

# POETRY OF PROMISE

**"Hope" is the thing with feathers**

1

EMILY DICKINSON

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -  
That perches in the soul -  
And sings the tune without the words -  
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -  
And sore must be the storm -  
That could abash the little Bird  
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -  
And on the strangest Sea -  
Yet - never - in Extremity,  
It asked a crumb - of me.

**Psalm 150**

2

JERICO BROWN

Some folks fool themselves into believing,  
But I know what I know once, at the height  
Of hopeless touching, my man and I hold  
Our breaths, certain we can stop time or maybe

Eliminate it from our lives, which are shorter  
Since we learned to make love for each other  
Rather than doing it to each other. As for praise  
And worship, I prefer the latter. Only memory

Makes us kneel, silent and still. Hear me?  
Thunder scares. Lightning lets us see. Then,  
Heads covered, we wait for rain. Dear Lord,  
Let me watch for his arrival and hang my head

And shake it like a man who's lost and lived.  
Something keeps trying, but I'm not killed yet.

**Carrion Comfort**

3

GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS

Not, I'll not, carrion comfort, Despair, not feast on thee;  
Not untwist — slack they may be — these last strands of man  
In me *ór*, most weary, cry *I can no more*. I can;  
Can something, hope, wish day come, not choose not to be.

But ah, but O thou terrible, why wouldst thou rude on me  
Thy wring-world right foot rock? lay a lionlimb against me? scan  
With darksome devouring eyes my bruised bones? and fan,  
O in turns of tempest, me heaped there; me frantic to avoid thee and flee?

Why? That my chaff might fly; my grain lie, sheer and clear.  
Nay in all that toil, that coil, since (seems) I kissed the rod,  
Hand rather, my heart lo! lapped strength, stole joy, would laugh, chéer.  
Cheer whom though? the hero whose heaven-handling flung me, fóot tród  
Me? or me that fought him? O which one? is it each one? That night, that year  
Of now done darkness I wretch lay wrestling with (my God!) my God.

## **Preface to a Twenty Volume Suicide Note**

4

AMIRI BARAKA

for Kellie Jones, born 16 May 1959

Lately, I've become accustomed to the way  
The ground opens up and envelopes me  
Each time I go out to walk the dog.  
Or the broad edged silly music the wind  
Makes when I run for a bus...

Things have come to that.

And now, each night I count the stars,  
And each night I get the same number.  
And when they will not come to be counted,  
I count the holes they leave.

Nobody sings anymore.

And then last night, I tiptoed up  
To my daughter's room and heard her  
Talking to someone, and when I opened  
The door, there was no one there...  
Only she on her knees, peeking into

Her own clasped hands.

## **Saint Francis and the Sow**

5

GALWAY KINNELL

The bud  
stands for all things,  
even for those things that don't flower,  
for everything flowers, from within, of self-blessing;  
though sometimes it is necessary  
to reteach a thing its loveliness,  
to put a hand on its brow  
of the flower

and retell it in words and in touch  
it is lovely  
until it flowers again from within, of self-blessing;  
as Saint Francis  
put his hand on the creased forehead  
of the sow, and told her in words and in touch  
blessings of earth on the sow, and the sow  
began remembering all down her thick length,  
from the earthen snout all the way  
through the fodder and slops to the spiritual curl of the tail,  
from the hard spininess spiked out from the spine  
down through the great broken heart  
to the sheer blue milken dreaminess spurting and shuddering  
from the fourteen teats into the fourteen mouths sucking and blowing beneath them:  
the long, perfect loveliness of sow.

## Goodbye to Tolerance

DENISE LEVERTOV

6

Genial poets, pink-faced  
earnest wits—  
you have given the world  
some choice morsels,  
gobbets of language presented  
as one presents T-bone steak  
and Cherries Jubilee.  
Goodbye, goodbye,  
I don't care  
if I never taste your fine food again,  
neutral fellows, seers of every side.  
Tolerance, what crimes  
are committed in your name.

And you, good women, bakers of nicest bread,  
blood donors. Your crumbs  
choke me, I would not want  
a drop of your blood in me, it is pumped  
by weak hearts, perfect pulses that never  
falter: unresponsive  
to nightmare reality.

