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Charles Sheeler and Paul Strand's 1921 short film *Manhatta* is widely considered to be the very first cinempoem <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P12guZoUoJ0>: it is a montage of shots of Manhattan with intertitles from Whitman's poetry.

YouTube houses a surprising number of Whitman-inspired cinemoems, some good, some less so. Whitman's poem "America," as (purportedly) read by the poet, scores a slideshow of photographic images of the poet <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wf7J2AvCQO4>.

Other interesting cinempoetic postings include Walt Whitman: A Video Biography

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICt7Hb9aA4E&NR=1>; Introduction to Walt Whitman

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmXI4qjCpls>; a dramatic rendition of "Song of Myself"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-6FR4hzjM2U>; and one of "O Captain! My Captain!"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SawtfQmirKI&feature=related>.

As part of Robert Pinsky's online Favorite Poem Project, he includes a video of Everyman John Doherty, a construction worker, reciting part of "Song of Myself" while leaning against a backhoe in Braintree, Massachusetts <http://www.favoritepoem.org/videos.html>.

The films archived in this issue are mostly educational in purpose, and can tell us much about the way Whitman was heard and seen throughout the twentieth century in America. The actor Efrem Zimbalist, Jr., narrates the 1972 short film *Walt Whitman*, in a series on "Poetry by Americans" (Oxford Films, Hollywood, CA). In the study guide that accompanies the reel-to-reel film, we read that "Original art work is combined with period photography and engravings to introduce the student to one of America's most distinguished poets and his work." A

centerpiece of the film is “O Captain! My Captain” which is used to reflect on recent dire political events: “As read by the film’s narrator ... and powerfully represented on the screen, the poem speaks not only of Lincoln but of more recent loved but fallen leaders.” As we listen to the poem as read by Zimbalist, we see images of Lincoln, JFK, MLK, Jr., and Robert Kennedy. A question proposed for class discussion in the study guide includes the following: “Why do you think the poem *O Captain! My Captain!* might well be read in tribute to John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, or Robert Kennedy?” With emphasis on the spoken word, the study guide further suggests that the teacher “Ask for volunteers to read *O Captain! My Captain!*”: “Select a different student to read each stanza. Discuss oral reading of poetry.”

In the 21-minute-long *Walt Whitman the Poet*, which, which was filmed over a 25-year period, with Whitman’s biographer, Gay Wilson Allen, serving as consultant, scenes include those of the Whitman homestead (birthplace); the Long Island seashore; rural Long Island; Brooklyn; Manhattan. The words of Whitman are spoken by Marvin Miller, and “the story is told entirely in Whitman’s own words.”

Walt Whitman’s Western Journey (1965) depicts Whitman’s trip to the American West, as far as to Colorado, in 1879.

In the 1972 15-minute film *Walt Whitman’s Civil War*, the poet is played by the actor Will Geer: “Archive photographs and filmed representations of the war so closely parallel the [t]ext that they might almost have been taken by Whitman to document his experiences.” A question posed in the pamphlet that accompanies the film asks us to imagine Whitman’s reaction to the era of the Vietnam War might be: “If Whitman lived today, what do you think his stance would be on the various social and political issues confronting us (integration, busing, the draft, involvement in Southeast Asia, communes, free love, health foods)?”

In each of these films, we see how Whitman was held up as a lens through which to view contemporary politics, especially nationality, in order to make him culturally relevant to us as well as to make us more aware of our own history.

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