

ZEBA BOOKS CLASSICS

The Patriotic Poems

Walt Whitman

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Poems of Walt
Whitman
Walt Whitman



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Preface

Classics endure not because they are old, but because they are alive. They speak across centuries, cultures, and changing moral landscapes, carrying with them the anxieties, aspirations, and insights of humanity in its many forms. When a work survives the erosion of time, it earns the right to be read again -- not as a relic, but as a conversation partner.

Zeba Books undertakes this series with a simple conviction: public domain classics deserve to be accessible, affordable, and respectfully presented. These works no longer belong to a single nation, publisher, or generation. They belong to everyone. Yet too often, they are buried under careless reprints, poor formatting, or editions that treat the text as mere filler. Our aim is to reverse that neglect.

The books in this collection are reproduced with fidelity to the original text, while being prepared for the modern reader. Language has been preserved, not diluted; structure respected, not abridged. Where the prose challenges, it does so honestly -- because classics are meant to stretch the reader, not flatter them. At the same time, thoughtful typesetting and clean layouts ensure that engagement comes from ideas, not from wrestling with poor design.

Why read classics today, when new books appear by the thousands each week? Because the problems we face -- power, faith, love, injustice, ambition, fear -- are not new. Long before algorithms shaped attention and borders hardened identities, writers were grappling with the same tensions, often with sharper clarity. To read a classic is to realize that modernity did not invent complexity; it merely renamed it.

This series is not curated around prestige alone. Some titles are famous, others less celebrated but equally vital. What unites them is their influence: on thought, on literature, on political imagination, or on moral inquiry. These are works that shaped debates, inspired movements, and unsettled complacency. They are not always comfortable -- and that is precisely why they matter.

Zeba Books does not believe classics should be treated as museum pieces, to be admired from a distance. They should be argued with, questioned, underlined, even disagreed with. A living reader brings new meanings to an old text, just as the text sharpens the reader in return. This mutual friction is the essence of serious reading.

By reissuing these public domain works, we are not claiming to improve them -- only to make them available in a form worthy of their content. We see this series as an

invitation: to slow down in an age of skimming, to think deeply in an age of instant opinion, and to rediscover voices that still have something urgent to say.

If these books provoke thought, challenge assumptions, or simply remind readers that human inquiry has a long and dignified history, then this project has served its purpose. Classics do not ask to be preserved for nostalgia's sake. They ask to be read.

About the Author

Walt Whitman was born May 31, 1819, in West Hills, Long Island, New York. Whitman began learning the printer's profession at the age of twelve and developed an interest in the written word. He was largely self-taught and read voraciously, getting acquainted with the writings of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and the Bible. In *Leaves of Grass* (1855,1891-2), he praised democracy, nature, love, and friendship. This monumental masterpiece shouted accolades to both the body and the soul, finding beauty and comfort even in death. Whitman, along with Emily Dickinson, is recognized as one of America's most prominent 19th-century poets, influencing later writers such as Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams, Allen Ginsberg, Simon Ortiz, C.K. Williams, and Martín Espada.

During the Civil War, Whitman was a clerk in Washington, D.C. He spent three years of his leisure time visiting soldiers, treating wounds and comforting the injured. These experiences inspired the poems in Whitman's 1865 publication, *Drum-Taps*, which include "*When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*," an elegy for President Lincoln.

Whitman's poetry is distinguished by its inclusive vision, celebration of the self, and conviction in the unity of all people. He aimed to produce a uniquely American literature that valued variety, equality, and spiritual freedom. Despite financial difficulties and criticism throughout his life, his reputation gradually improved. Walt Whitman died in Camden, New Jersey in 1892.

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**THE PATRIOTIC POEMS OF
WALT WHITMAN**

America

Centre of equal
daughters, equal
sons,

All, all alike, endear'd,
grown, ungrown,
young or old,

Strong, ample, fair,
enduring,
capable, rich,

Perennial with the
Earth, with
Freedom, Law
and Love,

A grand, sane,
towering, seated
Mother,

Chair'd in the adamant
of Time.

I**POEMS OF WAR**

THICK-SPRINKLED BUNTING

Thick-sprinkled bunting! flag
of stars!

Long yet your road, fateful
flag—long yet your
road, and lined with
bloody death,

For the prize I see at issue at
last is the world,

All its ships and shores I see
interwoven with your
threads greedy banner;

Dream'd again the flags of
kings, highest borne,
to flaunt unrival'd?

O hasten flag of man—O with
sure and steady step,
passing highest flags of
kings,

Walk supreme to the
heavens mighty
symbol—run up above
them all,

Flag of stars! thick-sprinkled
bunting!

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,

Not 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.

CITY OF SHIPS

City of ships!

(O the black ships! O the
fierce ships!

O the beautiful sharp-bow'd
steam-ships and
sail-ships!)

City of the world! (for all
races are here,

All the lands of the earth
make contributions
here);

City of the sea! city of
hurried and glittering
tides!

City whose gleeful tides
continually rush or
recede, whirling in and
out with eddies and
foam!

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

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

Spring up O city—not for
peace alone, but be
indeed yourself,
warlike!

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!

**A MARCH IN THE RANKS HARD-PREST,
AND THE ROAD UNKNOWN**

A march in the ranks
hard-prest, and the
road unknown,

A route through a heavy
wood with muffled
steps in the darkness,

Our army foil'd with loss
severe, and the sullen
remnant retreating,

Till after midnight glimmer
upon us the lights of a
dim-lighted building,

We come to an open space in
the woods, and halt by
the dim-lighted
building,

'Tis a large old church at the
crossing roads, now an
impromptu hospital,

Entering but for a minute I
see a sight beyond all
the pictures and poems
ever made,

Shadows of deepest, deepest
black, just lit by
moving candles and
lamps,

And by one great pitchy
torch stationary with
wild red flame and
clouds of smoke,

By these, crowds, groups of
forms vaguely I see on
the floor, some in the
pews laid down,

At my feet more distinctly a
soldier, a mere lad, in
danger of bleeding to
death (he is shot in the
abdomen),

I stanch the blood
temporarily (the
youngster's face is
white as a lily),

Then before I depart I sweep
my eyes o'er the scene
fain to absorb it all,

Faces, varieties, postures
beyond description,
most in obscurity,
some of them dead,

Surgeons operating,
attendants holding
lights, the smell of
ether, the odour of
blood,

The crowd, O the crowd of
the bloody forms, the
yard outside also fill'd,

Some on the bare ground,
some on planks or

stretchers, some in the
death-spasm sweating,
An occasional scream or cry,
the doctor's shouted
orders or calls,
The glisten of the little steel
instruments catching
the glint of the torches,
These I resume as I chant, I
see again the forms, I
smell the odour,
Then hear outside the orders
given, *Fall in, my men,*
fall in;
But first I bend to the dying
lad, his eyes open, a
half-smile gives he me,
Then the eyes close, calmly
close, and I speed forth
to the darkness,

Resuming, marching, ever in
darkness marching, on
in the ranks,

The unknown road still
marching.

COME UP FROM THE FIELDS FATHER

Come up from the fields
father, here's a letter
from our Pete,

And come to the front door
mother, here's a letter
from thy dear son.

Lo, 'tis autumn,

Lo, where the trees, deeper
green, yellower and
redder,

Cool and sweeten Ohio's
villages with leaves
fluttering in the
moderate wind,

Where apples ripe in the
orchards hang and
grapes on the trellis'd
vines

(Smell you the smell of the
grapes on the vines?

Smell you the buckwheat
where the bees were
lately buzzing?),

Above all, lo, the sky so
calm, so transparent
after the rain, and with
wondrous clouds,

Below too, all calm, all vital
and beautiful, and the
farm prospers well.

Down in the fields all
prospers well,

But now from the fields
come father, come at
the daughter's call,

And come to the entry
mother, to the front
door come right away.

Fast as she can she hurries,
something ominous,
her steps trembling,

She does not tarry to smooth
her hair nor adjust her
cap.

Open the envelope quickly,

O this is not our son's
writing, yet his name is
sign'd,

O a strange hand writes for
our dear son, O
stricken mother's soul!

All swims before her eyes,
flashes with black, she
catches the main
words only,

Sentences broken, *gunshot*
wound in the breast,
cavalry skirmish, taken
to hospital,

*At present low, but will soon be
better.*

Ah now the single figure to
me,

Amid all teeming and
wealthy Ohio with all
its cities and farms,

Sickly white in the face and
dull in the head, very
faint,

By the jamb of a door leans.

Grieve not so, dear mother (the
just-grown daughter
speaks through her
sobs,

The little sisters huddle
around speechless and
dismay'd),

*See, dearest mother, the letter
says Pete will soon be
better.*

Alas poor boy, he will never
be better (nor may he
need to be better, that
brave and simple soul),

While they stand at home at
the door he is dead
already,

The only son is dead.

But the mother needs to be
better,

She with thin form presently
drest in black,

By day her meals untouch'd,
then at night fitfully
sleeping, often waking,

In the midnight waking,
weeping, longing with
one deep longing,

O that she might withdraw
unnoticed, silent from
life escape and
withdraw,

To follow, to seek, to be with
her dear dead son.

A TWILIGHT SONG

As I sit in twilight late alone
by the flickering
oak-flame,

Musing on long-pass'd
war-scenes—of the
countless buried
unknown soldiers,

Of the vacant names, as
unindented air's and
sea's—the unreturn'd,

The brief truce after battle,
with grim
burial-squads, and the
deep-fill'd trenches

Of gather'd dead from all
America, North, South,
East, West, whence
they came up,

From wooded Maine,
New-England's farms,

from fertile
Pennsylvania, Illinois,
Ohio,

From the measureless West,
Virginia, the South, the
Carolinas, Texas

(Even here in my
room-shadows and
half-lights in the
noiseless flickering
flames,

Again I see the stalwart
ranks on-filing,
rising—I hear the
rhythmic tramp of the
armies);

You million unwrit names
all, all—you dark
bequest from all the
war,

A special verse for you—a
flash of duty long
neglected—your mystic
roll strangely gather'd
here,

Each name recall'd by me
from out the darkness
and death's ashes,

Henceforth to be, deep, deep
within my heart
recording, for many a
future year,

Your mystic roll entire of
unknown names, or
North or South,

Embalm'd with love in this
twilight song.

**A SIGHT IN CAMP IN THE DAYBREAK
GRAY AND DIM**

A sight in camp in the
daybreak gray and
dim,

As from my tent I emerge so
early sleepless,

As slow I walk in the cool
fresh air the path near
by the hospital tent,

Three forms I see on
stretchers lying,
brought out there
untended lying,

Over each the blanket
spread, ample
brownish woollen
blanket,

Gray and heavy blanket,
folding, covering all.

Curious I halt and silent
stand,

Then with light fingers I
from the face of the
nearest the first just lift
the blanket;

Who are you elderly man so
gaunt and grim, with
well-gray'd hair, and
flesh all sunken about
the eyes?

Who are you my dear
comrade?

Then to the second I
step—and who are you
my child and darling?

Who are you sweet boy with
cheeks yet blooming?

Then to the third—a face nor
child nor old, very

calm, as of beautiful
yellow-white ivory;

Young man I think I know
you—I think this face is
the face of the Christ
himself,

Dead and divine and brother
of all, and here again
he lies.

**YEAR THAT TREMBLED AND REEL'D
BENEATH ME**

Year that trembled and reel'd
beneath me!

Your summer wind was
warm enough, yet the
air I breathed froze me,

A thick gloom fell through
the sunshine and
darken'd me,

Must I change my
triumphant songs? said
I to myself,

Must I indeed learn to chant
the cold dirges of the
baffled,

And sullen hymns of defeat?

FIRST O SONGS FOR A PRELUDE

First O songs for a prelude,

Lightly strike on the stretch'd
tympanum pride and
joy in my city,

How she led the rest to arms,
how she gave the cue,

How at once with lithe limbs
unwaiting a moment
she sprang,

(O superb! O Manhattan, my
own, my peerless.

O strongest you in the hour
of danger, in crisis! O
truer than steel!)

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

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

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

How Manhattan drum-taps
led.

Forty years had I in my city
seen soldiers parading,

Forty years as a pageant, till
unawares the lady of
this teeming and
turbulent city,

Sleepless amid her ships, her
houses, her
incalculable wealth,

With her million children
 around her, suddenly,

At dead of night, at news
 from the south,

Incens'd struck with clinch'd
 hand the pavement.

A shock electric, the night
 sustain'd it,

Till with ominous hum our
 hive at daybreak pour'd
 out its myriads.

From the houses then and
 the workshops, and
 through all the
 doorways,

Leapt they tumultuous, and
 lo! Manhattan arming.

To the drum-taps prompt,

The young men falling in
 and arming,

The mechanics arming (the
trowel, the jack-plane,
the blacksmith's
hammer, tost aside
with precipitation),

The lawyer leaving his office
and arming, the judge
leaving the court,

The driver deserting his
wagon in the street,
jumping down,
throwing the reins
abruptly down on the
horses' backs,

The salesman leaving the
store, the boss,
book-keeper, porter, all
leaving;

Squads gather everywhere
by common consent
and arm,

The new recruits, even boys,
the old men show them
how to wear their
accoutrements, they
buckle the straps
carefully,

Outdoors arming, indoors
arming, the flash of the
musket-barrels,

The white tents cluster in
camps, the arm'd
sentries around, the
sunrise cannon and
again at sunset,

Arm'd regiments arrive
every day, pass
through the city, and
embark from the
wharves

(How good they look as they
tramp down to the
river, sweaty, with

their guns on their
shoulders!

How I love them! how I
could hug them, with
their brown faces and
their clothes and
knapsacks cover'd with
dust!)

The blood of the city
up—arm'd! arm'd! the
cry everywhere,

The flags flung out from the
steeple 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
favourites,

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.

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 the
child's voice and sea's
voice and father's
voice,

Low on the ground and high
in the air,

On the ground where father
and child stand,

In the upward air where
their eyes turn,

Where the banner at
daybreak is flapping.

Words! book-words! what are
you?

Words no more, for hearken
and see,

My song is there in the open
air, and I must sing,

With the banner and
pennant a-flapping.

I'll weave the chord and
twine in,

Man's desire and babe's
desire, I'll twine them
in, I'll put in life,

I'll put the bayonet's flashing
point, I'll let bullets
and slugs whizz

(As one carrying a symbol
and menace far into
the future,

Crying with trumpet voice,
Arouse and beware!
Beware and arouse!)

I'll pour the verse with
streams of blood, full
of volition, full of joy,

Then loosen, launch forth, to
go and compete,

With the banner and
pennant a-flapping.

Pennant

Come up here, bard, bard,

Come up here, soul, soul,

Come up here, dear little
child,

To fly in the clouds and
winds with me, and
play with the
measureless light.

Child

Father what is that in the sky
beckoning to me with
long finger?

And what does it say to me
all the while?

Father

Nothing my babe you see in
the sky,

And nothing at all to you it
says—but look you my
babe,

Look at these dazzling things
in the houses, and see
you the money-shops
opening,

And see you the vehicles
preparing to crawl
along the streets with
goods;

These, ah these, how valued
and toil'd for these!

How envied by all the earth!

Poet

Fresh and rosy red the sun is
mounting high,

On floats the sea in distant
blue careering through
its channels,

On floats the wind over the
breast of the sea
setting in toward land,

The great steady wind from
west to 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, depots, of
Boston, Baltimore,
Charleston, New
Orleans,

I see far in the West the
immense area of grain,
I dwell awhile
hovering,

I pass to the lumber forests
of the North, and again
to the Southern
plantation, and again
to California;

Sweeping the whole I see the
countless profit, the
busy gatherings, earn'd
wages,

See the Identity formed out
of thirty-eight spacious

and haughty States
(and many more to
come),

See forts on the shores of
harbours, see ships
sailing in and out;

Then over all (aye! aye!) my
little and lengthen'd
pennant shaped like a
sword,

Runs swiftly up indicating
war and defiance—and
now the halyards have
rais'd it,

Side of my banner broad and
blue, side of my starry
banner,

Discarding peace over all the
sea and land.

