

WALT WHITMAN

ASSIMILATIONS.

1.

There was a child went forth every day;
And the first object he looked upon, that object he became;
And that object became part of him for the day, or a certain part of the
day, or for many years, or tretching cycles of years.

2.

The early lilacs became part of this child,
And grass, and white and red morning-glories,[1] and white and red clover,
and the song of the phoebe-bird,[2]
And the Third-month lambs, and the sow's pink-faint litter, and the mare's
foal, and the cow's calf,
And the noisy brood of the barn-yard, or by the mire of the pond-side,
And the fish suspending themselves so curiously below there--and the
beautiful, curious liquid,
And the water-plants with their graceful fiat heads--all became part of

him.

The field-sprouts of Fourth-month and Fifth-month became part or him;

3.

Winter-grain sprouts, and those of the light-yellow corn, and the esculent
roots of the garden,

And the apple-trees covered with blossoms, and the fruit afterward, and
wood-berries, and the commonest weeds by the road;

And the old drunkard staggering home from the outhouse of the tavern,
whence he had lately risen,

And the schoolmistress that passed on her way to the school,

And the friendly boys that passed, and the quarrelsome boys,

And the tidy and fresh-cheeked girls, and the barefoot negro boy and girl,

And all the changes of city and country, wherever he went.

His own parents;

He that had fathered him, and she that had conceived him in her womb, and
birthed him,

They gave this child more of themselves than that;

They gave him afterward every day--they became part of him.

The mother at home, quietly placing the dishes on the supper-table;

The mother with mild words--clean her cap and gown, a wholesome odour
falling off her person and clothes as she walks by;

The father, strong, self-sufficient, manly, mean, angered, unjust;

The blow, the quick loud word, the tight bargain, the crafty lure,

The family usages, the language, the company, the furniture--the yearning
and swelling heart,
Affection that will not be gainsaid--the sense of what is real--the thought
if after all it should prove unreal,
The doubts of day-time and the doubts of night-time--the curious whether
and how--
Whether that which appears so is so, or is it all flashes and specks?
Men and women crowding fast in the streets--if they are not flashes and
specks, what are they?
The streets themselves, and the façades of houses, and goods in the
windows,
Vehicles, teams, the heavy-planked wharves--the huge crossing at the
ferries,
The village on the highland, seen from afar at sunset--the river between;
Shadows, aureola and mist, light falling on roofs and gables of white or
brown, three miles off;
The schooner near by, sleepily dropping down the tide--the little boat
slack-towed astern,
The hurrying tumbling waves quick-broken crests slapping,
The strata of coloured clouds, the long bar of maroon-tint, away solitary
by itself--the spread of purity it lies motionless in,
The horizon's edge, the flying sea-crow, the fragrance of salt marsh and
shore mud;--
These became part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes,
and will always go forth every day.

[Footnote 1: The name of "morning-glory" is given to the bindweed, or a sort of bindweed, in America. I am not certain whether this expressive name is used in England also.]

[Footnote 2: A dun-coloured little bird with a cheerful note, sounding like the word Phoebe.]

A WORD OUT OF THE SEA.

1.

Out of the rocked cradle,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musical shuttle,
Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands, and the fields beyond, where the child, leaving his
 bed, wandered alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the showered halo,
Up from the mystic play of shadows, twining and twisting; as if they were
 alive,
Out from the patches of briars and blackberries,
From the memories of the birds that chanted to me,
From your memories, sad brother--from the fitful risings and fallings I
 heard,
From under that yellow half-moon, late-risen, and swollen as if with tears,
From those beginning notes of sickness and love, there in the transparent
 mist,
From the thousand responses of my heart, never to cease,
From the myriad thence-aroused words,
From the word stronger and more delicious than any,--
From such, as now they start, the scene revisiting,
As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing,
Borne hither--ere all eludes me, hurriedly,--

A man--yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting the waves,
I, chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter,
Taking all hints to use them, but swiftly leaping beyond
 them,
A reminiscence sing.

2.

Once, Paumanok,
When the snows had melted, and the Fifth-month grass
 was growing,
Up this sea-shore, in some briars,
Two guests from Alabama--two together,
And their nest, and four light-green eggs spotted with brown;
And every day the he-bird, to and fro, near at hand,
And every day the she-bird, crouched on her nest, silent,
 with bright eyes;
And every day I, a curious boy, never too close, never
 disturbing them,
Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

3.

Shine! shine! shine!
Pour down your warmth, great Sun!
While we bask--we two together.

