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City University of New York PH.D. 1986

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THE UNFRACTIONED IDIOM: HART CRANE AND MODERNISM

by

MARIA F. BENNETT

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1986

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Abstract

THE UNFRACTIONED IDIOM: HART CRANE AND MODERNISM

by

Maria Bennett

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This work attempts to place the figure of the American poet, Hart Crane, within the context of the literary and artistic movement known as Modernism. Most criticism of Crane, until this point, has focused on either a close reading of his poetry, a psychological analysis of his emotional problems vis-à-vis his life's often-cited "interference" with his work, or a study of the function of certain central symbols in his poetry. In a comparative manner, this work attempts to examine Crane's poetry as it may be related to aspects of Modernism such as Cubist aesthetics, the development of film and jazz techniques, and Crane's intense involvement with Steiglitz and photographic innovation. Forming roughly half of this work, the Crane/Modernist "connection" is deepened by an examining of Crane's relationship to two extremely important figures in the early development of Modernist aesthetics: Rimbaud and Baudelaire. The metaphors of erotic experience and the sea-voyage, in their function as agents of transformation and emblems of the threshold experience central to Modernism, will be focused on, as well as, in the work's conclusion, their final figuration in Crane's tour-de-force, The Bridge.

> New conditions of life germinate new forms of spiritual articulation. And while I feel that my work includes a more consistent extension of traditional literary elements than many contemporary poets are capable of appraising, I realize that I am utilizing the gifts of the past as instruments principally; and that the voice of the present, if it is to be known, must be caught at the risk of speaking in idioms and circumlocutions sometimes shocking to the scholar and historians of logic. Language has always built towers and bridges, but itself is inevitably as fluid as always.

The poet Hart Crane, in his statements here from "General Aims and Theories" (222-223), attempts to define his role within the context of modern poetry as that of one searching for "new forms of spiritual articulation." Throughout his short poetic career, Crane's search for spiritual definition expressed itself most strongly in images of transubstantiation and metamorphosis; his desire for a personal as well as poetic "bridge" manifested in an "unfractioned idiom" serves as the focus for this dissertation.

My interest in Crane stems from his peculiar position in American literary history; his work seems much more allied with the European tradition in its use of language and imagery, and he was often referred to by both friends and critics as "the Cleveland Rimbaud." What may have originally been a joking parallel between the two poets is, when critically examined, in fact a strong similarity in terms of poetic <u>persona</u> and personal crisis.

The <u>déréglement</u> which this alludes to in the work of Crane has been a chief source for comparative study in the Rimbaud/Crane field (Foster, Taupin); in examining the sim-

ilarities of Crane and Rimbaud as prototypically "modern" writers, I would like to extend this comparison into the realm of imagistic analysis. As Sister M. Bernetta Quinn has pointed out in many of her works, the concept of metamorphosis was crucial in the development of the modern poetic image; protean images then, and the personal/poetic transfiguration which they engender, are the focus of this study.

Crane's relationship to Baudelaire, perhaps less obvious than his relationship to Rimbaud, centers on the concept of sea-voyage as personal and aesthetic transformation. In chapters five through seven, the associations of the sea with figurations of the unconscious mind, the erotic impulse and with death itself will be focused upon as they appear in the poetry of Baudelaire, Crane, and Rimbaud. What Harold Bloom refers to as the Orphic spirit present in Crane's aesthetic seems to be present also in Rimbaud's and Baudelaire's work; the relationship of the individual poet to his vision, for these poets so important, is crucial to the study of the process of transformation for both poet and poem that is, for Crane, the movement toward the "unfractioned idiom" of his conceptual/poetic Bridge.

Although, as many have noted, all translation involves a treason of sorts, the works cited from Rimbaud (Oeuvres completes: Mercure de France, 1931) will be followed by the English translations of Paul Schmidt (Rimbaud: Complete Works, Harper Colophon, 1976) and the citations from Baudelaire are found in Baudelaire: Selected Verse by Francis Scarfe (Penguin, 1961). The Crane text used is The Complete Poems

and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane, edited by Brom Weber (Anchor, 1966).

As the idea of Modernism itself seems overwhelming, I have tried to isolate two aspects of poetic presentation which characterize Crane's output as well as that of the poets just mentioned. These ideas, loosely grouped, form the body of what I have termed the "fragmentation" of the poetic voice and its eventual transubstantiation via the poetic image. As per my outline, I have divided this study into chapters dealing with the notions of fragmentation and transubstantiation as aesthetic principles in modern art and, separately, their function as applied to poets and poems. Linking the concept of fragmentation with that of transubstantiation is the notion of the poet as visionary (found in chapter four). If it is true that one of the hallmarks of the modernist consciousness is a "dissociation of sensibility," then the role of the poet becomes increasingly involved with the attempt at making that consciousness whole again, in whatever manner. For a poet such as Eliot, the religious impulse served to conduct the "dissociation" back to some type of integration. For Crane, Rimbaud and many others, this attempt took a more Dionysian turn, essentially visionary in its nature. Many poets looked to poetry for this type of experience; at times, their poems sink beneath this heavy conceptual "weight." Crane's poems in particular seem targeted for this type of criticism, as his high expectations for his own poetry were not often met with the requisite amount of poetic "transcendence" in the finished

product. His vision, however, involved what he might term a "transmemberment" of both the poet and the phenomenological world through the act of poetry. His involvement in the poetic movement called "Verticalism" attests to this, as all good Verticalists believed that poetry should concentrate on "vertical" (ascending) imagery in order to effect a type of transfiguration of poet and reader.

In terms of the proposed outline of this study, chapters one through three attempt to "break" new critical ground as such in their attempt to place Crane's work within the framework of Modernist aesthetics as found in the most "modern" developments of art: Cubism, photography, cinema and jazz. The dissociative quality of both the poetic image and the artistic form in terms of Modernist works will be centered on in this section of my analysis; what has been called the Modernist "principle of discontinuity" seems equally applicable to the innovations of the Cubist canvas, the jazz improvisation, and Crane's "logic of metaphor." As suggested in the chapter outline, the influence of late-Symbolist aesthetics (James Kugel's notion of Symbolist "strangeness") will serve as a point of reference in this portion of the work. Crane's "unmediated images" and their parallels in the loss of referentiality found in the abstract artist's painting will be explored with special reference to Crane's poem, "Lachrymae Christi." In light of Crane's interest in jazz as symbolic of musical innovation, as well as its importance as an "American" invention, the jazz techniques of syncopation and improvisation will be related to Crane's

poetic "Shakespeherian Rag" in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." The disarticulation of the jazz beat, in its shift of tonality, as well as the totality of the jazz experience, in its emphasis on musical experimentation as a result of an almost divinely-inspired impulse, all may be found in Crane's poetry.

As Crane notes in "The Broken Tower," the discontinuity of the modern experience of life is on a par with that of art: "And so it was I entered the broken world/To trace the visionary company of love, its voice/An instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled)/But not for long to hold each desperate choice." (193, 17-20)

Perhaps one of the more important "sources" for this dissociation is the Rimbaud of A Season in Hell. His statement that in poetry Je est un autre was clearly taken to heart by Crane and many other Modernist writers, and I hope to explore this connection fully in my study. In addition, the disjunction between thought and feeling that one finds as part of this shattering of the poetic voice will be related to the Rimbaldian notion of the déréglement des sens. In a remark that might well be applied to many others of his generation, Harriet Monroe once said that Crane "thought with his heart and felt with his head." The effects of this, however portentous they may seem, however, make for interesting, if difficult, reading.

The importance of "illumination," for both Rimbaud and Crane, in terms of a poetic aesthetic, is found in many of Baudelaire's works; it is here that many of the concepts

shared by Rimbaud and Crane may also be analyzed as they appear in Baudelaire's poetry. Chapter five centers on the concept of voyage as emblematic of the desire for transformation; Crane's "Voyages" sequence of poems will be focused on in their associative development of the voyage metaphor. It is at this point in my work that the need for imagistic as well as ontological transcendence, in Crane's own words, the imagination "Swinging beyond despair," becomes crucial to the understanding of Modernist fragmentation. Crane's poetic Bridge reaches to "Atlantis," and so in a sense appears as poetic wish-fulfillment. The remaining chapters will rely on the concept of the image as transformative bridge, the poetic vehicle for the poet/shaman in his attempt to achieve transfiguration. In this manner, the erotic impulse, so important to Crane's poetry, and its involvement with the ecstatic experience will be analyzed within the context of Rimbaud's and Baudelaire's work. Water imagery, especially as it appears in the depiction of the sea as mother, lover and destroyer, as well as its relationship to the unconscious and dream-figurations, will be the focus of chapter seven. Jungian associations with archetypal structures will be related to these imagistic transformations as they appear in the poetic text. In chapter eight, the notion of whiteness, first as a concept for abstract artists, and then used in a similar manner by Crane and Mallarmé, will be explored as a metaphor for poetic purification, absolute transcendence, and, finally, the terror of the blank page for the poet and the empty canvas for the artist. The final chapter deals with the

creation of Crane's The Bridge, which he stated was modeled on the construction of Roebling's Brooklyn Bridge; aspects of the bridge's innovative structure will, as appropriate, be analyzed in terms of Crane's mammoth "span of consciousness" which formed The Bridge. The Bridge's ascent of imagery, similar to the arching cables of Brooklyn Bridge, was also related to Jolas' Verticalist movement and its emphasis on "vertical" structure in poetry, leading to an apotheotic experience of art. Closely allied to Crane's aspirations for his own work, it found its ultimate expression in Crane's last poem, "The Broken Tower."

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CHAPTER I

> Modern poetry has long since passed the crest of its rebellion against many of the so-called classical structures...Revolution flourishes still, but rather as a contemporary tradition in which the original obstacles to freedom have been, if not always eradicated at least obscured by floods of later experimentation...The poet's concern must be, as always, self-discipline toward a formal integration of experience. (Crane, 260)

Strange words, indeed, from a poet considered to be one of this century's true "roaring boys" in the artistic and personal realms. The desired "formal integration of experience," embodying Crane's great hope for his poetry, appears to be at odds, however, with the very nature of Crane's poetic output. For early critics (notably Winters and Tate, both "friends" of Crane), Crane's poetry, in both White Buildings and The Bridge, was disconcerting, lacking an organic and intelligible structure, even, for Winters, "hysteric." What he claimed was a spurious attempt by the poet to apprehend an "ecstatically asserted existence" whose nature was uncertain at best proved to create, in his estimation of Crane's work, a poetry which "says nothing" despite its dramatic use of words. The internal chaos which forms the body of Crane's "broken world," clearly, was misunderstood; the verbal act of faith which the poet hoped would unite subject and object, Platonic universal and particular, in the form of the totemic symbols of bridge and tower was perhaps too intense to be analyzed "admiratively" by the poets of Crane's own era.

Crane's attempt to resolve the differences between these two aspects of his work, his poetic "reach" perhaps exceeding his "grasp", creates an artistic tension and verbal texture in his poems which are, ultimately, the sources of his strength as well as the stigmata of the modern poet *per se*. In this vein, the critic Michael Hamburger, in his description of the modern poet's *métier*, cites the attempt to cope with the paradox between beauty and truth, reality and the ideal as emblematic of the modern aesthetic. (Faulkner, 32) Crane's later critics, perhaps more aware of this (and certainly less concerned with the "profit and the loss," or the "success" or "failure" of a work dependent upon its adherence to what Blackmur calls "intended effects"), are generally more sympathetic, as Vogler notes:

> The fact that Crane did not achieve his purpose does not mean that he did not write magnificent poetry here and there in *The Bridge*. It does mean, however, that any reading of the poem in the way Crane hoped it could be read is doomed to be disappointing... It seems inherently valuable to find a way of reading a poem so that it becomes unified in structure and content as a whole, even if the meaning of the whole is not what the poet intended or thought he was achieving. (Vogler, 146)

We, then, fifty years later, must find the poem out for ourselves.

Crane's theoretical statements about poetry are often provocative and certainly "place" him within the context of the modern era. He defends his method in no uncertain terms (often more effectively in letters than in polemical "statements"); the linchpin of his poetic theory is what he terms the "logic of metaphor":

> To put it more plainly, as a poet I may very possibly be more interested in the so-called illogical impingements of the connotations of words on the consciousness (and their combinations and interplay in metaphor on this basis) than I am interested in the preservation of their logically rigid significations at the cost of limiting my subject matter and perceptions involved in the poem. (Crane, 234)

In his famous letter to Harriet Monroe which explains how a portent may be "wound" in a "corridor of shells" (from "At Melville's Tomb"), Crane here posits his theory that the problem of modern consciousness stems from an inadequate (some might say overly analytical) system of rationality. The flux of associations which the mind makes with the poetic stimulus is neither static nor analytical, outside the realm of what Crane terms "scientific" thinking, and surely more similar to the "logic of ecstasy" made popular by Crane's avatar of sorts, P.D. Ouspensky: "Man, throwing off the chains of "three-dimensional" logic, has already penetrated into another world... Poetry, mysticism, the idealistic philosophy of all ages and peoples preserve the traces of our transition into this realm... Out of the "old" logic a new and higher logic may arise." (Ouspensky, 235)

The "higher logic" which the Russian mystic proposes here in Tertium Organum is based on his idea that the conditions of human perception must change in order for individuals to penetrate the 'fourth dimension" of true, perhaps undifferentiated, consciousness and knowledge. Clearly, for Crane, the limits of common logic could be tested poetically through the workings of the logic of metaphor; the "hows and whys" of this faculty eluded a

detailed description (providing more fuel for critics), as Crane often alluded to a quality of impenetrability in his works which he himself could not fully account for. In "General Aims and Theories," as well as in his letters, he exhorts readers to explore the effects of imagistic structures without analyzing them in a rational manner; poems must rely on an "organic impact" on the imagination for their force. Crane realized the limitations of any type of traditional interpretation for his work, and frequently there is a sense of frustration in his letters which gives us a picture of Crane as a man attempting to provide an explanation for something he himself can't fully understand, fully conscious of his own lack of a conceptual "grasp" on the thing itself. This fact, many believe, may have proven the ultimate contradiction for the poet, as his last attempts to reclaim a piece of the unified poetic vision as such were less than successful. Although Crane himself might have cringed at the thought, his logic of metaphor, in its insistence on the primacy of a subterranean, psychological source for the creation of poetry, is similar to many of the aesthetic theories of the French surrealists, his contemporaries. In the emphasis of Surrealist aesthetics on forms of association common to the mind in the dream-state, as well as its emphasis on the apprehension of a "higher reality" which appears related to the ideas of abstract artists of this time, Crane finds strong points of similarity.

In 1924, the first official manifesto of Surrealism was

presented. Edited by André Breton, it summarized most of the theory that had been discussed by artists and poets such as Aragon, Eluard and Soupault. The First Manifesto rejected all aspects of "control through reason" and spoke of the imagination's "recovery of its ancient rights." The Surrealists took Crane's experiment in the workings of the logic of metaphor one step further, establishing the Center for Surrealist Research in Paris in order to better chart the progress of the mind in the act of artistic creation through experiments in automatic writing (which Crane might have paid a bit more attention to) and spontaneous association of metaphor. The analogies made by many Surrealists, through their contact with Freud and other psychologists of the era, between the artistic/poetic act and the function of the dream state is, in light of Crane's "dynamics of inferential mention," particularly important in terms of placing Crane within the framework of modern poetry. Just as Crane's logic of metaphor operates by the free association of images and the compression of metaphor, relying on an almost Crocean creative intuition to hold things together, so does the mind, in the dream state, weave together disparate images through transposition, sublimation, and condensation. Crane's examples of how these elements function in his poems are stated most clearly in "General Aims and Theories." His well-known defense of the phrase "adagios of islands" and its function as an example of the logic of metaphor, perhaps Freudian in its unconscious association as mechanism, was presented in

a response to Harriet Monroe and other critics who found this phrase especially difficult. In Crane's explanation of "adagios of islands" (221), he states that the reference is formed as an allusion to the motion of a boat as it passes through clusters of islands. The adagio is itself the rhythm, slow and ebbing, of the wave transporting the seafarer and his ship through the waters separating the islands themselves. The perception of the poet/narrator of "Voyages II" is affected synesthetically by the music of the waves as the ship passes, and this quality of heightened sense-perception is crucial not only to the impact of the image here but to the entire structure of Crane's aesthetic.

Crane's ideas here, again like those of so many modern writers (the various aesthetic "statements" of such groups as the Ultraists, Creationists, Vorticists and others attest to this), focus on the liberation of the imagination in order to fully achieve the "bright logic" which Crane cites in "Legend" as the ultimate goal of the poetic process. Not content in this mature phase to merely "arrange" images in the fashion of an Impressionist (a term used to criticize Crane's "teenage" verses, such as "The Bathers" and "Annunciations"), Crane aimed to probe the limits of the creative process through experiments both poetically transformative (The Bridge) and personally destructive (alcoholism). Crane desired no less than a new, charged language as the vehicle for his expression at the time of his composition of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" (1923), his first radical

experiment in verse, as Yannella has noted. This poem, which in form and content seems to be most closely allied to Crane's admiration of T.S. Eliot, is perhaps Crane's strongest expression of the desire to penetrate what Yannella terms "Absolute reality" (313) and transcend the limits of conventional linguistic expression. The mystic source for the desire to apprehend through poetic experience something of the noumenal appears at the heart of Crane's logic of metaphor, and the notion of poet as magus was shared by Crane with many of his contemporaries. In Time and Western Man, a book which, in addition to Spengler's Decline of Western Civilization, served as an important touchstone for Crane during the creation of The Bridge, Wyndham Lewis states that all artists use a "supernatural" power in order to fabricate artistic talismans, in effect rendering a work of art "a graven image." (193) The talismanic poem par excellence, for Crane, was the "harp and altar" of The Bridge, itself incorporating mythic rites in the form of Maquokeeta's dance and the "Ave Maria" of Columbus' men as they approach land. In poems such as "Possessions," the poet becomes even more directly involved with the shamanistic aspects of poetry (as do the two Modernist precursors in this work, Baudelaire and Rimbaud), as he is both priest and victim in the act of the poetic ritual of purification and transformation.

The Modernist search for, in Crane's words, "new thresholds, new anatomies" often leads to a liminal silence after the experience of a struggle with the word which appears

vatic at its core. For present day critics, many moderns stretched the limits of discourse a bit too far, finding an ultimate silence which horrified; Rimbaud's renunciation of poetry and the deaths of Crane and Trakl are evidence of this linguistic terror's personal effect. One wonders if these recent attempts at the analysis of Crane and his work indicate a critical reversal of sorts in terms of Crane's "place" as such in literary history (and the "place" of other moderns as well, given the importance of psychological and biographical criticism in the post-War era). Early critics of Crane, frequently calling into view the more sordid aspects of his personal life, found the poet a "brilliant failure" who was unable to sustain his poetic vision; critics of the 1950's and 1960's reversed many of these notions, centering their analyses on thematic and imagistic structures in the lyrics from White Buildings and The Bridge, ignoring the previous generation's "rage for order" and allowing the vaunted "lack of coherent structure" to take a back seat to sensibility (notably in the work of Paul and Dembo). Present critics, armed with the lexicon of linguistic/structural analysis, appear to be moving, in turn, away from the more "admirative" criticism of the 60's toward a stern judgment of the limits of Crane's presentation of autotelic symbols and polyvalent images. Clearly, Crane demands quite a lot of his readers, even in this "post-modern" age, as he himself was well aware; he notes, to Harriet Monroe: "In the minds of people who have sensitively read, seen, and experienced a great deal, isn't

there a terminology something like short-hand as compared to usual description and dialectics, which the artist ought to be right in trusting as a reasonable connective agent toward fresh concepts, more inclusive evaluations?" (Crane, 238)

What was left, finally, for Crane and other modern artists, was to transform reality, inner perceptions and external phenomena by means of the poetic act. For Crane, the bridge was to become a symbol of this attempt at transfiguration, a symbol which many have decried as too frail to support its own conceptual weight. For Eliot, the Christian myth of death and resurrection performed the same function, as did the concept of illumination for Rimbaud, and the symbolic genesis of the ancient city of Macchu Picchu for Neruda. All built their bridges to infinity, as did Hart Crane.

One aspect of the Modernist "assault" on traditional form and function in art involves what W.B. Yeats might have termed the "fascination of what's difficult." As artistic "givens" such as time and space, syntax and metaphor appear disjointed and pulled from context in many Modernist works, so the aesthetic construct itself often seems impermeable, a "closed set" of ideas and images which confuse rather than explain. Eliot refers to this quality in many of his essays, most notably in "The Metaphysical Poets," which supports the notion that modern art must necessarily be complicated, as it reflects the growing complexity of the modern age. As Eliot felt compelled to give footnotes to his readers in The Waste

Land in order to grant better access to the poem, so, interestingly, does Crane supply a gloss to The Bridge in an attempt to provide a counterpoint of narrative to what some have perceived as the "story" of The Bridge.

What was later termed the "expressive fallacy" grounds the dissociative quality of the Modernist work of art in the extreme circumstances of life in the early twentieth century. The challenge to consciousness of the perceptual "noise" of the New Age is much the same as the conceptual "challenge" of a modern canvas or poem. Earlier ideas concerning the primacy of reason and man's ability to integrate all aspects of human experience were, by this time, seriously questioned, and Crane notes in a letter to Gorham Munson: "The tragic quandary of the modern world (or agon) derives from the paradoxes that an inadequate system of rationality forces on the living consciousness." (226) For many, philosophy's "consolation" would not suffice in this era.

As loss of contact with the world of meaning crushes Prufrock, so what many critics have termed the "loss of referentiality" seems to exist at the core of the Modernist struggle. Sypher writes: "In Modern Art, there is no "framework of objectivity" into which to fit the images that are vividly intuited. There is no dividing line between perception and representation...Since the immediate impression is absolute, the presence of things is very intense and the image is not measured by anything beyond itself."(118)

This aesthetic "closing off" of expression, whether or

not a "conscious" aspect of the Modern voice, is one of its most salient features. Both time and space, fixed points of reference in the process of artistic perception and analysis, became highly subjective entities for poets and artists in the twentieth century. For Eliot and Pound, the juxtaposition of ancient history, Renaissance poets, and trench warfare was not at all unusual, as the imbrication of Pocahontas, the Spanish conquest and the BMT subway was not for Crane in The Bridge. Likewise, conversations are started in one part of a Mondernist poem (as in The Waste Land, the Cantos and The Bridge), ended in another, and then alluded to in still another part of the poem. They too form the "structure" as such of the self-referential work. As a result, the reader is forced to re-define his own notions concerning meaning and form within the context of poetry. Frequently, references are suspended throughout the poem so that a sense of total form in terms of their referents may only appear at the poem's conclusion; in a sense, this indicates the notion of meaning by accretion of images which is so much a part of the modern poetic sequence. In Crane's "Voyages" poems, this is seen most clearly as the expanse of association of the sea-image which appears in totality in the last poem of the group, "Voyages VI." It is only through the buildup of the sea-image in its figurations as life-force, lover, source of shipwreck and, finally, transformative conductor for the poet in his journey toward Belle Isle that the poem as process of perception becomes fully realized. As many modern artists

were to state that their works were "about" nothing more than the aesthetic perceptions of their audience (Magritte and Rauschenberg were quite vocal in this), so does the modern focus on a self-defined process as artistic goal; for Crane in The Bridge, this process led from the ritual, incantatory myth of the American past in "The Dance" to the apotheosis of "Atlantis."

In a recent study of many of these aspects of Mondernism, The Techniques of Strangeness, James Kugel finds strong links between what he terms Modernist "strangeness" and Symbolist aesthetics.

Kugel's provocative thesis is that both "movements" share a propensity for literary "strangeness," a quality which he finds in a list of "Symbolists" and "Modernists" ranging from Osip Mandelstam to Bob Dylan. Many of the manifestations of "strangeness" he cites as emblematic of Moréas and Maeterlinck are very much allied to the idea of fragmentation and dissociation which I have identified as a Modernist hallmark. On a personal level, Kugel cites the posture of the Modern artist as alienated from society as a Symbolist prototype; the shock of cultural alienation sensed in the persona of a Prufrock or a Mauberley was, for all the talk of its newness, something that had been already a part of the work of Rimbaud, Lautréamont and even Baudelaire.

Although not mentioned in Kugel's work, the Modernists most clearly epitomizing this in their lives and work are Eliot and Pound, Crane's literary "godfathers." Eliot's high-

church Anglicanism, Pound's insistent support for the Fascists, and Crane's homosexuality placed them, certainly, in a position "at odds" with the mores of their time. For many, cultural alienation led to a deliberate dissolving of the ties inherent in communication through language.

The sense of "mystery" which frequently accompanies the Symbolist poem is perhaps a function of this notion of being isolated; the more removed the poet or artist becomes from objective reality, the more self-referential his or her work becomes.

"Mystery" in linguistic terms, as Kugel uses it here, involves the estrangement of poet from reader, poem from easy accessibility. In this sense, perhaps the heart of Modernist creation lies in this deliberate "mystery" of words and their referents, despite Crane's wish for an "audience," however limited. Aware of the dissonant effects created by even the most patient readers of The Waste Land, Eliot felt compelled to offer a skeleton-key of notes to his "grouse with life." Pound's letters, as do Crane's, constantly refer to aspects of his texts which have eluded the critical "grasp" of those trying to piece together fragments of Provencal, Greek and Henry Adams. More specifically, the usage of "frustrated allusions" as self-referential aspects of this "mysterious" poetic coinage is common in both Symbolists and Modernists. Each poetic allusion implies the idea of withheld information, and although this device was used by poets as removed from Symbolist aesthetics as Jonson, the Symbolists used this

method most frequently. These references cause the poetic text to assume a much more protean form, as they pull us both away from the text as such in our effort to investigate quotations we are perhaps not familiar with, but bring us back to the text as well, ready to thread this information into what seems to be an ever-changing context.

What are termed "frustrated allusions" often serve as road signs along the cognitive map which is the Modernist poem, again creating a sense of disjunction within the text until the final shantih, as in Eliot's Waste Land, is heard. In Crane's poem, "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," Crane begins his poem with an allusion of this sort to Jonson's play, The Alchemist; its relation to the story of Faust is, however, unclear. Crane's reference here is doubly frustrated, creating even more disjunction of meaning, when we realize that the quote the poet is using here to "ground" his poem as an epigraph is really the speech of Dol Common, Jonson's illiterate whore in the play. Most readers assume Crane's epigraph was taken to simply set up the polarity between the classical realm and the banality of the modern age ("Helen sitting in a streetcar"), but the fact that the speech is a parody may call us away from this reading. Did Crane understand the context of Jonson's lines? Sometimes the "frustrated allusion" is purposely manipulated by the poet for his own personal reasons, again severing the image from contextual meaning as such. In The Waste Land, the Tarot reading of Madame Sostris is alluded to: "Here, said

she, Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor. (Those were pearls that were his eyes. Look!) Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the rocks, The lady of situations."(46-50)

Careful readers will, no doubt, try to associate the concept of the Tarot with Tiresias and divination, the Sibyl of Cumae at the poem's beginning (another allusion), etc. However, as Eliot states in his hesitant notes to the poem, he wasn't really sure about the Tarot's significance, and simply used it as a device to introduce the image of the Hanged Man (a real card in the Tarot deck), which he interprets in a manner inconsistent with its true signification in the Tarot schema. There are no Phoenician Sailors, nor Ladies of the Rocks.

CHAPTER II

> Emancipation is born of inner necessity, which is the spiritual power behind the objective creation of art. In Cubism, forms are dissolved to express the artist's objective more clearly. The intention of art today manifests itself with a forceful intensity. The artist's soul...has something of its own to convey, even, at the moment, utterly incomprehensible to the artist. This spiritual life, to which art belongs and of which it is one of its mightiest agents, is a complicated but definite uplifting movement. This movement is one of perception. (Kandinsky, 89)

In On the Spiritual in Art, Wassily Kandinsky describes the spiritual forces behind the phenomenon of Cubism in the plastic arts. As, to Kandinsky, Masson and many others, the locus of Cubist creation was the perceptual process, so to many modern poets this process is paramount in the creation of poetry. The tension between subjective experience and external reality, the questioning and probing of these limits, forms what M.A. Caws has termed the "threshold experience" which is the mark of modern art. What Kandinsky here terms the "uplifting movement" of this aesthetic process, like the emphasis Masson places on the value of l'émportement in the artist's constellation of images on the canvas, was also crucial to Crane's aesthetic, although it was maligned by friends and critics as "angel kissing" and "waiting for another ecstasy." (225-226) Called upon to "explain" his works frequently, Crane attempts to describe his poetic process in a letter to Gorham Munson as "the evidence of the experience of a recognition... It can give you a ratio of fact and experience, and in this sense is

perception and thing perceived." (225) Léger, whose painting The Bridge contains the sense of simultaneity of perception (we see the bridge from different angles at once) and structural ascent (its girders point constantly upward in this canvas, forcing the eye to move in the direction in which they are pointing) which Crane's own Bridge makes use of, focuses in his critical writings on the need for the analysis of artistic perception in the modern age. To claims that Cubist aesthetics had altered radically any notion of pictorial expression, Léger cited in The Functions of Painting that the exigencies of modern life called for a re-direction of artistic impulse toward the process of perception rather than its objects. Objects become less fixed due to the effects of inventions such as the airplane or the auto, as our perception of physical reality changes as we ride in either of these; as the landscape becomes fragmented to our eye when we rush past, so does the Cubist canvas reflect the distortion we perceive in these other areas. In Picasso's startling Ma Jolie, the "inner vision" of the woman depicted clearly takes artistic precedence over her retinal image.

Our perception of shapes and diagonal structures is immediate in this canvas, but our recognition of the female body at its center is much less so. The artist seems to be exploring the difference between the forms we see and the way we integrate them into our perceptual understanding; how does the feminine shape, darkened, relate to the rough geometrical shapes which surround it? As in many Cubist canvases, parts

of la jolie herself seem scattered into the periphery of the painting; this "breaking apart" of the conceptual form often involved the attempt to penetrate through visual order into the essence of a phenomenological object. Picasso remarked, concerning this to Leo Stein, that "A head was a matter of eyes, nose and mouth which could be distributed in any way you like - the head remained a head." (Fry, 39) As Cubism developed, this desire for essential forms often displayed itself in the clash between retinal imagery and intuitive "vision" on the part of Cubist painters. This dissection of formal properties in order to reveal essence is seen in Picasso's Three Dancers (1925), in which the bodies of the dancers appear less formed than the sense of movement they convey. In Delaunay's Fenetre (1911), the freedom from objective likeness is also paramount, as the canvas consists of a checkered overlay superimposed on parts of the composition. Any reference to the window indicated in the title has been eliminated, as have the distinct outline of buildings; what clearly remains in the canvas is a curve similar to the profile of the Eiffel Tower. In this manner, many Cubists were said to analyze their impressions to the point that material subjects for their works became pretexts for analysis itself. Retinal vision, in a sense, carried with it the ability to de-form as well as apprehend; the desire to capture the essence of form here suggests a relationship between this aspect of Cubist theory and a phenomenological perception of reality similar to Husserl's in his concept of

eidetic reduction, the intuitional apprehension of noumenal essence. The cryptic line from the first poem of Crane's White Buildings, "Legend," is a poetic counterpoint to the phenomenological aspect of Cubist expression: "As silent as a mirror is believed/Realities plunge in silence by..." (3, 1-2) Here, for Crane, as for Husserl or Braque, the retinal image reflected in the mirror does not capture essence or eidos; once we believe its image, the true reality escapes us. merely representational form was for Klee the belief in Crane's mirror, what he referred to as the "transitory simile" of nineteenth-century art. As Crane goes beyond his mirror in order to articulate the noumenal realities which threaten to pass by, so does Klee desire to apprehend essences rather than the merely transitory forms of objective reality which are bound to time; abstract art in Klee's terms here will not stand for mere simile when the power of metaphor is needed. The "inner eye" perceives the metaphorical and archetypal structure, which for Gleizes, in his critical writings, takes on the quality of an eidetic form pre-existing within the human consciousness. Clearly, the abstract tendencies of Cubist art represented a rejection of the purely pictorial, impressionistic method of the nineteenth-century in favor of a more complex, conceptually ambitious aesthetic; throughout the writings of the Cubist painters, references to ideas of purity and immanence are legion. The expectations of the Cubist with reference to his canvas were strongly similar to Crane's expectations for his

poetry, a poetry beyond mirrors, which he describes in "General Aims and Theories" in terms worthy of Klee or Braque:

> The impressionist...is not really interested in the causes (metaphysical) of his materials, their emotional derivations or their utmost spiritual consequences. A kind of retinal registration is enough, along with a certain psychological stimulation...The impressionist creates only with the eye and for the readiest surface of the consciousness. It is my hope to go <u>through</u> the combined materials of the poem, using our "real" world somewhat as a springboard and to give the poem <u>as a whole</u> an orbit of its own... It is as though a poem gave the reader as he left it a single, new <u>word</u>, never before spoken. (220-221)

As Klee replaced objectified reality with a metaphysical dimension in his works, dislocating and combining, stripping the phenomena of the known world bare in order to reveal a new perceptual order, so did Hart Crane perform the same process with words, often straining in his poetry for the "word never before spoken." As the merely visual world of perception would not suffice for Klee, Kandinsky, Braque and many others involved in the plastic arts, so the conventional associations of words were shunned by Crane in order to unveil a more complex, complete and affirmative linguistic/ontological "truth." (Another term used frequently by Crane, Klee, Kandinsky and others in describing the impetus behind modern works, the concept of artistic "truth" as well as "beauty" for Crane is often focused upon by critics as being a shade too nebulous, leading the artist into abstraction for its own sake.)

