

I raise the present on the past,  
(As some perennial tree out of its roots, the present on the past,)   
With time and space I him dilate and fuse the immortal laws,  
To make himself by them the law unto himself.

#### When I Read the Book

When I read the book, the biography famous,  
And is this then (said I) what the author calls a man's life?  
And so will some one when I am dead and gone write my life?  
(As if any man really knew aught of my life,  
Why even I myself I often think know little or nothing of my real life,  
Only a few hints, a few diffused faint clews and indirections  
I seek for my own use to trace out here.)

#### Beginning My Studies

Beginning my studies the first step pleas'd me so much,  
The mere fact consciousness, these forms, the power of motion,  
The least insect or animal, the senses, eyesight, love,  
The first step I say awed me and pleas'd me so much,  
I have hardly gone and hardly wish'd to go any farther,  
But stop and loiter all the time to sing it in ecstatic songs.

#### 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 the States

To the States or any one of them, or any city of the States, Resist  
much, obey little,  
Once unquestioning obedience, once fully enslaved,  
Once fully enslaved, no nation, state, city of this earth, ever  
afterward resumes its liberty.

#### On Journeys Through the States

On journeys through the States we start,  
(Ay through the world, urged by these songs,  
Sailing henceforth to every land, to every sea,)
We willing learners of all, teachers of all, and lovers of all.

We have watch'd the seasons dispensing themselves and passing on,  
And have said, Why should not a man or woman do as much as the  
seasons, and effuse as much?

We dwell a while in every city and town,  
We pass through Kanada, the North-east, the vast valley of the  
Mississippi, and the Southern States,  
We confer on equal terms with each of the States,  
We make trial of ourselves and invite men and women to hear,  
We say to ourselves, Remember, fear not, be candid, promulge the  
body and the soul,  
Dwell a while and pass on, be copious, temperate, chaste, magnetic,  
And what you effuse may then return as the seasons return,  
And may be just as much as the seasons.

#### To a Certain Cantatrice

Here, take this gift,  
I was reserving it for some hero, speaker, or general,  
One who should serve the good old cause, the great idea, the  
progress and freedom of the race,  
Some brave confronter of despots, some daring rebel;  
But I see that what I was reserving belongs to you just as much as to any.

#### Me Imperturbe

Me imperturbe, standing at ease in Nature,  
Master of all or mistress of all, aplomb in the midst of irrational things,  
Imbued as they, passive, receptive, silent as they,  
Finding my occupation, poverty, notoriety, foibles, crimes, less  
important than I thought,  
Me toward the Mexican sea, or in the Mannahatta or the Tennessee,  
or far north or inland,  
A river man, or a man of the woods or of any farm-life of these  
States or of the coast, or the lakes or Kanada,  
Me wherever my life is lived, O to be self-balanced for contingencies,  
To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs, as  
the trees and animals do.

#### Savantism

Thither as I look I see each result and glory retracing itself and  
nestling close, always obligated,  
Thither hours, months, years--thither trades, compacts,  
establishments, even the most minute,  
Thither every-day life, speech, utensils, politics, persons, estates;  
Thither we also, I with my leaves and songs, trustful, admirant,

As a father to his father going takes his children along with him.

#### The Ship Starting

Lo, the unbounded sea,  
On its breast a ship starting, spreading all sails, carrying even  
her moonsails.  
The pennant is flying aloft as she speeds she speeds so stately--  
below emulous waves press forward,  
They surround the ship with shining curving motions and foam.

#### I Hear America Singing

I hear America singing, the varied carols I hear,  
Those of mechanics, each one singing his as it should be blithe and strong,  
The carpenter singing his as he measures his plank or beam,  
The mason singing his as he makes ready for work, or leaves off work,  
The boatman singing what belongs to him in his boat, the deckhand  
singing on the steamboat deck,  
The shoemaker singing as he sits on his bench, the hatter singing as  
he stands,  
The wood-cutter's song, the ploughboy's on his way in the morning,  
or at noon intermission or at sundown,  
The delicious singing of the mother, or of the young wife at work,  
or of the girl sewing or washing,  
Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,  
The day what belongs to the day--at night the party of young  
fellows, robust, friendly,  
Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.

