

Whitman's "Song of Myself" The Structure of "Song of Myself"

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Abstract: Walt Whitman's "song of myself" is one of the original twelve pieces- first edition of *Leaves of Grass* appeared in 1852. Like most of the other Whitman's poems, "song of myself" is revised extensively till its final permutation in 1881. The song is a sprawling combination of biography, sermon, and poetic meditation. It is not nearly as heavy-handed in its pronouncements as "Starting at Paumanok", rather, Whitman uses symbols and sly commentary to get at important issues. "Song of Myself" is composed more of vignettes than lists, he uses small, precisely drawn scenes to compose his. Song of My Self does not take on the title "Song of Myself" until the 1881 edition. Previously titled "Poem of Walt Whitman, an American" and, in the 1860, 1867, and 1871 editions, simply "Walt Whitman." The poem's shifting title suggests Whitman's intentions. Whitman was acquainted with the varying aspects of the metropolis, listening to the oratory of the time, becoming intimate with drivers of omnibus and ferryboat pilots, joining the crowds at bathing beaches, all of which had an effect on the manner of his poetry. " Song of Myself" and other poems have distinctive features as repetition, parallelism, rhetorical mannerisms and the employment of the phrase instead of the foot as unit of rhythm, to create forms called free verse. "It stands to reason", says one critic, "that Whitman gave much thought to the planning and organizing of his poems" (James Miller, 1964).

Keywords Whitman's, Song of Myself, Leaves of Grass, America, my foot, Touch

Introduction:

Walt Whitman (1819-1892) is one of the most famous American poets, called the "father of free verse" for his innovations in rhyme, rhythm, length of lines, and images. Born in poverty in New York, he dropped out of school to support his family. His job as a printer taught him a love for language. He later taught school, was a journalist, and served as a volunteer in Army hospitals during the Civil War (for 11 years). *Leaves of Grass*, his signature book of poems, were first published in 1955, and he revised it again and again over the years, publishing 9 versions in total of the same book—the last in the year he died. Whitman wrote of the common people; he saw the poet as the speaker for the people and as such an arm of democracy, the "great poem" that was America itself (Pease, 1987).

This most famous of Whitman's works was one of the original twelve pieces in the 1855 first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. Like most of the other poems, it too was revised extensively, reaching its final permutation in 1881. "Song of Myself" is a sprawling combination of biography, sermon, and poetic meditation. It is not nearly as heavy-handed in its pronouncements as "Starting at Paumanok" rather,

Whitman uses symbols and sly commentary to get at important issues. "Song of Myself" is composed more of vignettes than lists: Whitman uses small precisely drawn scenes to do his work here (Blake, 2005).

This poem did not take on the title "Song of Myself" until the 1881 edition. Previous to that it had been titled "Poem of Walt Whitman, an American" and, in the 1860, 1867, and 1871 editions, simply "Walt Whitman." The poem's shifting title suggests something of what Whitman was about in this piece. As Walt Whitman, the specific individual, melts away into the abstract "Myself," the poem explores the possibilities for communion between individuals. Starting from the premise that "what I assume you shall assume" Whitman tries to prove that he both encompasses and is indistinguishable from the universe (Anderson, 1991).

Objectives of the Study:

This paper examines the 1852 edition of "Song of Myself" as an example of Whitman's argument for an American nationalism founded on unity through diversity of ethnicities. The poem exhibits Whitman's inventive abilities to craft something new: a non-political argument for the continuation of the Union through images, American language, and the performance of a dialogic argument.

Significance of the Study:

The researcher hopes the study would be useful in different ways: That it would help reveal and facilitate an understanding of how the predecessors' influence on the text of the poem.

Methodology:

The study focuses on "Song of Myself", This will also take the form of Citing texts that are relevant to the study

Previous studies:

There are many previous studies that deal with song of myself or *leaves of grass*, but never discussed the structure of the poem in detail, instead these studies tried to shed light on the subject of the poem, rather the structure of the poem, a study titled " Whitman and the American Idiom", by (Anderson, Benedict, 1991). And "Whitman and the American Idiom", by (Hollis, 1957). and " Walt Whitman's America: A cultural Biography", by (Reynolds, 1996).

