

2015

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Recommended Citation

Kurraz, Abdullah (2015) "Revisiting Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself": The Poetics of Human Self and Identity," *An-Najah University Journal for Research - B (Humanities)*: Vol. 29 : Iss. 8 , Article 7.

Available at: https://digitalcommons.aaru.edu.jo/anutr_b/vol29/iss8/7

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Revisiting Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself": The Poetics of Human Self and Identity

معاودة تأمل قصيدة "أغنية عن نفسي" للشاعر ولت ويتمان: شاعرية الذات الإنسانية وهويتها

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Received: (6/7/2014), Accepted: (19/11/2014)

Abstract

This paper explores the constituents of Walt Whitman's poetic self – soul and body; its hopes, tensions, expectations and concerns. It focuses mainly on "Song of Myself"¹ for it presents a web of references and implications to the poet's fragmented self and confused identity. Whitman portrays his self as such in its human and universal context, expecting other selves to identify with his. In its psychoanalytic ground, the paper also tries to shed light on the poetic anticipation that foreshadows the current hard situations that cause a lot of shocks, fragmentation, depression, uncertainty, and disappointment. According to Whitman's poetics, the absence of stable selves, the loss of hopes and the confusion on place and time provide a ground for exploring human desires and hopes of having stable selves and integrated and identified identities. This paper also studies the fusion between the self and identity as seen in the identification of the poet's self with other people's selves, in search for uniqueness, stability, and social and psychological mobility.

Keywords: Walt Whitman, Self, Identity, Universality, Human, Song of Myself.

ملخص

يستكشف هذا البحث – جسداً وروحاً - مكونات الذات الشعرية للشاعر والت ويطمان؛ آمالها وتوتراتها وتوقعاتها واهتماماتها. ويركز البحث أساساً على قصيدة "أغنية عن نفسي" لأنها تعرض نسيجاً من الإشارات والتضمينات لذات الشاعر المتشظية وهويته المضطربة. يصور ويطمان ذاته على هذا النحو في سياقها الإنساني والكوني، متوقفاً أن تتماهى الذوات الأخرى مع ذاته. ويحاول البحث، وعلى أساس نظرية التحليل النفسي، تسليط الضوء على التوقعات الشعرية التي تنبأ بالأوضاع الصعبة المعاصرة التي تتسبب في الكثير من الصدمات والاكنتاب، والشكوى، وخيبة الأمل. وفي ضوء شاعرية ويطمان، فإن غياب الذوات المستقرة، وفقدان الآمال و في ظل حالة من الارتباك حول المكان والزمان يوفر أرضية لاستكناه الرغبات والآمال الإنسانية في ذوات مستقرة وهويات متكاملة وواضحة. كما تبحث الدراسة في انصهار الذات والهوية كما نرى في توحيد الذات الشاعرة مع الذوات الأخرى، بحثاً عن الأصالة والاستقرار، والحراك الاجتماعي والنفسي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ولت ويطمان، الذات، الهوية، العالمية، الإنسان، أغنية عن نفسي.

1. “Song of Myself” is referred to as “Song” henceforth

Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" (1855) modernizes the vision of a powerful American poet on human universal self and individual identity. Its poetic identity and self are presented in a fresh condensed discourse directly related to the realities of the American people. Poetically, Whitman captures the sight and soul of the cosmopolitan self and defines his nation as his own self by referring to daily life ideals and rituals, using a new surprising poetic way. “Song” also explores how Whitman adapts a poetic motif of metamorphosis by using the image of nature and society as two driving forces for his transformation. It presents intimacy in self-expression and privacy in association with the relationships with modern humans in various aspects of life. Moreover, "Song" presents a set of the most prominent features of Whitman’s poetics: the open form of free verse, prose-like language, and musicality, all of which are derived from the language of everyday speech with a sort of internal harmony. In this light, Josep Armengol (2013) argues that Whitman is a new born American hero qualified with “American ideological values of independence, autonomy, individualism, and self-sufficiency” (p.77).

