

LEAVES OF GRASS.

PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S FUNERAL HYMN.

1.

When lilacs last in the door-yard bloomed,  
And the great star[1] early drooped in the western sky in the night,  
I mourned,...and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.

O 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 disappeared! 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 door-yard fronting an old farm-house, near the whitewashed 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-coloured 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The hermit, withdrawn to himself, avoiding the settlements,  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 gifted to sing, thou wouldst surely die.

5.

Over the breast of the spring, the land, amid cities,  
Amid lanes, and through old woods, where lately the violets peeped from the  
ground, spotting the greydebris;  
Amid the grass in the fields each side of the lanes--passing the endless  
grass;  
Passing the yellow-speared wheat, every grain from its shroud in the  
dark-brown fields uprising;  
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 inlooped flags, with the cities draped in black,  
With the show of the States themselves as of crape-veiled 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, poured 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.

7.

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 we walked,  
As we walked up and down in the dark blue so mystic,  
As we walked in silence the transparent shadowy night,  
As I saw you had something to tell, as you bent to me night after night,  
As you drooped from the sky low down, as if to my side, while the other  
stars all looked on;  
As we wandered 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, ere you went, how  
full you were of woe;  
As I stood on the rising ground in the breeze, in the cool transparent  
night,  
As I watched where you passed and was lost in the netherward black of the  
night,  
As my soul, in its trouble, dissatisfied, sank, as where you, sad orb,  
Concluded, dropped 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 detained me;  
The star, my comrade departing, 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 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 grey 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!  
Mighty 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, covered 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 fulfilled 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 grey-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 looked forth,

In the close of the day, with its light, and the fields of spring, and the

farmer preparing his crops,

In the large unconscious scenery of my land, with its lakes and forests,

In the heavenly aerial beauty, after the perturbed 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 sailed,



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 minutiae of daily usages;  
And the streets, how their throbbings throbbed, and the cities  
pent--lo! then and there,  
Falling upon them all, and among them all, enveloping me with the rest,  
Appeared the cloud, appeared the long black trail;  
And I knew Death, its thought, and the sacred knowledge of Death.

15.

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 received me;  
The grey-brown bird I know received us Comrades three;  
And he sang what seemed the song 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 singing of the bird.

And the charm of the singing 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.

16.

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.

Praised be the fathomless universe,  
For life and joy, and for objects and knowledge curious;  
And for love, sweet love--But praise! O praise and 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, encompassing Death-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-veiled 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-packed cities all, and the teeming wharves and ways,  
I float this carol with joy, with joy, to thee, O Death!

17.

To the tally of my soul  
Loud and strong kept up the grey-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.

18.

I saw the vision of armies;  
And I saw, as in noiseless dreams, hundreds of battle-flags;  
Borne through the smoke of the battles, and pierced with missiles, I saw  
    them,  
And carried hither and yon through the smoke, and torn and bloody;  
And at last but a few shreds of the flags left on the staffs, (and all in  
    silence,)  
And the staffs all splintered and broken.

I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them,  
And the white skeletons of young men--I saw them;  
I saw the debris and debris of all dead soldiers.  
But I saw they were not as was thought;  
They themselves were fully at rest--they suffered not;

The living remained and suffered--the mother suffered,  
And the wife and the child, and the musing comrade suffered,  
And the armies that remained suffered.

19.

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.

20.

Must I leave thee, lilac with heart-shaped leaves?  
Must I leave thee there in the door-yard, blooming, returning with spring?  
  
Must I pass 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?

21.

Yet each I keep, and all;

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

And the tallying chant, the echo aroused in my soul,

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

With the lilac tali, and its blossoms of mastering odour;

Comrades mine, and I in the midst, and their memory ever I 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,

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

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

[Footnote 1: "The evening star, which, as many may remember night after night, in the early part of that eventful spring, hung low in the west with unusual and tender brightness."--JOHN BURROUGHS.]

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

(FOR THE DEATH OF LINCOLN.)

1.

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done!  
The ship has weathered every wrack, 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!  
Leave you not the little spot  
Where on the deck my Captain lies,  
Fallen cold and dead.

2.

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 ribboned wreaths; for you the shores a-crowding:  
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning.

O Captain! dear father!  
This arm I push beneath you.  
It is some dream that on the deck  
You've fallen cold and dead!

3.

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

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

But the ship, the ship is anchored safe, 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 silent tread,

Walk the spot my Captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.



PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

1.

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!

2.

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!

3.

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!

4.

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!

5.

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!

6.

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!

7.

We primeval forests felling,  
We the rivers stemming, vexing we, and piercing deep the mines within;  
We the surface broad surveying, and the virgin soil upheaving,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

8.

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!

9.

From Nebraska, from Arkansas,  
Central inland race are we, from Missouri, with the continental blood  
interveined;  
All the hands of comrades clasping, all the Southern, all the Northern,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

10.

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;

11.

Raise the mighty mother mistress,  
Waving high the delicate mistress, over all the starry mistress, (bend your  
heads all,  
Raise the fanged and warlike mistress, stern, impassive, weaponed mistress,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

12.

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!

13.

On and on, the compact ranks,

With accessions ever waiting, with the places of the dead quickly filled,  
Through the battle, through defeat, moving yet and never stopping,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

14.

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 filled,  
Pioneers! O pioneers!

15.

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!

16.

Life's involved and varied pageants,  
All the forms and shows, all the workmen at their work,

All the seamen and the landmen, all the masters with their slaves,  
Pioneers, O pioneers!

17.

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!

18.

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!

19.

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

20.

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!

21.

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!

22.

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

23.

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!

24.

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

25.

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!

