

“Song of Myself” (1892 Version)

BY WALT WHITMAN

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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.