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his life roving. This roving movement allows him to be ‘free’; his perpetual move from one place to another is his way to challenge the colonizer. He refused to accept the coloniser’s laws and he established his own code; as Younes Adli notes: « Il demeura jusqu’à la fin de ses jours, aussi fort et inébranlable dans sa liberté de mouvement qu’il n’avait jamais troqué dans les moments de disette, ni abandonnée pour un quelconque heur de stabilité » (2001: 36). The quest of the rover is not only an individual quest but also a collective one, since his poetry is considered as a vivid testimony of an important period of the Algerian history.

For Whitman man’s duty on earth is to enjoy life to the fullest extent, guided only by the “Deity planted” intuition of one’s own soul”. Si Mohand is the one who has lived his life intensively. His itinerary could be seen as a perpetual quest for an impossible happiness. However, this excess in everything couldn’t fulfill his deepest wish, which was to recover the lost objet; i.e. his land, family, security and stability. He lived and died as an exile, but he was buried in a peaceful land as he wished in “Asekif-n-Ettemana” which means a Peaceful Ha-ven. It is a sanctuary in Ath Sidi Said in Ain El Hammam, Tizi-Ouzou.

It is true that the experience and expression of freedom is actually quite different for the two poets given that Si Mohand Ou M'hand laments the loss of freedom and his beloved world - the one that had gone with the French colonial conquest - while Whitman who lived through the American Civil War crafts a new vision for America; however, the quest for liberty is an important notion in both poets’ poetries.

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## Conclusion

Like Whitman, Si Mohand is a rebel. They both express their sensibilities through audacious and unconventional themes poetic patterns for Whitman. In Whitman's poems, there are no rhymes and no metrical patterns. What matters is the rhythm and what he called "Vocalism": conveying the impression of a human voice which unites body and soul. This, results in an oratical effect which gives poetry the power to be fresh and immortal. Like Whitman's poetry, Si Mohand's addresses the common man. His poetry is lyrical or satirical depending on his mood. He chants both his sadness and happiness and expresses his love and hate. His poems bless or curse; sometimes he raises his voice towards God to implore His Clemency or addresses the 'Saints' of "Kabylia" to help him. He revolts against all: himself, the other, the century, his misery and poverty. Despite his suffering and adversity he never ceases to sing love. He says: "anyone stricken with Love will be blessed by God". This recalls Whitman's saying "we know that Sympathy or Love is the law over all laws, because in nothing else but love is the soul conscious of pure happiness which appears to be the ultimate place and point of all things" (1970: 39).

Both poetical works can also be seen as auto-biographies since their poems speak first about the poets themselves. By celebrating his own 'personal nature', Whitman celebrated the American and human nature in practically all its aspects. By revealing his passion frustrations and misery, Si Mohand spoke not only about himself but also about man, the one that he met on his trips. As Mammeri notes, « [Mohand] cet éternel voyageur [...] a côtoyé toute les sociétés [...] a parlé des Kabyles, des Arabes, des Tunisiens, des Noirs, des Juifs, enfin de tous les hommes qu'il a été donné de connaître » (1982 : 72). The new freedom of form and content that modeled Whitman's poetry and the freedom of speech Si Mohand used in expressing himself without restraints or taboos make them stand as the poets of their 'People'. The condition that Whitman set down: "the proof of a poet is that his country absorbs him as affectionately as he absorbed it" is well fulfilled for both poets.

Whitman, throughout the rest of his life, kept rewriting and republishing editions of *Leaves of Grass*; whereas Si Mohand spent

*Lywerba tura g-wqerru  
Welleh ard annenfu  
Wala laaquba yer ilfan*

*Je le jure De Tizi-Ouzou  
Jusqu'à l'Akfadou  
Nul, d'eux ne me commandera*

*Plutôt rompre que plier  
Plutôt être maudit  
Dans un pays où les chefs sont des entremetteurs*

*L'exil m'est prédestiné  
Par dieu j'aime mieux l'exil  
Que la loi des pourceaux  
(Mammeri, 1982: 152-53)*

The power of this poem reflects the Berber tenacity to be 'free'. The verse line of the second Stanza: "Annerrez wal' anneknu" 'better break than bend' (translation mine) becomes the leitmotiv to the Kabyle generations after Independence. In fact, this sentence becomes a revolutionary tag that the Kabyle youth used in the 1980, known as the 'Berber Spring' and in the "Black Spring" in 2003 to ask for more 'Liberty' in Algeria. A. Hanoteau, a French thinker, describing the kabyle society refers to this notion of liberty as a racial distinction of the Berber. He says: «Cette passion d'égalité et d'indépendance, qui anime la société berbère, est trop générale et trop vivace pour être de date récente. Elle a dû constituer, à toutes les époques, le caractère distinctif et le mobile dirigeant de la race» (1893 : 3). There are also powerful and sensitive poems where Si Mohand mourns the 'happy' time when the 'Kabylia' was 'free'. These poems express first his personal regret of his tranquil and easy life, "Af asmi lily d acawrar / zzin iw yufrar / Nekseb tiyezza n Cammlal"; « Du temps que j'étais enfant / Sans pareille était ma beauté / Nous possédions les bonnes terres de Chammlal » (Ibid.117).

