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City University of New York

PH.D.

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HART CRANE'S THE BRIDGE AS A HYBRID FORM

by

DANIEL GABRIEL

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

1986

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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For Marlen

Acknowledgments

There are many individuals to whom I feel grateful and indebted, but I can only acknowledge a few of these here. Two of the people who have contributed much to my education and spiritual development are not among the living. Muriel Rukeyser was a great Poet-Mother and mentor for me, someone who taught me how to break the silence and make the light. Her largeness of spirit and largeness of work have inspired many -- and she has had a lasting influence on my work and outlook. She also did much to lead me to Hart Crane. Her voice will always remain strong inside me.

Richard Darabaner's death is still too fresh to understand, and I may never. He was a very dear friend and a valuable colleague. He helped me concretely on the prospectus with his careful advice, and he encouraged me throughout that difficult enterprise. He was a steady support through the orals and the beginning stages of the dissertation as well. His untimely death is a profound loss to literature and the life of the spirit. Richard was one of the last visionaries -- a rare intellect, a very good and moral man, and a spiritual oddity in a materialistic age. I wish he could read this dissertation. His voice will also always be strong within

me, and I am committed to carrying on his work of the deep-spirit. (A special acknowledgment to Richard's wife, Gwen, and children: she has shown an astounding bravery in the face of his death.)

Among those friends at the Graduate Center, William McClellan has been the most important and helpful. He literally kept me in the program when I panicked in my first semester -- and he was an invaluable guide through the various rites and ordeals of doctoral study. We share an intellectual and spiritual companionship that is crucial to me. Anne Simpson and Sylvia Tomasch have also been extremely helpful in keeping me "on track." They offered both concrete advice and persistent encouragement. There have been others also who were of genuine assistance at the prospectus stage -- Rosanne Wasserman and Jane Epstein to name two. And Wolhee Choe has been a supportive friend and intellectual companion as well. I would also like to thank the members of the English Club, with whom on almost any Friday evening I could share the frustrations and joys of doctoral work.

Of the faculty at the Graduate Center, I owe the biggest thanks to my adviser, Professor David J. Gordon. I could not have hoped for a more reliable adviser and mentor. He helped shape my thinking, define the intellectual

parameters of the project, and revise and edit the various drafts of the manuscript. He read with amazing rapidity and was always available for consultation. His hard work both reduced the pressures on me and shortened the time frame of the project. He has also been a very good friend. Professor Charles Molesworth was also a dedicated reader, especially in the beginning stages when I needed his critical eye to cut and refine. Professor Angus Fletcher as another faithful reader has also been a very important teacher and mentor over the years. Our spiritual affinity has sustained me both intellectually and emotionally. He was also instrumental in leading me to Hart Crane, and his teaching and ideas are certainly reflected in this dissertation. Finally, Professor Allen Mandelbaum has been both an important teacher and mentor. He has taught me much about modern poetry, and his ideas are also certainly reflected in this study.

I want also to thank my parents who were highly supportive during the crucial period of the dissertation's writing. Their help was both concretely and emotionally beneficial, and it would have been very difficult to accomplish this work without it.

I want most to thank Marlen. Our love has been a mainstay for me -- a real spiritual, emotional, and intellectual

home. She has been a committed counselor, a serious reader of the text, and an emotional support, without whom I very much doubt I could have completed this project. She has given me a center I needed very badly. She is the most beautiful person I know -- and I thank the stars I can share my life with her.

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Abbreviations

- CP Hart Crane. The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane. Ed. Brom Weber. New York: Liveright; Anchor-Doubleday, 1966.
- L Hart Crane. The Letters of Hart Crane, 1916-1932. Ed. Brom Weber. New York: Hermitage, 1952; Berkeley: U of California P, 1965.
- LB Hart Crane. The Bridge. 1933. New York: Liveright, 1970.
- LE Ezra Pound. Literary Essays of Ezra Pound. New York: New Directions, 1954.
- SR Ezra Pound. The Spirit of Romance. New York: New Directions, n.d.

Introduction

The Bridge is Hart Crane's most ambitious work, the one in his poetic canon he is best known for and that has received the greatest critical attention. Published in April 1930 (a limited edition was issued earlier in Paris by the Black Sun Press: Frank, LB xxvii), it was the second book of Crane to be published during his lifetime. His first, White Buildings, established him as a lyric master. Crane was to return to the lyric mode in his projected third collection, Key West, and in other poems published posthumously. But The Bridge is a work of a highly different order.

Criticism of the poem has been quite various, ranging from early attacks on the work's "disunities" to appraisals that it is Crane's most coherent thematic statement (Frank, LB xxiv-xxviii). The early criticism essentially labeled The Bridge a "magnificent failure." But recent criticism has been by and large more generous, in part because of a general acceptance of modernist poetics, and also because of a revival of English and American Romanticism and a general interest in mythopoetics.

No matter what the nature of this criticism, however, The Bridge has attracted a significant readership. It is major in scope if not in size, a work that Crane called an "epic of the modern consciousness" (L 308), one that he compared in ambition to Virgil's Aeneid. The analogy with a classical epic is startling but suggests the critical atmosphere within which the poem was originally viewed. Promised in the work's prepublication announcements was a return to classical epos, perhaps an unreasonable hope of critics. At the very least they expected a more conventionally structured narrative than they found in The Bridge, not the modernist experiment that it turned out to be; for The Bridge is a modernist epic with a Romantic point of view, and must be evaluated in these terms.

The analogy with The Aeneid has another value, however. It reveals the conflict of literary modes, and raises an overriding question: what kind of poem is The Bridge? It is not an epic in any conventional sense and it is hardly a lyric, although early critics especially liked to refer to it as a "collection of lyrics." I view its genre as a combination of lyric and epic modes, similar to the "lyrical epics" of the Romantics but with significant differences. My study is a reading of The Bridge from this focus, and its thesis is that the form of The Bridge emerges out of the hybrid coexistence of lyric and epic. In this latter sense, the poem behaves accord-

ing to the characteristics of what I consider a new genre of the twentieth century -- the "hybrid modernist epic"; but it demonstrates as well its own unique properties. The dissertation will also argue that The Bridge has an order and unity despite its discontinuities, that it is in fact one poem; and will show how it acquires its order and unity through the perspective of its hybrid form. I refer to this hybrid form as an "epic sequence," one that outbounds the typical lyrical sequence. The Bridge, both in rhythm and theme, is a sequence of voices, of lyric and epic modulations. I read the work both in its rhetorical patterns -- an alternating utterance of a "lyric I" and an "epic I" -- and in its thematic aspects.

The terms "lyric" and "epic" are of course crucial ones for the dissertation. Generally speaking, I define lyric as the mode of subjectivity, and epic as the mode of objectivity. These are open-ended descriptors and contain a number of other characteristics: for example, the sublime and the meditative aspects of the lyric mode; the historical/mythic dimension and the voyage motif of the epic mode. From a rhetorical point of view, the "lyric I," a term deriving from Käte Hamburger, describes the "private" or "personal" utterance of the poet-speaker (or narrator); the "epic I," another term of Hamburger, describes the "public" or "impersonal" utterance of speakers other than the poet, or refers to the constitution of

figures so strong as to reduce the immediate lyric voice, such as the Walt Whitman of "Cape Hatteras." There is of course a certain amount of overlap between the modes: they appear as intermixtures or they intersect. But by and large the sections of the poem do conform to one or the other mode, and in my analysis I separate the sections into lyric or epic, closely reading a select few as exemplary. I also treat the poem in its entirety in an overview of the hybrid phenomenon. I view The Bridge as a long poem made up of fifteen individual poems, and in my reading and analysis I often refer to the sections of the work (or parts of the sections) as poems and the entire work as a poem as well. I believe the context will make this distinction clear.

In terms of style, The Bridge does not exhibit the epic grandeur of The Aeneid, and this goes without question. Its sublimity is most present in the lyric mode, though certain sections of the epic mode also clearly demonstrate the sublime. But in the epic mode there exists a definite level of action, and this is conveyed through the voyage motif. In this latter sense, The Bridge could be said to imitate the classical epic, but the differences are too vast for such an analogy to be sustained. Besides the voyage motif, the epic mode of The Bridge emerges when the poem leaves the private sphere of the lyric, either through public or historical references

or, for example, through the techniques of dialogue and characterization -- though these latter also occur in the lyric mode. The work's historicizing and public dimension give it an epic "scope" as well. But though there are elements of story in the poem, The Bridge is not a conventional narrative; though there are "heroic" figures, there is no central hero. Rather, The Bridge is a discontinuous narrative, whose major voice is indeed the poet-narrator's; but as a "voice sequence" the poem also presents other voices that harmonize with the poet's. It behaves, again, in accordance with the principles of the "modernist epic," and its narrative procedure is more circular than linear: The Waste Land is one important model in this vein.

However, though the basic narrative procedure of The Bridge is not one of linearity, of chronological sequence or of logical episodic organization, the sequence of its sections is very important to theme and to the distribution of lyric and epic modalities, which is the underpinning of its form. The sequence of voices in the work manifests both musical structure and thematic meaning. To summarize briefly the distribution of modes (with a full examination in chapter four), we begin in the "Proem" or "To Brooklyn Bridge" in a high lyric mode with the "lyric I" of the poet in direct relationship to his sublime object of meditation, the bridge itself. This "I" is a

dramatic one in a lyrical composition that embodies all the major themes and metaphors of The Bridge. Though the poet-speaker attains sublime heights with the transcendent bridge, his climb is partially "checked" because his aspiration is too great. This motif of ascent and descent is a recurring one in The Bridge and metaphorically manifests the ambivalences of mood and spirit throughout the poem.

After this prologue, we move into the First Part of The Bridge proper, into the epic mode of "Ave Maria." The lyric I of the "Proem" surrenders to the epic I of the Columbus-persona. Chronological sequence is immediately broken, as we travel from a contemporary New York to an ocean voyage of the past -- Columbus' return voyage from his first journey to the New World. This is the only genuinely "historical" section of The Bridge, based as it is on the Journal of Christopher Columbus. Though "Ave Maria" is more fictive than "factive," the poet-narrator is extending himself to historical epos, and the trials of Columbus become his trials. The poet's voice is filtered through the voice of Columbus, and the poet's concerns, likewise, become the concerns of Columbus.

The epic I dissolves in the lyric dream poem of "The Harbor Dawn," the first section of Part II, "Powhatan's Daughter." Back on land and in contemporary New York, the poet is meditating on the harbor scene once again -- now

in a state of dream-reverie. "The Harbor Dawn" begins the love theme proper in The Bridge, as the poet conjures the mythic Pocahontas in a waking dream with an actual lover next to him.

The lyric I is sustained in the next section, "Van Winkle," which principally concerns lyric memory -- both from the point of view of the poet and the archetypal sleeper, Rip Van Winkle. Though "Van Winkle" takes place in the contemporary moment, in the lyric I's New York, in addition to the private memories of the poet it makes historical allusions that foreshadow the epic movement of The Bridge hereafter.

In fact, Van Winkle leads us West into the second voyage-poem of The Bridge, "The River." Through an epic transaction, the poet's voice merges with the voices of hoboies, with the wind of a moving train, and finally with a mighty force of nature, the Mississippi River. We gain also a proximity with the mythic American scene, another aspect of the epic mode, as the poet pursues longingly his idealized Pocahontas.

He locates her in "The Dance," the third epic voyage of The Bridge, and a rapturous dance of death as well (Hoffman 268). The epic I here is manifested through the poet's identification with Maquoqueeta, the sacrificial victim of the ritual dance. The love theme gains erotic fervor in this section, as the poet -- alter ego of Maquo-

keeta -- marries Pocahontas along with the Indian. The poet's merger with the mythic realm is problematic, however, as the modern world of the poet cannot fully marry the mythic past.

We move forward in time (the aftermath of the Gold Rush) in "Indiana," the final section of "Powhatan's Daughter." The epic I is maintained as the poet assumes the voice of a pioneer mother. We are also travelling back East, and toward the sea of "Cutty Sark." The poet identifies as well with the destiny of the mother's son who seeks his freedom as a sailor. His departure is both an escape from the Mother-Prison and a yearning-commitment to Pocahontas -- his bondage to the Eternal Feminine as ideal.

The son's journey East melts into the tale of "Cutty Sark," Part III of The Bridge, which revolves around a weathered seaman in contemporary New York. The epic mode is again dominant here as we merge with the poet's fascination with this seaman, in a narrative style that is highly disjunctive.

Part IV, "Cape Hatteras," is the fourth epic voyage in the work, as the poet takes flight in a modern airplane. This homage to Walt Whitman is, rhetorically speaking, the constitution of an epic "other" who is the center of poetic discourse. The fall from the sublime (in man's conquest of space) is paramount here as the plane crashes after a war mission.

After five sections of the epic mode -- the quest outward in time and space -- we return in Part V, "Three Songs," to a frustrated lyric I. The poet encounters false counterparts to the ideal Pocahontas. These three contemporary woman-figures fall far below the ideal, but are nevertheless aspects of the Eternal Feminine the poet is determined to pursue and embrace.

Part VI continues this lyric agony but chiefly in cultural terms. "Quaker Hill" is the poet's ironic cry of despair in the face of an American Dream that has turned out to be "belated." The lyric voice is the central voice here: his agony is in immediate relationship with his subject, as it was in "Three Songs" as well.

The final voyage and epic section of The Bridge is Part VII, "The Tunnel." This voyage through fire is the poet's and the culture's ultimate destruction before the partial redemption of "Atlantis." Despite the attempted recuperations in "Quaker Hill" and "The Tunnel," these sections are actually catastrophic closures and must await the rhapsodic opening of Part VIII, "Atlantis."

The lyric I is at a towering height in this final section -- higher than in the "Proem." Though composed first, "Atlantis" makes perfect sense as a concluding culmination to the entire work. I will argue, however, that a section between "The Tunnel" and "Atlantis" would have prepared us better for this rhapsodic climax after

the infernal fires of "The Tunnel" -- that is, a purgatorial middle stage. Nevertheless, given this shortcoming, "Atlantis" represents a partial recuperation in the work, especially as it offers only a prospective redemption and no definitive salvation. "Atlantis" also proves out the "myth of the eternal return" as we return to the sublime bridge -- the lyric poet's object of meditation.

In its entirety, The Bridge is an experiment in both form and world view. It combines Romantic conception and style, the self absorbed and possessed, with epic distance and collective meanings. It does this both temporally and spatially. It places in relationship the contemporary moment with the epic past, as well as intimacy and immensity. It counterpoints lyric meditation and epic voyage, the still voice and the voice of action. It is a work of the modernist sublime, gathering what would seem to be conflictive modes in a harmonic union. We may call it a "visionary epic."

The dissertation includes four chapters: in the first, I discuss the background of the poem's composition and publication, those forces that "pressured" the poem into existence. Of principal importance here is the literary moment within which the poem came into being. The poem's context, I believe, has much to do with its meanings. This same chapter presents a survey of major criticism. The second and third chapters present defini-

tion and analysis of the lyric and epic modes respectively, with a close reading of select sections in each mode. The final chapter presents an overall reading of The Bridge based on the hybrid phenomenon. This same chapter examines The Bridge's relationship to other hybrid modernist epics after brief analyses of these. This aspect of the dissertation is very important, as I attempt to locate The Bridge within a generic context, so that my study, though centered on Crane's epic, has interests and application beyond it. This chapter culminates in a conclusion.

A large objective of the dissertation is the interrelationship of form to world view: how the interfusion of a "lyric consciousness" and an "epic consciousness" bears on the meaning structure of the poem and the poet's attitude to the world. The Bridge is, finally, a tragic poem, a testament of the individual self in a struggle with a culture defeated by the Great War and by gross materialism. But the poem's tragic sense is not ultimately one of defeat, and rather imitates in this vein Nietzsche's tragic assertiveness or the sublimity of Shakespearean tragedy. In the final analysis, though the darkness of the poem is very visible, it is counterpoised by a strong light from a prospective future. The Bridge, in a beautiful closure, gives us choices for the future: either we rebuild the world or we let it drown.

CHAPTER I: CONTEXT AND CRITICISM

1. Context

When Hart Crane wrote Allen Tate on February 6, 1923, that he was "ruminating on a new longish poem under the title of The Bridge" (L 118) -- his first mention of the poem in his letters -- he had no idea how long it would turn out to be or that it would take him nearly seven years to complete. According to John Unterecker in Voyager, his biography of Crane, Crane initially intended to include The Bridge along with "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" and "Voyages" within one volume in a sequence of "increasing density and length." But with his continuing work on The Bridge and its resulting expansion he decided to save it for a second volume (374). The seven years of labor on the poem would turn out to be difficult and exhausting, but exhilarating as well. In Crane's short life, The Bridge would represent his central statement.

This "central statement" is a complex one: The Bridge is a difficult, sometimes obscure, poem. Crane is not an easy poet, and yet with study his message is essentially clear -- certainly profound. But the complexity of The Bridge is not merely the result of Crane's difficulty as a

poet. Rather, The Bridge is a product of many pressures -- diverse and often conflictive. We must view the work, I believe, in the context of historical, literary-historical, and personal forces. Only then will we understand and appreciate the work's richness and manifold generic character.

The historical pressures are themselves diverse, and I can only suggest them here. In the decade prior to the twenties, the period of the poem's composition, two major phenomena seem important as possible influences on the work. One is the fact that in the first part of the decade in both Europe and America, the general mood was one of optimism: mankind was improving, progress was being made, and liberties were being won. But World War I reversed all this; its catastrophe wiped out the sense of optimism and the persistent "myth of improvement" (Hoffman 24), and brought about, as many commentators have noticed, a general loss of innocence, especially in Europe.

Paul Fussell probes the ironic structures of the war and of modern literature in The Great War and Modern Memory, citing one source of irony as being the seeming endlessness of the war. He writes:

One did not have to be a lunatic or a particularly despondent visionary to conceive quite seriously that the war would literally never end and would become the permanent condition of mankind. (71)

If the war could seem to be endless, an eternal element of the human condition, it was nevertheless brutally

intense at all moments. There had never been a war so devastating, so apocalyptic, and there had never been a war in which the machine was so instrumental. The Great War was the beginning of a new military style: technological and multinational.

At the same time as the war's massive destruction was taking place, patriotic zeal was at a height. Ezra Pound's well known indictment in "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" of "a botched civilization" underscores the ironic fate of the gifted dead; and this nationalism only increased the irony of the war and made more difficult the heritage it left behind.

In more than one sense, then, the world ended. Millions met their physical end, and the War's survivors were dying spiritually. This world-death -- an important metaphor for The Bridge as well -- has an analogue, I believe, in dramatic tragedy. Northrop Frye has noted that at the end of comedy -- particularly Shakespearean comedy -- a new society is set in place, a continuum is established from old to new. At the end of tragedy, however, a mystery lingers. We as audience must participate in the reconstruction of a world (Fools of Time 119). The end of Hamlet, for example, represents a world catastrophe. Despite the restoration of order, as in all Shakespearean tragedy, here through the assumption of power by Fortinbras, Hamlet is dead and his world with him. We are responsible for creating the essence of a new society,

even a new universe. We must tell his story -- as he asks of Horatio -- in order to erect a new social and ontological order.

But the world-death of tragic drama is far different from reality. Tragedy purifies. We leave Hamlet not depressed, but sublimely uplifted. One reason for this transfiguration may be moral, as commentators have traditionally argued, but Nietzsche repudiates the moral base, and his positive conception of tragedy rises out of the perpetuation of the Eternal Will. He writes of the tragic moment, for example: "For a brief moment we become, ourselves, the primal Being, and we experience its insatiable hunger for existence" (102).

In an historical world-death we feel only depression. The Great War had little purifying effect, at least in Europe. The "sense of waste" that Pound and others articulated could not be remedied through tragic catharsis. But the analogue with dramatic tragedy can be useful to this extent: after long mourning comes a slow revival. Nevertheless, it is the nature of this reality that causes a distinct break in the analogy. Whereas in tragedy a resurrection may occur or a Nietzschean surge of energy, in reality, as the Great War demonstrated, a new order may not be purified but merely the continuation of the old order in a new mode of dress. This at least is the way many writers perceived the Great War: as death without

afterlife, as massive slaughter for the principles of "a botched civilization."

How exactly does Crane fit into this picture? According to his biographers, he did not directly serve in the war: he was too young to do so -- though he did try to enlist. But he did work in a munitions factory and from this vantage point was indirectly involved in the war effort. He was sensitive to the war's brutality, and to the general cataclysm of the period, but he detested patriotism. Philip Horton writes, in fact:

Nor was he insensible to the momentous events going on in the world about him, the epoch-making victories and defeats, the barbaric mechanical mass slaughters, the starvations and revolutions. But he hated war, and said so. Even more he hated the drunken patriotism which nourished it. If he had to go to the front, he would, but not to kill, not even in self-defense. (39)

Indeed, as Sherman Paul has pointed out, World War I was the "first public occasion in Crane's poetry" (78).

Paul is referring to "Faustus and Helen" -- and I believe this poem marks a new course for Crane's poetry: one embracing social strata. Crane's awareness of the "momentous events" around him was for the first time gaining expression in his poetry. Before this point, he was essentially an asocial Symbolist poet. With "Faustus and Helen" he was becoming what I would call a "Romantic modernist," welding the two styles and world views in his verse, and in this transformation evolving into something of a social prophet.

The Bridge is certainly a culmination of this new style, an extension of lyric effusion into epic and even tragic terrain. The Great War must serve as background to this new style, which indeed also encompasses an entirely new consciousness. I believe the two phenomena I have outlined -- the "myth of improvement" and the devastation of World War I -- are present in the poem and inform its epic and tragic modalities. This mix of naive optimism and overwhelming pessimism was a residue of the war -- as we move into the American twenties. America did not suffer quite the same psychic and physical scar as Europe had, and its economy actually improved after the war; so the "myth of improvement" lingered as the new decade commenced. It was this optimistic spirit that Crane was tapping as he conceived his epic poem. He was also aware that the old order was vanishing, as Herbert Leibowitz lucidly describes:

It was evident to him, as it was to other artists at the time, that in the wake of the First World War the old order was dying. He believed that a "new order of consciousness" could rise phoenix-like from the ashes of the old. (16)

The Bridge is really a testament to this premise: a kind of Nietzschean assertion of the recuperative Will. Crane was attempting to recover the world from the death that had been administered to it, to erect a new world in the face of catastrophe. In this latter sense, the notion

of dramatic tragedy as reconstructive has relevance, and the Nietzschean Will-Energy also is a significant factor. But The Bridge is also a poem that cannot forget the wound: the tragic death of the world is also imprinted in it. These antagonistic impulses explain in fact some of the poem's ambivalences.

On yet another level, the party atmosphere of the twenties is well documented, as America was experiencing a psychic and sensual revival. But the Big Party was less than a joyous one in actuality: it was rather an anxious escape from the death consciousness of the Great War, and it smelled of death. Crane participated in both the Party and the hangover, and The Bridge is also a confluence of sometimes exaggerated exuberance and depression.

We cannot discount Crane's restless Americanism either. His literary ancestors were to a certain extent Emerson and Whitman, though their influence, I believe, has been overrated. Nevertheless, what he could not help to acquire from them as an American Romantic was the indomitable need to make the world over. The "American Sublime" is a fundamental reason for this impulse, and Harold Bloom describes Emerson's part in it:

Emerson therefore founds his Sublime upon a refusal of history, particularly literary history. But no poetic Sublime can be so founded without a compensating isolation and even a crippling sublimation of the self, as Wordsworth's Sublime already had demonstrated. (Poetry and Repression 254)

This aggressive beginning anew is ingrained in Crane but the "refusal" of Emerson's sublime is not. Despite the fact that Crane is industriously creating a new world in his poem, he is also building a "bridge" to the past, and his eye is always on literary history. Crane's sublime is not one of forgetting, or of "self-begetting," to use a Bloom descriptor, but of an overreaching in the Marlovian sense. And in fact, Crane's bridge is an expanse between European and American culture.

In addition to the war, the machine and Puritanism also represented monumental social issues. Many intellectuals viewed these phenomena as negative -- as producing a joyless spirit in America. Waldo Frank's Our America, which Crane read with interest, is an indictment principally of the machine and indirectly of its Puritanical origins. What Frank calls the "ferocity of Puritan denial" (63) led in his opinion to a conservation of energy, in turn to the nervousness of the pioneer, and ultimately to the opportunism of the captain of industry. Frank identifies the machine as at the root of this crisis.

If the Puritanical sensibility produced the machine, and if the Puritans created a stringent work ethic, they did so at a cost, according to William Carlos Williams. His In the American Grain was very important to Crane, an original document of "mythic" history. He describes this cost to the Puritans as a kind of early spiritual death,

maintaining that, "This stress of the spirit against the flesh has produced a race incapable of flower"(66).

