 70
Shall mediate to the Modern, to Democracy, interpret yet to
them,
God and eidólons.

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

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 eidólon.

80

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 eidólon.

1876

WITH ALL THY GIFTS

With all thy gifts America,
 Standing secure, rapidly tending, overlooking the world,
 Power, wealth, extent, vouchsafed to thee—with these and like
 of these vouchsafed to thee,
 What if one gift thou lackest? (the ultimate human problem
 never solving,)
 The gift of perfect women fit for thee—what if that gift of gifts
 thou lackest?
 The towering feminine of thee? the beauty, health, completion,
 fit for thee?
 The mothers fit for thee?

1876

TO A LOCOMOTIVE IN WINTER

Thee for my recitative,
 Thee in the driving storm even as now, the snow, the winter-
 day declining,
 Thee in thy panoply, thy measur'd dual throbbing and thy beat
 convulsive,

Thy black cylindric body, golden brass and silvery steel,
Thy ponderous side-bars, parallel and connecting rods, gyrating,
shuttling at thy sides,
Thy metrical, now swelling pant and roar, now tapering in the
distance,
Thy great protruding head-light fix'd in front,
Thy long, pale, floating vapor-pennants, tinged with delicate
purple,
The dense and murky clouds out-belching from thy smoke-
stack,
Thy knitted frame, thy springs and valves, the tremulous
twinkle of thy wheels, 10
Thy train of cars behind, obedient, merrily following,
Through gale or calm, now swift, now slack, yet steadily
careering;
Type of the modern—emblem of motion and power—pulse of
the continent,
For once come serve the Muse and merge in verse, even as here
I see thee,
With storm and buffeting gusts of wind and falling snow,
By day thy warning ringing bell to sound its notes,
By night thy silent signal lamps to swing.

Fierce-throated beauty!
Roll through my chant with all thy lawless music, thy swinging
lamps at night,
Thy madly-whistled laughter, echoing, rumbling like an earth-
quake, rousing all, 20
Law of thyself complete, thine own track firmly holding,
(No sweetness debonair of tearful harp or glib piano thine,)
Thy trills of shrieks by rocks and hills return'd,
Launch'd o'er the prairies wide, across the lakes,
To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.

BY BROAD POTOMAC'S SHORE

By broad Potomac's shore, again old tongue,
 (Still uttering, still ejaculating, canst never cease this babble?)
 Again old heart so gay, again to you, your sense, the full flush
 spring returning,
 Again the freshness and the odors, again Virginia's summer sky,
 pellucid blue and silver,
 Again the forenoon purple of the hills,
 Again the deathless grass, so noiseless soft and green,
 Again the blood-red roses blooming.

Perfume this book of mine O blood-red roses!
 Lave subtly with your waters every line Potomac!
 Give me of you O spring, before I close, to put between its
 pages! 10

O forenoon purple of the hills, before I close, of you!
 O deathless grass, of you!

1876

SPIRIT THAT FORM'D THIS SCENE

Written in Platte Cañon, Colorado

Spirit that form'd this scene,
 These tumbled rock-piles grim and red,
 These reckless heaven-ambitious peaks,
 These gorges, turbulent-clear streams, this naked freshness,
 These formless wild arrays, for reasons of their own,
 I know thee, savage spirit—we have communed together,
 Mine too such wild arrays, for reasons of their own;
 Was't charged against my chants they had forgotten art?
 To fuse within themselves its rules precise and delicatessé?
 The lyrist's measur'd beat, the wrought-out temple's grace—
 column and polish'd arch forgot? 10
 But thou that revelest here—spirit that form'd this scene,
 They have remember'd thee.

1879

1881

PATROLING BARNEGAT

Wild, wild the storm, and the sea high running,
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant undertone muttering,
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully piercing and pealing,
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing,
Out in the shadows there milk-white combs careering,
On beachy slush and sand spirts of snow fierce slanting,
Where through the murk the easterly death-wind breasting,
Through cutting swirl and spray watchful and firm advancing,
(That in the distance! is that a wreck? is the red signal flaring?)
Slush and sand of the beach tireless till daylight wending, 10
Steadily, slowly, through hoarse roar never remitting,
Along the midnight edge by those milk-white combs careering,
A group of dim, weird forms, struggling, the night confronting,
That savage trinity warily watching.

1880

ROAMING IN THOUGHT

(After reading HEGEL)

Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that is
Good steadily hastening towards immortality,
And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to merge
itself and become lost and dead.

1881

A RIDDLE SONG

That which eludes this verse and any verse,
Unheard by sharpest ear, unform'd in clearest eye or cunningest
mind,
Nor lore nor fame, nor happiness nor wealth,
And yet the pulse of every heart and life throughout the world
incessantly,
Which you and I and all pursuing ever ever miss,
Open but still a secret, the real of the real, an illusion,
Costless, vouchsafed to each, yet never man the owner,

Which poets vainly seek to put in rhyme, historians in prose,
 Which sculptor never chisel'd yet, nor painter painted,
 Which vocalist never sung, nor orator nor actor ever utter'd, 10
 Invoking here and now I challenge for my song.

Indifferently, 'mid public, private haunts, in solitude,
 Behind the mountain and the wood,
 Companion of the city's busiest streets, through the assemblage,
 It and its radiations constantly glide.

In looks of fair unconscious babes,
 Or strangely in the coffin'd dead,
 Or show of breaking dawn or stars by night,
 As some dissolving delicate film of dreams,
 Hiding yet lingering.

20

Two little breaths of words comprising it,
 Two words, yet all from first to last comprised in it.

How ardently for it!
 How many ships have sail'd and sunk for it!
 How many travelers started from their homes and ne'er return'd!
 How much of genius boldly staked and lost for it!
 What countless stores of beauty, love, ventur'd for it!
 How all superbest deeds since Time began are traceable to it—
 and shall be to the end!
 How all heroic martyrdoms to it!
 How, justified by it, the horrors, evils, battles of the earth! 30
 How the bright fascinating lambent flames of it, in every age
 and land, have drawn men's eyes,
 Rich as a sunset on the Norway coast, the sky, the islands, and
 the cliffs,
 Or midnight's silent glowing northern lights unreachable.

Haply God's riddle it, so vague and yet so certain,
 The soul for it, and all the visible universe for it,
 And heaven at last for it.

A CLEAR MIDNIGHT

This is thy hour O Soul, thy free flight into the wordless,
Away from books, away from art, the day erased, the lesson
done,
Thee fully forth emerging, silent, gazing, pondering the themes
thou lovest best,
Night, sleep, death and the stars.

1881

AS AT THY PORTALS ALSO DEATH

As at thy portals also death,
Entering thy sovereign, dim, illimitable grounds,
To memories of my mother, to the divine blending, maternity,
To her, buried and gone, yet buried not, gone not from me,
(I see again the calm benignant face fresh and beautiful still,
I sit by the form in the coffin,
I kiss and kiss convulsively again the sweet old lips, the cheeks,
the closed eyes in the coffin;)
To her, the ideal woman, practical, spiritual, of all of earth, life,
love, to me the best,
I grave a monumental line, before I go, amid these songs,
And set a tombstone here.

10

1881

WITH HUSKY-HAUGHTY LIPS, O SEA!

With husky-haughty lips, O sea!
Where day and night I wend thy surf-beat shore,
Imaging to my sense thy varied strange suggestions,
(I see and plainly list thy talk and conference here,)
Thy troops of white-maned racers racing to the goal,
Thy ample, smiling face, dash'd with the sparkling dimples of
the sun,
Thy brooding scowl and murk—thy unloos'd hurricanes,
Thy unsubduedness, caprices, wilfulness;

Great as thou art above the rest, thy many tears—a lack from
 all eternity in thy content,
 (Naught but the greatest struggles, wrongs, defeats, could
 make thee greatest—no less could make thee,) 10
 Thy lonely state—something thou ever seek'st and seek'st, yet
 never gain'st,
 Surely some right withheld—some voice, in huge monotonous
 rage, of freedom-lover pent,
 Some vast heart, like a planet's, chain'd and chafing in those
 breakers,
 By lengthen'd swell, and spasm, and panting breath,
 And rhythmic rasping of thy sands and waves,
 And serpent hiss, and savage peals of laughter,
 And undertones of distant lion roar,
 (Sounding, appealing to the sky's deaf ear—but now, rapport
 for once,
 A phantom in the night thy confidant for once,)
 The first and last confession of the globe, 20
 Outsurgings, muttering from thy soul's abysses,
 The tale of cosmic elemental passion,
 Thou tellest to a kindred soul.

1884

FANCIES AT NAVESINK

THE PILOT IN THE MIST

Steaming the northern rapids—(an old St. Lawrence reminiscence,
 A sudden memory-flash comes back, I know not why,
 Here waiting for the sunrise, gazing from this hill;)*
 Again 'tis just at morning—a heavy haze contends with day-break,
 Again the trembling, laboring vessel veers me—I press through
 foam-dash'd rocks that almost touch me,
 Again I mark where aft the small thin Indian helmsman
 Looms in the mist, with brow elate and governing hand.

*Navesink—a sea-side mountain, lower entrance of New York Bay.

HAD I THE CHOICE

Had I the choice to tally greatest bards,
To limn their portraits, stately, beautiful, and emulate at will,
Homer with all his wars and warriors—Hector, Achilles, Ajax,
Or Shakspeare's woe-entangled Hamlet, Lear, Othello—Tenny-
son's fair ladies,
Metre or wit the best, or choice conceit to wield in perfect
rhyme, delight of singers;
These, these, O sea, all these I'd gladly barter,
Would you the undulation of one wave, its trick to me transfer,
Or breathe one breath of yours upon my verse,
And leave its odor there.

YOU TIDES WITH CEASELESS SWELL

You tides with ceaseless swell! you power that does this work!
You unseen force, centripetal, centrifugal, through space's
spread,
Rapport of sun, moon, earth, and all the constellations,
What are the messages by you from distant stars to us? what
Sirius'? what Capella's?
What central heart—and you the pulse—vivifies all? what
boundless aggregate of all?
What subtle indirection and significance in you? what clue to
all in you? what fluid, vast identity,
Holding the universe with all its parts as one—as sailing in a
ship?

LAST OF EBB, AND DAYLIGHT WANING

Last of ebb, and daylight waning,
Scented sea-cool landward making, smells of sedge and salt
incoming,
With many a half-caught voice sent up from the eddies,
Many a muffled confession—many a sob and whisper'd word,
As of speakers far or hid.

How they sweep down and out! how they mutter!
 Poets unnamed—artists greatest of any, with cherish'd lost
 designs,
 Love's unresponse—a chorus of age's complaints—hope's last
 words,
 Some suicide's despairing cry, *Away to the boundless waste, and
 never again return.*

On to oblivion then!

10

On, on, and do your part, ye burying, ebbing tide!
 On for your time, ye furious debouché!

AND YET NOT YOU ALONE

And yet not you alone, twilight and burying ebb,
 Nor you, ye lost designs alone—nor failures, aspirations;
 I know, divine deceitful ones, your glamour's seeming;
 Duly by you, from you, the tide and light again—duly the
 hinges turning,
 Duly the needed discord-parts offsetting, blending,
 Weaving from you, from Sleep, Night, Death itself,
 The rhythmus of Birth eternal.

PROUDLY THE FLOOD COMES IN

Proudly the flood comes in, shouting, foaming, advancing,
 Long it holds at the high, with bosom broad outswelling,
 All throbs, dilates—the farms, woods, streets of cities—work-
 men at work,
 Mainsails, topsails, jibs, appear in the offing—steamers' pen-
 nants of smoke—and under the forenoon sun,
 Freight with human lives, gaily the outward bound, gaily the
 inward bound,
 Flaunting from many a spar the flag I love.

BY THAT LONG SCAN OF WAVES

By that long scan of waves, myself call'd back, resumed upon
myself,
In every crest some undulating light or shade—some retrospect,
Joys, travels, studies, silent panoramas—scenes ephemeral,
The long past war, the battles, hospital sights, the wounded and
the dead,
Myself through every by-gone phase—my idle youth—old age
at hand,
My three-score years of life summ'd up, and more, and past,
By any grand ideal tried, intentionless, the whole a nothing,
And haply yet some drop within God's scheme's ensemble—
some wave, or part of wave,
Like one of yours, ye multitudinous ocean.

THEN LAST OF ALL

Then last of all, caught from these shores, this hill,
Of you O tides, the mystic human meaning:
Only by law of you, your swell and ebb, enclosing me the
same,
The brain that shapes, the voice that chants this song.

1885

"GOING SOMEWHERE"

My science-friend, my noblest woman-friend,
(Now buried in an English grave—and this a memory-leaf for
her dear sake,) Ended our talk—"The sum, concluding all we know of old or
modern learning, intuitions deep,
"Of all Geologies—Histories—of all Astronomy—of Evolu-
tion, Metaphysics all,
"Is, that we all are onward, onward, speeding slowly, surely
bettering,

“Life, life an endless march, an endless army, (no halt, but it is
duly over,)

“The world, the race, the soul—in space and time the universes,
“All bound as is befitting each—all surely going somewhere.”

1887

TWILIGHT

The soft voluptuous opiate shades,
The sun just gone, the eager light dispell'd—(I too will soon be
gone, dispell'd,)
A haze—nirwana—rest and night—oblivion.

1887

THE FIRST DANDELION

Simple and fresh and fair from winter's close emerging,
As if no artifice of fashion, business, politics, had ever been,
Forth from its sunny nook of shelter'd grass—innocent, golden,
calm as the dawn,
The spring's first dandelion shows its trustful face.

1888

AFTER THE DAZZLE OF DAY

After the dazzle of day is gone,
Only the dark, dark night shows to my eyes the stars;
After the clangor of organ majestic, or chorus, or perfect band,
Silent, athwart my soul, moves the symphony true.

1888

HALCYON DAYS

Not from successful love alone,
Nor wealth, nor honor'd middle age, nor victories of politics or
war;
But as life wanes, and all the turbulent passions calm,
As gorgeous, vapory, silent hues cover the evening sky,

The Calming Thought of All

309

As softness, fulness, rest, suffuse the frame, like fresher, balmier
air,
As the days take on a mellower light, and the apple at last hangs
really finish'd and indolent-ripe on the tree,
Then for the teeming quietest, happiest days of all!
The brooding and blissful halcyon days!

1888

FROM MONTAUK POINT

I stand as on some mighty eagle's beak,
Eastward the sea absorbing, viewing, (nothing but sea and sky,)
The tossing waves, the foam, the ships in the distance,
The wild unrest, the snowy, curling caps—that inbound urge
and urge of waves,
Seeking the shores forever.

1888

LIFE

Ever the undiscouraged, resolute, struggling soul of man;
(Have former armies fail'd? then we send fresh armies—and
fresh again;)
Ever the grappled mystery of all earth's ages old or new;
Ever the eager eyes, hurrahs, the welcome-clapping hands, the
loud applause;
Ever the soul dissatisfied, curious, unconvinced at last;
Struggling to-day the same—battling the same.

1888

THE CALMING THOUGHT OF ALL

That coursing on, whate'er men's speculations,
Amid the changing schools, theologies, philosophies,
Amid the bawling presentations new and old,
The round earth's silent vital laws, facts, modes continue.

1888

A PRAIRIE SUNSET

Shot gold, maroon and violet, dazzling silver, emerald, fawn,
 The earth's whole amplitude and Nature's multiform power
 consign'd for once to colors;
 The light, the general air possess'd by them—colors till now
 unknown,
 No limit, confine—not the Western sky alone—the high
 meridian—North, South, all,
 Pure luminous color fighting the silent shadows to the last.

1888

A VOICE FROM DEATH

(The Johnstown, Penn., cataclysm, May 31, 1889)

A voice from Death, solemn and strange, in all his sweep and
 power,
 With sudden, indescribable blow—towns drown'd—humanity
 by thousands slain,
 The vaunted work of thrift, goods, dwellings, forge, street, iron
 bridge,
 Dash'd pell-mell by the blow—yet usher'd life continuing on,
 (Amid the rest, amid the rushing, whirling, wild debris,
 A suffering woman saved—a baby safely born!)

Although I come and unannounc'd, in horror and in pang,
 In pouring flood and fire, and wholesale elemental crash, (this
 voice so solemn, strange,)
 I too a minister of Deity.

Yea, Death, we bow our faces, veil our eyes to thee, 10
 We mourn the old, the young untimely drawn to thee,
 The fair, the strong, the good, the capable,
 The household wreck'd, the husband and the wife, the engulf'd
 forger in his forge,
 The corpses in the whelming waters and the mud,
 The gather'd thousands to their funeral mounds, and thousands
 never found or gather'd.

Then after burying, mourning the dead,
(Faithful to them found or unfound, forgetting not, bearing the
past, here new musing,)
A day—a passing moment or an hour—America itself bends
low,
Silent, resign'd, submissive.

War, death, cataclysm like this, America, 20
Take deep to thy proud prosperous heart.

E'en as I chant, lo! out of death, and out of ooze and slime,
The blossoms rapidly blooming, sympathy, help, love,
From West and East, from South and North and over sea,
Its hot-spurr'd hearts and hands humanity to human aid moves
on;
And from within a thought and lesson yet.

Thou ever-darting Globe! through Space and Air!
Thou waters that encompass us!
Thou that in all the life and death of us, in action or in
sleep!
Thou laws invisible that permeate them and all, 30
Thou that in all, and over all, and through and under all, incessant!
Thou! thou! the vital, universal, giant force resistless, sleepless,
calm,
Holding Humanity as in thy open hand, as some ephemeral toy,
How ill to e'er forget thee!

For I too have forgotten,
(Wrapt in these little potencies of progress, politics, culture,
wealth, inventions, civilization,)
Have lost my recognition of your silent ever-swaying power,
ye mighty, elemental throes,
In which and upon which we float, and every one of us is
buoy'd.

WHEN THE FULL-GROWN POET CAME

When the full-grown poet came,
 Out spake pleased Nature (the round impassive globe, with all
 its shows of day and night,) saying, *He is mine;*
 But out spake too the Soul of man, proud, jealous and unrecon-
 ciled, *Nay, he is mine alone;*
 —Then the full-grown poet stood between the two, and took
 each by the hand;
 And to-day and ever so stands, as blender, uniter, tightly
 holding hands,
 Which he will never release until he reconciles the two,
 And wholly and joyously blends them.

1891-2

GRAND IS THE SEEN

Grand is the seen, the light, to me—grand are the sky and stars,
 Grand is the earth, and grand are lasting time and space,
 And grand their laws, so multiform, puzzling, evolutionary;
 But grander far the unseen soul of me, comprehending, endow-
 ing all those,
 Lighting the light, the sky and stars, delving the earth, sailing
 the sea,
 (What were all those, indeed, without thee, unseen soul? of
 what amount without thee?)
 More evolutionary, vast, puzzling, O my soul!
 More multiform far—more lasting thou than they.

1891-2

GOOD-BYE MY FANCY!

Good-bye my Fancy!
 Farewell dear mate, dear love!
 I'm going away, I know not where,
 Or to what fortune, or whether I may ever see you again,
 So Good-bye my Fancy.

Now for my last—let me look back a moment;
The slower fainter ticking of the clock is in me,
Exit, nightfall, and soon the heart-thud stopping.

Long have we lived, joy'd, caress'd together;
Delightful!—now separation—Good-bye my Fancy. 10

Yet let me not be too hasty,
Long indeed have we lived, slept, filter'd, become really blended
into one;
Then if we die we die together, (yes, we'll remain one,)
If we go anywhere we'll go together to meet what happens,
May-be we'll be better off and blither, and learn something,
May-be it is yourself now really ushering me to the true songs,
(who knows?)
May-be it is you the mortal knob really undoing, turning—so
now finally,
Good-bye—and hail! my Fancy.

PREFACE TO 1855 EDITION OF
"LEAVES OF GRASS"

America does not repel the past or what it has produced under its forms or amid other politics or the idea of castes or the old religions . . . accepts the lesson with calmness . . . is not so impatient as has been supposed that the slough still sticks to opinions and manners and literature while the life which served its requirements has passed into the new life of the new forms . . . perceives that the corpse is slowly borne from the eating and sleeping rooms of the house . . . perceives that it waits a little while in the door . . . that it was fittest for its days . . . that its action has descended to the stalwart and wellshaped heir who approaches . . . and that he shall be fittest for his days.

The Americans of all nations at any time upon the earth have probably the fullest poetical nature. The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem. In the history of the earth hitherto the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action untied from strings necessarily blind to particulars and details magnificently moving in vast masses. Here is the hospitality which forever indicates heroes. . . . Here are the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves. Here the performance disdaining the trivial unapproached in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings and the push of its perspective spreads with crampless and flowing breadth and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance. One sees it must indeed own the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt while corn grows from the ground or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish or men beget children upon women.

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies . . . but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors . . . but always most in the common people. Their manners speech dress friendships—the freshness and candor of their physiognomy—the picturesque looseness of their carriage . . . their deathless attachment to freedom—their aversion to anything indecorous or soft or mean—the practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states—the fierceness of their roused resentment—their curiosity and welcome of novelty—their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy—their susceptibility to a slight—the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors—the fluency of their speech—their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul . . . their good temper and openhandedness—the terrible significance of their elections—the President's taking off his hat to them not they to him—these too are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it.

The largeness of nature or the nation were monstrous without a corresponding largeness and generosity of the spirit of the citizen. Not nature nor swarming states nor streets and steamships nor prosperous business nor farms nor capital nor learning may suffice for the ideal of man . . . nor suffice the poet. No reminiscences may suffice either. A live nation can always cut a deep mark and can have the best authority the cheapest . . . namely from its own soul. This is the sum of the profitable uses of individuals or states and of present action and grandeur and of the subjects of poets.—As if it were necessary to trot back generation after generation to the eastern records! As if the beauty and sacredness of the demonstrable must fall behind that of the mythical! As if men do not make their mark out of any times! As if the opening of the western continent by discovery and what has transpired since in North and South America were less than the small theatre of the antique or the

aimless sleepwalking of the middle ages! The pride of the United States leaves the wealth and finesse of the cities and all returns of commerce and agriculture and all the magnitude of geography or shows of exterior victory to enjoy the breed of full-sized men or one full-sized man unconquerable and simple.

The American poets are to enclose old and new for America is the race of races. Of them a bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as contributions . . . he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake. His spirit responds to his country's spirit . . . he incarnates its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes. Mississippi with annual freshets and changing chutes, Missouri and Columbia and Ohio and Saint Lawrence with the falls and beautiful masculine Hudson, do not embouchure where they spend themselves more than they embouchure into him. The blue breadth over the inland sea of Virginia and Maryland and the sea off Massachusetts and Maine and over Manhattan bay and over Champlain and Erie and over Ontario and Huron and Michigan and Superior, and over the Texan and Mexican and Floridian and Cuban seas and over the seas off California and Oregon, is not tallied by the blue breadth of the waters below more than the breadth of above and below is tallied by him. When the long Atlantic coast stretches longer and the Pacific coast stretches longer he easily stretches with them north or south. He spans between them also from east to west and reflects what is between them. On him rise solid growths that offset the growths of pine and cedar and hemlock and liveoak and locust and chestnut and cypress and hickory and limetree and cottonwood and tuliptree and cactus and wildvine and tamarind and persimmon . . . and tangles as tangled as any canebreak or swamp . . . and forests coated with transparent ice and icicles hanging from the boughs and crackling in the wind . . . and sides and peaks of mountains . . . and pasturage sweet and free as savannah or upland or prairie . . . with flights and songs and screams that answer those of the wildpigeon and highhold and orchard-oriole and coot and surf-duck and redshouldered-hawk

and fish-hawk and white-ibis and indian-hen and cat-owl and water-pheasant and qua-bird and pied-sheldrake and blackbird and mockingbird and buzzard and condor and night-heron and eagle. To him the hereditary countenance descends both mother's and father's. To him enter the essences of the real things and past and present events—of the enormous diversity of temperature and agriculture and mines—the tribes of red aborigines—the weatherbeaten vessels entering new ports or making landings on rocky coasts—the first settlements north or south—the rapid stature and muscle—the haughty defiance of '76, and the war and peace and formation of the constitution . . . the union always surrounded by blatherers and always calm and impregnable—the perpetual coming of immigrants—the wharf-hem'd cities and superior marine—the unsurveyed interior—the loghouses and clearings and wild animals and hunters and trappers . . . the free commerce—the fisheries and whaling and gold-digging—the endless gestation of new states—the convening of Congress every December, the members duly coming up from all climates and the uttermost parts . . . the noble character of the young mechanics and of all free American workmen and workwomen . . . the general ardor and friendliness and enterprise—the perfect equality of the female with the male . . . the large amativeness—the fluid movement of the population—the factories and mercantile life and labor-saving machinery—the Yankee swap—the New-York firemen and the target excursion—the southern plantation life—the character of the northeast and of the northwest and southwest—slavery and the tremulous spreading of hands to protect it, and the stern opposition to it which shall never cease till it ceases or the speaking of tongues and the moving of lips cease. For such the expression of the American poet is to be transcendent and new. It is to be indirect and not direct or descriptive or epic. Its quality goes through these to much more. Let the age and wars of other nations be chanted and their eras and characters be illustrated and that finish the verse. Not so the great psalm of the republic. Here the theme is creative and has vista. Here comes one among the well-beloved stonecutters and plans with

decision and science and sees the solid and beautiful forms of the future where there are now no solid forms.

Of all nations the United States with veins full of poetical stuff most need poets and will doubtless have the greatest and use them the greatest. Their Presidents shall not be their common referee so much as their poets shall. Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric or fail of their sanity. Nothing out of its place is good and nothing in its place is bad. He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportions neither more nor less. He is the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key. He is the equalizer of his age and land . . . he supplies what wants supplying and checks what wants checking. If peace is the routine out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building vast and populous cities, encouraging agriculture and the arts and commerce—lighting the study of man, the soul, immortality—federal, state or municipal government, marriage, health, free trade, intertravel by land and sea . . . nothing too close, nothing too far off . . . the stars not too far off. In war he is the most deadly force of the war. Who recruits him recruits horse and foot . . . he fetches parks of artillery the best that engineer ever knew. If the time becomes slothful and heavy he knows how to arouse it . . . he can make every word he speaks draw blood. Whatever stagnates in the flat of custom or obedience or legislation he never stagnates. Obedience does not master him, he masters it. High up out of reach he stands turning a concentrated light . . . he turns the pivot with his finger . . . he baffles the swiftest runners as he stands and easily overtakes and envelops them. The time straying toward infidelity and confections and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith . . . he spreads out his dishes . . . he offers the sweet firmfibred meat that grows men and women. His brain is the ultimate brain. He is no arguer . . . he is judgment. He judges not as the judge judges but as the sun falling around a helpless thing. As he sees the farthest he has the most faith. His thoughts are the hymns of the praise of things. In the talk on the soul and eternity and God off of his equal plane he is silent.

He sees eternity less like a play with a prologue and denouement . . . he sees eternity in men and women . . . he does not see men and women as dreams or dots. Faith is the antiseptic of the soul . . . it pervades the common people and preserves them . . . they never give up believing and expecting and trusting. There is that indescribable freshness and unconsciousness about an illiterate person that humbles and mocks the power of the noblest expressive genius. The poet sees for a certainty how one not a great artist may be just as sacred and perfect as the greatest artist. . . . The power to destroy or remould is freely used by him but never the power of attack. What is past is past. If he does not expose superior models and prove himself by every step he takes he is not what is wanted. The presence of the greatest poet conquers . . . not parleying or struggling or any prepared attempts. Now he has passed that way see after him! there is not left any vestige of despair or misanthropy or cunning or exclusiveness or the ignominy of a nativity or color or delusion of hell or the necessity of hell . . . and no man thenceforward shall be degraded for ignorance or weakness or sin.

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into any thing that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. He is a seer . . . he is individual . . . he is complete in himself . . . the others are as good as he, only he sees it and they do not. He is not one of the chorus . . . he does not stop for any regulations . . . he is the president of regulation. What the eyesight does to the rest he does to the rest. Who knows the curious mystery of the eyesight? The other senses corroborate themselves, but this is removed from any proof but its own and foreruns the identities of the spiritual world. A single glance of it mocks all the investigations of man and all the instruments and books of the earth and all reasoning. What is marvelous? what is unlikely? what is impossible or baseless or vague? after you have once just opened the space of a peachpit and given audience to far and near and to the sunset and had all things enter with electric swiftness softly and duly without confusion or jostling or jam.

The land and sea, the animals fishes and birds, the sky of heaven and the orbs, the forests mountains and rivers, are not small themes . . . but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects . . . they expect him to indicate the path between reality and their souls. Men and women perceive the beauty well enough . . . probably as well as he. The passionate tenacity of hunters, woodmen, early risers, cultivators of gardens and orchards and fields, the love of healthy women for the manly form, seafaring persons, drivers of horses, the passion for light and the open air, all is an old varied sign of the unfailing perception of beauty and of a residence of the poetic in outdoor people. They can never be assisted by poets to perceive . . . some may but they never can. The poetic quality is not marshalled in rhyme or uniformity or abstract addresses to things nor in melancholy complaints or good precepts, but is the life of these and much else and is in the soul. The profit of rhyme is that it drops seeds of a sweeter and more luxuriant rhyme, and of uniformity that it conveys itself into its own roots in the ground out of sight. The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form. The fluency and ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent. All beauty comes from beautiful blood and a beautiful brain. If the greatnesses are in conjunction in a man or woman it is enough . . . the fact will prevail through the universe . . . but the gaggery and gilt of a million years will not prevail. Who troubles himself about his ornaments or fluency is lost. This is what you shall do: Love the earth and sun and the animals, despise riches, give alms to every one that asks, stand up for the stupid and crazy, devote your income and labor to others, hate tyrants, argue not concerning God, have patience and indulgence toward the people, take off your hat to nothing known or unknown or to any man or number of men, go freely with

powerful uneducated persons and with the young and with the mothers of families, read these leaves in the open air every season of every year of your life, re-examine all you have been told at school or church or in any book, dismiss whatever insults your own soul, and your very flesh shall be a great poem and have the richest fluency not only in its words but in the silent lines of its lips and face and between the lashes of your eyes and in every motion and joint of your body. . . . The poet shall not spend his time in unneeded work. He shall know that the ground is always ready plowed and manured . . . others may not know it but he shall. He shall go directly to the creation. His trust shall master the trust of everything he touches . . . and shall master all attachment.

The known universe has one complete lover and that is the greatest poet. He consumes an eternal passion and is indifferent which chance happens and which possible contingency of fortune or misfortune and persuades daily and hourly his delicious pay. What balks or breaks others is fuel for his burning progress to contact and amorous joy. Other proportions of the reception of pleasure dwindle to nothing to his proportions. All expected from heaven or from the highest he is rapport with in the sight of the daybreak or a scene of the winterwoods or the presence of children playing or with his arm round the neck of a man or woman. His love above all love has leisure and expanse . . . he leaves room ahead of himself. He is no irresolute or suspicious lover . . . he is sure . . . he scorns intervals. His experience and the showers and thrills are not for nothing. Nothing can jar him . . . suffering and darkness cannot—death and fear cannot. To him complaint and jealousy and envy are corpses buried and rotten in the earth . . . he saw them buried. The sea is not surer of the shore or the shore of the sea than he is of the fruition of his love and of all perfection and beauty.

The fruition of beauty is no chance of hit or miss . . . it is inevitable as life . . . it is exact and plumb as gravitation. From the eyesight proceeds another eyesight and from the hearing proceeds another hearing and from the voice proceeds another voice eternally curious of the harmony of things with man. To

these respond perfections not only in the committees that were supposed to stand for the rest but in the rest themselves just the same. These understand the law of perfection in masses and floods . . . that its finish is to each for itself and onward from itself . . . that it is profuse and impartial . . . that there is not a minute of the light or dark nor an acre of the earth or sea without it—nor any direction of the sky nor any trade or employment nor any turn of events. This is the reason that about the proper expression of beauty there is precision and balance . . . one part does not need to be thrust above another. The best singer is not the one who has the most lithe and powerful organ . . . the pleasure of poems is not in them that take the handsomest measure and similes and sound.

Without effort and without exposing in the least how it is done the greatest poet brings the spirit of any or all events and passions and scenes and persons some more and some less to bear on your individual character as you hear or read. To do this well is to compete with the laws that pursue and follow time. What is the purpose must surely be there and the clue of it must be there . . . and the faintest indication is the indication of the best and then becomes the clearest indication. Past and present and future are not disjoined but joined. The greatest poet forms the consistence of what is to be from what has been and is. He drags the dead out of their coffins and stands them again on their feet . . . he says to the past, Rise and walk before me that I may realize you. He learns the lesson . . . he places himself where the future becomes present. The greatest poet does not only dazzle his rays over character and scenes and passions . . . he finally ascends and finishes all . . . he exhibits the pinnacles that no man can tell what they are for or what is beyond . . . he glows a moment on the extremest verge. He is most wonderful in his last half-hidden smile or frown . . . by that flash of the moment of parting the one that sees it shall be encouraged or terrified afterwards for many years. The greatest poet does not moralize or make applications of morals . . . he knows the soul. The soul has that measureless pride which consists in never acknowledging any lessons but its own. But it

has sympathy as measureless as its pride and the one balances the other and neither can stretch too far while it stretches in company with the other. The inmost secrets of art sleep with the twain. The greatest poet has lain close betwixt both and they are vital in his style and thoughts.

The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity . . . nothing can make up for excess or for the lack of definiteness. To carry on the heave of impulse and pierce intellectual depths and give all subjects their articulations are powers neither common nor very uncommon. But to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art. If you have looked on him who has achieved it you have looked on one of the masters of the artists of all nations and times. You shall not contemplate the flight of the graygull over the bay or the mettlesome action of the blood horse or the tall leaning of sunflowers on their stalk or the appearance of the sun journeying through heaven or the appearance of the moon afterward with any more satisfaction than you shall contemplate him. The greatest poet has less a marked style and is more the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution, and is the free channel of himself. He swears to his art, I will not be meddlesome, I will not have in my writing any elegance or effect or originality to hang in the way between me and the rest like curtains. I will have nothing hang in the way, not the richest curtains. What I tell I tell for precisely what it is. Let who may exalt or startle or fascinate or sooth I will have purposes as health or heat or snow has and be as regardless of observation. What I experience or portray shall go from my composition without a shred of my composition. You shall stand by my side and look in the mirror with me.

The old red blood and stainless gentility of great poets will be proved by their unconstraint. A heroic person walks at his ease through and out of that custom or precedent or authority

that suits him not. Of the traits of the brotherhood of writers savans musicians inventors and artists nothing is finer than silent defiance advancing from new free forms. In the need of poems philosophy politics mechanism science behaviour, the craft of art, an appropriate native grand-opera, shipcraft, or any craft, he is greatest forever and forever who contributes the greatest original practical example. The cleanest expression is that which finds no sphere worthy of itself and makes one.

The messages of great poets to each man and woman are, Come to us on equal terms, Only then can you understand us, We are no better than you, What we enclose you enclose, What we enjoy you may enjoy. Did you suppose there could be only one Supreme? We affirm there can be unnumbered Supremes, and that one does not countervail another any more than one eyesight countervails another . . . and that men can be good or grand only of the consciousness of their supremacy within them. What do you think is the grandeur of storms and dismemberments and the deadliest battles and wrecks and the wildest fury of the elements and the power of the sea and the motion of nature and of the throes of human desires and dignity and hate and love? It is that something in the soul which says, Rage on, Whirl on, I tread master here and everywhere, Master of the spasms of the sky and of the shatter of the sea, Master of nature and passion and death, And of all terror and all pain.

The American bards shall be marked for generosity and affection and for encouraging competitors. . . . They shall be kosmos . . . without monopoly or secresy . . . glad to pass any thing to any one . . . hungry for equals night and day. They shall not be careful of riches and privilege . . . they shall be riches and privilege . . . they shall perceive who the most affluent man is. The most affluent man is he that confronts all the shows he sees by equivalents out of the stronger wealth of himself. The American bard shall delineate no class of persons nor one or two out of the strata of interests nor love most nor truth most nor the soul most nor the body most . . . and not be

for the eastern states more than the western or the northern states more than the southern.

Exact science and its practical movements are no checks on the greatest poet but always his encouragement and support. The outset and remembrance are there . . . there are the arms that lifted him first and brace him best . . . there he returns after all his goings and comings. The sailor and traveler . . . the anatomist chemist astronomer geologist phrenologist spiritualist mathematician historian and lexicographer are not poets, but they are the lawgivers of poets and their construction underlies the structure of every perfect poem. No matter what rises or is uttered they sent the seed of the conception of it . . . of them and by them stand the visible proofs of souls . . . always of their fatherstuff must be begotten the sinewy races of bards. If there shall be love and content between the father and the son and if the greatness of the son is the exuding of the greatness of the father there shall be love between the poet and the man of demonstrable science. In the beauty of poems are the tuft and final applause of science.

