

All below duly travel'd, and still I mount and mount.

Rise after rise bow the phantoms behind me,  
Afar down I see the huge first Nothing, I know I was even there,  
I waited unseen and always, and slept through the lethargic mist,  
And took my time, and took no hurt from the fetid carbon.

Long I was hugg'd close--long and long.

Immense have been the preparations for me,  
Faithful and friendly the arms that have help'd me.

Cycles ferried my cradle, rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen,  
For room to me stars kept aside in their own rings,  
They sent influences to look after what was to hold me.

Before I was born out of my mother generations guided me,  
My embryo has never been torpid, nothing could overlay it.

For it the nebula cohered to an orb,  
The long slow strata piled to rest it on,  
Vast vegetables gave it sustenance,  
Monstrous sauroids transported it in their mouths and deposited it  
with care.

All forces have been steadily employ'd to complete and delight me,  
Now on this spot I stand with my robust soul.

45

O span of youth! ever-push'd elasticity!  
O manhood, balanced, florid and full.

My lovers suffocate me,  
Crowding my lips, thick in the pores of my skin,  
Jostling me through streets and public halls, coming naked to me at night,  
Crying by day, Ahoy! from the rocks of the river, swinging and  
chirping over my head,  
Calling my name from flower-beds, vines, tangled underbrush,  
Lighting on every moment of my life,  
Bussing my body with soft balsamic busses,  
Noiselessly passing handfuls out of their hearts and giving them to be mine.

Old age superbly rising! O welcome, ineffable grace of dying days!

Every condition promulges not only itself, it promulges what grows  
after and out of itself,  
And the dark hush promulges as much as any.

I open my scuttle at night and see the far-sprinkled systems,  
And all I see multiplied as high as I can cipher edge but the rim of  
the farther systems.

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding,  
Outward and outward and forever outward.

My sun has his sun and round him obediently wheels,  
He joins with his partners a group of superior circuit,  
And greater sets follow, making specks of the greatest inside them.

There is no stoppage and never can be stoppage,

If I, you, and the worlds, and all beneath or upon their surfaces,  
were this moment reduced back to a pallid float, it would  
not avail the long run,  
We should surely bring up again where we now stand,  
And surely go as much farther, and then farther and farther.

A few quadrillions of eras, a few octillions of cubic leagues, do  
not hazard the span or make it impatient,  
They are but parts, any thing is but a part.

See ever so far, there is limitless space outside of that,  
Count ever so much, there is limitless time around that.

My rendezvous is appointed, it is certain,  
The Lord will be there and wait till I come on perfect terms,  
The great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine will be there.

46

I know I have the best of time and space, and was never measured and  
never will be measured.

I tramp a perpetual journey, (come listen all!)  
My signs are a rain-proof coat, good shoes, and a staff cut from the woods,  
No friend of mine takes his ease in my chair,  
I have no chair, no church, no philosophy,  
I lead no man to a dinner-table, library, exchange,  
But each man and each woman of you I lead upon a knoll,  
My left hand hooking you round the waist,  
My right hand pointing to landscapes of continents and the public road.

Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it for yourself.

It is not far, it is within reach,  
Perhaps you have been on it since you were born and did not know,  
Perhaps it is everywhere on water and on land.

Shoulder your duds dear son, and I will mine, and let us hasten forth,  
Wonderful cities and free nations we shall fetch as we go.

If you tire, give me both burdens, and rest the chuff of your hand  
on my hip,  
And in due time you shall repay the same service to me,  
For after we start we never lie by again.

This day before dawn I ascended a hill and look'd at the crowded heaven,  
And I said to my spirit When we become the enfolders of those orbs,  
and the pleasure and knowledge of every thing in them, shall we  
be fill'd and satisfied then?  
And my spirit said No, we but level that lift to pass and continue beyond.

You are also asking me questions and I hear you,  
I answer that I cannot answer, you must find out for yourself.

Sit a while dear son,  
Here are biscuits to eat and here is milk to drink,  
But as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes, I kiss you  
with a good-by kiss and open the gate for your egress hence.

Long enough have you dream'd contemptible dreams,  
Now I wash the gum from your eyes,

You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every  
moment of your life.

Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore,  
Now I will you to be a bold swimmer,  
To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me, shout,  
and laughingly dash with your hair.