It is my brothers, my sisters,  
whose blood spurts out and stops  
forever  
because you choose to believe it is not your business.

Goodbye, goodbye,  
your poems  
shut their little mouths,  
your loaves grow moldy,  
a gulf has split  
the ground between us,

and you won't wave, you're looking  
another way.

We shan't meet again—  
unless you leap it, leaving  
behind you the cherished  
worms of your dispassion,  
your pallid ironies,  
your jovial, murderous,  
wry-humored balanced judgment,  
leap over, un-  
balanced? ... then  
how our fanatic tears  
would flow and mingle  
for joy ...

## Thanks

[W. S. MERWIN](#)

7

Listen  
with the night falling we are saying thank you  
we are stopping on the bridges to bow from the railings  
we are running out of the glass rooms  
with our mouths full of food to look at the sky  
and say thank you  
we are standing by the water thanking it  
standing by the windows looking out  
in our directions

back from a series of hospitals back from a mugging  
after funerals we are saying thank you  
after the news of the dead  
whether or not we knew them we are saying thank you

over telephones we are saying thank you  
in doorways and in the backs of cars and in elevators  
remembering wars and the police at the door  
and the beatings on stairs we are saying thank you  
in the banks we are saying thank you  
in the faces of the officials and the rich  
and of all who will never change  
we go on saying thank you thank you

with the animals dying around us  
taking our feelings we are saying thank you  
with the forests falling faster than the minutes  
of our lives we are saying thank you  
with the words going out like cells of a brain  
with the cities growing over us  
we are saying thank you faster and faster  
with nobody listening we are saying thank you  
thank you we are saying and waving  
dark though it is

## The Flower

GEORGE HERBERT

8

How fresh, oh Lord, how sweet and clean  
Are thy returns! even as the flowers in spring;  
    To which, besides their own demean,  
The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.  
    Grief melts away  
    Like snow in May,  
As if there were no such cold thing.

Who would have thought my shriveled heart  
Could have recovered greenness? It was gone  
    Quite underground; as flowers depart  
To see their mother-root, when they have blown,  
    Where they together  
    All the hard weather,  
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

. . .

And now in age I bud again,  
After so many deaths I live and write;  
    I once more smell the dew and rain,  
And relish versing. Oh, my only light,  
    It cannot be  
    That I am he  
On whom thy tempests fell all night.

. . .

*From a prominent Welsh family, George Herbert (1593-1633) traded his position as Cambridge University's Public Orator and a member of Parliament for ordination as an Anglican priest. He served as rector of a small parish outside Salisbury, and was a skilled lutenist and composer as well as a poet.*

## Just to Say It

PATTIANN ROGERS

9

All of those will stir and rise  
from the night of the sea floor,  
gather themselves to the surface  
and breathe, sun in the sun once more,  
stretched and dozing on placid beaches.

Others will move backward,  
drawing themselves up out  
of their own dispersed smoke  
and cold ashes to stand entire.

Those wasted and vanished  
will rouse to bread, fruit and chocolate,  
cheese and eggs, jugs of cider,  
pitchers of cream, drink and feast

without hurry, satiated.

Far sleeping infants will wake  
in the laps of their living  
mothers, wrap up in their lost  
and disintegrated, loved blankets,  
lullabied, found and made whole.

Deep field dust will congeal  
to many who will remember  
and speak again their several  
names. Coal bog and granite  
strata will open their eyes and see.  
Mountaintop and chasm fossils  
will mend their broken facets,  
sail their fins and winds, stitch  
and bind and contrive. Ice  
skeletons will turn to viable  
bone and stone become blood,  
and all those uncounted  
will be distinguished, all those  
unheard will be attended,  
all those disassembled will be  
coherent, and this is true  
and it will be.

*Pattiann Rogers (1940-) has published fifteen books of poetry, won numerous fellowships and awards, and been a visiting writer at a number of universities in the Midwest and Pacific Northwest. She lives in Colorado. Much of her poetry is rooted in the natural world.*

## **Somewhere the Equation Breaks Down**

10

DANIEL BERRIGAN

between the perfect  
    (invisible, Plato said)  
and the imperfect  
    that comes at you on the street,  
    stench and cloth and fried eyes;  
between the wired bones of the dead  
    stuttering, shamed  
and the marvelous lucid spirit  
    that moves in the body's spaces  
    a rainbow fish behind glass  
decide. O coincide!