Great is the faith of the flush of knowledge and of the investigation of the depths of qualities and things. Cleaving and circling here swells the soul of the poet yet is president of itself always. The depths are fathomless and therefore calm. The innocence and nakedness are resumed . . . they are neither modest nor immodest. The whole theory of the special and supernatural and all that was twined with it or educed out of it departs as a dream. What has ever happened . . . what happens and whatever may or shall happen, the vital laws enclose all . . . they are sufficient for any case and for all cases . . . none to be hurried or retarded . . . any miracle of affairs or persons inadmissible in the vast clear scheme where every motion and every spear of grass and the frames and spirits of men and women and all that concerns them are unspeakably perfect miracles all referring to all and each distinct and in its place. It is also not consistent with the reality of the soul to admit that there is anything in the known universe more divine than men and women.

Men and women and the earth and all upon it are simply to be taken as they are, and the investigation of their past and present and future shall be unintermitted and shall be done with perfect candor. Upon this basis philosophy speculates ever looking toward the poet, ever regarding the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness never inconsistent with what is clear to the senses and to the soul. For the eternal tendencies of all toward happiness make the only point of sane philosophy. Whatever comprehends less than that . . . whatever is less than the laws of light and of astronomical motion . . . or less than the laws that follow the thief the liar the glutton and the drunkard through this life and doubtless afterward . . . or less than vast stretches of time or the slow formation of density or the patient upheaving of strata—is of no account. Whatever would put God in a poem or system of philosophy as contending against some being or influence is also of no account. Sanity and ensemble characterise the great master . . . spoilt in one principle all is spoilt. The great master has nothing to do with miracles. He sees health for himself in being one of the mass . . . he sees the hiatus in singular eminence. To the perfect shape comes common ground. To be under the general law is great for that is to correspond with it. The master knows that he is unspeakably great and that all are unspeakably great . . . that nothing for instance is greater than to conceive children and bring them up well . . . that to be is just as great as to perceive or tell.

In the make of the great masters the idea of political liberty is indispensable. Liberty takes the adherence of heroes wherever men and women exist . . . but never takes any adherence or welcome from the rest more than from poets. They are the voice and exposition of liberty. They out of ages are worthy the grand idea . . . to them it is confided and they must sustain it. Nothing has precedence of it and nothing can warp or degrade it. The attitude of great poets is to cheer up slaves and horrify despots. The turn of their necks, the sound of their feet, the motions of their wrists, are full of hazard to the one and hope to the other. Come nigh them awhile and though

they neither speak or advise you shall learn the faithful American lesson. Liberty is poorly served by men whose good intent is quelled from one failure or two failures or any number of failures, or from the casual indifference or ingratitude of the people, or from the sharp show of the tushes of power, or the bringing to bear soldiers and cannon or any penal statutes. Liberty relies upon itself, invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, and knows no discouragement. The battle rages with many a loud alarm and frequent advance and retreat . . . the enemy triumphs . . . the prison, the handcuffs, the iron necklace and anklet, the scaffold, garrote and leadballs do their work . . . the cause is asleep . . . the strong throats are choked with their own blood . . . the young men drop their eyelashes toward the ground when they pass each other . . . and is liberty gone out of that place? No never. When liberty goes it is not the first to go nor the second or third to go . . . it waits for all the rest to go . . . it is the last . . . When the memories of the old martyrs are faded utterly away . . . when the large names of patriots are laughed at in the public halls from the lips of the orators . . . when the boys are no more christened after the same but christened after tyrants and traitors instead . . . when the laws of the free are grudgingly permitted and laws for informers and bloodmoney are sweet to the taste of the people . . . when I and you walk abroad upon the earth stung with compassion at the sight of numberless brothers answering our equal friendship and calling no man master—and when we are elated with noble joy at the sight of slaves . . . when the soul retires in the cool communion of the night and surveys its experience and has much extasy over the word and deed that put back a helpless innocent person into the gripe of the grippers or into any cruel inferiority . . . when those in all parts of these states who could easier realize the true American character but do not yet—when the swarms of cringers, suckers, doughfaces, lice of politics, planners of sly involutions for their own preferment to city offices or state legislatures or the judiciary or congress or the presidency, obtain a response of love and natural deference from the people

whether they get the offices or no . . . when it is better to be a bound booby and rogue in office at a high salary than the poorest free mechanic or farmer with his hat unmoved from his head and firm eyes and a candid and generous heart . . . and when servility by town or state or the federal government or any oppression on a large scale or small scale can be tried on without its own punishment following duly after in exact proportion against the smallest chance of escape . . . or rather when all life and all the souls of men and women are discharged from any part of the earth—then only shall the instinct of liberty be discharged from that part of the earth.

As the attributes of the poets of the kosmos concentrate in the real body and soul and in the pleasure of things they possess the superiority of genuineness over all fiction and romance. As they emit themselves facts are showered over with light . . . the daylight is lit with more volatile light . . . also the deep between the setting and rising sun goes deeper many fold. Each precise object or condition or combination or process exhibits a beauty . . . the multiplication table its—old age its—the carpenter's trade its—the grand-opera its . . . the hugehulled cleanshaped New-York clipper at sea under steam or full sail gleams with unmatched beauty . . . the American circles and large harmonies of government gleam with theirs . . . and the commonest definite intentions and actions with theirs. The poets of the kosmos advance through all interpositions and coverings and turmoils and stratagems to first principles. They are of use . . . they dissolve poverty from its need and riches from its conceit. You large proprietor they say shall not realize or perceive more than any one else. The owner of the library is not he who holds a legal title to it having bought and paid for it. Any one and every one is owner of the library who can read the same through all the varieties of tongues and subjects and styles, and in whom they enter with ease and take residence and force toward paternity and maternity, and make supple and powerful and rich and large. . . . These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them.

In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books or newspapers, or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or any thing to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or places or contingencies is a nuisance and revolt. Of the human form especially it is so great it must never be made ridiculous. Of ornaments to a work nothing outre can be allowed . . . but those ornaments can be allowed that conform to the perfect facts of the open air and that flow out of the nature of the work and come irrepressibly from it and are necessary to the completion of the work. Most works are most beautiful without ornament. . . . Exaggerations will be revenged in human physiology. Clean and vigorous children are jetted and conceived only in those communities where the models of natural forms are public every day. . . . Great genius and the people of these states must never be demeaned to romances. As soon as histories are properly told there is no more need of romances.

The great poets are also to be known by the absence in them of tricks and by the justification of perfect personal candor. Then folks echo a new cheap joy and a divine voice leaping from their brains: How beautiful is candor! All faults may be forgiven of him who has perfect candor. Henceforth let no man of us lie, for we have seen that openness wins the inner and outer world and that there is no single exception, and that never since our earth gathered itself in a mass have deceit or subterfuge or prevarication attracted its smallest particle or the faintest tinge of a shade—and that through the enveloping wealth and rank of a state or the whole republic of states a sneak or sly person shall be discovered and despised . . . and that the soul has never been once fooled and never can be fooled . . . and thrift without the loving nod of the soul is only a foetid puff . . . and there never grew up in any of the continents of the globe nor upon any planet or satellite or star, nor upon the asteroids, nor in any part of ethereal space, nor in the midst of

density, nor under the fluid wet of the sea, nor in that condition which precedes the birth of babes, nor at any time during the changes of life, nor in that condition that follows what we term death, nor in any stretch of abeyance or action afterward of vitality, nor in any process of formation or reformation anywhere, a being whose instinct hated the truth.

Extreme caution or prudence, the soundest organic health, large hope and comparison and fondness for women and children, large alimentiveness and destructiveness and causality, with a perfect sense of the oneness of nature and the propriety of the same spirit applied to human affairs . . . these are called up of the float of the brain of the world to be parts of the greatest poet from his birth out of his mother's womb and from her birth out of her mother's. Caution seldom goes far enough. It has been thought that the prudent citizen was the citizen who applied himself to solid gains and did well for himself and his family and completed a lawful life without debt or crime. The greatest poet sees and admits these economies as he sees the economies of food and sleep, but has higher notions of prudence than to think he gives much when he gives a few slight attentions at the latch of the gate. The premises of the prudence of life are not the hospitality of it or the ripeness and harvest of it. Beyond the independence of a little sum laid aside for burial-money, and of a few clapboards around and shingles overhead on a lot of American soil owned, and the easy dollars that supply the year's plain clothing and meals, the melancholy prudence of the abandonment of such a great being as a man is to the toss and pallor of years of moneymaking with all their scorching days and icy nights and all their stifling deceits and underhanded dodgings, or infinitesimals of parlors, or shameless stuffing while others starve . . . and all the loss of the bloom and odor of the earth and of the flowers and atmosphere and of the sea and of the true taste of the women and men you pass or have to do with in youth or middle age, and the issuing sickness and desperate revolt at the close of a life without elevation or naivete, and the ghastly chatter of a death without serenity or majesty, is the great fraud upon modern civilization and forethought,

blotching the surface and system which civilization undeniably drafts, and moistening with tears the immense features it spreads and spreads with such velocity before the reached kisses of the soul. . . . Still the right explanation remains to be made about prudence. The prudence of the mere wealth and respectability of the most esteemed life appears too faint for the eye to observe at all when little and large alike drop quietly aside at the thought of the prudence suitable for immortality. What is wisdom that fills the thinness of a year or seventy or eighty years to wisdom spaced out by ages and coming back at a certain time with strong reinforcements and rich presents and the clear faces of wedding-guests as far as you can look in every direction running gaily toward you? Only the soul is of itself . . . all else has reference to what ensues. All that a person does or thinks is of consequence. Not a move can a man or woman make that affects him or her in a day or a month or any part of the direct lifetime or the hour of death but the same affects him or her onward afterward through the indirect lifetime. The indirect is always as great and real as the direct. The spirit receives from the body just as much as it gives to the body. Not one name of word or deed . . . not of venereal sores or discolorations . . . not the privacy of the onanist . . . not of the putrid veins of gluttons or rumdrinkers . . . not peculation or cunning or betrayal or murder . . . no serpentine poison of those that seduce women . . . not the foolish yielding of women . . . not prostitution . . . not of any depravity of young men . . . not of the attainment of gain by discreditable means . . . not any nastiness of appetite . . . not any harshness of officers to men or judges to prisoners or fathers to sons or sons to fathers or husbands to wives or bosses to their boys . . . not of greedy looks or malignant wishes . . . nor any of the wiles practised by people upon themselves . . . ever is or ever can be stamped on the programme but it is duly realized and returned, and that returned in further performances . . . and they returned again. Nor can the push of charity or personal force ever be any thing else than the profoundest reason, whether it brings arguments to hand or no. No specification is necessary . . . to add or subtract or divide is

in vain. Little or big, learned or unlearned, white or black, legal or illegal, sick or well, from the first inspiration down the windpipe to the last expiration out of it, all that a male or female does that is vigorous and benevolent and clean is so much sure profit to him or her in the unshakable order of the universe and through the whole scope of it forever. If the savage or felon is wise it is well . . . if the greatest poet or savor is wise it is simply the same . . . if the President or chief justice is wise it is the same . . . if the young mechanic or farmer is wise it is no more or less . . . if the prostitute is wise it is no more nor less. The interest will come round . . . all will come round. All the best actions of war and peace . . . all help given to relatives and strangers and the poor and old and sorrowful and young children and widows and the sick, and to all shunned persons . . . all furtherance of fugitives and of the escape of slaves . . . all the self-denial that stood steady and aloof on wrecks and saw others take the seats of the boats . . . all offering of substance or life for the good old cause, or for a friend's sake or opinion's sake . . . all pains of enthusiasts scoffed at by their neighbors . . . all the vast sweet love and precious suffering of mothers . . . all honest men baffled in strifes recorded or unrecorded . . . all the grandeur and good of the few ancient nations whose fragments of annals we inherit . . . and all the good of the hundreds of far mightier and more ancient nations unknown to us by name or date or location . . . all that was ever manfully begun, whether it succeeded or not . . . all that has at any time been well suggested out of the divine heart of man or by the divinity of his mouth or by the shaping of his great hands . . . and all that is well thought or done this day on any part of the surface of the globe . . . or on any of the wandering stars or fixed stars by those there as we are here . . . or that is henceforth to be well thought or done by you whoever you are, or by any one—these singly and wholly inured at their time and inure now and will inure always to the identities from which they sprung or shall spring. . . . Did you guess any of them lived only its moment? The world does not so exist . . . no parts palpable or impalpable so exist . . . no

result exists now without being from its long antecedent result, and that from its antecedent, and so backward without the farthest mentionable spot coming a bit nearer to the beginning than any other spot. . . . Whatever satisfies the soul is truth. The prudence of the greatest poet answers at last the craving and glut of the soul, is not contemptuous of less ways of prudence if they conform to its ways, puts off nothing, permits no let-up for its own case or any case, has no particular sabbath or judgment-day, divides not the living from the dead or the righteous from the unrighteous, is satisfied with the present, matches every thought or act by its correlative, knows no possible forgiveness or deputed atonement . . . knows that the young man who composedly periled his life and lost it has done exceeding well for himself, while the man who has not periled his life and retains it to old age in riches and ease has perhaps achieved nothing for himself worth mentioning . . . and that only that person has no great prudence to learn who has learnt to prefer real longlived things, and favors body and soul the same, and perceives the indirect assuredly following the direct, and what evil or good he does leaping onward and waiting to meet him again—and who in his spirit in any emergency whatever neither hurries or avoids death.

The direct trial of him who would be the greatest poet is today. If he does not flood himself with the immediate age as with vast oceanic tides . . . and if he does not attract his own land body and soul to himself and hang on its neck with incomparable love and plunge his semitic muscle into its merits and demerits . . . and if he be not himself the age transfigured . . . and if to him is not opened the eternity which gives similitude to all periods and locations and processes and animate and inanimate forms, and which is the bond of time, and rises up from its inconceivable vagueness and infiniteness in the swimming shape of today, and is held by the ductile anchors of life, and makes the present spot the passage from what was to what shall be, and commits itself to the representation of this wave of an hour and this one of the sixty beautiful children of the wave—let him merge in the general run and wait his development.

... Still the final test of poems or any character or work remains. The prescient poet projects himself centuries ahead and judges performer or performance after the changes of time. Does it live through them? Does it still hold on untired? Will the same style and the direction of genius to similar points be satisfactory now? Has no new discovery in science or arrival at superior planes of thought and judgment and behaviour fixed him or his so that either can be looked down upon? Have the marches of tens and hundreds and thousands of years made willing detours to the right hand and the left hand for his sake? Is he beloved long and long after he is buried? Does the young man think often of him? and the young woman think often of him? and do the middleaged and the old think of him?

A great poem is for ages and ages in common and for all degrees and complexions and all departments and sects and for a woman as much as a man and a man as much as a woman. A great poem is no finish to a man or woman but rather a beginning. Has any one fancied he could sit at last under some due authority and rest satisfied with explanations and realize and be content and full? To no such terminus does the greatest poet bring . . . he brings neither cessation or sheltered fatness and ease. The touch of him tells in action. Whom he takes he takes with firm sure grasp into live regions previously unattained . . . thenceforward is no rest . . . they see the space and ineffable sheen that turn the old spots and lights into dead vacuums. The companion of him beholds the birth and progress of stars and learns one of the meanings. Now there shall be a man cohered out of tumult and chaos . . . the elder encourages the younger and shows him how . . . they two shall launch off fearlessly together till the new world fits an orbit for itself and looks unabashed on the lesser orbits of the stars and sweeps through the ceaseless rings and shall never be quiet again.

There will soon be no more priests. Their work is done. They may wait awhile . . . perhaps a generation or two . . . dropping off by degrees. A superior breed shall take their place . . . the gangs of kosmos and prophets en masse shall take

their place. A new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own priest. The churches built under their umbrage shall be the churches of men and women. Through the divinity of themselves shall the kosmos and the new breed of poets be interpreters of men and women and of all events and things. They shall find their inspiration in real objects today, symptoms of the past and future. . . . They shall not deign to defend immortality or God or the perfection of things or liberty or the exquisite beauty and reality of the soul. They shall arise in America and be responded to from the remainder of the earth.

The English language befriends the grand American expression . . . it is brawny enough and limber and full enough. On the tough stock of a race who through all change of circumstances was never without the idea of political liberty, which is the animus of all liberty, it has attracted the terms of daintier and gayer and subtler and more elegant tongues. It is the powerful language of resistance . . . it is the dialect of common sense. It is the speech of the proud and melancholy races and of all who aspire. It is the chosen tongue to express growth faith self-esteem freedom justice equality friendliness amplitude prudence decision and courage. It is the medium that shall well nigh express the inexpressible.

No great literature nor any like style of behaviour or oratory or social intercourse or household arrangements or public institutions or the treatment by bosses of employed people, nor executive detail or detail of the army or navy, nor spirit of legislation or courts or police or tuition or architecture or songs or amusements or the costumes of young men, can long elude the jealous and passionate instinct of American standards. Whether or no the sign appears from the mouths of the people, it throbs a live interrogation in every freeman's and free-woman's heart after that which passes by or this built to remain. Is it uniform with my country? Are its disposals without ignominious distinctions? Is it for the evergrowing communes of brothers and lovers, large, well-united, proud beyond the old models, generous beyond all models? Is it something

grown fresh out of the fields or drawn from the sea for use to me today here? I know that what answers for me an American must answer for any individual or nation that serves for a part of my materials. Does this answer? or is it without reference to universal needs? or sprung of the needs of the less developed society of special ranks? or old needs of pleasure overlaid by modern science and forms? Does this acknowledge liberty with audible and absolute acknowledgement, and set slavery at naught for life and death? Will it help breed one goodshaped and wellhung man, and a woman to be his perfect and independent mate? Does it improve manners? Is it for the nursing of the young of the republic? Does it solve readily with the sweet milk of the nipples of the breasts of the mother of many children? Has it too the old ever-fresh forbearance and impartiality? Does it look with the same love on the last born and those hardening toward stature, and on the errant, and on those who disdain all strength of assault outside of their own?

The poems distilled from other poems will probably pass away. The coward will surely pass away. The expectation of the vital and great can only be satisfied by the demeanor of the vital and great. The swarms of the polished deprecating and reflectors and the polite float off and leave no remembrance. America prepares with composure and goodwill for the visitors that have sent word. It is not intellect that is to be their warrant and welcome. The talented, the artist, the ingenious, the editor, the statesman, the erudite . . . they are not unappreciated . . . they fall in their place and do their work. The soul of the nation also does its work. No disguise can pass on it . . . no disguise can conceal from it. It rejects none, it permits all. Only toward as good as itself and toward the like of itself will it advance half-way. An individual is as superb as a nation when he has the qualities which make a superb nation. The soul of the largest and wealthiest and proudest nation may well go half-way to meet that of its poets. The signs are effectual. There is no fear of mistake. If the one is true the other is true. The proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he has absorbed it.

PREFACE, 1876,
to the two-volume Centennial Edition
of *L. of G.* and "*Two Rivulets.*"

At the eleventh hour, under grave illness, I gather up the pieces of prose and poetry left over since publishing, a while since, my first and main volume, "*Leaves of Grass*"—pieces, here, some new, some old—nearly all of them (sombre as many are, making this almost death's book) composed in by-gone atmospheres of perfect health—and preceded by the freshest collection, the little "*Two Rivulets,*" now send them out, embodied in the present melange, partly as my contribution and outpouring to celebrate, in some sort, the feature of the time, the first centennial of our New World nationality—and then as chyle and nutriment to that moral, indissoluble union, equally representing all, and the mother of many coming centennials.

And e'en for flush and proof of our America—for reminder, just as much, or more, in moods of towering pride and joy, I keep my special chants of death and immortality* to stamp the

*PASSAGE TO INDIA.—As in some ancient legend-play, to close the plot and the hero's career, there is a farewell gathering on ship's deck and on shore, a loosing of hawsers and ties, a spreading of sails to the wind—a starting out on unknown seas, to fetch up no one knows whither—to return no more—and the curtain falls, and there is the end of it—so I have reserv'd that poem, with its cluster, to finish and explain much that, without them, would not be explain'd, and to take leave, and escape for good, from all that has preceded them. (Then probably "*Passage to India,*" and its cluster, are but freer vent and fuller expression to what, from the first, and so on throughout, more or less lurks in my writings, underneath every page, every line, everywhere.)

I am not sure but the last inclosing sublimation of race or poem is, what it thinks of death. After the rest has been comprehended and said, even the grandest—after those contributions to mightiest nationality, or to sweetest song, or to the best personalism, male or female, have been glean'd from the rich and varied themes of tangible life, and have been fully accepted and sung, and the pervading fact of visible existence, with the duty it devolves, is rounded and apparently completed, it still remains to be really completed by suffusing through the whole and several, that other pervading invisible fact, so large a part, (is it not the largest part?) of life here, combining the rest, and furnishing, for person or State, the only permanent and unitary meaning to all, even the meanest life, consistently with the dignity of the universe, in Time. As from the eligibility to this

coloring-finish of all, present and past. For terminus and temperer to all, they were originally written; and that shall be their office at the last.

For some reason—not explainable or definite to my own mind, yet secretly pleasing and satisfactory to it—I have not hesitated to embody in, and run through the volume, two altogether distinct veins, or strata—politics for one, and for

thought, and the cheerful conquest of this fact, flash forth the first distinctive proofs of the soul, so to me, (extending it only a little further,) the ultimate Democratic purports, the ethereal and spiritual ones, are to concentrate here, and as fixed stars, radiate hence. For, in my opinion, it is no less than this idea of immortality, above all other ideas, that is to enter into, and vivify, and give crowning religious stamp, to democracy in the New World.

It was originally my intention, after chanting in "Leaves of Grass" the songs of the body and existence, to then compose a further, equally needed volume, based on those convictions of perpetuity and conservation which, enveloping all precedents, make the unseen soul govern absolutely at last. I meant, while in a sort continuing the theme of my first chants, to shift the slides, and exhibit the problem and paradox of the same ardent and fully appointed personality entering the sphere of the resistless gravitation of spiritual law, and with cheerful face estimating death, not at all as the cessation, but as somehow what I feel it must be, the entrance upon by far the greatest part of existence, and something that life is at least as much for, as it is for itself. But the full construction of such a work is beyond my powers, and must remain for some baid in the future. The physical and the sensuous, in themselves or in their immediate continuations, retain holds upon me which I think are never entirely releas'd; and those holds I have not only not denied, but hardly wish'd to weaken.

Meanwhile, not entirely to give the go-by to my original plan, and far more to avoid a mark'd hiatus in it, than to entirely fulfil it, I end my books with thoughts, or radiations from thoughts, on death, immortality, and a free entrance into the spiritual world. In those thoughts, in a sort, I make the first steps or studies toward the mighty theme, from the point of view necessitated by my foregoing poems, and by modern science. In them I also seek to set the key-stone to my democracy's enduring arch. I recollect them now, for the press, in order to partially occupy and offset days of strange sickness, and the heaviest affliction and bereavement of my life; and I fondly please myself with the notion of leaving that cluster to you, O unknown reader of the future, as "something to remember me by," more especially than all else. Written in former days of perfect health, little did I think the pieces had the purport that now, under present circumstances, opens to me.

[As I write these lines, May 31, 1875, it is again early summer—again my birth-day—now my fifty-sixth. Amid the outside beauty and freshness the sunlight and verdure of the delightful season, O how different the moral atmosphere amid which I now revise this Volume, from the jocund influence surrounding the growth and advent of "Leaves of Grass." I

the other, the pensive thought of immortality. Thus, too, the prose and poetic, the dual forms of the present book. The volume, therefore, after its minor episodes, probably divides into these two, at first sight far diverse, veins of topic and treatment. Three points, in especial, have become very dear to me, and all through I seek to make them again and again, in many forms and repetitions, as will be seen: 1. That the true growth-characteristics of the democracy of the New World are henceforth to radiate in superior literary, artistic and religious expressions, far more than in its republican forms, universal suffrage, and frequent elections, (though these are unspeakably important.) 2. That the vital political mission of the United States is, to practically solve and settle the problem of two sets of rights—the fusion, thorough compatibility and junction of individual State prerogatives, with the indispensable necessity of centrality and Oneness—the national identity power—the sovereign Union, relentless, permanently comprising all, and over all, and in that never yielding an inch: then 3d. Do we not, amid a general malaria of fogs and vapors, our day, unmistakably see two pillars of promise, with grandest, indestructible indications—one, that the morbid facts of American politics and society everywhere are but passing incidents and flanges of our unbounded impetus of growth? weeds, annuals, of the rank, rich soil—not central, enduring, perennial things?

occupy myself, arranging these pages for publication, still envelopt in thoughts of the death two years since of my dear Mother, the most perfect and magnetic character, the rarest combination of practical, moral and spiritual, and the least selfish, of all and any I have ever known—and by me O so much the most deeply loved—and also under the physical affliction of a tedious attack of paralysis, obstinately lingering and keeping its hold upon me, and quite suspending all bodily activity and comfort.]

Under these influences, therefore, I still feel to keep "*Passage to India*" for last words even to this centennial dithyramb. Not as, in antiquity, at highest festival of Egypt, the noisome skeleton of death was sent on exhibition to the revelers, for zest and shadow to the occasion's joy and light—but as the marble statue of the normal Greeks at Elis, suggesting death in the form of a beautiful and perfect young man, with closed eyes, leaning on an inverted torch—emblem of rest and aspiration after action—of crown and point which all lives and poems should steadily have reference to, namely, the justified and noble termination of our identity, this grade of it, and outlet-preparation to another grade.

The other, that all the hitherto experience of the States, their first century, has been but preparation, adolescence—and that this Union is only now and henceforth, (*i.e.* since the secession war,) to enter on its full democratic career?

Of the whole, poems and prose, (not attending at all to chronological order, and with original dates and passing allusions in the heat and impression of the hour, left shuffled in, and undisturb'd,) the chants of "Leaves of Grass," my former volume, yet serve as the indispensable deep soil, or basis, out of which, and out of which only, could come the roots and stems more definitely indicated by these later pages. (While that volume radiates physiology alone, the present one, though of the like origin in the main, more palpably doubtless shows the pathology which was pretty sure to come in time from the other.)

In that former and main volume, composed in the flush of my health and strength, from the age of 30 to 50 years, I dwelt on birth and life, clothing my ideas in pictures, days, transactions of my time, to give them positive place, identity—saturating them with that vehemence of pride and audacity of freedom necessary to loosen the mind of still-to-be-form'd America from the accumulated folds, the superstitions, and all the long, tenacious and stifling anti-democratic authorities of the Asiatic and European past—my enclosing purport being to express, above all artificial regulation and aid, the eternal bodily composite, cumulative, natural character of one's self.*

* Namely, a character, making most of common and normal elements, to the superstructure of which not only the precious accumulations of the learning and experiences of the Old World, and the settled social and municipal necessities and current requirements, so long a-building, shall still faithfully contribute, but which at its foundations and carried up thence, and receiving its impetus from the democratic spirit, and accepting its gauge in all departments from the democratic formulas, shall again directly be vitalized by the perennial influences of Nature at first hand, and the old heroic stamina of Nature, the strong air of prairie and mountain, the dash of the briny sea, the primary antiseptics—of the passions, in all their fullest heat and potency, of courage, rankness, amativeness, and of immense pride. Not to lose at all, therefore, the benefits of artificial progress and civilization, but to re-occupy for Western tenancy the oldest

Estimating the American Union as so far, and for some time to come, in its yet formative condition, I bequeath poems and essays as nutriment and influences to help truly assimilate and

though ever-fresh fields, and reap from them the savage and sane nourishment indispensable to a hardy nation, and the absence of which, threatening to become worse and worse, is the most serious lack and defect to-day of our New World literature.

Not but what the brawn of "*Leaves of Grass*" is, I hope, thoroughly spiritualized everywhere, for final estimate, but, from the very subjects, the direct effect is a sense of the life, as it should be, of flesh and blood, and physical urge, and animalism. While there are other themes, and plenty of abstract thoughts and poems in the volume—while I have put in it passing and rapid but actual glimpses of the great struggle between the nation and the slave-power, (1861-'65,) as the fierce and bloody panorama of that contest unroll'd itself: while the whole book, indeed, revolves around that four years' war, which, as I was in the midst of it, becomes, in "*Drum-Taps*," pivotal to the rest entire—and here and there, before and afterward, not a few episodes and speculations—*that*—namely, to make a type-portrait for living, active, worldly, healthy personality, objective as well as subjective, joyful and potent, and modern and free, distinctively for the use of the United States, male and female, through the long future—has been, I say, my general object. (Probably, indeed, the whole of these varied songs, and all my writings, both volumes, only ring changes in some sort, on the ejaculation, How vast, how eligible, how joyful, how real, is a human being, himself or herself.)

Though from no definite plan at the time, I see now that I have unconsciously sought, by indirections at least as much as directions, to express the whirls and rapid growth and intensity of the United States, the prevailing tendency and events of the Nineteenth century, and largely the spirit of the whole current world, my time; for I feel that I have partaken of that spirit, as I have been deeply interested in all those events, the closing of long-stretch'd eras and ages, and, illustrated in the history of the United States, the opening of larger ones. (The death of President Lincoln, for instance, fitly, historically closes, in the civilization of feudalism, many old influences—drops on them, suddenly, a vast, gloomy, as it were, separating curtain.)

Since I have been ill, (1873-74-75,) mostly without serious pain, and with plenty of time and frequent inclination to judge my poems, (never composed with eye on the book-market, nor for fame, nor for any pecuniary profit,) I have felt temporary depression more than once, for fear that in "*Leaves of Grass*" the *moral* parts were not sufficiently pronounced. But in my clearest and calmest moods I have realized that as those "*Leaves*," all and several, surely prepare the way for, and necessitate morals, and are adjusted to them, just the same as Nature does and is, they are what, consistently with my plan, they must and probably should be. (In a certain sense, while the Moral is the purport and last intelligence of all Nature, there is absolutely nothing of the moral in the works, or laws, or shows of Nature. Those only lead inevitably to it—begin and necessitate it.)

harden, and especially to furnish something toward what the States most need of all, and which seems to me yet quite unsupplied in literature, namely, to show them, or begin to show them,

Then I meant "Leaves of Grass," as publish'd, to be the Poem of average Identity, (of *yours*, whoever you are, now reading these lines.) A man is not greatest as victor in war, nor inventor or explorer, nor even in science, or in his intellectual or artistic capacity, or exemplar in some vast benevolence. To the highest democratic view, man is most acceptable in living well the practical life and lot which happens to him as ordinary farmer, sea-farer, mechanic, clerk, laborer, or driver—upon and from which position as a central basis or pedestal, while performing its labors, and his duties as citizen, son, husband, father and employ'd person, he preserves his physique, ascends, developing, radiating himself in other regions—and especially where and when, (greatest of all, and nobler than the proudest mere genius or magnate in any field,) he fully realizes the conscience, the spiritual, the divine faculty, cultivated well, exemplified in all his deeds and words, through life, uncompromising to the end—a flight loftier than any of Homer's or Shakspeare's—broader than all poems and bibles—namely, Nature's own, and in the midst of it, Yourself, your own Identity, body and soul. (All serves, helps—but in the centre of all, absorbing all, giving, for your purpose, the only meaning and vitality to all, master or mistress of all, under the law, stands Yourself.) To sing the Song of that law of average Identity, and of Yourself, consistently with the divine law of the universal, is a main intention of those "Leaves."

Something more may be added—for, while I am about it, I would make a full confession. I also sent out "Leaves of Grass" to arouse and set flowing in men's and women's hearts, young and old, endless streams of living, pulsating love and friendship, directly from them to myself, now and ever. To this terrible, irrepressible yearning, (surely more or less down underneath in most human souls)—this never-satisfied appetite for sympathy, and this boundless offering of sympathy—this universal democratic comradeship—this old, eternal, yet ever-new interchange of adhesiveness, so fitly emblematic of America—I have given in that book, undisguisedly, declaredly, the openest expression. Besides, important as they are in my purpose as emotional expressions for humanity, the special meaning of the "Calamus" cluster of "Leaves of Grass," (and more or less running through the book, and cropping out in "Drum-Taps,") mainly resides in its political significance. In my opinion, it is by a fervent, accepted development of comradeship, the beautiful and sane affection of man for man, latent in all the young fellows, north and south, east and west—it is by this, I say, and by what goes directly and indirectly along with it, that the United States of the future, (I cannot too often repeat,) are to be most effectually welded together, intercalated, anneal'd into a living union.

Then, for enclosing clue of all, it is imperatively and ever to be borne in mind that "Leaves of Grass" entire is not to be construed as an intellectual or scholastic effort or poem mainly, but more as a radical utterance out of the Emotions and the Physique—an utterance adjusted to, perhaps born of, Democracy and the Modern—in its very nature regardless of the old conventions, and, under the great laws, following only its own impulses.

themselves distinctively, and what they are for. For though perhaps the main points of all ages and nations are points of resemblance, and, even while granting evolution, are substantially the same, there are some vital things in which this Republic, as to its individualities, and as a compacted Nation, is to specially stand forth, and culminate modern humanity. And these are the very things it least morally and mentally knows—(though, curiously enough, it is at the same time faithfully acting upon them.)

I count with such absolute certainty on the great future of the United States—different from, though founded on, the past—that I have always invoked that future, and surrounded myself with it, before or while singing my songs. (As ever, all tends to followings—America, too, is a prophecy. What, even of the best and most successful, would be justified by itself alone? by the present, or the material ostent alone? Of men or States, few realize how much they live in the future. That, rising like pin-nacles, gives its main significance to all You and I are doing to-day. Without it, there were little meaning in lands or poems—little purport in human lives. All ages, all Nations and States, have been such prophecies. But where any former ones with prophecy so broad, so clear, as our times, our lands—as those of the West?)

Without being a scientist, I have thoroughly adopted the conclusions of the great savans and experimentalists of our time, and of the last hundred years, and they have interiorly tinged the chyle of all my verse, for purposes beyond. Following the modern spirit, the real poems of the present, ever solidifying and expanding into the future, must vocalize the vastness and splendor and reality with which scientism has invested man and the universe, (all that is called creation,) and must henceforth launch humanity into new orbits, consonant with that vastness, splendor, and reality, (unknown to the old poems,) like new systems of orbs, balanced upon themselves, revolving in limitless space, more subtle than the stars. Poetry, so largely hitherto and even at present wedded to children's tales, and to

mere amorousness, upholstery and superficial rhyme, will have to accept, and, while not denying the past, nor the themes of the past, will be revived by this tremendous innovation, the kosmic spirit, which must henceforth, in my opinion, be the background and underlying impetus, more or less visible, of all first-class songs.

Only, (for me, at any rate, in all my prose and poetry,) joyfully accepting modern science, and loyally following it without the slightest hesitation, there remains ever recognized still a higher flight, a higher fact, the eternal soul of man, (of all else too,) the spiritual, the religious—which it is to be the greatest office of scientism, in my opinion, and of future poetry also, to free from fables, crudities and superstitions, and launch forth in renew'd faith and scope a hundred fold. To me, the worlds of religiousness, of the conception of the divine, and of the ideal, though mainly latent, are just as absolute in humanity and the universe as the world of chemistry, or anything in the objective worlds. To me

The prophet and the bard,
Shall yet maintain themselves—in higher circles yet,
Shall mediate to the modern, to democracy—interpret yet to them,
God and eidólons.

To me, the crown of savantism is to be, that it surely opens the way for a more splendid theology, and for ampler and diviner songs. No year, nor even century, will settle this. There is a phase of the real, lurking behind the real, which it is all for. There is also in the intellect of man, in time, far in prospective recesses, a judgment, a last appellate court, which will settle it.

In certain parts in these flights, or attempting to depict or suggest them, I have not been afraid of the charge of obscurity, in either of my two volumes—because human thought, poetry or melody, must leave dim escapes and outlets—must possess a certain fluid, aerial character, akin to space itself, obscure to those of little or no imagination, but indispensable to the highest purposes. Poetic style, when address'd to the soul, is less definite form, outline, sculpture, and becomes vista, music, half-tints,

and even less than half-tints. True, it may be architecture; but again it may be the forest wild-wood, or the best effect thereof, at twilight, the waving oaks and cedars in the wind, and the impalpable odor.

Finally, as I have lived in fresh lands, inchoate, and in a revolutionary age, future-founding, I have felt to identify the points of that age, these lands, in my recitatives, altogether in my own way. Thus my form has strictly grown from my purports and facts, and is the analogy of them. Within my time the United States have emerged from nebulous vagueness and suspense, to full orbic, (though varied,) decision—have done the deeds and achiev'd the triumphs of half a score of centuries—and are henceforth to enter upon their real history—the way being now, (*i.e.* since the result of the Secession War,) clear'd of death-threatening impedimenta, and the free areas around and ahead of us assured and certain, which were not so before—(the past century being but preparations, trial voyages and experiments of the ship, before her starting out upon deep water.)