ni se soustraire» (1982:19). In fact, some of his poems show his rejection of the colonial administration. He criticizes harshly the representatives of the political and military system in 'High Kabylia' Whenever he has the opportunity to criticize the colonial system he uses his verses to do it:

*A Muhnd udem n tlam  
Uuday i-Lismam  
Ay aqewwad n Nnsara*

*Ibbwi d yelli-s ar Lhmam  
Atbayaa i lhekkwam  
Izwar yer thuksa l-lharma*

*Ssuprifi bu imetman  
Ur iclaa g Lislam  
Siwa Werdiyya a- gwala.*

*Mohand face de ténèbres  
Juif de l'islam  
Entremetteur des Chrétiens*

*A amené sa fille à Michelet  
Pour qu'elle présente son compliment aux autorités  
Montrant ainsi la voie de l'indignité  
Le Sous-préfet bavant  
Oubliant tous les Musulmans  
N'eut d'yeux que pour Ourdia. (Ibid.258)*

In the above poem, he refers to the natives who collaborate with the French colonial government, and he treats them as perfidy and disloyal towards their religion. This is his way to resist and defend the values and customs of his society. He swears:

*Ggulley seg Tizi-Wuzu  
Armi Akeffadou  
Urhkimen deg-(i) akken iLan  
AnnerreZ wal' anneknu  
Axir daεussu  
Anda tqe wwiden ccifan*

*Qu'elle soit préservée de l'enfer !  
(Mouloud Feraoun, 1960 : 61)*

This poem can be considered as an elegy where Si Mohand expresses his sadness of having lost his friend. In the second stanza he begs dust not damaging the beauty of his beloved. Through this poem, we feel the suffering of people when losing a beloved person. In the death of Lincoln, Whitman too has found the symbol for the suffering and death he has seen in so many forgotten soldiers. In giving his love to the dead leader in *The Requiem for Lincoln* "When Lilacs last in Dooryard", he has given it to mankind. In this lament poem, he shows the Symbolic importance for America of Lincoln's sudden death. Indeed, in death Lincoln came alive to signify the terrific cost the American people had paid for the union of the American nation:

*I saw battle-corpses, myriads of them  
And the white Skeletons of young men, I saw them,  
I saw the debris and debris of the slain soldiers of the war*

As in any great elegy the poet reconciles the personal death of Lincoln with the public life his subject now represents.

*Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,  
Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west  
And thought of him Love. (1990: 255)*

The whole poem is like a strong symphony built around the intersection of three symbols: "Lilac and star and bird twined with the chant of my soul" (1990:262). This technique has the ability to arise emotions from the reader.

Si Mohand's poetry reflects the Kabyle's rejection of the colonial system. With a sarcastic style, he denounces the control of the French over the kabylia Region. In this sense, his poetry expresses the two distinct periods of time: Before colonization when the traditional system was peaceful and organized, and after 1871 when the whole country was under the colonial system, the one that perverted the social values, the essence of the identity of the natives. So, the past for the poet means 'liberty' whereas the present means negative change: since the native must submit to colonialism. Mouloud Mammeri notes: « Après la répression de 1871, Mohand va vivre avec tout le peuple algérien les péripéties de l'installation du régime nouveau, [...] a la nouvelle société née de la colonisation Mohand ne peut ni adhérer

*And come to the front door mother, here's a letter from  
thy dear son.*

.....  
*Cool and Sweeten Ohio's villages with leaves fluttering  
in the moderate wind,  
Where apples ripe in the orchards hang and grapes on  
the trellis'd vines,*

.....  
*Down in the field all prospers well,  
While they stand at home at the door he is dead already  
The only Son is dead. (Ibid. 237)*

Whitman builds a strong contrast between the peacefulness of the prosperous farm and the peace-breaking news of the letter. With simple words, the poet shows death as a consequence of war. The reader shares the emotion that the soldier's death has on his family. The mother's despair and dignity in this poem can be applied not only to an American mother but also to all mothers who have lost a child because of war.

We can draw a parallel with Si Mohand's poem where he cries his beloved who has been killed by the French army in the 1857 revolt.

*Themouth thezizth our nemzir  
Elmouth athetsekhethir  
Rebbi ithedou addegg enouqma*

*Aiakkal oursets gheillir  
mlaioun nettir  
Thafoumthas a el moulaka*

*Dda Zaouali our tehqir  
Ddiellis nel khir  
Merhoumath si djahnama*

*Elle est morte loin de moi :  
La mort choisit ses victimes  
Et Dieu pousse à la révolte.*

*O terre, ne profane pas  
Sa beauté incomparable,  
O anges, pardonnez-lui.  
Fille de sang généreux,  
Elle n'a pas dédaigné le pauvre :*

Whitman considers himself as a seer and a prophet and his poetry stands as God's Voice; he was convinced that he had revelation from God. He describes himself in one of his poems entitled "So long": "Curious envelop'd messages delivering /Myself Unknowing, my commission obeying, to question it never daring" (Ibid. 381). His poems show his wonder towards the magnificence of the world. His 'cosmic Spirit' gives him the ability to see things as a part of the whole universe. This 'cosmic Spirit' is also detected in Si Mohand's poetry that some critics, like Mouloud Mammeri's study, consider as a divine one.