Crane himself repudiates Puritanism most directly in "Quaker Hill," but his high Romantic spirit generally represents an argument against the Puritan ethic. His attitude to the machine, on the other hand, is ambivalent, and this ambivalence penetrates his epic. His principal response to the machine appears in his essay, "Modern Poetry":

I mean to say that mere romantic speculation on the power and beauty of machinery keeps it at a continual remove; it can not act creatively in our lives until, like the unconscious nervous responses of our own bodies, its connotations emanate from within--forming as spontaneous a terminology of poetic references as the bucolic world of pasture, plow, and barn. (CP 262)

In short, the machine does not have to cripple poetic creation: it can in fact inspire it. Nor will it necessarily diminish the American spirit unless we allow it to -- that is, we can continue to have power over it. But the machine's oppressiveness and potential destructiveness are prominent in The Bridge; and this phenomenon is the result of Crane's awareness of the role of the machine in the Great War, as well as its role in the industrialized world around him. Crane's recuperative solution to these negative factors is suggested when he writes in "Modern Poetry" that the poet must possess "an extraordinary capacity for surrender, at least temporarily, to the sensations of urban life" (CP 262).

Crane outlines the task for the poet of the twenties: experience the world in its fullness, surrender to it, and shape it in your own image -- the fundamental Romantic project. 'This in small is the essence of Crane's raison d'être as a poet: "to convert this experience into positive terms," as he goes on to say, to convert the defeat of the machine into a victory -- and like an alchemist, to convert matter into the spirit of the bridge. But Crane is also responsive to those negative forces of the period, forces that in part make The Bridge a tragic product of the age. The poem cannot resist the machine's damage to the American spirit -- as well as the other dark background presences of the Great War and Puritanism. Crane became aware of these presences, consciously and unconsciously, before and during the long period of the poem's composition. This awareness gave birth to a poem of swirling dualities and conflictive moods. The Bridge is an amalgam of the optimistic "myth of improvement," the high Romantic spirit, and Nietzsche's tragic "joy" -- as well as the pessimism produced by the war and other phenomena. But the complexity of The Bridge is greater even still.

The literary-historical pressures on Crane and his poem must also be taken into account. The decade of the twenties in both Europe and America was a highly experi-

mental one in the arts, as Frederick J. Hoffman and Malcolm Cowley point out, among others. But the more radical experiments, such as Dadaism and Futurism, were not attractive to Crane. Where Crane does fit in is the more mainstream modernism of Joyce, Eliot, and Pound. And even Gertrude Stein's technique of a "continuous present" is important to The Bridge, as it is to these other writers. Frederick J. Hoffman describes the essence of her contribution in the following: "The 'pastness' of people and events was not so important as their relevance, and this relevance was tested in the light of its applicability to the present" (158).

T.S. Eliot conceives his own version of a continuous present in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in which he reveals the presentness of the past. Even in The Waste Land, despite its seeming renunciation of the present, the past and the present interweave toward an idealized timelessness. William Carlos Williams enacts his own version of a continuous present when in In the American Grain he converts historical figures into mythic archetypes. And Hart Crane himself refers to "Faustus and Helen" as a "kind of fusion of our own time with the past" (L 120), and this applies as well to The Bridge. All of the above writers, and Pound and Joyce with them, were engaged in a reassessment of history, a reordering of history for their own purposes. Generally speaking, they turned to formal experiments as a way of making the world over.

According to Hoffman, Hart Crane was at the center of this revolution, and The Bridge is an exemplar of the experimental decade (257). But Crane's need to write an epic not only grew out of the general historical pressures of the period, and the experimentalism in the arts, but also out of the influential presence of two important contemporaries, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot. They were influences from the very earliest time in Crane's short career. He writes to Gorham Munson on December 27, 1919, for example: "More and more am I turning toward Pound and Eliot and the minor Elizabethans for values" (L 28). His debt to Eliot was to continue throughout his life, and Eliot became for him, in the terms of Harold Bloom, a literary father to be overcome.

Pound and Eliot also directed Crane to the nineteenth-century Symbolists, Laforgue in particular. Crane, as I have noted, was an early Symbolist who developed into a Romantic modernist. Edmund Wilson asserts one important distinction between Romanticism and Symbolism in the following:

...whereas the Romantic, in his individualism, had usually revolted against or defied that society in which he felt himself at odds, the Symbolist had detached himself from society and schools himself in indifference to it... (265)

Wilson's analysis represents an important phenomenon for Crane, as we trace his growth to epos from the lyric

moment of effusion in a private Symbolist sense to the social statement of The Bridge. Pound's and Eliot's careers, along with Williams', also proceed along these lines of development, as they establish for themselves successively more ambitious projects.

At the same time, the lyric mode is the beginning point for the new epic, and has its origins, I believe, in Ezra Pound's concept of the Image. Pound defines the Image as "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time" (LE 4). He goes on to elaborate:

It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time and space limits; that sense of growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art. (LE 4)

"It is better," he maintains, "to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works (LE 4).

Stanley Plumly maintains, and I concur, that the Image defines the history of modernism. He writes: "So the history of the Modernist movement in poetry is a history of the image" (27). In the hands of Eliot the Image becomes the "objective correlative," in the hands of Williams the "thing," and in the hands of Crane the "logic of metaphor." The Image represents the modernist sign: it transmits emotion and intellect in time (but also timelessly and across space); and it eliminates narrative as

a prevalent poetic discourse. There would now be "direct treatment" and presentation in the Imagist mode, as well as compression and juxtaposition. Transitions would be eliminated and syntax modified. But Pound and other modernists would outstrip the Image as they began to work in longer forms; nevertheless, in each case, their development as writers can be explained through their various versions of the Image and evolutions therefrom.

"It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works." Pound soon overhauled this statement when he outgrew the Imagist "In the Station of the Metro" in favor of "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" and then The Cantos. But this generic evolution has its roots in the Image. David Perkins notes: "The fragmentary, continuously concrete style of the Cantos had its roots in techniques and convictions that were forming between 1908 and 1911" (457). And these "techniques and convictions" would culminate in Imagist doctrine. Michael André Bernstein maintains, furthermore, that Pound employed his Imagist technique in the service of a "'historical and cultural context'" in The Cantos (37).

The expansion of the Image into the presentation of a "historical and cultural context" is perhaps not the natural progression we might expect. The Image has applicability less to the social realm than to the individual consciousness, and it is the Image's limitation, as Pound

perceived it, that propelled him to The Cantos. At the same time, in its modernist form as an entirely new invention of modernist aesthetics, the Image contained the seed for Pound and other poets. It was the emotional, intellectual complex, or focal point, from which larger human concerns could grow.

Furthermore, Pound's concern with science and precision, with "control" -- "'Good writing,'" he says, "is perfect control" (LE 49) -- is satisfied by the Image. The Image is the new means in poetry for expressing the objective world, for projecting a world determined by science. The Image requires that whatever inner or emotional state is being expressed must itself be objectified. The means to do this is through "equations for human emotions" (SR 14) or the "objective correlative," or whatever version of the Image is being postulated.

Pound was also at this time proposing definitions of art. Considering the morality of the artistic act, he writes: "By good art I mean art that bears true witness, I mean the art that is most precise" (LE 44). Pound seems to be trying to fuse the Image with a theory of ethics (he had earlier described the "immorality of bad art") (LE 43). It is in fact this kind of thinking that affected his poetic development. He perceived the Image as a potential embodiment of science (precision), but also in its extended form as the equivalent of good art or "morality." But he also recognized that the Image was limited

in the degree to which it could enclose the ethical realm to which it was progressing. In short, the Image contained ethos potentially, but it was too objective a device in formal terms to engage the full experience of the human realm, most notably history. The Image was too aesthetic an instrument for the purposes toward which Pound was developing. And in fact, the evolution from aesthetic to ethical can characterize the heart of the modernist movement in general. Pound, Eliot, Crane and Williams all began their careers in the heavily formal climate of the early part of the century, with French Symbolism being a gigantic presence. Their study of the French Symbolists profoundly influenced the character of their early verse, but they would develop along other lines -- though these original seeds were enduring.

We can read Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (1920) as a poem between Imagist beginnings and later epos. A modernist paradigm, it was the first of Pound's long poems to deal with the modern world (Perkins 482-83). It was influential to Eliot and Crane in attitude and in its quatrain style. Its impersonality is a keynote of the modernist temperament, and it demonstrates as such Pound's acute awareness of the need for poetry to be on a par with prose, to compete with the novel as the dominant form of the age. In addition to "Mauberley"'s ironic and objective tone, it was also influential in its employment/

presentation of: persona; mixed languages; the ethical context of the Great War; dialogue and italicization; the sequence form; allusions to Greek mythology; and its debt and homage to Flaubert.

Of greater influence on Eliot and Crane were The Cantos themselves. Perkins reports that the opening three Cantos were first printed in 1917 in Poetry, though they had been worked on since 1915 and perhaps before (474). Pound was not satisfied with their "subjective" style; his reading of Joyce's Ulysses as well as Flaubert, James, and Eliot was reviving his earlier penchant for objectivity as manifested in "Mauberley." The "Ur-Cantos" were affected by this, as Perkins points out: "Successive revisions of the Ur-Cantos progressively eliminated the speaker and advanced toward an objective, maximally compressed presentation, in which the principle of progress is juxtaposition, not transition" (475). Eliot would learn from this, and Crane later, and Williams later still. The elimination of linear narrative and the installation of a discourse without transitions, a procedure evolving out of the Poundian concept of the Image, would define the modernist long poem. And Joyce was employing this technique in Ulysses as well.

Where Crane breaks from Pound -- and I must stress that the presence of The Cantos was an important reason for The Bridge -- was in the scientific objectivity of

much of Pound's program. Crane was ambivalent about science, despite its potential for material and technique for art. His "poetics of subjectivity," in addition, are everywhere apparent in his work. Crane is distinguished from the other modernists in his insistence on a Romantic aesthetic -- one, however, modified to suit the modern world. His allegiance to the Romantics and his inheritance from the Symbolists remain constant determinants throughout his career. His expansion of the Image (in his version, metaphor) into epic utterance, into the communal work of The Bridge, is affected to a greater degree than for Pound, Eliot, and Williams by the special character of his lyricism and by his innate lyrical gift. Even Pound's epic work as Bernstein points out (179), becomes more subjective in the Pisan Cantos and less a "tale of the tribe." Here Pound, the objectivist, is overcome by experience -- and the psychologically tragic finds a place in his work. Hybridization in the modernist long poem, generic and thematic, will be examined as a general phenomenon in the final chapter. Here it is important just to note Crane's debt to "Maunderley" and to The Cantos, but also the difference between the two poets in aesthetics and point of view.

The influence of Eliot was stronger on Crane than the influence of Pound, probably because Crane felt closer to Eliot's repressed emotions. Despite the intellectualized

style of Eliot's early poetry, a sense of hidden grief rises from beneath the textual surface. Eliot was also a more dominant figure than Pound in the modernist movement. Despite Pound's salesmanship, his work was slow to take hold. Eliot's work from the beginning was considered important and had the feel of the modern from the outset, as even Pound was aware. (It goes without saying that Pound had much to do with establishing Eliot; he helped him publish his early work, and his masterly editing of The Waste Land drafts is a hallmark of literary history.) Furthermore, Pound's work before "Mauberley" showed only occasional evidence of the modernist temperament. The Laforguan influence on Eliot (greater than on Pound) was also attractive to Crane, who needed Laforgue's ironic style for a brief period to make his own work more lively (Leibowitz 36). And Eliot was perhaps a more influential critic than Pound: his Sacred Wood demonstrates an authoritative, articulate critical voice -- the beginning of an illustrious critical career. His style is cool, his judgment sound and impersonal. Pound, for all his preeminence as a critic, was perhaps a little too idiosyncratic. (We must nevertheless also acknowledge Pound's influence on Eliot's critical ideas.)

Eliot's The Sacred Wood (1920) was a work very influential to Crane. Certain ideas had special impact, such as those on tradition, "impersonality," and of course the

objective correlative. Eliot's notion of impersonality requires a certain surrendering to the form of art itself. Crane's "surrender," on the other hand, is a giving over to the world of experience. Eliot proposes a certain self-sacrifice in service to the higher deity of Art, while Crane's poetic encourages engagement with an experiencing personality, and this personality can indeed become a poetic subject in its own right.

Eliot's objective correlative is also instrumental to Crane. It evolves out of Pound's Image, but has a more dramatic and linguistic character. Crane's "logic of metaphor," another outgrowth of the Image, defines poetic metaphor as outside the parameters of linguistic or empirical logic; indeed, it has "pre-logical" roots, thus positioning Crane closer to the Romantics in his version of the Image.

Despite Crane's differences with Eliot's poetics, the Eliot example is important for Crane if for no other reason that to locate himself -- as with Pound -- in a modernist context. But Crane's debt is even more profound than this, because Eliot's notions of impersonality and tradition ("the historical sense") instructed Crane in both the use of the past and the organization of larger poetic structures than he had been committed to. "Faustus and Helen" and The Bridge involve the recuperation of the past through its evocation in a vital present, and the

creation of a more expansive poetic self. Though dependent on lyrical subjectivity, these poems also break away from subjective constraints -- they view the world in grander terms.

Furthermore, Crane learned from Eliot's craft in The Waste Land, a more practical education than the one contained in Eliot's poetics. Crane read The Waste Land with studious interest and was mindful of it throughout the composition of The Bridge. He perceived Eliot's poem as a rival work, and he wished to answer it with a more affirmative statement. The Waste Land's negativity has been examined industriously, and its formal problems well documented. William Carlos Williams writes of it, for example, that it "wiped out our world as if an atom bomb had been dropped upon it and our brave sallies into the unknown were turned to dust" (The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams 174).

For Williams, The Waste Land was a blow against the vital present and the sense of the local he was trying to capture through an American idiom. Eliot's poem, according to Williams, was a poem of the past, of the "academy," and in its international, intercultural contours, a poem whose locus was the world. What was more disturbing to the general reader was the poem's break from narrative logic (Perkins 502). Eliot acquired this technique from his readings of Ulysses, "Mauberley," and The Cantos, and it is the result of Pound's extensive editing and cutting.

Whatever reservations may exist about The Waste Land, no one can deny its place as the modernist poem, along with Ulysses as the modernist novel (Sultan 3). Crane, as a poet keenly aware of the contemporary scene, understood that Eliot's poem was breaking formal ground, even though he condemned the poem's pessimism. The Bridge is a poem that behaves very much like The Waste Land, but it is one that breaks its own ground as well. Crane's epic refers in style and ambitiousness to the modernist projects around him.

There were also personal factors in Crane's need to write an epic, and though these refer to the historical and literary-historical realms, they have their own status as well. I believe Crane understood that a major poet must take upon himself ambitious projects -- that his stature depends upon his ability to handle epic forms. John Unterecker writes of Crane, for example: "Major poets, he recognized early on, are poets who set themselves tasks which stretch their powers to the breaking point" (Voyager 260). Crane's personality had about it an overreaching quality, an aspect of grandiosity. This fact and his own inborn belief in what constituted a major poet were elements in his undertaking The Bridge project.

Crane's consciousness of the world and of himself was also expanding. "Faustus and Helen" (1923) is the first illustration of this expansion, and his poetic in this

poem would gain further elaboration in The Bridge. In an important letter to Alfred Stieglitz of July 4, 1923, Crane gives some suggestion as to a larger view of the world, a view that holds in it the transcendent:

...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 rather the purest living indice of a new order of consciousness that I have met? We are accomplices in many ways that we don't yet fully understand. "What is now proved was only once imagined," said Blake. I have to combat every day those really sincere people, though limited, who deny the superior logic of metaphor in favor of their perfect sums, divisions and subtractions. (L 138)

Though including science in its point of view, The Bridge will be affected by a new approach to organizing the world, to understanding reality, by "a new order of consciousness." This reordering will depend less on conventional logic than on a logic of metaphor, on a special use of the imagination. This logic will be contrary to the logic of "perfect sums, divisions and subtractions." It will be a "metaphysical" rather than a "physical" logic -- though it will refer just as much to the here and now, in my opinion, as to the transcendent. Crane's imagination will set out to prove something; it will bring into being a world heretofore unknown, nonexistent. This is the Romantic project par excellence: world-creation over imitation. The logic of metaphor takes Pound's Image into less empirical realms.

At the same time, Crane became more engaged with the social realm in The Bridge and sought to improve upon what he found around him. He offered a new world to a "fallen world" (Lewis 231). Of course, his attitudes to America were not constant and stable from the beginning, but were wavering throughout. Though Crane's early formulations were for the creation of an "optimistic" poem, the state of the world and his personal doubts over his powers would cause a depression, sometimes resulting in inertia, leaving a deep mark on the work. This depression is most obvious in "The Tunnel," although there occurs an ambivalent healing in "Atlantis"; and though The Bridge is a public poem and not merely a private lyric, the psychological dimension of Crane's imaginative process can help define the poem's cultural statement. His personal hopes for America frankly dwindled by the end of the project, and it is interesting to note that though The Bridge is very different in conception from his earlier work, the aesthetic of suffering implicit in his lyrics functions to some degree in the longer poem.

Crane's style also was changing in The Bridge. He was moving away from the compressed style he had learned from the Symbolists and from Pound and Eliot into a more expansive style, although characteristics of the earlier style would be retained in the later. Allen Tate notes this conversion when referring to "Faustus and Helen":

The originality of the poem is in its rhythms, but it has the conventional diction that a young poet picks up in his first reading. Crane, I believe, felt that this was so; and he became so dissatisfied, not only with the style of the poem, which is heavily influenced by Eliot and Laforgue, but with the "literary" character of the symbolism, that he set about the greater task of writing The Bridge. He had looked upon his "Faustus and Helen" as an answer to the pessimism of the school of Eliot, and The Bridge was to be an even more complete answer. (286)

Tate exaggerates the case here, and I do not agree with his full statement, but he does describe the principal phenomenon of Crane's stylistic transformation. Crane was very simply becoming a new poet, converting aspects of his earlier style into the later. "Voyages," Crane's sequence of love poems, marks a transition point between "Faustus and Helen" and The Bridge. Though the theme of "Faustus and Helen" -- broadly the continuous present -- is anticipatory of The Bridge, the style of "Voyages" sets a pattern for the style of the epic work. There is a loosening of syntax in "Voyages," and its lyricism is more exuberant than in previous work. The personal lyricism of "Voyages" frees Crane for the "louder" epic-lyric voice of The Bridge. Additionally, Crane was developing away from the irony of some of his early verse. "Voyages" is an illustration of the "anti-ironic" style par excellence, anticipating that stylistic aspect of The Bridge. At the same time, "Voyages" retains the difficulty inherent in Symbolist poems, as well as lyrical purity. Its voice is the voice of private lyricism, whereas The Bridge is a

hybrid of private and public. Nevertheless, the liberation of syntax in "Voyages," as well as its treatment of the sea, constitute an analogue between the two works.

Indeed, the rhapsodic aspect of "Voyages" translates well into what Crane had called the "symphonic" form of The Bridge. He writes, for example, on January 18, 1926: "I dare to congratulate myself a little, I think, in having found some liberation for my condensed metaphorical habit in a form as symphonic (at least so attempted) as this" (L 232). The musical analogue will be of importance to the structure of his poem, as Crane sought a wider rhetorical range to suit his theme, while at the same time not abandoning his "condensed metaphorical habit."

The darkness and bleakness that Crane felt during the project were also factors in The Bridge's composition. Attracted for a time to the somber theories of Oswald Spengler, Crane was also gripped by his own despair. He believed himself at moments to be detached from any community, frustrated in his ability to tell his epic "tale." At the same time, he was extremely determined to write his epic, to overcome the resistances of his own psyche and the indifference of the culture. Despite his occasional pessimism, he was committed to a more ambitious poetic. The hybrid Bridge presupposes that the Romantic lyricist will assume a social attitude to the world. In this view, Crane and his lyric self must engage the social

realm, must leave the lyric shell. Closing the door on his lyric past, he in fact entered upon a vast territory, and his project both in form and theme became ambitious and profound.

Simultaneously, he was becoming sick of the world, because through Spengler he saw it for what it was worth: "Emotionally I should like to write The Bridge; intellectually judged the whole theme and project seems [sic] more and more absurd" (L 261, letter of June, 20, 1926). He goes on to write in the same letter:

The very idea of a bridge, of course, is a form peculiarly dependent on such spiritual convictions. It is an act of faith besides being a communication. The symbols of reality necessary to articulate the span -- may not exist where you expected them, however. By which I mean that however great their subjective significance to me is concerned -- these forms, materials, dynamics are simply non-existent in the world. (L 261)

Crane felt himself alone as an aspiring epic poet in an increasingly industrialized, routinized, mechanical America. But the "darkness" of his task also propelled him onward, a darkness that lends The Bridge a tragic modality. This tragic aspect is closer to Nietzsche's conception of tragedy than to The Waste Land, in the final analysis, but Eliot's poem is also a towering presence for Crane.

Crane also strongly believed that his career depended on the project, which is one reason he published the poem

when he did -- before he was fully satisfied with it. His rush to the press at the end may only have exaggerated the difficulties, the obscurities, and the discontinuities of The Bridge. But clearly Crane was not writing traditional narrative. The Bridge is a modernist epic, one extremely sensitive to the historical realm as well as the literary-historical. It is a poem that also rises out of Crane's deepest ambitions as a poet and individual.

2. Criticism

Reviews of The Bridge (reviewers waited for the Liveright edition) were by and large "enthusiastic" according to John Unterecker (Voyager 619). But the reviews and critical essays that really mattered to Crane and to the literary establishment were not favorable. The critical appraisals of Yvor Winters, Allen Tate, and R.P. Blackmur constitute a consensus of opinion that was to be very damaging to the early career of The Bridge. Despite the positive reviews, the criticism of these men, who were very influential in their own right, struck an anti-Romantic chord; i.e. their criticism reflected the tenor of the times, which was "new critical" and "classical." Crane's Romanticism did not suit them -- he was writing against the grain. Because these critics represented a kind of power elite, and because some of their judgments were indeed intelligent and persuasive, it would take many

years to rehabilitate The Bridge. They especially questioned the poem's unity, its status as epic, and its moral content.

Yvor Winters' "The Progress of Hart Crane" (1930) is a devastating review of The Bridge. Winters opens discussion by attempting to define the genre of the poem, maintaining that it is not an epic because it lacks a "narrative framework" and the "formal unity of an epic." He calls it rather "a collection of lyrics" based on the example of Whitman (73).

This represents in small the heart of Winters' attack against the poem. He dismisses it as an epic because of its disjunctive style and because of its overall lack of conventional unity. There are no ideas to support the poetry either, according to Winters, and no didactic dimension -- ultimately no morality. By calling the poem finally a "lyrical" one, Winters is in effect reducing it, and he assumes that epic and didactic are in some ways superior.

The reduction is complete when he associates Crane with Whitman. Indeed, the very section in which Crane sings his praises to Whitman, "Cape Hatteras," comes under the strongest fire. Winters considers this section to be out of place; he is confused about how it fits into the entire work. He experiences the same problem with "Quaker Hill," and in fact The Bridge generally shows "no more unity than the Song of Myself" (75).

Winters unfairly compares the Whitman/Crane epic and corresponding world view to The Aeneid and the value system of the ancients. Whitman and Crane were not trying to write classical epic. Despite Crane's comparison between The Bridge and The Aeneid -- one that was politically disadvantageous -- his aesthetics and final product are not in the classical vein. His is a modernist epic, one that does not, and cannot, conform to the values of the classical world. In fact, Crane's Bridge is not even a "Whitmanian epic" despite his spiritual debt to Whitman.

Winters, however, cannot accept the differences in world view between Whitman/Crane and the Virgilian Romans. He maintains that in the Virgilian world destiny was "clear and comprehensible" and attached to "a complete scale of human values," whereas in the Whitmanian perspective "all human values" are "about equal" (75). And Winters notes that as a result of such thinking "if nothing is bad it follows equally that nothing is good" (75). Of course, it is a danger, as will become clear, to equate Crane's world view with Whitman's. They may begin out of the same social impulse, but their notions of democracy vary.

Winters does concede that a saving grace for Crane in the Whitman heritage may be his Symbolist tendencies, but he immediately goes on the attack again when he disqualifies The Bridge as an epic for not including heroes. He

attributes this to the fact that in Whitman's democratic world view heroes are "impossible." There exist in the poem no flesh and blood characters, only abstract and vague principles and a mystical enthusiasm for the masses. Because of Crane's reliance on Whitman, Winters asserts, The Bridge suffers from not only the absence of a hero but the absence of any human relationships whatsoever. Only "Indiana" draws a human relationship and this fails miserably. Winters believes that "The River" and "The Dance" are the best sections of The Bridge, but in the third section of "The River" there again occurs the en masse philosophy of Whitman -- of the undifferentiated masses -- and there is a falling off.

But even of "The Dance" Winters claims that it "is composed mainly of unfused details, and is excited rather than rhythmic" (79). It is full of a kind of "hysteria," clearly marked by an overabundance of emotion. He also claims that "Atlantis" may be characterized by a "vague thunder" (80), and generally considers The Bridge to be plagued by problems of meaning. He does concede that "Southern Cross" is almost as perfect as "Repose of Rivers" and "Voyages, II" from White Buildings. But he makes a countermove when he says that "To Brooklyn Bridge" and "Ave Maria" suffer from the same "inexact poetic verbiage" as "Atlantis." The Bridge as a whole may be said to suffer from Crane's "moment-to-moment inspiration," and though this is a problem of Crane in particular, it is

also related to the "anti-intellectualist literature of our time" (81).