In estimating my volumes, the world's current times and deeds, and their spirit, must be first profoundly estimated. Out of the hundred years just ending, (1776–1876,) with their genesis of inevitable wilful events, and new experiments and introductions, and many unprecedented things of war and peace, (to be realized better, perhaps only realized, at the remove of a century hence;) out of that stretch of time, and especially out of the immediately preceding twenty-five years, (1850–75,) with all their rapid changes, innovations, and audacious movements—and bearing their own inevitable wilful birth-marks—the experiments of my poems too have found genesis.

W. W.

A BACKWARD GLANCE O'ER TRAVEL'D ROADS

[*Preface to November Boughs, 1888*]

Perhaps the best of songs heard, or of any and all true love, or life's fairest episodes, or sailors', soldiers' trying scenes on land or sea, is the *résumé* of them, or any of them, long afterwards, looking at the actualities away back past, with all their practical excitations gone. How the soul loves to float amid such reminiscences!

So here I sit gossiping in the early candle-light of old age—I and my book—casting backward glances over our travel'd road. After completing, as it were, the journey—(a varied jaunt of years, with many halts and gaps of intervals—or some lengthen'd ship-voyage, wherein more than once the last hour had apparently arrived, and we seem'd certainly going down—yet reaching port in a sufficient way through all discomfitures at last)—After completing my poems, I am curious to review them in the light of their own (at the time unconscious, or mostly unconscious) intentions, with certain unfoldings of the thirty years they seek to embody. These lines, therefore, will probably blend the web of first purposes and speculations, with the warp of that experience afterwards, always bringing strange developments.

Result of seven or eight stages and struggles extending through nearly thirty years, (as I nigh my three-score-and-ten I live largely on memory,) I look upon "Leaves of Grass," now finish'd to the end of its opportunities and powers, as my definitive *carte visite* to the coming generations of the New World,* if I may assume to say so. That I have not gain'd the acceptance of my own time, but have fallen back on fond dreams of the future—anticipations—"still lives the song, though Regnar dies")—That from a worldly and business point of

* When Champollion, on his death-bed, handed to the printer the revised proof of his "Egyptian Grammar," he said gayly, "Be careful of this—it is my *carte de visite* to posterity."

view "Leaves of Grass" has been worse than a failure—that public criticism on the book and myself as author of it yet shows mark'd anger and contempt more than anything else—"I find a solid line of enemies to you everywhere,"—letter from W. S. K., Boston, May 28, 1884)—And that solely for publishing it I have been the object of two or three pretty serious special official buffetings—is all probably no more than I ought to have expected. I had my choice when I commenc'd. I bid neither for soft eulogies, big money returns, nor the approbation of existing schools and conventions. As fulfill'd or partially fulfill'd, the best comfort of the whole business (after a small band of the dearest friends and upholders ever vouchsafed to man or cause—doubtless all the more faithful and uncompromising—this little phalanx!—for being so few) is that, unstopp'd and unwarp'd by any influence outside the soul within me, I have had my say entirely my own way, and put it unerringly on record—the value thereof to be decided by time.

In calculating that decision, William O'Connor and Dr. Bucke are far more peremptory than I am. Behind all else that can be said, I consider "Leaves of Grass" and its theory experimental—as, in the deepest sense, I consider our American republic itself to be, with its theory. (I think I have at least enough philosophy not to be too absolutely certain of any thing, or any results.) In the second place, the volume is a *sortie*—whether to prove triumphant, and conquer its field of aim and escape and construction, nothing less than a hundred years from now can fully answer. I consider the point that I have positively gain'd a hearing, to far more than make up for any and all other lacks and withholdings. Essentially, *that* was from the first, and has remain'd throughout, the main object. Now it seems to be achiev'd, I am certainly contented to waive any otherwise momentous drawbacks, as of little account. Candidly and dispassionately reviewing all my intentions, I feel that they were creditable—and I accept the result, whatever it may be.

After continued personal ambition and effort, as a young fellow, to enter with the rest into competition for the usual rewards, business, political, literary, &c.—to take part in the

great *mêlée*, both for victory's prize itself and to do some good—After years of those aims and pursuits, I found myself remaining possess'd, at the age of thirty-one to thirty-three, with a special desire and conviction. Or rather, to be quite exact, a desire that had been flitting through my previous life, or hovering on the flanks, mostly indefinite hitherto, had steadily advanced to the front, defined itself, and finally dominated everything else. This was a feeling or ambition to articulate and faithfully express in literary or poetic form, and uncompromisingly, my own physical, emotional, moral, intellectual, and æsthetic Personality, in the midst of, and tallying, the momentous spirit and facts of its immediate days, and of current America—and to exploit that Personality, identified with place and date, in a far more candid and comprehensive sense than any hitherto poem or book.

Perhaps this is in brief, or suggests, all I have sought to do. Given the Nineteenth Century, with the United States, and what they furnish as area and points of view, "*Leaves of Grass*" is, or seeks to be, simply a faithful and doubtless self-will'd record. In the midst of all, it gives one man's—the author's—identity, ardors, observations, faiths, and thoughts, color'd hardly at all with any decided coloring from other faiths or other identities. Plenty of songs had been sung—beautiful, matchless songs—adjusted to other lands than these—another spirit and stage of evolution; but I would sing, and leave out or put in, quite solely with reference to America and to-day. Modern science and democracy seem'd to be throwing out their challenge to poetry to put them in its statements in contradistinction to the songs and myths of the past. As I see it now (perhaps too late,) I have unwittingly taken up that challenge and made an attempt at such statements—which I certainly would not assume to do now, knowing more clearly what it means.

For grounds for "*Leaves of Grass*," as a poem, I abandon'd the conventional themes, which do not appear in it: none of the stock ornamentation, or choice plots of love or war, or high, exceptional personages of Old-World song; nothing, as I may

say, for beauty's sake—no legend, or myth, or romance, nor euphemism, nor rhyme. But the broadest average of humanity and its identities in the now ripening Nineteenth Century, and especially in each of their countless examples and practical occupations in the United States to-day.

One main contrast of the ideas behind every page of my verses, compared with establish'd poems, is their different relative attitude towards God, towards the objective universe, and still more (by reflection, confession, assumption, &c.) the quite changed attitude of the ego, the one chanting or talking, towards himself and towards his fellow-humanity. It is certainly time for America, above all, to begin this readjustment in the scope and basic point of view of verse; for everything else has changed. As I write, I see in an article on Wordsworth, in one of the current English magazines, the lines, "A few weeks ago an eminent French critic said that, owing to the special tendency to science and to its all-devouring force, poetry would cease to be read in fifty years." But I anticipate the very contrary. Only a firmer, vastly broader, new area begins to exist—nay, is already form'd—to which the poetic genius must emigrate. Whatever may have been the case in years gone by, the true use for the imaginative faculty of modern times is to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives, endowing them with the glows and glories and final illustriousness which belong to every real thing, and to real things only. Without that ultimate vivification—which the poet or other artist alone can give—reality would seem incomplete, and science, democracy, and life itself, finally in vain.

Few appreciate the moral revolutions, our age, which have been profounder far than the material or inventive or war-produced ones. The Nineteenth Century, now well towards its close (and ripening into fruit the seeds of the two preceding centuries*)—the uprisings of national masses and shiftings of

* The ferment and germination even of the United States to-day, dating back to, and in my opinion mainly founded on, the Elizabethan age in English history, the age of Francis Bacon and Shakespeare. Indeed, when we pursue it, what growth or advent is there that does not date back, back, until lost—perhaps its most tantalizing clues lost—in the receded horizons of the past?

boundary-lines—the historical and other prominent facts of the United States—the war of attempted Secession—the stormy rush and haste of nebulous forces—never can future years witness more excitement and din of action—never completer change of army front along the whole line, the whole civilized world. For all these new and evolutionary facts, meanings, purposes, new poetic messages, new forms and expressions, are inevitable.

My Book and I—what a period we have presumed to span! those thirty years from 1850 to '80—and America in them! Proud, proud indeed may we be, if we have cull'd enough of that period in its own spirit to worthily waft a few live breaths of it to the future!

Let me not dare, here or anywhere, for my own purposes, or any purposes, to attempt the definition of Poetry, nor answer the question what it is. Like Religion, Love, Nature, while those terms are indispensable, and we all give a sufficiently accurate meaning to them, in my opinion no definition that has ever been made sufficiently encloses the name Poetry; nor can any rule or convention ever so absolutely obtain but some great exception may arise and disregard and overturn it.

Also it must be carefully remember'd that first-class literature does not shine by any luminosity of its own; nor do its poems. They grow of circumstances, and are evolutionary. The actual living light is always curiously from elsewhere—follows unaccountable sources, and is lunar and relative at the best. There are, I know, certain controlling themes that seem endlessly appropriated to the poets—as war, in the past—in the Bible, religious rapture and adoration—always love, beauty, some fine plot, or pensive or other emotion. But, strange as it may sound at first, I will say there is something striking far deeper and towering far higher than those themes for the best elements of modern song.

Just as all the old imaginative works rest, after their kind, on long trains of presuppositions, often entirely unmention'd by themselves, yet supplying the most important bases of them, and without which they could have had no reason for being,

so "Leaves of Grass," before a line was written, presupposed something different from any other, and, as it stands, is the result of such presupposition. I should say, indeed, it were useless to attempt reading the book without first carefully tallying that preparatory background and quality in the mind. Think of the United States to-day—the facts of these thirty-eight or forty empires solder'd in one—sixty or seventy millions of equals with their lives, their passions, their future—these incalculable, modern, American, seething multitudes around us, of which we are inseparable parts! Think, in comparison, of the petty environage and limited area of the poets of past or present Europe, no matter how great their genius. Think of the absence and ignorance in all cases hitherto, of the multitudinousness, vitality, and the unprecedented stimulants of to-day and here. It almost seems as if a poetry with cosmic and dynamic features of magnitude and limitlessness suitable to the human soul, were never possible before. It is certain that a poetry of absolute faith and equality for the use of the democratic masses never was.

In estimating first-class song, a sufficient Nationality, or, on the other hand, what may be call'd the negative and lack of it, (as in Goethe's case, it sometimes seems to me,) is often, if not always, the first element. One needs only a little penetration to see, at more or less removes, the material facts of their country and radius, with the coloring of the moods of humanity at the time, and its gloomy or hopeful prospects, behind all poets and each poet, and forming their birth-marks. I know very well that my "Leaves" could not possibly have emerged or been fashion'd or completed, from any other era than the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, nor any other land than democratic America, and from the absolute triumph of the National Union arms.

And whether my friends claim it for me or not, I know well enough, too, that in respect to pictorial talent, dramatic situations, and especially in verbal melody and all the conventional technique of poetry, not only the divine works that to-day stand ahead in the world's reading, but dozens more, transcend (some

of them immeasurably transcend) all I have done, or could do. But it seem'd to me, as the objects in Nature, the themes of æstheticism, and all special exploitations of the mind and soul, involve not only their own inherent quality, but the quality, just as inherent and important, of *their point of view*,* the time had come to reflect all themes and things, old and new, in the lights thrown on them by the advent of America and democracy—to chant those themes through the utterance of one, not only the grateful and reverent legatee of the past, but the born child of the New World—to illustrate all through the genesis and ensemble of to-day; and that such illustration and ensemble are the chief demands of America's prospective imaginative literature. Not to carry out, in the approved style, some choice plot of fortune or misfortune, or fancy, or fine thoughts, or incidents, or courtesies—all of which has been done overwhelmingly and well, probably never to be excell'd—but that while in such æsthetic presentation of objects, passions, plots, thoughts, &c., our lands and days do not want, and probably will never have, anything better than they already possess from the bequests of the past, it still remains to be said that there is even towards all those a subjective and contemporary point of view appropriate to ourselves alone, and to our new genius and environments, different from anything hitherto; and that such conception of current or gone-by life and art is for us the only means of their assimilation consistent with the Western world.

Indeed, and anyhow, to put it specifically, has not the time arrived when, (if it must be plainly said, for democratic America's sake, if for no other) there must imperatively come a readjustment of the whole theory and nature of Poetry? The question is important, and I may turn the argument over and repeat it: Does not the best thought of our day and Republic conceive of a birth and spirit of song superior to anything past or present? To the effectual and moral consolidation of our lands (already, as materially establish'd, the greatest factors in

* According to Immanuel Kant, the last essential reality, giving shape and significance to all the rest.

known history, and far, far greater through what they prelude and necessitate, and are to be in future)—to conform with and build on the concrete realities and theories of the universe furnish'd by science, and henceforth the only irrefragable basis for anything, verse included—to root both influences in the emotional and imaginative action of the modern time, and dominate all that precedes or opposes them—is not either a radical advance and step forward, or a new verteber of the best song indispensable?

The New World receives with joy the poems of the antique, with European feudalism's rich fund of epics, plays, ballads—seeks not in the least to deaden or displace those voices from our ear and area—holds them indeed as indispensable studies, influences, records, comparisons. But though the dawn-dazzle of the sun of literature is in those poems for us of to-day—though perhaps the best parts of current character in nations, social groups, or any man's or woman's individuality, Old World or New, are from them—and though if I were ask'd to name the most precious bequest to current American civilization from all the hitherto ages, I am not sure but I would name those old and less old songs ferried hither from east and west—some serious words and debits remain; some acrid considerations demand a hearing. Of the great poems receiv'd from abroad and from the ages, and to-day enveloping and penetrating America, is there one that is consistent with these United States, or essentially applicable to them as they are and are to be? Is there one whose underlying basis is not a denial and insult to democracy? What a comment it forms, anyhow, on this era of literary fulfilment, with the splendid day-rise of science and resuscitation of history, that our chief religious and poetical works are not our own, nor adapted to our light, but have been furnish'd by far-back ages out of their arriere and darkness, or, at most, twilight dimness! What is there in those works that so imperiously and scornfully dominates all our advanced civilization, and culture?

Even Shakspeare, who so suffuses current letters and art (which indeed have in most degrees grown out of him,) belongs

essentially to the buried past. Only he holds the proud distinction for certain important phases of that past, of being the loftiest of the singers life has yet given voice to. All, however, relate to and rest upon conditions, standards, politics, sociologies, ranges of belief, that have been quite eliminated from the Eastern hemisphere, and never existed at all in the Western. As authoritative types of song they belong in America just about as much as the persons and institutes they depict. True, it may be said, the emotional, moral, and æsthetic natures of humanity have not radically changed—that in these the old poems apply to our times and all times, irrespective of date; and that they are of incalculable value as pictures of the past. I willingly make those admissions, and to their fullest extent; then advance the points herewith as of serious, even paramount importance.

I have indeed put on record elsewhere my reverence and eulogy for those never-to-be-excell'd poetic bequests, and their indescribable preciousness as heirlooms for America. Another and separate point must now be candidly stated. If I had not stood before those poems with uncover'd head, fully aware of their colossal grandeur and beauty of form and spirit, I could not have written "*Leaves of Grass*." My verdict and conclusions as illustrated in its pages are arrived at through the temper and inculcation of the old works as much as through anything else—perhaps more than through anything else. As America fully and fairly construed is the legitimate result and evolutionary outcome of the past, so I would dare to claim for my verse. Without stopping to qualify the averment, the Old World has had the poems of myths, fictions, feudalism, conquest, caste, dynastic wars, and splendid exceptional characters and affairs, which have been great; but the New World needs the poems of realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equality, which shall be greater. In the centre of all, and object of all, stands the Human Being, towards whose heroic and spiritual evolution poems and everything directly or indirectly tend, Old World or New.

Continuing the subject, my friends have more than once suggested—or may be the garrulity of advancing age is possessing me—some further embryonic facts of “Leaves of Grass,” and especially how I enter’d upon them. Dr. Bucke has, in his volume, already fully and fairly described the preparation of my poetic field, with the particular and general plowing, planting, seeding, and occupation of the ground, till everything was fertilized, rooted, and ready to start its own way for good or bad. Not till after all this, did I attempt any serious acquaintance with poetic literature. Along in my sixteenth year I had become possessor of a stout, well-cramn’d one thousand page octavo volume (I have it yet,) containing Walter Scott’s poetry entire—an inexhaustible mine and treasury of poetic forage (especially the endless forests and jungles of notes)—has been so to me for fifty years, and remains so to this day.*

Later, at intervals, summers and falls, I used to go off, sometimes for a week at a stretch, down in the country, or to Long Island’s seashores—there, in the presence of outdoor influences, I went over thoroughly the Old and New Testaments, and absorb’d (probably to better advantage for me than in any library or indoor room—it makes such difference *where* you read,) Shakspeare, Ossian, the best translated versions I could get of Homer, Eschylus, Sophocles, the old German Nibelungen, the ancient Hindoo poems, and one or two other masterpieces, Dante’s among them. As it happen’d, I read the latter mostly in an old wood. The Iliad (Buckley’s prose version,) I read first thoroughly on the peninsula of Orient, northeast end of Long Island, in a shelter’d hollow of rocks and sand, with the sea on each side. (I have wonder’d since why I was not

* Sir Walter Scott’s COMPLETE POEMS; especially including BORDER MINSTRELSY; then Sir Tristrem; Lay of the Last Minstrel; Ballads from the German; Marmion; Lady of the Lake; Vision of Don Roderick; Lord of the Isle; Rokeby; Bridal of Triermain; Field of Waterloo; Harold the Dauntless; all the Dramas; various Introductions, endless interesting Notes, and Essays on Poetry, Romance, &c.

Lockhart’s 1833 (or ’34) edition with Scott’s latest and copious revisions and annotations. (All the poems were thoroughly read by me, but the ballads of the BORDER MINSTRELSY over and over again.)

overwhelm'd by those mighty masters. Likely because I read them, as described, in the full presence of Nature, under the sun, with the far-spreading landscape and vistas, or the sea rolling in.)

Toward the last I had among much else look'd over Edgar Poe's poems—of which I was not an admirer, tho' I always saw that beyond their limited range of melody (like perpetual chimes of music bells, ringing from lower *b* flat up to *g*) they were melodious expressions, and perhaps never excell'd ones, of certain pronounc'd phases of human morbidity. (The Poetic area is very spacious—has room for all—has so many mansions!) But I was repaid in Poe's prose by the idea that (at any rate for our occasions, our day) there can be no such thing as a long poem. The same thought had been haunting my mind before, but Poe's argument, though short, work'd the sum out and proved it to me.

Another point had an early settlement, clearing the ground greatly. I saw, from the time my enterprise and questionings positively shaped themselves (how best can I express my own distinctive era and surroundings, America, Democracy?) that the trunk and centre whence the answer was to radiate, and to which all should return from straying however far a distance, must be an identical body and soul, a personality—which personality, after many considerations and ponderings I deliberately settled should be myself—indeed could not be any other. I also felt strongly (whether I have shown it or not) that to the true and full estimate of the Present both the Past and the Future are main considerations.

These, however, and much more might have gone on and come to naught (almost positively would have come to naught,) if a sudden, vast, terrible, direct and indirect stimulus for new and national declamatory expression had not been given to me. It is certain, I say, that, although I had made a start before, only from the occurrence of the Secession War, and what it show'd me as by flashes of lightning, with the emotional depths it sounded and arous'd (of course, I don't mean in my own heart only, I saw it just as plainly in others, in millions)—that only

from the strong flare and provocation of that war's sights and scenes the final reasons-for-being of an autochthonic and passionate song definitely came forth.

I went down to the war fields in Virginia (end of 1862), lived thenceforward in camp—saw great battles and the days and nights afterward—partook of all the fluctuations, gloom, despair, hopes again arous'd, courage evoked—death readily risk'd—the *cause*, too—along and filling those agonistic and lurid following years, 1863-'64-'65—the real parturition years (more than 1776-'83) of this henceforth homogeneous Union. Without those three or four years and the experiences they gave, "Leaves of Grass" would not now be existing.

But I set out with the intention also of indicating or hinting some point-characteristics which I since see (though I did not then, at least not definitely) were bases and object-urgings toward those "Leaves" from the first. The word I myself put primarily for the description of them as they stand at last, is the word Suggestiveness. I round and finish little, if anything; and could not, consistently with my scheme. The reader will always have his or her part to do, just as much as I have had mine. I seek less to state or display any theme or thought, and more to bring you, reader, into the atmosphere of the theme or thought—there to pursue your own flight. Another impetus-word is Comradeship as for all lands, and in a more commanding and acknowledg'd sense than hitherto. Other word-signs would be Good Cheer, Content, and Hope.

The chief trait of any given poet is always the spirit he brings to the observation of Humanity and Nature—the mood out of which he contemplates his subjects. What kind of temper and what amount of faith report these things? Up to how recent a date is the song carried? What the equipment, and special raciness of the singer—what his tinge of coloring? The last value of artistic expressers, past and present—Greek æsthetes, Shakspeare—or in our own day Tennyson, Victor Hugo, Carlyle, Emerson—is certainly involv'd in such questions. I say the profoundest service that poems or any other writings can do

for their reader is not merely to satisfy the intellect, or supply something polish'd and interesting, nor even to depict great passions, or persons or events, but to fill him with vigorous and clean manliness, religiousness, and give him *good heart* as a radical possession and habit. The educated world seems to have been growing more and more ennuy'd for ages, leaving to our time the inheritance of it all. Fortunately there is the original inexhaustible fund of buoyancy, normally resident in the race, forever eligible to be appeal'd to and relied on.

As for native American individuality, though certain to come, and on a large scale, the distinctive and ideal type of Western character (as consistent with the operative political and even money-making features of United States' humanity in the Nineteenth Century as chosen knights, gentlemen and warriors were the ideals of the centuries of European feudalism) it has not yet appear'd. I have allow'd the stress of my poems from beginning to end to bear upon American individuality and assist it—not only because that is a great lesson in Nature, amid all her generalizing laws, but as counterpoise to the leveling tendencies of Democracy—and for other reasons. Defiant of ostensible literary and other conventions, I avowedly chant “the great pride of man in himself,” and permit it to be more or less a *motif* of nearly all my verse. I think this pride indispensable to an American. I think it not inconsistent with obedience, humility, deference, and self-questioning.

Democracy has been so retarded and jeopardized by powerful personalities, that its first instincts are fain to clip, conform, bring in stragglers, and reduce everything to a dead level. While the ambitious thought of my song is to help the forming of a great aggregate Nation, it is, perhaps, altogether through the forming of myriads of fully develop'd and enclosing individuals. Welcome as are equality's and fraternity's doctrines and popular education, a certain liability accompanies them all, as we see. That primal and interior something in man, in his soul's abysses, coloring all, and, by exceptional fruitions, giving the last majesty to him—something continually touch'd upon and attain'd by the old poems and ballads of feudalism, and often

the principal foundation of them—modern science and democracy appear to be endangering, perhaps eliminating. But that forms an appearance only; the reality is quite different. The new influences, upon the whole, are surely preparing the way for grander individualities than ever. To-day and here personal force is behind everything, just the same. The times and depictions from the *Iliad* to Shakspeare inclusive can happily never again be realized—but the elements of courageous and lofty manhood are unchanged.

Without yielding an inch the working-man and working-woman were to be in my pages from first to last. The ranges of heroism and loftiness with which Greek and feudal poets endow'd their god-like or lordly born characters—indeed prouder and better based and with fuller ranges than those—I was to endow the democratic averages of America. I was to show that we, here and to-day, are eligible to the grandest and the best—more eligible now than any times of old were. I will also want my utterances (I said to myself before beginning) to be in spirit the poems of the morning. (They have been founded and mainly written in the sunny forenoon and early midday of my life.) I will want them to be the poems of women entirely as much as men. I have wish'd to put the complete Union of the States in my songs without any preference or partiality whatever. Henceforth, if they live and are read, it must be just as much South as North—just as much along the Pacific as Atlantic—in the valley of the Mississippi, in Canada, up in Maine, down in Texas, and on the shores of Puget Sound.

From another point of view "Leaves of Grass" is avowedly the song of Sex and Amativeness, and even Animality—though meanings that do not usually go along with those words are behind all, and will duly emerge; and all are sought to be lifted into a different light and atmosphere. Of this feature, intentionally palpable in a few lines, I shall only say the espousing principle of those lines so gives breath of life to my whole scheme that the bulk of the pieces might as well have been left unwritten were those lines omitted. Difficult as it will be, it

has become, in my opinion, imperative to achieve a shifted attitude from superior men and women towards the thought and fact of sexuality, as an element in character, personality, the emotions, and a theme in literature. I am not going to argue the question by itself; it does not stand by itself. The vitality of it is altogether in its relations, bearings, significance—like the clef of a symphony. At last analogy the lines I allude to, and the spirit in which they are spoken, permeate all “*Leaves of Grass*,” and the work must stand or fall with them, as the human body and soul must remain as an entirety.

Universal as are certain facts and symptoms of communities or individuals all times, there is nothing so rare in modern conventions and poetry as their normal recognizance. Literature is always calling in the doctor for consultation and confession, and always giving evasions and swathing suppressions in place of that “heroic nudity”* on which only a genuine diagnosis of serious cases can be built. And in respect to editions of “*Leaves of Grass*” in time to come (if there should be such) I take occasion now to confirm those lines with the settled convictions and deliberate renewals of thirty years, and to hereby prohibit, as far as word of mine can do so, any elision of them.

Then still a purpose enclosing all, and over and beneath all. Ever since what might be call'd thought, or the budding of thought, fairly began in my youthful mind, I had had a desire to attempt some worthy record of that entire faith and acceptance (“to justify the ways of God to man” is Milton’s well-known and ambitious phrase) which is the foundation of moral America. I felt it all as positively then in my young days as I do now in my old ones; to formulate a poem whose every thought or fact should directly or indirectly be or connive at an implicit belief in the wisdom, health, mystery, beauty of every process, every concrete object, every human or other existence, not only consider’d from the point of view of all, but of each.

While I can not understand it or argue it out, I fully believe in a clue and purpose in Nature, entire and several;

* “*Nineteenth Century*,” July, 1883.

and that invisible spiritual results, just as real and definite as the visible, eventuate all concrete life and all materialism, through Time. My book ought to emanate buoyancy and gladness legitimately enough, for it was grown out of those elements, and has been the comfort of my life since it was originally commenced.

One main genesis-motive of the "Leaves" was my conviction (just as strong to-day as ever) that the crowning growth of the United States is to be spiritual and heroic. To help start and favor that growth—or even to call attention to it, or the need of it—is the beginning, middle and final purpose of the poems. (In fact, when really cipher'd out and summ'd to the last, plowing up in earnest the interminable average fallows of humanity—not "good government" merely, in the common sense—is the justification and main purpose of these United States.)

Isolated advantages in any rank or grace or fortune—the direct or indirect threads of all the poetry of the past—are in my opinion distasteful to the republican genius, and offer no foundation for its fitting verse. Establish'd poems, I know, have the very great advantage of chanting the already perform'd, so full of glories, reminiscences dear to the minds of men. But my volume is a candidate for the future. "All original art," says Taine, anyhow, "is self-regulated, and no original art can be regulated from without; it carries its own counterpoise, and does not receive it from elsewhere—lives on its own blood"—a solace to my frequent bruises and sulky vanity.

As the present is perhaps mainly an attempt at personal statement or illustration, I will allow myself as further help to extract the following anecdote from a book, "Annals of Old Painters," conn'd by me in youth. Rubens, the Flemish painter, in one of his wanderings through the galleries of old convents, came across a singular work. After looking at it thoughtfully for a good while, and listening to the criticisms of his suite of students, he said to the latter, in answer to their questions, (as to what school the work implied or belong'd,) "I do not believe the artist, unknown and perhaps no longer living, who has

given the world this legacy, ever belong'd to any school, or ever painted anything but this one picture, which is a personal affair—a piece out of a man's life."

"Leaves of Grass" indeed (I cannot too often reiterate) has mainly been the outcropping of my own emotional and other personal nature—an attempt, from first to last, to put *a Person*, a human being (myself, in the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, in America,) freely, fully and truly on record. I could not find any similar personal record in current literature that satisfied me. But it is not on "Leaves of Grass" distinctively as *literature*, or a specimen thereof, that I feel to dwell, or advance claims. No one will get at my verses who insists upon viewing them as a literary performance, or attempt at such performance, or as aiming mainly toward art or æstheticism.

I say no land or people or circumstances ever existed so needing a race of singers and poems differing from all others, and rigidly their own, as the land and people and circumstances of our United States need such singers and poems to-day, and for the future. Still further, as long as the States continue to absorb and be dominated by the poetry of the Old World, and remain unsupplied with autochthonous song, to express, vitalize and give color to and define their material and political success, and minister to them distinctively, so long will they stop short of first-class Nationality and remain defective.

In the free evening of my day I give to you, reader, the foregoing garrulous talk, thoughts, reminiscences,

As idly drifting down the ebb,
Such ripples, half-caught voices, echo from the shore.

Concluding with two items for the imaginative genius of the West, when it worthily rises—First, what Herder taught to the young Goethe, that really great poetry is always (like the Homeric or Biblical canticles) the result of a national spirit, and not the privilege of a polish'd and select few; Second, that the strongest and sweetest songs yet remain to be sung.

From SPECIMEN DAYS

OPENING OF THE SECESSION WAR

News of the attack on fort Sumter and *the flag* at Charleston harbor, S. C., was receiv'd in New York city late at night (13th April, 1861,) and was immediately sent out in extras of the newspapers. I had been to the opera in Fourteenth street that night, and after the performance was walking down Broadway toward twelve o'clock, on my way to Brooklyn, when I heard in the distance the loud cries of the newsboys, who came presently tearing and yelling up the street, rushing from side to side even more furiously than usual. I bought an extra and cross'd to the Metropolitan hotel (Niblo's) where the great lamps were still brightly blazing, and, with a crowd of others, who gather'd impromptu, read the news, which was evidently authentic. For the benefit of some who had no papers, one of us read the telegram aloud, while all listen'd silently and attentively. No remark was made by any of the crowd, which had increas'd to thirty or forty, but all stood a minute or two, I remember, before they dispers'd. I can almost see them there now, under the lamps at midnight again.

AFTER FIRST FREDERICKSBURG

December 23 to 31.—The results of the late battle are exhibited everywhere about here in thousands of cases, (hundreds die every day,) in the camp, brigade, and division hospitals. These are merely tents, and sometimes very poor ones, the wounded lying on the ground, lucky if their blankets are spread on layers of pine or hemlock twigs, or small leaves. No cots; seldom even a mattress. It is pretty cold. The ground is frozen hard, and there is occasional snow. I go around from one case to another. I do not see that I do much good to these wounded and dying; but I cannot leave them. Once in a while some youngster holds on to me convulsively, and I do what I can for him; at any rate, stop with him and sit near him for hours, if he wishes it.

Besides the hospitals, I also go occasionally on long tours through the camps, talking with the men, &c. Sometimes at night among the groups around the fires, in their shebang enclosures of bushes. These are curious shows, full of characters and groups. I soon get acquainted anywhere in camp, with officers or men, and am always well used. Sometimes I go down on picket with the regiments I know best. As to rations, the army here at present seems to be tolerably well supplied, and the men have enough, such as it is, mainly salt pork and hard tack. Most of the regiments lodge in the flimsy little shelter-tents. A few have built themselves huts of logs and mud, with fire-places.

A NIGHT BATTLE, OVER A WEEK SINCE

May 12.—There was part of the late battle at Chancellorsville, (second Fredericksburgh,) a little over a week ago, Saturday, Saturday night and Sunday, under Gen. Joe Hooker, I would like to give just a glimpse of—(a moment's look in a terrible storm at sea—of which a few suggestions are enough, and full details impossible.) The fighting had been very hot during the day, and after an intermission the latter part, was resumed at night, and kept up with furious energy till 3 o'clock in the morning. That afternoon (Saturday) an attack sudden and strong by Stonewall Jackson had gain'd a great advantage to the southern army, and broken our lines, entering us like a wedge, and leaving things in that position at dark. But Hooker at 11 at night made a desperate push, drove the secesh forces back, restored his original lines, and resumed his plans. This night scrimmage was very exciting, and afforded countless strange and fearful pictures. The fighting had been general both at Chancellorsville and northeast at Fredericksburgh. (We hear of some poor fighting, episodes, skedaddling on our part. I think not of it. I think of the fierce bravery, the general rule.) One corps, the 6th, Sedgewick's, fights four dashing and bloody battles in thirty-six hours, retreating in great jeopardy, losing largely but maintaining itself, fighting with the sternest desperation under all circumstances, getting over the Rappahannock only by the skin of its

teeth, yet getting over. It lost many, many brave men, yet it took vengeance, ample vengeance.

But it was the tug of Saturday evening, and through the night and Sunday morning, I wanted to make a special note of. It was largely in the woods, and quite a general engagement. The night was very pleasant, at times the moon shining out full and clear, all Nature so calm in itself, the early summer grass so rich, and foliage of the trees—yet there the battle raging, and many good fellows lying helpless, with new accessions to them, and every minute amid the rattle of muskets and crash of cannon, (for there was an artillery contest too,) the red life-blood oozing out from heads or trunks or limbs upon that green and dew-cool grass. Patches of the woods take fire, and several of the wounded, unable to move, are consumed—quite large spaces are swept over, burning the dead also—some of the men have their hair and beards singed—some, burns on their faces and hands—others holes burnt in their clothing. The flashes of fire from the cannon, the quick flaring flames and smoke, and the immense roar—the musketry so general, the light nearly bright enough for each side to see the other—the crashing, tramping of men—the yelling—close quarters—we hear the scesesh yells—our men cheer loudly back, especially if Hooker is in sight—hand to hand conflicts, each side stands up to it, brave, determined as demons, they often charge upon us—a thousand deeds are done worth to write newer greater poems on—and still the woods on fire—still many are not only scorched—too many, unable to move, are burn'd to death.

Then the camps of the wounded—O heavens, what scene is this?—is this indeed *humanity*—these butchers' shambles? There are several of them. There they lie, in the largest, in an open space in the woods, from 200 to 300 poor fellows—the groans and screams—the odor of blood, mixed with the fresh scent of the night, the grass, the trees—that slaughter-house! O well is it their mothers, their sisters cannot see them—cannot conceive, and never conceived, these things. One man is shot by a shell, both in the arm and leg—both are amputated—there lie the rejected members. Some have their legs blown off—some

bullets through the breast—some indescribably horrid wounds in the face or head, all mutilated, sickening, torn, gouged out—some in the abdomen—some mere boys—many rebels, badly hurt—they take their regular turns with the rest, just the same as any—the surgeons use them just the same. Such is the camp of the wounded—such a fragment, a reflection afar off of the bloody scene—while over all the clear, large moon comes out at times softly, quietly shining. Amid the woods, that scene of flitting souls—amid the crack and crash and yelling sounds—the impalpable perfume of the woods—and yet the pungent, stifling smoke—the radiance of the moon, looking from heaven at intervals so placid—the sky so heavenly—the clear-obscure up there, those buoyant upper oceans—a few large placid stars beyond, coming silently and languidly out, and then disappearing—the melancholy, draped night above, around. And there, upon the roads, the fields, and in those woods, that contest, never one more desperate in any age or land—both parties now in force—masses—no fancy battle, no semi-play, but fierce and savage demons fighting there—courage and scorn of death the rule, exceptions almost none.

What history, I say, can ever give—for who can know—the mad, determin'd tussle of the armies, in all their separate large and little squads—as this—each steep'd from crown to toe in desperate, mortal purports? Who know the conflict, hand-to-hand—the many conflicts in the dark, those shadowy-tangled, flashing-moonbeam'd woods—the writhing groups and squads—the cries, the din, the cracking guns and pistols—the distant cannon—the cheers and calls and threats and awful music of the oaths—the indescribable mix—the officers' orders, persuasions, encouragements—the devils fully rous'd in human hearts—the strong shout, *Charge, men, charge*—the flash of the naked sword, and rolling flame and smoke? And still the broken, clear and clouded heaven—and still again the moonlight pouring silvery soft its radiant patches over all. Who paint the scene, the sudden partial panic of the afternoon, at dusk? Who paint the irrepressible advance of the second division of the Third corps, under Hooker himself, suddenly order'd up—those rapid-filing phan-

toms through the woods? Who show what moves there in the shadows, fluid and firm—to save, (and it did save,) the army's name, perhaps the nation? as there the veterans hold the field. (Brave Berry falls not yet—but death has mark'd him—soon he falls.)