26.



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

TO THE SAYERS OF WORDS.

1.

Earth, round, rolling, compact--suns, moons, animals--all these are words  
to be said;

Watery, vegetable, sauroid advances--beings, premonitions, lispings of  
the future,

Behold! these are vast words to be said.

Were you thinking that those were the words--those upright lines? those  
curves, angles, dots?

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

They are in the air--they are in you.

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

No; the real words are more delicious than they.

Human bodies are words, myriads of words;

In the best poems reappears the body, man's or woman's, well-shaped,  
natural, gay;

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

Air, soil, water, fire--these are words;

I myself am a word with them--my qualities interpenetrate

with theirs--my name is nothing to them;

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

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

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

2.

The workmanship of souls is by the inaudible words of the earth;

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

Amelioration is one of the earth's words;

The earth neither lags nor hastens;

It has all attributes, growths, effects, latent in itself from the jump;

It is not half beautiful only--defects and excrescences show just as much  
as perfections show.

The earth does not withhold--it is generous enough;

The truths of the earth continually wait, they are not so concealed either;

They are calm, subtle, untransmissible by print;  
They are imbued through all things, conveying themselves willingly,  
Conveying a sentiment and invitation of the earth. I utter and utter:  
I speak not; yet, if you hear me not, of what avail am I to you?  
To bear--to better; lacking these, of what avail am I?

Accouche! Accouchez!

Will you rot your own fruit in yourself there?

Will you squat and stifle there?

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

The earth does not exhibit itself, nor refuse to exhibit itself--possesses  
still underneath;  
Underneath the ostensible sounds, the august chorus of heroes, the wail of  
slaves,  
Persuasions of lovers, curses, gasps of the dying, laughter of young  
people, accents of bargainers,  
Underneath these, possessing the words that never fail.

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

The true words do not fail, for motion does not fail, and reflection does  
not fail;

Also the day and night do not fail, and the voyage we pursue does not fail.

3.

Of the interminable sisters,  
Of the ceaseless cotillons of sisters,  
Of the centripetal and centrifugal sisters, the elder and younger sisters,  
The beautiful sister we know dances on with the rest.

With her ample back towards every beholder,  
With the fascinations of youth, and the equal fascinations of age,  
Sits she whom I too love like the rest--sits undisturbed,  
Holding up in her hand what has the character of a mirror, while her eyes  
glance back from it,  
Glance as she sits, inviting none, denying none,  
Holding a mirror day and night tirelessly before her own face.

Seen at hand, or seen at a distance,  
Duly the twenty-four appear in public every day,  
Duly approach and pass with their companions, or a companion,  
Looking from no countenances of their own, but from the countenances of  
those who are with them,  
From the countenances of children or women, or the manly countenance,

From the open countenances of animals, or from inanimate things,  
From the landscape or waters, or from the exquisite apparition of the sky,  
From our countenances, mine and yours, faithfully returning them,  
Every day in public appearing without fail, but never twice with the same  
companions.

Embracing man, embracing all, proceed the three hundred and  
sixty-five resistlessly round the sun;  
Embracing all, soothing, supporting, follow close three hundred and sixty-  
five offsets of the first, sure and necessary as they.

Tumbling on steadily, nothing dreading,  
Sunshine, storm, cold, heat, for ever withstanding, passing, carrying,

The Soul's realisation and determination still inheriting;  
The fluid vacuum around and ahead still entering and dividing,  
No baulk retarding, no anchor anchoring, on no rock striking,  
Swift, glad, content, unbereaved, nothing losing,  
Of all able and ready at any time to give strict account,  
The divine ship sails the divine sea.

4.

Whoever you are! motion and reflection are especially for you;  
The divine ship sails the divine sea for you.

Whoever you are! you are he or she for whom the earth is solid and liquid,  
You are he or she for whom the sun and moon hang in the sky;  
For none more than you are the present and the past,  
For none more than you is immortality.

Each man to himself, and each woman to herself, such as the word of the  
past and present, and the word of immortality;  
No one can acquire for another--not one!  
Not one can grow for another--not one!

The song is to the singer, and comes back most to him;  
The teaching is to the teacher, and comes back most to him;  
The murder is to the murderer, and comes back most to him;

The theft is to the thief, and comes back most to him;  
The love is to the lover, and comes back most to him;  
The gift is to the giver, and comes back most to him--it cannot fail;  
The oration is to the orator, the acting is to the actor and actress, not  
to the audience;

And no man understands any greatness or goodness but his own, or the  
indication of his own.

5.

I swear the earth shall surely be complete to him or her who shall be  
complete!

I swear the earth remains jagged and broken only to him or her who remains  
broken and jagged!

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

I swear there can be no theory of any account, unless it corroborate the  
theory of the earth!

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

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

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

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

I swear I begin to see little or nothing in audible words!

I swear I think all merges toward the presentation of the unspoken meanings  
of the earth;

Toward him who sings the songs of the Body, and of the truths of the earth;

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

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

It is always to leave the best untold.



When I undertake to tell the best, I find I cannot,  
My tongue is ineffectual on its pivots,  
My breath will not be obedient to its organs,  
I become a dumb man.

The best of the earth cannot be told anyhow--all or any is best;  
It is not what you anticipated--it is cheaper, easier, nearer;  
Things are not dismissed from the places they held before;  
The earth is just as positive and direct as it was before;  
Facts, religions, improvements, politics, trades, are as real as before;  
But the Soul is also real,--it too is positive and direct;  
No reasoning, no proof has established it,  
Undeniable growth has established it.

6.

