

Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea-winds along Paumanok's shore;
I wait and I wait till you blow my mate to
me.

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
 All night long on the prong of a moss-scal-
 lop'd stake,
 Down almost amid the slapping waves,
 Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,
 He pour'd forth the meanings which I of
 all men know. 60

Yes my brother I know,
 The rest might not, but I have treasur'd
 every note,
 For more than once dimly down to the
 beach gliding,
 Silent, avoiding the moonbeams, blending
 myself with the shadows,
 Recalling now the obscure shapes, the
 echoes, the sounds and sights after their
 sorts,
 The white arms out in the breakers tire-
 lessly tossing,
 I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting
 my hair,
 Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating
 the notes,
 Following you my brother. 70

Soothe! soothe! soothe!
Close on its wave soothes the wave behind,
And again another behind embracing and lap-
ping, every one close,
But my love soothes not me, not me.

Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging — O I think it is heavy with love,
with love.

O madly the sea pushes upon the land,
With love, with love.

O night! do I not see my love fluttering out
among the breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in
the white? 80

Loud! loud! loud!
Loud I call to you, my love!

High and clear I shoot my voice over the
waves,
Surely you must know who is here, is here,
You must know who I am, my love.

Low-hanging moon!
What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow?
O it is the shape, the shape of my mate!
O moon do not keep her from me any longer.

Land! land! O land!
Whichever way I turn, O I think you could
give me my mate back again if you only
would, 90
For I am almost sure I see her dimly which-
ever way I look.

O rising stars!
Perhaps the one I want so much will rise, will
rise with some of you.

O throat! O trembling throat!
Sound clearer through the atmosphere!
Pierce the woods, the earth,
Somewhere listening to catch you must be the
one I want.

Shake out carols!
Solitary here, the night's carols! 100
Carols of lonesome love! death's carols!
Carols under that lagging, yellow, waning
moon!
O under that moon where she droops almost
down into the sea!
O reckless despairing carols.

But soft! sink low!
Soft! let me just murmur,
And do you wait a moment you husky-nois'd
sea,
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate re-
sponding to me,
So faint, I must be still, be still to listen,
But not altogether still, for then she might not
come immediately to me. 110

Hither my love!
Here I am! here!
With this just-sustain'd note I announce my-
self to you,
This gentle call is for you my love, for you.

Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not my
voice,

That is the fluttering, the fluttering of the
spray,
Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowfu. 120

O brown halo in the sky near the moon,
drooping upon the sea!
O troubled reflection in the sea!
O throat! O throbbing heart!
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the
night.

O past! O happy life! O songs of joy!
In the air, in the woods, over fields,
Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!
But my mate no more, no more with me!
We two together no more.

The aria sinking, 130
 All else continuing, the stars shining,
 The winds blowing, the notes of the bird
 continuous echoing,
 With angry moans the fierce old mother in-
 cessantly moaning,
 On the sands of Paumanok's shore gray
 and rustling,
 The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging
 down, drooping, the face of the sea al-
 most touching,
 The boy ecstatic, with his bare feet the
 waves, with his hair the atmosphere dal-
 lying,
 The love in the heart long pent, now loose,
 now at last tumultuously bursting,
 The aria's meaning, the ears, the soul,
 swiftly depositing,
 The strange tears down the cheeks
 coursing,
 The colloquy there, the trio, each uttering,
 The undertone, the savage old mother in-
 cessantly crying, 141
 To the boy's soul's questions sullenly
 timing, some drown'd secret hissing,
 To the outseting bard.

Demon or bird (said the boy's soul)!
 Is it indeed toward your mate you sing?
 or is it really to me?
 For I, that was a child, my tongue's use
 sleeping, now I have heard you,
 Now in a moment I know what I am for, I
 awake,
 And already a thousand singers, a thousand

songs, clearer, louder and more sorrowful
 than yours,
 A thousand warbling echoes have started
 to life within me, never to die.

O you singer solitary, singing by yourself,
 projecting me, 150
 O solitary me listening, never more shall I
 cease perpetuating you,
 Never more shall I escape, never more the
 reverberations,
 Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be
 absent from me,
 Never again leave me to be the peaceful
 child I was before what there in the night,
 By the sea under the yellow and sagging
 moon,
 The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the
 sweet hell within,
 The unknowu want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew (it lurks in the night
 here somewhere)!
 O if I am to have so much, let me have more!

A word then (for I will conquer it), 160
 The word final, superior to all,
 Subtle, sent up — what is it? — I listen;
 Are you whispering it, and have been all
 the time, you sea-waves?
 Is that it from your liquid rims and wet
 sands?

Whereto answering, the sea,
 Delaying not, hurrying not,
 Whisper'd me through the night, and very
 plainly before daybreak,
 Lisp'd to me the low and delicious word
 death,
 And again death, death, death, death,
 Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor
 like my arous'd child's heart, 170
 But edging near as privately for me rus-
 tling at my feet,
 Creeping thence steadily up to my ears and
 laying me softly all over,
 Death, death, death, death, death.

