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WALT WHITMAN

POEM OF SALUTATION

O take my hand, Walt Whitman!
Such gliding wonders! Such sights and sounds!
Such joined unended links, each hooked to the next!
Each answering all, each sharing the earth with all.
What widens within you, Walt Whitman?
What waves and soils exuding?
What climes? what persons and lands are here?
Who are the infants? some playing, some slumbering?
Who are the girls? Who are the married women?
Who are the three old men going slowly with their arms about each others' necks?
What rivers are these? What forests and fruits are these?
What are the mountains called that rise so high in the mists?
What myriads of dwellings are they, filled with dwellers?
Within me latitude widens, longitude lengthens,
Asia, Africa, Europe, are to the east – America is provided for in the west,
Banding the bulge of the earth winds the hot equator,
Curiously north and south turn the axis-ends;
Within me is the longest day, the sun wheels in slanting rings, it does not set for months,
Stretched in due time within me the midnight sun just rises above the horizon, and sinks again;
Within me zones, seas, cataracts, plains, volcanoes, groups,
Oceanica, Australasia, Polynesia, and the great West Indian islands.
What do you hear, Walt Whitman?
I hear the workman singing, and the farmer's wife singing,
I hear in the distance the sounds of children, and of animals early in the day,
I hear the inimitable music of the voices of mothers,
I hear the persuasions of lovers,
I hear quick rifle-cracks from the riflemen of East Tennessee and Kentucky, hunting on hills,
I hear emulous shouts of Australians, pursuing the wild horse,
I hear the Spanish dance with castanets, in the chestnut shade, to the rebeck and guitar,
I hear continual echoes from the Thames,
I hear fierce French liberty songs,

I hear of the Italian boat-sculler the musical recitative of old poems,
I hear the Virginia plantation chorus of negroes, of a harvest night, in
the glare of pine knots,
I hear the strong baritone of the long-shore-men of Manahatta – I hear
the stevedores unlading the cargoes, and singing,
I hear the screams of the water-fowl of solitary northwest lakes,
I hear the rustling pattering of locusts, as they strike the grain and
grass with the showers of their terrible clouds,
I hear the Coptic refrain toward sun-down pensively falling on the
breast of the black venerable vast mother, the Nile,
I hear the bugles of raft-tenders on the streams of Canada,
I hear the chirp of the Mexican muleteer, and the bells of the mule,
I hear the Arab muezzin, calling from the top of the mosque,
I hear Christian priests at the altars of their churches – I hear the
responsive base and soprano,
I hear the wail of utter despair of the white-haired Irish grand-parents,
when they learn the death of their grand-son,
I hear the cry of the Cossack, and the sailor’s voice, putting to sea at Okotsk,
I hear the wheeze of the slave-coffle, as the slaves march on, as the
husky gangs pass on by twos and threes, fastened together
with wrist-chains and ankle-chains,
I hear the entreaties of women tied up for punishment, I hear the
sibilant whisk of thongs through the air,
I hear the appeal of the greatest orator, he that turns states by the tip
of his tongue,
I hear the Hebrew reading his records and psalms,
I hear the rhythmic myths of the Greeks, and the strong legends of the
Romans,
I hear the tale of the divine life and bloody death of the beautiful god,
the Christ,
I hear the Hindoo teaching his favorite pupil the loves, wars, adages,
transmitted safely to this day from poets who wrote three
thousand years ago.
What do you see, Walt Whitman?
Who are they you salute, and that one after another salute you?
I see a great round wonder rolling through the air,
I see diminute farms, hamlets, ruins, grave-yards, jails, factories, pa
laces, hovels, huts of barbarians, tents of nomads, upon the surface,
I see the shaded part on one side where the sleepers are sleeping, and
the sun-lit part on the other side,
I see the curious silent change of the light and shade,
I see distant lands, as real and near to the inhabitants of them as my
land is to me.
I see plenteous waters,

