

## Ports of Call and Destinations: The Imagery of the Sea-voyage in Nineteenth Century American Poetry

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The concept of life as a sea-voyage, of man "sailing o'er life's solemn main," was not such a "tired metaphor" when it appeared in an early poem of the nineteenth century, Longfellow's famous "Psalm of Life"<sup>1</sup>: developed with its symbolic overtones or mythological associations, it was successfully used by so many of the major American poets of the period that variations on its use can be seen as powerful indicators of the individual poets' development, and of the development of American poetry in general at this time.

No doubt it was inevitable that these nineteenth century poets should have made extensive use of what Northrop Frye has termed the archetypal "quest-myth."<sup>2</sup> Close to those early pioneering days, themselves pioneers in their nation's literature, seeking to mark out its territories and establish its goals, and receiving a strong impetus from European poets already embarked on new journeys of self-discovery, they were certain to draw on symbolism which has reverberated down the ages with the suggestion of the challenge of human life.

That the quest should so often take the form of a sea-voyage was also natural. There were the historical factors, starting with the voyages of Columbus himself<sup>3</sup>, keenly appreciated by those who dated their origins from the days of the Mayflower, glorified again in Longfellow's long poem or 'idyl,' "The Courtship of Miles Standish":

“Out of the sea rose the sun, and the billows  
rejoiced at his coming;  
Beautiful were his feet on the purple tops  
of the mountains;  
Beautiful on the sails of the Mayflower  
riding at anchor.”

One recent critic has traced "the water-borne heroic line" through the whole history of early American life and literature.<sup>4</sup> And there were the geographical factors too. Poe, for instance, who found the "sounding sea" and "pitiless wave" so useful for his poetic effects, lived much of his foreshortened life on the Atlantic seaboard, in Boston, Philadelphia and New York. In the words of a more recent poet, Reed Whittemore,

“that lumbering presence  
Has been in my ear so long that I have to say something  
Or other about it” (“Waves in Peoria”).

Classical inspiration offered such epic models as the *Odyssey*, depicting the vicissitudes of the sea-faring Odysseus, to writers who were, in the main, academics, and strongly attracted to the ancient myths by their Romantic inclinations. And contemporary

literary influences from Europe gave additional clout to the sea as a resonant poetic motif for the age, investing it with mystery and grandeur from Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" onwards. As Auden pointed out in his essay, "The Enchanted Flood," such a motif was bound to spill over into the work of other writers. Important too was the primal association of the sea with rich inner life, which antedates all such influences. For the American poet's quest, like that of Telemachus in the *Odyssey*, was above all a quest for enlightenment.

D. G. James, in his comments on Matthew Arnold and the course of English Romanticism, wrote thus:

"Somewhere, deep in his human nature, were the sources of impregnable peace and simplicity: but to come upon them and draw infallibly upon them—this was the quest."<sup>5</sup>

Increasingly these nineteenth century American poets too use the idea of the voyage in order to express the movement inwards as well as forwards.

The course of one such voyage can be clearly seen in Longfellow's work. Its beginning in "A Psalm of Life" is not as facile as it appears, nor is it at all propitious. The poem as a whole is an exhortation to purposeful endeavour, but the encouragement is less to others than to the poet himself, "it being a voice from my inmost heart, at a time when I was rallying from depression."<sup>6</sup> Since he was given to calling his poems "psalms," either of life or death, the psalmist whom he refutes at the beginning would seem to be his own darker side, and the poem, therefore, a dialogue with himself. Thus, the "forlorn and shipwrecked brother" of the eighth stanza is not only some unknown troubled spectator but is also partly identifiable with the poet himself, struggling against the problems of life. Shipwreck was Longfellow's theme in another famous poem of this early period, the ballad of "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and subsequent poems, some of them among his best known, develop the image of the dangerous voyage with more complexity. "Freighted with hope and fear," as he says in "To a Child," is the thought which the poet sends out into the future, and, for all the early bravado, it is the fear rather than the hope which proves justified.