Whitman's "Song of Myself" is divided into five divisions :

1. Sections 1-18, the self; mystical interpenetration of the self with all life and experience .
2. Sections 19-25, definition of the self; identification with the degraded and transfiguration of it .
3. Sections 26-38, life flowing in upon the self, then interpenetration of life .
4. Sections 39-41, the Superman .
5. Sections 42-52, questions of life, religion, faith, God, death; immortality and happiness mystically affirmed (Kaplan, 2012).

In the first section, there are two or three themes: the self, the identification of the self with others, and "Nature without check with original energy". Transition I one of Whitman's qualities, and it seems that the

last line from any section suggests a theme. In the second section, the self declares its independence of "civilization". "Houses and rooms" (Cohen, 1971). Then, he talks about the soul's ecstasy with nature. "The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and meeting the sun". He invites us to have a relation with the universe. And in section four, he continues his invitation, emphasizing his happiness and satisfaction with nature. "Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul". While in the fourth section, we find a kind of hesitation, as he says that the social context is "a game". In section five, he shows the companionship with nature (Woodress, 1983). "And akelson of the creation is love". In section six, he comes to the climax of the poem "What is the grass?" "A child said what is the grass? Fetching it to me with full hands; How could I answer the child? I do not know what it is any more thanks. I guess it is the handkerchief of the Lord, or I guess the grass is itself a child, the produced babe of the vegetation". In it, he gives the theme of pantheism and immortality theme, and these themes extend to section seven. Here he talks about the universal quality by stating that he passes "death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe". Self finds all things good and this goes through section eight to nineteen, he says "I am there I saw the marriage". "I behold the picturesque giant". In section eleven, his mysticism is clear through the picture of young men bathing and the woman who own the fine house by the rise of the bank (Zweig, 1984).

So far in the poem, there is a more detailed declaration of the Self, nature, love, immortality, and closely allied themes, and he gives a description about himself, he is "hankering, gross, mystical, nude", he is a great ego, a representative ego, an ego no prouder than nature itself, calling himself "a kosmos" and "T moisten the roots of all that has grown". This means that he accepts both good and evil and all life, but, accepting these phenomena "only to lift them up" (Thomas, 2007). And this is considered ethical. It is ethical because life as he conceives it is ethical. He could not accept these phenomena on their own level, because he stands in a primary relation to the universe, which in its goodness acts as a challenge to him. And this is clear in section forty-three where he says that his faith is "the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths" (Pollak, 2000).

Whitman's equalitarian doctrine is based both on the theory of evolution and on a pantheistic belief; once he is a mystic, and once joyful for positive science, while yet admitting that facts serve only to give entrance to an "area of my dwelling". This inconsistency, however, he confesses and accepts: "Do I contradict myself? Very well, then, I contradict myself, (I am large, .I contain multitudes). And at the end, he reiterates his mystical pantheism (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) (Oliver, 1987).

In the 1855 edition of *Leaves a/Grass*, "Song of Myself." came first in the series of twelve untitled volumes not only by its sheer bulk, but also by its brilliant display of Whitman's innovative techniques. Whitman left the poem in the lead position in the 1856 edition and gave it its first title, "Poem of Walt American", shortened to "Walt Whitman" in the third edition of 1860. By the time Whitman has shaped its

final structure in 1881, he left the poem (its lines now grouped into 52 sections) in a lead position, epigraph-like cluster "Inscriptions" and the programmatic "Staring from Paumanok" (1. R. LeMaster and Donal D. Kummings, eds., *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia* (New Work: Ga, 1998) (Miller, 2006).

