

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 con-  
     stitution ? or the best built steamships ?  
 Or hotels of granite and iron ? or any chef-d'œuvres of  
     engineering, forts, armaments ?

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

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

## 5

The place where a great city stands is not the place of  
     stretch'd wharves, docks, manufactures, deposits of  
     produce merely,  
 Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the  
     anchor-lifters of the departing,  
 Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops  
     selling goods from the rest of the earth,  
 Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place  
     where money is plentiest,  
 Nor the place of the most numerous population.  
 Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators  
     and bards,  
 Where the city stands that is 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,  
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 Pre-  
sident, Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for  
pay,  
Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and  
to depend on themselves,  
Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,  
Where speculations on the soul are encouraged,  
Where women walk in public processions in the streets the  
same as the men,  
Where they enter the public assembly and take places the  
same as the men ;  
Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands,  
Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands,  
Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands,  
Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,  
There the great city stands.

## 6

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

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

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



## 7

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

Than this nothing has better served, it has served all,  
Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and  
long ere the Greek,  
Served in building the buildings that last longer than any,  
Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient Hindu-  
stanee,  
Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi, served those  
whose relics remain in Central America,  
Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn  
pillars and the druids,  
Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the snow-  
cover'd hills of Scandinavia,  
Served those who time out of mind made on the granite  
walls rough sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships,  
ocean waves,  
Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths, served the  
pastoral tribes and nomads,  
Served the long distant Kelt, served the hardy pirates of  
the Baltic,  
Served before any of those the venerable and harmless men  
of Ethiopia,  
Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure and  
the making of those for war,  
Served all great works on land and all great works on the  
sea,  
For the 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 s'ands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs and  
strong naked arms,  
And leans on a ponderous axe.



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

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

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

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

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

## 9

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

The axe leaps !  
The solid forest gives fluid utterances,  
They tumble forth, they rise and form,  
Hut, tent, landing, survey,  
Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade,  
Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, 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 !  
 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,  
 Shapes of the fleets of barges, tows, lake and canal craft,  
 river craft,  
 Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western  
 seas, and in many a bay and by-place,  
 The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the  
 hackmatack-roots for knees,  
 The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds,  
 the workmen busy outside and inside,  
 The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger, the  
 adze, bolt, line, square, gouge, and bead-plane.

## 10

The shapes arise !  
 The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,  
 The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his  
 shroud,  
 The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the  
 posts of the bride's bed,



The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers  
beneath, the shape of the babe's cradle,  
The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for dancers'  
feet,  
The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of  
the friendly parents and children,  
The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young  
man and woman, the roof over the well-married young  
man and woman,  
The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste  
wife, and joyously eaten by the chaste husband,  
content after his day's work.

The shapes arise !

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

The shapes arise !

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

11

Her shape arises,  
She less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever,  
The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her  
gross and soil'd,



She knows the thoughts as she passes, nothing is conceal'd  
 from her,  
 She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor,  
 She is the best belov'd, it is without exception, she has no  
 reason to fear and she does not fear,  
 Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions, are  
 idle to her as she passes,  
 She is silent, she is possess'd of herself, they do not offend  
 her,  
 She receives them as the laws of Nature receive them, she  
 is strong,  
 She too is a law of Nature—there is no law stronger than  
 she is.

## 12

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



## SONG OF THE EXPOSITION

<sup>1</sup>  
(An little reck's the laborer,  
How near his work is holding him to God,  
The loving Laborer through space and time.)

After all not to create only, or found only,  
But to bring perhaps from afar what is already founded,  
To give it our own identity, average, limitless, free,  
To fill the gross the torpid bulk with vital religious fire,  
Not to repel or destroy so much as accept, fuse, rehabilitate,  
To obey as well as command, to follow more than to lead,  
These also are the lessons of our New World;  
While how little the New after all, how much the Old, Old  
World!

Long and long has the grass been growing,  
Long and long has the rain been falling,  
Long has the globe been rolling round.

<sup>2</sup>  
Come Muse migrate from Greece and Ionia,  
Cross out please those immensely overpaid accounts,  
That matter of Troy and Achilles' wrath, and Æneas',  
Odysseus' wanderings,  
Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your  
snowy Parnassus,  
Repeat at Jerusalem, place the notice high on Jaffa's gate  
and on Mount Moriah,  
The same on the walls of your German, French and Spanish  
castles, and Italian collections,  
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried  
domain awaits, demands you.

<sup>3</sup>  
Responsive to our summons,  
Or rather to her long-nurs'd inclination,



Join'd with an irresistible, natural gravitation,  
She comes ! I hear the rustling of her gown,  
I scent the odor of her breath's delicious fragrance,  
I mark her step divine, her curious eyes a-turning, rolling,  
Upon this very scene.

The dame of dames ! can I believe then,  
Those ancient temples, sculptures classic, could none of  
them retain her ?

Nor shades of Virgil and Dante, nor myriad memories,  
poems, old associations, magnetize and hold on to her ?  
But that she's left them all—and here ?

Yes, if you will allow me to say so,  
I, my friends, if you do not, can plainly see her,  
The same undying soul of earth's, activity's, beauty's,  
heroism's expression,  
Out from her evolutions hither come, ended the strata of  
her former themes,  
Hidden and cover'd by to-day's, foundation of to-day's,  
Ended, deceas'd through time, her voice by Castaly's  
fountain,

Silent the broken-lipp'd Sphynx in Egypt, silent all those  
century-baffling tombs,

Ended for aye the epics of Asia's, Europe's helmeted  
warriors, ended the primitive call of the muses,

Calliope's call forever closed, Clio, Melpomene, Thalia dead,  
Ended the stately rhythmus of Una and Oriana, ended the  
quest of the holy Graal,

Jerusalem a handful of ashes blown by the wind, extinct,  
The Crusaders' streams of shadowy midnight troops sped  
with the sunrise,

Amadis, Tancred, utterly gone, Charlemagne, Roland,  
Oliver gone,

Palmerin, ogre, departed, vanish'd the turrets that Usk  
from its waters reflected,

Arthur vanish'd with all his knights, Merlin and Lancelot  
and Galahad, all gone, dissolv'd utterly like an exhalation ;

Pass'd ! pass'd ! for us, forever pass'd, that once so mighty  
world, now void, inanimate, phantom world,

Embroider'd, dazzling, foreign world, with all its gorgeous  
legends, myths,



Its kings and castles proud, its priests and warlike lords  
and courtly dames,  
Pass'd to its charnel vault, coffin'd with crown and armor-  
on,  
Blazon'd with Shakspeare's purple page,  
And dirged by Tennyson's sweet sad rhyme.

I say I see, my friends, if you do not, the illustrious emigré,  
(having it is true in her day, although the same,  
changed, journey'd considerable,)  
Making directly for this rendezvous, vigorously clearing a  
path for herself, striding through the confusion,  
By thud of machinery and shrill steam-whistle undismay'd,  
Bluff'd not a bit by drain-pipe, gasometers, artificial  
fertilizers,  
Smiling and pleas'd with palpable intent to stay,  
She's here, install'd amid the kitchen ware !

## 4

But hold—don't I forget my manners ?  
To introduce the stranger, (what else indeed do I live to  
chant for ?) to thee Columbia ;  
In liberty's name welcome immortal ! clasp hands,  
And ever henceforth sisters dear be both.

Fear not O Muse ! truly new ways and days receive,  
surround you,  
I candidly confess a queer, queer race, of novel fashion,  
And yet the same old human race, the same within, without,  
Faces and hearts the same, feelings the same, yearnings  
the same,  
The same old love, beauty and use the same.

## 5

We do not blame thee elder World, nor really separate  
ourselves from thee,  
(Would the son separate himself from the father ?)  
Looking back on thee, seeing thee to thy duties, grandeurs,  
through past ages bending, building,  
We build to ours to-day.

Mightier than Egypt's tombs,  
Fairer than Grecia's, Roma's temples,



Prouder than Milan's statued, spired cathedral,  
More picturesque than Rhenish castle-keeps,  
We plan even now to raise, beyond them all,  
Thy great cathedral sacred industry, no tomb,  
A keep for life for practical invention.

As in a waking vision,  
E'en while I chant I see it rise, I scan and prophesy outside  
and in,  
Its manifold ensemble.

Around a palace, loftier, fairer, ampler than any yet,  
Earth's modern wonder, history's seven outstripping,  
High rising tier on tier with glass and iron façades,  
Gladdening the sun and sky, enhued in cheerfulest hues,  
Bronze, lilac, robin's-egg, marine and crimson,  
Over whose golden roof shall flaunt, beneath thy banner  
Freedom,

The banners of the States and flags of every land,  
A brood of lofty, fair, but lesser palaces shall cluster.

Somewhere within their walls shall all that forwards perfect  
human life be started,  
Tried, taught, advanced, visibly exhibited.

Not only all the world of works, trade, products,  
But all the workmen of the world here to be represented.

Here shall you trace in flowing operation,  
In every state of practical, busy movement, the rills of  
civilization,  
Materials here under your eye shall change their shape as  
if by magic,

The cotton shall be pick'd almost in the very field,  
Shall be dried, clean'd, ginn'd, baled, spun into thread and  
cloth before you,

You shall see hands at work at all the old processes and all  
the new ones,

You shall see the various grains and how flour is made and  
then bread baked by the bakers,

You shall see the crude ores of California and Nevada  
passing on and on till they become bullion,



You shall watch how the printer sets type, and learn what  
a composing-stick is,

You shall mark in amazement the Hoe press whirling its  
cylinders, shedding the printed leaves steady and fast,  
The photograph, model, watch, pin, nail, shall be created  
before you.

In large calm halls, a stately museum shall teach you the  
infinite lessons of minerals,

In another, woods, plants, vegetation shall be illustrated—  
in another animals, animal life and development

One stately house shall be the music house,

Others for other arts—learning, the sciences, shall all be  
here,

None shall be slighted, none but shall here be honour'd,  
help'd, exempl'd.

## 6

(This, this and these, America, shall be *your* pyramids and  
obelisks,

Your Alexandrian Pharos, gardens of Babylon,  
Your temple at Olympia.)

The male and female many laboring not,  
Shall ever here confront the laboring many,  
With precious benefits to both, glory to all,  
To thee America, and thee eternal Muse.

And here shall ye inhabit powerful Matrons !

In your vast state vaster than all the old,

Echoed through long, long centuries to come,

To sound of different, prouder songs, with stronger themes,  
Practical, peaceful life, the people's life, the People them-  
selves,

Lifted, illumin'd, bathed in peace—elate, secure in peace.

## 7

Away with themes of war ! away with war itself !

Hence from my shuddering sight to never more return that  
show of blacken'd, mutilated corpses !

That hell unpent and raid of blood, fit for wild tigers or for  
lop-tongued wolves, not reasoning men,

And in its stead speed industry's campaigns,

With thy undaunted armies, engineering,



Thy pennants labor, loosen'd to the breeze,  
Thy bugles sounding loud and clear.

Away with old romance !

Away with novels, plots and plays of foreign courts,  
Away with love-verses sugar'd in rhyme, the intrigues,  
amours of idlers,

Fitted for only banquets of the night where dancers to  
late music slide,

The unhealthy pleasures, extravagant dissipations of the few,  
With perfumes, heat and wine, beneath the dazzling  
chandeliers.

To you ye reverent sane sisters,

I raise a voice for far superber themes for poets and for art,

To exalt the present and the real,

To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and  
trade,

To sing in songs how exercise and chemical life are never  
to be baffled,

To manual work for each and all, to plough, hoe, dig,

To plant and tend the tree, the berry, vegetables, flowers,

For every man to see to it that he really do something, for  
every woman too ;

To use the hammer and the saw, (rip, or cross-cut,)

To cultivate a turn for carpentering, plastering, painting,

To work as tailor, tailoress, nurse, hostler, porter,

To invent a little, something ingenious, to aid the washing,  
cooking, cleaning,

And hold it no disgrace to take a hand at them themselves.

I say I bring thee Muse to-day and here,

All occupations, duties broad and close,

Toil, healthy toil and sweat, endless, without cessation,

The old, old practical burdens, interests, joys,

The family, parentage, childhood, husband and wife,

The house-comforts, the house itself and all its belongings,

Food and its preservation, chemistry applied to it,

Whatever forms the average, strong, complete, sweet-

blooded man or woman, the perfect longeve personality,

And helps its present life to health and happiness, and  
shapes its soul,

For the eternal real life to come.



With latest connections, works, the inter-transportation of  
the world,  
Steam-power, the great express lines, gas, petroleum,  
These triumphs of our time, the Atlantic's delicate cable,  
The Pacific railroad, the Suez canal, the Mont Cenis and  
Gothard and Hoosac tunnels, the Brooklyn bridge,  
This earth all spann'd with iron rails, with lines of steam-  
ships threading every sea,  
Our own rondure, the current globe I bring.