"With the middle years of life disillusion begins, the colors fade,"<sup>7</sup> writes one critic. Contrary to the received notion of Longfellow as a serene figure untouched by the storms of life, Longfellow had his own problems in getting established as an author, and suffered much personal distress from the death of his first wife, the long (seven year) courtship of his second, and then her tragic death in a household fire.<sup>8</sup> While the cardboard figure of the village blacksmith could wipe away a tear from his eye with his manly hand, and continue gamely with his life of toil, the human being was bound to tire and recognize the discrepancy between the real and the ideal. Longfellow, the author of that famous piece of cold comfort, "Into each life some rain must fall," could not fully withstand the battering of a life-time's experience.

The last volume of poems published while Longfellow was alive was given the title "Ultima Thule," the name used in classical times for the furthest outpost of the then known world, and dedicated to a life-long friend, George Washington Greene. The

dedicatory poem describes how the two friends had set out on their voyage towards an ideal destination—the Hesperides, “The land where golden apples grow,” for which Hercules once sought. It is associated in Greek mythology with eternal pleasure, the immortal love of the gods, and (earlier in the nineteenth century) it had been the subject of a haunting poem by Tennyson. When the two set out on their voyage, the winds were favourable and the sun shone. But just as Hercules had had to struggle with Nereus, the god of the sea, so the two friends were beset by harsher conditions. As time went by (“But that, ah! that was long ago”) they were swept off their course by the ocean tides. Their youthful idealism, which, although it was based on illusion (“fiction”), was also a true and valuable state of mind (Longfellow’s use of the word “truth” here is reminiscent of Keats’s equation of Beauty with Truth), was lost like that other legendary island, Atlantis. Instead of the longed-for goal, the friends are now confronted with quite another experience, this time symbolized by the name of some real islands—the Orcades, off the Scottish coast—and ones associated both in legend and actuality with terrible storms. The Greeks believed them to be haunted. They are just right for Longfellow’s poetic purposes, providing a contrast to the Hesperides and Atlantis both in the fact of their geographical location, and in their harshness: “sea-gulls scream, and breakers roar,/And wreck and sea-weed line the shore.” In the last stanza, this harsh reality is seen as the friends’ “Ultima Thule”—perhaps identifiable with approaching death. It is as far as they can go or see ahead at present, although it is by no means their goal. They hope that it is not the end of their journey either, but rather, a place to rest and gather strength:

“We lower our sails; a while we rest

From the unending, endless quest.”

All this seems a far cry from the encouraging stance of the earlier poems, but just as those poems too could be seen to acknowledge the problems of life, so the juxtaposition of “unending” and “endless” in the last line of this later poem suggests at least a faint ray of hope. Although the goal may not be attained, the search will continue, apparently even beyond death.

A more startling turn-about is to be found in another poem in the volume, “The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls.” In this poem, the traveller returns from the seashore to take refuge in the town, and fails to resume his journey: “The day returns, but nevermore/Returns the traveller to the shore.” Here, even the marks which he leaves behind him, footprints which clearly recall those indelibly printed on “the sands of time” in “A Psalm of Life,” are washed away by insidious “little waves, with their soft, white hands.” The reader is alerted to possible echoes of Poe’s poetry by the hopeless finality of the word “nevermore” in the last stanza, and it appears that in his darker moods, the poet who first made a name for himself by stridently refuting the notion of life as an “empty dream”<sup>9</sup> came, at the end of a long writing career, close to the sense of futility which permeated the work of Poe, his early rival. In “The Tide Rises, The Tide Falls,” the traveller is no longer a voyager, but a man seen first on the seashore, a familiar enough situation in Poe’s poetry. There is a withdrawal from the kind of direct

confrontation with life which Longfellow had once advocated, under the influence of Goethe and activist philosophy, and the only consolation is that the traveller staying at the inn, like the voyager resting in the harbour, finds some shelter from the prevailing darkness (which, however, "settles on roofs and walls"). The difference between Longfellow and Poe is now less one of mood, than of tone or register. Disillusioned as he was, Longfellow never wrote with the desperate intensity of Poe.

