

48

I have said that the soul is not more than the body,¹
 And I have said that the body is not more than the soul,
 And nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is,
 And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud,
 And I or you pocketless of a dime may purchase the pick of the earth,
 And to glance with an eye or show a bean in its pod confounds the learning of all times,
 And there is no trade or employment but the young man following it may become a hero,
 And there is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheel'd universe,
 And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes.

¹ Compare, in *Notes and Fragments*, p. 36, No. 112 of the 'First Drafts and Rejected Lines' for *Leaves of Grass*. Compare also, as the best possible commentary on this section, two passages of Whitman's prose, the first a note written probably between 1850 and 1855, the second from the Preface to the 1876 edition of *Leaves of Grass*:

All through writings preserve the equilibrium of the truth that the material world, and all its laws, are as grand and superb as the spiritual world and all its laws. Most writers have disclaimed the physical world, and they have not over-estimated the other, or soul, but have under-estimated the corporeal. How shall my eye separate the beauty of the blossoming buckwheat field from the stalks and heads of tangible matter? How shall I know what the life is except as I see it in the flesh? I will not praise one without the other or more than the other.

Do not argue at all or compose proofs to demonstrate things. State nothing which it will not do to state as apparent to all eyes. (*Notes and Fragments*, p. 56.)

It was originally my intention, after chanting in 'Leaves of Grass' the songs of the body and existence, to then compose a further, equally needed volume, based on those convictions of perpetuity and conservation which, enveloping all precedents, make the unseen soul govern absolutely at last. I meant, while in a sort continuing the theme of my first chants, to shift the slides, and exhibit the problem and paradox of the same ardent and fully appointed personality entering the sphere of the resistless gravitation of spiritual law, and with cheerful face estimating death, not at all as the cessation, but as somehow what I feel it must be, the entrance upon by far the greatest part of existence, and something that life is at least as much for, as it is for itself. But the full construction of such a work is beyond my powers, and must remain for some bard in the future. The physical and the sensuous, in themselves or in their immediate continuations, retain holds upon me which I think are never entirely releas'd; and those holds I have not only not denied, but hardly wish'd to weaken. (*Complete Prose Works*, pp. 273, 274.)

And I say to mankind, Be not curious about God,²
 For I who am curious about each am not curious about God,
 (No array of terms can say how much I am at peace about God and about death.)

I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least,
 Nor do I understand who there can be more wonderful than myself.

Why should I wish to see God better than this day?

I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then,
 In the faces of men and women I see God, and in my own face in the glass,
 I find letters from God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's name,
 And I leave them where they are, for I know that wheresoe'er I go,
 Others will punctually come for ever and ever.

51

The past and present wilt—I have fill'd them, emptied them,
 And proceed to fill my next fold of the future.

Listener up there! what have you to confide to me?
 Look in my face while I snuff the sidle of evening.
 (Talk honestly, no one else hears you, and I stay only a minute longer.)

² Compare the original sketch for these lines in *Notes and Fragments*, p. 24:—

There is no word in any tongue,
 No array, no form of symbol,
 To tell his infatuation
 Who would define the scope and purpose of God.

Mostly this we have of God; we have man.
 Lo, the Sun;
 Its glory floods the moon
 Which of a night shines in some turbid pool,
 Shaken by souging winds:
 And there are sparkles mad and tossed and broken
 And their archetype is the sun.

Of God I know not;
 But this I know:
 I can comprehend no being more wonderful than man;
 Man, before the rage of whose passions the storms of Heaven
 are but a breath;
 Before whose caprices the lightning is slow and less fatal;
 Man, microcosm of all Creation's wildness, terror, beauty and power,
 And whose folly and wickedness are in nothing else existent.

SONG OF THE OPEN ROAD²

1

A FOOT 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,³
 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.¹¹

(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.⁴

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 hastening after the physician, the beggar's tramp, the drunkard's stagger, the laughing party of mechanics,²⁰

² A great recreation, the past three years, has been in taking long walks out from Washington, five, seven, perhaps ten miles and back; generally with my friend Peter Doyle, who is as fond of it as I am. Fine moonlight nights, over the perfect military roads, hard and smooth—or Sundays—we had these delightful walks, never to be forgotten. (WHITMAN, *Specimen Days*, December 10th, 1865. *Complete Prose Works*, p. 70.) This poem first appeared in 1856, with the title 'Poem of the Road.'

³ This line was added in the edition of 1881.

⁴ In the first form of the poem, 1856, this line read:

I believe that something unseen is also here.

Do I contradict myself?
 Very well then I contradict myself,
 (I am large, I contain multitudes.)