Which I do not forget,
 But fuse the song of my dusky demon and
 brother,
 That he sang to me in the moonlight on
 Paumanok's gray beach,
 With the thousand responsive songs at ran-
 dom,

My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from
the waves,
The word of the sweetest song and all
songs,¹⁸⁰
That strong and delicious word which,
creeping to my feet,
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle,
swathed in sweet garments, bending
aside,)
The sea whisper'd me.

1859. (1860.)¹FACING WEST FROM CALIFORNIA'S SHORES²

FACING west from California's shores,
Inquiring, tireless, seeking what is yet un-
found,
I, a child, very old, over waves, towards
the house of maternity, the land of mi-
grations, look afar,
Look off the shores of my Western sea, the
circle almost circled;
For starting westward from Hindustan,
from the vales of Kashmere,
From Asia, from the north, from the God,
the sage, and the hero,
From the south, from the flowery penin-
sulas and the spice islands,
Long having wander'd since, round the
earth having wander'd,
Now I face home again, very pleas'd and
joyous.
(But where is what I started for so long
ago?
And why is it yet unfound?)

1860.

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,

¹ For Whitman the date of publication in book form is the most important. This has therefore been added, in parentheses, when the poem was published earlier in a periodical.

² In the 1860 edition, without separate sub-title, as No. 10 of the section entitled *Enfance d'Adam*. In this edition the poem began with what is now the second line. The first line was added in 1867.

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 inter-
mission 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 me-
lodious songs.

1860.

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, con-
tinental, 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.

1860.

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 Man-
nhatta 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 of 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 ani-
mals do.

1860.

FOR YOU O DEMOCRACY¹

COME, I will make the continent indissol-
uble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun
ever shone upon,

¹ This and the eight following poems belong to the section of Whitman's work devoted to the celebration of "the dear love of comrades," and entitled "Calamus." "The Sweet Flag or Calamus," says W. S. Kennedy, in explaining Whitman's use of this title, "belongs among the grasses, and like them suggests equality and brotherhood. It is found in vast masses in marshy ground, growing in fascicles of three, four, or five blades, which cling together for support, shoulder to shoulder and back to back, the delicate "pink-tinged" roots exhaling a faint fragrance, not only when freshly gathered, but after having been kept many years."

With these poems should be read the volume entitled *Calamus, a Series of Letters written during the Years 1863-1880 by Walt Whitman to a Young Friend*.

"For you O Democracy" is a revised and improved version of the last lines of a much longer poem with the title "States," in the 1860 edition, the whole of which is worth preserving:—

STATES!
Were you looking to be held together by the lawyers?
By an agreement on a paper? Or by arms?

Away!
I arrive, bringing these, beyond all the forces of courts and arms.
These I to hold you together as firmly as the earth itself is held together.

The old breath of life, ever new,
Here I pass it by contact to you, America.

O mother! have you done much for me?
Behold, there shall from me be much done for you.

There shall from me be a new friendship — It shall be called after my name.
It shall circulate through The States, indifferent of place.
It shall twist and intertwist them through and around each other — Compact shall they be, showing new signs.
Affection shall solve every one of the problems of freedom.
Those who love each other shall be invincible.
They shall finally make America completely victorious, in my name.

One from Massachusetts shall be comrade to a Missourian,
One from Maine or Vermont, and a Carolinian and an Oregonese, shall be friends trine, more precious to each other than all the riches of the earth.
To Michigan shall be wafted perfume from Florida,
To the Mannahatta from Cuba or Mexico,
Not the perfume of flowers, but sweeter, and wafted beyond death.

No danger shall balk Columbia's lovers,
If need be, a thousand shall eternally immolate themselves for one,

I will make divine magnetic lands,
With the love of comrades,
With the life-long love of comrades.

I will plant companionship thick as trees
along all the rivers of America, and
along the shores of the great lakes, and
all over the prairies,
I will make inseparable cities with their
arms about each other's necks,
By the love of comrades,
By the manly love of comrades.

For you these from me, O Democracy, to
serve you ma femme!

For you, for you I am trilling these songs.
1860.

RECORDERS AGES HENCE

RECORDERS ages hence,²
Come, I will take you down underneath
this impassive exterior, I will tell you
what to say of me,
Publish my name and hang up my picture
as that of the tenderest lover,
The friend the lover's portrait, of whom
his friend his lover was fondest,

The Kanuck shall be willing to lay down his life for the Kansian, and the Kansian for the Kanuck, on due need.

It shall be customary in all directions, in the houses and streets, to see manly affection,
The departing brother or friend shall salute the remaining brother or friend with a kiss.

There shall be innovations,
There shall be countless linked hands — namely, the North-easterner's, and the Northwesterner's, and the Southwesterner's, and those of the interior, and all their brood,
These shall be masters of the world under a new power,
They shall laugh to scorn the attacks of all the remainder of the world.