This is a poem for the sayers of words--these are hints of meanings,  
These are they that echo the tones of souls, and the phrases of souls;  
If they did not echo the phrases of souls, what were they then?  
If they had not reference to you in especial, what were they then?  
I swear I will never henceforth have to do with the faith that tells the  
best!  
I will have to do only with that faith that leaves the best untold.

7.

Say on, sayers!

Delve! mould! pile the words of the earth!

Work on--it is materials you bring, not breaths;

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

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

When the materials are all prepared, the architects shall appear.

I swear to you the architects shall appear without fail! I announce them  
and lead them;

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

I swear to you the greatest among them shall be he who best knows you, and  
encloses all, and is faithful to all;

I swear to you, he and the rest shall not forget you--they shall perceive  
that you are not an iota less than they;

I swear to you, you shall be glorified in them.

VOICES.

1.

Now I make a leaf of Voices--for I have found nothing mightier than they  
are,  
And I have found that no word spoken but is beautiful in its place.

2.

O what is it in me that makes me tremble so at voices?  
Surely, whoever speaks to me in the right voice, him or her I shall follow,  
As the water follows the moon, silently, with fluid steps anywhere around  
the globe.

All waits for the right voices;  
Where is the practised and perfect organ? Where is the developed Soul?  
For I see every word uttered thence has deeper, sweeter, new sounds,  
impossible on less terms.

I see brains and lips closed--tympan and temples unstruck,  
Until that comes which has the quality to strike and to uncloset,  
Until that comes which has the quality to bring forth what lies slumbering,  
for ever ready, in all words.

WHOSOEVER.

Whoever you are, I fear you are walking the walks of dreams,  
I fear those supposed realities are to melt from under your feet and hands;  
Even now, your features, joys, speech, house, trade, manners, troubles,  
    follies, costume, crimes, dissipate away from you,  
Your true Soul and Body appear before me,  
They stand forth out of affairs--out of commerce, shops, law, science, work,  
    farms, clothes, the house, medicine, print, buying, selling,  
    eating, drinking, suffering, dying.

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you, that you be my poem;  
I whisper with my lips close to your ear,  
I have loved many women and men, but I love none better than you.

Oh! I have been dilatory and dumb;  
I should have made my way straight to you long ago;  
I should have blabbed nothing but you, I should have chanted nothing but  
    you.

I will leave all, and come and make the hymns of you;  
None have understood you, but I understand you;  
None have done justice to you--you have not done justice to yourself;  
None but have found you imperfect--I only find no imperfection in you;  
None but would subordinate you--I only am he who will never consent to

subordinate you;

I only am he who places over you no master, owner, better, God, beyond what  
waits intrinsically in yourself.

Painters have painted their swarming groups, and the centre figure of all,  
From the head of the centre figure spreading a nimbus of  
gold-coloured light;

But I paint myriads of heads, but paint no head without its nimbus of gold-  
coloured light;

From my hand, from the brain of every man and woman, it streams,  
effulgently flowing for ever.

O I could sing such grandeurs and glories about you!

You have not known what you are--you have slumbered upon yourself all your  
life;

Your eyelids have been the same as closed most of the time;

What you have done returns already in mockeries;

Your thrift, knowledge, prayers, if they do not return in mockeries, what  
is their return?

The mockeries are not you;

Underneath them, and within them, I see you lurk;

I pursue you where none else has pursued you;

Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night, the accustomed  
routine, if these conceal you from others, or from yourself, they  
do not conceal you from me;

The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure complexion, if these baulk  
others, they do not baulk me.

The pert apparel, the deformed attitude, drunkenness, greed, premature  
death, all these I part aside.

There is no endowment in man or woman that is not tallied in you;  
There is no virtue, no beauty, in man or woman, but as good is in you;  
No pluck, no endurance in others, but as good is in you;  
No pleasure waiting for others, but an equal pleasure waits for you.  
As for me, I give nothing to any one, except I give the like carefully to  
you;  
I sing the songs of the glory of none, not God, sooner than I sing the  
songs of the glory of you.

Whoever you are! claim your own at any hazard!  
These shows of the east and west are tame compared to you;  
These immense meadows--these interminable rivers--you are immense and  
interminable as they;  
These furies, elements, storms, motions of Nature, throes of apparent  
dissolution--you are he or she who is master or mistress over them,  
Master or mistress in your own right over Nature, elements, pain, passion,  
dissolution.

The hopples fall from your ankles--you find an unfailing sufficiency;  
Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by the rest, whatever you  
are promulgates itself;

Through birth, life, death, burial, the means are provided, nothing is  
scanted;

Through angers, losses, ambition, ignorance, ennui, what you are picks its  
way.

BEGINNERS.

How they are provided for upon the earth, appearing at intervals;

How dear and dreadful they are to the earth;

How they inure to themselves as much as to any--What a paradox appears  
their age;

How people respond to them, yet know them not;

How there is something relentless in their fate, all times;

How all times mischoose the objects of their adulation and reward,

And how the same inexorable price must still be paid for the same great  
purchase.



TO A PUPIL.

1.

Is reform needed? Is it through you?

The greater the reform needed, the greater the PERSONALITY you need to accomplish it.

You! do you not see how it would serve to have eyes, blood, complexion, clean and sweet?

Do you not see how it would serve to have such a Body and Soul that, when you enter the crowd, an atmosphere of desire and command enters with you, and every one is impressed with your personality?

2.

O the magnet! the flesh over and over!

Go, dear friend! if need be, give up all else, and commence to-day to inure yourself to pluck, reality, self-esteem, definiteness, elevatedness;

Rest not, till you rivet and publish yourself of your own personality.

LINKS.

1.

