

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking About the poet

Author : Walter "Walt" Whitman
Born : 31 May 1819, Huntington on Long Island
Died : 1892
Nationality : America
Period : the transition between transcendentalism
and realism Called as : He is called **the father of free
verse.**

The national poet of America the 'Organ Voice' of America.

Whitman published the first edition of his masterpiece The Leaves of Grass, on July 4, 1855.

Works

1. Franklin Evans - 1842
2. Leaves of Grass - 1855
3. Drum-Taps - 1865
4. Memoranda During the War
5. Specimen Days
6. Democratic Vistas - 1871

The two great elegies of American literature are

O! Captain! My Captain,
and

When lilacs last in the dooryard bloome'd Timber Creek

In all his poems Whitman reflects the values and aspirations of Americans.

Whitman was particular that the diction of American poetry should not be derived from that of ancient Greek or English classics but should be rooted in the language actually spoken by Americans.

His poetry collection Leaves of Grass was described as obscene for its overt sexuality. The Leaves of Grass is 'the Bible of democracy'. Thoreau welcomed Whitman's Leaves of Grass as 'very brave and American'.

W.D.O. Conner says that to understand Greece, study the Iliad and Odyssey; study Leaves of Grass to understand America.

About the work

Written in : 1859
Published in : 1860
Collection : **Leaves of Grass. This poem is found in the title section,**

Sea-Drift.

Original title : "A Child's Remembrance", It was first published in the Saturday Press on December 24, 1859.
Introduction: "Our readers may, if they choose, consider as our Christmas or New Year's present to them, the curious warble by Walt Whitman".
It was later included Leaves of Grass under the title "A Word Out of the Sea" and also occasionally referred as "A Voice Out of the Sea".

The present title suggests "a word from the sea," and that word is death, which is the second phase in the process of birth-death-rebirth.

Theme : The basic theme of the poem is the relationship between suffering and art.
About : It shows how a boy matures into a poet through his experience of love and death. Art is a sublimation of frustrations and death is a release from the stress and strains caused by such frustrations.

The poem, an elegy, is thought to be based on an intensely personal experience of the poet.

The secret of life which the boy grasps from the sea is the recurrent pattern of birth-death-rebirth.

Whitman used images like bird, boy, sea. Some critics have taken the poem to be an elegy mourning the death of someone dear to him. The language is similar to "There Was a Child Went Forth".

"Out of the Cradle" can be described as a poem about the birth of the poet, it can also be read as a poem about the death of the self. In the end, these two phenomena are one and the same.

Whitman takes his inspiration from nature. Nature gives him very specific answers to his questions about overarching concepts. Nature is a tabula rasa - an absence of preconceived ideas or predetermined goals; a clean slate, the poet can project himself. It seems to be by his permission.

The epiphany surrounding the word "death" seems appropriate, in other poems of Whitman's we have seen death described as the ultimate tool for democracy and sympathy.

An epiphany is an experience of a sudden and striking realization. Generally the term is used to describe scientific breakthrough, religious or philosophical discoveries. The word epiphany originally referred to insight through the divine.

Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking
Poem

Out of the cradle endlessly rocking,
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
wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot,
Down from the shower'd 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 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 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.

Once Paumanok,
When the lilac-scent was in the air 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.

*Blow! blow! blow!
Blow up sea-winds along
Paumanok's shore; I wait and I wait
till you blow my mate to me.*

Yes, when the stars glisten'd,
All night long on the prong of a moss-
scallop'd stake, Down almost amid the
slapping waves,
Sat the lone singer wonderful causing tears.

He call'd on his mate,
He pour'd forth the meanings which I of all men know.

Yes my brother I know,
The rest might not, but I have treasur'd
every note, For 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, Listen'd long and long.

Listen'd to keep, to sing, now translating the
notes, Following you my brother.

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,
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love.

O madly the sea pushes upon
the land, With love, with love.

O night! do I not see my love fluttering out 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-nois'd 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-sustain'd note I announce
myself to you, This gentle call is for you my
love, for you.*

*Do not be decoy'd elsewhere,
That is the whistle of the wind, it is not
my voice, That is the fluttering, the
fluttering 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!
And I singing uselessly, uselessly all the night.*

*O past! O happy life! O
songs of joy! In the air, in
the woods, over fields,
Loved! loved! loved! loved!
loved!*

*But my mate no more, no more
with me! We two together no
more.*

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 gray 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 drown'd secret
hissing, To the outsetting bard.

Demon or bird! (said the boy's soul,)

Is it indeed toward your mate you sing? or is it really 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 arous'd, the fire, the sweet
hell within, The unknown want, the destiny of me.

O give me the clew! (it lurks in the night here
somewhere,) O if I am to have so much, let me
have more!

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?

Whereto answering, the sea,
Delaying not, hurrying not,
Whisper'd me through the night, and very plainly before day-break,

Lisp'd to me the low and delicious
word death, And again death, death,
death, death,
Hissing melodious, neither like the bird nor like my arous'd 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 gray
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,
(Or like some old crone rocking the cradle, swathed in sweet garments,
bending aside,) The sea whisper'd me.

