

## Song of Myself (1892 Version)

WALT WHITMAN

8

The little one sleeps in its cradle,  
I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies with my  
hand.

The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill,  
I peeringly view them from the top.

The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,  
I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the pistol has fallen.

The blab of the pave, tires of carts, sluff of boot-soles, talk of the  
promenaders,  
The heavy omnibus, the driver with his interrogating thumb, the clank of  
the shod horses on the granite floor,  
The snow-sleighs, clinking, shouted jokes, pelts of snow-balls,  
The hurrahs for popular favorites, the fury of rous'd mobs,  
The flap of the curtain'd litter, a sick man inside borne to the hospital,  
The meeting of enemies, the sudden oath, the blows and fall,  
The excited crowd, the policeman with his star quickly working his passage  
to the centre of the crowd,  
The impassive stones that receive and return so many echoes,  
What groans of over-fed or half-starv'd who fall sunstruck or in fits,  
What exclamations of women taken suddenly who hurry home and give  
birth to babes,  
What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls  
restrain'd by decorum,  
Arrests of criminals, slights, adulterous offers made, acceptances, rejections  
with convex lips,  
I mind them or the show or resonance of them—I come and I depart.

## The Village Blacksmith

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW

UNDER a spreading chestnut tree  
The village smithy stands;  
The smith, a mighty man is he,  
With large and sinewy hands;  
And the muscles of his brawny arms 5  
Are strong as iron bands.

His hair is crisp, and black, and long,  
His face is like the tan;  
His brow is wet with honest sweat,  
He earns whate'er he can, 10  
And looks the whole world in the face,  
For he owes not any man.

Week in, week out, from morn till night,  
You can hear his bellows blow;  
You can hear him swing his heavy sledge 15  
With measured beat and slow,  
Like a sexton ringing the village bell,  
When the evening sun is low.

And children coming home from school  
Look in at the open door; 20  
They love to see the flaming forge,  
And hear the bellows roar,  
And watch the burning sparks that fly  
Like chaff from a threshing-floor.

He goes on Sunday to the church, 25  
And sits among his boys;  
He hears the parson pray and preach,  
He hears his daughter's voice,  
Singing in the village choir,  
And it makes his heart rejoice. 30

It sounds to him like her mother's voice,  
Singing in Paradise!

He needs must think of her once more,  
How in the grave she lies;  
And with his hard, rough hand he wipes 35  
A tear out of his eyes.

Toiling,—rejoicing,—sorrowing,  
Onward through life he goes;  
Each morning sees some task begin,  
Each evening sees it close; 40  
Something attempted, something done,  
Has earned a night's repose.

Thanks, thanks to thee, my worthy friend,  
For the lesson thou hast taught!  
Thus at the flaming forge of life 45  
Our fortunes must be wrought;  
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped  
Each burning deed and thought!

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12

The butcher-boy puts off his killing-clothes, or sharpens his knife at the stall  
in the market,  
I loiter enjoying his repartee and his shuffle and break-down.

Blacksmiths with grimed and hairy chests environ the anvil,  
Each has his main-sledge, they are all out, there is a great heat in the fire.

From the cinder-strew'd threshold I follow their movements,  
The lithe sheer of their waists plays even with their massive arms,  
Overhand the hammers swing, overhand so slow, overhand so sure,  
They do not hasten, each man hits in his place.

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[EXCERPT]

13

The negro holds firmly the reins of his four horses, the block swags  
    underneath on its tied-over chain,  
The negro that drives the long dray of the stone-yard, steady and tall he  
    stands pois'd on one leg on the string-piece,  
His blue shirt exposes his ample neck and breast and loosens over his hip-  
    band,  
His glance is calm and commanding, he tosses the slouch of his hat away  
    from his forehead,  
The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the black of his  
    polish'd and perfect limbs.

[...]