#### **Politics in the Poets' Poetics**

In the second edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman added a bunch of poems referring to the American Civil war. These war poems (1866) express a mood of depression and resignation and reveal the poet's experience of war. In these poems, 'Beat! Beat! Drums!' to 'Vigil Stranger I Kept on the Field One Night' and 'A Sight in Camp in the Day break Gray and Dim', Whitman reflects "on both the war's early excitement and its ultimate pathos." (1990: xvii). He verbalizes its atrocities and states: "I saw the debris and debris of all the slain soldiers of the war" (Ibid). His experience came through the war's bloody consequences, which he mainly encountered in the wartime hospitals where he served as a volunteer male nurse.

*Beat! beat! drums! - blows! bugles! blow!  
Make no parley-stop for no expostulation,  
Mind not the timid-mind not the weeper or prayer,  
Mind not the old man beseeking the young man,  
Let not the child's voice be heard, nor the mother's  
entreaties,  
Make even the trestles to shake the dead where they lie  
awaiting the hearses,  
So strong you thump O terrible drums - so land you  
bugles blow. (Ibid. 222)*

When Whitman learned that his beloved brother George was wounded and was in an army hospital, he went to care for him, and then for the others who were stricken by the war. With the coming of sorrow, love for his fellows became more and more an impersonal bond with humanity, a principle of life closely associated with death. In the poem "Come up From the Field father":

Come up from the field father, here's a letter from our Pete



mercy. In other words, there are many passages in the Bible as well as in the Koran in which God is described in terms of human emotions in order to be more understandable to humanity. It is clear that the relation between human beings and God is the main concern in these Holy Books. Moreover in the Koran God is given 99 names which is a classical list of Allah, the Muslim name for God; Merciful, Kind, Compassionate, Forgiving and so on and so forth. Si Mohand and Whitman employ such an image of God mostly in a mystical and transcendental way.

Therefore, the noble task of Si Mohand and Whitman is to transform the traditionally unknowable images of the Divine into a humanistic and mystic one; God is addressed as “Alhanin”; i.e. “Divine Beloved” and “the Great Camerado”. Both poets, in their poems, use such images to show the fraternal relation between human beings and God.

*Si Mohand:*

*Alhanin kecc d rrahim  
Sebhan-ek a leadim  
A mul lyaci bla edad*

*O Généreux, ô Miséricordieux  
Sois loué, ô très élevé  
Toi, dont le nombre des adorateurs est incalculable*

Si Mohand believes in the idea that God is everywhere in Humankind and Nature; in other words, God has an omnipresent reality:

*Subhan-k a Rebbi Ixaleq  
Kulci yer-k isbeq*

*Sois loué, ô Dieu le créateur  
Qui, dans la nature, as tout prévu*

For Whitman it is the “central urge” in everything as he says in *Song of Myself*:

*Allah is all, all, all – is immanent in every life and  
object  
It is the central urge in every atom  
(Often unconscious, often evil, down fallen,)  
To return to its divine source and origin, however  
distant,  
Latent the same in subject and in object, without one  
exception (1990: 419)*

part of a vegetable today, and an animal tomorrow, which in perishing forms other vegetables and animals. This is the same doctrine the poet of *Song of Myself* voices near the end of the poem when he says: 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. No separation between the soul and the body. Man exists now and forever and his body is just a part of the universe. He declares: “My faith is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths, enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern”.

The originality of his faith is that the ‘body’ is equally important as the ‘soul’. He states: “I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul” (Ibid. 45). The word body is worshiped and loved in his poems. The reader discovers the beauties of the physical world and that life is a miracle: “Seeing, hearing, feeling are miracles, and each part and tag of me is a miracle” (Ibid.49). He continually oscillated from ‘body’ and ‘soul’, from ‘visible and invisible’. His poetry is a tentative reconciliation between ‘spirit’ and ‘matter’: “I am the poet of the body and I am the poet of the soul.” His mystic and sensual egotism made him feel this duality and express it in his poetry: “The pleasures of Heaven are with me and the pains of Hell are with me” (Ibid.45).