#### What Place Is Besieged?

What place is besieged, and vainly tries to raise the siege?  
Lo, I send to that place a commander, swift, brave, immortal,  
And with him horse and foot, and parks of artillery,  
And artillery-men, the deadliest that ever fired gun.

#### Still Though the One I Sing

Still though the one I sing,  
(One, yet of contradictions made,) I dedicate to Nationality,  
I leave in him revolt, (O latent right of insurrection! O  
quenchless, indispensable fire!)

#### Shut Not Your Doors

Shut not your doors to me proud libraries,  
For that which was lacking on all your well-fill'd shelves, yet  
    needed most, I bring,  
Forth from the war emerging, a book I have made,  
The words of my book nothing, the drift of it every thing,  
A book separate, not link'd with the rest nor felt by the intellect,  
But you ye untold latencies will thrill to every page.

#### Poets to Come

Poets to come! orators, singers, musicians to come!  
Not to-day is to justify me and answer what I am for,  
But you, a new brood, native, athletic, continental, greater than  
    before known,  
Arouse! for you must justify me.

I myself but write one or two indicative words for the future,  
I but advance a moment only to wheel and hurry back in the darkness.

I am a man who, sauntering along without fully stopping, turns a  
    casual look upon you and then averts his face,  
Leaving it to you to prove and define it,  
Expecting the main things from you.

#### To You

Stranger, if you passing meet me and desire to speak to me, why  
    should you not speak to me?  
And why should I not speak to you?

#### Thou Reader

Thou reader throbbest life and pride and love the same as I,  
Therefore for thee the following chants.

#### BOOK II

##### Starting from Paumanok

1

Starting from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born,  
Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother,  
After roaming many lands, lover of populous pavements,  
Dweller in Mannahatta my city, or on southern savannas,  
Or a soldier camp'd or carrying my knapsack and gun, or a miner  
    in California,  
Or rude in my home in Dakota's woods, my diet meat, my drink from  
    the spring,

Or withdrawn to muse and meditate in some deep recess,  
Far from the clank of crowds intervals passing rapt and happy,  
Aware of the fresh free giver the flowing Missouri, aware of  
mighty Niagara,  
Aware of the buffalo herds grazing the plains, the hirsute and  
strong-breasted bull,  
Of earth, rocks, Fifth-month flowers experienced, stars, rain, snow,  
my amaze,  
Having studied the mocking-bird's tones and the flight of the  
mountain-hawk,  
And heard at dawn the unrivall'd one, the hermit thrush from the  
swamp-cedars,  
Solitary, singing in the West, I strike up for a New World.

2

Victory, union, faith, identity, time,  
The indissoluble compacts, riches, mystery,  
Eternal progress, the kosmos, and the modern reports.  
This then is life,  
Here is what has come to the surface after so many throes and convulsions.

How curious! how real!  
Underfoot the divine soil, overhead the sun.

See revolving the globe,  
The ancestor-continent away group'd together,  
The present and future continents north and south, with the isthmus  
between.

See, vast trackless spaces,  
As in a dream they change, they swiftly fill,  
Countless masses debouch upon them,  
They are now cover'd with the foremost people, arts, institutions, known.

See, projected through time,  
For me an audience interminable.

With firm and regular step they wend, they never stop,  
Successions of men, Americanos, a hundred millions,  
One generation playing its part and passing on,  
Another generation playing its part and passing on in its turn,  
With faces turn'd sideways or backward towards me to listen,  
With eyes retrospective towards me.

3

Americanos! conquerors! marches humanitarian!  
Foremost! century marches! Libertad! masses!  
For you a programme of chants.

Chants of the prairies,  
Chants of the long-running Mississippi, and down to the Mexican sea,  
Chants of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota,  
Chants going forth from the centre from Kansas, and thence equidistant,  
Shooting in pulses of fire ceaseless to vivify all.

4

Take my leaves America, take them South and take them North,  
Make welcome for them everywhere, for they are your own off-spring,  
Surround them East and West, for they would surround you,  
And you precedents, connect lovingly with them, for they connect  
lovingly with you.