Technically, this aesthetic found its expression in the

Cubist canvas through the dissolution of the visual field; background/foreground relationships and the ideas of perspective and proportion, so much a part of artistic training and practice, were often distorted in order to reveal the essential forms of things and to highlight the process of apprehension of these forms. Barbara Herman notes Crane's Cubist influence with reference to these formal innovations: "Dislocation of language is used toward the revealing of states of perception, but instead of elaborate cross-references which alter meaning through contiguity, Crane compresses what would be a series of metaphors into one or two words." (60) This poetic technique involving a metaphorical compression is reliant upon a type of simultaneous perception similar to the contrastes simultanés of Delaunay and other artists of this time; as the dynamic effect of the compressed metaphor upon consciousness is immediate, so is our perception of the visual image in the Cubist work. The women of Picasso's Les Demoiselles d'Avignon are seen in multiple perspective, each woman's movements etched into one linear female form; faces and bodies are portrayed in profile and full-face in the same outline. The "compressed metaphor" here is the simultaneous perception of the female forms of the ironic demoiselles in their movement through time and space; Duchamp's Nude Descending a Staircase, in this manner, utilizes the idea of temporal and spatial compression in its depiction of a woman going down a flight of stairs. Each step in her descent is sequentially represented, in order

that our apprehension of the figure's movement may be instantaneous. The imagistic frisson that this engenders (like the magnetic and electric charge of Breton's fil conducteur) was also very much a part of the Cubist kunstwollen; as a child is slapped into consciousness at birth, so must we, observers and readers, be "shocked" into an awareness of our own perceptual process and the process of creation as well. This "jarring way of representing the world," as Gris refers to Cubist technique (Cooper, 29), placed more emphasis on the development and accretion of perception - becoming rather than being - and it is no accident that Crane, in his The Bridge, refers to his massive emblem as a "steeled Cognizance," embodying the process of awareness itself.

A poem from Crane's collection White Buildings, "Lachrymae Christi," seems to best illustrate Crane's involvement with Cubist aesthetics. Conceptual ambiguity is immediately found in the work's title, as "Lachrymae Christi" refers to the name of a cheap wine as well as the tears of Christ (irony of juxtaposed forms and meanings is also found in many Cubist works, as we see in the figures of Picasso's "demoiselles" who are obviously courtesans). What do we, then, expect Crane's poem to signify? Both facets of the title's interpretation seem to fit the poem's context (a contraste simultané), as, perhaps metonymically, the liquid tears of Christ in agony (images of physical violence and pain abound in this very raw, naked poem) also suggest the

"blood" of Christ in the Christian mass, or wine.

The poem's prevailing imagery is presented in a manner reminiscent of a collage; disparate forms (unlike the Impressionist flow of images) emerge from one another, differentiate themselves, and then are juxtaposed in order to call attention to the conceptual "baggage" of our conventional associations with these forms. Unlike many of Crane's other works which are characterized by a Whitman-like flowing quality in terms of their diction, this poem seems to stop and start in a series of fugitive delays and backups which are again reminiscent of Cubist works. As we must search for the isolated features of the woman in Picasso's Ma Jolie, tracing from limb to limb her conceptual form in the painting, so we find ourselves doubling back throughout Crane's poem to thread its own form. The first two stanzas of the poem form one sentence, syntactically fragmented by ellipses and parentheses. The poem begins with a sharply visual image of a factory (one of Crane's many symbols of the modern age): "Whitely, while benzine/Rinsings from the moon/Dissolve all but the windows of the mills." (19, 1-3) Optical illusion is suggested here, as our attention is directed first upward at the moon, then downward as the rain of benzine clouds our vision of all but the mill's windows. Crane here uses another "compression" in terms of the combination of disparate elements in the poetic image, as the natural, timeless (and perhaps sentimental) moon is seen pouring out benzine, a modern, flammable cleaning fluid. Our "attention" to this

image (again, the manipulation of perceptual response seems to be at work here) is quickly drawn away by the parenthetical description of the machinery inside the factory: "(...the machinery is still/And curdled only where a sill/ Sluices its one unyielding smile" (5-7).

Crane's second stanza forming part of this complicated "sentence" as such gives a sense of multiple perspective, as upon viewing the sill opening to let out water (a "visual clue" suggesting the spreading outward and upward of the lips in a smile), our focus is immediately directed to an image of what critics have suggested is an image of Christ's crucifixion: "From flanks unfended/Twanged red perfidies of spring/Are trillion on the hill." (11-13) We are outside and inside at once, and the crucifixion of sorts appears to be occurring in both places; the beginning of stanza two refers to an "Immaculate venom" which binds the "fox's teeth" and "swart thorns: which freshen on the "first blood" of the year. Although these highly tactile fragments seem to refer to the outer crucifixion (Christ's crown of thorns), "fox teeth" is a phrase used to describe the needles on a weaving machine. Thus, an "inner" crucifixion seems to be taking place simultaneously, if we envision the sharp needle-tooth of the machine as it cuts into the sacrificial cloth. An acute image for Crane especially, as his fondness for the technological "progress" of his age (planes, trains and other machines appear often throughout his work) was often offset by a fear of becoming dominated by them.

Crane's poetic language itself often contains this type of immediate multiplicity of association, as in stanza five he refers to Christ's "Nazarene and tinder eyes." The provocative use of the word tinder here suggests a bit of trompe l'oeil aesthetics applied to the poetic milieu, as when we first read the line we expect the Nazarene's eyes to be tender, not tinder. With one phrase, the poet manages to present (through something akin to auditory hallucination) the image of Christ's eyes as both gentle and incendiary at the same time. These two divergent associations recur in different terms at the poem's end, as in line 34 the Nazarene's eyes contain "undimming lattices of flame" which spell out in "palm and pain" the torture of the crucifixion. Again burning and tender, the eyes are here part of a sharply visual image: the flames are crossing one another in the form of lattice-work. The fire is ultimately purifying, as the ritual sacrifice (according to Christian dogma) has taken away man's sin; Christ's limbs are, finally, "luminous" and the world appears new, as he has lifted the grail "Of earth again-/Thy face/From charred and riven stakes" (41-43) Here in the last two lines of the poem, Crane's focus changes abruptly, and a figure from Greek mythology is introduced: "O Dionysus, Thy/Unmangled target smile." (44-45) Kozloff has cited the "willful recombination" and imagistic caprice of Cubist creation: "At each turning point of the Cubist mind, some deeply irrational and contrary decision was involved... the idea was to bring in something from another world and

hence change the organism." (112) This seems to describe Crane's ending of the poem quite well, as our sense of poetic closure with the culmination of the sacrificial renewal of the "grail of earth" is immediately undercut (again, the manipulation of our response) by the presentation of the "Unmangled target smile" of a figure who many have suggested is an amalgam of Christ, Dionysus and the poet himself. The "target smile" also hints at the image of the clown or fool (similar to Crane's Laforguean "Chaplinesque") which the poet often relates to the artist's figure. Again, compression, disjunction, recombination of conventional associations, and a probing of the mechanics of response and perception. Crane's ending manipulates our sense of aesthetic expectation, as the poem does not end when we expect it to, but when Crane himself has finished. This joins to create the sense of a poetic text quite similar to a Cubist canvas. The final image of the poem reverberates back through other associations in the text: Dionysus echoes the wine of the title as well as the frequent blood imagery, and the vulnerability of the "target" calls our attention back to the tenderness of both Christ's and the poet's eyes, and so, by this accretion of image and form, we are sent back to explore the poem once again; no finished product here, but a call to awareness of the process of apprehension of the modern work of creation.

> Vorticism means that one is interested in the creative faculty rather than the mimetic. It is only by applying a particular and suitable force that you can bring order and vitality and beauty into a plate of iron filings, which are otherwise as "ugly" as

> anything under heaven. The design in the magnetized filings expresses a confluence of energy, a "vortex" of art. (New Age, 277)

As Pound notes here, the primary aesthetic emphasis in the Vorticist credo as such involved the concept of a kinetic, often volatile energy force. The "message" of Vorticism was pronounced by Wyndham Lewis in the pages of Blast, and clearly found voice in what he was to term the War era's "mask of dis--content" through the canvases and sculpture of Gaudier-Brzeska and the "vor-texts" of Pound. We find, in the frequent Blast manifestoes, a strong opposition of the mellifluousness of the preceding generation's verse, the sweetness of Pre-Raphaelite portraiture; the world had, indeed, changed radically for these artists (few in number, but so strongly influential), the machine age had arrived, and it seemed imperative that art reflect this change through the use of stark lines and jagged rhythms in poetry and painting. The importance of the Vortex was located in its force, the wrenching of contemporary consciousness away from what Pound denigrated as the conceptual "baggage" of the Christian era. The nature of the Vortex force, however, differed from the Surrealist champ magnétique in its focus on an Einsteinian metaphor of energy to center the act of artistic creation. The term Vorticism has been traced to the London exhibitions of 1912 and 1913 in which Italian Futurists Boccioni and Balla displayed a series of paintings entitled Vortice; their emphasis on the abstraction of pure movement from form, and the connection between this movement/

energy and consciousness itself embodied what Pound termed the "fury of intelligence" which he claimed was the mark of the Vorticist mind. Boccioni's series of paintings States of Mind also illustrates this link between internal energy and physical force, the dynamism which Carrà refers to in his description of the concept of the vortex as "the emotional condition of the Modern and the Futurist."

Wyndham Lewis, whose Time and Western Man is referred to constantly in Crane's letters, was the first artist to actively pursue the idea of the vortex as an emblem of modern creation. In his Composition: Timon of Athens (1912), the Vorticist concepts of abstraction and energy seem to be best illustrated, and, although Lewis claimed to have written a Vorticist play, Enemy of the Stars, the canvas appears to have been the most appropriate place to express the forces of the vortex.

In Lewis' canvas, created as a design for the Shakespeare play, the geometrical figures of soldiers are wrapped in a spiral of Vorticist energy which draws them to the center of the canvas. Human forms are barely perceptible, and they appear fragmented, as if from the explosion of the central vortex itself. Pound wrote of this canvas that its theme was "the fury of intelligence baffled and shut in by circumjacent stupidity" (Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir, 93) and in this we may also see a link to the Cubist movement away from the phenomenological world and its representational locus in painting. In Pound's view of this work, we may see

Vorticism operating on a psychological level as well, as the "fury of intelligence" creating the energy of an artistic vortex occurs partly as a result of the shock of the "circumjacent stupidity" of the modern age. World War I was no doubt in Pound's mind in this assessment of Lewis' work, and the tension which he cites as the essence of the Vorticist work is also applicable to many modern works. Eliot's famous evocation of the modern artist in his ability to "murder and create" is perhaps related to Pound's notion here, as the energy of the vortex makes creation possible, but also may involve destruction as well. For Lewis, the destruction of the representational image was necessary in order to, in Pound's terms, "make it new," to break with the past, and his frequent statements concerning the energy of the vortex place it alongside the developments of the machine age, which itself relied on the harnessing of energy for a purpose which often implied both destruction and creation; in the Vorticist Manifesto, Lewis focuses on the "lines of force" found in the gears and levers of machines, as "ugly" as they may be, as symbolic of the Vorticist direction of energies to create "art in discord," the only valid expression of modern consciousness. (Wyndham Lewis on Art, 30) He continues in the Manifesto to define the nature of Vorticist art:

> The origin of the term "Vorticism" involved the idea of a mass of excited thinking engrossed into a whirling centre. We all know what is meant by a vortex. It is a violent central activity attracting everything to itself, absorbing all into a violent whirling... Had I been teaching Vorticism at the same time as I was preaching it, I would have...recommended

> the construction of as abstract as alphabet as possible. (Wyndham Lewis on Art, 45)

Pound's ambition "to write to paint" seems related to Lewis' reference to abstraction as necessary for expression of the vortex; Vorticism worked most effectively in terms of the dissociation of the visual image from its referent on the canvas or, in the case of Gaudier-Brzeska, in the forms of sculpture. Gaudier's dissociation of conventional objects from their canonical form embodies this aspect of Vorticism; in Bird Swallowing a Fish, Gaudier emphasizes the geometric construction of both bird and fish: the square and cone shapes of the fish, the arch of the curved fish and its spherical eyes. As in the Vorticist Manifesto, the forms of bird and fish seem independent of the creatures which exist in the natural world. In his Red Stone Dancer, circular form becomes a geometric analogue for the female body, which Pound analyzed as if it were a thesis demonstration of Vorticist concepts; "Into the triangle and circle, human abstractions, life flows, the circle moves and elongates into the oval, takes volume in the sphere which is the breast of the dancer." (Gaudier-Brzeska, 137)

Perhaps at the heart of Vorticism is the notion of transformation; in light of Yeat's spirals and Sufi dances, the metaphor of the vortex seems to contain a sense of elemental change as an end-product of its perceptual upheaval (Pound's constant exhortation to "Make it new!" suggests a transformative goal, as does the poetry of Eliot, a "reluctant" Vorticist in the early days of his association with

Pound and Lewis). Although Hart Crane was never a "member" of the Vortex group, its focus on the immediacy of the transformative experience is central to his work. The image of the vortex appears in his poetry as an analogue of the mind engaged in the poetic act; in the "Cape Hatteras" section of The Bridge, the circular spin of the airplane mirrors the dizzying ascent of consciousness in the creative process: "Giddily spiralled/gauntlets upturned" (92, 149-150), the poet/pilot flies toward "new thresholds" with a vortex-like energy, a "Sanskrit charge" to do nothing less than "conjugate infinity" - the design of Crane and many other Mondernists.

Crane's most Vorticist poem as such is "At Melville's Tomb," as the movement of its imagery seems to be constructed on the basis of the vortex itself. Although criticized by Harriet Monroe in one of the most memorable battles over poetic license, Crane's poem follows the movement of the vortex as life-giving energy to its function as cataclysmic death-bringer in a carefully plotted poetic sequence.

In "At Melville's Tomb," the calyx/vortex has given back a supernatural script of sorts, a type of hermetic knowledge in spiral form, the "portent wound in corridors of shells." Crane's "sign" here (Perhaps, in Eliot's terms, taken for something of a "wonder"), the "hieroglyph" of knowledge from beyond death which is contained in the shell, may allow us ingress to the wrold of the shipwrecked mariners. In the detritus from the storm's vortex of wind and water Crane

finds a visionary cipher, transforming image and idea. By the end of the poem, both figurations of the vortex have been themselves transformed into a transcendent, unified image of the vortex as pure motion: "Then in the circuit calm of one vast coil/Frosted eyes there were that lifted altars;/And silent answers crept across the stars." (34, 9, 11-12) At first here, it seems that the conceptual vortex, the "circuit calm of one vast coil" has somehow dislocated syntax, as it seems more plausible that the eyes referred to in line 11 should be lifted in the altar's direction in reverence, perhaps seeking help in deciphering the broken semaphore of the shell. It appears, however, that the vortex and its energy may also bequeath insight into the workings of human reality, an illumination of sorts, as the action of the eyes turned upward in prayer, in Crane's words, "postulates a deity somehow, and the altar of that deity by the very action of the eyes lifted in searching." (239) Through our belief we create our own gods, not vice-versa; perhaps, as Pound would say, "End of Christian Era!" The vortex, finally, for Crane, is revelatory.

The energy of the sea-vortex, drawing all into its fury, appears to function for Crane much in the same manner as it did for the Vorticists, as an emblem of consciousness in the modern world. Its destructibve side, embraced by Lewis, at least theoretically in the Manifesto, was feared, however, by Crane. This is evident not only in "At Melville's Tomb," but in the "Voyages" sequence which follows in White Buildings.

In "Voyages I," the sea-vortex and the more primal aspects of the consciousness-vortex appear allied; Crane warns the young boys playing by the sea: "...there is a line/You must not cross nor ever trust beyond it/Spry cordage of your bodies to caresses/Too lichen faithful... (35, 12-15) The marine vortex, whose bottom is, as the earlier title of the poem suggests, "cruel" in its promise of shipwreck and drowning, appears related to the chaos of consciousness engendered by the erotic experience, as developed in this sequence of poems. What is figured, in "Voyages II," as the "vortex of our grave," the sea-vortex causing death in its "unfettered leewardings" is also allied to the feminine figuration of the sea whose "turning shoulders wind and hours," embodying the circular movement of the vortex itself. The erotically charged vortex of consciousness is, in "Voyages III," the agent of the transfigurative vision: "...laved and scattered with no stroke.../The sea lifts, also reliquary hands" (37, 6, 8) but finds itself, in "Voyages V," overcome by its own effect: "...For we/Are overtaken. Now no cry, no sword/Can fasten ora deflect this tidal wedge." (39, 8-10)

The circling movement of the vortex as an emblem of pure energy appears also at the conceptual heart of Crane's Bridge. The furious spiral of the airplane in its flight through "Cape Hatteras," the coiling subway, and the "cyclo-ramic crest" of the Vision-of-the-Voyage which appears in "Atlantis" are all part of the poet's attempt to "conjugate infinity," and in an earlier version of "Atlantis," the

vortex figuration is perhaps even more emphatic: "That radiant field that rings/The Universe - I'd have us hold one consonance/Kinetic to its poised and deathless dance." (Weber, 425)

The vortical dance of the universe here, figured throughout The Bridge in the whirling heel of Elohim and the dizzying, erotically charged cartwheel dance of Pocahontas, appears central to Crane's concept of transformation, as the circling of energy which is embodied in the cosmic dance here reconciles the metaphors of flight and voyage, man's own attempt at "transport," with the dynamism of the universe.

Crane's circling stars, his "spiring cordage" all combine to give the sense of endless spiraling, not toward a fixed end, but into a new dimension; as the arch symbol which is the focus of the bridge-figure suggests incompleteness, perhaps even presentiment as it did for de Chirico, so does Crane's evocation of the vortex in its figuration as cosmic energy, have no real finish, no end to its spiral movement. Although the vision of Atlantis appears at the end of The Bridge, the cyclic energy of the Universe, as well as the consciousness of the poet in its sway, is constant and Einsteinian; the "whispers antiphonal in azure swing: at the poem's end suggest the eternal movement which has become the scientific definition of "space" in the modern world. In this, Crane's desire to transform consciousness through contact with the "new realm of fact" of dynamism and pure energy accounts for his constant shifts of poetic focus and

perspective. Of this impulse in Crane's work, M.D. Uroff writes: There is no fixed point of reference in Crane's world. The universe becomes a vast cyclorama, and the poet's sensibility absorbs it through its own gyring perspective ...In the poem, the solidity of the world and the fixity of the perceiving mind are dissolved...The world is energized and sanctified by its circular movement. (151)

In effect, the universe of Crane's poem is the universe of Einstein, whose vortex of creation fuses time and space, and whose only constant is the pervasive energy of possibility.

CHAPTER III

In 1924, when Hart Crane was nearing completion of his first collection of poems, White Buildings, another bit of Modernist "history" was being made by Francis Picabia and René Clair, artists and writers turned filmmakers, who created one of the most ambitious works of cinema at this time, Entr'acte. Considered by Maurice Bardéche, one of the early historians of modern film, as a "classic of absurdity," (218) Entr'acte (which Crane was probably familiar with as a result of his stay in Paris) celebrated what Picabia was to term the principle (very Einsteinian) of "Instantaneism." The notion of the artist's desire to capture the "exaltation of the moment" in "perpetual movement" (Kovacs, 74) through the new medium of the motion picture was no doubt crucial to the early development of film aesthetics, and Picabia's "Instantaneism" in its focus on "accelerated movement" of the artistic image has been largely overlooked by critics taken aback by the tongue-in-cheek manner in which Picabia presents his ideas. In Entr'acte, originally intended to be a cinematic "Intermission" between the parts of Picabia's ballet, Relâche, Picabia's images in motion are realized through the genius of René Clair's photography. The focus on motion is brought to the screen by his quick takes of scenes of Paris interspersed with shots of the loading of a cannon by Picabia and Satie, and the inflation and deflation of a doll. Boxing gloves attack one another, Man Ray plays chess with Duchamp,

and the resulting flow of accelerated images is "as rapid as the thought of our brain." (Picabia, 4)

In Cinema Yesterday and Today, René Clair speaks of this aspect of the aesthetics of motion which captivated the new filmmakers, and which appeared for many to be the closest approximation of the expression of consciousness: "Motion is the primary basis of cinematic lyricism. Just when, in literature, it seemed to be dying at the hands of the heirs of Rimbaud and Mallarmé, poetry is reborn on the great white canvas toward which the men of the world turn." (70) The blank screen which Clair speaks of, like the blank page of Mallarmé, is full of creative possibilities. The vision of cinematic poetry here is related to Crane's own "white screen" of panoramic motion in The Bridge. If one approaches Crane's spectacle of a poem in a manner similar to the way in which a movie is witnessed, accepting all the fast-forwards and jump cuts in the poem as comprehensively as in a movie, many of the poem's critically assailed "difficulties" disappear. At the poem's beginning, the link between cinematic perception and the manner in which Crane wishes us to read the poem is clear: "I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights/ With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene/Never disclosed, but hastened to again/Foretold to other eyes on the same screen." (45, 9-12) The poet is standing before Brooklyn Bridge, and the cinematic metaphor is the only one which conveys Crane's emphasis on perceptual process which is central to the poem. Our cinematic experience is precisely

that of the "panoramic sleight," and as Prufrock's magic lantern throws a picture of "nerves in patterns on a screen" so are we passively bound to the "flashing scene" which engages us. The film, for Crane here, appears, as does the poem itself, as a "sleight," or, in aesthetic terms, an example of non-representational expression which again places the poem and the movie within the context of Cubism and other Modernist experiments in non-realistic form. Just as the movies which Crane loved were those involving the most extreme examples of cinematic "sleights" (Mack Sennett's crazy comedies, the preposterousness of the Keystone Kops, and the movements of Chaplin, to be discussed later in this chapter), so he seems to ask us to approach the "screen" of the movie which is The Bridge in its panoramic scanning of American history, technology, and the modern urban experience with a requisite acceptance of the "un-reality" within. The intensity of this aspect of the film experience is perhaps what made so many of this generation's poets devotees of the cinema; the "magic events of the silver screen," (Kovacs, 24) in their farcical escapades and erotic distortion (Pearl White's legs and Clara Bow's mount were objects of cinematic "fixation") provided an escape from the tragedy of war still uppermost in all minds. Apollinaire, Desnos and Aragon all praised the new cinema for this fantastic quality; Fantômas' superhuman abilities at outwitting policemen especially impressed Aragon, and Brenton speaks frequently in his writings of the appeal of the phantoms from Murnau's Nosferatu.

Perhaps less familiar with these European films than with the popular melodramas and comedies from the United States, Crane's knowledge of movies centered around such successes as D.W. Griffith's Broken Blossoms (1919) and Intolerance (1916), the latter in its expanse of plot and history a "panorama" similar to The Bridge.

Criticized by the public for many of the same reasons as Crane's epic, Intolerance is structured around the conflict between individuals desiring freedom and the forces of intolerance. The film expressed Griffith's idea that intolerance is a condition common to all societies, at all times, a condition related to the failings of men, but controllable by means of self-awareness. From Babylon to Calvary, the symbolic implications for contemporary society cannot be missed; as Crane's retelling of the story of Atlantis serves as a warning to modern American society to beware of the falsity and destruction inherent in materialism and "progress," so does Griffith's epic of tyrants throughout the ages portray the evils of the modern age. Interestingly, Griffith's uses a phrase from Whitman, the numen of "Cape Hatteras" and much of The Bridge, throughout his film to stitch its varied sequences together, "Out of the cradle, endlessly rocking," and provides his expansive work with a gloss similar to that found in The Bridge.

The comedies of Mack Sennett, in Crane's era, epitomized the lure of "un-reality" found in film. His major characters all had something absurd about them (Fatty Arbuckle, and

later Chaplin), and worked on the premise that if one custard pie in the face was good, then ten were even better. Much like modern-day cartoons, Sennett's popular works exude violence, but, miraculously, never involved actual injury; twenty Kops emerge from a tiny vehicle in perfect shape, and Harry Langdon's frequent bashings never have lethal impact. An early work, Love, Speed and Thrills (1915) - the title of which is a perfect description of the major events in all his works - involves a series of disasters and chase scenes which defy gravity, and every other conceivable law of physics, intercut wildly and culminating in a motorcycle being driven off a bridge; closer to Picabia aesthetically than he would have imagined, Sennett's use of frantic energy and motion was central to cinematic development. The addition of sound in the late 1920's to these films seemed to diminish their quality as artistic expressions for many who felt that the limits of film aesthetics had already been explored by silent film artists such as Eisenstein, Lang and Chaplin. Visual expressiveness was no longer as important to the filmmaker, and Jolson's success in The Jazz Singer (1927) became the first box-office hit employing a synchronized sound track. For many years, however, these experiments in sound placed a stronger emphasis on the aural component of the film, and, for film historian Stanley Solomon, "strongly restricted the visual component of the film." (187) The visual impact of slapstick comedy was lessened when accompanied with dialogue, and only the true talents of this era, such as Lang, Renoir

and Chaplin, were able to create meaningful dialogue and sound to accompany their film ideas.

The figure of Chaplin as a comedic hero had such a broad appeal for the filmgoers of this period that the actor and his film persona are often seen as one and the same. The expressive face of Charlot served as an icon for poets and artists, and Crane evokes not only the pathos and exuberance of his film character but many of the aesthetic qualities of film itself in his poem, "Chaplinesque."

Le cinéma peut introduire dans un film un style de vision original, une personalité singulaire, un tempérament poétique enfin. La poésie sera ici plus diffuse, elle se réfugiera davantage dans le dètail, mais elle sera présente. (Fuzellier, 92) In 1895, the Lumiére brothers produced the first experiments in film, short movies such as Arrival of a Train at the Station and Bathing Beach. These early films were made with a single, uninterrupted flow of film through the camera, and were usually shot from a single camera position. In these works, the motivation for cinematic expression is simple: to render the mirror image of commonplace reality with as much accuracy as possible. By 1906, however, the vision of film-maker Georges Méliès (lamp-like rather than mirrored) presented a radical departure from this technically and conceptually simple approach to cinema. In Méliès' Faust of the same year, the recording of movement in space and time is just a small part of the movie itself; drawing on the Faust legend, he intercuts dreamlike imagery

with narrative, utilizing cinematic "tricks" such as stopping the camera in mid-frame (in order to make a subject "disappear") and masking part of the camera lens (to show half an object rather than its entirety) in a manner which indicates, as Fuzellier notes above, the proximity between the aesthetic intent of the creative film-maker and the poet. As Méliès sought to give a sense of tangible reality to figures of myth and magic (his A Trip to the Moon is worth citing here, as it pictures for the first time in history a group of moon-men), through film he made the invisible visible, in a sense "word" made "flesh" in a Modernist "miracle." In this light, film language and poetic language are quite similar: Hart Crane, as we will see, drew much inspiration from this confluence of energies, and cinematic techniques appear frequently in his works, most notably in "Chaplinesque."

Crane's imagery in "Chaplinesque" has a highly vivified visual element, almost eidetic in its presentation. The characteristic ellipses and aural puns are absent and, like the films of the era, "Chaplinesque" constellates image and meaning in a precise visual frame. This pre-Eisenstein work brings to mind Pound's dicta concerning the visual acuity and terseness of the Imagist poem. By contrast, Crane's expansive The Bridge is post-Eisenstein. This emphasis on the maximum of emotional effect in each cinematic image or scene is discussed by Elliott:

> Our emotions are stirred more by detail than by incident, and it is upon detail that the photoplay concentrates. The worrying detail of a railway

> disaster may be the sight of an off-running wheel. In a tragedy, the sight of one nervously twitching hand may impress itself on our mind more than all the horror and bloodshed. The glimpse of a common object may start a crucial train of reflections. (148)

Form and content in the film, then, as in the poem, have a reciprocal relation; the abridged context of the movie or the painting or the poem presents the "frame" for the transcendence of time, space and physical reality by the consciousness of the poem's reader or the film's viewer. The subjective impact of what critics have now termed the film metaphor is highly associative or, in Mitry's terms, almost metonymic:

> La métaphore filmique est essentiellement associative, ce que revient à dire qu'en fait ce n'est rien d'autre qu'une métonymie-tout ou moins quant à sa structure. Elle est constituée de deux termes: parfois enchaînés ou surimpressionés, mais cependent distincts. Sans doute de l'un à l'autre de ces termes y a-t-il un glissement de sens, un transfert qui équivaut à une substitution. Mais celle-ci se fait dans l'esprit du spectateur. (124)

This sense is very much with us throughout the early experiments in film-making; although technically different from the works of Méliès and Griffith, Léger's Ballet Mécanique relies on the same personal element of associative interpretation of the visual image, the glissement de sens which is the psychological conductor essential to film. The Cubist emphasis on perceptual process led Léger to experiment in 1923 with the cinematic medium; in Ballet Mécanique there are no characters or plot, but simply objects freed from traditional contexts, placed in new relationships to one another.

Focusing on the close-up technique, Léger moves in with his cinematic "eye" to explore the most minute aspects of a form, in order to prove his theory that "by isolating a thing, you give it a personality." (Léger, 50) Léger's short film also repeats certain images, in order to "first amaze the audience, then make them uneasy" (51), and then slows them down or speeds them up in order to exploit the sense of time-perspective of the viewers. With an Einstenian sense of modern aesthetics, he would explore the human perception of time and space by recording responses to these effects. Upon observing the viewers of Ballet Mécanique, he reported: "In eight hours I learned what I wanted to know. Nearly all the spectators reacted the same way at the same time." (51)

As Léger links the technique to close-up in cinema with the revelation of personality, so Crane, in "Chaplinesque" does much the same thing in identifying his subject, the actor Charlie Chaplin, whom many have taken as a symbol of modern man; in his essay "Charlot," Desnos calls him the "créateur spontané qu'on l'aime ou non, impose sa lecon, aussi bien aux rieurs qu'aux moroses." (146) In the poem's first stanza, Crane closes in on the image of Chaplin's famous threadbare overcoat, whose floppy pockets both protect his hands and suggest the money which he, as the "little tramp" lacks: "Contented with such random consolations/As the wind deposits/In slithered and too ample pockets." (2-4)

In this manner, the oversized, empty pockets of Charlot are the very details which define his cinematic presence;

like any good film-maker, Crane presents us with a close-up of them at the poem's start to effect our awareness of his tragic/comic character.

Each stanza of Crane's poem focuses in close-up fashion on a visual image symbolic of Chaplin's presence: these images accrete and ultimately give us the sense of cinematic montage, or the juxtaposition/succession of related film shots. Developed by Eisenstein in the 1920's, the original notion of montage involved, in the dynamic Russian's words, "the conflict of two images in opposition of each other, offering moments of culmination and substantiation which form the canon of all dialectical processes, and hence that of the film." (Casty, 33) Related to his political emphasis in cinematic creation, his theories concerning montage focused on the shock effect of image imposed upon image; in Strike (1924), he depicts the image of the workers' slaughter through the juxtaposition of frames of masses of workers and, alternately, the pictorial sequence of a bull being slaughtered. We see, first, the bull flayed, then bodies lying at the foot of a cliff, and then a dismembered hand lying in a pool of blood. Perhaps too Agitprop for many, this type of montage typifies Eisenstein's manipulation of audience perceptions, montage as weapon, in effect.

Eisenstein's images, strikingly similar to Crane's, are organized in montage-fashion in order to evoke the quality of consciousness and simultaneous perception (again the emphasis on "motion" pictures) that is so central to Modernist

aesthetics. In The Film Sense, Eisenstein describes the effect of montage in terms of non-representational art: "It is precisely the montage principle, not that of representation by any means, which obliges spectators themselves to create and the montage principle, by this means, achieves that great power of inner creation and excitement in the spectator which distinguishes a work from one that merely stops without going further than giving information or recording events." (35)

Eisenstein's place in the Modernist canon has not been, at this point, fully realized; he is known primarily as a technician and an epic filmmaker. Throughout his critical writings, however, there are constant references to the interrelation of the arts in the modern era; he cites Mayakovsky and even Keats as practitioners of montage, and it is clear that, for Eisenstein, the modern impulse could be equally realized in all the arts:

> There is no inconsistency between the method whereby the poet writes, the actor forms his character, or the director composes the montage construction of a film: they are the same vitalizing perceptions inherent in modern art... As in jazz, modern aesthetics is built on the disunion of elements, heightening contrast, and repetition. As Jazz seeks volume of sound and phrase, so montage seeks volume of visual image. Conventional perspective, with its fixed focus, has abdicated in favor of intricate synthesis. (96)

The emphasis on perspectival relationships as related to the focus on the act of perception, as seen so clearly in Cubist works, is allied again with film developments by Eisenstein. His use of montage, like Picabia's "instan-

taneous" effects, manipulated viewer perspective in its "volume" of quick cuts and vivified images (in speaking of Alexander Nevsky, he describes his quick repetition of the image of the victorious peasant army twelve times in order to "win the spectators' approval," 96). In his insistent use of the close-up technique (emphasized by many early filmmakers due to its ability to distort proportion), he again centers his technique on viewer perception: "To portray a man as he sometimes appears to us, out of natural proportion, suddenly fifty centimeters away, is part of our new perspective. Realistic depth is washed away in our modern urban scene. Far and near, foreground and background, bursting and vanishing, neon lights soar and die, abolishing all sense of real space." (98) In this manner, montage and close-up go hand-in-hand in their function as techniques for emphasizing the act of perception; the zoom lens as metaphor for the mind seems to apply to the modern aesthetic not only in Eisenstein's work but in that of many others, notably Crane in his constant poetic movement to the background and foreground of the poetic image. As in The Bridge, Crane gives us constant "close-ups" of character and place in his panoramic vision of what Eisenstein termed the "modern urban scene" in its perceptual chaos, so does Crane, in "Chaplinesque," bring us "fifty centimeters away" from the pockets of Chaplin, his thumb raised in the wind, or the ash can at the poem's end, transformed by the moon into a "grail of laughter," itself a fitting icon for the work of the "montage-poet" and the

"montage-filmmaker."

Eisenstein's less political contemporary, Pudovkin, modified the concept of montage, however, to include the emphasis on "linkage" in the montage sequence rather than collision. Even when contrast was evoked, in Pudovkin's work, the selective continuity of emotion was stressed in the visual images presented. In Mother (1926), for instance, much emphasis is placed in the editing of the film in the unity of feeling in each montage sequence; the happiness of an imprisoned son is conveyed by interspersing shots of the corners of his mouth turned up in smile with shots of sylvan scenes and finally a child laughing. Mitry terms this type of montage le montage lyrique and contrasts it with Eisenstein's montage intellectuel; the montage lyrique "se sert de continuité pour exprimer des sentiments qui transcendent le drame" (113) - although Crane employs Eisenstein's montage intellectuel in The Bridge, with each section of the poem clashing against the next, the dialectic of ideas taking precedence over any continuation of sentiment or mood, his montage effect in "Chaplinesque" (and in most of the poems of White Buiildings) seems closest to Mitry's idea of le montage lyrique.