Banner and Pennant

Yet louder, higher, stronger,
bard! yet farther, wider
cleave!

No longer let our children
deem us riches and
peace alone,

We may be terror and
carnage, and are so
now,

Not now are we any one of
these spacious and
haughty States (nor
any five, nor ten),

Nor market nor depot we,
nor money-bank in the
city,

But these and all, and the
brown and spreading
land, and the mines
below, are ours,

And the shores of the sea are
ours, and the rivers
great and small,

And the fields they moisten,
and the crops and the
fruits are ours,

Bays and channels and ships
sailing in and out are
ours—while we over
all,

Over the area spread below,
the three or four
millions of square
miles, the capitals,

The forty millions of
people—O bard! in life
and death supreme,

We, even we, henceforth
flaunt out masterful,
high up above,

Not for the present alone, for
a thousand years
chanting through you,

This song to the soul of one
poor little child.

Child

O my father I like not the
houses,

They will never to me be
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 Mississippi
with bends and chutes,

And my Illinois fields, and
my Kansas fields, and
my fields of Missouri,

The Continent, devoting the
whole identity without
reserving an atom,

Pour in! whelm that which
asks, which sings, with
all and the yield of all,

Fusing and holding,
claiming, devouring
the whole,

No more with tender lip, nor
musical labial sound,

But out of the night
emerging for food, 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.

THE DYING VETERAN

*(A Long Island incident—early part of the
nineteenth century.)*

Amid these days of order,
ease, prosperity,

Amid the current songs of
beauty, peace,
decorum,

I cast a reminiscence—(likely
't will offend you,

I heard it in my
boyhood)—More than a
generation since,

A queer old savage man, a
fighter under
Washington himself

(Large, brave, cleanly,
hot-blooded, no talker,
rather spiritualistic,

Had fought in the
ranks—fought
well—had been all
through the
Revolutionary war),

Lay dying—sons, daughters,
church-deacons,
lovingly tending him,

Sharpening their sense, their
ears, towards his
murmuring,
half-caught words:

"Let me return again to my
war-days,

To the sights and scenes—to
forming the line of
battle,

To the scouts ahead
reconnoitering,

To the cannons, the grim
artillery,

To the galloping aids,
carrying orders,

To the wounded, the fallen,
the heat, the suspense,

The perfume strong, the
smoke, the deafening
noise;

Away with your life of
peace!—your joys of
peace!

Give me my old wild
battle-life again!"

THE WOUND-DRESSER**1**

An old man bending I come
among new faces,

Years looking backward
resuming in answer to
children,

Come tell us old man, as
from young men and
maidens that love me

(Arous'd and angry, I'd
thought to beat the
alarum, and urge
relentless war,

But soon my fingers fail'd
me, my face droop'd
and I resign'd myself,

To sit by the wounded and
soothe them, or

silently watch the
dead);

Years hence of these scenes,
of these furious
passions, these
chances,

Of unsurpass'd heroes (was
one side so brave? the
other was equally
brave);

Now be witness again, paint
the mightiest armies of
earth,

Of those armies so rapid so
wondrous what saw
you to tell us?

What stays with you latest
and deepest? of curious
panics,

Of hard-fought engagements
or sieges tremendous
what deepest remains?

2

O maidens and young men I
love and that love me,

What you ask of my days
those the strangest and
sudden your talking
recalls,

Soldier alert I arrive after a
long march cover'd
with sweat and dust,

In the nick of time I come,
plunge in the fight,
loudly shout in the
rush of successful
charge,

Enter the captur'd
works—yet lo, like a

swift-running river
they fade,

Pass and are gone they
fade—I dwell not on
soldiers' perils or
soldiers' joys

(Both I remember
well—many the
hardships, few the
joys, yet I was content).

But in silence, in dreams'
projections,

While the world of gain and
appearance and mirth
goes on,

So soon what is over
forgotten, and waves
wash the imprints off
the sand,

With hinged knees returning
I enter the doors (while
for you up there,

Whoever you are, follow
without noise and be of
strong heart).

Bearing the bandages, water
and sponge,

Straight and swift to my
wounded I go,

Where they lie on the ground
after the battle brought
in,

Where their priceless blood
reddens the grass, the
ground,

Or to the rows of the hospital
tent, or under the
roof'd hospital,

To the long rows of cots up
and down each side I
return,

To each and all one after
another I draw near,
not one do I miss,

An attendant follows holding
a tray, he carries a
refuse pail,

Soon to be fill'd with clotted
rags and blood,
emptied, and fill'd
again.

I onward go, I stop,

With hinged knees and
steady hand to dress
wounds,

I am firm with each, the
pangs are sharp yet
unavoidable,

One turns to me his
 appealing eyes—poor
 boy! I never knew you,

Yet I think I could not refuse
 this moment to die for
 you, if that would save
 you.

3

On, on I go (open doors of
 time! open hospital
 doors!)

The crush'd head I dress
 (poor crazed hand tear
 not the bandage away),

The neck of the cavalry-man
 with the bullet through
 and through I examine,

Hard the breathing rattles,
 quite glazed already
 the eye, yet life
 struggles hard,

(Come sweet death! be
persuaded O beautiful
death!

In mercy come quickly).

From the stump of the arm,
the amputated hand,

I undo the clotted lint,
remove the slough,
wash off the matter
and blood,

Back on his pillow the
soldier bends with
curv'd neck and
side-falling head,

His eyes are closed, his face
is pale, he dares not
look on the bloody
stump,

And has not yet look'd on it.

I dress a wound in the side,
deep, deep,

But a day or two more, for
see the frame all
wasted and sinking,

And the yellow-blue
countenance see.

I dress the perforated
shoulder, the foot with
the bullet-wound,

Cleanse the one with a
gnawing and putrid
gangrene, so sickening,
so offensive,

While the attendant stands
behind aside me
holding the tray and
pail.

I am faithful, I do not give
out,

The fractur'd thigh, the knee,
the wound in the
abdomen,

These and more I dress with
impassive hand (yet
deep in my breast a
fire, a burning flame).

4

Thus in silence in dreams'
projections,

Returning, resuming, I
thread my way through
the hospitals,

The hurt and wounded I
pacify with soothing
hand,

I sit by the restless all the
dark night, some are so
young,

Some suffer so much, I recall
the experience sweet
and sad

(Many a soldier's loving arms
about this neck have
cross'd and rested,

Many a soldier's kiss dwells
on these bearded lips).

DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

The last sunbeam

Lightly falls from the finish'd
Sabbath,

On the pavement here, and
there beyond it is
looking

Down a new-made
double grave

Lo, the moon ascending,

Up from the east the silvery
round moon,

Beautiful over the
house-tops, ghastly,
phantom moon,

Immense and silent
moon.

I see a sad procession,

And I hear the sound of
coming full-key'd
bugles,

All the channels of the city
streets they're
flooding,

As with voices and with
tears.

I hear the great drums
pounding,

And the small drums steady
whirring,

And every blow of the great
convulsive drums,

Strikes me through and
through.

For the son is brought
with the father

(In the foremost ranks of the
fierce assault they fell,

Two veterans, son and
father, dropt together,

And the double grave
awaits them).

Now nearer blow the
bugles,

And the drums strike more
convulsive,

And the daylight over the
pavement quite has
faded,

And the strong
dead-march
enwraps me.

In the eastern sky
up-buoying,

The sorrowful vast phantom
moves illumin'd

('Tis some mother's large
transparent face,

In heaven brighter
growing).

O strong dead-march you
please me!

O moon immense with your
silvery face you soothe
me!

O my soldiers twain! O my
veterans passing to
burial!

What I have I also give
you.

The moon gives you
light,

And the bugles and the
drums give you music,

And my heart, O my soldiers,
my veterans,

My heart gives you love.

FROM FAR DAKOTA'S CAÑONS

June 25, 1876.

From far Dakota's cañons,

Lands of the wild ravine, the
dusky Sioux, the
lonesome stretch, the
silence,

Haply to-day a mournful
wail, haply a
trumpet-note for
heroes.

The battle-bulletin,

The Indian ambushade, the
craft, the fatal
environment,

The cavalry companies
fighting to the last in
sternest heroism,

In the midst of their little
circle, with their

slaughter'd horses for
breastworks,

The fall of Custer and all his
officers and men.

Continues yet the old, old
legend of our race,

The loftiest of life upheld by
death,

The ancient banner perfectly
maintain'd,

O lesson opportune, O how I
welcome thee!

As sitting in dark days,

Lone, sulky, through the
time's thick murk
looking in vain for
light, for hope,

From unsuspected parts a
fierce and momentary
proof

(The sun there at the centre
though conceal'd,

Electric life forever at the
centre),

Breaks forth a lightning
flash.

Thou of the tawny flowing
hair in battle,

I erewhile saw, with erect
head, pressing ever in
front, bearing a bright
sword in thy hand,

Now ending well in death the
splendid fever of thy
deeds

(I bring no dirge for it or
thee, I bring a glad
triumphal sonnet),

Desperate and glorious, aye
in defeat most

desperate, most
glorious,

After thy many battles in
which never yielding
up a gun or a colour,

Leaving behind thee a
memory sweet to
soldiers,

Thou yieldest up thyself

OLD WAR-DREAMS

In midnight sleep of many a
face of anguish,

Of the look at first of the
mortally wounded (of
that indescribable
look),

Of the dead on their backs
with arms extended
wide,

I dream, I dream, I
dream.

Of scenes of Nature, fields
and mountains,

Of skies so beautiful after a
storm, and at night the
moon so unearthly
bright,

Shining sweetly, shining
down, where we dig

the trenches and
gather the heaps,

I dream, I dream, I
dream.

Long have they pass'd, faces
and trenches and
fields,

Where through the carnage I
moved with a callous
composure, or away
from the fallen,

Onward I sped at the
time—but now of their
forms at night,

I dream, I dream, I
dream.

DELICATE CLUSTER

Delicate cluster! flag of
teeming life!

Covering all my lands—all
my seashores lining!

Flag of death! (how I watch'd
you through the smoke
of battle pressing!

How I heard you flap and
rustle, cloth defiant!)

Flag cerulean—sunny flag,
with the orbs of night
dappled!

Ah my silvery beauty—ah my
woolly white and
crimson!

Ah to sing the song of you,
my matron mighty!

My sacred one, my mother!

TO A CERTAIN CIVILIAN

Did you ask dulcet rhymes
from me?

Did you seek the civilian's
peaceful and
languishing rhymes?

Did you find what I sang
erewhile so hard to
follow?

Why I was not singing
erewhile for you to
follow, to
understand—nor am I
now;

(I have been born of the
same as the war was
born,

The drum-corps' rattle is
ever to me sweet
music, I love well the
martial dirge,

With slow wail and
convulsive throb
leading the officer's
funeral);

What to such as you anyhow
such a poet as I?
therefore leave my
works,

And go lull yourself with
what you can
understand, and with
piano-tunes,

For I lull nobody, and you
will never understand
me.

ADIEU TO A SOLDIER

Adieu O soldier,

You of the rude campaigning
(which we shared),

The rapid march, the life of
the camp,

The hot contention of
opposing fronts, the
long manoeuvre,

Red battles with their
slaughter, the stimulus,
the strong terrific
game,

Spell of all brave and manly
hearts, the trains of
time through you and
like of you all fill'd,

With war and war's
expression.

Adieu dear comrade,

Your mission is fulfill'd—but
I, more warlike,

Myself and this contentious
soul of mine,

Still on our own
campaigning bound,

Through untried roads with
ambushes opponents
lined,

Through many a sharp
defeat and many a
crisis, often baffled,

Here marching, ever
marching on, a war
fight out—aye here,

To fiercer, weightier battles
give expression.

LONG, TOO LONG AMERICA

Long, too long America,

Travelling roads all even and
peaceful you learn'd
from joys and
prosperity only,

But now, ah now, to learn
from crises of anguish,
advancing, grappling
with direst fate and
recoiling not,

And now to conceive and
show to the world what
your children
en-masse really are.

(For who except myself has
yet conceiv'd what
your children
en-masse really are?).

II

POEMS OF AFTER-WAR

WEAVE IN, MY HARDY LIFE

Weave in, weave in, my
hardy life,

Weave yet a soldier strong
and full for great
campaigns to come,

Weave in red blood, weave
sinews in like ropes,
the senses, sight weave
in,

Weave lasting sure, weave
day and night the weft,
the warp, incessant
weave, tire not

(We know not what the use O
life, nor know the aim,

the end, nor really
aught we know,

But know the work, the need
goes on and shall go
on, the death-envelop'd
march of peace as well
as war goes on),

For great campaigns of peace
the same the wiry
threads to weave, We
know not why or what,
yet weave, forever
weave.

HOW SOLEMN AS ONE BY ONE

(Washington City, 1865)

How solemn as one by one,

As the ranks returning worn
and sweaty, as the men
file by where I stand,

As the faces the masks
appear, as I glance at
the faces studying the
masks

(As I glance upward out of
this page studying you,
dear friend, whoever
you are),

How solemn the thought of
my whispering soul to
each in the ranks, and
to you!

I see behind each mask that
wonder a kindred soul,

O the bullet could never kill
what you really are,
dear friend,

Nor the bayonet stab what
you really are;

The soul! yourself I see, great
as any, good as the
best,

Waiting secure and content,
which the bullet could
never kill,

Nor the bayonet stab O
friend.

SPIRIT WHOSE WORK IS DONE

(Washington City, 1865)

Spirit whose work is
done—spirit of
dreadful hours!

Ere departing fade from my
eyes your forests of
bayonets;

Spirit of gloomiest fears and
doubts (yet onward
ever unfaltering
pressing),

Spirit of many a solemn day
and many a savage
scene—electric spirit,

That with muttering voice
through the war now
closed, like a tireless
phantom flitted,

Rousing the land with breath
of flame, while you
beat and beat the
drum,

Now as the sound of the
drum, hollow and
harsh to the last,
reverberates round
me,

As your ranks, your
immortal ranks,
return, return from the
battles,

As the muskets of the young
men yet lean over their
shoulders,

As I look on the bayonets
bristling over their
shoulders,

As those slanted bayonets,
whole forests of them

appearing in the
distance, approach and
pass on, returning
homeward,

Moving with steady motion,
swaying to and fro to
the right and left,

Evenly, lightly rising and
falling while the steps
keep time;

Spirit of hours I knew, all
hectic red one day, but
pale as death next day,

Touch my mouth ere you
depart, press my lips
close,

Leave me your pulses of
rage—bequeath them
to me—fill me with
currents convulsive,

Let them scorch and blister
out of my chants when
you are gone,

Let them identify you to the
future in these songs.

THE RETURN OF THE HEROES**1**

For the lands and for these
passionate days and
for myself,

Now I awhile retire to thee O
soil of autumn fields,

Reclining on thy breast,
giving myself to thee,

Answering the pulses of thy
sane and equable
heart,

Tuning a verse for thee.

O earth that hast no voice,
confide to me a voice,

O harvest of my lands—O
boundless summer
growths,

O lavish brown parturient
earth—O infinite
teeming womb,

A song to narrate thee.

2

Ever upon this stage,

Is acted God's calm annual
drama,

Gorgeous processions, songs
of birds,

Sunrise that fullest feeds and
freshens most the soul,

The heaving sea, the waves
upon the shore, the
musical, strong waves,

The woods, the stalwart
trees, the slender,
tapering trees,

The liliput countless armies
of the grass,

The heat, the showers, the
measureless
pasturages,

The scenery of the snows,
the winds' free
orchestra,

The stretching light-hung
roof of clouds, the
clear cerulean and the
silvery fringes,

The high-dilating stars, the
placid beckoning stars,

The moving flocks and
herds, the plains and
emerald meadows,

The shows of all the varied
lands and all the
growths and products.

3

Fecund America—to-day,

Thou art all over set in births
and joys!

Thou groan'st with riches,
thy wealth clothes thee
as a swathing garment,

Thou laughest loud with
ache of great
possessions,

A myriad-twinning life like
interlacing vines binds
all thy vast demesne,

As some huge ship freighted
to water's edge thou
ridest into port,

As rain falls from the heaven
and vapours rise from
the earth, so have the
precious values fallen

upon thee and risen
out of thee;

Thou envy of the globe! thou
miracle!