The most dauntless and rude shall touch face to face lightly,
The dependence of Liberty shall be lovers,
The continuance of Equality shall be comrades.

These shall tie and band stronger than hoops of iron,
I, ecstatic, O partners! O lands! henceforth with the love of lovers tie you.

I will make the continent indissoluble,
I will make the most splendid race the sun ever yet shone upon,
I will make divine magnetic lands

I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers of America, and along the shores of the great lakes, and all over the prairies,
I will make inseparable cities, with their arms about each other's necks.

For you these, from me, O Democracy, to serve you ma femme!
For you! for you, I am trilling these songs.

² Instead of this line, the edition of 1860 reads:—

You bards of ages hence! when you refer to me, mind not so much my poems,
Nor speak of me that I prophesied of The States, and led them the way of their glories.

Who was not proud of his songs, but of the
measureless ocean of love within him,
and freely pour'd it forth,
Who often walk'd lonesome walks thinking
of his dear friends, his lovers,
Who pensive away from one he lov'd often
lay sleepless and dissatisfied at night,
Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest
the one he lov'd might secretly be indif-
ferent to him,
Whose happiest days were far away through
fields, in woods, on hills, he and another
wandering hand in hand, they twain apart
from other men,
Who oft as he saunter'd the streets curv'd
with his arm the shoulder of his friend,
while the arm of his friend rested upon
him also.

1860.

WHEN I HEARD AT THE CLOSE OF THE DAY

WHEN I heard at the close of the day how
my name had been receiv'd with plaudits
in the capitol, still it was not a happy
night for me that follow'd,
And else when I carous'd, or when my
plans were accomplish'd, still I was not
happy,
But the day when I rose at dawn from the
bed of perfect health, refresh'd, singing,
inhaling the ripe breath of autumn,
When I saw the full moon in the west
grow pale and disappear in the morning
light,
When I wander'd alone over the beach,
and undressing bathed, laughing with the
cool waters, and saw the sun rise,
And when I thought how my dear friend
my lover was on his way coming, O then
I was happy,
O then each breath tasted sweeter, and all
that day my food nourish'd me more, and
the beautiful day pass'd well,
And the next came with equal joy, and with
the next at evening came my friend,
And that night while all was still I heard
the waters roll slowly continually up the
shores,
I heard the hissing rustle of the liquid and
sands as directed to me whispering to
congratulate me,
For the one I love most lay sleeping by me
under the same cover in the cool night,

In the stillness in the autumn moonbeams
his face was inclined toward me,
And his arm lay lightly around my breast
— and that night I was happy.

1860.

I SAW IN LOUISIANA A LIVE- OAK GROWING

I SAW in Louisiana a live-oak growing,
All alone stood it and the moss hung down
from the branches,
Without any companion it grew there utter-
ing joyous leaves of dark green,
And its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made
me think of myself,
But I wonder'd how it could utter joyous
leaves standing alone there without its
friend near, for I knew I could not,
And I broke off a twig with a certain num-
ber of leaves upon it, and twined around
it a little moss,
And brought it away, and I have placed
it in sight in my room,
It is not needed to remind me as of my
own dear friends,
(For I believe lately I think of little else
than of them.)
Yet it remains to me a curious token, it
makes me think of manly love;
For all that, and though the live-oak glis-
tens there in Louisiana solitary in a wide
flat space,
Uttering joyous leaves all its life without a
friend a lover near,
I know very well I could not.

1860.

I HEAR IT WAS CHARGED AGAINST ME

I HEAR it was charged against me that I
sought to destroy institutions,
But really I am neither for nor against in-
stitutions,
(What indeed have I in common with them?
or what with the destruction of them?)
Only I will establish in the Mannahatta
and in every city of these States inland
and seaboard,
And in the fields and woods, and above
every keel little or large that dents the
water,

Without edifices or rules or trustees or any
argument,
The institution of the dear love of com-
rades.

1860.

THE PRAIRIE-GRASS DIVIDING

THE prairie-grass dividing, its special odor
breathing,
I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,
Demand the most copious and close com-
panionship of men,
Demand the blades to rise of words, acts,
beings,
Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sun-
lit, fresh, nutritious,
Those that go their own gait, erect, step-
ping with freedom and command, leading
not following,
Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those
with sweet and lusty flesh clear of taint,
Those that look carelessly in the faces of
Presidents and governors, as to say *Who
are you?*
Those of earth-born passion, simple, never
constrain'd, never obedient,
Those of inland America.¹

1860.

¹ If you care to have a word from me, I should speak
it about these very prairies; they impress me most, of
all the objective shows I have seen on this, my first
real visit to the West. . . . As I have . . . launch'd
my view across broad expanses of living green, in every
direction — I have again been most impress'd, I say,
and shall remain for the rest of my life most impress'd,
with . . . that vast Something, stretching out on its
own unbounded scale, unconfined, which there is in
these prairies, combining the real and the ideal, and
beautiful as dreams.