Think of the Soul;

I swear to you that body of yours gives proportions to your Soul somehow to  
live in other spheres;

I do not know how, but I know it is so.

2.

Think of loving and being loved;

I swear to you, whoever you are, you can interfuse yourself with such  
things that everybody that sees you shall look longingly upon you.

3.

Think of the past;

I warn you that, in a little while, others will find their past in you and  
your times.

The race is never separated--nor man nor woman escapes;

All is inextricable--things, spirits, nature, nations, you too--from

precedents you come.

Recall the ever-welcome defiers (the mothers precede them);  
Recall the sages, poets, saviours, inventors, lawgivers, of the earth;  
Recall Christ, brother of rejected persons--brother of slaves, felons,  
idiots, and of insane and diseased persons.

4.

Think of the time when you was not yet born;  
Think of times you stood at the side of the dying;  
Think of the time when your own body will be dying.

Think of spiritual results:

Sure as the earth swims through the heavens, does every one of its objects  
pass into spiritual results.

Think of manhood, and you to be a man;

Do you count manhood, and the sweet of manhood, nothing?

Think of womanhood, and you to be a woman;

The creation is womanhood;

Have I not said that womanhood involves all?

Have I not told how the universe has nothing better than the best  
womanhood?

## THE WATERS.

The world below the brine.

Forests at the bottom of the sea--the branches and leaves,

Sea-lettuce, vast lichens, strange flowers and seeds--the thick tangle, the  
openings, and the pink turf,

Different colours, pale grey and green, purple, white, and gold--the play  
of light through the water,

Dumb swimmers there among the rocks--coral, gluten, grass, rushes--and the  
aliment of the swimmers,

Sluggish existences grazing there, suspended, or slowly crawling close to  
the bottom:

The sperm-whale at the surface, blowing air and spray, or disporting with  
his flukes,

The leaden-eyed shark, the walrus, the turtle, the hairy  
sea-leopard, and the sting-ray.

Passions there, wars, pursuits, tribes--sight in those ocean-depths--  
breathing that thick breathing air, as so many do.

The change thence to the sight here, and to the subtle air breathed by  
beings like us, who walk this sphere:

The change onward from ours to that of beings who walk other spheres.

TO THE STATES.

TO IDENTIFY THE SIXTEENTH, SEVENTEENTH, OR EIGHTEENTH  
PRESIDENTIAD.[1]

Why reclining, interrogating? Why myself and all drowsing?

What deepening twilight! Scum floating atop of the waters!

Who are they, as bats and night-dogs, askant in the Capitol?

What a filthy Presidentiad! (O South, your torrid suns! O North, your  
Arctic freezings!)

Are those really Congressmen? Are those the great Judges? Is that the  
President?

Then I will sleep a while yet--for I see that these States sleep, for  
reasons.

With gathering murk--with muttering thunder and lambent shoots, we all duly  
awake, South, North, East, West, inland and seaboard, we will  
surely awake.

[Footnote 1: These were the three Presidentships of Polk; of Taylor,  
succeeded by Fillmore; and of Pierce;--1845 to 1857.]

TEARS.

Tears! tears! tears!

In the night, in solitude, tears;

On the white shore dripping, dripping, sucked in by the sand;

Tears--not a star shining--all dark and desolate;

Moist tears from the eyes of a muffled head:

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

What shapeless lump is that, bent, crouched there on the sand?

Streaming tears--sobbing tears--throes, choked with wild cries;

O storm, embodied, rising, careering, with swift steps along the beach;

O wild and dismal night-storm, with wind! O belching and desperate!

O shade, so sedate and decorous by day, with calm countenance and regulated  
pace;

But away, at night, as you fly, none looking--O then the unloosened ocean

Of tears! tears! tears!

A SHIP.

1.

Aboard, at the ship's helm,  
A young steersman, steering with care.

A bell through fog on a sea-coast dolefully ringing,  
An ocean-bell--O a warning bell, rocked by the waves.

O you give good notice indeed, you bell by the sea-reefs ringing,  
Ringing, ringing, to warn the ship from its wreck-place.  
For, as on the alert, O steersman, you mind the bell's admonition,  
The bows turn,--the freighted ship, tacking, speeds away under her grey  
    sails;  
The beautiful and noble ship, with all her precious wealth, speeds away  
    gaily and safe.

2.

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

## GREATNESS.

1.

Great are the myths--I too delight in them;

Great are Adam and Eve--I too look back and accept them;

Great the risen and fallen nations, and their poets, women, sages,  
inventors, rulers, warriors, and priests.

Great is Liberty! great is Equality! I am their follower;

Helmsmen of nations, choose your craft! where you sail, I sail,

I weather it out with you, or sink with you.

Great is Youth--equally great is Old Age--great are the Day and Night;

Great is Wealth--great is Poverty--great is Expression--great is Silence.

2.

Youth, large, lusty, loving--Youth, full of grace, force, fascination!

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

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



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

Wealth, with the flush hand, fine clothes, hospitality;  
But then the soul's wealth, which is candour, knowledge, pride, enfolding  
love;  
Who goes for men and women showing Poverty richer than wealth?

Expression of speech! in what is written or said, forget not that Silence  
is also expressive;  
That anguish as hot as the hottest, and contempt as cold as the coldest,  
may be without words.

3.

Great is the Earth, and the way it became what it is:  
Do you imagine it has stopped at this? the increase abandoned?  
Understand then that it goes as far onward from this as this is from the  
times when it lay in covering waters and gases, before man had  
appeared.

4.

Great is the quality of Truth in man;  
The quality of truth in man supports itself through all changes;  
It is inevitably in the man--he and it are in love, and never leave each  
other.