Through his frequent deliberate poetic use of I, Whitman shows his inflated and unstable self that requires remedy, "I am there, I help, I came stretch'd atop of the load, I felt its soft jolts ... I jump from the cross-beams and seize the clover and timothy" (S.9, L.6-8). The dominating poetic I represents the human self where the poet shows his "love for the soldier, the common man, the workingman, and the men he considered the real heroes of America" (Whitley, 2006, p.477). In this respect, Whitman poetically unites the individual selves of the American, celebrating himself and enjoying nature, in which his "tongue, every atom of my blood, form'd from this soil, this air," as the bond between the inner self and the outer world guarantees soul and self-recovery of pains and agonies (S.1, L.6). Whitman repeats "I" in his "finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I" (Lehman, 2008, p.12). Thus, the poet's inner soul and self are recovered after being fragmented due to wars, conflicts, disputes and battles; politically, socially, religiously and intellectually. Again, once the soul is awakened, the poet's self becomes universal, "the far-off depth and height reflecting my own face/This the thoughtful merge of myself, and the outlet again" (S. 19, L. 9-10). Here, the poet states the maneuver in which "universality makes him a part of everyone" and hopes to identify with other stable selves and tranquil souls (Greenspan, 2005, p.193).

"Song" embodies a web of condensed and displaced images of Whitman's self, fragmented but hopeful to change for better. Being self-fragmented and confused, Whitman experiences a state of being "apart, watchful, detached, amused, complacent, compassionating, idle, unitary," a thing that arouses his national and human intimacy to change negative feelings in reality through poetry (Lehman, 2008, p.12). Whitman stresses the manners by which "individual lives constitute the very circumference of democracy," where the self is the central unit of democracy and freedom (Whitley, 2006, p.476). Whitman expects to live in a world of stability and uniqueness; a world that harmonizes with his psyche, for "One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is myself, ... I can cheerfully take it now, or with equal cheerfulness I can

wait” (S.20, L.32-34). Thus, his poetic cognitive self develops in vision and thinking.

Apparently, one can notice the main three themes as mentioned in the poem: the idea of the self, the identification of the self with other selves, and the poet's relationship with the elements of nature and the universe. Whitman describes his true inner self shining through as “the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun” (S.2, L16). Thus, the poetic self comprises various ideas, expressions, psychological states, and spiritual insights. The self is the spiritual entity that Whitman reshapes in it a permanent form through a set of logical ideas and realistic experiences.

Admittedly, Whitman has a ramified self that may include other human selves who share with him similar confusion, fragmentation, uncertainty, disappointment and disorientation that characterize modern man's case. In this respect, Whitman embodies the human self and soul that make other selves attainable and unified. The aftermaths of wars certainly cause psychological, social and cultural changes; the result is a fragmented human self unable to tolerate such breakdown of the moral and spiritual systems. Robert C. Sickels (2000) argues that Whitman's poetic and realistic observations underlie “a basic motivation to provide a model for those wishing to engage in a similar activity of transcendence” on human divided self (p, 23). Certainly, readers can share with Whitman his vision on the relationship between the self and the universe in the light of the common dilemmas and fragmentations of modern life. Whitman’s poetic soul is both a single or public soul bearing a flavor of a universal one, a soul that “transcends from egotistical existence to a more sublime and expansive existence” displacing itself from “the contracting to the expansive” (Baghira,2013, p.2).

Whitman composes "Song" in the light of his "dreams and anxieties within the political and cultural context of his age" (Whitley, 2006, p.466). Whitman tries to reconcile his own self with contemporary social and political habits of his society after experiencing a state of fragmentation and instability. Whitman poetically tries to set up his "inspired autonomous self" in order to "reconcile what he had so

absolutely divided" (Pires, 2009, p.371). Accordingly, Whitman poeticizes "Song" to present his ideas that may dramatically overstep tough and fossilized mentalities and mistaken insights of modern societies (Hermansen, 2010). Modern man, seen in Whitman's poetic vision, is divided between the external and internal conflicts, between "The sickness of one of my folks or of myself, or ill-doing or/loss or lack of money, or depressions or exaltations" (S.4, L.6-7). The result is a lot of depression, estrangement, and fragmentation of the human self that is exposed to wars and battles; their horrors and pains. Consequently, the poetically new born self embodies relevant thoughts, experiences, psychological reactions, and spiritual beliefs. Both land and water form "a duality symbolic of the physical and spiritual, body and soul, life and death" (Baghira,2013,p. 3).