The opening of the poem is a *tour de force* of poetic suspense: a single sentence, twenty-two lines of sustained anaphora and parallelism, of gliding prepositional phrases and arousing half-allusions culminating in the simple bardic verb "sing." This haunting recitation introduces **the four voices** in the poem, bird, boy, man, sea and arranges them into a sequence of "afflatus."

The bird calls "those beginning notes of yearning and love," the boy listens and "translates" them, the man records the translation and comments on the boy's condition, and the sea taciturnly provides the final word on the matter, the "word of the sweetest song and all songs," death.

Out of the ceaselessly rocking cradle of the sea waves, a memory comes back to the poet. He recalls that as a child, he left his bed and "wander'd alone, bareheaded, barefoot" in search of the mystery of life and death. He is a man now but "by these tears a little boy again," and he throws himself on the shore "confronting the waves." He is a "chanter of pains and joys, uniter of here and hereafter," and he uses all his experiences but goes beyond them.

This poem describes a young boy's awakening as a poet, mentored by nature and his own maturing consciousness. It has an abundance of repeated prepositions describing movement like out, over, down, up, from these words convey the sense of a struggle, in this case the poet's struggle to come to consciousness.

Cradle, mentioned here, is associated with creation and its inexhaustible possibilities. The poet describes the mocking-bird's song heard across sterile sands and fields and patches of briars and black berries filling him with sadness in his childhood days. He was so much moved by the bird's song so he leaves his bed and wanders barefooted in search of the inconsolable bird. The male bird sang a happy song in the beginning as it had a fulfilling experience with **its mate in the mist**. This song evoked a 'thousand responses' from the poet's heart. Later, when the female bird died, the male was plunged into grief.

This present song is a product of the poet's reminiscences over the past.

When the poet Whitman was a small boy he lived **in Long Island, referred to by the Indian name "Paumanok"**. When the **lilac-scent** was in the air and Fifth-month **grass was growing, two birds migrated there from Alabama**. The female bird **brooded over four light-green eggs spotted with brown in the next**. The male bird watches over its mate by remaining close to the nest. The female bird was silent, its eyes bright with joy at the prospect of hatching young ones. The boy was watching it with **curiosity, absorbing the mystery of creation**.

The birds appeal to the sun to shed warmth and facilitate the hatching of their eggs. The birds are so hopeful of their future that the winds and rivers and mountains sing to them.

One day, the female bird was missing. Somebody might have killed it. It did not return to its nest. From that time of its missing the male bird's sad song was heard across the surging sea, the calm sky lit by the full moon and from bushes of briars. Now all nature echo the male bird's bitter agony.

The bereaved male bird asks the sea-wind to blow its missing mate back to it. It called for its mate day and night. When the stars shone, the male bird sang sadly and shed tears. Nobody understood the cause of the bird's agony. **The Poet regarded the male bird as his brother**. Only he understood the bird's grief. The boy went to the beach and searched in shadowy, obscure

places for the she-bird in several nights. He could translate the bird's mournful notes into human language.

The male bird turns to nature for consolation. It appeals to the never-ending succession of waves to soothe it. The bird notices love in all natural objects. Waves 'embrace' and 'lap' one another, like human lovers.

The bird turns to the moon and feels that the moon is 'heavy with love' and so rises late and moves slowly. The sea is in love with the land and 'pushes' on it 'madly'. The male bird sees a 'black thing' on the waves and mistakes it for its beloved. It mistakes the 'dusky spot' in the moon for its beloved and asks the moon to return its mate. The male bird's sees its mate wherever it looks—in the moon, the stars and the land and asks all of them to send back the mate.

The male bird decides not to shout but to 'just murmur'. It asks the sea to remain silent for some time, as it thinks that the female bird is responding. The male bird realizes the need to let know its presence to the mate. So it gently announces its presence 'here' to the mate. It anxiously asks the mate not to mistake the whistle of the wind and the fluttering of spray from the male bird's voice and the shadows of leaves for its body.

The male bird realizes that its mate is dead and that it is useless to sing. There is love in the air, the woods and the fields but its beloved is irrecoverably lost.

The male bird's song gradually subsides. Nature continues its activities unaffected by the bird's grief. The stars glitter, the winds blow, the sea moans and the moon comes close to the sea as usual. The boy experiences both joy and sorrow.

The male bird's song, germinate in his soul. The poet is sure that his poetic talent will never die.

The male bird is indirectly expressing the poet's grief. The bird's lament, or "aria," affected the boy deeply. The poem that Whitman write will immortalize the bird's grief. Thus the bird and the poet echo each other. The poet says that after listening to the bird's sad song, he has lost the peace of mind that he knew as a boy.

The death is final. It is as delicious to him as a crony's rocking of the cradle is to the infant sleeping in it.