*Daniel Berrigan (1921-2016 ) was a Jesuit priest, peace activist, poet and author of more than 50 books. He was the first priest on the FBI's most-wanted list. The last decades of his life were devoted to caring for AIDS patients in New York City. He once wrote that "We want to test the resurrection in our bones. To see if we might live in hope. May I say we have not been disappointed."*

## Who has not found the heaven below

11

EMILY DICKINSON

Who has not found the heaven below  
Will fail of it above.  
God's residence is next to mine,  
His furniture is love.

*When Emmanuel's first rector, Frederic Dan Huntington (1819-1904), attended Amherst College, he became friendly with Emily Dickinson (1830-86) and her family. Years later he remembered her as "a spirit with only as much of the mortal investiture as served to maintain her relations with this present world."*

## Some of the Planets Are Hosting

12

HAFIZ (translated by Daniel Ladinsky)

God has sent out ten thousand messengers  
Announcing a great bash tonight some of the planets  
Are hosting  
Where the lead singer is God  
Himself.  
But most of those couriers  
Have become drunk, got waylaid,  
Disoriented to the hilt  
With such exalted  
News,  
And can no longer remember  
The time and the  
Place.

What does that have to do  
With you?  
Plenty.

*Xawje Shams-od-Din Mohammad Hafez-e Shirazi (1315-1390), known by his pen name Hafiz, was a Persian Sufi Muslim lyric poet whose words are often learned by heart as everyday proverbs. His poems are well known for their ironic tone and mockery of religious hypocrisy.*

## Meditation

13

CZESLAW MILOSZ

Lord, it is quite possible that people, while praising you, were mistaken.  
You were not a ruler on a throne to whom from here below prayers and the smoke of incense ascend.  
The throne they imagined was empty and you smiled bitterly  
Seeing that they turn to you with the hope  
That you will protect their crops from hail and their bodies from illness,  
That you save them from pestilence, hunger, fire and war.  
A wanderer, camping by invisible waters, you would keep a little flame hardly visible in darkness.  
And sitting by it, pensive, you would shake your head.  
So much you wanted to help them, glad any time you succeeded,  
You felt compassion for them, forgiving them their mistake,  
Their falsity, of which they were aware, pretending they did not know it,  
And even their ugliness, as they gathered in their churches.

Lord, my heart is full of admiration and I want to talk with you,  
For I am sure you understand me, in spite of my contradictions.  
It seems to me that now I learned at last what it means to love people  
And why love is worn down by loneliness, pity, and anger.  
It is enough to reflect strongly and persistently on one life,  
On a certain woman, for instance, as I am doing now  
To perceive the greatness of those—weak—creatures  
Who are able to be honest, brave in misfortune, and patient till the end.  
What can I do more, Lord, than to meditate on all that  
And stand before you in the attitude of an implorer  
For the sake of their heroism asking: Admit us to your glory.

*Czeslaw Milosz (1911-2004) was a Polish-American poet and essayist who survived the German occupation of Warsaw and later defected to France and then the United States, becoming a professor at the University of California, Berkeley. He was well known for tackling questions of morality, politics, history and faith in his life and work. In 1980 he won the Nobel Prize in Literature.*

### Conscientious Objector

14

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death.

I hear him leading his horse out of the stall; I hear the clatter on the barn-floor.  
He is in haste; he has business in Cuba, business in the Balkans, many calls to make this morning.  
But I will not hold the bridle while he cinches the girth.  
And he may mount by himself: I will not give him a leg up.

Though he flick my shoulders with his whip, I will not tell him which way the fox ran.  
With his hoof on my breast, I will not tell him where the black boy hides in the swamp.  
I shall die, but that is all that I shall do for Death; I am not on his pay-roll.

I will not tell him the whereabouts of my friends nor of my enemies either.  
Though he promise me much, I will not map him the route to any man's door.  
Am I a spy in the land of the living, that I should deliver men to Death?  
Brother, the password and the plans of our city are safe with me; never through me  
Shall you be overcome.