*Like Whitman, Si Mohand asks God as if he addresses a friend:*

*Txil-ek a Rebb' ar k-ensal  
Af-fin ur nuklal  
Izga-d af rrbah isqattee*

.....  
*L'awal di tegmat la sswal  
A lfahmin bbwawal  
Tabbwed s-ahdid tennegrae*

*Je te prie, Ô Dieu, de me laisser T'interroger  
Au sujet d'un indigne qui, sans avoir mérité  
Accapare et détient tous les bonheurs*

.....  
*Des frères je n'ai eu ni parole de consolation, ni  
nouvelle*

*O Toi qui comprends et saisis le sens des mots  
Sache que je suis acculé à un obstacle infranchissable*

(Yacine, 1990: 93)

The image of the Divine in Islam and Christianity is presented with certain human emotions such as kindness, affection, and

they can find the personal object of Love. Transcendentalists believe that God was the Universal Being, or Over-Soul, present throughout Nature and in each individual human being. Whitman is influenced by transcendentalism, i.e., the sacred in nature and in humanity and Si Mohand by Sufism, the mystical tradition of Islam. Si Said Boulifa (Boulifa, 1904: XIII) refers to Si Mohand's religious education in Zaouia Sidi Abderhman, which is known for its Sufism. Both transcendentalism and Sufism espouse the view that the Divine permeates all objects (animate/inanimate) and the purpose of human life is union with God. This part, then, will address Mysticism as an experience in the poets' selected poems and explore the poets' perception of the divine images and the way they are represented in the material world.

The title of the book "*Leaves of Grass*" has its importance in symbolizing 'universality' and 'eternity' of life. As he said in *Song of Myself*:

Or I guess it is Uniform Hieroglyphic  
 And it means, Sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow  
 zones.

.....  
 And now it seems to me the beautiful uncut hair of graves

.....  
 The smallest sprout shows there is really no death...

(1990:33)

The plant 'Grass' symbolizes life, so for the poet his book has this power of eternity which is expressed through the vivacity and the freshness of his poetry. According to Whitman, man is a part of the universe. Man is eternal because life is endless. He declares in *Song of Myself*:

My embryo has never been Torpid, nothing could overlay it.

.....  
 Vast vegetables grave it sustenance,

(Ibid.72)

The poet speaks about the divine and miraculous character of life using natural exhibitions. This can be seen in section 6 to section 9 of "*Song of Myself*". For Whitman, God is synonymous with life, an irresistible and indestructible power that animates the universe. Everything is God; and God is everywhere even in the smallest inanimate object, "They are but parts, anything is but a part". Everything is eternal, composed of unchangeable atoms that produce all the varieties in the substances constituting "the great material whole, of which we form a part". The atoms may form

evokes the gazelle to refer not only to her beauty and delicacy, but also to her spirit of independence and rebellion:

*t-tizerert diSsehra  
yetnusun berra  
ur izmer hed at-t-ittef*

*Gazelle des déserts  
Qui passe dehors ses nuits  
Et que nulle ne peut atteindre*

(Ibid. 249)

The woman is also strong and independent when the poet uses the name of the wild lioness to show her resistance to the male authority: « *tasedda iṛāâden turwas* », « la lionne rugit et hurle » (Ibid. 262).

Both poets sang the woman's body. In celebrating himself, in the late half of the nineteenth century, Whitman spoke of all mankind as emblems of God. The 'Man Kind' he celebrated specifically included women. Si Mohand's poems refer to the woman as an important element in the Algerian society. As he rejected all forms of subjugation, his poems describe the woman in a very audacious manner.

### **Mysticism in Whitman's and Si Mohand's Poetries: The "Great Camerado" / The "Divine Beloved"**

The reading of some poems reveals that Whitman and Si Mohand make use of mysticism to transform the traditionally unknowable images of the Divine into humanistic and mystic one. God is addressed as "the Divine Beloved" by Si Mohand and "the Great Camerado" by Whitman. So both poets introduce the notion of 'liberty' in their relation with God. Some critics didn't understand the relationship between Si Mohand and God. The poet is, sometimes, seen as a profane. Dr Hamza Ben Aissa notes: « toute cette détresse intérieure et extérieure, exacerbée par la colonisation, la FOI de SI MOHAND OU M'HAND ne peut être remise en cause, même si elle est obscure et passive » (1997:69).

Critics have already dealt with the influence of mysticism in both poets' poetries. In our present work, we refer to Mysticism not as a religion in itself, but rather as a spiritual, philosophical, and vital element rising up as a revolt against strict religious dogmas. According to Julian Baldick, Sufism is "the notion of mysticism as a universal search of existence" (1989:1). The aim of most mystics then, is to establish a conscious relation with the Absolute, in which

Mer wahdes I tella  
at - nur ar lhara  
ad rwuy degs asuden

Elle est debout d'entre les portes  
Je la vis debout au seuil de la porte  
Son visage orienté vers moi  
Dahbia ma bien aimée

Le soleil fait de sa robe un tamis  
Je me suis senti enivré  
Devant tant de belles jambes

Ah ! Si nous étions seuls  
Je l'aurais abordé  
Et la couvrirais de baisers.