Winters concludes by praising White Buildings in which he finds "several lyrics that one is tempted to call great." Both in this book and The Bridge, there are "several charming minor lyrics and many magnificent fragments" (82). His review of White Buildings in 1927 had been highly enthusiastic, but The Bridge does not signal any "progress" for Hart Crane, largely because for Winters it is impossible to get "anywhere with the Whitmanian inspiration" (82).

Allen Tate's "Hart Crane" (1932-1937) is an assessment of Crane's career using The Bridge as a basis. Tate makes it seem as though Crane regretted The Bridge project when he reports that Crane wrote to him in the summer of 1930, telling him that "he feared" The Bridge "was not quite perfectly 'realized'" and that his "soundest work" was probably in the lyrical White Buildings; but since he was committed to The Bridge he "could never return to the lyrical and more limited form" (285).

Whatever Crane may have said on occasion, I think he had a strong belief in The Bridge, and though he recognized the difficulties inherent in the work, he also felt it was coherent and ultimately a successful poem. For example, he wrote to Herbert Bienstock in response to Bienstock's (positive) review on April 22, 1930:

It is pertinent to suggest, I think, that with more time and familiarity with The Bridge you will come to envisage it more as one poem with a clearer and more integrated unity and development than was at first evident. At least if my own experience in reading and rereading Eliot's Wasteland has any relation to the circumstances this may be found to be the case. It took me nearly five years, with innumerable readings to convince myself of the essential unity of that poem. And The Bridge is at least as complicated in its structure and inferences as The Wasteland -- perhaps more so. (L 350)

And as Unterecker maintains in Voyager: "Crane was discouraged by the reception given his poem. Yet he never repudiated The Bridge, the integrity of its design, the validity of its theme" (623).

It is clear, then, that Crane perceived The Bridge as a unified poem, but unified in a complicated and perhaps disjunctive sense like The Waste Land -- and by extension, the modernist epic in general. He grew to understand its difficulties and accept them -- he did not lose faith in his epic.

As to whether Crane could have returned to the lyrical form, "The Broken Tower," his last poem, is clear evidence that he had not lost his lyrical powers, and that, had he lived, he could have worked in the lyric mode for his third book. In fact, Key West and other late poems that Crane had not collected were written in the lyric mode when the composition of The Bridge was well under way.

Tate also maintains that Crane misinterpreted Eliot's "'pessimism'," which he says "grows out of an awareness of

the decay of the individual consciousness and its fixed relations to the world" (286), but I believe that in Crane's view of the world there exists a reality just as valid as Eliot's. As Tate later points out and I have also maintained, Crane is profoundly influenced by the Eliot reality -- and this reality adds to the tragic dimension of The Bridge. But Crane's reality is naggingly Romantic: he is stubborn enough to think that a dismal reality can be corrected by poetry. Eliot, on the other hand, finds hope through a religious view that seeks salvation in a hereafter.

Tate's analysis of The Bridge proper is interesting, if wrongheaded. He argues that the poem lacks "a coherent structure," partly because of the "personal quality of the writing" (287). The bridge as a symbol is also shaky and lacks objectivity. The historical sense of the poem is overly abstract as well, and "the historical plot...is arbitrary and broken" (288). Tate argues that Crane would have profited from focusing on a "single period or episode," and that Crane's view of history as "mythical" rather than as "truth-in-itself" would have worked better in a more mythical time. In an era of science, the religious impulse in this view of history only causes a discontinuity -- so that Crane again is writing against the grain.

Tate defines the structure of The Bridge as not a "single poem" but "a collection of lyrics, the best of

which are not surpassed by anything in American literature" (290). He singles out "The River" as the best of this collection and finds strength also in the "Proem," "The Harbor Dawn," and "The Dance." "Indiana," however, is in his view "a nightmare of sentimentality" (290). Crane is in trouble in The Bridge when he tries to become philosophical, Tate maintains, and he states: "The writing is most distinguished when Crane is least philosophical, when he writes from sensation" (290). But an aesthetic of sensation, he goes on, cannot satisfy the demands of an epic project, and he echoes Winters in the following analysis of the problem:

His pantheism is necessarily a philosophy of sensation without point of view. An epic is a judgment of human action, an implied evaluation of a civilization, a way of life. In The Bridge the civilization that contains the subway hell of the section called "The Tunnel" is the same civilization of the airplane that the poet apostrophizes in "Cape Hatteras." There is no reason why the subway should be a fitter symbol of damnation than the airplane: both were produced by the same mentality on the same moral plane. (290)

Crane's ambivalence regarding the machine is implicit in the dialectics of the poem itself -- the machine is in fact both good and evil; and Crane is again not writing classical epic. Nevertheless, Tate does concede: "Yet some of the best poetry of our generation is in The Bridge. Its inner confusion is a phase of the inner crosspurposes of the time" (291). In short, Crane and his

poem are products of the age, and his "narcissism," Tate continues, is "typical of the rootless spiritual life of our time" (292). Crane had no historical knowledge, and his "poem is the effort of a solipsistic sensibility to locate itself in the external world, to establish points of reference" (292). And indeed, Tate maintains, Crane's confusion and collapse draw him closer to the Eliot reality than he could have allowed.

Tate suggests that Crane would have profited by staying in the lyric mode, and he offers "Praise for an Urn" as a paradigm of lyric purity and insular wholeness. Crane is in trouble, however, when he "goes out into the world and finds that the simplicity of a child's world has no universal sanction" (292). Tate considers Crane to be an adolescent poet, whose "thrust into sensation is responsible for the fragmentary quality of his most ambitious work" (293). This "thrust" led in two directions: "the blind assertion of the will, and the blind desire for self-destruction" (293).

Tate wrote this essay in the period following Crane's suicide, and this fact seems powerfully to have influenced his evaluation of the poet. He is looking, in my opinion, too closely at the man and not closely enough at the work. The Bridge is, I believe, a mature work by a mature poet. In its hybridization, it locates a private self in intimate contact with a public self. Lyric and epic modal-

ities are not in conflict in the work but in hybrid coexistence, and the internal and external aspects nicely weave together. The Bridge is a sophisticated experiment on the part of Crane and consistent with the poetics of the modernist epic.

Finally, Tate maintains, Crane ends the Romantic era in his own person -- although he allows that the "Romantic impulse" may one day revive. He is suggesting by this the authority (and dominance) of the New Criticism. The Bridge fails, he concludes, like "Hyperion" fails with "comparable magnificence," but The Bridge is even further removed from the epic tradition than the poem by Keats.

R.P. Blackmur's "New Thresholds, New Anatomies. Notes on a Text of Hart Crane" (1935) is an important essay on Crane's poetry, focusing on The Bridge and "The Wine Menagerie." Grouping The Bridge with two other "ambitious poems" of the century, Blackmur maintains:

It is a striking and disheartening fact that the three most ambitious poems of our time should all have failed in similar ways: in composition, in independent objective existence, and in intelligibility of language. The Wasteland, The Cantos, and The Bridge all fail to hang together structurally in the sense that "Prufrock," "Envoi," and "Praise for an Urn" -- lesser works in every respect -- do hang together. (121)

Incoherence in these works, Blackmur asserts, is a fundamental problem. We must search as readers for material outside the poem to decode them. Coherence is a virtue,

as "Light, radiance, and wholeness remain the attributes of serious art" (121).

One reason Crane went wrong in The Bridge, according to Blackmur, is that he "had the sensibility typical of Baudelaire and so misunderstood himself that he attempted to write The Bridge as if he had the sensibility typical of Whitman" (124). He suggests that Baudelaire would have been a better model for Crane than Whitman, because "Baudelaire aimed at control, Whitman at release" (124). Whitman in general is a bad influence on a poet because he had little support for his ideas and had only "an inarticulate pantheism" (124).

Referring to Crane's comparison between The Bridge and The Aeneid, Blackmur points out the fallacy of such an analogy and maintains that Crane erred in his approach to the epic form: "He used the private lyric to write the cultural epic; used the mode of intensive contemplation, which secures ends, to present the mind's actions, which have no ends" (126). This is an argument very relevant to my own thesis. What Blackmur perceives as a fault, I perceive as a strength. Crane does exactly what Blackmur claims he does: he develops the epic form out of a lyric base, and what results, in my perception of the work, is that lyric and epic stand side by side in harmonic correspondence. And this phenomenon is to Crane's advantage, not his downfall. The Bridge is a far more vital work, in

my opinion, as a hybrid than it would have been as a purer form.

But in addition to this element is the fact that The Bridge behaves according to what we may call a new genre: the hybrid modernist epic. The reason why Winters, Tate, and Blackmur had so much trouble with The Bridge (and to a certain extent with other modernist long poems) is that they did not, or could not, recognize this new genre -- it was perhaps too early to do so -- and were making evaluations based on old standards, on the classical epic in particular.

Indeed, Blackmur maintains, Crane should have had an education in the classics. He went to Baudelaire, Poe, and Donne when he should have gone to Milton, Racine, Hardy, Bridges, and Masefield, for what they could teach him about the epic's "narrative sweep" (128). Crane went instead to what Blackmur calls the "school of tortured sensibility" (127). Because Crane chose the wrong masters, Blackmur resolves, he never fully matured.

Blackmur then carries out a rather useful analysis of "The Wine Menagerie," and concludes his essay by disagreeing with Tate that Crane was a product of his age. He concedes, however, that Crane possessed "the distraught but exciting splendour of a great failure" (140).

Thus we see the origins in Blackmur and Tate, especially, of the "magnificent failure" label that was to haunt Crane's reputation and his Bridge for many years.

Blackmur's praise for Crane, it should be noted, is in part the result of his close analysis of "The Wine Menagerie" (though only one stanza), and I might suggest that if these critics had generally stayed close to the text and concerned themselves less with preconceived notions of the epic, their appraisals may have been more positive.

Despite the negativity of their criticism, however, they raise issues important to this dissertation. The Bridge, they maintain, does not have a coherent structure, and it is basically a collection of lyrics. It is also not an epic because it has no moral foundation and no system of ideas -- it represents essentially a continuation of the Whitman tradition. Their positions, I believe, derive out of an antagonism to Romanticism as well as an ignorance of new modernist directions in the epic. What they fail to see, basically, is the hybrid character of an evolving genre -- a form that continues the Romantic epic of the nineteenth century, but is also distinctly different.

Criticism after the decade of the thirties has been by and large more positive, but the "magnificent failure" label continued in some of the major criticism of the forties, as well as evaluation of the poem based on the standards of the classical epic. The precepts of the New Criticism remained intact.

Yvor Winters remained a persistent detractor of the poem. In his essay, "The Significance of The Bridge by

Hart Crane, or What Are We to Think of Professor X" (1947), he concerns himself for the most part with the moral content of the poem. He claims that most of Crane's thought derives from Whitman (a continuing prejudice), probably by way of Emerson, and that the center of this thought is the glorification of change for its own sake. Concerning the structure of The Bridge, Winters announces: "The Bridge is a loosely joined sequence of lyrics, and some of the individual pieces have only a tenuous connection with the principal themes" (591). Winters maintains, in fact, that the poems following "Indiana" are joined together very loosely because Crane had no ideas about society. Later, granting him integrity and conviction, Winters maintains that Crane lacked the critical intelligence necessary to uncover the flaws in his doctrine.

The Bridge is not a conventional, linear epic offering a clear-cut morality. As John Unterecker points out in his essay "The Architecture of The Bridge," the looseness of the poem's structure may be close to its basic form -- not a defect as Winters and others seem to think. Crane certainly had ideas about society as expressed in his letters and poetry, although they are more implicit than explicit in the latter, The Bridge included. But ideas do emerge out of the form and themes of The Bridge. There is little dogma or moralizing aspect in Crane's poetry. The

world view of The Bridge is not imposed but arises out of the interpenetration of the sublime and historical. The poem does entertain collectivity, but in an untraditional, unorthodox manner. Finally, the attitude that Crane lacked a critical intelligence, a general prejudice against Crane, is unjustified. Crane is an intelligent poet, a conscious craftsman, in fact a highly self-conscious practitioner as reflected in his letters and programmatic statements. Winters and others seem to think that Romanticism and reason are antithetical, a view I believe to be an overgeneralization and an unfortunate stereotyping.

Brom Weber's study also attacks Crane's so-called anti-intellectualism. In his Hart Crane: A Biographical and Critical Study (1947), Weber maintains that Crane went wrong in becoming what he considers a transcendentalist, and that he did not know enough about the world in general in composing The Bridge. He claims, in fact, that Crane chose a "role" as a poet that "required a primitive function without a modern understanding of the world" (277). He denies Crane the status of cultural poet and of being a suitable spokesman for the age, and therefore recommends that he should have stayed at an emotional level in his poetry. But even at this level, Crane would have encountered a problem: "As he soon realized, however, his emotions had a tragic contour, and no amount of induced ecstasy could eradicate that complexion" (277). This

"tragic contour" would assume a form of depression in The Bridge, a state of mind to which the Spengler thesis was a suitable companion. Considering the condition of The Bridge and Crane's personality, there were two choices open to him, according to Weber: not to have completed the work at all, or to have written a "critical tragic poem."

Weber comes close to the central concern of this dissertation when he writes:

Crane made an error in judgment when he deviated from the aims of White Buildings and set himself the vastly more-complex task embodied in The Bridge. In other words, Crane did himself and poetry less good when he underestimated the expression of personal emotion as a legitimate phase of art and attempted to create single-handed a philosophical and sociological myth in which, as it happened, personal emotion predominated when it should not have. (312)

Weber does not understand the subtle modulation of lyric and epic tonalities in The Bridge, and his argument continues earlier critical prejudices.

Weber does admire the tragic aspects of "Passage" and "Recitative" and maintains once again that Crane "should have been content with being a poet of the negative" (312-13). Crane was better in the mode of tragic lyricism than in the epic contours of The Bridge. One reason for this, according to Weber, is Crane's ignorance of American history, an ignorance that makes it impossible to be glorious in the present. Crane in fact did not believe in

America in any sense of the word. Weber reduces The Bridge's mythic and epic status when he writes: "Crane is not a myth-maker. Because there is no strong yea or nay in The Bridge, the poem is not an epic as well" (326).

He continues the argument against the poem's epic status, in a spirit similar to Winters and Tate before him, when he claims that there is no narrative dimension in the work, no idea, and no hero. He considers the bridge symbol "inorganic" and The Bridge as a whole to have no unity. He does locate, however, a profound aspect of depression and death in the work: "Death, indeed, is victor in The Bridge" (328).

Weber attempts to close the case on the poem's unity when he writes that "The Bridge is a collection of individual lyrics of varying quality" and that readers will appreciate the work more if they acknowledge its overall failure and acclaim its individual achievements (328). Just prior to this Weber had claimed that The Bridge is not a "unified poem" and that Crane "was unqualified...to handle a didactic poem or a poem of faith" (328). Crane, in short, was unable to weave the threads of the poem together. Like The Waste Land, The Bridge suffers, according to Weber, from a personal symbolism, and both works lack organic unity because of this. Weber does grant Crane musical skills in his employment of assonance, alliteration, consonance, and pauses, but in the next breath he attacks the metrical and stanzaic variations of

The Bridge, and The Waste Land along with it, and cites this aspect of the poems as another cause of their structural disunity.

Concerning The Bridge proper, Weber reads the poem as one of depression rather than high tragedy. He claims that the poem's myth begins to corrode from "Indiana" on, and that the reference to the bridge in "Cutty Sark" is unconvincing, as he generally feels about the bridge symbol. He maintains that "Cape Hatteras" is a failure both as a poem and as a contributory part. Indeed, there is a "welcoming attitude to death" both here and in "Indiana," poems he feels were written in despair. He also claims that "Three Songs" is logically out of place and should have been part of "Powhatan's Daughter." "Quaker Hill" is yet another section that Weber claims does not fit into the scope of the poem.

He attacks "The Tunnel" in a way reminiscent of Tate. He maintains that though there is a good/evil polarity regarding the machine in "Cape Hatteras," the subway is not more dangerous than the airplane, or any other machine for that matter. "The Tunnel," therefore, is not integral to The Bridge either. Weber maintains that Crane included rejected lines from "Atlantis" in "The Tunnel" in order to offset its negativity; but we cannot rely on a reversal of this negativity, he goes on, through the single poem "Atlantis."

Regarding the latter poem, Weber believes it is one of serious doubt, and its doubt is symptomatic of the thematic and structural problems of The Bridge. He writes of the Atlantis symbol, for example:

Atlantis, like Cathay, is an ideal. But whereas Cathay is for us an unsullied symbol, Atlantis is a symbol of the triumph of the material over the spiritual. (377)

He ends his argument against The Bridge by comparing the sinking of Atlantis to the sinking of the poet and his poem:

But the island had sunk below the waves many thousands of years before, and the poet's belief in his myth had likewise been gone for many a year. So in the end "Atlantis" was not a suitable roof, and the preceding sections did not serve as supports for it. (378)

I have many problems with Weber's general and specific criticism of Crane and his epic. For one thing, Weber's accusation that Crane did not know enough about the world around him, specifically about twentieth-century science and philosophy, is a misreading, I believe, of Crane's original intentions, and represents a disservice to his intelligence. No matter what Crane may have announced programmatically about his poem, about his becoming "a suitable Pindar for the dawn of the machine age" (L 129), for example, or of creating the equivalent of another Aeneid, his basic intentions were to write a work of romantic visionary poetics. His attitude concerning science

and the machine, as I have noted, was at best ambivalent; but he did seek a spirituality in the machine and wrote out of this sensibility. (His attitude to philosophy was equally ambivalent.) To perceive Crane as the epic poet of the age, or The Bridge as a conventional epic with all-inclusive goals, is to take too seriously some of what he announced about his work and not to read it for what it is, a visionary epic in the modernist tradition.

As to whether Crane should have stayed at an emotional level in his poetry, this recommendation seems to force him into a lyrical mold that he and other modernists sought to escape from. Crane is essentially a lyrical poet, it is true, but he had ambitions beyond the convention and tradition of the lyric. Crane is also a tragic poet -- and I do not believe he feared this aspect of himself, converting it, as he does, into moments of exquisite ecstasy. This conversion, as I will show, is a principal element of The Bridge. The poem is indeed, as L.S. Dembo also points out, a tragic poem whose flights of ecstasy reflect a high tragic mode -- assuring that the work is not depressing.

Weber also does not perceive the hybrid structure of The Bridge. The poem is highly emotional, but makes a broad cultural statement as well. To read the poem as a conventional epic, or to require it to be so, necessarily disallows the dominance of personal emotion. At the same

time, to read it only as a collection of lyrics, is to reduce the social meanings implicit in the work. I do not believe that Crane undervalued emotion as an endpoint in art, that he was critical of poetry that confined itself to the pure lyric mode, but he sought to apply personal emotion to a theme larger than the lyric would accommodate. This mix of personal and public is what makes The Bridge as rich as it is; and Crane was not alone in this enterprise but was writing in the climate of the modernist epic.

That Crane lacked historical knowledge is perhaps true. But it is apparent from his letters that he did intensive research for the project, and it is also clear that he assimilated some of this material into the work itself. The Bridge is not a strongly historical poem, as is The Cantos, for example. I do believe that Crane could have been more historically concrete, and more scientifically and philosophically concrete as well, in order to make the poem fuller and deeper. But The Bridge is a visionary epic first and foremost and views history as a set of "fabulae" rather than as concrete events in real time. Its attitude to science and philosophy is similar -- and again ambivalent. It uses history, as it uses science and the machine, as a source of spiritual knowledge: Crane is less interested in fact than he is in vision. He chooses those episodes and figures from his-

tory that bear on the spirit of the present and his personal vision of the future.

Weber's claim that The Bridge is not an epic is true in its own terms. It is not an epic in the classical sense; it actually makes no effort to be so. It has no narrative, no hero, and no obvious idea. The Bridge is a modernist epic whose mode of progress is circular rather than linear, and whose hero is the poet and the archetypal visionary: Columbus, Whitman, Poe, or even Pocahontas. It contains a set of heroes, in short, and the poet is the central protagonist. Its idea, for there certainly is one, is submerged in the text. It is not a didactic poem and we must ferret out the idea as, in a sense, the poet himself is doing. Its unity is also implicit. As with other modernist epics, we must study its structure carefully. The Bridge can claim an unconventional unity, one depending upon the balance of lyric and epic modalities. We must "decode" its structure in order to locate its unity: to see it along a line is, curiously, to go astray.

Finally, Weber does not appear to understand the metrical, stanzaic or general structural variousness of the modernist epic. Though he may wish for the uniform iambic pentameter and stanzaic formations of the classical epic, the modernist version cannot comply with these restrictions. The epic of the twentieth century is formally diverse and is an attempt to retain the reader's attention through continuous change. The variousness of the mod-

ernist epic is apropos of the world from which it grows -- a nervous and disjunctive modernity.

I agree with Weber in some of his argument concerning the poem proper, and I have profited from these points in my own reading. But he is far too negative in his evaluation of The Bridge, and his position represents, in my opinion, a serious misreading. He is correct to fault "Cutty Sark" and "Indiana," which I also feel represent weak moments in the work. But "Cape Hatteras," despite its ambivalent philosophy and its sometimes strained music is, in some of its movements, an ecstatic crescendo, an operatic affirmation. "Three Songs," also, belongs exactly where it is as both a thematic and musical variation on "Hatteras." It also accords with the temporal aspect of the last quarter of The Bridge, taking place as it does in the contemporary moment. And "Quaker Hill," though not a major section of the poem, presents themes that are critical to the whole. Its ironic tone, additionally, adds a dimension to the work not manifest to any sustained degree elsewhere. In the modernist music of The Bridge, this differentiation makes perfect sense.

Weber is correct to argue that the subway is no more dangerous than the airplane, but the ambivalence regarding the machine is prominent in The Bridge, and Crane is not about building a logical argument. The machine is at different times for Crane both beautiful and dangerous.

But I believe we must read "The Tunnel" as not merely a "subway poem," but as a voyage through a psychological and cultural hell. The subway is merely a vehicle for this voyage, as the airplane is a vehicle for man's fall from arrogance. The poem's attempt at redemption does seem forced, and I agree with Weber here.

Weber also gives too much weight to the negative meaning of "Atlantis" and the Atlantis symbol in general. Though Atlantis is a fallen civilization with parallels to America, we may also read the symbol as ambivalent, given the ambivalent structure of The Bridge. In my interpretation of the poem, it is also feasible to imagine the metaphorical reemergence of America/Atlantis toward the ultimate ideal of Cathay. This view accords with the fabric of the entire work, a poem full of doubt but not despair.

L.S. Dembo's important Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge: A Study of "The Bridge" (1960) represents perhaps the most important chapter in the rehabilitation of the poem. The study embraces the Romantic possibilities of the work -- as the era of the New Criticism could not. Its sympathetic reading has been very influential. Dembo has influenced my own conception of Crane's ambitions when he maintains that Crane could not accept "isolation" as a lyricist and attempted to create a personal vision of an "Absolute Beauty" in relation to an "industrial civilization" and thus become a social "seer" (7-8). For Dembo, Crane is not a traditional epic poet who speaks for his

nation, however, but a Romanticist who attempts to assert his notions of the Absolute for the benefit of civilization.

Dembo discusses with depth the theme of love in The Bridge as posed against the poem's social values, defining the work as "a romantic lyric given epic implications" (10). It is for him, as it is for me to some extent, a quest poem in both personal and cultural terms. But Dembo also maintains that there is a tension between the romantic and social in the poem, and he looks for a reconciliation of the two in Nietzsche's conception of tragedy. He writes: "...Crane accepted the proposition that resurrection always follows suffering and death. That is really the essence of what he took from Nietzsche" (16).

The tragic lyric poet becomes the social seer by applying his personal suffering to the tragic situation of civilizations, Dembo goes on to assert, and he makes a point about The Bridge influential to my own reading: "Its proposition is that society holds within it the possibility of its own redemption, not that it has already been redeemed" (18). And he further maintains: "Society will be redeemed when it understands its tragic nature and through its imagination, which speaks through the poet, moves beyond tragedy to a knowledge of divinity" (18).

After an extensive reading of the poem through the tragic modality, Dembo makes the following conclusion:

Yet what happens when the romantic poet becomes a culture hero, when the reference of the myth is shifted from the usual epic hero, who embodies the positive ideals of this world and is in tune with it, to a figure who stands outside society? When Crane interpreted the death of the voyager as the death of Everyman, he was doing no less than re-creating Everyman in the voyager's image, fashioning society in the image of himself; and it is here that the distinction between lyric and epic is wholly obscured. (132-33)

My own thematic reading of The Bridge owes much to Dembo and to Weber as well. But my view of the poem veers from these critics in the tragic dimension of the work. Briefly here, Weber does not grant the work a tragic stature and sees it only as an expression of despair. In his opinion, The Bridge is the result of psychological breakdown and Crane's inability to uphold the myth. He does not perceive the aesthetics of suffering I have earlier suggested -- with suffering being a somewhat conscious strategy in Crane's poetry toward catharsis and redemption. Dembo, on the other hand, reads too much into these aesthetics, and I believe imposes Nietzsche's formula artificially, as if the tragic modality were in Crane's plans from the beginning. Dembo does not understand, therefore, the psychological exhaustion and cultural disillusionment that Crane was undergoing as the project proceeded.