I wonder indeed if the people of this continental in-
land West know how much of first-class *art* they have
in these prairies — how original and all your own —
how much of the influences of a character for your fu-
ture humanity, broad, patriotic, heroic, and new? how
entirely they tally on land the grandeur and superb
monotony of the skies of heaven, and the ocean with
its waters? how freeing, soothing, nourishing they are
to the soul?

Then is it not subtly they who have given us our lead-
ing modern Americans, Lincoln and Grant? — vast-
spread, average men — their foregrounds of character
altogether practical and real, yet (to those who have
eyes to see) with finest backgrounds of the ideal, tower-
ing high as any. And do we not see, in them, fore-
shadowings of the future races that shall fill these
prairies?

Not but what the Yankee and Atlantic States, and
every other part — Texas, and the States flanking the
south-east and the Gulf of Mexico — the Pacific shore
empire — the Territories and Lakes, and the Canada
line (the day is not yet, but it will come, including
Canada entire) — are equally and integrally and indis-

WHEN I PERUSE THE CON- QUER'D FAME

WHEN I peruse the conquer'd fame of he-
roes and the victories of mighty generals,
I do not envy the generals,
Nor the President in his Presidency, nor
the rich in his great house,
But when I hear of the brotherhood of lov-
ers, how it was with them,
How together through life, through dan-
gers, odium, unchanging, long and long,
Through youth and through middle and old
age, how unfaltering, how affectionate
and faithful they were,
Then I am pensive — I hastily walk away
fill'd with the bitterest envy.

1860.

I DREAM'D IN A DREAM²

I DREAM'D in a dream I saw a city invin-
cible to the attacks of the whole of the
rest of the earth,
I dream'd that was the new city of Friends,

solubly this Nation, the *sine qua non* of the human, po-
litical and commercial New World. But this favor'd
central area of (in round numbers) two thousand miles
square seems fated to be the home both of what I would
call America's distinctive ideas and distinctive realities.
(WHITMAN, *Specimen Days*, 'The Prairies.' Complete
Prose Works, Small, Maynard & Co., pp. 134, 135.)

² Intense and loving comradeship, the personal and
passionate attachment of man to man — which, hard to
define, underlies the lessons and ideals of the profound
saviours of every land and age, and which seems to
promise, when thoroughly develop'd, cultivated and
recognized in manners and literature, the most sub-
stantial hope and safety of the future of these States,
will then [when the true poet comes] be fully express'd.

A strong fibred joyousness and faith, and the sense
of health *al fresco*, may well enter into the preparation
of future noble American authorship. . . .

It is to the development, identification, and general
prevalence of that fervid comradeship (the adhesive
love, at least rivaling the amative love hitherto possess-
ing imaginative literature, if not going beyond it), that
I look for the counterbalance and offset of our mate-
rialistic and vulgar American democracy, and for the
spiritualization thereof. Many will say it is a dream,
and will not follow my inferences: but I confidently
expect a time when there will be seen, running like a
half-hid warp through all the myriad audible and visi-
ble worldly interests of America, threads of many
friendship, fond and loving, pure and sweet, strong and
life-long, carried to degrees hitherto unknown — not
only giving tone to individual character, and making
it unprecedentedly emotional, muscular, heroic, and re-
fined, but having the deepest relations to general po-
itics. I say democracy infers such loving comradeship,
as its most inevitable twin or counterpart, without
which it will be incomplete, in vain, and incapable of
perpetuating itself. . . .

In my opinion, it is by a fervent, accepted develop-

Nothing was greater there than the quality
of robust love, it led the rest,
It was seen every hour in the actions of the
men of that city,
And in all their looks and words.

1860.

FULL OF LIFE NOW

FULL of life now, compact, visible,
I, forty years old the eighty-third year of
the States,
To one a century hence or any number of
centuries hence,
To you yet unborn these, seeking you.

When you read these I that was visible am
become invisible,
Now it is you, compact, visible, realizing
my poems, seeking me,
Fancying how happy you were if I could be
with you and become your comrade;
Be it as if I were with you. (Be not too
certain but I am now with you.)

1860.

TO ONE SHORTLY TO DIE

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.

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
neighbor,
I absolve you from all except yourself
spiritual bodily, that is eternal, you your-
self will surely escape,
The corpse you will leave will be but
excrementitious.

ment of comradeship, the beautiful and sane affection of
man for man, latent in all the young fellows, north and
south, east and west — it is by this, I say, and by what
goes directly and indirectly along with it, that the
United States of the future (I cannot too often repeat),
are to be most effectually welded together, intercalated,
anneal'd into a living union. (WHITMAN, in his Preface
to the 1876 edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Complete
Prose Works, Small, Maynard & Co., pp. 239, 240, and
277, 278.)

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.

1860.