*After contentious undergraduate years at Vassar, Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892-1950) became a prominent figure and feminist in Greenwich Village, openly living a bisexual life. She wrote poems, novels and an opera, and in 1923 became the first woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.*

### The Secret

15

DENISE LEVERTOV

Two girls discover  
the secret of life  
in a sudden line of  
poetry.

I who don't know the  
secret wrote  
the line. They



told me

(through a third person)  
they had found it  
but not what it was  
not even

what line it was. No doubt  
by now, more than a week  
later, they have forgotten  
the secret,

the line, the name of  
the poem. I love them  
for finding what  
I can't find,

and for loving me  
for the line I wrote,  
and for forgetting it  
so that

a thousand times, till death  
finds them, they may  
discover it again, in other  
lines

in other  
happenings. And for  
wanting to know it,  
for

assuming there is  
such a secret, yes,  
for that  
most of all.

*Born in England, Denise Levertov (1923-1997) attended Emmanuel in the 1970s and 1980s, when she was active in the opposition to the Vietnam War, before moving to Seattle in 1989. She taught at Brandeis, MIT and Tufts, and in the last decade of her life at Stanford and the University of Washington. She wrote many poems with spiritual themes. The composer James Primosch wrote motets for Emmanuel Music based on two of them, "Meditation for Candlemas" and "The Avowal."*

### **I Live My Life in Widening Circles**

16

RAINER MARIA RILKE (translated by Anita Barrows and Joanna Macy)

I live my life in widening circles  
that reach out across the world.  
I may not complete this last one  
but I give myself to it.

I circle around God, around the primordial tower,  
I've been circling for thousands of years

and I still don't know: am I a falcon,  
a storm, or a great song?

*Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) published The Book of Hours in 1906, inspired by his observations of Orthodox Christianity while visiting Russia in his mid-twenties.*

## **The Lanyard**

17

BILLY COLLINS

The other day as I was ricocheting slowly  
off the pale blue walls of this room,  
bouncing from typewriter to piano,  
from bookshelf to an envelope lying on the floor,  
I found myself in the L section of the dictionary  
where my eyes fell upon the word *lanyard*.

No cookie nibbled by a French novelist  
could send one more suddenly into the past—  
a past where I sat at a workbench at a camp  
by a deep Adirondack lake  
learning how to braid thin plastic strips  
into a lanyard, a gift for my mother.

I had never seen anyone use a lanyard  
or wear one, if that's what you did with them,  
but that did not keep me from crossing  
strand over strand again and again  
until I had made a boxy  
red and white lanyard for my mother.

She gave me life and milk from her breasts,  
and I gave her a lanyard.  
She nursed me in many a sick room,  
lifted teaspoons of medicine to my lips,  
set cold face-cloths on my forehead,  
and then led me out into the airy light

and taught me to walk and swim,  
and I, in turn, presented her with a lanyard.  
Here are thousands of meals, she said,  
and here is clothing and a good education.  
And here is your lanyard, I replied,  
which I made with a little help from a counselor.

Here is a breathing body and a beating heart,  
strong legs, bones and teeth,  
and two clear eyes to read the world, she whispered,  
and here, I said, is the lanyard I made at camp.  
And here, I wish to say to her now,  
is a smaller gift—not the archaic truth

that you can never repay your mother,

but the rueful admission that when she took  
the two-tone lanyard from my hands,  
I was as sure as a boy could be  
that this useless, worthless thing I wove  
out of boredom would be enough to make us even.

*Billy Collins (1941-) is Distinguished Professor at the City University of New York, and was Poet Laureate of the United States from 2001-2003. He has published twelve books of poetry, and has a wide spectrum of readers charmed by his loopy images of daily life. This poem is about a son and mother, but perhaps it also has an echo of an entirely unearned but spot-on certainty that we are the apple of God's eye.*

## **Song of the Open Road**

18

WALT WHITMAN

1

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road,  
Healthy, free, the world before me,  
The long brown path before me leading wherever I choose.

Henceforth I ask not good-fortune, I myself am good-fortune,  
Henceforth I whimper no more, postpone no more, need nothing,  
Done with indoor complaints, libraries, querulous criticisms,  
Strong and content I travel the open road.