In stanza two of Crane's poem, just as the focus in stanza one was placed on Chaplin's empty pockets as an analogue for his rag-tag poverty, the image-center is a starving kitten, another symbol of the pathos of Chaplin's character: "For we can still love the world, who find/A

famished kitten on the step, and know/Recesses for it from the fury of the street." (5-7) The sentiment connecting the two different images involves the feeling of salvatory kindness in the face of the modern world's cruelty. There is "random consolation" in Charlot's pockets, and the kitten is, through the gentleness and care of the "we" constantly referred to, saved.

The major point of poetic and iconic emphasis here is on the integration of the lone figure into the human conformity; personally, Crane held fast to the "truth" of his feelings in order to ward off despair and alienation, and seems to recommend that "we" do the same--in this he is identifying both with the clown/figure and the universal "we" as well. Notably, it was through his friendship with Chaplin, before the writing of this poem, that Crane began recognizing in Chaplin's clown the prototype of modern man.

The pathos of "the little tramp" is effected in the image of the hitchhiker's raised and snarled thumb (Mitry's metonymy of cinematic image), symbolizing the figure of the hobo (a figure which recurs throughout Crane's work), in stanza three: "We will sidestep, and to the final smirk/ Dally the doom of that inevitable thumb/That slowly chafes its puckered index toward us" (9-11). If we read "dally" in its more archaic sense of "delay", then "we" again keep Charlot from ruin, preserve his innocence, and in doing so, perhaps reclaim our own. Crane constantly exploits multiple meanings of words, to the extent that we may imagine him

crackling over his dictionary, in full cognizance of the confusion he will cause with such usage. The metonymic "picture" speaking the proverbial thousand words in the next stanza is that of Chaplin's ubiquitous cane. The image of the tramp with an aristocratic cane is itself an example of the ironic tension characteristic not only of Chaplin's persona but of Crane's poem as well, as each montage-frame image of vulnerability is imbedded in the context of the hostility and insensitivity of the surrounding world: "And yet these fine collapses are not lies/More than the pirouettes of any pliant cane;/Our obsequies are, in a way, no enterprise." (14-16) Chaplin's well-known twirling of the cane as a characteristic gesture here in his emblem in this stanza, but again is placed within the framework of the falseness of modern intellect. The tramp's "fine collapses" are truthful, opposed to the spurious "obsequies" of much of Crane's era's intellectual life (is he invoking Eliot here?); the poet had a keen eye and ear for the perils of over-intellectualization, as he notes in a letter to Yvor Winters: "The image of "the complete man" is a good antidote for the hysteria for intellectual specialization that inhabits the modern world." (242) What matters, he says at the end of stanza four, is the validity of human emotion, that which Chaplin inspired in many of his films: "We can evade you, and all/else but the heart/What blame to us if the heart live on." (17-18) It is through this identification with the heart that our feelings become so important in a machine age,

Crane seems to say. Through this we become transformed, and the final montage-image of the poem brings to a close the association of Chaplin/innocence/vulnerability through its various juxtapositions in the image of pathos transformed into joy: "The game enforces smirks; but we have seen/The moon in lonely alleys make/A grail of laughter of an empty ash can" (19-21) Ash can into grail, symbolic of Chaplin's transformation of the clown/hobo into king, and the poet's own transformation via the montage of imagery in his poem.

In his first letter of April 15, 1923 to the photographer Alfred Steiglitz, Crane suggests the existence of "elective affinities" between his own visionary creativity and the search for the "idea photography" which Steiglitz found necessary to his work: "The moment of our meeting was a tremendous one in my life because I was able to share all the truth toward which I am working with another man taking steps in the same direction in his work." (131, Letters)

Crane planned a full essay on Steiglitz, and included a portion of it with the above letter; in it, he focused on the aspect of Steiglitz' work which was most similar to his own aesthetic, the search for the noumenal essence behind phenomenological reality. Of Steiglitz' work he states: "If the essence of things were in their mass and bulk, we should not need the clairvoyance of Steiglitz' photos to arrest them... But they are suspended on the invisible dimension whose vibrance has been denied the human eye." (Letters, 132) Significantly, the concept of vision in terms of the "inner

eye," so similar to that of Klee and Kandinsky, who were central to Steiglitz' philosophical ground for his photographic work, is shared by Crane as well; he adds that the "invisible dimension" (unlike the perimeters of the "world dimensional") and its dynamism may be apprehended through the "intuition of ecstasy" with Steiglitz, through the "eerie speed of the shutter, more adequate than the human eye" permits us access to in the "ultimate harmonies" which are the "emotion of inanimate life." (Letters, 132)

Like Crane, Steiglitz probed the philosophical relationship of his art to the larger context of aesthetics in order to focus on what he constantly referred to as "the meaning of the idea of photography," founding the Photo-Session group at the turn of the century with the purpose of exploring the possibilities inherent in the development of the new photographic movement. Rejecting representationalism, Steiglitz turned toward Picasso for inspiration, and spoke of his ventures into Cubism: "Abstract art is the new medium of expression - the true medium. Picasso is the great force in the plastic arts; he will bring back art to its true expression." (Letter to Georgia O'Keefe, 1911, cited in Greenough, 19) Through his contact with Picabia and other abstract artists of this time, he developed the concept of "pure photography," which relied on an intuitive attempt by the photographer to "capture" the essence of a form or subject. Like Klee in his search for the deeper reality behind the fortuitous shapes of physical reality, Steiglitz

depended on a "spiritual direction: of energies which Crane describes in his letter of July 4, 1923: "The great energies about us cannot be transformed into a higher quality of life...I nearly go mad with the intense but always misty realization of what can be done if potentialities are freed. I know you to feel the same way about your camera." (Letters, 139) Crane's admiration for Steiglitz and his work led him to the conclusion that they were both part of the "visionary company," experiencing the same triumphs and failures in their attempts at transformation: "I feel you as entering very strongly into certain developments in The Bridge. May I say it, and not seem absurd, that you are the first, or purest living indice of a new order of consciousness that I have met? We are accomplices in ways we don't yet fully understand." (Letters, 138)

In Steiglitz' series of photographs Equivalents, completed in 1925, his attempt at defining photographic limits is brought to its culmination. This series of works relies on a theory of photography which he evolved along with the other members of the Studio 291 group. The Equivalents are photographs of shapes which have ceded their identity, in which all references to canonical form have been eliminated. There is no photographic "evidence" of where these shots were taken, none of the objective referents which were expected in the photographic image of the time. Because there is no horizon line in these pictures, it is not even clear which way our perspective is to be aligned. The "confusion" this

effects leads us to perceive what we believe are pictures of clouds as photographs of abstracted forms; Steiglitz has stripped them of their functional properties and traditional associations and transformed them into a language of form which expressed his own spirit. When exhibited, the Equivalents, perhaps like Baudelaire's correspondences, embodied Steiglitz' attempt at locating the point of conjunction between object and idea. By placing his photographs into series which defy linear, and essentially photographic, progression of time, and by photographing them not actually as clouds, but as the abstract forms which they suggest, Steiglitz was asserting that these pictures are not recorded reality. They are, however, the vehicles for the expression of an idea (hence his emphasis on "the idea photography") equivalent to "Something already taking form" within his consciousness. (Letter to J. Dudley Johnson, in Greenough, 25) The emphasis on photography as the new art "of possibility" is found throughout Steiglitz' writings in the journals Camera Notes and Camera Work, and he sought to ally the technical innovations in photography with a modern sense of aesthetics. His most interesting photographs seem to have been the result of technical experimentation as a result of some difficulty, as we see in the abstract and unexpected patterning of light and shape in photographs such as Sun Rays or A Street in Bellagio; these pictures were completed as a result of the tests he made of the camera's capability to record extreme contrasts of light. His desire to utilize the

mechanical invention of the camera as a medium which could be controlled and used for purposes of art resembles Crane's statements in "Modern Poetry" concerning the necessity of modern art to "acclimatize" the machine, in a sense, manipulating it for the sake of the innovation of expression. New York City, the embodiment of all aspects of mechancical innovation in its subways, towers and (for both Crane and Steiglitz) iconic white buildings, became the site for many of Steiglitz' most effective experiments. In such photographs as From My Window - New York 1902, and The City of Ambition (1910), the shapes of the modern urban world appear as symbols of the dynamism which Crane also felt was at the heart of modern perception. An early work, The Hand of Man (1902) appears as one of the Steiglitz' most forceful expressions of the confluence of mechanical/modern energy and individual perception. The foreground of the photograph is a panorama of the crossing ties of a railroad; their sharp outlines convey the sense of kinetic movement which Crane focused on as evocative of the modern consciousness in "the Tunnel" in The Bridge. The shacks, posts and even the locomotive itself are subordinated in the photograph by the force of the railway ties circling the crossing each other, the connection of rail and consciousness similar to that of the "interborough fissures of the mind" depicted by Crane in the labyrinth of "The Tunnel."

As Crane notes in his letters to Steiglitz, his approach toward the construct of The Bridge was similar to Steiglitz'

own method and photographic aesthetic. In a letter to Crane, Steiglitz responds to his enthusiastic affirmation of Apples and Gable, telling the photographer that he had truly "captured life": "I know that I have done something that has never been done. It may be an approach occasionally found in music...I have a vision of life and I try to find equivalents for it in the forms of photographs...The camera is a wonder instrument, if you give it a chance." (Letter to Crane, December 10, 1923 in Greenough, 208)

Steiglitz' emphasis on the analogy between musical effect and his own aesthetic aims is surprisingly similar to Crane's concept of music at the end of The Bridge in "Atlantis." As Steiglitz sought the purity of visual form and perception in the abstract metaphor of sound and music (perhaps the least representational of the arts, hence its abstraction) so does Crane, in his figuration of Brooklyn Bridge as "harp and altar," point his work's apocalyptic end toward the pure form which is music: the "flight of strings" and "sibylline voices" transform Crane's bridge-symbol in the manner which is suggested in Steiglitz' letter, its "arching path upward" embodying both musical abstraction and artistic transformation, "whispers aniphonal" from the noumenal world which figure strongly in Crane's verse and Steiglitz' pictorial "equivalences."

At Nick's bar in New York, the national pastime is presented. From ten until three, the jazz holds forth. They play. You listen. No one dreams. Chopin makes you dream,

but not the jazz at Nick's. It fascinates, you can't get your mind off it. No consolation whatsoever. (Toledano, 67)

Ralph Toledano here quotes Sartre on the modern fascination with the "new" musical form of jazz. Although often rhapsodic, jazz, with its stylistic departures from European musical conventions, may entice, but, as Sartre reminds us, it is not the music of dreams. Harsh to many ears, filled with unexpected caesuras, syncopations and non-diatonic harmonies, jazz was to music history what cinema was to the development of the visual arts: a radical innovation in technique which ultimately altered the aesthetic expectations and perceptions of the "audience" as such, an innovation which, we will see, is mirrored in Crane's poem, "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen."

In the early twenties, what seemed necessary to the enjoyment of jazz music involved a perceptual shift, like that found in the apprehension of the visually truncated image in the Cubist painting; according to Edgar Willems, this calls for the development of an <u>oreille moderne</u>, a modern ear, in order to truly appreciate the music of the twentieth-century, jazz: "L'oreille classique n'est pas en mesure de juger le jazz; l'oreille moderne exige une oreille synthétique capable de fonctionner sensoriellement, affectivement et cérébralement à la fois ou tour à tour selon les exigences du moment." (39) The modern ear, like the modern eye, must interpret the physical and plastic nature of the "new" music as well as its aural effect; syncopated beat,

crescendo, unresolved tension and many other technical foci of jazz placed a highly physical element in composition, creating the sense of a totality of experience (body and mind respond simultaneously to jazz, as any observer of jazz performers and their audiences may note) which Willems alludes to.

The question of the origin of jazz is complex; many insist that it is a purely American experiment in the alteration of European musical "language," while others find its roots in the inflection and repetitive patterns of African chants, in which polymetric shifts and choral response, so important to jazz form, are found frequently. The jazz era developed side by side with that of atonal music, and the experiments of Schoenberg and Stravinsky in serial music, on the conceptual level, have similarities to the anti-diatonic, often cacaphonous "blue notes" of American jazz players: Stravinsky employed elements of ragtime (a jazz predecessor) in many works, and Milhaud captured a jazz effect in La Création du monde. "Symphonic" jazz, that of Gershwin's 1924 Rhapsody in Blue, involved the integration of certain jazz techniques into what many have termed "serious" music; at the same time, however, Louis Armstrong was cheating his own form of "swing" or "hot jazz" in New Orleans jam sessions in which spontaneous improvisation took precedence over acoustics or instrumentation. Phonographs made it possible to bring jazz to millions, and so life in the modern age was changed; like any literary or cultural movement, jazz had its ardent

followers, eager to give thés dansants in Paris or to frequent after-hours Prohibition era clubs in New York in order to experience the catharsis and exaltation of the jazz experience. Whether or not Eliot's Shakespeherian Rag was truly elegant or intelligent as he states in "A Game of Chess" in The Waste Land remains to be proven; the melos of the Jazz Age, however, in its emphasis on the transformation of affect and individuality of expression through improvisation, found form in the poetry of many writers, most notably Hart Crane.

Jazz itself gives form to Crane's poem, "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," as Leibowitz notes. "Music pierces everything, introducing new soothings, "New amazements," hence the "cornets," "drums," and "strange harmonic laws. The language imitates this joyous hullabaloo, exploiting words for special effects of emotion and noise." (66) In a letter to Waldo Frank, the poet himself described the poem as being "packed with cross-currents and multiple suggestions" and the percussive and provocative qualities of the jazz aesthetic, packed with their own "cross-currents" as well, first appear in section one of Crane's tripartite poem. Crane's epigraph for the poem is taken from Jonson's The Alchemist; whether or not he knew that the lines cited were taken from the speech of a prostitute in mockery of intellectual "culture" remains to be verified. If we see their usage as an allusion to the falsity of mass culture, the lowbrow aspect of modern life, then the poem is well-

grounded; if, as some have suggested, Crane merely inserts the epigraph to allude to the notion of alchemical transformation (Faustus/poet transfigured through his contact with Helen/absolute beauty), then perhaps the poet himself is unaware of the irony contained within the reference. In either case, the improvisational nature of the poem is apparent.

Improvisation has always been one of the defining characteristics of jazz, separating it from other types of modern music. The music critic Leonard Feather, in describing the types of improvisation which occur in jazz, notes:

> In the first type of improvisation, the original melody of the jazz composition is adhered to completely; the only change lies in the lengthening or shortening of some notes, repetition of others, or the use of tonal variations. In the second, the melody remains recognizable, but its phrases are subject to slight additions and changes; in the third, the soloist departs entirely from the main melody, and impromptu notes occur (which usually follow a natural sequence) that are often part of a previously heard sequence at the back of the performer's mind. (69)

Crane's "previously heard sequence" is his epigraph here, and it contains a good deal of ambiguity as well. Often in jazz composition, there is no notion of a hierarchy of harmonic relations, and improvisatory harmonies often just shift around a central tone. Improvisatory technique needs some basis or theme around which an individual may construct his or her own melodic excursion into the unknown, and Crane states his in italics in stanza three of the poem: "There is the world dimensional for/those untwisted by the love of things/irreconcilable..." (16-18) Like the melancholy

refrain that recurs throughout Duke Ellington's Mood Indigo (1930), this seems to be Crane's melodic focus. As the poet/Faust wants more than the merely conventional or quotidian (the "world dimensional"), he seeks an absolute enlightenment through union with the divine Helen. Suggested in these lines, however is the poet's association with the figure "twisted" by the love of things irreconcilable; we have the incursion of the mythic Faust's destruction here as well (another "previously heard sequence"). What is central to the poem, then, is the clash of the ideal and the real embodied in the figures of the poem's title. This central refrain, often called a seed pattern in improvisatory jazz, as it forms the thematic focus of the entire work, is Crane's conceptual ground for the poem.

The individual jazz artist, in his or her solo, often utilizes a technique called paraphrase in the act of improvisation, simply a kind of melodic shorthand which echoes a musical image previously presented in the work; it serves as an aural reminder of a previous theme. Crane's image of the mythical Faust recurs in this manner later in section one, but in a highly unexpected way; also indicating a type of metonymic representation, as we must make a number of associations before the allusion is clear, we find in stanza five: "And now, before its arteries turn dark/I would have you meet this bartered blood." (29-30 How may the poet's blood be bartered? How may blood be exchanged? This connection leads us to the image of Faust, echo-like, as the

notion of Faust's bargain with the devil, not mentioned, is evoked by the image, as his own life's blood was bartered for absolute knowledge and illumination.

At this point, the poem's rhetoric swells to what appears as a final cadence; the poet approaches a heavenly image of Helen in what seems to be (and is, for Crane, characteristically) an apocalyptic image: "The earth may glide diaphanous to death;/But if I lift my arms it is to bend/To you who turned away once..." (41-43) Crescendo, resolution/transformation, end of poem. We have here, however, an example of a frequent jazz "trick" of sorts, or the technique of deceptive cadence, in which the musician follows the customary pattern of tension and resolution, the build-up to a strong cadence of melody, but then, instead of ending his piece, goes on to something new, very often radically different in tonality. In this poem, Crane effects much of the same technique and the deceptive cadence at the end of section one makes a complete break stylistically from the rhapsodic quality which has preceded it.

What has been, in section one, "...companion ways/That beat, continuous, to hourless days-/One inconspicuous, glowing orb of praise" (52-54), a transcendent sweep of vision which prefigures the timeless invocation of Atlantis at the conclusion of The Bridge, shifts into a minor key in section two. The movement of Crane's expository sequence involves, at its end, an ascent; the poet raises his arms upward in order to apprehend the assumption-like image of

Helen, who has transcended the "press of troubled hands" and the "final chains" of her mythic captivity. In the movement of Crane's devotional gaze upward, his "lone eye riveted" to the fleeting image of Helen, the figuration of the ideal, mythic beauty that is incorporated into the persona of Helen itself shifts. In section two, her image is diffused through the screen of the modern jazz effect; she is now the "siren of the springs of guilty song," Crane's original title for the poem, and the rhetoric of praise and incantation directed toward her has been radically altered. In the universe of the jazz age, clearly the locus of section two, the music of the poem itself is changed; the long, rolling line of the previous section is now sharp, staccato, less grand in its tenor. In a sense Crane's evocation of the quick change in tempo, essential to jazz, the modulation of the poetic beat is now clearly oriented, according to Butterfield and other critics, toward the rhythms of modern dance. The language of the poet now incorporates all the banalities of modern speech: "nigger cupids scour the stars" while "glee shifts from foot to foot." While the language and image of the previous section of Crane's poem built toward the cadence of the "glowing orb of praise" raised in Helen's direction, section two is shaped by a reverberation of sensual effects similar to the aural and perhaps synesthetic effect of the jazz scene depicted. Bodies "ricochet" and "canter" while shifting back and forth while the sound of cornets is intercut with the "deft catastrophes of drums" which perhaps

suggests a ritual aspect of scene of "gyrating awnings" where the jazz age performs its own ritual dance "magnetic" to the musical "tremolo" which forms this part of the work.

Crane's rhythmic inflection (a rhythmic and stylistic "signature" essential to jazz performers, i.e. the phrasing or bending of musical notes in an idiosycratic manner) here has shifted; his poetic meter, rhythm and tempo are more self-consciously syncopated. Another jazz technique traceable to African polyrhythms, syncopation involves the temporary shifting of a regular metrical accent; it displaces the customary meter of a passage in order to place emphasis on a weak or unaccented note. As syncopation breaks up the rhythmic flow of a musical passage, so does Crane surprise us with syncopative breaks in his imagistic series in each stanza of this section. Describing the dance scene on a rooftop garden, for example, in stanza two, Crane's dance "through snarling hails of melody" (10), caught up in the provocative rhythms of jazz; the sophisticated scene is disturbed, however, by the image which follows of the strange figuration of the rooster: "Rhythmic ellipses lead into canters/Until somewhere a rooster banters." (13-14) The poet may be, as some have claimed, to be merely alluding to the encroaching dawn (jazz devotees keep late hours), the next stanza follows with continued dance references, however, and the party continues. The bird seems to play no true role in the imagistic framework of the poem, and provides us, rather, with a slightly comic, contrastive shift of focus; in short,

a syncopation of poetic effect.

Structurally, this section of the poem takes the imagery of jazz itself as its frame; improvisation is often comprised of what Schuller terms "melodic whirlpools" - short "riffs" or phrases which are dominant in each portion of the work, but change from passage to passage. As the "tremolo" in line three sets the mood for the exposition of stanza one, this stanza's imagery is related to the sensation of the tremolo; wavering images form its impact, i.e. the "glittering" of the hypnotics and the "ricochet" of noise, as well as the "breathlessness" of the speaker. The "snarling hails of melody" of stanza two reflect the violence of the sensual effect of jazz; the dancers are "splayed like cards from a loose hand" (12), and fall downstairs in stanza three as a result of the "new amazements" that "cornets introduce at every turn" (17). The frenzy of dance, here linked with the aural "assault" of jazz on the unprepared modern ear, hints at Crane's overall theme of the desire for some type of transcendence of the dichotomy of the ideal/real; he seems to find sustenance in the energetic, cathartic effect of the jazz experience in the poem: "Above the deft catastrophes of drums/... This music has a reassuring way." (26, 30) This would provide us with a conclusion of sorts to the development of the poem; through this dithyrambic dance, Crane as hieratic poet has been transformed. This is not, however, what we find in the poem. At the second section's end, Crane inserts the image of Helen once again, the "siren of the

springs of guilty song." Let us take her on the incandescent wax/Striate with nuances, nervosities/That we are heir to" (32-34) By placing the image of Helen where we least expect it, Crane introduces a type of "unresolved tension" - the tonal equivalent of syncopation, in which a melodic tone is added to a phrase not containing it in the phrase's chordal structure-in effect, a "blue note" or deliberate dissonance. As jazz improvisations are usually structured by these "unresolved tensions" injected into melodic sequences, paving the way for their own resolution, in a sense, because no composition ends on a "blue note" - dissonant tones usually resolve into ones consonant with the given chordal structure of a phrase - the overall quality of continuity of impulse which characterizes jazz construction becomes obvious. Helen is, for the poet and the poem, an "unresolved tension" certainly giving conceptual form to the poem; Crane, like any jazz artist, manages to integrate her image by the poem's conclusion. She becomes, in section three, again a figure of myth, in effect the cause of the Trojan War; identifying himself with Paris, the "Capped arbiter of beauty" (1), the poet himself becomes the modern-day equivalent of a warrior himself, a fighter in World War I: "We even/Who drove speediest destruction/In corymbulous formations of mechanics" (11-13) Through the war's frenzy (described in Crane's characteristically lyrical, rhapsodic inflection, and not at all tonally similar to the preceding section), he at last finds the creative impulse which reveals the figuration of

myth and history in present time (another Eliot-like echo): "Anchises' navel, dripping of the sea,/The hands Erasmus dipped in gleaming tides.../Delve upward for the new and scattered wine." (36-37, 39) The theme of a "world dimensional" which is at odds with that of history, myth and "perfection" has, by the poem's end, been resolved by the conceptual bridge of the poet's consciousness, transforming all: "The imagination spans beyond despair,/Outpacing bargain, vocable and prayer." (47-8)

CHAPTER IV

"At every point in his life, Rimbaud was an absolutist. As a child, he was either the out-and-out rebel or the outstanding pupil. As an adolescent, he was a poet in an absolute sense because he demanded everything of poetry...The way he had elected to reach the absolute was a cul-de-sac. The poet is the man stranded between the idea and the word." (Fowlie, 60)

Stranded between the idea and the word, or as Crane says in "Black Tambourine," "mid-kingdom," Arthur Rimbaud and Hart Crane, separated by fifty years of history, shared the spiritual and aesthetic affinities that are the characteristics of what Crane termed the "Visionary Company." Biographically, the lives of both poets are strikingly similar; although many would bridle at any type of biographical interpretation of lyric poetry, regarding it as a denigration of a work, there may be a strong case to be made for the psychological interpretation of Rimbaud's and Crane's work. David Bleich, a recent critic of Crane's work from this standpoint, finds biography essential to the understanding of labyrinthine poetry: "The symbols Crane made are in a way inbred or incestuous in that their accessibility to the public in an emotional way depends centrally on the public's familiarity with Crane, the man." (89) The formulation of the aesthetics of transformation common to both poets finds its root in the exigencies of their lives, in this manner; Crane's over-

whelming desire (critics often speak of his extravagant poetic will impelling the poem toward resolution/transformation, rather than a less arbitrary, more loosely-figured imagistic development) for "new thresholds, new anatomies" is parallel in its development to Rimbaud's wish to change his life.

In this sense, both poets were in active revolt against the personal and aesthetic restraints of bourgeois life; Crane's father's candy company, in which he was forced to work during periods of unemployment, represented the ill effects of the middle-class "mid-kingdom" to which he refers in "Black Tambourine." In early poems such as "Porphyro in Akron," Crane's sense of despair at the exigencies of life in modern America with its emphasis on conspicuous consumption becomes clear: "And some of them will be Americans/Using the latest ice-box and buying Fords." (145, 24-25) The irony of the poem's title is developed by various evocations of the banalities of parlor-room conversation and grim images of factories until, at the poem's end, the speaker (the modern-day Porphyro) realizes that "...in this town, poetry's a/Bedroom occupation." (146, 60-61) In effect, the poetic consciousness of the romantic Porphyro is incompatible with middle-class life.

For Rimbaud, this aspect of the conflict between bourgeois temperament and aesthetic awareness led him to an escape of sorts in Paris. As Crane fled from Ohio to Greenwich Village, so did Rimbaud, attracted by not only the

artistic milieu of Paris but its involvement in the revolutionary effect of the Paris Commune. This physical deracination is perhaps allied to the amorphous quality of the poetic voice in both poets' work; although infrequent, Crane's usage of the first-person pronoun, much like Rimbaud's, gives us no clear sense of speaker. In his poem "Passage," the context of Crane's "I" is detailed from stanza to stanza, but the "I" itself/himself appears hazy, again undifferentiated, defined only by its ambient: "Where the cedar leaf divides the sky/I heard the sea/I was promised an improved infancy." (1-2, 4) Here, the poet's eidetic figurations are quite clear; we have tree, sea, sky and hill. But what of the improved infancy? Again not specific, somehow embedded in the context of the pastoral scene. Crane continues in this manner: "Sulking, sanctioning the sun,/My memory I left in a ravine,-/Casual louse that tissues the buckwheat..." (5-7) Here we have an "I" and along with it the notion of memory, but lacking form and strangely without fixed identity; the journey from ravine to alley is circumspect. The notion of "Improved infancy" controls the poem thematically, and the persona is clearly bound up in it, but the distinction between subject and object, poet/speaker and context, is imperceptible.

In "Après le déluge" the "improved infancy," hinting at the lack of affection and understanding of the poet's youth, is also the source of poetic impetus. The flood/birth metaphor, central to the poem, appears diffused: "Le sang

coula, chez Barbe-Bleue, - aux abbatoirs, dans les cirques, où le sceau de Dieu blemit les fenêtres. Le sang et le lait coulèrent." (155) (In Bluebeard's Castle, the blood ran-/In slaughterhouses, in the circuses, where the seal of God/Paled at the windows. Blood flowed, and milk.) (219) The stormed castle, like the female womb at the moment of birth, is linked to the image of blood and maternal milk. As in Crane's "Passage," however, the sense of persona is indefinite; there is no "I" in the poem, but the poet's figuration seems linked with the image of the child placed in the context of birth: "Une porte claqua; et, sur la place du hameau, l'enfant tourna ses bras, compris des girouettes et des coqs des clochers de partout, sous l'éclatante giboulée." (155) ("A door slammed-and on the village square a child waved his arms,/Making windmills and weathercocks everywhere/Beneath a drizzling rain.") (219) The womb/door rudely slammed, the child waves his arms in the echo of the first shock of the post-natal experience; the protective water of the nurturant womb has become merely a drizzling rain. The amorphous quality of the poetic voice here is most apparent, as the imagery of the poem lends itself to one of the primary experiences of psychological indifferentiation, that of fetal existence. As the fetus is bound to his mother for survival, taking in nourishment within the protective water of the amnion, the distinction between mother and child, subject and object, in a sense, becomes imperceptible. It is precisely that experience, like Crane's "improved infancy," that

Rimbaud embodies in the poem. For both poets, the birth trauma, in its violence and forced "differentiation," is central to both the problems of life and the problems of art. "Après le déluge" ends, in this manner, with the image of birth as an unhappy fall from grace (Crane's cry of "Disgrace" before his suicide seems frightening here, as his mother was Grace Hart Crane); grace/knowledge/integration were complete while in utero, but the magic quality of undifferentiated consciousness now appears as something which the mother/Queen figure possesses and the poet covets:" Et la Reine, la Sorcière qui allume sa braise dans le pot de terre, ne voudra jamais nous raconter ce qu'elle sait, et que nous ignorons." (155) ("And the Queen, the Witch who lights her fire in an earthen pot,/Will never tell us what she knows/And we do not.") (220)

As the poet, alienated from the magic of womb consciousness, is forced into individuation, the mother-figure thus becomes adored and deprecated throughout Rimbaud's life and work. In "Les poètes de sept ans" she appears as a domineering force, "très fière" in her dealings with the impressionable young poet. Rimbaud's father abandoned the family, thereby forcing Mme. Rimbaud to assume the roles of father and mother to her son. The ideational mother, in her gentleness and patience so important to the young boy, clashed with the actuality of the harsh, demanding mother, aggressively masculine in her desire for Rimbaud's academic success. The poet thus created his own "happy childhood" through the

medium of verse, perhaps to compensate for the asperity of life in Charleville. Pre-conscious perception and maternal love are part of this movement toward an ideal enfance, as they are part of Crane's wished-for "improved infancy." Crane's efforts to become independent from his mother constantly caused anguish, and Henry Miller notes the same situation in Rimbaud's life: "No matter how Rimbaud struggles to remove himself from the parental orbit, his mother is there like a lodestone pulling him back. He can free himself from the claims of the literary world, but never from her. She is the black star which attracts him fatally." (120)

In this statement, the concept of fatality seems primary, as the destructive effects of each poet's mother are obvious. Crane's frequent illnesses almost always occurred after being chastised by his mother, and his admission of homosexuality severed their relationship; Bleich relates Crane's sexuality and his alcoholism to this destructive aspect of his relationship with Grace Hart Crane:

> The first self-awareness Crane had was disturbed by the schisms of his parents, and his mother's pathological view of him as what would save her from the pains of her marriage. Thus, the style of Crane's continued pathology is "oral"...On one hand, there is the excessive talking and on the other the drinking ...In real life, Crane's symptoms tried to blur differences between male and female, consciousness and unconsciousness, and finally, his own life and his mother's. (101)

The reasons, then, for the urgency of the transformative impulse in Crane's work are manifold. In life, the transformative impulse took the form of excessive drinking. In the

Voyage en Orient, Gérard de Nerval claims that "Le haschish" makes man equal to God. Crane's drinking, usually motivated by some form of the transformative aesthetic, is similar, in light of de Nerval's statement, to Rimbaud's impulse toward drugs and absinthe. Gwendolyn Bays attributes Rimbaud's motivation here as a type of inverted asceticism, with the poet imbibing "poison" in order to suffer tortures in the cause of new poetry (193); in the poem "Matinée d'ivresse" this ritualistic element seems strong: "Ce poison va rester dans toutes nos veines même quand, la fanfare tournant, nous serons rendu à l'ancienne inharmonie. O maintenant, nous si digne de ces tortures!" (167) ("This poison will rest in our veins even when, as the fanfares depart/We return to our former disharmony. Oh now, we who are so worthy of these tortures!") (224)

The dreaded "disharmony" of everyday life is clearly a diminution of the ecstatic experience felt by Rimbaud during his period of intoxication; the disjunction between the two states reinforces aspects of the duality between the ideal and the real, a major theme in Rimbaud and Crane, and also impels the poet to probe the limits of the hallucinatory experience even more, as we see Crane drinking more and more in the last phase of his career in order to achieve the necessary level of inspiration to write, and Rimbaud's attempt to arrive at the Unknown involved similarly, an increased involvement with drugs, as he writes in the Voyant letters of debauching himself as much as possible. The last

paragraph of "Matinée d'ivresse" refers to the hallucinatory vision, finally, as a holy one; he offers himself, almost sacrificially, in order to chercher l'absolu, to test Crane's thresholds: "Petite veille d'ivresse, sainte! quand ce ne serait que pour le masque dont tu nous as gratifié. Nous t'affirmons, méthode!...Nous avons foi au poison. Nous savons donner notre vie tout entière tous les jours. Voici les temps des ASSASSINS." (167) ("Little drunken vigil, blessed! If only for the mask that you have left us! Method, we believe in you!...We have faith in our poison. We will give our lives completely, every day. FOR THIS IS THE ASSASSINS' HOUR.") (224) The poet's transformation, here, is that of the haschischin/assassin, and therefore implies violence; the desire to tarir toutes les urnes in "Comedie de la Soif" has become aggressive, the violence of birth ("Après le deluge") becoming the violence of vision, in whose conflicts a poetry of revelation emerges, involving a revolutionary aesthetic which is part of the poet's "Dionysian dance."

James Horne, in Beyond Mysticism, attempts to define common aspects of the mystical experience; although each instance of religious illumination appears essentially personal and individualized, certain similarities in the visions of those experiencing transcendence occur:

> The typical mystic seems to move toward his goal through a series of strongly marked oscillations between "states of pleasure" and "states of pain."... But before real and permanent union with an Absolute can take place, the dependence on personal joys must be done away. This "annihilation of selfhood" includes an awareness of "undifferentiated unity" but

> also, in this trans-subjectivity, proves the mystical experience to be interruptive, probably one of the most disorderly there is. (59)

Throughout Crane's work, the approximation of what is here termed "trans-subjectivity" appears to be central to poetic intent. In Buddhist and Vedantic theory, the achievement of illumination inherent in the mystic state is only arrived at through an elimination of desire, even the desire for nirvana. In other words, at certain points in the mystical experience there appears a stage involving purge and negation; Saint Augustine, Saint Teresa and Meister Eckhart all refer to this illumination in terms of negatives. The difficulty of expressing in language this complex of states leading to illumination leads often to a dependence on intuition in order to effect some type of explanation of the individual experience of what Ouspensky refers to as the "higher consciousness" and Crane refers to, in the same manner, as "higher tranquillity" and "intuition of ecstasy" in his letters. The Buddhist concept of the experience of sunyata, or the absolute freedom from constraint and rational interpretation is also inherent in Crane's expectations for the function of the "logic of metaphor," which operates on a super-rational level; in a letter to Alfred Steiglitz he speaks, in ecstatic terms, of the "intense but also misty revelation of what can be done if potentialities are fully freed, released." (Letters, 138) The problem of giving form to the illuminative experience, of giving shape to potentialities, led the poet to desire to create his own autotelic

language, an "interior form, so thorough and intense as to dye the words themselves with a peculiarity of meaning." (Letters, 70) This internal language often appears, in Horne's terms, "interruptive" and "disorderly," as the nature of the experience of undifferentiated consciousness which is at the heart of Crane's work contains as much of what the poet refers to as "interior form" as does each poem.