"Song of Myself" portrays (and mythologizes) Whitman's poetic birth and the journey into "awakening". But the "I" who speaks is not alone. His camerado, the "you" addressed in the poem's reader, placed on shared ground with the poet, a presence throughout much of the journey. As the poet "observing a spear of summer grass" and extending an invitation to his soul. "He speaks at every hazard,/ Nature without check with original energy" (section 1). Leaving "[c]reeds" and goes "to the bank by the wood to become undisguised and naked" (section 1 and 2), clearly prepares a visit of section 5, which dramatizes the transfiguring event that launches the poet on his . lifelong question (Maslan, 2001).

This event may best be described as the organic union of the poet's body and soul, the latter appears disembodied "hum" of a "valved voice". In highly charged erotic imagery, the soul settles his head, "gently" turns over upon him, parting his shirt from his "bosommbone" and plunging his "tongue" to the heart" - while reaching simultaneously to *feel* his "beard" and to *hold* his "feet". In-short, the soul is an (instrument of his "valved voice") penetrates directly to the poet's heart. As the awakening portrayed in section 5 has prepared the poet for a new kind of knowledge, journey into knowing, beginning with exploration of a child's question, "*What is the grass?*" This extends through section 32, providing ample occasion for the poet to establish many of the subjects addressed elsewhere in *Leaves of Grass*. From the focus on the grass imagery in section 6, the poet of "en-masse", in sections 7-16. he becomes Walt Whitman, American, roaming the continent, celebrating of ordinary life. He presents himself (in section 13) as the "caresser of life wherever moving ... ". This movement rises in a crescendo to the extended catalogue of section 15, with its American types and scenes (Martin, 1970).

Moving away from -American diversity in section 17, the poet turns to human commonality - to "the grass wherever the land is and the water is", In sections 18-24, the poet proceeds to collapse celebrating "conquer'd and-slain persons" (section 18) along with victors, the "righteous" along with his embrace to include outcasts and outlaws. But increasingly his focus fixes on the equality of body rescuing the body from its inferior status. He turns to himself and his own body, "I am large... I contain multitudes" (section 50). Throughout sections 18-32 of "Song of Myself", the poet celebrates the erotic dimension of the miraculous 'touch' in section 28: "is this then a touch? Quivering me to a new identity?" In some of the lines in all of *Leaves of grass*, the poet proceeds to portray himself in a sexual scene. Section 29 presents the poet's tender farewell to complicit. touch, which sections 30-32 explore the experience: "What is less or more than a touch?" Having experienced and affirmed physical ecstasies, the poet contemplates becoming one with the animals: he mounts and races a "stallion". But he ends by "resign[ing] the stallion, realizing that deeper knowledge lies in wait (Mack, 2002).

Adjusted to his new identity bestowed by touch, he is now ready for the second major phase of his journey begins with new and higher affirmations: "Space and Time! Now I see it is true, what I guess'd at, / loaf'd on the grass". In this longest section of "Song of Myself", the poet feels the exhilaration of being, the ties of space and time: he is "afoot with" his "vision". He feels able, indeed, to range back and forward soar like a meteor out into space. But in one of the strangest reversals in "Song of Myself", this peak 33 glides into its opposite as the poet begins to identify more and more closely with the outcasts. He becomes the "old-faced infants and the lifted sick". A note of despair sounds louder and louder through sections 34-37, until at the end a homeless beggar. Such despair, unfelt during similar identifications with outcasts in sections 17-20, he has moved obscurely beyond the knowledge of his previous phase (Leimberg, 1996).

Section 38, opening with strong rejection of the role of beggar he has assumed ("Enough! Enough!") he resets the direction for the poet on his journey: "I discover myself on a verge of a usual mistake". A quite explicit about the basis for what he knows, he says that he "remember [s] now". He suggests metaphorically that the nature of this "overstaid fraction" is contained in the resurrection that follows crucifixion, in lines implying humankind's identification with the universalized experiences of "The grave of rock multiplies" what has been confided to it, or to any graves, / Corpses rise, gashes heal, fastening: / of his despair, the poet emerges "replenish'd with supreme power", a power that- downtrodden and rejected, a power indeed to bring "help for the sick as they pant on their backs" needed help from "strong upright men" (section 41).

