

I conn'd old times,  
I sat studying at the feet of the great masters,  
Now if eligible O that the great masters might return and study me.

In the name of these States shall I scorn the antique?  
Why these are the children of the antique to justify it.

5

Dead poets, philosophs, priests,  
Martyrs, artists, inventors, governments long since,  
Language-shapers on other shores,  
Nations once powerful, now reduced, withdrawn, or desolate,  
I dare not proceed till I respectfully credit what you have left  
    wafted hither,  
I have perused it, own it is admirable, (moving awhile among it,)  
Think nothing can ever be greater, nothing can ever deserve more  
    than it deserves,  
Regarding it all intently a long while, then dismissing it,  
I stand in my place with my own day here.

Here lands female and male,  
Here the heir-ship and heiress-ship of the world, here the flame of  
    materials,  
Here spirituality the translatress, the openly-avow'd,  
The ever-tending, the finale of visible forms,  
The satisfier, after due long-waiting now advancing,  
Yes here comes my mistress the soul.

6

The soul,  
Forever and forever--longer than soil is brown and solid--longer  
    than water ebbs and flows.  
I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be the  
    most spiritual poems,  
And I will make the poems of my body and of mortality,  
For I think I shall then supply myself with the poems of my soul and  
    of immortality.

I will make a song for these States that no one State may under any  
    circumstances be subjected to another State,  
And I will make a song that there shall be comity by day and by  
    night between all the States, and between any two of them,  
And I will make a song for the ears of the President, full of  
    weapons with menacing points,  
And behind the weapons countless dissatisfied faces;  
And a song make I of the One form'd out of all,  
The fang'd and glittering One whose head is over all,  
Resolute warlike One including and over all,  
(However high the head of any else that head is over all.)

I will acknowledge contemporary lands,  
I will trail the whole geography of the globe and salute courteously  
    every city large and small,  
And employments! I will put in my poems that with you is heroism  
    upon land and sea,  
And I will report all heroism from an American point of view.

I will sing the song of companionship,  
I will show what alone must finally compact these,  
I believe these are to found their own ideal of manly love,

indicating it in me,  
I will therefore let flame from me the burning fires that were  
threatening to consume me,  
I will lift what has too long kept down those smouldering fires,  
I will give them complete abandonment,  
I will write the evangel-poem of comrades and of love,  
For who but I should understand love with all its sorrow and joy?  
And who but I should be the poet of comrades?

7

I am the credulous man of qualities, ages, races,  
I advance from the people in their own spirit,  
Here is what sings unrestricted faith.

Omnes! omnes! let others ignore what they may,  
I make the poem of evil also, I commemorate that part also,  
I am myself just as much evil as good, and my nation is--and I say  
there is in fact no evil,  
(Or if there is I say it is just as important to you, to the land or  
to me, as any thing else.)

I too, following many and follow'd by many, inaugurate a religion, I  
descend into the arena,  
(It may be I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there, the  
winner's pealing shouts,  
Who knows? they may rise from me yet, and soar above every thing.)

Each is not for its own sake,  
I say the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's sake.

I say no man has ever yet been half devout enough,  
None has ever yet adored or worship'd half enough,  
None has begun to think how divine he himself is, and how certain  
the future is.

I say that the real and permanent grandeur of these States must be  
their religion,  
Otherwise there is just no real and permanent grandeur;  
(Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion,  
Nor land nor man or woman without religion.)

8

What are you doing young man?  
Are you so earnest, so given up to literature, science, art, amours?  
These ostensible realities, politics, points?  
Your ambition or business whatever it may be?

It is well--against such I say not a word, I am their poet also,  
But behold! such swiftly subside, burnt up for religion's sake,  
For not all matter is fuel to heat, impalpable flame, the essential  
life of the earth,  
Any more than such are to religion.

9

What do you seek so pensive and silent?  
What do you need camerado?  
Dear son do you think it is love?

Listen dear son--listen America, daughter or son,  
It is a painful thing to love a man or woman to excess, and yet it  
satisfies, it is great,

But there is something else very great, it makes the whole coincide,  
It, magnificent, beyond materials, with continuous hands sweeps and  
provides for all.

10

Know you, solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater religion,  
The following chants each for its kind I sing.

My comrade!

For you to share with me two greatnesses, and a third one rising  
inclusive and more resplendent,  
The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness of Religion.

Melange mine own, the unseen and the seen,  
Mysterious ocean where the streams empty,  
Prophetic spirit of materials shifting and flickering around me,  
Living beings, identities now doubtless near us in the air that we  
know not of,  
Contact daily and hourly that will not release me,  
These selecting, these in hints demanded of me.

Not he with a daily kiss onward from childhood kissing me,  
Has winded and twisted around me that which holds me to him,  
Any more than I am held to the heavens and all the spiritual world,  
After what they have done to me, suggesting themes.

O such themes--equalities! O divine average!  
Warblings under the sun, usher'd as now, or at noon, or setting,  
Strains musical flowing through ages, now reaching hither,  
I take to your reckless and composite chords, add to them, and  
cheerfully pass them forward.

11

As I have walk'd in Alabama my morning walk,  
I have seen where the she-bird the mocking-bird sat on her nest in  
the briers hatching her brood.

I have seen the he-bird also,  
I have paus'd to hear him near at hand inflating his throat and  
joyfully singing.

And while I paus'd it came to me that what he really sang for was  
not there only,  
Nor for his mate nor himself only, nor all sent back by the echoes,  
But subtle, clandestine, away beyond,  
A charge transmitted and gift occult for those being born.

