



Excerpts from “Song of the Open Road”

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 . . . querulous criticisms,  
Strong and content I travel the open road.

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 . . .  
None but are accepted, none but shall be dear to me.

4

O public road . . . I love you,  
You express me better than I can express myself . . .

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, freedom!  
From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines . . .

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.

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.

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.

9

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

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.

15

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!

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 . . .

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!

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?