## 8

And thou America,  
Thy offspring towering e'er so high, yet higher Thee above  
all towering,  
With Victory on thy left, and at thy right hand Law ;  
Thou Union holding all, fusing, absorbing, tolerating all,  
Thee, ever thee, I sing.

Thou, also thou, a World,  
With all thy wide geographies, manifold, different, distant,  
Rounded by thee in one—one common orbic language,  
One common indivisible destiny for All.

And by the spells which ye vouchsafe to those your ministers  
in earnest,  
I here personify and call my themes, to make them pass  
before ye.

Behold, America ! (and thou, ineffable guest and sister !)  
For thee come trooping up thy waters and thy lands ;  
Behold ! thy fields and farms, thy far-off woods and moun-  
tains,  
As in procession coming.

Behold, the sea itself,  
And on its limitless, heaving breast, the ships ;  
See, where their white sails, bellying in the wind, speckle  
the green and blue,  
See, the steamers coming and going, steaming in or out of  
port,  
See, dusky and undulating, the long pennants of smoke.



Behold, in Oregon, far in the north and west,  
Or in Maine, far in the north and east, thy cheerful axemen,  
Wielding all day their axes.

Behold, on the lakes, thy pilots at their wheels, thy oarsmen,  
How the ash writhes under those muscular arms !

There by the furnace, and there by the anvil,  
Behold thy sturdy blacksmiths swinging their sledges,  
Overhand so steady, overhand they turn and fall with  
joyous clank,  
Like a tumult of laughter.

Mark the spirit of invention everywhere, thy rapid patents,  
Thy continual workshops, foundries, risen or rising,  
See, from their chimneys how the tall flame-fires stream.

Mark, thy interminable farms, North, South,  
Thy wealthy daughter-states, Eastern and Western,  
The varied products of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Missouri,  
Georgia, Texas, and the rest,  
Thy limitless crops, grass, wheat, sugar, oil, corn, rice,  
hemp, hops,  
Thy barns all fill'd, the endless freight-train and the bulging  
storehouse,  
The grapes that ripen on thy vines, the apples in thy  
orchards,  
Thy incalculable lumber, beef, pork, potatoes, thy coal, thy  
gold and silver,  
The inexhaustible iron in thy mines.

All thine O sacred Union !  
Ships, farms, shops, barns, factories, mines,  
City and State, North, South, item and aggregate,  
We dedicate, dread Mother, all to thee !

Protectress absolute, thou ! bulwark of all !  
For well we know that while thou givest each and all,  
(generous as God,)

Without thee neither all nor each, nor land, home,  
Nor ship, nor mine, nor any here this day secure,  
Nor aught, nor any day secure.



## 9

And thou, the Emblem waving over all !  
Delicate beauty, a word to thee, (it may be salutary,)  
Remember thou hast not always been as here to-day so  
comfortably ensovereign'd,  
In other scenes than these have I observ'd thee flag,  
Not quite so trim and whole and freshly blooming in folds  
of stainless silk,  
But I have seen thee bunting, to tatters torn upon thy  
splinter'd staff,  
Or clutch'd to some young color-bearer's breast with  
desperate hands,  
Savagely struggled for, for life or death, fought over long,  
'Mid cannons' thunder-crash and many a curse and groan  
and yell, and rifle-volleys cracking sharp,  
And moving masses as wild demons surging, and lives as  
nothing risk'd,  
For thy mere remnant grimed with dirt and smoke and  
sopp'd in blood,  
For sake of that, my beauty, and that thou might'st dally  
as now secure up there,  
Many a good man have I seen go under.  
Now here and these and hence in peace, all thine O Flag !  
And here and hence for thee, O universal Muse ! and thou  
for them !  
And here and hence O Union, all the work and workmen  
thine !  
None separate from thee—henceforth One only, we and thou,  
(For the blood of the children, what is it, only the blood  
maternal ?  
And lives and works, what are they all at last, except the  
roads to faith and death ?)  
While we rehearse our measureless wealth, it is for thee,  
dear Mother,  
We own it all and several to-day indissoluble in thee ;  
Think not our chant, our show, merely for products gross  
or lucre—it is for thee, the soul in thee, electric,  
spiritual !  
Our farms, inventions, crops, we own in thee ! cities and  
States in thee !  
Our freedom all in thee ! our very lives in thee !



## SONG OF THE REDWOOD-TREE

### 1

A CALIFORNIA song,  
A prophecy and indirection, a thought impalpable to  
breathe as air,  
A chorus of dryads, fading, departing, or hamadryads  
departing,  
A murmuring, fateful, giant voice, out of the earth and  
sky,  
Voice of a mighty dying tree in the redwood forest dense.

*Farewell my brethren,  
Farewell O earth and sky, farewell ye neighboring waters,  
My time has ended, my term has come.*

Along the northern coast,  
Just back from the rock-bound shore and the caves,  
In the saline air from the sea in the Mendocino country,  
With the surge for base and accompaniment low and  
hoarse,  
With crackling blows of axes sounding musically driven by  
strong arms,  
Riven deep by the sharp tongues of the axes, there in the  
redwood forest dense,  
I heard the 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,  
Down from its lofty top rising two hundred feet high,  
Out of its stalwart trunk and limbs, out of its foot-thick  
bark,



That chant of the seasons and time, chant not of the past  
only but the future.

*You untold life of me,  
And all you venerable and innocent joys,  
Perennial hardy life of me with joys 'mid rain and many a  
summer sun,*

*And the white snows and night and the wild winds ;  
O the great patient rugged joys, my soul's strong joys unreck'd  
by man,*

*(For know I bear the soul befitting me, I too have conscious-  
ness, identity,*

*And all the rocks and mountains have, and all the earth,) Joys of the life befitting me and brothers mine,  
Our time, our term has come.*

*Nor yield we mournfully majestic brothers,  
We who have grandly fill'd our time ;  
With Nature's calm content, with tacit huge delight,  
We welcome what we wrought for through the past,  
And leave the field for them.*

*For them predicted long,  
For a superber race, they too to grandly fill their time,  
For them we abdicate, in them ourselves ye forest kings !  
In them these skies and airs, these mountain peaks, Shasta,  
Nevadas,  
These huge precipitous cliffs, this amplitude, these valleys,  
far Yosemite,  
To be in them absorb'd, assimilated.*

*Then to 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,) But come from Nature's long and harmless throes, peacefully  
builded thence,  
These virgin lands, lands of the Western shore,*



*To the new culminating man, to you, the empire new,  
You promis'd long, we pledge, we dedicate.*

*You occult deep volitions,  
You average spiritual manhood, purpose of all, pois'd on  
yourself, giving not taking law,  
You womanhood divine, mistress and source of all, whence  
life and love and aught that comes from life and  
love,*

*You unseen moral essence of all the vast materials of America,  
(age upon age working in death the same as life,)*

*You that, sometimes known, oftener unknown, really shape  
and mould the New World, adjusting it to Time and  
Space,*

*You hidden national will lying in your abysms, conceal'd but  
ever alert,*

*You past and present purposes tenaciously pursued, may-be  
unconscious of yourselves,*

*Unswerv'd by all the passing errors, perturbations of the  
surface ;*

*You vital, universal, deathless germs, beneath all creeds, arts,  
statues, 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 pro-  
portionate to Nature,*

*Here climb the vast pure spaces unconfined, uncheck'd by  
wall or roof,*

*Here laugh with storm or sun, here joy, here patiently  
inure,*

*Here heed himself, unfold himself, (not others' formulas heed,)  
here fill his time,*

*To duly fall, to aid, unreck'd at last,*

*To disappear, to serve.*

*Thus on the northern coast,*

*In the echo of teamsters' calls and the clinking chains, and  
the music of choppers' axes,*

*The falling trunk and limbs, the crash, the muffled shriek,  
the groan,*



Such words combined from the redwood-tree, as of voices  
ecstatic, ancient and rustling,  
The century-lasting, unseen dryads, singing, withdrawing,  
All their recesses of forests and mountains leaving,  
From the Cascade range to the Wahsatch, or Idaho far, or  
Utah,  
To the deities of the modern henceforth yielding,  
The chorus and indications, the vistas of coming humanity,  
the settlements, features all,  
In the Mendocino woods I caught.

## 2

The flashing and golden pageant of California,  
The sudden and gorgeous drama, the sunny and ample  
lands,  
The long and varied stretch from Puget sound to Colorado  
south,  
Lands bathed in sweeter, rarer, healthier air, valleys and  
mountain cliffs,  
The fields of Nature long prepared and fallow, the silent,  
cyclic chemistry,  
The slow and steady ages plodding, the unoccupied surface  
ripening, the rich ores forming beneath ;  
At last the New arriving, assuming, taking posses-  
sion,  
A swarming and busy race settling and organizing every-  
where,  
Ships coming in from the whole round world, and going out  
to the whole world,  
To India and China and Australia and the thousand island  
paradises of the Pacific,  
Populous cities, the latest inventions, the steamers on the  
rivers, the railroads, with many a thrifty farm, with  
machinery,  
And wool and wheat and the grape, and diggings of yellow  
gold.

## 3

But more in you than these, lands of the Western  
shore,  
(These but the means, the implements, the standing-  
ground,)



I see in you, certain to come, the promise of thousands of  
 years, till now deferr'd,  
 Promis'd to be fulfill'd, our common kind, the race.

The new society at last, proportionate to Nature,  
 In man of you, more than your mountain peaks or stalwart  
 trees imperial,  
 In woman more, far more, than all your gold or vines, or  
 even vital air.

Fresh come, to a new world indeed, yet long prepared,  
 I see the genius of the modern, child of the real and  
 ideal,  
 Clearing the ground for broad humanity, the true America,  
 heir of the past so grand,  
 To build a grander future.



## A SONG FOR OCCUPATIONS

### 1

A song for occupations !

In the labor of engines and trades and the labor of fields I  
find the developments,  
And find the eternal meanings.

Workmen and Workwomen !

Were all educations practical and ornamental well display'd  
out of me, what would it amount to ?

Were I as the head teacher, charitable proprietor, wise  
statesman, what would it amount to ?

Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would  
that satisfy you ?

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

Neither a servant nor a master I,

I take no sooner a large price than a small price, I will have  
my own whoever enjoys me,

I will be even with you and you shall be even with me.

If you stand at work in a shop I stand as 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 ?  
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.

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

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

Offspring of ignorant and poor, boys apprenticed to trades,  
Young fellows working on farms and old fellows working on  
farms,

Sailor-men, merchant-men, coasters, immigrants,  
All these I see, but nigher and farther the same I see,  
None shall escape me and none shall wish to escape me.

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



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

You may read in many languages, yet read nothing about  
it,  
You may read the President's message and read nothing  
about it there,

Nothing in the reports from the State department or  
Treasury department, or in the daily papers or weekly  
papers,

Or in the census or revenue returns, prices current, or any  
accounts of stock.

## 3

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

I do not know what it is except that it is grand, and that  
it is happiness,

And that the enclosing purport of us here is not a specula-  
tion or bon-mot or reconnoissance,

And that it is not something which by luck may turn out  
well for us, and without luck must be a failure for us,

And not something which may yet be retracted in a certain  
contingency.

The light and shade, the curious sense of body and identity,  
the greed that with perfect complaisance devours all  
things,

The endless pride and outstretching of man, unspeakable  
joys and sorrows,

The wonder every one sees in every one else he sees, and the  
wonders that fill each minute of time forever,

What have you reckon'd them for, camerado?

Have you reckon'd them for your trade or farm-work?  
or for the profits of your store?

Or to achieve yourself a position? or to fill a gentleman's  
leisure, or a lady's leisure?



Have you reckon'd that the landscape took substance and form that it might be painted in a picture ?  
Or men and women that they might be written of, and songs sung ?

Or the attraction of gravity, and the great laws and harmonious combinations and the fluids of the air, as subjects for the savans ?

Or the brown land and the blue sea for maps and charts ?  
Or the stars to be put in constellations and named fancy names ?

Or that the growth of seeds is for agricultural tables, or agriculture itself ?

Old institutions, these arts, libraries, legends, collections, and the practice handed along in manufactures, will we rate them so high ?

Will we rate our cash and business high ? I have no objection,

I rate them as high as the highest—then a child born of a woman and man I rate beyond all rate.

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

We consider bibles and religions divine—I do not say they are not divine,

I say they have all grown out of you, and may grow out of you still,

It is not they who give the life, it is you who give the life, Leaves are not more shed from the trees, or trees from the earth, than they are shed out of you.

## 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 anything inscribed any-  
where are tallied in you,

The gist of histories and statistics as far back as the records  
reach is in you this hour, and myths and tales the same,  
If you were not breathing and walking here, where would  
they all be?

The most renown'd poems would be ashes, orations and  
plays would be vacuums.

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

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

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

It is nearer and farther than they.

## 5

Will the whole come back then?