MY PREPARATIONS FOR VISITS

In my visits to the hospitals I found it was in the simple matter of personal presence, and emanating ordinary cheer and magnetism, that I succeeded and help'd more than by medical nursing, or delicacies, or gifts of money, or anything else. During the war I possess'd the perfection of physical health. My habit, when practicable, was to prepare for starting out on one of those daily or nightly tours of from a couple to four or five hours, by fortifying myself with previous rest, the bath, clean clothes, a good meal, and as cheerful an appearance as possible.

A SILENT NIGHT RAMBLE

October 20th.—To-night, after leaving the hospital at 10 o'clock, (I had been on self-imposed duty some five hours, pretty closely confined,) I wander'd a long time around Washington. The night was sweet, very clear, sufficiently cool, a voluptuous half-moon, slightly golden, the space near it of a transparent blue-gray tinge. I walk'd up Pennsylvania avenue, and then to Seventh street, and a long while around the Patent-office. Somehow it look'd rebukefully strong, majestic, there in the delicate moonlight. The sky, the planets, the constellations all so bright, so calm, so expressively silent, so soothing, after those hospital scenes. I wander'd to and fro till the moist moon set, long after midnight.

SUMMER OF 1864

I am back again in Washington, on my regular daily and nightly rounds. Of course there are many specialties. Dotting a ward here and there are always cases of poor fellows, long-suffering under obstinate wounds, or weak and dishearten'd from typhoid fever, or the like; mark'd cases, needing special and

sympathetic nourishment. These I sit down and either talk to, or silently cheer them up. They always like it hugely, (and so do I.) Each case has its peculiarities, and needs some new adaptation. I have learnt to thus conform—learnt a good deal of hospital wisdom. Some of the poor young chaps, away from home for the first time in their lives, hunger and thirst for affection; this is sometimes the only thing that will reach their condition. The men like to have a pencil, and something to write in. I have given them cheap pocket-diaries, and almanacs for 1864, interlev'd with blank paper. For reading I generally have some old pictorial magazines or story papers—they are always acceptable. Also the morning or evening papers of the day. The best books I do not give, but lend to read through the wards, and then take them to others, and so on; they are very punctual about returning the books. In these wards, or on the field, as I thus continue to go round, I have come to adapt myself to each emergency, after its kind or call, however trivial, however solemn, every one justified and made real under its circumstances—not only visits and cheering talk and little gifts—not only washing and dressing wounds, (I have some cases where the patient is unwilling any one should do this but me)—but passages from the Bible, expounding them, prayer at the bedside, explanations of doctrine, &c. (I think I see my friends smiling at this confession, but I was never more in earnest in my life.) In camp and everywhere, I was in the habit of reading or giving recitations to the men. They were very fond of it, and liked declamatory poetical pieces. We would gather in a large group by ourselves, after supper, and spend the time in such readings, or in talking, and occasionally by an amusing game called the game of twenty questions.

THE REAL WAR WILL NEVER GET IN THE BOOKS

And so good-bye to the war. I know not how it may have been, or may be, to others—to me the main interest I found, (and still, on recollection, find,) in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and in those specimens amid the hospitals, and even

the dead on the field. To me the points illustrating the latent personal character and eligibilities of these States, in the two or three millions of American young and middle-aged men, North and South, embodied in those armies—and especially the one-third or one-fourth of their number, stricken by wounds or disease at some time in the course of the contest—were of more significance even than the political interests involved. (As so much of a race depends on how it faces death, and how it stands personal anguish and sickness. As, in the glints of emotions under emergencies, and the indirect traits and asides in Plutarch, we get far profounder clues to the antique world than all its more formal history.)

Future years will never know the seething hell and the black infernal background of countless minor scenes and interiors, (not the official surface-courteousness of the Generals, not the few great battles) of the Secession war; and it is best they should not—the real war will never get in the books. In the mushy influences of current times, too, the fervid atmosphere and typical events of those years are in danger of being totally forgotten. I have at night watch'd by the side of a sick man in the hospital, one who could not live many hours. I have seen his eyes flash and burn as he raised himself and recurr'd to the cruelties on his surrender'd brother, and mutilations of the corpse afterward. (See, in the preceding pages, the incident at Upperville—the seventeen kill'd as in the description, were left there on the ground. After they dropt dead, no one touch'd them—all were made sure of, however. The carcasses were left for the citizens to bury or not, as they chose.)

Such was the war. It was not a quadrille in a ball-room. Its interior history will not only never be written—its practicality, minutiae of deeds and passions, will never be even suggested. The actual soldier of 1862-'65, North and South, with all his ways, his incredible dauntlessness, habits, practices, tastes, language, his fierce friendship, his appetite, rankness, his superb strength and animality, lawless gait, and a hundred unnamed lights and shades of camp, I say, will never be written—perhaps must not and should not be.

The preceding notes may furnish a few stray glimpses into that life, and into those lurid interiors, never to be fully convey'd to the future. The hospital part of the drama from '61 to '65, deserves indeed to be recorded. Of that many-threaded drama, with its sudden and strange surprises, its confounding of prophecies, its moments of despair, the dread of foreign interference, the interminable campaigns, the bloody battles, the mighty and cumbrous and green armies, the drafts and bounties—the immense money expenditure, like a heavy-pouring constant rain—with, over the whole land, the last three years of the struggle, an unending, universal mourning-wail of women, parents, orphans—the marrow of the tragedy concentrated in those Army Hospitals—(it seem'd sometimes as if the whole interest of the land, North and South, was one vast central hospital, and all the rest of the affair but flanges)—those forming the untold and unwritten history of the war—ininitely greater (like life's) than the few scraps and distortions that are ever told or written. Think how much, and of importance, will be—how much, civic and military, has already been—buried in the grave, in eternal darkness.

A JULY AFTERNOON BY THE POND

The fervent heat, but so much more endurable in this pure air—the white and pink pond-blossoms, with great heart-shaped leaves; the glassy waters of the creek, the banks, with dense bushery, and the picturesque beeches and shade and turf; the tremulous, reedy call of some bird from recesses, breaking the warm, indolent, half-voluptuous silence; an occasional wasp, hornet, honey-bee or bumble (they hover near my hands or face, yet annoy me not, nor I them, as they appear to examine, find nothing, and away they go)—the vast space of the sky overhead so clear, and the buzzard up there sailing his slow whirl in majestic spirals and discs; just over the surface of the pond, two large slate-color'd dragon-flies, with wings of lace, circling and darting and occasionally balancing themselves quite still, their wings quivering all the time, (are they not showing

off for my amusement?)—the pond itself, with the sword-shaped calamus; the water snakes—occasionally a fitting black-bird, with red dabs on his shoulders, as he darts slantingly by—the sounds that bring out the solitude, warmth, light and shade—the quawk of some pond duck—(the crickets and grasshoppers are mute in the noon heat, but I hear the song of the first cicadas;)—then at some distance the rattle and whirr of a reaping machine as the hoises draw it on a rapid walk through a rye field on the opposite side of the creek—(what was the yellow or light-brown bird, large as a young hen, with short neck and long-stretch'd legs I just saw, in flapping and awkward flight over there through the trees?)—the prevailing delicate, yet palpable, spicy, grassy, clovery perfume to my nostrils; and over all, encircling all, to my sight and soul, the free space of the sky, transparent and blue—and hovering there in the west, a mass of white-gray fleecy clouds the sailors call “shoals of mackerel”—the sky, with silver swirls like locks of toss'd hair, spreading, expanding—a vast voiceless, formless simulacrum—yet may-be the most real reality and formulator of everything—who knows?

A WINTER DAY ON THE SEA-BEACH

One bright December mid-day lately I spent down on the New Jersey sea-shore, reaching it by a little more than an hour's railroad trip over the old Camden and Atlantic. I had started betimes, fortified by nice strong coffee and a good breakfast (cook'd by the hands I love, my dear sister Lou's—how much better it makes the victuals taste, and then assimilate, strengthen you, perhaps make the whole day comfortable afterwards.) Five or six miles at the last, our track enter'd a broad region of salt grass meadows, intersected by lagoons, and cut up everywhere by watery runs. The sedgy perfume, delightful to my nostrils, reminded me of “the mash” and south bay of my native island. I could have journey'd contentedly till night through these flat and odorous sea-prairies. From half-past 11 till 2 I was nearly all the time along the beach, or in sight of the ocean, listening to its hoarse murmur, and inhaling the bracing and welcome

breezes. First, a rapid five-mile drive over the hard sand—our carriage wheels hardly made dents in it. Then after dinner (as there were nearly two hours to spare) I walk'd off in another direction, (hardly met or saw a person,) and taking possession of what appear'd to have been the reception-room of an old bath-house range, had a broad expanse of view all to myself—quaint, refreshing, unimpeded—a dry area of sedge and Indian grass immediately before and around me—space, simple, unornamented space. Distant vessels, and the far-off, just visible trailing smoke of an inward bound steamer; more plainly, ships, brigs, schooners, in sight, most of them with every sail set to the firm and steady wind.

The attractions, fascinations there are in sea and shore! How one dwells on their simplicity, even vacuity! What is it in us, arous'd by those indirections and directions? That spread of waves and gray-white beach, salt, monotonous, senseless—such an entire absence of art, books, talk, elegance—so indescribably comforting, even this winter day—grim, yet so delicate-looking, so spiritual—striking emotional, impalpable depths, subtler than all the poems, paintings, music, I have ever read, seen, heard. (Yet let me be fair, perhaps it is because I have read those poems and heard that music.)

AN EGOTISTICAL “FIND”

“I have found the law of my own poems,” was the unspoken but more-and-more decided feeling that came to me as I pass'd, hour after hour, amid all this grim yet joyous elemental abandon—this plenitude of material, entire absence of art, untrammel'd play of primitive Nature—the chasm, the gorge, the crystal mountain stream, repeated scores, hundreds of miles—the broad handling and absolute uncrampedness—the fantastic forms, bathed in transparent browns, faint reds and grays, towering sometimes a thousand, sometimes two or three thousand feet high—at their tops now and then huge masses pois'd, and mixing with the clouds, with only their outlines, hazed in misty lilac, visible. (“In Nature's grandest shows,” says an old

Dutch writer, an ecclesiastic, "amid the ocean's depth, if so might be, or countless worlds rolling above at night, a man thinks of them, weighs all, not for themselves or the abstract, but with reference to his own personality, and how they may affect him or color his destinies.")

NEW SENSES—NEW JOYS

We follow the stream of amber and bronze brawling along its bed, with its frequent cascades and snow-white foam. Through the cañon we fly—mountains not only each side, but seemingly, till we get near, right in front of us—every rood a new view flashing, and each flash defying description—on the almost perpendicular sides, clinging pines, cedars, spruces, crimson sumach bushes, spots of wild grass—but dominating all, those towering rocks, rocks, rocks, bathed in delicate vari-colors, with the clear sky of autumn overhead. New senses, new joys, seem develop'd. Talk as you like, a typical Rocky Mountain cañon, or a limitless sea-like stretch of the great Kansas or Colorado plains, under favoring circumstances, tallies, perhaps expresses, certainly awakes, those grandest and subtlest element-emotions in the human soul, that all the marble temples and sculptures from Phidias to Thorwaldsen—all paintings, poems, reminiscences, or even music, probably never can.

MILLET'S PICTURES

April 18.—Went out three or four miles to the house of Quincy Shaw, to see a collection of J. F. Millet's pictures. Two rapt hours. Never before have I been so penetrated by this kind of expression. I stood long and long before "the Sower." I believe what the picture-men designate "the first Sower," as the artist executed a second copy, and a third, and, some think, improved in each. But I doubt it. There is something in this that could hardly be caught again—a sublime murkiness and original pent fury. Besides this masterpiece, there were many others, (I shall never forget the simple evening scene, "Watering the Cow,")

all inimitable, all perfect as pictures, works of mere art; and then it seem'd to me, with that last impalpable ethic purpose from the artist (most likely unconscious to himself) which I am always looking for. To me all of them told the full story of what went before and necessitated the great French revolution—the long precedent crushing of the masses of a heroic people into the earth, in abject poverty, hunger—every right denied, humanity attempted to be put back for generations—yet Nature's force, titanic here, the stronger and hardier for that repression—waiting terribly to break forth, revengeful—the pressure on the dykes, and the bursting at last—the storming of the Bastille—the execution of the king and queen—the tempest of massacres and blood. Yet who can wonder?

Could we wish humanity different?
 Could we wish the people made of wood or stone?
 Or that there be no justice in destiny or time?

The true France, base of all the rest, is certainly in these pictures. I comprehend "Field-People Reposing," "the Diggers," and "the Angelus" in this opinion. Some folks always think of the French as a small race, five or five and a half feet high, and ever frivolous and smirking. Nothing of the sort. The bulk of the personnel of France, before the revolution, was large-sized, serious, industrious as now, and simple. The revolution and Napoleon's wars dwarf'd the standard of human size, but it will come up again. If for nothing else, I should dwell on my brief Boston visit for opening to me the new world of Millet's pictures. Will America ever have such an artist out of her own gestation, body, soul?

NATURE AND DEMOCRACY—MORALITY

Democracy most of all affiliates with the open air, is sunny and hardy and sane only with Nature—just as much as Art is. Something is required to temper both—to check them, restrain them from excess, morbidity. I have wanted, before departure, to bear special testimony to a very old lesson and requisite. American Democracy, in its myriad personalities, in factories,

work-shops, stores, offices—through the dense streets and houses of cities, and all their manifold sophisticated life—must either be fibred, vitalized, by regular contact with out-door light and air and growths, farm-scenes, animals, fields, trees, birds, sun-warmth and free skies, or it will certainly dwindle and pale. We cannot have grand races of mechanics, work people, and commonalty, (the only specific purpose of America,) on any less terms. I conceive of no flourishing and heroic elements of Democracy in the United States, or of Democracy maintaining itself at all, without the Nature-element forming a main part—to be its health-element and beauty-element—to really underlie the whole politics, sanity, religion and art of the New World.

Finally, the morality: "Virtue," said Marcus Aurelius, "what is it, only a living and enthusiastic sympathy with Nature?" Perhaps indeed the efforts of the true poets, founders, religions, literatures, all ages, have been, and ever will be, our time and times to come, essentially the same—to bring people back from their persistent strayings and sickly abstractions, to the costless average, divine, original concrete.

From NOTES LEFT OVER

FREEDOM

It is not only true that most people entirely misunderstand Freedom, but I sometimes think I have not yet met one person who rightly understands it. The whole Universe is absolute Law. Freedom only opens entire activity and license *under the law*. To the degraded or undeveloped—and even to too many others—the thought of freedom is a thought of escaping from law—which, of course, is impossible. More precious than all worldly riches is Freedom—freedom from the painful constipation and poor narrowness of ecclesiasticism—freedom in manners, habiliments, furniture, from the silliness and tyranny of local fashions—entire freedom from party rings and mere conventions in Politics—and better than all, a general freedom of One's-Self from the tyrannic domination of vices, habits, appetites, under which nearly every man of us, (often the greatest

brawler for freedom,) is enslaved. Can we attain such enfranchisement—the true Democracy, and the height of it? While we are from birth to death the subjects of irresistible law, enclosing every movement and minute, we yet escape, by a paradox, into true free will. Strange as it may seem, we only attain to freedom by a knowledge of, and implicit obedience to, Law. Great — unspeakably great—is the Will! the free Soul of man! At its greatest, understanding and obeying the laws, it can then, and then only, maintain true liberty. For there is to the highest, that law as absolute as any—more absolute than any—the Law of Liberty. The shallow, as intimated, consider liberty a release from all law, from every constraint. The wise see in it, on the contrary, the potent Law of Laws, namely, the fusion and combination of the conscious will, or partial individual law, with those universal, eternal, unconscious ones, which run through all Time, pervade history, prove immortality, give moral purpose to the entire objective world, and the last dignity to human life.

DEMOCRATIC VISTAS

As the greatest lessons of Nature through the universe are perhaps the lessons of variety and freedom, the same present the greatest lessons also in New World politics and progress. If a man were ask'd, for instance, the distinctive points contrasting modern European and American political and other life with the old Asiatic cultus, as lingering-bequeath'd yet in China and Turkey, he might find the amount of them in John Stuart Mill's profound essay on Liberty in the future, where he demands two main constituents, or sub-strata, for a truly grand nationality—1st, a large variety of character—and 2d, full play for human nature to expand itself in numberless and even conflicting directions—(seems to be for general humanity much like the influences that make up, in their limitless field, that perennial health-action of the air we call the weather—an infinite number of currents and forces, and contributions, and temperatures, and cross purposes, whose ceaseless play or counterpart upon counterpart brings constant restoration and

vitality.) With this thought—and not for itself alone, but all it necessitates, and draws after it—let me begin my speculations.

America, filling the present with greatest deeds and problems, cheerfully accepting the past, including feudalism, (as, indeed, the present is but the legitimate birth of the past, including feudalism,) counts, as I reckon, for her justification and success, (for who, as yet, dare claim success?) almost entirely on the future. Nor is that hope unwarranted. To-day, ahead, though dimly yet, we see, in vistas, a copious, sane, gigantic offspring. For our New World I consider far less important for what it has done, or what it is, than for results to come. Sole among nationalities, these States have assumed the task to put in forms of lasting power and practicality, on areas of amplitude rivaling the operations of the physical kosmos, the moral political speculations of ages, long, long deferr'd, the democratic republican principle, and the theory of development and perfection by voluntary standards, and self-reliance. Who else, indeed, except the United States, in history, so far, have accepted in unwitting faith, and, as we now see, stand, act upon, and go security for, these things?

But precluding no longer, let me strike the key-note of the following strain. First premising that, though the passages of it have been written at widely different times, (it is, in fact, a collection of memoranda, perhaps for future designers, comprehenders,) and though it may be open to the charge of one part contradicting another—for there are opposite sides to the great question of democracy, as to every great question—I feel the parts harmoniously blended in my own realization and convictions, and present them to be read only in such oneness, each page and each claim and assertion modified and temper'd by the others. Bear in mind, too, that they are not the result of studying up in political economy, but of the ordinary sense, observing, wandering among men, these States, these stirring years of war and peace. I will not gloss over the appalling dangers of universal suffrage in the United States. In fact, it is to admit and face these dangers I am writing. To him or her within whose thought rages the battle, advancing, retreat-

ing, between democracy's convictions, aspirations, and the people's crudeness, vice, caprices, I mainly write this essay. I shall use the words America and democracy as convertible terms. Not an ordinary one is the issue. The United States are destined either to surmount the gorgeous history of feudalism, or else prove the most tremendous failure of time. Not the least doubtful am I on any prospects of their material success. The triumphant future of their business, geographic and productive departments, on larger scales and in more varieties than ever, is certain. In those respects the republic must soon (if she does not already) outstrip all examples hitherto afforded, and dominate the world.*

*"From a territorial area of less than nine hundred thousand square miles, the Union has expanded into over four millions and a half—fifteen times larger than that of Great Britain and France combined—with a shore-line, including Alaska, equal to the entire circumference of the earth, and with a domain within these lines far wider than that of the Romans in their proudest days of conquest and renown. With a river, lake, and coastwise commerce estimated at over two thousand millions of dollars per year; with a railway traffic of four to six thousand millions per year, and the annual domestic exchanges of the country running up to nearly ten thousand millions per year; with over two thousand millions of dollars invested in manufacturing, mechanical, and mining industry; with over five hundred millions of acres of land in actual occupancy, valued, with their appurtenances, at over seven thousand millions of dollars, and producing annually crops valued at over three thousand millions of dollars; with a realm which, if the density of Belgium's population were possible, would be vast enough to include all the present inhabitants of the world; and with equal rights guaranteed to even the poorest and humblest of our forty millions of people—we can, with a manly pride akin to that which distinguish'd the palmiest days of Rome, claim," &c., &c., &c.—*Vice-President Colfax's Speech, July 4, 1870.*

LATER—*London "Times," (Weekly,) June 23, '82.*

"The wonderful wealth-producing power of the United States defies and sets at naught the grave drawbacks of a mischievous protective tariff, and has already obliterated, almost wholly, the traces of the greatest of modern civil wars. What is especially remarkable in the present development of American energy and success is its wide and equitable distribution. North and south, east and west, on the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific, along the chain of the great lakes, in the valley of the Mississippi, and on the coasts of the gulf of Mexico, the creation of wealth and the increase of population are signally exhibited. It is quite true, as has been shown by the recent apportionment of population in the House of Representatives, that some sections of the Union have advanced, relatively to the rest, in

Admitting all this, with the priceless value of our political institutions, general suffrage, (and fully acknowledging the latest, widest opening of the doors,) I say that, far deeper than these, what finally and only is to make of our western world a nationality superior to any hitherto known, and outtopping the past, must be vigorous, yet unsuspected Literatures, perfect personalities and sociologies, original, transcendental, and expressing (what, in highest sense, are not yet express'd at all,) democracy and the modern. With these, and out of these, I promulge new races of Teachers, and of perfect Women, indispensable to endow the birth-stock of a New World. For feudalism, caste, the ecclesiastic traditions, though palpably retreating from political institutions, still hold essentially, by their spirit, even in this country, entire possession of the more important fields, indeed the very subsoil, of education, and of social standards and literature.

I say that democracy can never prove itself beyond cavil, until it founds and luxuriantly grows its own forms of art, poems, schools, theology, displacing all that exists, or that has been produced anywhere in the past, under opposite influences. It is curious to me that while so many voices, pens, minds, in the press, lecture-rooms, in our Congress, &c., are discussing intellectual topics, pecuniary dangers, legislative problems, the suffrage, tariff and labor questions, and the various business and benevolent needs of America, with propositions, remedies, often worth deep attention, there is one need, a hiatus the profoundest, that no eye seems to perceive, no voice to state. Our fundamental want to-day in the United States, with closest, amplest reference to present conditions, and to the future, is of a class, and the clear idea of a class, of native authors, literatures, far different, far higher in grade than any yet known, sacerdotal, modern, fit to cope with our occasions, lands, permeating the

an extraordinary and unexpected degree. But this does not imply that the States which have gain'd no additional representatives or have actually lost some have been stationary or have receded. The fact is that the present tide of prosperity has risen so high that it has overflow'd all barriers, and has fill'd up the back-waters, and establish'd something like an approach to uniform success."

whole mass of American mentality, taste, belief, breathing into it a new breath of life, giving it decision, affecting politics far more than the popular superficial suffrage, with results inside and underneath the elections of Presidents or Congresses—radiating, begetting appropriate teachers, schools, manners, and, as its grandest result, accomplishing, (what neither the schools nor the churches and their clergy have hitherto accomplish'd, and without which this nation will no more stand, permanently, soundly, than a house will stand without a substratum,) a religious and moral character beneath the political and productive and intellectual bases of the States. For know you not, dear, earnest reader, that the people of our land may all read and write, and may all possess the right to vote—and yet the main things may be entirely lacking?—(and this to suggest them.)

View'd, to-day, from a point of view sufficiently over-arching, the problem of humanity all over the civilized world is social and religious, and is to be finally met and treated by literature. The priest departs, the divine literatus comes. Never was anything more wanted than, to-day, and here in the States, the poet of the modern is wanted, or the great literatus of the modern. At all times, perhaps, the central point in any nation, and that whence it is itself really sway'd the most, and whence it sways others, is its national literature, especially its archetypal poems. Above all previous lands, a great original literature is surely to become the justification and reliance, (in some respects the sole reliance,) of American democracy.

Few are aware how the great literature penetrates all, gives hue to all, shapes aggregates and individuals, and, after subtle ways, with irresistible power, constructs, sustains, demolishes at will. Why tower, in reminiscence, above all the nations of the earth, two special lands, petty in themselves, yet inexpressibly gigantic, beautiful, columnar? Immortal Judah lives, and Greece immortal lives, in a couple of poems.

Nearer than this. It is not generally realized, but it is true, as the genius of Greece, and all the sociology, personality, poli-

tics and religion of those wonderful states, resided in their literature or esthetics, that what was afterwards the main support of European chivalry, the feudal, ecclesiastical, dynastic world over there—forming its osseous structure, holding it together for hundreds, thousands of years, preserving its flesh and bloom, giving it form, decision, rounding it out, and so saturating it in the conscious and unconscious blood, breed, belief, and intuitions of men, that it still prevails powerful to this day, in defiance of the mighty changes of time—was its literature, permeating to the very marrow, especially that major part, its enchanting songs, ballads, and poems.*

To the ostent of the senses and eyes, I know, the influences which stamp the world's history are wars, uprisings or downfalls of dynasties, changeful movements of trade, important inventions, navigation, military or civil governments, advent of powerful personalities, conquerors, &c. These of course play their part; yet, it may be, a single new thought, imagination, abstract principle, even literary style, fit for the time, put in shape by some great literatus, and projected among mankind, may duly cause changes, growths, removals, greater than the longest and bloodiest war, or the most stupendous merely political, dynastic, or commercial overturn.

In short, as, though it may not be realized, it is strictly true, that a few first-class poets, philosophers, and authors, have substantially settled and given status to the entire religion, education, law, sociology, &c., of the hitherto civilized world, by tingeing and often creating the atmospheres out of which they

*See, for hereditaments, specimens, Walter Scott's *Border Minstrelsy*, Percy's collection, Ellis's early English Metrical Romances, the European continental poems of Walter of Aquitania, and the *Nibelungen*, of pagan stock, but monkish-feudal redaction; the history of the Troubadours, by Fauriel, even the far-back cumbrous old Hindu epics, as indicating the Asian eggs out of which European chivalry was hatch'd; Ticknor's chapters on the *Cid*, and on the Spanish poems and poets of Calderon's time. Then always, and, of course, as the superbest poetic culmination-expression of feudalism, the Shakspearean dramas, in the attitudes, dialogue, characters, &c., of the princes, lords and gentlemen, the pervading atmosphere, the implied and express'd standard of manners, the high port and proud stomach, the regal embroidery of style, &c.

have arisen, such also must stamp, and more than ever stamp, the interior and real democratic construction of this American continent, to-day, and days to come. Remember also this fact of difference, that, while through the antique and through the mediæval ages, highest thoughts and ideals realized themselves, and their expression made its way by other arts, as much as, or even more than by, technical literature, (not open to the mass of persons, or even to the majority of eminent persons,) such literature in our day and for current purposes, is not only more eligible than all the other arts put together, but has become the only general means of morally influencing the world. Painting, sculpture, and the dramatic theatre, it would seem, no longer play an indispensable or even important part in the workings and mediumship of intellect, utility, or even high esthetics. Architecture remains, doubtless with capacities, and a real future. Then music, the combiner, nothing more spiritual, nothing more sensuous, a god, yet completely human, advances, prevails, holds highest place; supplying in certain wants and quarters what nothing else could supply. Yet in the civilization of to-day it is undeniable that, over all the arts, literature dominates, serves beyond all—shapes the character of church and school—or, at any rate, is capable of doing so. Including the literature of science, its scope is indeed unparallel'd.

Before proceeding further, it were perhaps well to discriminate on certain points. Literature tills its crops in many fields, and some may flourish, while others lag. What I say in these Vistas has its main bearing on imaginative literature, especially poetry, the stock of all. In the department of science, and the specialty of journalism, there appear, in these States, promises, perhaps fulfilments, of highest earnestness, reality, and life. These, of course, are modern. But in the region of imaginative, spinal and essential attributes, something equivalent to creation is, for our age and lands, imperatively demanded. For not only is it not enough that the new blood, new frame of democracy shall be vivified and held together merely by political means, superficial suffrage, legislation, &c., but it is clear to

me that, unless it goes deeper, gets at least as firm and as warm a hold in men's hearts, emotions and belief, as, in their days, feudalism or ecclesiasticism, and inaugurates its own perennial sources, welling from the centre forever, its strength will be defective, its growth doubtful, and its main charm wanting. I suggest, therefore, the possibility, should some two or three really original American poets, (perhaps artists or lecturers,) arise, mounting the horizon like planets, stars of the first magnitude, that, from their eminence, fusing contributions, races, far localities, &c., together, they would give more compaction and more moral identity, (the quality to-day most needed,) to these States, than all its Constitutions, legislative and judicial ties, and all its hitherto political, warlike, or materialistic experiences. As, for instance, there could hardly happen anything that would more serve the States, with all their variety of origins, their diverse climes, cities, standards, &c., than possessing an aggregate of heroes, characters, exploits, sufferings, prosperity or misfortune, glory or disgrace, common to all, typical of all—no less, but even greater would it be to possess the aggregation of a cluster of mighty poets, artists, teachers, fit for us, national expressers, comprehending and effusing for the men and women of the States, what is universal, native, common to all, inland and seaboard, northern and southern. The historians say of ancient Greece, with her ever-jealous autonomies, cities, and states, that the only positive unity she ever own'd or receiv'd, was the sad unity of a common subjection at the last, to foreign conquerors. Subjection, aggregation of that sort, is impossible to America; but the fear of conflicting and irreconcilable interiors, and the lack of a common skeleton, knitting all close, continually haunts me. Or, if it does not, nothing is plainer than the need, a long period to come, of a fusion of the States into the only reliable identity, the moral and artistic one. For, I say, the true nationality of the States, the genuine union, when we come to a moral crisis, is, and is to be, after all, neither the written law, nor, (as is generally supposed,) either self-interest, or common pecuniary or material objects—but the fervid and tremendous IDEA, melting every-

thing else with resistless heat, and solving all lesser and definite distinctions in vast, indefinite, spiritual, emotional power.

It may be claim'd, (and I admit the weight of the claim,) that common and general worldly prosperity, and a populace well-to-do, and with all life's material comforts, is the main thing, and is enough. It may be argued that our republic is, in performance, really enacting to-day the grandest arts, poems, &c., by beating up the wilderness into fertile farms, and in her railroads, ships, machinery, &c. And it may be ask'd, Are these not better, indeed, for America, than any utterances even of greatest rhapsode, artist, or literatus?

I too hail those achievements with pride and joy: then answer that the soul of man will not with such only—nay, not with such at all—be finally satisfied; but needs what, (standing on these and on all things, as the feet stand on the ground,) is address'd to the loftiest, to itself alone.

Out of such considerations, such truths, arises for treatment in these Vistas the important question of character, of an American stock-personality, with literatures and arts for outlets and return-expressions, and, of course, to correspond, within outlines common to all. To these, the main affair, the thinkers of the United States, in general so acute, have either given feeblest attention, or have remain'd, and remain, in a state of somnolence.

For my part, I would alarm and caution even the political and business reader, and to the utmost extent, against the prevailing delusion that the establishment of free political institutions, and plentiful intellectual smartness, with general good order, physical plenty, industry, &c., (desirable and precious advantages as they all are,) do, of themselves, determine and yield to our experiment of democracy the fruitage of success. With such advantages at present fully, or almost fully, possess'd—the Union just issued, victorious, from the struggle with the only foes it need ever fear, (namely, those within itself, the interior ones,) and with unprecedented materialistic advancement—society, in

these States, is canker'd, crude, superstitious, and rotten. Political, or law-made society is, and private, or voluntary society, is also. In any vigor, the element of the moral conscience, the most important, the verteber to State or man, seems to me either entirely lacking, or seriously enfeebled or ungrown.

I say we had best look our times and lands searchingly in the face, like a physician diagnosing some deep disease. Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States. Genuine belief seems to have left us. The underlying principles of the States are not honestly believ'd in, (for all this hectic glow, and these melodramatic screamings,) nor is humanity itself believ'd in. What penetrating eye does not everywhere see through the mask? The spectacle is appalling. We live in an atmosphere of hypocrisy throughout. The men believe not in the women, nor the women in the men. A scornful superciliousness rules in literature. The aim of all the *littérateurs* is to find something to make fun of. A lot of churches, sects, &c., the most dismal phantasms I know, usurp the name of religion. Conversation is a mass of badinage. From deceit in the spirit, the mother of all false deeds, the offspring is already incalculable. An acute and candid person, in the revenue department in Washington, who is led by the course of his employment to regularly visit the ciues, north, south and west, to investigate frauds, has talk'd much with me about his discoveries. The depravity of the business classes of our country is not less than has been supposed, but infinitely greater. The official services of America, national, state, and municipal, in all their branches and departments, except the judiciary, are saturated in corruption, bribery, falsehood, mal-administration; and the judiciary is tainted. The great cities reek with respectable as much as non-respectable robbery and scoundrelism. In fashionable life, flippancy, tepid amours, weak infidelism, small aims, or no aims at all, only to kill time. In business, (this all-devouring modern word, business,) the one sole object is, by any means, pecuniary gain. The magician's serpent in the fable ate up

all the other serpents; and money-making is our magician's serpent, remaining to-day sole master of the field. The best class we show, is but a mob of fashionably dress'd speculators and vulgarians. True, indeed, behind this fantastic farce, enacted on the visible stage of society, solid things and stupendous labors are to be discover'd, existing crudely and going on in the background, to advance and tell themselves in time. Yet the truths are none the less terrible. I say that our New World democracy, however great a success in uplifting the masses out of their sloughs, in materialistic development, products, and in a certain highly-deceptive superficial popular intellectuality, is, so far, an almost complete failure in its social aspects, and in really grand religious, moral, literary, and esthetic results. In vain do we march with unprecedented strides to empire so colossal, outvying the antique, beyond Alexander's, beyond the proudest sway of Rome. In vain have we annex'd Texas, California, Alaska, and reach north for Canada and south for Cuba. It is as if we were somehow being endow'd with a vast and more and more thoroughly-appointed body, and then left with little or no soul.

Let me illustrate further, as I write, with current observations, localities, &c. The subject is important, and will bear repetition. After an absence, I am now again (September, 1870) in New York city and Brooklyn, on a few weeks' vacation. The splendor, picturesqueness, and oceanic amplitude and rush of these great cities, the unsurpass'd situation, rivers and bay, sparkling sea-tides, costly and lofty new buildings, façades of marble and iron, of original grandeur and elegance of design, with the masses of gay color, the preponderance of white and blue, the flags flying, the endless ships, the tumultuous streets, Broadway, the heavy, low, musical roar, hardly ever intermitted, even at night; the jobbers' houses, the rich shops, the wharves, the great Central Park, and the Brooklyn Park of hills, (as I wander among them this beautiful fall weather, musing, watching, absorbing)—the assemblages of the citizens in their groups, conversations, trades, evening amusements, or

along the by-quarters—these, I say, and the like of these, completely satisfy my senses of power, fulness, motion, &c., and give me, through such senses and appetites, and through my esthetic conscience, a continued exaltation and absolute fulfilment. Always and more and more, as I cross the East and North rivers, the ferries, or with the pilots in their pilot-houses, or pass an hour in Wall street, or the gold exchange, I realize, (if we must admit such partialisms,) that not Nature alone is great in her fields of freedom and the open air, in her storms, the shows of night and day, the mountains, forests, seas—but in the artificial, the work of man too is equally great—in this profusion of teeming humanity—in these ingenuties, streets, goods, houses, ships—these hurrying, feverish, electric crowds of men, their complicated business genius, (not least among the geniuses,) and all this mighty, many-threaded wealth and industry concentrated here.

But sternly discarding, shutting our eyes to the glow and grandeur of the general superficial effect, coming down to what is of the only real importance, Personalities, and examining minutely, we question, we ask, Are there, indeed, *men* here worthy the name? Are there athletes? Are there perfect women, to match the generous material luxuriance? Is there a pervading atmosphere of beautiful manners? Are there crops of fine youths, and majestic old persons? Are there arts worthy freedom and a rich people? Is there a great moral and religious civilization—the only justification of a great material one? Confess that to severe eyes, using the moral microscope upon humanity, a sort of dry and flat Sahara appears, these cities, crowded with petty grotesques, malformations, phantoms, playing meaningless antics. Confess that everywhere, in shop, street, church, theatre, bar-room, official chair, are pervading flippancy and vulgarity, low cunning, infidelity—everywhere the youth puny, impudent, foppish, prematurely ripe—everywhere an abnormal libidinousness, unhealthy forms, male, female, painted, padded, dyed, chignon'd, muddy complexions, bad blood, the capacity for good motherhood deceasing or deceas'd, shallow notions of beauty, with a range of manners,

or rather lack of manners, (considering the advantages enjoy'd,) probably the meanest to be seen in the world.*

Of all this, and these lamentable conditions, to breathe into them the breath recuperative of sane and heroic life, I say a new founded literature, not merely to copy and reflect existing surfaces, or pander to what is called taste—not only to amuse, pass away time, celebrate the beautiful, the refined, the past, or exhibit technical, rhythmic, or grammatical dexterity—but a literature underlying life, religious, consistent with science, handling the elements and forces with competent power, teaching and training men—and, as perhaps the most precious of its results, achieving the entire redemption of woman out of these incredible holds and webs of silliness, millinery, and every kind of dyspeptic depletion—and thus insuring to the States a strong and sweet Female Race, a race of perfect Mothers—is what is needed.