The earth, that is sufficient,  
I do not want the constellations any nearer,  
I know they are very well where they are,  
I know they suffice for those who belong to them.

(Still here I carry my old delicious burdens,  
I carry them, men and women, I carry them with me wherever I go,  
I swear it is impossible for me to get rid of them,  
I am fill'd with them, and I will fill them in return.)

2

You road I enter upon and look around, I believe you are not all that is here,  
I believe that much unseen is also here.

Here the profound lesson of reception, nor preference nor denial,  
The black with his woolly head, the felon, the diseas'd, the illiterate person, are not denied;  
The birth, the hasting after the physician, the beggar's tramp, the drunkard's stagger, the laughing party  
of mechanics,  
The escaped youth, the rich person's carriage, the fop, the eloping couple,

The early market-man, the hearse, the moving of furniture into the town, the return back from the  
town,  
They pass, I also pass, any thing passes, none can be interdicted,  
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

3

You air that serves me with breath to speak!  
You objects that call from diffusion my meanings and give them shape!

You light that wraps me and all things in delicate equable showers!  
You paths worn in the irregular hollows by the roadsides!  
I believe you are latent with unseen existences, you are so dear to me.

You flagg'd walks of the cities! you strong curbs at the edges!  
You ferries! you planks and posts of wharves! you timber-lined sides! you distant ships!

You rows of houses! you window-pierc'd façades! you roofs!  
You porches and entrances! you copings and iron guards!  
You windows whose transparent shells might expose so much!  
You doors and ascending steps! you arches!  
You gray stones of interminable pavements! you trodden crossings!  
From all that has touch'd you I believe you have imparted to yourselves, and now would impart the same secretly to me,  
From the living and the dead you have peopled your impassive surfaces, and the spirits thereof would be evident and amicable with me.

4

The earth expanding right hand and left hand,  
The picture alive, every part in its best light,  
The music falling in where it is wanted, and stopping where it is not wanted,  
The cheerful voice of the public road, the gay fresh sentiment of the road.

O highway I travel, do you say to me Do not leave me?  
Do you say Venture not—if you leave me you are lost?  
Do you say I am already prepared, I am well-beaten and undenied, adhere to me?

O public road, I say back I am not afraid to leave you, yet I love you,  
You express me better than I can express myself,  
You shall be more to me than my poem.

I think heroic deeds were all conceiv'd in the open air, and all free poems also,  
I think I could stop here myself and do miracles,  
I think whatever I shall meet on the road I shall like, and whoever beholds me shall like me,  
I think whoever I see must be happy.

5

From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,  
Going where I list, my own master total and absolute,  
Listening to others, considering well what they say,  
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,  
Gently, but with undeniable will, divesting myself of the holds that would hold me.  
I inhale great draughts of space,  
The east and the west are mine, and the north and the south are mine.

I am larger, better than I thought,  
I did not know I held so much goodness.

All seems beautiful to me,  
I can repeat over to men and women You have done such good to me I would do the same to you,  
I will recruit for myself and you as I go,  
I will scatter myself among men and women as I go,  
I will toss a new gladness and roughness among them,

Whoever denies me it shall not trouble me,  
Whoever accepts me he or she shall be blessed and shall bless me.

6

Now if a thousand perfect men were to appear it would not amaze me,  
Now if a thousand beautiful forms of women appear'd it would not astonish me.

Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons,  
It is to grow in the open air and to eat and sleep with the earth.

Here a great personal deed has room,  
(Such a deed seizes upon the hearts of the whole race of men,  
Its effusion of strength and will overwhelms law and mocks all authority and all argument against it.)

Here is the test of wisdom,  
Wisdom is not finally tested in schools,  
Wisdom cannot be pass'd from one having it to another not having it,  
Wisdom is of the soul, is not susceptible of proof, is its own proof,  
Applies to all stages and objects and qualities and is content,  
Is the certainty of the reality and immortality of things, and the excellence of things;  
Something there is in the float of the sight of things that provokes it out of the soul.

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions,  
They may prove well in lecture-rooms, yet not prove at all under the spacious clouds and along the  
landscape and flowing currents.

Here is realization,  
Here is a man tallied—he realizes here what he has in him,  
The past, the future, majesty, love—if they are vacant of you, you are vacant of them.