For Crane, those who deny the "superior logic of metaphor" are also negating the possibility of a "new order of consciousness" where words or images will not serve to define or delimit objective identities, but will, through the multiplicity of suggestions they convey, transform and intensify our perception of the "ultimate harmonies" which lie beyond phenomenological reality. (quotes from Letters, 138-139)

The problem of the expression of visionary consciousness is addressed in an early poem by Crane which has been dismissed by many critics as a minor work relying on self-conscious irony for its effect. In "The Bridge of Estador," sub-titled "An Impromptu Aesthetic Tirade," Crane nevertheless appears to address in an acutely self-aware manner the problem of communicating and sustaining the transcendent vision. The poem begins with an exhortation to "Walk high on the bridge of Estador" where no one has ever gone; the figuration of the bridge here suggests the ascending vision of the later Bridge, whose arch ultimately leads the poet to the apotheotic illumination of Atlantis. The Estador of the

poem's title is ambiguous; some critics have suggested that it is a Spanish term referring to one who appraises, but this can not be proven; its closest Spanish referent is the term estado, implying the notion of "state," as in the English "state of mind." Crane's Estador is, perhaps as the vision it contains, beyond conventional linguistic description. As is the vision of the ideal in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," the vision here transcends mortality and temporality, but is momentary and ineffable, leaving the poet to search for its shadow-symbols in the "Wreck of dreams." The poem contains also the refrain from Faustus and Helen which is so central to the opposing themes in Crane's work: "But some are twisted with the love/Of things irreconcilable" (143, 22-3) The impelling force of the mystical experience, the "thing irreconcilable" with daily life, proved fatal for the poet unable to integrate it within the context of the totality of experience; he exhorts his listeners in the poem, here the "fools" of Beauty, impelled by the vision of transcendence as is the poet: "...though you have never seen them again, you won't forget./Nor the Gods that danced before you" (25-6) The intensity of the "higher consciousness" is revealed, finally, in a manner unique and personal to each seeker (hence its ineffability): "And you others-follow your arches/To what corners of the sky they pull you to" (29-30), its dynamism figured through the movement of conceptual vision upward in the transformative arc of the bridge.

Undifferentiated perception, psychologically related in

Crane's work to the emphasis on bercement and childhood which he shared with Rimbaud, is perhaps related to the visionary impulse as described in Nietzche's Birth of Tragedy, a text constantly cited by Crane as crucial to the understanding of the modern consciousness. For Nietzche, the principium individuationis represented the Apollonian dependence on the phenomenal world of appearance, while the Dioysian link with the "Primordial Unity" and mystery of the noumenal symbolized the nature of undifferentiated consciousness. The hope of a "new birth of Dionysus" which would end the primacy of individuation, for Crane allied with the "inadequate system of rationality" indicative of the modern milieu (226), involved, for Nietzche, the realization of "the conception of individuation as the prime cause of evil...of a world torn asunder and shattered into individuals." (230) Through the realization of the aesthetic vision, the unification of the individual consciousness with "primordial experience," the dissolution of the boundaries of the self may be effected, according to Nietzche; this transcendence is, significantly, termed as the ingress into "the higher community." Much like Crane's vision of the "higher consciousness," Nietzche's concept of an illuminative and essentially aesthetic union with the forces of the "higher community" which dissolves the boundaries of the individual is at the heart of Crane's visionary aesthetic.

The necessary violence of the assassin/poet is similar to the furor poeticus in its "divine madness" in the Platonic

schema, bringing forth the strength necessary to pierce the surface of human experience, breaking the maya-like spell of the ordinary with anarchic force. The destruction of the Dionysian dance is, for Rimbaud and Crane, certainly méthode; the name Rimbaud gave to the méthode was the déréglement des sens:

> A Poet makes himself a visionary through a long, boundless and systematized disordering of the senses. All forms of love, suffering, madness; he searches himself, he exhausts within himself all poisons, and preserves their quintessences. Unspeakable torment, where he will need the greatest faith...where he becomes among all men the great invalid, the great criminal, the great accursed - and the Supreme Scientist! (102)

In this letter of May 15, 1871 to Paul Demeny, the transformative nature of Rimbaud's déréglement is clear; motivated by spiritual experience, the poet actively seeks what Fowlie terms the "casting into form of the most vertiginous plunges of man's mind." (76) The revolt of the voleur du feu is consummately intentional (and here it must be noted that while Rimbaud's disordering of the senses was systematic, many critics find it an almost organic aspect of Crane's thought processes); it highlights his dual impulses in the directions of chaos and order. The Rimbaldian "I" truly is, in this sense, an "other," as it has been, through the déréglement, dissociated and recombined. The synesthetic technique appears as the most obvious ramification of this disordering of the sense-impressions, as in "Voyelles," where color, orthography and sound merge; through synesthetic transcendence of these categories of perception, at the

poem's end: "O, suprême clarion plein de strideurs étranges,/Silence traversés des Mondes et des Anges/O l'Oméga, rayon violet des Ses Yeux!" (77) ("O supreme Trumpet, harsh with strange stridencies,/Silences traced in angels and astral designs:/O, Omega...the violet light of His Eyes!") (123)

The effect of dérèglement in Crane's poetry seems to be even more extreme; it involves the creation, much like that of Joyce in Finnegans Wake, of what Spengler (one of Crane's deities) called a "counterworld" of language. Using words plastically, he creates new linguistic "bridges" of sound and meaning, as Irwin notes: "Language in Crane's poetry attempts to break a purely mimetic relationship to the external world and to establish in its place a creative relationship wherein the juxtaposition of words on the basis of linguistic features enables us to build new relations." (295)

In a letter to Gorham Munson, the sensual locus of the dérèglement in Crane's work becomes apparent: "One must be drenched with words, soaked in them to have the right ones form themselves into the proper pattern at the right moment. When they come, they come as things in themselves; it is a matter of felicitous juggling!" (71) The synesthetic perception is clearly Dionysiac in its tenor as well; as in "Matinée d'ivresse," Crane's poem "The Wine Menagerie" lauds the synesthetic effect of the Bacchic vision: "Invariably when wine redeems the sight,/Narrowing the mustard scansions

of the eyes,/A leopard ranging always in the brow/Asserts a vision in the slumbering gaze." (23, 1-4) Here the hallucinatory vision is, as in Rimbaud's poem, redemptive; induced by wine, the exciter of the "Yes faculty" or the expansive and affirmative response, according to William James, it performs a holy synesthesia of sorts. It appears as the agent of inner, absolute vision, as opposed to the "scansions" of retinal registration. Crane's leopard here, a symbol of Dionysus, unlike Eliot's in "Ash Wednesday," is perhaps a less benign agent of visionary experience, as he "ranges" through the poet's consciousness in an uncontrolled manner; shamanistic hallucinations are often spiritually enlightening, as we know from Mr. Castaneda's much-publicized experiences, but they also can be terrifying as well.

This sense of divinatory presence which accompanies Crane's intensity of poetic vision causes, in Blackmur's terms, the "felt nature of knowledge" to become apparent. Perception itself becomes inverted as a result of the wine-induced experience: "...glozening decanters that reflect the street/Wear me in crescents on their bellies" (23, 5-6) and will itself is given over to the possession (an important word for Crane) of the leopard and hallucinatory vision: "I am conscripted to their shadows' glow." (8)

The incantatory and accretive turn in Crane's work, again in "Wine Menagerie," seems linked with vatic prayer; the poem's invocation to the "wine talons" which "distill" a poetic metamorphosis culminates in the poet's possession by

anya-manas, as the "other mind" has taken over his consciousness: "-Anguished, the wit that cries out to me:/..."Alas, these frozen billows of your skill!/Invent new dominoes of love and bile.../Ruddy, the tooth implicit of the world/Has followed you..." (24, 37-40)

The extreme synesthesia of the ecstatic experience of possession also appears here; as the shamans, after their ritual experience, frequently report the confusion of sight and sound, so do Crane's "new dominoes of love and bile" hint at the incorporation of synaesthetic perception into the vatic experience. For the shaman, this ritual of incantation usually leads to a visionary "contact" of sorts, as through the prayer he makes himself into a supplicant for the purpose of possession by gods. This possession carries with it an extraordinary sense of energy, again perhaps similar to the accretive energy of Crane's work, and Poulet notes a similar function in the poetry of Rimbaud: "Nous sommes soumis, dans la poésie rimbaldienne, à un rhythme précipité, semblable d'une chaîne d'imprécations, à une série ininterrompue de malédictions de toute sorte. C'est un assaut à l'aide de mots aussi violents que des instruments de guerre." (136)

The visionary transformation, for both Rimbaud and Crane, as Poulet notes here, involves very often a violence of energy, both physical and verbal; as the synesthetic experience involves the violent dissociation of sense-perception, so does the ritual incantation of the shaman exhaust, in its frenzy of creation and destruction, the

probing of visionary limits. As Rimbaud approaches his transformative vision of beauty in "Being Beauteous," the violent impulse of the poet's incantation leads to his apprehension of the Être, shamanistically, in a moment of synesthetic possession: "...des blessures écarlates et noires éclatent dans les chairs superbes. - Les couleurs propres de la vie se foncent, et se dégagent autour de la vision...je dois m'abattre à travers la mêlée des arbres et l'air léger." (180) "Black and scarlet gashes burst in the gleaming flesh. The true colors of life grow dark,/Shimmer and separate/In the scaffolding around the Vision...I mean to destroy myself/ In a swirling of trees and soft air!") (160)

The synesthetic experience, like the undifferentiated consciousness before birth, involved, for Rimbaud and Crane, the transcendence of subjectivity; what is primary in the disordering of the senses is the diffusion of self into a larger, perhaps noumenal, context. As Crane's leopard of inspiration ranges at his whim, overcoming the poet with the given synesthetic vision, so does Rimbaud claim that he is "thought" rather than that he "thinks" in his letter to Izambard of May 13, 1871. Rather than subjecting the senses to conscious control, the visionary aesthetic involves immersion into the chaos of sound, and sense that forms the world of the haschischin: Horton writes of Crane in this regard:

> The desire to expand the consciousness into higher levels of awareness and to achieve the ultimate reconciliation of conflict is one of the chief

> characteristics of mysticism. In Crane's case, this desire has too often been taken as a search for sensation... The only true happiness lay in the "idea of God" or the identification of one's self with all of life. He felt tremendous reserves of spiritual power that, once released, would supply the elect with a clairvoyant vision. (129)

The mystic vision is perhaps the highest sensory experience man is capable of; by raising, synesthetically, the senses to their highest pitch, the boundary of the self and subjective perception is subsumed into what Margaret Foster has termed the "ecstatic whole" sought after especially by Rimbaud and Crane. For both, moments of ecstatic vision, moments at which the nature of what Blackmur terms "felt knowledge" expresses itself fully, render the poet an instrument of what Rimbaud termed the "Universal Intelligence;" in this sense, the notion of poet as seer is perhaps the strongest link between Crane and Rimbaud.

What, then, does the voyant see? Crane's oft-quoted description of his "dentist chair vision" may give a clue; he claims, under the effects of anaesthesia, to have heard a voice proclaiming: "You have the higher consciousness." The experience affected Crane so significantly that he claimed to have "felt the two worlds" (presumably noumenal and phenomenal) in a moment of ecstasy which he had only experienced twice in his life.

The nature of the visionary lyric impulse in Crane and many other Modernists also contains something of Melville's idea of the "apocalyptic imagination" which attempts to define reality behind appearances. Just as the Modernist eye

often does much more than visually apprehend in its act of "seeing," so the distinction between noumenal and phenomenal realms appears more pronounced. As Kramer notes, it is through the eye's contact with the "luminous forms" that function as symbols in the world of phenomena that the poet is able to approach a truly visionary ecstasy: "The possibility of ecstasy, sensed by the poet, needs the ship, the sky, as well as the sea before it can become an actual ecstasy, and more, one of truly symbolic importance." (411)

In The Varieties of Religious Experience, William James speaks of the conditions of the mystic experience: "Overcoming the barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In Hinduism, Neoplatonism, Sufism and Christian mysticism the impulse toward samadhi is the same." (400) According to Buddhist and Hindu theory, samadhi involves the passage from a conscious state into a superconscious, enlightened spiritual mode of perception; in experiencing samadhi, all distinctions between the self and the outer world are blurred, no sense of ego differentiation is felt. Especially in Vedantic theory, the denial of the self is a requisite for religious ecstasy, the penetration of what Ouspensky termed the "fourth dimension," and Crane was certainly aware of the rudiments of Vedanta learning (Walt Whitman is saluted as the "Vedic Caesar" in The Bridge) through his contacts with the Indian writer Tagore. The depersonalization inherent, then, in the mystic vision of the voyant is universal, transcending religious and cultural

boundaries; accounts of religious experience in ritualistic settings frequently involve "possession" by the spirit of a deity. The possessed voyant/shaman, often taking on the persona of a god (as in Haitian voodoo rites), is transported into an immediate apprehension of religious ecstasy and divinity. The mystical state takes authority over the individual "possessed," and the symbolism of the vision as such in these experiences invariably involves the metaphor of light as an emblem of illuminative ecstasy, in effect the "luminous forms" marking the boundaries of any mystic experience.

According to Nietzche, the ecstatic and illuminative vision of the Dionysian dithyramb involves the highest expression of man's symbolic faculties; the loss of self in the "narcotic draught" of paroxysmal exaltation effectively rends, for a brief time, the maya of the illusory, phenomenal world. Jennings writes of Crane in this regard: "Every poem Crane wrote was a whole-hearted plunging into ecstatic experience, and above all, a willingness to surrender." (224) The giving-over of the self to the illuminative vision is common to both Rimbaud and Crane; as Henry Miller writes of Rimbaud: "In the darkness of the womb, which Rimbaud sought with the same ferocity as he did the light of heaven, he transforms into radium. His is a substance dangerous to handle' a light which annihilates but also illumines." (113)

As Paul was overcome by light in his Christian experience of conversion, so do many mystics mention the combined

experience of brilliant light and spiritual revelation, in itself a synesthetic perception; Plotinus speaks of the soul "taking light" from a supreme source, and creating a sustaining personal vision from that illuminative source. As Prometheus stole light from the gods, so does Rimbaud refer to the poet as a "stealer of fire," as well as illuminative knowledge, in the Voyant letters; he identifies himself, as well, as a "démon-dieu" (Lucifer as poet) of illumination in "Angoisse."

The nature of the Rimbaldian illumination and its frequent expression in light imagery may also be related to Kabbalistic theories of "astral light," a supreme light symbolic of the light of eternity, and an aid to the seer's vision. In "Eternité," the poet alludes to this concept, as the poet sees himself brushing away the darkness of the heavens in order to receive the spark of light which illumines inner perception. The notions of Eliphas Lévi and the Illuminists concerning the revelatory powers of this divine light are traced to the Egyptian temples where, in the sanctuaries of Isis or Mithra, sacred light was said to have prepared the Magi for prophecy and divination. As the Illuminist soul passed from the status of a "child of darkness" to that of a "child of light," however, one is reminded of the Génie figure in Rimbaud's poem" "Il nous a connus tous et nous à tous aimés: sachons...le héler et le voir, et le renvoyer, et, sous les marées et au haut des déserts de neige suivre ses vues..." (159) "He has known us

all and loved us, Let us discover how...to see him, and to send him away once again, and under the tides and over high deserts of snow, to follow his image." (240) Here, the poet is impelled by the force of the suprahuman Génie in his illuminative function; like Rilke's angel, he is necessary for the poet's transcendent impulse. The Génie is pure spirit, pure light, possessed of the magic power to render the poet/seeker into the visionary seer, as occurs in "Délires II."

For Crane, the visionary light and its source appear less obvious, and certainly more circumspect, than they appear for Rimbaud. The visionary source of illumination for the poet is more amorphous for Crane; there are no angels or genies to guide his spiritual journey. The transcendent impulse, certainly as strong as that in Rimbaud, is more fevered, more chaotic, less focused in its perception and effect. In Crane's poem, "Legend," the agent of spiritual transcendence is unidentified, and the locus of visionary illumination is diffused; the poem begins: "As silent as a mirror is believed/Realities plunge in silence by..." (3, 1-2) Here we are presented with the clear dichotomy of the phenomenological and noumenal worlds, the disjunction of the spiritual and the physical; as in Cocteau's Orpheus, it seems that the poet must somehow go beyond the mirror, in effect plunging into the world which lies at the other side of the mirror/consciousness. Illumination, for the poet in "Legend," is experienced through contact with the world on

the other side of the reflective glass: "Twice and twice.../ and yet again./Until the bright logic is won." (14, 16-17) The context of Crane's visionary transcendence here, as is frequently the case, appears desperate; something of the poet's own "legend" seems embedded within, as the image of the "bleeding eidolon" may be a personal allusion to his attempted suicide, and the unidentified "One" (like Rimbaud's On) who spends himself out in the "cleaving and burning" (10-11) of the strain toward visionary knowledge ("It is to be learned" - line 9) are evidence of the extreme quality of Crane's poetic/illuminative impulse. In one of his last works, "O Carib Isle!" the illumination granted to the poet/voyant has as its point of departure the volatile light energy of Lucifer: "You have given me the shell, Satan, - carbonic amulet/Sere of the sun exploded in the sea." (157, 34-35) The divine amulet which strengthens the poet's vision, which protects him, is itself an emblem of the violence of the visionary "possession" which the poet experiences, again in a shamanistic fashion; it is the "sere" of the sun (Rimbaud too identified himself with Lucifer as the fils du soleil), or the scar caused by branding with fire. As in the case of Nietzche's angel, the visionary transcendence of Bacchic knowledge may burn too brightly in the poet's consciousness; ecstatic visions cannot often be totally sustained. The increasing personal and poetic frenzy to attain access to this transcendent realm beyond the mirror, as it were, accounts for the poetic silence of both

Crane and Rimbaud after their most intense periods of vision. Crane, after the crescendo of The Bridge, and Rimbaud, after the vertiginous plunge from Illuminations to Une Saison en enfer, found no voice for the expression of the visionary experience which, for both shamans and saints, always becomes increasingly difficult to articulate. The gouffre between the intense quality of mystic perception and the paucity of human language in which it must be, if one calls oneself poet, expressed has become too great. For Rimbaud, silence cloaked his distress at the disjunction of unsustained vision and the disordered life; renouncing poetry, he became another, in the deserts (internal landscapes and those outside often have their own reciprocities) of Abyssinia. Crane, responding more extremely to his own iconic disarticulation, found his silence in the sea.

CHAPTER V

For Rimbaud, the first "king of poets" and true voyant was Baudelaire; for Gautier as well, he possessed the mystic ability to intuit the reciprocities of matter and spirit which Swedenborg termed correspondences. The poet himself speaks of the desire to transcend the world of appearances in L'Art romantique as part of the instinct of the "Beautiful" which leads us to perceive earthly phenomena as manifestations of a higher reality; it is, for Baudelaire, imperative that the poetic act serve as the vehicle for the voyage, so to speak. It is in this approximation of the transcendent impulse that we may perceive his affinities with Crane and Rimbaud, as all three desired to penetrate the mystery of life and death, conscious and unconscious perception, and the distinctions between subjective and objective reality, embodying Viélé-Griffin's vision of the modern poet's need for transcendence as the "thirst for eternity."

In the first chapter of Baudelaire's Les Paradis artificiels, the poet describes the pervasive desire of the poet/creator to lift himself toward the infinite as "Le Goût pour l'infini." In man's movement in the direction of revelation, for Baudelaire in his explication of the concept of the paradis artificiel, the agent of enlightenment is of lesser importance than the quality of the vision itself. Tout chemin mène à Rome, he says, "a la rècompense ou au châtiment, deux formes de l'éternité. (29)

Although he places haschisch at the bottom of the hallucinatory list, the equivocation of all forms of sensory stimulation as means for attaining the absolute is, in light of Crane and Rimbaud, significant; for Baudelaire, music, art, wine, and eros itself all serve as conductors for the poet's insight (it is while listening to Lohengrin, for example, that Baudelaire first experiences l'infini in Les paradis artificiels). As in Crane's "Wine Menagerie" and Rimbaud's "Matinée d'ivresse," the notion of intoxication inextricably linked to visionary insight is found in poems such as "L'Âme du vin" in which wine heightens the poetic sensibility and leads to an ascent toward heaven: "En toi je tomberai, végétale ambroisie,/Grain précieux jeté par l'éternel Semeur/Pour que de notre amour naisse la poésie!" (21-23) ("Into you I shall fall, a vegetal ambrosia, a precious seed cast by the everlasting Sower, so that from our love poetry may be born." (77) What Barbey d'Aurevilly termed the "feu de Prométhée" appears also as illuminative agent in "Le vin des chiffonniers" where it sets flowing an "éblouissant Pactole" in the "Humanité frivole" perhaps unworthy of the vision.

In Baudelaire's "philosophie d'ivresse" as Ruff would describe it (15), there seems to be a sense of Rimbaud's méthode as well; again in "Le vin des chiffonniers" wine appears as a creation of mankind designed to parallel the gift of sleep, in its illuminative transcendence of conscious reality by connection with the dream state, which was given

by God: "Dieu, touché de remords, avait fait le sommeil;/ L'Homme ajouta le Vin, fils sacré du Soleil!" (31-32) ("God, touched with remorse, created Sleep:Man added wine, the sacred Son of the Sun." (97) Dream symbols, as Jung would prove in his theories of the archetypal structure of the unconscious mind, often afford the waking consciousness an ingress to the correspondances which lie beyond the surface of reality. This attempt to realize new thresholds through whatever possible means of visionary transport (Baudelaire's insistence is similar to that of Crane in this regard) culminates in his cry of "Enfin, mon âme fait explosion, et sagement elle me crie: 'N'importe où! pourvu que ce soit hors de ce monde!" ("At last my soul erupts and cries out, in its wisdom, "Anywhere! so long as it is out of this world!") (192) from the poème éclatante "Anywhere Out Of This World."

Baudelaire's theory of the correspondence between the phenomenological world and the realm of the spirit, in terms of the poetry of Crane, is a bit difficult to trace in terms of direct influence, as, by the early 1920's, T.S. Eliot had incorporated the Baudelairean correspondance into his theory of the objective-correlative. Crane, a keen admirer of both poets, absorbed as much as he could during his early years as a writer, and many critics have pointed out the marked tendency in his early poems ("C33") and "Carmen de Bohème" most notably) toward the Parnassian-inspired evocation of scene that was characteristic of Baudelaire's milieu (one considered trop artistique by Rimbaud). In his poem of the

same name, Baudelaire speaks of the correspondances as "...des parfums frais comme des chairs d'entrants...Ayant l'expansion des choses infinies." (9, 12) ("Having perfumes fresh and cool as the bodies of children...That have the infinite expansion of infinite things"). (37)

Like Rimbaud's intuitive and mystic "universal language" (perhaps Baudelaire's famous quote concerning the function of all poets as "translators" is apt here, as, for the poet/ voyant, communication of the visionary experience involves a decoding of this universal cipher), these correspondences involve communication as the framework for the transcendent impulse. Bays writes in this regard: "Man, before the fall, made use of a universal language and enjoyed by means of it immediate revelation and communication with higher beings. After the fall, this took place by means of correspondence, and later, the Word was written. This...constituted man's chief bond with heaven." (198)

Speaking here of Swedenborg's mystical theories of language and transcendence, Bays here focuses on the role of the "Word" in communication with the infinite; claiming to have himself spoken with angels, Swedenborg described his parlance as involving something of what we might term telepathic communication, immediate revelation through the medium of an intuitive language-response. The internalized discourse of the universal language, for Swedenborg, was similar in function to the correspondence between the phenomenal and noumenal worlds. Swedenborg, perhaps

following Kabbalistic theories, believed that objects in our natural world have counterparts in the spiritual realm. Awareness of these reciprocities leads, for the seer, to a type of communication with this invisible world. In literary terms, the natural world as a "forest of symbols" is open to a mystic interpretation which perceives the affinities between matter and spiritual states in what Baudelaire called "l'universelle analogie." In order to pierce the Platonic essence of things it is, then, necessary to practice the "sorcellerie évocatoire" similar to that of the shaman, as the interpretation of the correspondences as such is essential to the ability to transcend the spleen of existence, apprehending the Idéal; in this, Crane appears as a close companion of Baudelaire.

In Crane's poem, "Repose of Rivers," the phenomena of nature appear imbued with a metaphysical link to the ideational world; in stanza two, the poet's view, in the guise of a river's perspective, a precipitous drop in a mountain frightens him in a manner suggesting the fear of mankind's first descent in Christian mythology: "And remembrances of steep alcoves/Where cypresses shared the noon's/Tyranny; they drew me into hades almost." (16, 7-9) The idea of this fall from grace is continued, as we see "mammoth turtles climbing sulphur dreams" (10) the sulphur appearing as a Satanic echo, a correspondence of mineral nature and supernatural presence (a smell of sulphur was frequently connected to a visitation by Satan in accounts of diabolical possession).

Crane seems to speak more directly of the idea of correspondence at the poem's end, as he finds in the outer world traces of a transcendent, spiritual identity: "And finally, in that memory all things nurse;/...I heard wind flaking sapphire, like this summer,/And willows could not hold more steady sound." (17, 22-23) Something of the collective unconscious seems to reside in the tenebrous relation between Crane's memory "nursed" by all things; as Baudelaire's forest of symbols exists to draw the seer closer to the world of spiritual reality, so does the natural scene in Crane's poem exist as a cognitive map for the correspondent soul, here allied with the river/speaker. The most potent visionary moment occurs here when the poet hears the "wind flaking sapphire," an aurally synesthetic perception, Nature's "dictionary" serving to illuminate the union of object and essence. As Baudelaire, at the end of "Élévation," is able to comprehend "Le langage des fleurs et des choses muets" so Crane is able to perceive in the hieroglyphic reverberation of thing and spirit, at his poem's end, the union of color, sound and sense in the synesthetic wind.

The transformative aesthetic in Baudelaire's work, similar to that in the work of Crane and Rimbaud, often involves a conceptual alchemy on personal and poetic levels. Similar to many of the mystical aspects of the correspondance, the alchemical process involved, essentially, the magnum opus of transference; through an operation on the prima materia (a natural element such as lead or salt),

symbolic of various aspects of soul, "Gold" was extracted, symbolic of liberation of the soul, heretofore "asleep" and imprisoned in the matter for alchemical transfer. The desire for alchemical change, also strongly sensed in Rimbaud's work, is found in Crane's transformative aesthetic as described in General Aims and Theories: "There may be discoverable under new forms certain spiritual illuminations, shining with a morality essentialized from experience directly, and not from previous precepts or preconceptions. It is as though the poem gave the reader as he left it a single, new word, never before spoken and impossible to actually enunciate, but self-evident as an active principle in the reader's consciousness henceforward." (221)

As, alchemically, base metals are made pure, so Crane desires illumination through the purifying rite of the new word. His goal is not merely "decorative" or sentimental verse, but, using a term applied frequently to Rimbaud and Baudelaire, an "absolute" form of expression involving the transformation not only of language but consciousness as well. Believing, as did Crane, that through the poetic act consciousness may be transformed, the alchemical nigredo changed into rubedo, Baudelaire proclaims in L'Art romantique that "la poésie vraiment belle emporte les âmes vers un monde céleste." (319) Baudelaire's Beauté, like Crane's absolute, exists as the alchemical goal as such; for the poet of Fleurs du Mal, however, the heightened awareness engendered by the coniunctio oppositorum, or conjunction of opposites, in

effect, the movement from Mal to Beauté, often exacts a painful price. As Satan was both angel and emblem of evil, so Baudelaire in the poems of Fleurs du Mal finds alchemical transformation in the union of these opposing impulses. His poetic ascent is not a pure one; the movement toward ailleurs is often predicated, as it is in Crane, on the sense of the poet as exile. Of this Poulet notes: "Rêver d'être ailleurs, c'est donc, en même temps, rêver d'autre, rêver d'avoir un autre moi, une autre nature. Ainsi l'ailleurs, l'avenir ont avant tout une fonction centrifuge...le mouvement est fuite de l'esprit loin des choses." (24)

The conunctio of alchemical enlightenment, desired in part due to the sense of estrangement and fragmentation referred to here is effected, for Baudelaire, through union with the chair spirituelle of woman. Her celestial body appears, in "Le Balcon," to be both voluptuous and transcendent at the same time: "Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon,/Et les soirs au balcon, voilés de vapeurs roses/ Que ton sein m'etait doux!" (6-8) ("Evenings illumined by the glowing coal, evenings in the balcony, veiled with rosy mists, how gentle I found your breast!") (54) In "Possessions," Crane, too, achieves a conunctio of sorts in his transformation through sensual contact with a lover; although the imagery Crane uses is considerably more violent in its allusion to the sensual experience (perhaps sadomasochistic), the emotional transport is nevertheless effected: "The pure possession, the inclusive cloud/Whose heart is fire shall

come - the white wind rase/All but bright stones wherein our smiling plays." (18, 28-30)

As Böehme and Ballanche sought a purification of experience through the allegory of the alchemical process, so must language too be somehow purified, affecting a Rimbaldian alchimie du verbe. The language of the "spirit" which reverberates in Böehme's writings, in his moments of "illumination" similar to Rimbaud's, reminds us that, for the alchemist as well as for the poet, words do not function solely as vehicles for the expression of ideas, but are imbued with a symbolic, correspondence-laden, significance. As Baudelaire's correspondances and Rimbaud's verbal alchimie aim at a new evocation of perception through the Word, so Crane's language performs this transfiguration of impulse and idea, in effect, as Barbara Herman notes, "remodeling what was living and arbitrary into invariable symbols of an intuitive and abstract kind." (53) In an early attempt at formulating the mechanism of this transfigurative impulse in poetry, Crane writes, in "Critical Fragments":

> A pure approach to any art must involve the elimination of extraneous elements...As such, the approach to certain irreducible common denominators, called Truth, is evident as a perpetually creative principle...There are no guide posts or tracks to answer us, seldom even a new terminology to follow us. An inward synthesis of recognitions may apprehend the logic of our pursuit, but it is only when that moving factor in this process, a really scientific honesty, has already connected a new link of realizations that the proper order of relationships is evident. (Weber's appendix. 424)

Here, Crane's alchemical principles appear clearly; purification as a goal is primary, as it was for Baudelaire

and Rimbaud. As the nigredo of the base metal must be transmuted into alchemical gold, so must Crane eliminate the "extraneous" elements from the poetic product. For Crane, one manner in which to achieve poetic purification is by identification with the transfigurative symbol as it proceeds through the alchemical allegory of purgation and purificatio. Christian mystics frequently employ this type of figuration of alchemical imagery in their description of the soul's movement in the direction of God, involving the assumption of a state of grace. For Saint John of the Cross, as well as Ignatius of Loyola, the experience of purification first involves a working-through of the negative, nigredo-like, impulse; rather than a fear of, and conscious movement away from, the carnal forces weighing down man's spirit, true purification is effected through an immersion in those impulses in order to eventually purge them from the soul. In Baudelaire's "Les Litanies de Satan" this appears through the poet's identification with various aspects of grotesqueness leading to a prayer/exorcism similar to John of the Cross in his movement through the dark nights of the soul. Like the figures in Piranesi's frightening prisons, Baudelaire's images, as they roam through the conceptual hell of the poem, find the path from darkness to light tortuous: "Toi dont la large main cache les précipices/Au somnambule errant au bord des édifices...Toi que/Nous appris à mêler le salpêtre et le soufre." (27-8, 34) ("You whose vast hand hides the precipice from the sleepwalker, as he strays on the brink of lofty

buildings... You who taught us to mix saltpeter and sulphur") (21) The demonic nature of the alchemical impulse, here, appears clear, as the poet is alluding to the alchemical mixture of elements (sulphur and saltpeter) which are supposed to produce aurum potabile, alchemical gold, like wine to be drunk for inspiration and enlightenment; it is Satan who has given this to man, according to Baudelaire's poem.

The notion for purgation through a conceptual nigredo may also be traced through Crane's poem, "Possessions," as the title itself is suggestive of a possession by the dreaded Manichean forces of darkness. As Crane was fond of quoting Donne's call from the depths of "Make my dark poem light!," so here the poet evokes the imagery of a descent into the darker levels of consciousness through contact with the depths of homoerotic experience; as was Baudelaire, the poet appears locked in a region where no access to heaven is apparent: "O undirected as the sky/That through its black foam has no eyes/For this fixed stone of lust..." (18, 7-9) Crane's mal here, again reminiscent of the qualities of Piranesi's dungeons, finds itself identified with images of the darkness of torture: "In Bleecker Street, still trenchant in a void,/Wounded by apprehensions out of speech/... Tossed on these horns, who bleeding dies." (18-19, 23) Captive in the void of homoerotic impulse, along with the lost souls of Crane's conceptual Bleecker Street, in Crane's time a place for homosexual encounter, cut off from the

larger world in this sense, the poet appears to speak from an abyss similar to that of Baudelaire's poem by the same name; tortured by the presence of des Nombres et des Êtres, Baudelaire's pit is filled with meaningless "Action, désir, rêve,/Parole!" (Action, desire, dreams, words!" (245) For Crane, at the end of his poem, the fully purgative experience of the possession as such is intuited, but not actually felt; its metaphysic is present, but, as for Baudelaire, its actuality is not rendered conclusive by the poetic sequence. Piranesi's dark men, their faces lifted in ascent, sense the presence of light; Crane, like Baudelaire, finds, at the end of "Possessions," the possibility of purification through the purgation of the "Record of rage and partial appetites" (27) and the "fixed stone of lust" holds the promise of becoming an alchemical philosopher's stone. As impure metals are made into gold, so does Crane's stone, through the purifying fire of what he terms "pure possession" become bright, unalloyed: "The pure possession.../Whose heart is fire shall come, - the white wind rase/All but bright stones wherein our smiling plays." (28-30)

The concept of voyage appears central to a study of Crane as his poetry is intimately connected with the idea of journey toward transcendence; process, in the form of the conceptual voyage, its flux and movement, fuels virtually all of his work. The sense of visionary longing, in all its manifestations, involved, for Crane, not just the contemplation or apprehension of an enlightened state, but the fits

and starts of the actual passage toward illumination which is portrayed within consciousness itself. The voyage is dynamic, allied to the sense of alchemical transmutation, in its radical transformation of knower and known; as alchemical metals are changed into gold, and as in Christian terminology wine and bread are transformed into the conceptual body and blood of Christ, so the voyage is the agent of poetic process and movement toward a transcendent vision.