The same critic who noted Longfellow's disillusion in later life has commented that, as a result of this change of mood, "Longfellow's distinctively romantic period was over before 1849."<sup>10</sup> This is a moot point. By this logic, Poe could hardly be said to have written any Romantic poetry, for the whole tenor of his poetry was bitterly to lament the unattainability of the ideal. Already struggling with his problems with his foster-father and his education, he felt that (in words which he used for the title of a poem) "The happiest day—the happiest hour" had "flown" by the time he was eighteen. But of course, Poe's desolation clearly came from his fierce, unappeased yearning for the ideal, and this is what gives his poetry its peculiarly intense, and intensely *Romantic*, quality.

Here again, the way in which the poet uses the imagery of the sea-voyage is indicative of the development of his thought. While still a young man, in his early twenties, he idealized a woman-friend in the celebrated poem "To Helen," and saw her beauty as a means of transporting him across a "perfumed sea" to the wonders of the classical past. But even then it was as a "weary, way-worn wanderer" that he pictured himself. Poems of the same period show a gloomy sea over which no one now voyages, a sea which will eventually swallow up the wierd imaginary "city" of death. In the poem "The City in the Sea," he describes this fantastic place as being surrounded by "melancholy waters"—"Resignedly beneath the sky/The melancholy waters lie"—which, "hideously serene," promise to engulf the city in the last stanza. In a later poem, "Dream-Land," he relates a recent voyage "by a route obscure and lonely" from a very similar place which, as Longfellow was to do later, he terms "an ultimate dim Thule."

But this traveller is inexorably drawn back to the shore. In one of his last poems, "Annabel Lee," Poe pictures himself as being more or less buried alive voluntarily in his beloved's tomb by the side of a sea which harbours "demons":

"And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side  
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,  
In the sepulchre there by the sea,  
In her tomb by the sounding sea."

It is a confused poem of personal loss (most probably, that of his young wife who had died quite recently after a prolonged illness): the "emotional chaos" underlying this and other works has been pointed out by R. E. Spiller.<sup>11</sup> From the ending, it might appear either that Poe considered the voyage of his life to be over, now that he is reunited with his beloved, or that he has simply given up under the pressure of that harsh reality which robbed him of his living bride. Neither interpretation, however, seems at all

adequate to explain the feeling, at the end, of the poet's having desperately and resentfully snatched back from the envious angels of stanza four something of his "Annabel"—a feeling which hardly suggests either achievement or resignation, but instead, the same sort of helpless defiance of "the pitiless wave"<sup>12</sup> which characterized his poetry from the first. Sadly, despite all his technical skill in translating the world of his imagination into memorable sound patterns and images, Poe had reached a dead end: "Further than Poe the isolated self could never venture."<sup>13</sup>

It was Emerson's work which offered a new direction to the American Romantics, floundering in their perilous quest for the ideal. If both Longfellow and Poe failed to reach their goal in the face of ever-increasing odds, Emerson, in one of his last significant works, "Terminus," was determined to ride out the difficulties in order to arrive at the longed-for destination. In this poem he bravely faces the major problem of mortality and his own specific problem of failing faculties, and accepts them without bitterness or loss of hope. He does not curse his forefathers for their legacy of "ebbing veins," as the voice of the first part of the poem suggests that he might, but rather prepares to devote his remaining energy to the rest of the voyage:

"As the bird trims her to the gale,  
I trim myself to the storm of time,  
I man the rudder, reef the sail,  
Obey the voice at eve obeyed at prime:  
'Lowly faithful, banish fear,  
Right onward drive unharmed;  
The port, well worth the cruise, is near,  
And every wave is charmed."

The "voice" at the end here is not to be confused with that of "The god of bounds/Who sets to seas a shore," heard in earlier lines: the poet is now taking courage from the faith he has held to since the beginning ("prime"), which reassures him that, as his life appears by sure physical signs to be nearing its appointed end, so he may expect also its spiritual completion or fruition. He expresses his confidence that the "little while" still left to him to "mature the unfallen fruit" will surely be enough to carry him to "the port," and ends on a note of wonder which recalls the magical recoveries and discoveries of *The Tempest*.