Dembo also gives too much emphasis to the romantic dimensions of the work, reading it as an extended love lyric with "epic implications." He undervalues Crane's

social and epic role in the poem. His final statement in which he claims that "the distinction between lyric and epic is wholly obscured" is inaccurate, as this dissertation will argue. There are definite distinctions between lyric and epic, and Crane in fact plays two roles: that of romantic lyric poet and social seer. These roles Dembo acknowledges to some extent, but he fails to perceive that they exist side by side in hybrid formation and do not collapse into one another.

I do agree with the relationship he makes between the cultural aspects of the poem and the tragic modality, especially the point that society discovers its own regeneration through an awareness of its elemental tragedy. But my reading of The Bridge makes an analogy with dramatic tragedy that Dembo does not make, and is more sensitive to the tragic contours of America and of Crane's attitude at the end of the project. Finally, it is a poem of historical importance that Dembo does not fully recognize.

R.W.B. Lewis' The Poetry of Hart Crane (1967) is a study of Crane's entire canon, with a lengthy portion devoted to The Bridge. Lewis argues that the poem has "epic rhythm" rather than "design" and grows from lyric roots. The lyric aspect has its origin in Romantic aesthetics, Lewis maintains, particularly as they derive from Emerson and Whitman. Though he claims that Democratic Vistas is a seminal text for The Bridge, as I do, he also

maintains in a note that there is no "consciousness of evil very notable in The Bridge generally" (248).

Lewis perceives the bridge as ideal throughout the poem, and only occasionally as real. He also argues that Crane's revolution was not political but one of consciousness, and that The Bridge is a "religious revelation." He defines myth, in fact, as revelation and not as story; and The Bridge, he says, is a poet's journey to revelation. Lewis maintains that the reason critics have found the work a failure is that they have defined myth as story -- and the poem, he stresses, does not work as one story. Rather, if we define myth as revelation, the work is a success.

Lewis gives great weight to what he considers the religiosity of The Bridge, but he does not read it as a Christian poem. He writes in this regard:

The situation was that of a modern American poet with or tormented by an overpowering religious impulse, confronted by a cultural world which (so he felt) denied him either the terms or the substance of religious expression... (270)

He notes that for Wallace Stevens poetry replaces religion, but for Crane poetry creates "new objects of religious belief," and that the divine is within the world.

Lewis implicitly undervalues Crane's historical knowledge when he maintains of "The Dance," for example, that the reader will only be distracted by any familiarity with the actual world of the American Indian. In an earlier

note regarding a section never completed on a Negro porter, Lewis asserts: "...Crane's imagination -- perhaps unfortunately -- was never hospitable to, or easy with, material of this social and political order" (304). Based on this assessment of the work's historicity or lack of it, Lewis concludes that the poem represents a "purely poetic and visionary structure," demonstrating a "mythic sensibility."

Finally, Lewis views the work as a "personal epic," and he indicates that this is also Harry Levin's perception of Ulysses and William Carlos Williams' sense of his own Paterson. Regarding structure, Lewis goes on to claim that the seemingly disparate sections of the poem are in fact repetitive, agreeing on this point with Kenneth Burke. Lewis also concurs with Burke's analysis of the poem's structure as having "qualitative progression" over linear progression. He concludes that the visionary imagination is the true hero of the Romantic epic, wherein culture and the world are reborn.

I agree with Lewis that The Bridge has a footing in the lyric mode, but it is not, in my opinion, a lyric poem. It possesses not only "epic rhythm" but epic "design" as well. Crane's plan for the poem, I might speculate, contained a definite modulation of lyric and epic tonalities. The Bridge is certainly a Romantic poem, as it is a modernist one, but the Emersonian influence is not as strong as Lewis makes out. Whitman is also largely an inspirational presence -- though he makes a contribution to the histori-

cal sense of the poem through Democratic Vistas. Crane does not wish to break free from the Old World, as Emerson and to some degree Whitman had recommended, but to strike an entirely new synthesis of Old and New. In order to achieve this synthesis, however, Crane had to confront evil in both old and new manifestations, and poetically tear down in order to rebuild. Democratic Vistas helped point to some of these evils as they were beginning to form in American democracy.

Lewis is correct to perceive The Bridge as a revelatory poem, and his definition of myth as revelation seems appropriate, but I do not perceive this aspect of the poem as essentially religious. The Bridge is a highly spiritual work and Crane is an intensely spiritual poet, but his religion is too personal (Horton has called it "subjective") to make much of it in any substantive sense. I prefer to read the transcendent in Crane as a manifestation of the sublime -- as we would in Shelley. Crane's God is a personal God, not a historical one.

Lewis' view that Crane lacked a political, social, or historical sensibility is an oversimplification. As I have stated earlier, Crane could have made his poem more historically concrete, but he did consider historicity to be an important element, nevertheless. In my reading of the poem, I perceive historical phenomena as "fabulae" (the term is Horace Gregory's) -- not fictions. They are moments in time that can stimulate the imagination and that

the imagination can recreate -- not creations of the imagination as such. Crane's relationship to the social and political orders is on a par: they have less "factive" importance than "fabulistic"; but his poem makes strong implicit statements on these realms as well.

Though I agree in part with Lewis' perception of the work's structure, the poem does progress in a linear fashion to the extent that it is an epic sequence -- with each section flowing rhythmically and thematically into the next. However, its circular organization is perhaps more dominant in its break from narrative chronology, for example, and in its observance of the "myth of the eternal return." Further, The Bridge is not merely a "personal epic," nor only an epic of the Romanticist point of view. It is a modernist epic possessing a Romantic world view -- an amalgam of "personal" and "impersonal" tonalities.

John T. Irwin's unpublished dissertation, "An Interpretation of Hart Crane's The Bridge" (Rice University, 1970), is an important and intelligent contribution to Crane criticism. Irwin includes chapters on Crane criticism, the logic of metaphor, "varieties of myth" in the poem, and on "closing the circle," based on a view of the poem as a circular form. The final two chapters represent Irwin's interpretation of The Bridge. He reviews six critics in his survey, three of whom feel the poem is unsuccessful (Tate, Winters, and Weber), and three of whom believe it is successful (Dembo, Vogler, and Lewis). Sum-

marizing the criticism in general, he notes the influence of Crane's biography and his written intentions on critical opinion; the problem of the poem's genre and unity of structure; and the question of the religious or mythic status of the poem.

Irwin's reading of The Bridge is a positive one and it grows in part out of his notions of the logic of metaphor. He views this principle as fundamental to Crane, a device the poet uses for "naming." Irwin maintains, for example: "For him the ultimate act of the poetic imagination is a kind of naming which creates an ordered world in opposition to the chaotic world of physical nature" (57). He examines the logic of metaphor's act of naming in poems before The Bridge, and draws the following conclusion central to his study:

In this process of linking through linguistic features, internal coherence is finally more important than external correspondence, that is, the incarnation of the Word, the creation of an ordered world-model in the poem, is in a sense a work of opposition -- the making of an anti-world. (66)

The logic of metaphor is, then, a key instrument in Crane's "creative act of naming," culminating in the construction of an "internally-coherent anti-world" (67), a world, as Irwin earlier had stated, "made in and by language" (66).

In the third chapter, "Varieties of Myth," Irwin begins his reading of the poem out of the focus of previous

analysis and out of his concept of the three "myths" in The Bridge. He defines these as religious, scientific, and personal myth. The first two are what he refers to as "true-believed myths," in which mankind has attempted to designate a relationship between himself and the universe. In religious myth, man was in correspondence with nature, but scientific myth overhauled this in man's attempt to dominate nature. Personal myth, on the other hand, is a fictionalized construction of the self and "exists for its own sake, for the sake of the order which it embodies" (86). It is therefore "anti-world," as Irwin had announced in his abstract (ii). Irwin's premise is that Crane adopts the first two kinds of myth in his poem, but finds them inadequate, turning from a communal orientation to a personal one, "which he creates in the very writing of the poem" (87). The circular form of the poem derives out of this self-referencing to self and to language.

After a reading of The Bridge in which Irwin argues the inadequacy of religious myth and scientific myth, he argues for the poem's conversion to personal myth in later sections, in which "man's mind is the source of that order formerly attributed to God" (181). Of the bridge symbol in "Atlantis," he maintains: "It is an attempt to grasp the whole flux of human time in a single spatial image -- the circular journey of man through the man-made ordered

symbol back to himself as the self-conscious source of order" (193).

For Irwin, the bridge is only a symbol; it does not exist in the poem as a real object, and Crane is a "modern symbolist" poet as opposed to a Romantic. The poem, Irwin asserts, attaches a value to the individual life and acknowledges that life's isolation; but his reading is not "solipsistic," he maintains, because the isolated life of the poet communicates itself to others. Nevertheless, the poem is a testament to a non-communal self, a self that is uninterested in changing the world -- as in Romantic philosophy -- and is, in fact, "anti-world."

Irwin's analysis of the logic of metaphor and of the mythic structure of The Bridge is valuable and insightful. I also perceive the metalinguistic dimension of the work, and acknowledge its mythic status. But I do not read the poem as basically self-referential, as a journey in the sanctity and self-sufficiency of the imagination. The bridge is not merely a symbol, but a real architectural structure of a producing civilization. The logic of metaphor does have an internalized metalinguistic character, but with respect to The Bridge it is not merely the tool of a private sensibility. Rather, the logic of metaphor expands from what I call a "lyric consciousness" to an "epic consciousness," though the lyric never disappears. The lyric mode of The Bridge, in short, changes character in the service of the epic mode. Irwin does not

recognize this, and analyzes the work as if it were simply a long lyric -- with imagination being private and self-contained. The Bridge has clearly public values as well as private, and is in part an address to a civilization, to a community of readers.

The poem is, therefore, not only one of personal myth, in my opinion, but of "social" myth as well. It is not a repudiation of what Irwin calls "religious myth," but a longing for it, a struggle to reassert it in modern guise. Though Crane rejects in part Irwin's "scientific myth," he is in fact ambivalent about the machine. It certainly is destructive in the form of the airplane of "Cape Hatteras," but the bridge itself -- as a real and also symbolic presence -- is a quintessential creation of the scientific spirit. Crane's attitude to science is that it has fallen away from its ideal, and that it must return to its positive function as bridge-maker. In my own reading of the poem, I do not make a distinction between religious and scientific myth, but between myth and science. As to Irwin's "personal myth," I do not believe Crane is creating a fiction of the self as much as a lyric embodiment of the self in relationship to culture. The "lyric I" is to some extent governed by an "epic I."

I also believe that language is not essentially self-referential in the poem, though of course Crane is very conscious of the act of writing: he believes in, and

refers to, the world-building powers of language and the imagination. But language has an external orientation as well as an internal orientation in the poem; it is also attached to an objective reality, and attempts to change that reality through its transformative powers. Crane does this through a Romantic/modernist frame: he is indeed attempting to make the world over, and he is not simply a "modern symbolist." Though he owes a great debt to Symbolism, a debt that is manifest even in The Bridge, his central role in this poem alters from the purely Symbolist mold of his early work. He now assumes the role of a "cultural visionary," and his imagination extends to the world.

Helge Normann Nilsen's Hart Crane's Divided Vision: An Analysis of "The Bridge" (1980) is the final work I shall review in this survey. Nilsen places Crane within a Whitmanian tradition, within a convention of "mystic American nationalism." She does not view the work as a traditional epic, but rather one that combines "historical as well as contemporary" elements "in a highly personal, poetic synthesis of American experience" (13). In a historical review of the work's criticism, Nilsen notes that recent criticism has not been classical-epic oriented but has considered Crane's approach to American philosophical and religious issues. Her own reading of the poem is in line with this latter perspective, as The Bridge for Nilsen demonstrates a "spiritual unity in America," and

"expresses a mystic American nationalism that derives from the work of Waldo Frank and Walt Whitman" (17).

But despite its mysticism, The Bridge projects not a Platonic, "abstract, otherworldly ideal," but rather "tries to present a vision within the real, or to render 'the whole in terms of its parts' as Frank says" (17). The Bridge, Nilsen maintains, expresses a "lofty image of America," so much so that "here a vision is suggested of a land of beauty and power, with shining cities, strong yet graceful works of technology, and fertile, verdant landscapes" (19). This view of the New World as the land of the chosen people, Nilsen notes, has antecedents in Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman.

But also implicit in the work is an attitude of doubt. Nilsen cites Whitman's Democratic Vistas and Frank's The Re-Discovery of America as seminal texts for The Bridge -- and these works are of a critical nature. Nilsen's reading of Frank's Re-Discovery (and Virgin Spain as well) indicates a cycle of decline in European culture from its inception. But the technological magic of America is really only the "grave of European science," according to Frank, and Nilsen goes on: "...the true new world will arise when the American people have acquired a new vision of their environment, have learned to see themselves as part of a more organic, deeply interwoven whole" (52).

Nilsen applies this cycle of ecstasy/doubt in her reading of the poem, claiming that Cathay is never realized but remains only a potential, a "promise." The machine is also a symbol of ambivalence for Nilsen, as it is for me. She maintains in fact that Crane came under Eliot's pessimistic influence, especially in "The Tunnel," but that The Bridge retains an affirmative outlook as a whole.

Nilsen's reading of "Atlantis" concurs with my own thematic reading of the poem, and has implications for the entire Bridge that I am indebted to. She writes:

If the Indian cultures came from Atlantis, it means that Europe and America once were a primordial unity, and such a union is eminently symbolized by the bridge. (162)

In her conclusion, Nilsen maintains that Crane conceived of himself as an "orphyic poet" whose words had magical properties. Though The Bridge projects a tone of doubt, it also represents a "utopian theme," and its dialectics of ambivalence are an integral part of the poem. Finally, she describes certain sections of The Bridge as demonstrating an "infinite longing," namely "To Brooklyn Bridge," "Ave Maria," "The Harbor Dawn," "The Dance," and "Atlantis."

I believe Nilsen's study of The Bridge to be one of the most sound, and my debt to it is clear. But I have a number of disagreements with her argument. Though The

Bridge is certainly not a classical epic, not an epic in any conventional sense of the word, it belongs to the convention of the modernist epic, and Nilsen does not perceive this phenomenon. Also, the poem is certainly a very personal one, but it is more than "a highly personal, poetic synthesis of the American experience." Crane was writing within a new convention, a new genre, and he was conscious of this to some degree. Though his poem has an idiosyncratic character, it also behaves according to characteristics of a generic group. Further, the poem projects more than an "American experience" -- I believe a European and universal one as well. Though Whitman and Frank are spiritual fathers of the work, I feel that Crane alters or expands their views, and that Crane's poetry is not technically related to Whitman's. (On the latter point, Leibowitz writes of the the two poets that "their music is altogether different," when comparing their prosody and rhetoric (223-24).)

I certainly agree with Nilsen's premise that a here and now Godhead pervades the poem, but I do not believe that this divinity is strictly "American" as deriving from Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman. Rather, this Godhead is "American-European" and sublime as well.

I do not think, further, that Crane was especially influenced by Frank's view of America as the grave of Europe; indeed, as Nilsen herself suggests, Old and New Worlds synthesize in the ultimate bridging of the work.

I am in accord with Nilsen's reading of Frank on the machine, and I believe Frank's perception was very influential to Crane. But at the same time, Crane was attempting a synthesis of the machine and nature, and his attitude, at least in part, was that the machine could lead America back toward its spiritual essence -- with proper usage. Finally, I agree with Nilsen's perception of the dialectics of ambivalence in the work and her notion of an "infinite longing," especially in those sections cited.

This survey has been by no means comprehensive and has reviewed only the central arguments of the major criticism. These arguments are of crucial interest to this dissertation, and I believe they represent the general curve of reaction to the poem. The negative criticism of The Bridge, it should be noted, did not end with Brom Weber's study of 1947, but has persisted since that time. As recently as 1983, for example, in their study of the modern poetic sequence, M. L. Rosenthal and Sally M. Gall are critical of The Bridge for lacking the kind of psychological and lyrical tonalities they identify as the heart of the sequence poem. They maintain that The Bridge should have imitated "Voyages" and been "much more centered on successive states of feeling and awareness and much less on public symbols and values" (321). They do not, in short, recognize the hybrid vitality of the work.

The negative criticism of the poem, however, has been useful in underscoring major critical issues that I earlier

suggested, namely the unity, coherence, and generic character of the work. In my study, I am presenting an alternative reading of The Bridge, one based on the hybrid model -- on the dynamics of lyric and epic. This reading will be a positive one because it assumes that The Bridge gains by virtue of these dynamics, which the negative criticism has not perceived. This criticism has read the work as either a traditional epic or a collection of lyrics; it is neither. It is "epic" in a radical sense and its lyric dimension is colored by its context in a "public" poem. The "negative" critics, who collectively represent an influential point of view on the poem, read it as something other than what it is: they misname its genre. Their readings are, perforce, negative. Nevertheless, this criticism has often been intelligent and engaging, and has informed my own point of view.

I owe a stronger debt to the "positive" critics reviewed here and to others cited in my analysis and reading. They have demonstrated the unities of the work, its Romantic character, and its mythic status -- among other assets. The positive criticism, however, has often given too much attention to the personal dimensions of the work, calling it a "personal epic," or a work of "personal myth," or a continuation of Whitman's Song of Myself, for example. John T. Irwin's emphasis on the linguistic aspect of the poem and on the sanctity of the imagination in it, is also symptomatic of a general focus on the poem's

"lyric consciousness," a focus that undervalues the epic status of The Bridge. These critics, then, also have not recognized the hybrid dynamics of the poem, and though their criticism has indeed rehabilitated The Bridge, another reading based on the hybrid configuration can, I believe, bring us closer to the true form of the work. My own reading, of course, could not exist without these previous readings.

CHAPTER II: THE LYRIC MODE

1. Background and Definition

Hart Crane is first and foremost a lyric poet. His consciousness is fundamentally a "lyric" consciousness and his work up to and including The Bridge demonstrates a keen lyric talent. But The Bridge represents an expansion upon the lyric moment, an evolutionary stage that surpasses lyric inspiration. Despite the centrality of lyric consciousness in The Bridge, the poem exceeds the typical boundaries of the lyric. Beyond this generic aspect, Crane was extremely conscious of making a social statement with his poem. He was indeed attempting to write an epic, but an epic of a special caliber, one of the "modern consciousness." The only way he knew how to do this, however, was from the point of view of the lyric mode. Crane consciously and unconsciously was building a hybrid poem, and as such creating a modernist epic. Of course, he did not come to this overnight, and it is to our advantage, I believe, to examine his poetics that refer to the lyric mode and its transit to the epic. The lyric mode, the mode of subjectivity, was the beginning point for Crane toward his goal of epic objectivity. And in fact, the two

modes counterpoise and influence one another as they balance in a hybrid mix.

"General Aims and Theories" (1925) is a very important statement of Crane's poetics. It was principally written to describe the aesthetic basis of "Faustus and Helen," but has relevance for The Bridge as well, and marks a new course in Crane's style and point of view. According to Brom Weber, "The essay is apparently the set of 'notes' prepared by HC in 1925 for Eugene O'Neill to aid O'Neill in writing a foreword to the projected White Buildings" (CP 293). Crane writes, to begin with:

When I started writing "Faustus & Helen" it was my intention to embody in modern terms (words, symbols, metaphors) a contemporary approximation to an ancient human culture or mythology... (CP 217)

Crane is obviously referring to his own version of a continuous present, which we noticed in the last chapter was an idea of significant currency among major writers. He states further:

...I found that I was really building a bridge between so-called classic experience and many divergent realities of our seething, confused cosmos of today, which has no formulated mythology yet for classic poetic reference or for religious exploitation. (CP 217)

Crane is setting out a theory for his already completed poem--establishing a rationale after the fact for his major poem to this point. By reaching into the past, he is formulating a poetic largely omitted from his pre-

vious poetry. "Faustus and Helen" is in part an answer to The Waste Land (like the later Bridge), a more positive assertion of a continuous present. Crane's view of the present is generally more positive than Eliot's, but Eliot is instrumental to the "negative" elements of The Bridge. Crane's hope in "Faustus and Helen" (and of course in The Bridge) is to construct a bridge between what he recognizes as an orderly past and a chaotic present, hoping to rectify the "confused cosmos" of today, to "lend a myth to God," as he indicates in the "Proem." His recognition of both the past (suggesting epic memory) and the alarmingly disordered present is an entirely new path for Crane. To this point he has been writing strictly in the "lyrical present," a present largely subjective and asocial.

He goes on to write:

So I found "Helen" sitting in a street car; the Dionysian revels of her court and her seduction were transferred to a Metropolitan roof garden with a jazz orchestra; and the katharsis of the fall of Troy I saw approximated in the recent war. (CP 217)

We have already seen how the consciousness of the Great War saturated the literary world of the twenties; but this passage reflects a social consciousness that is foreign to the early Crane. He is beginning to leave his lyric shell, to give expression to and react to the social world around him. We cannot claim that Crane was a political poet; but in "Faustus and Helen" and The Bridge he is definitely a "cultural visionary." As Herbert Leibowitz

maintains: "For Crane, the visionary and the aesthetic were inextricably tied to social rehabilitation" (19). In the undertaking of "Faustus and Helen" he was becoming aware of a more expansive style and a less limited poetic voice than in earlier lyrics. He was also for the first time thinking in terms of sequence, an important structural facet of The Bridge. This "social consciousness" would vanish momentarily in the "Voyages" sequence, but resume in The Bridge. Nevertheless, as noted in the previous chapter, "Voyages" is instrumental to the musicality and sea theme of The Bridge, and as another sequence poem, it is preparatory for Crane's epic sequence.

Describing the method of "Faustus and Helen" Crane comments that it evolves from a "grafting process" connected to "the relation of tradition to the contemporary creating imagination" (CP 217). He did not think that the process would be repeated, but of course it is, in The Bridge. Crane is undoubtedly conscious of Eliot's notions of tradition here along with Pound's ideas and example. But once again, Crane tends to be more positive about the present than Eliot, and he seeks a Romantic restoration of the present through the past.

An important facet of this present-hope is in the spiritual dimension of America, a dimension that will feed his Bridge project. He maintains:

I am concerned with the future of America, but not because I think that America has any so-called par

value as a state or as a group of people....It is only because I feel persuaded that here are destined to be discovered certain as yet undefined spiritual quantities, perhaps a new hierarchy of faith not to be developed so completely elsewhere. (CP 219)

This passage suggests an implicit difference between Crane and Whitman. Whitman was definitely interested in a democratic America, in America as a state. Crane, on the other hand, is concerned with the spirit of America, detached from a political orientation. Whitman was committed to that spirit as well, but his hope for America had its roots in the American people themselves. Crane is never guilty in The Bridge, as Winters maintained, of an en masse philosophy à la Whitman. Crane is rather interested in types of "spiritual personality" that exemplify the core tissue of America's spirit. Crane's vision of America of course changes in the undertaking of The Bridge. His "American Dream" becomes in part an illusion--even a nightmare.

The development of Crane from a pure lyric poet to a poet of the lyric sequence and then to the epic sequence of The Bridge, may be characterized as a transformation from lyric singer to social seer, as Crane withdraws from the purely Symbolist technique of earlier work. But he hardly loses a "lyric" consciousness in The Bridge, and this consciousness is the more dominant of the two. Nevertheless, the dominance of lyric does not exist to any significant extent, and epic in fact counterbalances and

redefines it. Furthermore, the difference between the lyric mode of The Bridge and its manifestation in Crane's lyrics (earlier and later) is that the "lyric I," the poet-speaker, is perpetually conscious of epic purposes and intentions. In The Bridge, we cannot lose ourselves in the states of consciousness of the lyric I because we are made aware that the lyric sections of the poem function in sequence and refer to other sections. And even when the lyric I appears in more purely epic sections, which it does, it has a collaborative function with the "epic I," the poet speaking through others. In those more purely lyric sections, though they can stand apart, full meaning is attained only in context and in sequence. Crane himself described this pattern in a letter to Otto Kahn of September 12, 1927:

For each section of the entire poem has presented its own unique problem of form, not alone in relation to the materials embodied within its separate confines, but also in relation to the other parts, in series, of the major design of the entire poem. Each is a separate canvas, as it were, yet none yields its entire significance when seen apart from the others. One might take the Sistine Chapel as an analogy. (L 305)

The lyric mode, in short, has a contextual function within the sequential structure of The Bridge, and the epic mode is itself "personalized" by the presence of the lyric.

The lyric consciousness of The Bridge partly emerges out of Crane's conception of the Absolute, which he defines in "General Aims" as being the equivalent of a "for-

mally convincing statement of a conception or apprehension of life that gains our unquestioning assent" (CP 219). Later, he employs a metaphor to draw us closer to the center of the Absolute:

It is as though a 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. (CP 221)

This "word" will become transfigured into the Word of The Bridge, the linguistic sign of the Absolute. And though this Word may have religious connotations, its metalinguistic aspects have been undervalued, except in the criticism of Leibowitz, Irwin, and Richard P. Sugg. The poem of the Absolute, Crane maintains, will be one that will strive to enunciate the Absolute through a "new word"; at the same time, it will give birth to a new word, a new kind of vision.