As the souls of religious mystics such as St. John of the Cross and St. Theresa were often depicted in terms of a journey from darkness to light, so the figurations of the voyage in Crane's work have this framework for their genesis. What Hazo terms the "drama" of the voyage, however, often involves the concept of an internal, private journey as well as one oriented toward external reality; in the notion of egress as well as ingress central to the voyage Crane has strong similarities, again, with Baudelaire and Rimbaud.

In Crane's sequence of poems "Voyages," the journey involved has as its destination the realm of love, as does Baudelaire's "Voyage à Cythere." Although there is no physical sense of an actual Venusberg in the direction of which he must set his course, the concept of voyage for Crane embodied the movement out of self which is implied in the erotic instinct. On the psychological level, Crane's involvement with sailors probably served as a unifying ground for his use of the voyage metaphor; his relationships, first with the Norwegian sea-captain Emil Opfer, and later with

other seafarers were sadly paradigmatic in that the fulfillment each relationship might offer was truncated by the departure of the sailor's ship from port. The eternal movement of the voyage, then, is related to the lability of his desire; in a sense, as we find as well in "Voyage à Cythere," the voyage is destined to fail in any true sense of a sustained apprehension of emotion. There is no completion, no conceptual "port" at the end of Crane's journey; there is, in poem VI of the "Voyages" group, the idea of a Belle Isle, taken from Emerson, perhaps a transcendent end of sorts, but it is embedded in the imagery of shipwreck ("Let thy waves rear/More savage than the death of kings/Some splintered garland for the seer." (40, 14-16)

Crane's poetic sequence in "Voyages," like the shaman's voyage out of the realm of his own borders of consciousness and personality, centers on the transcendent aspects of the erotic journey away from the self; in a lyric manner reminiscent of theme-and-variations technique, Crane first grounds the theme of voyage in the context of a beach/pastoral complete with children playing by the sea: "O brilliant kids, frisk with your dog/...but there is a line/You must not cross nor ever trust beyond it." (35, 10, 12-13)

As the vision of gay children by the sea is soon undercut by the allusion to death ("The bottom of the sea is cruel," line 16, the poem's original title), so does the structure of Baudelaire's "Voyage à Cythere" appear to follow the same formula as Crane's voyage; the poem begins with a

positive context, the union of nature and eros, but soon the nature grows putrescent, a deliberate perversion by Baudelaire in the esthetique du mal of the ideal Cythera: "Eldorado banal de tous les vieux garcons/Regardez après tout, c'est un pauvre terre." ("The tame Eldorado of all old bachelors, as you see, after all, not much of a place!") (97) Perhaps there is a stronger sense of irony in Baudelaire's depiction of the "coins saignants de cette pourriture" in the island paradise, as he no doubt had in mind Watteau's The Embarkation for Cythera, a painting filled with courtly gallantry and what he might term "pictures of bliss," showing none of the blood and struggle he found endemic to life. Cythera, land of an idealized love, contains only the corpse of a hanged man, a totemic warning just as is Crane's allusion to death at sea: "De féroces oiseaux perchés sur leur pâture/Détruisant avec rage un pendu déjà mùr" ("Fierce birds, perched on their prey, were savagely rending the ripened corpse of a hanged man.") (99)

The voyage as process, in Baudelaire's poem, appears to be internalized at the poem's end; as Crane's voyage extends outward to a conceptual Cythera, so it also mirrors an internal process. As Rimbaud's voyager in Le bateau ivre desires escape from himself as well as his physical ambient, becoming a pagan or a leper, eventually seeing his own image in the shipwreck of the noyé pensif, so does Baudelaire find the vision of his own destruction: "Dans ton île, O Vénus! je n'ai trouvé debout/Qu'un gibet symbolique où pendait mon

image" ("O Venus, in your isle I found nothing standing but a symbolic gallows, with my own image hanged upon it.") (100)

The ship/vessel/self of the voyage is never clearly defined; in Rimbaud's Le bateau ivre it appears amniotic, a semi-permeable structure allowing a flux of percepta and identity with the surrounding sea. In Jungian terms, the vessel itself, like the amnion, protects and is often associated with a mother symbol; this appears in the second section of Crane's poetic series, where the 'undinal vast belly" of the sea protects the poet and his lover in "wrapt inflections" suggesting the protective amnion of Undine, wrapping her child, according to myth, the union of the water spirit and a mortal. The amniotic quality of the vessel in the process of voyage here suggests the desire, part of the internalize voyage, to return to the pure perception of childhood. In Baudelaire's poem, "Le Voyage," the journey backward to an unalloyed, fresh perception of things appears central in the concept of internalized voyage: "Pour l'enfant, amoreux de cartes et d'estampes/L'univers est égal à son vaste appetit.. Ah! que le monde est grand à la clarté des lampes!" ("For the child in love with maps and prints, the universe matches his vast appetite. Ah, how big the world is, in the lamplight!") (182) The vastness of the world and the attendant sense of freedom for the child in his perceptions, untainted by ideas of destruction and betrayal, is also part of the voyage to childhood perception as it appears here in Baudelaire's poem; in Crane's "Voyages III,"

the freshness of perception that is desired is affected as a result of the unified vision, childlike in its sense of undifferentiated, sensual joy: "Light wrestling there incessantly with light,/Star kissing star through wave on wave unto/Your body rocking!" (37, 12-14)

The internal voyage continues, from an immediate perception of childhood innocence, toward contact with the impulsion of experience through love and its own voyage of desire, illusion, and betrayal. The Scylla and Charybdis of ideal vision and spleen, in Baudelaire's poem, mark his psychological descent into the tidewater of conscious and unconscious dreams and motivation. In imagery suggestive of Crane's Bridge, Baudelaire depicts his movement through the chaos of the self: "Singuliere fortune où le but se déplace/ Et, n'etant nulle part, peut être n'importe où!/...Où l'homme.../Pour trouver le repos court toujours comme un fou!/Notre âme est un trois-mâts cherchant son Icarie;/Un voix retentit sur le pont "Ouvre l'oeil!"/Une voix de la hume, ardente et folle, crie/""Amour...gloire...bonheur! Enfer! c'est un écueil!" (29-36) ("A strange destiny, this, in which the target is ever shifting, and being nowhere, can be anywhere, in which Man is always rushing like a madman in search of rest. Our soul is a three-master in search of its Icaria; a voice from the bridge booms out "Watch out!" but another from aloft, eager and demented, cries "Love! Glory! Happiness! but no, it's hell let loose, we've struck a rock!") (183-4)

Baudelaire's soul in search of an absolute, tossed in its journey from the extremes of reality and idea, appears to have lost its charted course, perhaps having abandoned balance to the overwhelming desire to reach the noumenal; in this regard Poulet notes:" L'obsession du voyage chez Baudelaire n'a donc pas seulement un aspect géographique. Ce que il veut au fond de lui-même, c'est accomplir un déplacement eschatologique." (22) In his transcendent voyage within, however, the vessel of the soul strikes rock, and the bitter knowledge of the voyage finds its last emblem in death: "Ô Mort, vieux capitaine, il est temps! levons l'ancre...Nous voulons, tant ce feu nous brûle le cerveau/ Plonger au fond du gouffre, Enfer où Ciel, qu'importe!/Au fond de l'Inconnu pour trouver du nouveau!" ("O Death, old navigator, the hour has come! Let us weigh anchor! We yearn to dive into the gulf's depths/and what matter if it's heaven or hell, in to the depths of the Unknown, in quest of something new!") (190) Baudelaire's shipwreck of the self, like Crane's, leads to the recurrence of the eternal voyage in a transcendent image of the new, the Unknown that is perhaps the poetic equivalent of Christian resurrection following death. The journey from finite to infinite, then, from the descent into the self and its unconscious dream and emotion, ultimately fixes itself in the transcendent impulse. The ship of death in "VI," Crane's last section of "Voyages," as it burns, becomes the figuration of the unknown as Belle Isle, impelling the poet/voyager toward another, more

visionary, course: "Still fervid covenant, Belle Isle/-
Unfolded floating dais before/Which rainbows twine continual
hair/Belle Isle, white echo of the oar!" (25-28)

CHAPTER VI

Rimbaud, in so many ways the prototype of the modern poet, noted the potential for transformation and enlightenment which is part of the erotic impulse in his statement that "L'amour est à reinventer!" What Kierkegaard described as the "psycho-sensual synthesis," or the erotic impulse, involves the transcendence of personal boundaries in what was, for Crane, a truly profound experience of physical and spiritual union. As, for Kierkegaard, love involved the movement from sensual gratification to spiritual revelation, similar to the höchste Lust or supreme joy of passionate experience which Wagner's Isolde sings of, so, for Crane, sexual union let to a mystical apprehension of reality, the "secret oar and petals of all love" which he refers to in "Voyages IV."

As Rimbaud realized, the notion of love which is the heritage of the Western world needed (and probably still needs) a revolutionary change in order to restore its conceptual power. The tradition of courtly love, marriage, and the bourgeois family structure all worked against the realization of the visionary quality inherent in the love experience. In this manner, Denis de Rougemont notes: "Every conception of love (whether sexual or matrimonial), every attitude of man confronting love, corresponds to a spiritual attitude, expresses or betrays it, but would not exist without it." (13)

What Baudelaire terms, in Journaux intimes, the "desire to go outside oneself" forms the impetus toward erotic experience as well as the impetus toward artistic creation. Immersion in sensual experience was a form of involvement with the artificial paradise; desire itself, for the poet, was a form of self-expansion. The transport of eros frequently found its emblem in the image of a woman's hair for Baudelaire; through sensual contact with his lover's hair, the poet discovers the "other sea" which appears as the embodiment of noumenal reality in "La Chevelure": "Je plongerai ma tête amoureuse d'ivresse/Dans ce noir océan ou l'autre est enfermé;/Et mon esprit subtil que le roulis caresse/Saura vous retrouver, ô féconde paresse!" (21-24) ("I shall plunge my head, never weary of its rapture, into the jet black ocean that contains the other sea; and my subtle mind, caressed by the rolling swell, will know how to find you there!") (58) Here, what Valéry termed Baudelaire's "abstract sensuality" takes precedence, as the sensual quality of the correspondences overwhelms the actuality of the woman's hair. The "disorder" of the synesthetic correspondence is allied to the energy of the erotic impulse in its movement toward transformation, as Bersani notes in Boudelaire and Freud: "The crucial point to hold on to is the association of sexuality with the organism's experience of something excessive...sexual excitement occurs when the body's normal range of sensation is deranged." (77) Similarly, in "Chanson d'après-midi," the poet achieves heigh-

tened perception through desire; the "excesses" of sensation lead to erotic transport, as the poet is overwhelmed by the scent and the feel of his lover's "tresses rudes," her "yeux alléchants," her "dos et seins" to the point of an orgasmic, mystical illumination: "Par toi, lumière et couleur! Explosion de chaleur/Dans ma noire Siberie!" (39-40) ("You, who are all light and color, an explosion of warmth in my black Siberia.") (69)

The sensual disorder leading to sexual transformation is found most notably in Crane's work in the "Voyages" sequence. The series of poems begins with a quiet beach scene, laden with overtones of death, but the seascape soon becomes an emblem of the poet's erotic transformation. In "Voyages II," the poet moves away from shore, lost in the synesthetic flux of the sea-experience: "Take this Sea, whose diapason knells/On scrolls of silver snowy sentences" (36, 4-5). The sea-experience here is filled with sound and sense, similar again to Baudelaire's imagistic figurations in that they appear sensually "abstracted" and convey the feeling of the poet being given over to this experience. Analysis, for Crane here, as for Baudelaire, will come later. As the image of <u>chevelure</u> creates the <u>état d'âme</u> necessary for transport, linking desire and knowledge, so do Crane's everpresent "reliquary hands" appear as the physical agents of transformation in their function as sensual symbols of the <u>correspondance</u> between spirit and flesh. Erotically charged (perhaps in psychoanalytic terms appearing as a phallic symbol), the

hand as tactile transmitter of sensation and touch is also the agent of salvation for the poet; in stanza two of "Voyages II," they preserve the lovers from death: "The sceptred terror" of the sea destroys all but "the pieties of lovers' hands." In a fusion of image again reminiscent of the abstracted sensuality in Baudelaire, the hand of the lover in "Voyages II" becomes the hand of the sea in "Voyages III": "While ribboned water lanes I wind/The sea lifts, also, reliquary hands." (37, 5, 8) Here mirrored in the image of the speaker himself "winding" the sea in the act of swimming, the sea-hand is, like the hand of eros in the preceding poem, sacred. It is here that "Voyages III" becomes the most directly involved in the depiction of erotic experience; if the poem may be read as a chronicle of the drama inherent within erotic experience, then "Voyages III" appears as the culmination of the sensory/spiritual union of poet and lover. The poet's transport from the phenomenological realm through an extreme of heightened sensation in which the tactile distinction between lover's hand and that of the sea becomes blurred appears shamanistic at this point, having ritual significance: "And so, admitted through black swollen gates/That must arrest all distance otherwise/Past whirling pillars and lithe pediments..." (37, 9-11) Here, through the "black swollen gates" which are perhaps figurations again of phallic stimulation, the normal boundaries of physical experience have been destroyed in the ecstatic union; in the moment of illumination/orgasm, as light

wrestles with light, the distinctions of body and spirit are imperceptible. Crane's incantatory speech here appears allied to the ritual tenor of the section, as his accretion of images builds to a climax, light, star and wave become fused in the totality of the synesthetic/erotic epiphany.

As one of the shaman's problems involves the articulation of the transcendent experience, so we may see Crane search for metaphors commensurate with the parousia of the erotic experience. It becomes, at the end of "Voyages III," analogous to the transport of the musical experience, as it often appeared for Baudelaire. At once sensual and transcendent, the erotic union mirrors the "silken skilled transmemberment of song" for Crane, literally transfiguring the distinctions of body and spirit, life and death:" and where death, if shed,/Presumes no carnage, but this single change," (37, 15-16) There is, then, no "you" or "I" at the culmination of the erotic experience, no differentiation between matter and spirit, or subjective and objective perception. The movement of the individual through the totality of the erotic experience, for Bersani, in Baudelaire and Freud, is related to his role as creator: "The artist is intrinsically an unanchored self. The energy with which he penetrates the world (or is penetrated by the world) sets him afloat...In love as in art, identity floats. Its wholeness can be shattered in various ways...Psychic identity is dissipated by the very force with which it is projected." (15)

What Tymieniecka has termed the Eros-créateur, the link between the erotic impulse and the creative urge, was apparent to Crane; in his letter of April 21, 1924 to Waldo Frank he states that, through his union with a lover, he has felt the "Word made Flesh". In effect, his imagination became freed through his experience of eros as liberator as well, sensing the power of the logos latent in the drama of erotic experience. In Crane's "Voyages," the erotic voyage itself constantly shifts to the realm of artistic impulse, significantly related to the harbor image in "Voyages IV": "In signature of the incarnate word/The harbor shoulders..." (38, 17-18) If the body is the vessel for the metamorphosis of spirit, then the logos of poetry may be, for Crane as well as many modern poets, its sustainer. By the fourth poem in Crane's "Voyages" sequence, the impossibility of an infinite erotic consummation is clear; sensual ecstasy and illumination are, as they were for the ritual priest, momentary. In "Voyages V," the poet has traveled to the limits of the ecstatic experience, and finds the end of the voyage, as Rimbaud found beauty, quite bitter: "What words/Can strangle this deaf moonlight? For we/Are overtaken." (39, 8-10) The poet here seeks an explanation, some recompense perhaps, for the dissolution of the erotic union in the word; it is toward the word/harbor he turns in search of divination, as in "Voyages VI" the poem's voyage ends at Belle Isle, finding poetic resolution as such in the "imaged Word...the unbetrayable reply/Whose accent no farewell can know." (41, 29, 30-

31) Although springing from the same source, the logos, perhaps here more perfect than eros, does not betray, does not leave. Erotic desire, in the "Voyages" sequence, burns bright in its passion, but is in turn transfigured into "pure possession," as in Crane's poem "Possessions," non-corporeal, noumenal, and ultimately poetic.

As, for Plato, homerotic experience was perhaps more lofty than heterosexuality, Crane and Rimbaud both sought to "reinvent" the nature of the erotic experience by exploring new forms of sensual perception; for both, the artistic urge, Dionsyian in its relation of sexuality with the creative dithyramb, involved an ecstatic apprehension of the totality of being. Homosexuality, like the disorder of the senses involved another form of conduit, another access to the threshold experience. What many termed vice, Crane and Rimbaud would consider saintly; searching for water in the desert of modern love, as Rimbaud termed it, both poets probed the nature of their own erotic past. Poems such as Rimbaud's "Les Soeurs de charité" embody the notion of a frustrated eros, turned against its object, as in this poem's figuration of death as a woman defying the poet's erotic possession. Rimbaud, like Crane, suffers from the thwarted eroticism of "un jeune, tout jeune homme," and his erotic fantasies are often desperate due to their lack of physical realization. The woman who disappears from Rimbaud's bed in "Les Déserts de l'amour" causes him to weep fitfully, and also leads him to a feeling of shame and insecurity

concerning his sexual power. This leads to an ultimate autoeroticism in poems like "H" (solitude becoming the mécanique erotique), the conceptual end point for the contradictions and torments inherent in the erotic journey. The poet nevertheless pursues the attempt to reach the amatory inconnu through the cycle of rejection and ecstasy, the banality of the sexual cat-and-mouse game of the Vierge Folle and the Epoux Infernal, in order to reinvent a love filled with truth, self-awareness, and charity.

The sensuality of eros spiritualizes, but, in Bersani's words, the "maximal point" of sensuality and illumination, once apprehended, creates an internalized space: "There is, after this moment, an expansion like that of infinite things, and perhaps a certain emptiness insinuates itself into the plenitude of the senses." (34, Baudelaire and Freud) Bersani's statement hints at the duality of the erotic experience which manifests itself in the work of Rimbaud, Baudelaire and Crane; desire leads to life, fertility and transcendence, but it also kills. In Freudian terms, eros and thanatos are linked, sensual pain and pleasure are allied. The erotic experience, like Baudelaire's goût de l'infini, often leads to an internalized longing; in "Les Plaintes d'un Icare," it appears as the result of the dichotomy between what Eliot termed the "high dream" and the "low dream," idealized Eros and its visceral mirror image: "Les amants des prostituées/Sont heureux, dispos, et repus;/Quant à moi, mes bras sont rompus/Pour avoir étreint

des nuées." (1-4) ("Lovers of harlots are happy, cheerful and satiated; but as for me, my arms are racked through embracing clouds.") (247) As the idealized Cythère was found by the poet to be "un terrain de désert rocailleux," so does Crane realize, as did Baudelaire, the double nature of the erotic impulse; in "The Marriage of Faustus and Helen," the figure of the mythical Helen is clearly juxtaposed with her modern-day manifestation. The ideal Helen is the sought-after erotic object ("But if I lift my arms it is to bend/To you who turned away once, Helen" 28, 39-40), but her modern image is denigrated as the "incunabula of the divine grotesque," a Medusa-like figure who appears in "Carmen de Bohème" and "National Winter Garden" as well. In Baudelaire's poems such as "Le Serpent qui danse" Jeanne Duval appears Medusa-like, again the mirror-image of idealized desire, similar to Crane's "simian Venus" in "National Winter Garden" in her figuration as hypertrophied sexuality; fear is, in these instances, mingled with the poet's description of the woman in question, hinting at something similar to Ferenczi's idea of Medusa-figurations as emblematic of the young boy's horror of female genitalia. Like the figure of the ulcerated Venus in Rimbaud's "Vénus Anadyomène" these grotesque women serve, in their representation of the destructive side of eros, to ground the poet in a psycho-sensual experience more ontologically valid, less a poetic act of faith than a true transformative process implying descent as well as ascent. It is the snake-woman of

"National Winter Garden" who brings Crane and the "audience" of spectators watching her to some realization of their experience, as, at the end of the poem, she appears to perform a redemptive act: "Then you, the burlesque of our lust, - and faith/Lug us back lifeward, bone by infant bone." (101, 27-8)

For Rimbaud, as for Crane, the erotic impulse was allied to the visionary; unlike Baudelaire in his "abstracted sensuality," however, Rimbaud speaks directly of the transformation through desire. In "Conte," the Prince seems to be a figuration of the poet in his desire to reinvent love, to realize its transformative aspect to the fullest extent: "(Le Prince) prevoyait d'etonnantes revolutions de l'amour... Il voulait voir la verité, l'heure de désir et de la satisfaction essentiel." (187) ("The Prince foresaw astonishing revolutions in love. He desired to see the Truth, the time of essential desire/And satisfaction." (157) The actions of Rimbaud's Prince seem autobiographical at times, and also appear to embody a type of wish-fulfillment ("Toutes les femmes qui l'avaient connu furent assassinées - "All women who had known him were slaughtered"--a statement which Crane might have made also) as well as asking a rhetorical question which prefigures Freud in its exploration of the pleasure/pain connection in erotic perception: "Peut-on s'extasier dans le destruction, se rajeunir par la cruauté!" (Is ecstasy possible in destruction? Can one grow young in cruelty?") (157)

For Rimbaud, the answer appears to be affirmative. The

pleasure threshold and its relation to pain are further developed in Une Saison en enfer, in the story of the Vierge folle and the Epoux infernal, whose relationship is based, as was Rimbaud's and Verlaine's, on a type of erotic tyranny; in giving herself over to the entirety of erotic possession (and here Crane's poem "Possessions" must again be remembered), the foolish virgin becomes a slave to eros and to the infernal bridegroom: "La vraie vie est absente. Nous ne sommes pas au monde. Je vais ou il va, il le faut. Et souvent il s'emporte contre moi, moi, le pauvre âme!" (219) ("True life is lacking. We are exiles from this world, really. I go where he goes; I have to. And lots of times he gets mad at me - at me, poor sinner!") (211) The mechanism of the love relationship, in all the sado-masochistic impulses implied throughout this section of Rimbaud's physical/metaphysical descent, has become that of the slave and master. Eros may be perverted, twisted into a force which destroys as well as gives life; for Rimbaud in the enfer, it destroys the integrity of the self, as the vierge folle cannot live without the epoux, who soon appears abstracted from the experience ("La morale est la faiblesse de la cervelle") and seeks instead an erotically charged union with the Word in "Alchimie du verbe" which follows.

The allegory of love which Rimbaud proposes here finds a complement in one of Crane's late poems, "Reply." One of his most clearly homoerotic works, it contains the elements of erotic experience as they appear in Rimbaud's enfer, folle

and epoux here figured as brother and brother: "...brother passes brother without sight.../Seek bliss, then, brother, in my moment's shame." (177, 3, 6) The poet's shame, like Rimbaud's in his poem of the same name, is not specified, but the poem's next stanza links erotic pleasure with violence: "...through wounds prescribed by swords/...hate is but the vengeance of a love caress/And fame is pivotal to shame with every sun." (8-10) Despiritualized here, eros has become the agent of pain as in Rimbaud's poem; significantly, in Crane's short poem, the experience leading to the poet's sense of shame and disgrace is not able to be translated into language: "All this that balks delivery through words." (7) It is only in one of Crane's last, and what many have perceived as one of his finest poems, "The Broken Tower," that the positive aspects of the erotic impulse are again organically drawn together with the salvatory logos: "What I hold healed, original now, and pure.../And builds a tower within that is not stone." (194, 32, 33) The poet's tower, once broken, has been made new through love; obvious phallic imagery aside, the tower appears, for Crane, as the transformative image, uniting word with impulse; through purified eros ("she/Whose sweet mortality stirs latent power" - 194, 27, 28) fusing body ("the matrix of the heart") with spirit as the tower unites earth with the "tall decorum of sky," "unsealing" both in the apotheosis of the erotic image.

The association of violence with erotic longing as well as poetic genesis seems constant in Crane's poetry; both

artistic as well as sexual consummation are often figured in terms of suffering, pain and blood. In poems such as "Lachrymae Christi," the violence is inflicted on the figure of the Dionysus/Savior, whose suffering is ritualistic in its depiction of the "swart thorns" which freshen on the year's "first blood;" the religious violence of Christ's crucifixion here appears allied to a type of springtime rite of slaughter suggested in the "year's first blood." It is this ritual violence which leads to linguistic/poetic purification, as the poet's tongue is cleared by the poem's end, where a revelation which appears language-bound is linked with Christ's agony on the cross: "Names peeling from Thine eyes/ And their undimming lattices of flame/Spell out in palm and pain" (20, 33-35) Crane's sacrificial victim here perhaps prefigures the vision of Edgar Allan Poe in The Bridge, whose burned body appears in the modern subway of "The Tunnel" bursting from a "smouldering bundle" and embodying the figure of a poetic Dionysus/Christ.

The strong emphasis on hands in Crane's work is related to the figurations of physical violence as well as desire and sensuality which appear frequently; phallic references aside, the hand is the agent of human communication, as in "Episode of Hands," where the "fingers of a factory owner's son" bandage and heal the "larger, quieter hand" of the worker, their contact forming a physical bridge transcending the polarities of class and race. In "Voyages II," they appear as the physical manifestations of erotic contact which

engender, in the poem which follows in this sequence, transformation via the "reliquary hands" of the sea.

Throughout The Bridge, the symbol of Brooklyn Bridge is referred to as the "Hand of Fire," the icon of apocalyptic transfiguration, and its figuration as the hand of fire which sears in its contact is found most powerfully in "Possessions." The double function of the hand which caresses as well as destroys is made clear in this poem; at the poem's beginning, the hand appears again as an agent of a transformation, as the poet approaches the threshold of erotic experience: "And the key, ready to hand-sifting/One moment in sacrifice." (18, 3-4) It is soon, however, the agent of violence, as it "assaults outright for bolts that linger/ Hidden" (6-7), in effect performing a ritual of eroticized violence through the action of probing the limits of sexual experience. The concealed "bolt" of erotic energy which may transform must be found, as must the Sanskrit charge for the aviator of "Cape Hatteras," through a burning out, through a "stabbing medley." It seems as if the extreme necessity for this transformation implies, throughout Crane's work, the figurations of violence and shipwreck, the "bleeding eidolon" in order to accomplish its ends. The "inclusive cloud" which Crane figures as an icon of "pure possession," is attained only through the violence and sexual rage which itself is dramatized in his poetry: "Upon the page whose blind sum finally burns/Record of rage" (25-6). The self-reflexive quality of the ritualized erotic experience here reminds

us of Crane's poem, "Legend," which begins the White Buildings collection. The locus of the poem is, as is that of "Possessions," the threshold experience; in "Legend," however, it lacks an exclusively erotic iconography. Reality on the other side of Crane's mirror is, as is the "pure possession," to be apprehended, however painfully. Drawn to the other side of the figurative mirror as Crane's moth (a self-figuration appearing in his early poem, "The Moth that God Made Blind,") is to the "imploring flame" of "Legend," the nature of the ritual "possession" here implies, as it does in many of Crane's works, the violence of consummation: "It is to be learned-/This cleaving and this burning.../Again the smoking souvenir." (3, 10-11) Crane's "bright logic" is won here, "unwhispering as a mirror is believed," through the bending of the moth to the flame, the act of the poet who "spends out himself again," in the act of violent burning, here a metaphor for life and desire. As the poet here enters the cycle of pain and deliverance which brings him to illumination, so does the speaker in "Possessions" become "Tossed on these horns" and "turning on smoked forking spires" again linking the metaphor of violent penetration with the ritualized erotic impulse, in order to achieve the redemptive vision at the poem's end.

The first example in Crane's work of the destructive impulse as necessary for the transformation of the poetic and personal vision is perhaps found in "C33," Crane's first published poem. The title, an allusion to the cell number of

Oscar Wilde while he was in Reading, places the poet in the Decadent frame, and perhaps alludes to Crane's own vision of himself as similar to Wilde in his prison experience, in effect "paying" for the act of being a homosexual writer. Wilde's prison experience is not directly addressed in the poem, and, again, Crane seems to be addressing his own experience as much as Wilde's situation: "He has woven rose-vines/About the empty heart of night." (125, 1-2)

The poem's involvement with images of purgation and redemptive "burning" appears related to the poetic faculty; the "searing sophistry" of the first stanza is opposed to the "mellowed wines of dreaming" which are the natural products of Wilde's/Crane's poetic reverie. The "rose-vines" are poetic expressions of his creativity, woven, in effect, around nothingness (the "empty heart of night"); the poet tends them even though they are full of thorns. The "thorny tree" of poetic revelation appears, curiously, allied to the maternal image (for Wilde as strong as it was for Crane): "O Materna! to enrich thy gold head/And wavering shoulders with a new light shed/From penitence must needs bring pain." (8-10) The process of poetic illumination, as well as the more Freudian journey to the maternal and perhaps eroticized "gold head" (figurations of golden hair are, for Crane, synonymous with eros; not only did Grace Hart Crane have a luxurious mane of golden hair, but Emil Opfer as well) is only achieved through suffering. It is through this experience that the poet, "who hears the lamp whisper thru night" and can "trace

paths tear-wet" entering the broken world, may be able to "forget all blight" in the "broken strain" of song and pain to undergo transformation. Although this poem represents a very early attempt at metaphorical structure (Crane was only seventeen at the time of its composition), the basic sequence of many of his later poems here is established. Through the process of giving oneself over to the extremities of experience, erotic ecstasy or ritual blood-sacrifice, the "bright logic," as in "Legend," the vision of Belle-Isle in the "Voyages" sequence, and the "unmangled target smile" of "Lachrymae Christi," all emblems of transfiguration, may be apprehended.

The ardent figurations of spiritual illumination are found also throughout Appolinaire's work; in Zone the moments of both erotic and religious intensity are figured in terms of light and burning as they are in the poems of Saint John of the Cross and Saint Teresa of Avila. In Zone, the "epiphany" of feeling and memory which the poet experiences as he approaches a Paris street filled with memories of youth and friendship ("Tu est très pieux avec le plus ancien de tes camerades René Dalize") (40, 25) achieves its greatest strength in its association with the "flamboyante gloire du Christ" which the poet senses upon entering the church. The figuration of Christ becomes transformed into the images of a flaming torch, a lily, and, in the modern-day equivalent of the miracle of the Resurrection, an aviator/bird similar to the Wright figure in "Cape Hatteras," who holds the "record

du monde pour le hauteur." He becomes, finally, allied with the phoenix, who, in his ritual act of burning, becomes reborn according to myth; Le phénix se bûcher qui soi-même s'engendre/Un instant voile tout de son ardente cendre." (41, 63-64) At the poem's end, the metaphor of burning becomes an analogue for desire and life itself as it does for Crane: the poet drunks the "alcool brûlant" of life as if it were, quite literally, the fiery water of an eau-de-vie.

In The Sadean Woman, Angela Carter explores the nature of the Sado-masochistic aspects of erotic experience:

> Sade's sexual metaphor is always ambiguous. Linguistically, he mystifies the sexual attributes of the female body; it is described in terms of sacred architecture, as though it were a holy place...This ironic sacralization of the body is the image of sado-masochism; even in the body's mortification, when it is spattered with blood, the altar retains its perfidious magic. Orgasm itself appears as the rendering of homage in Sade. This homage is itself equivocal, administered with such violence the recipient may regard it as sacrilege, the culmination of an act of hostility. (72)

The altar/body of spiritualized, romantic eros which Carter alludes to here is, in sado-masochistic experience, the locus of the connection between pleasure and pain. In Crane's poem, "Reply," the nature of desire is all-inclusive, as eros incorporates both extremes of sensation in its transcendent function; the homoerotic experience which appears central to the poem is part of this impulse, as Crane's first line of the poem suggests: "Thou canst read nothing except through appetite." It is this "appetite" which is itself incorporative of the erotic mingling of the experiences of pleasure and pain. As in other poems, Crane

here connects the nature of this experience with muteness; the ignominy with which society regards the homoerotic and sado-masochistic experiences is clearly a part of his inability to articulate the nature of this experience, which "balks delivery through words." The reply of the poem's title, an erotic response, of sorts, is related to this "ironic sacralization" of the mystic aspects of sexuality; the "wounds prescribed by swords" are, perhaps, the reply to the "long caress" of "conviviality" which stands for the homoerotic experience in Crane's poetic shorthand throughout the poem.

As in Sade's Philosophy in the Boudoir, the nature of sado-masochistic or homoerotic contact involves the freeing of sexual experience from the context of virtue and its attendant sense, in Crane's words, of "shame." The emphasis on sexual freedom of expression as a means of personal liberation which was at the core of Sade's revolutionary theory is perhaps related to Rimbaud's desire to trouver du nouveau through all aspects of the sense-experience, as well as Crane's attempt to apprehend new thresholds of consciousness in the same manner. Crane's aesthetic relies upon a sense of undifferentiated perception which, as it does for Rimbaud, equivocates all aspects of sense-experience and intellectual perception. In his search for "new conditions of life" which he perceived as central to artistic and personal experience in "General Aims and Theories," there is no clear demarcation between the aesthetic and the sensual or

intellectual perimeters of perception. Yeats' famous statement concerning the perfection by the poet of either life or art was not, in this sense, applicable to Crane or Rimbaud. The nature of eros was as much part of the drive for illumination as was the involvement in visionary aesthetics. In the vastness of Crane's "Appetite" in "Reply" we may see the desire to transcend the limits of perception on the absolute level as well as the immediately sexual level which the poet addresses.