The poem is remarkable for its mix of Emerson's transcendentalism with a realistic acknowledgement of advancing years, and clearly reflects his ideas about the intimate relationship of the inner being of man to the world around.<sup>14</sup> The imagery of the sea-voyage, with the ageing poet himself as the navigator whose skills are just adequate for the journey, borne on a rough but "charmed" sea, effectively conveys his belief that the law which dictates the workings of the human spirit corresponds with that which animates and orders external nature. As he wrote in his address on "The American Scholar," "Nature is the opposite of the soul, answering to it part for part. One is seal and one is print." There could hardly be a better way of getting over the "horror of reality" which Faguet believed to be inevitable in Romanticism<sup>15</sup>, without losing the basic

Romantic concern with the self. "Terminus," with its deeply personal self-assessment and lack of any generalized 'message', obviously contrasts with an earlier nineteenth century poem which also suggested a positive conclusion, Bryant's well-known "To a Waterfowl": despite its element of realism, it is much more firmly in the Romantic tradition than Bryant's didactic, specifically religious piece. Yet it contrasts just as strongly with those works of Poe and Longfellow which use similar imagery to express feelings of frustration and disappointment.

This poem was, in fact, an expression of the one-time pastor's attempt to inform the enfeebled Romanticism of the mid-nineteenth century with a new spirituality, and at the same time to relate it to the realities of life. Although he wrote very little of importance after this, it is well known that his poetic thought had already found a true heir in the work of Walt Whitman. Both poets recognized the connection of course, with Emerson writing to greet the author of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* "at the beginning of a great career" and Whitman subsequently cashing in on the older poet's letter by publishing it to promote his book.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps it was something more than the result of geographical or broader literary influence that Whitman too was drawn to adopt the imagery of the sea-voyage in his work. Emerson had written about the sea before (for instance, in "Seashore," in which also the sea is used to suggest unity, this time between nations). At any rate, it has already been noticed that "the sea always moved Whitman, and more than any other physical fact lifted him above the world of assertions and opinions into that of imagination and vision,"<sup>17</sup> and, indeed, from "Song of Myself" onwards the sea-voyage is an important motif in his poetry. Easily missed in the early part of that poem, where it appears amid an abundance of brief, evocative, scenic descriptions, it comes to have greater significance in later poems, and by the time of "Passage to India" it has assumed central significance in his work. In Whitman, the Romantic yearning for the ideal and the search for enlightenment, self-discovery, become for the first time fully harmonized in the desire to identify the whole man (not just his spiritual qualities) with the cosmos (not an after-life which must be taken on trust, but the actual universe as we can experience it now). Aspirations which did not quite gel before, do now: his is the ultimate voyage of discovery, the culmination of the American Romantic tradition. And he urges his readers to voyage with or after him, like a prophet pointing out the way by virtue of his superior insight, personal example and extraordinary self-confidence. "Voyaging to every port to dicker and adventure . . . I launch all men and women forward with me into the Unknown" ("Song of Myself," 11. 786 and 1136).

Nowhere is Whitman's voyage more buoyant and hopeful than at the beginning of "Song of Myself."

"The Yankee clipper is under her sky-sails, she cuts the  
sparkle and scud,

My eyes settle the land, I bend at her prow or shout  
joyously from the deck (11. 180-181).

Many of the early passages allude to sailing and associated activities: in Whitman's great catalogues, bursting with realistic details and human energy, there are whale-

boats (l. 268), steamboats (l. 292), the regatta with the white sails sparkling (l. 300), fish-smacks (l. 310), flatboats (l. 319) and ice-boats (l. 340); there are the "boatmen and clam-diggers" (l. 182), the "builders and steerers of ships" (l. 257), the pilot who "seizes the king-pin" (l. 267), "the groups of newly-come immigrants" on the wharf (l. 285), the "deckhands" and "the shore-going passengers" (l. 292), mariners who "put the ship through dangerous unknown seas" (l. 488) and the "stevedores" and "anchor-lifters" (l. 591). Although Whitman admits, in a later section (43), to knowing "the sea of torment, doubt, despair and unbelief" (l. 1114), and the sea's destructive aspects are seen to be inseparable from its life-giving ones, the sea in "Song of Myself" is primarily the "sea of the brine of life" (l. 456), to which the poet gives himself freely. Even in its role as the taker of life, suggested in the same line (that is, l. 456) by its "unshovell'd yet always ready graves," it is a source of renewal, for from the "old-time sea-fight" of section 35 come "death-messages given in charge to survivors" (l. 941), and from his own encounter with death itself the poet arises "replenish'd with supreme power, one of an average unending procession,/Inland and sea-coast we go" (ll. 970-971).