This stage, in which the poet is confident in his transcendent power, extends through the closing section 43 the poet affirms all religious faiths ("worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern he celebrates his place in evolutionary theory: both religion and science contain the seeds that provide supreme power (Loving, 1999).

The reader learns in section 46 that the poet's is a "perpetual journey", that he has "no church" he cannot travel the road for "you", but "you must travel it for yourself". In sections 48-49, he again affirms with the soul, as he affirms the identity of selfhood and Godhead. And similarly, he proclaims death as bonded as to render one unimaginable without the other. Near the end of section 49, the poet conveys in words what he knows and turns to the natural world for help: "O suns--O grass of graves transfers and promotions, / If you do not say any thing now can I say any thing"?

In section 50 the poet seems to be emerging from a trance-like state: sweaty--calm and cool then my body becomes, / I sleep--I sleep long". Coming out of his deep sleep almost incoherently: "I do not know it... it is a word unsaid, / It is not in any dictionary, utterance, symbol". Readers may guess that "it" refers to the ineffable transcendent meaning of the poet's experience journey. That meaning can be conveyed only by oblique analogy: "Something it swings on more than". "To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me" (emphasis added). In the end the poet's "brothers and sisters" first evoked in section 5, trying

to hit upon a word that might convey some notice inadequately, of the transcendent meaning discovered on his journey: "It is not chaos or death—it is eternal life—it is Happiness" (Kummings,1999) .

As the poet's camerado from the beginning. "you" the reader comes to the fore in the two concluding sections, 51, 52. the poet does not deny but dismisses his "contradictions", asserting, "I am large, I contain multitudes" his journey (section 1) he promised he would "permit to speak at every hazard, / Nature without check with similarly, at the end, he describes himself as. "not a bit tamed", as "untranslatable", as one who "sounds original over the roofs of the world". His journey over and done, he prepares for departure, "bequeathing himself energy", from the grass he loves, and tells the reader: "If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles". The poet insists that his transcendental knowledge gained on his spiritual journey cannot be embodied in, nevertheless, it can be conveyed indirectly. Readers will come to "know", not because he has conveyed abstractly, but rather because he has come to "filter and fibre" their blood. At the end, the poet asks the reader not to stop looking for him, promising: "I stop somewhere waiting for you". Like most poetic works of genius, "Song of Myself" has defied attempts to provide a definitive interpretive sense, no reading of the poem has clarified the sum of its many mysteries (Hourihan, 2004).

"The art of art, the glory of expression and the sunshine of the light of letters is simplicity. Nothing is better than simplicity ... nothing can make up for excess of the lack of definiteness". (Preface of Leaves of Grass, 1855). Like Emerson, Whitman is celebrating the income parable materials available to the American poet, not simply physical resources but also the people themselves—the spirit of the place. To Whitman, the bard is to be commensurate with a people. To him the other continents arrive as contributions; he gives them reception for their sake and his own sake. The poet's spirit responds to his country's spirit; he incarnates its geography and natural life. The land and sea, the animals and birds, the sky, the forests and rivers, are not small themes, but folks expect of the poet to indicate more than the beauty and dignity which always attach to dumb real objects. They expect of the poet to explore the path between reality and their souls. Men and women perceive the beauty well enough as well as the poet (Ezra, 1990).

Whitman, the "multitudes" what he tells he tells for precisely what it is. What he experiences or portrays shall go from his composition, he says "stand by my side and look in the mirror with me". (preface to leaves of Grass, 1855). The poet according to Whitman, is a "kosmo" without monopoly of secrecy, glad to pass anything to anyone. A poet shall not be careful of riches and privilege, he is the riches and the privilege, he sees by equivalents out of the stronger wealth of himself. The poet, Whitman indicates, shall delineate no class of persons nor one or two out of the strata of interests nor love most or truth most nor the soul most nor the body most (preface to leaves of Grass, 1855). Also Whitman states in the preface that poets are the voice and exposition of liberty. The attitude of poets is to cheer up slaves and horrify despots. Liberty relies upon itself, invites no one, promises nothing, sits in calmness and light, is positive and composed, and knows no discouragement (Grossman, 2003).

