

BOOK XXX. WHISPERS OF HEAVENLY DEATH

Darest Thou Now O Soul

Darest thou now O soul,  
Walk out with me toward the unknown region,  
Where neither ground is for the feet nor any path to follow?

No map there, nor guide,  
Nor voice sounding, nor touch of human hand,  
Nor face with blooming flesh, nor lips, nor eyes, are in that land.

I know it not O soul,  
Nor dost thou, all is a blank before us,  
All waits undream'd of in that region, that inaccessible land.

Till when the ties loosen,  
All but the ties eternal, Time and Space,  
Nor darkness, gravitation, sense, nor any bounds bounding us.

Then we burst forth, we float,  
In Time and Space O soul, prepared for them,  
Equal, equipt at last, (O joy! O fruit of all!) them to fulfil O soul.

## Whispers of Heavenly Death

Whispers of heavenly death murmur'd I hear,  
Labial gossip of night, sibilant chorals,  
Footsteps gently ascending, mystical breezes wafted soft and low,  
Ripples of unseen rivers, tides of a current flowing, forever flowing,  
(Or is it the plashing of tears? the measureless waters of human tears?)

I see, just see skyward, great cloud-masses,  
Mournfully slowly they roll, silently swelling and mixing,  
With at times a half-dimm'd sadden'd far-off star,  
Appearing and disappearing.

(Some parturition rather, some solemn immortal birth;  
On the frontiers to eyes impenetrable,  
Some soul is passing over.)

## Chanting the Square Deific

1

Chanting the square deific, out of the One advancing, out of the sides,

Out of the old and new, out of the square entirely divine,  
Solid, four-sided, (all the sides needed,) from this side Jehovah am I,  
Old Brahm I, and I Saturnius am;  
Not Time affects me--I am Time, old, modern as any,  
Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments,  
As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos, with laws,  
Aged beyond computation, yet never new, ever with those mighty laws rolling,  
Relentless I forgive no man--whoever sins dies--I will have that man's life;  
Therefore let none expect mercy--have the seasons, gravitation, the  
    appointed days, mercy? no more have I,  
But as the seasons and gravitation, and as all the appointed days  
    that forgive not,  
I dispense from this side judgments inexorable without the least remorse.

2

Consolator most mild, the promis'd one advancing,  
With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,  
Foretold by prophets and poets in their most rapt prophecies and poems,  
From this side, lo! the Lord Christ gazes--lo! Hermes I--lo! mine is  
    Hercules' face,  
All sorrow, labor, suffering, I, tallying it, absorb in myself,  
Many times have I been rejected, taunted, put in prison, and  
    crucified, and many times shall be again,  
All the world have I given up for my dear brothers' and sisters'  
    sake, for the soul's sake,  
Wandering my way through the homes of men, rich or poor, with the kiss

of affection,  
For I am affection, I am the cheer-bringing God, with hope and  
all-enclosing charity,  
With indulgent words as to children, with fresh and sane words, mine only,  
Young and strong I pass knowing well I am destin'd myself to an  
early death;  
But my charity has no death--my wisdom dies not, neither early nor late,  
And my sweet love bequeath'd here and elsewhere never dies.

3

Aloof, dissatisfied, plotting revolt,  
Comrade of criminals, brother of slaves,  
Crafty, despised, a drudge, ignorant,  
With sudra face and worn brow, black, but in the depths of my heart,  
proud as any,  
Lifted now and always against whoever scorning assumes to rule me,  
Morose, full of guile, full of reminiscences, brooding, with many wiles,  
(Though it was thought I was baffled, and dispel'd, and my wiles  
done, but that will never be,)  
Defiant, I, Satan, still live, still utter words, in new lands duly  
appearing, (and old ones also,)  
Permanent here from my side, warlike, equal with any, real as any,  
Nor time nor change shall ever change me or my words.

4

Santa Spirita, breather, life,

Beyond the light, lighter than light,  
Beyond the flames of hell, joyous, leaping easily above hell,  
Beyond Paradise, perfumed solely with mine own perfume,  
Including all life on earth, touching, including God, including  
    Saviour and Satan,  
Ethereal, pervading all, (for without me what were all? what were God?)  
Essence of forms, life of the real identities, permanent, positive,  
    (namely the unseen,)  
Life of the great round world, the sun and stars, and of man, I, the  
    general soul,  
Here the square finishing, the solid, I the most solid,  
Breathe my breath also through these songs.