I concentrate toward them that are nigh, I wait on the door-slab.

Who has done his day's work? who will soonest be through with his supper?
 Who wishes to walk with me?

Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?

52

The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering.

I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
 I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.¹

The last seud of day holds back for me,
 It flings my likeness after the rest and true as any on the shadow'd wilds,
 It coaxes me to the vapor and the dusk.

I depart as air, I shake my white locks at the runaway sun,
 I effuse my flesh in eddies, and drift it in lacy jags.

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
 If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
 But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
 And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
 Missing me one place search another,
 I stop somewhere waiting for you.^{1855.}

¹ Compare the original sketch for these lines, in *Notes and Fragments*, p. 36:—

The spotted hawk salutes the approaching night;
 He sweeps by me and rebukes me hoarsely with his invitation;
 He complains with sarcastic voice of my lagging.

I feel apt to clip it and go;
 I am not half tamed yet.

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!¹
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!³⁰
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,⁴⁰

¹ In the first form of the poem there followed here three lines which were omitted in 1871 and in the following editions:—

You animals moving serenely over the earth!
You birds that wing yourselves through the air! you insects!
You sprouting growths from the farmers' fields! you stalks and weeds by the fences!

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,⁵⁰
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,²
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,⁶⁰
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,

² In the edition of 1856 this section began:—

From this hour, freedom!
From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits, etc.

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.⁷⁰

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,¹
(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,⁸⁰
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.²

¹ Here is space—here a great personal deed has room. (1856.)

² The animals, the past, the future, light, space,

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?⁹⁰

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 eyeballs?

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;)¹⁰⁰
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,

majesty, love, if they are vacant of you, you are vacant of them. (1856.)

(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.) 110

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, 120
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. 1 130

¹ The 1856 edition has 'formulas' in both these lines.

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, 140
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, 2 150
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas,
Sailors of many a ship, walkers of many a mile of land,

² Here began in the 1856 edition a new paragraph :
Over that which hindered them, over that which retarded, passing impediments large or small,
Committees of crimes, committers of many beautiful virtues,
Enjoyers of calms of seas and storms of seas, . . .

The first two lines were omitted from 1881 on.

Habitues of many distant countries, habitues 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, 160
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, 170
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. 1

All parts away for the progress of souls, 181
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. 190

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,

¹ In the early editions, down to 1881, there follows here another brief paragraph : —

The soul travels,
The body does not travel as much as the soul,
The body has just as great a work as the soul, and parts away at last for the journeys of the soul.

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 coun-
termanded.

Have the past struggles succeeded?
What has succeeded? yourself? your na-
tion? 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.

210

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?

1856.

MIRACLES¹

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 table at dinner with the rest,
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;
These with the rest, one and all, are to me
miracles,
The whole referring, yet each distinct and
in its place.²

¹ In the 1856 edition, with the title 'Poem of Perfect
Miracles.' In its first form the poem began with a
paragraph since omitted: —

Realism is mine, my miracles,
Take all of the rest — take freely — I keep but my own — I
give only of them.
I offer them without end — I offer them to you wherever your
feet can carry you, or your eyes reach.

² Compare the original Preface to *Leaves of Grass*,
the first edition, 1855: '... every motion and every
spear of grass, and the frames and spirits of men and
women and all that concerns them, are unspeakably
perfect miracles, all referring to all, and each distinct
and in its place.'

See also the longer passage at the end of the fifth
paragraph of this Preface, on the miracle of eyesight.

To me every hour of the light and dark is
a miracle,
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle,
Every square yard of the surface of the
earth is spread with the same,
Every foot of the interior swarms with the
same.

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?

1856.

ASSURANCES¹

I NEED no assurances, I am a man who is
pre-occupied of his own soul;²
I do not doubt that from under the feet and
beside the hands and face I am cogni-
zant of, are now looking faces I am not
cognizant of, calm and actual faces,
I do not doubt but the majesty and beauty
of the world are latent in any iota of the
world,³
I do not doubt I am limitless, and that the
universes are limitless, in vain I try to
think how limitless,
I do not doubt that the orbs and the sys-
tems of orbs play their swift sports
through the air on purpose, and that I
shall one day be eligible to do as much
as they, and more than they,⁴
I do not doubt that temporary affairs keep
on and on millions of years,
I do not doubt interiors have their interiors,
and exteriors have their exteriors, and
that the eyesight has another eyesight,

¹ In the 1856 edition, with the title 'Faith Poem;' in
1860 as No. vii, *Leaves of Grass*.

