

BOOK V. CALAMUS

In Paths Untrodden

In paths untrodden,
In the growth by margins of pond-waters,
Escaped from the life that exhibits itself,
From all the standards hitherto publish'd, from the pleasures,
 profits, conformities,
Which too long I was offering to feed my soul,
Clear to me now standards not yet publish'd, clear to me that my soul,
That the soul of the man I speak for rejoices in comrades,
Here by myself away from the clank of the world,
Tallying and talk'd to here by tongues aromatic,
No longer abash'd, (for in this secluded spot I can respond as I
 would not dare elsewhere,)
Strong upon me the life that does not exhibit itself, yet contains
 all the rest,
Resolv'd to sing no songs to-day but those of manly attachment,
Projecting them along that substantial life,
Bequeathing hence types of athletic love,
Afternoon this delicious Ninth-month in my forty-first year,
I proceed for all who are or have been young men,
To tell the secret my nights and days,
To celebrate the need of comrades.

Scented Herbage of My Breast

Scented herbage of my breast,
Leaves from you I glean, I write, to be perused best afterwards,
Tomb-leaves, body-leaves growing up above me above death,
Perennial roots, tall leaves, O the winter shall not freeze you
 delicate leaves,
Every year shall you bloom again, out from where you retired you
 shall emerge again;
O I do not know whether many passing by will discover you or inhale
 your faint odor, but I believe a few will;
O slender leaves! O blossoms of my blood! I permit you to tell in
 your own way of the heart that is under you,
O I do not know what you mean there underneath yourselves, you are
 not happiness,
You are often more bitter than I can bear, you burn and sting me,
Yet you are beautiful to me you faint tinged roots, you make me
 think of death,
Death is beautiful from you, (what indeed is finally beautiful
 except death and love?)

O I think it is not for life I am chanting here my chant of lovers,

I think it must be for death,
For how calm, how solemn it grows to ascend to the atmosphere of lovers,
Death or life I am then indifferent, my soul declines to prefer,
(I am not sure but the high soul of lovers welcomes death most,)
Indeed O death, I think now these leaves mean precisely the same as
 you mean,
Grow up taller sweet leaves that I may see! grow up out of my breast!
Spring away from the conceal'd heart there!
Do not fold yourself so in your pink-tinged roots timid leaves!
Do not remain down there so ashamed, herbage of my breast!
Come I am determin'd to unbare this broad breast of mine, I have
 long enough stifled and choked;
Emblematic and capricious blades I leave you, now you serve me not,
I will say what I have to say by itself,
I will sound myself and comrades only, I will never again utter a
 call only their call,
I will raise with it immortal reverberations through the States,
I will give an example to lovers to take permanent shape and will
 through the States,
Through me shall the words be said to make death exhilarating,
Give me your tone therefore O death, that I may accord with it,
Give me yourself, for I see that you belong to me now above all, and
 are folded inseparably together, you love and death are,
Nor will I allow you to balk me any more with what I was calling life,
For now it is convey'd to me that you are the purports essential,
That you hide in these shifting forms of life, for reasons, and that

they are mainly for you,
That you beyond them come forth to remain, the real reality,
That behind the mask of materials you patiently wait, no matter how long,
That you will one day perhaps take control of all,
That you will perhaps dissipate this entire show of appearance,
That may-be you are what it is all for, but it does not last so very long,
But you will last very long.

Whoever You Are Holding Me Now in Hand

Whoever you are holding me now in hand,
Without one thing all will be useless,
I give you fair warning before you attempt me further,
I am not what you supposed, but far different.

Who is he that would become my follower?
Who would sign himself a candidate for my affections?

The way is suspicious, the result uncertain, perhaps destructive,
You would have to give up all else, I alone would expect to be your
sole and exclusive standard,
Your novitiate would even then be long and exhausting,
The whole past theory of your life and all conformity to the lives

around you would have to be abandon'd,
Therefore release me now before troubling yourself any further, let
go your hand from my shoulders,
Put me down and depart on your way.