Despite Whitman's fascination with the sea, his main inspiration for the mystical journey of section 33 onwards comes not from the sea-voyage, but from the quite recent discovery, late in the previous century, of the hot-air balloon:

"My ties and ballasts leave me, my elbows rest in sea-gaps,  
I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents . . .  
. . . the pear-shaped balloon is floating aloft, (floating in it  
myself and looking composedly down)"

11. 714-715; l. 740.

It is a stroke of genius, surely derived from the journalist's excitement at a new proof of man's daring, and while rooting the vision of the poet firmly in the reality of his own age, it gives it truly cosmic dimensions. Whitman shows himself "speeding through space, speeding through heaven and the stars" (l. 791), a visionary rising above all the restraints (or "ties") of the earth-bound creature. Describing his vessel as a "ship" (l. 804) with a "crow's nest" (l. 808), he does however use the idea of the sea-voyage as secondary imagery, seeing his passages of poetry also as carrying his thoughts like "vessels that sail" (l. 1260). At the end of the poem he identifies himself with the fluid waters of the sea, and feels himself being dispersed into "eddies" as well as into the fertile soil to be renewed in the "perpetual transfers and promotions" of the natural cycle (l. 1300). It is the end (or is it the beginning?) towards which his cradle was first "ferried" by forces "rowing and rowing like cheerful boatmen" (l. 1159).

Of course, this rhythmic line, and the first part of section 22 of "Song of Myself" ("You sea! I resign myself to you also—") clearly contain the seed of another famous poem, "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," with its wonderful "'oceanic' opening sentence."<sup>18</sup> This is a different sort of poem, however, apparently composed at a difficult period in Whitman's life, perhaps after the loss of a lover, and some discouraging set-backs in his efforts to publish a new edition of his work.<sup>19</sup> While it matches "Song

of Myself" in intensity of feeling, it represents a passive yielding to the death-wish rather than an active confrontation with the problem of death. Speaking generally about his work, Whitman claimed to have rejected Poe's "dark nights" from the beginning of his career as a writer, and later wrote derisively of Poe's writing in terms of a "lurid dream" of a "little schooner . . . flying uncontroll'd with torn sails and broken spars through the wild sleet and winds and waves of the night"—with Poe himself enjoying the wildness of the storm.<sup>20</sup> It is true that there is nothing at all "lurid" about "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," and yet here, rather like Poe, the poet pictures himself at the sea-shore, with the waves lapping near him. Significantly, it is a poem in which Whitman makes symbolic use of the sea, rather than of the sea-voyage. He is recalling his early life, his first awakening as a poet, and the perpetual motion of the water is associated with the rocking of the cradle, and the sea itself is compared to some ancient mother soothing her child, and passing on her wisdom to the poet's "arous'd . . . heart": the message concerns the nature of death, which is shown to be a final and sufficient answer to the "unsatisfied love" embodied in the mocking-bird's song earlier in the poem, and the poet's own new sense of some "unknown want." It is a beautifully orchestrated, haunting poem, and many prefer the Whitman who sings poignantly of the loss of happiness and the end of life, to the one who asserts the possibility of victory over the human condition. But, as the development of the continually revised and extended "Song of Myself" suggests, Whitman was not long to be content with simply listening to the whisperings of the sea.

Again and again in the later poems he returns to the theme of the voyage, to the "ship of the body, ship of the soul, voyaging, voyaging, voyaging" ("Aboard at a Ship's Helm," 1867), for after all he discovered what Longfellow only glimpsed in "Ultima Thule"—what D. H. Lawrence recognized in Whitman's work years later and identified as a new doctrine, the "heroic message of the American future": "Death is not the goal . . . Only . . . the journey itself, down the open road . . . Only the soul remaining true to herself in her going."<sup>21</sup>

"Passage to India," first published in 1871, is the fullest expression of this message, and the climax of Whitman's use of the imagery of the sea-voyage. The movement of thought in the poem is clear enough. Referring to recent exciting developments in world communications, such as the laying of the Atlantic cable in 1866, and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, Whitman voices his fervent belief in the brotherhood of all mankind, and then, inspired by the advances of man in the physical universe, passes on from this vision of future world amity to one of spiritual progress towards God. Of particular interest to Whitman is the fact that, by opening up the world, modern man has gained fresh access to the spirituality of the past:

"Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,  
Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,  
The young maturity of brood and bloom,  
To realms of budding bibles" (11. 165-168).