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15

The pure contralto sings in the organ loft,  
The carpenter dresses his plank, the tongue of his foreplane whistles its wild  
    ascending lisp,  
The married and unmarried children ride home to their Thanksgiving dinner,  
The pilot seizes the king-pin, he heaves down with a strong arm,  
The mate stands braced in the whale-boat, lance and harpoon are ready,  
  
The duck-shooter walks by silent and cautious stretches,  
The deacons are ordain'd with cross'd hands at the altar,  
The spinning-girl retreats and advances to the hum of the big wheel,  
The farmer stops by the bars as he walks on a First-day loafe and looks at the  
    oats and rye,  
The lunatic is carried at last to the asylum a confirm'd case,  
(He will never sleep any more as he did in the cot in his mother's bed-room;)  
The jour printer with gray head and gaunt jaws works at his case,  
He turns his quid of tobacco while his eyes blurr with the manuscript;  
The malform'd limbs are tied to the surgeon's table,  
What is removed drops horribly in a pail;  
The quadron girl is sold at the auction-stand, the drunkard nods by the  
    bar-room stove,  
The machinist rolls up his sleeves, the policeman travels his beat, the  
    gate-keeper marks who pass,  
The young fellow drives the express-wagon, (I love him, though I do not know  
    him;)  
The half-breed straps on his light boots to compete in the race,  
The western turkey-shooting draws old and young, some lean on their rifles,  
    some sit on logs,  
Out from the crowd steps the marksman, takes his position, levels his piece;  
The groups of newly-come immigrants cover the wharf or levee,  
As the woolly-pates hoe in the sugar-field, the overseer views them from his  
    saddle,  
The bugle calls in the ball-room, the gentlemen run for their partners, the  
    dancers bow to each other,  
The youth lies awake in the cedar-roof'd garret and harks to the musical rain,  
The Wolverine sets traps on the creek that helps fill the Huron,  
The squaw wrapt in her yellow-hemm'd cloth is offering moccasins and bead-

bags for sale,  
The connoisseur peers along the exhibition-gallery with half-shut eyes bent  
sideways,  
As the deck-hands make fast the steamboat the plank is thrown for the shore-  
going passengers,  
The young sister holds out the skein while the elder sister winds it off in a ball,  
and stops now and then for the knots,  
The one-year wife is recovering and happy having a week ago borne her first  
child,  
The clean-hair'd Yankee girl works with her sewing-machine or in the factory  
or mill,  
The paving-man leans on his two-handed rammer, the reporter's lead flies  
swiftly over the note-book, the sign-painter is lettering with blue and  
gold,  
The canal boy trots on the tow-path, the book-keeper counts at his desk, the  
shoemaker waxes his thread,  
The conductor beats time for the band and all the performers follow him,  
The child is baptized, the convert is making his first professions,  
The regatta is spread on the bay, the race is begun, (how the white sails  
sparkle!)

The drover watching his drove sings out to them that would stray,  
The pedler sweats with his pack on his back, (the purchaser higgling about  
the odd cent;)

The bride unrumples her white dress, the minute-hand of the clock moves  
slowly,  
The opium-eater reclines with rigid head and just-open'd lips,  
The prostitute draggles her shawl, her bonnet bobs on her tipsy and pimpled  
neck,  
The crowd laugh at her blackguard oaths, the men jeer and wink to each  
other,  
(Miserable! I do not laugh at your oaths nor jeer you;)

The President holding a cabinet council is surrounded by the great  
Secretaries,  
On the piazza walk three matrons stately and friendly with twined arms,  
The crew of the fish-smack pack repeated layers of halibut in the hold,  
The Missourian crosses the plains toting his wares and his cattle,  
As the fare-collector goes through the train he gives notice by the jingling of  
loose change,  
The floor-men are laying the floor, the tanners are tanning the roof, the masons  
are calling for mortar,  
In single file each shouldering his hod pass onward the laborers;  
Seasons pursuing each other the indescribable crowd is gather'd, it is the  
fourth of Seventh-month, (what salutes of cannon and small arms!)