It is an elegy on the death of a female mocking-bird.

The poet asks nature to give him the one word "**superior to all.**"

Death is described as **the ultimate tool for democracy and sympathy.** Here death is one lesson a child must learn from nature or from an elder. Only the realization of death can lead to emotional and artistic maturity.

The poetic persona remembers that as a child, he left the mother's womb. The mother's womb is a cradle of human life He also left the bed and roamed alone in search of the secret of life and death. Life itself is the cradle that is continually rocked by death. The sea gave hints to the boy, now the poet

'the word final, superior to all', 'delicious word death...../Death, death.' He was enlightened by the truth that death is the final destiny of any creatures. Death rocked the cradle of life endlessly. The lonely bird singing to relieve his pain is a metaphor here for arousing the poetic spirit in the poet.

The nature, the sea too mourns on the death, the sea is restless and the moon is lagging behind on the separation of the loving birds.

Walt Whitman presents his attitude towards death. According to Whitman death is not the end of life, but the beginning of another form of life. It is true that death is the beginning of another form of life. It is true that death is superior and final, yet it can make us enter another phase of life. He has hope that her life has continued elsewhere. The requests made to the moon, land, sea and stars presuppose the continuation of life somewhere in another form.

The title has dual meaning: one refers to the birth from mother's womb, and if the cradle is taken as the life, it refers to the death. The implied theme of the poem is the connection between grief and art.

The seashore is the meeting line between his paternal island and the "savage old mother.

The boy and the mocking bird is translator in the poem

The word "imitation" means not representation but repetition.

The trio of bird, sea, and boy all echo the "undertone," the "secret hissing" of the word "death." Whitman's decision to call himself simply a "bard" instead of the "bard of love" was a repressing of the union between love and death.

The sea waves contribute to the "Death, death, death, death, death" is the key line in the poem; "death" is "sweet" and "delicious";

This poem links Whitman to the Romantics. The "birth of the poet" genre was of particular importance to **Wordsworth's *Prelude***. It details his artistic coming-of-age in detail. Like Wordsworth, Whitman takes his inspiration from nature.

A reviewer for the *Daily Commercial* called the poem "unmixed and hopeless drivel."

The *Saturday Press* published a response to that review titled "All About a Mocking-Bird", celebrating Whitman's poem. This article may have been written by Whitman himself

Literary Devices "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking"

Anaphora: It refers to the repetition of a word or expression in the first part of some verses. The words "Out of the" in the first stanza repeated to emphasize the point. Example:

“Out of the cradle endlessly rocking;
Out of the mockingbird’s throat, the musical
shuttle; Out of the Ninth-month midnight.”

Assonance: Assonance is the repetition of vowel sounds in the same line.

Example: the sound of /i/ in “twittering, rising, or overhead passing” and the sound of

/ai/ in “*Shine! shine! shine!*.”

Alliteration: Alliteration is the repetition of consonant sounds in the same line in quick succession.

Example: the sound of /d/ in “For more than once dimly down to the beach gliding,” and the sound of /m/ in “*But my mate no more, no more with me!*”

Imagery: Imagery is used to make readers perceive things involving their five senses. Example: “Are you whispering it, and have been all the time, you sea-waves?”, “A man, yet by these tears a little boy again” and “As a flock, twittering, rising, or overhead passing.”

Personification: Personification is to give human qualities to inanimate objects. The poet has used this device at many places in the poem.

Example: “Over the hoarse surging of the sea”, “That strong and delicious word which, creeping to my feet” and “The sea whisper’d me.”

Rhetorical Question: Rhetorical question is a question that is not asked in order to receive an answer; it is just posed to make the point clear and emphasize a point.

Example: “*O night! do I not see my love fluttering out among the breakers?*” and “*What is that dusky spot in your brown yellow??*”

Symbolism: Symbolism is using symbols to signify ideas and qualities, giving them symbolic meanings that are different from the literal meanings. The death of the she-bird serves as a symbol for the death of his own childlike ignorance.

The title itself is a symbol of birth. The sun and the moon, the land and the sea, and the stars and atmosphere are symbolic scenery in the poem.

The sea symbolizes the principle of maternity, birth and life. Death is but a natural transition to rebirth.

The sea symbolizes the principle of maternity, birth and life. Death is but a natural transition to rebirth.

“Sea” symbolizes the spiritual and the imaginary world of poetry.

Free Verse: Free Verse is a type of poetry that does not contain patterns of rhyme or meter. This is a free-verse poem with no strict rhyme scheme or metrical pattern.

Closing lines

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 whisper'd me.

Important lines

1. A man, yet by these tears a little boy again,
Throwing myself on the sand, confronting
the waves
2. free verse and imagery
3. 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.
4. Low hangs the moon, it rose late,
It is lagging—O I think it is heavy with love, with love
5. With angry moans the fierce old mother incessantly moaning
6. 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.
7. My own songs awaked from that hour,
And with them the key, the word up from the waves