Whitman sets forth a "revolutionary religious doctrine" as a defense mechanism against his deep feelings of suppression, depression, confusion, and estrangement (Hermansen, 2010). Whitman's poetic vision may seem probable to the modern public in the light of the need to such a vision and its implementation. Then, the poetic self is the robust connecting rule of Whitman's poetic vision with the overall selfhood that should emerge free from fragmentation and confusion. Whitman shows full awareness of the "integration of the body and soul," that seeks establishing balance among various aspects of his culture through his poetics (Sickels, 2000, p.28). Again, Whitman asserts human self identity in its modernized structure, "Houses and rooms are full of perfume" (S.2, L.1). Here, the poetic and indicative image of "Perfume" is a symbol of other human individual selves, and the atmosphere around signifies the universal collective self. Jacob (2012) argues that human identity enters a new domain of representation, aesthetically delimited by the self's referentiality to nature's embodiments of the good, the bad and the ugly, which also function as boundaries of the Whitmanian Edenic space.

Accordingly, Whitman's identity becomes the displaced metaphor of a grand self which contains other various selves presented by poetic language. Whitman mirrors his own self, fragmented and unstable, through other individual selves. In this sense, Jacques Lacan argues

(1978) that awareness of self as a unique entity is gained through the interaction and integration with others (p.110). Therefore, Whitman's human identity is constructed by a conscious process that arises from a sense of suppressed perfection that entails an action to regain self stability and enlightenment. Displacing his own qualities, the poet talks about all objects and concerns that reshape his identity and personality. His self is like his soul, personifying it as a self-contented individual. He also declares, “I believe in you my soul, the other I am must not abase itself to you,/ Loafe with me on the grass, loose the stop from your throat (S.5, L.4-5). Here, Whitman resumes the image of draping body and soul in the grass. In a sense, the image of the grass becomes the breath of his soul. Whitman makes his soul speak in music, not in words.

In Whitman's age, American people lost sight of "the idea of individuals" because of phenomenological concepts of "equality, community, racism, segregation, sexism, and Marxism" (Greenspan, 2005, p.204). Whitman offers a text on the "phenomenology of self" that places the human individual and society in a relationship of mutuality and utility (Mack, 1999). The individuals got lost and Whitman describes the case as if he represents all these individuals and envisions their selves. The concept of the self, individual or collective, in "Song" is the most significant aspect of Whitman's poetics. Whitman's critics have a consensus on his genius concept of the universal self that represents humanity. For instance, Richard Bucke (1972) describes “Song” as a true song of the human self, which expresses the poetic self that belongs to "a religious era" that was not achieved too (p.363). Besides, “Song” suggests the poet's selfhood as an intense sense of individuality in which his inflated self, confused and divided, seeks resolution and catharsis in human unity and solidarity.

Seemingly, Whitman's self is a microcosm of all humanity; he says, “My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach, With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of worlds” (S.24, L.7). It means that the poet's self and its fragments and passions play a crucial role in reshaping his human self in its universal context. In this sense, Yong-Lan Zhang (2009) asserts the poetic vision of Whitman's concept of self

manifested in a "double structure: body and soul; microcosmic and macroscopic" (p.37). In "Song," Whitman exposes an intricate concept of the self, displacing preceding images with new poetic ones that belong to nature or its aspects, "Nature without check with original energy," in which he reshapes his self describing it as "large, [and] contains multitudes" (S.51, L.7-8). Whitman displaces the poetic image of nature with that of "multitudes" to intensify and diversify his own reflections and visions about life, self, nature and the universe as a whole. The self that is depicted here as a fragmented one is not merely Whitman's, it may be any person's self for the commonalities between the expressed feelings and experiences in the poem and the human selves. Asserting the self's need for other selves and identities to get its uniqueness. Lacan (1978) states that "identities no longer have to bear any resemblance to the actual corporeal body or experiences of the self in the real world" (p.158). Actually, Whitman meditates on his poetic and thematic vision in order to get out of his fragmented self and indulge himself with the process of constructing a wider national healthy self. Whitman's poetics shows "corporeal and material" selfhood and supports the idea that one's identity simply means an affiliation to a human group in terms of several criteria (Iacob, 2012). It is then Whitman's self poetics that suggests fixed conceptualized faith and views of identity.