The Absolute is for Crane an ideal of the subjective consciousness. The poet must experience it in isolation prior to any collective experience. Though there is an element of the mystical or quasi-religious in Crane's formulation of the Absolute, we need not interpret it solely in these terms. Crane is struggling to envision the Absolute (that which is not relative or unwavering) and articulate it in the form of a poem. The poem-word that will emerge, beginning in the subjective consciousness, will be a communication that a reader can poten-

tially embrace. (By implication, if a number of readers do embrace it, they will evolve into a healthier community.) As Richard P. Sugg writes: "The Bridge is a poem about the creation of a poem, one that can embody the truth of the fictional poet's imagination in 'one arc synoptic' ('Atlantis')" (4).

Of course The Bridge is more than "a poem about the creation of a poem"; it is also a social poem, and its poet is a social seer. L.S. Dembo writes of "Faustus and Helen": "The poet is qualified to be a seer because his own cycle of suffering, destruction and redemption is a mirror of the death and rebirth of civilizations through war and decay" (Sanskrit Charge 16). This statement could just as easily apply to The Bridge. Dembo is referring to the Nietzschean influence on Crane, the tragic cycle of The Birth of Tragedy. The poet's own suffering, then, has social implications, whereas previous to "Faustus and Helen" Crane's suffering was limited to himself.

Sugg's reading of The Bridge underscores an important element--its metalinguistics. This aspect is more prominent in the lyric mode than in the epic, though it exists in the latter as well. Because the lyric mode is the mode of subjectivity, it has about it a quality of self-consciousness--the consciousness of not only the self, but the language produced by that self. Leibowitz writes of the Romantic poets and of Crane: "For them as for Crane, words have a symbolic power; the search for self is

equally a search for the order and essence of language, the comprehension of an unspoken idea, 'the incognizable word'" (91).

In addition to his notions of the Absolute and the "new word," Crane's ideas about poetic language are contained in his principal of the "logic of metaphor." He defines this in "General Aims and Theories" through the following:

As to technical considerations: the motivation of the poem must be derived from the implicit emotional dynamics of the materials used, and the terms of expression employed are often selected less for their logical (literal) significance than for their associational meanings. Via this and their metaphorical inter-relationships, the entire construction of the poem is raised on the organic principle of a "logic of metaphor," which antedates our so-called pure logic, and which is the genetic basis of all speech, hence consciousness and thought-extension. (CP 221)

If the Crane poem gives to the reader a "new word," a new configuration and a means of envisioning the world, a glimpse of the Absolute, it does so in a rather complex fashion. What Crane is presenting in brief is an alternative to the scientific consciousness of the twenties. Rather than the logic of science, Crane is proposing a "logic" of the imagination. This logic refers in part to a "mythic" or "primitive" consciousness. John T. Irwin suggests this in an article on the logic of metaphor when he states:

As Crane describes the absolute of the imagination that the poem is to embody, it sounds as if the basis of this absolute, on the deepest level, is the trans-personal structure of the collective unconscious. (qtd. in Clark 219)

Irwin goes on to compare the technique of the logic of metaphor with the free association used by psychoanalysts, asserting that both represent a "shattering of the surface-form relationships of normal lexicon and syntax in order that a more basic structure may erupt into consciousness from the very depths of the human psyche" (qtd. in Clark 219).

Though Crane's logic of metaphor is intimately associated with subjectivity and lyric consciousness--the idiosyncratic expression of the lyric poet--Irwin suggests that it has "trans-personal" potential as well. Despite its psychological origins within the poet himself, it also has the capacity to express a universal language, one determined to some degree by the unconscious. Crane is striving for a new idiom, a new word, a language that will express the sublime Absolute--and he does this in part by combining the past and the present, by attempting to recover the "mythic" view in an age of science.

Though a more Romantic conception than Pound's Image, Eliot's objective correlative, or Williams' "thing," the logic of metaphor shares with them the capacity to build a poetry out of a figuration. These figures incorporate the seed of an entire poetry--and they are all forms of com-

pression and condensation. They possess the germ of creation, both as stylistic device and as principle, by which more ambitious poetries can be generated. Pound's Image, for example, is the stylistic basis for his ideogram and "luminous details," and as far as world view, evolves ultimately into a social and historical cosmology. If we might trace the path of the Image, the objective correlative, and the "thing," these figures become respectively history and myth in Pound, religion and myth in Eliot, and the American idiom and place in Williams. The lyrical origins of these poets, expressed in their figurations, are preliminary to epic development, and in each case their long work can be explained through a study of their figurations.

This is also the case with Crane, whose logic of metaphor is a perfect realization of his growth to epos. But again, Crane's figuration is more Romantic than the others: it is imbued with the visionary sublime; and it is less "externalized" than "internalized." Can a lyrical configuration so Romantically imbued be called into the service of the epic mode? And in fact, can the less Romantic figurations of the other poets cited--possessing lyrical status nevertheless--also be utilized for epic production? These questions represent the heart of my dissertation and will be taken up in later chapters.

For the moment, I define the lyric mode in The Bridge as the mode of greatest subjectivity unmediated by fictive

voices and not diluted by the imaginative constitution of figures other than the poet (such as the Walt Whitman of "Cape Hatteras"). The "lyric I," as Käte Hamburger designates it, is the "I" of self-reflexiveness. She writes: "What we encounter in the lyric poem is the immediate lyric I" (272). She further maintains that this lyric I "transforms objective reality into a reality of subjective experience, for which reason this still persists as reality" (286). The lyric I, as so constituted, might have an analogue in T.S. Eliot's "meditative" voice, which he defines in "The Three Voices of Poetry" as "the voice of the poet talking to himself--or to nobody" (6).

Crane's lyric voice in The Bridge is actually somewhere between Eliot's first meditative voice (he does not term it lyric) and his second "epic" voice, which he defines as "the voice of the poet addressing an audience..." (6). Crane's meditative lyrics are not addressed to an audience--as meditations they could not be--and they are not linked to epic narration. But they assume a "Thou," whether it be the thou of the bridge or of the abstract sublime or of the American state mythicized. The lyric voice is an intensely subjective lyric I addressing a Thou, and this voice is the one that permeates the entire poem even in the context of public utterance. The Bridge is a cross between a self-reflexive meditative poetry and a mimetic poetry.

Louis Martz defines the self-reflexive meditative poem in his study The Poetry of Meditation when he writes that "a meditative poem is a work that creates an interior drama of the mind" (330). This drama is normally "created by some form of self-address" where the speaker's mind confronts a problem of the memory and resolves it in "a moment of illumination" (330). On the other hand, the "mimetic" lyric voice "imitates" the world, is in some sense a picture of it, and assumes the presence of at least one other listener.

The meditative mode in Crane operates in both directions. Though it is largely psychological and self-reflexive, it also has a "social" function within the context of the epic Bridge. In itself, it has a mimetic function as well, as the lyric poet comments at times upon the "epic" themes of the poem. In fact, we may trace this meditation cycle as follows: the poet centers his consciousness on the object of meditation (often the bridge); he becomes engrossed by the act of meditation itself; in this act the object as object dissolves and becomes symbolized; the poet's subjectivity then becomes master through the sublime; the meditation itself dissolves through the raptures of inspiration; and finally, these raptures conclude in certain thematic implications--as the inspired self expresses aspects of external reality once again, and in so doing expands upon the self of the first stage. This cycle of meditation does not function in any

strict sense: its stages may be implicit in the very inception of any given lyric section of The Bridge. But it describes in general terms the meditative mode, and has reference to the love motif of The Bridge as well.

This cycle also refers to the sublime, the final attribute of the lyric mode important to this dissertation. The sublime, of course, occurs in the epic mode as well, but has more definite relevance to the lyric where the bridge is prominent and where the act of meditation leads to feelings of awe and wonder. As I see the sublime in the work, it is a shared attribute of "outside" and "inside," or the material world and subjective consciousness. The bridge is a sublime object: it is inherently grand. But it also inspires in the poet imaginative "extravagance," to use Harold Bloom's term, or one aspect of a "subjective" sublime. The poet's imagination, that is, often exceeds the concrete bridge, or any other "object" of his attention. But when the poet reaches the heights of the sublime, he is often "checked" in his aspiration--and suffers a fall. Harold Bloom describes the fall from the sublime in a critique of Wallace Stevens' "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction":

In his great flight, the Canon, like Milton's Satan winging through the abyss, falls upward, in that condition of psychic extravagance which Binswanger names Verstiegenheit. "Aspire" goes back to the Latin for "breaking upon, desiring, favoring," and I think we can translate "the Canon Aspirin" as the self-defining, self-describing human desire for a beyond, even if that beyond turns out to be an abyss. (Wallace Stevens 205)

I do not attach the word "abyss" to the Cranean sublime, but rather perceive it as an extravagance or aspiration that can result in a fall. Crane is an overreacher in all his poetry, especially in The Bridge. He literally goes too far, he aspires to unattainable reaches. He is destined, then, to fall in the terms of the psychologist Binswanger's "Verstiegenheit." This German noun derives from the verb "versteigen," which means literally "to climb too high," and it is evident that at certain subliminal moments Crane does just this. Bloom might refer to this tendency also as a "visionary skepticism." And Angela Leighton comes close to the same meaning when she says of Shelley's sublime that it is "beset by uncertainty and skepticism" (25).

An element of skepticism exists in Crane as well, but his sublime is chiefly marked by an energetic innocence and a boundlessness that risks the heights, often ending in a problematic fall. The Bridge's sublime also has thematic implications, and I believe it occupies three thematic contexts: cosmic and natural; cultural; and romantic. The cosmic and natural context refers to the harmony of the heavens--the stars, the planets, the sun--as well as external nature; the cultural context refers to the ideal civilization Crane is striving for; and the romantic context is the idealized Woman, the Eternal Feminine of the poet's dream. In each case a fall results, partly because the aspiration toward these ideals is too

great. The bridge burns at the end of the poem in a dramatic apocalypse; America as Atlantis sinks into the ocean; and the Eternal Feminine frustrates and rejects the poet throughout the poem. Nevertheless, in an ultimate reading, these falls are thematically necessary for regeneration on all three levels.

2. Reading of Select Lyric Sections

"To Brooklyn Bridge," or the "Proem"

This first poem of The Bridge serves as a paean to the Brooklyn Bridge and a prologue and anticipation of the entire poem. It contains a promise to come and the thematic seeds to be developed. Frederick J. Hoffman maintains that "it contains all the essential metaphors through which the entire poem is unified" (263-64). But it is more than simply prologue: it is a poem unto itself that demonstrates organic harmony and the high lyric mode--once more attained in the terminal "Atlantis." Though the "Proem" reaches a high sublime, existing also is the implicit fall from the sublime and a sustained tension between the sublime and the "real."

The "Proem" and "Atlantis" exhibit an immediate and intense subjectivity. The lyric poet addresses the Absolute directly, the ultimate Thou of the bridge. Other than in these sections, references to the bridge are sparse throughout the work. This disappearance of the real bridge should not cause alarm, as it has for some

critics, because the symbolical bridge is in fact more important--the span along psychological, mythic, and historical "terrain." Nevertheless, I do not feel we can question the reality of the bridge as an engineering masterpiece of the nineteenth century.

The "Proem" begins in what Richard P. Sugg calls an "exclamation-question" (24), in a strong image of the sublime:

How many dawns chill from his rippling rest
The seagull's wings shall dip and pivot him,
Shedding white rings of tumult, building high
Over the chained bay waters Liberty--

The question motif is an important one in The Bridge, as a crucial question occurs at the terminus of "Atlantis"--"Is it Cathay...?"--and significant questions occur throughout the work. Sugg writes about the critical function of questions in The Bridge when he maintains:

Questions, for instance, are frequent: not "why" questions, which would suggest causes, but "how" questions, which reflect the poet's desire to accept and emulate new patterns, new shapes, changes for their own sake. (18-19)

Specifically, I believe, the interrogative represents the linguistic analogue of the quest motif in the work. But the quest of the poet is not merely personal, as some critics have emphasized, but public as well--a quest for a new cultural ideal, and ultimately a new New World. The question mode establishes an open-ended discourse and a

mystery in the possibly unanswerable. We as audience of a tragic work must seek responses along with the poet--and there exists the very real possibility of never finding answers. Nevertheless, the question itself provokes the quest and the quest must be undertaken for its own sake.

The exclamation mode, on the other hand, more definitively serves the sublime, representing the expression of the poet's wonder or awe. This first stanza amounts to a conjunction of the two modes as the quest begins in the sublime flight of a seagull. It is a "chill" dawn as the seagull rises with the day from his "rippling rest." The dawn is an important time period in The Bridge as is the night--the exits and entrances, that is, in the realm of sleep and dream. Here, the seagull's rest is not easy: it is a restless repose like the "rippling" waters about him, and the poem itself begins at the break of day out of a fitful rest. In the second line, "The seagull's wings shall dip and pivot him," the correlation of the phonemic short "i" within the line and in relation to the first adds to the speed and motion of the seagull. The following two lines describe a tension between motion and stasis: "Shedding white rings of tumult, building high / Over the chained bay waters Liberty--." A certain syntactical "suspension" exists here as well, a quality of floating that well conveys the seagull's flight. The circle imagery has been examined at length in these lines and throughout this first poem (by Stanley Coffman and

others). What may not have been noticed, however, is the dialectical tension of "white rings of tumult" that has the effect of qualifying the organic wholeness of the circle imagery. "Tumult" carries many suggestive meanings: certainly agitation, but more extremely, disorder or confusion. Out of his restless repose, the seagull rises in an agitated flight. In a more cosmic sense, he is the bearer of disorder. The seagull is an aspect of the poet's soul that seeks cosmic harmony, but in its flight of aspiration is "checked" and falls away. The antithesis of the next line is apparent in "chained" and "Liberty." "Liberty" may suggest political freedom (the Statue of Liberty?: Nilsen 35), but on a cosmic scale it is the freedom toward which the bird and the poet are soaring.

The next stanza sustains the image of the seagull in the first line, but makes a radical shift thereafter:

Then, with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes
 As apparitional as sails to cross
 Some pages of figures to be filed away;
 --Till elevators drop us from our day...

"Inviolate curve" is a perfect image on at least three levels: linguistically, there is a beautiful music in the correspondence of "v" sounds; as physical description, it is quite palpable; and as metaphysical sign it points toward the wholeness and purity of the circle, or the cosmic sublime. By extension, it also refers to the love

sublime as the bridge is metaphorized as Woman among its various manifestations. In the same line, however, the seagull abandons us--his wings are "As apparitional as sails." This action completes the falling away from the cosmic sublime. This falling away is the result of an unattainability--whether of a Godhead, or other higher power, or the Absolute, however we may wish to designate this phenomenon.

This disappointment or rejection translates into the "visionary skepticism" of the next two lines. "Some pages of figures" embodies the rigid logic Crane denounced--antithetical to the logic of metaphor. We can also assume that he is satirizing clerical office work. "--Till elevators drop us from our day..." further, represents an alteration in the original version--"--And elevators heave us from our day," as Crane sent The Bridge to press. Brom Weber argues that the change in diction from "heave" to "drop" reflects Crane's despairing state of mind at the end of the project (Hart Crane 297), and though there may be an aspect of truth to this, Crane was also considering, I am sure, the musical quality of the line.

The third stanza presents another spatial shift, as we move into the psychological space of the lyric I--"I think." This stanza compresses in its image of the cinema the "deceptiveness" of the earlier seagull. Sherman Paul points out in a note on cinema that "As the great modern art of illusion, the cinema called attention to the illu-

sory nature of art" (181); and this meaning I believe operates here. The "I" of the poet is embarking on a meditation. In the meditation cycle I earlier traced, this stanza represents the second stage, or meditation itself. Previous stanzas concerned external perception ("our eyes"), but here a process of psychological interiorization begins. The poet's true object of meditation, however, the bridge itself, will have to await these earlier moves. The true first stage of the cycle easily melts into the purely meditative and inspirational, as the "Proem" embraces a rhapsodic sublime. In this stanza, we physically enter into the mind of the poet. But his meditation is not private: he is making an implicit commentary about cinema. The movies in the twenties were at a height of popularity: the new talkies were a source of wondrous distraction for the typically bored office worker, especially in a big city like New York. Waldo Frank explains the need for this distraction in Our America: "America is a joyless land. And nowhere is this so crying-clear as in the places of New York--Broadway, the 'movies,' Coney Island--where Joy is sought" (175).

But the cinema is not only a form of distraction, it is illusion, and Crane captures this well in the phrase "panoramic sleights," sleight implying a deceit or cunning act, and as such carrying over the "trick" of the seagull. These "sleights" are "panoramic" because the movies can project wide spaces in a limited frame--and "panoramic"

also contains the epic intentions of The Bridge. The following three lines suggest the electric and transient magic of cinema that makes it continually seductive. These lines indicate the aesthetic nature of film: it is both easily transmitted to the public ("other eyes," recalling "our eyes" of line five) and highly ephemeral as well ("flashing scene"). It does not, in short, have the solidity of words on the page. At the same time, the montaging of film, a major modernist strategy, offers to Crane a technique for later sections.

In the fourth stanza, the poet confronts the true object of meditation:

And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced
As though the sun took step of thee, yet left
Some motion ever unspent in they stride,--
Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!

The tension between motion and stasis is manifest here. The bridge is a still object but is becoming part of the ever-moving course of nature--"the sun took step of thee"--including the waters that it hovers above. This conjunction of technology and nature has an antecedent in Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," and the two poems share certain resonances. The following lines from Whitman serve as illustration: "The sea-gulls oscillating their bodies, the hay-boat in the / twilight, and the belated lighter?" The effect is one of a delicate harmony between the things of industry and mother nature--of a flowing together.

Crane achieves his own marriage between the two realms, but his goal is more clearly transcendence. The "freedom" of the final line above links up with the earlier "Liberty"; but "freedom" has a still more metaphysical connotation than "Liberty," and it suggests the poet's psychological need to transcend with the bridge, to move, so to speak, with the bridge's static motion. The "Thee" of the first line signals the sublime; we can assume we are in the presence of a supernal object. Indeed, as a metaphor of the Absolute, the bridge can potentially bring about cosmic harmony, as well as freeing the poet psychologically.

From the heights of the fourth stanza we descend once again in the fifth with a suicide: "A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets." This more definitely than previous stanzas is a foreshadowing of the tragic dimension of The Bridge. It represents once again the fall from the sublime climb. Having ascended in the previous stanza to the sublime heights of the bridge, the poet's aspiration is checked. It has become overly "aggrandized," and the poet plummets to his suicidal death. The bedlamite is indeed a persona for the poet, but he also represents modern man at an eccentric extreme--and his fall foreshadows the sinking of Atlantis/America. The bridge stands strong, nevertheless, as personal and cultural savior. The final line--"A jest falls from the speechless caravan"--skillfully suggests in the noun "jest" both the suicidal fall and the "gesture"

of the "speechless caravan," a gesture that is the equivalent of a joke. Who is the victim of this joke? In fact, both the "bedlamite" and the "speechless caravan" are losers: the bedlamite obviously because he falls to his death, and the crowd because it is incapable of feeling empathy. As in a "caravan," a group of travelers on a difficult journey, as in any crowd in the modern sense for that matter, the individuals within the group become indistinguishable, part of the great masses. These are not the "en masse" of Whitman, but the awful masses of modern civilization--the nameless plurality. This phenomenon recalls a passage from The Waste Land:

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many. (lines
60-63)

Eliot is alluding to Baudelaire and Dante in these lines, and he conjures in this authorial collocation and within the lines themselves, the inferno of modernity. Eliot's "demonic" London Bridge is antithetical to Crane's sublime Brooklyn Bridge, and Crane was clearly aware of the contrast.

The following stanza introduces the technological dimension of the bridge, its realistic setting and modality: "All afternoon the cloud-flown derricks turn...thy cables breathe the North Atlantic still." As the bridge becomes an entity in the processes of nature, so nature

becomes enmeshed in technology. This synthesis is an important one for the entire Bridge and underscores Crane's capacities as both a poet of myth and of science. His world view is a composite of the two. In the final line of this sixth stanza, the bridge's expansiveness (as "fact and symbol" in Alan Trachtenberg's phrase) becomes imaged in "cables" and in the spatial extensiveness of "North Atlantic": i.e. the bridge spans the harbor but also reaches into the more cosmic waters of the ocean.

Indeed, this line signals another stage in the meditation cycle. The poet's meditation upon his ideal object--an object that is nevertheless real--evolves into the rhapsodic inspiration of the following stanzas, which read:

And obscure as the heaven of the Jews,
Thy guerdon...Accolade thou dost bestow
Of anonymity time cannot raise:
Vibrant reprieve and pardon thou dost show.

O harp and altar, of the fury fused,
(How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!)
Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge,
Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry,--

The bridge is a focus here of Crane's sublime "extravagance" beginning in the term "guedon," which has a vague origin and exists in a dark and unknown territory--like the "heaven of the Jews." This term occupies a mental rather than a physical existence--physical, that is, to the extent that the Christian heaven is such. The objectness of the bridge fades as the sublime becomes centered in the imagination of the poet. Our passage is one from

the real bridge, to the subjectivity of the poet's meditation, and finally to a realm that is in some sense beyond meditation.

The second of the foregoing stanzas carries us even further away from the bridge as object, into a highly symbolical poetic space. The coupling "harp and altar" introduces the synthesis of music and the sacred in The Bridge that achieves its height in "Atlantis." Crane may have been influenced in his notions of music by Nietzsche and Plato (from whom the epigraph to "Atlantis" is drawn). Nietzsche says much about music and the sublime when he writes that "music...is the direct copy of the will itself, and therefore represents the metaphysical of every physical in the world, and the thing-in-itself of every phenomenon" (99).

We in fact pass into the pure will of the poet in the foregoing stanzas, into his symbol-making imagination. The bridge dissolves, as it were, in the act of imagining, and we cross the "threshold" of meditation into the inspirational--or onto the plane of Nietzschean music. But the bridge is not, in fact, lost to us as object in the second of these stanzas; rather Crane builds a conceit out of it, and its physical form becomes metaphorized as "harp and altar." And does the bridge not look like these in reality? In our sentimental imaginations, the harp is an instrument played in heaven; by an imaginative inflation it could symbolize the music of the spheres. In our dia-

lectical reading of the "Proem," "altar," locus of sacred worship, might also serve as a place of sacrifice. "Fury fused" suggests fusion out of fury, and the fury of fusion also: it is the logic of metaphor exemplified. The following line in parentheses is an exclamation of bemusement and wonder: how is it possible for man's engineering brain to create such a monument of apotheosis? In addition to being a harp and altar, the bridge is a "threshold." Thresholds as we know from Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner, in particular, possess powerful sacred properties. In mythic history the threshold is the sacred crossing. In the tripartite rites of passage that van Gennep investigates, the threshold phase is the middle phase between separation and incorporation--termed "liminal" (from Latin "limen": Turner 232). (The ritual subject is referred to as a "passenger" or "liminar" in Latin, to cite Turner once again: 232). Thus, in ancient ritual, "to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world" (van Gennep 20). All passengers are guided by their tribal brethren in this triadic series of rites, and these rites accompany various critical life-moments. The bridge is the threshold into a sacred world, a margin between sacred and profane. It promises apotheosis, it offers up the sublime, it is an entrance to the ineffable, but it is not God. It is rather a passage to God--but can be painful as well ("Prayer of pariah"), or sensually urgent ("the lover's cry"). These metaphoric heights and

depths describe the sublime climb and the dangerous fall from the sublime. Furthermore, the "new world" of van Gennep's analysis has a sustained resonance throughout The Bridge, as the poet seeks a more ideal civilization; and herein the bridge is a vehicle to the cultural sublime.

The next stanza is a beautiful synthesis of these heights and depths:

Again the traffic lights that skim thy swift
 Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars,
 Bending thy path--condense eternity:
 And we have seen night lifted in thine arms.

This is an excellent illustration of the logic of metaphor. Collocations like "swift / Unfractioned idiom" and "immaculate sigh of stars" suggest more than the individual words convey, associational meanings of an "alogical" nature. In the former, the bridge is envisioned as a speaker, as a language bearer. In the latter, Crane's fascination with synaesthesia is actualized, as there is a blending of visual and aural reality. Here, the "sigh" is pure, as pure as the light that falls from the stars upon the bridge, but it is also a sigh of despair--the antithesis of moods characteristic of The Bridge. The last line, "And we have seen night lifted in thine arms," illustrates the interplay of syntax and semantics, where "night" by its medial position in the line, takes on special significance. It is the time, perhaps, in which the poem is made, after the day of work--and The Bridge is of

course the poet's journey of a day through the world of work and far beyond. In literary terms, night is the Romantic's period of germinal creativity. It is the time when ultimately the dream-self takes over, and The Bridge is its own dream of Utopia, of cosmic harmony, and perfect love. But this line also suggests the sublime power and theatrics of the bridge: to oversee and physically effect the inception of night.