I see mountain peaks – I see the sierras of Andes and Alleghanies, I see where they range,
I see plainly the Himmalehs, Chian Shahs, Altays, Gauts,
I see the Rocky Mountains, and the Peak of Winds,
I see the Styrian Alps and the Karnac Alps,
I see the Pyrenees, Balks, Carpathians, and to the north the Dofrafields, and off at sea Mount Hecla,
I see Vesuvius and Etna – I see the Anahuacs,
I see the Mountains of the Moon, and the Snow Mountains, and the Red Mountains of Madagascar,
I see the Vermont hills, and the long string of Cordilleras;
I see the vast deserts of Western America,
I see the Libyan, Arabian, and Asiatic deserts;
I see huge dreadful Arctic and Antarctic icebergs,
I see the superior oceans and the inferior ones – the Atlantic and Pacific, the sea of Mexico, the Brazilian sea, and the sea of Peru,
The Japan waters, those of Hindostan, the China Sea, and the Gulf of Guinea,
The spread of the Baltic, Caspian, Bothnia, the British shores, and the Bay of Biscay,
The clear-sunned Mediterranean, and from one to another of its islands,
The inland fresh-tasted seas of North America,
The White Sea, and the sea around Greenland.
I behold the mariners of the world,
Some are in storms, some in the night, with the watch on the lookout, some drifting helplessly, some with contagious diseases.
I behold the steam-ships of the world,
Some double the Cape of Storms, some Cape Verde, others Cape Guardafui, Bon, or Bajadore,
Others Dondra Head, others pass the Straits of Sunda, others Cape Lopatka, others Behring’s Straits,
Others Cape Horn, others the Gulf of Mexico, or along Cuba or Hayti, others Hudson’s Bay or Baffin’s Bay,
Others pass the Straits of Dover, others enter the Wash, others the Firth of Solway, others round Cape Clear, others the Land’s End,
Others traverse the Zuyder Zee or the Scheld,
Others add to the exits and entrances at Sandy Hook,
Others to the comers and goers at Gibraltar or the Dardanelles,
Others sternly push their way through the northern winter-packs,
Others descend or ascend the Obi or the Lena,
Others the Niger or the Congo, others the Hoangho and Amoor, others the Indus, the Burampooter and Cambodia,

Others wait at the wharves of Manahatta, steamed up, ready to start,
Wait swift and swarthy in the ports of Australia,
Wait at Liverpool, Glasgow, Dublin, Marseilles, Lisbon, Naples,
Hamburgh, Bremen, Bordeaux, the Hague, Copenhagen,
Wait at Valparaiso, Rio Janeiro, Panama,
Wait at their moorings at Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Charleston,
New Orleans, Galveston, San Francisco.
I see the tracks of the rail-roads of the earth,
I see them welding state to state, county to county, city to city,
through North America,
I see them in Great Britain, I see them in Europe,
I see them in Asia and in Africa.
I see the electric telegraphs of the earth,
I see the filaments of the news of the wars, deaths, losses, gains,
passions, of my race.
I see the long thick river-stripes of the earth,
I see where the Mississippi flows, I see where the Columbia flows,
I see the St. Lawrence and the falls of Niagara,
I see the Amazon and the Paraguay,
I see where the Seine flows, and where the Loire, the Rhone, and the
Guadalquivir flow,
I see the windings of the Volga, the Dnieper, the Oder,
I see the Tuscan going down the Arno, and the Venetian along the Po,
I see the Greek seaman sailing out of Egina bay.
I see the site of the great old empire of Assyria, and that of Persia, and
that of India,
I see the falling of the Ganges over the high rim of Saukara.
I see the place of the idea of the Deity incarnated by avatars in human
forms,
I see the spots of the successions of priests on the earth, oracles,
sacrificers, brahmins, sabians lamas, monks, muftis, exhorters,
I see where druids walked the groves of Mona, I see the misletoe and vervain,
I see the temples of the deaths of the bodies of gods, I see the old
signifiers,
I see Christ once more eating the bread of his last supper in the midst
of youths and old persons,
I see where the strong divine young man, the Hercules, toiled
faithfully and long, and then died,
I see the place of the innocent rich life and hapless fate of the
beautiful nocturnal son, the full-limbed Bacchus,
I see Kneph, blooming, dressed in blue, with the crown of feathers on
his head,
I see Hermes, unsuspected, dying, well-beloved, saying to the people,
Do not weep for me, this is not my true country, I have lived