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

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

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

House-building, measuring, sawing the boards,  
Blacksmithing, glass-blowing, nail-making, coopering, tin-  
roofing, shingle-dressing,  
Ship-joining, dock-building, fish-curing, flagging of side-  
walks 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,  
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 vincer and glue-pot, the confectioner's ornaments,  
the decanter and glasses, the shears and flat-iron,  
The awl and knee-strap, the pint measure and quart  
measure, the counter and stool, the writing-pen of  
quill or metal, the making of all sorts of edged tools,  
The brewery, brewing, the malt, the vats, every thing that  
is done by brewers, wine-makers, vinegar-makers,  
Leather-dressing, coach-making, boiler-making, rope-  
twisting, distilling, sign-painting, lime-burning, cotton-  
picking, electroplating, electrotyping, stereotyping,  
Stave machines, planing-machines, reaping-machines,  
ploughing-machines, thrashing-machines, steam  
wagons,  
The cart of the carman, the omnibus, the ponderous dray,  
Pyrotechny, letting off color'd fireworks at night, fancy  
figures and jets ;



Beef on the butcher's stall, the slaughter-house of the  
butcher, the butcher in his killing-clothes,  
The pens of live pork, the killing-hammer, the hog-hook,  
the scalding tub, gutting, the cutter's cleaver, the  
packer's maul, and the plenteous winterwork of pork-  
packing,  
Flour-works, grinding of wheat, rye, maize, rice, the  
barrels and the half and quarter barrels, the loaded  
barges, the high piles on wharves and levees,  
The men and the work of the men on ferries, railroads,  
coasters, fish-boats, canals ;  
The hourly routine of your own or any man's life, the shop,  
yard, store, or factory,  
These shows all near you by day and night—workman !  
whoever you are, your daily life !  
In that and them the heft of the heaviest—in that and  
them far more than you estimated, (and far less also,)  
In them realities for you and me, in them poems for you  
and me,  
In them, not yourself—you and your soul enclose all things,  
regardless of estimation,  
In them the development good—in them all themes, hints,  
possibilities.

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

## 6

Will you seek afar off ? you surely come back at last,  
In things best known to you finding the best, or as good  
as the best,  
In folks nearest to you finding the sweetest, strongest,  
lovingest,  
Happiness, knowledge, not in another place but this place,  
not for another hour but this hour,  
Man in the first you see or touch, always in friend, brother,  
nearest neighbor—woman in mother, sister, wife,  
The popular tastes and employments taking precedence in  
poems or anywhere,



You workwomen and workmen of these States having your  
own divine and strong life,  
And all else giving place to men and women like you.

When the psalm sings instead of the singer,  
When the script preaches instead of the preacher,  
When the pulpit descends and goes instead of the carver  
that carved the supporting desk,  
When I can touch the body of books by night or by day,  
and when they touch my body back again,  
When a university course convinces like a slumbering  
woman and child convince,  
When the minted gold in the vault smiles like the night-  
watchman's daughter,  
When warrantee deeds loafe in chairs opposite and are my  
friendly companions,  
I intend to reach them my hand, and make as much of  
them as I do of men and women like you.



## A SONG OF THE ROLLING EARTH

### 1

A SONG of the rolling earth, and of words according,  
Were you thinking that those were the words, those upright  
lines? those curves, angles, dots?

No, those are not the words, the substantial words are in  
the ground and sea,

They are in the air, they are in you.

Were you thinking that those were the words, those delicious  
sounds out of your friends' mouths?

No, the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words,  
(In the best poems re-appears the body, man's or woman's,  
well-shaped, natural, gay,

Every part able, active, receptive, without shame or the  
need of shame.)

Air, soil, water, fire—those are words,

I myself am a word with them—my qualities interpenetrate  
with theirs—my name is nothing to them,

Though it were told in the three thousand languages, what  
would air, soil, water, fire, know of my name?

A healthy presence, a friendly or commanding gesture, are  
words, sayings, meanings,

The charms that go with the mere looks of some men and  
women, are sayings and meanings also.

The workmanship of souls is by those inaudible words of  
the earth,

The masters know the earth's words and use them more  
than audible words.

Amelioration is one of the earth's words,

The earth neither lags nor hastens,



It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself from  
the jump,  
It is not half beautiful only, defects and excrescences show  
just as much as perfections show.

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

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

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

To bear, to better, lacking these of what avail am I ?

(Accouche ! accouchez !

Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there ?

Will you squat and stifle there ?)

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

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

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

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

Underneath these possessing words that never fail.

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

The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail and  
reflection does not 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,  
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 com-  
panion,

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 appar-  
ition of the sky,

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 divid-  
ing,



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

## 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 im-  
 mortality;

No one can acquire for another—not one,  
 Not one can grow for another—not one.

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

## 3

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



I swear there is no greatness or power that does not emulate  
those of the earth,

There can be no theory of any account unless it corroborate  
the theory of the earth,

No politics, song, religion, behavior, or what not, is of  
account, unless it compare with the amplitude of the  
earth,

Unless it face the exactness, vitality, impartiality, rectitude  
of the earth.

I swear I begin to see love with sweeter spasms than that  
which responds love,

It is that which contains itself, which never invites and  
never refuses.

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words,  
All merges toward the presentation of the unspoken  
meanings of the earth,

Toward him who sings the songs of the body and of the  
truths of the earth,

Toward him who makes the dictionaries of words that print  
cannot touch.

I swear I see what is better than to tell the best,

It is always to leave the best untold.

When I undertake to tell the best I find I cannot,

My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,

My breath will not be obedient to its organs,

I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow, all or any is  
best,

It is not what you anticipated, it is cheaper, easier, nearer,

Things are not dismiss'd from the places they held before,

The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before,

Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as real  
as before,

But the soul is also real, it too is positive and direct,

No reasoning, no proof has establish'd it,

Undeniable growth has establish'd it.



These to echo the tones of souls and the phrases of souls,  
(If they did not echo the phrases of souls what were they  
then ?

If they had not reference to you in especial what were they  
then ?)

I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith  
that tells the best,

I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best  
untold.

Say on, sayers ! sing on, singers !

Delve ! mould ! pile the words of the earth !

Work on, age after age, nothing is to be lost,

It may have to wait long, but it will certainly come in use,

When the materials are all prepared and ready, the archi-  
tects shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail,

I swear to you they will understand you and justify you,

The greatest among them shall be he who best knows you,  
and encloses all and is faithful to all,

He and the rest shall not forget you, they shall perceive  
that you are not an iota less than they,

You shall be fully glorified in them.

## YOUTH, DAY, OLD AGE AND NIGHT

YOUTH, large, lusty, loving—youth full of grace, force,  
fascination,

Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal  
grace, force, fascination ?

Day full-blown and splendid—day of the immense sun,  
action, ambition, laughter,

The Night follows close with millions of suns, and sleep and  
restoring darkness.



## BIRDS OF PASSAGE

### SONG OF THE UNIVERSAL

#### 1

COME said the Muse,  
Sing me a song no poet yet has chanted,  
Sing me the universal.

In this broad earth of ours,  
Amid the measureless grossness and the slag,  
Enclosed and safe within its central heart,  
Nestles the seed perfection.

By every life a share or more or less,  
None born but it is born, conceal'd or unconceal'd the seed  
is waiting.

#### 2

Lo ! keen-eyed towering science,  
As from tall peaks the modern overlooking,  
Successive absolute 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,  
Not the right only justified, what we call evil also justified.

Forth from their masks, no matter what,  
From the huge festering trunk, from craft and guile and  
tears,

Health to emerge and joy, joy universal.



Out of the bulk, the morbid and the shallow,  
Out of the bad majority, the varied countless frauds of  
men and states,  
Electric, antiseptic yet, cleaving, suffusing all,  
Only the good is universal.

## 3

Over the mountain-growths disease and sorrow,  
An uncaught bird is ever hovering, hovering,  
High in the purer, happier air.

From imperfection's murkiest cloud,  
Darts always forth one ray of perfect light,  
One flash of heaven's glory.

To fashion's, custom's discord,  
To the mad Babel-din, the deafening orgies,  
Soothing each lull a strain is heard, just heard,  
From some far shore the final chorus sounding.

O the blest eyes, the happy hearts,  
That see, that know the guiding thread so fine,  
Along the mighty labyrinth.

## 4

And thou America,  
For the scheme's culmination, its thought and its reality,  
For these (not for thyself) thou hast arrived.

Thou too surroundest all,  
Embracing carrying welcoming all, thou too by pathways  
broad and new,  
To the ideal tendest.

The 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,  
All eligible to all.

All, all for immortality,  
Love like the light silently wrapping all,



Nature's amelioration blessing all,  
The blossoms, fruits of ages, orchards divine and certain,  
Forms, objects, growths, humanities, to spiritual images  
ripening.

Give me O God to sing that thought,  
Give me, give him or her I love this quenchless faith,  
In Thy ensemble, whatever else withheld withhold not  
from us,  
Belief in plan of Thee enclosed in Time and Space,  
Health, peace, salvation universal.

Is it a dream ?  
Nay but the lack of it the dream,  
And failing it life's lore and wealth a dream,  
And all the world a dream.

### PIONEERS ! O PIONEERS !

COME my tan-faced children,  
Follow well in order, get your weapons ready,  
Have you your pistols ? have you your sharp-edged axes ?  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

For we cannot tarry here,  
We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of  
danger,  
We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

O you youths, Western youths,  
So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friend-  
ship,  
Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with  
the foremost,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Have the elder races halted ?  
Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there  
beyond the seas ?  
We take up the task eternal, and the burden and the lesson,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !



All the past we leave behind,  
We debouch upon a newer mightier world, varied world,  
Fresh and strong the world we seize, world of labor and the  
march,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

We detachments steady throwing,  
Down the edges, through the passes, up the mountains  
steep,  
Conquering, holding, daring, venturing as we go the un-  
known 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 up-  
heaving,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Colorado men are we,  
From the peaks gigantic, from the great sierras and the high  
plateaus,  
From the mine and from the gully, from the hunting trail  
we come,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,  
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the conti-  
nental blood intervein'd,  
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all  
the Northern,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

O resistless restless race !  
O beloved race in all ! O my breast aches with tender love  
for all !

O I mourn and yet exult, I am rapt with love for all,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Raise the mighty mother mistress,  
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry  
mistress, (bend your heads all,)



Raise the fang'd and warlike mistress, stern, impassive,  
    weapon'd mistress,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

See my children, resolute children,  
By those swarms upon our rear we must never yield or  
    falter,  
Ages back in ghostly millions frowning there behind us  
    urging,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

On and on the compact ranks,  
With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead  
    quickly fill'd,  
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never  
    stopping,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

O to die advancing on !  
Are there some of us to droop and die ? has the hour come ?  
Then upon the march we fittest die, soon and sure the gap  
    is fill'd,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

All the pulses of the world,  
Falling in they beat for us, with the Western movement  
    beat,  
Holding single or together, steady moving to the front, all  
    for us,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Life's involv'd and varied pageants,  
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,  
All the seamen and the landmen, all the masters with their  
    slaves,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

All the hapless silent lovers,  
All the prisoners in the prisons, all the righteous and the  
    wicked,  
All the joyous, all the sorrowing, all the living, all the dying,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !



I too with my soul and body,  
We, a curious trio, picking, wandering on our way,  
Through these shores amid the shadows, with the apparitions pressing,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Lo, the darting bowling orb !  
Lo, the brother orbs around, all the clustering suns and planets,  
All the dazzling days, all the mystic nights with dreams,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

These are of us, they are with us,  
All for primal needed work, while the followers there in embryo wait behind,  
We to-day's procession heading, we the route for travel clearing,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

O you daughters of the West !  
O you young and elder daughters ! O you mothers and you wives !  
Never must you be divided, in our ranks you move united,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Minstrels latent on the prairies !  
(Shrouded bards of other lands, you may rest, you have done your work,)  
Soon I hear you coming warbling, soon you rise and tramp amid us,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Not for delectations sweet,  
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,  
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Do the feasters gluttonous feast ?  
Do the corpulent sleepers sleep ? have they lock'd and bolted doors ?  
Still be ours the diet hard, and the blanket on the ground,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !



Has the night descended ?  
Was the road of late so toilsome ? did we stop discouraged  
nodding on our way ?  
Yet a passing hour I yield you in your tracks to pause  
oblivious,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

Till with sound of trumpet,  
Far, far off the daybreak call—hark ! how loud and clear  
I hear it wind,  
Swift ! to the head of the army !—swift ! spring to your  
places,  
Pioneers ! O pioneers !

### TO YOU

WHOEVER you are, I fear you are walking the walks of  
dreams,  
I fear these supposed realities are to melt from under your  
feet and hands,  
Even now your features, joys, speech, house, trade, manners,  
troubles, follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from  
you,  
Your true soul and body appear before me,  
They stand forth out of affairs, out of commerce, shops,  
work, farms, clothes, the house, buying, selling, eating,  
drinking, suffering, dying.  
Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you  
be my poem,  
I whisper with my lips close to your ear,  
I have loved many women and men, but I love none better  
than you.