To return momentarily to the phrase "Unfractioned idiom," I have already noted its metalinguistic aspects: it is the equivalent of the "new word" of "General Aims and Theories." As "idiom," the bridge is that part of language that is culturally unique, and this fact resonates with Williams' American idiom. The bridge makes speech--as opposed to the "speechless caravans." Unlike them, it is a poet, a metaphorizer of the "new word." Furthermore, in the word "Unfractioned," it is a symbol of organic unity, wholeness, integrity--again like the new word. It is, in short, the perfect language, and it gives us a "new world."

The poet himself reappears in the penultimate stanza: "Under thy shadow by the piers I waited." We may remember the Eliot stanza earlier quoted that can serve as analogue: "Unreal City / Under the brown fog of the winter dawn." In Crane's stanza, we travel from the collective sense of stanza nine back to the isolated voice of the lyric I, or poet. This "I" is in direct, intimate rela-

tionship with the sublime bridge. The correspondence with the Eliot stanza is in the echoes of "Under" (first and second lines respectively) and in "undone" (third and fourth lines respectively). A more significant correspondence is in the attitude to the city in each case. In the Eliot stanza a parallel is drawn between the modern city and a Dantean hell: the city bears death, so to speak--an impersonal death--on its back. The poet is startled by the numbers of the dead, and he is sickened, one could infer, by the unrealness of this city and the awful "brown fog" (of industry?) on a "winter dawn"--a cold place in a cold time. "To Brooklyn Bridge" also had its beginnings in the dawn, but at this point in the poem we have descended with the day into the night. The poem is ending with the day, and the city's activities have burned down to "parcels," fragments of the city's daylight intensity. These fragments are linked semantically with other images of disintegration in the poem: the seagull's "desertion," the boredom of office work, the ephemeral character of film, the suicide, the "speechless caravan," and the "pariah." We might notice also that "City" appears in initial capital as in the Eliot stanza. The city is both geographical place and universe--the modern waste land (and "parcels" does suggest waste remaining from the day). As in the Eliot stanza the season is winter--"Already snow submerges an iron year..."--and "iron year" may suggest the hardness of the times, and the coldness,

severity, and industrialization of the city. Nevertheless, the bridge is present in this City, and it gains a perspective in the night unknown during the day--"Only in darkness is thy shadow clear." The night, again, can be a period of vitality for the Romantic imagination; and one reason the poet had "waited" in line one was for the nocturnal inspiration of the bridge.

An elipsis ends this stanza, and here, as in two other places in the "Proem" (after stanza two and within stanza six), a dramatic shift is signalled, implicit in the final stanza:

O Sleepless as the river under thee,
 Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,
 Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend
 And of the curvship lend a myth to God.

Here the bridge assumes a grandeur. As in stanza six, the bridge's expanse increases. But it also gains immortality (or perhaps divinity) through personification: "O Sleepless as the river under thee." Unlike the poet who must sleep, the bridge need not--it can persist through the night in constant corresponding motion with nature, the river under it. This represents another metaphor of the bridge's sympathy with nature: the bridge is a kind of architecture of the natural world. In line two the bridge also spans "the prairies' dreaming sod": it vaults not only sea but land. It bridges Brooklyn/Manhattan, but the continent at large as well--and Europe and elsewhere in

later realizations. The "lowliest" of line three is the lot of us mortals, with the poet as spokesman; the word also suggests a spatial metaphor--we are continually looking upward to the sublime bridge. But the poet asks of the bridge to "sweep" down among us, to "descend / And of the curveship lend a myth to God." The poet hopes that the bridge will confer upon us a grandeur and a release from quotidian reality.

The last line of this stanza has caused many readers trouble. What is "myth" in Hart Crane? Joseph J. Arpad maintains that Crane's idea of myth originates in Plato. "Platonic myths," he writes, "were not stories but philosophic expositions of Ideas" (77):

In Crane's poetic vision, the bridge embodied an absolute Form or Idea (its curveship) which could only be comprehended through a lyrical progression of images; the poem itself was a record of that progression and was, in the Platonic sense, a myth. (78)

In this scheme, as Arpad suggests, myth has an analogue in the logic of metaphor. In the latter, as metaphors build up in a poem, a new word is created; and this metaphorical technique has its roots in ancient consciousness, in the "mythic" as Arpad defines it. The Platonic presence is also felt in "Atlantis," so Arpad has an overall justification for his argument, and I essentially agree with his definition of myth in The Bridge. Crane's epic is clearly not a story, not a mythical rendition, but rather an

accumulation of ideas and images that consummate in a vision. The narrative (if we may call it that) proceeds along lines similar to those proposed in Eliot's "mythical method," which he applies to Joyce's Ulysses, and which suggests a "circular" rather than a linear narrative procedure. Nevertheless, though The Bridge is not a linear and conventional narrative, there are elements of story in it: fictive, dramatic, and novelistic devices, thematic sequence and parallels, spiritual autobiography. But these elements amount to an implicit, internalized narrative and not the explicit "objective" narrative of the classical epic. At the same time, however, we must recognize the public and collective values of the poem that make it, along with the lyrical values of subjectivity and metaphor, a true hybrid.

As the "Proem" comes to an end, we have reached the final stage in the meditation cycle, where inspiration culminates in thematic innuendo. In the inspirational stage, the poet had let himself go--too far, in fact--in his pursuit of the sublime bridge. In this final stage, inspiration has thematic objectives, and the poet is making points for his entire epic. To this extent, though the lyric mode possesses some of the insular purity of the Nietzschean music, it also serves the more externalized purposes of the epic mode. The "threshold" of the bridge in stanza eight represents not only the margin of the poet's rite of passage, but the crossing point as well for

the cultural--and at the cosmic end, the boundary into the infinite and eternal. Though God has been divested of myth in the terminal line of the "Proem," the bridge will recover God from his fall. The poet holds this ideal before him throughout his epic, despite the tragic crises that stagger him.

"The Harbor Dawn"

After the epic sea saga of "Ave Maria," the second section of The Bridge, we return in time to twentieth-century New York. "The Harbor Dawn," the first section of "Powhatan's Daughter," reasserts the lyric I of the poet. The epigraph to this second Part gives us clues for a reading of "The Harbor Dawn" and later sections as well. Pocahontas is portrayed as a lusty, wanton maiden who drives men to near madness. Her seductiveness seems to have a legendary status--and it is this seductiveness that will be both sublime and painful for the poet-narrator.

Here in "The Harbor Dawn" Pocahontas emerges in a state of dream. Water functions as the setting for meditation, as it does in so much of The Bridge, and the meditation cycle is pointed toward this dream. As in the "Proem," the meditation begins in a reality that is external to the poet, but it is a reality colored by the quandary state of sleep:

Insistently through sleep--a tide of voices--
They meet you listening midway in your dream,

The long, tired sounds, fog-insulated noises:
Gongs in white surplices, beshrouded wails,
Far strum of fog horns...signals dispersed in veils.

Crane, as a poet of dream and reverie (Uroff 179), is here describing a state of immersion--both within his psyche and in the harbor-water of the foreground. It is a state between sleep and waking, and the waking dream is the seed of this state. This dream, that ultimately culminates in the apparition of Pocahontas, may have prophetic status. Thomas Vogler writes: "On some level he [Crane] may also have known of the ancient belief that dreams coming just before dawn were prophetic" (Preludes to Vision 156).

This in fact is a dawn poem--taking place like the "Proem" in still winter. Though the meditation cycle begins in the "object" world of the harbor, this world is interiorized in the dream quality of this first stanza. The dream aspect and the notion of prophecy are supported by such figures as "fog-insulated," "white surplices, beshrouded wails," and "dispersed in veils."

This dream quality is interrupted in the next stanza by a harsh modernity: "And then a truck will lumber past the wharves." The meditative mode is broken by the rough diction and action of this stanza, in contradistinction to the religious diction of stanza one. This discordance, however, has much to do with the modernist music of The Bridge: we see this readily in the voice-counters of The Waste Land and The Cantos as well.

The meditative mood returns, however, in stanzas three and four, as we pass quietly into the psychological space of the poet and with him into the sublime. The beautiful music of "And if they take your sleep away sometimes / They give it back again," the beginning of stanza three, indicates a remarkable adjustment to the noisy life of the metropolis, to the oppressive existence of technology, and reminds us of Crane's dictum that the poet must surrender "to the sensations of urban life," and in this sentence and the following lines the poet does exactly that. The result is an imagistic correspondence between the waking poet, technology, and nature. Through the logic of metaphor all three elements collect and fuse; through linguistic compression there is an equivalent focus of the senses.

Stanzas three and four represent the second phase of the cycle, where the act of meditation begins to dominate. Though the meditative "object" of the harbor is still in view, the poet withdraws into a subjective stance regarding it. It is now a "darkling harbor," a "pillowed bay." The metaphors of sleep are used to describe the actual world outside, and that world folds into the sleep-world of the poet. This view of the actual world as an extension of the subjective self is an aspect of the Romantic conception of the sublime, and indeed a general phenomenon of the Romantic imagination. In the fourth stanza, the introduction of the sky extends the poet's meditation into natural space, but in the concluding lines

we return to the objects of his room: "Immemorially the window, the half-covered chair." The spatial frame alters from the immense to the intimate, a recurring motif in The Bridge. The adverb "immemorially" both suggests a loss of memory in the act of waking and a time before recorded history--or the mythic era when the prophetic was more important.

This dream is alluded to in the gloss adjacent to the next stanza, and this and the following stanza are instrumental to theme:

And you beside me, blessed now while sirens
Sing to us, stealthily weave us into day--
Serenely now, before day claims our eyes
Your cool arms murmurously about me lay.

While myriad snowy hands are clustering at the panes--
your hands within my hands are deeds:
my tongue upon your throat--singing
arms close; eyes wide, undoubtful
dark
drink the dawn--
a forest shudders in your hair!

These stanzas initiate the love sublime, where the poet's meditation becomes intensified by love and the love object.

This is the stage in the meditation cycle when inspiration takes over; and here, though the love object is quite present, we are keenly aware of the poet's expansive rhapsodies. And curiously the lover next to the poet is in some sense inspiring the dream of the woman in the gloss. The poet, however, is uncertain as to who this woman is: "Who is the woman with us in the dawn?" That

this woman is Pocahontas is clear from textual evidence, from Crane's statements, and from commentaries about this section. But implicit in this erotic dream is a somewhat wider reading concerning the poet's search for the Eternal Feminine. The Eternal Feminine is embodied in Pocahontas, as well as the other female figures of The Bridge--the Mary of "Ave Maria," the Eve, Magdalene, and Mary of "Three Songs," and Isadora Duncan and Emily Dickinson of "Quaker Hill," among others--but it is also an abstraction. Charles Passage, in an introduction to Goethe's Faust, suggests one meaning of this abstraction when he discusses Goethe's version of the Platonic "forms" or "Ideas," and then writes:

...Faust descends into the untrodden realms of mind toward the "idea" of Helen, who is the symbol of beauty as the Greeks conceived beauty, and his journey parallels the clarification of a concept by the human intelligence. (lxi)

We may recall, in connection to the above, Joseph Arpad's Platonic analysis of the "Proem," wherein the bridge is a supernal Form or Idea. Furthermore, Crane's own statement that "The bridge in becoming a ship, a world, a woman, a tremendous harp (as it does finally) seems to really have a career" (L 232) has relevance also. Crane's reference is most specifically to Pocahontas, but we may read in "curveship" the general form of woman.

The Eternal Feminine is, I believe, instrumental to the thematic structure of The Bridge, and represents a significant element of the love sublime. Denis de Rougement defines it through the following--in terms germane to my own discussion:

Eros has taken the guise of Woman, and symbolizes both the other world and the nostalgia which makes us despise earthly joys. But the symbol is ambiguous, since it tends to mingle sexual attraction with eternal desire. The Essylt mentioned in sacred legends as being both 'an object of contemplation and a mystic vision' stirred up a yearning for what lies beyond embodied forms. Although she was beautiful and desirable for herself, it was her nature to vanish. 'The Eternal feminine leads us away,' Goethe said, and 'Woman is man's goal,' according to Novalis. (63-64)

This passage provides a philosophical basis for the state of "waking dream" or reverie through which the poet makes love to the Eternal Feminine. But he enacts this illusory love through the real love of his partner next to him. There are two levels of poetic action, then: the first is the actual love-making occurring in waking dawn; the second is the fictional act of love that the dawn-dream brings the poet. The two levels are mirrors of each other, and the first clearly excites the second. The inspirational stage of the meditation cycle is a complex of longing for the Eternal Feminine, and the ecstasy of the poetry itself in which the meditative object dissolves into the transcendent of nature: "a forest shudders in your hair!"

The actual love itself can only exist before "day claims our eyes," a love that can only be consummated in

the frosty half-light of dawn (and the love scene appears in italicized lines, suggesting intensity). But the consummation with the dream-woman will have to wait; she is only still a dream-figment of the poet's imagination: "Although she was beautiful and desirable for herself, it was her nature to vanish."

The final two stanzas represent a passage into the "harsh" day:

The window goes blond slowly. Frostily clears.
 From Cyclopean towers across Manhattan waters
 --Two--three bright window-eyes aglitter, disk
 The sun, released--aloft with cold gulls hither.

The fog leans one last moment on the sill.
 Under the mistletoe of dreams, a star--
 As though to join us at some distant hill--
 Turns in the waking west and goes to sleep.

The first sentence may suggest the impending departure of the woman, her blondness pre-imaging the sun, as well as foreshadowing the blonde of "Three Songs." The next sentence indicates the day's emergence: both the real love and the dream love, in the context of this section, must by necessity terminate. The day in all its urban energy is in full force; and "cold gulls" recalls to us the sublime gull of the "Proem." But like the gull of the latter, these "cold gulls," though engaged in a sublime flight with the sun, will dissolve in the image of the next line--"The fog leans one last moment on the sill"--which metaphorizes the fall from the sublime. This fall, however, is more like a descent into the "level"

day, and into a waking consciousness that is counterpoint to the dream consciousness of the love sublime.

The phrase, "bright window-eyes aglitter," recalls an image from Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" ("the vacant and eye-like windows"), and of course Poe is a pivotal figure in "The Tunnel." But this occurrence is no mere coincidence here: Poe himself was fascinated with hypnagogic states, dream-moments between sleep and waking. Richard Wilbur in writing of "Usher" claims, in fact: "Poe regarded the hypnagogic state as the visionary condition par excellence, and he considered its rapidly shifting abstract images to be--as he put it--'glimpses of the spirit's outer world'" (qtd. in Regan 108). He goes on to demonstrate the importance of this semiconscious state to "Usher." The hypnagogic state has also brought Crane the Eternal Feminine, and this phenomenon will be prophetic for the entire Bridge.

The final stanza, in fact, indicates a resistance to the day's realities and the cessation of daydream. Though the line, "The fog leans one last moment on the sill," suggests a descent from the sublime, it also carries a sense of hesitation before the poet will merge fully with the day-city. It reminds us also of Eliot's "Prufrock": "The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes." In the following three lines the poet is transported by a day star back to his lover and former dream state; he imagines that the star has reunited them (all)

"at some distant hill." And the day commences as the star itself retires.

As the passage from Denis de Rougemont points out, the Eternal Feminine represents not only "sexual attraction" but "eternal desire" as well. It translates to a life-principle that will complete the poet spiritually and psychologically, as well as sexually. His longing for this ideal woman is on a par with his longing for harmony in the cosmos, and with cultural wholeness as well. Whether or not attainability is possible is beside the question: a search must be undertaken at whatever cost. "The Eternal feminine leads us away," according to Goethe, and "Woman is man's goal," Novalis maintains. Richard P. Sugg writes of this phenomenon in "The Harbor Dawn": "The woman of the poet's dream has vanished, but there is the promise of her future appearance if the imagination can move beyond time and space, 'the world dimensional,' into the mythic world of 'The Dance'" (43). Woman is the possibility, the inspiration, the Muse, the symbol of eros, that must be sought even at the risk of death. The poet will never be whole, never complete, unless he seeks her out. He will be only half his full form. And this fusion is one aspect of the bridge symbol. So the poet in longing for the Eternal Feminine, for the ideal woman of his dream state, goes in search of her and begins his Romantic quest.

The Eternal Feminine is, then, one embodiment on a thematic level of the lyric mode. The lyric I refuses its solitary condition and will risk death in pursuit of the female-Thou. That Other of love that de Rougemont examines may be a devastating Other, but its capacity to devastate may be one attraction. The poet's need for completion may have a resonance with the Keatsian poetic of completion, as Helen Vendler interprets it:

"Completion" is a Keatsian word (I take it from the "Hymn to Pan") and I use it because the odd result of the devastations in "Nightingale" [the ode] and elsewhere is that we feel, in those pained wakenings from Fancy, Keats' most solid poetic strength, a strength which eventually affirms not a vanishing but a discovery. (86)

Crane's discovery emerges in the final stage of meditation, when the poet's imagination boils down to a rude awakening. Here in the final stanzas, the fall from the sublime results from a reaching too high, from a longing that is difficult to fulfill, if not impossible. But the poet's realization of this difficulty represents the Keatsian "discovery," as he goes in pursuit of the indeed "vanishing" maiden. His quest for her represents an important plot device and a key thematic element--a distillation at this end of the meditation cycle.

Analogues of the Eternal Feminine that exist among other modernist poets include Williams' conception of the "Beautiful Thing" in Paterson and Pound's Helen figure in The Cantos. Eliot's Waste Land, on the other hand, de-

picts sexual encounters that are corruptions of the love act--so that his Eternal Feminine is "demonized." But this aspect of eros will also be important to Crane, especially in "The Tunnel." And in fact, the Eternal Feminine contains within itself the seeds of frustration. Nevertheless, it is a visionary love that Crane constructs, one that he must seek out despite its sufferings.

"Van Winkle"

The most important lyric aspect of "Van Winkle," the section following "The Harbor Dawn," is the element of personal memory. Even though a pastness is constructed in the poem, it is not of epic status because it is construed as the presencing of the lyric I. The poet is remembering the historical past, but he is doing so through the medium of his own personal life, and through the phenomenon of sentient memory. The poet does not lose himself, nor does he become fully transfigured in Rip Van Winkle either. Additionally, the poet projects memories of his personal life, and these memories and those of history interact.

. In the first stanzas, as Crane reports (L 306), the poet-protagonist has arisen from his slumber and makes his way through the city. There is in the air such a fervent bristle that the whole continent seems to be coming to life. The bridge is now a metaphoric bridge spanning the continent, and it is upon this bridge that the poet will journey West and to the past (he has already been East in

"Ave Maria" through Columbus). The presence of Pizarro and Cortes in the second stanza--"You walked with Pizarro in a copybook, / And Cortes rode up, reining tautly in"--is no accident. The conquerors of Peru and Mexico respectively, they have an analogical relationship with Columbus, although the latter is profoundly the more visionary. Pizarro and Cortes nevertheless share in the conquest of a primitive America, commingling the seed of Europe with the seed of the Indian, and in such an act giving birth to the archetypal American civilization Crane is himself exploring in The Bridge. These figures swell up in the poet's memory and become intermixed with the modern scene: "Firmly as coffee grips the taste,--and away!," an illustration of the continuous present.

From the founders of American civilization we move to the American continent proper in the third stanza. Captain Smith, founder of Virginia, appears and represents yet another conqueror-explorer. Crane is here seeking origins, and if his memory tends to be rather elementary, it is because it is associated with childhood; and further, his concern with history is of the "fabulous" rather than the concrete and factual--with historical parable rather than historical realism.

The figure of Rip Van Winkle counters the conqueror-explorer motif. He is a prototypic "sleeper," and as such he recalls images of sleep earlier in The Bridge: in the "Proem" ("O Sleepless as the river under thee" and the

poet's implicit need for sleep) and in "The Harbor Dawn," which takes place "on the border of sleep and consciousness" (L 306). The question in this stanza--"'Is this Sleepy Hollow, friend?'"--is another example of the importance of the interrogative in The Bridge, underscoring the puzzlement and confusion of Van Winkle. The use of dialogue also indicates fictive or dramatic framing. As a prolix sleeper, Van Winkle is the passive antithesis of the conquest of America: he sleeps while history is made, and he is the poet of "The Harbor Dawn," who would prefer to sleep rather than wake. But Van Winkle's sleep is itself historical--more properly mythical--for two reasons: it has become legendary and thus quite vivid to human memory on the one hand, and on the other, it represents a negation of human memory through its unconsciousness. Van Winkle is the architect of a history (or mythos) of dreams. He is an idealized sleeper, a sublime sleeper, to whom, in one sense, the poet of "The Harbor Dawn" aspires. Further, as seminal dreamer, Van Winkle is a medium through whom the poet can attain the Eternal Feminine, the dream-woman who came to him in his semiconsciousness.

On a purely historical level, Van Winkle negates history in his person: he reaches timelessness through the absence of consciousness. But time nevertheless moves through him and around him, and when he awakes, time's changes become magnificently evident. Important also is

that he has slept through the American Revolution--a war that represents a historical break with the European father. And here too the continuous present has relevance: the world of the twenties has itself awakened from an awful nightmare to a complex of cataclysmic changes.

The intersection of historical memory and autobiographical memory is a recurring motif in The Bridge and represents a hybridization on the thematic level. The fifth stanza's "Remember, remember" signals an indulgence in lyric memory from the historical and mythical musings of earlier stanzas. This stanza describes a violent episode in Crane's life, and in "Garter snakes" presages the serpent/eagle myth of The Bridge and in "monoplanes" possibly the airplane of "Cape Hatteras" (Slote 16). These images in the form of childhood memories are preliminary to the more complex mythic and cosmic images of later sections.

Of further importance is the implication that epic memory has been supplanted by personal memory, and this represents a transition from classic to Romantic viewpoints. Crane's visionary poetics are more personal than those of the classical epic: as lyric I he is himself a subject in the history he is creating. And he projects attitudes about this history through his own person. Though Crane is a cultural visionary, his Romantic "I" gives structure to the values of this culture--and this "I" is highly selective about what historical past to draw

upon. The Romantic "I" does not sink into the narrative, but remains a distinctive voice, drawing upon history in its apprehension of culture.

The seventh stanza, like the fourth, is italicized to suggest the poet's identification with Van Winkle. It reads:

And Rip was slowly made aware
that he, Van Winkle, was not here
nor there. He woke and swore he'd seen Broadway
a Catskill daisy chain in May--

Rip Van Winkle is split psychically, and being "not here / nor there" he is a classically liminal character, one who in transition is neither in this world nor in that. He awakes to a modern metropolis, thinking Broadway is the natural landscape of Upstate New York. He undergoes a psychological, temporal, and spatial disjuncture because he cannot remember. Thomas Vogler claims of Van Winkle, in fact, that he represents a disjunction between past and future, and that:

He woke to find himself out of time, in a world incommensurable with his past, and he was a pathetic rather than a triumphant figure. He awoke from his sleep of death not to a rebirth but like Keats' Saturn, to decrepitude in an older world and to death. (Preludes to Vision 158)

Nevertheless, he will play a key role in the poet's quest for Pocahontas; and as prerequisite to this, the poet makes an act of sympathy with him in concluding stan-

zas. In the eighth stanza, the poet sharpens his powers of memory:

So memory, that strikes a rhyme out of a box,
Or splits a random smell of flowers through glass--
Is it the whip stripped from the lilac tree
One day in spring my father took to me,
Or is it the Sabbatical, unconscious smile
My mother almost brought me once from church
And once only, as I recall--?

In this and the succeeding stanza we draw closer to the autobiography of the poet, memories of both pleasure and pain, ultimately of disjuncture. These "fragments" of the mind interweave with the fracturing of Van Winkle, and the poet and the legend become fused. But where Van Winkle is devoid of memory, the poet is powerfully invested with it--it has become a force of the emotions. Furthermore, the poet subsumes Van Winkle in the very act of imagining him, even in the last stanza when Van Winkle becomes a fully conscious contemporary figure:

Macadam, gun-grey as the tunny's belt,
Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate....
Keep hold of the nickel for car-change, Rip,--
Have you got your "Times"--?
And hurry along, Van Winkle--it's getting late!

Van Winkle is now engulfed in the nervous energies of twentieth-century America. The final line of this stanza is reminiscent of The Waste Land's "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME," which of course interlocks with the earlier "Times" in Crane's stanza as well. Eliot's reference is to the closing time of English pubs, but both lines contain an element

of the human condition in the twentieth century: that of nervous haste. Nevertheless, Van Winkle is still a hallmark of the past, guiding the poet into the frontier history of "The River" and toward the Eternal Feminine.

Unlike earlier sections of The Bridge, "Van Winkle" does not demonstrate the cycle of meditation in any strong sense, and I believe this is because the poem is more narrative than meditation. We might describe it as a sort of meditation on memory, but its narrative aspects qualify this--and the sublime hardly exists at all in this poem. Nevertheless, because it is so autobiographical, and because personal memory is a central phenomenon in it, "Van Winkle" is in my view a lyrical section.

