

### 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 raftsmen, the pioneer,  
Lumbermen in their winter camp, daybreak in the woods, stripes of  
snow on the limbs of trees, the occasional snapping,  
The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry song, the natural  
life of the woods, the strong day's work,  
The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the talk, the  
bed of hemlock-boughs, and the bear-skin;  
The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,  
The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,  
The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places, laying them  
regular,

Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises according as they  
were prepared,  
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men, their  
curv'd limbs,  
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, holding on by  
posts and braces,  
The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the axe,  
The floor-men forcing the planks close to be nail'd,  
Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the bearers,  
The echoes resounding through the vacant building;  
The huge storehouse carried up in the city well under way,  
The six framing-men, two in the middle and two at each end, carefully  
bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick for a cross-beam,  
The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right hands rapidly  
laying the long side-wall, two hundred feet from front to rear,  
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of the trowels  
striking the bricks,  
The bricks one after another each laid so 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, spasmodic, blue-white jets, the bringing to bear of the  
    hooks and ladders and their execution,  
The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or through floors if  
    the fire smoulders under them,  
The crowd with their lit faces watching, the glare and dense shadows;  
The forger at his forge-furnace and the user of iron after him,  
The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder and temperer,  
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel and trying the  
    edge with his thumb,  
The one who clean-shapes the handle and sets it firmly in the socket;  
The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past users also,  
The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,  
The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,  
The Roman lictors preceding the consuls,  
The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,  
The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted head,

The death-howl, the limpsy tumbling body, the rush of friend and foe  
thither,  
The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,  
The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates, the truce and  
parley,  
The sack of an old city in its time.  
The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously and disorderly,  
Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,  
Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of women in the  
gripe of brigands,  
Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old persons  
despairing,  
The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,  
The list of all executive deeds and words just or unjust,  
The power of personality just or unjust.

4

Muscle and pluck forever!  
What invigorates life invigorates death,  
And the dead advance as much as the living advance,  
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,  
For the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much as the  
delicatesse 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 glutt'd, 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 irrepressible! 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,  
ripply, crystalline, open, beyond the floes,  
White drift spooning ahead where the ship in the tempest dashes,  
On solid land what is done in cities as the bells strike midnight  
together,  
In primitive woods the sounds there also sounding, the howl of the  
wolf, the scream of the panther, and the hoarse bellow of the  
elk,  
In winter beneath the hard blue ice of Moosehead lake, in summer  
visible through the clear waters, the great trout swimming,  
In lower latitudes in warmer air in the Carolinas the large black  
buzzard floating slowly high beyond the tree tops,  
Below, the red cedar festoon'd with tylandria, the pines and cypresses

growing out of the white sand that spreads far and flat,  
Rude boats descending the big Pedee, climbing plants, parasites with  
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, futurity,  
In space the sporades, the scatter'd islands, the stars--on the firm  
earth, the lands, my lands,  
O lands! all so dear to me--what you are (whatever it is), I putting  
it at random in these songs, become a part of that, whatever  
it is,  
Southward there, I screaming, with wings slow flapping, with the  
myriads of gulls wintering along the coasts of Florida,  
Otherways there atwixt the banks of the Arkansaw, the Rio Grande, the  
Nueces, the Brazos, the Tombigbee, the Red River, the  
Saskatchewan or the Osage, I with the spring waters laughing  
and skipping and running,  
Northward, on the sands, on some shallow bay of Paumanok, I with  
parties of snowy herons wading in the wet to seek worms and  
aquatic plants,  
Retreating, triumphantly twittering, the king-bird, from piercing  
the crow with its bill, for amusement--and I triumphantly  
twittering,  
The migrating flock of wild geese alighting in autumn to refresh  
themselves, the body of the flock feed, the sentinels outside  
move around with erect heads watching, and are from time to  
time reliev'd by other sentinels--and I feeding and taking  
turns with the rest,  
In Kanadian forests the moose, large as an ox, corner'd by hunters,

rising desperately on his hind-feet, and plunging with his  
fore-feet, the hoofs as sharp as knives--and I, plunging at  
the hunters, corner'd and desperate,

In the Mannahatta, streets, piers, shipping, store-houses, and the  
countless workmen working in the shops,

And I too of the Mannahatta, singing thereof--and no less in myself  
than the whole of the Mannahatta in itself,

Singing the song of These, my ever-united lands--my body no more  
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 Nippon come,  
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded envoys,  
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-headed, impassive,  
Ride to-day through Manhattan.

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

When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to her pavements,  
When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud roar I love,  
When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and smell I love spit  
    their salutes,

When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and heaven-clouds  
    canopy my city with a delicate thin haze,

When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests at the wharves,  
    thicken with 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.