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

I will leave all and come and make the hymns of you,  
None has understood you, but I understand you,



None has done justice to you, you have not done justice  
to yourself,  
None but has found you imperfect, I only find no imperfec-  
tion in you,  
None but would subordinate you, I only am he who will  
never consent to subordinate you,  
I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better,  
God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

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

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

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

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



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

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

Whoever you are ! claim your own at any hazard !

These shows of the East and West are tame compared to  
you,

These immense meadows, these interminable rivers, you  
are immense and interminable as they,

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

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

The 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.

## FRANCE

### *The 18th Year of these States*

A GREAT year and place,

A harsh discordant natal scream out-sounding, to touch  
the mother's heart closer than any yet.

I walk'd the shores of my Eastern sea,

Heard over the waves the little voice,

Saw the divine infant where she woke mournfully wailing,  
amid the roar of cannon, curses, shouts, crash of falling  
buildings,

Was not so sick from the blood in the gutters running, nor  
from the single corpses, nor those in heaps, nor those  
borne away in the tumbrils,

Was not so desperate at the battues of death—was not so  
shock'd at the repeated fusillades of the guns.



Pale, silent, stern, what could I say to that long-accrued  
retribution ?

Could I wish humanity different ?

Could I wish the people made of wood and stone ?

Or that there be no justice in destiny or time ?

O Liberty ! O mate for me !

Here too the blaze, the grape-shot and the axe, in reserve,  
to fetch them out in case of need,

Here too, though long repress'd, can never be destroy'd,

Here too could rise at last murdering and ecstatic,

Here too demanding full arrears of vengeance.

Hence I sign this salute over the sea,

And I do not deny that terrible red birth and baptism,

But remember the little voice that I heard wailing, and wait  
with perfect trust, no matter how long,

And from to-day sad and cogent I maintain the bequeath'd  
cause, as for all lands,

And I send these words to Paris with my love,

And I guess some chansonniers there will understand them,

For I guess there is latent music yet in France, floods of it,

O I hear already the bustle of instruments, they will soon  
be drowning all that would interrupt them,

O I think the east wind brings a triumphal and free march,

It reaches hither, it swells me to joyful madness,

I will run transpose it in words, to justify it,

I will yet sing a song for you ma femme.

### MYSELF AND MINE

MYSELF and mine gymnastic ever,

To stand the cold or heat, to take good aim with a gun, to

sail a boat, to manage horses, to beget superb children,

To speak readily and clearly, to feel at home among common  
people,

And to hold our own in terrible positions on land and sea.

Not for an embroiderer,

(There will always be plenty of embroiderers, I welcome  
them also,)

But for the fibre of things and for inherent men and women.



Not to chisel ornaments,  
But to chisel with free stroke the heads and limbs of plente-  
ous supreme Gods, that the States may realize them  
walking and talking.

Let me have my own way,  
Let others promulge the laws, I will make no account of  
the laws,  
Let others praise eminent men and hold up peace, I hold  
up agitation and conflict,  
I praise no eminent man, I rebuke to his face the one that  
was thought most worthy.

(Who are you ? and what are you secretly guilty of all your  
life ?

Will you turn aside all your life ? will you grub and chatter  
all your life ?

And who are you, blabbing by rote, years, pages, languages,  
reminiscences,

Unwitting to-day that you do not know how to speak  
properly a single word ?)

Let others finish specimens, I never finish specimens,  
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature does, fresh and  
modern continually.

I give nothing as duties,  
What others give as duties I give as living impulses,  
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty ?)

Let others dispose of questions, I dispose of nothing, I  
arouse unanswerable questions,  
Who are they I see and touch, and what about them ?  
What about these likes of myself that draw me so close by  
tender directions and indirections ?

I call to the world to distrust the accounts of my friends,  
but listen to my enemies, as I myself do,  
I charge you forever reject those who would expound me,  
for I cannot expound myself,  
I charge that there be no theory or school founded out of  
me,  
I charge you to leave all free, as I have left all free.



After me, vista !

O I see life is not short, but immeasurably long,  
I henceforth tread the world chaste, temperate, an early  
riser, a steady grower,

Every hour the semen of centuries, and still of centuries.

I must follow up these continual lessons of the air, water,  
earth,

I perceive I have no time to lose.

## YEAR OF METEORS

(1859-60)

YEAR of meteors ! brooding year !

I would bind in words retrospective some of your deeds and  
signs,

I would sing your contest for the 19th Presidentiad,

I would sing how an old man, tall, with white hair, mounted  
the scaffold in Virginia,

(I was at hand, silent I stood with teeth shut close, I  
watch'd,

I stood very near you old man when cool and indifferent,  
but trembling with age and your unheal'd wounds you  
mounted the scaffold ;)

I would sing in my copious song your census returns of  
the States,

The tables of population and products, I would sing of  
your ships and their cargoes,

The proud black ships of Manhattan arriving, some fill'd  
with immigrants, some from the isthmus with cargoes  
of gold,

Songs thereof would I sing, to all that hitherward comes  
would I welcome give,

And you would I sing, fair stripling ! welcome to you from  
me, young prince of England !

(Remember you surging Manhattan's crowds as you pass'd  
with your cortege of nobles ?

There in the crowds stood I, and singled you out with  
attachment ;)

Nor forget I to sing of the wonder, the ship as she swam  
up my bay,



Well-shaped and stately the Great Eastern swam up my  
bay, she was six hundred feet long,  
Her moving swiftly surrounded by myriads of small craft  
I forget not to sing ;  
Nor the comet that came unannounced out of the north  
flaring in heaven,  
Nor the strange huge meteor-procession dazzling and clear  
shooting over our heads,  
(A moment, a moment long it sail'd its balls of unearthly  
light over our heads,  
Then departed, dropt in the night, and was gone ;)  
Of such, and fitful as they, I sing—with gleams from them  
would I gleam and patch these chants,  
Your chants, O year all mottled with evil and good—year  
of forebodings !  
Year of comets and meteors transient and strange—lo !  
even here one equally transient and strange !  
As I flit through you hastily, soon to fall and be gone, what  
is this chant,  
What am I myself but one of your meteors ?

## WITH ANTECEDENTS

## 1

With antecedents,  
With my fathers and mothers and the accumulations of  
past ages,  
With all which, had it not been, I would not now be here,  
as I am,  
With Egypt, India, Phenicia, Greece and Rome,  
With the Kelt, the Scandinavian, the Alb and the Saxon,  
With antique maritime ventures, laws, artisanship, wars and  
journeys,  
With the poet, the skald, the saga, the myth, and the  
oracle,  
With the sale of slaves, with enthusiasts, with the trouba-  
dour, the crusader, and the monk,  
With those old continents whence we have come to this new  
continent,  
With the fading kingdoms and kings over there,  
With the fading religions and priests,



With the small shores we look back to from our own large  
 and present shores,  
 With countless years drawing themselves onward and  
 arrived at these years,  
 You and me arrived—America arrived and making this  
 year,  
 This year! sending itself ahead countless years to come.

## 2

O but it is not the years—it is I, it is You,  
 We touch all laws and tally all antecedents,  
 We are the skald, the oracle, the monk and the knight, we  
 easily include them and more,  
 We stand amid time beginningless and endless, we stand  
 amid evil and good,  
 All swings around us, there is as much darkness as light,  
 The very sun swings itself and its system of planets around  
 us,  
 Its sun, and its again, all swing around us.

As for me, (torn, stormy, amid these vehement days,)  
 I have the idea of all, and am all and believe in all,  
 I believe materialism is true and spiritualism is true, I  
 reject no part.

(Have I forgotten any part? anything in the past?  
 Come to me whoever and whatever, till I give you recogni-  
 tion.)

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,  
 I assert that all past days were what they must have been,  
 And that they could no-how have been better than they  
 were,  
 And that to-day is what it must be, and that America is,  
 And that to-day and America could no-how be better than  
 they are.

## 3

In the name of these States and in your and my name, the  
 Past,



And in the name of these States and in your and my name,  
the Present time.

I know that the past was great and the future will be great,  
And I know that both curiously conjoint in the present time,  
(For the sake of him I typify, for the common average  
man's sake, your sake if you are he,)

And that where I am or you are this present day, there is  
the centre of all days, all races,

And there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of  
races and days, or ever will come.



## A BROADWAY PAGEANT

## 1

OVER the Western sea hither from Nippon come,  
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,  
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, impassive,  
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

Libertad ! I do not know whether others behold what I  
behold,  
In the procession along with the nobles of Nippon, the  
errand-bearers,  
Bringing up the rear, hovering above, around, or in the  
ranks marching,  
But I will sing you a song of what I behold Libertad.

When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to her  
pavements,  
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud  
roar I love,  
When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and smell  
I love spit their salutes,  
When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and  
heaven-clouds canopy my city with a delicate thin  
haze,  
When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests at  
the wharves, thicken with colors,  
When every ship richly drest carries her flag at the peak,  
When pennants trail and street-festoons hang from the  
windows,  
When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers and  
foot-standers, when the mass is densest,  
When the 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,

## 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 Orinatress comes,

The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race of  
eld,

Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with  
passion,

Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,

With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering eyes,

The race of Brahma comes.

See my cantabile ! these and more are flashing to us from  
the procession,

As it moves changing, a kaleidoscope divine it moves  
changing before us.

For not the envoys nor the tann'd Japanee from his island  
only,

Lithe and silent the Hindoo appears, the Asiatic continent  
itself appears, the past, the dead,

The murky night-morning of wonder and fable inscrutable,

The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-bees,

The north, the sweltering south, eastern Assyria, the

Hebrews, the ancient of ancients,

Vast desolated cities, the gliding present, all of these and  
more are in the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it,

The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia, the coast  
beyond,



The coast you henceforth are facing—you Libertad! from  
your Western golden shores,  
The countries there with their populations, the millions  
en-masse are curiously here,  
The swarming market-places, the temples with idols ranged  
along the sides or at the end, bonze, brahmin, and  
lama,  
Mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman,  
The singing-girl and the dancing-girl, the ecstatic persons,  
the secluded emperors,  
Confucius himself, the great poets and heroes, the warriors,  
the castes, all,  
Trooping up, crowding from all directions, from the Altay  
mountains,  
From Thibet, from the four winding and far-flowing rivers  
of China,  
From the southern peninsulas and the demi-continental  
islands, from Malaysia,  
These and whatever belongs to them palpable show forth  
to me, and are seiz'd by me,  
And I am seiz'd by them, and friendlily held by  
them,  
Till as here them all I chant, Libertad! for themselves and  
for you.

For I too raising my voice join the ranks of this  
pageant,  
I am the chanter, I chant aloud over the pageant,  
I chant the world on my Western sea,  
I chant copious the islands beyond, thick as stars in the  
sky,  
I chant the new empire grander than any before, as in a  
vision it comes to me,  
I chant America the mistress, I chant a greater supremacy,  
I chant projected a thousand blooming cities yet in time  
on those groups of sea-islands,  
My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archipelagoes,  
My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,  
Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its work,  
races reborn, refresh'd,  
Lives, works resumed—the object I know not—but the  
old, the Asiatic renew'd as it must be,  
Commencing from this day surrounded by the world.



## 3

And you Libertad of the world !

You shall sit in the middle well-pois'd thousands and  
thousands of years,

As to-day from one side the nobles of Asia come to you,

As to-morrow from the other side the queen of England  
sends her eldest son to you.

The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed,

The ring is circled, the journey is done,

The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd, nevertheless the  
perfume pours copiously out of the whole box.

Young Libertad ! with the venerable Asia, the all-mother,  
Be considerate with her now and ever hot Libertad, for you  
are all,

Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother now sending  
messages over the archipelagoes to you,

Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

Were the children straying westward so long ? so wide the  
tramping ?

Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward from  
Paradise so long ?

Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all the  
while unknown, for you, for reasons ?

They are justified, they are accomplish'd, they shall now  
be turn'd the other way also, to travel toward you  
thence,

They shall now also march obediently eastward for your  
sake Libertad.



## SEA-DRIFT

### OUT OF THE CRADLE ENDLESSLY ROCKING

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,  
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,  
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,  
Over the sterile sands and the fields beyond, where the  
child leaving his bed wander'd alone, bareheaded,  
barefoot,  
Down from the shower'd halo,  
Up from the mystic play of shadows twining and twisting  
as if they were alive,  
Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,  
From the memories of the bird that chanted to me,  
From your memories sad brother, from the fitful risings and  
fallings I heard,  
From under that yellow half-moon late-risen and swollen  
as if with tears,  
From those beginning notes of yearning and love there in  
the mist,  
From the thousand responses of my heart never to cease,  
From the myriad thence-arous'd words,  
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,  
From such as now they start the scene revisiting,  
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,  
Borne hither, ere all eludes me, hurriedly,  
A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,  
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,  
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,  
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond  
them,  
A reminiscence sing.