Clearly, the essential objective of Whitman's poetic discourse is revealing "the nature of the poet's journey through life and the spiritual knowledge" (Shahane, 1995, p.18). Meanwhile, Ezra Greenspan mentions a number of factors that help shape Whitman's poetic mentality and scope; they include "civil war, racism, internationalism, populism, slavery, reconstruction, transcendentalism, Victorian ideals, and enlightened thinking" which form Whitman's individual self (2005, p.122). Accordingly, Whitman displaces his self into that of the universal and human, "I am he that walks with the tender and growing night, I call to the earth and sea half-held by the night" (S.21, L.15-16). Here, Whitman's poetic self is "undying not only in body but also in soul," where body refers to nature and country, and soul refers to his own spirit and humanity. Whitman maintains his own poetic self-portrayal; yet, he

shows a set of self-contradictions, “Do I contradict myself?” Thus, Whitman uses a sort of persona that oversteps the human self, where “I pass death with the dying, and birth with the new-washed babe and am not contained between my hat and boots” (S.7, L. 3). Indeed, “Song” represents Whitman’s lofty poetics full of confidence and authority in a deliberate and conscious structure which seems to be a modernist example of free association in poetry. This poetics moves in circular rather than upward way; the soul always resumes its previous entity, emphasizing the poet’s identification with the existence, through a free harmony between the body and the soul, the self and the other. This poetics turns the whole poem into a festive epic that integrates the cosmic with the individual and melts the realistic contradictions in one crucible.

Furthermore, Whitman asserts his poetic self, in which “All truths wait in all things” (S. 30, L. 2). This reflection suggests the poet's growing self that may represent the other selves, not only in his own continent but in other places all over the world in the light of the social, religious, cultural, moral, political downfalls, corruption, and chaos. Whitman draws on the logic of the “bifurcated self” that entails remedy, yet, it is the self that should be reshaped by making use of those “fresh, eternal qualities of being” (Mack, 1999). Then, Whitman hopes to engage other selves in his creation of a stable self, using his condensed poetics. Whitman also condenses several thoughts and emotions to cast his intimacy of soul and body, “And I say to any man or woman, Let your soul stand cool, and composed before a million universes” (S.48, L.14-15).

Thematically, Whitman projects his poetic persona into the future to participate in the process of creating the cosmic “highly-integrative personality” in a harmonious way (Sickels 29). Whitman reshapes his human self out of its internal and external conflicts and deconstructs the internalized conflict between the individual and the universe. He creates a “transpersonal self” out of both the individual self and the universal one, where the individual self is “one with the cosmic whole” (Whitley, 2006, p.457). Thus, Whitman rebuilds his own “textualized version of his

ego" after having internalized fears of losing the self through his talented "functionally pragmatic" poetic style and language (Mack, 1999).

However, Whitman introduces his own self with a kind of emotional capability that enables him to tolerate his pains and to "differentiate his human and national identity from the rest of other global selves" (Lehman, 2008, p.12). This result is the ultimate aim that Whitman works on and casts. Moreover, Whitman views his ideas and beliefs as a didactic poetic discourse "expressed and developed in a nation that offers such liberty as the key to granting true individual freedom" (Hermansen, 2010). Yes, Whitman is seen as the spokesperson of his age; he is the sincere "representative of all humanity" for he is the sole voice of different people who identify his discourse (Shahane, 1995, p.19). Also, Whitman's poetics reclaims "American voice and individual identity in a landscape of growing materialism" (Baghira, 2013, p.6).

Cognitively, Whitman delivers self as a profound cosmic one which James E. Miller (1992) views as "an ideal [self]" that manifests the mainstream identity rather than the heroic one and elevates Whitman's poetic vision and self-discovery and knowledge (p.138). Thus, Whitman's poetic quest is to find "a unified self," where the body is fused with the soul (Shahane, 1995, p.19). Introjecting attitudes on body and soul is a deliberate poetic way that Whitman employs to poeticize his ideas of spirituality. Heaven is displaced and condensed with hell. This poetic feelings of alienation of being displaced from a universal state into another is Whitman's poetic genius implied in "I am the poet of the body, And I am the poet of the soul" (S.21, L.1). Here, Whitman tries to depict a unique body-soul bond as it is important to the purification of his soul from its internal and external conflicts that the human self always experiences. In order to resolve his conflicts, Whitman develops a "poetic agency" in which he represents his "subjective I to negotiate the psychic dangers" embracing his own self (Mack, 1999). Similarly, Mark DeLancey (1989) notices a state of "conjoining of body and soul" in Whitman's poetic discourse that intensifies his poetics and creates his own poetic cry against self and human agonies. (p.379). However,

Whitman surpasses the self-conscious subjectivity to a more human objectivity.