NIGHT ON THE PRAIRIES¹

NIGHT on the prairies,
The supper is over, the fire on the ground
burns low,
The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapt in their
blankets;
I walk by myself — I stand and look at the
stars, which I think now I never realized
before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,
I admire death and test propositions.

How plenteous! how spiritual! how re-
sumé!
The same old man and soul — the same old
aspirations, and the same content.

I was thinking the day most splendid till I
saw what the not-day exhibited,
I was thinking this globe enough till there
sprang out so noiseless around me myri-
ads of other globes.

Now while the great thoughts of space and
eternity fill me I will measure myself by
them,

¹ The germ of this poem is found in a loose note of
Whitman's: 'Idea of poem. Day and night. Namely,
celebrate the beauty of Day, with all its splendor, the
sun — life — action — Love — strength. The Night with
its beauty. . .'

Compare also the passages from Whitman's Prose
Works quoted or referred to in the note on 'When I
heard the learn'd astronomer'; especially the passage
in *Specimen Days* under date of July 22, 1878. Com-
plete Prose Works, pp. 111, 112.

Whitman was acquainted with Blanco White's fa-
mous sonnet on this same idea. Among his clippings
he preserved a copy of it, on the margin of which he
had written: 'What life hides too!' (*Notes and Frag-
ments*, p. 104.)

And now touch'd with the lives of other
globes arrived as far along as those of
the earth,
Or waiting to arrive, or pass'd on farther
than those of the earth,
I henceforth no more ignore them than I
ignore my own life,
Or the lives of the earth arrived as far as
mine, or waiting to arrive.

O I see now that life cannot exhibit all to
me, as the day cannot,
I see that I am to wait for what will be
exhibited by death.

1860.

O MAGNET-SOUTH¹

O MAGNET-SOUTH! O glistening perfumed
South! my South!
O quick mettle, rich blood, impulse and
love! good and evil! O all dear to
me!
O dear to me my birth-things — all moving
things and the trees where I was born
— the grains, plants, rivers,
Dear to me my own slow sluggish rivers
where they flow, distant, over flats of
silvery sands or through swamps,
Dear to me the Roanoke, the Savannah, the
Altamahaw, the Pedee, the Tombigbee,
the Santee, the Coosa and the Sabine,
O pensive, far away wandering, I return with
my soul to haunt their banks again,
Again in Florida I float on transparent
lakes, I float on the Okeechobee, I cross
the hummock-land or through pleasant
openings or dense forests,
I see the parrots in the woods, I see the
papaw-tree and the blossoming titi;
Again, sailing in my coaster on deck, I
coast off Georgia, I coast up the Caro-
linas,
I see where the live-oak is growing, I see
where the yellow-pine, the scented bay-
tree, the lemon and orange, the cypress,
the graceful palmetto,
I pass rude sea-headlands and enter Pam-
lico sound through an inlet, and dart my
vision inland;
O the cotton plant! the growing fields of
rice, sugar, hemp!

¹ In the 1860 edition, with the title 'Longings for
Home.'

The cactus guarded with thorns, the laurel-
tree with large white flowers,
The range afar, the richness and barrenness,
the old woods charged with mistletoe and
trailing moss,
The piney odor and the gloom, the awful
natural stillness, (here in these dense
swamps the freebooter carries his gun,
and the fugitive has his conceal'd hut;)
O the strange fascination of these half-
known half-impassable swamps, infested
by reptiles, resounding with the bellow of
the alligator, the sad noises of the night-
owl and the wild-cat, and the whirr of
the rattlesnake,
The mocking-bird, the American mimic,
singing all the forenoon, singing through
the moon-lit night,
The humming-bird, the wild turkey, the
raccoon, the opossum;
A Kentucky corn-field, the tall, graceful,
long-leav'd corn, slender, flapping, bright
green, with tassels, with beautiful ears
each well-sheath'd in its husk;
O my heart! O tender and fierce pangs, I
can stand them not, I will depart;
O to be a Virginian where I grew up! O to
be a Carolinian!
O longings irrepressible! O I will go back
to old Tennessee and never wander more.

1860.

MANNAHATTA²

I WAS asking for something specific and
perfect for my city,
Whereupon lo! upsprang the aboriginal
name.

² Compare 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,' 'A Broadway
Pageant,' 'Give me the Splendid Silent Sun,' and the
following passages from Whitman's *Specimen Days*: —
June 25. — Returned to New York last night. Out to-
day on the waters for a sail in the wide bay, southeast
of Staten island, — a rough, tossing ride, and a free
sight — the long stretch of Sandy Hook, the highlands
of Navesink, and the many vessels outward and inward
bound. We came up through the midst of all, in the full
sun. I especially enjoy'd the last hour or two. A mod-
erate sea-breeze had set in; yet over the city, and the
waters adjacent, was a thin haze, concealing nothing
only adding to the beauty. From my point of view, as
I write amid the soft breeze, with a sea-temperature,
surely nothing on earth of its kind can go beyond this
show. To the left the North river with its far vista —
nearer, three or four war-ships, anchor'd peacefully —
the Jersey side, the banks of Weehawken, the Palisades,
and the gradually receding blue, lost in the distance —
to the right the East river — the mast-hemm'd shores