47

I am the teacher of athletes,  
He that by me spreads a wider breast than my own proves the width of my own,  
He most honors my style who learns under it to destroy the teacher.

The boy I love, the same becomes a man not through derived power,  
but in his own right,  
Wicked rather than virtuous out of conformity or fear,  
Fond of his sweetheart, relishing well his steak,  
Unrequited love or a slight cutting him worse than sharp steel cuts,  
First-rate to ride, to fight, to hit the bull's eye, to sail a  
skiff, to sing a song or play on the banjo,  
Preferring scars and the beard and faces pitted with small-pox over  
all latherers,  
And those well-tann'd to those that keep out of the sun.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me?  
I follow you whoever you are from the present hour,  
My words itch at your ears till you understand them.

I do not say these things for a dollar or to fill up the time while  
I wait for a boat,  
(It is you talking just as much as myself, I act as the tongue of you,  
Tied in your mouth, in mine it begins to be loosen'd.)

I swear I will never again mention love or death inside a house,  
And I swear I will never translate myself at all, only to him or her  
who privately stays with me in the open air.

If you would understand me go to the heights or water-shore,  
The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or motion of waves key,  
The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,  
But roughs and little children better than they.

The young mechanic is closest to me, he knows me well,  
The woodman that takes his axe and jug with him shall take me with  
him all day,  
The farm-boy ploughing in the field feels good at the sound of my voice,  
In vessels that sail my words sail, I go with fishermen and seamen  
and love them.

The soldier camp'd or upon the march is mine,  
On the night ere the pending battle many seek me, and I do not fail them,  
On that solemn night (it may be their last) those that know me seek me.  
My face rubs to the hunter's face when he lies down alone in his blanket,  
The driver thinking of me does not mind the jolt of his wagon,  
The young mother and old mother comprehend me,  
The girl and the wife rest the needle a moment and forget where they are,  
They and all would resume what I have told them.

48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,  
And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,  
And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,  
And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own  
    funeral drest in his shroud,  
And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the earth,  
And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the  
    learning of all times,  
And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it  
    may become a hero,  
And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe,  
And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed  
    before a million universes.

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,  
For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,  
(No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and  
    about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least,  
Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?  
I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,  
In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,  
I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd  
    by God's name,  
And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,  
Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

49

And as to you Death, and you bitter hug of mortality, it is idle to  
    try to alarm me.

To his work without flinching the accoucheur comes,  
I see the elder-hand pressing receiving supporting,  
I recline by the sills of the exquisite flexible doors,  
And mark the outlet, and mark the relief and escape.

And as to you Corpse I think you are good manure, but that does not  
    offend me,  
I smell the white roses sweet-scented and growing,  
I reach to the leafy lips, I reach to the polish'd breasts of melons.

And as to you Life I reckon you are the leavings of many deaths,  
(No doubt I have died myself ten thousand times before.)

I hear you whispering there O stars of heaven,  
O suns--O grass of graves--O perpetual transfers and promotions,  
If you do not say any thing how can I say any thing?

Of the turbid pool that lies in the autumn forest,  
Of the moon that descends the steeps of the soughing twilight,  
Toss, sparkles of day and dusk--toss on the black stems that decay  
    in the muck,  
Toss to the moaning gibberish of the dry limbs.

I ascend from the moon, I ascend from the night,  
I perceive that the ghastly glimmer is noonday sunbeams reflected,  
And debouch to the steady and central from the offspring great or small.

50

There is that in me--I do not know what it is--but I know it is in me.

Wrench'd and sweaty--calm and cool then my body becomes,  
I sleep--I sleep long.

I do not know it--it is without name--it is a word unsaid,  
It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol.

Something it swings on more than the earth I swing on,  
To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me.

Perhaps I might tell more. Outlines! I plead for my brothers and sisters.

Do you see O my brothers and sisters?  
It is not chaos or death--it is form, union, plan--it is eternal  
life--it is Happiness.

51

The past and present wilt--I have fill'd them, emptied them.  
And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?  
Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening,  
(Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer.)

Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through with his supper?  
Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab  
and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,  
I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

The last scud of day holds back for me,  
It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,  
It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,  
I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,  
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,  
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,  
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
Missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.