

LEAVES OF GRASS

[Song of Myself]

I CELEBRATE myself,
And what I assume you shall assume,
For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

I loafe and invite my soul,
I lean and loafe at my ease . . . observing a spear of summer
grass.

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes . . . the shelves are
crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

The atmosphere is not a perfume . . . it has no taste of the
distillation . . . it is odorless,
It is for my mouth forever . . . I am in love with it,
I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and
naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.

The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, and buzzed whispers . . . loveroot, silkthread,
crotch and vine,⁶
My respiration and inspiration . . . the beating of my heart . . .
the passing of blood and air through my lungs,
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and
darkcolored sea-rocks, and of hay in the barn,
The sound of the belched words of my voice . . . words loosed to
the eddies of the wind,
A few light kisses . . . a few embraces . . . a reaching around of
arms,

The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs
wag,

The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields
and hillsides,

The feeling of health the full-noon trill the song of me
rising from bed and meeting the sun.

Have you reckoned a thousand acres much? Have you reckoned
the earth much?

Have you practiced so long to learn to read?

Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?

Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin
of all poems,

You shall possess the good of the earth and sun . . . there are
millions of suns left,

You shall no longer take things at second or third hand nor
look through the eyes of the dead nor feed on the
spectres in books,

You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things
from me,

You shall listen to all sides and filter them from yourself.

I have heard what the talkers were talking the talk of the
beginning and the end,

But I do not talk of the beginning or the end.

There was never any more inception than there is now,

Nor any more youth or age than there is now;

And will never be any more perfection than there is now,

Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now.

Urge and urge and urge,

Always the procreant urge of the world.

Out of the dimness opposite equals advance Always
substance and increase,

Always a knit of identity always distinction always a
breed of life.

To elaborate is no avail Learned and unlearned feel that it
is so.

Sure as the most certain sure plumb in the uprights, well
entretied, braced in the beams,⁷

Stout as a horse, affectionate, haughty, electrical,
I and this mystery here we stand.

Clear and sweet is my soul and clear and sweet is all that is
not my soul.

Lack one lacks both and the unseen is proved by the seen,
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.

Showing the best and dividing it from the worst, age vexes age,
Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things, while they
discuss I am silent, and go bathe and admire myself.

Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man
hearty and clean,
Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be
less familiar than the rest.

I am satisfied I see, dance, laugh, sing;
As God comes a loving bedfellow and sleeps at my side all night
and close on the peep of the day,
And leaves for me baskets covered with white towels bulging the
house with their plenty,

Shall I postpone my acceptance and realization and scream at
my eyes,

That they turn from gazing after and down the road,

And forthwith cipher and show me to a cent,

Exactly the contents of one, and exactly the contents of two, and
which is ahead?