Two together!
Winds blow South, or winds blow North,
Day come white or night come black,
Home, or rivers and mountains from home,
Singing all time, minding no time,
If we two but keep together.

4.

Till of a sudden,
Maybe killed, unknown to her mate,
One forenoon the she-bird crouched not on the nest,
Nor returned that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appeared again.

And thenceforward, all summer, in the sound of the sea,
And at night, under the full of the moon, in calmer weather,
Over the hoarse surging of the sea,
Or flitting from briar to briar by day,
I saw, I heard at intervals, the remaining one, the he-bird,
The solitary guest from Alabama.

5.

Blow! blow! blow!

Blow up, sea-winds, along Paumanok's shore!

I wait and I wait, till you blow my mate to me.

6.

Yes, when the stars glistened.

All night long, on the prong of a moss-scalloped stake,

Down, almost amid the slapping waves,

Sat the lone singer, wonderful, causing tears.

He called on his mate;

He poured forth the meanings which I, of all men, know.

Yes, my brother, I know;

The rest might not--but I have treasured every note;

For once, and 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 tirelessly tossing,

I, with bare feet, a child, the wind wafting my hair,
Listened long and long.

Listened, to keep, to sing--now translating the notes,
Following you, my brother.

7.

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

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

O madly the sea pushes, pushes upon the land,
With love--with love.
O night! do I not see my love fluttering out there among the breakers?
What is that little black thing I see there in the white?

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;

For I am almost sure I see her dimly whichever 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!

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-noised sea;
For somewhere I believe I heard my mate responding 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.

Hither, my love!
Here I am! Here!
With this just-sustained note I announce myself to you;
This gentle call is for you, my love, for you!

Do not be decoyed elsewhere!
That is the whistle of the wind--it is not my voice;
That is the fluttering, the flattering of the spray;
Those are the shadows of leaves.

O darkness! O in vain!
O I am very sick and sorrowful!

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

Yet I murmur, murmur on!

O murmurs--you yourselves make me continue to sing, I know not why.

O past! O life! O songs of joy!

In the air--in the woods--over fields;

Loved! loved! loved! loved! loved!

But my love no more, no more with me!

We two together no more!

8.

The aria sinking;

All else continuing--the stars shining,

The winds blowing--the notes of the bird continuous echoing,

With angry moans the fierce old Mother incessantly moaning,

On the sands of Paumanok's shore, grey and rustling;

The yellow half-moon enlarged, sagging down, drooping, the face of the sea
almost touching;

The boy ecstatic--with his bare feet the waves, with his hair the
atmosphere, dallying,

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, incessantly crying,
To the boy's soul's questions sullenly timing--some drowned secret hissing
To the outseting bard of love.

9.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,
Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it mostly 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;
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 aroused--the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clue! (it lurks in the night here somewhere;)
O if I am to have so much, let me have more!
O a word! O what is my destination? I fear it is henceforth chaos;--
O how joys, dreads, convolutions, human shapes and all shapes, spring as
from graves around me!

O phantoms! you cover all the land, and all the sea!
O I cannot see in the dimness whether you smile or frown upon me;
O vapour, a look, a word! O well-beloved!
O you dear women's and men's phantoms!

A word then, (for I will conquer it,)
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?

10.

Whereto answering, the Sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whispered me through the night, and very plainly before daybreak,
Lisped to me the low and delicious word DEATH;
And again Death--ever Death, Death, Death,

Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my aroused child's heart,
But edging near, as privately for me, rustling at my feet,
Creeping thence steadily up to my ears, and laving 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 grey beach,
With the thousand responsive songs, at random,
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,
That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet,
The Sea whispered me.

CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY.

1.

Flood-tide below me! I watch you face to face;
Clouds of the west! sun there half an hour high! I see you also face to
face.

2.

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how curious you are
to me!
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning home,
are more curious to me than you suppose;
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more to me,
and more in my meditations, than you might suppose.

3.

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things, at all hours of the day;
The simple, compact, well-joined scheme--myself disintegrated, every one
disintegrated, yet part of the scheme;
The similitudes of the past, and those of the future;

The glories strung like beads on my smallest sights and hearings--on the
walk in the street, and the passage over the river;
The current rushing so swiftly, and swimming with me far away;
The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them;
The certainty of others--the life, love, sight, hearing, of others.

Others will enter the gates of the ferry, and cross from shore to shore;
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide;
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights
of Brooklyn to the south and east;
Others will see the islands large and small;
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour
high;
A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence, others will see
them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling-back
to the sea of the ebb-tide.
It avails not, neither time nor place--distance avails not;
I am with you--you men and women of a generation, or ever so many
generations hence;
I project myself--also I return--I am with you, and know how it is.

Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt;
Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd;
Just as you are refreshed by the gladness of the river and the bright flow,
I was refreshed;

Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I
stood, yet was hurried;

Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships, and the
thick-stemmed pipes of steamboats, I looked.

I too many and many a time crossed the river, the sun half an hour high;
I watched the twelfth-month sea-gulls--I saw them high in the air, floating
with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,

I saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies, and left the
rest in strong shadow,

I saw the slow-wheeling circles, and the gradual edging toward the south.

I too saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,
Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
Looked at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of my head
in the sun-lit water,

Looked on the haze on the hills southward and southwestward,

Looked on the vapour as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,

Looked toward the lower bay to notice the arriving ships,

Saw their approach, saw aboard those that were near me,

Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at anchor,

The sailors at work in the rigging, or out astride the spars.

The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender serpentine
pennants,

The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their
pilot-houses,

The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of the
wheels,
The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,
The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the frolicsome
crests and glistening,
The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the grey walls of the granite
store-houses by the docks,
On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flanked on each
side by the barges--the hay-boat, the belated lighter,
On the neighbouring shore, the fires from the foundry chimneys burning high
and glaringly into the night,
Casting their flicker of black, contrasted with wild red and yellow light,
over the tops of houses and down into the clefts of streets.

These, and all else, were to me the same as they are to you;
I project myself a moment to tell you--also I return.

I loved well those cities;
I loved well the stately and rapid river;
The men and women I saw were all near to me;
Others the same--others who look back on me because I looked forward to
them;
The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night.

What is it, then, between us?

What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?

Whatever it is, it avails not--distance avails not, and place avails not.

I too lived--Brooklyn, of ample hills, was mine;

I too walked the streets of Manhattan Island, and bathed in the waters
around it;

I too felt the curious abrupt questionings stir within me;

In the day, among crowds of people, sometimes they came upon me,

In my walks home late at night, or as I lay in my bed, they came upon me.

I too had been struck from the float for ever held in solution, I too had
received identity by my Body;

That I was, I knew, was of my body--and what I should be, I knew, I should
be of my body.

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,

The dark threw patches down upon me also;

The best I had done seemed to me blank and suspicious;

My great thoughts, as I supposed them, were they not in reality meagre?
would not people laugh at me?

It is not you alone who know what it is to be evil;

I am he who knew what it was to be evil;

I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,

Blabbed, blushed, resented, lied, stole, grudged;

Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak;

Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant;
The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me;
The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not wanting;
Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these wanting.

But I was Manhattanese, friendly and proud!

I was called by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young men as they
saw me approaching or passing,

Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of their
flesh against me as I sat;

Saw many I loved in the street, or ferry-boat, or public assembly, yet
never told them a word;

Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing,
sleeping;

Played the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,

The same old rôle, the rôle that is what we make it,--as great as we like,

Or as small as we like, or both great and small.

Closer yet I approach you:

What thought you have of me, I had as much of you--

I laid in my stores in advance;

I considered long and seriously of you before you were born.

Who was to know what should come home to me?

Who knows but I am enjoying this?

Who knows but I am as good as looking at you now, for all you cannot see

me?

It is not you alone, nor I alone;
Not a few races, nor a few generations, nor a few centuries;
It is that each came or comes or shall come from its due
emission, without fail, either now or then or henceforth.

Everything indicates--the smallest does, and the largest does;
A necessary film envelops all, and envelops the Soul for a proper time.

Now I am curious what sight can ever be more stately and admirable to me
 than my mast-hemmed Manhatta,
My river and sunset, and my scallop-edged waves of flood-tide;
The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the twilight, and
 the belated lighter;
Curious what Gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with
 voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as I
 approach;
Curious what is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man
 that looks in my face,
Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you.

We understand, then, do we not?

What I promised without mentioning it have you not accepted?

What the study could not teach--what the preaching could not accomplish, is
 accomplished, is it not?

What the push of reading could not start, is started by me personally, is
it not?

4.

Flow on river! flow with the flood-tide, and ebb with the ebb-tide!

Frolic on, crested and scallop-edged waves!

Gorgeous clouds of the sunset, drench with your splendour me, or the men
and women generations after me!

Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds of passengers!

Stand up, tall masts of Mannahatta!-stand up, beautiful hills of Brooklyn!

Bully for you! you proud, friendly, free Manhattanese!

Throb, baffled and curious brain! throw out questions and answers!

Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float of solution!

Blab, blush, lie, steal, you or I or any one after us!