Now I see what there is in a name, a word,
liquid, sane, unruly, musical, self-suffi-
cient,
I see that the word of my city is that word
from of old,

—the grand obelisk-like towers of the bridge, one on either side, in haze, yet plainly defin'd, giant brothers twain, throwing free graceful interlinking loops high across the tumbled tumultuous current below (the tide is just changing to its ebb)—the broad water-spread everywhere crowded—no, not crowded, but thick as stars in the sky—with all sorts and sizes of sail and steam vessels, plying ferry-boats, arriving and departing coasters, great ocean Dons, iron-black, modern, magnificent in size and power, fill'd with their incalculable value of human life and precious merchandise—with here and there, above all, those daring, careening things of grace and wonder, those white and shaded swift-darting fish-birds (I wonder if shore or sea elsewhere can outvie them), ever with their slanting spars, and fierce, pure, hawk-like beauty and motion—first-class New York sloop or schooner yachts, sailing, this fine day, the free sea in a good wind. And rising out of the midst, tall-top, ship-hemm'd, modern, American, yet strangely oriental, V-shaped Manhattan, with its compact mass, its spires, its cloud-touching edifices group'd at the centre—the green of the trees, and all the white, brown and gray of the architecture well blended, as I see it, under a miracle of limpid sky, delicious light of heaven above, and June haze on the surface below.

HUMAN AND HEROIC NEW YORK. — The general subjective view of New York and Brooklyn (will not the time hasten when the two shall be municipally united in one, and named Manhattan?)—what I may call the human interior and exterior of these great seething oceanic populations, as I get it in this visit, is to me best of all. After an absence of many years (I went away at the outbreak of the secession war, and have never been back to stay since), again I resume with curiosity the crowds, the streets, I knew so well, Broadway, the ferries, the west side of the city, democratic Bowery—human appearances and manners as seen in all these, and along the wharves, and in the perpetual travel of the horse-cars, or the crowded excursion steamers, or in Wall and Nassau streets by day—in the places of amusement at night—bubbling and whirling and moving like its own environment of waters—endless humanity in all phases—Brooklyn also—taken in for the last three weeks. No need to specify minutely—enough to say that (making all allowances for the shadows and side-streaks of a million-headed-city) the brief total of the impressions, the human qualities, of these vast cities, is to me comforting, even heroic, beyond statement. Alertness, generally fine physique, clear eyes that look straight at you, a singular combination of reticence and self-possession, with good nature and friendliness—a prevailing range of acceding manners, taste and intellect, surely beyond any elsewhere upon earth—and a palpable out-cropping of that personal comradeship I look forward to as the subtlest, strongest future hold of this many-item'd Union—are not only constantly visible here in these mighty channels of men, but they form the rule and average. To-day, I should say—defiant of cynics and pessimists, and with a full knowledge of all their exceptions—an appreciative and perceptive study of the current humanity of New York gives the directest proof yet of successful Democracy, and of the solution of that paradox, the eligibility of the free and fully developed individual with the paramount aggregate. In old age, lame and sick, pondering for years on many a doubt and danger for this republic of ours—fully aware of all that can be said on the other side—I find in this

Because I see that word nested in nests of
water-bays, superb,
Rich, hemm'd thick all around with sailships
and steamships, an island sixteen miles
long, solid-founded,
Numberless crowded streets, high growths
of iron, slender, strong, light, splendidly
uprising toward clear skies,
Tides swift and ample, well-loved by me,
toward sundown,
The flowing sea-currents, the little islands,
larger adjoining islands, the heights, the
villas,
The countless masts, the white shore-steam-
ers, the lighters, the ferry-boats, the black
sea-steamers well-model'd,
The down-town streets, the jobbers' houses
of business, the houses of business of the
ship-merchants and money-brokers, the
river-streets,
Immigrants arriving, fifteen or twenty thou-
sand in a week,
The carts hauling goods, the manly race
of drivers of horses, the brown-faced
sailors,
The summer air, the bright sun shining, and
the sailing clouds aloft,
The winter snows, the sleigh-bells, the
broken ice in the river, passing along up
or down with the flood-tide or ebb-tide,
The mechanics of the city, the masters,
well-form'd, beautiful-faced, looking you
straight in the eyes,
Trottoirs throng'd, vehicles, Broadway, the
women, the shops and shows,
A million people—manners free and superb
—open voices—hospitality—the most
courageous and friendly young men,
City of hurried and sparkling waters! city
of spires and masts!
City nested in bays! my city!

1860.

visit to New York, and the daily contact and rapport with its myriad people, on the scale of the oceans and tides, the best, most effective medicine my soul has yet partaken—the grandest physical habitat and surroundings of land and water the globe affords—namely, Manhattan island and Brooklyn, which the future shall join in one city—city of superb democracy, amid superb surroundings. (Complete Prose Works, Small, Maynard & Co., pp. 109-111.)