I teach straying from me, yet who can stray from me? I follow you whoever you are from the present hour, My words itch at your ears till you understand them (S.47, L.16-18).

Here, the poet's self-consciousness and self-centered voice are fused in the collective voice. Whitman's poetics is viewed as self-expression and as the recognition of the tie between the poet and his world, then the self becomes the center of this world. As a result, “Song” is the best portrait of the significance of the poet's universal self. It is then the poet's main task to reshape the human self with purgation and purification. This task entails essential qualities of great poet and poetic talent that qualify Whitman an omniscient and skilled poet. Armengol admits that Whitman's poetics with its variations express “the potential to transform America into a more egalitarian and progressive society” (2013, p.82). In addition, Whitman uses an “omnipresent I . . . through a pseudo-lens” to construct robust identity based on “a self apparatus consisting of the poetic self, the reader self, the heroic self, the bohemian self and the random other self” (Iacob, 2012).

Again, in "Song," the body and the soul are two "distinct but interconnected entities" that together produce a larger entity of the self, where the concept of human self is a central maxim of "Whitman's religion" (DeLancey,1989, p.361). Whitman strongly asserts that the body is equal to the soul and affirms the identity of selfhood, "I have said that the soul is not more than the body/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" (S. 48, L.1-3). Further, Whitman composes a didactic poetic discourse to teach his readers a moral on self dignity and identity, self recovery and renewal, self-quest and knowledge. However, Whitman's belief in self identity and equality- as a human quality and right - is solid and consistent through using condensed and displaced images and allusions that fulfill his poetic aspirations. In this light, critics focused on four main aspects of Whitman's poetics: an innovative in composing

poetry, an experimenter of poetic language, a poet of democracy, and a prophet of the self. It seems that there is a consensus on the fact that Whitman uses authentic, innate, popular objects and elements of life and nature to create his own poetics and to express his authentic conscience and human belonging,

I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human voice I hear all sounds running together, combined, fused or following, Sounds of ... and sounds out of the city, sounds of the day and night (S.16, L6-8)

Although Whitman's self is divided into I, myself, and me, he intimately explores the answers to questions of his identity, place and role. Thus, Whitman's poetic journey offers a shift from mere observations of the physical world to the spirituality of the inner psyche. This hilarious poetic tone is self-consciously expressed in "Song." Whitman keeps focusing on the theme of the "equality of body and soul and ways of rescuing the body from its inferior status," by which he can escape daily pains, sufferings and depressions (Miller,1992, p.67). Whitman also portrays a set of phases of his poetic journey of quest for the stable and recovered soul and self which compose his human identity, "Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd when I loafed on the grass" (S.33,L1-2). Here, the poet elevates time and space in his quest for his recovered self. It is the poet's task to re-shape and express the collective self in its human sense of identity and to cast this self as a spiritual national self. Whitman eagerly defends the public self which represents the "civil self" that enables him to "incorporate himself with his readers upon reality" (Pires, 2009, p.371). ,

Furthermore, the poetic self seeks stability, tranquility, and purgation in "the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is" (S. 17, L. 5). Here, the poet invokes and displaces suggestive images of sand, grass, water, and plants along with the eternal universe. Again, both the body and the soul constitute the driving poetic forces to euphemize and finalize "Song." They are also two inseparable unified elements of Whitman's vision of human identity, in which "This unity goes beyond the internal union of an individual's body and soul to encapsulate the harmony of all human beings" (DeLancey,1989, p.365). Clearly, Whitman's poetic ideas

assert the significance of human unity as the ultimate tool of purification and purgation of human sins, conflicts, dissatisfaction, confusion, alienation and solitude. This is why Whitman grants great importance and attention to "the unity of human souls and the fellowship of all human beings," regardless of race, rank, and gender (DeLancey, p.371). It is his poetic career to cure the divided selves and souls and unify them.