Gaze, loving and thirsting eyes, in the house, or street, or public
assembly!

Sound out, voices of young men! loudly and musically call me by my highest
name!

Live, old life! play the part that looks back on the actor or actress!

Play the old role, the role that is great or small, according as one makes
it!

Consider, you who peruse me, whether I may not in unknown ways be looking
upon you:

Be firm, rail over the river, to support those who lean idly, yet haste
with the hastening current;
Fly on, sea-birds! fly sideways, or wheel in large circles high in the air;
Receive the summer sky, you water! and faithfully hold it, till all
downcast eyes have time to take it from you;
Diverge, fine spokes of light, from the shape of my head, or any one's
head, in the sun-lit water;
Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass up or down, white-sailed schooners,
sloops, lighters!
Flaunt away, flags of all nations! be duly lowered at sunset;
Burn high your fires, foundry chimneys! cast black shadows at nightfall;
cast red and yellow light over the tops of the houses;
Appearances, now or henceforth, indicate what you are;
You necessary film, continue to envelop the soul;
About my body for me, and your body for you, be hung our divinest aromas;
Thrive, cities! bring your freight, bring your shows, ample and sufficient
rivers!
Expand, being than which none else is perhaps more spiritual!
Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting!

We descend upon you and all things--we arrest you all;
We realise the soul only by you, you faithful solids and fluids;
Through you colour, form, location, sublimity, ideality;
Through you every proof, comparison, and all the suggestions and
determinations of ourselves.

You have waited, you always wait, you dumb, beautiful ministers! you
novices!

We receive you with free sense at last, and are insatiate henceforward;
Not you any more shall be able to foil us, or withhold yourselves from us;
We use you, and do not cast you aside--we plant you permanently within us;
We fathom you not--we love you--there is perfection in you also;
You furnish your parts toward eternity;
Great or small, you furnish your parts toward the soul.

NIGHT AND DEATH.

1.

Night on the prairies.

The supper is over--the fire on the ground burns low;

The wearied emigrants sleep, wrapped in their blankets;

I walk by myself--I stand and look at the stars, which I think now I never
realised before.

Now I absorb immortality and peace,

I admire death, and test propositions.

How plenteous! How spiritual! How resumé!

The same Old Man and Soul--the same old aspirations, and the same content.

2.

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 myriads of other globes.

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

myself by them:

And now, touched with the lives of other globes, arrived as far along as
those of the earth,

Or waiting to arrive, or passed 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.

3.

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.

ELEMENTAL DRIFTS.

1.

Elemental drifts!

O I wish I could impress others as you and the waves have just been
impressing me.

As I ebbd with an ebb of the ocean of life,
As I wended the shores I know,
As I walked where the sea-ripples wash you, Paumanok,
Where they rustle up, hoarse and sibilant,
Where the fierce old Mother endlessly cries for her castaways,
I, musing, late in the autumn day, gazing off southward,
Alone, held by this eternal self of me, out of the pride of which I have
uttered my poems,
Was seized by the spirit that trails in the lines underfoot,
In the rim, the sediment, that stands for all the water and all the land of
the globe.

Fascinated, my eyes, reverting from the south, dropped, to follow those
slender winrows,
Chaff, straw, splinters of wood, weeds, and the sea-gluten,
Scum, scales from shining rocks, leaves of salt-lettuce, left by the tide;
Miles walking, the sound of breaking waves the other side of me,

Paumanok, there and then, as I thought the old thought of likenesses.
These you presented to me, you fish-shaped Island,
As I wended the shores I know,
As I walked with that eternal self of me, seeking types.

2.

As I wend to the shores I know not,
As I list to the dirge, the voices of men and women wrecked,
As I inhale the impalpable breezes that set in upon me,
As the ocean so mysterious rolls toward me closer and closer,
I too but signify, at the utmost, a little washed-up drift,
A few sands and dead leaves to gather,
Gather, and merge myself as part of the sands and drift.

O baffled, baulked, bent to the very earth,
Oppressed with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
Aware now that, amid all the blab whose echoes recoil upon me, I have not
 once had the least idea who or what I am,
But that before all my insolent poems, the real ME stands yet untouched,
 untold, altogether unreached,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs and bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I have written,
Pointing in silence to all these songs, and then to the sand beneath.

Now I perceive I have not understood anything--not a single object--and
that no man ever can.

I perceive Nature, here in sight of the sea, is taking advantage of me, to
dart upon me, and sting me,
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

3.

You oceans both! I close with you;
These little shreds shall indeed stand for all.