See also *Specimen Days*, May 24, 1879. 'Two City Areas, Certain Hours,' Prose Works, pp. 126, 127; May 16 to 22, 'Central Park Walks and Talks,' Prose Works, pp. 128, 129; July 29, 1881, 'My Passion for Ferries,' 'Broadway Sights,' 'Omnibus Jaunts,' Prose Works, pp. 11-13; and also the *Collect*, Prose Works, pp. 205, 206, quoted in part in the note on 'Give me the splendid silent sun,' p. 578.

MYSELF AND MINE

MYSELF and mine gymnastic ever,
To stand the cold or heat, to take good aim
with a gun, to sail a boat, to manage
horses, to beget superb children,
To speak readily and clearly, to feel at
home among common people,
And to hold our own in terrible positions
on land and sea.

Not for an embroiderer,
(There will always be plenty of embroider-
ers, I welcome them also.)
But for the fibre of things and for inherent
men and women.

Not to chisel ornaments,
But to chisel with free stroke the heads
and limbs of plenteous supreme Gods,
that the States may realize them walking
and talking.

Let me have my own way,
Let others promulge the laws, I will make
no account of the laws,
Let others praise eminent men and hold up
peace, I hold up agitation and conflict,
I praise no eminent man, I rebuke to his
face the one that was thought most worth-
y.

(Who are you? and what are you secretly
guilty of all your life?
Will you turn aside all your life? will you
grub and chatter all your life?
And who are you, blabbing by rote, years,
pages, languages, reminiscences,
Unwitting to-day that you do not know
how to speak properly a single word?)

Let others finish specimens, I never finish
specimens,
I start them by exhaustless laws as Nature
does, fresh and modern continually.

I give nothing as duties,
What others give as duties I give as living
impulses,
(Shall I give the heart's action as a duty?)

Let others dispose of questions, I dispose of
nothing, I arouse unanswerable questions,
Who are they I see and touch, and what
about them?

What about these likes of myself that draw
me so close by tender directions and in-
directions?

I call to the world to distrust the accounts
of my friends, but listen to my enemies,
as I myself do,
I charge you forever reject those who would
expound me, for I cannot expound myself,
I charge that there be no theory or school
founded out of me,
I charge you to leave all free, as I have left
all free.

After me, vista!
O I see life is not short, but immeasurably
long,
I henceforth tread the world chaste, tem-
perate, an early riser, a steady grower,
Every hour the semen of centuries, and
still of centuries.

I must follow up these continual lessons of
the air, water, earth,
I perceive I have no time to lose.

1860.

A BROADWAY PAGEANT

I

OVER the Western sea hither from Nippon¹
come,
Courteous, the swart-cheek'd two-sworded
envoys,
Leaning back in their open barouches, bare-
headed, impassive,
Ride to-day through Manhattan.²

Libertad! I do not know whether others be-
hold what I behold,
In the procession along with the nobles of
Nippon, the errand-bearers,
Bringing up the rear, hovering above,
around, or in the ranks marching,
But I will sing you a song of what I behold
Libertad.

¹ Nippon, the native name of Japan.² In the edition of 1865 the poem begins:—

A BROADWAY PAGEANT

(Reception Japanese Embassy, June 16, 1860.)

Over sea, hither from Nippon,
Courteous, the Princes of Asia, swart-cheek'd princes,
First-comers, guests, two-sworded princes,
Lesson-giving princes, leaning back in their open barouches,
bare-headed, impassive,
This day they ride through Manhattan.

When million-footed Manhattan unpent descends to her pavements,
 When the thunder-cracking guns arouse me with the proud roar I love,¹⁰
 When the round-mouth'd guns out of the smoke and smell I love spit their salutes,
 When the fire-flashing guns have fully alerted me, and heaven-clouds canopy my city with a delicate thin haze,
 When gorgeous the countless straight stems, the forests at the wharves, thicken with colors,
 When every ship richly drest carries her flag at the peak,
 When pennants trail and street-festoons hang from the windows,
 When Broadway is entirely given up to foot-passengers and foot-standers, when the mass is densest,
 When the façades of the houses are alive with people, when eyes gaze riveted tens of thousands at a time,
 When the guests from the islands advance, when the pageant moves forward visible,
 When the summons is made, when the answer that waited thousands of years answers,
 I too arising, answering, descend to the pavements, merge with the crowd, and gaze with them.²⁰

²
 Superb-faced Manhattan!
 Comrade Americanos! to us, then at last the Orient comes.

To us, my city,
 Where our tall-topt marble and iron beauties range on opposite sides, to walk in the space between,
 To-day our Antipodes comes.

The Originatress comes,¹
 The nest of languages, the bequeather of poems, the race of eld,
 Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion,
 Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,
 With sunburnt visage, with intense soul and glittering eyes,³⁰
 The race of Brahma comes.