Only the kernel of every object nourishes;  
Where is he who tears off the husks for you and me?  
Where is he that undoes stratagems and envelopes for you and me?

Here is adhesiveness, it is not previously fashion'd, it is apropos;  
Do you know what it is as you pass to be loved by strangers?  
Do you know the talk of those turning eye-balls?

7

Here is the efflux of the soul,  
The efflux of the soul comes from within through embower'd gates, ever provoking questions,  
These yearnings why are they? these thoughts in the darkness why are they?  
Why are there men and women that while they are nigh me the sunlight expands my blood?  
Why when they leave me do my pennants of joy sink flat and lank?  
Why are there trees I never walk under but large and melodious thoughts descend upon me?  
(I think they hang there winter and summer on those trees and always drop fruit as I pass;)  
What is it I interchange so suddenly with strangers?  
What with some driver as I ride on the seat by his side?  
What with some fisherman drawing his seine by the shore as I walk by and pause?  
What gives me to be free to a woman's and man's good-will? what gives them to be free to mine?

8

The efflux of the soul is happiness, here is happiness,

I think it pervades the open air, waiting at all times,  
Now it flows unto us, we are rightly charged.

Here rises the fluid and attaching character,  
The fluid and attaching character is the freshness and sweetness of man and woman,  
(The herbs of the morning sprout no fresher and sweeter every day out of the roots of themselves, than  
it sprouts fresh and sweet continually out of itself.)

Toward the fluid and attaching character exudes the sweat of the love of young and old,  
From it falls distill'd the charm that mocks beauty and attainments,  
Toward it heaves the shuddering longing ache of contact.

9  
Allons! whoever you are come travel with me!  
Traveling with me you find what never tires.

The earth never tires,  
The earth is rude, silent, incomprehensible at first, Nature is rude and incomprehensible at first,  
Be not discouraged, keep on, there are divine things well envelop'd,  
I swear to you there are divine things more beautiful than words can tell.

Allons! we must not stop here,  
However sweet these laid-up stores, however convenient this dwelling we cannot remain here,  
However shelter'd this port and however calm these waters we must not anchor here,  
However welcome the hospitality that surrounds us we are permitted to receive it but a little while.

10  
Allons! the inducements shall be greater,  
We will sail pathless and wild seas,  
We will go where winds blow, waves dash, and the Yankee clipper speeds by under full sail.

Allons! with power, liberty, the earth, the elements,  
Health, defiance, gayety, self-esteem, curiosity;  
Allons! from all formules!  
From your formules, O bat-eyed and materialistic priests.

The stale cadaver blocks up the passage—the burial waits no longer.

Allons! yet take warning!  
He traveling with me needs the best blood, thews, endurance,  
None may come to the trial till he or she bring courage and health,  
Come not here if you have already spent the best of yourself,  
Only those may come who come in sweet and determin'd bodies,  
No diseas'd person, no rum-drinker or venereal taint is permitted here.

(I and mine do not convince by arguments, similes, rhymes,  
We convince by our presence.)

11  
Listen! I will be honest with you,  
I do not offer the old smooth prizes, but offer rough new prizes,  
These are the days that must happen to you:  
You shall not heap up what is call'd riches,

You shall scatter with lavish hand all that you earn or achieve,  
You but arrive at the city to which you were destin'd, you hardly settle yourself to satisfaction before  
you are call'd by an irresistible call to depart,  
You shall be treated to the ironical smiles and mockings of those who remain behind you,  
What beckonings of love you receive you shall only answer with passionate kisses of parting,  
You shall not allow the hold of those who spread their reach'd hands toward you.

12

Allons! after the great Companions, and to belong to them!  
They too are on the road—they are the swift and majestic men—they are the greatest women,  
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,  
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,  
Habitues of many distant countries, habitués of far-distant dwellings,  
Trusters of men and women, observers of cities, solitary toilers,  
Pausers and contemplators of tufts, blossoms, shells of the shore,  
Dancers at wedding-dances, kissers of brides, tender helpers of children, bearers of children,  
Soldiers of revolts, standers by gaping graves, lowerers-down of coffins,  
Journeyers over consecutive seasons, over the years, the curious years each emerging from that which  
preceded it,  
Journeyers as with companions, namely their own diverse phases,  
Forth-steppers from the latent unrealized baby-days,  
Journeyers gayly with their own youth, journeyers with their bearded and well-grain'd manhood,  
Journeyers with their womanhood, ample, unsurpass'd, content,  
Journeyers with their own sublime old age of manhood or womanhood,  
Old age, calm, expanded, broad with the haughty breadth of the universe,  
Old age, flowing free with the delicious near-by freedom of death.