In "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" Whitman states that the songs of Leaves-of Grass are "the best songs heard"ⁱ. Whitman adds "as I nigh my three-score and ten I live largely on memory, I look upon "Leaves of Grass", now finished to the end of its opportunities and powers, as any definitive carte visite to the coming generations of the New World. That I have not gain'd the acceptance of my own time, but have fallen back on fond dreams of the future". "Leaves of Grass" has been worse than a failure-that public criticism on the book and myself as author of it yet shows mark'd anger and contempt more than anything else. ("I find a solid line of enemies to you everywhere", -letter from W.S.K., Boston, May 28, 1884)ⁱⁱ. Whitman considers "Leaves of Grass" and its theory experimental. He has a philosophy not to be too absolutely certain of anything or any results. He sought to give the Nineteenth century with the United States, the points of view, "Leaves of Gras" demonstrates: the author's identity, ardors, observations, faiths, and thoughts (Gardner, 1989).

Whitman's "Leaves of Grass", as a poem, abandoned the conventional themes, which do not appear in it: none of the stock ornamentation, or choice plots of love or war, or high, exceptional personages of old-world song; no legend or myth, or romance, nor euphemism, nor rhyme. But the broadest average of humanity and its identities. The chief trait of any poet of humanity, the mood out of which he contemplates his subjects.

In Ralph Waldo Emerson's letter of 21, July, 1855, To Whitman, Emerson wrote praising "Leaves of Grass":

Dear Sir-I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of "Leaves of Grass". I find it the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom. ... I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I find incomparable things said incomparably well. ... I greet you at the beginning of a great career for such a start .

Whitman wrote a prefatory letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson a year later, an open letter, published but not sent, which was virtually a preface to his "Leaves of Grass" of 1856, Whitman wrote :
Here are thirty-two poems, which I send you, dear Friend and Master, not having found how I could satisfy myself with sending any usual acknowledgment of your letter .

The open letter to Emerson, which Whitman included to his second "Leaves of Grass" edition (1856), may be regarded as a preface to, that edition (see C.J. Furness, *Introduction, Leaves of Grass*, 1855, New York, 1939) (Erkkila, 1989) .

From another point of view "Leaves of Grass" is a avowedly the song of sex and amativeness, and even animality. Many lines and even parts of "Leaves of Grass" allude to human sexuality or to the thought and fact of sexuality, as an element in character, personality, the emotions" and a theme in literature: Literature is always calling for consultation and confession, and always giving evasions and swathing suppressions in place of that "heroic nudity", which is calling for sex: normal or abnormal.

I mind how once we lay such a transparent summer morning, How you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me.

And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged you' tongue to my bare-stript heart.
(Leaves of Grass, 5, 28).

Your villain touch! What are you doing?

Blind loving wrestling touch, ... sharp tooth'd touch!

(Leaves of Grass, 28, 29).

There are many lines and parts in "Leaves of Grass" that shed speculations and charges about Whitman's homosexuality that might reflect and give birth to democracy and homosexuality in the United States (Miller, 2006).

Whitman's expression of sexuality ranged from his admiration for nineteenth-century ideals of male friendship to openly erotic descriptions of the male body, as can be readily seen in his poem "Song of Myself". This is in contradiction to the outrage Whitman displayed when confronted about these messages in public, praising chastity and denouncing masturbation. (Epstein, 2005).