The truth in man is no dictum, it is vital as eyesight;  
If there be any Soul, there is truth--if there be man or woman, there is  
truth--if there be physical or moral, there is truth;  
If there be equilibrium or volition, there is truth--if there be things at  
all upon the earth, there is truth.

O truth of the earth! O truth of things! I am determined to press my way  
toward you;  
Sound your voice! I scale mountains, or dive in the sea, after you.

5.

Great is Language--it is the mightiest of the sciences,  
It is the fulness, colour, form, diversity of the earth, and of men and  
women, and of all qualities and processes;  
It is greater than wealth, it is greater than buildings, ships, religions,  
paintings, music.

Great is the English speech--what speech is so great as the English?  
Great is the English brood--what brood has so vast a destiny as the

English?

It is the mother of the brood that must rule the earth with the new rule;  
The new rule shall rule as the Soul rules, and as the love, justice,  
equality in the Soul rule.

6.

Great is Law--great are the old few landmarks of the law,  
They are the same in all times, and shall not be disturbed.

Great is Justice!

Justice is not settled by legislators and laws--it is in the Soul;  
It cannot be varied by statutes, any more than love, pride, the attraction  
of gravity, can;  
It is immutable--it does not depend on majorities--majorities or what not  
come at last before the same passionless and exact tribunal.

For justice are the grand natural lawyers, and perfect judges--it is in  
their souls;

It is well assorted--they have not studied for nothing--the great includes  
the less;

They rule on the highest grounds--they oversee all eras, states,  
administrations.

The perfect judge fears nothing--he could go front to front before God;

Before the perfect judge all shall stand back--life and death shall stand  
back--heaven and hell shall stand back.

7.

Great is Life, real and mystical, wherever and whoever;  
Great is Death--sure as Life holds all parts together, Death holds all  
parts together.

Has Life much purport?--Ah! Death has the greatest purport.

THE POET.

1.

Now list to my morning's romanza;

To the cities and farms I sing, as they spread in the sunshine before me.

2.

A young man came to me bearing a message from his brother;

How should the young man know the whether and when of his brother?

Tell him to send me the signs.

And I stood before the young man face to face, and took his right hand in

my left hand, and his left hand in my right hand,

And I answered for his brother, and for men, and I answered for THE POET,

and sent these signs.

Him all wait for--him all yield up to--his word is decisive and final,

Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves, as amid light,

Him they immerse, and he immerses them.

Beautiful women, the haughtiest nations, laws, the landscape, people,

animals,

The profound earth and its attributes, and the unquiet ocean (so tell I my  
morning's romanza),

All enjoyments and properties, and money, and whatever money will buy,

The best farms--others toiling and planting, and he unavoidably reaps,

The noblest and costliest cities--others grading and building, and he  
domiciles there,

Nothing for any one but what is for him--near and far are for him,--the  
ships in the offing,

The perpetual shows and marches on land, are for him, if they are for  
anybody.

He puts things in their attitudes;

He puts to-day out of himself, with plasticity and love;

He places his own city, times, reminiscences, parents, brothers and  
sisters, associations, employment, politics, so that the rest never  
shame them afterward, nor assume to command them.

He is the answerer;

What can be answered he answers--and what cannot be answered, he shows how  
it cannot be answered.

3.

A man is a summons and challenge;

(It is vain to skulk--Do you hear that mocking and laughter? Do you hear

the ironical echoes?)

Books, friendships, philosophers, priests, action, pleasure, pride, beat up  
and down, seeking to give satisfaction;

He indicates the satisfaction, and indicates them that beat up and down  
also.

Whichever the sex, whatever the season or place, he may go freshly and  
gently and safely, by day or by night;

He has the pass-key of hearts--to him the response of the prying of hands  
on the knobs.

His welcome is universal--the flow of beauty is not more welcome or  
universal than he is;

The person he favours by day or sleeps with at night is blessed.

Every existence has its idiom--everything has an idiom and tongue;

He resolves all tongues into his own, and bestows it upon men, and any man  
translates, and any man translates himself also;

One part does not counteract another part--he is the joiner--he sees how  
they join.

He says indifferently and alike, "How are you, friend?" to the President  
at his levee,

And he says, "Good-day, my brother!" to Cudge that hoes in the sugar-  
field,

And both understand him, and know that his speech is right.

He walks with perfect ease in the Capitol,

He walks among the Congress, and one representative says to another, "Here  
is our equal, appearing and new."

4.

Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,

And the soldiers suppose him to be a soldier, and the sailors that he has  
followed the sea,

And the authors take him for an author, and the artists for an artist,

And the labourers perceive he could labour with them and love them;

No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow it, or has  
followed it,

No matter what the nation, that he might find his brothers and sisters  
there.

The English believe he comes of their English stock,

A Jew to the Jew he seems--a Russ to the Russ--usual and near, removed from  
none.

Whoever he looks at in the travellers' coffee-house claims him;

The Italian or Frenchman is sure, and the German is sure, and the Spaniard  
is sure, and the island Cuban is sure;



The engineer, the deck-hand on the great lakes, or on the Mississippi, or St. Lawrence, or Sacramento, or Hudson, or Paumanok Sound, claims him.

The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect blood;  
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar, see themselves  
in the ways of him--he strangely transmutes them,  
They are not vile any more--they hardly know themselves, they are so grown.

BURIAL.

1.

To think of it!

To think of time--of all that retrospection!

To think of to-day, and the ages continued henceforward!

Have you guessed you yourself would not continue?

Have you dreaded these earth-beetles?

Have you feared the future would be nothing to you?

Is to-day nothing? Is the beginningless past nothing?