Moreover, "Song" is an epic and mystical poem in its thematic associations about the human psyche and reality. Whitman expresses his own mystical vision that calls for ridding the human self of its confusion and ambiguities, "It alone is without flaw, it alone rounds and completes all/That mystic baffling wonder alone completes all" (S.23, L.5-6). Whitman's poetics implies a "continual reiteration of poetic intentionality" and employs a sort of "experimentation in form and style, as a celebration of the mystical experience, as merge of spirituality and sensuality" in which human knowledge is limited (Iacob, 2012). Also, it is an epic as it talks about human self's great deeds, thoughts, and actions in life. Whitman exposes his "deep depression induced by a sense of alienation from the self," that entails confronting the tough reality and enables the poet to strive to attain a "real self" (Mack, 1999). It seems that various social powers drove Whitman to despair and enabled him to have "self-empowerment," in which the individual self stands forth amidst the ruin of the political and religious parties (Reynolds, 2002, p.847). Vignesh Shahane (1995) also asserts that the poetic self is a "transcendental self" for it is inspired by insights and divine reality (p.70).

Poetically, Whitman's evoking the universal "I" brings a sense of equality between the single self and the universal one. However, Whitman "eulogizes" the human self with great keenness and expresses the concept of the self similar to that of the cycle of nature (Zhang, 2009, p.39). This implies that Whitman identifies with nature to find a cure to his pains and fragmentation and to catharsize his divided self, paving the way to a similar remedy to others' pains and tensions. Also, the poet's individual journey and quest for selfhood seem to fulfill the poet's mission. Ostensibly, the individual self only exists in relation to the

selves of other members of other social communities; the self that takes and gives, gains and loses, fails and succeeds. Yet, in a moment of fragmentation and confusion, Whitman "does not prescribe any fixed pathway to a knowledge of the self" (Shahane, 1995, p.70). Rather, Whitman keeps presenting his multi-layered poetic self, "I am cut by bitter and angry hail, I lose my breath/Steep'd amid honey'd morphine, my windpipe throttled in fakes of death" (S.26, L.26-27). This self is also the "object of consciousness" that seeks knowledge as the power that nourishes the poetic self and soul (Mack, 1999).

Likewise, Harold Bloom (1982) views another set of three "Whitmans" in the poem: the "myself," the "my soul," and the real "Me or myself." He also translates these selves respectively as "my masculine persona," which refers to Whitman, as America itself, "the American soul," and his "more ambiguous persona" (p. 26). Whitman presents his poetic persona to communicate his vision to readers, "Do you see O my brothers and sisters?/It is not chaos or death—it is form, union, plan—it is eternal / life—it is Happiness" (S.50, L.8-10). Lacan (1978) adds that experimenting with "the self and identity creates new connections and paradigms of existential experience that demand new and alternative examinations of existing discourses" (p.201). Also, "Song" evokes the "heroic struggle ... to align his inner vision with the outer world" in the process of self-realization (Pires 2009, p.369).

Throughout "Song," Whitman's poetic self and identity reveal his society as a whole. In this light, Pires asserts that Whitman seeks solitude for the self that "devour[s] the World" and adapts to "illusions and deceptions both past and future, both public and private" (2009, p.369). It is then Whitman's self poetic authority that enlightens his path into reality out of fragmentation and solitude, "Solitary at midnight in my back yard, my thoughts gone from me a long while, Storming, enjoying, planning, loving, cautioning, Backing and filling, appearing and disappearing" (S. 33,L.80-88). Here, Whitman fuses the poetic identity and his own self meditating on his own human identity and the mystical and psychological aspects of this self. What critics say about the poetic quest for the human self and identity is convincing as they read the

shadows of "Song." Whitman shows a spiritual awakening after passing suffering, despair, and “the dark night of the soul to finally achieve purification” (Shahane, 1995, p.17). Hence, Whitman's individual self grows and renews by "poetic inspiration" where the ultimate product is "the cosmic whole" (Bray, 2001, p.59). It's Whitman's poetics that expresses his cosmic spirit of poetry which embodies America identity being in a mixture of civilizations and cultures and creates a cosmopolitan model for self-expression.