(Abdësselam, 2005:102)

The woman in the above verse lines is sensual, her body is a saved gift, she is a 'partner' that reveals her womanly vitality. Si Mohand describes women as beautiful, soft, fragile, but also rebel wild and hard. In his poetry, the woman is referred to as a faithful lover or an adulterous woman; in other poems she is a divorced or a widow; and he even dare to devote poems to a prostitute:

*Tter iyi deg lhara  
Di labil teyra  
Taqcict iheggan s lherf*

*Elle m'est apparue dans la maison  
La fille experte  
Qui sait tout à la lettre*

(Mammeri, 1982: 248)

Sometimes, the woman is named through alphabetical letters or metaphors through the use of animals. For example, he uses birds to refer to her inaccessibility, since in the traditional society it was very difficult to have intimate relationship with a woman before marriage. In the Berber popular culture the bird, like the partridge or the pigeon, may also symbolize the fragility, softness and beauty of the woman: « *abaad ikseb tasekkurt* », « tel a eu en sa maison une perdrix » (1982: 360); « *tebaay lhjl' a t nettef* », « j'ai poursuivi la perdrix, sûr de l'atteindre » (Ibid. 252); « *titbirt yef ttruğ* », « de la colombe haut perchée » (Ibid. 246). In another poem, the poet

publiques [...] les femmes, chargées principalement de la fonction vitale de reproduction, sont cantonnées dans la gestion des affaires domestiques. (Ibid. 16)

So, Si Mohand disturbs the traditional society by having his poetry is full of sexual references; he is the poet that has the courage to say what others feel and cannot say. Younes Adli notes in *Si Mohand Ou\_Mhand Errance et Révolte* (2001 : 24) «le jeune Mohand avait choisi de briser le carcan des mœurs rigides qui avaient entouré sa jeunesse et son corollaire, la femme». The young poet, as Adli, notes breaks the rigid chains of the traditional society in relation to the woman and speaks freely about her, her beauty, and her body as the following poem shows:

*M timmi taεkef am laqwas  
amzur ar ammas  
Tibbcin-is difelfel*

*Melt-iy' anida Ihara s  
Ard rzuy fellas  
Ma εarey as ad- ii taaqel*

*Elle a sourcils arqués  
Cheveux jusqu'à la ceinture  
Seins pimentés*

*Ou est sa demeure dites-moi  
Que je m'y rende  
Elle se souviendra si même elle m'avait oublié.*

(Mammeri, 1982:263)

He describes the beauty of the body, and refers to it as a source of joy and pleasure: *Ihubb Rebbi tulawin / Yefka yaent tibbucin. Dieu a béni les femmes / En les gâtant de beaux seins.* The woman's body is sacred since in the first verse line, he refers to it as a divine gift. So, in Si Mohand's poetry, like in Whitman's, the body and physical love are permissible topics. Thus, sensuality, in relation to the body, is an important notion for Si Mohand:

*Walay-t tebdd ger tebbura  
Tazzi-d s twenZa  
Dahbiya tin aZiZen*

*Itij yeccercer r̄ruba  
trekkeb- iyi tawla  
ma drus aymiiwen*

*It attracts with fierce undeniable attraction, I am drawn  
by its fierce undeniable attraction, I am drawn by its  
breath as if I were no more than a helpless vapor, all  
aside but myself and it, Books, art, religion, time, the  
visible and solid earth, and what was expected of  
heaven or fear'd of hell, are now consumed*

(Ibid.83-84)

In his poetry, he sought to liberate the American woman from Victorian ideology about sex, the same ideology that some critics used to condemn *Leaves of Grass* with expurgation because it was considered as 'dirty'. *Leaves of Grass* may be considered as a woman's book because it celebrates the woman's body and frees it from the burden of the perfect Victorian lady ideology, and he allows the woman's body experience sexual vitality as the man; he declares in "A Woman Waits For Me": Without shame the man I like knows and avows the deliciousness of his sex, / Without shame the woman I like knows and avows hers (1990: 88).

Like in Whitman's poetry, the woman's body is sung by Si Mohand. His poems can be seen as an audacious act of 'liberty' in the kabyle conservative society. Si Ammar Ben Said Boulifa refers to the respect of the Kabyle to women. He notes that in the ancient time, the Berber woman played an important role in her community. 'La femme Berbère n'a pas seulement tenu son rang dans la société par son autorité morale; le côté intellectuel a eu également des types de femmes vraiment remarquables' (1990: 53). M. Duveyrieris is another writer who acknowledges us in his book *Les Touareg du Nord* that the Berber language and even the ancient written language were preserved thanks to women. In his oriental study, A. Hanoteau shows the importance of the woman in the Kabyle society, he states: « Aux yeux de ces barbares, la femme est un être respecté, sacré. Malheur à celui qui attenterait à sa personne, à sa réputation ou à son honneur. Une tentative de violence à l'égard d'une femme, de simple propos malséants, un geste indécent, suffisent pour faire couler le sang de celui qu'elle désigne aux sien comme coupable de lui avoir manqué de respect » (Ibid. 54).