And now, in the full conception of these facts and points, and all that they infer, pro and con—with yet unshaken faith in the elements of the American masses, the composites, of both sexes, and even consider'd as individuals—and ever recognizing in them the broadest bases of the best literary and esthetic appreciation—I proceed with my speculations, *Vistas*.

First, let us see what we can make out of a brief, general, sentimental consideration of political democracy, and whence it has arisen, with regard to some of its current features, as an

*Of these rapidly-sketch'd hiatuses, the two which seem to me most serious are, for one, the condition, absence, or perhaps the singular abeyance, of moral conscientious fibre all through American society; and, for another, the appalling depletion of women in their powers of sane athletic maternity, their crowning attribute, and ever making the woman, in loftiest spheres, superior to the man.

I have sometimes thought, indeed, that the sole avenue and means of a reconstructed sociology depended, primarily, on a new birth, elevation, expansion, invigoration of woman, affording, for races to come, (as the conditions that antedate birth are indispensable,) a perfect motherhood. Great, great, indeed, far greater than they know, is the sphere of women. But doubtless the question of such new sociology all goes together, includes many varied and complex influences and premises, and the man as well as the woman, and the woman as well as the man.

aggregate, and as the basic structure of our future literature and authorship. We shall, it is true, quickly and continually find the origin-idea of the singleness of man, individualism, asserting itself, and cropping forth, even from the opposite ideas. But the mass, or lump character, for imperative reasons, is to be ever carefully weigh'd, borne in mind, and provided for. Only from it, and from its proper regulation and potency, comes the other, comes the chance of individualism. The two are contradictory, but our task is to reconcile them.*

The political history of the past may be summ'd up as having grown out of what underlies the words, order, safety, caste, and especially out of the need of some prompt deciding authority, and of cohesion at all cost. Leaping time, we come to the period within the memory of people now living, when, as from some lair where they had slumber'd long, accumulating wrath, sprang up and are yet active, (1790, and on even to the present, 1870,) those noisy eructations, destructive iconoclasms, a fierce sense of wrongs, amid which moves the form, well known in modern history, in the old world, stain'd with much blood, and mark'd by savage reactionary clamors and demands. These bear, mostly, as on one inclosing point of need.

For after the rest is said—after the many time-honor'd and really true things for subordination, experience, rights of property, &c., have been listen'd to and acquiesced in—after the valuable and well-settled statement of our duties and relations in society is thoroughly conn'd over and exhausted—it remains to bring forward and modify everything else with the idea of that Something a man is, (last precious consolation of the drudging poor,) standing apart from all else, divine in his own right, and a woman in hers, sole and untouchable by any canons of

*The question hinted here is one which time only can answer. Must not the virtue of modern Individualism, continually enlarging, usurping all, seriously affect, perhaps keep down entirely, in America, the like of the ancient virtue of Patriotism, the fervid and absorbing love of general country? I have no doubt myself that the two will merge, and will mutually profit and brace each other, and that from them a greater product, a third, will arise. But I feel that at present they and their oppositions form a serious problem and paradox in the United States.

authority, or any rule derived from precedent, state-safety, the acts of legislatures, or even from what is called religion, modesty, or art. The radiation of this truth is the key of the most significant doings of our immediately preceding three centuries, and has been the political genesis and life of America. Advancing visibly, it still more advances invisibly. Underneath the fluctuations of the expressions of society, as well as the movements of the politics of the leading nations of the world, we see steadily pressing ahead and strengthening itself, even in the midst of immense tendencies toward aggregation, this image of completeness in separatism, of individual personal dignity, of a single person, either male or female, characterized in the main, not from extrinsic acquirements or position, but in the pride of himself or herself alone; and, as an eventual conclusion and summing up, (or else the entire scheme of things is aimless, a cheat, a crash,) the simple idea that the last, best dependence is to be upon humanity itself, and its own inherent, normal, full-grown qualities, without any superstitious support whatever. This idea of perfect individualism it is indeed that deepest tinges and gives character to the idea of the aggregate. For it is mainly or altogether to serve independent separatism that we favor a strong generalization, consolidation. As it is to give the best vitality and freedom to the rights of the States, (every bit as important as the right of nationality, the union,) that we insist on the identity of the Union at all hazards.

The purpose of democracy—supplanting old belief in the necessary absoluteness of establish'd dynastic rulership, temporal, ecclesiastical, and scholastic, as furnishing the only security against chaos, crime, and ignorance—is, through many transmigrations, and amid endless ridicules, arguments, and ostensible failures, to illustrate, at all hazards, this doctrine or theory that man, properly train'd in sanest, highest freedom, may and must become a law, and series of laws, unto himself, surrounding and providing for, not only his own personal control, but all his relations to other individuals, and to the State; and that, while other theories, as in the past histories of nations, have proved wise enough, and indispensable perhaps for

their conditions, *this*, as matters now stand in our civilized world, is the only scheme worth working from, as warranting results like those of Nature's laws, reliable, when once establish'd, to carry on themselves.

The argument of the matter is extensive, and, we admit, by no means all on one side. What we shall offer will be far, far from sufficient. But while leaving unsaid much that should properly even prepare the way for the treatment of this many-sided question of political liberty, equality, or republicanism—leaving the whole history and consideration of the feudal plan and its products, embodying humanity, its politics and civilization, through the retrospect of past time, (which plan and products, indeed, make up all of the past, and a large part of the present)—leaving unanswer'd, at least by any specific and local answer, many a well-wrought argument and instance, and many a conscientious declamatory cry and warning—as, very lately, from an eminent and venerable person abroad*—things, problems, full of doubt, dread, suspense, (not new to me, but old occupiers of many an anxious hour in city's din, or night's silence,) we still may give a page or so, whose drift is opportune. Time alone can finally answer these things. But as a substitute in passing, let us, even if fragmentarily, throw forth a short direct or indirect suggestion of the premises of that other plan, in the new spirit, under the new forms, started here in our America.

As to the political section of Democracy, which introduces and breaks ground for further and vaster sections, few probably are the minds, even in these republican States, that fully com-

*"SHOOTING NIAGARA."—I was at first roused to much anger and abuse by this essay from Mr. Carlyle, so insulting to the theory of America—but happening to think afterwards how I had more than once been in the like mood, during which his essay was evidently cast, and seen persons and things in the same light, (indeed some might say there are signs of the same feeling in these Vistas)—I have since read it again, not only as a study, expressing as it does certain judgments from the highest feudal point of view, but have read it with respect as coming from an earnest soul, and as contributing certain sharp-cutting metallic grains, which, if not gold or silver, may be good, hard, honest iron.

prehend the aptness of that phrase, "THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE," which we inherit from the lips of Abraham Lincoln; a formula whose verbal shape is homely wit, but whose scope includes both the totality and all minutiae of the lesson.

The People! Like our huge earth itself, which, to ordinary scansion, is full of vulgar contradictions and offence, man, viewed in the lump, displeases, and is a constant puzzle and affront, to the merely educated classes. The rare, cosmical, artist-mind, lit with the Infinite, alone confronts his manifold and oceanic qualities—but taste, intelligence and culture, (so-called,) have been against the masses, and remain so. There is plenty of glamour about the most damnable crimes and hog-gish meannesses, special and general, of the feudal and dynastic world over there, with its *personnel* of lords and queens and courts, so well-dress'd and so handsome. But the People are ungrammatical, untidy, and their sins gaunt and ill-bred.

Literature, strictly consider'd, has never recognized the People, and, whatever may be said, does not to-day. Speaking generally, the tendencies of literature, as hitherto pursued, have been to make mostly critical and querulous men. It seems as if, so far, there were some natural repugnance between a literary and professional life, and the rude rank spirit of the democracies. There is, in later literature, a treatment of benevolence, a charity business, rife enough it is true; but I know nothing more rare, even in this country, than a fit scientific estimate and reverent appreciation of the People—of their measureless wealth of latent power and capacity, their vast, artistic contrasts of lights and shades—with, in America, their entire reliability in emergencies, and a certain breadth of historic grandeur, of peace or war, far surpassing all the vaunted samples of book-heroes, or any *haut ton* coteries, in all the records of the world.

The movements of the late secession war, and their results, to any sense that studies well and comprehends them, show that popular democracy, whatever its faults and dangers, practically

justifies itself beyond the proudest claims and wildest hopes of its enthusiasts. Probably no future age can know, but I well know, how the gist of this fiercest and most resolute of the world's war-like contentions resided exclusively in the unnamed, unknown rank and file; and how the brunt of its labor of death was, to all essential purposes, volunteer'd. The People, of their own choice, fighting, dying for their own idea, insolently attack'd, by the secession-slave-power, and its very existence imperil'd. Descending to detail, entering any of the armies, and mixing with the private soldiers, we see and have seen august spectacles. We have seen the alacrity with which the American-born populace, the peaceablest and most good-natured race in the world, and the most personally independent and intelligent, and the least fitted to submit to the irksomeness and exasperation of regimental discipline, sprang, at the first tap of the drum, to arms—not for gain, nor even glory, nor to repel invasion—but for an emblem, a mere abstraction—for the life, *the safety of the flag*. We have seen the unequal'd docility and obedience of these soldiers. We have seen them tried long and long by hopelessness, mismanagement, and by defeat; have seen the incredible slaughter toward or through which the armies, (as at first Fredericksburg, and afterward at the Wilderness,) still unhesitatingly obey'd orders to advance. We have seen them in trench, or crouching behind breast-work, or tramping in deep mud, or amid pouring rain or thick-falling snow, or under forced marches in hottest summer (as on the road to get to Gettysburg)—vast suffocating swarms, divisions, corps, with every single man so grimed and black with sweat and dust, his own mother would not have known him—his clothes all dirty, stain'd and torn, with sour, accumulated sweat for perfume—many a comrade, perhaps a brother sun-struck, staggering out, dying, by the roadside, of exhaustion—yet the great bulk bearing steadily on, cheery enough, hollow-bellied from hunger, but sinewy with unconquerable resolution.

We have seen this race proved by wholesale by drearier, yet more fearful tests—the wound, the amputation, the shatter'd

face or limb, the slow hot fever, long impatient anchorage in bed, and all the forms of maiming, operation and disease. Alas! America have we seen, though only in her early youth, already to hospital brought. There have we watch'd these soldiers, many of them only boys in years—mark'd their decorum, their religious nature and fortitude, and their sweet affection. Wholesale, truly. For at the front, and through the camps, in countless tents, stood the regimental, brigade and division hospitals; while everywhere amid the land, in or near cities, rose clusters of huge, white-wash'd, crowded, one-story wooden barracks; and there ruled agony with bitter scourge, yet seldom brought a cry; and there stalk'd death by day and night along the narrow aisles between the rows of cots, or by the blankets on the ground, and touch'd lightly many a poor sufferer, often with blessed, welcome touch.

I know not whether I shall be understood, but I realize that it is finally from what I learn'd personally mixing in such scenes that I am now penning these pages. One night in the gloomiest period of the war, in the Patent-office hospital in Washington city, as I stood by the bedside of a Pennsylvania soldier, who lay, conscious of quick approaching death, yet perfectly calm, and with noble, spiritual manner, the veteran surgeon, turning aside, said to me, that though he had witness'd many, many deaths of soldiers, and had been a worker at Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, &c., he had not seen yet the first case of man or boy that met the approach of dissolution with cowardly qualms or terror. My own observation fully bears out the remark.

What have we here, if not, towering above all talk and argument, the plentifully-supplied, last-needed proof of democracy, in its personalities? Curiously enough, too, the proof on this point comes, I should say, every bit as much from the south, as from the north. Although I have spoken only of the latter, yet I deliberately include all. Grand, common stock! to me the accomplish'd and convincing growth, prophetic of the future; proof undeniable to sharpest sense, of perfect beauty, tenderness and pluck, that never feudal lord, nor Greek, nor Roman

breed, yet rival'd. Let no tongue ever speak in disparagement of the American races, north or south, to one who has been through the war in the great army hospitals.

Meantime, general humanity, (for to that we return, as, for our purposes, what it really is, to bear in mind,) has always, in every department, been full of perverse maleficence, and is so yet. In downcast hours the soul thinks it always will be—but soon recovers from such sickly moods. I myself see clearly enough the crude, defective streaks in all the strata of the common people; the specimens and vast collections of the ignorant, the credulous, the unfit and uncouth, the incapable, and the very low and poor. The eminent person just mention'd sneeringly asks whether we expect to elevate and improve a nation's politics by absorbing such morbid collections and qualities therein. The point is a formidable one, and there will doubtless always be numbers of solid and reflective citizens who will never get over it. Our answer is general, and is involved in the scope and letter of this essay. We believe the ulterior object of political and all other government, (having, of course, provided for the police, the safety of life, property, and for the basic statute and common law, and their administration, always first in order,) to be among the rest, not merely to rule, to repress disorder, &c., but to develop, to open up to cultivation, to encourage the possibilities of all beneficent and manly outcroppage, and of that aspiration for independence, and the pride and self-respect latent in all characters. (Or, if there be exceptions, we cannot, fixing our eyes on them alone, make theirs the rule for all.)

I say the mission of government, henceforth, in civilized lands, is not repression alone, and not authority alone, not even of law, nor by that favorite standard of the eminent writer, the rule of the best men, the born heroes and captains of the race, (as if such ever, or one time out of a hundred, get into the big places, elective or dynastic)—but higher than the highest arbitrary rule, to train communities through all their grades, beginning with individuals and ending there again, to rule them-

selves. What Christ appear'd for in the moral-spiritual field for human-kind, namely, that in respect to the absolute soul, there is in the possession of such by each single individual, something so transcendent, so incapable of gradations, (like life,) that, to that extent, it places all beings on a common level, utterly regardless of the distinctions of intellect, virtue, station, or any height or lowliness whatever—is tallied in like manner, in this other field, by democracy's rule that men, the nation, as a common aggregate of living identities, affording in each a separate and complete subject for freedom, worldly thrift and happiness, and for a fair chance for growth, and for protection in citizenship, &c., must, to the political extent of the suffrage or vote, if no further, be placed, in each and in the whole, on one broad, primary, universal, common platform.

The purpose is not altogether direct; perhaps it is more indirect. For it is not that democracy is of exhaustive account, in itself. Perhaps, indeed, it is, (like Nature,) of no account in itself. It is that, as we see, it is the best, perhaps only, fit and full means, formulator, general caller-forth, trainer, for the million, not for grand material personalities only, but for immortal souls. To be a voter with the rest is not so much; and this, like every institute, will have its imperfections. But to become an enfranchised man, and now, impediments removed, to stand and start without humiliation, and equal with the rest; to commence, or have the road clear'd to commence, the grand experiment of development, whose end, (perhaps requiring several generations,) may be the forming of a full-grown man or woman—that *is* something. To ballast the State is also secured, and in our times is to be secured, in no other way.

We do not, (at any rate I do not,) put it either on the ground that the People, the masses, even the best of them, are, in their latent or exhibited qualities, essentially sensible and good—nor on the ground of their rights; but that good or bad, rights or no rights, the democratic formula is the only safe and preservative one for coming times. We endow the masses with the suffrage for their own sake, no doubt; then, perhaps still more, from another point of view, for community's sake.

Leaving the rest to the sentimentalists, we present freedom as sufficient in its scientific aspect, cold as ice, reasoning, deductive, clear and passionless as crystal.

Democracy too is law, and of the strictest, amplest kind. Many suppose, (and often in its own ranks the error,) that it means a throwing aside of law, and running riot. But, briefly, it is the superior law, not alone that of physical force, the body, which, adding to, it supersedes with that of the spirit. Law is the unshakable order of the universe forever; and the law over all, and law of laws, is the law of successions; that of the superior law, in time, gradually supplanting and overwhelming the inferior one. (While, for myself, I would cheerfully agree—first covenanting that the formative tendencies shall be administer'd in favor, or at least not against it, and that this reservation be closely construed—that until the individual or community show due signs, or be so minor and fractional as not to endanger the State, the condition of authoritative tutelage may continue, and self-government must abide its time.) Nor is the esthetic point, always an important one, without fascination for highest aiming souls. The common ambition strains for elevations, to become some privileged exclusive. The master sees greatness and health in being part of the mass; nothing will do as well as common ground. Would you have in yourself the divine, vast, general law? Then merge yourself in it.

And, topping democracy, this most alluring record, that it alone can bind, and ever seeks to bind, all nations, all men, of however various and distant lands, into a brotherhood, a family. It is the old, yet ever-modern dream of earth, out of her eldest and her youngest, her fond philosophers and poets. Not that half only, individualism, which isolates. There is another half, which is adhesiveness or love, that fuses, ties and aggregates, making the races comrades, and fraternizing all. Both are to be vitalized by religion, (sole worthiest elevator of man or State,) breathing into the proud, material tissues, the breath of life. For I say at the core of democracy, finally, is the religious element. All the religions, old and new, are there

Nor may the scheme step forth, clothed in resplendent beauty and command, till these, bearing the best, the latest fruit, the spiritual, shall fully appear.

A portion of our pages we might indite with reference toward Europe, especially the British part of it, more than our own land, perhaps not absolutely needed for the home reader. But the whole question hangs together, and fastens and links all peoples. The liberalist of to-day has this advantage over antique or mediæval times, that his doctrine seeks not only to individualize but to universalize. The great word Solidarity has arisen. Of all dangers to a nation, as things exist in our day, there can be no greater one than having certain portions of the people set off from the rest by a line drawn—they not privileged as others, but degraded, humiliated, made of no account. Much quackery teems, of course, even on democracy's side, yet does not really affect the orbic quality of the matter. To work in, if we may so term it, and justify God, his divine aggregate, the People, (or, the veritable horn'd and sharp-tail'd Devil, *his* aggregate, if there be who convulsively insist upon it)—this, I say, is what democracy is for; and this is what our America means, and is doing—may I not say, has done? If not, she means nothing more, and does nothing more, than any other land. And as, by virtue of its kosmical, antiseptic power, Nature's stomach is fully strong enough not only to digest the morbid matter always presented, not to be turn'd aside, and perhaps, indeed, intuitively gravitating thither—but even to change such contributions into nutriment for highest use and life—so American democracy's. That is the lesson we, these days, send over to European lands by every western breeze.

And, truly, whatever may be said in the way of abstract argument, for or against the theory of a wider democratizing of institutions in any civilized country, much trouble might well be saved to all European lands by recognizing this palpable fact, (for a palpable fact it is,) that some form of such democratizing is about the only resource now left. *That*, or chronic dissatisfaction continued, mutterings which grow annually

louder and louder, till, in due course, and pretty swiftly in most cases, the inevitable crisis, crash, dynastic ruin. Anything worthy to be call'd statesmanship in the Old World, I should say, among the advanced students, adepts, or men of any brains, does not debate to-day whether to hold on, attempting to lean back and monarchize, or to look forward and democratize—but *how*, and in what degree and part, most prudently to democratize.

The eager and often inconsiderate appeals of reformers and revolutionists are indispensable, to counterbalance the inertness and fossilism making so large a part of human institutions. The latter will always take care of themselves—the danger being that they rapidly tend to ossify us. The former is to be treated with indulgence, and even with respect. As circulation to air, so is agitation and a plentiful degree of speculative license to political and moral sanity. Indirectly, but surely, goodness, virtue, law, (of the very best,) follow freedom. These, to democracy, are what the keel is to the ship, or saltness to the ocean.

The true gravitation-hold of liberalism in the United States will be a more universal ownership of property, general homesteads, general comfort—a vast, intertwining reticulation of wealth. As the human frame, or, indeed, any object in this manifold universe, is best kept together by the simple miracle of its own cohesion, and the necessity, exercise and profit thereof, so a great and varied nationality, occupying millions of square miles, were firmest held and knit by the principle of the safety and endurance of the aggregate of its middling property owners. So that, from another point of view, ungracious as it may sound, and a paradox after what we have been saying, democracy looks with suspicious, ill-satisfied eye upon the very poor, the ignorant, and on those out of business. She asks for men and women with occupations, well-off, owners of houses and acres, and with cash in the bank—and with some cravings for literature, too; and must have them, and hastens

to make them. Luckily, the seed is already well-sown and has taken ineradicable root.*

Huge and mighty are our days, our republican lands—and most in their rapid shiftings, their changes, all in the interest of the cause. As I write this particular passage, (November, 1868,) the din of disputation rages around me. Acrid the temper of the parties, vital the pending questions. Congress convenes; the President sends his message; reconstruction is still in abeyance; the nomination and the contest for the twenty-first Presidentiad draw close, with loudest threat and bustle. Of these, and all the like of these, the eventuations I know not; but well I know that behind them, and whatever their eventuations, the vital things remain safe and certain, and all the needed work goes on. Time, with soon or later superciliousness, disposes of Presidents, Congressmen, party platforms, and such. Anon, it clears the stage of each and any mortal shred that thinks itself so potent to its day; and at and after which, (with precious, golden exceptions once or twice in a century,) all that relates to sir potency is flung to moulder in a burial-vault, and no one bothers himself the least bit about it afterward. But the People ever remain, tendencies continue and all the idiocratic transfers in unbroken chain go on.

In a few years the dominion-heart of America will be far inland, toward the west. Our future national capital may not be where the present one is. It is possible, nay likely, that in less than fifty years, it will migrate a thousand or two miles, will be re-founded, and every thing belonging to it made on a different plan, original, far more superb. The main social,

*For fear of mistake, I may as well distinctly specify, as cheerfully included in the model and standard of these Vistas, a practical, stirring, worldly, money-making, even materialistic character. It is undeniable that our farms, stores, offices, dry-goods, coal and groceries, enginery, cash-accounts, trades, earnings, markets, &c., should be attended to in earnest, and actively pursued, just as if they had a real and permanent existence. I perceive clearly that the extreme business energy, and this almost maniacal appetite for wealth prevalent in the United States, are parts of amelioration and progress, indispensably needed to prepare the very results I demand. My theory includes riches, and the getting of riches, and the amplest products, power, activity, inventions, movements, &c. Upon them, as upon substrata, I raise the edifice design'd in these Vistas.

political, spine-character of the States will probably run along the Ohio, Missouri and Mississippi rivers, and west and north of them, including Canada. Those regions, with the group of powerful brothers toward the Pacific, (destined to the mastery of that sea and its countless paradises of islands,) will compact and settle the traits of America, with all the old retain'd, but more expanded, grafted on newer, hardier, purely native stock. A giant growth, composite from the rest, getting their contribution, absorbing it, to make it more illustrious. From the north, intellect, the sun of things, also the idea of unswayable justice, anchor amid the last, the wildest tempests. From the south the living soul, the animus of good and bad, haughtily admitting no demonstration but its own. While from the west itself comes solid personality, with blood and brawn, and the deep quality of all-accepting fusion.

Political democracy, as it exists and practically works in America, with all its threatening evils, supplies a training-school for making first-class men. It is life's gymnasium, not of good only, but of all. We try often, though we fall back often. A brave delight, fit for freedom's athletes, fills these arenas, and fully satisfies, out of the action in them, irrespective of success. Whatever we do not attain, we at any rate attain the experiences of the fight, the hardening of the strong campaign, and throb with currents of attempt at least. Time is ample. Let the victors come after us. Not for nothing does evil play its part among us. Judging from the main portions of the history of the world, so far, justice is always in jeopardy, peace walks amid hourly pitfalls, and of slavery, misery, meanness, the craft of tyrants and the credulity of the populace, in some of their protean forms, no voice can at any time say, They are not. The clouds break a little, and the sun shines out—but soon and certain the lowering darkness falls again, as if to last forever. Yet is there an immortal courage and prophecy in every sane soul that cannot, must not, under any circumstances, capitulate. *Vive*, the attack—the perennial assault! *Vive*, the unpopular cause—the spirit that audaciously aims—

the never-abandon'd efforts, pursued the same amid opposing proofs and precedents.

Once, before the war, (Alas! I dare not say how many times the mood has come!) I, too, was fill'd with doubt and gloom. A foreigner, an acute and good man, had impressively said to me, that day—putting in form, indeed, my own observations: “I have travel'd much in the United States, and watch'd their politicians, and listen'd to the speeches of the candidates, and read the journals, and gone into the public houses, and heard the unguarded talk of men. And I have found your vaunted America honeycomb'd from top to toe with infidelism, even to itself and its own programme. I have mark'd the brazen hell-faces of secession and slavery gazing defiantly from all the windows and doorways. I have everywhere found, primarily, thieves and scalliwags arranging the nominations to offices, and sometimes filling the offices themselves. I have found the north just as full of bad stuff as the south. Of the holders of public office in the Nation or the States or their municipalities, I have found that not one in a hundred has been chosen by any spontaneous selection of the outsiders, the people, but all have been nominated and put through by little or large caucuses of the politicians, and have got in by corrupt rings and electioneering, not capacity or desert. I have noticed how the millions of sturdy farmers and mechanics are thus the helpless supple-jacks of comparatively few politicians. And I have noticed more and more, the alarming spectacle of parties usurping the government, and openly and shamelessly wielding it for party purposes.”

Sad, serious, deep truths. Yet are there other, still deeper, amply confronting, dominating truths. Over those politicians and great and little rings, and over all their insolence and wiles, and over the powerfulest parties, looms a power, too sluggish maybe, but ever holding decisions and decrees in hand, ready, with stern process, to execute them as soon as plainly needed—and at times, indeed, summarily crushing to atoms the mightiest parties, even in the hour of their pride.

In saner hours far different are the amounts of these things from what, at first sight, they appear. Though it is no doubt important who is elected governor, mayor, or legislator, (and full of dismay when incompetent or vile ones get elected, as they sometimes do,) there are other, quieter contingencies, infinitely more important. Shams, &c., will always be the show, like ocean's scum; enough, if waters deep and clear make up the rest. Enough, that while the piled embroider'd shoddy gaud and fraud spreads to the superficial eye, the hidden warp and weft are genuine, and will wear forever. Enough, in short, that the race, the land which could raise such as the late rebellion, could also put it down.

The average man of a land at last only is important. He, in these States, remains immortal owner and boss, deriving good uses, somehow, out of any sort of servant in office, even the basest; (certain universal requisites, and their settled regularity and protection, being first secured,) a nation like ours, in a sort of geological formation state, trying continually new experiments, choosing new delegations, is not served by the best men only, but sometimes more by those that provoke it—by the combats they arouse. Thus national rage, fury, discussion, &c., better than content. Thus, also, the warning signals, invaluable for after times.

What is more dramatic than the spectacle we have seen repeated, and doubtless long shall see—the popular judgment taking the successful candidates on trial in the offices—standing off, as it were, and observing them and their doings for a while, and always giving, finally, the fit, exactly due reward? I think, after all, the sublimest part of political history, and its culmination, is currently issuing from the American people. I know nothing grander, better exercise, better digestion, more positive proof of the past, the triumphant result of faith in human-kind, than a well-contested American national election

Then still the thought returns, (like the thread-passage in overtures,) giving the key and echo to these pages. When I pass to and fro, different latitudes, different seasons, beholding

the crowds of the great cities, New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, San Francisco, New Orleans, Baltimore—when I mix with these interminable swarms of alert, turbulent, good-natured, independent citizens, mechanics, clerks, young persons—at the idea of this mass of men, so fresh and free, so loving and so proud, a singular awe falls upon me. I feel, with dejection and amazement, that among our geniuses and talented writers or speakers, few or none have yet really spoken to this people, created a single image-making work for them, or absorb'd the central spirit and the idiosyncrasies which are theirs—and which, thus, in highest ranges, so far remain entirely uncelebrated, unexpress'd.

Dominion strong is the body's; dominion stronger is the mind's. What has fill'd, and fills to-day our intellect, our fancy, furnishing the standards therein, is yet foreign. The great poems, Shakspeare included, are poisonous to the idea of the pride and dignity of the common people, the life-blood of democracy. The models of our literature, as we get it from other lands, ultra-marine, have had their birth in courts, and bask'd and grown in castle sunshine; all smells of princes' favors. Of workers of a certain sort, we have, indeed, plenty, contributing after their kind; many elegant, many learn'd, all complacent. But touch'd by the national test, or tried by the standards of democratic personality, they wither to ashes. I say I have not seen a single writer, artist, lecturer, or what-not, that has confronted the voiceless but ever erect and active, pervading, underlying will and typic aspiration of the land, in a spirit kindred to itself. Do you call those genteel little creatures American poets? Do you term that perpetual, pistareen, paste-pot work, American art, American drama, taste, verse? I think I hear, echoed as from some mountain-top afar in the west, the scornful laugh of the Genius of these States.

Democracy, in silence, biding its time, ponders its own ideals, not of literature and art only—not of men only, but of women. The idea of the women of America, (extricated from this daze, this fossil and unhealthy air which hangs about the word

lady,) develop'd, raised to become the robust equals, workers, and, it may be, even practical and political deciders with the men—greater than man, we may admit, through their divine maternity, always their towering, emblematical attribute—but great, at any rate, as man, in all departments; or, rather, capable of being so, soon as they realize it, and can bring themselves to give up toys and fictions, and launch forth, as men do, amid real, independent, stormy life.

Then, as towards our thought's finalè, (and, in that, over-arching the true scholar's lesson,) we have to say there can be no complete or epical presentation of democracy in the aggregate, or anything like it, at this day, because its doctrines will only be effectually incarnated in any one branch, when, in all, their spirit is at the root and centre. Far, far, indeed, stretch, in distance, our *Vistas*! How much is still to be disentangled, freed! How long it takes to make this American world see that it is, in itself, the final authority and reliance!

Did you, too, O friend, suppose democracy was only for elections, for politics, and for a party name? I say democracy is only of use there that it may pass on and come to its flower and fruits in manners, in the highest forms of interaction between men, and their beliefs—in religion, literature, colleges, and schools—democracy in all public and private life, and in the army and navy.* I have intimated that, as a paramount scheme, it has yet few or no full realizers and believers. I do not see, either, that it owes any serious thanks to noted propagandists or champions, or has been essentially help'd, though often harm'd, by them. It has been and is carried on by all the moral forces, and by trade, finance, machinery, intercommunications, and, in fact, by all the developments of history, and can no more be stopp'd than the tides, or the earth in its orbit.

*The whole present system of the officering and personnel of the army and navy of these States, and the spirit and letter of their trebly-aristocratic rules and regulations, is a monstrous exotic, a nuisance and revolt, and belong here just as much as orders of nobility, or the Pope's council of cardinals. I say if the present theory of our army and navy is sensible and true, then the rest of America is an unmitigated fraud.

Doubtless, also, it resides, crude and latent, well down in the hearts of the fair average of the American-born people, mainly in the agricultural regions. But it is not yet, there or anywhere, the fully-receiv'd, the fervid, the absolute faith.

I submit, therefore, that the fruition of democracy, on aught like a grand scale, resides altogether in the future. As, under any profound and comprehensive view of the gorgeous-composite feudal world, we see in it, through the long ages and cycles of ages, the results of a deep, integral, human and divine principle, or fountain, from which issued laws, ecclesia, manners, institutes, costumes, personalities, poems, (hitherto unequall'd,) faithfully partaking of their source, and indeed only arising either to betoken it, or to furnish parts of that varied-flowing display, whose centre was one and absolute—so, long ages hence, shall the due historian or critic make at least an equal retrospect, an equal history for the democratic principle. It too must be adorn'd, credited with its results—then, when it, with imperial power, through amplest time, has dominated mankind—has been the source and test of all the moral, esthetic, social, political, and religious expressions and institutes of the civilized world—has begotten them in spirit and in form, and has carried them to its own unprecedented heights—has had, (it is possible,) monastics and ascetics, more numerous, more devout than the monks and priests of all previous creeds—has sway'd the ages with a breadth and rectitude tallying Nature's own—has fashion'd, systematized, and triumphantly finish'd and carried out, in its own interest, and with unparallel'd success, a new earth and a new man.

Thus we presume to write, as it were, upon things that exist not, and travel by maps yet unmade, and a blank. But the throes of birth are upon us; and we have something of this advantage in seasons of strong formations, doubts, suspense—for then the afflatus of such themes haply may fall upon us, more or less; and then, hot from surrounding war and revolution, our speech, though without polish'd coherence, and a failure by the standard called criticism, comes forth, real at least as the lightnings.

And may-be we, these days, have, too, our own reward—(for there are yet some, in all lands, worthy to be so encouraged.) Though not for us the joy of entering at the last the conquer'd city—not ours the chance ever to see with our own eyes the peerless power and splendid *eclat* of the democratic principle, arriv'd at meridian, filling the world with effulgence and majesty far beyond those of past history's kings, or all dynastic sway—there is yet, to whoever is eligible among us, the prophetic vision, the joy of being toss'd in the brave turmoil of these times—the promulgation and the path, obedient, lowly reverent to the voice, the gesture of the god, or holy ghost, which others see not, hear not—with the proud consciousness that amid whatever clouds, seductions, or heart-wearying postponements, we have never deserted, never despair'd, never abandon'd the faith.

So much contributed, to be conn'd well, to help prepare and brace our edifice, our plann'd Idea—we still proceed to give it in another of its aspects—perhaps the main, the high façade of all. For to democracy, the leveler, the unyielding principle of the average, is surely join'd another principle, equally unyielding, closely tracking the first, indispensable to it, opposite, (as the sexes are opposite,) and whose existence, confronting and ever modifying the other, often clashing, paradoxical, yet neither of highest avail without the other, plainly supplies to these grand cosmic politics of ours, and to the launch'd forth mortal dangers of republicanism, to-day or any day, the counterpart and offset whereby Nature restrains the deadly original relentlessness of all her first-class laws. This second principle is individuality, the pride and centripetal isolation of a human being in himself—identity—personalism. Whatever the name, its acceptance and thorough infusion through the organizations of political commonalty now shooting Aurora-like about the world, are of utmost importance, as the principle itself is needed for very life's sake. It forms, in a sort, or is to form, the compensating balance-wheel of the successful working machinery of aggregate America.

And, if we think of it, what does civilization itself rest upon—and what object has it, with its religions, arts, schools, &c., but rich, luxuriant, varied personalism? To that, all bends; and it is because toward such result democracy alone, on anything like Nature's scale, breaks up the limitless fallows of humankind, and plants the seed, and gives fair play, that its claims now precede the rest. The literature, songs, esthetics, &c., of a country are of importance principally because they furnish the materials and suggestions of personality for the women and men of that country, and enforce them in a thousand effective ways.* As the topmost claim of a strong consolidating of the nationality of these States, is, that only by such powerful compaction can the separate States secure that full and free swing within their spheres, which is becoming to them, each after its kind, so will individuality, with unimpeded branchings, flourish best under imperial republican forms.

*After the rest is satiated, all interest culminates in the field of persons, and never flags there. Accordingly in this field have the great poets and literatures signally toil'd. They too, in all ages, all lands, have been creators, fashioning, making types of men and women, as Adam and Eve are made in the divine table. Behold, shaped, bred by orientalism, feudalism, through their long growth and culmination, and breeding back in return—(when shall we have an equal series, typical of democracy?)—behold, commencing in primal Asia, (apparently formulated, in what beginning we know, in the gods of the mythologies, and coming down thence,) a few samples out of the countless product, bequeath'd to the moderns, bequeath'd to America as studies. For the men, Yudishtura, Rama, Arjuna, Solomon, most of the Old and New Testament characters; Achilles, Ulysses, Theseus, Prometheus, Hercules, Æneas, Plutarch's heroes; the Merlin of Celtic bards; the Cid, Arthur and his knights, Siegfried and Hagen in the Nibelungen; Roland and Oliver; Roustam in the Shah-Nemah; and so on to Milton's Satan, Cervantes' Don Quixote, Shakspeare's Hamlet, Richard II., Lear, Marc Antony, &c., and the modern Faust. These, I say, are models, combined, adjusted to other standards than America's, but of priceless value to her and hers.

Among women, the goddesses of the Egyptian, Indian and Greek mythologies, certain Bible characters, especially the Holy Mother; Cleopatra, Penelope; the portraits of Brunhelde and Chriemhulde in the Nibelungen; Oriana, Una, &c.; the modern Consuelo, Walter Scott's Jeanie and Effie Deans, &c., &c. (Yet woman portray'd or outlin'd at her best, or as perfect human mother, does not hitherto, it seems to me, fully appear in literature.)

Assuming Democracy to be at present in its embryo condition, and that the only large and satisfactory justification of it resides in the future, mainly through the copious production of perfect characters among the people, and through the advent of a sane and pervading religiousness, it is with regard to the atmosphere and spaciousness fit for such characters, and of certain nutriment and cartoon-draftings proper for them, and indicating them for New-World purposes, that I continue the present statement—an exploration, as of new ground, wherein, like other primitive surveyors, I must do the best I can, leaving it to those who come after me to do much better. (The service, in fact, if any, must be to break a sort of first path or track, no matter how rude and ungeometrical.)