In addition, Whitman's poetic and human self seems sincere, self-analytical, open, emotionally fluctuant and implies his own self-identification, "Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes/I breathe the fragrance myself and know it and like it" (S.2, L.1-2). Robert Bray (2001) argues that Whitman is the national and human "self-promoter," in his "cosmic identification," that indicates his sense of alienation (p.59). Whitman discovers his fragmented self and stressed soul on seeing the "cuffed heads," "slumbers," and the "mockers." Whitman's feeling of despair, viewed as a source of identifications with other selves of various classes and races, implies that Whitman moves vaguely out of the knowledge of his past self. This means that the poet's self bears fragmented feelings of opposites: the pains, the depression, solitude, alienation, on the one hand, and purgation, stability, uniqueness and identity with dignity on the other hand. Whitman's presents his identity and human emotions displaced onto natural events, "This is the grass that grows wherever the land is and the water is, This the common air that bathes the globe" (S.17, L9-11).

Aesthetically, Whitman creates his own poetic persona to express the distinctions between self and "anti-self" (Lehman, 2008, p.11). Accordingly, Whitman continues to transform his persona through his own unconventional character and poetic vision. He reacts to "challenges of political upheaval and Civil War, family dysfunction, critical ridicule and praise, censorship, destitution, relocation, illness, disappointments in relationships, and periods of self-questioning" (Miller, 1992, p.85). It is then the desperate dramatic self that necessitates the release of the poet's visions about his own national self embodied in its human entity.

Moreover, Bucke (1972) comments that "Song" represents an actual self experience, that probably occurred in 1853, in which "the old self" gives away to a "new me" or "my soul" that takes absolute possession of the poet (p.89). The poet achieves a state of acute condensation of the fragmented self, where he keeps searching for its integrity and fusion with other selves. Humans have their own individual selves, while the whole universe has a universal or "cosmic self" (Shahane, 1995, p.15).

Whitman shows immense poetic awareness in the light of his divided and tortured self that gets awfully involved in the daily practices. In this sense, Paul Zweig (1984) asserts that the "Song" evokes juxtaposed and displaced images and tone that imply his human fragmented self in the light of his own hopes and expectations of stability and tranquility (p.99). Nevertheless, Lehman reads a paradoxical tone in Whitman's poetic discourse that deciphers his "deep secrets" and offers death as a "mysterious solution to a host of riddles" (2008, p.13). This hypothesis is evident in Whitman's words, "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" (S.52, L.9-10). Whitman keeps changing his poetic tone to suit the various feelings and reactions he creates; his poetic transformation suggests a deeper shift in his human self recognition. I think that this is a sort of identification with the readers whom the poet addresses and hopes to get their identification with his own soul and self.

Furthermore, Whitman uses daily words to fuse the natural with the spiritual; he employs such words in a mythical method drawing a figurative image of the self fused with its poetic powers and significance. As a result, "Song" reflects Whitman's grandeur of self, where America is its crucible dependent on individuality and uniqueness, "My tongue, every atom of my blood, formed from this soil, this air/Born here of parents born here from parents the same, and their parents the same" (S.1, L.6-7). Whitman transcends himself to see beyond the depth of his spiritual knowledge. Meanwhile, Whitman focuses on the poetic form and diction and later on the poetic thematic content of humanity, freedom, democracy, and justice. Armengol asserts that that Whitman's conceptualized poetics works on establishing "a renewed American

democracy” (2013,p. 81). Whitman identifies with different people from various classes with mixed feelings as they are human beings bearing human psyches that suffer the pains and depressions of wars and conflicts. Again, “Song” embodies a conscious fusion of the individual psyche with world psyche. Thus, the idea of self in Whitman’s poem is very much interesting, an individual is the spiritual center of the universe and through the self-knowledge an individual can get the clue to explore nature, history and ultimately the cosmos itself” (Baghira,2013,P.1).