You friable shore, with trails of debris!
You fish-shaped Island! I take what is underfoot;
What is yours is mine, my father.

I too, Paumanok,
I too have bubbled up, floated the measureless float, and been washed on
your shores;
I too am but a trail of drift and debris,
I too leave little wrecks upon you, you fish-shaped Island.

I throw myself upon your breast, my father,
I cling to you so that you cannot unloose me,
I hold you so firm till you answer me something.

Kiss me, my father,
Touch me with your lips, as I touch those I love,
Breathe to me, while I hold you close, the secret of the wondrous murmuring
I envy.

4.

Ebb, ocean of life, (the flow will return.)
Cease not your moaning, you fierce old Mother,
Endlessly cry for your castaways--but fear not, deny not me,
Rustle not up so hoarse and angry against my feet, as I touch you, or
gather from you.

I mean tenderly by you,
I gather for myself, and for this phantom, looking down where we lead, and
following me and mine.

Me and mine!
We, loose winrows, little corpses,
Froth, snowy white, and bubbles,
(See! from my dead lips the ooze exuding at last!
See--the prismatic colours, glistening and rolling!)
Tufts of straw, sands, fragments,
Buoyed hither from many moods, one contradicting another,

From the storm, the long calm, the darkness, the swell;
Musing, pondering, a breath, a briny tear, a dab of liquid or soil;
Up just as much out of fathomless workings fermented and thrown;
A limp blossom or two, torn, just as much over waves floating, drifted at
 random;
Just as much for us that sobbing dirge of Nature;
Just as much, whence we come, that blare of the cloud-trumpets;
We, capricious, brought hither, we know not whence, spread out before you,
You, up there, walking or sitting,
Whoever you are--we too lie in drifts at your feet.

WONDERS.

1.

Who learns my lesson complete?

Boss, journeyman, apprentice--churchman and atheist,

The stupid and the wise thinker--parents and offspring--merchant, clerk,
porter, and customer,

Editor, author, artist; and schoolboy--Draw nigh and commence;

It is no lesson--it lets down the bars to a good lesson,

And that to another, and every one to another still.

2.

The great laws take and effuse without argument;

I am of the same style, for I am their friend,

I love them quits and quits--I do not halt and make salaams.

I lie abstracted, and hear beautiful tales of things, and the reasons of
things;

They are so beautiful I nudge myself to listen.

I cannot say to any person what I hear--I cannot say it to myself--it is
very wonderful.

It is no small matter, this round and delicious globe, moving so exactly in
its orbit for ever and ever, without one jolt, or the untruth of a
single second;

I do not think it was made in six days, nor in ten thousand years, nor ten
billions of years,

Nor planned and built one thing after another, as an architect plans and
builds a house.

I do not think seventy years is the time of a man or woman,
Nor that seventy millions of years is the time of a man or woman,
Nor that years will ever stop the existence of me, or any one else.

3.

Is it wonderful that I should be immortal? as every one is immortal;
I know it is wonderful--but my eyesight is equally wonderful, and how I was
conceived in my mother's womb is equally wonderful;
And passed from a babe, in the creeping trance of a couple of summers and
winters, to articulate and walk--All this is equally wonderful.

And that my Soul embraces you this hour, and we affect each other without
ever seeing each other, and never perhaps to see each other, is
every bit as wonderful.

And that I can think such thoughts as these is just as wonderful;
And that I can remind you, and you think them and know them to be true, is

just as wonderful.

And that the moon spins round the earth, and on with the earth, is equally wonderful;

And that they balance themselves with the sun and stars is equally wonderful.

MIRACLES.

1.

What shall I give? and which are my miracles?

2.

Realism is mine--my miracles--Take freely,
Take without end--I offer them to you wherever your feet can carry you or
your eyes reach.

3.

Why! who makes much of a miracle?
As to me, I know of nothing else but miracles,
Whether I walk the streets of Manhattan,
Or dart my sight over the roofs of houses toward the sky,
Or wade with naked feet along the beach, just in the edge of the water,
Or stand under trees in the woods,
Or talk by day with any one I love--or sleep in the bed at night with any
one I love,
Or sit at the table at dinner with my mother,

Or look at strangers opposite me riding in the car,
Or watch honey-bees busy around the hive, of a summer forenoon,
Or animals feeding in the fields,
Or birds--or the wonderfulness of insects in the air,
Or the wonderfulness of the sundown--or of stars shining so quiet and
 bright,
Or the exquisite, delicate, thin curve of the new moon in spring;
Or whether I go among those I like best, and that like me best--mechanics,
 boatmen, farmers,
Or among the savans--or to the soirée--or to the opera.
Or stand a long while looking at the movements of machinery,
Or behold children at their sports,
Or the admirable sight of the perfect old man, or the perfect old woman,
Or the sick in hospitals, or the dead carried to burial,
Or my own eyes and figure in the glass;
These, with the rest, one and all, are to me miracles,
The whole referring--yet each distinct and in its place.