² In the 1856 edition there followed the line (omitted
in 1867): —

I do not doubt that whatever I know at a given time, there
waits for me more which I do not know.

³ In the 1856 edition there followed the line (omitted
in 1867): —

I do not doubt there are realizations I have no idea of, wait-
ing for me through time and through the universes — also
upon this earth.

⁴ Here followed, in the 1856 edition, the lines (omitted
in 1867): —

I do not doubt there is far more in trivialities, insects, vulgar
persons, slaves, dwarfs, weeds, rejected refuse, than I have
supposed:

I do not doubt there is more in myself than I have supposed
— and more in all men and women — and more in my poems
than I have supposed.

and the hearing another hearing, and the
voice another voice,
I do not doubt that the passionately-wept
deaths of young men are provided for,
and that the deaths of young women and
the deaths of little children are provided
for,

(Did you think Life was so well provided
for, and Death, the purport of all Life, is
not well provided for?)

I do not doubt that wrecks at sea, no
matter what the horrors of them, no
matter whose wife, child, husband, father,
lover, has gone down, are provided for,
to the minutest points,⁵

I do not doubt that whatever can possibly
happen anywhere at any time, is pro-
vided for in the inherences of things,

I do not think Life provides for all and for
Time and Space, but I believe Heavenly
Death provides for all.⁶

1856.

CROSSING BROOKLYN FERRY⁷

1

FLOOD-TIDE below me! I see you face to
face!
Clouds of the west — sun there half an
hour high — I see you also face to face.

⁵ Here followed, in 1856, the lines (omitted in 1871):

I do not doubt that shallowness, meanness, malignance, are
provided for;
I do not doubt that cities, you, America, the remainder of the
earth, politics, freedom, degradations, are carefully pro-
vided for.

⁶ The last line of the poem, and the fourth line from
the end, in parenthesis, appeared first in the edition of
1871, where the poem was included among the *Whispers*
of *Heavenly Death*.

⁷ Living in Brooklyn or New York city from this
time forward, my life, then, and still more the follow-
ing years, was curiously identified with Fulton ferry,
already becoming the greatest of its sort in the world
for general importance, volume, variety, rapidity, and
picturesqueness. Almost daily, later ('50 to '60), I
cross'd on the boats, often up in the pilot-houses where
I could get a full sweep, absorbing shows, accompani-
ments, surroundings. What oceanic currents, eddies,
underneath — the great tides of humanity also, with
ever-shifting movements! Indeed, I have always had a
passion for ferries; to me they afford inimitable, stream-
ing, never-falling, living poems. The river and bay
scenery, all about New York island, any time of a fine
day — the hurrying, splashing sea-tides — the changing
panorama of steamers, all sizes, often a string of big
ones outward bound to distant ports — the myriads of
white sail'd schooners, sloops, skiffs, and the marvel-
lously beautiful yachts — the majestic Sound boats as
they rounded the Battery and came along towards 5,
afternoon, eastward bound — the prospect off towards
Staten Island, or down the Narrows, or the other way
up the Hudson — what refreshment of spirit such sights

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.

2

The impalpable sustenance of me from all things at all hours of the day,
The simple, compact, well-join'd 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.

3

It avails not, time nor place — distance avails not,

and experiences gave me years ago (and many a time since)! My old pilot friends, the Balsirs, Johnny Cole, Ira Smith, William White, and my young ferry friend, Tom Gere — how well I remember them all! (WHITMAN, *Specimen Days*. Complete Prose Works, Small, Maynard & Co., p. 11.)

In 1856 the poem was entitled 'Sun-down Poem,' and the first line read: —

Flood-tide of the river, flow on! I watch you, face to face!

I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence,

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 refresh'd by the gladness of the river and the bright flow, I was refresh'd,

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-stemm'd pipes of steamboats, I look'd.

I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old,
Watched the Twelfth-month sea-gulls, saw them high in the air floating with motionless wings, oscillating their bodies,
Saw how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their bodies and left the rest in strong shadow,
Saw the slow-wheeling circles and the gradual edging toward the south,
Saw the reflection of the summer sky in the water,

Had my eyes dazzled by the shimmering track of beams,
Look'd at the fine centrifugal spokes of light round the shape of my head in the sunlit water,
Look'd on the haze on the hills southward and south-westward,
Look'd on the vapor as it flew in fleeces tinged with violet,
Look'd toward the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving,
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 gray walls of the granite store-houses by the docks,

On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug closely flank'd on each side by the barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,

On the neighboring 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.