If the future is nothing, they are just as surely nothing.

To think that the sun rose in the east! that men and women were flexible,

real, alive! that everything was alive!

To think that you and I did not see, feel, think, nor bear our part!

To think that we are now here, and bear our part!

2.

Not a day passes--not a minute or second, without an accouchement!

Not a day passes-not a minute or second, without a corpse!

The dull nights go over, and the dull days also,

The soreness of lying so much in bed goes over,

The physician, after long putting off, gives the silent and terrible look

for an answer,

The children come hurried and weeping, and the brothers and sisters are

sent for;

Medicines stand unused on the shelf--(the camphor-smell has long pervaded

the rooms,)

The faithful hand of the living does not desert the hand of the dying,

The twitching lips press lightly on the forehead of the dying,

The breath ceases, and the pulse of the heart ceases,

The corpse stretches on the bed, and the living look upon it,

It is palpable as the living are palpable.

The living look upon the corpse with their eyesight,

But without eyesight lingers a different living, and looks curiously on the

corpse.

3.

To think that the rivers will flow, and the snow fall, and the fruits

    ripen, and act upon others as upon us now--yet not act upon us!

To think of all these wonders of city and country, and others taking great

    interest in them--and we taking--no interest in them!

To think how eager we are in building our houses!

To think others shall be just as eager, and we quite indifferent!

I see one building the house that serves him a few years, or seventy or

    eighty years at most,

I see one building the house that serves him longer than that.

Slow-moving and black lines creep over the whole earth--they never cease--

    they are the burial lines;

He that was President was buried, and he that is now President shall surely

    be buried.

4.

Gold dash of waves at the ferry-wharf--posh and ice in the river, half-

    frozen mud in the streets, a grey discouraged sky overhead, the

short last daylight of Twelfth-month,  
A hearse and stages--other vehicles give place--the funeral of an old  
Broadway stage-driver, the cortege mostly drivers.

Steady the trot to the cemetery, duly rattles the death-bell, the gate is  
passed, the new-dug grave is halted at, the living alight, the  
hearse uncloses,

The coffin is passed out, lowered, and settled, the whip is laid on the  
coffin, the earth is swiftly shovelled in,

The mound above is flattened with the spades--silence,

A minute, no one moves or speaks--it is done,

He is decently put away--is there anything more?

He was a good fellow, free-mouthed, quick-tempered, not bad-looking, able  
to take his own part, witty, sensitive to a slight, ready with life  
or death for a friend, fond of women, gambled, ate hearty, drank  
hearty, had known what it was to be flush, grew low-spirited toward  
the last, sickened, was helped by a contribution, died, aged forty-  
one years--and that was his funeral.

Thumb extended, finger uplifted, apron, cape, gloves, strap, wet-weather  
clothes, whip carefully chosen, boss, spotter, starter, hostler,  
somebody loafing on you, you loafing on somebody, headway, man  
before and man behind, good day's work, bad day's work, pet stock,  
mean stock, first out, last out, turning-in at night;

To think that these are so much and so nigh to other drivers--and he there

takes no interest in them!

5.

The markets, the government, the working-man's wages--to think what account  
they are through our nights and days!

To think that other working-men will make just as great account of them--  
yet we make little or no account!

The vulgar and the refined--what you call sin, and what you call goodness--  
to think how wide a difference!

To think the difference will still continue to others, yet we lie beyond  
the difference.

To think how much pleasure there is!

Have you pleasure from looking at the sky? have you pleasure from poems?

Do you enjoy yourself in the city? or engaged in business? or planning a  
nomination and election? or with your wife and family?

Or with your mother and sisters? or in womanly housework? or the beautiful  
maternal cares?

These also flow onward to others--you and I fly onward,

But in due time you and I shall take less interest in them.

Your farm, profits, crops,--to think how engrossed you are!

To think there will still be farms, profits, crops--yet for you, of what

avail?

6.

What will be will be well--for what is is well;

To take interest is well, and not to take interest shall be well.

The sky continues beautiful,

The pleasure of men with women shall never be sated, nor the pleasure of  
women with men, nor the pleasure from poems;

The domestic joys, the daily housework or business, the building of  
houses--these are not phantasms--they have weight, form, location;  
Farms, profits, crops, markets, wages, government, are none of them  
phantasms;

The difference between sin and goodness is no delusion,

The earth is not an echo--man and his life, and all the things of his life,  
are well-considered.

You are not thrown to the winds--you gather certainly and safely around  
yourself;

Yourself! Yourself! Yourself, for ever and ever!

7.

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother and father--it  
is to identify you;

It is not that you should be undecided, but that you should  
be decided;

Something long preparing and formless is arrived and formed in you,  
You are henceforth secure, whatever comes or goes.

The threads that were spun are gathered, the weft crosses the warp, the  
pattern is systematic.

The preparations have every one been justified,  
The orchestra have sufficiently tuned their instruments--the baton has  
given the signal.

The guest that was coming--he waited long, for reasons--he is now housed;  
He is one of those who are beautiful and happy--he is one of those that to  
look upon and be with is enough.

The law of the past cannot be eluded,  
The law of the present and future cannot be eluded,  
The law of the living cannot be eluded--it is eternal;  
The law of promotion and transformation cannot be eluded,  
The law of heroes and good-doers cannot be eluded,  
The law of drunkards, informers, mean persons--not one iota thereof can be  
eluded.

8.

Slow-moving and black lines go ceaselessly over the earth,  
Northerner goes carried, and Southerner goes carried, and they on the  
Atlantic side, and they on the Pacific, and they between, and all  
through the Mississippi country, and all over the earth.