Or else by stealth in some wood for trial,
Or back of a rock in the open air,
(For in any roof'd room of a house I emerge not, nor in company,
And in libraries I lie as one dumb, a gawk, or unborn, or dead,)
But just possibly with you on a high hill, first watching lest any
person for miles around approach unawares,
Or possibly with you sailing at sea, or on the beach of the sea or
some quiet island,
Here to put your lips upon mine I permit you,
With the comrade's long-dwelling kiss or the new husband's kiss,
For I am the new husband and I am the comrade.

Or if you will, thrusting me beneath your clothing,
Where I may feel the throbs of your heart or rest upon your hip,
Carry me when you go forth over land or sea;
For thus merely touching you is enough, is best,
And thus touching you would I silently sleep and be carried eternally.

But these leaves conning you con at peril,
For these leaves and me you will not understand,
They will elude you at first and still more afterward, I will

certainly elude you.

Even while you should think you had unquestionably caught me, behold!

Already you see I have escaped from you.

For it is not for what I have put into it that I have written this book,

Nor is it by reading it you will acquire it,

Nor do those know me best who admire me and vauntingly praise me,

Nor will the candidates for my love (unless at most a very few)

 prove victorious,

Nor will my poems do good only, they will do just as much evil,

 perhaps more,

For all is useless without that which you may guess at many times

 and not hit, that which I hinted at;

Therefore release me and depart on your way.

For You, O Democracy

Come, I will make the continent indissoluble,

I will make the most splendid race the sun ever shone upon,

I will make divine magnetic lands,

 With the love of comrades,

 With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America,
and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies,
I will make inseparable cities with their arms about each other's necks,
By the love of comrades,
By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme!
For you, for you I am trilling these songs.

These I Singing in Spring

These I singing in spring collect for lovers,
(For who but I should understand lovers and all their sorrow and joy?
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?)
Collecting I traverse the garden the world, but soon I pass the gates,
Now along the pond-side, now wading in a little, fearing not the wet,
Now by the post-and-rail fences where the old stones thrown there,
pick'd from the fields, have accumulated,
(Wild-flowers and vines and weeds come up through the stones and
partly cover them, beyond these I pass,)
Far, far in the forest, or sauntering later in summer, before I
think where I go,
Solitary, smelling the earthy smell, stopping now and then in the silence,

Alone I had thought, yet soon a troop gathers around me,
Some walk by my side and some behind, and some embrace my arms or neck,
They the spirits of dear friends dead or alive, thicker they come, a
 great crowd, and I in the middle,
Collecting, dispensing, singing, there I wander with them,
Plucking something for tokens, tossing toward whoever is near me,
Here, lilac, with a branch of pine,
Here, out of my pocket, some moss which I pull'd off a live-oak in
 Florida as it hung trailing down,
Here, some pinks and laurel leaves, and a handful of sage,
And here what I now draw from the water, wading in the pondside,
(O here I last saw him that tenderly loves me, and returns again
 never to separate from me,
And this, O this shall henceforth be the token of comrades, this
 calamus-root shall,
Interchange it youths with each other! let none render it back!)
And twigs of maple and a bunch of wild orange and chestnut,
And stems of currants and plum-blows, and the aromatic cedar,
These I compass'd around by a thick cloud of spirits,
Wandering, point to or touch as I pass, or throw them loosely from me,
Indicating to each one what he shall have, giving something to each;
But what I drew from the water by the pond-side, that I reserve,
I will give of it, but only to them that love as I myself am capable
 of loving.