12

Democracy! near at hand to you a throat is now inflating itself and  
joyfully singing.

Ma femme! for the brood beyond us and of us,  
For those who belong here and those to come,  
I exultant to be ready for them will now shake out carols stronger  
and haughtier than have ever yet been heard upon earth.

I will make the songs of passion to give them their way,  
And your songs outlaw'd offenders, for I scan you with kindred eyes,  
and carry you with me the same as any.

I will make the true poem of riches,

To earn for the body and the mind whatever adheres and goes forward  
and is not dropt by death;  
I will effuse egotism and show it underlying all, and I will be the  
bard of personality,  
And I will show of male and female that either is but the equal of  
the other,  
And sexual organs and acts! do you concentrate in me, for I am determin'd  
to tell you with courageous clear voice to prove you illustrious,  
And I will show that there is no imperfection in the present, and  
can be none in the future,  
And I will show that whatever happens to anybody it may be turn'd to  
beautiful results,  
And I will show that nothing can happen more beautiful than death,  
And I will thread a thread through my poems that time and events are  
compact,  
And that all the things of the universe are perfect miracles, each  
as profound as any.

I will not make poems with reference to parts,  
But I will make poems, songs, thoughts, with reference to ensemble,  
And I will not sing with reference to a day, but with reference to  
all days,  
And I will not make a poem nor the least part of a poem but has  
reference to the soul,  
Because having look'd at the objects of the universe, I find there  
is no one nor any particle of one but has reference to the soul.

13

Was somebody asking to see the soul?  
See, your own shape and countenance, persons, substances, beasts,  
the trees, the running rivers, the rocks and sands.

All hold spiritual joys and afterwards loosen them;  
How can the real body ever die and be buried?

Of your real body and any man's or woman's real body,  
Item for item it will elude the hands of the corpse-cleaners and  
pass to fitting spheres,  
Carrying what has accrued to it from the moment of birth to the  
moment of death.

Not the types set up by the printer return their impression, the  
meaning, the main concern,  
Any more than a man's substance and life or a woman's substance and  
life return in the body and the soul,  
Indifferently before death and after death.

Behold, the body includes and is the meaning, the main concern and  
includes and is the soul;  
Whoever you are, how superb and how divine is your body, or any part  
of it!

14

Whoever you are, to you endless announcements!

Daughter of the lands did you wait for your poet?  
Did you wait for one with a flowing mouth and indicative hand?  
Toward the male of the States, and toward the female of the States,  
Exulting words, words to Democracy's lands.

Interlink'd, food-yielding lands!

Land of coal and iron! land of gold! land of cotton, sugar, rice!  
 Land of wheat, beef, pork! land of wool and hemp! land of the apple  
 and the grape!  
 Land of the pastoral plains, the grass-fields of the world! land of  
 those sweet-air'd interminable plateaus!  
 Land of the herd, the garden, the healthy house of adobie!  
 Lands where the north-west Columbia winds, and where the south-west  
 Colorado winds!  
 Land of the eastern Chesapeake! land of the Delaware!  
 Land of Ontario, Erie, Huron, Michigan!  
 Land of the Old Thirteen! Massachusetts land! land of Vermont and  
 Connecticut!  
 Land of the ocean shores! land of sierras and peaks!  
 Land of boatmen and sailors! fishermen's land!  
 Inextricable lands! the clutch'd together! the passionate ones!  
 The side by side! the elder and younger brothers! the bony-limb'd!  
 The great women's land! the feminine! the experienced sisters and  
 the inexperienced sisters!  
 Far breath'd land! Arctic braced! Mexican breez'd! the diverse! the  
 compact!  
 The Pennsylvanian! the Virginian! the double Carolinian!  
 O all and each well-loved by me! my intrepid nations! O I at any  
 rate include you all with perfect love!  
 I cannot be discharged from you! not from one any sooner than another!  
 O death! O for all that, I am yet of you unseen this hour with  
 irrepressible love,  
 Walking New England, a friend, a traveler,  
 Splashing my bare feet in the edge of the summer ripples on  
 Paumanok's sands,  
 Crossing the prairies, dwelling again in Chicago, dwelling in every town,  
 Observing shows, births, improvements, structures, arts,  
 Listening to orators and oratresses in public halls,  
 Of and through the States as during life, each man and woman my neighbor,  
 The Louisianian, the Georgian, as near to me, and I as near to him and her,  
 The Mississippian and Arkansian yet with me, and I yet with any of them,  
 Yet upon the plains west of the spinal river, yet in my house of adobie,  
 Yet returning eastward, yet in the Seaside State or in Maryland,  
 Yet Kanadian cheerily braving the winter, the snow and ice welcome to me,  
 Yet a true son either of Maine or of the Granite State, or the  
 Narragansett Bay State, or the Empire State,  
 Yet sailing to other shores to annex the same, yet welcoming every  
 new brother,  
 Hereby applying these leaves to the new ones from the hour they  
 unite with the old ones,  
 Coming among the new ones myself to be their companion and equal,  
 coming personally to you now,  
 Enjoining you to acts, characters, spectacles, with me.

15

With me with firm holding, yet haste, haste on.  
 For your life adhere to me,  
 (I may have to be persuaded many times before I consent to give  
 myself really to you, but what of that?  
 Must not Nature be persuaded many times?)

No dainty dolce affettuoso I,  
 Bearded, sun-burnt, gray-neck'd, forbidding, I have arrived,  
 To be wrestled with as I pass for the solid prizes of the universe,  
 For such I afford whoever can persevere to win them.