13

Allons! to that which is endless as it was beginningless,  
To undergo much, tramps of days, rests of nights,  
To merge all in the travel they tend to, and the days and nights they tend to,  
Again to merge them in the start of superior journeys,  
To see nothing anywhere but what you may reach it and pass it,  
To conceive no time, however distant, but what you may reach it and pass it,  
To look up or down no road but it stretches and waits for you, however long but it stretches and waits  
for you,  
To see no being, not God's or any, but you also go thither,  
To see no possession but you may possess it, enjoying all without labor or purchase, abstracting the  
feast yet not abstracting one particle of it,  
To take the best of the farmer's farm and the rich man's elegant villa, and the chaste blessings of the  
well-married couple, and the fruits of orchards and flowers of gardens,  
To take to your use out of the compact cities as you pass through,  
To carry buildings and streets with you afterward wherever you go,  
To gather the minds of men out of their brains as you encounter them, to gather the love out of their  
hearts,  
To take your lovers on the road with you, for all that you leave them behind you,  
To know the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as roads for traveling souls.

All parts away for the progress of souls,  
All religion, all solid things, arts, governments—all that was or is apparent upon this globe or any globe,  
falls into niches and corners before the procession of souls along the grand roads of the universe.

Of the progress of the souls of men and women along the grand roads of the universe, all other

progress is the needed emblem and sustenance.

Forever alive, forever forward,  
Stately, solemn, sad, withdrawn, baffled, mad, turbulent, feeble, dissatisfied,  
Desperate, proud, fond, sick, accepted by men, rejected by men,  
They go! they go! I know that they go, but I know not where they go,  
But I know that they go toward the best—toward something great.

Whoever you are, come forth! or man or woman come forth!  
You must not stay sleeping and dallying there in the house, though you built it, or though it has been  
built for you.

Out of the dark confinement! out from behind the screen!  
It is useless to protest, I know all and expose it.

Behold through you as bad as the rest,  
Through the laughter, dancing, dining, supping, of people,  
Inside of dresses and ornaments, inside of those wash'd and trimm'd faces,  
Behold a secret silent loathing and despair.

No husband, no wife, no friend, trusted to hear the confession,  
Another self, a duplicate of every one, skulking and hiding it goes,  
Formless and wordless through the streets of the cities, polite and bland in the parlors,  
In the cars of railroads, in steamboats, in the public assembly,  
Home to the houses of men and women, at the table, in the bedroom, everywhere,  
Smartly attired, countenance smiling, form upright, death under the breast-bones, hell under the skull-  
bones,  
Under the broadcloth and gloves, under the ribbons and artificial flowers,  
Keeping fair with the customs, speaking not a syllable of itself,  
Speaking of any thing else but never of itself.

14

Allons! through struggles and wars!  
The goal that was named cannot be countermanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?  
What has succeeded? yourself? your nation? Nature?  
Now understand me well—it is provided in the essence of things that from any fruition of success, no  
matter what, shall come forth something to make a greater struggle necessary.

My call is the call of battle, I nourish active rebellion,  
He going with me must go well arm'd,  
He going with me goes often with spare diet, poverty, angry enemies, desertions.

15

Allons! the road is before us!  
It is safe—I have tried it—my own feet have tried it well—be not detain'd!

Let the paper remain on the desk unwritten, and the book on the shelf unopen'd!  
Let the tools remain in the workshop! let the money remain unearn'd!  
Let the school stand! mind not the cry of the teacher!  
Let the preacher preach in his pulpit! let the lawyer plead in the court, and the judge expound the law.



Camerado, I give you my hand!  
I give you my love more precious than money,  
I give you myself before preaching or law;  
Will you give me yourself? will you come travel with me?  
Shall we stick by each other as long as we live?