Seasons pursuing each other the plougher ploughs, the mower mows, and the  
winter-grain falls in the ground;

Off on the lakes the pike-fisher watches and waits by the hole in the frozen  
surface,  
The stumps stand thick round the clearing, the squatter strikes deep with his  
axe,  
Flatboatmen make fast towards dusk near the cotton-wood or pecan-trees,  
Coon-seekers go through the regions of the Red river or through those  
drain'd by the Tennessee, or through those of the Arkansas,  
Torches shine in the dark that hangs on the Chattahooche or Altamahaw,  
  
Patriarchs sit at supper with sons and grandsons and great-grandsons around  
them,  
In walls of adobie, in canvas tents, rest hunters and trappers after their day's  
sport,  
The city sleeps and the country sleeps,  
The living sleep for their time, the dead sleep for their time,  
The old husband sleeps by his wife and the young husband sleeps by his wife;  
And these tend inward to me, and I tend outward to them,  
And such as it is to be of these more or less I am,  
And of these one and all I weave the song of myself.



## Going Home: New Orleans

BY SHERYL ST. GERMAIN

for my grandmother, Theresa Frank

Some slow evenings when the light hangs late and stubborn in the sky,  
gives itself up to darkness slowly and deliberately, slow cloud after slow cloud,  
slowness enters me like something familiar,  
and it feels like going home.

It's all there in the disappearing light:

all the evenings of slow sky and slow loving, slow boats on sluggish bayous;  
the thick-middled trees with the slow-sounding names—oak, mimosa, pecan,  
magnolia;

the slow tree sap that sticks in your hair when you lie with the trees;  
and the maple syrup and pancakes and grits, the butter melting  
slowly into and down the sides like sweat between breasts of sloe-eyed  
strippers;

and the slow-throated blues that floats over the city like fog;  
and the weeping, the willows, the cut onions, the cayenne, the slow-cooking  
beans with marrow-thick gravy;

and all the mint juleps drunk so slowly on all the slow southern porches,  
the bourbon and sugar and mint going down warm and brown, syrup and slow;  
and all the ice cubes melting in all the iced teas,

all the slow-faced people sitting in all the slowly rocking rockers;

and the crabs and the shrimp and crawfish, the hard shells  
slowly and deliberately and lovingly removed, the delicate flesh  
slowly sucked out of heads and legs and tails;

and the slow lips that eat and drink and love and speak  
that slow luxurious language, savoring each word like a long-missed lover;  
and the slow-moving nuns, the black habits dragging the swollen ground;

and the slow river that cradles it all, and the chicory coffee  
that cuts through it all, slow-boiled and black as dirt;

and the slow dreams and the slow-healing wounds and the slow smoke of it all  
slipping out, ballooning into the sky—slow, deliberate, and magnificent.

## Sunflower Sutra

BY ALLEN GINSBERG

I walked on the banks of the tincan banana dock and sat down under the huge shade of a Southern Pacific locomotive to look at the sunset over the box house hills and cry.

Jack Kerouac sat beside me on a busted rusty iron pole, companion, we thought the same thoughts of the soul, bleak and blue and sad-eyed, surrounded by the gnarled steel roots of trees of machinery.

The oily water on the river mirrored the red sky, sun sank on top of final Frisco peaks, no fish in that stream, no hermit in those mounts, just ourselves rheumy-eyed and hung-over like old bums on the riverbank, tired and wily.

Look at the Sunflower, he said, there was a dead gray shadow against the sky, big as a man, sitting dry on top of a pile of ancient sawdust—

—I rushed up enchanted—it was my first sunflower, memories of Blake—my visions—Harlem

and Hells of the Eastern rivers, bridges clanking Joes Greasy Sandwiches, dead baby carriages, black treadless tires forgotten and unretreaded, the poem of the riverbank, condoms & pots, steel knives, nothing stainless, only the dank muck and the razor-sharp artifacts passing into the past—

and the gray Sunflower poised against the sunset, crackly bleak and dusty with the smut and smog and smoke of olden locomotives in its eye—

corolla of bleary spikes pushed down and broken like a battered crown, seeds fallen out of its face, soon-to-be-toothless mouth of sunny air, sunrays obliterated on its hairy head like a dried wire spiderweb,

leaves stuck out like arms out of the stem, gestures from the sawdust root, broke pieces of plaster fallen out of the black twigs, a dead fly in its ear,

Unholy battered old thing you were, my sunflower O my soul, I loved you then!