#### Of Him I Love Day and Night

Of him I love day and night I dream'd I heard he was dead,  
And I dream'd I went where they had buried him I love, but he was  
    not in that place,  
And I dream'd I wander'd searching among burial-places to find him,  
And I found that every place was a burial-place;  
The houses full of life were equally full of death, (this house is now,)  
The streets, the shipping, the places of amusement, the Chicago,  
    Boston, Philadelphia, the Mannahatta, were as full of the dead as

of the living,  
And fuller, O vastly fuller of the dead than of the living;  
And what I dream'd I will henceforth tell to every person and age,  
And I stand henceforth bound to what I dream'd,  
And now I am willing to disregard burial-places and dispense with them,  
And if the memorials of the dead were put up indifferently everywhere,  
    even in the room where I eat or sleep, I should be satisfied,  
And if the corpse of any one I love, or if my own corpse, be duly  
    render'd to powder and pour'd in the sea, I shall be satisfied,  
Or if it be distributed to the winds I shall be satisfied.

#### Yet, Yet, Ye Downcast Hours

Yet, yet, ye downcast hours, I know ye also,  
Weights of lead, how ye clog and cling at my ankles,  
Earth to a chamber of mourning turns--I hear the o'erweening, mocking  
    voice,  
Matter is conqueror--matter, triumphant only, continues onward.

Despairing cries float ceaselessly toward me,  
The call of my nearest lover, putting forth, alarm'd, uncertain,  
The sea I am quickly to sail, come tell me,  
Come tell me where I am speeding, tell me my destination.

I understand your anguish, but I cannot help you,  
I approach, hear, behold, the sad mouth, the look out of the eyes,  
    your mute inquiry,  
Whither I go from the bed I recline on, come tell me,--  
Old age, alarm'd, uncertain--a young woman's voice, appealing to  
    me for comfort;  
A young man's voice, Shall I not escape?

#### As If a Phantom Caress'd Me

As if a phantom caress'd me,  
I thought I was not alone walking here by the shore;  
But the one I thought was with me as now I walk by the shore, the  
    one I loved that caress'd me,  
As I lean and look through the glimmering light, that one has  
    utterly disappear'd.  
And those appear that are hateful to me and mock me.

#### Assurances

I need no assurances, I am a man who is preoccupied of his own soul;  
I do not doubt that from under the feet and beside the hands and  
face I am cognizant of, are now looking faces I am not cognizant  
of, calm and actual faces,  
I do not doubt but the majesty and beauty of the world are latent in  
any iota of the world,  
I do not doubt I am limitless, and that the universes are limitless,  
in vain I try to think how limitless,  
I do not doubt that the orbs and the systems of orbs play their  
swift sports through the air on purpose, and that I shall one day  
be eligible to do as much as they, and more than they,  
I do not doubt that temporary affairs keep on and on millions of years,  
I do not doubt interiors have their interiors, and exteriors have  
their exteriors, and that the eyesight has another eyesight, and  
the hearing another hearing, and the voice another voice,  
I do not doubt that the passionately-wept deaths of young men are  
provided for, and that the deaths of young women and the  
deaths of little children are provided for,  
(Did you think Life was so well provided for, and Death, the purport  
of all Life, is not well provided for?)  
I do not doubt that wrecks at sea, no matter what the horrors of  
them, no matter whose wife, child, husband, father, lover, has  
gone down, are provided for, to the minutest points,  
I do not doubt that whatever can possibly happen anywhere at any  
time, is provided for in the inferences of things,

I do not think Life provides for all and for Time and Space, but I  
believe Heavenly Death provides for all.

### Quicksand Years

Quicksand years that whirl me I know not whither,  
Your schemes, politics, fail, lines give way, substances mock and elude me,  
Only the theme I sing, the great and strong-possess'd soul, eludes not,  
One's-self must never give way--that is the final substance--that  
    out of all is sure,  
Out of politics, triumphs, battles, life, what at last finally remains?  
When shows break up what but One's-Self is sure?

### That Music Always Round Me

That music always round me, unceasing, unbeginning, yet long  
    untaught I did not hear,  
But now the chorus I hear and am elated,  
A tenor, strong, ascending with power and health, with glad notes of  
    daybreak I hear,

A soprano at intervals sailing buoyantly over the tops of immense waves,  
A transparent base shuddering lusciously under and through the universe,  
The triumphant tutti, the funeral wailings with sweet flutes and  
    violins, all these I fill myself with,  
I hear not the volumes of sound merely, I am moved by the exquisite  
    meanings,  
I listen to the different voices winding in and out, striving,  
    contending with fiery vehemence to excel each other in emotion;  
I do not think the performers know themselves--but now I think  
    begin to know them.