This is what makes Whitman aware of the vast possibilities open to the spirit of man.



Thinking of the spiritual needs and explorations of all nations and ages, from the very beginning of time, he sees the many different routes already opened up by "the far-darting beams of the spirit" (l. 21) as "all the seas of God" (l. 254) and offers himself as the one who will push forward across the seas to reach "the mystery of God":

"Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!

Cut the hawsers—haul out—shake out every sail! . . . .

Sail forth—steer for the deep waters only,

Reckless O soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,

For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,

And we will risk the ship, ourselves and all.

O my brave soul!

O farther farther sail!

O daring joy, but safe! are they not all the seas of God?

O farther, farther, farther sail! (ll. 243–255.)

Although Whitman's ideas are developed smoothly to this rousing finale which, as so often in his work, is not so much a conclusion as a rallying cry, the poem has come in for a good deal of criticism. Not only have the earlier sections been dismissed as empty bombast because the dream of internationalism failed to materialize, but the later sections too have been seen as overly rhetorical, even forced—a sort of padding out of sentiments later to be expressed with simple lyricism in Tennyson's "Crossing the Bar." " 'Passage to More than India' [the last section of the poem] should lead to a quiet conclusion," writes E. H. Miller plaintively, believing that once the poet had made the decision to seek out God (whom Miller sees as a representative of the father-figure for whom Whitman was always searching) his inner conflicts should have been resolved, and he should have experienced calm relief.<sup>22</sup> Both these criticisms, and the hypotheses on which they are based, are misguided. Whitman was a poet, not a social historian with a programme for the immediate future; and the whole emphasis of the poem is not on the brief vision of reunion with God in section 8, which, incidentally, was first conceived as an entirely separate poem<sup>23</sup>, but on the process, the challenging and exhilarating voyage, or, as Lawrence put it, "the journey itself." Nothing corroborates this better than Whitman's own comment on the poem:

"There is no philosophy, consistent or inconsistent, in that poem . . .

but the burden of it is evolution—the one thing escaping the other—

the unfolding of cosmic purposes";

and, he says, "There's more of me, the essential ultimate me, in that than in any of the poems."<sup>24</sup>

What has happened is that in Whitman's work the quest itself has become the ideal, and so the Romantic yearning, coming as close as it can to a final resolution, has found its apotheosis. By focussing on this central aspect of Whitman's work we may be helped to understand the paradox that *Leaves of Grass* represents at once the flowering and the end of the nineteenth century American Romantic movement. With his usual

critical acuteness and bluntness, Lawrence recognized both the unlimited range of Whitman's vision, and the failure of subsequent American poets to emulate it: "Ahead of Whitman, nothing."<sup>25</sup> Taken as a reflection on these later poets, as apparently it was in part intended, this is an acidic comment. But, as in the case of Poe and his solitary stand against the impending darkness, it would seem that there was simply no further that American poetry could go in that particular direction.

If Whitman's work marked the end of one literary era, there is no doubt that a new one was already beginning. Still to become known in Whitman's own century was another major poet, Emily Dickinson, in whose work amplitude of vision was replaced by incisiveness, and large, bold, all-embracing statements by modest insights, honest uncertainties. Instead of Romantic fervour there is a subtlety of tone and a reservation of judgement to which the modern ear is much more attuned. Although the withdrawn nature of her life may help to explain the type of poetry she wrote, there is little critical mileage to be got out of the fact that Emily Dickinson "never saw the sea" (J. 1052)—for, as she herself said, she could still imagine it. Besides, the sea and imagery associated with it have continued to figure in the work of a number of other American poets of recent years. Access to a certain area of experience (or indeed lack of it) can only go so far towards determining either the quality of a poet's vision or the poetic trends of an age. However, the fact is that the imagery of the sea-voyage does not seem to have occupied such a central position in the work of the modern American poets as it did in the work of their predecessors. It cannot be said to reflect the development of twentieth century poetry in the same way as it reflected that of the nineteenth century, nor to give anything like as good a clue to the understanding of it.