During the Civil War, the intense comradeship at the front lines in Virginia, which were visited by Whitman as he searched for his wounded brother, and later in Washington, D.C. where he spent a huge amount of time as an unpaid nurse, fueled his ideas about the convergence of homosexuality and democracy. In "Democratic Vistas", he begins to discriminate between amative (i.e., heterosexual) and adhesive (i.e., homosexual) love, and "identifies the latter as the key to forming the community without which democracy is incomplete :

It is to the development, identification, and general prevalence of that fervid comradeship (the adhesive love, at least rivaling the amative love hitherto possessing imaginative literature, if not going beyond it), that I look for the counterbalance and offset of our materialistic and vulgar American democracy, and for the spiritualization thereof .

In 1915, Fernando Pessoa explicitly described Whitman as being homosexual in his sensationalist poem "Sauda a Walt Whitman".

In the 1970s, the gay liberation movement made Whitman one of their poster children, -citing the homosexual content and comparing him to Jean Genet for his love of young working-class men ("We Two Boys. Together Clinging"). In particular the "Calamus" poems written after a vfailed.vand very likely homosexual relationship contain passages that were interpreted to represent the coming out of a gay man. The name of the poems alone would have sufficed to convey homosexual connotations to the ones known at the time, since the calamus plant is associated with Kalamos, a god in antique mythology who was transformed with grief by the death of his lover, the male youth Karpos. In addition, the calamus plant's central characteristic is a prominent central vein that is phallic in appearance (Bove, 1980).

Whitman's romantic and sexual attraction towards other men is not disputed. However, whether or not Whitman' had sexual relationships with men has been the subject of some critical disagreement. The best evidence is a pair of third-hand accounts attributed to fellow poets George Sylvester Viereck and

Edward Carpenter, neither of whom entrusted those accounts to print themselves. Though scholars in the field have increasingly supported the view of Whitman as actively homosexual, this aspect of his personality is still sometimes omitted when his works are presented in educational settings. The love of Whitman's life may well have been Peter Doyle, a bus conductor whom he met around 1866. They were inseparable for several years. Interviewed in 1895, Doyle said: "We were familiar at once, I put my hand on his knee, we understood. He did not get out at the end of the trip, in fact went all the way back with me". A more explicit second-hand account comes from Oscar Wilde met Whitman in America in 1882, and wrote to the homosexual rights activist George Cecil Ives that there was "no doubt" about the great American poet's sexual orientation "I have the kiss of Walt Whitman still on my lips", he boasted (Asselineau, 1990).

Harold Bloom in *The Western Canon* proposes that although Whitman was primarily attracted to his own sex, his primary expressions of sexuality throughout his life were onanistic and reads numerous onanistic references into *Leaves of Grass*. He writes of Whitman as one of the first Western writers to speak in praise of masturbation. This view is supported by Robert S. Frederickson in his essay "Public Onanism: Whitman's Song of Himself". Bloom's thesis "that the sexual experience Whitman celebrates was possible merely imagined - has been ridiculed by other scholars, such as Gary Schmidgall, who view it as obtuse at best, and homophobic at worst (Callow, 1990).

From its first publication in 1855, Whitman continued to add and expand the *Leaves of Grass*. He published nine books with this same title - the last one appeared in 1892, the year of his death. His poems capture the sweeping expanse of America. Among the numerous themes, Whitman discussed the unity of I and you; good and evil; sex; death, the divine average, and democracy (Chari, 1964).

Whitman says on his *Leave of Grass* :

" Remember, the book arose out of my life in Brooklyn and NY from 1838 to 1853, absorbing a million people for 15 years, with an intimacy, an eagerness, an abandon, probably never equaled" (Crawley, 1970).

I saw, from the time my enterprise and questionings positively shaped themselves (how best can I express my own distinctive era and surroundings, America, Democracy?), that the trunk and center whence the answer was to radiate, and which all should return from straying, however, far a distance, must be identical body and soul, a personality, after many considerations and pondering, I deliberately settled should be myself-indeed could not be any other" (Daiches, 1959) .