#### What Ship Puzzled at Sea

What ship puzzled at sea, cons for the true reckoning?  
Or coming in, to avoid the bars and follow the channel a perfect  
    pilot needs?  
Here, sailor! here, ship! take aboard the most perfect pilot,  
Whom, in a little boat, putting off and rowing, I hailing you offer.

#### A Noiseless Patient Spider

A noiseless patient spider,  
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,  
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,  
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament out of itself,  
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,  
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,  
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the spheres to  
    connect them,  
Till the bridge you will need be form'd, till the ductile anchor hold,  
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere, O my soul.

O Living Always, Always Dying

O living always, always dying!  
O the burials of me past and present,  
O me while I stride ahead, material, visible, imperious as ever;  
O me, what I was for years, now dead, (I lament not, I am content;)  
O to disengage myself from those corpses of me, which I turn and  
    look at where I cast them,  
To pass on, (O living! always living!) and leave the corpses behind.

## To One Shortly to Die

From all the rest I single out you, having a message for you,  
You are to die--let others tell you what they please, I cannot prevaricate,  
I am exact and merciless, but I love you--there is no escape for you.

Softly I lay my right hand upon you, you 'ust feel it,  
I do not argue, I bend my head close and half envelop it,  
I sit quietly by, I remain faithful,  
I am more than nurse, more than parent or neighbor,  
I absolve you from all except yourself spiritual bodily, that is  
eternal, you yourself will surely escape,  
The corpse you will leave will be but excrementitious.

The sun bursts through in unlooked-for directions,  
Strong thoughts fill you and confidence, you smile,  
You forget you are sick, as I forget you are sick,  
You do not see the medicines, you do not mind the weeping friends,  
I am with you,  
I exclude others from you, there is nothing to be commiserated,  
I do not commiserate, I congratulate you.

## Night on the Prairies

Night on the prairies,  
The supper is over, the fire on the ground burns low,  
The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapt in their blankets;  
I walk by myself--I stand and look at the stars, which I think now  
never realized before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,  
I admire death and test propositions.

How plenteous! how spiritual! how resume!  
The same old man and soul--the same old aspirations, and the same content.

I was thinking the day most splendid till I saw what the not-day exhibited,  
I was thinking this globe enough till there sprang out so noiseless  
around me myriads of other globes.

Now while the great thoughts of space and eternity fill me I will  
measure myself by them,  
And now touch'd with the lives of other globes arrived as far along  
as those of the earth,  
Or waiting to arrive, or pass'd on farther than those of the earth,

I henceforth no more ignore them than I ignore my own life,  
Or the lives of the earth arrived as far as mine, or waiting to arrive.

O I see now that life cannot exhibit all to me, as the day cannot,  
I see that I am to wait for what will be exhibited by death.

### Thought

As I sit with others at a great feast, suddenly while the music is playing,  
To my mind, (whence it comes I know not,) spectral in mist of a  
wreck at sea,  
Of certain ships, how they sail from port with flying streamers and  
wafted kisses, and that is the last of them,  
Of the solemn and murky mystery about the fate of the President,  
Of the flower of the marine science of fifty generations founder'd  
off the Northeast coast and going down--of the steamship Arctic  
going down,  
Of the veil'd tableau-women gather'd together on deck, pale, heroic,  
waiting the moment that draws so close--O the moment!  
  
A huge sob--a few bubbles--the white foam spirting up--and then the  
women gone,  
Sinking there while the passionless wet flows on--and I now

pondering, Are those women indeed gone?  
Are souls drown'd and destroy'd so?  
Is only matter triumphant?

### The Last Invocation

At the last, tenderly,  
From the walls of the powerful fortress'd house,  
From the clasp of the knitted locks, from the keep of the well-closed doors,  
Let me be wafted.

Let me glide noiselessly forth;  
With the key of softness unlock the locks--with a whisper,  
Set ope the doors O soul.

Tenderly--be not impatient,  
(Strong is your hold O mortal flesh,  
Strong is your hold O love.)

### As I Watch the Ploughman Ploughing

As I watch'd the ploughman ploughing,  
Or the sower sowing in the fields, or the harvester harvesting,  
I saw there too, O life and death, your analogies;  
(Life, life is the tillage, and Death is the harvest according.)

#### Pensive and Faltering

Pensive and faltering,  
The words the Dead I write,  
For living are the Dead,  
(Haply the only living, only real,  
And I the apparition, I the spectre.)