The grime was no man's grime but death and human locomotives,

all that dress of dust, that veil of darkened railroad skin, that smog of cheek, that eyelid of black mis'ry, that sooty hand or phallus or protuberance of artificial worse-than-dirt—industrial—modern—all that civilization spotting your crazy golden crown—

and those blur thoughts of death and dusty loveless eyes and ends and withered roots below, in the home-pile of sand and sawdust, rubber dollar

bills, skin of machinery, the guts and innards of the weeping coughing car, the empty lonely tincans with their rusty tongues alack, what more could I name, the smoked ashes of some cock cigar, the cunts of wheelbarrows and the milky breasts of cars, wornout asses out of chairs & sphincters of dynamos—all these  
entangled in your mummied roots—and you there standing before me in the sunset, all your glory in your form!  
A perfect beauty of a sunflower! a perfect excellent lovely sunflower existence! a sweet natural eye to the new hip moon, woke up alive and excited grasping in the sunset shadow sunrise golden monthly breeze!  
How many flies buzzed round you innocent of your grime, while you cursed the heavens of the railroad and your flower soul?  
Poor dead flower? when did you forget you were a flower? when did you look at your skin and decide you were an impotent dirty old locomotive? the ghost of a locomotive? the specter and shade of a once powerful mad American locomotive?  
You were never no locomotive, Sunflower, you were a sunflower!  
And you Locomotive, you are a locomotive, forget me not!  
So I grabbed up the skeleton thick sunflower and stuck it at my side like a scepter,  
and deliver my sermon to my soul, and Jack's soul too, and anyone who'll listen,  
—We're not our skin of grime, we're not dread bleak dusty imageless locomotives, we're golden sunflowers inside, blessed by our own seed & hairy naked accomplishment-bodies growing into mad black formal sunflowers in the sunset, spied on by our own eyes under the shadow of the mad locomotive riverbank sunset Frisco hilly tincan evening sitdown vision.

*Berkeley, 1955*

## Alabanza: In Praise of Local 100

BY MARTÍN ESPADA

*for the 43 members of Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 100, working at the Windows on the World restaurant, who lost their lives in the attack on the World Trade Center*

*Alabanza.* Praise the cook with a shaven head and a tattoo on his shoulder that said Oye, a blue-eyed Puerto Rican with people from Fajardo, the harbor of pirates centuries ago.

Praise the lighthouse in Fajardo, candle glimmering white to worship the dark saint of the sea.

*Alabanza.* Praise the cook's yellow Pirates cap worn in the name of Roberto Clemente, his plane that flamed into the ocean loaded with cans for Nicaragua, for all the mouths chewing the ash of earthquakes.

*Alabanza.* Praise the kitchen radio, dial clicked even before the dial on the oven, so that music and Spanish rose before bread. *Alabanza.*

Praise Manhattan from a hundred and seven flights up, like Atlantis glimpsed through the windows of an ancient aquarium. Praise the great windows where immigrants from the kitchen could squint and almost see their world, hear the chant of nations:

*Ecuador, México, Republica Dominicana,*

*Haiti, Yemen, Ghana, Bangladesh.*

*Alabanza.* Praise the kitchen in the morning, where the gas burned blue on every stove and exhaust fans fired their diminutive propellers, hands cracked eggs with quick thumbs or sliced open cartons to build an altar of cans.

*Alabanza.* Praise the busboy's music, the chime-chime of his dishes and silverware in the tub.

*Alabanza.* Praise the dish-dog, the dishwasher who worked that morning because another dishwasher could not stop coughing, or because he needed overtime to pile the sacks of rice and beans for a family floating away on some Caribbean island plagued by frogs.

*Alabanza.* Praise the waitress who heard the radio in the kitchen and sang to herself about a man gone. *Alabanza.*

After the thunder wilder than thunder,  
after the shudder deep in the glass of the great windows,  
after the radio stopped singing like a tree full of terrified frogs,  
after night burst the dam of day and flooded the kitchen,  
for a time the stoves glowed in darkness like the lighthouse in Fajardo,  
like a cook's soul. Soul I say, even if the dead cannot tell us  
about the bristles of God's beard because God has no face,  
soul I say, to name the smoke-beings flung in constellations  
across the night sky of this city and cities to come.  
*Alabanza* I say, even if God has no face.