The great masters and kosmos are well as they go--the heroes and good-doers  
are well,

The known leaders and inventors, and the rich owners and pious and  
distinguished, may be well,

But there is more account than that--there is strict account of all.

The interminable hordes of the ignorant and wicked are not nothing,

The barbarians of Africa and Asia are not nothing,

The common people of Europe are not nothing--the American aborigines are  
not nothing,

The infected in the immigrant hospital are not nothing--the murderer or  
mean person is not nothing,

The perpetual successions of shallow people are not nothing as they go,

The lowest prostitute is not nothing--the mocker of religion is not nothing  
as he goes.

9.



I shall go with the rest--we have satisfaction,

I have dreamed that we are not to be changed so much, nor the law of us  
changed,

I have dreamed that heroes and good-doers shall be under the present and  
past law,

And that murderers, drunkards, liars, shall be under the present and past  
law,

For I have dreamed that the law they are under now is enough.

And I have dreamed that the satisfaction is not so much changed, and that  
there is no life without satisfaction;

What is the earth? what are Body and Soul without satisfaction?

I shall go with the rest,

We cannot be stopped at a given point--that is no satisfaction,

To show us a good thing, or a few good things, for a space of time--that is  
no satisfaction,

We must have the indestructible breed of the best, regardless of time.

If otherwise, all these things came but to ashes of dung,

If maggots and rats ended us, then alarum! for we are betrayed!

Then indeed suspicion of death.

Do you suspect death? If I were to suspect death, I should die now:

Do you think I could walk pleasantly and well-suited toward annihilation?

10.

Pleasantly and well-suited I walk:

Whither I walk I cannot define, but I know it is good;

The whole universe indicates that it is good,

The past and the present indicate that it is good.

How beautiful and perfect are the animals! How perfect is my Soul!

How perfect the earth, and the minutest thing upon it!

What is called good is perfect, and what is called bad is just as perfect,

The vegetables and minerals are all perfect, and the imponderable fluids  
are perfect;

Slowly and surely they have passed on to this, and slowly and surely they  
yet pass on.

My Soul! if I realise you, I have satisfaction;

Animals and vegetables! if I realise you, I have satisfaction;

Laws of the earth and air! if I realise you, I have satisfaction.

I cannot define my satisfaction, yet it is so;

I cannot define my life, yet it is so.

11.

It comes to me now!

I swear I think now that everything without exception has an eternal soul!

The trees have, rooted in the ground! the weeds of the sea have! the  
animals!

I swear I think there is nothing but immortality!

That the exquisite scheme is for it, and the nebulous float is for it, and  
the cohering is for it;

And all preparation is for it! and identity is for it! and life and death  
are altogether for it!

THIS COMPOST.

1.

Something startles me where I thought I was safest;

I withdraw from the still woods I loved;

I will not go now on the pastures to walk;

I will not strip the clothes from my body to meet my lover the sea;

I will not touch my flesh to the earth, as to other flesh, to renew me.

2.

O how can the ground not sicken?

How can you be alive, you growths of spring?

How can you furnish health, you blood of herbs, roots, orchards, grain?

Are they not continually putting distempered corpses in you?

Is not every continent worked over and over with sour dead?

Where have you disposed of their carcasses?

Those drunkards and gluttons of so many generations;

Where have you drawn off all the foul liquid and meat?

I do not see any of it upon you to-day--or perhaps I am deceived;

I will run a furrow with my plough--I will press my spade through the sod,  
and turn it up underneath;

I am sure I shall expose some of the foul meat.

3.

Behold this compost! behold it well!

Perhaps every mite has once formed part of a sick person--Yet behold!

The grass covers the prairies,

The bean bursts noiselessly through the mould in the garden,

The delicate spear of the onion pierces upward,

The apple-buds cluster together on the apple branches,

The resurrection of the wheat appears with pale visage out of its graves,

The tinge awakes over the willow-tree and the mulberry-tree,

The he-birds carol mornings and evenings, while the she-birds sit on their  
    nests,  
The young of poultry break through the hatched eggs,  
The new-born of animals appear--the calf is dropped from the cow, the colt  
    from the mare,  
Out of its little hill faithfully rise the potato's dark-green leaves,  
Out of its hill rises the yellow maize-stalk;  
The summer growth is innocent and disdainful above all those strata of sour  
    dead.

What chemistry!

That the winds are really not infectious,  
That this is no cheat, this transparent green-wash of the sea, which is so  
    amorous after me;  
That it is safe to allow it to lick my naked body all over with its  
    tongues,  
That it will not endanger me with the fevers that have deposited themselves  
    in it,  
That all is clean for ever and for ever,  
That the cool drink from the well tastes so good,  
That blackberries are so flavorful and juicy,  
That the fruits of the apple-orchard, and of the orange-orchard--that  
    melons, grapes, peaches, plums, will none of them poison me,  
That when I recline on the grass I do not catch any disease,  
Though probably every sphere of grass rises out of what was once a catching  
    disease.

4.

Now I am terrified at the Earth! it is that calm and patient,  
It grows such sweet things out of such corruptions,  
It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless successions  
    of diseased corpses,  
It distils such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor,  
It renews with such unwitting looks its prodigal, annual, sumptuous crops,  
It gives such divine materials to men, and accepts such leavings from them  
    at last.

DESPAIRING CRIES.

1.

Despairing cries float ceaselessly toward me, day and night,  
The sad voice of Death--the call of my nearest lover, putting forth,  
alarmed, uncertain,  
"The Sea I am quickly to sail: come tell me,  
Come tell me where I am speeding--tell me my destination."

2.

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, alarmed, uncertain--A young woman's voice, appealing to me for  
comfort;  
A young man's voice, "Shall I not escape?"