"Three Songs"

After the poet has journeyed West into the past and has fulfilled his desire for the ideal woman in his marriage to Pocahontas--however qualified that fulfillment is--he retreads his path to the East. "Three Songs" represents a "lyrical interlude," in the words of John R. Willingham, between the ponderous though magnificent "Cape Hatteras" and the ironic "Quaker Hill" and hellish "Tunnel" sections (68). Brom Weber argues that this section would have more logically fit into "Powhatan's Daughter," and that its misplacement adds to "the logical disintegration of The Bridge" (Hart Crane 367). But I believe this section belongs where it is as a kind of prologue to the darker

sections to come, and as instrumental in the heightening theme of the Eternal Feminine. The three poems represent a female trinity of Eve, Magdalene, and Mary--something of a counter to the male-dominated Christian trinity of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. These women symbolize divergent prototypes of Woman writ large, and they vary from the Pocahontas figure as well, who embodies the Eternal Feminine as ideal.

The epigraph to the set--"The one Sestos, the other Abydos hight"--is taken from Christopher Marlowe's poem "Hero and Leander," which Marlowe based on a classical legend. According to the legend, Leander swam the Hellespont nightly to his beloved Hero, guided by a light that shone from a tower where Hero took care of the swans and sparrows dedicated to Venus. But he drowned one night when a storm rose up. The drowning of Leander has been equated by some critics with the drowning of the poet in the sea of modern love. Indeed, we can make a further analogue between this legend and the sinking poet (and civilization) of "Atlantis." But I believe "Three Songs" also has a positive dimension, as other critics have noticed.

The first poem, "Southern Cross," is the only one in The Bridge to have its setting outside America. Located near the Antarctica, this constellation resembles a cross, and may function as a religious metaphor. Certainly this whole series has religious overtones. But Crane's reli-

giosity is not based on any higher deity, at least in a conventional sense, and we should interpret these metaphors rather as quasi-religious and as belonging to an aesthetic that does not presume the existence of God. Helge Normann Nilsen lucidly explains the religious element in Crane when she writes:

...Crane's poetic mysticism does not express any devotion to the hereafter. His poetics of faith [were] aimed at a state of illumination of the quotidian, and his religiosity was undogmatic and catholic in the true sense of the word. But he refused to share the view of a poet like Wallace Stevens, who in "Sunday Morning," proclaimed that all gods are dead and that we live in an "old chaos of the sun." (32)

The Eternal Feminine in "Three Songs" is in fact only partially sublime. These three portraits (we are reminded of Pound's portraits in "Mauberley" or of Eliot's in The Waste Land and earlier) are independent, yet dependent, offshoots of the female principle. They are all degradations from the ideal woman figure, but they are nevertheless embodiments of the Eternal Feminine, and as such can potentially give birth to the new world of the poet's quest. And herein lies the biological-spiritual theme of The Bridge. The poet pursues Woman in order to complete himself personally, but also as the potential bearer of a new conception and ultimately a New World. The "new word" is made into flesh and is made in turn into a new world--and language in a primal sense is a sexual act. This explains in part Crane's love of words and his making love

with words, the leaps and falls of his poetry. His language bursts with ecstasy and plummets in despair.

These dialectics and the longing for Woman are keenly expressed in the opening of "Southern Cross":

I wanted you, nameless Woman of the South,
 No wraith, but utterly--as still more alone
 The Southern Cross takes night
 And lifts her girdles from her, one by one--
 High, cool,
 wide from the slowly smoldering fire
 Of lower heavens,--
 vaporous scars!
 Eve! Magdalene!
 or Mary, you?

This "Woman" becomes an Eve figure as the poem proceeds, and at this juncture presents a dramatic mix of erotic lust and spiritual love--to accord with the dualism of Eve. The poet's longing for her is powerful: he wants her, no "wraith" or image of her, but her "utterly." But his passion, like the love in the heavens between the Southern Cross and the night--"The Southern Cross takes night" (my emphasis)--is more refined than the lust of the "smoldering fire / Of lower heavens" (my emphasis once again). The former love is "cool" and deliberate--"And lifts her girdles from her, one by one"--and the hierarchy of love-making is communicated through height and depth metaphors. The question, "Eve! Magdalene! / or Mary, you?," again illustrates the centrality of the question made in The Bridge.

The next two stanzas trace the poet's depression resulting from his unrequited love: "Whatever call--falls

vainly on the wave." He identifies Eve as "simian Venus" (perhaps goddess and planet both), and as "homeless," "Unwedded," and "gardenless." She is a figure, then, of absences. But these absences only intensify her attractiveness. Roland Barthes suggests some of these dynamics when he writes in A Lover's Discourse:

Amorous absence functions in a single direction, expressed by the one who stays, never by the one who leaves: an always present I is constituted only by confrontation with an always absent you. To speak this absence is from the start to propose that the subject's place and the other's place cannot permute; it is to say: "I am loved less than I love." (13)

The absence of the loved one makes more urgent the lover's need to be loved--increases the longing; at the same time, as Barthes maintains, the lover recognizes a deficit in love, the absent one's denial of fulfillment. The power of the love nexus, in short, is retained in the absent one's hands. This fact, however, does not discourage Crane's longing for Eve, as Gaston Bachelard writes:

To tell a love, one must write. One never writes too much. How many lovers, upon returning home from the tenderest of rendezvous, open their writing desks! Love is never finished expressing itself, and it expresses itself better the more poetically it is dreamed. (8)

Of course, Crane's love does not have about it this passionate purity: it is frustrating, even terrifying. The Eve of Crane's poem cannot give birth--at least with

the poet--and like Van Winkle she is dislocated. The terminal line of this stanza--"Finally to answer all within one grave!"--not only announces the termination of love, but sustains the death theme that is to become more intense and elaborate as The Bridge draws to a close. This cycle of descent from the heavens, then to psychic rupture, and then to the prospect of death, is completed in the following stanza in the lines: "Slid on that backward vision / The mind is churned to spittle, whispering hell." These lines foreshadow the hell imagery of "The Tunnel," and this imagery, as well as Eve's betrayal of the poet, are sustained in the penultimate and final stanzas:

All night the water combed you with black
 Insolence. You crept out simmering, accomplished.
 Water rattled that stinging coil, your
 Rehearsed hair--docile, alas, from many arms.
 Yes, Eve--wraith of my unloved seed!

The Cross, a phantom, buckled--dropped below the
 dawn,
 Light drowned the lithic trillions of your spawn.

Crane's depiction of the serpent legend here, as attached to Eve, interlocks with the serpent associated with Pocahontas, and the pervasive serpent/eagle myth in The Bridge. Alfred Hanley maintains that the serpent has a visceral resonance in The Bridge, while the eagle suggests the sublime, and that further they are respectively the Dionysian/Apollonian poles of Nietzsche's conceptualization of Greek tragedy (94-95). But the serpent symbol

has positive and negative values within this framework. Here, Eve is clearly the demonic symbol of legend, becoming through her fall a serpent herself. By her rejection of the poet, Eve herself has become demonic, and the poet's frustration mounts in the figure, "your / Rehearsed hair--docile, alas, from many arms." Eve has become a whore, a debasement of woman carried forward in the Magdalene figure of "National Winter Garden." (Interestingly, here as in much of The Bridge, a fading from one part to another takes place, representing one instance of film technique in the work.) The poet is outraged and despondent at Eve's rejection and simultaneous promiscuity, and painfully concludes: "Yes, Eve--wraith of my unloved seed!" Wanting no part of her as "wraith" in stanza one (but wanting all of her as reality), the poet must resign himself to failure. His Eve has indeed become a "wraith," in whom his seed can never find fulfillment but only death.

In addition to parallels between these stanzas and the negative sexuality of The Waste Land, there is a more precise parallel at the close of "Prufrock":

.....

 I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

I do not think that they will sing to me.

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves
 Combing the white hair of the waves blown black
 When the wind blows the water white and black.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
 By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
 Till human voices wake us, and we drown.

Eliot's poem is of an equivalent frustration to Crane's. But the protagonists are vastly different: Prufrock is a passive lover or non-lover, while the Cranean poet is a high-Romantic Werther type. The water imagery in both poems conveys the sexual theme--and water is the medium of culminating catastrophe. In the Crane poem, however, water is transmuted into light, and we end where we began: in the heavens. The "Cross" has become a death-image (icon of Christ's sacrifice) and a symbol of the illusory as well. With the dawn--that ambivalent time in The Bridge--catastrophe befalls the "spawn" of Eve. The obliteration and oblivion motifs in both poems represent the only real consummation--death by drowning. But whereas the drowning in "Prufrock" tends to be self-oriented--including others like Prufrock through the pronoun "we"--in Crane the drowning is massive. Further, this is not a "passive" drowning as in "Prufrock," but a holocaust of the Romantic Will. This potent counterthrust to Eve's rejection splendidly illustrates the proportions of the poet's longing-passion.

This longing-passion is again frustrated in "National Winter Garden." Woman as Magdalene takes the form of carnal knowledge. The declination from the idealized Eternal Feminine of Pocahontas to the seductive, beatific

but ultimately whorish Eve, and now to a stripteaser, certainly seems to demonstrate the vacuousness of love in the modern world (à la Eliot). It also represents the fall from the sublime climb, both in terms of the "deterioration" of the love object, and the poet's frustrated longing. But in each of the "Three Songs" the poet is striving upward, pursuing the Eternal Feminine in its corrupted guises--even though it may be unattainable. And it is the nature of longing that we sometimes long for the unattainable.

The poet's longing also refers to the meditation cycle. In the latter, the love object dissolves, as it were, in the act of longing-meditation; but the inspirational phase is muted or non-existent, and the cycle ends in a painful but important knowledge. This phenomenon imitates, in a sense, the cycle of crisis, endurance, and redemption that has application to the epic mode. The meditation cycle, as I have earlier traced it, appears only again in "Atlantis."

Despite the danger of rejection, the poet seeks symbols of completion in the contemporary scene. His brief marriage to Pocahontas was promising, but in the end insufficient. And it is these contemporary images of woman that he has inherited. He keeps longing, for it is longing itself that is important.

The erotic dance of the stripteaser of this poem counterpoints that of "The Dance," where the sublime is at

a height. (Ironically, however, the dance of the latter is a dance of death.) In the second stanza of "National Winter Garden" another blonde appears--"You pick your blonde out neatly through the smoke"--and unlike the figure of "The Harbor Dawn," this woman is impersonalized. Her anonymity is stronger than the Eve of "Southern Cross," whom the poet calls "nameless Woman"--though Eve's namelessness may be one facet of her immortality. This blonde is not only anonymous, however; she is also dispensable: "always you wait for someone else, though, always--." The "smoke" of line four interlocks with the fire imagery of the previous poem--"it is fire / To stammer back"--and we are again being prepared for the full descent into "The Tunnel"'s inferno. "Fireworks" continues this imagery into the next stanza, as we work our way through the erotic fires and smoky turmoil of a strip joint.

But in stanza four something of the dancer's personality shines forth. In stanza one she had been described in reductive terms--"Outspoken buttocks in pink beads / Invite the necessary cloudy clinch." Here, however, her image is somewhat raised:

And shall we call her whiter than the snow?
 Sprayed first with ruby, then with emerald sheen--
 Least tearful and least glad (who knows her smile?)
 A caught slide shows her sandstone grey between.

She may evoke virginal associations in line one, but by line four her true colors come forth.

The following two stanzas continue the sexual acrobatics and present the image of the serpent once again--"Her silly snake rings begin to mount, surmount / Each other"--which links with the serpent associated with Pocahontas and looks forward to the evil of "The Tunnel." But there is a recuperation in the final stanza, a saving grace in one dimension of Magdalene:

Yet, to the empty trapeze of your flesh,
 O Magdalene, each comes back to die alone.
 Then you, the burlesque of our lust--and faith,
 Lug us back lifeward--bone by infant bone.

If Magdalene cannot offer a spiritual/psychic completion to the poet and to the male generally, she can at least satisfy the biological impulses. And she is faithful, as Eve was not, to the extent that each man can "die alone" in her. And in this dying so life can renew: "Lug us back lifeward--bone by infant bone." Magdalene's function is to reinspire childhood--to rouse the adolescent fire. She is the Eternal Feminine at the level of the sexual quotidian. John R. Willingham claims for her, in fact: "But we must remember that the Magdalene of the New Testament could become a means to show men the way to spiritual redemption, in spite of what men thought she was" (65).

As passionate about her asexuality is the figure of Mary in the last of the set, "Virginia"--a contemporary innocent. If Eve is a temptress, symbolizing the erotic at a high level, and Magdalene is the erotic of the purely

lustful, Mary is without any erotic character whatsoever. But she is still a portion of the Eternal Feminine, nevertheless. Despite her asexuality, she is potentially sexual and can be a bearer of the New World, and she is indeed sought after--"Keep smiling the boss away." This little poem of "Virginia," whose music resembles a popular tune, would seem to be inconsequential to the epic structure of The Bridge, but it is important in the final analysis. Its significance, I believe, rests on the possibilities inherent in Mary as contemporary and religious figure. As the latter, she ushers in a new world view, a Christian ideology that becomes central to American civilization. She is also a keystone figure in the New Testament, as Eve is in the Old. On a biological level, her virginity is something mystical: to give birth on the one hand to a Christ child and to remain on the other untainted, is to test the limits of credibility, and raises a profound issue of religious faith. Perhaps Crane is asking through her: how can the continent remain pure and still metamorphose into a new entity? In fact it cannot, and must be ravaged first before it can be reborn.

On a personal level, however, Mary cannot procreate. Her virginity is sterile: "O Mary, leaning from the high wheat tower, / Let down your golden hair!" Another example of Crane's fascination with blondes, Mary cannot satisfy the poet. She is above desire--"leaning from the high wheat tower"--and she insists on a "repressive" hair

style--"Let down your golden hair!" Hair is a symbol of sex and sexual power for Crane--we may recall "a forest shudders in your hair!" from "The Harbor Dawn." But Mary's implicit refusal of the poet is less the result of his person than it is because she rejects the sexual encounter itself. In short, she rejects the poet as a sexual object. Nevertheless, her innocence continues to offer possibilities as we notice in a profusion of flower imagery:

High in the noon of May
 On Cornices of daffodils
 The slender violets stray.
 Crap-shooting gangs in Bleeker reign,
 Peonies with pony manes--
 Forget-me-nots at window panes:

Out of the way-up nickel-dime tower shine,
 Cathedral Mary,
 shine!--

These buoyant lines suggest at least the promise of union, if not the actuality. The poet may be defeated in love, but he will continue to pursue because pursuit is sublime in its own right and Woman is his object.

"Quaker Hill"

I wish only to discuss the principal lyrical aspects and thematic motifs of this section. Crane did not consider "Quaker Hill" to be of major importance, but I believe he underrated it. It is perhaps the least lyrical of the lyrical sections, but it is pungently satirical and ironic in the way Eliot and Pound could be. In fact,

though this section is exceptional to the lyric mode, its exceptionality enlarges our definition of lyric. Unlike the freer music of earlier lyrical sections, "Quaker Hill" has for the most part a ponderous and stately tone. But it has a music, nevertheless. And its subjectivity, though governed by irony, is highly charged, partly because of this irony. The poem's lyric I is less private than in other sections and is engaged with an assessment of American culture--an assessment that is beleaguered by cynicism and disappointment. "Quaker Hill" is exceptional largely because, unlike other sections, it presents an argument, something like an expository essay with thesis, supports, and conclusion. The conclusion in this case, however, does not reassert the thesis but attempts to overhaul it.

One crucial theme in the poem is the trivialization and commercialization of the American Dream--"See them, like eyes that still uphold some dream / Through mapled vistas, cancelled reservations!" And the poet's dream has dwindled with it--"But I have seen death's stare in slow survey / From four horizons that no one relates..." These lines ironically counterpoint the previous two that illustrate the natural sublime (though a sublime tainted by irony). "Quaker Hill" is a poem of contrastive visions. The poet's vision is reduced to death--and is in this sense dead--because he realizes that visionary America has itself died.

The loss of the American Dream is sustained in following stanzas in such lines as: "This was the Promised Land...", "Where are my kinsmen and the patriarch race?," and "The resigned factions of the dead preside." If the poet-lover could not find completion in Woman, could not find the vessel for his seed, the cultural poet cannot find traces of the original seed from which his civilization has grown. Though the cultural sublime is never expressed in the poem, it is implied through ironic resignation. The poet surrenders his hope for external supports or guiding lights from the now impure culture, from the unreliable fathers (or father), and he must locate an inner integration and harmony -- a different source of inspiration.

The Indian race may represent one source of guidance for him, as he turns to the Iroquois in stanza seven: "But I must ask slain Iroquois to guide / Me farther than scalped Yankees knew to go: / Shoulder the curse of sundered parentage." The images of death and "sundering," it would seem, can only be ironically corrected through the assistance of "slain Iroquois," whose civilization was decimated by the whites of upstate New York. Their guidance, their inspiration in death, will aid the poet through his broken world, a world broken in fact from his very birth. The mythic spirit and intelligence of the Iroquois signify for the poet succulence and hope. It is the primitive world view in "Quaker Hill" that can save

the poet (and us as well), and lead him forward to the ideal Woman, who gains a realization in the final two stanzas, which return to the high lyric mode.

The poet's disillusionment regarding the American Dream is based on a complex of causes, but may be inherent in the dream itself. John T. Irwin is very illuminating on this phenomenon in the following:

The American dream, the dream of achieving an ultimate earliness, was a European dream, a late dream, reflecting the experience of those first settlers who left the Old World to find that the Edenic virgin continent, the green world, the first world, is the oldest world of all -- the paradoxical experience that the attempt to free oneself from the burden of history...by returning to the origin and starting over is simply to begin history once again... (American Hieroglyphics 113).

I believe Crane was aware of this problem in the American Dream from the beginning of The Bridge project, but it became all the more pronounced as the poem unfolded. In "Quaker Hill," the possibility of starting over, of making a new history in America, becomes strongly refuted. History cannot be "voided," as Irwin subsequently maintains, but must be embraced in order to create a genuinely new future. The poet acknowledges this even in the penultimate stanza: "As humbly as a guest who knows himself too late, / His news already told?" Crane is the American pioneer who discovers that he is in fact too late: that history marches on even in this "virgin" continent. "His news" is "already told" because there is no news: time in

its ceaseless forward energy has taken care of that. The Atlantis of Crane's dream will have to notice this phenomenon, absorbing history and the Old World in its reemergence.

The final two stanzas do not succeed in redeeming the gloom of earlier stanzas: they represent a forced conclusion. Nevertheless, the poet's attempt in them is to recover himself from this terrible awakening -- and he does this by eschewing the sublime. He also calls upon Isadora Duncan and Emily Dickinson, whose epigraphs preface this section: "Of pain that Emily, that Isadora knew!," as the final stanza opens in a call of fellow-help. Their pain, and creation through pain, he hopes will restore him. They symbolize the woman principle toward which the poet as artist is aspiring, a Platonic form of love. But I believe the redemption they offer can only be realized in the finale, "Atlantis."

"Atlantis"

The original thirteen lines of "Atlantis," the first lines composed for The Bridge, point directions for the final published version, but amount to only a fragment of the consummate rhapsody realized. These lines sent to Wilbur Underwood in February 1923, according to Brom Weber, read as follows:

And midway on that structure I would stand
One moment, not as diver, but with arms

That open to project a disk's resilience
 Winding the sun and planets in its face.
 Water should not stem that disk, nor weigh
 What holds its speed in vantage of all things
 That tarnish, creep, or wane; and in like laughter,
 Mobile, yet posited beyond even that time
 The Pyramids shall falter, slough into sand, --
 And smooth and fierce above the claim of wings,
 And figured in that radiant field that rings
 The Universe: -- I'd have us hold one consonance
 Kinetic to its poised and deathless dance.
 (qtd. in Weber, Hart Crane 425)

The immortality of the bridge holds forth in these early lines. The poet's role in the drama will not be as "diver" -- and his fate not that of the suicide of the "Proem" -- but as human medium through whom the bridge's immortality can find form. In a more complex sense, the bridge's eternal form will find expressive form in the poet's language. This thinking is carried forward and exceeded, in fact, in the final version of the poem, which is the lyric poet's ultimate rhapsodic address. The meditation cycle will have full play here as we begin in the object of meditation, pass into the act of meditation itself, then voyage with the poet in his rhapsodic inspirations, and end in a thematic conclusion -- or prospective conclusion -- that flows out of the rhapsody. Here again, the cycle does not behave according to any rigid sequence of stages, but is a global means of tracing the "movements" in this section.

The first movement begins in the poet's address to the real bridge -- real but in a romanticized sense. The lyric I is in immediate relation to the sublime bridge, as

it was only once before -- in the "Proem." The bridge's objectness becomes transcendental in the very first stanza:

Through the bound cable strands, the arching path
 Upward, veering with light, the flight of strings,--
 Taut miles of moonlight syncopate
 The whispered rush, telepathy of wires.
 Up the index of night, granite and steel--
 Transparent meshes--fleckless the gleaming staves--
 Sybilline voices flicker, waveringly stream
 As though a god were issue of the strings...

There is a remarkable interplay here between the bridge as machine and the bridge as sublime object. Crane is a master at combining technical, concrete words with abstractions, and this procedure is related to the logic of metaphor. This stanza illustrates the marriage of the mechanical and the sublime: we are at once inside the architecture of the bridge and cast with it into the light of the heavens. The coupling "moonlight syncopate" is a particular instance where Crane takes a technical term -- here from music -- and welds it, so to speak, against the natural universe. We may remember that music is an important metaphor in the "Proem," where the bridge is imaged as a harp; and the epigraph from Plato to this section is also significant in this sense. Crane's etymological interests are also illustrated in the foregoing through "syncopate," which derives from the Latin "syncopare," meaning to "swoon." The musical sense of the term, though relevant, is expanded to suggest an emotional state, one brought about by "moonlight."

The final line here, "As though a god were issue of the strings...", sustains the imagery of procreation from previous sections of The Bridge and interconnects with the "Proem"'s "and of the curveship lend a myth to God." The bridge, though not a god itself, can inspire godly myth in a mythless age. Though we never lose sight of the bridge in "Atlantis" as we do in the "Proem," it will become more and more symbolized and transcendent, and less a physical object of the poet's meditation.

In stanza two, the bridge's physicality is still before us: "And through that cordage, threading with its call / One arc synoptic of all tides below--." The bridge, being also a manmade object, has dominion over the human situation as well: it is a king of the waters, of the "seven oceans," and governs human history. It is also the focus of "sure love" and of song, and its form evolves out of perfect harmony and knowledge, as Plato had conceived them. It is the Absolute made real, come to earth. In this sense, "Atlantis" is an amalgam of the cosmic, cultural, and romantic forms of the sublime.

The bridge's status as somewhere between a product of human engineering and the Absolute is interestingly expressed by Herbert Leibowitz when writing of the stanza beginning "As obscure as that heaven of the Jews" from the "Proem":

Although the bridge is man-made, it has become something more than man; it is not exactly other-

worldly, but it is not temporal either. It represents an indefinite eternal principle which is without the metaphysical furniture of traditional religions, which indefiniteness is its strength.
(147)

The "something more than man" is supported in the third stanza of "Atlantis," as we climb one more rung up the ladder of transcendence. Music imagery is sustained in "New octaves trestle the twin monoliths," as the physical bridge, which is still in sight, becomes "musically subliminal," in the Nietzschean sense of music, that is. The sea imagery here is related to that of the "Proem" and "Ave Maria" especially -- and the sea, we might conclude, is the sublime of the horizontal, while the sky is the sublime of the vertical. The land, of course, is also horizontally subliminal, but has less mystical grandeur than the sea. Line four, "Two worlds of sleep (O arching strands of song!)," continues the music motif but also recalls earlier sleep imagery and interlocks with "Ave Maria"'s "From here between two worlds, another, harsh." The latter refers to the spatial and temporal span between Old and New Worlds, as does the former more than likely; and the bridge is indeed one that closes the gap between Europe and America, positing another world in that conjunction.

The following stanza (stanza four) praises the bridge as eternal, as earlier stanzas had praised it as infinite, and it is at this point that we enter upon the act of meditation itself:

Sheerly the eyes, like seagulls stung with rime--
 Slit and propelled by glistening fins of light--
 Pick biting way up towering looms that press
 Sidelong with flight of blade on tendon blade
 --Tomorrows into yesteryear--and link
 What cipher-script of time no traveler reads
 But who, through smoking pyres of love and death,
 Searches the timeless laugh of mythic spears.

The bridge is here clearly more than bridge: it has become a mythmaker and a link through all time. The "seagulls" return from earlier manifestations in The Bridge, as "Atlantis" renders beautifully the "myth of the eternal return" in the Mircea Eliade conception. As the bridge is a "curveship," so too is The Bridge as poem. The bridge and the poem have circled the seas to relocate a home, but it is a home that has changed dramatically like Van Winkle's world.

The importance of metalinguistics in the work is again illustrated through "cipher-script of time"; we are always conscious of reading language when we experience the bridge symbol--we read the bridge--here implicitly the very source of language itself. The bridge is something of an ancient hieroglyphic that generates all written language. But this language is a specially coded one and one that has secretive and symbolic value. Here again the logic of metaphor is a parallel--for Crane suggests that such logic is not literal but figurative. In order for us to comprehend the true stature and meaning of the bridge, we must decode its symbols. It is a complex and difficult language structure as well as being an architectural mas-

terpiece. As a product also of "imaginative" science, the bridge is a contemporary embodiment of Crane's ideal of metaphor.