*Alabanza.* When the war began, from Manhattan and Kabul  
two constellations of smoke rose and drifted to each other,  
mingling in icy air, and one said with an Afghan tongue:  
*Teach me to dance. We have no music here.*  
And the other said with a Spanish tongue:  
*I will teach you. Music is all we have.*

## Song of the Broad-Axe

WALT WHITMAN

1

Weapon, shapely, naked, wan!  
Head from the mother's bowels drawn!  
Wooded flesh and metal bone! limb only one, and lip only one!  
Gray-blue leaf by red-heat grown! helve produced from a little seed sown!  
Resting the grass amid and upon,  
To be lean'd, and to lean on.

Strong shapes, and attributes of strong shapes—masculine trades, sights and  
sounds;  
Long varied train of an emblem, dabs of music;  
Fingers of the organist skipping staccato over the keys of the great organ.

2

Welcome are all earth's lands, each for its kind;  
Welcome are lands of pine and oak;  
Welcome are lands of the lemon and fig;  
Welcome are lands of gold;  
Welcome are lands of wheat and maize—welcome those of the grape;  
Welcome are lands of sugar and rice;  
Welcome the cotton-lands—welcome those of the white potato and sweet  
potato;  
Welcome are mountains, flats, sands, forests, prairies;  
Welcome the rich borders of rivers, table-lands, openings;  
Welcome the measureless grazing-lands—welcome the teeming soil of  
orchards, flax, honey, hemp;  
Welcome just as much the other more hard-faced lands;  
Lands rich as lands of gold, or wheat and fruit lands;  
Lands of mines, lands of the manly and rugged ores;  
Lands of coal, copper, lead, tin, zinc;  
LANDS OF IRON! lands of the make of the axe!

3

The log at the wood-pile, the axe supported by it;  
The sylvan hut, the vine over the doorway, the space clear'd for a garden,  
The irregular tapping of rain down on the leaves, after the storm is lull'd,  
The wailing and moaning at intervals, the thought of the sea,  
The thought of ships struck in the storm, and put on their beam ends, and the

cutting away of masts;  
The sentiment of the huge timbers of old-fashion'd houses and barns;  
The remember'd print or narrative, the voyage at a venture of men, families,  
goods,  
The disembarkation, the founding of a new city,  
The voyage of those who sought a New England and found it—the outset  
anywhere,  
The settlements of the Arkansas, Colorado, Ottawa, Willamette,  
The slow progress, the scant fare, the axe, rifle, saddle-bags;  
The beauty of all adventurous and daring persons,  
The beauty of wood-boys and wood-men, with their clear untrimm'd faces,  
The beauty of independence, departure, actions that rely on themselves,  
The American contempt for statutes and ceremonies, the boundless  
impatience of restraint,  
The loose drift of character, the inkling through random types, the  
solidification;  
The butcher in the slaughter-house, the hands aboard schooners and sloops,  
the raftsman, the pioneer,  
Lumbermen in their winter camp, day-break in the woods, stripes of snow on  
the limbs of trees, the occasional snapping,  
The glad clear sound of one's own voice, the merry song, the natural life of  
the woods, the strong day's work,  
The blazing fire at night, the sweet taste of supper, the talk, the bed of  
hemlock boughs, and the bear-skin;  
—The house-builder at work in cities or anywhere,  
The preparatory jointing, squaring, sawing, mortising,  
The hoist-up of beams, the push of them in their places, laying them regular,  
Setting the studs by their tenons in the mortises, according as they were  
prepared,  
The blows of mallets and hammers, the attitudes of the men, their curv'd  
limbs,  
Bending, standing, astride the beams, driving in pins, holding on by posts and  
braces,  
The hook'd arm over the plate, the other arm wielding the axe,  
The floor-men forcing the planks close, to be nail'd,  
Their postures bringing their weapons downward on the bearers,  
The echoes resounding through the vacant building;  
The huge store-house carried up in the city, well under way,  
The six framing-men, two in the middle, and two at each end, carefully  
bearing on their shoulders a heavy stick for a cross-beam,  
The crowded line of masons with trowels in their right hands, rapidly laying  
the long side-wall, two hundred feet from front to rear,  
The flexible rise and fall of backs, the continual click of the trowels striking the  
bricks,  
The bricks, one after another, each laid so workmanlike in its place, and set