Not Heaving from My Ribb'd Breast Only

Not heaving from my ribb'd breast only,
Not in sighs at night in rage dissatisfied with myself,
Not in those long-drawn, ill-supprest sighs,
Not in many an oath and promise broken,
Not in my wilful and savage soul's volition,
Not in the subtle nourishment of the air,
Not in this beating and pounding at my temples and wrists,
Not in the curious systole and diastole within which will one day cease,
Not in many a hungry wish told to the skies only,
Not in cries, laughter, defiancies, thrown from me when alone far in
 the wilds,
Not in husky pantings through clinch'd teeth,
Not in sounded and resounded words, chattering words, echoes, dead words,
Not in the murmurs of my dreams while I sleep,
Nor the other murmurs of these incredible dreams of every day,
Nor in the limbs and senses of my body that take you and dismiss you
 continually--not there,
Not in any or all of them O adhesiveness! O pulse of my life!
Need I that you exist and show yourself any more than in these songs.

Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearances

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,
Of the uncertainty after all, that we may be deluded,
That may-be reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
That may-be identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only,
May-be the things I perceive, the animals, plants, men, hills,
 shining and flowing waters,
The skies of day and night, colors, densities, forms, may-be these
 are (as doubtless they are) only apparitions, and the real
 something has yet to be known,
(How often they dart out of themselves as if to confound me and mock me!
How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows, aught of them,)
May-be seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they indeed but seem)
 as from my present point of view, and might prove (as of course they
 would) nought of what they appear, or nought anyhow, from entirely
 changed points of view;
To me these and the like of these are curiously answer'd by my
 lovers, my dear friends,
When he whom I love travels with me or sits a long while holding me
 by the hand,
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and reason
 hold not, surround us and pervade us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom, I am silent, I
 require nothing further,

I cannot answer the question of appearances or that of identity
beyond the grave,
But I walk or sit indifferent, I am satisfied,
He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

The Base of All Metaphysics

And now gentlemen,
A word I give to remain in your memories and minds,
As base and finale too for all metaphysics.

(So to the students the old professor,
At the close of his crowded course.)

Having studied the new and antique, the Greek and Germanic systems,
Kant having studied and stated, Fichte and Schelling and Hegel,
Stated the lore of Plato, and Socrates greater than Plato,
And greater than Socrates sought and stated, Christ divine having
studied long,
I see reminiscent to-day those Greek and Germanic systems,
See the philosophies all, Christian churches and tenets see,
Yet underneath Socrates clearly see, and underneath Christ the divine I see,
The dear love of man for his comrade, the attraction of friend to friend,

Of the well-married husband and wife, of children and parents,
Of city for city and land for land.

Recorders Ages Hence

Recorders ages hence,
Come, I will take you down underneath this impassive exterior, I
will tell you what to say of me,
Publish my name and hang up my picture as that of the tenderest lover,
The friend the lover's portrait, of whom his friend his lover was fondest,
Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless ocean of love
within him, and freely pour'd it forth,
Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking of his dear friends, his lovers,
Who pensive away from one he lov'd often lay sleepless and
dissatisfied at night,
Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one he lov'd might
secretly be indifferent to him,
Whose happiest days were far away through fields, in woods, on hills,
he and another wandering hand in hand, they twain apart from other men,
Who oft as he saunter'd the streets curv'd with his arm the shoulder
of his friend, while the arm of his friend rested upon him also.

When I Heard at the Close of the Day

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been receiv'd
with plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for
me that follow'd,

And else when I carous'd, or when my plans were accomplish'd, still
I was not happy,

But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health,
refresh'd, singing, inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,

When I saw the full moon in the west grow pale and disappear in the
morning light,

When I wander'd alone over the beach, and undressing bathed,
laughing with the cool waters, and saw the sun rise,

And when I thought how my dear friend my lover was on his way
coming, O then I was happy,

O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all that day my food
nourish'd me more, and the beautiful day pass'd well,

And the next came with equal joy, and with the next at evening came
my friend,

And that night while all was still I heard the waters roll slowly
continually up the shores,

I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and sands as directed to me
whispering to congratulate me,

For the one I love most lay sleeping by me under the same cover in

the cool night,

In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams his face was inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast--and that night I was happy.