Thou, bathed, choked,
swimming in plenty,

Thou lucky Mistress of the
tranquil barns,

Thou Prairie Dame that
sittest in the middle
and lookest out upon
thy world, and lookest
East and lookest West,

Dispensatress, that by a
word givest a thousand
miles, a million farms,
and missest nothing,

Thou all-acceptress—thou
hospitable (thou only
art hospitable as God is
hospitable).

4

When late I sang sad was my
voice,

Sad were the shows around
me with deafening
noises of hatred and
smoke of war;

In the midst of the conflict,
the heroes, I stood,

Or pass'd with slow step
through the wounded
and dying.

But now I sing not war,

Nor the measur'd march of
soldiers, nor the tents
of camps,

Nor the regiments hastily
coming up deploying
in line of battle;

No more the sad, unnatural
shows of war.

Ask'd room those flush'd
immortal ranks, the
first forth-stepping
armies?

Ask room alas the ghastly
ranks, the armies
dread that follow'd.

(Pass, pass, ye proud
brigades, with your
tramping sinewy legs,

With your shoulders young
and strong, with your
knapsacks and your
muskets;

How elate I stood and
watch'd you, where
starting off you
march'd.

Pass—then rattle drums
again,

For an army heaves in sight,
O another gathering
army,

Swarming, trailing on the
rear, O you dread
accruing army,

O you regiments so piteous,
with your mortal
diarrhoea, with your
fever,

O my land's maim'd darlings,
with the plenteous
bloody bandage and
the crutch,

Lo, your pallid army
follows.)

But on these days of
brightness,

On the far-stretching
beauteous landscape,
the roads and lanes,
the high-piled
farm-wagons, and the
fruits and barns,

Should the dead intrude?

Ah the dead to me mar not,
they fit well in Nature,

They fit very well in the
landscape under the
trees and grass,

And along the edge of the
sky in the horizon's far
margin.

Nor do I forget you Departed,

Nor in winter or summer my
lost ones,

But most in the open air as
now when my soul is
rapt and at peace, like
pleasing phantoms,

Your memories rising glide
silently by me.

6

I saw the day the return of
the heroes, (Yet the heroes
never surpass'd shall never
return, Them that day I saw
not).

I saw the interminable corps,
I saw the processions of
armies, I saw them
approaching, defiling by
with divisions, Streaming
northward, their work done,

camping awhile in clusters
of mighty camps.

No holiday

soldiers—youthful, yet
veterans,

Worn, swart, handsome,
strong, of the stock of
homestead and
workshop,

Harden'd of many a long
campaign and sweaty
march,

Inured on many a
hard-fought bloody
field.

A pause—the armies wait,

A million flush'd embattled
conquerors wait,

The world too waits, then
 soft as breaking night
 and sure as dawn,

They melt, they disappear.

Exult O lands! victorious
 lands!

Not there your victory on
 those red shuddering
 fields,

But here and hence your
 victory.

Melt, melt away ye
 armies—disperse ye
 blue-clad soldiers,

Resolve ye back again, give
 up for good your
 deadly arms,

Other the arms the fields
 henceforth for you, or
 South or North,

With saner wars, sweet wars,
life-giving wars.

7

Loud O my throat, and clear
O soul!

The season of thanks and the
voice of full-yielding,

The chant of joy and power
for boundless fertility.

All till'd and untill'd fields
expand before me,

I see the true arenas of my
race, or first or last,

Man's innocent and strong
arenas.

I see the heroes at other toils,

I see well-wielded in their
hands the better
weapons.

I see where the Mother of
All,
With full-spanning eye gazes
forth, dwells long,
And counts the varied
gathering of the
products.
Busy the far, the sunlit
panorama,
Prairie, orchard, and yellow
grain of the North,
Cotton and rice of the South
and Louisianian cane,
Open unseeded fallows, rich
fields of clover and
timothy,
Kine and horses feeding, and
droves of sheep and
swine,

And many a stately river
 flowing and many a
 jocund brook,

And healthy uplands with
 herby-perfumed
 breezes,

And the good green grass,
 that delicate miracle
 the ever-recurring
 grass.

Toil on heroes! harvest the
 products!

Not alone on those warlike
 fields the Mother of
 All,

With dilated form and
 lambent eyes watch'd
 you.

Toil on heroes! toil well!
 handle the weapons
 well!

The Mother of All, yet here
as ever she watches
you.

Well-pleased America thou
beholdest,

Over the fields of the West
those crawling
monsters,

The human-divine
inventions, the
labour-saving
implements;

Beholdest moving in every
direction imbued as
with life the revolving
hay-rakes,

The steam-power
reaping-machines and
the horse-power
machines,

The engines, thrashers of
grain and cleaners of
grain, well separating
the straw, the nimble
work of the patent
pitchfork,

Beholdest the newer
saw-mill, the southern
cotton-gin, and the
rice-cleanser.

Beneath thy look O Maternal,

With these and else and with
their own strong hands
the heroes harvest.

All gather and all harvest,

Yet but for thee O Powerful,
not a scythe might
swing as now in
security,

Not a maize-stalk dangle as
now its silken tassels
in peace.

Under thee only they
harvest, even but a
wisp of hay under thy
great face only,

Harvest the wheat of Ohio,
Illinois, Wisconsin,
every barbed spear
under thee,

Harvest the maize of
Missouri, Kentucky,
Tennessee, each ear in
its light-green sheath,

Gather the hay to its myriad
mows in the odorous
tranquil barns,

Oats to their bins, the white
potato, the buckwheat
of Michigan, to theirs;

Gather the cotton in
Mississippi or
Alabama, dig and
hoard the golden the
sweet potato of Georgia
and the Carolinas,

Clip the wool of California or
Pennsylvania,

Cut the flax in the Middle
States, or hemp or
tobacco in the Borders,

Pick the pea and the bean, or
pull apples from the
trees or bunches of
grapes from the vines,

Or aught that ripens in all
these States or North
or South,

Under the beaming sun and
under thee.

MEMORIES OF PRESIDENT LINCOLN**WHEN LILACS LAST IN THE DOORYARD
BLOOM'D****1**

When lilacs last in the
dooryard bloom'd,

And the great star early
droop'd in the western
sky in the night,

I mourn'd, and yet shall
mourn with
ever-returning spring.

Ever-returning spring,
trinity sure to me you
bring,

Lilac blooming perennial
and drooping star in
the west,

And thought of him I love.

2

O powerful western fallen
star!

O shades of night—O moody,
tearful night!

O great star disappear'd—O
the black murk that
hides the star!

O cruel hands that hold me
powerless—O helpless
soul of me!

O harsh surrounding cloud
that will not free my
soul.

3

In the dooryard fronting an
old farm-house near
the white-wash'd
palings,

Stands the lilac-bush
tall-growing with
heart-shaped leaves of
rich green,

With many a pointed
blossom rising
delicate, with the
perfume strong I love,

With every leaf a
miracle—and from this
bush in the dooryard,

With delicate-colour'd
blossoms and
heart-shaped leaves of
rich green,

A sprig with its flower I
break.

4

In the swamp in secluded
recesses,

A shy and hidden bird is
warbling a song.

Solitary the thrush,

The hermit withdrawn to
himself, avoiding the
settlements,

Sings by himself a song.

Song of the bleeding throat,

Death's outlet song of life (for
well dear brother I
know,

If thou wast not granted to
sing thou would'st
surely die).

5

Over the breast of the spring,
the land, amid cities,

Amid lanes and through old
woods, where lately

the violets peep'd from
the ground, spotting
the gray débris,

Amid the grass in the fields
each side of the lanes,
passing the endless
grass,

Passing the yellow-spear'd
wheat, every grain
from its shroud in the
dark-brown fields
uprisen,

Passing the apple-tree blows
of white and pink in
the orchards,

Carrying a corpse to where it
shall rest in the grave,

Night and day journeys a
coffin.

6

Coffin that passes
through lanes and
streets,

Through day and night with
the great cloud
darkening the land,

With the pomp of the
inloop'd flags with the
cities draped in black,

With the show of the States
themselves as of
crape-veil'd women
standing,

With processions long and
winding and the
flambeaus of the night,

With the countless torches
lit, with the silent sea
of faces and the
unbared heads,

With the waiting depot, the
arriving coffin, and the
sombre faces,

With dirges through the
night, with the
thousand voices rising
strong and solemn,

With all the mournful voices
of the dirges pour'd
around the coffin,

The dim-lit churches and the
shuddering
organs—where amid
these you journey,

With the tolling tolling bells'
perpetual clang,

Here, coffin that slowly
passes,

I give you my sprig of lilac.

(Nor for you, for one alone,

Blossoms and branches
green to coffins all I
bring,

For fresh as the morning,
thus would I chant a
song for you O sane
and sacred death.

All over bouquets of roses,

O death, I cover you over
with roses and early
lilies,

But mostly and now the lilac
that blooms the first,

Copious I break, I break the
sprigs from the bushes,

With loaded arms I come,
pouring for you,

For you and the coffins all of
you O death.)

8

O western orb sailing the
heaven,

Now I know what you must
have meant as a month
since I walk'd,

As I walk'd in silence the
transparent shadowy
night,

As I saw you had something
to tell as you bent to
me night after night,

As you dropp'd from the sky
low down as if to my
side (while the other
stars all look'd on),

As we wander'd together the
solemn night (for

something I know not
what kept me from
sleep),

As the night advanced, and I
saw on the rim of the
west how full you were
of woe,

As I stood on the rising
ground in the breeze in
the cool transparent
night,

As I watch'd where you
pass'd and was lost in
the netherward black
of the night,

As my soul in its trouble
dissatisfied sank, as
where you sad orb,

Concluded, dropt in the
night, and was gone.

9

Sing on there in the swamp,

O singer bashful and tender,

I hear your notes, I

hear your call,

I hear, I come presently, I

understand you,

But a moment I linger, for

the lustrous star has

detain'd me,

The star my departing

comrade holds and

detains me.

10

O how shall I warble myself

for the dead one there I

loved?

And how shall I deck my

song for the large

sweet soul that has
gone?

And what shall my perfume
be for the grave of him
I love?

Sea-winds blown from east
and west,

Blown from the Eastern sea
and blown from the
Western sea, till there
on the prairies
meeting,

These and with these and the
breath of my chant,

I'll perfume the grave of him
I love.

11

O what shall I hang on the
chamber walls?

And what shall the pictures
be that I hang on the
walls,

To adorn the burial-house of
him I love?

Pictures of growing spring
and farms and homes,

With the Fourth-month eve
at sundown, and the
gray smoke lucid and
bright,

With floods of the yellow
gold of the gorgeous,
indolent, sinking sun,
burning, expanding
the air,

With the fresh sweet herbage
under foot, and the
pale green leaves of the
trees prolific,

In the distance the flowing
glaze, the breast of the
river, with a
wind-dapple here and
there,

With ranging hills on the
banks, with many a
line against the sky,
and shadows,

And the city at hand with
dwellings so dense,
and stacks of
chimneys,

And all the scenes of life and
the workshops, and the
workmen homeward
returning.

12

Lo, body and soul—this land,
My own Manhattan with
spires, and the

sparkling and hurrying
tides, and the ships,

The varied and ample land,
the South and the
North in the light,
Ohio's shores and
flashing Missouri,

And ever the far-spreading
prairies cover'd with
grass and corn.

Lo, the most excellent sun so
calm and haughty,

The violet and purple morn
with just-felt breezes,

The gentle soft-born
measureless light,

The miracle spreading
bathing all, the fulfill'd
noon,

The coming eve delicious,
the welcome night and
the stars,

Over my cities shining all,
enveloping man and
land.

13

Sing on, sing on you
gray-brown bird,

Sing from the swamps, the
recesses, pour your
chant from the bushes,

Limitless out of the dusk, out
of the cedars and
pines.

Sing on dearest brother,
warble your reedy
song,

Loud human song, with
voice of uttermost woe.

O liquid and free and tender!

O wild and loose to my
soul—O wondrous
singer!

You only I hear—yet the star
holds me (but will soon
depart),

Yet the lilac with mastering
odour holds me.

14

Now while I sat in the day
and look'd forth,

In the close of the day with
its light and the fields
of spring, and the
farmers preparing
their crops,

In the large unconscious
scenery of my land

with its lakes and
forests,

In the heavenly aerial beauty
(after the perturb'd
winds and the storms),

Under the arching heavens
of the afternoon swift
passing, and the voices
of children and
women,

The many-moving sea-tides,
and I saw the ships
how they sail'd,

And the summer
approaching with
richness, and the fields
all busy with labour,

And the infinite separate
houses, how they all
went on, each with its

meals and minutia of
daily usages,

And the streets how their
throbbings throb'd,
and the cities pent—lo,
then and there,

Falling upon them all and
among them all,
enveloping me with
the rest,

Appear'd the cloud, appear'd
the long black trail,

And I knew death, its
thought, and the
sacred knowledge of
death.

Then with the knowledge of
death as walking one
side of me,

And the thought of death
close-walking the
other side of me,

And I in the middle as with
companions, and as
holding the hands of
companions,

I fled forth to the hiding
receiving night that
talks not,

Down to the shores of the
water, the path by the
swamp in the dimness,

To the solemn shadowy
cedars and ghostly
pines so still.

And the singer so shy to the
rest receiv'd me,

The gray-brown bird I know
receiv'd us comrades
three,

And he sang the carol of
death, and a verse for
him I love.

From deep secluded
recesses,

From the fragrant cedars and
the ghostly pines so
still,

Came the carol of the bird.

And the charm of the carol
rapt me,

As I held as if by their hands
my comrades in the
night,

And the voice of my spirit
tallied the song of the
bird.

*Come lovely and soothing
death,*

*Undulate round the world,
serenely arriving,
arriving,*

*In the day, in the night, to all,
to each,*

Sooner or later delicate death.

*Prais'd be the fathomless
universe,*

*For life and joy, and for objects
and knowledge curious,*

*And for love, sweet love—but
praise! praise! praise!*

*For the sure-enwinding arms of
cool-enfolding death.*

*Dark mother always gliding
near with soft feet,*

*Have none chanted for thee a
chant of fullest welcome?*

*Then I chant it for thee, I
glorify thee above all,*

*I bring thee a song that when
thou must indeed come,
come unfalteringly.*

Approach strong deliveress,

*When it is so, when thou hast
taken them I joyously
sing the dead,*

*Lost in the loving floating
ocean of thee,*

*Laved in the flood of thy bliss O
death.*

*From me to thee glad
serenades,*

*Dances for thee I propose
saluting thee,
adornments and
feastings for thee,*

*And the sights of the open
landscape and the
high-spread sky are
fitting,*

*And life and the fields, and the
huge and thoughtful
night.*

*The night in silence under
many a star,*

*The ocean shore and the husky
whispering wave whose
voice I know,*

*And the soul turning to thee O
vast and well-veil'd
death,*

*And the body gratefully
nestling close to thee.*

*Over the tree-tops I float thee a
song,*

*Over the rising and sinking
waves, over the myriad
fields and the prairies
wide,*

*Over the dense-pack'd cities all
and the teeming wharves
and ways,*

*I float this carol with joy, with
joy to thee O death.*

15

To the tally of my soul,

Loud and strong kept up the
gray-brown bird,

With pure deliberate notes
spreading filling the
night.

Loud in the pines and cedars
dim,

Clear in the freshness moist
and the
swamp-perfume,

And I with my comrades
there in the night.

While my sight that was
bound in my eyes
unclosed,

As to long panoramas of
visions.

And I saw askant the armies,

I saw as in noiseless dreams
hundreds of
battle-flags,

Borne through the smoke of
the battles and pierc'd
with missiles I saw
them,

And carried hither and yon
through the smoke,
and torn and bloody,

And at last but a few shreds
left on the staffs (and
all in silence),

And the staffs all splinter'd
and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads
of them,

And the white skeletons of
young men, I saw
them,

I saw the débris and débris
of all the slain soldiers
of the war,

But I saw they were not as
was thought,

They themselves were fully
at rest, they suffer'd
not,

The living remain'd and
suffer'd, the mother
suffer'd,

And the wife and the child
and the musing
comrade suffer'd,

And the armies that remain'd
suffer'd.