Whitman's "Song" implies an "absurd degree of self-centeredness and arrogance," that play a role in shaping the poet's ideas and beliefs, in which he expresses his feelings of depression, confusion, and alienation in a world that is still without shape (Hermansen, 2010). People construct fragmented identities by assimilating their “respective desires” inside and outside other human entities and by "constructing a self which is both inside and outside a social community" (Lacan, 1978, p.209). In this light, Whitman says, “All these I feel or am/ I am the hounded slave” (S.33, L.128-29), implying that people of different races and colors share with him the sense of universality of the human self, in which the body connects with the soul. Thus, Whitman’s soul is awakened, and the universality of the self is rediscovered. Again, attaining his self awakened through a mystical experience, Whitman realizes that "life is eternal" while the body is mortal and that "his ideas will live on and be waiting to impart truth to new readers" (Greenspan, 2005, p.188). It is clear then that Whitman’s poetics enables him to deepen his “emotional connection and proximity to the readers” in which the poetic and the political force of “Song” implies one of “the strongest celebrations of American democracy” (Armengol, 2013, p. 83). Whitman poeticizes the identity of his individual self; however, he works to "merge it with the universal self," signifying the union of the poet’s own self with humanity as a whole (Shahane, 1995, p.16). Accordingly, Whitman displaces his own feelings and authentic experiences to publicize his self and humanity. "Song" ends with a mere "articulation of endlessness" that allows the poetic human self to continue its existence and role (Zweig, 1984, p.261). This view asserts that Whitman envisions his own self as a

universal one whose hopes and desires grow in order to maintain its vitality and viability.

Ostensibly, "Song" brings a poetic vitality by evoking displaced images from the physical world surrounding the poet's internal self, where the grass grows "wherever the land is and the water is" and "the common air ... bathes the globe (S.7, L. 8-9). Thus, Whitman's fragmented self, presented in the images of grass, blood, soul, music, graves, and water, is a universal one without a single place. Thus, the poetic image of the grass shapes a thematic reference to the poet's mercurial self, that takes a variety of other images in "Song" such as "soil," "air," "atmosphere," "green leaves," and "dry leaves," among others. Yet, Whitman displaces a place to another where his human self is manifested in the grass and the blood of countless readers, accessing the inner life of his culture. Also, Whitman's poetics of place shapes a "vertical sense ... necessary in the identity skeleton," accounting for the "horizontal reading of the self" (Iacob, 2012). Accordingly, poetic and humanistic identity establishes self-centeredness and awareness of the self's authenticity by displacing a variety of images and allusions of place and human.

Dramatically, Whitman is tied between the ideas of the self and the other external selves, "My face is ash-color'd, my sinews gnarl, away from me people retreat/Askers embody themselves in me and I am embodied in them" (S. 37,L. 18-19). Thus, Whitman casts his own poetic vision which implores identification from the audience. Lehman asserts that Whitman is the public poetic hero who "announces self-assurance" that is internalized within the Americans themselves (2008, p.11). Whitman's self undergoes a kind of transformation toward a state of self-realization and stability after having been fragmented and deteriorated. In this regard, Iacob (2012) describes Whitman's poetics as "transformative for the individual-that often cited recipient of the self- and equally for the entire world culture." It is then Whitman's public poetic self that harmonizes and identifies with the public other selves in an attempt to cure his soul and psyche of division and fragmentation.

In "Song," Whitman's poetic voice speaks confidently of union at a time of incredible division and tension in culture. Also, Whitman displaces his poetic voice into that of the trees which become a natural crucible of his own self-resurrection and revival, "The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag/The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides (S.2, L.36-37). So, "Song" ends with a mystic catharsis in which language embraces various juxtaposed images, motifs, ideas and themes. As such, the poem draws a condensed mural full of poetics and aesthetics and represents aesthetic and expressive displaced images that suggest both "poetic self-expression and self-representation" (Armengol, 2013, p.81).

In the postmodern practices, human identity and self have undergone a set of considerable pressures and tensions that result in human self fragmentation, division and confusion. This view offers a poetic flashback to Whitman's poetic provocative discourse whose displaced images and opposites are released to reflect the multi-cultural America, self, and identity. Actually, critics argue that "Song" is one of the most important texts of Whitman at all for it, among other stated poetic and aesthetic qualities, sums up his view of the world, extrapolates the American dream, and reveals the tendency of the individual to break free from the subjugation of the institutions, government, and ideology.

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