banished from my true country, I now go back there, I return
to the celestial sphere where every one goes in his turn.
I see the battle-fields of the earth – grass grows upon them, and
blossoms and corn,
I see the tracks of ancient and modern expeditions.
I see the nameless masonries, venerable messages of the unknown
events, heroes, records of the earth.
I see the places of the sagas,
I see pine-trees and fir-trees torn by northern blasts,
I see granite boulders and cliffs, I see green meadows and lakes,
I see the burial-cairns of Scandinavian warriors,
I see them raised high with stones, by the marge of restless oceans,
that the dead men's spirits, when they wearied of their quiet
graves, might rise up through the mounds, and gaze on the
tossing billows, and be refreshed by storms, immensity,
liberty, action.
I see the steppes of Asia,
I see the tumuli of Mongolia, I see the tents of Kalmucks and Baskirs,
I see the nomadic tribes with herds of oxen and cows,
I see the table-lands notched with ravines, I see the jungles and deserts,
I see the camel, the wild steed, the bustard, the fat-tailed sheep, the
antelope, and the burrowing wolf.
I see the high-lands of Abyssinia,
I see flocks of goats feeding, I see the fig-tree, tamarind, date,
I see fields of teff-wheat, I see the places of verdure and gold.
I see the Brazilian vaquero,
I see the Bolivian ascending Mount Sorata,
I see the Guacho crossing the plains, I see the incomparable rider of
horses with his lasso on his arm,
I see over the pampas the pursuit of wild cattle for their hides.
I see the little and large sea-dots, some inhabited, some uninhabited;
I see two boats with nets, lying off the shore of Paumanok, quite still,
I see ten fishermen waiting – they discover now a thick school of
mossbonkers, they drop the joined seine-ends in the water,
The boats separate, they diverge and row off, each on its rounding
course to the beach, enclosing the mossbonkers,
The net is drawn in by a windlass by those who stop ashore,
Some of the fishermen lounge in the boats, others stand negligently
ankle-deep in the water, poised on strong legs,
The boats are partly drawn up, the water slaps against them,
On the sand, in heaps and winrows, well out from the water, lie the
green-backed spotted moss-bonkers.
I see the despondent red man in the west, lingering about the banks of
Moingo, and about Lake Pepin,

He has beheld the quail and honey-bee, and sadly prepared to depart.
I see the regions of snow and ice,
I see the sharp-eyed Samoiede and the Finn,
I see the seal-seeker in his boat, poising his lance,
I see the Siberian on his slight-built sledge, drawn by dogs,
I see the porpoise-hunters, I see the whale-crews of the South Pacific and the North Atlantic,
I see the cliffs, glaciers, torrents, valleys, of Switzerland – I mark the long winters and the isolation.
I see the cities of the earth, and make myself a part of them,
I am a real Londoner, Parisian, Viennese,
I am a habitan of St. Petersburgh, Berlin, Constantinople,
I am of Adelaide, Sidney, Melbourne,
I am of Manchester, Bristol, Edinburgh, Limerick,
I am of Madrid, Cadiz, Barcelona, Oporto, Lyons, Brussels, Berne, Frankfort, Stuttgart, Turin, Florence,
I belong in Moscow, Cracow, Warsaw – or northward in Christiana or Stockholm – or in some street in Iceland,
I descend upon all those cities, and rise from them again.
I see vapors exhaling from unexplored countries,
I see the savage types, the bow and arrow, the poisoned splint, the fetish and the obi.
I see African and Asiatic towns,
I see Algiers, Tripoli, Derne, Mogadore, Timbuctoo, Monrovia,
I see the swarms of Pekin, Canton, Benares, Delhi, Calcutta,
I see the Kruman in his hut, and the Dahoman and Ashantee-man in their huts,
I see the Turk smoking opium in Aleppo,
I see the picturesque crowds at the fairs of Khiva, and those of Herat,
I see Teheran, I see Muscat and Medina, and the intervening sands – I see the caravans toiling onward;
I see Egypt and the Egyptians, I see the pyramids and obelisks,
I look on chiselled histories, songs, philosophies, cut in slabs of sandstone or granite blocks,
I see at Memphis mummy-pits, containing mummies, embalmed, swathed in linen cloth, lying there many centuries,
I look on the fall’n Theban, the large-ball’d eyes, the side-drooping neck, the hands folded across the breast.
I see the menials of the earth, laboring,
I see the prisoners in the prisons,
I see the defective human bodies of the earth,
I see the blind, the deaf and dumb, idiots, hunchbacks, lunatics,
I see the pirates, thieves, betrayers, murderers, slave-makers of the earth,
I see the helpless infants, and the helpless old men and women.