16

Passing the visions, passing
the night,

Passing, unloosing the hold
of my comrades'
hands,

Passing the song of the
hermit bird and the

tallying song of my
soul,

Victorious song, death's
outlet song, yet
varying ever-altering
song,

As low and wailing, yet clear
the notes, rising and
falling, flooding the
night,

Sadly sinking and fainting,
as warning and
warning, and yet again
bursting with joy,

Covering the earth and
filling the spread of the
heaven,

As that powerful psalm in
the night I heard from
recesses,

Passing, I leave thee lilac
with heart-shaped
leaves,

I leave thee there in the
dooryard, blooming,
returning with spring.

I cease from my song for
thee,

From my gaze on thee in the
west, fronting the west,
communing with thee,

O comrade lustrous with
silver face in the night.

Yet each to keep and all,
retrievements out of
the night,

The song, the wondrous
chant of the
gray-brown bird,

And the tallying chant, the
echo arous'd in my
soul,

With the lustrous and
drooping star with the
countenance full of
woe,

With the holders holding my
hand nearing the call
of the bird,

Comrades mine and I in the
midst, and their
memory ever to keep,
for the dead I loved so
well,

For the sweetest, wisest soul
of all my days and
lands—and this for his
dear sake,

Lilac and star and bird
twined with the chant
of my soul,

There in the fragrant pines
and the cedars dusk
and dim.

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! my Captain! our
fearful trip is done,

The ship has weather'd every
rack, the prize we
sought is won,

The port is near, the bells I
hear, the people all
exulting,

While follow eyes the steady
keel, the vessel grim
and daring;

But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops
of red,

Where on the
deck my Captain
lies,

Fallen cold
and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise
up and hear the bells;

Rise up—for you the flag is
flung—for you the
bugle trills,

For you bouquets and
ribbon'd wreaths—for
you the shores
a-crowding,

For you they call, the
swaying mass, their
eager faces turning;

Here Captain! dear
father!

This arm beneath
your head!

It is some dream
that on the
deck,

You've fallen
cold and
dead.

My Captain does not answer,
his lips are pale and
still,

My father does not feel my
arm, he has no pulse
nor will,

The ship is anchor'd safe and
sound, its voyage
closed and done,

From fearful trip the victor
ship comes in with
object won;

Exult O shores, and ring
O bells!

But I with mournful
tread,

Walk the deck
my Captain
lies,

Fallen cold
and
dead.

HUSH'D BE THE CAMPS TO-DAY

(May 4, 1865)

Hush'd be the camps to-day,

And soldiers let us drape our
war-worn weapons,

And each with musing soul
retire to celebrate,

Our dear commander's
death.

No more for him life's
stormy conflicts,

Nor victory, nor defeat—no
more time's dark
events,

Charging like ceaseless
clouds across the sky.

But sing poet in our name,

Sing of the love we bore
him—because you,
dweller in camps,
know it truly.

As they invault the coffin
there,

Sing—as they close the doors
of earth upon
him—one verse,

For the heavy hearts of
soldiers.

ASHES OF SOLDIERS

Ashes of soldiers South or
North,

As I muse retrospective
murmuring a chant in
thought,

The war resumes, again to
my sense your shapes,

And again the advance of the
armies.

Noiseless as mists and
vapours,

From their graves in the
trenches ascending,

From cemeteries all through
Virginia and
Tennessee,

From every point of the
compass out of the
countless graves,

In wafted clouds, in myriads
large, or squads of
twos or threes or single
ones they come,

And silently gather round
me.

Now sound no note O
trumpeters,

Not at the head of my cavalry
parading on spirited
horses,

With sabres drawn and
glistening, and
carbines by their
thighs (ah my brave
horsemen!

My handsome tan-faced
horsemen! what life,
what joy and pride,

With all the perils were
yours).

Nor you drummers, neither
at reveillé at dawn,

Nor the long roll alarming
the camp, nor even the
muffled beat for a
burial,

Nothing from you this time
O drummers bearing
my warlike drums.

But aside from these and the
marts of wealth and
the crowded
promenade,

Admitting around me
comrades close unseen
by the rest and
voiceless,

The slain elate and alive
again, the dust and
débris alive,

I chant this chant of my
 silent soul in the name
 of all dead soldiers.

Faces so pale with wondrous
 eyes, very dear, gather
 closer yet,

Draw close, but speak not.

Phantoms of countless lost,

Invisible to the rest
 henceforth become my
 companions,

Follow me ever—desert me
 not while I live.

Sweet are the blooming
 cheeks of the
 living—sweet are the
 musical voices
 sounding,

But sweet, ah sweet, are the
dead with their silent
eyes.

Dearest comrades, all is over
and long gone,

But love is not over—and
what love, O comrades!

Perfume from battlefields
rising, up from the
foetor arising.

Perfume therefore my chant,
O love, immortal love,

Give me to bathe the
memories of all dead
soldiers,

Shroud them, embalm them,
cover them all over
with tender pride.

Perfume all—make all
wholesome,

Make these ashes to nourish
and blossom,

O love, solve all, fructify all
with the last
chemistry.

Give me exhaustless, make
me a fountain,

That I exhale love from me
wherever I go like a
moist perennial dew,

For the ashes of all dead
soldiers South or
North.

PENSIVE ON HER DEAD GAZING

Pensive on her dead gazing I
heard the Mother of
All,

Desperate on the torn
bodies, on the forms
covering the
battlefields gazing

(As the last gun ceased, but
the scent of the
powder-smoke
linger'd),

As she call'd to her earth
with mournful voice
while she stalk'd,

Absorb them well O my
earth, she cried, I
charge you lose not my
sons, lose not an atom,

And you streams absorb
them well, taking their
dear blood,

And you local spots, and you
airs that swim above
lightly impalpable,

And all you essences of soil
and growth, and you
my rivers' depths,

And you mountain sides, and
the woods where my
dear children's blood
trickling reddened,

And you trees down in your
roots to bequeath to all
future trees,

My dead absorb or South or
North—my young
men's bodies absorb,
and their precious,
precious blood,

Which holding in trust for
me faithfully back
again give me many a
year hence,

In unseen essence and odour
of surface and grass,
centuries hence,

In blowing airs from the
fields back again give
me my darlings, give
my immortal heroes,

Exhale me them centuries
hence, breathe me
their breath, let not an
atom be lost,

O years and graves! O air and
soil! O my dead, an
aroma sweet!

Exhale them perennial sweet
death, years centuries
hence.

III

POEMS OF AMERICA

I HEAR AMERICA SINGING

I hear America singing, the
varied carols I hear,

Those of mechanics, each
one singing his as it
should be blithe and
strong,

The carpenter singing his as
he measures his plank
or beam,

The mason singing his as he
makes ready for work,
or leaves off work,

The boatman singing what
belongs to him in his
boat, the deckhand

singing on the
steamboat deck,

The shoemaker singing as he
sits on his bench, the
hatter singing as he
stands,

The wood-cutter's song, the
ploughboy's on his way
in the morning, or at
noon intermission or
at sundown,

The delicious singing of the
mother, or of the
young wife at work, or
of the girl sewing or
washing,

Each singing what belongs to
him or her and to none
else,

The day what belongs to the
day—at night the party

of young fellows,
robust, friendly,

Singing with open mouths
their strong melodious
songs.

PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

Come my tan-faced
children,

Follow well in order, get
your weapons ready,

Have you your pistols? have
you your sharp-edged
axes?

Pioneers! O pioneers!

For we cannot tarry
here,

We must march my darlings,
we must bear the brunt
of danger

We the youthful sinewy
races, all the rest on us
depend,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

O you youths, Western
youths,

So impatient, full of action,
full of manly pride and
friendship,

Plain I see you Western
youths, see you
tramping with the
foremost,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races
halted?

Do they droop and end their
lesson, wearied over
there beyond the seas?

We take up the task eternal,
and the burden and the
lesson,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the past we leave
behind,

We debouch upon a newer
mightier world, varied
world,

Fresh and strong the world
we seize, world of
labour and the march,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

We detachments steady
throwing,

Down the edges, through the
passes, up the
mountains steep,

Conquering, holding, daring,
venturing as we go the
unknown ways,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

We primeval forests
felling,

We the rivers stemming,
vexing we and piercing
deep the mines within,

We the surface broad
surveying, we the
virgin soil upheaving,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Colorado men are we,

From the peaks gigantic,
from the great sierras
and the high plateaus,

From the mine and from the
gully, from the hunting
trail we come,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

From Nebraska, from
Arkansas,

Central inland race are we,
from Missouri, with

the continental blood
intervein'd,

All the hands of comrades
clasping, all the
Southern, all the
Northern,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

O resistless restless race!

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

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

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Raise the mighty mother
mistress,

Waving high the delicate
mistress, over all the

starry mistress (bend
your heads all),

Raise the fang'd and warlike
mistress, stern,
impassive, weapon'd
mistress,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

See my children,
resolute children,

By those swarms upon our
rear we must never
yield or falter,

Ages back in ghostly millions
frowning there behind
us urging,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

On and on the compact
ranks,

With accessions ever
waiting, with the

places of the dead
quickly fill'd,

Through the battle, through
defeat, moving yet and
never stopping,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

O to die advancing on!

Are there some of us to
droop and die? has the
hour come?

Then upon the march we
fittest die, soon and
sure the gap is fill'd,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the pulses of the
world,

Falling in they beat for us,
with the Western
movement beat,

Holding single or together,
steady moving to the
front, all for us,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

Life's involv'd and varied
pageants,

All the forms and shows, all
the workmen at their
work,

All the seamen and the
landsmen, all the
masters with their
slaves,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

All the hapless silent
lovers,

All the prisoners in the
prisons, all the
righteous and the
wicked,

All the joyous, all the
sorrowing, all the
living, all the dying,

Pioneers! O pioneers!

I too with my soul and
body,

We, a curious trio, picking,
wandering on our way,

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 sun
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!

SONG OF THE BROAD-AXE**1**

Weapon shapely, naked,
wan,

Head from the mother's
bowels drawn,

Wooded flesh and metal
bone, limb only one
and lip only one,

Gray-blue leaf by red-heat
grown, helve produced
from a little seed sown

Resting the grass amid and
upon,

To be lean'd and to lean on.

Strong shapes and attributes
of strong shapes,
masculine trades,
sights and sounds,

Long varied train of an
emblem, dabs of
music,

Fingers of the organist
skipping staccato over
the keys of the great
organ.

2

Welcome are all earth's
lands, each for its kind,

Welcome are lands of pine
and oak,

Welcome are lands of the
lemon and fig,

Welcome are lands of gold,

Welcome are lands of wheat
and maize, welcome
those of the grape,

Welcome are lands of sugar
and rice,

Welcome the cotton-lands,
welcome those of the
white potato and sweet
potato,

Welcome are mountains,
flats, sands, forests,
prairies,

Welcome the rich borders of
rivers, table-lands,
openings,

Welcome the measureless
grazing-lands,
welcome the teeming
soil of orchards, flax,
honey, hemp;

Welcome just as much the
other more hard-faced
lands,

Lands rich as lands of gold or
wheat and fruit lands,

Lands of mines, lands of the
manly and rugged
ores,

Lands of coal, copper, lead,
tin, zinc,

Lands of iron—lands of the
make of the axe.

3

The log at the wood-pile, the
axe supported by it,

The sylvan hut, the vine over
the doorway, the space
clear'd for a garden,

The irregular tapping of rain
down on the leaves
after the storm is lull'd,

The wailing and moaning at
intervals, the thought
of the sea,

The thought of ships struck
in the storm and put
on their beam ends,
and the cutting away of
masts,

The sentiment of the huge
timbers of
old-fashion'd houses
and barns,

The remember'd print or
narrative, the voyage
at a venture of men,
families, goods,

The disembarkation, the
founding of a new city,

The voyage of those who
sought a New England
and found it, the outset
anywhere,

The settlements of the
Arkansas, Colorado,
Ottawa, Willamette,

The slow progress, the scant
fare, the axe, rifle,
saddle-bags;

The beauty of all
adventurous and
daring persons,

The beauty of wood-boys
and wood-men with
their clear untrimm'd
faces,

The beauty of independence,
departure, actions that
rely on themselves,

The American contempt for
statutes and
ceremonies, the
boundless impatience
of restraint,

The loose drift of character,
the inkling through
random types, the
solidification;

The butcher in the
slaughter-house, the
hands aboard
schooners and sloops,
the raftsman, the
pioneer,

Lumbermen in their winter
camp, daybreak in the
woods, stripes of snow
on the limbs of trees,
the occasional
snapping,

The glad clear sound of one's
own voice, the merry
song, the natural life of
the woods, the strong
day's work,

The blazing fire at night, the
sweet taste of supper,
the talk, the bed of
hemlock-boughs, and
the bear-skin;

The house-builder at work in
cities or anywhere,

The preparatory jointing,
squaring, sawing,
mortising,

The hoist-up of beams, the
push of them in their
places, laying them
regular,

Setting the studs by their
tenons in the mortises
according as they were
prepared,

The blows of mallets and
hammers, the attitudes

of the men, their
curv'd limbs,

Bending, standing, astride
the beams, driving in
pins, holding on by
posts and braces,

The hook'd arm over the
plate, the other arm
wielding the axe,

The floor-men forcing the
planks close to be
nail'd,

Their postures bringing their
weapons downward on
the bearers,

The echoes resounding
through the vacant
building;

The huge storehouse carried
up in the city well
under way,

The six framing-men, two in
the middle and two at
each end, carefully
bearing on their
shoulders a heavy stick
for a cross-beam,

The crowded line of masons
with trowels in their
right hands rapidly
laying the long
side-wall, two hundred
feet from front to rear,

The flexible rise and fall of
backs, the continual
click of the trowels
striking the bricks,

The bricks one after another
each laid so
workman-like in its
place, and set with a
knock of the
trowel-handle,

The piles of materials, the
mortar on the
mortar-boards, and the
steady replenishing by
the hod-men;

Spar-makers in the
spar-yard, the
swarming row of
well-grown
apprentices,

The swing of their axes on
the square-hew'd log
shaping it toward the
shape of a mast,

The brisk short crackle of
the steel driven
slantingly into the
pine,

The butter-colour'd chips
flying off in great flakes
and slivers,

The limber motion of
brawny young arms
and hips in easy
costumes,

The constructor of wharves,
bridges, piers,
bulk-heads, floats,
stays against the sea;

The city fireman, the fire
that suddenly bursts
forth in the
close-pack'd square,

The arriving engines, the
hoarse shouts, the
nimble stepping and
daring,

The strong command
through the
fire-trumpets, the
falling in line, the rise
and fall of the arms
forcing the water,

The slender, spasmic,
blue-white jets, the
bringing to bear of the
hooks and ladders and
their execution,

The crash and cut away of
connecting
wood-work, or through
floors if the fire
smoulders under
them,

The crowd with their lit
faces watching, the
glare and dense
shadows;

The forger at his
forge-furnace and the
user of iron after him,

The maker of the axe large
and small, and the
welder and temperer,

The chooser breathing his
breath on the cold steel
and trying the edge
with his thumb,

The one who clean-shapes
the handle and sets it
firmly in the socket;

The shadowy processions of
the portraits of the
past users also,

The primal patient
mechanics, the
architects and
engineers,

The far-off Assyrian edifice
and Mizra edifice,

The Roman lictors preceding
the consuls,

The antique European
warrior with his axe in
combat,

The uplifted arm, the clatter
of blows on the
helmeted head,

The death-howl, the limpsy
tumbling body, the
rush of friend and foe
thither,

The siege of revolted lieges
determin'd for liberty,

The summons to surrender,
the battering at castle
gates, the truce and
parley,

The sack of an old city in its
time.