Once Paumanok,  
When the lilac-scent was in the air and Fifth-month grass  
was growing,



Up this seashore in some briers,  
Two feather'd guests from Alabama, two together,  
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with  
brown,

And every day the he-bird to and fro near at hand,  
And every day the she-bird crouch'd on her nest, silent,  
with bright eyes,  
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never  
disturbing them,  
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

*O night ! do I not see my love fluttering out among the*  
     *breakers ?*

*What is that little black thing I see there in the white ?*

*Loud ! loud ! loud !*

*Loud I call to you, my love !*

*High and clear I shoot my voice over the waves,*

*Surely you must know who is here, is here,*

*You must know who I am, my love.*

*Low-hanging moon !*

*What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow ?*

*O it is the shape, the shape of my mate !*

*O moon do not keep her from me any longer.*



*Land ! land ! O land !*

*Whichever way I turn, O I think you could give me my mate  
back again if you only would,*

*For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever way I look.*

*O rising stars !*

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

*O throat ! O trembling throat !*

*Sound clearer through the atmosphere !*

*Pierce the woods, the earth,*

*Somewhere listening to catch you must be the one I want.*

*Shake out carols !*

*Solitary here, the night's carols !*

*Carols of lonesome love ! death's carols !*

*Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning moon !*

*O under that moon where she droops almost down into the sea !*

*O reckless despairing carols.*

*But soft ! sink low !*

*Soft ! let me just murmur,*

*And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd sea,*

*For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding to me,*

*So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,*

*But not altogether still, for then she might not come immedi-  
ately to me.*

*Hither my love !*

*Here I am ! here !*

*With this just-sustain'd note I announce myself to you,*

*This gentle call is for you my love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,*

*That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my voice,*

*That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the spray,*

*Those are the shadows of leaves.*

*O darkness ! O in vain !*

*O I am very sick and sorrowful.*

*O brown halo in the sky near the moon, drooping upon the sea !*

*O troubled reflection in the sea !*



*O throat ! O throbbing heart !  
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

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

*The aria sinking,  
All else continuing, the stars shining,  
The winds blowing, the notes of the bird continuous echoing,  
With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moan-*

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

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

*O you singer solitary, singing by yourself, projecting me,  
O solitary me listening, never more shall I cease per-  
petuating 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,)  
The word final, superior to all,  
Subtle, sent up—what is it ?—I listen ;  
Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you  
    sea-waves ?

Is that it from your liquid rims and wet sands ?

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

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

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

Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,  
But fuse the song of my dusky demon and brother,  
That he sang to me in the moonlight on Paumanok's gray  
    beach,

With the thousand responsive songs at random,  
My own songs awaked from that hour,  
And with them the key, the word up from the waves,  
The word of the sweetest song and all songs,  
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,  
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in  
    sweet garments, bending aside,)

The sea whisper'd me.



## AS I EBB'D WITH THE OCEAN OF LIFE

## 1

As I ebb'd with the ocean of life,  
 As I wended the shores I know,  
 As I walk'd where the ripples continually wash you  
 Paumanok,  
 Where they rustle up hoarse and sibilant,  
 Where the fierce old mother endlessly cries for her cast-  
 aways,  
 I musing late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,  
 Held by this electric self out of the pride of which I utter  
 poems,  
 Was seiz'd by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,  
 The rim, the sediment that stands for all the water and all  
 the land of the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes reverting from the south, dropt, to  
 follow those slender windrows,  
 Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,  
 Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left  
 by the tide,  
 Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side  
 of me,  
 Paumanok there and then as I thought the old thought of  
 likenesses,  
 These you presented to me you fish-shaped island,  
 As I wended the shores I know,  
 As I walk'd with that electric self seeking types.

## 2

As I wend to the shores I know not,  
 As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wreck'd,  
 As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,  
 As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and  
 closer,  
 I too but signify at the utmost a little wash'd-up drift,  
 A few sands and dead leaves to gather,  
 Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.  
 O baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,  
 Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,



Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil  
upon me I have not once had the least idea who or  
what I am,  
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands  
yet untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,  
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory  
signs and bows,  
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I  
have written,  
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand  
beneath.  
I perceive I have not really understood any thing, not a  
single object, and that no man ever can,  
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to  
dart upon me and sting me,  
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

## 3

You oceans both, I close with you,  
We murmur alike reproachfully rolling sands and drift,  
knowing not why,  
These little shreds indeed standing for you and me and all.

You friable shore with trails of debris,  
You fish-shaped island, I take what is underfoot,  
What is yours is mine my father.

I too Paumanok,  
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and  
been wash'd on your shores,  
I too am but a trail of drift and debris,  
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped island.

I throw myself upon your breast my father,  
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,  
I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me my father,  
Touch me with your lips as I touch those I love,  
Breathe to me while I hold you close the secret of the  
murmuring I envy.



## 4

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return,)  
Cease not your moaning you fierce old mother,  
Endlessly cry for your castaways, but fear not, deny not  
me,  
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet as I  
touch you or gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you and all,  
I gather for myself and for this phantom looking down where  
we lead, and following me and mine.

Me and mine, loose windrows, little corpses,  
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,  
(See, from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last,  
See, the prismatic colors glistening and rolling,)  
Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,  
Buoy'd hither from many moods, one contradicting another,  
From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell,  
Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid  
or soil,

Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and  
thrown,

A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves  
floating, drifted at random,

Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature,  
Just as much whence we come that blare of the cloud-  
trumpets,

We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence,  
spread out before you,

You up there walking or sitting,  
Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.

## TEARS

TEARS ! tears ! tears !

In the night, in solitude, tears,

On the white shore dripping, dripping, suck'd in by the sand,

Tears, not a star shining, all dark and desolate,

Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head ;

O who is that ghost ? that form in the dark, with tears ?



What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouch'd there on the  
sand ?  
Streaming tears, sobbing tears, throes, choked with wild  
cries ;  
O storm, embodied, rising, careering with swift steps along  
the beach !  
O wild and dismal night storm, with wind—O belching and  
desperate !  
O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm counte-  
nance and regulated pace,  
But away at night as you fly, none looking—O then the  
unloosen'd ocean,  
Of tears ! tears ! tears !

## TO THE MAN-OF-WAR-BIRD

THOU who hast slept all night upon the storm,  
Waking renew'd on thy prodigious pinions,  
(Burst the wild storm ? above it thou ascended'st,  
And rested on the sky, thy slave that cradled thee,)  
Now a blue point, far, far in heaven floating,  
As to the light emerging here on deck I watch thee,  
(Myself a speck, a point on the world's floating vast.)  
Far, far at sea,  
After the night's fierce drifts have strewn the shore with  
wrecks,  
With re-appearing day as now so happy and serene,  
The rosy and elastic dawn, the flashing sun,  
The limpid spread of air cerulean,  
Thou also re-appearest.  
Thou born to match the gale, (thou art all wings,)  
To cope with heaven and earth and sea and hurricane,  
Thou ship of air that never furl'st thy sails,  
Days, even weeks untired and onward, through spaces,  
realms gyrating,  
At dusk that look'st on Senegal, at morn America,  
That sport'st amid the lightning-flash and thunder-cloud,  
In them, in thy experiences, had'st thou my soul,  
What joys ! what joys were thine !



## ABOARD AT A SHIP'S HELM

ABOARD at a ship's helm,  
A young steersman steering with care.

Through fog on a sea-coast dolefully ringing,  
An ocean-bell—O a warning bell, rock'd by the waves.

O you give good notice indeed, you bell by the sea-reefs  
ringing,  
Ringing, ringing, to warn the ship from its wreck-place.

For as on the alert O steersman, you mind the loud admoni-  
tion,  
The bows turn, the freighted ship tacking speeds away  
under her gray sails,  
The beautiful and noble ship with all her precious wealth  
speeds away gayly and safe.

But O the ship, the immortal ship ! O ship aboard the ship !  
Ship of the body, ship of the soul, voyaging, voyaging,  
voyaging.

## ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT

ON the beach at night,  
Stands a child with her father,  
Watching the east, the autumn sky.

Up through the darkness,  
While ravening clouds, the burial clouds, in black masses  
spreading,  
Lower sullen and fast athwart and down the sky,  
Amid a transparent clear belt of ether yet left in the east,  
Ascends large and calm the lord-star Jupiter,  
And nigh at hand, only a very little above,  
Swim the delicate sisters the Pleiades.

From the beach the child holding the hand of her father,  
Those burial-clouds that lower victorious soon to devour all,  
Watching, silently weeps.



Weep not, child,  
Weep not, my darling,  
With these kisses let me remove your tears,  
The ravening clouds shall not long be victorious,  
They shall not long possess the sky, they devour the stars  
only in apparition,  
Jupiter shall emerge, be patient, watch again another night,  
the Pleiades shall emerge,  
They are immortal, all those stars both silvery and golden  
shall shine out again,  
The great stars and the little ones shall shine out again,  
they endure,  
The vast immortal suns and the long-enduring pensive  
moons shall again shine.

Then dearest child mournest thou only for Jupiter ?  
Considerest thou alone the burial of the stars ?  
Something there is,  
(With my lips soothing thee, adding I whisper,  
I give thee the first suggestion, the problem and indirection,)  
Something there is more immortal even than the stars,  
(Many the burials, many the days and nights, passing  
away,)  
Something that shall endure longer even than lustrous  
Jupiter,  
Longer than sun or any revolving satellite,  
Or the radiant sisters the Pleiades.

### THE WORLD BELOW THE BRINE

THE world below the brine,  
Forests at the bottom of the sea, the branches and leaves,  
Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds, the  
thick tangled openings, and pink turf,  
Different colors, pale gray and green, purple, white, and  
gold, the play of light through the water,  
Dumb swimmers there among the rocks, coral, gluten, grass,  
rushes, and the aliment of the swimmers,  
Sluggish existences grazing there suspended, or slowly  
crawling close to the bottom,



The sperm-whale at the surface blowing air and spray, or  
disporting with his flukes,  
The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy sea-  
leopard, and the sting-ray,  
Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes, sight in those ocean-  
depths, breathing that thick-breathing air, as so many  
do,  
The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air  
breathed by beings like us who walk this sphere,  
The change onward from ours to that of beings who walk  
other spheres.

### ON THE BEACH AT NIGHT ALONE

On the beach at night alone,  
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky  
song,  
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of  
the clef of the universes and of the future.  
A vast similitude interlocks all,  
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons,  
planets,  
All distances of place however wide,  
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,  
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different,  
or in different worlds,  
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes,  
the brutes,  
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,  
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe,  
or any globe,  
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,  
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,  
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose  
them.



# SONG FOR ALL SEAS, ALL SHIPS

1

To-DAY a rude brief recitative,  
 Of ships sailing the seas, each with its special flag or ship-  
 signal,  
 Of unnamed heroes in the ships—of waves spreading and  
 spreading far as the eye can reach,  
 Of dashing spray, and the winds piping and blowing,  
 And out of these a chant for the sailors of all nations,  
 Fitful, like a surge.

Of sea-captains young or old, and the mates, and of all  
 intrepid sailors,  
 Of the few, very choice, taciturn, whom fate can never  
 surprise nor death dismay,  
 Pick'd sparingly without noise by thee old ocean, chosen  
 by thee,  
 Thou sea that pickest and cullest the race in time, and  
 unitest nations,  
 Suckled by thee, old husky nurse, embodying thee,  
 Indomitable, untamed as thee.

(Ever the heroes on water or on land, by ones or twos  
 appearing,  
 Ever the stock preserv'd and never lost, though rare, enough  
 for seed preserv'd.)

2

Flaunt out O sea your separate flags of nations !  
 Flaunt out visible as ever the various ship-signals !  
 But do you reserve especially for yourself and for the soul of  
 man one flag above all the rest,  
 A spiritual woven signal for all nations, emblem of man  
 elate above death,  
 Token of all brave captains and all intrepid sailors and  
 mates,  
 And all that went down doing their duty,  
 Reminiscent of them, twined from all intrepid captains  
 young or old,  
 A pennant universal, subtly waving all time, o'er all brave  
 sailors,  
 All seas, all ships.



## PATROLING BARNEGAT

WILD, wild the storm, and the sea high running,  
Steady the roar of the gale, with incessant undertone  
muttering,  
Shouts of demoniac laughter fitfully piercing and pealing,  
Waves, air, midnight, their savagest trinity lashing,  
Out in the shadows there milk-white combs careering,  
On beachy slush and sand spirts of snow fierce slanting,  
Where through the murk the easterly death-wind breasting,  
Through cutting swirl and spray watchful and firm ad-  
vancing,  
(That in the distance ! is that a wreck ? is the red signal  
flaring ?)  
Slush and sand of the beach tireless till daylight wending,  
Steadily, slowly, through hoarse roar never remitting,  
Along the midnight edge by those milk-white combs  
careering,  
A group of dim, weird forms, struggling, the night con-  
fronting,  
That savage trinity warily watching.