We have frequently printed the word Democracy. Yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawaken'd, notwithstanding the resonance and the many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come, from pen or tongue. It is a great word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted. It is, in some sort, younger brother of another great and often-used word, Nature, whose history also waits unwritten. As I perceive, the tendencies of our day, in the States, (and I entirely respect them,) are toward those vast and sweeping movements, influences, moral and physical, of humanity, now and always current over the planet, on the scale of the impulses of the elements. Then it is also good to reduce the whole matter to the consideration of a single self, a man, a woman, on permanent grounds. Even for the treatment of the universal, in politics, metaphysics, or anything, sooner or later we come down to one single, solitary soul.

There is, in sanest hours, a consciousness, a thought that rises, independent, lifted out from all else, calm, like the stars, shining eternal. This is the thought of identity—yours for you, whoever you are, as mine for me. Miracle of miracles, beyond statement, most spiritual and vaguest of earth's dreams, yet hardest basic fact, and only entrance to all facts. In such de-

vout hours, in the midst of the significant wonders of heaven and earth, (significant only because of the Me in the centre,) creeds, conventions, fall away and become of no account before this simple idea. Under the luminousness of real vision, it alone takes possession, takes value. Like the shadowy dwarf in the fable, once liberated and look'd upon, it expands over the whole earth, and spreads to the roof of heaven.

The quality of BEING, in the object's self, according to its own central idea and purpose, and of growing therefrom and thereto—not criticism by other standards, and adjustments thereto—is the lesson of Nature. True, the full man wisely gathers, culls, absorbs; but if, engaged disproportionately in that, he slights or overlays the precious idiocrasy and special nativity and intention that he is, the man's self, the main thing, is a failure, however wide his general cultivation. Thus, in our times, refinement and delicatessen are not only attended to sufficiently, but threaten to eat us up, like a cancer. Already, the democratic genius watches, ill-pleased, these tendencies. Provision for a little healthy rudeness, savage virtue, justification of what one has in one's self, whatever it is, is demanded. Negative qualities, even deficiencies, would be a relief. Singleness and normal simplicity and separation, amid this more and more complex, more and more artificialized state of society—how pensively we yearn for them! how we would welcome their return!

In some such direction, then—at any rate enough to preserve the balance—we feel called upon to throw what weight we can, not for absolute reasons, but current ones. To prune, gather, trim, conform, and ever cram and stuff, and be genteel and proper, is the pressure of our days. While aware that much can be said even in behalf of all this, we perceive that we have not now to consider the question of what is demanded to serve a half-starved and barbarous nation, or set of nations, but what is most applicable, most pertinent, for numerous congeries of conventional, over-corpulent societies, already becoming stifled and rotten with flatulent, infidelistic literature, and polite conformity and art. In addition to establish'd sciences, we sug-

gest a science as it were of healthy average personalism, on original-universal grounds, the object of which should be to raise up and supply through the States a copious race of superb American men and women, cheerful, religious, ahead of any yet known.

America has yet morally and artistically originated nothing. She seems singularly unaware that the models of persons, books, manners, &c., appropriate for former conditions and for European lands, are but exiles and exotics here. No current of her life, as shown on the surfaces of what is authoritatively called her society, accepts or runs into social or esthetic democracy; but all the currents set squarely against it. Never, in the Old World, was thoroughly upholster'd exterior appearance and show, mental and other, built entirely on the idea of caste, and on the sufficiency of mere outside acquisition—never were glibness, verbal intellect, more the test, the emulation—more loftily elevated as head and sample—than they are on the surface of our republican States this day. The writers of a time hint the mottoes of its gods. The word of the modern, say these voices, is the word Culture.

We find ourselves abruptly in close quarters with the enemy. This word Culture, or what it has come to represent, involves, by contrast, our whole theme, and has been, indeed, the spur, urging us to engagement. Certain questions arise. As now taught, accepted and carried out, are not the processes of culture rapidly creating a class of supercilious infidels, who believe in nothing? Shall a man lose himself in countless masses of adjustments, and be so shaped with reference to this, that, and the other, that the simply good and healthy and brave parts of him are reduced and clipp'd away, like the bordering of box in a garden? You can cultivate corn and roses and orchards—but who shall cultivate the mountain peaks, the ocean, and the tumbling gorgeousness of the clouds? Lastly—is the readily-given reply that culture only seeks to help, systematize, and put in attitude, the elements of fertility and power, a conclusive reply?

I do not so much object to the name, or word, but I should certainly insist, for the purposes of these States, on a radical change of category, in the distribution of precedence. I should demand a programme of culture, drawn out, not for a single class alone, or for the parlors or lecture-rooms, but with an eye to practical life, the west, the working-men, the facts of farms and jack-planes and engineers, and of the broad range of the women also of the middle and working strata, and with reference to the perfect equality of women, and of a grand and powerful motherhood. I should demand of this programme or theory a scope generous enough to include the widest human area. It must have for its spinal meaning the formation of a typical personality of character, eligible to the uses of the high average of men—and *not* restricted by conditions ineligible to the masses. The best culture will always be that of the manly and courageous instincts, and loving perceptions, and of self-respect—aiming to form, over this continent, an idiocracy of universalism, which, true child of America, will bring joy to its mother, returning to her in her own spirit, recruiting myriads of offspring, able, natural, perceptive, tolerant, devout believers in her, America, and with some definite instinct why and for what she has arisen, most vast, most formidable of historic births, and is, now and here, with wonderful step, journeying through Time.

The problem, as it seems to me, presented to the New World, is, under permanent law and order, and after preserving cohesion, (ensemble-Individuality,) at all hazards, to vitalize man's free play of special Personalism, recognizing in it something that calls ever more to be consider'd, fed, and adopted as the substratum for the best that belongs to us, (government indeed is for it,) including the new esthetics of our future.

To formulate beyond this present vagueness—to help line and put before us the species, or a specimen of the species, of the democratic ethnology of the future, is a work toward which the genius of our land, with peculiar encouragement, invites her well-wishers. Already certain limnings, more or less gro-

tesque, more or less fading and watery, have appear'd. We too, (repressing doubts and qualms,) will try our hand.

Attempting, then, however crudely, a basic model or portrait of personality for general use for the manliness of the States, (and doubtless that is most useful which is most simple and comprehensive for all, and toned low enough,) we should prepare the canvas well beforehand. Parentage must consider itself in advance. (Will the time hasten when fatherhood and motherhood shall become a science—and the noblest science?) To our model, a clear-blooded, strong-fibred physique, is indispensable; the questions of food, drink, air, exercise, assimilation, digestion, can never be intermitted. Out of these we descry a well-begotten selfhood—in youth, fresh, ardent, emotional, aspiring, full of adventure; at maturity, brave, perceptive, under control, neither too talkative nor too reticent, neither flippant nor sombre; of the bodily figure, the movements easy, the complexion showing the best blood, somewhat flush'd, breast expanded, an erect attitude, a voice whose sound outvies music, eyes of calm and steady gaze, yet capable also of flashing—and a general presence that holds its own in the company of the highest. (For it is native personality, and that alone, that endows a man to stand before presidents or generals, or in any distinguish'd collection, with *aplomb*—and *not* culture, or any knowledge or intellect whatever.)

With regard to the mental-educational part of our model, enlargement of intellect, stores of cephalic knowledge, &c., the concentration thitherward of all the customs of our age, especially in America, is so overweening, and provides so fully for that part, that, important and necessary as it is, it really needs nothing from us here—except, indeed, a phrase of warning and restraint. Manners, costumes, too, though important, we need not dwell upon here. Like beauty, grace of motion, &c., they are results. Causes, original things, being attended to, the right manners unerringly follow. Much is said, among artists, of “the grand style,” as if it were a thing by itself. When a man, artist or whoever, has health, pride, acuteness, noble aspirations, he has the motive-elements of the grandest style.

The rest is but manipulation, (yet that is no small matter.)

Leaving still unspecified several sterling parts of any model fit for the future personality of America, I must not fail, again and ever, to pronounce myself on one, probably the least attended to in modern times—a hiatus, indeed, threatening its gloomiest consequences after us. I mean the simple, unsophisticated Conscience, the primary moral element. If I were asked to specify in what quarter lie the grounds of darkest dread, respecting the America of our hopes, I should have to point to this particular. I should demand the invariable application to individuality, this day and any day, of that old, ever-true plumb-rule of persons, eras, nations. Our triumphant modern civilizee, with his all-schooling and his wondrous appliances, will still show himself but an amputation while this deficiency remains. Beyond, (assuming a more hopeful tone,) the vertebration of the manly and womanly personalism of our western world, can only be, and is, indeed, to be, (I hope,) its all-penetrating Religiousness.

The ripeness of Religion is doubtless to be looked for in this field of individuality, and is a result that no organization or church can ever achieve. As history is poorly retain'd by what the technists call history, and is not given out from their pages, except the learner has in himself the sense of the well-wrapt, never yet written, perhaps impossible to be written, history—so Religion, although casually arrested, and, after a fashion, preserv'd in the churches and creeds, does not depend at all upon them, but is a part of the identified soul, which, when greatest, knows not bibles in the old way, but in new ways—the identified soul, which can really confront Religion when it extricates itself entirely from the churches, and not before.

Personalism fuses this, and favors it. I should say, indeed, that only in the perfect uncontamination and solitariness of individuality may the spirituality of religion positively come forth at all. Only here, and on such terms, the meditation, the devout ecstasy, the soaring flight. Only here, communion with the mysteries, the eternal problems, whence? whither? Alone, and identity, and the mood—and the soul emerges, and all

statements, churches, sermons, melt away like vapors. Alone, and silent thought and awe, and aspiration—and then the interior consciousness, like a hitherto unseen inscription, in magic ink, beams out its wondrous lines to the sense. Bibles may convey, and priests expound, but it is exclusively for the noiseless operation of one's isolated Self, to enter the pure ether of veneration, reach the divine levels, and commune with the unutterable.

To practically enter into politics is an important part of American personalism. To every young man, north and south, earnestly studying these things, I should here, as an offset to what I have said in former pages, now also say, that may-be to views of very largest scope, after all, perhaps the political, (perhaps the literary and sociological,) America goes best about its development its own way—sometimes, to temporary sight, appalling enough. It is the fashion among dillettants and fops (perhaps I myself am not guiltless,) to decry the whole formulation of the active politics of America, as beyond redemption, and to be carefully kept away from. See you that you do not fall into this error. America, it may be, is doing very well upon the whole, notwithstanding these antics of the parties and their leaders, these half-brain'd nominees, the many ignorant ballots, and many elected failures and blatherers. It is the dillettants, and all who shirk their duty, who are not doing well. As for you, I advise you to enter more strongly yet into politics. I advise every young man to do so. Always inform yourself; always do the best you can; always vote. Disengage yourself from parties. They have been useful, and to some extent remain so; but the floating, uncommitted electors, farmers, clerks, mechanics, the masters of parties—watching aloof, inclining victory this side or that side—such are the ones most needed, present and future. For America, if eligible at all to downfall and ruin, is eligible within herself, not without; for I see clearly that the combined foreign world could not beat her down. But these savage, wolfish parties alarm me. Owing no law but their own will, more and more combative, less and less tolerant of the idea of ensemble and of equal brotherhood, the perfect equality of the States, the ever-overarching American ideas, it

behooves you to convey yourself implicitly to no party, nor submit blindly to their dictators, but steadily hold yourself judge and master over all of them.

So much, (hastily toss'd together, and leaving far more unsaid,) for an ideal, or intimations of an ideal, toward American manhood. But the other sex, in our land, requires at least a basis of suggestion.

I have seen a young American woman, one of a large family of daughters, who, some years since, migrated from her meagre country home to one of the northern cities, to gain her own support. She soon became an expert seamstress, but finding the employment too confining for health and comfort, she went boldly to work for others, to house-keep, cook, clean, &c. After trying several places, she fell upon one where she was suited. She has told me that she finds nothing degrading in her position; it is not inconsistent with personal dignity, self-respect, and the respect of others. She confers benefits and receives them. She has good health; her presence itself is healthy and bracing; her character is unstain'd; she has made herself understood, and preserves her independence, and has been able to help her parents, and educate and get places for her sisters; and her course of life is not without opportunities for mental improvement, and of much quiet, uncosting happiness and love.

I have seen another woman who, from taste and necessity conjoin'd, has gone into practical affairs, carries on a mechanical business, partly works at it herself, dashes out more and more into real hardy life, is not abash'd by the coarseness of the contact, knows how to be firm and silent at the same time, holds her own with unvarying coolness and decorum, and will compare, any day, with superior carpenters, farmers, and even boatmen and drivers. For all that, she has not lost the charm of the womanly nature, but preserves and bears it fully, though through such rugged presentation.

Then there is the wife of a mechanic, mother of two children, a woman of merely passable English education, but of fine wit, with all her sex's grace and intuitions, who exhibits,

indeed, such a noble female personality, that I am fain to record it here. Never abnegating her own proper independence, but always genially preserving it, and what belongs to it—cooking, washing, child-nursing, house-tending—she beams sunshine out of all these duties, and makes them illustrious. Physiologically sweet and sound, loving work, practical, she yet knows that there are intervals, however few, devoted to recreation, music, leisure, hospitality—and affords such intervals. Whatever she does, and wherever she is, that charm, that indescribable perfume of genuine womanhood attends her, goes with her, exhales from her, which belongs of right to all the sex, and is, or ought to be, the invariable atmosphere and common aureola of old as well as young.

My dear mother once described to me a resplendent person, down on Long Island, whom she knew in early days. She was known by the name of the Peacemaker. She was well toward eighty years old, of happy and sunny temperament, had always lived on a farm, and was very neighborly, sensible and discreet, an invariable and welcom'd favorite, especially with young married women. She had numerous children and grandchildren. She was uneducated, but possess'd a native dignity. She had come to be a tacitly agreed upon domestic regulator, judge, settler of difficulties, shepherdess, and reconciler in the land. She was a sight to draw near and look upon, with her large figure, her profuse snow-white hair, (uncoif'd by any head-dress or cap,) dark eyes, clear complexion, sweet breath, and peculiar personal magnetism.

The foregoing portraits, I admit, are frightfully out of line from these imported models of womanly personality—the stock feminine characters of the current novelists, or of the foreign court poems, (Ophelias, Enids, princesses, or ladies of one thing or another,) which fill the envying dreams of so many poor girls, and are accepted by our men, too, as supreme ideals of feminine excellence to be sought after. But I present mine just for a change.

Then there are mutterings, (we will not now stop to heed them here, but they must be heeded,) of something more revo-

lutionary. The day is coming when the deep questions of woman's entrance amid the arenas of practical life, politics, the suffrage, &c., will not only be argued all around us, but may be put to decision, and real experiment.

Of course, in these States, for both man and woman, we must entirely recast the types of highest personality from what the oriental, feudal, ecclesiastical worlds bequeath us, and which yet possess the imaginative and esthetic fields of the United States, pictorial and melodramatic, not without use as studies, but making sad work, and forming a strange anachronism upon the scenes and exigencies around us. Of course, the old undying elements remain. The task is, to successfully adjust them to new combinations, our own days. Nor is this so incredible. I can conceive a community, to-day and here, in which, on a sufficient scale, the perfect personalities, without noise meet; say in some pleasant western settlement or town, where a couple of hundred best men and women, of ordinary worldly status, have by luck been drawn together, with nothing extra of genius or wealth, but virtuous, chaste, industrious, cheerful, resolute, friendly and devout. I can conceive such a community organized in running order, powers judiciously delegated—farming, building, trade, courts, mails, schools, elections, all attended to; and then the rest of life, the main thing, freely branching and blossoming in each individual, and bearing golden fruit. I can see there, in every young and old man, after his kind, and in every woman after hers, a true personality, develop'd, exercised proportionately in body, mind, and spirit. I can imagine this case as one not necessarily rare or difficult, but in buoyant accordance with the municipal and general requirements of our times. And I can realize in it the culmination of something better than any stereotyped *eclat* of history or poems. Perhaps, unsung, undramatized, unput in essays or biographies—perhaps even some such community already exists, in Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, or somewhere, practically fulfilling itself, and thus outvying, in cheapest vulgar life, all that has been hitherto shown in best ideal pictures.

In short, and to sum up, America, betaking herself to formative action, (as it is about time for more solid achievement, and less windy promise,) must, for her purposes, cease to recognize a theory of character grown of feudal aristocracies, or form'd by merely literary standards, or from any ultramarine, full-dress formulas of culture, polish, caste, &c., and must sternly promulgate her own new standard, yet old enough, and accepting the old, the perennial elements, and combining them into groups, unities, appropriate to the modern, the democratic, the west, and to the practical occasions and needs of our own cities, and of the agricultural regions. Ever the most precious in the common. Ever the fresh breeze of field, or hill, or lake, is more than any palpitation of fans, though of ivory, and redolent with perfume; and the air is more than the costliest perfumes.

And now, for fear of mistake, we may not intermit to beg our absolution from all that genuinely is, or goes along with, even Culture. Pardon us, venerable shade! if we have seem'd to speak lightly of your office. The whole civilization of the earth, we know, is yours, with all the glory and the light thereof. It is, indeed, in your own spirit, and seeking to tally the loftiest teachings of it, that we aim these poor utterances. For you, too, mighty minister! know that there is something greater than you, namely, the fresh, eternal qualities of Being. From them, and by them, as you, at your best, we too evoke the last, the needed help, to vitalize our country and our days. Thus we pronounce not so much against the principle of culture; we only supervise it, and promulge along with it, as deep, perhaps a deeper, principle. As we have shown the New World including in itself the all-leveling aggregate of democracy, we show it also including the all-varied, all-permitting, all-free theorem of individuality, and erecting therefor a lofty and hitherto unoccupied framework or platform, broad enough for all, eligible to every farmer and mechanic—to the female equally with the male—a towering selfhood, not physically perfect only—not satisfied with the mere mind's and learning's

stores, but religious, possessing the idea of the infinite, (rudder and compass sure amid this troublous voyage, o'er darkest, wildest wave, through stormiest wind, of man's or nation's progress)—realizing, above the rest, that known humanity, in deepest sense, is fair adhesion to itself, for purposes beyond—and that, finally, the personality of mortal life is most important with reference to the immortal, the unknown, the spiritual, the only permanently real, which as the ocean waits for and receives the rivers, waits for us each and all.

Much is there, yet, demanding line and outline in our Vistas, not only on these topics, but others quite unwritten. Indeed, we could talk the matter, and expand it, through lifetime. But it is necessary to return to our original premises. In view of them, we have again pointedly to confess that all the objective grandeurs of the world, for highest purposes, yield themselves up, and depend on mentality alone. Here, and here only, all balances, all rests. For the mind, which alone builds the permanent edifice, haughtily builds it to itself. By it, with what follows it, are convey'd to mortal sense the culminations of the materialistic, the known, and a prophecy of the unknown. To take expression, to incarnate, to endow a literature with grand and archetypal models—to fill with pride and love the utmost capacity, and to achieve spiritual meanings, and suggest the future—these, and these only, satisfy the soul. We must not say one word against real materials; but the wise know that they do not become real till touched by emotions, the mind. Did we call the latter imponderable? Ah, let us rather proclaim that the slightest song-tune, the countless ephemera of passions arous'd by orators and tale-tellers, are more dense, more weighty than the engines there in the great factories, or the granite blocks in their foundations.

Approaching thus the momentous spaces, and considering with reference to a new and greater personalism, the needs and possibilities of American imaginative literature, through the medium-light of what we have already broach'd, it will at once be appreciated that a vast gulf of difference separates the present

accepted condition of these spaces, inclusive of what is floating in them, from any condition adjusted to, or fit for, the world, the America, there sought to be indicated, and the copious races of complete men and women, along these Vistas crudely outlined. It is, in some sort, no less a difference than lies between that long-continued nebular state and vagueness of the astronomical worlds, compared with the subsequent state, the definitely-form'd worlds themselves, duly compacted, clustering in systems, hung up there, chandeliers of the universe, beholding and mutually lit by each other's lights, serving for ground of all substantial foothold, all vulgar uses—yet serving still more as an undying chain and echelon of spiritual proofs and shows. A boundless field to fill! A new creation, with needed orbic works launch'd forth, to revolve in free and lawful circuits—to move, self-poised, through the ether, and shine like heaven's own suns! With such, and nothing less, we suggest that New World literature, fit to rise upon, cohere, and signalize in time, these States.

What, however, do we more definitely mean by New World literature? Are we not doing well enough here already? Are not the United States this day busily using, working, more printer's type, more presses, than any other country? uttering and absorbing more publications than any other? Do not our publishers fatten quicker and deeper? (helping themselves, under shelter of a delusive and sneaking law, or rather absence of law, to most of their forage, poetical, pictorial, historical, romantic, even comic, without money and without price—and fiercely resisting the timidest proposal to pay for it.) Many will come under this delusion—but my purpose is to dispel it. I say that a nation may hold and circulate rivers and oceans of very readable print, journals, magazines, novels, library-books, "poetry," &c.—such as the States to-day possess and circulate—of unquestionable aid and value—hundreds of new volumes annually composed and brought out here, respectable enough, indeed unsurpass'd in smartness and erudition—with further hundreds, or rather millions, (as by free forage or theft afore-

mention'd,) also thrown into the market—and yet, all the while, the said nation, land, strictly speaking, may possess no literature at all.

Repeating our inquiry, what, then, do we mean by real literature? especially the democratic literature of the future? Hard questions to meet. The clues are inferential, and turn us to the past. At best, we can only offer suggestions, comparisons, circuits.

It must still be reiterated, as, for the purpose of these memoranda, the deep lesson of history and time, that all else in the contributions of a nation or age, through its politics, materials, heroic personalities, military eclat, &c., remains crude, and defers, in any close and thorough-going estimate, until vitalized by national, original archetypes in literature. They only put the nation in form, finally tell anything—prove, complete anything—perpetuate anything. Without doubt, some of the richest and most powerful and populous communities of the antique world, and some of the grandest personalities and events, have, to after and present times, left themselves entirely unbequeath'd. Doubtless, greater than any that have come down to us, were among those lands, heroisms, persons, that have not come down to us at all, even by name, date, or location. Others have arrived safely, as from voyages over wide, century-stretching seas. The little ships, the miracles that have buoy'd them, and by incredible chances safely convey'd them, (or the best of them, their meaning and essence,) over long wastes, darkness, lethargy, ignorance, &c., have been a few inscriptions—a few immortal compositions, small in size, yet compassing what measureless values of reminiscence, contemporary portraitures, manners, idioms and beliefs, with deepest inference, hint and thought, to tie and touch forever the old, new body, and the old, new soul! These! and still these! bearing the freight so dear—dearer than pride—dearer than love. All the best experience of humanity, folded, saved, freighted to us here. Some of these tiny ships we call Old and New Testament, Homer, Eschylus, Plato, Juvenal, &c. Precious minims! I think, if we were forced to choose, rather than have you, and the likes of you, and what

belongs to, and has grown of you, blotted out and gone, we could better afford, appalling as that would be, to lose all actual ships, this day fasten'd by wharf, or floating on wave, and see them, with all their cargoes, scuttled and sent to the bottom.

Gather'd by geniuses of city, race or age, and put by them in highest of art's forms, namely, the literary form, the peculiar combinations and the outshows of that city, age, or race, its particular modes of the universal attributes and passions, its faiths, heroes, lovers and gods, wars, traditions, struggles, crimes, emotions, joys, (or the subtle spirit of these,) having been pass'd on to us to illumine our own selfhood, and its experiences—what they supply, indispensable and highest, if taken away, nothing else in all the world's boundless storehouses could make up to us, or ever again return.

For us, along the great highways of time, those monuments stand—those forms of majesty and beauty. For us those beacons burn through all the nights. Unknown Egyptians, grav-ing hieroglyphs; Hindus, with hymn and apothegm and endless epic; Hebrew prophet, with spirituality, as in flashes of lightning, conscience like red-hot iron, plaintive songs and screams of vengeance for tyrannies and enslavement; Christ, with bent head, brooding love and peace, like a dove; Greek, creating eternal shapes of physical and esthetic proportion; Roman, lord of satire, the sword, and the codex;—of the figures, some far off and veil'd, others nearer and visible; Dante, stalking with lean form, nothing but fibre, not a grain of superfluous flesh; Angelo, and the great painters, architects, musicians; rich Shakspere, luxuriant as the sun, artist and singer of feudalism in its sunset, with all the gorgeous colors, owner thereof, and using them at will; and so to such as German Kant and Hegel, where they, though near us, leaping over the ages, sit again, impassive, imperturbable, like the Egyptian gods. Of these, and the like of these, is it too much, indeed, to return to our favorite figure, and view them as orbs and systems of orbs, moving in free paths in the spaces of that other heaven, the kosmic intellect, the soul?

Ye powerful and resplendent ones! ye were, in your atmos-

pheres, grown not for America, but rather for her foes, the feudal and the old—while our genius is democratic and modern. Yet could ye, indeed, but breathe your breath of life into our New World's nostrils—not to enslave us, as now, but, for our needs, to breed a spirit like your own—perhaps, (dare we to say it?) to dominate, even destroy, what you yourselves have left! On your plane, and no less, but even higher and wider, must we mete and measure for to-day and here. I demand races of orbic bards, with unconditional uncompromising sway. Come forth, sweet democratic despots of the west!

By points like these we, in reflection, token what we mean by any land's or people's genuine literature. And thus compared and tested, judging amid the influence of loftiest products only, what do our current copious fields of print, covering in manifold forms, the United States, better, for an analogy, present, than, as in certain regions of the sea, those spreading, undulating masses of squid, through which the whale swimming, with head half out, feeds?

Not but that doubtless our current so-called literature, (like an endless supply of small coin,) performs a certain service, and may-be, too, the service needed for the time, (the preparation-service, as children learn to spell.) Everybody reads, and truly nearly everybody writes, either books, or for the magazines or journals. The matter has magnitude, too, after a sort. But is it really advancing? or, has it advanced for a long while? There is something impressive about the huge editions of the dailies and weeklies, the mountain-stacks of white paper piled in the press-vaults, and the proud, crashing, ten-cylinder presses, which I can stand and watch any time by the half hour. Then, (though the States in the field of imagination present not a single first-class work, not a single great literatus,) the main objects, to amuse, to titillate, to pass away time, to circulate the news, and rumors of news, to rhyme and read rhyme, are yet attain'd, and on a scale of infinity. To-day, in books, in the rivalry of writers, especially novelists, success, (so-call'd,) is for him or her who strikes the mean flat average, the sensational

appetite for stimulus, incident, persiflage, &c., and depicts, to the common calibre, sensual, exterior life. To such, or the luckiest of them, as we see, the audiences are limitless and profitable; but they cease presently. While this day, or any day, to workmen portraying interior or spiritual life, the audiences were limited, and often laggard—but they last forever.

Compared with the past, our modern science soars, and our journals serve—but ideal and even ordinary romantic literature, does not, I think, substantially advance. Behold the prolific brood of the contemporary novel, magazine-tale, theatre-play, &c. The same endless thread of tangled and superlative love-story, inherited, apparently from the Amadis and Palmerins of the 13th, 14th, and 15th centuries over there in Europe. The costumes and associations brought down to date, the seasoning hotter and more varied, the dragons and ogres left out—but the *thing*, I should say, has not advanced—is just as sensational, just as strain'd—remains about the same, nor more, nor less.

What is the reason our time, our lands, that we see no fresh local courage, sanity, of our own—the Mississippi, stalwart Western men, real mental and physical facts, Southerners, &c., in the body of our literature? especially the poetic part of it. But always, instead, a parcel of dandies and ennuyees, dapper little gentlemen from abroad, who flood us with their thin sentiment of parlors, parasols, piano-songs, tinkling rhymes, the five-hundredth importation—or whimpering and crying about something, chasing one aborted conceit after another, and forever occupied in dyspeptic amours with dyspeptic women. While, current and novel, the grandest events and revolutions, and stormiest passions of history, are crossing to-day with unparallel'd rapidity and magnificence over the stages of our own and all the continents, offering new materials, opening new vistas, with largest needs, inviting the daring launching forth of conceptions in literature, inspired by them, soaring in highest regions, serving art in its highest, (which is only the other name for serving God, and serving humanity,) where is the man of letters, where is the book, with any nobler aim than to

follow in the old track, repeat what has been said before—and, as its utmost triumph, sell well, and be erudite or elegant?

Mark the roads, the processes, through which these States have arrived, standing easy, henceforth ever-equal, ever-compact, in their range to-day. European adventures? the most antique? Asiatic or African? old history—miracles—romances? Rather, our own unquestion'd facts. They hasten, incredible, blazing bright as fire. From the deeds and days of Columbus down to the present, and including the present—and especially the late Secession war—when I con them, I feel, every leaf, like stopping to see if I have not made a mistake, and fall'n on the splendid figments of some dream. But it is no dream. We stand, live, move, in the huge flow of our age's materialism—in its spirituality. We have had founded for us the most positive of lands. The founders have pass'd to other spheres—but what are these terrible duties they have left us?

Their politics the United States have, in my opinion, with all their faults, already substantially establish'd, for good, on their own native, sound, long-vista'd principles, never to be overturn'd, offering a sure basis for all the rest. With that, their future religious forms, sociology, literature, teachers, schools, costumes, &c., are of course to make a compact whole, uniform, on tallying principles. For how can we remain, divided, contradicting ourselves, this way? I say we can only attain harmony and stability by consulting ensemble and the ethic purports, and faithfully building upon them. For the New World, indeed, after two grand stages of preparation-strata, I perceive that now a third stage, being ready for, (and without which

*Note, to-day, an instructive, curious spectacle and conflict. Science, (twin, in its fields, of Democracy in its)—Science, testing absolutely all thoughts, all works, has already burst well upon the world—a sun, mounting, most illuminating, most glorious—surely never again to set. But against it, deeply entrench'd, holding possession, yet remains, (not only through the churches and schools, but by imaginative literature, and unregenerate poetry,) the fossil theology of the mythic-materialistic, superstitious, untaught and credulous, fable-loving, primitive ages of humanity.

the other two were useless,) with unmistakable signs appears. The First stage was the planning and putting on record the political foundation rights of immense masses of people—indeed all people—in the organization of republican National, State, and municipal governments, all constructed with reference to each, and each to all. This is the American programme, not for classes, but for universal man, and is embodied in the compacts of the Declaration of Independence, and, as it began and has now grown, with its amendments, the Federal Constitution—and in the State governments, with all their interiors, and with general suffrage; those having the sense not only of what is in themselves, but that their certain several things started, planted, hundreds of others in the same direction duly arise and follow. The Second stage relates to material prosperity, wealth, produce, labor-saving machines, iron, cotton, local, State and continental railways, intercommunication and trade with all lands, steamships, mining, general employment, organization of great cities, cheap appliances for comfort, numberless technical schools, books, newspapers, a currency for money circulation, &c. The Third stage, rising out of the previous ones, to make them and all illustrious, I, now, for one, promulge, announcing a native expression-spirit, getting into form, adult, and through mentality, for these States, self-contain'd, different from others, more expansive, more rich and free, to be evidenced by original authors and poets to come, by American personalities, plenty of them, male and female, traversing the States, none excepted—and by native superber tableaux and growths of language, songs, operas, orations, lectures, architecture—and by a sublime and serious Religious Democracy sternly taking command, dissolving the old, sloughing off surfaces, and from its own interior and vital principles, reconstructing, democratizing society.

For America, type of progress, and of essential faith in man, above all his errors and wickedness—few suspect how deep, how deep it really strikes. The world evidently supposes, and we have evidently supposed so too, that the States are merely to achieve the equal franchise, an elective government—to inaugurate the respectability of labor, and become a nation of

practical operatives, law-abiding, orderly and well-off. Yes, those are indeed parts of the task of America; but they not only do not exhaust the progressive conception, but rather arise, teeming with it, as the mediums of deeper, higher progress. Daughter of a physical revolution—mother of the true revolutions, which are of the interior life, and of the arts. For so long as the spirit is not changed, any change of appearance is of no avail.

The old men, I remember as a boy, were always talking of American independence. What is independence? Freedom from all laws or bonds except those of one's own being, control'd by the universal ones. To lands, to man, to woman, what is there at last to each, but the inherent soul, nativity, idiocracy, free, highest-poised, soaring its own flight, following out itself?

At present, these States, in their theology and social standards, (of greater importance than their political institutions,) are entirely held possession of by foreign lands. We see the sons and daughters of the New World, ignorant of its genius, not yet inaugurating the native, the universal, and the near, still importing the distant, the partial, and the dead. We see London, Paris, Italy—not original, superb, as where they belong—but second-hand here, where they do not belong. We see the shreds of Hebrews, Romans, Greeks; but where, on her own soil, do we see, in any faithful, highest, proud expression, America herself? I sometimes question whether she has a corner in her own house.

Not but that in one sense, and a very grand one, good theology, good art, or good literature, has certain features shared in common. The combination fraternizes, ties the races—is, in many particulars, under laws applicable indifferently to all, irrespective of climate or date, and, from whatever source, appeals to emotions, pride, love, spirituality, common to human-kind. Nevertheless, they touch a man closest, (perhaps only actually touch him,) even in these, in their expression through autochthonic lights and shades, flavors, fondnesses, aversions, specific incidents, illustrations, out of his own nationality,

geography, surroundings, antecedents, &c. The spirit and the form are one, and depend far more on association, identity and place, than is supposed. Subtly interwoven with the materiality and personality of a land, a race—Teuton, Turk, Californian, or what not—there is always something—I can hardly tell what it is—history but describes the results of it—it is the same as the untellable look of some human faces. Nature, too, in her stolid forms, is full of it—but to most it is there a secret. This something is rooted in the invisible roots, the profoundest meanings of that place, race, or nationality; and to absorb and again effuse it, uttering words and products as from its midst, and carrying it into highest regions, is the work, or a main part of the work, of any country's true author, poet, historian, lecturer, and perhaps even priest and philosopher. Here, and here only, are the foundations for our really valuable and permanent verse, drama, &c.

But at present, (judged by any higher scale than that which finds the chief ends of existence to be to feverishly make money during one-half of it, and by some "amusement," or perhaps foreign travel, flippantly kill time, the other half,) and consider'd with reference to purposes of patriotism, health, a noble personality, religion, and the democratic adjustments, all these swarms of poems, literary magazines, dramatic plays, resultant so far from American intellect, and the formation of our best ideas, are useless and a mockery. They strengthen and nourish no one, express nothing characteristic, give decision and purpose to no one, and suffice only the lowest level of vacant minds.

Of what is called the drama, or dramatic presentation in the United States, as now put forth at the theatres, I should say it deserves to be treated with the same gravity, and on a par with the questions of ornamental confectionery at public dinners, or the arrangement of curtains and hangings in a ballroom—nor more, nor less. Of the other, I will not insult the reader's intelligence, (once really entering into the atmosphere of these *Vistas*,) by supposing it necessary to show, in detail, why the copious dribble, either of our little or well-known rhymesters, does not fulfil, in any respect, the needs and august occasions of

this land. America demands a poetry that is bold, modern, and all-surrounding and kosmical, as she is herself. It must in no respect ignore science or the modern, but inspire itself with science and the modern. It must bend its vision toward the future, more than the past. Like America, it must extricate itself from even the greatest models of the past, and, while courteous to them, must have entire faith in itself, and the products of its own democratic spirit only. Like her, it must place in the van, and hold up at all hazards, the banner of the divine pride of man in himself, (the radical foundation of the new religion.) Long enough have the People been listening to poems in which common humanity, deferential, bends low, humiliated, acknowledging superiors. But America listens to no such poems. Erect, inflated, and fully self-esteeming be the chant; and then America will listen with pleased ears.

Nor may the genuine gold, the gems, when brought to light at last, be probably usher'd forth from any of the quarters currently counted on. To-day, doubtless, the infant genius of American poetic expression, (eluding those highly-refined imported and gilt-edged themes, and sentimental and butterfly flights, pleasant to orthodox publishers—causing tender spasms in the coteries, and warranted not to chafe the sensitive cuticle of the most exquisitely artificial gossamer delicacy,) lies sleeping far away, happily unrecognized and uninjur'd by the coteries, the art-writers, the talkers and critics of the saloons, or the lecturers in the colleges—lies sleeping, aside, unrecking itself, in some western idiom, or native Michigan or Tennessee repartee, or stump-speech—or in Kentucky or Georgia, or the Carolinas—or in some slang or local song or allusion of the Manhattan, Boston, Philadelphia or Baltimore mechanic—or up in the Maine woods—or off in the hut of the California miner, or crossing the Rocky mountains, or along the Pacific railroad—or on the breasts of the young farmers of the north-west, or Canada, or boatmen of the lakes. Rude and coarse nursing-beds, these; but only from such beginnings and stocks, indigenous here, may haply arrive, be grafted, and sprout, in

time, flowers of genuine American aroma, and fruits truly and fully our own.