4.

To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every inch of space is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the earth is spread with the same,
Every cubic foot of the interior swarms with the same;
Every spear of grass--the frames, limbs, organs, of men and women, and all

that concerns them,

All these to me are unspeakably perfect miracles.

To me the sea is a continual miracle;

The fishes that swim--the rocks--the motion of the waves--the ships, with
men in them,

What stranger miracles are there?

VISAGES.

Of the visages of things--And of piercing through to the accepted hells
beneath.

Of ugliness--To me there is just as much in it as there is in
beauty--And now the ugliness of human beings is acceptable to me.

Of detected persons--To me, detected persons are not, in any respect, worse
than undetected persons--and are not in any respect worse than I am
myself.

Of criminals--To me, any judge, or any juror, is equally criminal--and any
reputable person is also--and the President is also.

THE DARK SIDE.

I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all
oppression and shame;

I hear secret convulsive sobs from young men, at anguish with themselves,
remorseful after deeds done;

I see, in low life, the mother misused by her children, dying, neglected,
gaunt, desperate;

I see the wife misused by her husband--I see the treacherous seducer of
young women;

I mark the ranklings of jealousy and unrequited love, attempted to be hid--
I see these sights on the earth;

I see the workings of battle, pestilence, tyranny--I see martyrs and
prisoners;

I observe a famine at sea--I observe the sailors casting lots who shall be
killed, to preserve the lives of the rest;

I observe the slights and degradations cast by arrogant persons upon
labourers, the poor, and upon negroes, and the like;

All these--all the meanness and agony without end, I, sitting, look out
upon;

See, hear, and am silent.

MUSIC.

I heard you, solemn-sweet pipes of the organ, as last Sunday morn I passed
the church;

Winds of autumn!--as I walked the woods at dusk, I heard your
long-stretched sighs, up above, so mournful;

I heard the perfect Italian tenor, singing at the opera--I heard the
soprano in the midst of the quartette singing.

--Heart of my love! you too I heard, murmuring low, through one of the
wrists around my head;

Heard the pulse of you, when all was still, ringing little bells last night
under my ear.

WHEREFORE?

O me! O life!--of the questions of these recurring;
Of the endless trains of the faithless--of cities filled with the foolish;
Of myself for ever reproaching myself, (for who more foolish than I, and
 who more faithless?)
Of eyes that vainly crave the light--of the objects mean--of the struggle
 ever renewed;
Of the poor results of all--of the plodding and sordid crowds I see around
 me;
Of the empty and useless years of the rest--with the rest me intertwined;
The question, O me! so sad, recurring--What good amid these, O me, O life?

ANSWER.

That you are here--that life exists, and identity;

That the powerful play goes on, and you will contribute a verse.

QUESTIONABLE.

As I lay with my head in your lap, camerado,

The confession I made I resume--what I said to you and the open air I
resume.

I know I am restless, and make others so;

I know my words are weapons, full of danger, full of death;

(Indeed I am myself the real soldier;

It is not he, there, with his bayonet, and not the red-striped
artilleryman;)

For I confront peace, security, and all the settled laws, to unsettle them;

I am more resolute because all have denied me than I could ever have been
had all accepted me;

I heed not, and have never heeded, either experience, cautions, majorities,
nor ridicule;

And the threat of what is called hell is little or nothing to me;

And the lure of what is called heaven is little or nothing to me.

--Dear camerado! I confess I have urged you onward with me, and still urge
you, without the least idea what is our destination,

Or whether we shall be victorious, or utterly quelled and defeated.

SONG AT SUNSET.

1.

Splendour of ended day, floating and filling me!
Hour prophetic--hour resuming the past:
Inflating my throat--you, divine Average!
You, Earth and Life, till the last ray gleams, I sing.

2.

Open mouth of my soul, uttering gladness,
Eyes of my soul, seeing perfection,
Natural life of me, faithfully praising things;
Corroborating for ever the triumph of things.

3.

Illustrious every one!
Illustrious what we name space--sphere of unnumbered spirits;
Illustrious the mystery of motion, in all beings, even the tiniest insect;
Illustrious the attribute of speech--the senses--the body;
Illustrious the passing light! Illustrious the pale reflection on the new
moon in the western sky!