The bursting in of
mercenaries and bigots
tumultuously and
disorderly,

Roar, flames, blood,
drunkenness,
madness,

Goods freely rifled from
houses and temples,
screams of women in
the gripe of brigands,

Craft and thievery of
camp-followers, men
running, old persons
despairing,

The hell of war, the cruelties
of creeds,

The list of all executive
deeds and words just
or unjust,

The power of personality
just or unjust.

Muscle and pluck forever!

What invigorates life
invigorates death,

And the dead advance as
much as the living
advance,

And the future is no more
uncertain than the
present,

For the roughness of the
earth and of man
encloses as much as
the delicatessen of the
earth and of man,

And nothing endures but
personal qualities.

What do you think endures?

Do you think a great city
endures?

Or a teeming manufacturing
state? or a prepared
constitution? or the
best built steamships?

Or hotels of granite and iron?
or any chef-d'oeuvres
of engineering, forts,
armaments?

Away! these are not to be
cherish'd for
themselves,

They fill their hour, the
dancers dance, the
musicians play for
them,

The show passes, all does
well enough of course,

All does very well till one
flash of defiance.

A great city is that which has
the greatest men and
women,

If it be a few ragged huts it is
still the greatest city in
the whole world.

5

The place where a great city
stands is not the place
of stretch'd wharves,
docks, manufactures,
deposits of produce
merely,

Nor the place of ceaseless
salutes of new-comers
or the anchor-lifters of
the departing,

Nor the place of the tallest
and costliest buildings
or shops selling goods

from the rest of the
earth,

Nor the place of the best
libraries and schools,
nor the place where
money is plentiest,

Nor the place of the most
numerous population.

Where the city stands with
the brawniest breed of
orators and bards,

Where the city stands that is
belov'd by these, and
loves them in return
and understands them,

Where no monuments exist
to heroes but in the
common words and
deeds,

Where thrift is in its place,
and prudence is in its
place,

Where the men and women
think lightly of the
laws,

Where the slave ceases, and
the master of slaves
ceases,

Where the populace rise at
once against the
never-ending audacity
of elected persons,

Where fierce men and
women pour forth as
the sea to the whistle
of death pours its
sweeping and unript
waves,

Where outside authority
enters always after the

precedence of inside
authority,

Where the citizen is always
the head and ideal, and
President, Mayor,
Governor and what
not, are agents for pay,

Where children are taught to
be laws to themselves,
and to depend on
themselves,

Where equanimity is
illustrated in affairs,

Where speculations on the
soul are encouraged,

Where women walk in
public processions in
the streets the same as
the men,

Where they enter the public
assembly and take

places the same as the
men;

Where the city of the
faithfulest friends
stands,

Where the city of the
cleanliness of the sexes
stands,

Where the city of the
healthiest fathers
stands,

Where the city of the
best-bodied mothers
stands,

There the great city stands.

6

How beggarly appear
arguments before a
defiant deed!

How the floridness of the
materials of cities
shrivels before a man's
or woman's look!

All waits or goes by default
till a strong being
appears;

A strong being is the proof of
the race and of the
ability of the universe,

When he or she appears
materials are overaw'd,

The dispute on the soul
stops,

The old customs and phrases
are confronted, turn'd
back, or laid away.

What is your money-making
now? what can it do
now?

What is your respectability
now?

What are your theology,
tuition, society,
traditions,
statute-books, now?

Where are your jibes of
being now?

Where are your cavils about
the soul now?

7

A sterile landscape covers
the ore, there is as
good as the best for all
the forbidding
appearance,

There is the mine, there are
the miners,

The forge-furnace is there,
the melt is

accomplish'd, the
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 Hindustanee,

Served the mound-raiser on
the Mississippi, served
those whose relics
remain in Central
America,

Served Albic temples in
woods or on plains,
with unhewn pillars
and the druids,

Served the artificial clefts,
vast, high, silent, on
the snow-cover'd hills
of Scandinavia,

Served those who time out of
mind made on the
granite walls rough
sketches of the sun,
moon, stars, ships,
ocean waves,

Served the paths of the
irruptions of the Goths,

served the pastoral
tribes and nomads,

Served the long distant Kelt,
served the hardy
pirates of the Baltic,

Served before any of those
the venerable and
harmless men of
Ethiopia,

Served the making of helms
for the galleys of
pleasure and the
making of those for
war,

Served all great works on
land and all great
works on the sea,

For the mediæval ages and
before the mediæval
ages,

Served not the living only
then as now, but
served the dead.

8

I see the European
headsman,

He stands mask'd, clothed in
red, with huge legs and
strong naked arms,

And leans on a ponderous
axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd
lately European
headsman?

Whose is that blood upon
you so wet and sticky?)

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 neighbours
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
unwholesome couple,

The shape of the
gambling-board with
its devilish winnings
and losings,

The shape of the step-ladder
for the convicted and
sentenced murderer,
the murderer with
haggard face and
pinion'd arms,

The sheriff at hand with his
deputies, the silent and
white-lipp'd crowd, the
dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise!

Shapes of doors giving many
exits and entrances,

The door passing the
dissever'd friend
flush'd and in haste,

The door that admits good
news and bad news,

The door whence the son left
home confident and
puff'd up,

The door he enter'd again
from a long and
scandalous absence,
diseas'd, broken down,
without innocence,
without means.

11

Her shape arises,

She less guarded than ever,
yet more guarded than
ever,

The gross and soil'd she
moves among do not
make her gross and
soil'd,

She knows the thoughts as
she passes, nothing is
conceal'd from her,

She is none the less
considerate or friendly
therefor,

She is the best belov'd, it is
without exception, she
has no reason to fear
and she does not fear,

Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd
songs, smutty
expressions, are idle to
her as she passes,

She is silent, she is possess'd
of herself, they do not
offend her,

She receives them as the
laws of Nature receive
them, she is strong,

She too is a law of
Nature—there is no law
stronger than she is.

12

The main shapes arise!

Shapes of Democracy total,
result of centuries,

Shapes ever projecting other
shapes,

Shapes of turbulent manly
cities,

Shapes of the friends and
home-givers of the
whole earth,

Shapes bracing the earth and
braced with the whole
earth.

GIVE ME THE SPLENDID SILENT SUN**1**

Give me the splendid silent
sun with all his beams
full-dazzling,

Give me juicy autumnal fruit
ripe and red from the
orchard,

Give me a field where the
unmow'd grass grows,

Give me an arbour, give me
the trellis'd grape,

Give me fresh corn and
wheat, give me
serene-moving
animals teaching
content,

Give me nights perfectly
quiet as on high
plateaus west of the

Mississippi, and I
looking up at the stars,

Give me odorous at sunrise a
garden of beautiful
flowers where I can
walk undisturb'd,

Give me for marriage a
sweet-breath'd woman
of whom I should
never tire,

Give me a perfect child, give
me away aside from
the noise of the world a
rural domestic life,

Give me to warble
spontaneous songs
recluse by myself, for
my own ears only,

Give me solitude, give me
Nature, give me again

O Nature your primal
sanities!

These demanding to have
them (tired with
ceaseless excitement,
and rack'd by the
war-strife),

These to procure incessantly
asking, rising in cries
from my heart,

While yet incessantly asking
still I adhere to my
city,

Day upon day and year upon
year O city, walking
your streets,

Where you hold me
enchain'd a certain
time refusing to give
me up,

Yet giving to make me
glutted, enrich'd of
soul, you give me
forever faces

(O I see what I sought to
escape, confronting,
reversing my cries,

I see my own soul trampling
down what it ask'd for).

2

Keep your splendid silent
sun,

Keep your woods, O Nature,
and the quiet places by
the woods,

Keep your fields of clover
and timothy, and your
corn-fields and
orchards,

Keep the blossoming
buckwheat fields
where the
Ninth-month bees
hum;

Give me faces and
streets—give me these
phantoms incessant
and endless along the
trottoirs!

Give me interminable
eyes—give me
women—give me
comrades and lovers
by the thousand!

Let me see new ones every
day—let me hold new
ones by the hand every
day!

Give me such shows—give
me the streets of
Manhattan!

Give me Broadway, with the
soldiers
marching—give me the
sound of the trumpets
and drums!

(The soldiers in companies
or regiments—some
starting away, flushed
and reckless,

Some, their time up,
returning with thinn'd
ranks, young, yet very
old, worn, marching,
noticing nothing)

Give me the shores and
wharves heavy-fringed
with black ships!

O such for me! O an intense
life, full to repletion
and varied!

The life of the theatre,
bar-room, huge hotel,
for me!

The saloon of the steamer!
the crowded excursion
for me! the torchlight
procession!

The dense brigade bound for
the war, with high
piled military wagons
following;

People, endless, streaming,
with strong voices,
passions, pageants,

Manhattan streets with their
powerful throbs, with
beating drums as now,

The endless and noisy
chorus, the rustle and
clank of muskets (even

the sight of the
wounded),

Manhattan crowds, with
their turbulent musical
chorus!

Manhattan faces and eyes
forever for me.

FACES

The old face of the mother of
many children,

Whist! I am fully content.

Lull'd and late is the smoke
of the First-day
morning,

It hangs low over the rows of
trees by the fences,

It hangs thin by the sassafras
and wild-cherry and
cat-brier under them.

I saw the rich ladies in full
dress at the soiree,

I heard what the singers
were singing so long,

Heard who sprang in
crimson youth from

the white froth and the
water-blue.

Behold a woman!

She looks out from her
quaker cap, her face is
clearer and more
beautiful than the sky.

She sits in an armchair
under the shaded
porch of the
farmhouse,

The sun just shines on her
old white head.

Her ample gown is of
cream-hued linen,

Her grandsons raised the
flax, and her
granddaughters spun it
with the distaff and the
wheel.

The melodious character of
the earth,

The finish beyond which
philosophy cannot go
and does not wish to
go,

The justified mother of men.

O MAGNET-SOUTH

O magnet-South! O glistening
perfumed South! my
South!

O quick mettle, rich blood,
impulse and love! good
and evil! O all dear to
me!

O dear to me my
birth-things—all
moving things and the
trees where I was
born—the grains,
plants, rivers,

Dear to me my own slow
sluggish rivers where
they flow, distant, over
flats of silvery sands or
through swamps,

Dear to me the Roanoke, the
Savannah, the
Altamahaw, the Pedee,
the Tombigbee, the
Santee, the Coosa, and
the Sabine,

O pensive, far away
wandering, I return
with my soul to haunt
their banks again,

Again in Florida I float on
transparent lakes, I
float on the
Okeechobee, I cross
the hummock-land or
through pleasant
openings or dense
forests,

I see the parrots in the
woods, I see the
papaw-tree and the
blossoming titi;

Again, sailing in my coaster
on deck, I coast off
Georgia, I coast up the
Carolinas,

I see where the live-oak is
growing, I see where
the yellow-pine, the
scented bay-tree, the
lemon and orange, the
cypress, the graceful
palmetto,

I pass rude sea-headlands
and enter Pamlico
sound through an
inlet, and dart my
vision inland;

O the cotton plant! the
growing fields of rice,
sugar, hemp!

The cactus guarded with
thorns, the laurel-tree

with large white
flowers,

The range afar, the richness
and barrenness, the
old woods charged
with mistletoe and
trailing moss,

The piney odour and the
gloom, the awful
natural stillness (here
in these dense swamps
the freebooter carries
his gun, and the
fugitive has his
conceal'd hut);

O the strange fascination of
these half-known
half-impassable
swamps, infested by
reptiles, resounding
with the bellow of the
alligator, the sad noises
of the night-owl and

the wild-cat, and the
whirr of the
rattlesnake,

The mocking-bird, the
American mimic,
singing all the
forenoon, singing
through the moon-lit
night,

The humming-bird, the wild
turkey, the raccoon,
the opossum;

A Kentucky corn-field, the
tall, graceful,
long-leav'd corn,
slender, flapping,
bright green, with
tassels, with beautiful
ears each well-sheath'd
in its husk;

O my heart! O tender and
fierce pangs, I can

stand them not, I will
depart;

O to be a Virginian where I
grew up! O to be a
Carolinian!

O longings irrepensible! O I
will go back to old
Tennessee and never
wander more.

BY BROAD POTOMAC'S SHORE

By broad Potomac's shore,
again old tongue

(Still uttering, still
ejaculating, canst
never cease this
babble?)

Again old heart so gay, again
to you, your sense, the
full flush spring
returning,

Again the freshness and the
odours, again Virginia's
summer sky, pellucid
blue and silver,

Again the forenoon purple of
the hills,

Again the deathless grass, so
noiseless soft and
green,

Again the blood-red roses
blooming.

Perfume this book of mine O
blood-red roses!

Lave subtly with your waters
every line Potomac!

Give me of you O spring,
before I close, to put
between its pages!

O forenoon purple of the
hills, before I close, of
you!

O deathless grass, of you!

OUR OLD FEUILLAGE!

Always our old feuillage!

Always Florida's green
peninsula—always the
priceless delta of
Louisiana—always the
cotton-fields of
Alabama and Texas,

Always California's golden
hills and hollows, and
the silver mountains of
New Mexico—always
soft-breath'd Cuba,

Always the vast slope drain'd
by the Southern sea,
inseparable with the
slopes drain'd by the
Eastern and Western
seas,

The area the eighty-third
year of these States, the

three and a half
millions of square
miles,

The eighteen thousand miles
of sea-coast and
bay-coast on the main,
the thirty thousand
miles of river
navigation,

The seven millions of
distinct families and
the same number of
dwellings—always
these, and more,
branching forth into
numberless branches,

Always the free range and
diversity—always the
continent of
Democracy;

Always the prairies,
pastures, forests, vast

cities, travellers,
Kanada, the snows;

Always these compact lands
tied at the hips with
the belt stringing the
huge oval lakes;

Always the West with strong
native persons, the
increasing density
there, the habitans,
friendly, threatening,
ironical, scorning
invaders;

All sights, South, North,
East—all deeds
promiscuously done at
all times,

All characters, movements,
growths, a few noticed,
myriads unnoticed,

Through Mannahatta's
streets I walking, these
things gathering,

On interior rivers by night in
the glare of pine knots,
steamboats wooding
up,

Sunlight by day on the valley
of the Susquehanna,
and on the valleys of
the Potomac and
Rappahannock, and
the valleys of the
Roanoke and Delaware,

In their northerly wilds
beasts of prey
haunting the
Adirondacks the hills,
or lapping the Saginaw
waters to drink,

In a lonesome inlet a
sheldrake lost from the

flock, sitting on the
water rocking silently,

In farmers' barns oxen in the
stable, their harvest
labour done, they rest
standing, they are too
tired,

Afar on arctic ice the
she-walrus lying
drowsily while her
cubs play around,

The hawk sailing where men
have not yet sail'd, the
farthest polar sea,
rippy, crystalline,
open, beyond the floes,

White drift spooning ahead
where the ship in the
tempest dashes,

On solid land what is done in
cities as the bells strike
midnight together,

In primitive woods the
sounds there also
sounding, the howl of
the wolf, the scream of
the panther, and the
hoarse bellow of the
elk,

In winter beneath the hard
blue ice of Moosehead
lake, in summer visible
through the clear
waters, the great trout
swimming,

In lower latitudes in warmer
air in the Carolinas the
large black buzzard
floating slowly high
beyond the tree tops,

Below, the red cedar
festoon'd with
tylandria, the pines
and cypresses growing
out of the white sand
that spreads far and
flat,

Rude boats descending the
big Pedee, climbing
plants, parasites with
colour'd flowers and
berries enveloping
huge trees,

The waving drapery on the
live-oak trailing long
and low, noiselessly
waved by the wind,

The camp of Georgia
wagoners just after
dark, the supper-fires
and the cooking and
eating by whites and
negroes,

Thirty or forty great wagons,
the mules, cattle,
horses, feeding from
troughs,

The shadows, gleams, up
under the leaves of the
old sycamore-trees, the
flames with the black
smoke from the
pitch-pine curling and
rising;

Southern fishermen fishing,
the sounds and inlets
of North Carolina's
coast, the shad-fishery
and the
herring-fishery, the
large sweep-seines, the
windlasses on shore
work'd by horses, the
clearing, curing, and
packing-houses;