#### NOTES

1. See Dennis Welland, "The Dark Voice of the Sea: A Theme in American Poetry," Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies: 7, *American Poetry*, Assoc. ed. I. Ehrenpreis (Edward Arnold: 1973), p. 200.
2. See Frye's "The Archetypes of Literature," reprinted in *Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and Practice*, ed. J. B. Vickery (University of Nebraska: 1969), p. 95.
3. These were among the historic events most celebrated in this period. The last poem in Whitman's "death-bed" edition of *Leaves of Grass* is entitled "A Thought of Columbus." See Bernard Duffey, *Poetry in America, Expression and its Values in the Times of Bryant, Whitman and Pound* (Duke University: 1978), p. 86.
4. John Seelye, *Prophetic Waters: The River in Early American Life and Literature* (Oxford University Press: New York: 1977), p. 13.
5. *Matthew Arnold and the Decline of English Romanticism* (Oxford University Press: 1961), p. 23.
6. *Longfellow's Complete Works* (Cambridge Edition: U.S.A.: 1893), p. 2.
7. F. L. Patte, *The First Century of American Literature: 1770-1870* (Cooper Square: 1966), p. 532.
8. On his visit to Longfellow, Dickens was greatly moved by the old poet's account of the terrible accident, describing it thus to his son Charles: "She was in a blaze in an instant, rushed into his arms with a wild cry, and never spoke again" (Proceedings of the Cambridge Historical Society, Vol. 28, 1943, p. 89).
9. "Tell me not, in mournful numbers/Life is but an empty dream"—Longfellow's "Psalm of Life" was written several years after Poe's verdict on life as "A Dream within a Dream." For his part, Poe bitterly criticized his respected contemporary for what he considered to be the derivative and superficial nature of his poetry, and started a veritable "Longfellow war." See R. D. Rust's bibliographic essay on Longfellow, *Fifteen American Authors Before 1900*, edd. R. A. Rees and E. N. Harbert (University of Wisconsin: 1971), pp. 270-271.

10. F. L. Patte, op. cit., p. 532.
11. *The Cycle of American Literature: An Essay in Historical Criticism* (Macmillan: 1955), p. 57.
12. See "A Dream within a Dream," written in 1827.
13. Richard Gray, ed. *American Verse of the Nineteenth Century* (Dent: 1973), p. xxiii.
14. "His sense of unity in nature and the soul of man is not more powerful than austere," Douglas Bush, *Mythology and the Romantic Tradition in English Poetry* (Harvard University Press: 1969), p. 487. (This book contains a very forthright, critical chapter on American mythological verse, in which Emerson receives more praise than most.)
15. See P. Van Tiegham's essay on "The Romantic Soul," *The Romantic Movement*, ed. A. K. Thorlby (Longmans: 1966), p. 23.
16. See Justin Kaplan's *Walt Whitman: A Life* (Simon And Schuster: 1980), p. 202 onwards, for the details of the letter and a fascinating account of Whitman's use of it—also of Whitman's later repudiation of Emerson's influence, a repudiation which was blatantly dishonest.
17. John C. Bailey, *Walt Whitman* (Macmillan: New York: 1926), p. 165.
18. E. H. Miller, *Walt Whitman's Poetry: A Psychological Journey* (New York University Press: 1968), p. 185.
19. See G. W. Allen, *The New Walt Whitman Handbook* (New York University Press: 1975), pp. 92–93.
20. Quoted by Justin Kaplan, op. cit., p. 116.
21. See Lawrence's essay on Whitman in *Selected Essays* (Penguin: 1950), pp. 267–270.
22. E. H. Miller, op. cit., p. 220.
23. Pointed out in the headnote of "Passage to India" in the Norton Critical Edition of *Leaves of Grass*, edd. S. Bradley and H. W. Blodgett (1973), p. 410.
24. (Quoted), ibid, p. 411.
25. Op. cit., p. 268.

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