Are You the New Person Drawn Toward Me?

Are you the new person drawn toward me?

To begin with take warning, I am surely far different from what you suppose;

Do you suppose you will find in me your ideal?

Do you think it so easy to have me become your lover?

Do you think the friendship of me would be unalloy'd satisfaction?

Do you think I am trusty and faithful?

Do you see no further than this facade, this smooth and tolerant
manner of me?

Do you suppose yourself advancing on real ground toward a real heroic man?

Have you no thought O dreamer that it may be all maya, illusion?

Roots and Leaves Themselves Alone

Roots and leaves themselves alone are these,

Scents brought to men and women from the wild woods and pond-side,
Breast-sorrel and pinks of love, fingers that wind around tighter
 than vines,
Gushes from the throats of birds hid in the foliage of trees as the
 sun is risen,
Breezes of land and love set from living shores to you on the living
 sea, to you O sailors!
Frost-mellow'd berries and Third-month twigs offer'd fresh to young
 persons wandering out in the fields when the winter breaks up,
Love-buds put before you and within you whoever you are,
Buds to be unfolded on the old terms,
If you bring the warmth of the sun to them they will open and bring
 form, color, perfume, to you,
If you become the aliment and the wet they will become flowers,
 fruits, tall branches and trees.

Not Heat Flames Up and Consumes

Not heat flames up and consumes,
Not sea-waves hurry in and out,
Not the air delicious and dry, the air of ripe summer, bears lightly
 along white down-balls of myriads of seeds,
Waited, sailing gracefully, to drop where they may;

Not these, O none of these more than the flames of me, consuming,
burning for his love whom I love,
O none more than I hurrying in and out;
Does the tide hurry, seeking something, and never give up? O I the same,
O nor down-balls nor perfumes, nor the high rain-emitting clouds,
are borne through the open air,
Any more than my soul is borne through the open air,
Wafted in all directions O love, for friendship, for you.

Trickle Drops

Trickle drops! my blue veins leaving!
O drops of me! trickle, slow drops,
Candid from me falling, drip, bleeding drops,
From wounds made to free you whence you were prison'd,
From my face, from my forehead and lips,
From my breast, from within where I was conceal'd, press forth red
drops, confession drops,
Stain every page, stain every song I sing, every word I say, bloody drops,
Let them know your scarlet heat, let them glisten,
Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet,
Glow upon all I have written or shall write, bleeding drops,
Let it all be seen in your light, blushing drops.

City of Orgies

City of orgies, walks and joys,
City whom that I have lived and sung in your midst will one day make
Not the pageants of you, not your shifting tableaux, your
 spectacles, repay me,
Not the interminable rows of your houses, nor the ships at the wharves,
Nor the processions in the streets, nor the bright windows with
 goods in them,
Nor to converse with learn'd persons, or bear my share in the soiree
 or feast;
Not those, but as I pass O Manhattan, your frequent and swift flash
 of eyes offering me love,
Offering response to my own--these repay me,
Lovers, continual lovers, only repay me.

Behold This Swarthy Face

Behold this swarthy face, these gray eyes,

This beard, the white wool unclipt upon my neck,
My brown hands and the silent manner of me without charm;
Yet comes one a Manhattanese and ever at parting kisses me lightly
 on the lips with robust love,
And I on the crossing of the street or on the ship's deck give a
 kiss in return,
We observe that salute of American comrades land and sea,
We are those two natural and nonchalant persons.

I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing

I saw in Louisiana a live-oak growing,
All alone stood it and the moss hung down from the branches,
Without any companion it grew there uttering joyous of dark green,
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made me think of myself,
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous leaves standing alone there
 without its friend near, for I knew I could not,
And I broke off a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it and
 twined around it a little moss,
And brought it away, and I have placed it in sight in my room,
It is not needed to remind me as of my own dear friends,
(For I believe lately I think of little else than of them,)
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it makes me think of manly love;

For all that, and though the live-oak glistens there in Louisiana
solitary in a wide in a wide flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a friend a lover near,
I know very well I could not.