Deep in the forest in piney
woods turpentine
dropping from the
incisions in the trees,
there are the
turpentine works,

There are the negroes at
work in good health,
the ground in all
directions is cover'd
with pine straw;

In Tennessee and Kentucky
slaves busy in the
coalings, at the forge,
by the furnace-blaze,
or at the
corn-shucking,

In Virginia, the planter's son
returning after a long
absence, joyfully
welcom'd and kiss'd by
the aged mulatto
nurse,

On rivers boatmen safely
 moor'd at nightfall in
 their boats under
 shelter of high banks,

Some of the younger men
 dance to the sound of
 the banjo or fiddle,
 others sit on the
 gunwale smoking and
 talking;

Late in the afternoon the
 mocking-bird, the
 American mimic,
 singing in the Great
 Dismal Swamp,

There are the greenish
 waters, the resinous
 odour, the plenteous
 moss, the cypress-tree,
 and the juniper-tree;

Northward, young men of
 Mannahatta, the target

company from an
excursion returning
home at evening, the
musket-muzzles all
bear bunches of
flowers presented by
women;

Children at play, or on his
father's lap a young
boy fallen asleep (how
his lips move! how he
smiles in his sleep!),

The scout riding on
horseback over the
plains west of the
Mississippi, he ascends
a knoll and sweeps his
eyes around;

California life, the miner,
bearded, dress'd in his
rude costume, the
stanch California
friendship, the sweet

air, the graves one in
passing meets solitary
just aside the
horse-path;

Down in Texas the
cotton-field, the
negro-cabins, drivers
driving mules or oxen
before rude carts,
cotton bales piled on
banks and wharves;

Encircling all, vast-darting
up and wide, the
American Soul, with
equal hemispheres,
one Love, one Dilation
or Pride;

In arrière the peace-talk with
the Iroquois the
aborigines, the
calumet, the pipe of
good-will, arbitration,
and indorsement,

The sachem blowing the
smoke first toward the
sun and then toward
the earth,

The drama of the
scalp-dance enacted
with painted faces and
guttural exclamations,

The setting out of the
war-party, the long and
stealthy march,

The single file, the swinging
hatchets, the surprise
and slaughter of
enemies;

All the acts, scenes, ways,
persons, attitudes of
these States,
reminiscences,
institutions,

All these States compact,
every square mile of
these States without
excepting a particle;

Me pleas'd, rambling in lanes
and country fields,
Paumanok's fields,

Observing the spiral flight of
two little yellow
butterflies shuffling
between each other,
ascending high in the
air,

The darting swallow, the
destroyer of insects,
the fall traveller
southward but
returning northward
early in the spring,

The country boy at the close
of the day driving the
herd of cows and

shouting to them as
they loiter to browse
by the roadside,

The city wharf, Boston,
Philadelphia,
Baltimore, Charleston,
New Orleans, San
Francisco,

The departing ships when
the sailors heave at the
capstan;

Evening—me in my
room—the setting sun,

The setting summer sun
shining in my open
window, showing the
swarm of flies,
suspended, balancing
in the air in the centre
of the room, darting
athwart, up and down,
casting swift shadows

in specks on the
opposite wall where
the shine is;

The athletic American
matron speaking in
public to crowds of
listeners,

Males, females, immigrants,
combinations, the
copiousness, the
individuality of the
States, each for
itself—the
money-makers,

Factories, machinery, the
mechanical forces, the
windlass, lever, pulley,
all certainties,

The certainty of space,
increase, freedom,
futuraity,

In space the sporades, the
scatter'd islands, the
stars—on the firm
earth, the lands, my
lands,

O lands! all so dear to
me—what you are
(whatever it is), I
putting it at random in
these songs, become a
part of that, whatever
it is,

Southward there, I
screaming, with wings
slow flapping, with the
myriads of gulls
wintering along the
coasts of Florida,

Otherways there atwixt the
banks of the Arkansaw,
the Rio Grande, the
Nueces, the Brazos, the
Tombigbee, the Red

River, the
Saskatchewan or the
Osage, I with the
spring waters laughing
and skipping and
running,

Northward, on the sands, on
some shallow bay of
Paumanok, I with
parties of snowy
herons wading in the
wet to seek worms and
aquatic plants,

Retreating, triumphantly
twittering, the
king-bird, from
piercing the crow with
its bill, for
amusement—and I
triumphantly
twittering,

The migrating flock of wild
geese alighting in

autumn to refresh
themselves, the body
of the flock feed, the
sentinels outside move
around with erect
heads watching, and
are from time to time
reliev'd by other
sentinels—and I
feeding and taking
turns with the rest,

In Kanadian forests the
moose, large as an ox,
corner'd by hunters,
rising desperately on
his hind-feet, and
plunging with his
fore-feet, the hoofs as
sharp as knives—and I,
plunging at the
hunters, corner'd and
desperate,

In the Mannahatta, streets,
piers, shipping,
store-houses, and the
countless workmen
working in the shops,

And I too of the Mannahatta,
singing thereof—and
no less in myself than
the whole of the
Mannahatta in itself,

Singing the song of These,
my ever-united
lands—my body no
more inevitable
united, part to part,
and made out of a
thousand diverse
contributions one
identity, any more than
my lands are inevitably
united and made ONE
IDENTITY;

Nativities, climates, the grass
of the great pastoral
Plains,

Cities, labours, death,
animals, products, war,
good and evil—these
me,

These affording, in all their
particulars, the old
feuillage to me and to
America, how can I do
less than pass the clew
of the union of them,
to afford the like to
you?

Whoever you are! how can I
but offer you divine
leaves, that you also be
eligible as I am?

How can I but as here
chanting, invite you
for yourself to collect

bouquets of the
incomparable feuillage
of these States?

A BROADWAY PAGEANT**1**

Over the Western sea hither
from Niphon 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 Niphon,
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 colours,

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 Originatress comes,

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

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

Sultry with perfume, with
ample and flowing
garments,

With sunburnt visage, with
intense soul and
glittering eyes,

The race of Brahma comes.

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

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

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

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

The murky night-morning of
wonder and fable
inscrutable,

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

The north, the sweltering
south, eastern Assyria,
the Hebrews, the
ancient of ancients,

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

Geography, the world, is in
it,

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

The coast you henceforth are
facing—you Libertad!
from your Western
golden shores,

The countries there with
their populations, the

millions en-masse are
curiously here,

The swarming
market-places, the
temples with idols
ranged along the sides
or at the end, bonze,
brahmin, and llama,

Mandarin, farmer,
merchant, mechanic,
and fisherman,

The singing-girl and the
dancing-girl, the
ecstatic persons, the
secluded emperors,

Confucius himself, the great
poets and heroes, the
warriors, the castes,
all,

Trooping up, crowding from
all directions, from the
Altay mountains,

From Thibet, from the four
winding and
far-flowing rivers of
China,

From the southern
peninsulas and the
demi-continental
islands, from Malaysia,

These and whatever belongs
to them palpable show
forth to me, and are
seiz'd by me,

And I am seiz'd by them, and
friendlily held by
them,

Till as here them all I chant,
Libertad! for

themselves and for
you.

For I too raising my voice
join the ranks of this
pageant,

I am the chanter, I chant
aloud over the pageant,

I chant the world on my
Western sea,

I chant copious the islands
beyond, thick as stars
in the sky,

I chant the new empire
grander than any
before, as in a vision it
comes to me,

I chant America the
mistress, I chant a
greater supremacy,

I chant projected a thousand
blooming cities yet in
time on those groups
of sea-islands,

My sail-ships and
steam-ships threading
the archipelagoes,

My stars and stripes
fluttering in the wind,

Commerce opening, the
sleep of ages having
done its work, races
reborn, refresh'd,

Lives, works resumed—the
object I know not—but
the old, the Asiatic
renew'd as it must be,

Commencing from this day
surrounded by the
world.

3

And you Libertad of the
world!

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

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

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

The sign is reversing, the orb
is enclosed,

The ring is circled, the
journey is done,

The box-lid is but
perceptibly open'd,

nevertheless the
perfume pours
copiously out of the
whole box.

Young Libertad! with the
venerable Asia, the
all-mother,

Be considerate with her now
and ever hot Libertad,
for you are all,

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

Bend your proud neck low
for once, young
Libertad.

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.

THE PRAIRIE STATES

A newer garden of creation,
no primal solitude,

Dense, joyous, modern,
populous millions,
cities and farms,

With iron interlaced,
composite, tied, many
in one,

By all the world
contributed—freedom's
and law's and thrift's
society,

The crown and teeming
paradise, so far, of
time's accumulations,

To justify the past.

IV

POEMS OF DEMOCRACY

TO FOREIGN LANDS

I heard that you ask'd for
something to prove
this puzzle the New
World,

And to define America, her
athletic Democracy,

Therefore I send you my
poems that you behold
in them what you
wanted.

TO THEE OLD CAUSE

To thee old cause!

Thou peerless, passionate,
good cause,

Thou stern, remorseless,
sweet idea,

Deathless throughout the
ages, races, lands,

After a strange sad war, great
war for thee

(I think all war through time
was really fought, and
ever will be really
fought, for thee),

These chants for thee, the
eternal march of thee.

(A war O soldiers not for
itself alone,

Far, far more stood silently
 waiting behind, now to
 advance in this book.)

Thou orb of many orbs!

Thou seething principle!
 thou well-kept, latent
 germ! thou centre!

Around the idea of thee the
 war revolving,

With all its angry and
 vehement play of
 causes

(With vast results to come
 for thrice a thousand
 years),

These recitatives for
 thee,—my book and the
 war are one,

Merged in its spirit I and
mine, as the contest
hinged on thee,

As a wheel on its axis turns,
this book unwitting to
itself,

Around the idea of thee.

FOR YOU O DEMOCRACY

Come, I will make the
continent indissoluble,

I will make the most
splendid race the sun
ever shone upon,

I will make divine magnetic
lands,

With the love of
comrades,

With the life-long
love of
comrades.

I will plant companionship
thick as trees along all
the rivers of America,
and along the shores of
the great lakes, and all
over the prairies,

I will make inseparable cities
with their arms about
each other's necks,

By the love of comrades,

By the manly love of
comrades.

For you these from me, O
Democracy, to serve
you ma femme!

For you, for you I am trilling
these songs.

**THOU MOTHER WITH THY EQUAL
BROOD**

1

Thou Mother with thy equal
brood,

Thou varied chain of
different States, yet
one identity only,

A special song before I go I'd
sing o'er all the rest,

For thee, the future.

I'd sow a seed for thee of
endless Nationality,

I'd fashion thy ensemble
including body and
soul,

I'd show away ahead thy real
Union, and how it may
be accomplish'd.

The paths to the house I seek
to make,

But leave to those to come
the house itself.

Belief I sing, and
preparation;

As Life and Nature are not
great with reference to
the present only,

But greater still from what is
yet to come,

Out of that formula for thee I
sing.

2

As a strong bird on pinions
free,

Joyous, the amplest spaces
heavenward cleaving,

Such be the thought I'd think
of thee America,

Such be the recitative I'd
bring for thee.

The conceits of the poets of
other lands I'd bring
thee not,

Nor the compliments that
have served their turn
so long,

Nor rhyme, nor the classics,
nor perfume of foreign
court or indoor library;

But an odour I'd bring as
from forests of pine in
Maine, or breath of an
Illinois prairie,

With open airs of Virginia or
Georgia or Tennessee,
or from Texas uplands,
or Florida's glades,

Or the Saguenay's black
stream, or the wide
blue spread of Huron,

With presentment of
Yellowstone's scenes,
or Yosemite,

And murmuring under,
pervading all, I'd bring
the rustling sea-sound,

That endlessly sounds from
the two Great Seas of
the world.

And for thy subtler sense
subtler refrains dread
Mother,

Preludes of intellect tallying
these and thee,
mind-formulas fitted
for thee, real and sane
and large as these and
thee,

Thou! mounting higher,
diving deeper than we
knew, thou
transcendental Union!

By thee fact to be justified,
blended with thought,

Thought of man justified,
blended with God,

Through thy idea, lo, the
immortal reality!

Through thy reality, lo, the
immortal idea!

3

Brain of the New World,
what a task is thine,

To formulate the
Modern—out of the
peerless grandeur of
the modern,

Out of thyself, comprising
science, to recast
poems, churches, art

(Recast, maybe discard
them, end
them—maybe their
work is done, who
knows?),

By vision, hand, conception,
on the background of
the mighty past, the
dead,

To limn with absolute faith
the mighty living
present.

And yet thou living present
brain, heir of the dead,
the Old World brain,

Thou that lay folded like an
unborn babe within its
folds so long,

Thou carefully prepared by
it so long—haply thou
but unfoldest it, only
maturest it,

It to eventuate in thee—the
essence of the bygone
time contain'd in thee,

Its poems, churches, arts,
unwitting to
themselves, destined
with reference to thee;

Thou but the apples, long,
long, long a-growing,

The fruit of all the Old
ripening to-day in thee.

4

Sail, sail thy best, ship of
Democracy,

Of value is thy freight, 'tis not
the Present only,

The Past is also stored in
thee,

Thou holdest not the venture
of thyself alone, not of
the Western continent
alone,

Earth's *résumé* entire floats
on thy keel O ship, is
steadied by thy spars,

With thee Time voyages in
trust, the antecedent
nations sink or swim
with thee,

With all their ancient
struggles, martyrs,
heroes, epics, wars,
thou bear'st the other
continents,

Theirs, theirs as much as
thine, the

destination-port
triumphant;

Steer then with good strong
hand and wary eye O
helmsman, thou
carriest great
companions,

Venerable priestly Asia sails
this day with thee,

And royal feudal Europe
sails with thee.

5

Beautiful world of new
superber birth that
rises to my eyes,

Like a limitless golden cloud
filling the western sky,

Emblem of general
maternity lifted above
all,

Sacred shape of the bearer of
daughters and sons,

Out of thy teeming womb thy
giant babes in
ceaseless procession
issuing,

Acceding from such
gestation, taking and
giving continual
strength and life,

World of the real—world of
the twain in one,

World of the soul, born by
the world of the real
alone, led to identity,
body, by it alone,

Yet in beginning only,
incalculable masses of
composite precious
materials,

By history's cycles
forwarded, by every
nation, language,
hither sent,

Ready, collected here, a
freer, vast, electric
world, to be
constructed here

(The true New World, the
world of orbic science,
morals, literatures to
come),

Thou wonder world yet
undefined, unform'd,
neither do I define
thee,

How can I pierce the
impenetrable blank of
the future?

I feel thy ominous greatness
evil as well as good,

I watch thee advancing,
absorbing the present,
transcending the past,

I see thy light lighting, and
thy shadow
shadowing, as if the
entire globe,

But I do not undertake to
define thee, hardly to
comprehend thee,

I but thee name, thee
prophesy, as now,

I merely thee ejaculate!

Thee in thy future,

Thee in thy only permanent
life, career, thy own
unloosen'd mind, thy
soaring spirit,

Thee as another equally
needed sun, radiant,

ablaze, swift-moving,
fructifying all,

Thee risen in potent
cheerfulness and joy,
in endless great
hilarity,

Scattering for good the cloud
that hung so long, that
weigh'd so long upon
the mind of man,

The doubt, suspicion, dread,
of gradual, certain
decadence of man;

Thee in thy larger, saner
brood of female,
male—thee in thy
athletes, moral,
spiritual, South, North,
West, East,

(To thy immortal breasts,
Mother of All, thy

every daughter, son,
endear'd alike, forever
equal),

Thee in thy own musicians,
singers, artists, unborn
yet, but certain,

Thee in thy moral wealth
and civilization (until
which thy proudest
material civilization
must remain in vain),

Thee in thy all-supplying,
all-enclosing
worship—thee in no
single bible, saviour,
merely,

Thy saviours countless,
latent within thyself,
thy bibles incessant
within thyself, equal to
any, divine as any

(Thy soaring course thee
formulating, not in thy
two great wars, nor in
thy century's visible
growth,

But far more in these leaves
and chants, thy chants,
great Mother!),

Thee in an education grown
of thee, in teachers,
studies, students, born
of thee,

Thee in thy democratic fêtes
en-masse, thy high
original festivals,
operas, lecturers,
preachers,

Thee in thy ultimata (the
preparations only now
completed, the edifice
on sure foundations
tied),

Thee in thy pinnacles,
intellect, thought, thy
topmost rational joys,
thy love and godlike
aspiration,

In thy resplendent coming
literati, thy full-lung'd
orators, thy sacerdotal
bards, kosmic savans,

These! these in thee (certain
to come), to-day I
prophecy.