Illustrious whatever I see, or hear, or touch, to the last.

Good in all,

In the satisfaction and aplomb of animals,

In the annual return of the seasons,

In the hilarity of youth,

In the strength and flush of manhood,

In the grandeur and exquisiteness of old age,

In the superb vistas of Death.

Wonderful to depart;

Wonderful to be here!

The heart, to jet the all-alike and innocent blood,

To breathe the air, how delicious!

To speak! to walk! to seize something by the hand!

To prepare for sleep, for bed--to look on my rose-coloured flesh,

To be conscious of my body, so happy, so large,

To be this incredible God I am,

To have gone forth among other Gods--those men and women I love.

Wonderful how I celebrate you and myself!

How my thoughts play subtly at the spectacles around!

How the clouds pass silently overhead!

How the earth darts on and on! and how the sun, moon, stars, dart on and
on!

How the water sports and sings! (Surely it is alive!)

How the trees rise and stand up--with strong trunks--with branches and
leaves!

Surely there is something more in each of the trees--some living soul.

O amazement of things! even the least particle!

O spirituality of things!

O strain musical, flowing through ages and continents--now reaching me and
America!

I take your strong chords--I intersperse them, and cheerfully pass them
forward.

I too carol the sun, ushered, or at noon, or, as now, setting,

I too throb to the brain and beauty of the earth, and of all the growths of
the earth,

I too have felt the resistless call of myself.

As I sailed down the Mississippi,

As I wandered over the prairies,

As I have lived--As I have looked through my windows, my eyes,

As I went forth in the morning--As I beheld the light breaking in the east;

As I bathed on the beach of the Eastern Sea, and again on the beach of the
Western Sea;

As I roamed the streets of inland Chicago--whatever streets I have roamed;

Wherever I have been, I have charged myself with contentment and triumph.

I sing the Equalities;

I sing the endless finales of things;

I say Nature continues--Glory continues;

I praise with electric voice:

For I do not see one imperfection in the universe;

And I do not see one cause or result lamentable at last in the universe.

O setting sun! though the time has come,

I still warble under you unmitigated adoration.

LONGINGS FOR HOME.

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,[1] 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 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
Carolinas;

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 Pamlico Sound through an inlet, and
dart my vision inland;

O the cotton plant! the growing fields of rice, sugar, hemp!
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 odour and the gloom--the awful natural stillness, Here in these
 dense swamps the freebooter carries his gun, and the fugitive slave
 has his concealed 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 Tennessee corn-field--the tall, graceful, long-leaved corn--slender,
 flapping, bright green, with tassels--with beautiful ears, each
 well-sheathed in its husk;
An Arkansas prairie--a sleeping lake, or still bayou.
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!

[Footnote 1: These expressions cannot be understood in a literal sense, for Whitman was born, not in the South, but in the State of New York. The precise sense to be attached to them may be open

to some difference of opinion.]

APPEARANCES.

Of the terrible doubt of appearances,
Of the uncertainty after all--that we may be deluded,
That maybe reliance and hope are but speculations after all,
That maybe identity beyond the grave is a beautiful fable only,
Maybe the things I perceive--the animals, plants, men, hills, shining and
 flowing waters,
The skies of day and night--colours, densities, forms--Maybe these are (as
 doubtless they are) only apparitions, and the real something has
 yet to be known;
(How often they dart out of themselves, as if to confound me and mock me!
How often I think neither I know, nor any man knows, aught of them!)
Maybe seeming to me what they are (as doubtless they indeed but seem) as
 from my present point of view--And might prove (as of course they
 would) naught of what they appear, or naught anyhow, from entirely
 changed points of view;
--To me, these, and the like of these, are curiously answered by my lovers,
 my dear friends.
When he whom I love travels with me, or sits a long while holding me by the
 hand,
When the subtle air, the impalpable, the sense that words and reason hold
 not, surround us and pervade us,
Then I am charged with untold and untellable wisdom--I am silent--I require
 nothing further,

I cannot answer the question of appearances, or that of identity beyond the
grave;

But I walk or sit indifferent--I am satisfied,

He ahold of my hand has completely satisfied me.

THE FRIEND.

Recorders ages hence!

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,

Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless ocean of love within
him--and freely poured it forth,

Who often walked lonesome walks, thinking of his dear friends, his lovers,
Who pensive, away from one he loved, often lay sleepless and dissatisfied
at night,

Who knew too well the sick, sick dread lest the one he loved might secretly
be indifferent 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 sauntered the streets, curved with his arm the shoulder of
his friend--while the arm of his friend rested upon him also.