## AFTER THE SEA-SHIP

AFTER the sea-ship, after the whistling winds,  
After the white-gray sails taut to their spars and ropes,  
Below, a myriad myriad waves hastening, lifting up their  
necks,  
Tending in ceaseless flow toward the track of the ship,  
Waves of the ocean bubbling and gurgling, blithely prying,  
Waves, undulating waves, liquid, uneven, emulous waves,  
Toward that whirling current, laughing and buoyant, with  
curves,  
Where the great vessel sailing and tacking displaced the  
surface,  
Larger and smaller waves in the spread of the ocean yearn-  
fully flowing,  
The wake of the sea-ship after she passes, flashing and  
frolicsome under the sun,  
A motley procession with many a fleck of foam and many  
fragments,  
Following the stately and rapid ship, in the wake following.



## BY THE ROADSIDE

### A BOSTON BALLAD

(1854)

To get betimes in Boston town I rose this morning early,  
Here's a good place at the corner, I must stand and see the  
show.

Clear the way there Jonathan !  
Way for the President's marshal—way for the government  
cannon !  
Way for the Federal foot and dragoons, (and the apparitions  
copiously tumbling.)

I love to look on the Stars and Stripes, I hope the fifes will  
play Yankee Doodle.

How bright shine the cutlasses of the foremost troops !  
Every man holds his revolver, marching stiff through  
Boston town.

A fog follows, antiques of the same come limping,  
Some appear wooden-legged, and some appear bandaged  
and bloodless.

Why this is indeed a show—it has called the dead out of  
the earth !

The old graveyards of the hills have hurried to see !  
Phantoms ! phantoms countless by flank and rear !  
Cock'd hats of mothy mould—crutches made of mist !  
Arms in slings—old men leaning on young men's shoulders.

What troubles you Yankee phantoms ? what is all this  
chattering of bare gums ?

Does the ague convulse your limbs ? do you mistake your  
crutches for firelocks and level them ?



If you blind your eyes with tears you will not see the  
President's marshal,  
If you groan such groans you might balk the government  
cannon.

For shame old maniacs—bring down those toss'd arms, and  
let your white hair be,  
Here gape your great grandsons, their wives gaze at them  
from the windows,  
See how well dress'd, see how orderly they conduct them-  
selves.

Worse and worse—can't you stand it? are you retreating?  
Is this hour with the living too dead for you?

Retreat then—pell-mell!  
To your graves—back—back to the hills old limpers!  
I do not think you belong here anyhow.

But there is one thing that belongs here—shall I tell you  
what it is, gentlemen of Boston?

I will whisper it to the Mayor, he shall send a committee  
to England,  
They shall get a grant from the Parliament, go with a  
cart to the royal vault,  
Dig out King George's coffin, unwrap him quick from the  
grave-clothes, box up his bones for a journey,  
Find a swift Yankee clipper—here is freight for you, black-  
bellied clipper,  
Up with your anchor—shake out your sails—steer straight  
toward Boston bay.

Now call for the President's marshal again, bring out the  
government cannon,  
Fetch home the roarers from Congress, make another  
procession, guard it with foot and dragoons.

This centre-piece for them;  
Look, all orderly citizens—look from the windows, women!

The committee open the box, set up the regal ribs, glue those  
that will not stay,



Clap the skull on top of the ribs, and clap a crown on top  
of the skull.

You have got your revenge, old buster—the crown is come  
to its own, and more than its own.

Stick your hands in your pockets, Jonathan—you are a  
made man from this day,

You are mighty cute—and here is one of your bargains.

## EUROPE

### *The 72nd and 73rd Years of the United States*

SUDDENLY out of its stale and drowsy lair, the lair of  
slaves,

Like lightning it le'pt forth half startled at itself,  
Its feet upon the ashes and the rags, its hands tight to the  
throats of kings.

O hope and faith !

O aching close of exiled patriots' lives !

O many a sicken'd heart !

Turn back unto this day and make yourselves afresh.

And you, paid to defile the People—you liars, mark !

Not for numberless agonies, murders, lusts,

For court thieving in its manifold mean forms, worming  
from his simplicity the poor man's wages,

For many a promise sworn by royal lips and broken and  
laugh'd at in the breaking,

Then in their power not for all these did the blows strike  
revenge, or the heads of the nobles fall ;

The People scorn'd the ferocity of kings.

But the sweetness of mercy brew'd bitter destruction, and  
the frighten'd monarchs come back,

Each comes in state with his train, hangman, priest, tax-  
gatherer,

Soldier, lawyer, lord, jailer, and sycophant.



Yet behind all lowering stealing, lo, a shape,  
Vague as the night, draped interminably, head, front and  
form, in scarlet folds,

Whose face and eyes none may see,  
Out of its robes only this, the red robes lifted by the arm,  
One finger crook'd pointed high over the top, like the head  
of a snake appears.

Meanwhile corpses lie in new-made graves, bloody corpses  
of young men,

The rope of the gibbet hangs heavily, the bullets of princes  
are flying, the creatures of power laugh aloud,  
And all these things bear fruits, and they are good.

Those corpses of young men,  
Those martyrs that hang from the gibbets, those hearts  
pierc'd by the gray lead,  
Cold and motionless as they seem live elsewhere with  
unslaughter'd vitality.

They live in other young men O kings !  
They live in brothers again ready to defy you,  
They were purified by death, they were taught and exalted.

Not a grave of the murder'd for freedom but grows seed  
for freedom, in its turn to bear seed,  
Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and  
the snows nourish.

Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let  
loose,  
But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering, counseling,  
cautioning.

Liberty, let others despair of you—I never despair of you.

Is the house shut ? is the master away ?  
Nevertheless, be ready, be not weary of watching,  
He will soon return, his messengers come anon.



## A HAND-MIRROR

HOLD it up sternly—see this it sends back, (who is it? is it you?)

Outside fair costume, within ashes and filth,  
No more a flashing eye, no more a sonorous voice or springy step,

Now some slave's eye, voice, hands, step,  
A drunkard's breath, unwholesome eater's face, venereal's flesh,

Lungs rotting away piecemeal, stomach sour and cankerous,  
Joints rheumatic, bowels clogged with abomination,  
Blood circulating dark and poisonous streams,  
Words babble, hearing and touch callous,  
No brain, no heart left, no magnetism of sex;  
Such from one look in this looking-glass ere you go hence,  
Such a result so soon—and from such a beginning!

## GODS

LOVER divine and perfect Comrade,  
Waiting content, invisible yet, but certain,  
Be thou my God.

Thou, thou, the Ideal Man,  
Fair, able, beautiful, content, and loving,  
Complete in body and dilate in spirit,  
Be thou my God.

O Death, (for Life has served its turn,)  
Opener and usher to the heavenly mansion,  
Be thou my God.

Aught, aught of mightiest, best I see, conceive, or know,  
(To break the stagnant tie—thee, thee to free, O soul,)  
Be thou my God.

All great ideas, the races' aspirations,  
All heroisms, deeds of rapt enthusiasts,  
Be ye my Gods.



Or Time and Space,  
 Or shape of Earth divine and wondrous,  
 Or some fair shape I viewing, worship,  
 Or lustrous orb of sun or star by night,  
 Be ye my Gods.

### GERMS

FORMS, qualities, lives, humanity, language, thoughts,  
 The ones known, and the ones unknown, the ones on the  
 stars,  
 The stars themselves, some shaped, others unshaped,  
 Wonders as of those countries, the soil, trees, cities, in-  
 habitants, whatever they may be,  
 Splendid suns, the moons and rings, the countless combina-  
 tions and effects,  
 Such-like, and as good as such-like, visible here or anywhere,  
 stand provided for in a handful of space, which I  
 extend my arm and half enclose with my hand,  
 'That containing the start of each and all, the virtue, the  
 germs of all.

### THOUGHTS

Of ownership—as if one fit to own things could not at  
 pleasure enter upon all, and incorporate them into  
 himself or herself ;  
 Of vista—suppose some sight in arriere through the forma-  
 tive chaos, presuming the growth, fulness, life, now  
 attain'd on the journey,  
 (But I see the road continued, and the journey ever con-  
 tinued ;)  
 Of what was once lacking on earth, and in due time has  
 become supplied—and of what will yet be supplied,  
 Because all I see and know I believe to have its main  
 purport in what will yet be supplied.



## WHEN I HEARD THE LEARN'D ASTRONOMER

WHEN I heard the learn'd astronomer,  
 When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns  
 before me,  
 When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide,  
 and measure them,  
 When I sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured  
 with much applause in the lecture-room,  
 How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,  
 Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,  
 In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,  
 Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars.

## PERFECTIONS

ONLY themselves understand themselves and the like of  
 themselves,  
 As souls only understand souls.

## O ME! O LIFE!

O ME! O life! of the questions of these recurring,  
 Of the endless trains of the faithless, of cities fill'd with the  
 foolish,  
 Of myself forever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish  
 than I, and who more faithless?)  
 Of eyes that vainly crave the light, of the objects mean, of  
 the struggle ever renew'd,  
 Of the poor results of all, of the plodding and sordid crowds  
 I see around me,  
 Of the empty and useless years of the rest, with the rest  
 me intertwined,  
 The question, O me! so sad, recurring—What good amid  
 these, O me, O life?

## Answer

That you are here—that life exists and identity,  
 That the powerful play goes on, and you may contribute a  
 verse.



## TO A PRESIDENT

ALL you are doing and saying is to America dangled  
mirages,  
You have not learn'd of Nature—of the politics of Nature  
you have not learn'd the great amplitude, rectitude,  
impartiality,  
You have not seen that only such as they are for these  
States,  
And that what is less than they must sooner or later lift off  
from these States.

## I SIT AND LOOK OUT

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and  
upon all oppression and shame,  
I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men at anguish  
with themselves, remorseful after deeds done,  
I see in low life the mother misused by her children, dying,  
neglected, gaunt, desperate,  
I see the wife misused by her husband, I see the treacherous  
seducer of young women,  
I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love  
attempted to be hid, I see these sights on the earth,  
I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny, I see  
martyrs and prisoners,  
I observe a famine at sea, I observe the sailors casting lots  
who shall be kill'd to preserve the lives of the rest,  
I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant  
persons upon laborers, the poor, and upon negroes, and  
the like ;  
All these—all the meanness and agony without end I sitting  
look out upon,  
See, hear, and am silent.

## TO RICH GIVERS

WHAT you give me I cheerfully accept,  
A little sustenance, a hut and garden, a little money, as I  
rendezvous with my poems,



A traveler's lodging and breakfast as I journey through the States,—why should I be ashamed to own such gifts? why to advertise for them?

For I myself am not one who bestows nothing upon man and woman,

For I bestow upon any man or woman the entrance to all the gifts of the universe.

### THE DALLIANCE OF THE EAGLES

SKIRTING the river road, (my forenoon walk, my rest,) Skyward in air a sudden muffled sound, the dalliance of the eagles,

The rushing amorous contact high in space together, The clinching interlocking claws, a living, fierce, gyrating wheel,

Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling,

In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward falling,

Till o'er the river pois'd, the twain yet one, a moment's lull, A motionless still balance in the air, then parting, talons loosing,

Upward again on slow-firm pinions slanting, their separate diverse flight,

She hers, he his, pursuing.

### ROAMING IN THOUGHT

*(After reading HEGEL)*

Roaming in thought over the Universe, I saw the little that is Good steadily hastening towards immortality, And the vast all that is call'd Evil I saw hastening to merge itself and become lost and dead.

### A FARM PICTURE

THROUGH the ample open door of the peaceful country barn, A sunlit pasture field with cattle and horses feeding, And haze and vista, and the far horizon fading away.



## A CHILD'S AMAZE

SILENT and amazed even when a little boy,  
 I remember I heard the preacher every Sunday put God in  
 his statements,  
 As contending against some being or influence.

## THE RUNNER

ON a flat road runs the well-train'd runner,  
 He is lean and sinewy with muscular legs,  
 He is thinly clothed, he leans forward as he runs,  
 With lightly closed fists and arms partially rais'd.

## BEAUTIFUL WOMEN

WOMEN sit or move to and fro, some old, some young,  
 The young are beautiful—but the old are more beautiful  
 than the young.

## MOTHER AND BABE

I SEE the sleeping babe nestling the breast of its mother,  
 The sleeping mother and babe—hush'd, I study them long  
 and long.

## THOUGHT

OF obedience, faith, adhesiveness ;  
 As I stand aloof and look there is to me something pro-  
 foundly affecting in large masses of men following the  
 lead of those who do not believe in men.

## VISOR'D

A MASK, a perpetual natural disguiser of herself,  
 Concealing her face, concealing her form,  
 Changes and transformations every hour, every moment,  
 Falling upon her even when she sleeps.