6

Land tolerating all,
accepting all, not for
the good alone, all
good for thee,

Land in the realms of God to
be a realm unto
thysself,

Under the rule of God to be a
rule unto thyself.

(Lo, where arise three
peerless stars,

To be thy natal stars my
country, Ensemble,
Evolution, Freedom,

Set in the sky of Law.)

Land of unprecedented faith,
God's faith,

Thy soil, thy very subsoil, all
upheav'd,

The general inner earth so
long so sedulously
draped over, now
hence for what it is
boldly laid bare,

Open'd by thee to heaven's
light for benefit or
bale.

Not for success alone,
Not to fair-sail unintermitted
always,

The storm shall dash thy
face, the murk of war
and worse than war
shall cover thee all
over

(Wert capable of war, its tug
and trials? be capable
of peace, its trials,

For the tug and mortal strain
of nations come at last
in prosperous peace,
not war);

In many a smiling mask
death shall approach
beguiling thee, thou in
disease shalt swelter,

The livid cancer spread its
hideous claws, clinging

upon thy breasts,
seeking to strike thee
deep within,

Consumption of the worst,
moral consumption,
shall rouge thy face
with hectic,

But thou shalt face thy
fortunes, thy diseases,
and surmount them
all,

Whatever they are to-day
and whatever through
time they may be,

They each and all shall lift
and pass away and
cease from thee,

While thou, Time's spirals
rounding, out of
thyselves, thyselves still
extricating, fusing,

Equable, natural, mystical
 Union thou (the mortal
 with immortal blent),

Shalt soar toward the
 fulfilment of the
 future, the spirit of the
 body and the mind,

The soul, its destinies.

The soul, its destinies, the
 real real

(Purport of all these
 apparitions of the real);

In thee America, the soul, its
 destinies,

Thou globe of globes! thou
 wonder nebulous!

By many a throe of heat and
 cold convuls'd (by
 these thyself
 solidifying),

Thou mental, moral
orb—thou New, indeed
new, Spiritual World!

The Present holds thee
not—for such vast
growth as thine,

For such unparallel'd flight
as thine, such brood as
thine,

The FUTURE only holds thee
and can hold thee.

WHAT BEST I SEE IN THEE

To U. S. G. return'd from his World's Tour.

What best I see in thee

Is not that where thou mov'st
down history's great
highways,

Ever undimm'd by time
shoots warlike
victory's dazzle,

Or that thou sat'st where
Washington sat, ruling
the land in peace,

Or thou the man whom
feudal Europe fêted,
venerable Asia
swarm'd upon

Who walk'd with kings with
even pace the round
world's promenade;

But that in foreign lands, in
all thy walks with
kings,

Those prairie sovereigns of
the West, Kansas,
Missouri, Illinois,

Ohio's, Indiana's millions,
comrades, farmers,
soldiers, all to the
front,

Invisibly with thee walking
with kings with even
pace the round world's
promenade,

Were all so justified.

**AS I WALK THESE BROAD MAJESTIC
DAYS**

As I walk these broad
majestic days of peace

(For the war, the struggle of
blood finish'd,
wherein, O terrific
Ideal,

Against vast odds erewhile
having gloriously won,

Now thou stridest on, yet
perhaps in time toward
denser wars,

Perhaps to engage in time in
still more dreadful
contests, dangers,

Longer campaigns and
crises, labours beyond
all others),

Around me I hear that éclat
of the world, politics,
produce,

The announcements of
recognized things,
science,

The approved growth of
cities and the spread of
inventions.

I see the ships (they will last
a few years),

The vast factories with their
foremen and
workmen,

And hear the indorsement of
all, and do not object to
it.

But I too announce solid
things,

Science, ships, politics,
cities, factories, are not
nothing,

Like a grand procession to
music of distant bugles
pouring, triumphantly
moving, and grander
heaving in sight,

They stand for realities—all
is as it should be.

Then my realities;

What else is so real as mine?

Libertad and the divine
average, freedom to
every slave on the face
of the earth,

The rapt promises and
luminè of seers, the
spiritual world, these
centuries-lasting
songs,

And our visions, the visions
of poets, the most solid
announcements of any.

THE UNITED STATES TO OLD WORLD CRITICS

Here first the duties of
to-day, the lessons of
the concrete,

Wealth, order, travel, shelter,
products, plenty;

As of the building of some
varied, vast, perpetual
edifice,

Whence to arise inevitable in
time, the towering
roofs, the lamps,

The solid-planted spires tall
shooting to the stars.

YEARS OF THE MODERN

Years of the modern! years of
the unperform'd!

Your horizon rises, I see it
parting away for more
august dramas,

I see not America only, not
only Liberty's nation
but other nations
preparing,

I see tremendous entrances
and exits, new
combinations, the
solidarity of races,

The earth, restive, confronts
a new era, perhaps a
general divine war,

No one knows what will
happen next, such
portents fill the days
and nights;

Years prophetic! the space
ahead as I walk, as I
vainly try to pierce it,
is full of phantoms,

Unborn deeds, things soon to
be, project their shapes
around me,

This incredible rush and
heat, this strange
ecstatic fever of
dreams O years!

Your dreams O years, how
they penetrate through
me! (I know not
whether I sleep or
wake.)

The perform'd America and
Europe grow dim,
retiring in shadow
behind me,

The unperform'd, more
gigantic than ever,
advance, advance upon
me.

O STAR OF FRANCE**1870-71**

O star of France,

The brightness of thy hope
and strength and fame,

Like some proud ship that
led the fleet so long,

Beseems to-day a wreck
driven by the gale, a
mastless hulk,

And 'mid its teeming
madden'd half-drown'd
crowds,

Nor helm nor helmsman.

Dim smitten star,

Orb not of France alone, pale
symbol of my soul its
dearest hopes,

The struggle and the daring,
rage divine for liberty,

Of aspirations toward the far
ideal, enthusiast's
dreams of
brotherhood,

Of terror to the tyrant and
the priest.

Star crucified—by traitors
sold,

Star panting o'er a land of
death, heroic land,

Strange, passionate,
mocking, frivolous
land.

Miserable! yet for thy errors,
vanities, sins, I will not
now rebuke thee,

Thy unexampled woes and
pangs have quell'd
them all,

And left thee sacred.

In that amid thy many faults
thou ever aimedst
highly,

In that thou wouldst not
really sell thyself
however great the
price,

In that thou surely wakedst
weeping from thy
drugg'd sleep,

In that alone among thy
sisters thou, giantess,
didst rend the ones
that shamed thee,

In that thou couldst not,
wouldst not, wear the
usual chains,

This cross, thy livid face, thy
pierced hands and feet,

The spear thrust in thy side.

O star! O ship of France, beat
back and baffled long!

Bear up O smitten orb! O
ship continue on!

Sure as the ship of all, the
Earth itself,

Product of deathly fire and
turbulent chaos,

Forth from its spasms of fury
and its poisons,

Issuing at last in perfect
power and beauty,

Onward beneath the sun
following its course,

So thee O ship of France!

Finish'd the days, the clouds
dispel'd,

The travail o'er, the
long-sought
extrication,

When lo! reborn, high o'er
the European world,

(In gladness answering
thence, as face afar to
face, reflecting ours
Columbia),

Again thy star O France, fair
lustrous star,

In heavenly peace, clearer,
more bright than ever,

Shall beam immortal.

THOUGHTS**1**

Of these years I sing,

How they pass and have
pass'd through
convuls'd pains, as
through parturitions,

How America illustrates
birth, muscular youth,
the promise, the sure
fulfilment, the
absolute success,
despite of
people—illustrates evil
as well as good,

The vehement struggle so
fierce for unity in
one's-self;

How many hold despairingly
yet to the models
departed, caste, myths,

obedience,
compulsion, and to
infidelity,

How few see the arrived
models, the athletes,
the Western States, or
see freedom or
spirituality, or hold
any faith in results

(But I see the athletes, and I
see the results of the
war glorious and
inevitable, and they
again leading to other
results).

How the great cities
appear—how the
Democratic masses,
turbulent, wilful, as I
love them,

How the whirl, the contest,
the wrestle of evil with

good, the sound and
resounding, keep on
and on,

How society waits uniform'd,
and is for a while
between things ended
and things begun,

How America is the
continent of glories,
and of the triumph of
freedom and of the
Democracies, and of
the fruits of society,
and of all that is begun,

And how the States are
complete in
themselves—and how
all triumphs and
glories are complete in
themselves, to lead
onward,

And how these of mine and
of the States will in
turn be convuls'd, and
serve other
parturitions and
transitions,

And how all people, sights,
combinations, the
Democratic masses
too, serve—and how
every fact, and war
itself, with all its
horrors, serves,

And how now or at any time
each serves the
exquisite transition of
death.

2

Of seeds dropping into the
ground, of births,

Of the steady concentration
of America, inland,
upward, to
impregnable and
swarming places,

Of what Indiana, Kentucky,
Arkansas, and the rest,
are to be,

Of what a few years will
show there in
Nebraska, Colorado,
Nevada, and the rest

(Or afar, mounting the
Northern Pacific to
Sitka or Aliaska),

Of what the feuillage of
America is the
preparation for—and of
what all sights, North,
South, East and West,
are,

Of this Union welded in
blood, of the solemn
price paid, of the
unnamed lost ever
present in my mind;

Of the temporary use of
materials for identity's
sake,

Of the present, passing,
departing—of the
growth of completer
men than any yet,

Of all sloping down there
where the fresh free
giver the mother, the
Mississippi flows,

Of mighty inland cities yet
unsurvey'd and
unsuspected,

Of the new and good names,
of the modern

developments, of
inalienable
homesteads,

Of a free and original life
there, of simple diet
and clean and sweet
blood,

Of liveness, majestic faces,
clear eyes, and perfect
physique there,

Of immense spiritual results
future years far West,
each side of the
Anahuacs,

Of these songs, well
understood there
(being made for that
area),

Of the native scorn of
grossness and gain
there

(O it lurks in me night and
day—what is gain after
all to savageness and
freedom?).

BY BLUE ONTARIO'S SHORE**1**

By blue Ontario's shore,

As I mused of these warlike
days and of peace
return'd, and the dead
that return no more,

A Phantom gigantic superb,
with stern visage
accosted me,

*Chant me the poem, it said,
that comes from the soul
of America, chant me the
carol of victory,*

*And strike up the marches of
Libertad, marches more
powerful yet,*

*And sing me before you go the
song of the throes of
Democracy.*

(Democracy, the destin'd
conqueror, yet
treacherous lip-smiles
everywhere,

And death and infidelity at
every step.)

2

A Nation announcing itself,

I myself make the only
growth by which I can
be appreciated,

I reject none, accept all, then
reproduce all in my
own forms.

A breed whose proof is in
time and deeds,

What we are we are, nativity
is answer enough to
objections,

We wield ourselves as a
weapon is wielded,

We are powerful and
tremendous in
ourselves,

We are executive in
ourselves, we are
sufficient in the variety
of ourselves,

We are the most beautiful to
ourselves and in
ourselves,

We stand self-pois'd in the
middle, branching
thence over the world,

From Missouri, Nebraska, or
Kansas, laughing
attacks to scorn.

Nothing is sinful to us
outside of ourselves,

Whatever appears, whatever
 does not appear, we are
 beautiful or sinful in
 ourselves only.

(O Mother—O Sisters dear!

If we are lost, no victor else
 has destroy'd us,

It is by ourselves we go down
 to eternal night.)

3

Have you thought there
 could be but a single
 supreme?

There can be any number of
 supremes—one does
 not countervail
 another any more than
 one eyesight
 countervails another,
 or one life countervails
 another.

All is eligible to all,

All is for individuals, all is
for you,

No condition is prohibited,
not God's or any.

All comes by the body, only
health puts you
rapport with the
universe.

Produce great Persons, the
rest follows.

4

Piety and conformity to
them that like,

Peace, obesity, allegiance, to
them that like,

I am he who tauntingly
compels men, women,
nations,

Crying, Leap from your seats
and contend for your
lives!

I am he who walks the States
with a barb'd tongue,
questioning every one
I meet,

Who are you that wanted
only to be told what
you knew before?

Who are you that wanted
only a book to join you
in your nonsense?

(With pangs and cries as
thine own O bearer of
many children,

These clamours wild to a
race of pride I give.)

O lands, would you be freer
than all that has ever
been before?

If you would be freer than all
that has been before,
come listen to me.

Fear grace, elegance,
civilization,
delicatesse,

Fear the mellow sweet, the
sucking of honey juice,

Beware the advancing
mortal ripening of
Nature,

Beware what precedes the
decay of the
ruggedness of states
and men.

5

Ages, precedents, have long
been accumulating
undirected materials,

America brings builders, and
brings its own styles.

The immortal poets of Asia
and Europe have done
their work and pass'd
to other spheres,

A work remains, the work of
surpassing all they
have done.

America, curious toward
foreign characters,
stands by its own at all
hazards,

Stands removed, spacious,
composite, sound,
initiates the true use of
precedents,

Does not repel them or the
past or what they have
produced under their
forms,

Takes the lesson with
calmness, perceives
the corpse slowly
borne from the house,

Perceives that it waits a little
while in the door, that
it was fittest for its
days,

That its life has descended to
the stalwart and
well-shaped heir who
approaches,

And that he shall be fittest
for his days.

Any period one nation must
lead,

One land must be the
promise and reliance
of the future.

These States are the amplest
poem,

Here is not merely a nation
but a teeming Nation
of nations,

Here the doings of men
correspond with the
broadcast doings of the
day and night,

Here is what moves in
magnificent masses
careless of particulars,

Here are the roughs, beards,
friendliness,
combativeness, the
soul loves,

Here the flowing trains, here
the crowds, equality,
diversity, the soul
loves.

6

Land of lands and bards to
corroborate!

Of them standing among
 them, one lifts to the
 light a west-bred face,

To him the hereditary
 countenance
 bequeath'd both
 mother's and father's,

His first parts substances,
 earth, water, animals,
 trees,

Built of the common stock,
 having room for far
 and near,

Used to dispense with other
 lands, incarnating this
 land,

Attracting it body and soul to
 himself, hanging on its
 neck with
 incomparable love,

Plunging his seminal muscle
into its merits and
demerits,

Making its cities, beginnings,
events, diversities,
wars, vocal in him,

Making its rivers, lakes,
bays, embouchure in
him,

Mississippi with yearly
freshets and hanging
chutes, Columbia,
Niagara, Hudson,
spending themselves
lovingly in him,

If the Atlantic coast stretch
or the Pacific coast
stretch, he stretching
with them North or
South,

Spanning between them East
and West, and
touching whatever is
between them,

Growths growing from him
to offset the growths of
pine, cedar, hemlock,
live-oak, locust,
chestnut, hickory,
cottonwood, orange,
magnolia,

Tangles as tangled in him as
any canebrake or
swamp,

He likening sides and peaks
of mountains, forests
coated with northern
transparent ice,

Off him pasturage sweet and
natural as savanna,
upland, prairie,

Through him flights, whirls,
screams, answering
those of the fish-hawk,
mocking-bird,
night-heron, and eagle,

His spirit surrounding his
country's spirit,
unclosed to good and
evil,

Surrounding the essences of
real things, old times
and present times,

Surrounding just found
shores, islands, tribes
of red aborigines,

Weather-beaten vessels,
landings, settlements,
embryo stature and
muscle,

The haughty defiance of the
Year One, war, peace,

the formation of the
Constitution,

The separate States, the
simple elastic scheme,
the immigrants,

The Union always swarming
with blatherers and
always sure and
impregnable,

The unsurvey'd interior,
log-houses, clearings,
wild animals, hunters,
trappers,

Surrounding the multiform
agriculture, mines,
temperature, the
gestation of new States,

Congress convening every
Twelfth-month, the
members duly coming

up from the uttermost
parts,

Surrounding the noble
character of mechanics
and farmers, especially
the young men,

Responding their manners,
speech, dress,
friendships, the gait
they have of persons
who never knew how it
felt to stand in the
presence of superiors,

The freshness and candor of
their physiognomy, the
copiousness and
decision of their
phrenology,

The picturesque looseness of
their carriage, their
fierceness when
wrong'd,

The fluency of their speech,
their delight in music,
their curiosity, good
temper and
open-handedness, the
whole composite
make,

The prevailing ardour and
enterprise, the large
amativeness,

The perfect equality of the
female with the male,
the fluid movement of
the population,

The superior marine, free
commerce, fisheries,
whaling, gold-digging,

Wharf-hemm'd cities,
railroad and steamboat
lines intersecting all
points,

Factories, mercantile life,
labour-saving
machinery, the
Northeast, Northwest,
Southwest,

Manhattan firemen, the
Yankee swap, southern
plantation life,

Slavery—the murderous,
treacherous
conspiracy to raise it
upon the ruins of all
the rest,

On and on to the grapple
with it—Assassin! then
your life or ours be the
stake, and respite no
more.