MEETING AGAIN.

When I heard at the close of the day how my name had been received with
plaudits in the capitol, still it was not a happy night for me that
followed;

And else, when I caroused, or when my plans were accomplished, still I was
not happy.

But the day when I rose at dawn from the bed of perfect health, refreshed,
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 wandered alone over the beach, and undressing bathed, laughing with
the cool waters, and saw the sunrise,

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 nourished me
more--and the beautiful day passed 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.

A DREAM.

Of him I love day and night, I dreamed I heard he was dead;
And I dreamed I went where they had buried him I love--but he was not in
that place;
And I dreamed I wandered, searching among burial-places, to find him;
And I found that every place was a burial-place;
The houses full of life were equally full of death, (this house is now);
The streets, the shipping, the places of amusement, the Chicago, Boston,
Philadelphia, the Mannahatta, were as full of the dead as of the living,
And fuller, O vastly fuller, of the dead than of the living.
--And what I dreamed I will henceforth tell to every person and age,
And I stand henceforth bound to what I dreamed;
And now I am willing to disregard burial-places, and dispense with them;
And if the memorials of the dead were put up indifferently everywhere, even
in the room where I eat or sleep, I should be satisfied;
And if the corpse of any one I love, or if my own corpse, be duly rendered
to powder, and poured in the sea, I shall be satisfied;
Or if it be distributed to the winds, I shall be satisfied.

PARTING FRIENDS.

What think you I take my pen in hand to record?

The battle-ship, perfect-modelled, majestic, that I saw pass the offing to-day under full sail?

The splendours of the past day? Or the splendour of the night that envelops me?

Or the vaunted glory and growth of the great city spread around me?--No;

But I record of two simple men I saw to-day, on the pier, in the midst of the crowd, parting the parting of dear friends;

The one to remain hung on the other's neck, and passionately kissed him,

While the one to depart tightly pressed the one to remain in his arms.

TO A STRANGER.

Passing stranger! you do not know how longingly I look upon you;
You must be he I was seeking, or she I was seeking (it comes to me, as of a
dream).

I have somewhere surely lived a life of joy with you.

All is recalled as we flit by each other, fluid, affectionate, chaste,
matured;

You grew up with me, were a boy with me, or a girl with me;

I ate with you, and slept with you--your body has become not yours only,
nor left my body mine only;

You give me the pleasure of your eyes, face, flesh, as we pass--you take of
my beard, breast, hands in return;

I am not to speak to you--I am to think of you when I sit alone, or wake at
night alone;

I am to wait--I do not doubt I am to meet you again;

I am to see to it that I do not lose you.

OTHER LANDS.

This moment yearning and thoughtful, sitting alone,

It seems to me there are other men in other lands, yearning and thoughtful;

It seems to me I can look over and behold them in Prussia, Italy, France,

Spain--or far, far away, in China, or in Russia or India--talking

other dialects;

And it seems to me, if I could know those men, I should become attached to

them, as I do to men in my own lands.

O I know we should be brethren and lovers;

I know I should be happy with them.

ENVY.

When I peruse the conquered fame of heroes, 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 read of the brotherhood of lovers, how it was with them;
How through life, through dangers, 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 put down the book, and walk away, filled with
the bitterest envy.

THE CITY OF FRIENDS.

I dreamed in a dream I saw a city invincible to the attacks of the whole of
the rest of the earth;

I dreamed that it was the new City of Friends;

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.

OUT OF THE CROWD.

1.

Out of the rolling ocean, the crowd, came a drop gently to me,
Whispering, I love you; before long I die:
I have travelled a long way, merely to look on you, to touch you:
For I could not die till I once looked on you,
For I feared I might afterward lose you.

2.

Now we have met, we have looked, we are safe;
Return in peace to the ocean, my love;
I too am part of that ocean, my love--we are not so much separated;
Behold the great rondure--the cohesion of all, how perfect!
But as for me, for you, the irresistible sea is to separate us,
As for an hour carrying us diverse--yet cannot carry us diverse for ever;
Be not impatient--a little space--know you, I salute the air, the ocean,
and the land,
Every day, at sundown, for your dear sake, my love.

AMONG THE MULTITUDE.

Among the men and women, the multitude,
I perceive one picking me out by secret and divine signs,
Acknowledging none else--not parent, wife, husband, brother, child, any
 nearer than I am;
Some are baffled--But that one is not--that one knows me.

Ah, lover and perfect equal!
I meant that you should discover me so, by my faint indirections;
And I, when I meet you, mean to discover you by the like in you.