I say it were a standing disgrace to these States—I say it were a disgrace to any nation, distinguish'd above others by the variety and vastness of its territories, its materials, its inventive activity, and the splendid practicality of its people, not to rise and soar above others also in its original styles in literature and art, and its own supply of intellectual and esthetic masterpieces, archetypal, and consistent with itself. I know not a land except ours that has not, to some extent, however small, made its title clear. The Scotch have their born ballads, subtly expressing their past and present, and expressing character. The Irish have theirs. England, Italy, France, Spain, theirs. What has America? With exhaustless mines of the richest ore of epic, lyric, tale, tune, picture, &c., in the Four Years' War; with, indeed, I sometimes think, the richest masses of material ever afforded a nation, more variegated, and on a larger scale—the first sign of proportionate, native, imaginative Soul, and first-class works to match, is, (I cannot too often repeat,) so far wanting.

Long ere the second centennial arrives, there will be some forty to fifty great States, among them Canada and Cuba. When the present century closes, our population will be sixty or seventy millions. The Pacific will be ours, and the Atlantic mainly ours. There will be daily electric communication with every part of the globe. What an age! What a land! Where, elsewhere, one so great? The individuality of one nation must then, as always, lead the world. Can there be any doubt who the leader ought to be? Bear in mind, though, that nothing less than the mightiest original non-subordinated SOUL has ever really, gloriously led, or ever can lead. (This Soul—its other name, in these Vistas, is LITERATURE.)

In fond fancy leaping those hundred years ahead, let us survey America's works, poems, philosophies, fulfilling prophecies, and giving form and decision to best ideals. Much that is now undream'd of, we might then perhaps see establish'd, luxuriantly cropping forth, richness, vigor of letters and of artistic expres-

sion, in whose products character will be a main requirement, and not merely erudition or elegance.

Intense and loving comradeship, the personal and passionate attachment of man to man—which, hard to define, underlies the lessons and ideals of the profound saviours of every land and age, and which seems to promise, when thoroughly develop'd, cultivated and recognized in manners and literature, the most substantial hope and safety of the future of these States, will then be fully express'd.*

A strong-fibred joyousness and faith, and the sense of health *al fresco*, may well enter into the preparation of future noble American authorship. Part of the test of a great literatus shall be the absence in him of the idea of the covert, the lurid, the maleficent, the devil, the grim estimates inherited from the Puritans, hell, natural depravity, and the like. The great literatus will be known, among the rest, by his cheerful simplicity, his adherence to natural standards, his limitless faith in God, his reverence, and by the absence in him of doubt, ennui, burlesque, persiflage, or any strain'd and temporary fashion.

Nor must I fail, again and yet again, to clinch, reiterate more plainly still, (O that indeed such survey as we fancy, may show in time this part completed also!) the lofty aim, surely the proudest and the purest, in whose service the future literatus, of whatever field, may gladly labor. As we have intimated,

*It is to the development, identification, and general prevalence of that fervid comradeship, (the adhesive love, at least rivaling the amative love hitherto possessing imaginative literature, if not going beyond it,) that I look for the counterbalance and offset of our materialistic and vulgar American democracy, and for the spiritualization thereof. Many will say it is a dream, and will not follow my inferences: but I confidently expect a time when there will be seen, running like a half-hid warp through all the myriad audible and visible worldly interests of America, threads of manly friendship, fond and loving, pure and sweet, strong and life-long, carried to degrees hitherto unknown—not only giving tone to individual character, and making it unprecedentedly emotional, muscular, heroic, and refined, but having the deepest relations to general politics. I say democracy infers such loving comradeship, as its most inevitable twin or counterpart, without which it will be incomplete, in vain, and incapable of perpetuating itself.

offsetting the material civilization of our race, our nationality, its wealth, territories, factories, population, products, trade, and military and naval strength, and breathing breath of life into all these, and more, must be its moral civilization—the formulation, expression, and aidancy whereof, is the very highest height of literature. The climax of this loftiest range of civilization, rising above all the gorgeous shows and results of wealth, intellect, power, and art, as such—above even theology and religious fervor—is to be its development, from the eternal bases, and the fit expression, of absolute Conscience, moral soundness, Justice. Even in religious fervor there is a touch of animal heat. But moral conscientiousness, crystalline, without flaw, not Godlike only, entirely human, awes and enchants forever. Great is emotional love, even in the order of the rational universe. But, if we must make gradations, I am clear there is something greater. Power, love, veneration, products, genius, esthetics, tried by subtlest comparisons, analyses, and in serenest moods, somewhere fail, somehow become vain. Then noiseless, with flowing steps, the lord, the sun, the last ideal comes. By the names right, justice, truth, we suggest, but do not describe it. To the world of men it remains a dream, an idea as they call it. But no dream is it to the wise—but the proudest, almost only solid lasting thing of all. Its analogy in the material universe is what holds together this world, and every object upon it, and carries its dynamics on forever sure and safe. Its lack, and the persistent shirking of it, as in life, sociology, literature, politics, business, and even sermonizing, these times, or any times, still leaves the abyss, the mortal flaw and smutch, mocking civilization to-day, with all its unquestion'd triumphs, and all the civilization so far known.*

*I am reminded as I write that out of this very conscience, or idea of conscience, of intense moral right, and in its name and strain'd construction, the worst fanaticisms, wars, persecutions, murders, &c., have yet, in all lands, in the past, been broach'd, and have come to their devilish fruition. Much is to be said—but I may say here, and in response, that side by side with the unflagging stimulation of the elements of religion and conscience must henceforth move with equal sway, science, absolute reason, and the general proportionate development of the whole man. These scientific facts, deductions, are divine too—precious counted parts of

Present literature, while magnificently fulfilling certain popular demands, with plenteous knowledge and verbal smartness, is profoundly sophisticated, insane, and its very joy is morbid. It needs tally and express Nature, and the spirit of Nature, and to know and obey the standards. I say the question of Nature, largely consider'd, involves the questions of the esthetic, the emotional, and the religious—and involves happiness. A fitly born and bred race, growing up in right conditions of outdoor as much as in-door harmony, activity and development, would probably, from and in those conditions, find it enough merely *to live*—and would, in their relations to the sky, air, water, trees, &c., and to the countless common shows, and in the fact of life itself, discover and achieve happiness—with Being suffused night and day by wholesome extasy, surpassing all the pleasures that wealth, amusement, and even gratified intellect, erudition, or the sense of art, can give.

In the prophetic literature of these States (the reader of my speculations will miss their principal stress unless he allows well for the point that a new Literature, perhaps a new Metaphysics, certainly a new Poetry, are to be, in my opinion, the only sure and worthy supports and expressions of the American Democracy,) Nature, true Nature, and the true idea of Nature, long absent, must, above all, become fully restored, enlarged, and must furnish the pervading atmosphere to poems, and the test of all high literary and esthetic compositions. I do not mean the smooth walks, trimm'd hedges, poseys and nightingales of the English poets, but the whole orb, with its geologic history, the kosmos, carrying fire and snow, that rolls through the illimitable areas, light as a feather, though weighing billions of tons. Furthermore, as by what we now partially call Nature moral civilization, and, with physical health, indispensable to it, to prevent fanaticism. For abstract religion, I perceive, is easily led astray, ever credulous, and is capable of devouring, remorseless, like fire and flame. Conscience, too, isolated from all else, and from the emotional nature, may but attain the beauty and purity of glacial, snowy ice. We want, for these States, for the general character, a cheerful, religious fervor, endued with the ever-present modifications of the human emotions, friendship, benevolence, with a fair field for scientific inquiry, the right of individual judgment, and always the cooling influences of material Nature.

is intended, at most, only what is entertainable by the physical conscience, the sense of matter, and of good animal health—on these it must be distinctly accumulated, incorporated, that man, comprehending these, has, in towering superaddition, the moral and spiritual consciences, indicating his destination beyond the ostensible, the mortal.

To the heights of such estimate of Nature indeed ascending, we proceed to make observations for our *Vistas*, breathing rarest air. What is I believe called Idealism seems to me to suggest, (guarding against extravagance, and ever modified even by its opposite,) the course of inquiry and desert of favor for our New World metaphysics, their foundation of and in literature, giving hue to all.*

*The culmination and fruit of literary artistic expression, and its final fields of pleasure for the human soul, are in metaphysics, including the mysteries of the spiritual world, the soul itself, and the question of the immortal continuation of our identity. In all ages, the mind of man has brought up here—and always will. Here, at least, of whatever race or era, we stand on common ground. Applause, too, is unanimous, antique or modern. Those authors who work well in this field—though their reward, instead of a handsome percentage, or royalty, may be but simply the laurel-crown of the victors in the great Olympic games—will be dearest to humanity, and their works, however esthetically defective, will be treasur'd forever. The altitude of literature and poetry has always been religion—and always will be. The Indian Vedas, the Naçkas of Zoroaster, the Talmud of the Jews, the Old Testament, the Gospel of Christ and his disciples, Plato's works, the Koran of Mohammed, the Edda of Snorro, and so on toward our own day, to Swedenborg, and to the invaluable contributions of Leibnitz, Kant and Hegel—these, with such poems only in which, (while singing well of persons and events, of the passions of man, and the shows of the material universe,) the religious tone, the consciousness of mystery, the recognition of the future, of the unknown, of Deity over and under all, and of the divine purpose, are never absent, but indirectly give tone to all—exhibit literature's real heights and elevations, towering up like the great mountains of the earth.

Standing on this ground—the last, the highest, only permanent ground—and sternly criticising, from it, all works, either of the literary, or any art, we have peremptorily to dismiss every pretensive production, however fine its esthetic or intellectual points, which violates or ignores, or even does not celebrate, the central divine idea of All, suffusing universe, of eternal trains of purpose, in the development, by however slow degrees, of the physical, moral, and spiritual kosmos. I say he has studied, meditated to no profit, whatever may be his mere erudition, who has not absorb'd this simple consciousness and faith. It is not entirely new—but it is for Democracy to elaborate it, and look to build upon and expand

The elevating and etherealizing ideas of the unknown and of unreality must be brought forward with authority, as they are the legitimate heirs of the known, and of reality, and at least as great as their parents. Fearless of scoffing, and of the ostent, let us take our stand, our ground, and never desert it, to confront the growing excess and arrogance of realism. To the cry, now victorious—the cry of sense, science, flesh, incomes, farms, merchandise, logic, intellect, demonstrations, solid perpetuities, buildings of brick and iron, or even the facts of the shows of trees, earth, rocks, &c., fear not, my brethren, my sisters, to sound out with equally determin'd voice, that conviction brooding within the recesses of every envision'd soul—illusions! apparitions! figments all! True, we must not condemn the show, neither absolutely deny it, for the indispensability of its meanings; but how clearly we see that, migrate in soul to what we can already conceive of superior and spiritual points of view, and, palpable as it seems under present relations, it all and several might, nay certainly would, fall apart and vanish.

I hail with joy the oceanic, variegated, intense practical energy, the demand for facts, even the business materialism of the current age, our States. But woe to the age or land in which these things, movements, stopping at themselves, do not tend to ideas. As fuel to flame, and flame to the heavens, so must wealth, science, materialism—even this democracy of which we

from it, with uncompromising reliance. Above the doors of teaching the inscription is to appear, 'Though little or nothing can be absolutely known, perceiv'd, except from a point of view which is evanescent, yet we know at least one permanency, that Time and Space, in the will of God, furnish successive chains, completions of material births and beginnings, solve all discrepancies, fears and doubts, and eventually fulfil happiness—and that the prophecy of those births, namely spiritual results, throws the true arch over all teaching, all science. The local considerations of sin, disease, deformity, ignorance, death, &c., and their measurement by the superficial mind, and ordinary legislation and theology, are to be met by science, boldly accepting, promulging this faith, and planting the seeds of superber laws—of the explication of the physical universe through the spiritual—and clearing the way for a religion, sweet and unimpugnable alike to little child or great savan.

make so much—unerringly feed the highest mind, the soul. Infinitude the flight; fathomless the mystery. Man, so diminutive, dilates beyond the sensible universe, competes with, outcopes space and time, meditating even one great idea. Thus, and thus only, does a human being, his spirit, ascend above, and justify, objective Nature, which, probably nothing in itself, is incredibly and divinely serviceable, indispensable, real, here. And as the purport of objective Nature is doubtless folded, hidden, somewhere here—as somewhere here is what this globe and its manifold forms, and the light of day, and night's darkness, and life itself, with all its experiences, are for—it is here the great literature, especially verse, must get its inspiration and throbbing blood. Then may we attain to a poetry worthy the immortal soul of man, and which, while absorbing materials, and, in their own sense, the shows of Nature, will, above all, have, both directly and indirectly, a freeing, fluidizing, expanding, religious character, exulting with science, fructifying the moral elements, and stimulating aspirations, and meditations on the unknown.

The process, so far, is indirect and peculiar, and though it may be suggested, cannot be defined. Observing, rapport, and with intuition, the shows and forms presented by Nature, the sensuous luxuriance, the beautiful in living men and women, the actual play of passions, in history and life—and, above all, from those developments either in Nature or human personality in which power, (dearest of all to the sense of the artist,) transacts itself—out of these, and seizing what is in them, the poet, the esthetic worker in any field, by the divine magic of his genius, projects them, their analogies, by curious removes, in directions, in literature and art. (No useless attempt to repeat the material creation, by daguerreotyping the exact likeness by mortal mental means.) This is the image-making faculty, coping with material creation, and rivaling, almost triumphing over it. This alone, when all the other parts of a specimen of literature or art are ready and waiting, can breathe into it the breath of life, and endow it with identity.

“The true question to ask,” says the librarian of Congress in

a paper read before the Social Science Convention at New York, October, 1869, "The true question to ask respecting a book, is, *has it help'd any human soul?*" This is the hint, statement, not only of the great literatus, his book, but of every great artist. It may be that all works of art are to be first tried by their art qualities, their image-forming talent, and their dramatic, pictorial, plot-constructing, euphonious and other talents. Then, whenever claiming to be first-class works, they are to be strictly and sternly tried by their foundation in, and radiation, in the highest sense, and always indirectly, of the ethic principles, and eligibility to free, arouse, dilate.

As, within the purposes of the Kosmos, and vivifying all meteorology, and all the congeries of the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds—all the physical growth and development of man, and all the history of the race in politics, religions, wars, &c., there is a moral purpose, a visible or invisible intention, certainly underlying all—its results and proof needing to be patiently waited for—needing intuition, faith, idiosyncrasy, to its realization, which many, and especially the intellectual, do not have—so in the product, or congeries of the product, of the greatest literatus. This is the last, profoundest measure and test of a first-class literary or esthetic achievement, and when understood and put in force must fain, I say, lead to works, books, nobler than any hitherto known. Lo! Nature, (the only complete, actual poem,) existing calmly in the divine scheme, containing all, content, careless of the criticisms of a day, or these endless and wordy chatterers. And lo! to the consciousness of the soul, the permanent identity, the thought, the something, before which the magnitude even of democracy, art, literature, &c., dwindles, becomes partial, measurable—something that fully satisfies, (which those do not.) That something is the All, and the idea of All, with the accompanying idea of eternity, and of itself, the soul, buoyant, indestructible, sailing space forever, visiting every region, as a ship the sea. And again lo! the pulsations in all matter, all spirit, throbbing forever—the eternal beats, eternal systole and diastole of life in things—wherefrom I feel and know that death is not the ending,

as was thought, but rather the real beginning—and that nothing ever is or can be lost, nor ever die, nor soul, nor matter.

In the future of these States must arise poets immenser far, and make great poems of death. The poems of life are great, but there must be the poems of the purports of life, not only in itself, but beyond itself. I have eulogized Homer, the sacred bards of Jewry, Eschylus, Juvenal, Shakspeare, &c., and acknowledged their inestimable value. But, (with perhaps the exception, in some, not all respects, of the second-mention'd,) I say there must, for future and democratic purposes, appear poets, (dare I to say so?) of higher class even than any of those—poets not only possess'd of the religious fire and abandon of Isaiah, luxuriant in the epic talent of Homer, or for proud characters as in Shakspeare, but consistent with the Hegelian formulas, and consistent with modern science. America needs, and the world needs, a class of bards who will, now and ever, so link and tally the rational physical being of man, with the ensembles of time and space, and with this vast and multiform show, Nature, surrounding him, ever tantalizing him, equally a part, and yet not a part of him, as to essentially harmonize, satisfy, and put at rest. Faith, very old, now scared away by science, must be restored, brought back by the same power that caused her departure—restored with new sway, deeper, wider, higher than ever. Surely, this universal ennui, this coward fear, this shuddering at death, these low, degrading views, are not always to rule the spirit pervading future society, as it has the past, and does the present. What the Roman Lucretius sought most nobly, yet all too blindly, negatively to do for his age and its successors, must be done positively by some great coming literatus, especially poet, who, while remaining fully poet, will absorb whatever science indicates, with spiritualism, and out of them, and out of his own genius, will compose the great poem of death. Then will man indeed confront Nature, and confront time and space, both with science, and *con amore*, and take his right place, prepared for life, master of fortune and misfortune. And then that which was long wanted will be supplied, and the

ship that had it not before in all her voyages, will have an anchor.

There are still other standards, suggestions, for products of high literatures. That which really balances and conserves the social and political world is not so much legislation, police, treaties, and dread of punishment, as the latent eternal intuitional sense, in humanity, of fairness, manliness, decorum, &c. Indeed, this perennial regulation, control, and oversight, by self-suppliance is *sine qua non* to democracy; and a highest widest aim of democratic literature may well be to bring forth, cultivate, brace, and strengthen this sense, in individuals and society. A strong mastership of the general inferior self by the superior self, is to be aided, secured, indirectly, but surely, by the literatus, in his works, shaping, for individual or aggregate democracy, a great passionate body, in and along with which goes a great masterful spirit.

And still, providing for contingencies, I fain confront the fact, the need of powerful native philosophers and orators and bards, these States, as rallying points to come, in times of danger, and to fend off ruin and defection. For history is long, long, long. Shift and turn the combinations of the statement as we may, the problem of the future of America is in certain respects as dark as it is vast. Pride, competition, segregation, vicious wilfulness, and license beyond example, brood already upon us. Unwieldy and immense, who shall hold in behemoth? who bridle leviathan? Flaunt it as we choose, athwart and over the roads of our progress loom huge uncertainty, and dreadful, threatening gloom. It is useless to deny it: Democracy grows rankly up the thickest, noxious, deadliest plants and fruits of all—brings worse and worse invaders—needs newer, larger, stronger, keener compensations and compellers.

Our lands, embracing so much, (embracing indeed the whole, rejecting none,) hold in their breast that flame also, capable of consuming themselves, consuming us all. Short as the span of

our national life has been, already have death and downfall crowded close upon us—and will again crowd close, no doubt, even if warded off. Ages to come may never know, but I know, how narrowly during the late secession war—and more than once, and more than twice or thrice—our Nationality, (wherein bound up, as in a ship in a storm, depended, and yet depend, all our best life, all hope, all value,) just grazed, just by a hair escaped destruction. Alas! to think of them! the agony and bloody sweat of certain of those hours! those cruel, sharp, suspended crises!

Even to-day, amid these whirls, incredible flippancy, and blind fury of parties, infidelity, entire lack of first-class captains and leaders, added to the plentiful meanness and vulgarity of the ostensible masses—that problem, the labor question, beginning to open like a yawning gulf, rapidly widening every year—what prospect have we? We sail a dangerous sea of seething currents, cross and under-currents, vortices—all so dark, untried—and whither shall we turn? It seems as if the Almighty had spread before this nation charts of imperial destinies, dazzling as the sun, yet with many a deep intestine difficulty, and human aggregate of cankerous imperfection,—saying, lo! the roads, the only plans of development, long and varied with all terrible balks and ebullitions. You said in your soul, I will be empire of empires, overshadowing all else, past and present, putting the history of old-world dynasties, conquests behind me, as of no account—making a new history, a history of democracy, making old history a dwarf—I alone inaugurating largeness, culminating time. If these, O lands of America, are indeed the prizes, the determinations of your soul, be it so. But behold the cost, and already specimens of the cost. Thought you greatness was to ripen for you like a pear? If you would have greatness, know that you must conquer it through ages, centuries—must pay for it with a proportionate price. For you too, as for all lands, the struggle, the traitor, the wily person in office, scrofulous wealth, the surfeit of prosperity, the demonism of greed, the hell of passion, the decay of faith,

the long postponement, the fossil-like lethargy, the ceaseless need of revolutions, prophets, thunderstorms, deaths, births, new projections and invigorations of ideas and men.

Yet I have dream'd, merged in that hidden-tangled problem of our fate, whose long unraveling stretches mysteriously through time—dream'd out, portray'd, hinted already—a little or a larger band—a band of brave and true, unprecedented yet—arm'd and equipt at every point—the members separated, it may be, by different dates and States, or south, or north, or east, or west—Pacific, Atlantic, Southern, Canadian—a year, a century here, and other centuries there—but always one, compact in soul, conscience-conserving, God-inculcating, inspired achievers, not only in literature, the greatest art, but achievers in all art—a new, undying order, dynasty, from age to age transmitted—a band, a class, at least as fit to cope with current years, our dangers, needs, as those who, for their times, so long, so well, in armor or in cowl, upheld and made illustrious, that far-back feudal, priestly world. To offset chivalry, indeed, those vanish'd countless knights, old altars, abbeys, priests, ages and strings of ages, a knightlier and more sacred cause to-day demands, and shall supply, in a New World, to larger, grander work, more than the counterpart and tally of them.

Arrived now, definitely, at an apex for these Vistas, I confess that the promulgation and belief in such a class or institution—a new and greater literatus order—its possibility, (nay certainty,) underlies these entire speculations—and that the rest, the other parts, as superstructures, are all founded upon it. It really seems to me the condition, not only of our future national and democratic development, but of our perpetuation. In the highly artificial and materialistic bases of modern civilization, with the corresponding arrangements and methods of living, the force-infusion of intellect alone, the depraving influences of riches just as much as poverty, the absence of all high ideals in character—with the long series of tendencies, shapings, which few are strong enough to resist, and which now seem, with steam-engine speed, to be everywhere turning out the generations of

humanity like uniform iron castings—all of which, as compared with the feudal ages, we can yet do nothing better than accept, make the best of, and even welcome, upon the whole, for their oceanic practical grandeur, and their restless wholesale kneading of the masses—I say of all this tremendous and dominant play of solely materialistic bearings upon current life in the United States, with the results as already seen, accumulating, and reaching far into the future, that they must either be confronted and met by at least an equally subtle and tremendous force-infusion for purposes of spiritualization, for the pure conscience, for genuine esthetics, and for absolute and primal manliness and womanliness—or else our modern civilization, with all its improvements, is in vain, and we are on the road to a destiny, a status, equivalent, in its real world, to that of the fabled damned.

Prospecting thus the coming unsped days, and that new order in them—marking the endless train of exercise, development, unwind, in nation as in man, which life is for—we see, fore-indicated, amid these prospects and hopes, new law-forces of spoken and written language—not merely the pedagogue-forms, correct, regular, familiar with precedents, made for matters of outside propriety, fine words, thoughts definitely told out—but a language fann'd by the breath of Nature, which leaps overhead, cares mostly for impetus and effects, and for what it plants and invigorates to grow—tallies life and character, and seldomer tells a thing than suggests or necessitates it. In fact, a new theory of literary composition for imaginative works of the very first class, and especially for highest poems, is the sole course open to these States. Books are to be call'd for, and supplied, on the assumption that the process of reading is not a half-sleep, but, in highest sense, an exercise, a gymnast's struggle; that the reader is to do something for himself, must be on the alert, must himself or herself construct indeed the poem, argument, history, metaphysical essay—the text furnishing the hints, the clue, the start or frame-work. Not the book needs so much to be the complete thing, but the reader of the

book does. That were to make a nation of supple and athletic minds, well-train'd, intuitive, used to depend on themselves, and not on a few coteries of writers.

Investigating here, we see, not that it is a little thing we have, in having the bequeath'd libraries, countless shelves of volumes, records, &c.; yet how serious the danger, depending entirely on them, of the bloodless vein, the nerveless arm, the false application, at second or third hand. We see that the real interest of this people of ours in the theology, history, poetry, politics, and personal models of the past, (the British islands, for instance, and indeed all the past,) is not necessarily to mould ourselves or our literature upon them, but to attain fuller, more definite comparisons, warnings, and the insight to ourselves, our own present, and our own far grander, different, future history, religion, social customs, &c. We see that almost everything that has been written, sung, or stated, of old, with reference to humanity under the feudal and oriental institutes, religions, and for other lands, needs to be re-written, re-sung, re-stated, in terms consistent with the institution of these States, and to come in range and obedient uniformity with them.

We see, as in the universes of the material kosmos, after meteorological, vegetable, and animal cycles, man at last arises, born through them, to prove them, concentrate them, to turn upon them with wonder and love—to command them, adorn them, and carry them upward into superior realms—so, out of the series of the preceding social and political universes, now arise these States. We see that while many were supposing things established and completed, really the grandest things always remain; and discover that the work of the New World is not ended, but only fairly begun.

We see our land, America, her literature, esthetics, &c., as, substantially, the getting in form, or effusement and statement, of deepest basic elements and loftiest final meanings, of history and man—and the portrayal, (under the eternal laws and conditions of beauty,) of our own physiognomy, the subjective tie and expression of the objective, as from our own combination,

continuation, and points of view—and the deposit and record of the national mentality, character, appeals, heroism, wars, and even liberties—where these, and all, culminate in native literary and artistic formulation, to be perpetuated; and not having which native, first-class formulation, she will flounder about, and her other, however imposing, eminent greatness, prove merely a passing gleam; but truly having which, she will understand herself, live nobly, nobly contribute, emanate, and, swinging, poised safely on herself, illumin'd and illuming, become a full-form'd world, and divine Mother not only of material but spiritual worlds, in ceaseless succession through time—the main thing being the average, the bodily, the concrete, the democratic, the popular, on which all the superstructures of the future are to permanently rest.

DEATH OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

LECTURE *deliver'd in New York, April 14, 1879—in Philadelphia, '80—in Boston, '81*

How often since that dark and dripping Saturday—that chilly April day, now fifteen years bygone—my heart has entertain'd the dream, the wish, to give of Abraham Lincoln's death, its own special thought and memorial. Yet now the sought-for opportunity offers, I find my notes incompetent, (why, for truly profound themes, is statement so idle? why does the right phrase never offer?) and the fit tribute I dream'd of, waits unprepared as ever. My talk here indeed is less because of itself or anything in it, and nearly altogether because I feel a desire, apart from any talk, to specify the day, the martyrdom. It is for this, my friends, I have call'd you together. Oft as the rolling years bring back this hour, let it again, however briefly, be dwelt upon. For my own part, I hope and desire, till my own dying day, whenever the 14th or 15th of April comes, to annually gather a few friends, and hold its tragic reminiscence. No narrow or sectional reminiscence. It belongs to these States in their entirety—not the North only, but the South—perhaps belongs most tenderly and

devoutly to the South, of all; for there, really, this man's birth-stock. There and thence his antecedent stamp. Why should I not say that thence his manliest traits—his universality—his canny, easy ways and words upon the surface—his inflexible determination and courage at heart? Have you never realized it, my friends, that Lincoln, though grafted on the West, is essentially, in personnel and character, a Southern contribution?

And though by no means proposing to resume the Secession war to-night, I would briefly remind you of the public conditions preceding that contest. For twenty years, and especially during the four or five before the war actually began, the aspect of affairs in the United States, though without the flash of military excitement, presents more than the survey of a battle, or any extended campaign, or series, even of Nature's convulsions. The hot passions of the South—the strange mixture at the North of inertia, incredulity, and conscious power—the incendiarism of the abolitionists—the rascality and *grip* of the politicians, unparalleled in any land, any age. To these I must not omit adding the honesty of the essential bulk of the people everywhere—yet with all the seething fury and contradiction of their natures more arous'd than the Atlantic's waves in wildest equinox. In politics, what can be more ominous, (though generally unappreciated then)—what more significant than the Presidentiads of Fillmore and Buchanan? proving conclusively that the weakness and wickedness of elected rulers are just as likely to afflict us here, as in the countries of the Old World, under their monarchies, emperors, and aristocracies. In that Old World were everywhere heard underground rumblings, that died out, only to again surely return. While in America the volcano, though civic yet, continued to grow more and more convulsive—more and more stormy and threatening.

In the height of all this excitement and chaos, hovering on the edge at first, and then merged in its very midst, and destined to play a leading part, appears a strange and awkward figure. I shall not easily forget the first time I ever saw Abraham Lincoln. It must have been about the 18th or 19th of February, 1861. It was rather a pleasant afternoon, in New York city, as he arrived

there from the West, to remain a few hours, and then pass on to Washington, to prepare for his inauguration. I saw him in Broadway, near the site of the present Post-office. He came down, I think from Canal street, to stop at the Astor House. The broad spaces, sidewalks, and street in the neighborhood, and for some distance, were crowded with solid masses of people, many thousands. The omnibuses and other vehicles had all been turn'd off, leaving an unusual hush in that busy part of the city. Presently two or three shabby hack barouches made their way with some difficulty through the crowd, and drew up at the Astor House entrance. A tall figure step'd out of the centre of these barouches, paus'd leisurely on the sidewalk, look'd up at the granite walls and looming architecture of the grand old hotel—then, after a relieving stretch of arms and legs, turn'd round for over a minute to slowly and good-humoredly scan the appearance of the vast and silent crowds. There were no speeches—no compliments—no welcome—as far as I could hear, not a word said. Still much anxiety was conceal'd in that quiet. Cautious persons had fear'd some mark'd insult or indignity to the President-elect—for he possess'd no personal popularity at all in New York city, and very little political. But it was evidently tacitly agreed that if the few political supporters of Mr. Lincoln present would entirely abstain from any demonstration on their side, the immense majority, who were any thing but supporters, would abstain on their side also. The result was a sulky, unbroken silence, such as certainly never before characterized so great a New York crowd.

Almost in the same neighborhood I distinctly remember'd seeing Lafayette on his visit to America in 1825. I had also personally seen and heard, various years afterward, how Andrew Jackson, Clay, Webster, Hungarian Kossuth, Filibuster Walker, the Prince of Wales on his visit, and other celebres, native and foreign, had been welcom'd there—all that indescribable human roar and magnetism, unlike any other sound in the universe—the glad exulting thunder-shouts of countless unloos'd throats of men! But on this occasion, not a voice—not a sound. From the top of an omnibus, (driven up one side, close by, and block'd

by the curbstone and the crowds,) I had, I say, a capital view of it all, and especially of Mr. Lincoln, his look and gait—his perfect composure and coolness—his unusual and uncouth height, his dress of complete black, stovepipe hat push'd back on the head, dark-brown complexion, seam'd and wrinkled yet canny-looking face, black, bushy head of hair, disproportionately long neck, and his hands held behind as he stood observing the people. He look'd with curiosity upon that immense sea of faces, and the sea of faces return'd the look with similar curiosity. In both there was a dash of comedy, almost farce, such as Shakspeare puts in his blackest tragedies. The crowd that hemm'd around consisted I should think of thirty to forty thousand men, not a single one his personal friend—while I have no doubt, (so frenzied were the ferments of the time,) many an assassin's knife and pistol lurk'd in hip or breast-pocket there, ready, soon as break and riot came.

But no break or riot came. The tall figure gave another relieving stretch or two of arms and legs; then with moderate pace, and accompanied by a few unknown looking persons, ascended the portico-steps of the Astor House, disappear'd through its broad entrance—and the dumb-show ended.

I saw Abraham Lincoln often the four years following that date. He changed rapidly and much during his Presidency—but this scene, and him in it, are indelibly stamped upon my recollection. As I sat on the top of my omnibus, and had a good view of him, the thought, dim and inchoate then, has since come out clear enough, that four sorts of genius, four mighty and primal hands, will be needed to the complete limning of this man's future portrait—the eyes and brains and finger-touch of Plutarch and Eschylus and Michel Angelo, assisted by Rabelais.

And now—(Mr. Lincoln passing on from this scene to Washington, where he was inaugurated, amid armed cavalry, and sharpshooters at every point—the first instance of the kind in our history—and I hope it will be the last)—now the rapid succession of well-known events, (too well known—I believe, these days, we almost hate to hear them mention'd)—the national flag fired on at Sumter—the uprising of the North, in paroxysms

of astonishment and rage—the chaos of divided councils—the call for troops—the first Bull Run—the stunning cast-down, shock, and dismay of the North—and so in full flood the Secession war. Four years of lurid, bleeding, murky, murderous war. Who paint those years, with all their scenes?—the hard-fought engagements—the defeats, plans, failures—the gloomy hours, days, when our Nationality seem'd hung in pall of doubt, perhaps death—the Mephistophelean sneers of foreign lands and attachés—the dreaded Scylla of European interference, and the Charybdis of the tremendously dangerous latent strata of secession sympathizers throughout the free States, (far more numerous than is supposed)—the long marches in summer—the hot sweat, and many a sunstroke, as on the rush to Gettysburg in '63—the night battles in the woods, as under Hooker at Chancellorsville—the camps in winter—the military prisons—the hospitals—(alas! alas! the hospitals.)

The Secession war? Nay, let me call it the Union war. Though whatever call'd, it is even yet too near us—too vast and too closely overshadowing—its branches unform'd yet, (but certain,) shooting too far into the future—and the most indicative and mightiest of them yet ungrown. A great literature will yet arise out of the era of those four years, those scenes—era compressing centuries of native passion, first-class pictures, tempests of life and death—an inexhaustible mine for the histories, drama, romance, and even philosophy, of peoples to come—indeed the vertebra of poetry and art, (of personal character too,) for all future America—far more grand, in my opinion, to the hands capable of it, than Homer's siege of Troy, or the French wars to Shakspeare.

But I must leave these speculations, and come to the theme I have assign'd and limited myself to. Of the actual murder of President Lincoln, though so much has been written, probably the facts are yet very indefinite in most persons' minds. I read from my memoranda, written at the time, and revised frequently and finally since.

The day, April 14, 1865, seems to have been a pleasant one throughout the whole land—the moral atmosphere pleasant too

—the long storm, so dark, so fratricidal, full of blood and doubt and gloom, over and ended at last by the sun-rise of such an absolute National victory, and utter break-down of Secessionism—we almost doubted our own senses! Lee had capitulated beneath the apple-tree of Appomattox. The other armies, the flanges of the revolt, swiftly follow'd. And could it really be, then? Out of all the affairs of this world of woe and failure and disorder, was there really come the confirm'd, unerring sign of plan, like a shaft of pure light—of rightful rule—of God? So the day, as I say, was propitious. Early herbage, early flowers, were out. (I remember where I was stopping at the time, the season being advanced, there were many lilacs in full bloom. By one of those caprices that enter and give tinge to events without being at all a part of them, I find myself always reminded of the great tragedy of that day by the sight and odor of these blossoms. It never fails.)

But I must not dwell on accessories. The deed hastens. The popular afternoon paper of Washington, the little "Evening Star," had spatter'd all over its third page, divided among the advertisements in a sensational manner, in a hundred different places, *The President and his Lady will be at the Theatre this evening*. . . . (Lincoln was fond of the theatre. I have myself seen him there several times. I remember thinking how funny it was that he, in some respects the leading actor in the stormiest drama known to real history's stage through centuries, should sit there and be so completely interested and absorb'd in those human jack-straws, moving about with their silly little gestures, foreign spirit, and flatulent text.)

On this occasion the theatre was crowded, many ladies in rich and gay costumes, officers in their uniforms, many well-known citizens, young folks, the usual clusters of gas-lights, the usual magnetism of so many people, cheerful, with perfumes, music of violins and flutes—(and over all, and saturating all, that vast, vague wonder, *Victory*, the nation's victory, the triumph of the Union, filling the air, the thought, the sense, with exhilaration more than all music and perfumes.)