7

(Lo, high toward heaven, this
day,

Libertad, from the
conqueress' field
return'd,

I mark the new aureola
around your head,

No more of soft astral, but
dazzling and fierce,

With war's flames and the
lambent lightnings
playing,

And your port immovable
where you stand,

With still the
inextinguishable
glance and the clinch'd
and lifted fist,

And your foot on the neck of
the menacing one, the
scorner utterly crush'd
beneath you,

The menacing arrogant one
that strode and
advanced with his
senseless scorn,
bearing the murderous
knife,

The wide-swelling one, the
braggart that would
yesterday do so much,

To-day a carrion dead and
damn'd, the despised of
all the earth,

An offal rank, to the dunghill
maggots spurn'd.)

8

Others take finish, but the
Republic is ever
constructive and ever
keeps vista,

Others adorn the past, but
you O days of the
present, I adorn you,

O days of the future I believe
in you—I isolate myself
for your sake,

O America because you build
for mankind I build for
you,

O well-beloved stone-cutters,
I lead them who plan
with decision and
science,

Lead the present with
friendly hand toward
the future.

(Bravas to all impulses
sending sane children
to the next age!

But damn that which spends
itself with no thought

of the stain, pains,
dismay, feebleness, it
is bequeathing.)

9

I listened to the Phantom by
Ontario's shore,

I heard the voice arising
demanding bards,

By them all native and
grand, by them alone
can these States be
fused into the compact
organism of a nation.

To hold men together by
paper and seal or by
compulsion is no
account,

That only holds men
together which
aggregates all in a
living principle, as the

hold of the limbs of the
body or the fibres of
plants.

Of all races and eras these
States with veins full of
poetical stuff most
need poets, and are to
have the greatest, and
use them the greatest,

Their Presidents shall not be
their common referee
so much as their poets
shall.

(Soul of love and tongue of
fire:

Eye to pierce the deepest
deeps and sweep the
world!

Ah Mother, prolific and full
in all besides, yet how
long barren, barren?)

10

Of these States the poet is the
equable man,

Not in him but off from him
things are grotesque,
eccentric, fail of their
full returns,

Nothing out of its place is
good, nothing in its
place is bad,

He bestows on every object
or quality its fit
proportion, neither
more nor less,

He is the arbiter of the
diverse, he is the key,

He is the equalizer of his age
and land,

He supplies what wants
supplying, he checks
what wants checking,

In peace out of him speaks
the spirit of peace,
large, rich, thrifty
building populous
towns, encouraging
agriculture, arts,
commerce, lighting the
study of man, the soul,
health, immortality,
government,

In war he is the best backer
of the war, he fetches
artillery as good as the
engineer's, he can
make every word he
speaks draw blood,

The years straying toward
infidelity he withholds
by his steady faith,

He is no arguer, he is
judgment (Nature
accepts him
absolutely),

He judges not as the judges
but as the sun falling
round a helpless thing,

As he sees the farthest he has
the most faith,

His thoughts are the hymns
of the praise of things,

In the dispute on God and
eternity he is silent,

He sees eternity less like a
play with a prologue
and dénouement,

He sees eternity in men and
women, he does not
see men and women as
dreams or dots

For the great Idea, the idea of
perfect and free
individuals,

For that, the bard walks in
advance, leader of
leaders,

The attitude of him cheers
up slaves and horrifies
foreign despots.

Without extinction is
Liberty, without
retrograde is Equality,

They live in the feelings of
young men and the
best women

(Not for nothing have the
indomitable heads of
the earth been always
ready to fall for
Liberty).

11

For the great Idea,
That, O my brethren, that is
the mission of poets.
Songs of stern defiance ever
ready,
Songs of the rapid arming
and the march,
The flag of peace
quick-folded, and
instead the flag we
know,
Warlike flag of the great Idea.
(Angry cloth I saw there
leaping!
I stand again in leaden rain
your flapping folds
saluting,

I sing you over all, flying
beckoning through the
fight—O the
hard-contested fight!

The cannons ope their
rosy-flashing
muzzles—the hurtled
balls scream,

The battle-front forms amid
the smoke—the volleys
pour incessant from
the line,

Hark, the ringing word
Charge!—now the tussle
and the furious
maddening yells,

Now the corpses tumble
curl'd upon the
ground,

Cold, cold in death, for
precious life of you,

Angry cloth I saw there
leaping.)

12

Are you he who would
assume a place to teach
or be a poet here in the
States?

The place is august, the
terms obdurate.

Who would assume to teach
here may well prepare
himself body and
mind,

He may well survey, ponder,
arm, fortify, harden,
make lithe himself,

He shall surely be question'd
beforehand by me with
many and stern
questions.

Who are you indeed who
would talk or sing to
America?

Have you studied out the
land, its idioms and
men?

Have you learn'd the
physiology,
phrenology, politics,
geography, pride,
freedom, friendship of
the land? its
substratums and
objects?

Have you consider'd the
organic compact of the
first day of the first
year of Independence,
sign'd by the
Commissioners,
ratified by the States,
and read by

Washington at the
head of the army?

Have you possess'd yourself
of the Federal
Constitution?

Do you see who have left all
feudal processes and
poems behind them,
and assumed the
poems and processes
of Democracy?

Are you faithful to things? do
you teach what the
land and sea, the
bodies of men,
womanhood,
amativeness, heroic
angers, teach?

Have you sped through
fleeting customs,
popularities?

Can you hold your hand
against all seductions,
follies, whirls, fierce
contentions? are you
very strong? are you
really of the whole
People?

Are you not of some coterie?
some school or mere
religion?

Are you done with reviews
and criticisms of life?
animating now to life
itself?

Have you vivified yourself
from the maternity of
these States?

Have you too the old
ever-fresh forbearance
and impartiality?

Do you hold the like love for
those hardening to
maturity? for the
last-born? little and
big? and for the errant?

What is this you bring my
America?

Is it uniform with my
country?

Is it not something that has
been better told or
done before?

Have you not imported this
or the spirit of it in
some ship?

Is it not a mere tale? a
rhyme? a
prettiness?—is the good
old cause in it?

Has it not dangled long at the
heels of the poets,

politicians, literats, of
enemies' lands?

Does it not assume that what
is notoriously gone is
still here?

Does it answer universal
needs? will it improve
manners?

Does it sound with
trumpet-voice the
proud victory of the
Union in that secession
war?

Can your performance face
the open fields and the
seaside?

Will it absorb into me as I
absorb food, air, to
appear again in my
strength, gait, face?

Have real employments
contributed to it?
original makers, not
mere amanuenses?

Does it meet modern
discoveries, calibres,
facts, face to face?

What does it mean to
American persons,
progresses, cities?
Chicago, Kanada,
Arkansas?

Does it see behind the
apparent custodians
the real custodians
standing, menacing,
silent, the mechanics,
Manhattanese,
Western men,
Southerners,
significant alike in
their apathy, and in the

promptness of their
love?

Does it see what finally
befalls, and has always
finally befallen, each
temporizer, patcher,
outsider, partialist,
alarmist, infidel, who
has ever ask'd any
thing of America?

What mocking and scornful
negligence?

The track strew'd with the
dust of skeletons,

By the roadside others
disdainfully toss'd.

13

Rhymes and rhymers pass
away, poems distill'd
from poems pass away,

The swarms of reflectors and
the polite pass, and
leave ashes,

Admirers, importers,
obedient persons,
make but the soil of
literature,

America justifies itself, give
it time, no disguise can
deceive it or conceal
from it, it is impassive
enough,

Only toward the likes of
itself will it advance to
meet them,

If its poets appear it will in
due time advance to
meet them, there is no
fear of mistake

(The proof of a poet shall be
sternly deferr'd till his

country absorbs him
as affectionately as he
has absorb'd it).

He masters whose spirit
masters, he tastes
sweetest who results
sweetest in the long
run,

The blood of the brawn
beloved of time is
unconstraint;

In the need of songs,
philosophy, an
appropriate native
grand-opera, shipcraft,
any craft,

He or she is greatest who
contributes the
greatest original
practical example.

Already a nonchalant breed,
silently emerging,
appears on the streets,

People's lips salute only
doers, lovers,
satisfiers, positive
knowers,

There will shortly be no
more priests, I say
their work is done,

Death is without
emergencies here, but
life is perpetual
emergencies here,

Are your body, days,
manners, superb? after
death you shall be
superb,

Justice, health, self-esteem,
clear the way with
irresistible power,

How dare you place any
thing before a man?

14

Fall behind me States!

A man before all—myself,
typical, before all.

Give me the pay I have
served for,

Give to sing the songs of the
great Idea, take all the
rest,

I have loved the earth, sun,
animals, I have
despised riches,

I have given alms to every
one that ask'd, stood up
for the stupid and
crazy, devoted my
income and labour to
others,

Hated tyrants, argued not
concerning God, had
patience and
indulgence toward the
people, taken off my
hat to nothing known
or unknown,

Gone freely with powerful
uneducated persons
and with the young,
and with the mothers
of families,

Read these leaves to myself
in the open air, tried
them by trees, stars,
rivers,

Dismiss'd whatever insulted
my own soul or defiled
my body,

Claim'd nothing to myself
which I have not
carefully claim'd for

others on the same
terms,

Sped to the camps, and
comrades found and
accepted from every
State

(Upon this breast has many a
dying soldier lean'd to
breathe his last,

This arm, this hand, this
voice, have nourish'd,
rais'd, restored,

To life recalling many a
prostrate form);

I am willing to wait to be
understood by the
growth of the taste of
myself,

Rejecting none, permitting
all.

(Say O Mother, have I not to
your thought been
faithful?

Have I not through life kept
you and yours before
me?)

15

I swear I begin to see the
meaning of these
things,

It is not the earth, it is not
America who is so
great,

It is I who am great or to be
great, it is You up
there, or any one,

It is to walk rapidly through
civilizations,
governments, theories,

Through poems, pageants,
shows, to form
individuals.

Underneath all, individuals,

I swear nothing is good to
me now that ignores
individuals,

The American compact is
altogether with
individuals,

The only government is that
which makes minute of
individuals,

The whole theory of the
universe is directed
unerringly to one
single
individual—namely to
You.

(Mother! with subtle sense
severe, with the naked
sword in your hand,

I saw you at last refuse to
treat but directly with
individuals.)

16

Underneath all, Nativity,

I swear I will stand by my
own nativity, pious or
impious so be it;

I swear I am charm'd with
nothing except
nativity.

Men, women, cities, nations,
are only beautiful from
nativity.

Underneath all is the
Expression of love for
men and women

(I swear I have seen enough
of mean and impotent
modes of expressing
love for men and
women,

After this day I take my own
modes of expressing
love for men and
women).

I swear I will have each
quality of my race in
myself

(Talk as you like, he only
suits these States
whose manners favour
the audacity and
sublime turbulence of
the States).

Underneath the lessons of
things, spirits, Nature,
governments,

ownerships, I swear I
perceive other lessons,

Underneath all to me is
myself, to you yourself
(the same monotonous
old song).

17

O I see flashing that this
America is only you
and me,

Its power, weapons,
testimony, are you and
me,

Its crimes, lies, thefts,
defections, are you and
me,

Its Congress is you and me,
the officers, capitols,
armies, ships, are you
and me,

Its endless gestations of new
States are you and me,

The war (that war so bloody
and grim, the war I
will henceforth forget)
was you and me,

Natural and artificial are you
and me,

Freedom, language, forms,
employments, are you
and me,

Past, present, future, are you
and me.

I dare not shirk any part of
myself,

Not any part of America
good or bad,

Not to build for that which
builds for mankind,

Not to balance ranks,
complexions, creeds,
and the sexes,

Not to justify science nor the
march of equality,

Nor to feed the arrogant
blood of the brawn
belov'd of time.

I am for those that have
never been master'd,

For men and women whose
tempers have never
been master'd,

For those whom laws,
theories, conventions,
can never master.

I am for those who walk
abreast with the whole
earth,

Who inaugurate one to
inaugurate all.

I will not be outfaced by
irrational things,

I will penetrate what it is in
them that is sarcastic
upon me,

I will make cities and
civilizations defer to
me,

This is what I have learnt
from America—it is the
amount, and it I teach
again.

(Democracy, while weapons
were everywhere aim'd
at your breast,

I saw you serenely give birth
to immortal children,
saw in dreams your
dilating form,

Saw you with spreading
mantle covering the
world.)

18

I will confront these shows
of the day and night,

I will know if I am to be less
than they,

I will see if I am not as
majestic as they,

I will see if I am not as subtle
and real as they,

I will see if I am to be less
generous than they,

I will see if I have no
meaning, while the
houses and ships have
meaning,

I will see if the fishes and
birds are to be enough

for themselves, and I
am not to be enough
for myself.

I match my spirit against
yours you orbs,
growths, mountains,
brutes,

Copious as you are I absorb
you all in myself, and
become the master
myself,

America isolated yet
embodying all, what is
it finally except
myself?

These States, what are they
except myself?

I know now why the earth is
gross, tantalizing,
wicked, it is for my
sake,

I take you specially to be
 mine, you terrible,
 rude forms.

(Mother, bend down, bend
 close to me your face,

I know not what these plots
 and wars and
 deferments are for,

I know not fruition's success,
 but I know that
 through war and crime
 your work goes on, and
 must yet go on.)

19

Thus by blue Ontario's shore,

While the winds fann'd me
 and the waves came
 trooping toward me,

I thrill'd with the power's
 pulsations, and the

charm of my theme
was upon me,

Till the tissues that held me
parted their ties upon
me.

And I saw the free souls of
poets,

The loftiest bards of past
ages strode before me,

Strange large men, long
unwaked, undisclosed,
were disclosed to me.

20

O my rapt verse, my call,
mock me not!

Not for the bards of the past,
not to invoke them
have I launch'd you
forth,

Not to call even those lofty
bards here by Ontario's
shores,

Have I sung so capricious
and loud my savage
song.

Bards for my own land only I
invoke

(For the war, the war is over,
the field is clear'd),

Till they strike up marches
henceforth triumphant
and onward,

To cheer O Mother your
boundless expectant
soul.

Bards of the great Idea! bards
of the peaceful
inventions! (for the
war, the war is over!)

Yet bards of latent armies, a
million soldiers
waiting ever-ready,

Bards with songs as from
burning coals or the
lightning's fork'd
stripes!

Ample Ohio's, Kanada's
bards—bards of
California! inland
bards—bards of the
war!

You by my charm I invoke.

EPILOGUE

**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
glutted,

I have witness'd the true
lightning, I have
witness'd my cities
electric,

I have lived to behold man
burst forth and warlike
America rise,

Hence I will seek no more
the food of the
northern solitary
wilds,

No more the mountains
roam or sail the stormy
sea.

THE END



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