The "bliss" which is achieved through the act of intercourse alluded to in the poem is described in terms of phallic imagery through the figuration of wounds inflicted by swords; the sword is the agent of the "long caress" which causes pleasure as well as agony. The exploration of sexual limits, and the distance between the "vengeance" and the "caress" in line nine, are allied to the exploration of conceptual limits as well within this poem, as the movement beyond to a Baudelairean <u>ailleurs</u> is found in the metaphor of penetration contained within the sword image in "Reply," as well as the penetrating flash of the lightning bolt in "Possessions": "Through a thousand nights the flesh/Assaults outright for bolts that linger...O undirected as the sky" (18, 5-7) Penetration of physical limits through homoerotic experience in "Possessions" carries a strongly mystical connotation, as the phallic penetration described is embedded within the context of ardent illumination: "I, turning, turning, on smoked forking spires" (21) The poem's constant

references to acts of "stabbing" "wounding" and "bleeding" are, significantly, related to the notion of "appetite" which also appears crucial to the erotic metaphor of "Reply." In "Possessions," it is the record of "rage" and "appetites" which finds its form in the "pure possession" of transcendent and illuminative vision; again, the erotic transfiguration is part of the larger movement, the "appetite" perhaps for Crane similar to the goût de l'infini found in Baudelaire and Rimbaud.

In an early poem, "The Moth that God Made Blind" Crane's erotic figurations appear more Freudian in their tenor. As, in "Reply," lack of vision ("brother passes brother without sight") implies a sense of shame connected with sexuality, the lack of vision figured in the blindness of the moth of the poem is related to a sexual experience perhaps more shameful for the poet than homoerotic longing. The blindness of the moth appears Oedipal; as Oedipus blinded himself upon realization of his incest, so does Crane's blind moth, with his "dim eyes" and "a tongue that cannot tell" seem to be an emblem of an erotic experience perhaps more psychologically disturbing than we would imagine. The moth appears tied to the maternal image at the poem's beginning: "Their mother, the moon, marks a halo of light/On their own small oasis, ray-cut, an incision" (122, 10-11) but in a manner which suggests violence, the "incision" here an echo of Oedipus' symbolic castration upon realizing his incest-wish.

Crane's moth is constantly figured in terms of a sensual

apprehension of experience; maternal overtones are combined with this sensuality in the image of the moth in flight as he appears "pierroting over/Swinging in spirals round the fresh breasts of day." (123, 29-30) The image of a maternal breast is joined in the next stanza of the poem with an image suggestive of phallic release; the ascent of the moth, as related to this, has been stressed throughout the poem until this point, and so the erotic movement of the poem appears built upon the metaphor of flight and ascent in a strongly sexual manner. He flies over "that circle of paradise" in an image of awakening sexuality, his wings climbing in "the power he felt bud" upon learning "of the span of his wings." It is at this point that the "sea of white spray" which appears "Shot out all white" leads to an erotic apotheosis, one similar to those in later poems such as "Possessions," as the moth is led again in ascent, the "white spray" turning into streams of white-hot light which "lead him up in octopus arms." The encircling movement of the eroticized light carries the moth close to the sun, where the transformative vision is granted: "And the torrid hum of great wings was his song/When below him he saw what his whole race had shunned." (123, 41-42)

Crane's poem "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" centers on the image of the mythic Helen who is, through Crane's poem, transformed into a modern-day figuration of beauty found, as the poet often liked to note, "sitting in a streetcar." The modern Helen's link to the mythic figure

appears in her portrayal as an archetypal femme fatale; in Crane's poem, she calls forth desire but never experiences its consummation: "The earth may glide diaphanous to death;/ But if I lift my arms it is to bend/To you who turned away once, Helen/Knowing the press of troubled hands, too alternate/...to hold you endlessly." (28, 38-42) Here, the "siren of the springs of guilty song" is perhaps similar to the symbolist figure of Helen as an embodiment of unattainable beauty. In Gustave Moreau's famous painting, Helen on the Walls of Troy (1885), she appears, like Salomé, stately and beautiful, standing out against a horizon streaked with blood, unaware of the destruction surrounding her. For Moreau, as for many poets and artists of this period, the Helen figure appears as an idealized beauty but also is, in Moreau's words, the personification of Evil, Fate and Death in the lineaments of her severe beauty. (Mathieu, 164) As the female figure of Beauté for Baudelaire in "Hymne à la Beauté" attracts the poet with her dazzling beauty but repels him with her cruelty, so does Moreau's Helen appear impervious to the scene around her. Crane's Helen, indifferent to the demands of the "world dimensional" (as is Moreau's Helen or his female figure in The Victims, who appears as a stylish and beautiful modern woman holding in her hands some human-looking puppets which she has presumably been playing with) is removed from the context of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" despite the poet's statements calling for her embodiment in the modern figure of the flapper. For Crane,

as for Moreau and Baudelaire, Helen represents the idea of perfection and beauty in a feminine ideal; as "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" was as icon of sorts for Romantic poets, so the inaccessible beauty of Helen functions as a point of inspiration as well as an incarnation of fatal desire. She is linked throughout Crane's poem with the refrain alluding to the "love of things irreconcilable"; as the poet may never possess her, in reality, the poem reflects a strong sense of wish-fulfillment in its title. In the poem, however, there is no real "marriage" between the Faust/poet and Helen. The poet/speaker hypothesizes a union in the first section of the poem: "There is some way, I think, to touch/Those hands of yours" (28, 23-24) but erotic or spiritual consummation is achieved only in the imagination: "Imminent in his dream, none better knows/The white wafer cheek of love." (28, 28-9) Moreau's extra-human Helen, a source of inspiration for Laforgue and Samain in their poetic explorations of the attraction of this mythic figure, transcended mere representation and became the embodiment of an idea of absolute beauty, as her image did also in Crane's poem. Moreau speaks of this in terms similar to those used by Crane in "General Aims and Theories" as we see in an excerpt from his diary: "O noble poetry of the living and impassioned silence! What a lovely art is that which is the mirror of physical beauties yet also reflects the great workings of the soul and the divine! It is the language of God!...the evocation of thought through line and arabesque, that is my aim." (Mathieu, 258)

As Crane wished to use the details of physical reality as a "springboard" for the apprehension of ideas (220) in order to create "new conditions" of perception in the modern mind, so does Moreau, a strong influence for contemporaries of Crane such as André Breton and many of the Surrealists, wish to arrive at the ideational level through the depiction of the essence of physical forms, "line and arabesque," as well.

Moreau's figure of Helen, then, appears as the feminine incarnation of the idea of an absolute beauty; in his watercolor of 1896, Helen Glorified, she is swathed in a milky light, eyes closed, as two darkened male figures cling to her cast-off robes. Their human form is contrasted with her idealized beauty, which forms the radiant focus of the canvas. Although the male figures appear to be addressing her, her eyes remain closed, her head tilted away from them. It is this connection of the feminine image with silence and unrequited eros which appears in two of Crane's works from "White Buildings," "Stark Major" and "North Labrador," as well as in numerous poems by Baudelaire and Rimbaud.

In Baudelaire's poem, "La Beauté," the feminine figuration of an ideal is evoked in terms of a series of metaphors which do little to render a sense of her corporeality; her allure is compared to "un rêve de pierre" and her heart is made of snow "à la blancheur des cygnes" but there is no strong sense of physical form for the woman who is speaking. As the white light of Moreau's glorified Helen almost obliterates her actual features, so does Baudelaire's Helen-

like beauty assume the characteristics of an idea rather than a vivified image. She is unable to move, as "le mouvement déplace les lignes" - movement disturbs the ideal line of her pose. She exists "pour fasciner ces dociles amants," the poets who spend their days consumed in "austeres études" or contemplation of her eyes, which are, significantly, "purs miroirs" which magnify the beauty of all things, and are, in this power of reflection, filled with eternal light. She is, in this manner, an agent of illuminative transformation, but one which is narcissistic and potentially dangerous, as the mirror-reflection of Beauty hypnotizes and enslaves. She is associated, finally, with the idea of silence, as she inspires "un amour/Eternel et muet ainsi la matière" (26, 3-4), a love silent as matter itself; her revelation is, ultimately, incommunicable.

In Rimbaud's poem, "Being Beauteous," the female figure of Beauty is sphinx-like, as is Baudelaire's; her "chairs superbes" are alluded to, but not truly defined, and, as in Moreau's painting, the whiteness and luminosity accompanying her form render all else, here "les couleurs propres de la vie," dark in contrast. For Rimbaud, the female "being beauteous" is, as she was for Baudelaire in "Beauté," more force than actual form; she appears as "le Vision sur le chantier" impelling the poet with physical allure which is never quite physical. Her power is essentially erotic, yet not that of the Vierge folle. She calls forth the desire of the poet, who is transformed into a "nouveau corps amoreux,"

in a sense, by the act of his longing; his "Vision," however, is potentially destructive here, as the "face cendrée" of beauty causes the poet to fall abruptly upon "le canon sur lequel je dois m'abattre." Like Crane's Helen, she causes him to re-enter the "world dimensional" after his view of idealized eros.

In Crane's short poem, "North Labrador," the female image associated with beauty is, as it is in the poems referred to here by Baudelaire and Rimbaud, depicted in terms of stillness and silence. Crane's poem, unusually spare in its imagistic development, addresses a female figure whose aloofness and brilliant beauty are unapproachable and embedded in silence: "Has no one come here to win you/Or left you with the faintest blush/Upon your glittering breasts?/Have you no memories, O Darkly Bright?" (15, 5-8) The poet receives no answer to his question, no response to his desire; as in Baudelaire's "Beauté," it is the mirror which thrusts his own image back upon him in an almost autoerotic manner. As in both Baudelaire's and Rimbaud's poems, the feminine figure is never clearly detailed; her effect is much more important than her essence. In Crane's poem, this is seen in the association of the female with the vision of North Labrador which is the poem's locus; itself inaccessible, the land of "leaning ice," the coldness and barrenness of North Labrador are the coldness and barrenness of the Darkly Bright who, as in Baudelaire's and Rimbaud's poems, is able to illuminate but also destroy. She appears

to have carried the poet, in Crane's poem, into a Rimbaldian abyss; upon asking his question which garners no response, he is left "Cold-hushed," with only the"...shifting of movements/That journey toward no Spring-/No birth, no death, no time nor sun." (9-11) He has somehow transcended the "world dimensional" here, but the recompense for the vision of beauty appears to be an emotional and psychic disarticulation for the poet suspended somewhere between the "silent eternity" of the poem's first stanza and the nothingness of the "shifting of moments" at the poem's end.

In Crane's poem, "Stark Major" the female figure also appears allied to the concept of the disarticulation of erotic experience. The poem's title, perhaps an allusion to a musical coldness akin to the image of "North Labrador," refers to the appearance in the poem's first stanza of the "starker vestiges of the sun" which accompany the late spring referred to, but also cast a cold light on the scene of awakening. For Crane, in "The Harbor Dawn," waking consciousness is allied with a synesthetic perception of sounds and dream imagery, the mind straddling the phantoms of the unconscious which are fading as the act of waking becomes complete. His vision of Pocahontas blends with the "soft sleeves of sound" which enter his room, and the experience of being gently "woven into day" provides one of the pivotal moments for <u>The Bridge</u>. In "Stark Major," the act of waking is accompanied by a hyperborean glare which denotes "the time of sundering," both of the self from the warmth of sleep and

of lover from lover. The female figure of the poem is allied with the quality of light in her sense of coldness and distance from the poet; she is, presumably, about to have a child, as we are told that "Her mound of undelivered life/ Lies cool upon her, not yet pain." (10, 11-12) This distances her even more from the lover of the poem, whose death appears linked to the child's conception. The female figure of the poem, although less related to the notion of beauty than the woman of "North Labrador," has been granted access to a realm of experience which not only distances her from the male but also elevates her, and in this she shares certain affinities with the prototype of Helen. As the lover leaves her to look "at doors and stone with broken eyes," his vision of the "world dimensional" suffers diminution. She, however, has been unaffected by the act of "sundering," and her apprehension of reality, perhaps through the intensity of the experience of maternity, supersedes his own: "Henceforth her memory is more/Than yours, in cries, in ecstasies/You cannot ever reach to share." (22-24) She has, in her ability to nurture a child, a biological and emotional link with the natural world which the male can never share, and in this perhaps he senses an even greater estrangement. In her future role as mother, he may lose her as an erotic object.

CHAPTER VII

In Les Paradis artificiels, Baudelaire notes the "astonishing predilection of the brain" for the "liquid element and its seductions" during the synesthetic experience of the hashishin. The figurations of the sea-image and the qualities of flux, motion and purification inherent in the "liquid element" appear central to the poetic development of Crane, Rimbaud and Baudelaire; the sea as numen for the poetic process of transformation is sensed continually throughout their work.

As the sea-image is a conduit for the transport of the poetic consciousness through the flux of creation, so it is often described in the alchemical process as an extractio, or "watery knowledge" distilled from the refinement of the base metals into gold (itself frequently figured as aurum potabile, or drinkable divine essence). In this context, the metaphors of thirst which appear especially in Rimbaud's "Comedie de la soif" and Crane's "Wine Menagerie" are crucial to the multiform figuration of water as such throughout their work; the liquid element, in its most important function, is an emblem of life. Many critics have found it odd that Rimbaud, who had never seen the sea, wrote so intimately of it; it is perhaps the idea of the sea, bringer of life and change, that impressed him most as an analogue for poetic and personal movement. As the sea never stands still, so Rimbaud and Crane are poets of flux and motion; images accrete in

their works with great rapidity, symbols change and become polyvalent, the "frames" of consciousness themselves shift from stanza to stanza. Theirs is the dynamism that is inherently the property most definitive of the sea: no still-life Impressionist surface to it, but a kinetic and powerful surge of strength that embraces all of life. As Auden notes in The Enchafèd Flood, "The sea is the real situation and the voyage is the true condition of man; to leave the land and the city is the desire of every man of sensibility and honor." (12)

The idea of sea-movement as crucial to experience is found in Baudelaire's "La Chevelure," as the movement from present to future, from sensation to idea, seems the essential method for poetic development. As the poet approaches the object of his desire, he is carried back by the poetic current to the associations of his memory, which surge forth and imbue the tresses of hair with fantasy images of Asia, silk, and warmth.

For Crane throughout the "Voyages" sequence, the sea motion, as it is in Baudelaire's poem, often mirrors the sexual movements of "sleep, death and desire" as well as the flux of consciousness in the poetic process from object to memory. In "Voyages II," the water image circumscribes all aspects of movement; it is temporal, psychic and erotic. There are traces in the poem of Crane's reading of Edward Carpenter's The Ocean of Sex, praised by Ouspensky in Tertium Organum. Carpenter's work approaches the sea image as a

figuration of conscious flux and sensual undulation, as it appears "vibrating, swaying emotional to the star-glint of the eyes of all human beings." (Ouspensky, 156) The world of water, in its ebb and flow, is an image of the transcendence of time in Crane's poem, as the sea-woman, in her deliverance of the "great wink of eternity," moves from past memory to present reality as her "turning shoulders wind the hours." The flux and reflux of the wave-movement here carry the poet through the process of desire, as the moment of sexual release is hastened by the "superscription of bent foam and wave" which transforms the "floating flower" in its erotic movement. As Baudelaire loses himself in the undulations of chevelure, so Crane finds himself "wrapt" in the easy rhythm of the "poinsettia meadows" of the sea tides; the sea-image is, for both poets, synesthetic in its evocation of the mingling of sight, sound and smell that is part of the marine experience. Less a symbol than what Bertocci terms a "radical metaphor," (155) filled with varied associations and sense, the sea-image's intensity, through its figuration as fleece or flower, draws us in to its paradisial universe, its "genius," as Wallace Stevens described it. In this, the sea's movement is self-reflexive, containing, in Baudelaire's poem, not only the associations of the physical sea, but the noumenal vastness its image contains as well: "ce noir océan ou l'autre est enfermé." The "other ocean" is also suggested in Crane's poem, as the phenomenological sea bends "moonward" in its approximation of "rimless floods" and "unfettered

leewardings." The conceptual sea without a shore, here rimless, suggests another important property of the sea-image, its wideness, its sense of limitless freedom. For Baudelaire, as Bachelard has noted, the concept of vastness was crucial to the poetic process, as it embodied the sense of "le plus naturellement l'infini de l'espace intime." (174) The depth and expansion needed for poetic creation is most naturally found in the oceanic image, in whose expanse the blurred distinctions of subject and object, as well as the vastness of the poetic imagination, are best grounded.

For Bachelard in "L'eau et les reves," the sea as mare tenebrarum, the source of fear and liquidité d'excitation psychique, (22) mirrors the internal flux of consciousness within the poet. Its appeal is total as a symbol of the destructive as well as the creative aspects of consciousness: "Les choses, les formes...se dispersent et s'effacent quand retentit l'appel de l'eau. L'appel de l'eau réclame en quelque sorte un don total, un don intime. En fait, le saut dans le mer ravive les echos d'une initiation...Il est la seule image exacte, la seule image qu'on peut vivre, du saut dans l'inconnu." (22)

The threshold experience sought by Crane is figured here in Bachelard's leap into the metaphorical sea of the unknown. In the dynamism of its movement, whether the gentle, maternal bercement of the "milky sea" in Crane's "The Bathers," or the ravaging waves of shipwreck in "At Melville's Tomb," the sea-image proves to be the most powerful icon of the psychisme

hydrante which Bachelard finds at the source of the poetry of transfiguration.

In Biblical terms, the sea, in its vastness, has been allied to an undifferentiated sense of being, the primordial flux of disorder which was given shape by God during the first days of creation. In the Book of Revelation, the vision of the new heaven and earth is significant in that it contains no sea at all - "there was no more sea" it tells us, as if the unruly force it embodies is well kept away from any notion of an orderly Christian paradise. For poets, however, the sea's own type of déréglement is indicative of an absolute freedom in its expanse of wind and wave; Byron reminds us in Childe Harold that man's ruin and earthly control "stops with the shore," as the sea becomes an image of the vastness of the "uncivilized" and untrapped potential of the unconscious. Its suggestiveness is well allied with the work of Symbolist and Modernist poets, as, for many of these writers, the nature of the poetic act involved the evocation of internalized states of awareness and revelation, not their strict delineation. Verlaine's Art poétique (1882) stresses this suggestive power of the poetic image over a discursive and more explanatory method of presentation, and Mallarmé later was to epitomize this in his work and in his insistence that the poet must "retain only the suggestion" of things. As the sea-image contains a mysterious quality in its profound depths, so the poème de la mer has as its basis creative locus the profundity of the internalized voyage.

As, in Crane's poem, "At Melville's Tomb," an "embassy" exists undersea, so does the possibility of a "kingdom," similar to Poe's in "The City in the Sea" beneath the "wilderness of glass" exist for Rimbaud. Perhaps drawing more from Jules Verne's Vingt mille lieues sous la mer than from Poe's more macabre undersea city of "melancholy waters," Rimbaud's "bateau ivre" in its journey encounters "incroyables Florides/Mêlante aux fleurs des yeux de panthères aux peaux/ D'hommes..." (32, 45-47) ("unbelievable Floridas/I have seen among the flowers the wild eyes/of panthers in the skins of men") (121). Significantly, the poet's journey is filled with the "green water" that suggests absinthe as well as the green hues of the sea, linking another image, that of the hallucinatory vision, with the sea voyage. It is this absinthe/sea that causes the synesthetic vision of the "ecstatic flotsam" which propels Rimbaud toward an illumination which mingles sea with sky, experiencing a depth of imaginative power that is singular and shamanic: "J'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir." (32) ("I've seen what men have only dreamed they saw!" (121)

As Rimbaud's poem involves a journey into self and the unconscious, so does the sea voyage seem an appropriate poetic expression of this internalized exploration. For Jung, in Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious the water of the sea is a strong figuration of the unconscious mind:

> Water is the commonest symbol for the unconscious... The world of water is where all life floats in

> suspension, where the realm of the sympathetic system, the soul of everything, begins; where I am indivisibly this and that...The way of the soul in search of its lost father leads to the water, to the dark mirror that reposes at its bottom...This water is no figure of speech, but a living symbol of the dark psyche...The depths of the sea are dark, yet the source of life is often the "place of darkness." (19)

As Baudelaire speaks in Les Paradis artificiels of plunging into the abyss of the unconscious, its powerful and dark undertow exerting a strong pull similar to that described by Nerval in Aurélia when watery currents fill the poet's brain as he drifts toward sleep, so does Jung speak here of the figuration of the unconscious as dark water, its mysterious depths those of the recesses of the self. It is an emblem of the uncontrollable nature of the unconscious, as Rimbaud calls it in "bateau ivre" the "Fleuve impassible," an uncontrolled current which must guide the poet in his journey, but certainly cannot be mastered by the self. As the poet gives in to the erotic impulse in order to experience ecstasy, so must he give himself over to the surge of the fluid unconscious in its revelation of the "City in the Sea" which is the underground self. The probing of the imagery of the unconscious, like the probing of the erotic experience in its depths, implies for Crane a disintegration of sorts as well, as he "Must first be lost in fatal tides" to "tell" the story of his own primal experience. The free association of unconscious imagery as a means of approaching psychoanalytical "revelation" is here similar to Crane's logic of metaphor which often relies on an intuitive response of association in order to make the necessary connection

between unconscious symbol and associative meaning. In "General Aims and Theories" he writes: "The motivation of the poem must be derived from the implicit emotional dynamics of the materials used, and the terms of expression are often selected less for their logical (literal) significance than for their associational meanings. Via this and their metaphorical inter-relationships, the entire principle of the poem is raised on the organic construction on a "logic of metaphor." (221) Crane goes on to describe this association as the "genetic basis of all speech," or a type of Ur-communication which seems related to the psychological idea of a collective unconscious, as well as prefiguring a type of linguistic "deep-structure" reminiscent of Chomsky. Crane concludes his often overlooked essay by describing the unconscious response to his "dynamics of inferential mention" as a process extraordinarily similar to psychoanalytic method: "In manipulating the more imponderable phenomena of psychic motives, pure emotional crystallizations, etc. I have had to rely on these dynamics of inferential mention, and I am doubtless still unconscious of having committed myself to what seems nothing but obscurities to some minds. It is part of a poet's business to risk not only criticism - but folly - in the conquest of consciousness." (222)

The tumult of waves which bring forth, in "Voyages VI" a "splintered garland for the seer" seems to again link the water movement with that of the unconscious mind in its psychological journey. Revelation of the self is achieved,

but it is fragmentary and its glory appears "splintered"; the rewards of penetration of the unconscious levels of the psyche, as anyone involved in psychoanalytic therapy will note, are often disconnected and perplexing for the "seer" who wishes truth. The psychoanalytic voyage appears often to be, for modern man, something of a rite de passage, as the sea journey appears to be a mirror for the internalized movement toward the unconscious.

This sea ritual appears in Crane's poem "Repose of Rivers" linked to a poetic and personal "coming of age" as the poet speaking through the persona of the river, states: "I could never remember/That seething, steady leveling of the marshes/Till age had brought me to the sea." (16, 3-5) The sea vision, like that of the unconscious, involves the perception of a landscape of terror: "Where cypresses shared the noon's/Tyranny; they drew me into hades almost." (7-8) Here, the depths of hades, like the depths of the unconscious in the dream state so strongly depicted in Nerval's Aurélia, are frightening, but contain revelatory mysteries as well. The figurations of the unconscious come to us through the dream image, according to Jung: through this manifestation, according to Pierrot, "l'inconscient corrige l'homme, lui apporte des conseils d'une sagesse ancestrale...c'est dans les flots de cet inconscient que chaque nuit l'individu se retrempe." (19) He goes on to link the unconscious, as Crane does in this poem, with the infernal river Styx and oneiric symbol: "On peut supposer que la experience onirique

primitive est à l'origine du mythe de la navigation des âmes des morts sur un fleuve infernal, par exemple en Grèce avec le fleuve des enfers et le nautonier Charon." (21) As, through the dream journey, Nerval is able to apprehend the secret of the noumenal revealed through the dream images of the inconscient, so Crane finds eidetic revelation in the collective "memory that all things nurse" which he had found entrance to as a result of the sea experience.

Rimbaud's rite of passage appears also as a type of infernal river-journey into the depths of the unconscious in Une Saison en enfer: necessary for the poet, this psychological search for the collective representations which may serve as illuminations is effected through the dream process. In the section entitled "Nuit de l'enfer" Rimbaud moves through the states of "Extase, cauchemar, sommeil" in the oneiric drama which parallels the poetic search for meaning. Through the hallucination of the dream state, he achieves power; as the dream experience progresses, telluric reality undergoes an equivocation similar to the sea's function as the great leveler of men and things. As the sea may create and destroy without regard to time or value, so does Rimbaud's experience of traumwerk equivocate the givens of conscious reality: "Je vais dévoiler tous les mystères: mystères religeux ou naturels, mort, naissance, avenir, passé, cosmogonie, néant." (217) ("I will tear the veils from every mystery-mysteries of religion or of nature, death, birth, the future, the past, cosmogony, and nothingness.")

(199) In his dream-search, Rimbaud finds a common symbol for the enlightenment he seeks, as he asks: "Veut-on que je disparaisse, que je plonge à la recherche de l'anneau? Veut-on? Je ferai de l'or, des remèdes." (217) ("Shall I disappear? Shall I begin an attempt to discover the Ring? Shall I? I will manufacture gold, and medicines.") (199) Here, the poet's attempt to find the ring appears as an archetypal dream symbol of union, strength, self-fulfillment. The circular ring, like the uroboros of myth, indicates a spiritual union with the anima or shadow, and the poet's manufacture of gold and medicines further reinforces the dream symbol of the ring, as the end-product of the alchemical process, in its internalized manifestation, involved the "gold" of enlightenment as well as a spiritual healing; aurum potabile as medicine for the infernally tortured soul.

According to Cocteau, solitude is the "royaume des marins," and Baudelaire, in his continual use of the metaphor of plunging into the abyss in order to experience revelation, often appears solitary in his search. The sea appears, in this manner, as essential to the lone individual's reflection, casting back through the water-mirror a figuration of internal and external mood; in "L'Homme et la Mer," the "plunge" into the self is reflected in the sea: "La mer est ton miroir: tu contemples ton âme/Dans la déroulement infini de sa lame/Et ton esprit n'est pas un gouffre moins amer." ("The sea is your looking-glass; you contemplate your own soul in the infinite unfolding of its waves, while your mind

is a no less bitter gulf.") (151) Like the mirror of Narcissus' pool, the reflective surface of the water outlines the dark secrets of both the sea's bottom and the Narcissus-figure who is intent upon finding his image in the infinite wave. Narcissus' search, however, proves useless, as his "knowledge" never truly penetrates the surface of things. The reciprocity which the Narcissus/seeker may have between his own soul and depths of the sea is not, for Baudelaire in this poem, achieveable; although both the man and the sea share qualities of the ténébreux, there is no interpenetration of the secrets which both guard: "Homme, nul n'a sondé le fond de tes abîmes/Ô mer, nul ne connaît tes richesses intimes." ("O Man, no man knows what intimate riches you contain, O Sea, jealously you guard your secrets.") (151) The purely reflective quality of the sea here, as it admits of no entry into its conceptual depths of buried treasure, may turn the Narcissus/seeker desperate, and it is here that the image of the drowned man becomes part of the sea's destructive figuration. For Eliot and many others a symbol of modern man, the drowned man, like Rimbaud's noyé pensif, is a victim of the sea's lethal undertow; in order to fathom the secrets at the sea/psyche's bottom, a "sea-change" through death is necessary. In "L'Irrémédiable," Baudelaire's angel must experience death by drowning in the process of arriving at the "Puits de Verité" found at the bottom of the sea-abyss: "Un damné descendant sans lampe.../Où veillent des monstres visqueux.../Font une nuit plus noire encore

.../Un navire pris dans le pôle/Comme en un piège de cristal.../Il est tombé dans cette geôle." ("A damned man going lampless down the brink...where slimy monsters glare ...that deepen the darkness of the night...a ship seized as in a crystal trap at the Pole...landed in that prison.") (157-8)

The extraordinary destructive powers of the sea and the figurations of drowning men approximating "watery knowledge" are found throughout Crane's work, perhaps as a result of his experience of a devastating hurricane on the Isle of Pines. The frenzy of the sea during this storm clearly impressed the poet, as his letters are filled with allusions to the Isle of Pines experience, and many of his later poems ("O Carib Isle!," "The Mermen," and "The Hurricane") seem centered in the shipwreck metaphor. Fear is also allied to the sea-experience, as psychic drowning is as frightening an experience as physical drowning; what Melville saw in "Pebbles" as the "implacable Sea" pleased by "myriad wrecks" is part of Crane's injunction at the beginning of the "Voyages" sequence: "The bottom of the sea is cruel." As the poet must drown in the conceptual sea of erotic experience in "Voyages III" in order to be fully given over to the entirety of love, tossed "Upon the steep floor" of the ocean/bed in an image of frenzy suggesting both the act of drowning and sexual intercourse, so does the "sea-change" which the poet speaks of mirror the transformation of the self in the "silken skilled transmemberment of song" that is eros. The "scattered

chapter" of bones that are thrown back by the waves in "At Melville's Tomb" are here transformed into an image of drowning which, when wedded with the implications of eros, becomes less malignant in its tenor; the torn limbs of the shipwreck are, in "Voyages III" "transmembered," indicating the sense of death by drowning as an ultimate act of rebirth. As Baudelaire must lose himself in la chevelure, drowning in the sensuality of his experience, in order to achieve poetic revelation, so must Crane, in "Voyages IV," lose himself in the "Fatal tides" of eros and its attendant "shipwreck" of loss in the process of "telling" or bringing to awareness the mysteries of love and consciousness inherent in the Joycean "wavespeech" of the "transmemberment of song."

CHAPTER VIII

The color white has held special significance for poets as well as artists in the modern age; although their usage of artistic means may differ, frequently the associations they make with whiteness are, on a conceptual level, similar in many ways. For abstract artists, the color white embodied not only the obvious challenge of a bare canvas but highly charged spiritual qualities as well. Kandinsky, speaking for many abstract artists, notes: "The color white fills us with an absolute silence. It sounds inwardly and responds to some pause in music, which, though temporarily interrupting the development of a melody, does not represent a definite end of the sequence. It is not a dead silence, but one full of possibilities." (68)

Kandinsky's whiteness here appears allied to that of Mallarmé, whose idea of the possibilities of literary creation found its expression frequently in the evocation of the blank page set before the poet. Musical caesura, like the "white spaces" on an abstract canvas or the blank spaces on the poetic page which are such an integral part of Mallarmé's Un coup de dés, creates an important pause in the flow of consciousness, as Kandinsky notes. Silence, in this form similar to the fertile blankness of the Zen meditation, represents in its conceptual whiteness the void from which creation springs. Kandinsky continues: "White has the appeal of silence which has suddenly become comprehended. It is a

"blank," infinitely young, a symbol of a world from which all color, as a material substance, has disappeared. This world is so far above us that we do not perceive any sound coming from it...For that reason, white is used to color pure joy and infinite purity." (68) Kandinsky's white here approaches the embodiment of noumenal reality, the "world far above us" which Mallarmé was to seek in his attempts at pure poetry, and which Crane had as the endpoint of his psychic and poetic transformation. White, more than a color in the artist's palette, and much more than the sum of all colors, approach a totemic quality for modern artists and poets; it was, for Malevich, the "only true, real representation of infinity" (Elsen, 406), and for Klee the "white-in-white" of the "nothingness-plenum" from which all colors and artistic representations spring. Of Klee's attachment to whiteness as an abstract metaphor for creation Bronstein notes: "Klee's white-in-white is a given, noticed by the eye with little sensation, in whose belly the increase of tension, the white's "descent on behalf of ascent" creates a necessary opposition-correspondence." (67) Whiteness, then, makes possible the line and form perceptible in the abstract canvas; it held, in Léger's words, the "magic which envelops truth." (153) For Léger, perhaps in a manner similar to Crane in his concept of White Buildings, his first book-length venture into the "white heat" of poetry, an entirely white city was envisioned as a futuristic paradise; in his plan for the 1937 Paris Exposition, he suggested the idea of

Paris Completely White. Perhaps rejected as impractical, Léger's plan called for the employment of 300,000 people to scrub the facades of the gray buildings of Paris in order to "create a white and luminous city," a "fairyland" of futuristic vision. For Léger and many others, whiteness as the embodiment of light served an important psychological function; in his plan for a "new city" which he discussed with Trotsky, light and whiteness were essential to the creation of a positive environment for workers. Rather than the darkened factories which were commonplace, Léger suggested that through whiteness and light the spirits of all may be elevated: "Light will violently orchestrate the whole." (152)

For poets such as Mallarmé or Crane, the whiteness indicative of purification is often related to the purity of l'Idée, however imprecise or ephemeral the idea itself may seem, especially in Mallarmé's work. His desire to donner un sens plus pur to the language of men is part of the purification of not only self and soul, but the language of poetic experience, as it was for Crane and Rimbaud. Askesis appears, then, as another aspect of the transformative impulse; the poetic and personal act of cleansing often takes a religious turn, as Beausire notes of Mallarmé: "L'objet de la poésie de Mallarmé est la conquete d'une pureté de regard ...le pouvoir de saisir le rhythme de l'éternité. Enfin la poèsie est l'unique religion valable. Dieu est psychologiquement póesie." (54) As, in Mallarmé's poem, "Soupir," the

"blanc jet d'eau" travels upward, "vers l'Azur" in the attempt at purification, so, in Crane's poem "Voyages VI," the process of purification and ascent expresses its ultimate figuration in the "white echo" that is the emblem of Belle Isle. Religious purity, although ultimately ridiculed in Rimbaud's "Les Premières communions," is constantly figured in white; the "blanche fenêtre" which appears on Sunday in poem V of this sequence becomes mirrored in the "l'air blanc" of the "nuit sainte" in poem VI. Virginal as well as religious in its symbolism, whiteness, in poem VIII, appears as it does frequently in Christian iconography as the emblem of Christ, whose presence is found in the white communion wafer, itself a symbol of transformation; the speaker confronts the image of the Virgin, immaculate, in the face of the "blanc million des Maries." In Crane's poem "Lachrymae Christi," this appears as the "white rinsings" of benzine, itself a powerful chemical "purifier" allied with the image of Christ as religious savior and purifier, through whose tears all are redeemed.