## THOUGHT

OF Justice—as if Justice could be anything but the same  
ample law, expounded by natural judges and saviors,  
As if it might be this thing or that thing, according to  
decisions.

## GLIDING O'ER ALL

GLIDING o'er all, through all,  
Through Nature, Time, and Space,  
As a ship on the waters advancing,  
The voyage of the soul—not life alone,  
Death, many deaths I'll sing.

## HAST NEVER COME TO THEE AN HOUR

HAST never come to thee an hour,  
A sudden gleam divine, precipitating, bursting all these  
bubbles, fashions, wealth?  
These eager business aims—books, politics, art, amours,  
To utter nothingness?

## THOUGHT

OF Equality—as if it harm'd me, giving others the same  
chances and rights as myself—as if it were not indis-  
pensable to my own rights that others possess the  
same.

## TO OLD AGE

I SEE in you the estuary that enlarges and spreads itself  
grandly as it pours in the great sea.

## LOCATIONS AND TIMES

LOCATIONS and times—what is it in me that meets them all,  
whenever and wherever, and makes me at home?  
Forms, colors, densities, odors—what is it in me that  
corresponds with them?



## OFFERINGS

A THOUSAND perfect men and women appear,  
 Around each gathers a cluster of friends, and gay children  
 and youths, with offerings.

## TO THE STATES

*To Identify the 16th, 17th, or 18th Presidentiad*

WHY reclining, interrogating ? why myself and all drows-  
 ing ?

What deepening twilight—scum floating atop of the waters,  
 Who are they as bats and night-dogs askant in the capitol ?  
 What a filthy Presidentiad ! (O South, your torrid suns !  
 O North, your arctic freezings !)

Are those really Congressmen ? are those the great Judges ?  
 is that the President ?

Then I will sleep awhile yet, for I see that these States  
 sleep, for reasons ;

(With gathering murk, with muttering thunder and lambent  
 shoots we all duly awake,

South, North, East, West, inland and seaboard, we will  
 surely awake.)



## DRUM-TAPS

### FIRST O SONGS FOR A PRELUDE

FIRST O songs for a prelude,  
Lightly strike on the stretch'd tympanum pride and joy  
in my city,

How she led the rest to arms, how she gave the cue,  
How at once with lithe limbs unwaiting a moment she  
sprang,

(O superb ! O Manhattan, my own, my peerless !  
O strongest you in the hour of danger, in crisis ! O truer  
than steel !)

How you sprang—how you threw off the costumes of peace  
with indifferent hand,

How your soft opera-music changed, and the drum and fife  
were heard in their stead,

How you led to the war, (that shall serve for our prelude,  
songs of soldiers,)

How Manhattan drum-taps led.

Forty years had I in my city seen soldiers parading,  
Forty years as a pageant, till unawares the lady of this  
teeming and turbulent city,

Sleepless amid her ships, her houses, her incalculable wealth,  
With her million children around her, suddenly,  
At dead of night, at news from the south,  
Incens'd struck with clinch'd hand the pavement.

A shock electric, the night sustain'd it,  
Till with ominous hum our hive at daybreak pour'd out its  
myriads.

From the houses then and the workshops, and through all  
the doorways,  
Leapt they tumultuous, and lo ! Manhattan arming.



To the drum-taps prompt,  
The young men falling in and arming,  
The mechanics arming, (the trowel, the jack-plane, the  
blacksmith's hammer, tost aside with precipitation,)  
The lawyer leaving his office and arming, the judge leaving  
the court,  
The driver deserting his wagon in the street, jumping down,  
throwing the reins abruptly down on the horses' backs,  
The salesman leaving the store, the boss, book-keeper,  
porter, all leaving ;  
Squads gather everywhere by common consent and arm,  
The new recruits, even boys, the old men show them how  
to wear their accoutrements, they buckle the straps  
carefully,  
Outdoors arming, indoors arming, the flash of the musket-  
barrels,  
The white tents cluster in camps, the arm'd sentries around,  
the sunrise cannon and again at sunset,  
Arm'd regiments arrive every day, pass through the city,  
and embark from the wharves,  
(How good they look as they tramp down to the river,  
sweaty, with their guns on their shoulders !  
How I love them ! how I could hug them, with their brown  
faces and their clothes and knapsacks cover'd with  
dust !)  
The blood of the city up—arm'd ! arm'd ! the cry every-  
where,  
The flags flung out from the steeples of churches and from  
all the public buildings and stores,  
The tearful parting, the mother kisses her son, the son kisses  
his mother,  
(Loth is the mother to part, yet not a word does she speak  
to detain him.)  
The tumultuous escort, the ranks of policemen preceding,  
clearing the way,  
The unpent enthusiasm, the wild cheers of the crowd for  
their favorites,  
The artillery, the silent cannons bright as gold, drawn along,  
rumble lightly over the stones,  
(Silent cannons, soon to cease your silence,  
Soon unlimber'd to begin the red business ;)  
All the mutter of preparation, all the determin'd arming,  
The hospital service, the lint, bandages and medicines,



The women volunteering for nurses, the work begun for in earnest, no mere parade now ;

War ! an arm'd race is advancing ! the welcome for battle, no turning away ;

War ! be it weeks, months, or years, an arm'd race is advancing to welcome it.

Mannahatta a-march—and it's O to sing it well !

It's O for a manly life in the camp.

And the sturdy artillery,  
The guns bright as gold, the work for giants, to serve well the guns,

Unlimber them ! (no more as the past forty years for salutes for courtesies merely,

Put in something now besides powder and wadding.)

And you lady of ships, you Mannahatta,  
Old matron of this proud, friendly, turbulent city,  
Often in peace and wealth you were pensive or covertly frown'd amid all your children,

But now you smile with joy exulting old Mannahatta.

## EIGHTEEN SIXTY-ONE

ARM'D year—year of the struggle,  
No dainty rhymes or sentimental love verses for you terrible year,

Not you as some pale poetling seated at a desk lisping cadenzas piano,

But as a strong man erect, clothed in blue clothes, advancing, carrying a rifle on your shoulder,

With well-gristled body and sunburnt face and hands, with a knife in the belt at your side,

As I heard you shouting loud, your sonorous voice ringing across the continent,

Your masculine voice O year, as rising amid the great cities, Amid the men of Manhattan I saw you as one of the workmen, the dwellers in Manhattan,

Or with large steps crossing the prairies out of Illinois and Indiana,



Rapidly crossing the West with springy gait and descending  
the Alleghanies,  
Or down from the great lakes or in Pennsylvania, or on  
deck along the Ohio river,  
Or southward along the Tennessee or Cumberland rivers,  
or at Chattanooga on the mountain top,  
Saw I your gait and saw I your sinewy limbs clothed in  
blue, bearing weapons, robust year,  
Heard your determin'd voice launch'd forth again and  
again,  
Year that suddenly sang by the mouths of the round-lipp'd  
cannon,  
I repeat you, hurrying, crashing, sad, distracted year.

### BEAT! BEAT! DRUMS!

BEAT! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!  
Through the windows—through doors—burst like a  
ruthless force,  
Into the solemn church, and scatter the congregation,  
Into the school where the scholar is studying;  
Leave not the bridegroom quiet—no happiness must he  
have now with his bride,  
Nor the peaceful farmer any peace, ploughing his field or  
gathering his grain,  
So fierce you whirr and pound you drums—so shrill you  
bugles blow.

Beat! beat! drums!—blow! bugles! blow!  
Over the traffic of cities—over the rumble of wheels in the  
streets;  
Are beds prepared for sleepers at night in the houses? no  
sleepers must sleep in those beds,  
No bargainers' bargains by day—no brokers or speculators  
—would they continue?  
Would the talkers be talking? would the singer attempt to  
sing?  
Would the lawyer rise in the court to state his case before  
the judge?  
Then rattle quicker, heavier drums—you bugles wilder  
blow.



Beat ! beat ! drums !—blow ! bugles ! blow !  
 Make no parley—stop for no expostulation,  
 Mind not the timid—mind not the weeper or prayer,  
 Mind not the old man beseeching the young man,  
 Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's  
     entreaties,  
 Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie  
     awaiting the hearses,  
 So strong you thump O terrible drums—so loud you  
     bugles blow.

### FROM PAUMANOK STARTING I FLY LIKE A BIRD

FROM Paumanok starting I fly like a bird,  
 Around and around to soar to sing the idea of all  
 To the north betaking myself to sing there arctic songs,  
 To Kanada till I absorb Kanada in myself, to Michigan  
     then,  
 To Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota, to sing their songs, (they  
     are inimitable ;) )  
 Then to Ohio and Indiana to sing theirs, to Missouri and  
     Kansas and Arkansas to sing theirs,  
 To Tennessee and Kentucky, to the Carolinas and Georgia  
     to sing theirs,  
 To Texas and so along up toward California, to roam  
     accepted everywhere ;  
 To sing first, (to the tap of the war-drum if need be,) )  
 The idea of all, of the Western world one and inseparable,  
 And then the song of each member of these States.

### SONG OF THE BANNER AT DAYBREAK

*Poet*

O A new song, a free song,  
 Flapping, flapping, flapping, flapping, by sounds, by voices  
     clearer,  
 By the wind's voice and that of the drum,



By the banner's voice and child's voice and sea's voice and  
 father's voice,  
 Low on the ground and high in the air,  
 On the ground where father and child stand,  
 In the upward air where their eyes turn,  
 Where the banner at daybreak is flapping.

Words! book-words! what are you?  
 Words no more, for hearken and see,  
 My song is there in the open air, and I must sing,  
 With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

I'll weave the chord and twine in,  
 Man's desire and babe's desire, I'll twine them in, I'll put  
 in life,  
 I'll put the bayonet's flashing point, I'll let bullets and slugs  
 whizz,  
 (As one carrying a symbol and menace far into the future,  
 Crying with trumpet voice, *Arouse and beware! Beware  
 and arouse!*)  
 I'll pour the verse with streams of blood, full of volition,  
 full of joy,  
 Then loosen, launch forth, to go and compete,  
 With the banner and pennant a-flapping.

*Pennant*

Come up here, bard, bard,  
 Come up here, soul, soul,  
 Come up here, dear little child,  
 To fly in the clouds and winds with me, and play with the  
 measureless light.

*Child*

Father what is that in the sky beckoning to me with long  
 finger?  
 And what does it say to me all the while?

*Father*

Nothing my babe you see in the sky,  
 And nothing at all to you it says—but look you my babe,  
 Look at these dazzling things in the houses, and see you  
 the money-shops opening,



And see you the vehicles preparing to crawl along the streets  
with goods ;  
These, ah these, how valued and toil'd for these !  
Now envied by all the earth.

*Poet*

Fresh and rosy red the sun is mounting high,  
On floats the sea in distant blue careering through its  
channels,  
On floats the wind over the breast of the sea setting in  
toward land,  
The great steady wind from west or west-by-south,  
Floating so buoyant with milk-white foam on the waters.

But I am not the sea nor the red sun,  
I am not the wind with girlish laughter,  
Not the immense wind which strengthens, not the wind  
which lashes,  
Not the spirit that ever lashes its own body to terror and  
death,  
But I am that which unseen comes and sings, sings, sings,  
Which babbles in brooks and scoots in showers on the land,  
Which the birds know in the woods mornings and evenings,  
And the shore-sands know and the hissing wave, and that  
banner and pennant,  
Aloft there flapping and flapping.

*Child*

O father it is alive—it is full of people—it has children,  
O now it seems to me it is talking to its children,  
I hear it—it talks to me—O it is wonderful !  
O it stretches—it spreads and runs so fast—O my father,  
It is so broad it covers the whole sky.

*Father*

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



*Banner and Pennant*

Speak to the child O bard out of Manhattan,  
To our children all, or north or south of Manhattan,  
Point this day, leaving all the rest, to us over all—and yet  
we know not why,  
For what are we, mere strips of cloth profiting nothing,  
Only flapping in the wind ?

*Poet*

I hear and see not strips of cloth alone,  
I hear the tramp of armies, I hear the challenging sentry,  
I hear the jubilant shouts of millions of men, I hear Liberty !  
I hear the drums beat and the trumpets blowing,  
I myself move abroad swift-rising flying then,  
I use the wings of the land-bird and use the wings of the  
sea-bird, and look down as from a height,  
I do not deny the precious results of peace, I see populous  
cities with wealth incalculable,  
I see numberless farms, I see the farmers working in their  
fields or barns,  
I see mechanics working, I see buildings everywhere  
founded, going up, or finish'd,  
I see trains of cars swiftly speeding along railroad tracks  
drawn by the locomotives,  
I see the stores, depôts, of Boston, Baltimore, Charleston,  
New Orleans,  
I see far in the West the immense area of grain, I dwell  
awhile hovering,  
I pass to the lumber forests of the North, and again to the  
Southern plantation, and again to California ;  
Sweeping the whole I see the countless profit, the busy  
gatherings, earn'd wages,  
See the Identity formed out of thirty-eight spacious and  
haughty States, (and many more to come,)  
See forts on the shores of harbors, see ships sailing in and  
out ;  
Then over all, (aye ! aye !) my little and lengthen'd  
pennant shaped like a sword,  
Runs swiftly up indicating war and defiance—and now  
the halyards have rais'd it,  
Side of my banner broad and blue, side of my starry banner,  
Discarding peace over all the sea and land.