4

These and all else were to me the same as they are to you,

I loved well those cities, 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 look'd forward to them (The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night).

5

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 walk'd 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 forever held in solution,

I too had receiv'd 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.

6

It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,

The dark threw its patches down upon me also,

The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious,

My great thoughts as I supposed them, were they not in reality meagre?

Nor is it 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,

Blabb'd, blush'd, resented, lied, stole, grudg'd,

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,

Was one with the rest, the days and haps of the rest,¹

Was call'd by my highest 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,

Play'd 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.

7

Closer yet I approach you,

What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you — I laid in my stores in advance,

I consider'd 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?

¹ Instead of this line the 1856 edition has: —
But I was a Manhattanese, free, friendly, and proud!

and this line begins a new paragraph.

Who knows, for all the distance, but I am
as good as looking at you now, for all
you cannot see me?¹

8

Ah, what can ever be more stately and ad-
mirable to me than mast-hemm'd Man-
hattan?

River and sunset and scallop-edg'd waves
of flood-tide?

The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the
hay-boat in the twilight, and the belated
lighter?

What gods can exceed these that clasp me
by the hand, and with voices I love call
me promptly and loudly by my highest
name as I approach?

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?²

We understand, then, do we not?

What I promis'd without mentioning it,
have you not accepted?

What the study could not teach — what the
preaching could not accomplish is accom-
plish'd, is it not?³

100

9

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

Frolic on, crested and scallop-edg'd waves!
Gorgeous clouds of the sunset! drench
with your splendor me, or the men and
women generations after me!

Cross from shore to shore, countless crowds
of passengers!

¹ There follow at this point in the 1856 edition two
other brief paragraphs: —

It is not you alone, nor I alone,
Not a few races, not a few generations, not 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.

These lines seem necessary to the understanding of line
121, which has been retained in all editions.

² Remember, the book arose out of my life in Brook-
lyn and New York from 1838 to 1855, absorbing a million
people with an intimacy, an eagerness, an abandon, prob-
ably never equalled. (WHITMAN, *Bucke's Life*, p. 67.)

³ In the 1856 edition this paragraph ends with a line
unhappily omitted from the latest editions: —

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

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

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

Suspend here and everywhere, eternal float
of solution!

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 rôle, the rôle 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 hasting
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 sunlit water!

Come on, ships from the lower bay! pass
up or down, white-sail'd schooners, sloops,
lighters!

Faunt away, flags of all nations! be duly
lower'd 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 per-
haps more spiritual,

Keep your places, objects than which none
else is more lasting.⁴

⁴ At this point a paragraph has been omitted from
the 1881 and later editions: —

We descend upon you and all things, we arrest you all,
We realize the soul only by you, you faithful solids and
fluids.

Through you color, form, location, sublimity, ideality,
Through you every proof, comparison, and all the sugges-
tions and determinations of ourselves.

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

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 to-
ward the soul.

1856.

OUT OF THE CRADLE END- LESSLY ROCKING¹

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
Out of the mocking-bird's throat, the musi-
cal shuttle,

Out of the Ninth-month midnight,
Over the sterile sands and the fields be-
yond, where the child leaving his bed

wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd halo,

Up from the mystic play of shadows twin-
ing and twisting as if they were alive,

Out from the patches of briars and black-
berries,

From the memories of the bird 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 yearning
and love there in the mist,

From the thousand responses of my heart
never to cease,

From the myriad thence-arous'd words,
From the word stronger and more delicious
than any,

From such as now they start the scene re-
visiting,

As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead
passing,

As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead
passing,

¹ First published in the *New York Saturday Press*,
December 24, 1859, with the title 'A Child's Reminis-
cence.' In 1860 it appears with the new title, 'A Word
Out of the Sea,' for the whole poem, and with the sub-
title, 'Reminiscences,' for the part beginning with the
second paragraph.

In the earlier versions, up to 1871, the first line
read: —

Out of the rocked cradle.

Out of the rocked cradle.

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.

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air² and
Fifth-month grass was growing,

Up this seashore in some briars,
Two feather'd 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 crouch'd on her
nest, silent, with bright eyes,

And every day I, a curious boy, never too
close, never disturbing them,

Cautiously peering, absorbing, translating.

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,

While we two keep together.

Till of a sudden,
May-be kill'd, unknown to her mate,

One forenoon the she-bird crouch'd not on
the nest,

Nor return'd that afternoon, nor the next,
Nor ever appear'd 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 brier to brier by day,

I saw, I heard at intervals the remaining
one, the he-bird,

The solitary guest from Alabama.

² When the snows had melted. (1859-60.)