with a knock of the trowel-handle,  
The piles of materials, the mortar on the mortar-boards, and the steady  
replenishing by the hod-men;  
—Spar-makers in the spar-yard, the swarming row of well-grown apprentices,  
The swing of their axes on the square-hew'd log, shaping it toward the shape  
of a mast,  
The brisk short crackle of the steel driven slantingly into the pine,  
The butter-color'd chips flying off in great flakes and slivers,  
The limber motion of brawny young arms and hips in easy costumes;  
The constructor of wharves, bridges, piers, bulk-heads, floats, stays against  
the sea;  
—The city fireman—the fire that suddenly bursts forth in the close-pack'd  
square,  
The arriving engines, the hoarse shouts, the nimble stepping and daring,  
The strong command through the fire-trumpets, the falling in line, the rise and  
fall of the arms forcing the water,  
The slender, spasmic, blue-white jets—the bringing to bear of the hooks and  
ladders, and their execution,  
The crash and cut away of connecting wood-work, or through floors, if the fire  
smoulders under them,  
The crowd with their lit faces, watching—the glare and dense shadows;  
—The forger at his forge-furnace, and the user of iron after him,  
The maker of the axe large and small, and the welder and temperer,  
The chooser breathing his breath on the cold steel, and trying the edge with  
his thumb,  
The one who clean-shapes the handle, and sets it firmly in the socket;  
The shadowy processions of the portraits of the past users also,  
The primal patient mechanics, the architects and engineers,  
The far-off Assyrian edifice and Mizra edifice,  
The Roman lictors preceding the consuls,  
The antique European warrior with his axe in combat,  
The uplifted arm, the clatter of blows on the helmeted head,  
The death-howl, the limpsey tumbling body, the rush of friend and foe thither,  
The siege of revolted lieges determin'd for liberty,  
The summons to surrender, the battering at castle gates, the truce and parley;  
The sack of an old city in its time,  
The bursting in of mercenaries and bigots tumultuously and disorderly,  
Roar, flames, blood, drunkenness, madness,  
Goods freely rifled from houses and temples, screams of women in the gripe  
of brigands,  
Craft and thievery of camp-followers, men running, old persons despairing,  
The hell of war, the cruelties of creeds,  
The list of all executive deeds and words, just or unjust,  
The power of personality, just or unjust.



#### 4

Muscle and pluck forever!  
What invigorates life, invigorates death,  
And the dead advance as much as the living advance,  
And the future is no more uncertain than the present,  
And the roughness of the earth and of man encloses as much as the  
    delicatesse of the earth and of man,  
And nothing endures but personal qualities.  
What do you think endures?  
Do you think the great city endures?  
Or a teeming manufacturing state? or a prepared constitution? or the best-  
    built steamships?  
Or hotels of granite and iron? or any chef-d'oeuvres of engineering, forts,  
    armaments?

Away! These are not to be cherish'd for themselves;  
They fill their hour, the dancers dance, the musicians play for them;  
The show passes, all does well enough of course,  
All does very well till one flash of defiance.

The great city is that which has the greatest man or woman;  
If it be a few ragged huts, it is still the greatest city in the whole world.