However, the Berber community had undergone some transformation because of the different invasions at different periods of times. This new state brought changes to the society and to the role of women in it. Tassadit Yacine Notes, "Sont en effet privés de la parole, donc de pouvoir, les enfants, les adolescents, les femmes [...] Les hommes sont chargés de la gestion des affaires

women do not know it, but every now and then a woman shows that she knows it: it speaks out the necessities, its cry of the right and wrong of the woman sex - of the woman first of all, of the facts of creation first of all - of the feminine: speaks out loud: warms encourage, persuades, points the way” (1908:331). In many places throughout *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman refers to an equitable democratic treatment of women. He states in his poem “*Song of Myself*”, “I am the poet of the woman the same as the man, / And I say it is great to be a woman as to be a man” (1990: 45); or in “*Inscriptions*”: “The Female equally with the Male I sing” (Ibid. 9).

A number of women of the poet’s day responded with enthusiasm for *Leaves of Grass*. Sara Willis, an American author (1811-1872), wrote: “I confess I extract no poison from “Leaves” – to me they have brought only healing” (1990: x-xi). Whitman is a precursor in using the freedom of speech to refer to the woman and her body, revealing woman’s vitality in sexuality as co-equal lovers and ‘partners’ of men in America at that period of time, which was referred to as the ‘Victorian America’ for its defense to the standard - respectful American family and society. He says in “*Children of Adam*”:

*The furious storm through me careering, I passionately  
trembling.*

*The oath of the inseparableness of two together, of the  
woman that loves me an whom I love more than my life  
that oath swearing,*

*(O I willingly stake all for you,  
O let me be lost if it must be so!  
O you and I! What is it to us what the rest do or think?  
What is all else to us? Only that we enjoy each other  
and exhaust each other if it must be so ;)  
From the master, the pilot I yield the vessel to the  
general commanding me, commanding all, from him  
permission taking (1990:80)*

Whitman sounds like a feminist of the first order because he calls for the ‘complete’ woman; that is, the one that expresses her “animal want” and her “eager physical hunger”. Whitman’s egalitarian attitude towards woman stemmed, perhaps, from his Jacksonian background in politics. He voices in his poem “*I Sing The Body Electric*” the physiology of the woman’s body:

*This is the female form,  
A divine nimbus exhales from it from head to foot*



*Il en restera dans ses vers des échos de révolte d'indignation, de lamentation, de mépris, d'autant plus profonds qu'ils sont contraints. Mohand est du clan des vaincus. Il le constate chaque jour un peu plus [...] A la nouvelle société née de la colonisation Mohand ne peut ni adhérer ni se soustraire. Il finira par s'installer tant bien que mal, et plutôt mal que bien, dans cet écartèlement qui sera pour lui une source intarissable d'inspiration.* (1982: 19-20)

For Mammeri, Si Mohand's verses echo the revolt and indignation that the poet felt towards the injustice of colonization. The colonial system had destroyed his life. He suddenly found himself with no home, no family; he became an exile in his own country. However this distress will also be an inexhaustible source of inspiration to his poetry.

Like Whitman, and even a step further, Si Mohand was a rover – 'poet errant', a person moving from one place to another. This roving movement supplied both poets with materials that would be used in their poetry. In the case of Whitman, it was a quest for 'nationality'. Whitman considered his trip round the States as a revelation for him as an American. His trip to New Orleans Chicago and the Western frontier gave him a new vision of America. It was the first time that he saw the American Continent. This experience provided him with a sum of visual and auditory memories, pictures and emotions that fed his imagination, and later was expressed in his work.

The authors' biographical elements have shown that Si Mohand and Whitman did not have easy lives. For different and sometimes similar reasons, they experienced a life of restlessness which might explain the perpetual quest for liberty and selfhood in their respective works. Both poets lived a long bachelor life where poetry was a vital element in it. If Whitman advocates Democracy, Si Mohand rebels against the French authority and the new social order. They espoused the cause of nationalists, and in the case of Si Mohand, he even took open side with the oppressive colonial administration. To achieve their aims, they adapted a frank language and daring themes in their poetries.

#### **Whitman / Si Mohand: Poets of the Woman**

Walt Whitman and Si Mohand are considered as poets of women. In a letter to Horace Traubal, Summer 1888, Walt Whitman declared: "Leaves of Grass is essentially a woman's book: the

eldest brother spent his last years in an asylum. The youngest brother spent his life mentally retarded and physically handicapped. A third brother died early of alcoholism and tuberculosis. The years 1857-60 saw two traumatic periods in Whitman's personal life: his deception of his love affair and the Civil war, witnessing the carnage of that war he asserted:

*I went down to the war fields in Virginia (end of 1862)  
lived thence forwards in camp - saw great battles and  
the days and the nights afterward – partook of all the  
fluctuations, gloom, despair, hopes again arous'd  
courage evoked – death readily risk'd – the cause, too –  
along and filling those agonistic and lurid following  
years, 1863 – '64 – '65 – the real parturition years  
(more than 1776 – '83) of this hence forth homogenous  
Union. Without these three or four years and the  
experiences they gave, "Leaves of Grass" would not  
now be existing. (1990: 434)*

The above quote shows the importance of the impact of the war and life experience in the production of "Leaves of Grass". In 1848 he took a trip to the southern city of New Orleans, at the mouth of the Mississippi River, that great waterway flowing through the heart of the country. There, Whitman gained a new vision of America and began writing poetry that would embody this vision. In 1855, he published a ground-breaking book called *Leaves of Grass*.