Again related to Christian symbolism, the figurations of whiteness are expressive frequently of religious joy, sacramental in use. A priest's vestments are primarily white, and the color is worn as an emblem of chastity in marriage and purification/innocence in baptism. In his poem, "Autre éventail," Mallarmé fuses the image of the whiteness of an angel's wing with the movement of a young girl's hand in the act of opening and closing a fan, becoming the "blanc vol

fermé" which also suggests the purity of the hand/wing in motion. Purification and ascent, in Crane's work, are often white in their motion toward Metzinger's "white Primordial Unity" of the infinite. In "To the Cloud Juggler," Crane figures the ascent of Harry Crosby at death (the "juggler" referred to in the poem's title) in terms of the searing whiteness of the Sun's light: "Your light lifts whiteness into virgin azure." (159, 5) In "Key West," similarly, Crane's meteor, curving in its ascent like the "white escarpments" of Brooklyn Bridge, forms a "white arch" which serves as a portent of the end of the storm and its destruction.

The white light of illumination and purified consciousness, for Mallarmé the pure clarté de conscience figured in Hérodiade, often becomes internalized, indicative of the shadow which illumination implies. In Igitur, Mallarmé's speaker finds revelatory light too overwhelming in its perfection, and he seeks, as a result, the shadow, dark and Jungian in its tenor, the opposite of articulated consciousness, exclaiming: "Tout est trop clair!" Igitur must return to the "Ombre antérieure" which appears womb-like in its "opacité" in order to experience what Blanchot terms the desoeuvrement de l'être or the separation of consciousness from itself. For Crane, in "Recitative," light and whiteness appear as the manifestations of clear consciousness, similar to that in Igitur, which imply their opposite, the "shadowed halves" which are like the Ombre of undifferentiated

perception, consciousness without illumination. As Mallarmé's shadow is "àntérieure" so is Crane's primordial darkness figured in the "brain's disk shivered against lust" as animalistic, inarticulate: "While darkness, like an ape's face, falls away/And gradually white buildings answer day." (25, 15-16)

This inherently suggestive quality of whiteness as modern metaphor appears central to Mallarmé in his writings. What appears in "Brise marine," as the "vide papier que la blancheur défend," the poet's empty page glaring in its whiteness, symbolizes not only the suggestiveness of possibilities but the poet, white with fear, staring at the blank page. His desire for l'ambigüité, which appears throughout his theoretical works, is perhaps like Poe's notion of the "indefinite" pleasure needed in poetry; for both poets, whiteness, as embodied in the blank page, stood as an emblem of the limitless possibilities of the poetic consciousness in imaginative journey. The imaginative world, in the image of the white page, is perhaps more enticing than the phenomenological realities of the marine scene which is the locus of "Brise marine." The sea-birds and swaying masts are less important than the suggestion of interior universes here; it is not the objective flower which Mallarmé lauds in his essay on the crisis in poetry, but the one entirely created by the poet himself, as we witness his famous statement: Je dis: une fleur!, in itself as revolutionary as Rimbaud's Je est un autre. Mallarmé's flower is the one which is "absent from

every bouquet," and it is in this connection of whiteness in the symbol of the blank page with the idea of absence rather than poetic presence that Mallarmé's aesthetic again finds parallels in Crane's work as well as in abstract art.

As pictorial whiteness is not so much color as the absence of color, so the definition of the aesthetic experience by Borges ("the imminence of a revelation which does not occur") cites a type of absence which is similar in terms of literature to the white canvases of Minimalist painters. As in works such as Robert Motherwell's Elegies for the Spanish Republic, a series of paintings begun in 1949 which express the emotional impact of the Spanish Civil War, whiteness is used as a strong background to intensify the violence of the black vertical slashes which are the hallmarks of this group of paintings. In this manner, Rauschenberg's all-white canvases, first disturbing to viewers when exhibited in 1952, eventually became known for the unlimited possibilities of their blankness, a pictorial "absence," as they reflected the shadows of viewers who walked past. Like Rauschenberg, Mallarmé's radical absence, in its aesthetic, is itself a symbol of the "point-zero" of creation which each, in his own way, reached. Whiteness as a defining absence contains also the sense of mystery inherent in artistic perception. As, for Rauschenberg, each viewer of his white canvases saw a discrete image, each shadow in a sense defined by itself without any help from the artist, so, for Mallarmé, the reader defines the perimeters of the text, also making his

own "shadow" through contact with the opacity of the poem.

In Un coup de des, Mallarmé's "white aesthetic" is perhaps most close to the dynamics of the visual arts. In the preface to this work, he describes the effect of the strategically placed white spaces in the printed text: "The blanks in fact assume an importance, striking first: versification required them like a surrounding silence...The text imposes itself in various places, near or far from the latent guiding thread." (105) For the poet, everything in the poem happens "by shortcut, hypothetically;" the length of the spaces on the page determining the speed, like a musical score, of the act of reading. The mystery of the poem, like the mystery of the white spaces on canvas, lies in the "hypothetical," the "naked use of thought" which the poet speaks of that leads us to our own evocation of form and image.

Giorgio de Chirico, in his painting, frequently used the whiteness of empty space to suggest, like Mallarmé, what he termed the 'metaphysical insight" of the reality behind ordinary perceptions. His early work was filled with what he characterized as "enigmatic" spaces and illogical, oneiric shadows which appear as emblems of the noumenal reality which he hoped to apprehend through the process of the aesthetic experience. Along with Carrà he began the Scuola Metafisica in 1917 with the aim of developing a "new way of seeing," using blank space and suggestive forms in order to represent "spiritual necessities" and the "spectral side of things."

(Osborne, 368) Different from Impressionism and the traditions which derived from it by a haunting sense of lighting and unreal perspective, the Metaphysical School focused on, according to de Chirico, "the reflection of profound sensation, telling something beyond the limits of an object. It must tell poetically what their volumes hide materially; a work of art must stand completely outside human limitation ...an eternal proof of the nonsense of this universe." (368, Osborne)

Crane's definition of himself and his work as "absolutist" in "General Aims and Theories" is similar to de Chirico's definition of metaphysical aesthetics in painting, as it places emphasis on the suggestion, the conceptual white space, in any form of representation. He decries, as does de Chirico, mere "retinal registration" of an image, much in the manner de Chirico depreciates "human limitation," asking that "spiritual realities" be placed at the forefront of aesthetic intent. Anti-impressionist, both poet and painter aimed toward the evocation of hidden illuminations which must of necessity be suggested rather than clearly delineated; for Crane, the "absolute" poem must be, like the twentieth-century "Metaphysical" canvas, self-referential. Like Mallarmé's "pure poem" it must have "an orbit or predetermined direction of its own, free from personality." (220) Rather than focusing on things, it must conduct one toward the noumenal ideas behind them: "Its evocation must be toward a state of consciousness, an "innocence" (Blake) or

absolute beauty." (220) Paradoxically, for Crane, as for Mallarmé, the "absolute" poem must suggest its own eternal and ultimately ineffable shadow-cognate: "It is as though the poem gave the reader as he left it a single, new word, never before spoken and impossible to actually enunciate, but self-evident as an active principle in the reader's consciousness henceforward." (221)

Conceptual whiteness often assumes the quality of sterility and coldness, the whiteness of ice and snow, especially for Mallarmé. In the often-quoted poem, "Le vierge, le vivace et le bel aujourd'hui," the white swan, figured only by a bare link outline in Matisse's illustration for Mallarmé's book of verse, is trapped in the ice of a frozen lake as a result of "having failed to sing the realms of life" ("Pour n'avoir pas chanté la region où vivre") in the midst of the whiteness of the "ennui of sterile winter," in a sense linking the swan's own lush white coloration with the entropic and frozen whiteness of winter and its snow. Although Mallarmé's bird is able to shake off the "white torment" which space inflicts upon him, he nevertheless remains immobile, in this manner a figure of the Mallarmean poet trapped by the sterile whiteness of his pure creation. Of this glacial quality to the approach toward art Aish writes of Mallarmé: "Voici la cause de la sterilité Mallarméenne. Il espère réaliser une oeuvre parfaite; il se contente d'une seule strophe, d'un seul vers, pourvu qu'ils soient bien travaillés...Désespéré, il se refugie dans la

solitude et dans l'hermétisme." (17)

As the moment toward a pure, perfect expression of poetry made of Mallarmé's swan a white victim, so one may intuit the duality inherent in the figuration of whiteness. In Oriental symbolism, it appears as the color of mourning, and the association of death with white shrouds and white-faced ghosts (Klee's Death and Fire is an excellent example of the frightening depiction of the white face of personified death) is common in Western myth as well. Whiteness becomes skeletal in Mallarmé's poem, "Les Fenêtres," as the hospital scene is filled with the "banal whiteness of veils" and the "Stupidity" of the "World Below." The dying man is a figure of disgust, tied to the phenomenological world and its contingencies; the whiteness of his hair and bones suggest a decrepitude which only the poet, in his angelic figuration, may supersede: "Je me mire et me vois ange!" ("I look and see myself an angel!") Crane's response to the vision of the ghostly whiteness of death and dying is similar to Mallarmé's in his late poem, "O Carib Isle." Written in part after his experience of the destruction delivered by a hurricane on the Isle of Pines, he depicts the "nacreous frames of tropic death" as the aftermath of the storm in the island scene. The white sand is strewn with dead bodies which, as they do in Mallarmé's poem, provoke not a sympathetic reaction but the horror of mortality, the poet gone "white with fear." It is through the poet's function that he alone may transcend the wreck of "death's brittle crypt," presuming, as does

Mallarmé, that in his poetic/vatic act of speaking a name "to the white sand," prophesying the magic "word" of poetry to the scene, he may become angelic; the poet is, at the poem's end, "sieved upward, white" in his ascent to the Stevens-like heaven of the "blue comedian's host."

As Crane's white buildings "answer day" to the contrast of night's darkness, and are perhaps icons of rational thought in their function as the works of modern urban "civilization," precluding the discontents of the subconscious darkness with which Crane continued to struggle, so may Crane's insistent use of whiteness as metaphor be seen as part of his attempt to redeem himself and his work from the chaos which threatened him as a poet and as an integrated personality. In the Book of Revelations, it is the white stone which is symbolic of spiritual redemption, a fact which Crane, through his readings in Christian Science, was aware; the series of poems which comprise White Buildings, as well as the more obvious Bridge sequence, clearly chronicles the attempt to, in modern psychological terms, "center" himself and his work. Crane spoke openly concerning this in a letter to Yvor Winters: "Much of my work, as you say, is unfinished ...yet this deficiency is not doe to laziness. I think there is a stage in the creative process which I have not yet succeeded in mastering. It is the complete control of the power of sustaining the central vision." (in Parkinson, 51) The white nakedness of Crane's attempt to "strip the sensibility of all its false masks" (Combs, 42) is, in White Buildings,

central to his desire to rid both the self and the poem of "illusion" in all its manifestations. In this, Crane's white aesthetic is similar to that of the Russian artist Kasimir Malevich, whose Suprematist white-on-white canvases "gave up the objective representation of reality in order to unmask art." (Osborne, 347)

Whiteness assumes a synesthetic quality when it is allied to the images of eroticism and physical nature in Mallarmé's work; in "The White Waterlily" whiteness is an integral part not only of the idea of absence which the poet suggests by his allusions to the woman/flower of the title, but of the sensations of nakedness and sensuality inherent in the pale beauty of the white flesh as well. What appears, in "Un Spectacle Interrompu" as the "pâleur évasive" of muslin, the opaque whiteness of a veiled sensuality producing the much-favored "effect" rather than the more obvious erotic "object" one might expect, becomes, in "The White Waterlily" the evocation of eroticized and sensual longing. As the poet comes nearer to the "object," or the woman/flower at the other side of the water, the more distant her image becomes; the poet sees the white lace of her shirt as he approaches, desires to "penetrate the mystery" of her "exquisitely knotted" sashes, but finds her human figuration gone when he comes too close. He finds, instead, the flower itself, whitely virginal and unopened, enclosing "in "deep white, a nameless nothingness made of unbroken reveries, of happiness never to be." (67)

For Rimbaud in "Mémoire," the complex association of whiteness with the sensuality and erotic desire evoked by the white body is similar to that of Mallarmé's white flower/ woman. In water, the poet sees the "blancheurs des corps des femmes" resembling the "lys pur" as the image appears in Mallarmé's poem. Significantly, desire is never actually achieved; its effect is evoked in the image of a lace-dressed woman standing with her parasol, but the "lui" involved, like Mallarmè, stops short of actual consummation: "Hélas! Lui, comme mille anges blancs qui se separent sur la route/ s'eloigne par delà la montagne! Elle/toute froide, et noire, court! après le départ de l'homme!" (136) ("Alas! HE/Like a thousand white angels scattering in flight/Scales the mountaintops and fades from sight!/Behind him runs the black, unbending SHE!") (138) The female figure here, interestingly, is no longer figured in terms of sensual whiteness and fragrant flowers, but is blackened as a result of impure love. It is the angel/poet who is immaculate, whitened by the purifying white heat at the sun's core.

Whiteness in its figuration as sensual effect is found in an early poem by Crane entitled "The Bathers." The whiteness of the women bathers is coupled with the image of a "milky sea" where the women, goddess-like, are silently swimming. The poet watches, as do Mallarmé and Rimbaud in the poems previously mentioned, but is unable to act on any erotic longing he may feel; the sexual emblem of a phallic "black mountain spear" appears in the sky above the women,

but the entire scene appears, as it does also in the other poems, frozen: "But there is no sound-not even a bird-note/Only simple ripples flaunt, and stroke, and float." (131, 5-6) The bathers, here like the lily/women in Mallarmé's and Rimbaud's poems, tease the spectator in their erotic "float" (in Crane's poem, the ripples of water flaunting and stroking appear more explicit than do the movements in the other poems), but the poet runs from the Venus-like women as they are emblems of beauty not only virginal but "cursed" as well.

CHAPTER IX

> BROOKLYN BRIDGE... Seems for the first time as a weird metallic apparition under a metallic sky, out of proportion with the winged lightness of its arch, traced for the conjunction of WORLDS, supported by the massive dark towers dominating the surrounding tumult of the surging skyscrapers with their gothic majesty sealed in the purity of their arches, the cables, like divine messages from above, transmitted to the vibrating coils, cutting and dividing into innumerable musical spaces the nude immensity of the sky, it impressed me as the shrine containing all the efforts of the new civilization of AMERICA - the eloquent meeting point of all forces arising in a superb assertion of their powers, in APOTHEOSIS... I am deeply moved, as if on the threshold of a new religion, or in the presence of a new DIVINITY. (Transition, 16/17, 87)

In a passage remarkably similar to Crane, Joseph Stella describes the extraordinary effect of the Brooklyn Bridge for the modern artist; both he and Gleizes depicted it as a powerful symbol of liberation through technology. In their canvases, both artists focus on the figuration of the bridge in its ascending movement; although Gleizes' 1917 work is more obviously Cubist in its dislocation of the bridge's spatial form, his On Brooklyn Bridge captures the vertiginous quality one experiences when following the ascent of the bridge's cables with the eye. Stella's series of paintings based on Brooklyn Bridge, New York Interpreted (1922), more representational with reference to details such as the "white buildings" of Wall Street seen from the Brooklyn side of the bridge, nevertheless distorts the sense of perspective in The Bridge in order to convey the overwhelming quality of the seemingly endless heavenward curve of the bridge. As did

Gleizes and Stella, Crane regarded Brooklyn Bridge as an escape to a higher level of reality, spanning what Stella termed the "tragic city" of New York, filled with the confinement of skyscrapers and factories. For Crane, the bridge itself became a symbol of personal and poetic transcendence, of "divinity" as in Stella's description; the act of bridging appears as the essential motion in all of Crane's work. Although many critics may focus on differences in White Buildings and The Bridge, they are essentially similar products of Crane's visionary consciousness in its effort to struggle with an increasing sense of failure in the poetic process. Many of the themes that have been discussed with reference to the lyrics of White Buildings are also present in The Bridge; water symbolism, erotic transfiguration, so important in White Buildings, appear equally in The Bridge, although in somewhat altered form. Crane's desire to create a bridge of words was, for the poet, the culmination of his poetic development which had begun with White Buildings; Crane's bridge, like Stella's in the previous quotation, was to be a "superb assertion of power" and a true "conjunction of WORLDS" which the poet hoped would also unite the modern age with the myth and legend of the American past.

Crane's bridge and Stella's share another source as such in the Verticalist movement started by Eugene Jolas through Transition magazine. In 1929, Jolas published Stella's commentary on the creation of his Brooklyn Bridge paintings as well as Crane's lyrics "East of Yucatan" and "The Mango

Tree," a poem intended originally for The Bridge. Through Jolas, Crane met Harry Crosby, whose Black Sun press was to first publish The Bridge in 1930. From 1927 to 1932 Jolas printed Crane's work and the critical reviews of White Buildings and The Bridge which were positive, as contrasted with the majority of reviews which proved to be assaults on Crane's work. Perhaps the most vocal supporter of the poet, Jolas declared, after reading The Bridge, that "After Crane, America has no poem." (McMillan, 127), and even considered naming his magazine The Bridge. Through Transition Jolas advocated the renewal of American art by linking it with a more transcendent, perhaps European, cultural context; the rootlessness which Crane sensed as endemic to twentieth-century America was also a concern of Jolas, and it was through Verticalism that a new link between historical myth and contemporary reality would create a "new faith" for the modern age. For Jolas, the modern poet's function involved a rediscovery of the vertical elements in creation, establishing through art a "Sense of the miraculous" through new forms such as the "anamyth" (a narrative of what he termed "preconscious relationships") and the "psychograph" (a hallucinatory prose text), both classifications which he might have used to describe Crane's The Bridge. Verticalism, opposed to the "horizontal" plane of normal life, encompasses both the movements of descent and ascent, a parabolic curve of experience and expression similar to the Tunnel-descent and Atlantis-ascent in Crane's poem. Although negative and

positive forces were necessary for Verticalist life, Jolas felt that the final artistic resolution of a work must focus on an upward movement, often allied with the theme of a quest for a religious and absolute experience. In these terms, Crane's Bridge is perhaps the prototype of the Verticalist poem; the poet's struggle for transfiguration often assumes the proportions of a quest, and his "grail" as such appears at last in "Atlantis," the apotheosis of The Bridge. Crane's idea of a logic of metaphor as a skeleton key to the absolute is also strongly allied to Jolas' conceptions of Verticalist function, as in "Poetry is Vertical" he claims: "It is in the immediacy of the ecstatic revelation, in the a-logical movement of the psyche, in the organic rhythm of the vision that the creative act occurs." (Transition, 21, 148) Like Freudian free-association, the logic of metaphor may cause what Jolas termed the "irruption" of images from the unconscious, effecting not only poetic revelation but psychic cleansing, and this appears in the same passage from "Poetry is Vertical" as the "hegemony of the inner life...building a nexus between the "I" and the "You" by leading the emotions of the sunken, telluric depths upward toward the illumination of a collective reality and a totalistic universe." (Transition, 21, 149) Jolas' "nexus," here similar to Crane's bridge, achieves the ideal of personal integration within the context of the human community through the medium of artistic creation; for Crane, in his re-creation of the myth of America standing as a positive, "Vertical" force for

unification (unlike Eliot's Waste Land which he felt was "so damn dead"), Jolas' ideas proved strong supports for Crane's conceptual bridge.

The Verticalist impulse toward transcendence finds its most potent symbol in the figuration of Crane's bridge; swinging "beyond despair," it embodies both a spatial union of land-bodies, spanning the watery chaos which it arches above, as well as an internalized projection through the American past, from "Far Rockaway to Golden Gate," in order to capture what Crane hoped would be a sustaining image for the twentieth century. Crane's Bridge, in its movement back into the American past, attempts to unite the modern consciousness with a purely American sense of historical perspective; it also moves forward, however, and projects a sense of future identity in the image of Atlantis at the poem's end. As the artists of the Brücke movement in painting seized upon the image of a conceptual bridge which would link their works with those of a revolutionized future, so did Crane's aspirations for The Bridge point toward a revitalized future for American consciousness, uniting technology and myth. What was, in 1905, a symbol of the span of the "innermost essence of life through artistic expression" (Osborne, 85) for the Brücke artists Kirschner and Schmidt-Rotluff was, for Crane, just as essential in his construction of The Bridge. It became, for these artists as well as Crane, a talisman of faith and hope in both their own abilities and those of future generations. The bridge,

finally, for these artists, represented the intensity of subjective expression necessary for the fully realized aesthetic experience; the bridge as emblem of the imperative of the artist's own vision figures strongly also in Crane's internalized "pontification" which culminates in The Bridge.

In a letter of July 24, 1926 to Waldo Frank, Crane cites an influence on the composition of The Bridge which has been critically ignored but seems to carry a great deal of importance in terms of the artistic ground for many of Crane's poems. This letter, written while Crane was vacationing in the Isle of Pines, contains the positive spirit which was only sporadically present in the poet's attitude toward his expansive work; perhaps as a result of the beauty of his tropical surroundings coupled with the maternal care granted him by "Aunt Sally" Simpson, the Crane estate's caretaker, Crane's sense of achievement at this point was clear:

> I feel an absolute music in the air again, and some tremendous rondure floating somewhere-perhaps my little dedication in "To Brooklyn Bridge" is going to swing me back to San Cristobal again...That little prelude by the way, I think to be almost the best thing I've ever written, something steady and uncompromising about it. Do you notice how its construction parallels the peculiar technique of space and detail division used by El Greco in several canvases-notably the Christus am Olberg? I've just been struck by that while casually returning to my little monograph as I often do. (Letters, 267)

Vigny's poem, "Le Mont des Oliviers," contains many of the figurations of Christ which are found in El Greco's painting; Crane was perhaps familiar with Vigny's poem as well, given the wide range of French texts in his personal

collection. In Vigny's depiction of the agony of Christ, the lone figure appears first bathed in white light, "vêtu de blanc" as he does in El Greco's representation. His disciples, at the foot of the hill, are in darkness, unaware of his revelation of divinity, and his transcendent vision of his own Resurrection "pour laver l'avenir," Christ's vision is that of his own agony as well as his own deliverance, his mortal pain as well as his divine illumination, and in this Vigny's Christ is similar to El Greco's, as well as to Crane's poetic figuration of the poet as Job at the beginning of The Bridge. Paradise may be reached, in these terms, only through the acceptance of the bitter chalice, which Christ tries to have taken from him, but ultimately realizes is essential to his act of transfiguration. Crane's poet/Job is perhaps another link to the Garden of Olives here, as he must go "to and from in the earth," in order to reach Atlantis.

Although at first the idea of Crane's Modernist work having roots in the art of Spanish Mannerism seems far-fetched, it is clear that Crane's interest in art, regardless of period or place, has always been present in his aesthetics. Upon further consideration, El Greco shares many aspects of artistic method with Crane, and, although separated by four hundred years of artistic history as such, shows many similarities to Crane in both his intense pursuit of life as well as his search for, in Crane's terms, new thresholds of artistic consciousness. Coincidentally, El Greco is mentioned throughout Einstein's writings as the

forefather of modern cinematic aesthetics, and referred to as the "first montage artist."

El Greco's work appears as the embodiment of the Mannerist aesthetics of his time; twisted poses rather than those more natural and unaffected are the norm in portraiture, expressing extreme feeling and emotion, and pictorial perspective ceased to be a focal point in the direction of the artistic eye. Balance and proportion became less important than an almost mystical expression of form and idea, and in this we may see the first link between Crane and El Greco.

Trained in Byzantine painting through his education in the Monasteries of Crete, El Greco carried over many of the lessons of his early artistic development to his work with Titian in Venice. It was in Spain, however, that the visionary tendencies in his work which ally him most closely in spirit with Crane became evident. His Assumption (1577) is perhaps the first of his works to represent the union of the natural and supernatural worlds, and in its emphasis on ascent is related to the upward movement of Crane's poem toward Atlantis. This canvas, similar to his others treating the theme of the annunciation, seems to incorporate the Neo-Platonic idea of light as both physical and spiritual symbol of illumination; the intensity of light which directs the eye upward appears heavenly, as it does in Crane's "Atlantis," where it shines down upon the bridge's arches, rendering them "gleaming staves" with cables "veering with light." El

Greco's work, in these terms, is related to the Counter-Reformation's preoccupation with situations in which man is constantly placed in contact with noumenal reality, with religious ecstasy, through figurations of martyrdom and religious agony, and in this there is perhaps a link with Crane's epigraph to The Bridge from the Book of Job: "From going to and fro in the earth/And from walking up and down in it" which alludes to the tunnel-bound path the poet must take in order to reach Atlantis. In El Greco's The Martyrdom of Saint Maurice and the Theban Legion, the central figure of the painting is part of a group of nervous-looking, slender soldiers, not at all the larger-than-life heroes commanding the focal point of the canvas which Philip II expected in his commission to El Greco to paint a glorification of the military scene to be hung in the Escorial. Saint Maurice and his men appear confused, and their suffering is juxtaposed against the angelic figures suspended in air which appear in the upper left section of the canvas and which focus the painting in an asymmetrical manner. The strong lines of this composition appear broken, and peripheral forms appear abstracted; the contrast between human form and celestial airiness is clear, and the sense of dissociation we perceive has led many modern critics, notably Sànchez-Cantón, to relate this canvas to the work of Picasso: "There is no massing, no sumptuous coloring...the icy yellows and blues border on the acid, and the patterning is broken up...in this work the artist's thought and purpose have been faithfully

translated into plastic terms, as in a work by Picasso." (76)

This dramatic tension between the realm of Job as suffering servant/poet and the musically inspired heights of Atlantis/Cathay, which Crane described in a letter to Otto Kahn (March 18, 1926) as the "conquest of space and knowledge...ultimately transmuted into a symbol of consciousness, knowledge and spiritual unity...containing a rather religious motivation, albeit not Presbyterian," (Letters, 240) is most strongly present in "The Tunnel." The descent of the poet into the teeming world of the subway, the "hiving swarms/Out of the Square" is similar to the depiction of the crowds of men surrounding Saint Maurice in El Greco's composition. Although this scene takes up most of the canvas, with various soldiers in battle poses or talking with one another, the controlling aspect of the scene is found in the cluster of angels in the upper left corner of the work, and the concentration of light in their figures. Our eyes, as in so many of El Greco's works, are pulled upward, and the tension between the human ground of the painting and the angelic force which draws our attention away is again similar to the invocation of the "Word that will not die!" in the midst of the horrors of the physical subway scene and its attendant psychological descent into the "inter-borough fissures of the mind." The necessity to enter reality "through the Gates of Wrath" as Crane refers to it in the epigraph of this section of The Bridge in order to be able to apprehend the harmony of the vision of Atlantis at the poem's end is crucial for the

poet's own metaphysic, as it was for El Greco earlier. The ecstatic and harmonious vision of light and music which Crane aspires to at the end of the Bridge-journey may only be realized after the nightmare of Poe's own agony is met: "And when they dragged your retching flesh/Your trembling hands that night through Baltimore/...did you/Shaking, deny the ticket, Poe?" (110, 78-81)

In this manner, El Greco's series of compositions on the theme of the Virgin Mary's Annunciation focuses on the torment of the Virgin, usually depicted in somber colors in the lower half of the canvas, whose vision is being directed upward by the golden light of the Holy Spirit, often accompanied by a band of angels playing musical instruments. Clearly, light, music and harmony, as in the epigraph to "Atlantis," were strong figurations of spiritual perfection for El Greco as well as for the poet whose vision is also drawn upward by the arch of Brooklyn Bridge, "Deity's glittering Pledge."

Whether or not Crane's reference to El Greco was based on a studied comparison between his work and that of the Spanish painter remains to be proven; his reference to the Christus am Olberg, or The Agony in the Garden is, nevertheless, important to any consideration of the formal analysis of The Bridge. According to his letter to Frank, Crane found similarities in several canvases of El Greco, not only The Agony, to his method in the opening section of his long poem. Our first image, in "To Brooklyn Bridge," is that of

the seagull shedding "white rings of tumult" in ascent, like that of the "inviolate curve" of the bridge itself. In El Greco's composition, our eye is, characteristically, drawn to the upper portion of the canvas, where what appears, at first, to be a white-winged bird approached the figure of Christ. All light and clarity of form are found in this area, as the rest of the painting is dark and contains shadowy figures which are the representations of death. Upon closer inspection, the winged figure approaching Christ has the face of an angel, and is bearing a chalice. The arc of the bird's flight in the poem is similar to the circular train of white which descends from the angel's wings; as, in "To Brooklyn Bridge" the gull flies out of sight, causing the descent of the poet's vision momentarily ("Till elevators drop us from our day"), so does the train of gossamer wind down to the lower half of El Greco's canvas, the symbolic lower world much the same for painter and poet.

El Greco's deathlike figures in tones of grey and umber appear to also be figurations of the disciples waiting for Christ. They are in various states of repose, illuminated only by the light surrounding the angelic messenger. El Greco's canvas, in terms of Crane's notation concerning space and detail division, is based, as is this encapsulation of the major movements of The Bridge, on an almost Manichean frame of darkness and light, ecstatic illumination and uninspired consciousness. Christ, in the luminous portion of the painting, appears to be experiencing both the agony of his

fate and the ecstasy of transcendence at once. Crane's vision of Brooklyn Bridge is clearly allied to the ecstatic experience, and constantly associated with this idea of illumination: "And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced/As though the sun took step of thee..." (45, 13-14) Its function as a deity is again invoked, as the bridge is addressed as "Thee," as was Christ in Christian prayer. As Christ undergoes his ritual agony in order to redeem mankind, so does Crane render the image of the bridge in terms of its salvatory function; it is able to remove darkness, both conceptual and physical: "And we have seen night lifted in thine arms." (46, 36) It is through the "vibrant reprieve and pardon" which the Bridge offers that the "multitudes" of the telluric scene are able to apprehend the nature of the ecstatic illumination.

As the bridge's curve must descend "unto us lowliest" in order to grant the vision of the unfractioned idiom, so, in the Christian myth which is the subject of El Greco's work, must Christ experience his own death and resurrection in order to fulfill his function as the "Word made Flesh," a phrase which was crucial to Crane. In his union of divinity with human form, the figure of Christ for El Greco represented much the same impulse as the mythical structure of the Bridge for Crane. As, at the end of "To Brooklyn Bridge" Crane states that "Only in darkness" is the shadow of the bridge clear, so it is that the forms of the disciples in El Greco's painting, waiting as the poet is for revelation

("Under thy shadow by the piers I waited"), must wait in symbolic darkness in order to fully apprehend Christ's nature. To return to Crane's original commentary on the relation between text and canvas, the centrality of the Bridge, in its illuminative function, performs much the same effect in the poem as does the Christ figure in El Greco's painting. The tensions between the conceptual darkness of the "subway scuttle," in Crane's vision of the modern world, like the darkness of the disciples waiting for Christ's revelation in the Agony, the heavenly light in El Greco's painting, illustrate Crane's notion of the similarity of image and form in both The Agony in Garden and The Bridge.

Critics, in their appraisal of Crane's Bridge, have focused for the most part on the figure of Brooklyn Bridge as a symbol of modernity and technological achievement. Crane's selection of Brooklyn Bridge as the focus for the introductory poem of his series is perhaps related to this, and his panoramic view of its span from his bedroom window in Brooklyn Heights no doubt influenced this choice of the bridge-symbol as an objective correlative for his artistic aspirations in what he constantly referred to as his "master work" reminiscent of nothing less than the Sistene Chapel in its development. What he points out as his "architectural method" in a letter to Otto Kahn (249) is related not only to the figure of Brooklyn Bridge, however, but to many of the stylistic and aesthetic assumptions related to bridge-building as a whole.

For the architect Eduardo Torroja, the function of a bridge should have as its basis the idea of passage and transport. Of the most common material used in bridge-making, he notes that steel gives a visual effect of "potent lightness and beauty, though not in the individual structural members, but in the completed skeleton and its arch." (46) Torroja's statement concerning our apprehension of the beauty inherent in the bridge-structure might well be applied to our attempt to approach Crane's Bridge as well; most criticism has focused on the faults of its discrete parts rather than on an appreciation of its entirety, its "completed skeleton." His citation of passage as the underlying principle for bridge-construction is even more significant, as this poem attempts a larger-scale version of the act of poetic "passage" and transport so crucial to Crane's earlier works. The metaphor of spanning, itself the "method" of the act of passage, is frequently used by Crane in his attempts to explain his text: the "arching path upward" serves, in The Bridge, not only as an image of the Bridge's span, but of the act of consciousness it is itself an emblem of. In his letter dated September 12, 1927, he explains to Otto Kahn: "I am really writing an epic of modern consciousness... Although I find the topic vaster than I had at first realized, I am still confident of its final articulation into an eloquent and continuous span." (253) The long-span bridge (Brooklyn Bridge and Golden Gate are the two most famous structures in the world) is itself an artistic "miracle"

worthy of Crane's own aspirations for his poem; the engineer Stussi regards its construction as "A victory over the forces of nature and progress in the battle against human insufficiency." (quoted in Torroja, 207) The bridge's arch, according to an Arabian proverb, is "never dormant," and Torroja comments that its function was always more than utilitarian: "The arch, although originally thought of as conceived by a devil due to early skepticism concerning its resistant capacity, spans space. It is dramatic and uniquely impressive, and will always be connected with the idea of power, stress, and the leap to dominate distance; always of monumental character, the arch was predestined to proclaim the honors of victory." (80) The "domination of distance," internally as well as externally, is certainly a part of Crane's own span within The Bridge, as the passage from history to present, Atlantic to Pacific, self to ailleurs is the focal movement of the poem. The "power" of this impetus has been noted by many critics, whose negative assessment of the poem revolves around the idea that the poem's "movement" was more an act " of will" by the poet absorbed in the act of "pushing it along." Whether or not ingenuous, the impulse toward the "domination of distance" as a metaphor for the creation of either poetry or bridges is shared by Roebling, who wanted his bridges to suggest, much in the manner of Crane's "Atlantis," a "higher spiritual culture," and by Telford, whose London Bridge anticipates the Brooklyn Bridge in its function as the first bridge to offer a panoramic

perspective on a major city. Curiously, Telford's arches on London Bridge are flattened, while those on Roebling's bridge seem to intersect the clouds; as Crane intended his Bridge to provide a positive response to Eliot's Waste Land, the flattened arches of London Bridge which transport Eliot's living dead are perhaps related to the negative impulse of the poem, an antithesis to Crane's ecstatic ascent in "Atlantis." Using Crane's own image of the "broken world" as an analogue for modern consciousness, the historian Raymond Sontag titled his book on the period between wars A Broken World, and cited the artist's vision during this period as one which "mended the broken world through a union of art and the symbols of technology." (214) Crane's Bridge, unlike Eliot's in The Waste Land, is a paradigm of Stussi's notion of the bridge as a "battle against human insufficiency," and, like Roebling's, offers a panoramic distance from the fragmentary world.