#### 5

The place where the great city stands is not the place of stretch'd wharves,  
    docks, manufactures, deposits of produce,  
Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new comers, or the anchor-lifters of the  
    departing,  
Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings, or shops selling goods  
    from the rest of the earth,  
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools—nor the place where money is  
    plentiest,  
Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and bards;  
Where the city stands that is beloved by these, and loves them in return, and  
    understands them;  
Where no monuments exist to heroes, but in the common words and deeds;  
Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place;  
Where the men and women think lightly of the laws;  
Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases;  
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected  
    persons;  
Where fierce men and women pour forth, as the sea to the whistle of death  
    pours its sweeping and unript waves;

Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside  
authority;  
Where the citizen is always the head and ideal—and President, Mayor,  
Governor, and what not, are agents for pay;  
Where children are taught to be laws to themselves, and to depend on  
themselves;  
Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs;  
Where speculations on the Soul are encouraged;  
Where women walk in public processions in the streets, the same as the men,  
Where they enter the public assembly and take places the same as the men;  
Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands;  
Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands;  
Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands;  
Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,  
There the great city stands.

## 6

How beggarly appear arguments before a defiant deed!  
How the floridness of the materials of cities shrivels before a man's or  
woman's look!

All waits, or goes by default, till a strong being appears;  
A strong being is the proof of the race, and of the ability of the universe;  
When he or she appears, materials are overaw'd,  
The dispute on the Soul stops,  
The old customs and phrases are confronted, turn'd back, or laid away.

What is your money-making now? what can it do now?  
What is your respectability now?  
What are your theology, tuition, society, traditions, statute-books, now?  
Where are your jibes of being now?  
Where are your cavils about the Soul now?

## 7

A sterile landscape covers the ore—there is as good as the best, for all the  
forbidding appearance;  
There is the mine, there are the miners;  
The forge-furnace is there, the melt is accomplish'd; the hammers-men are at  
hand with their tongs and hammers;  
What always served, and always serves, is at hand.

Than this, nothing has better served—it has served all:  
Served the fluent-tongued and subtle-sensed Greek, and long ere the Greek:  
Served in building the buildings that last longer than any;  
Served the Hebrew, the Persian, the most ancient Hindostanee;

Served the mound-raiser on the Mississippi—served those whose relics remain  
in Central America;  
Served Albic temples in woods or on plains, with unhewn pillars, and the  
druids;  
Served the artificial clefts, vast, high, silent, on the snow-cover'd hills of  
Scandinavia;  
Served those who, time out of mind, made on the granite walls rough  
sketches of the sun, moon, stars, ships, ocean-waves;  
Served the paths of the irruptions of the Goths—served the pastoral tribes and  
nomads;  
Served the long, long distant Kelt—served the hardy pirates of the Baltic;  
Served before any of those, the venerable and harmless men of Ethiopia;  
Served the making of helms for the galleys of pleasure, and the making of  
those for war;  
Served all great works on land, and all great works on the sea;  
For the mediæval ages, and before the mediæval ages;  
Served not the living only, then as now, but served the dead.

## 8

I see the European headsman;  
He stands mask'd, clothed in red, with huge legs, and strong naked arms,  
And leans on a ponderous axe.

(Whom have you slaughter'd lately, European headsman?  
Whose is that blood upon you, so wet and sticky?)

I see the clear sunsets of the martyrs;  
I see from the scaffolds the descending ghosts,  
Ghosts of dead lords, uncrown'd ladies, impeach'd ministers, rejected kings,  
Rivals, traitors, poisoners, disgraced chieftains, and the rest.

I see those who in any land have died for the good cause;  
The seed is spare, nevertheless the crop shall never run out;  
(Mind you, O foreign kings, O priests, the crop shall never run out.)

I see the blood wash'd entirely away from the axe;  
Both blade and helve are clean;  
They spirt no more the blood of European nobles—they clasp no more the  
necks of queens.

I see the headsman withdraw and become useless;  
I see the scaffold untrodden and mouldy—I see no longer any axe upon it;  
I see the mighty and friendly emblem of the power of my own race—the  
newest, largest race.

## 9

(America! I do not vaunt my love for you;  
I have what I have.)

The axe leaps!  
The solid forest gives fluid utterances;  
They tumble forth, they rise and form,  
Hut, tent, landing, survey,  
Flail, plough, pick, crowbar, spade,  
Shingle, rail, prop, wainscot, jamb, lath, panel, gable,  
Citadel, ceiling, saloon, academy, organ, exhibition-house, library,  
Cornice, trellis, pilaster, balcony, window, shutter, turret, porch,  
Hoe, rake, pitch-fork, pencil, wagon, staff, saw, jack-plane, mallet, wedge,  
    rounce,  
Chair, tub, hoop, table, wicket, vane, sash, floor,  
Work-box, chest, string'd instrument, boat, frame, and what not,  
Capitols of States, and capitol of the nation of States,  
Long stately rows in avenues, hospitals for orphans, or for the poor or sick,  
Manhattan steamboats and clippers, taking the measure of all seas.