## THE CITY DEAD-HOUSE

By the City Dead-House, by the gate,  
As idly sauntering, wending my way from the clangour,  
I curious pause--for lo! an outcast form, a poor dead prostitute brought;  
Her corpse they deposit unclaimed, it lies on the damp brick pavement.  
The divine woman, her body--I see the body--I look on it alone,  
That house once full of passion and beauty--all else I notice not;  
Nor stillness so cold, nor running water from faucet, nor odours morbidic  
    impress me;  
But the house alone--that wondrous house--that delicate fair house--that  
    ruin!  
That immortal house, more than all the rows of dwellings ever built,  
Or white-domed Capitol itself, with majestic figure surmounted--or all the  
    old high-spired cathedrals,  
That little house alone, more than them all--poor, desperate house!  
Fair, fearful wreck! tenement of a Soul! itself a Soul!  
Unclaimed, avoided house! take one breath from my tremulous lips;  
Take one tear, dropped aside as I go, for thought of you,  
Dead house of love! house of madness and sin, crumbled! crushed!  
House of life--erewhile talking and laughing--but ah, poor house! dead even  
    then;  
Months, years, an echoing, garnished house-but dead, dead, dead!



TO ONE SHORTLY TO DIE.

1.

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.

2.

Softly I lay my right hand upon you--you just 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 neighbour,

I absolve you from all except yourself, spiritual, bodily--that is  
eternal,--

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.

UNNAMED LANDS.

1.

Nations, ten thousand years before these States, and many times ten  
thousand years before these States;

Garnered clusters of ages, that men and women like us grew up and travelled  
their course, and passed on;

What vast-built cities--what orderly republics--what pastoral tribes and  
nomads;

What histories, rulers, heroes, perhaps transcending all others;

What laws, customs, wealth, arts, traditions;

What sort of marriage--what costumes--what physiology and phrenology;

What of liberty and slavery among them--what they thought of death and the  
soul;

Who were witty and wise--who beautiful and poetic--who brutish and  
undeveloped;

Not a mark, not a record remains,--And yet all remains.

2.

O I know that those men and women were not for nothing, any more than we  
are for nothing;

I know that they belong to the scheme of the world every bit as much as we

now belong to it, and as all will henceforth belong to it.

Afar they stand--yet near to me they stand,  
Some with oval countenances, learned and calm,  
Some naked and savage--Some like huge collections of insects,  
Some in tents--herdsmen, patriarchs, tribes, horsemen,  
Some prowling through woods--Some living peaceably on farms, labouring,  
reaping, filling barns,  
Some traversing paved avenues, amid temples, palaces, factories, libraries,  
shows, courts, theatres, wonderful monuments.

Are those billions of men really gone?  
Are those women of the old experience of the earth gone?  
Do their lives, cities, arts, rest only with us?  
Did they achieve nothing for good, for themselves?

3.

I believe, of all those billions of men and women that filled the unnamed  
lands, every one exists this hour, here or elsewhere, invisible to  
us, in exact proportion to what he or she grew from in life, and  
out of what he or she did, felt, became, loved, sinned, in life.

I believe that was not the end of those nations, or any person of them, any  
more than this shall be the end of my nation, or of me;

Of their languages, governments, marriage, literature, products, games,  
wars, manners, crimes, prisons, slaves, heroes, poets, I suspect  
their results curiously await in the yet unseen world--counterparts  
of what accrued to them in the seen world;

I suspect I shall meet them there,

I suspect I shall there find each old particular of those unnamed lands.

## SIMILITUDE.

1.

On the beach at night alone,  
As the old Mother sways her to and fro, singing her savage and husky song,  
As I watch the bright stars shining--I think a thought of the clef of the  
    universes, and of the future.

2.

A VAST SIMILITUDE interlocks all,  
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets, comets,  
    asteroids,  
All the substances of the same, and all that is spiritual upon the same,  
All distances of place, however wide,  
All distances of time--all inanimate forms,  
All Souls--all living bodies, though they be ever so different, or in  
    different worlds,  
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes--the fishes, the brutes,  
All men and women--me also;  
All nations, colours, barbarisms, civilisations, languages;  
All identities that have existed, or may exist, on this globe, or any  
    globe;

All lives and deaths--all of the past, present, future;

This vast similitude spans them, and always has spanned, and shall for ever  
span them, and compactly hold them.

THE SQUARE DEIFIC.

GOD.

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, modern as any;  
Unpersuadable, relentless, executing righteous judgments;  
As the Earth, the Father, the brown old Kronos, with laws,  
Aged beyond computation--yet ever 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.



SAVIOUR.

Consolator most mild, the promised one advancing,  
With gentle hand extended, the mightier God am I,  
Foretold by prophets and poets, in their most wrapt prophecies and poems;  
From this side, lo! the Lord CHRIST gazes--lo! Hermes I--lo! mine is

Hercules' face;

All sorrow, labour, 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;

Wending 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;

Conqueror yet--for before me all the armies and soldiers of the earth shall  
yet bow--and all the weapons of war become impotent:

With indulgent words, as to children--with fresh and sane words, mine only;

Young and strong I pass, knowing well I am destined myself to an early  
death:

But my Charity has no death--my Wisdom dies not, neither early nor late,  
And my sweet Love, bequeathed here and elsewhere, never dies.

SATAN.

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 dispelled, 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.

THE SPIRIT.

Santa SPIRITA,[1] 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 little songs.

[Footnote 1: The reader will share my wish that Whitman had written  
sanctus spiritus, which is right, instead of santa spirita, which is  
methodically wrong.]