I see male and female everywhere,
I see the serene brotherhood of philosophs,
I see the constructiveness of my race,
I see the results of the perseverance and industry of my race,
I see ranks, colors, barbarisms, civilizations – I go among them, I mix indiscriminately,
And I salute all the inhabitants of the earth.
You, inevitable where you are!
You daughter or son of England!
You free man of Australia! you of Tasmania! you of Papua! you free woman of the same!
You of the mighty Slavic tribes and empires! you Russ in Russia!
You dim-descended, black, divine-souled African, large, fine-headed, nobly-formed, superbly destined, on equal terms with me!
You Norwegian! Swede! Dane! Icelander! you Prussian!
You Spaniard of Spain! you Portuguese!
You Frenchwoman and Frenchman of France!
You Belge! you liberty-lover of the Netherlands!
You sturdy Austrian! you Lombard! Hun! Bohemian! farmer of Styria!
You neighbor of the Danube!
You working-man of the Rhine, the Elbe, or the Weser! you working-woman too!
You Sardinian! you Bavarian! you Swabian! Saxon! Wallachian! Bulgarian!
You citizen of Prague! you Roman! Napolitan! Greek!
You lithe matador in the arena at Seville!
You mountaineer living lawlessly on the Taurus or Caucasus!
You Bokh horse-herd watching your mares and stallions feeding!
You beautiful-bodied Persian, at full speed in the saddle, shooting arrows to the mark!
You Chinaman and Chinawoman of China! you Tartar of Tartary!
You women of the earth, subordinated at your tasks!
You Jew journeying in your old age through every risk to stand once on Syrian ground!
You other Jews waiting in all lands for your Messiah!
You thoughtful Armenian pondering by some stream of the Euphrates! you peering amid the ruins of Nineveh! you ascending Mount Ararat!
You foot-worn pilgrim welcoming the far-away sparkle of the minarets of Mecca!
You sheiks along the stretch from Suez to Babel-mandel, ruling your families and tribes!
You olive-grower tending your fruit on fields off Nazareth, Damascus, or Lake Tiberias!

You Thibet trader on the wide inland, or bargaining in the shops of Lassa!
You Japanese man or woman! you liver in Madagascar, Ceylon, Sumatra, Borneo!
All you continentals of Asia, Africa, Europe, Australia, indifferent of place!
All you on the numberless islands of the archipelagoes of the sea!
And you of centuries hence, when you listen to me!
And you everywhere whom I specify not, but include just the same!
I salute you for myself and for America.
Each of us inevitable,
Each of us limitless – each of us with his or her right upon the earth,
Each of us allowed the eternal purport of the earth,
Each of us here as divinely as any is here.
You Hottentot with clicking palate!
You woolly-haired hordes! you white or black owners of slaves!
You owned persons dropping sweat-drops or blood-drops!
You felons, deformed persons, idiots!
You human forms with the fathomless ever-impressive countenances of brutes!
You poor koboo whom the meanest of the rest look down upon, for all your glimmering language and spirituality!
You low expiring aborigines of the hills of Utah, Oregon, California!
You dwarfed Kamskatkan, Greenlander, Lapp!
You Austral negro, naked, red, sooty, with protrusive lip, grovelling, seeking your food!
You Caffre, Berber, Soudanese!
You haggard, uncouth, untutored Bedowee!
You plague-swarms in Madras, Nankin, Kaubul, Cairo!
You bather bathing in the Ganges!
You benighted roamer of Amazonia! you Patagonian! you Fegee-man!
You peon of Mexico! you Russian serf! you quadroon of Carolina, Texas, Tennessee!
I do not refuse you my hand, or prefer others before you,
I do not say one word against you.
My spirit has passed in compassion and determination around the whole earth,
I have looked for brothers, sisters, lovers, and found them ready for me in all lands.
I think I have risen with you, you vapors, and moved away to distant continents, and fallen down there, for reasons,
I think I have blown with you, you winds,
I think, you waters, I have fingered every shore with you,

I think I have run through what any river or strait of the globe has run through,
I think I have taken my stand on the bases of peninsulas, and on imbedded rocks.
What cities the light or warmth penetrates, I penetrate those cities myself,
All islands to which birds wing their way, I wing my way myself,
I find my home wherever there are any homes of men.