The President came betimes, and, with his wife, witness'd the play from the large stage-boxes of the second tier, two thrown into one, and profusely draped with the national flag. The acts and scenes of the piece—one of those singularly written compositions which have at least the merit of giving entire relief to an audience engaged in mental action or business excitements and cares during the day, as it makes not the slightest call on either the moral, emotional, esthetic, or spiritual nature—a piece, (“Our American Cousin,”) in which, among other characters, so call'd, a Yankee, certainly such a one as was never seen, or the least like it ever seen, in North America, is introduced in England, with a varied fol-de-rol of talk, plot, scenery, and such phantasmagoria as goes to make up a modern popular drama—had progress'd through perhaps a couple of its acts, when in the midst of this comedy, or non-such, or whatever it is to be call'd, and to offset it, or finish it out, as if in Nature's and the great Muse's mockery of those poor mimes, came interpolated that scene, not really or exactly to be described at all, (for on the many hundreds who were there it seems to this hour to have left a passing blur, a dream, a blotch)—and yet partially to be described as I now proceed to give it. There is a scene in the play representing a modern parlor, in which two unprecedented English ladies are inform'd by the impossible Yankee that he is not a man of fortune, and therefore undesirable for marriage-catching purposes; after which, the comments being finish'd, the dramatic trio make exit, leaving the stage clear for a moment. At this period came the murder of Abraham Lincoln. Great as all its manifold train, circling round it, and stretching into the future for many a century, in the politics, history, art, &c., of the New World, in point of fact the main thing, the actual murder, transpired with the quiet and simplicity of any commonest occurrence—the bursting of a bud or pod in the growth of vegetation, for instance. Through the general hum following the stage pause, with the change of positions, came the muffled sound of a pistol-shot, which not one-hundredth part of the audience heard at the time—and yet a moment's hush—somehow,

surely, a vague startled thrill—and then, through the ornamented, draped, starr'd and striped space-way of the President's box, a sudden figure, a man, raises himself with hands and feet, stands a moment on the railing, leaps below to the stage, (a distance of perhaps fourteen or fifteen feet,) falls out of position, catching his boot-heel in the copious drapery, (the American flag,) falls on one knee, quickly recovers himself, rises as if nothing had happen'd, (he really sprains his ankle, but unfelt then)—and so the figure, Booth, the murderer, dress'd in plain black broadcloth, bare-headed, with full, glossy, raven hair, and his eyes like some mad animal's flashing with light and resolution, yet with a certain strange calmness, holds aloft in one hand a large knife—walks along not much back from the foot-lights—turns fully toward the audience his face of statuesque beauty, lit by those basilisk eyes, flashing with desperation, perhaps insanity—launches out in a firm and steady voice the words *Sic semper tyrannis*—and then walks with neither slow nor very rapid pace diagonally across to the back of the stage, and disappears. (Had not all this terrible scene—making the mimic ones preposterous—had it not all been rehears'd, in blank, by Booth, beforehand?)

A moment's hush—a scream—the cry of *murder*—Mrs. Lincoln leaning out of the box, with ashy cheeks and lips, with involuntary cry, pointing to the retreating figure, *He has kill'd the President*. And still a moment's strange, incredulous suspense—and then the deluge!—then that mixture of horror, noises, uncertainty—(the sound, somewhere back, of a horse's hoofs clattering with speed)—the people burst through chairs and railings, and break them up—there is inextricable confusion and terror—women faint—quite feeble persons fall, and are trampled on—many cries of agony are heard—the broad stage suddenly fills to suffocation with a dense and motley crowd, like some horrible carnival—the audience rush generally upon it, at least the strong men do—the actors and actresses are all there in their play-costumes and painted faces, with mortal fright showing through the rouge—the screams and calls, confused talk—redoubled, trebled—two or three manage to pass up

water from the stage to the President's box—others try to clamber up—&c., &c.

In the midst of all this, the soldiers of the President's guard, with others, suddenly drawn to the scene, burst in—(some two hundred altogether)—they storm the house, through all the tiers, especially the upper ones, inflamed with fury, literally charging the audience with fix'd bayonets, muskets and pistols, shouting *Clear out! clear out! you sons of ——*. . . Such the wild scene, or a suggestion of it rather, inside the play-house that night.

Outside, too, in the atmosphere of shock and craze, crowds of people, fill'd with frenzy, ready to seize any outlet for it, come near committing murder several times on innocent individuals. One such case was especially exciting. The infuriated crowd, through some chance, got started against one man, either for words he utter'd, or perhaps without any cause at all, and were proceeding at once to actually hang him on a neighboring lamp-post, when he was rescued by a few heroic policemen, who placed him in their midst, and fought their way slowly and amid great peril toward the station house. It was a fitting episode of the whole affair. The crowd rushing and eddying to and fro—the night, the yells, the pale faces, many frighten'd people trying in vain to extricate themselves—the attack'd man, not yet freed from the jaws of death, looking like a corpse—the silent, resolute, half-dozen policemen, with no weapons but their little clubs, yet stern and steady through all those eddying swarms—made a fitting side-scene to the grand tragedy of the murder. They gain'd the station house with the protected man, whom they placed in security for the night, and discharged him in the morning.

And in the midst of that pandemonium, infuriated soldiers, the audience and the crowd, the stage, and all its actors and actresses, its paint-pots, spangles, and gas-lights—the life blood from those veins, the best and sweetest of the land, drips slowly down, and death's ooze already begins its little bubbles on the lips.

Thus the visible incidents and surroundings of Abraham Lincoln's murder, as they really occur'd. Thus ended the attempted

secession of these States; thus the four years' war. But the main things come subtly and invisibly afterward, perhaps long afterward—neither military, political, nor (great as those are,) historical. I say, certain secondary and indirect results, out of the tragedy of this death, are, in my opinion, greatest. Not the event of the murder itself. Not that Mr. Lincoln strings the principal points and personages of the period, like beads, upon the single string of his career. Not that his idiosyncrasy, in its sudden appearance and disappearance, stamps this Republic with a stamp more mark'd and enduring than any yet given by any one man—(more even than Washington's;)—but, join'd with these, the immeasurable value and meaning of that whole tragedy lies, to me, in senses finally dearest to a nation, (and here all our own)—the imaginative and artistic senses—the literary and dramatic ones. Not in any common or low meaning of those terms, but a meaning precious to the race, and to every age. A long and varied series of contradictory events arrives at last at its highest poetic, single, central, pictorial denouement. The whole involved, baffling, multiform whirl of the secession period comes to a head, and is gather'd in one brief flash of lightning-illumination—one, simple fierce deed. Its sharp culmination, and as it were solution, of so many bloody and angry problems, illustrates those climax-moments on the stage of universal Time, where the historic Muse at one entrance, and the tragic Muse at the other, suddenly ringing down the curtain, close an immense act in the long drama of creative thought, and give it radiation, tableau, stranger than fiction. Fit radiation—fit close! How the imagination—how the student loves these things! America, too, is to have them. For not in all great deaths, nor far or near—not Cæsar in the Roman senate-house, or Napoleon passing away in the wild night-storm at St. Helena—not Paleologus, falling, desperately fighting, piled over dozens deep with Grecian corpses—not calm old Socrates, drinking the hemlock—outvies that terminus of the secession war, in one man's life, here in our midst, in our own time—that seal of the emancipation of three million slaves—that parturition and delivery of our at last really free Republic, born again, henceforth

to commence its career of genuine homogeneous Union, compact, consistent with itself.

Nor will ever future American Patriots and Unionists, indifferently over the whole land, or North or South, find a better moral to their lesson. The final use of the greatest men of a Nation is, after all, not with reference to their deeds in themselves, or their direct bearing on their times or lands. The final use of a heroic-eminent life—especially of a heroic-eminent death—is its indirect filtering into the nation and the race, and to give, often at many removes, but unerringly, age after age, color and fibre to the personalism of the youth and maturity of that age, and of mankind. Then there is a cement to the whole people, subtler, more underlying, than any thing in written constitution, or courts or armies—namely, the cement of a death identified thoroughly with that people, at its head, and for its sake. Strange, (is it not?) that battles, martyrs, agonies, blood, even assassination, should so condense—perhaps only really, lastingly condense—a Nationality.

I repeat it—the grand deaths of the race—the dramatic deaths of every nationality—are its most important inheritance-value—in some respects beyond its literature and art—(as the hero is beyond his finest portrait, and the battle itself beyond its choicest song or epic.) Is not here indeed the point underlying all tragedy? the famous pieces of the Grecian masters—and all masters? Why, if the old Greeks had had this man, what trilogies of plays—what epics—would have been made out of him! How the rhapsodes would have recited him! How quickly that quaint tall form would have enter'd into the region where men vitalize gods, and gods divinify men! But Lincoln, his times, his death—great as any, any age—belong altogether to our own, and are autochthonic. (Sometimes indeed I think our American days, our own stage—the actors we know and have shaken hands, or talk'd with—more fateful than any thing in Eschylus—more heroic than the fighters around Troy—afford kings of men for our Democracy prouder than Agamemnon—models of character cute and hardy as Ulysses—deaths more pitiful than Priam's.)

When, centuries hence, (as it must, in my opinion, be centuries hence before the life of these States, or of Democracy, can be really written and illustrated,) the leading historians and dramatists seek for some personage, some special event, incisive enough to mark with deepest cut, and mnemonize, this turbulent Nineteenth century of ours, (not only these States, but all over the political and social world)—something, perhaps, to close that gorgeous procession of European feudalism, with all its pomp and caste-prejudices, (of whose long train we in America are yet so inextricably the heirs)—something to identify with terrible identification, by far the greatest revolutionary step in the history of the United States, (perhaps the greatest of the world, our century)—the absolute extirpation and erasure of slavery from the States—those historians will seek in vain for any point to serve more thoroughly their purpose, than Abraham Lincoln's death.

Dear to the Muse—thrice dear to Nationality—to the whole human race—precious to this Union—precious to Democracy—unspeakably and forever precious—their first great Martyr Chief.

NOTES

POETRY

Song of Myself

The key to the understanding of this poem, as of all of *Leaves of Grass*, is the concept of the self (typified by Walt Whitman) as both individual and universal. The universal aspect of the self is illustrated in two ways: (1) by an imaginative and sympathetic identification of Walt Whitman with every other individual self, and (2) by a mystical union of Walt Whitman with God, the Absolute Self. In either case the self of Walt Whitman maintains its own identity, the consciousness of its own separateness.

ll. 14-16. The poet determines to keep free of the influence of other individual selves, symbolized as "perfumes" and "fragrance." Cf. "efflux of the soul," in "Song of the Open Road," l. 94 ff.

ll. 17-20. The poet escapes from the individual to the universal, symbolized by the atmosphere.

ll. 60-65. The sense of the passage is: Shall I postpone the acceptance of the gifts of providence until I have calculated their exact value?

l. 75, *what I am*: probably the potential or ideal self.

ll. 87-98. This passage contains the most definite record left by Whitman of his mystical gift. Jean Catel (*Walt Whitman: la naissance du poète*, pp. 400-422) suggests that the soul is the subconscious self, or *dæmon*, for which the conscious self is the mouthpiece.

l. 394. The second *snivel* is a noun.

ll. 493-496. The sense is: My words are less the reminders of expressed properties, and more the reminders of unexpressed life.

l. 637. The traitors are all the other senses besides the sense of touch. The passage is a highly figurative description of the abandonment of reason in sensual ecstasy.

ll. 670-673. Whitman accepted the theory of evolution, but he was inclined to the view that man is not limited in any way by his animal antecedents. His belief that environment is the chief factor in evolution connects him with Lamarck rather than with Darwin. It was on the strength of this belief that he expected a new race of people to develop in America.

l. 710. What he guessed was that man is not only infinite in time through evolution past and to come, but also in space through imagination and sympathy.

l. 800, *swallowing soul*: cf. l. 831, and also *filter* in l. 37, and also *infold* in l. 1002 and *embraced* in l. 1019.

l. 871. It is doubtful if Whitman ever visited Texas. Certainly he was

not there during the Texas Revolution. The incident here described is the battle of Coleto, March 20, 1836, and the massacre of Fannin and his men at Goliad, March 27, 1836.

l. 887, *an old-time sea-fight* probably suggested by a letter from John Paul Jones to Benjamin Franklin. See David Goodale's article, "Some of Walt Whitman's Borrowings," *American Literature*, X, 202-213 (May, 1938).

l. 899. Captain John Williams

ll. 959-975 In the exalted mood of sympathetic identification with the wounded sufferers and the prisoners of the ship, it is suddenly revealed to him that he, one of an average unending procession, is in reality identical with the crucified Christ

l. 1028 ff Whitman must be understood to mean that each human being is potentially, not actually, greater than the gods of old religions.

l. 1129, *koboo* A savage of the Ladrone Islands. See the *Complete Writings*, IX, 54.

ll. 1199-1200, *Lord . . . great Camerado* probably the Absolute Self, or Man perfected. Cf. *Listen up there* in l. 1321

ll. 1334-1336. As the sun sets, one's shadow lengthens and merges with the shadows of earth; so, at death, the body is merged with the elements, and perhaps, also, the soul with the general soul

Song of the Answerer

Section 1 of this poem was first published without title in 1855. Section 2 was first published in 1856 as "Poem of the Singers." The two were combined in 1881 and given the present title.

To Think of Time

ll. 72-75, 117-121 These lines should be compared especially with "Starting from Paumanok," ll. 177-186. See also the note on "Eidólons," as well as the poem itself.

Song of the Open Road

Section 3. The cosmic mind, with which for the moment he identifies himself, is omnipresent in nature. His love for nature is the outgrowth of a vague feeling of spiritual identity with nature, and the objects which his senses perceive are felt to be the realization of his own ideas. Thus, because of the efflux of the soul, which is love, the substance of the cosmic mind or soul, each person leaves a part of himself in every object with which he comes in contact.

A Song of the Rolling Earth

The earth is a poem, and each object and quality of earth is a word. The poet should seek in the words of earth the meanings he would indicate by his own words. Hence the poet "tallies" nature. But each individual is a

microcosm; therefore in so far as he knows himself he knows the world, and in so far as he is complete the world will be complete.

ll. 48-53. The following note, from one of Whitman's manuscript notebooks in the Library of Congress, was doubtless the basis of these lines:

"The mirror that Nature holds and hides behind is deep and floating and ethereal and faithful. A man always sends and sees himself in it—from himself he reflects the fashion of his gods and all his religions and politics and books and art and social and public institutions—ignorance or knowledge—kindness or cruelty—grossness or refinement—definitions or chaos—each is merrily sent back to him or her who curiously gazes.

"There is a full-sized woman of calm and voluptuous beauty . . . The unspeakable charm of the face of the mother of many children is the charm of her face . . . she is clean and sweet and simple with immortal health . . . she holds always before her what has the quality of a mirror, and dwells serenely behind it."

Nature here, represented in the figure of a woman, is Reality; the mirror which the woman holds and hides behind is Appearance. The human observer, as a microcosm, is identified with nature; thus, what he sees in the mirror is himself and his world, although it appears as nature. This passage, together with ll. 44-47, which suggest the idea of motion by representing the earth as one of a troupe of dancing sisters, will become clearer if studied in the light of ll. 41-43 and 73, where it is intimated that the truths of earth are revealed through reflection and motion.

To the Garden the World

This and the four poems next following it are part of the group of sex-poems entitled *Children of Adam*. In this poem he represents himself as the resurrected Adam come to restore the primitive and natural status of sex. Whitman's motive for emphasizing sex has often been misunderstood. He identified the sexual or procreative impulse with the spiritual and creative force in the universe and considered it, therefore, as divine. Cf. "A Song of Joys," ll. 102-103.

The poems of the *Children of Adam* group first published in 1860 were probably composed between 1856 and 1859, though the exact dates are unknown.

Once I Pass'd Through a Populous City

In the original draft of this poem (see Holloway, *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, II, 102), the lover was a man, not a woman. Whitman expressed the desire that the poem should be regarded merely in its general application, not as autobiographical. (See Binns, *A Life of Walt Whitman*, p. 51.)

Facing West from California's Shores

Apparently an early study for "Passage to India." The fact that it was grouped with *Children of Adam* supports the view that Whitman held the

instinct of sex to be the creative and progressive force in man and nature, both physical and spiritual.

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking

First published in the New York *Saturday Press*, December 24, 1859, as "A Child's Reminiscence." It is here placed after the *Children of Adam* poems because internal evidence indicates that it was written after those poems, to which, however, it is closely related psychologically.

The poem was based on an actual experience (see Holloway's *Whitman*, pp. 161-162) but "leaping beyond" this experience, the poet discovers in it the means by which sexual love is spiritualized through death and transformed to the uses of poetical creation. The word *death*, the clue to this mystery, is uttered by the sea, symbol of the spiritual world. The bird is a symbol of the dæmon or genius of the poet.

In Paths Untrodden

This poem and the eighteen immediately following it belong to the group of poems published in 1860 under the title *Calamus*. In l. 15 of this poem he tells us that he began the composition of these poems in September, 1859. The calamus is the plant generally known as the sweet flag. "It is found in vast masses in marshy ground, growing in fascicles of three, four, or five blades, which cling together for support, shoulder to shoulder and back to back, the delicate 'pink-tinged' roots exhaling a faint fragrance, not only when freshly gathered, but often after having been kept many years." (Kennedy, *Reminiscences of Walt Whitman*, p. 134.)

The calamus is a three-fold symbol. The leaves or blades represent the transient forms of life; the clustering growth of the leaves suggests the adhesive love, or friendship, which gives consistency to human life; and the perennial root symbolizes the immortal life-principle from which new life-forms (the leaves of the plant) successively emerge. In these poems and frequently elsewhere, Whitman uses the word *death* as though it were a synonym of *immortality*. The spiritual love of man for man has its fulfillment only in death and spiritual immortality, whereas the sexual love of man for woman is satisfied in the physical immortality of successive births.

Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand

As this title indicates, Whitman here identifies himself with his book, and makes no distinction between those who love him personally and those who love his poems. He dreamed of becoming the prophet of a new religion of love and of gathering about him a group of disciples, who should be bound to him not only by a common faith but by the physical tie of personal magnetism. In imitation, perhaps, of Christ, he made the conditions of discipleship very strict.

Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances

This poem illustrates the dual quality of Whitman's mind. While strongly drawn to the idealistic philosophy, he was held to the world of palpable reality by the keenness of his sense of perception, by the sense of touch in particular, and the magnetic influence associated with it.

Myself and Mine

ll. 27-29. Whitman's objection to systematic explanation is based on the assumption that freedom is necessary to growth, and that a fixed philosophy is dead already

With Antecedents

Published in the New York *Saturday Press*, January 14, 1860

ll. 30-34. Whitman's philosophy had a place for necessity as well as for freedom. Necessity is the will of the Absolute. But the Absolute is that which is self-determined, which submits to no law except the law of self. Hence the Absolute is free, for that which is self-determined is free. The individual soul is also self-determined and so identical with the Absolute. The true will of the individual, that is, the rational will, since it is self-determined, is identical with the will of the Absolute, or necessity, and therefore free.

l. 40. If the universe is infinite in time and space, as Whitman believed, each moment and each point is the center of all and in a sense encloses all.

As I Ebb'd with the Ocean of Life

First published as "Bardic Symbols" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, April, 1860. The drift and windrows on the shore of the material ocean (stanza 1) are the types of the drift of human lives and the windrows of human activity on the shore of the immaterial ocean of eternal life. The shore is the symbol of death, the border line of spirit (ocean) and matter (land). He now (stanza 2) understands that his real (spiritual) self and its work is as far superior to his physical self and its work as the vast ocean to the line of drift where it meets the land. He is therefore, for the moment, profoundly humiliated and depressed. Henceforth (stanza 3) he will seek to understand and make poems of the spiritual as well as the material world. Since the spiritual is mostly inaccessible, he hopes to learn from the material world the secret of the other world, of which it affords types. The contradictory storms and calms of the sea are typical (stanza 4) of the contradictory moods by which he has been drawn to the mystic shores where these truths are revealed to him, and where he lies as drift at the feet of the Absolute, which is his own real soul in its infinitude.

A Broadway Pageant

Probably composed in some form in 1860. It was first published in *Drum-Taps* (1865) with the sub-title "Reception Japanese Embassy,

June 16, 1860." This was the first Japanese embassy to a foreign power. Three Japanese nobles came as envoys extraordinary and ministers plenipotentiary for the exchange of ratifications of the treaty concluded between Japan and the United States on July 29, 1858. The exchange was made May 22, in Washington, and the reception in New York was held just before the envoys left on their return voyage towards the end of June. L. 69 refers to the anticipated visit of the young Prince of Wales (afterwards King Edward VII), at the special invitation of President Buchanan. The Prince spent three weeks in the United States in October, 1860.

Pioneers! O Pioneers!

l. 69, *I too with my soul and body* The "I" is the synthesis of body and soul.

Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd

First published in *Drum-Taps*, 1865. Holloway says (*Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, I, lviii) that Ellen M. Calder (Mrs. W. D. O'Connor), in the original draft of an article printed in the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1907, states that Whitman was in love with a married lady in Washington during the Civil War and would have married her if she had been free. This poem, she says, was written for the lady in question.

I Heard You Solemn-Sweet Pipes of the Organ

Perhaps this poem, too, like "Out of the Rolling Ocean the Crowd," was written to the lady with whom he was said to have been in love. For this reason it is placed here, among the poems first published in *Drum-Taps*, though it first appeared in *Sequel to Drum Taps*, which bore the date 1865-6.

Old Ireland

Through migration and new settlement, a new Ireland is born in America from the decay of the old. The poem is a parable of immortality.

Beat! Beat! Drums!

This poem and many others published in *Drum-Taps* in 1865 were probably written between 1861 and 1863.

Over the Carnage Rose Prophetic a Voice

Part of this poem first appeared in 1860 as No. 5 of the *Calamus* group.

When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd

Lincoln was shot by an assassin on the night of April 14, 1865, while attending the theatre, and died the following morning. His body remained in Washington until April 21. On that date began the long procession through Philadelphia, New York, Chicago, and other cities to the

place of burial in Springfield, Illinois. The final obsequies took place there on May 4.

In *Specimen Days* (*Prose Works*, pp. 25-26), Whitman wrote: "Of all the days of the war, there are two especially I can never forget. Those were the day following the news, in New York and Brooklyn, of that first Bull Run defeat, and the day of Abraham Lincoln's death. I was home in Brooklyn on both occasions. The day of the murder we heard the news very early in the morning. Mother prepared breakfast—and other meals afterward—as usual, but not a mouthful was eaten all day by either of us. We each drank half a cup of coffee, that was all. Little was said. We got every newspaper morning and evening, and the frequent extras of that period, and passed them silently to each other." (Cf. also Whitman's lecture on the death of Lincoln, p. 393.)

As the representative of his nation, Whitman, in this poem, mourns the death of Lincoln, the ideal American. He uses three principal symbols: the star is Lincoln, the man (not the permanent spiritual self), the lilac is human love, the hermit thrush is the poet of the soul, and its song is the carol of death, the deliverance of the soul. As elsewhere in Whitman's poetry, the sea is the symbol of eternal life, the land of mortal life, and the shore of death that unites (and separates) the two, the "dark mother" of the reborn soul. As in most elegies, the lament is for the death of the body, the consolation in the immortality of the soul. The lamentation includes the first twelve stanzas, the consolation the last three, beginning with stanza 14. Stanza 13 is transitional.

One unusual and effective device in this elegy is the manner in which the reader is prepared for the consolation by the early introduction of the thrush and his persistent call, which, however, the poet cannot yet answer because he is held by the star and the lilac—by grief for his loved comrade and hero.

Chanting the Square Deific

To the usual trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Whitman adds a fourth member, Satan, the spirit of freedom. Thus the Godhead becomes a "square deific," composed of the following "sides" or members: (1) Jehovah, or natural law, universal and irrevocable, (2) Christ, or love, the consoler, (3) Satan, or freedom, the deity of the individual will in opposition to the omnipotent, and (4) Santa Spirita, or the general soul, which gives life and identity to all. What he calls "Santa Spirita" is obviously not the same as the Holy Spirit of Christian theology. For a detailed analysis and interpretation see George L. Sixby's article "'Chanting the Square Deific'—A Study in Whitman's Religion," in *American Literature*, IX, 171-195 (May, 1937).

One's-Self I Sing

This was placed first in Whitman's final arrangement of the poems,

probably because it states in a few lines the central purpose of the whole of *Leaves of Grass*.

Tears

The stormy night of wind and rain is first personified in the muffled form of a person weeping in the darkness by the seashore. The person then becomes the symbol of the unappeasable anguish of human life in the presence of death, which is here again represented by the shore.

The City Dead-House

l. 9, *That immortal house* Perhaps Whitman means that since the fundamental quality of the soul is revealed in the body, when the soul is next incarnated this quality will reappear in the new body and so, in a sense, perpetuate the old.

Whispers of Heavenly Death

First published in the *Broadway Magazine*, October, 1868. At the same time appeared also "Darest Thou Now O Soul," "A Noiseless Patient Spider," "The Last Invocation" under the title "At the Last Tenderly," and "Pensive and Faltering." A rough first draft of "A Noiseless Patient Spider" exists in Whitman's notebook for 1862-63. (See Holloway, *Uncollected Poetry and Prose*, II, 93.)

Proud Music of the Storm

First published under the title of "Proud Music of the Sea-Storm" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, February, 1869. The poem expresses Whitman's dream of creating a new poetry that shall fuse the art of man with the art of nature.

Passage to India

With the successful laying of the Atlantic cable in 1866 and the completion in 1869 of the Suez Canal and the Union Pacific Railroad, Whitman foresaw the realization of the mediæval dream of world unity. He believed that a divine purpose lies behind the ceaseless westward drive of the human race from its primal home in Asia, perhaps in India itself, and that this purpose will be finally accomplished on the American continent, the last link in the circuit of the globe. Here is destined to arise a nation whose people shall combine the physical and intellectual vigor of the West with the profound wisdom and spirituality of the East, and here shall appear the true poet through whom is to be restored the divine trinity of God (the universal), Nature (the particular), and Man (the individual). This spiritual completion is the "more than India" to which the soul is to have passage. If Man here be understood as the community of human souls, Whitman's trinity becomes identical with Hegel's divine trinity of Father (Abstract Idea), Son (Nature), and Holy Ghost (the Church).

O Star of France

First published in the *Galaxy*, June, 1871. It seems to have been inspired by the insurrection of the Parisian populace in the spring of 1871 against the temporary government of the National Assembly, which was suspected of designing the reestablishment of the monarchy.

To Thee Old Cause

The cause of human freedom. Cf. "Song of the Broad-Axe," l. 175, "By Blue Ontario's Shore," l. 198, and "Song of Prudence," l. 25.

On the Beach at Night

As the clouds obscure the eternal light of the stars for an interval only, so death obscures the eternal life of the soul for an interval only.

As They Draw to a Close

The sentence structure is somewhat confusing. In general, he proposes in these closing poems to sing the joyousness of death, as he has already sung the joyousness of life, and to place nature in harmony with the soul by compacting the diverse lives of the material and spiritual worlds. (Cf. "Passage to India" and "When the Full-Grown Poet Came.")

Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood

Read by invitation of the United Literary Societies at the commencement celebration of Dartmouth College, June 26, 1872. It was first published in 1872 as the title poem of the volume *As a Strong Bird on Pinions Free*.

ll. 101-103. The four elements named in this passage may be compared to the four aspects of the Square in "Chanting the Square Deific."

The Mystic Trumpeter

First published in the *Kansas Magazine*, February, 1872. The trumpeter's music was perhaps suggested by the mysterious faint sounds of the wind at night. The phantom musician's first songs illustrate the chief themes of the poets of the past: feudal pageantry, love, war, and dejection. His last song—a song of faith and joy in universal freedom—illustrates the chief theme of the poets of the future, of whom Whitman is the herald and exemplar. Cf. "Proud Music of the Storm." For a different and interesting interpretation of "The Mystic Trumpeter" see W. L. Werner's "Whitman's 'The Mystic Trumpeter' as Autobiography," in *American Literature*, VII, 455-458 (January, 1936).

Wandering at Morn

This poem was probably suggested by the exposure of political corruption in high places in 1872-1873 in Washington. The most famous scandal

was in connection with the Credit Mobilier, an organization formed to finance the Union Pacific Railroad, in which Whitman was interested, which had scattered stock at nominal prices among members of Congress to prevent their interference with land grants. Another scandal was uncovered in the administration of Indian affairs. Whitman was personally interested in this affair, also, because he had been employed in the Indian Bureau for a while in 1865. Cf. "Nay, Tell Me Not To-day the Publish'd Shame."

Song of the Redwood-Tree

First published in *Harper's Monthly*, February, 1874. Whitman believes that California is destined to be the place where man is to reach his highest development because nature there is on the grandest scale and untouched by earlier civilizations, and because it is the most western region to be occupied by man before completing the cycle of earth and returning to the East. Cf. "A Promise to California," "Facing West from California's Shores," and "Passage to India."

Prayer of Columbus

This poem is the spiritual autobiography of Whitman himself. When first published, in *Harper's Monthly*, March, 1874, it was prefaced by the following note:

"It was near the close of his indomitable and pious life—on his last voyage when nearly 70 years of age—that Columbus, to save his two remaining ships from foundering in the Caribbean Sea in a terrible storm, had to run them ashore on the Island of Jamaica, where, laid up for a long and miserable year—1503—he was taken very sick, had several relapses, his men revolted, and death seem'd daily imminent, though he was eventually rescued, and sent home to Spain to die, unrecognized, neglected and in want. It is only ask'd, as preparation and atmosphere for the following lines, that the bare authentic facts be recall'd and realized, and nothing contributed by the fancy. See, the Antillean Island, with its florid skies and rich foliage and scenery, the waves beating the solitary sands, and the hulls of the ships in the distance. See, the figure of the great Admiral, walking the beach, as a stage, in this sublimest tragedy—for what tragedy, what poem, so piteous and majestic as the real scene?—and hear him uttering—as his mystical and religious soul surely utter'd, the ideas following—perhaps, in their equivalents, the very words."

Song of the Universal

A commencement poem delivered by proxy at Tufts College, Massachusetts, June 17, 1874. The editor is indebted to Mr. Rollo G. Silver for information that this poem first appeared in the *New York Daily Graphic* on June 17, 1874. It was published in Camden, in the *New Republic*, on June 20 following.

The Ox-Tamer

First published in the New York *Daily Graphic*, December, 1874.

Eidólons

The term *eidólon* is borrowed probably from Democritus (460–370 B.C.), but its meaning is closer to that of the *monad* of Giordano Bruno (1548–1600) or of Leibnitz (1646–1716). The idea of growth through the interaction of life and death suggests the philosophy of Hegel (1770–1831). The thought of the poem may be summarized as follows:

Every material object, whether man, animal, plant, or stone, has spiritual effluxes which remain changeless and eternal after the dissolution of the object itself. When they emanate from an organic form these effluxes unite to produce a spiritual image or *eidólon* of that form, which is its soul. Thus each human life in all its activities, physical, mental, and emotional, is summed up and made immortal in its *eidólon*. Similarly, every nation and every age leaves its *eidólon*, which forms a link between the past and the future. For each *eidólon* is the spiritual result of a life-cycle of birth, growth, and decay, and becomes the basis for a new cycle that shall produce more advanced *eidolons*. Since these *eidólons* are eternal, they must always have existed in the cosmic consciousness as divine purpose. The *eidólon*, not the material body, is the true reality. (Cf. "Unnamed Lands," ll. 22–23, and "Starting from Paumanok," section 13.)

Spirit that Form'd This Scene

First published in the *Critic*, September 10, 1881. See "An Egotistical 'Find,'" p. 372.

Patrolling Barnegat

First published in the *American*, June, 1880.

A Riddle Song

The two words that explain the riddle are probably *the ideal*.

As at Thy Portals Also Death

Whitman's mother died May 23, 1873, in her 78th year

With Husky-Haughty Lips, O Sea!

First published in *Harper's Monthly*, March, 1884. Here the ocean tides are represented as the pulse of the heart of the universe aroused by some cosmic, elemental passion; and the ceaseless, mournful turmoil of the sea is imagined to be the sign of the eternal struggle of the elemental spirit of freedom against the elemental spirit of law in nature. Out of this struggle is developed the greatness of nature. These are the Jehovah and Satan of

"Chanting the Square Deific." Reconciling the two comes Christ, the spirit of love, the creator, bringing growth and new ideals. This spirit, however, is not explicitly mentioned in the poem. Perhaps it is not to be found except in the life of man.

The Pilot in the Mist

This poem and the seven immediately following were perhaps written in some form on one of Whitman's visits to New York between 1881 and 1885. They were first published in the *Nineteenth Century*, August, 1885, under the group title of "Fancies at Navesink."

Had I the Choice

See Introduction, p. li.

You Tides with Ceaseless Swell

See note to "With Husky-Haughty Lips, O Sea!"

And Yet Not You Alone

The continuity of life through birth and death is figured in the cyclic flow of the tides, with their alternating ebb and flood. See Introduction, pp. xxxix-xl.

"Going Somewhere"

First published in *Lippincott's Magazine*, November, 1887. Mrs. Anne Gilchrist, an English woman who lived for a while (1876-1878) in Philadelphia, where Whitman saw her frequently. She died in 1885.

Twilight

First published in the *Century Magazine*, December, 1887.

After the Dazzle of Day

First published in the New York *Herald*, February 3, 1888. During this same year the following poems were also published in the *Herald*: "The First Dandelion," "Halcyon Days," "From Montauk Point," "Life," "The Calming Thought of All," and "A Prairie Sunset."

Compare with this poem the passage from Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn"—

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter.

A Voice from Death

First published in the New York *World*, June 7, 1889.

When the Full-Grown Poet Came

Cf. "Passage to India," l. 114, and "As They Draw to a Close."

PROSE

Preface of 1855

This is the text of the original edition of 1855. When reprinted in the *Complete Prose* it was considerably altered. The early text was chosen for the present volume because it is more vigorous in style and more characteristic of Whitman's early manner.

Preface of 1876

This preface illustrates Whitman's later prose style at its worst. It is included, however, because of the light it throws upon the plan and purpose of *Leaves of Grass*. The text, that of the *Prose Works* of 1892, is somewhat different from the original text of 1876.

A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads

Parts of this essay were published in the *Critic*, January 5, 1884, as "A Backward Glance on My Own Road," and in the *New York Star*, 1885, as "How *Leaves of Grass* Was Made." It was used as the preface to *November Boughs*, 1888. The text used here is that of the edition of *Leaves of Grass*, 1891-2.

Specimen Days

The first seven selections from *Specimen Days* appeared in *Memoranda of the War*, 1875.

After First Fredericksburg

Hearing that his brother, Captain George Whitman, had been wounded in the battle of Fredericksburg on December 13, 1862, Whitman hurriedly left Brooklyn for Falmouth, Virginia, where George's regiment was encamped at the time. His pocket was picked on the way at Philadelphia, and he arrived in Washington penniless. Fortunately he met W. D. O'Connor, whom he had known in Boston in 1860, and borrowed the money to continue his journey. He arrived at Falmouth, opposite Fredericksburg, on December 19, and found George well. He remained in camp for several days.

A Night Battle, Over a Week Since

Whitman was not, of course, present at the battle of Chancellorsville, May 2-4, 1863, but he heard first-hand reports of it from the wounded as they were brought to the hospitals in Washington.

Summer of 1864

In February, 1864, he had spent a few days in the war zone at Culpepper, Virginia, where the memoranda immediately preceding this item in *Specimen Days* were written. On June 14, Whitman wrote his mother that he was not feeling well and that the doctors had forbidden him for a time to visit the hospitals. Shortly afterwards, he went home and did not return to Washington until January, 1865.

The Real War Will Never Get in the Books

This is the last item of *Memoranda of the War*

An Interregnum Paragraph

He was appointed to a clerkship in the Indian Bureau of the Department of the Interior in February, 1865, but was dismissed on June 30, 1865, by Secretary Harlan for having published an indecent book; that is, *Leaves of Grass*. Almost immediately he was appointed to another clerkship, this time in the office of the Attorney General, which he held until incapacitated by an attack of paralysis, in 1873.

A July Afternoon by the Pond

Probably written in the summer of 1876, at the Stafford farm on Timber Creek, near Camden.

A Winter Day on the Sea-Beach

Probably written in December, 1876.

An Egotistical "Find"

On September 10, 1879, Whitman left Philadelphia with some friends for a sixteen-weeks' trip into the West. They went by way of St. Louis and Topeka to Denver, where he spent several days and from which he made short trips into the Rocky Mountains. On his return, he stopped with his brother Jeff in St. Louis until after January 1, 1880. This and the next selection, "New Senses—New Joys," were written on a trip from Denver to Leadville along the Platte River canyon. (Cf. the poem "Spirit that Form'd this Scene.")

Miller's Pictures

During a visit to Boston in April, 1881, to read his lecture on Lincoln, he saw the collection of J. F. Millet's pictures at the home of Quincy A. Shaw.

Freedom

This selection is from "Notes Left Over," originally published in 1882, as a part of *Collect in Specimen Days and Collect*.

Democratic Vistas

This pamphlet, published in 1871, was based largely on two essays previously published, "Democracy" and "Personalism," published respectively in December, 1867, and May, 1868, in the *Galaxy*. The text here chosen is that of the *Prose Works*, 1892, corrected in a few instances by comparison with the text of *Specimen Days and Collect*, 1882-1883.

Death of Abraham Lincoln

Peter Doyle said to Dr. Bucke and Horace Traubel, as reported by Traubel (see the *Complete Writings*, VIII, 8): "Walt was not at the theatre the night Lincoln was shot. It was me he got all that from in the book—they are almost my words."

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