¹ Here follows, in the original edition: —
 The land of Paradise — land of the Caucasus — the nest of birth, . . .

See my cantabile! these and more are flashing to us from the procession,
 As it moves echanging, a kaleidoscope divine it moves changing before us.

For not the envoys nor the tann'd Japanees from his island only,²
 Lithe and silent the Hindoo appears, the Asiatic continent itself appears, the past, the dead,
 The murky night-morning of wonder and fable inscrutable,
 The envelop'd mysteries, the old and unknown hive-bees,
 The north, the sweltering south, eastern Assyria, the Hebrews, the ancient of ancients,
 Vast desolated cities, the gliding present, all of these and more are in the pageant-procession.

Geography, the world, is in it,⁴⁰
 The Great Sea, the brood of islands, Polynesia, the coast beyond,
 The coast you henceforth are facing — you Libertad! from your Western golden shores,
 The countries there with their populations, the millions en-masse are curiously here,

The swarming market-places, the temples with idols ranged along the sides or at the end, bonze, brahmin, and llama,
 Mandarin, farmer, merchant, mechanic, and fisherman,
 The singing-girl and the dancing-girl, the ecstatic persons, the secluded emperors, Confucius himself, the great poets and heroes, the warriors, the castes, all,³
 Trooping up, crowding from all directions, from the Altay mountains,
 From Thibet, from the four winding and far-flowing rivers of China,
 From the southern peninsulas and the demi-continental islands, from Malaysia,⁵⁰
 These and whatever belongs to them palpable show forth to me, and are seiz'd by me,

² In the original edition this line reads: —
 Not the errand-bearing princes only, nor the tann'd Japanees only.

³ In the original edition these two lines read: —
 The singing-girl and the dancing-girl — the ecstatic person — the divine Buddha;
 The secluded Emperors — Confucius himself — the great poets and heroes — the warriors, the castes, all.

And I am seiz'd by them, and friendly held by them,
 Till as here them all I chant, Libertad! for themselves and for you.

For I too raising my voice join the ranks of this pageant,
 I am the chanter, I chant aloud over the pageant,
 I chant the world on my Western sea,
 I chant copious the islands beyond, thick as stars in the sky,
 I chant the new empire grander than any before, as in a vision it comes to me,
 I chant America the mistress, I chant a greater supremacy,
 I chant projected a thousand blooming cities yet in time on those groups of sea-islands,⁶⁰
 My sail-ships and steam-ships threading the archipelagoes,
 My stars and stripes fluttering in the wind,
 Commerce opening, the sleep of ages having done its work, races reborn, refresh'd,
 Lives, works resumed — the object I know not — but the old, the Asiatic renew'd as it must be,
 Commencing from this day surrounded by the world.

³
 And you Libertad of the world!
 You shall sit in the middle well-poss'd thousands and thousands of years,
 As to-day from one side the nobles of Asia come to you,
 As to-morrow from the other side the queen of England sends her eldest son to you.
 The sign is reversing, the orb is enclosed,⁷⁰
 The ring is circled, the journey is done,
 The box-lid is but perceptibly open'd, nevertheless the perfume pours copiously out of the whole box.

Young Libertad! with the venerable Asia, the all-mother,
 Be considerate with her now and ever hot Libertad, for you are all,
 Bend your proud neck to the long-off mother now sending messages over the archipelagoes to you,
 Bend your proud neck low for once, young Libertad.

Were the children straying westward so long? so wide the tramping?
 Were the precedent dim ages debouching westward from Paradise so long?
 Were the centuries steadily footing it that way, all the while unknown, for you, for reasons?

They are justified, they are accomplish'd, they shall now be turn'd the other way also, to travel toward you thence,⁸⁰
 They shall now also march obediently eastward for your sake Libertad.¹
 1860. 1865.

PIONEERS! O PIONEERS!

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!

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!

O you youths, Western youths,
 So impatient, full of action, full of manly pride and friendship,¹⁰
 Plain I see you Western youths, see you tramping with the foremost,
 Pioneers! O pioneers!

Have the elder races halted?
 Do they droop and end their lesson, wearied over there beyond the seas?

¹ THE EAST. — What a subject for a poem! Indeed, where else a more pregnant, more splendid one? Where one more idealistic-real, more subtle, more sensuous-delicate? The East, answering all lands, all ages, peoples; touching all senses, here, immediate, now — and yet so indescribably far off — such retrospect! The East — long-stretching — so losing itself — the orient, the gardens of Asia, the womb of history and song — forth-issuing all those strange, dim cavalades —
 Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion,
 Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,
 With sunburnt visage, intense soul and glittering eyes.

Always the East — old, how incalculably old! And yet here the same — ours yet, fresh as a rose, to every morning, every life, to-day — and always will be. (WHITMAN, *Specimen Days*. Complete Prose Works, pp. 112, 113.)