In 1840s, far from America, in the Kabyle region (Algeria) was born one of the most popular poet whose name is Si Mohand - Ou – Mhand Ait Hamadouch in Ichariouen near Tizi- Rached in the Arch of At-Iraten (nowadays Larba Nath Iraten in Tizi-Ouzou). At that time this mountainous region was not yet colonized by the French. In 1857, when Si Mohand was a child, General Randon started to colonize this region; the village of Ichariouen was destroyed and the villagers' land confiscated to build a Fortress, Fort-Napoleon. This traumatic event had thrown down Si Mohand peaceful childhood.

In 1871, he witnessed another dramatic event. His father Mohand Amezian At Hmadouch, was executed by the colonial army because he was suspected to have taken part in the kabyle insurrection against the French administration. His life as a rover started and his poetry would express this distress. Mouloud Mammeri in *Les isefra de Si-Mohand* (1982) notes on this context:

quest for liberty by both poets can be seen as a universal analogy where the right to be 'free' is a natural human attitude.

Whitman in "*Leaves of Grass*" refers to an important theme 'Liberty'. Liberty is expressed first in the way he wrote his poetry i.e., free verse. For him, the truly American and democratic base on which to build a new poetry is a new language. He freely expressed himself using the living vernacular American speech and using naturally the standard metered line, discarding the obligatory rhyme scheme. For Jerome Loving, "Whitman declared not only independence from his past as a journalist, freelance writer, and poetaster but his literary independence from the conventions that made 'literature' something of an anachronism in the democracy he celebrated" (1990: viii). Si Mohand's poetry, like Whitman's expresses 'liberty' and even a step further since Si Mohand lived during colonization. Accordingly, both poets' works can be seen as an act of rebellion where the quest for liberty is essential for them. They freed themselves from any barrier that would prevent them from expressing, first about themselves, then about Man, i.e., man and woman. Whitman's poetry was described by Charles Eliot Norton (1827-1908), a contemporary critic whose review appeared in *Putman's Monthly* in New-York, September 1855 as follow:

*The poems, twelve in number are neither in rhyme nor blank verse, but in a sort of excited prose broken into lines without attempt at measure or regularity. He (poet) adopts words, usually banished from polite society. [Words] are here employed, without reserve and with perfect indifference to their effect on the reader's mind. The book is one not to be read aloud to a mixed audience.*  
(1971:24)

His poetry as the above quote shows is different from the 'correct' poetry of his time. Some of Si Mohand's poems too could not be read loudly to a mixed audience. So, the Kabyle bard, as Si Ammar Ben Said Boulifa calls him, "le barde populaire de la Grande Kabylie" (1990:45) can be compared to the American bard Walt Whitman.

#### **Restlessness in the Lives of the Poets**

While reading the poets' biographies, I was streaked by the similarities in their lives. Whitman was the second of eight children born to an alcoholic father. The family was often in economic difficulty and moved several times between the city of Brooklyn and the country around Huntington, Long Island. He joined the work force early, no doubt to help care for and feed his large family. The poet's

The scholarship of oral literature has crossed academic boundaries to straddle many disciplines, ranging from aesthetics to linguistics, to communication, to psychology, to anthropology, and many more. This broadening of the academic base has been very fruitful in bolstering the theories and methods of the field. Specialists, like Walter Ong, underscore the encyclopedic of oral literature emphasizing its information on history, world view cultural values, and entire way of life. In other words, oral literature is embedded with important knowledge of the traditional societies. Thus, a poem from oral literature may have a serious intent - to defend a case, lay a claim, exhort to action, declare war (Bedouin oral poems), celebrate a victory, and so on. Accordingly, the Kabyle oral poet Si Mohand Ou M'hand (1845/46-1902) can be compared to Walt Whitman (1819-1892), the American poet. This comparative study seeks to explore the common tenets of these poets in relation to the notion of "liberty" despite their geographical distance and language differences. It is true that the experience and expression of freedom is actually quite different for the two poets given that Si Mohand Ou M'hand laments the loss of freedom and his beloved world - the one that had gone with the French colonial conquest - while Whitman who lived through the American Civil War crafts a new vision for America. However, the quest for liberty is an important notion in both poetries whereby the two poets transgressed rules in their choice of the topics dealt with in their poems.