An attempt of a naïve, masculine, affectionate, contemplative, sensual, imperious person to cast into literature not only his grit and arrogance, but his own flesh and form, undraped, regardless of models, regardless of modesty of law; and ignorant as at first it appears, of all outside of the fiercely loved land of his birth The effects he produces in his poems are no effects of artists or the arts, but the effects of the original eye, or the actual atmosphere, or tree, or bird". (A backward Glance on My Own Road).

"Leaves of Grass ... has mainly been ... at attempt ... to put 'a Person' a human being (myself in the latter half of the nineteenth century, in America) freely, fully, and truly on record. I could not find any similar personal record in current literature that satisfied me". (Preface to Leaves of Grass, 1856).

Conclusion:

"Song of Myself" exemplifies the American nationalism that Whitman wanted to inspire throughout America. It glorifies individuality through free verse, Americanisms, and close attention to individual lived experiences. Yet the poem goes beyond the individual to create a unified whole, using the very things that represent diversity to represent unity. As the democratic catalogues have demonstrated, each individual act is similar to another individual act. Furthermore, by occupying the poet prophet location, Whitman draws upon himself the power to "legislate the world." Yet he shares, in democratic fashion, this power with his reader, sharing his "atom[s]" (Whitman 1). Whitman hoped his poetry would be "absorbed" by the masses, and, by being "absorbed," that each individual reader would be transformed by his unique American language into a new way of "seeing" America. This is the purpose of "Song of Myself" and, more extensively, Leaves of Grass, to convert individual readers into nationalists.

End Note:

- ⁱ "A Backward Glance o'er Travel'd Roads" was completed by May 28, 1888, on Whitman's sixty-ninth birthday .
- ⁱⁱ Ventures in literary autobiography, the first of which was "A backward Glance on My Own Road" (The critic, January 5, 1884). This article, on two dominant themes, foreshadowed the two halves of this essay. The second half of the critic article was probably derived from the Whitman's article "How 'Leaves of Grass' was Made", reported as appeared "in 1855, in The New York Star .

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ملخص البحث:

"أغنيتي" هي الأكثر شهرة من بين أعمال ويتمان، وهي واحدة من اثني عشرة قطعة شعرية من بين من 1855 الطبعة الأولى من أوراق العشب. ومثل معظم القصائد الأخرى، تم تنقيحها أيضا على نطاق واسع، ووصلت إلى التقليب النهائي في عام 1881. "أغنية نفسي" هو مزيج مترامية الأطراف من السيرة الذاتية، والتأمل الشعري. وفيها يستخدم ويتمان الرموز والتعليق للحصول على القضايا الهامة التي رسمها بدقة. هذه القصيدة لم تأخذ على لقب "أغنية من نفسي" حتى طبعة 1881. وقبل ذلك كان عنوان "قصيدة والت ويتمان، أمريكي". قصيدة وتمان "أغنيتي" وقصائده الأخرى لها خصائص متميزة، حيث إنها تتصف بالترار، وتشابه التعابير، وجمع التناقضات، والفن الخطابي، وكذلك توظيف شبه الجملة بدل وحدة التفعيلة والإيقاع، وجعل من الشعر الحر متكافئاً له موظفاً التفكير العميق في تنظيم شعره تنبيء بملهمه "الشخص المفهومي". يقول وتمان "لا شيء أفضل من البساطة". لقد كان وتمان على معرفة بجميع نواحي الحياة في المدن الأمريكية الكبيرة التي كان يتنقل في أرجائها مستمعاً للخطباء وللوعاظ تارة، ويتعرف على سائقي السيارات وباصات النقل العمومي، وعلى قائدي المراكب النهرية تارة أخرى؛ فكان يشارك جمهور المستحقين على الشواطئ، وكل هذا كان له كبير الأثر على نظم شعره كما جاء في قصيدته "أغنيتي".

الكلمات المفتاحية: أغنيتي، والت مان، أوراق العشب، أمركا، قديمي.