The shapes arise!  
Shapes of the using of axes anyhow, and the users, and all that neighbors  
    them,  
Cutters down of wood, and haulers of it to the Penobscot or Kennebec,  
Dwellers in cabins among the California mountains, or by the little lakes, or on  
    the Columbia,  
Dwellers south on the banks of the Gila or Rio Grande—friendly gatherings,  
    the characters and fun,  
Dwellers up north in Minnesota and by the Yellowstone river—dwellers on  
    coasts and off coasts,  
Seal-fishers, whalers, arctic seamen breaking passages through the ice.

The shapes arise!  
Shapes of factories, arsenals, foundries, markets;  
Shapes of the two-threaded tracks of railroads;  
Shapes of the sleepers of bridges, vast frameworks, girders, arches;  
Shapes of the fleets of barges, towns, lake and canal craft, river craft.

The shapes arise!  
Ship-yards and dry-docks along the Eastern and Western Seas, and in many a  
    bay and by-place,  
The live-oak kelsons, the pine planks, the spars, the hackmatack-roots for  
    knees,  
The ships themselves on their ways, the tiers of scaffolds, the workmen busy  
    outside and inside,

The tools lying around, the great auger and little auger, the adze, bolt, line, square, gouge, and bead-plane.

## 10

The shapes arise!

The shape measur'd, saw'd, jack'd, join'd, stain'd,

The coffin-shape for the dead to lie within in his shroud;

The shape got out in posts, in the bedstead posts, in the posts of the bride's bed;

The shape of the little trough, the shape of the rockers beneath, the shape of the babe's cradle;

The shape of the floor-planks, the floor-planks for dancers' feet;

The shape of the planks of the family home, the home of the friendly parents and children,

The shape of the roof of the home of the happy young man and woman—the roof over the well-married young man and woman,

The roof over the supper joyously cook'd by the chaste wife, and joyously eaten by the chaste husband, content after his day's work.

The shapes arise!

The shape of the prisoner's place in the court-room, and of him or her seated in the place;

The shape of the liquor-bar lean'd against by the young rum-drinker and the old rum-drinker;

The shape of the shamed and angry stairs, trod by sneaking footsteps;

The shape of the sly settee, and the adulterous unwholesome couple;

The shape of the gambling-board with its devilish winnings and losings;

The shape of the step-ladder for the convicted and sentenced murderer, the murderer with haggard face and pinion'd arms,

The sheriff at hand with his deputies, the silent and white-lipp'd crowd, the dangling of the rope.

The shapes arise!

Shapes of doors giving many exits and entrances;

The door passing the dissever'd friend, flush'd and in haste;

The door that admits good news and bad news;

The door whence the son left home, confident and puff'd up;

The door he enter'd again from a long and scandalous absence, diseas'd, broken down, without innocence, without means.

## 11

Her shape arises,

She, less guarded than ever, yet more guarded than ever;

The gross and soil'd she moves among do not make her gross and soil'd;

She knows the thoughts as she passes—nothing is conceal'd from her;

She is none the less considerate or friendly therefor;  
She is the best belov'd—it is without exception—she has no reason to fear, and  
she does not fear;  
Oaths, quarrels, hiccupp'd songs, smutty expressions, are idle to her as she  
passes;  
She is silent—she is possess'd of herself—they do not offend her;  
She receives them as the laws of nature receive them—she is strong,  
She too is a law of nature—there is no law stronger than she is.

## 12

The main shapes arise!  
Shapes of Democracy, total—result of centuries;  
Shapes, ever projecting other shapes;  
Shapes of turbulent manly cities;  
Shapes of the friends and home-givers of the whole earth,  
Shapes bracing the earth, and braced with the whole earth.