*Banner and Pennant*

Yet louder, higher, stronger, bard ! yet farther, wider  
cleave !  
No longer let our children deem us riches and peace alone,  
We may be terror and carnage, and are so now,  
Not now are we any one of these spacious and haughty  
States, (nor any five, nor ten,)  
Nor market nor depôt we, nor money-bank in the city,  
But these and all, and the brown and spreading land, and  
the mines below, are ours,  
And the shores of the sea are ours, and the rivers great and  
small,  
And the fields they moisten, and the crops and the fruits  
are ours,  
Bays and channels and ships sailing in and out are ours—  
while we over all,  
Over the area spread below, the three or four millions of  
square miles, the capitals,  
The forty millions of people,—O bard ! in life and death  
supreme,  
We, even we, henceforth flaunt out masterful, high up  
above,  
Not for the present alone, for a thousand years chanting  
through you,  
This song to the soul of one poor little child.

*Child*

O my father I like not the houses,  
They will never to me be anything, nor do I like money,  
But to mount up there I would like, O father dear, that  
banner I like,  
That pennant I would be and must be.

*Father*

Child of mine you fill me with anguish,  
To be that pennant would be too fearful,  
Little you know what it is this day, and after this day,  
forever,  
It is to gain nothing, but risk and defy everything,  
Forward to stand in front of wars—and O, such wars !—  
what have you to do with them ?  
With passions of demons, slaughter, premature death ?



*Banner*

Demons and death then I sing,  
 Put in all, aye all will I, sword-shaped pennant for  
 war,  
 And a pleasure new and ecstatic, and the prattled yearning  
 of children,  
 Blent with the sounds of the peaceful land and the liquid  
 wash of the sea,  
 And the black ships fighting on the sea envelop'd in  
 smoke,  
 And the icy cool of the far, far north, with rustling cedars  
 and pines,  
 And the whirr of drums and the sound of soldiers marching,  
 and the hot sun shining south,  
 And the beach-waves combing over the beach on my  
 Eastern shore, and my Western shore the same,  
 And all between those shores, and my ever running Missis-  
 sippi with bends and chutes,  
 And my Illinois fields, and my Kansas fields, and my fields  
 of Missouri,  
 The Continent, devoting the whole identity without  
 reserving an atom,  
 Pour in ! whelm that which asks, which sings, with all and  
 the yield of all,  
 Fusing and holding, claiming, devouring the whole,  
 No more with tender lip, nor musical labial sound,  
 But out of the night emerging for good, our voice persuasive  
 no more,  
 Croaking like crows here in the wind.

*Poet*

My limbs, my veins dilate, my theme is clear at last,  
 Banner so broad advancing out of the night, I sing you  
 haughty and resolute,  
 I burst through where I waited long, too long, deafen'd  
 and blinded,  
 My hearing and tongue are come to me, (a little child taught  
 me,)

I hear from above O pennant of war your ironical call and  
 demand,  
 Insensate ! insensate ! (yet I at any rate chant you,) O  
 banner !



Not houses of peace indeed are you, nor any nor all their  
prosperity, (if need be, you shall again have every one  
of those houses to destroy them,

You thought not to destroy those valuable houses, standing  
fast, full of comfort, built with money,

May they stand fast, then ? not an hour except you above  
them and all stand fast ;)

O banner, not money so precious are you, not farm produce  
you, nor the material good nutriment,

Nor excellent stores, nor landed on wharves from the  
ships,

Not the superb ships with sail-power or steam-power,  
fetching and carrying cargoes,

Nor machinery, vehicles, trade, nor revenues—but you as  
henceforth I see you,

Running up out of the night, bringing your cluster of stars,  
(ever-enlarging stars,)

Divider of daybreak you, cutting the air, touch'd by the  
sun, measuring the sky,

(Passionately seen and yearn'd for by one poor little  
child,

While others remain busy or smartly talking, forever  
teaching thrift, thrift ;)

O you up there ! O pennant ! where you undulate like a  
snake hissing so curious,

Out of reach, an idea only, yet furiously fought for, risking  
bloody death, loved by me,

So loved—O you banner leading the day with stars brought  
from the night !

Valueless, object of eyes, over all and demanding all—  
(absolute owner of all)—O banner and pennant !

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

I see but you, O warlike pennant ! O banner so broad,  
with stripes, I sing you only,

Flapping up there in the wind.



RISE O DAYS FROM YOUR FATHOMLESS  
DEEPS

## 1

RISE O days from your fathomless deeps, till you loftier,  
fiercer sweep,  
Long for my soul hungering gymnastic I devour'd what  
the earth gave me,  
Long I roam'd the woods of the north, long I watch'd  
Niagara pouring,  
I travel'd the prairies over and slept on their breast, I  
cross'd the Nevadas, I cross'd the plateaus,  
I ascended the towering rocks along the Pacific, I sail'd  
out to sea,  
I sail'd through the storm, I was refresh'd by the storm,  
I watch'd with joy the threatening maws of the waves,  
I mark'd the white combs where they career'd so high,  
curling over,  
I heard the wind piping, I saw the black clouds,  
Saw from below what arose and mounted, (O superb ! O  
wild as my heart, and powerful !)  
Heard the continuous thunder as it bellow'd after the  
lightning,  
Noted the slender and jagged threads of lightning as sudden  
and fast amid the din they chased each other across  
the sky ;  
These, and such as these, I, elate, saw—saw with wonder,  
yet pensive and masterful,  
All the menacing might of the globe uprisen around me,  
Yet there with my soul I fed, I fed content, supercilious.

## 2

'Twas well, O soul—'twas a good preparation you gave me,  
Now we advance our latent and ampler hunger to fill,  
Now we go forth to receive what the earth and the sea  
never gave us,  
Not through the mighty woods we go, but through the  
mightier cities,  
Something for us is pouring now more than Niagara pouring,  
Torrents of men, (sources and rills of the Northwest are  
you indeed inexhaustible ?)



What, to pavements and homesteads here, what were those  
storms of the mountains and sea ?  
What, to passions I witness around me to-day ? was the  
sea risen ?  
Was the wind piping the pipe of death under the black  
clouds ?  
Lo ! from 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 !  
(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,  
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.

### VIRGINIA—THE WEST

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

The noble son on sinewy feet advancing,  
 I saw, out of the land of prairies, land of Ohio's waters and  
     of Indiana,  
 To the rescue the stalwart giant hurry his plenteous off-  
     spring,  
 Drest in blue, bearing their trusty rifles on their shoulders.

Then the Mother of All with calm voice speaking,  
 As to you Rebellious, (I seemed to hear her say,) why  
     strive against me, and why seek my life?  
 When you yourself forever provide to defend me?  
 For you provided me Washington—and now these also.

### CITY OF SHIPS

CITY of ships!  
 (O the black ships! O the fierce ships!  
 O the beautiful sharp-bow'd steam-ships and sail-ships!)

• City of the world! (for all races are here,  
 All the lands of the earth make contributions here;)  
 City of the sea! city of hurried and glittering tides!  
 City whose gleeful tides continually rush or recede, whirling  
     in and out with eddies and foam!



City of wharves and stores—city of tall façades of marble  
and iron !

Proud and passionate city—mettlesome, mad, extravagant  
city !

Spring up O city—not for peace alone, but be indeed your-  
self, warlike !

Fear not—submit to no models but your own O city !

Behold me—incarnate me as I have incarnated you !

I have rejected nothing you offer'd me—whom you adopted

I have adopted,

Good or bad I never question you—I love all—I do not  
condemn 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 !

### THE CENTENARIAN'S STORY

*Volunteer of 1861-2 (at Washington Park, Brooklyn,  
assisting the Centenarian)*

GIVE me your hand old Revolutionary,  
The hill-top is nigh, but a few steps, (make room gentlemen,)  
Up the path you have follow'd me well, spite of your  
hundred and extra years,  
You can walk old man, though your eyes are almost done,  
Your faculties serve you, and presently I must have them  
serve me.

Rest, while I tell what the crowd around us means,  
On the plain below recruits are drilling and exercising,  
There is the camp, one regiment departs to-morrow,  
Do you hear the officers giving their orders ?  
Do you hear the clank of the muskets ?

Why what comes over you now old man ?  
Why do you tremble and clutch my hand so convulsively ?  
The troops are but drilling, they are yet surrounded with  
smiles,  
Around them at hand the well-drest friends and the women,  
While splendid and warm the afternoon sun shines down,



Green the midsummer verdure and fresh blows the dallying  
breeze,  
O'er proud and peaceful cities and arm of the sea between.

But drill and parade are over, they march back to quarters,  
Only hear that approval of hands ! hear what a clapping !

As wending the crowds now part and disperse—but we  
old man,  
Not for nothing have I brought you hither—we must re-  
main,  
You to speak in your turn, and I to listen and tell.

### *The Centenarian*

When I clutch'd your hand it was not with terror,  
But suddenly pouring about me here on every side,  
And below there where the boys were drilling, and up the  
slopes they ran,  
And where tents are pitch'd, and wherever you see south  
and south-east and south-west,  
Over hills, across lowlands, and in the skirts of woods,  
And along the shores, in mire (now fill'd over) came again  
and suddenly raged,  
As eighty-five years a-gone no mere parade receiv'd with  
applause of friends,  
But a battle which I took part in myself—aye, long ago  
as it is, I took part in it,  
Walking then this hilltop, this same ground.

Aye, this is the ground,  
My blind eyes even as I speak behold it re-peopled from  
graves,  
The years recede, pavements and stately houses disappear,  
Rude forts appear again, the old hoop'd guns are mounted,  
I see the lines of rais'd earth stretching from river to bay,  
I mark the vista of waters, I mark the uplands and slopes ;  
Here we lay encamp'd, it was this time in summer also.

As I talk I remember all, I remember the Declaration,  
It was read here, the whole army paraded, it was read to  
us here,



By his staff surrounded the General stood in the middle,  
 he held up his unsheath'd sword,  
 It glitter'd in the sun in full sight of the army.

'Twas a bold act then—the English war-ships had just  
 arrived,  
 We could watch down the lower bay where they lay at  
 anchor,  
 And the transports swarming with soldiers.

A few days more and they landed, and then the battle.

Twenty thousand were brought against us,  
 A veteran force furnish'd with good artillery.

I tell not now the whole of the battle,  
 But one brigade early in the forenoon order'd forward to  
 engage the red-coats,  
 Of that brigade I tell, and how steadily it march'd,  
 And how long and well it stood confronting death.

Who do you think that was marching steadily sternly  
 confronting death?

It was the brigade of the youngest men, two thousand  
 strong,

Rais'd in Virginia and Maryland, and most of them known  
 personally to the General.

Jauntily forward they went with quick step toward  
 Gowanus' waters,

Till of a sudden unlook'd for by defiles through the woods,  
 gain'd at night,

The British advancing, rounding in from the east, fiercely  
 playing their guns,

That brigade of the youngest was cut off and at the enemy's  
 mercy.

The General watch'd them from this hill,  
 They made repeated desperate attempts to burst their  
 environment,

Then drew close together, very compact, their flag flying  
 in the middle,

But O from the hills how the cannon were thinning and  
 thinning them!



It sickens me yet, that slaughter !  
I saw the moisture gather in drops on the face of the  
General,  
I saw how he wrung his hands in anguish.

Meanwhile the British manœuvr'd to draw us out for a  
pitch'd battle,  
But we dared not trust the chances of a pitch'd battle.

We fought the fight in detachments,  
Sallying forth we fought at several points, but in each the  
luck was against us,  
Our foe advancing, steadily getting the best of it, push'd  
us back to the works on this hill,  
Till we turn'd menacing here, and then he left us.

That was the going out of the brigade of the youngest men,  
two thousand strong,  
Few return'd, nearly all remain in Brooklyn.

That and here my General's first battle,  
No women looking on nor sunshine to bask in, it did not  
conclude with applause,  
Nobody clapp'd hands here then.

But in darkness in mist on the ground under a chill rain,  
Wearied that night we lay foil'd and sullen,  
While scornfully laugh'd many an arrogant lord off against  
us encamp'd,  
Quite within hearing, feasting, clinking wineglasses together  
over their victory.

So dull and damp and another day,  
But the night of that, mist lifting, rain ceasing,  
Silent as a ghost while they thought they were sure of him,  
my General retreated.

I saw him at the river-side,  
Down by the ferry lit by torches, hastening the embarca-  
tion ;  
My General waited till the soldiers and wounded were all  
pass'd over,  
And then, (it was just ere sunrise,) these eyes rested on him  
for the last time.