To a Stranger

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon you,
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking, (it comes to me
as of a dream,)
I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you,
All is recall'd as we flit by each other, fluid, affectionate,
chaste, matured,
You grew up with me, were a boy with me or a girl with me,
I ate with you and slept with you, your body has become not yours
only nor left my body mine only,
You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we pass, you
take of my beard, breast, hands, in return,
I am not to speak to you, I am to think of you when I sit alone or
wake at night alone,
I am to wait, I do not doubt I am to meet you again,
I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

This Moment Yearning and Thoughtful

This moment yearning and thoughtful sitting alone,
It seems to me there are other men in other lands yearning and thoughtful,
It seems to me I can look over and behold them in Germany, Italy,
 France, Spain,
Or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or talking other dialects,
And it seems to me if I could know those men I should become
 attached to them as I do to men in my own lands,
O I know we should be brethren and lovers,
I know I should be happy with them.

I Hear It Was Charged Against Me

I hear it was charged against me that I sought to destroy institutions,
But really I am neither for nor against institutions,
(What indeed have I in common with them? or what with the
 destruction of them?)
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta and in every city of these
 States inland and seaboard,

And in the fields and woods, and above every keel little or large
that dents the water,
Without edifices or rules or trustees or any argument,
The institution of the dear love of comrades.

The Prairie-Grass Dividing

The prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing,
I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,
Demand the most copious and close companionship of men,
Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,
Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious,
Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with freedom and
command, leading not following,
Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those with sweet and lusty
flesh clear of taint,
Those that look carelessly in the faces of Presidents and governors,
as to say Who are you?
Those of earth-born passion, simple, never constrain'd, never obedient,
Those of inland America.

When I Peruse the Conquer'd Fame

When I peruse the conquer'd fame of heroes and the victories of
mighty generals, I do not envy the generals,
Nor the President in his Presidency, nor the rich in his great house,
But when I hear of the brotherhood of lovers, how it was with them,
How together through life, through dangers, odium, unchanging, long
and long,
Through youth and through middle and old age, how unfaltering, how
affectionate and faithful they were,
Then I am pensive--I hastily walk away fill'd with the bitterest envy.

We Two Boys Together Clinging

We two boys together clinging,
One the other never leaving,
Up and down the roads going, North and South excursions making,
Power enjoying, elbows stretching, fingers clutching,
Arm'd and fearless, eating, drinking, sleeping, loving.
No law less than ourselves owning, sailing, soldiering, thieving,
threatening,
Misers, menials, priests alarming, air breathing, water drinking, on

the turf or the sea-beach dancing,
Cities wrenching, ease scorning, statutes mocking, feebleness chasing,
Fulfilling our foray.

A Promise to California

A promise to California,
Or inland to the great pastoral Plains, and on to Puget sound and Oregon;
Sojourning east a while longer, soon I travel toward you, to remain,
to teach robust American love,
For I know very well that I and robust love belong among you,
inland, and along the Western sea;
For these States tend inland and toward the Western sea, and I will also.

Here the Frailest Leaves of Me

Here the frailest leaves of me and yet my strongest lasting,
Here I shade and hide my thoughts, I myself do not expose them,
And yet they expose me more than all my other poems.

No Labor-Saving Machine

No labor-saving machine,
Nor discovery have I made,
Nor will I be able to leave behind me any wealthy bequest to found
 hospital or library,
Nor reminiscence of any deed of courage for America,
Nor literary success nor intellect; nor book for the book-shelf,
But a few carols vibrating through the air I leave,
For comrades and lovers.