The notion of perspective is essential in a comparison of bridge aesthetics and Crane's poetic intent. Again from Crane's letter of September 12, 1927 to Otto Kahn, the idea of perspectival perception is linked with the poet's own bridge-making: "The airy regatta of phantom clipper ships seen from Brooklyn Bridge on the way home is quite effective, I think, in my rendering of consciousness in 'Cutty Sark.'" (252) In many of his letters, Crane speaks rhapsodically of the experience of walking across Brooklyn Bridge while hand-in-hand with a lover, and it is clearly foremost in his mind here. Not incidentally linked with the image of a lover, or

with the waters below, the bridge-experience for Crane clearly implies much more than a pleasant stroll from Brooklyn Heights to Lower Manhattan. What matters, for Crane, is the achievement of perspective; the bedlamite's tragedy at the poem's beginning is related to this, as he falls from the bridge's parapet after "tilting" atop a girder, unhappily "speeding" from the "subway scuttle." As one walks across Brooklyn Bridge, the overwhelming sensation is that of being lifted; the chaos of New York City appears benign at this distance, and it is this bridge-perspective Crane focuses on throughout the poem. From the central elevated walkway of the bridge, the vertical suspender-girders and the diagonal stays create a mesh of steel through which pedestrians can see changing views of the city as they walk above traffic. Early in the bridge's history, pedestrians frequently expressed fear at this dizzying ascent and perspectival focus, and an article from Harper's stated that Roebling's achievement might give way to strong winds or even become unusable, as "few readers would care to climb to the top of its Brooklyn tower." (Shapiro, 42) As Crane speaks of the various stories contained in The Bridge as "Thousands of strands searched for, and delicately woven" (249), so did the delicacy of the appearance of the bridge's cables add to the vertiginous sensation of walking across it. Exhilaration often was blended with panic, and the numerous stampedes which occurred during the roadway's first decade attest to this. According to historians, the best view of the bridge

during Crane's time was precisely from the area he viewed it, Brooklyn Heights. It is from this distance that the larger buildings seem in harmonious perspective; the Fulton Ferry House offered an array of ships in harbor to complete the scene. It is perhaps this vista Crane had in mind when he describes the bridge scene in "To Brooklyn Bridge": "And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced/As though the sun took step in thee" (45, 13-14) From this distance, the bridge's arch and the sun are somehow equal; through this "leveling" of perception, the Bridge may be equal to "God's myth," and may, in another metaphor for the poetic act here, "condense eternity."

It is through this bridge-perspective that Crane manages to make contact with the past most successfully in "Cutty Sark," the poem in The Bridge which, according to Crane, is most involved with the evocation of perception and perspective, albeit in a hallucinatory manner. Similar to "Wine Menagerie" in its focus on the vatic perspective of a dionysian reveler, the speaker is able to connect himself with the "usable past," in this case the days of the Yankee traders and the clipper ships (wish-fulfillment apparent here as in many other scenes), through his perspective from the mid-point of the bridge: "I started walking home across the Bridge/Blithe Yankee vanities, turreted sprites./British repartees.../Bright skysails ticketing the Line." (84, 60-62, 69) Crane's vision of the sea-chanteys of the past here leads him to the next section of The Bridge, "Cape Hatteras,"

whose epigraph from Whitman, "The seas all crossed, weathered the capes, the voyage done" carries the poem's course from "Cutty Sark" effectively. Crane regarded "Cape Hatteras" as, along with "Atlantis," one of The Bridge's "twin towers," in effect providing one of the poem's two perspectival "high points." As the vision of Atlantis at the poem's end is linked with "the view from above," so is "Cape Hatteras" involved with the same evocation of the dizzying perspective of the aerial flyer: "...thy stilly eyes partake/What alcohol of space.../Thou hast in thy wrist a Sanskrit charge/To conjugate infinity's dim marge/Anew...!" (92, 131-134) Crane's reference here appears to be to the pilot/poet's ability, through the vision he has achieved through his perspectival height and the effect of speed, to transform reality, to redefine the "marge" or borderline of infinity. Crane's poem, then, as an example of passage and perspectival distance, may be related to his own difficulties in achieving the proper perspective on his own poem, a poem he referred to, in a letter to Allen Tate (July 13, 1930), as a poem "of transitions, of process," as "our age is one of transition." (257) As he himself was well aware, the major sections of The Bridge were not composed in America, but in Cuba; he notes that "even with the torturing heat of my sojourn in Cuba, I was able to work faster than in America. The foreignness of my surroundings stimulated me to the realization of natively American viewpoints not hitherto seen." (Letter to Otto Kahn, September 12, 1927, 254) Perspective,

then, is the key to The Bridge, both for poet in the act of creation, and for readers in the act of re-creation. Only in darkness, as Crane says in "To Brooklyn Bridge," is the shadow clear.

Robert Harbison in Eccentric Spaces speaks of the bridge as a modern technological symbol of the "architecture of motion, leaving the ground entirely, the bridge as flight to survive." (41) For Hart Crane, the architecture of The Bridge was linked, in a sense, to the "flight to survive" many of the personal problems which threatened his sanity as well as his poetic output during the years 1926-1930. Crane's "interlocking elements" give a sense of the architectural form of the poem (a form he also alluded to as "symphonic," perhaps reminiscent of music as "frozen architecture"), and his interest in the Roebling family and its involvement in the construction of Brooklyn Bridge is no doubt related to this. The first man to envision the Brooklyn Bridge, John Roebling, like Crane, saw it not only as a technological achievement but as an image of the combination of a Hegelian "inner world" with outward appearances. Roebling's suspension bridge, unlike the traditional stone arch bridge, had no supports, nothing to interfere with navigation; the suspension principle, according to Trachtenberg, represented for Roebling the "principle as a universal truth especially appropriate for America...an American necessity." (68) Roebling's long-span bridge relied on the caternary curve, structured by a cable hanging freely between two support

points: the long-span bridge was held together by a "parabolic truss" of cables, roadway and towers supported by foundations on the river's bottom. A theoretical "union of opposite forces, harmonizing tension and compression" (Trachtenberg, 69), Roebling's plan for a suspension bridge resulted in a construction much like Crane's own poetic Bridge. Roebling's principle of force as "matter in motion" found expression in the wide span of his Brooklyn Bridge, a manifestation of his view of the universe as a dynamic megastructure held together in equilibrium by the constant flux of energies within. The importance of balance here, again so important to Crane as well, calls attention to the spiritual side of Roebling's conceptual bridge, itself an emblem of the "span of consciousness" of the modern world. As the Brooklyn Bridge brought together the diverse materials of granite, strong in weight, and steel wire, light in tension, so does Crane's Bridge balance the weight of American history with the uplifting vision of "Atlantis." The essential arc of the physical bridge, constructed as it is upon the system of supports, cables, and trusses, is itself the most accurate analogue for Crane's efforts as pontifex, his strongest approach to a transfigurative vision.

The "caternary curve" of Roebling's Brooklyn Bridge created an overwhelming effect in all who viewed it; the painter John Marin, in addition to Stella, Steiglitz and others who attempted to capture its emotional effect, depicted its arch as a symbol of light and energy. The

aesthetic value of the suspension bridge is described by Elizabeth Mock: "The suspended cable reverses the arch curve and grows wings. Impatient of gravity, it achieves strength without mass or weight...these extremes of lightness, length and height are in themselves sufficient to arouse emotion." (54) From Crane's window, the emotion stirred by the sight of the cables of Brooklyn Bridge was sufficient to sustain the genesis of what some critics have termed his epic failure and others, perhaps more graciously, his spiritual quest for a mythic America.

Crane's Bridge is built, as is Roebling's, upon a system of perspectival harmony which unifies a dualistic structure. In the Brooklyn Bridge, the rising and falling arcs of the bridge's cables are separate from the curve of the bridge's floor, and the bridge itself is actually two bridges in one - one set of cables forms the New-York-bound side of the roadway, and a separate set forms the Brooklyn-bound side. The towers which raise the cables at each side of the river serve to harmonize the appearance of the bridge in perspective, causing a synthetic effect similar to the image of the bridge in Crane's "Proem" section of the poem as the "harp and altar, of the fury fused." In this manner, Arpad speaks of Crane's intent in the poem as an attempt to expose the "metaphysical form or idea of the Brooklyn Bridge's physical form." (79) The curved ship of Crane's bridge, then, is built on a dialectical progression of images intrinsically related to the idea of an absolute form, constructed with the

poet's intent of utilizing it as a "symbol of consciousness spanning time and space." (Letters, 241) It is both the point of the poem's departure and the consummate symbol of its Platonic transfiguration in the final image of "Atlantis" reborn. Although the genesis of Crane's Bridge was perhaps even more complicated than that of Roebling's, as sections were added, deleted and revised until the second printing of The Bridge in 1930, the poet's faith in his work as a manifestation of an absolute knowledge similar to Hegel's in its emphasis on a totality of awareness remained constant. In a letter to Waldo Frank, he asserts that "To Brooklyn Bridge" is "almost the best thing I've ever written." (Letters, 267) Curiously, The Bridge appears in this manner the most self-referential of his works, calling to mind fragments from other poems in White Buildings; female imagery in "Three Songs" is strongly related to the figure of Helen in "Faustus and Helen" as well as an echo of the Pocahontas legend which Crane focuses on in "The Dance." The bridge itself as a symbol is recurrent in many suggestive forms; the opening section of "To Brooklyn Bridge" begins with the image of a gull's wing arched in ascent, as well as the inverted arc of the bedlamite as he plunges from the bridge. In "Ave Maria," it is figured in the first "Palm chevron" which Columbus sees as he approaches America, as well as the "crescent ring" of shore which gives hope to his crew. In "The Dance," the point which serves as a balance of ascending and apocalyptic imagery in Crane's bridge-span toward Atlantis (as Brooklyn

Bridge has two towers, so does The Bridge rely on "The Dance" and "Atlantis" for its most forceful impulse toward ascent), the sensual arc of Pocahontas' hair as she runs ("Your hair's keen crescent running") as well as the "fleet young crescent" of the moon, repeat the recurrent figurations of "bridges within The Bridge" which help to outline the form of the poem.

The arching movement of the bridge's cables holds special attention for Crane in its relation to circular form. In "Cape Hatteras," as the poet evokes the ascent of the Wright brothers in their airplane, the circular sweep of the plane, like the great sweep of the gull's wing in "To Brooklyn Bridge," in its flight becomes an icon of perfection identified with the concept of space: "The circle, blind crucible of endless space/Is sluiced by motion-subjugated never." (89, 27-8) For Crane, the consummate power of the man-made bridge was to be found, as was the innovative strength of the airplane, in its approximation of the "endless space" invoked in these lines. The Einsteinian vortex of space, in "Cape Hatteras" the "bulging bouillon, harnessed jelly of the stars" represents an antidote to the "real world" of telluric reality, which is everpresent in the poem, in "Cape Hatteras" appearing as the banal Stock Exchange which Whitman must confront, or the "thin squeaks of radio static" which necessitate a new universe, the idea of space to the modern world. Whitman figures in this section of the poem because of his association with the notion of

freedom, which for Crane was part of the lure of space; unconquered, free from the constraints of the "prison crypts of Canyoned traffic," the concept of space in the physical universe, its stars and galaxies, is that which causes ascent and transformation. The notion of potentialities to be explored, for the poet here "waking into the dream of act," is allied with the limitlessness of space, again linked with Whitman as the "Saunterer on free ways still ahead." As this section of the poem progresses, Crane takes on the dithyrambic and hortatory tone of Whitman's own voice; the Wright "windwrestlers" (significantly "two brothers in their twinship" - another figuration of duality) approach the "new verities" of ether in "oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy." Their "whirling armatures" are also as bright as "frog's eyes," (Emerson's notion that the "eye is the first circle") but the ecstatic spiral/circle of the plane's flight soon becomes the "marauding circle" of planes ready for war; flight and ascent is perilous, its freedom from earthly constraints not guaranteed, and the arc of the skygak's plane soon becomes inverted, as he plummets downward; here the Falcon-Ace appears to be taking on the qualities perhaps of the bedlamite on the parapets of Brooklyn Bridge in his descent: "Thou sowest doom thou hast nor time nor chance/To reckon." (92, 130-131)

At the end of this section of The Bridge, Crane invokes Whitman again as a presiding numen, one who has witnessed both the ascent and descent of the soul as well as the

biplane, and who holds out his hand to Crane, bridging time and history: "O Walt! Ascensions of thee hover in me now/As thou at junctions elegiac, there, of speed/With vast eternity, dost wield the rebound seed!" (93, 145-147) Here, Whitman's figure itself forms a bridge for the poet; the arch of his "rebound seed" connects the poet with the eternal, as well as making fertile the "Sequoia alleys" and "Potomac lilies" which serve as telluric reminders of Whitman's spirit. Whitman's final identification in the poem is with the image of Brooklyn Bridge itself: "And it was thou who on the boldest heel/Stood up and flung the span on even wing/Of that great Bridge, our Myth, whereof I sing!" (94, 191-193) The Bridge is here a shared myth for both poets, and Crane clearly feels that Whitman would approve of his attempt to create a symbol of the span of American history and consciousness as well as a personal icon of faith. Crane finally likens the bridge's "span of Consciousness" to Whitman's vision of the Open Road, infinite, in whose path is found another bridge of sorts, the arc of the rainbow as a portent of the Bridge-vision: "And see! the rainbow's arch - how shimmeringly stands/Above the Cape's ghoul mound, O joyous seer!" (95, 209-210)

The arc of the body figured in the dance of Pocahontas takes place on "pure mythical and smoky soil," as Crane described the American terrain to Otto Kahn, and this sensual dance takes on shamanistic overtones similar to those in Crane's earlier poems such as "Lachrymae Christi" as the poet

witnesses the ritual sacrifice of the Indian Maquokeeta which will ultimately bring back the purification of the "tribal morn," an idealized vision of America. This vision, which R.W.B. Lewis terms the mensonge sacré or the Symbolist notion of the highest truth aspired to by the imagination, helps the poet "rejoin his own visionary capabilities" (312) and gives The Bridge the first of its apotheotic moments through the dance which brings spring and fertility. Crane based his Pocahontas figure in part on Swinburne's Hertha, the goddess as source of all, identified with the plenitude of earth and natural richness. Appearing in "The Harbor Dawn" as the poet's mistress, what Dembo refers to as a "sign of the Absolute" leading the poet to "spiritual intimacy with the body of the continent" (Sanskrit Charge, 65) the figure of Pocahontas in "The Dance" appears as a link with immortality, innocence of perception, the Rimbaldian enfance which Crane approximated in "Passage." The poet's movement toward the scene of the dance is itself one of ascent; he takes the "portage climb" in order to pursue his vision of the "fleet young crescent" of the goddess' hair as she appears, much like the ascension of Mary, to disappear into the sky, leaving only a star in her wake (here like the mark of the arching heel of Elohim and Columbus' white corposant which appear earlier in the poem). He ascends the "steep, inaccessible smile" of the mountain ledge, his journey here the same as the journey of The Bridge itself through physical and metaphysical distance, until he reaches the site of the dance

which unites serpent and eagle, time and space, present and undifferentiated past, which is significantly veiled in white, "gusted from the very top" of heaven. The peak of shamanic experience is evoked here, intertwined with the erotic culmination of union between Maquokeeta as ritual priest, allied with the poet-narrator, and Pocahontas as earth figure. It is here that the rhetoric of The Bridge reaches its primary point of imagistic transformation, as Maquokeeta, through ritual sacrifice and erotic union with Pocahontas as the idea of a mystic/telluric synthesis, in effect "sheds his skin," and like the bridge itself, approaches divinity: "...I saw thy change begun!/And saw thee dive to kiss that destiny/Like one white meteor sacrosanct and blent." (74, 76-78)

As Crane's bridge spans from the days of prairie settlers in "Indiana," which follows "The Dance," through the modern evocation of experience in "Cutty Sark" and "Cape Hatteras," the curve of the bridge's reality descends. The apocalyptic tenor of the erotic union of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas is, now for the poet, the subject of an agonizing burlesque in "Three Songs," the portion of The Bridge which seems most imbued with the personal and psychological effects of Crane's work. As "Three Songs" follows Crane's invocation of Whitman, the poet attempting to reach for the sustaining hand of Panis Angelicus, in "Cape Hatteras," the logic of the placement of these sections seems to come to light. If we see the narrative movement of Crane's work functioning on two

levels, the internalized search for a bridge of meaning as well as the external search for an American myth of history and spirit, the importance of Whitman's figure becomes clear. Crane is on his way to "The Tunnel," through which he must pass in order to reach Atlantis; Whitman's figure as an American poet and symbol of freedom supports the external structure of The Bridge while his acceptance of his homosexuality, the erotic hand extended to Crane, gives strength to the poet as he enters his most explicit confrontation with the feminine symbol.

As Crane's epigraph to "Three Songs" is a wry commentary on the nature of love, the figures of Hero and Leander in need of a bridge, so we may see Crane's personal and erotic quest most directly faced. In "Southern Cross," what John Willingham has termed Crane's "male restlessness" (65) in the form of the poet's extreme desire is apparent; he wants to possess the nameless Woman of the South, but his calls to her go unheeded. As the female figures of "the Harbor Dawn" and "The River," in Crane's glosses on these sections, are also without name, the poet here invokes the archetypal figures of Eve, Magdalene, and Mary (mother, sinner, and divinity), in his attempt to claim a response. As Crane's mother fails to respond to the poet in "Van Winkle," ("The Sabbatical, unconscious smile...Did not return with the kiss in the hall") so are these women unattainable. The Eve-figure in "Southern Cross" is exhibitionistic, as is the dancer in "National Winter Garden," as the Southern Cross/Woman of the

South "lifts her girdles" while the poet watches; like the silent ice-woman of "North Labrador" she is also inaccessible. As the poet's call finds no answer, his sense of rejection turns the Eve/mother into a "simian Venus" similar to Jung's archetype of the "terrible mother" in her Medusa-like figuration: "All night the water combed you with black/ Insolence. You crept out simmering, accomplished./Water rattled that stinging coil, your/Rehearsed hair." (99, 27-30) The poet's speech falters as he recalls his intensity of desire here in a manner which suggests the incest-wish: "I wanted you.../It is blood to remember; it is fire/To stammer back." (98, 22, 24-25) Jung also associates the figure of Eve with a fear of incest, and it is here that the significant namelessness of female figures throughout The Bridge perhaps becomes clear. The references to the "trailed derision" and "backward vision" also suggest a sense of shame allied to this experience, which carries with it an image of debasement as well: "The mind is churned to spittle, whispering hell." (98, 20) At the poem's end, the poet appears jealous of the post-coital image of the Eve/mother figure; she is "docile, alas, from many arms" and has emerged from the "embers" of her own desire "shimmering" and "accomplished." In Jung's terms, the female figure here is allied to the anima in her frequent manifestation in unconscious symbol as the mother. In Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious Jung states: "For the son, the anima is hidden in the dominating power of the mother, which sometimes leaves

him with a sentimental attachment and impairs his fate as an adult." (85) Crane's extraordinary attachment to his mother, in light of Jung's statement, appears to be figured especially in "Southern Cross." Jung continues: "In homosexuality, the son's entire heterosexuality is tied to the mother...The effects of this may be seen in the ideology of the Cybèle and Attis type: self-castration, madness and early death." (85) The heterosexual imagery throughout this section of the poem here takes on a deeper significance; sexual union is infertile, as Eve appears at the end of "Southern Cross" as the "wraith of my unloved seed." As was Helen, the "siren of the springs of guilty song" in "Faustus and Helen," the Eve/mother figure of feminity in "Southern Cross" appears sterile rather than fertile, unlike the figure of Pocahontas.

The second poem of Crane's sequence here gives us a female image different from the Medusa/mother of "Southern Cross." Originally titled "New York Burlesque," Crane's poem "National Winter Garden" takes place at a striptease performance. Significantly, the female dancer is enveloped in a smoke-like mist which recalls not only the "vaporous scars" of "Southern Cross" but the fog of "Harbor Dawn" and the veil of Pocahontas in "The Dance." Crane's obscene dancer here appears embedded in what Eliot termed the "low dream" or the banality of the modern image; she is the object of voyeuristic masturbatory fantasy, not erotic union: her legs "waken salads in the brain" but she exists as an object only, as the poet states: "Always you wait for someone else though, always-

/(Then rush the nearest exit through the smoke.)" (100, 7-8) At this point in the poem, the placing of "Three Songs" in the framework of The Bridge becomes crucial in its depiction of what both Crane and Eliot (and here we must remember that Crane considered The Bridge as something of a "response to The Waste Land, and acknowledged its influence on The Bridge throughout his letters) viewed as the one-dimensionality of modern consciousness, the post-War catatonia of the spirit. Crane's dancer is, in "National Winter Garden" the modern world's Pocahontas; as Pocahontas is, in her fertility dance, still "virgin to the last of men," maintaining a sort of ritual purity in her union with Maquokeeta, Crane's modern dancer appears as her debased image eros as a true "burlesque," as the poet asks ironically, "And shall we call her whiter than the snow?" "Three Songs" occurs after the descent of the Falcon-Ace in "Cape Hatteras" and links this section of The Bridge with the vision of a spiritually bankrupt America in "Quaker Hill" and the psychologically destructive effects of the chaos of modern urban life in "The Tunnel." Clearly, the loss of idealized vision, so necessary for the life of the spirit, is what Crane finds lacking in his evocation of the "downward path" of the "world dimensional" here in "Three Songs." What produced fertility and life in the mythic dance of Pocahontas is twisted in "National Winter Garden" into the "cheapest echo" of grotesque sexuality; it is not by accident that Crane changed the name of his dancer from Astarte to Magdalene in the final draft of the

poem: "Yet, to the empty trapeze of your flesh/O Magdalene, each comes back to die alone." (101, 25-26) No longer a source of desire and fertile union, she is the "burlesque of our lust," the only symbol of faith in the modern world as she will "Lug us back lifeward" as does the Jungian anima, whose multiplicity of figurations as mother, maiden or whore parallels Crane's use of the feminine image in The Bridge.

The last character in the female bridge which comprises "Three Songs" is, as many critics have suggested, perhaps the weakest link in the chain of the work's structure. "Virginia" appears as a modern lyric addressed to "blue-eyed Mary with the claret scarf" the twentieth-century manifestation of Columbus' Madre Maria in her virtue; she must keep "smiling the boss away" in order to remain a virgin, perhaps here an allusion to the poem's title. The poem's refrain was taken from a popular music hall song ("What Do You Do Sunday, Mary?") and its evocation of a modern urban scene ("And Spring in Prince Street/Where green figs gleam" 102, 12-13) places the figure of Mary in the context of Crane's search for a twentieth-century equivalent for Dante's Beatrice. Mary's association with spring and innocence, as well as her golden hair, all combine to make her the modern image of an inspirational female, an embodiment of beauty and illumination, as she "shines" in her industrialized "nickel-dime tower" which becomes, for Crane, a contemporary "Cathedral."

Crane's journey in The Bridge continues through the "interborough fissures of the mind" where the spirit of Poe

resides in "The Tunnel," as the poet finally turns eastward toward the light which is his vision of Atlantis. It is at this point that the arch of the bridge/poem turns upward, capturing in its finale the sense of being lifted up which Crane so rhapsodically experienced when walking across Brooklyn Bridge. Trying perhaps in "Atlantis" to, as R.W.B. Lewis phrases it, "say everything at once," (370), Crane's bridge-symbol becomes one and the same with the idea of the poem, the source of vision and the musical/universal harmony which the epigraph of this section alludes to. The Platonic notion of Atlantis, found in the Timaeus, fits Crane's poetic purpose here, as the "drowned" city of bridge-builders was said to one day rise again, just as Crane hoped a new myth of America would surface from the materialist horror that it had, like Atlantis, become.

Crane's bridge symbol is invoked in this section of the poem in language that is similar to the shamanic incantation of "The Dance," and allies the bridge/harp to the notion of religious possession: "Sibylline voices flicker, waveringly stream/As though a god were issue of the strings." (114, 7-8) As Maquokeeta must perform the ritual sacrifice before experiencing erotic union with Pocahontas, so must the union of poet and bridge, itself eroticized in the "smoking pyres of love and death," as well as in the phallic rising of "love's clear direction," be effected through a rite of "mythic spears," "terrible of drums" which results in the bridge's transformation into a "Steeled Cognizance" and

paradigm of love. Crane's ascent on the "white choiring wings" of the bridge-cables renders the image of the bridge as purified desire, the "whitest Flower" brought to life, as was the spring terrain in "The Dance," and vouchsafes to the poet an orphic power through its "Everpresence" which has become a symbol of infinite transcendence.

It would seem that at this point in "Atlantis," Crane had achieved something of the Hegelian aufhebung, ascent as negation, as the poem's language seems farthest from the realm of human reality. Crane's poem does not, however, end with this extremity of vision, but asks the question:" Is it Cathay?" The "floating singer," perhaps another figuration of Crane's suicide, is not quite sure if his bridge, his "Vision of the Voyage" so perilously attained, has truly brought him Atlantis. He is back in the world of flux, yet his poetic bridge is no longer the absolute toward which he is headed. Finally, the poetic process, itself the most intense form of transformation which the poet may apprehend, like the responsorial circle of "whispers" which begin and end "Atlantis," must begin again.

In a poem titled "Death to Van Gogh's Ear," Allen Ginsberg identified the suicides both of Hart Crane and Mayakovsky as acts capable of regenerating the societies which alienated, and, for Ginsberg, ultimately martyred, them. Ginsberg was the only poet who perceived Crane's suicide, surprisingly, in the manner of a ritual destruction/purification; given the emphasis on this element

throughout his earlier works ("Lachrymae Christi" and "Possessions" are only two poems most related to this impulse), it is unusual that more critics failed to see this aspect of the poet's death. Death as exemplary of an ultimate "passage," perhaps in Crane's mind during his last days, is most certainly found in the symbolism and tenor of his last poem, "The Broken Tower."

Scholars are still in the process of "re-viewing" Crane and his work, and Visionary Company, a magazine devoted to the literature and art produced during Crane's era, has been crucial in unearthing lost photographs, letters and other "fragments" of Crane's life which may give us a better perspective on the man and his work. In its Spring, 1982 issue, Visionary Company reproduced a photograph from Peggy Cowley's collection which illustrates Crane's focus in both life and work during his last days in Mexico. The photograph, similar to the portrait of Crane which Siquieros finished in 1931, shows Crane in a Yoga-like meditative posture, legs folded in, hands crossed, with his head bowed down. He is, according to Cowley's notation, in the bell tower of St. Prisca's church, and the bright sun is shining down on him. Behind Crane stands the church sexton, whose figure is not as clear as Crane's and who casts a shadow upon the spot where Crane's gaze is focused. The Mexican bell-ringer, an ancient man dressed in white, appears spectral behind Crane, and the ghostly quality of the photograph appears even more so when we realize that it was taken only a

month before Crane leaped from the Orizaba in April, 1932. The picture is uncannily illustrative of the belief which many have expressed concerning Crane's desire to spend his Guggenheim year in Mexico, where the "cult of death" is still pervasive through Indian legend and tradition. If Crane's death-wish was indeed strong at this point in his life, it would explain his desire to visit Mexico City, close to the religious ruins of the Toltecs, whose god, Quetzalcoatl, was not only the god of water but the plumed serpent, a figuration of the serpent/time and eagle/space union in Crane's Bridge. The Nahuatl poetry which Crane may have encountered in his wanderings through Taxco, Mexico City and Mixcoac may have also influenced his perspective at this time. The common themes of many of these verses, still very much alive in Mexico through written hundreds of years ago, link Quetzalcoatl with the idea of inner perfection and spiritual sacrifice. Often referred to as the god of knowledge, Quetzalcoatl, along with Huitzilopochtli, required human sacrifice as well; in many Nahuatl works, this appears with the symbolism of many of Crane's best poems. As Crane's ritual of destruction and apprehension of noumenal essence is the crux of "Lachrymae Christi," so does the ancient Nahuatl poet ask: "Is it true that on earth one lives? Where is that source of light, since that which gives light hides itself?" (Keen, 39)

Upon arriving in Mexico, Crane became friendly with the Mexican artists Diego Rivera and David Siquieros, Modernists

who focused on the development of indigenismo, or the portrayal of native scenes and myths. As did Douanier Rousseau, the "father" of many modern artists, Rivera and Siquieros found a strong similarity between primitive structures and modern aesthetics, as Keen notes: "The anatomies that Léger put together with rule and compass still had far to go on their mechanical legs to equal the frightfully abstract countenance of a Tlaloc or Tzontémoc. These idols combined the moroseness of a Derain with the mathematical innuendos of Juan Gris, Picasso's evisceration of objects matching the fierceness of an Aztec ritual knifing." (516) Rivera and Siquieros spared their audience none of the bloody sacrifice alluded to here in their works, and Wolfe notes of Rivera's murals: "In Diego's world there is nothing modern man can do which Aztecs have not done more intensely and skillfully... Over all presides the watchful vulture, who takes upon himself the ungrateful task of scavenging to keep this world clean" (3) Perhaps an analogue of the Christ/Dionysus figure of "Lachrymae Christi," the watchful vulture here is as much a part of Crane's myth of creation at this point as it is for the Indianists. Unterecker notes that this feral aspect of the experience of primitivism drew Crane to Mexico as it did D.H. Lawrence earlier: "Crane was looking for the same thing as Lawrence. He wanted to discover a primitive Mexico - the world that had existed before the white man. If he could make such a discovery, he would feel grounded in the work he hoped to produce." (652) Crane had hoped, as part of his

Guggenheim year, to begin a long poem on the conquest of Mexico. Interested in Indian history through his contact with Waldo Frank, he intended to create an epic of Mexico in its pre-Cortés era, in a sense redefining history and perspective in the manner of The Bridge. Although there is no evidence that Crane read William Carlos Williams' essay, "The Destruction of Tenochtitlan," (1952) the Williams work is similar to Crane's proposed poem in its celebration of Mexico before Spanish rule. Another important experience for Crane came in his attendance of the yearly feast of Tepotzécatl, ironically, the god of pulque, the potent Mexican liquor. The three-day ceremony, complete with drums, flutes and chants, offered Crane the opportunity to participate in the rite itself, as the Indians allowed him to play the ceremonial drum as well as imbibe. Unfortunately, although this experience and others related to his deep feeling for Mexico and its culture were uppermost in his mind, the epic of Aztec civilization would not be written.

What would be written, however, is what many have considered Crane's finest poem, "The Broken Tower." The poem's source is in Crane's experience while ringing the town bells with the local sexton in St. Prisca's Church, an "epiphany" which fueled the ecstatic poem's development. Crane sensed, according to his letters, that he was about to die at this period in his life; whether it is a creative and spiritual death he sensed or a presaging of his physical death is not clear. In a letter to Slater Brown, he complained, in 1932,

of being depressed about his work, and Katharine Anne Porter's account of his inner chaos at this time perhaps alludes to Crane's impending sense of death: "He said that his life was blunting his sensibilities, and he was no longer capable of feeling anything except under the most violent and brutal shocks. He described Harry Crosby's suicide as 'imaginative, the act of a poet.' He would weep and shout, 'I am Whitman, Baudelaire, Christ' but never once did he say he was Hart Crane." (quoted in Horton, 286-287)

Crane's focus on the tower symbol for his final poem goes beyond its basis in his own experience in the bell tower of St. Prisca's Church; it implies, as it does in Nerval's Aurélia, the life consumed in climbing to its top, a metaphor for art. The tower is also the common figuration for the alchemist's furnace, where metals change into gold; rising above the phenomenological world, it symbolizes ascent, transformation, and as does the Bridge's arc, the aufhebung. In Harold Bloom's terms, it is his most Orphic poem, as the poet's song and the bells' carillon are inseparable, and the poet achieves kenosis by pouring out himself as the church-tower's bells "break down their tower." The poet's identification with the idea of destruction/purification is total in this work, whereas it had been elusive in the poems with similar structure before. Crane is ready, at this point, for the sacrifice; he realizes that agony is fundamentally necessary for his most extreme attempt at transformation, and the ailleurs is all too close. Crane's tower is broken, an

allusion perhaps to the broken tower of the tarot deck, which he may have been familiarized with through his contact with Eliot and The Waste Land. In the tarot, the broken tower, struck by lightning, symbolizes radical transformation, a drastic change, but not death itself. The broken tower itself appears, for Crane, his most ontologically valid and complete symbol; as the bridge seems, for contemporary critics such as Irwin and Bleich, wrapped in Crane's own wish-fulfillment and distanced from himself due to its aesthetic weight, so does the broken tower, conversely, embody Crane's aesthetic predicament most completely. At the poem's beginning, it appears to be a response to the question at the end of The Bridge, as the "whispers antiphonal" return: "Have you not heard, have you not seen that corps/Of shadows in the tower, whose shoulders sway/Antiphonal carillons launched." (193, 5-7) As the frenzied carillon bells "break down their tower," so does Crane's own ecstatic vision overcome him; he has lost control in one of the most magnificent and frightening moments in modern poetry: "The bells, I say...swing I know not where. Their tongues engrave/Membrane through marrow, my long-scattered score/Of broken intervals." (193, 9-11) Here strongly reminiscent of Hopkins, whose "terrible sonnets" he read in his last few years, the sense of agony and poetic necessity is at its most direct and extreme point. Crane's song is here, again echoing Hopkins' own diction and tone, clearly explosive: "Banked voices slain!/Pagodas, companiles with reveilles outleaping/O terraced echoes

prostrate on the plain! (193, 14-16) As Hopkins' sonnets were written before his death, so is Crane's vision here, in its extraordinary blending of ecstasy and terror, at its end-point; telling friends after its completion that he would write no more, he creates his own Paradiso-image at its end, with all the "terrible beauty" of consummate Modernism: "The angelus of wars my chest evokes/...visible wings of silence sown/In azure circles, widening as they dip./The commodious, tall decorum of that sky/Unseals her earth, and lifts love in its shower." (194, 31, 35-36, 39-40)

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