This comparative study is significant for several reasons. Firstly Whitman applies a new form of poetry in American literature; for many it is neither epic, nor lyric, nor ode, nor verse. It is free verse poetry without affixed beat or regular rhyme scheme. It is as if Whitman speaks to the reader; "It is the spoken word that Whitman writes" (1990: xix). For Si Mohand, his poetry is known as 'Asfrou', an oral verse based on personal inspiration. Thus, both are the ones whom we listen to. Secondly, the message in Whitman's poetry is that America is totally representative of the divinity and humanity of men and women in countries around the world. His poetic vision is not limited to Americans but extended to men, women and children around the globe. He declares in "Song of Myself": "Of every hue and caste am I, /of every rank and religion" (1990:42). Si Mohand's poetry is one of the most challenging literary works in Kabyle literature. In the same way Whitman's major work *Leaves of Grass* is considered as one of the most important American work in Western literature. Thirdly, the

have introduced the anthropological and psychological implications of the theory to include not only an oral mode of composition but also an oral mode of thinking and the processes of oral discourse in general. This paper introduces Si Mohand Ou M'hand's oral poetry from a wider perspective to treat it with the seriousness it deserves as a social, political and ideological literary text; and then, draw a comparative study with Walt Whitman's poetry. The aim of this study is to investigate the common tenets of these poets in relation to the notion of "liberty" despite their geographical distance and language differences. It is true that the experience and expression of freedom is actually quite different for the two poets given that Si Mohand Ou M'hand laments the loss of freedom and his beloved world - the one that had gone with the French colonial conquest - while Whitman who lived through the American Civil War crafts a new vision for America. However, the quest for liberty is an important notion in both poets' poetries. Both poets transgressed rules in their choice of the topics dealt with in their poems.

### ***Walt Whitman and Si Mohand Ou M'Hand : Free - Folk Voices***

#### **Introduction**

The theory of Oral-formulaic composition and performance in its traditional conception as proposed by Milman Parry (1902-1935) and enunciated by Albert Lord (1912-1991) is rather restricted, since it applies only to the poetic genre looked at strictly from a formal literary perspective. It can even be considered as a surface-structure-oriented theory with a meager intellectual yield. Jack Goody (1919), Walter Ong (1912-2003) and others have tried to broaden this theory. They have introduced the anthropological and psychological implications of the theory to include not only an oral mode of composition but also an oral mode of thinking and the processes of oral discourse in general. The discussion, since then, have shifted to focus on the oral stage versus the writing stage of culture, and what effects the introduction of script has on the individual and on the society as a whole. The emphasis now is on the examination of the structure and working of the human memory and cognition and the means through which oral societies store organize, and retrieve knowledge, pass on their traditions, and maintain cultural continuity through successive generations. What started as an insular theory of textual criticism is now turning into an interdisciplinary enterprise.

# Walt Whitman and Si Mohand Ou M'Hand : Free - Folk Voices

Fadhila Sidi-Said Boutouchent  
Departement of English  
Mouloud Mammeri University, Tizi-Ouzou (Algeria)

**ملخص:** قطع الأدب الشفوي أشواط الحدود الأكاديمية واحتوى العديد من التخصصات، بدءا من الجماليات إلى اللسانيات إلى الاتصالات إلى علم النفس والأنثروبولوجيا وغيرها. لقد حاول جاك غودي 1919 والتراونج 1912-2003 وغيرهم توسيع نظرية الأدب الشفوي وقد أدخلوا عليها بصمات وآثار الأنثروبولوجيا وعلم النفس لتشمل هذه النظرية ليس الخطاب الشفوي فقط ولكن الخطاب الفكري أيضا. لذلك نستطيع أن نأخذ الشعر الشفوي لسي موح ومحمد من منظور أوسع والتعامل معه بالجدية التي يستحقها بوصفه نصا أدبيا، اجتماعيا، سياسيا وإيديولوجيا. هذا النص الأدبي الذي هو الشعر الشفوي يقارن مع نص من الأدب الأمريكي للشاعر والت ويطمان.

الهدف من هذه المقالة هو دراسة مفهوم الحرية عند والت ويطمان وسي محمد ومحمد على الرغم من المسافة الجغرافية والاختلافات اللغوية بينهما. صحيح أن التجربة والتعبير عن الحرية يختلف عند هذين الشعارين، حيث سي محمد ومحمد يرثي فقدان الحرية وعالمه الحبيب والسكين- ذلك الذي زال مع الغزو الفرنسي-أما ويطمان الذي عاش خلال الحرب الأهلية الأمريكية يسعى لرؤية جديدة لأمريكا. ومع ذلك فإن مفهوم الحرية مهم في أشعار كل من الشعارين. إن كلاهما قد تجاوزا القوانين وانتهاكا القواعد الاجتماعية في اختيارهم للمواضيع المتناولة.

## Abstract

The scholarship of oral literature has crossed academic boundaries to straddle many disciplines, ranging from aesthetics to linguistics, to communication, to psychology, to anthropology, and many more. In fact, Jack Goody (1919), Walter Ong (1912-2003) and others have tried to broaden the theory of Oral-formulaic. They