A Glimpse

A glimpse through an interstice caught,
Of a crowd of workmen and drivers in a bar-room around the stove
 late of a winter night, and I unremark'd seated in a corner,
Of a youth who loves me and whom I love, silently approaching and
 seating himself near, that he may hold me by the hand,
A long while amid the noises of coming and going, of drinking and
 oath and smutty jest,

There we two, content, happy in being together, speaking little,
perhaps not a word.

A Leaf for Hand in Hand

A leaf for hand in hand;
You natural persons old and young!
You on the Mississippi and on all the branches and bayous of
the Mississippi!
You friendly boatmen and mechanics! you roughs!
You twain! and all processions moving along the streets!
I wish to infuse myself among you till I see it common for you to
walk hand in hand.

Earth, My Likeness

Earth, my likeness,
Though you look so impassive, ample and spheric there,
I now suspect that is not all;
I now suspect there is something fierce in you eligible to burst forth,

For an athlete is enamour'd of me, and I of him,
But toward him there is something fierce and terrible in me eligible
to burst forth,
I dare not tell it in words, not even in these songs.

I Dream'd in a Dream

I dream'd in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the
whole of the rest of the earth,
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,
Nothing was greater there than the quality of robust love, it led the rest,
It was seen every hour in the actions of the men of that city,
And in all their looks and words.

What Think You I Take My Pen in Hand?

What think you I take my pen in hand to record?
The battle-ship, perfect-model'd, majestic, that I saw pass the
offing to-day under full sail?
The splendors of the past day? or the splendor of the night that

envelops me?

Or the vaunted glory and growth of the great city spread around me? --no;
But merely of two simple men I saw to-day on the pier in the midst
of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends,
The one to remain hung on the other's neck and passionately kiss'd him,
While the one to depart tightly prest the one to remain in his arms.

To the East and to the West

To the East and to the West,
To the man of the Seaside State and of Pennsylvania,
To the Kanadian of the north, to the Southerner I love,
These with perfect trust to depict you as myself, the germs are in all men,
I believe the main purport of these States is to found a superb
friendship, exalte, previously unknown,
Because I perceive it waits, and has been always waiting, latent in all men.

Sometimes with One I Love

Sometimes with one I love I fill myself with rage for fear I effuse

unreturn'd love,
But now I think there is no unreturn'd love, the pay is certain one
way or another,
(I loved a certain person ardently and my love was not return'd,
Yet out of that I have written these songs.)

To a Western Boy

Many things to absorb I teach to help you become elevel of mine;
Yet if blood like mine circle not in your veins,
If you be not silently selected by lovers and do not silently select lovers,
Of what use is it that you seek to become elevel of mine?

Fast Anchor'd Eternal O Love!

Fast-anchor'd eternal O love! O woman I love!
O bride! O wife! more resistless than I can tell, the thought of you!
Then separate, as disembodied or another born,
Ethereal, the last athletic reality, my consolation,
I ascend, I float in the regions of your love O man,

O sharer of my roving life.

Among the Multitude

Among the men and women the multitude,
I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,
Acknowledging none else, not parent, wife, husband, brother, child,
 any nearer than I am,
Some are baffled, but that one is not--that one knows me.

Ah lover and perfect equal,
I meant that you should discover me so by faint indirections,
And I when I meet you mean to discover you by the like in you.

O You Whom I Often and Silently Come

O you whom I often and silently come where you are that I may be with you,
As I walk by your side or sit near, or remain in the same room with you,
Little you know the subtle electric fire that for your sake is
 playing within me.

That Shadow My Likeness

That shadow my likeness that goes to and fro seeking a livelihood,
chattering, chaffering,
How often I find myself standing and looking at it where it flits,
How often I question and doubt whether that is really me;
But among my lovers and caroling these songs,
O I never doubt whether that is really me.

Full of Life Now

Full of life now, compact, visible,
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of the States,
To one a century hence or any number of centuries hence,
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.

When you read these I that was visible am become invisible,
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing my poems, seeking me,
Fancying how happy you were if I could be with you and become your comrade;

Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too certain but I am now with you.)