The poet's meditation in this stanza supersedes the meditative object because he is taking a turn inward: first, by virtue of his linguistic self-consciousness; and second, by his construction of such emotionally expressive figures as "stung with rime" (also metalinguistic), "smoking pyres of love and death," and "timeless laugh of mythic spears."

This second movement of "Atlantis" is sustained in the fifth stanza in the realm of mythic fable. The identical metrics in the second and fourth lines--"Some trillion whispering hammers glimmer Tyre: / Of inchling aeons silence rivets Troy"--establish an interesting correspondence in sound, adding to the semantic value of "Tyre" and "Troy." In ushering in the world of Roman and Greek myth in this stanza, Crane is lending the bridge a mythic-historical status, and in so doing is expressing a cultural sublime. By juxtaposing two ancient empire-cities, and by placing them in the frame of the sublime bridge, Crane is suggesting that the bridge also represents a centerpiece in a potentially great civilization: by the continuous present, he is raising contemporary America to the heights of the past. On the other hand, the Trojan War and the sieges of Tyre detract from their glory--and this serves

as another element in a dialectical reading of The Bridge. Certainly, Helen of Troy, though a symbol of ideal beauty and an archetype of the Eternal Feminine, embodies also the seeds of war-death and destruction, her beauty leading to ten years of combat. From another perspective, that of the love sublime, her beauty may be worth it; and we must remember Crane's exaltation of her in "Faustus and Helen." The figure of Jason in line five is yet another exemplar of the explorer, the questing man whose search becomes magnificent for its own sake. His quest for the golden fleece is on a par with the poet's search for the ideal civilization. Jason was also reputed to be a great lover; and all the resonances of this stanza swirl together as the poet is engaged in a meditation on the past.

The second movement is interrupted by the sixth stanza, which is characterized by an inspirational tone, though it meditates as well on language. It reads:

From gulfs unfolding, terrible of drums,
 Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage, tensely spare--
 Bridge, lifting night to cycloramic crest
 Of deepest day--O Choir, translating time
 Into what multitudinous Verb the suns
 And synergy of waters ever fuse, recast
 In myriad syllables,--Psalm of Cathay!
 O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm...!

As "multitudinous Verb," the bridge is the "new word" of Crane's conception. It is an Absolute poem, and as verb it is the most vital and functionally significant part of language. The bridge as symbol is a poem that predicates

action ("lifting night to cycloramic crest / Of deepest day," recalling a similar metaphor in the "Proem"). Structurally, it plays a pivotal role in a language that can be equated with one envisioned by the Romantics, and the Symbolists to some degree--that is, one that generates life and world over one that imitates, a language of genesis over mimesis. (But the Symbolists, it must be clear, were principally interested in language for its own sake, in one that referred more to itself than to the external world, especially the world of society.) Etymologically speaking, the word "verb" derives from the Latin "verbum" meaning "word." The bridge, then, is the verb, the primal word, and ultimately the New Word writ large. It is "multitudinous" because as it synthesizes it also diffuses: it disseminates its truth through "myriad syllables," into the wide and diverse world. It is also a musical word--"O Choir"--and in "Psalm of Cathay!" a prayer of the earthly paradise sought by Columbus and the poet. The poet is questing for the ideal of Cathay, or China, and the collocation, "Psalm of Cathay!," indeed confers upon Cathay an even greater sublimity, inasmuch as a psalm is a sacred poem of Jewish or Christian scripture. Cathay, then, becomes a focal point of Eastern and Western civilizations, and a culmination of the two. The final line--"O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm...!," conflates a number of meanings. For one thing, it suggests the love sublime and the power of love. "White," a favorite color of Crane, also

implies the purity of that love, but carries in it as well a suggestion of vastness and distances--and perhaps the terror of Melville's White Whale. Leibowitz also points out that Crane uses "white" to describe the sea (29)--and the bridge is of course a threshold to the sea. "Pervasive Paradigm" again suggests the omnipresence of the bridge, and "paradigm" is both an archetypal model and a grammatical term: that is, the bridge is the perfect (artistic) form and the perfect language.

We return in the seventh stanza to the second movement of the meditation cycle, a contemplative mood in relation to the rhapsody of the previous stanza. "And still the circular, indubitable frieze / Of heaven's meditation" signals this mood, for in fact it is the poet's meditation upon heaven. In the final line, however, "The vernal strophe chimes from deathless strings!," we begin to enter the third movement of the poem, the exclamatory and inspirational. This phase extends from the eighth to the tenth stanzas, as the sublime becomes more intense and transcendent.

The unity of stanza seven's "one song" crystallizes in the imagery of wholeness of stanza eight, as we climb upward with the poet to cosmic space:

O Thou steeled Cognizance whose leap commits
 The agile precincts of the lark's return;
 Within whose lariat sweep encinctured sing
 In single chrysalis the many twain,--
 Of stars Thou art the stitch and stallion glow
 And like an organ, Thou, with sound of doom--

Sight, sound and flesh Thou ledest from time's realm
 As love strikes clear direction for the helm.

The noun "Cognizance" of line one derives from the Latin "cognoscere," meaning "to know," so the bridge is also a passage to knowledge. The bridge embodies knowledge, but it is also a means to knowing, a way of rendering the truth. Further, through "Cognizance," it is the act of perception itself, as well as the thing perceived. The bridge "lends" eyes to the poet as well as being beautiful to behold. In this sense, the bridge is an ultimate and yet visible form of the Absolute. It is both an idealized and a "steeled" form--and at the same time, an agent for human self-sufficiency. The bridge is both noun and verb: an omniscient name/object and a "pervasive" action.

It also governs nature: "whose leap commits / The agile precincts of the lark's return." The lark beckons to the "leap" of the bridge, to an object both static and mobile, and to its symbolic home. The "myth of the eternal return" applies here as there are circle images throughout. Mircea Eliade defines this when he maintains that in the archaic past man was "indissolubly connected with the Cosmos and the cosmic rhythms," whereas modern man "is connected only with History" (xiii-xiv). He goes on to make a distinction between sacred and profane history, and stresses the importance of repetition to archaic man as opposed to the "linear" pattern of modern man's

history. Time for archaic man is circular, with the world regenerating periodically, repeating itself in the image of Creation itself: "Every New Year," Eliade writes, "is a resumption of time from the beginning, that is, a repetition of the cosmogony" (54). Modern man's belief in history, on the other hand, is temporal and linear--in time and therefore finite.

Crane's world view only partly resembles Eliade's conception of the "mythic" man and his world. Crane is somewhere between the everpresent, eternal, renewing realm of myth and the ceaseless, progressive motions of historical time. The bridge is also poised between these perspectives. In the foregoing stanza, the bridge represents a cosmic center or home. The fourth line, "In single chrysalis the many twain," carries in it the generative powers of the bridge: from this single bud will spring the many--or Crane's version of the One and the many. The poet's imagination turns to the cosmos, when in the next line he compares the bridge to a star, and this complex of metaphors confers upon the bridge sublime status. But the following line corrects this, or checks the transcendence--"And like an organ, Thou, with sound of doom." This foreshadows what will be a grave fall from the sublime in the penultimate stanza. Nevertheless, the final two lines reassert the sublime, as the bridge becomes a focus of the senses and a home for Crane's Platonic love.

The "eternal return" of this stanza is the "lark's return" to the "womb" of the bridge, to the evercreating matrix, where once again Creation can begin. The sublime lark is a more rarefied version of the "Proem"'s "seagull" and the earlier "cold gulls" of "The Harbor Dawn" and "seagulls" of "Atlantis." These latter possessed within themselves not only sublimity but the resulting fall. Nevertheless, we have come full circle with the lark from the original seagull of the "Proem." The lark has not only circled the "world" in its return to the symbolic bridge, it has also circled the poem. And in its singing powers, the lark is something of a poet: a lyric poet par excellence. Shelley's "To a Skylark" is not only an antecedent for Crane, it also draws an analogy between the poetic voice and the lark's song:

Teach me half the gladness
That my brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
From my lips would flow
The world should listen then--as I am
listening now.

Shelley's plea in his final stanza is also Crane's mission--to transmit the song of the lark to as many others who would dare listen.

This mood of inspiration falls off somewhat in the following stanza in such figures as "death's utter wound," "Sustained in tears the cities," and "sweet torment," which detract from the bridge's glory. But rather than a

fall from the sublime as such, these constructions suggest something of what Shelley writes in an earlier stanza:

We look before and after,
 And pine for what is not:
 Our sincerest laughter
 With some pain is fraught;
 Our sweetest songs are those that tell
 of saddest thought.

I believe Crane also captures the bitter sweet element of Shelley and that the object of his love is producing a "sweet torment" in him. His turn to death in the second line, however, is a repudiation of death, with the implication that the bridge can grant immortality. This is a curious line, in fact, as "fell unshadow" seems to ameliorate the "Under thy shadow" of the "Proem." Is "unshadow" the immortal archetypal form, the Platonic idea in heaven of the real bridge--and one therefore that cancels death? Joseph J. Arpad contributes to this discussion when he writes:

Thus, by envisioning the Brooklyn Bridge as logos, as a Platonic myth, Crane was able to justify his celebration of a physical object in the epic tradition; the bridge was not only the material ideal of a nation, but also the spiritual ideal of the individual. (85)

Arpad goes on to assert that "Atlantis" is the "synthesis of his [Crane's] initial dialectic, the conflict between the individual and the national ideals" (86).

I do not read the personal and public elements in The Bridge as in a state of conflict, but rather in hybrid

coexistence. Arpad's Platonic interpretation, however, seems germane to the foregoing stanza; and in fact the second line does seem to demonstrate Plato's Eternal Idea--and a spiritual apotheosis for the poet himself. It carries over the "Myth" of line one, in fact. Later lines suggest the national ideal Arpad refers to, in particular the final three, which describe the flourishing of cities and the fertile health of the soil, as brought about by the light and waters of the bridge.

The mood of the tenth stanza is again exclamatory, as we return to the sublime. The bitter sweetness of stanza nine translates into ecstatic joy in ten:

Forever Deity's glittering Pledge, O Thou
 Whose canticle fresh chemistry assigns
 To wrapt inception and beatitude,--
 Always through blinding cables, to our joy,
 Of thy white seizure springs the prophecy:
 Always through spring cordage, pyramids
 Of silver sequel, Deity's young name
 Kinetic of white choiring wings...ascends.

The bridge becomes an object once again, though an exalted one. The "fresh chemistry" of line two is the positive science that Crane sought out, a science that could culminate in the "glittering Pledge" of the bridge. "White seizure" incorporates both purity and the terror that can prompt the sublime. The final line, however, overcomes this potential terror as we ascend to the apogee of the bridge. "Blinding cables" of line four contains the Shelleyan image of the sorrowful song; the terminal "joy"

is indeed a product of the bridge that in its beauty blinds us. We are redeemed through a loss of the senses; and this loss reaches a threshold as we literally take flight with the bridge in the terminal line.

Stanza eleven marks the end of the inspirational phase of the meditation cycle, and we crash with the poet in his fall from the sublime. But there are thematic gains from this "tragic" fall. This stanza reads as follows:

Migrations that must needs void memory,
 Inventions that cobblestone the heart,--
 Unspeakable Thou Bridge to Thee, O Love.
 Thy pardon for this history, whitest Flower,
 O Answerer of all,--Anemone,--
 Now while thy petals spend the suns about us, hold--
 (O Thou whose radiance doth inherit me)
 Atlantis,--hold thy floating singer late!

"Migrations" of line one suggests a change of locale, but possibly "transmigrations" as well: the passage of the soul after death to another body or being. The latter meaning would seem to be positive in terms of the whole poem, a continual series of rebirths toward perfection, and would seem to accord also with the "myth of the eternal return." But these "migrations...must needs void memory." We are told very explicitly that these transferences, whether spatial or spiritual, are negative--for memory is a positive attribute in The Bridge. No matter how we read "migrations," at this stage of "Atlantis" the poet is spiritually exhausted. These continuous crossings defeat the constancy of memory he is grasping for: they

are a facet of that modern restlessness that drives us away from meditative stillness. Reading "migrations" as "transmigrations" further recalls the Eliot line about the march of the dead across London Bridge: "I had not thought death had undone so many." Crane's "migrations," we might conclude, are death marches also, granting Crane's sensitivity and debt to The Waste Land. And memory dies in this configuration.

Unlike the dead, the poet can remember: "Thy pardon for this history, whitest Flower, / O Answerer of all,--Anemone,--." The death of the memory in line one is an element in the fall from the sublime--a devastation the poet somewhat recovers from in preceding lines. But there is an apologetic tone here, and we may compare this "history" with the "tortured history" of "The River." Indeed, this aspect of doubt recalls Pound's terminal Canto (CXX):

I have tried to write Paradise

Do not move
 Let the wind speak
 that is paradise.

Let the Gods forgive what I
 have made
 Let those I love try to forgive
 what I have made.

Pound ends his epic in a great lyrical moment; and it is already presaged in Crane. Crane is also trying to "write Paradise," and to do so in a still and meditative state: "Do not move / Let the wind speak / that is paradise."

The apology of Pound's final stanza is already present in Crane's "Thy pardon for this history," and in both cases this apology is a gesture of humility in the face of paradise; that is, it represents a concession of "failure." The epic project in each case has not come up to the demands of heaven on earth--at least according to the ambitions and in the terms of the respective poets.

Nevertheless, Crane's "whitest Flower, / O Answerer of all,--Anemone,--" is suggestive of the Adonis myth. Adonis' flower is the anemone, borne of his blood; in his honor it blossoms every spring. He is a vegetation figure, symbol of rebirth, and in some accounts a precursor of Christ. The death and redemption motif is central to Crane's aesthetics of suffering and to the tragic spirit of The Bridge.

This stanza demonstrates the thematic dialectics of The Bridge at their height. On the one hand, we have images of death and fracturing, which culminate in the final line in the sinking of Atlantis and the self-destruction of the poet. A crucial ambivalence exists here, conflicting with the previous images of wholeness in "Atlantis." The inference of death in line one and the violent death of the beautiful Adonis, as well as the urgency of the poet in the repetition of "hold" (lines six and eight), all demonstrate a falling or sinking.

On the other hand, the rebirths suggested in "transmigration" and in the annual regeneration of the Adonis

myth through the anemone, as well as the glorious heritage of Atlantis, all illustrate the rising out of death, the possible redemption of the poet and his civilization. If America is Atlantis, as Crane's reading of Lewis Spence's Atlantis in America might have suggested to him, could it rise again? Could the poet be revived from drowning as Leander had not been? Could the "belated" Crane, whose American Dream is indeed a "late" one (the terminal word of this stanza), discover a formula for a more perfect America?

Answers to these questions are implied in The Bridge though hardly stated, and they are implicit in the final stanza of "Atlantis" as well:

So to thine Everpresence, beyond time,
 Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star
 That bleeds infinity--the orphic strings,
 Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge:
 --One Song, one Bridge of Fire! Is it Cathay,
 Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring
 The serpent with the eagle in the leaves...?
 Whispers antiphonal in azure swing.

In the first part of this stanza we return to the sublime, with music being an important and transcendent symbol. But in the fifth line the bridge bursts into flame, and this indeed is an apocalyptic fire, as Leibowitz points out: "Crane's apocalyptic vision of the bridge consumed in fire is the consummation of The Bridge, but it comes after passing through the demonic fires of the tunnel" (153-4). Leibowitz probably has in mind Northrop Frye's

distinction between apocalyptic and demonic imagery, important to many critics and to this dissertation. The fires of "The Tunnel" are indeed hell fires; but the bridge fire of "Atlantis" is a phoenix fire of renewal, a fire that both consumes and paves the way to heaven. Nevertheless, the destructive-creative meanings of Apocalypse are implicit in this stanza and in the entire Bridge for that matter--and are central to the ambivalence of the work and its tragic spirit. The closing lines are further proof of this ambivalence. The question, "Is it Cathay...?," is a profound one. Is this the paradise on earth the poet is seeking? Is the bridge as Woman an embodiment of the Eternal Feminine? The orgasmic character of "Atlantis" (we might call it a "mystical orgasm") would seem to imply fulfillment and union, the consummate completion the poet has been longing for. But the question interrupts completion, or delays it, and the final declarative statement does not really alter this fact. The conjunction of the serpent and the eagle in line seven also demonstrates an ambivalence: on the one hand, there is a suggestion of violent destruction; on the other, a fusion of the sensual and the sublime. All these contrasts may be explained by the tragic structure of The Bridge, as death and catastrophe are prerequisite to renewal. Nietzsche presents what might be one source of these tragic dynamics:

The metaphysical delight in tragedy is a translation of instinctive Dionysiac wisdom into images. The hero, the highest manifestation of the will, is destroyed, and we assent, since he too is merely a phenomenon, and the eternal life of the will remains unaffected. Tragedy cries, "We believe that life is eternal!" and music is the direct expression of that life. (102)

I do not believe Crane's attitude to tragedy is quite this ecstatic, but his debt to Nietzsche is nevertheless deep and substantial. The tragic modality in The Bridge is more accurately a composite of the regenerative and the despairing. The ambivalence of the work resides in the fact that the poet does not state but offers. He offers paradise, a civilization of heaven on earth--but only after upheaval, and only after our recognition of this need. The tragic poet, as it were, invests in us the will to build anew. It is for us to take him up on his offer. As he is also an epic poet, he is there to help us.

CHAPTER III: THE EPIC MODE

1. Background and Definition

When Hart Crane undertook The Bridge project, he was getting himself into deep waters. We have already seen that in the initial planning of the work, he anticipated the poem would be no longer than "Faustus and Helen." But with time, The Bridge became a far more ambitious work than the earlier poem, and one that would consume Crane's total energies, forcing him to confront formal questions he had no experience with. Already in "Faustus and Helen" he was evolving away from the pure lyricism of his very earliest poems, as Philip Horton lucidly points out:

Its subject matter indicated an expansion of consciousness, a shift of interest from the particular to the universal. He had achieved at least a partial realization of his long-standing desire to write of the "eternal verities" in a new and creative way, to ally his work firmly with tradition and still to express fully the spirit of his own times. (139)

Crane would expand upon these themes in The Bridge but in a far more epic sense; taking his lead from Whitman, his poem would be not only one of the past and present but also the future. As with Whitman, however, his hopes for

the future would dissipate with time and The Bridge would become a tragic testament.

Nevertheless, the tragic element in The Bridge is not depressing, as Brom Weber seems to think. It is related in part to Nietzsche's positive conception of the tragic in The Birth of Tragedy, a work Crane read with much interest. L.S. Dembo uses Nietzsche's work as intellectual background in his analysis; but I believe he overstates the positive sense of the tragic, not concerning himself enough with the actual state of affairs in America and Crane's attitude to them; i.e., his growing impatience with an American culture he had hoped would represent spiritual apotheosis.

The tragic sense of the work is a composite of Nietzschean philosophy, Crane's attitude to America, and Crane's poetics and personality. It partly emerges from the agony of a natural lyricist taking on the ambitions and demands of an epic project. Not only was Crane's subject expanding in The Bridge but his consciousness of the world was expanding as well; and as his world was expanding he was compelled to apply lyric gifts to the scope of the epic. Horton analyzes this problem when he reports on Crane's delay of The Bridge project in favor of shorter pieces:

But such ambitions involved a constant pursuit of sensation, an almost exclusive cultivation of subjective states of mind which would be scarcely compatible with the focus of attention demanded of

the historical and social subject of The Bridge.
(170-71)

This conflict between sensation and the epic task recalls Allen Tate's argument against sensation as a reasonable constituent of the epic and R.P. Blackmur's censure that Crane "used the private lyric to write the cultural epic." L.S. Dembo also engages this generic problem, as we have seen, when he equates the romantic poet in The Bridge to a "culture hero" and maintains that "it is here that the distinction between lyric and epic is wholly obscured" (Sanskrit Charge 132-33).

There is an aspect of truth in all these comments, but they seem to suggest an irreconcilable tension between sensation or lyric on the one hand and epic and social purpose on the other. Lyric and epic in fact have a "conglomerative" relationship in The Bridge, engendering in the poem not so much a synthesis as a symphonic form. Crane himself called The Bridge "symphonic," and I believe the tragic theme acts as a kind of focus for this form, drawing into itself lyric and epic tonalities and serving as a global frame for the poem's meanings.

I only wish to mention the tragic frame at this point because it is a focus of lyric and epic modes, and may suggest as well the psychological conflict Crane was undergoing in his development from a lyric poet in the Symbolist mode to an epic seer. The tragic sense results from the lyric poet's disillusionment with the epic sub-

ject as well as the agony of producing an epic from a lyric foundation, an agony that I believe, unlike Blackmur, proves fruitful.

This conflict between lyric and epic is not unique to Hart Crane and applies as well to Pound, Eliot and Williams and to the modernist epic in general. The problem is more emphatic with Crane because of his acute Romantic sensibility. But the epic poem in the twentieth century has been plagued by formal problems. Thomas Vogler identifies one source of these problems when he maintains that the modern world possesses "no common ideology, no vital, central source for universally acceptable concepts of authority and value" (Preludes to Vision 8). He further elaborates on the problem and task of the epic poet in the modern world:

The epic problem is no longer that of recreating the outward history of man or a nation, but of creating the inward history of man, by moving to levels of generality through the concept of the individual as psyche rather than the individual as action. (13)

Though there is a good deal of truth in the above, the modernist epic is not simply psychological (of the psyche) but exhibits its own variety of action as well. Certainly there is action in The Bridge and this element defines the work in a forceful way that must be taken into account. The Cantos demonstrates action in its mythological episodes--the night journey of Odysseus, for example; The

Waste Land, assuming it to be a miniature epic, is most active in its sexual encounters; and Paterson exhibits action in its highlights of local history and its burning of a library, as obvious examples. In each of these works action defines the epic mode, or represents one definition of epic, and counterbalances the meditateness or "stillness" of the lyric mode.

But of course action in the modernist epic is not equivalent to action in the classical epic. As Vogler notes, there are no shared values or ideology in the modern world. In the modernist epic, then, action tends to be less "universal," less racial and more particular--more directed than the classical epic to a diversity of views. This does not mean, however, that the modernist epic is entirely psychological. Vogler is closer to my own conception of the hybrid modernist epic in the following:

The lyric moment of inspired vision, with its direct intuition of reality, was the beginning of poetry for these poets, the only mode of knowledge whose validity could not be doubted because of sheer intensity of the vision. Yet ordinary lyric poetry, however good, lacked the scope and significance of the long poem which these poets felt was needed as a genuine justification for poetry.
(Preludes to Vision 14-15)

Vogler goes on to claim that a "new poetic canon" has emerged as a result of this sense of ambition, "beginning with lyric poems and progressing, finally, to an epic that would retain the intensity and subjectivity of the lyric

while achieving the scope and universal reference of the epic" (15).

Vogler is not in reality describing the lyric-epic tendencies of the modernist epic as much as indicating the development of poetic careers from lyricist to epic bard; and he is referring in the above not only to Hart Crane (and possibly his contemporaries) but to the Romantic epic as well. Nevertheless, he identifies a fundamental problem of the epic project in Romantic and modernist contexts: and that is the translation of the lyric mode into the epic. Can the mode of "sensation," so-called, be utilized in the mode of social purpose and scope? Vogler believes that it is the very character of the Romantic and modern periods that promoted the lyric mode into its dominant position, citing psychological reasons in particular. He maintains, for instance, that in the Romantic epic there is a rebirth of man as well as poet (13), and in the Romantic and modern epic "The subject of the epic story becomes the history of the poet's attempts to find a vision" (13). He addresses the problem in criticism of the recent epic when he writes: "Critics seem less willing to see the lyric mode as valid in a longer poem, even when the poem is primarily concerned with subjective problems of perception" (14). Finally, in addressing The Bridge, he writes: "...in a poem like The Bridge we are forced to follow the poet's attempts to expand the lyric into a poem of epic scope" (14).

Vogler argues that the lyric mode must be considered the ground point from which the new epic can emerge; and he is close to my own thesis in this regard. Lyric consciousness is the more dominant one in The Bridge--and it is linked to the logic of metaphor, in the same way as lyric is linked to other modernist figurations in the modernist epic at large. But I differ with Vogler in degree of emphasis. I place less emphasis on the subjective aspects of The Bridge and more on the balance of subjective and objective modalities. Lyric subjectivity becomes, as it were, transformed by epic objectivity. Though the subjective consciousness of the poet remains the dominant one, this consciousness changes character in the service of the epic mode. While Vogler says essentially the same thing, he tends to undervalue objectivity when he writes, for example, that "acquired objective knowledge" is no longer important (15). He is certainly not thinking about The Cantos in this context or The Waste Land; and even The Bridge, though it does not demonstrate wide erudition, emerges out of intensive research and assimilation of materials. It is not a Romantic epic like Wordsworth's Prelude or Whitman's Song of Myself, works that are expressly autobiographical and personal and do not engage resources other than the self.

Crane's learning tends to be undervalued in general. He read voraciously, and he employed a variety of sources for The Bridge. His erudition does not match Eliot's or

Pound's and his lyric gifts must be considered his forte as a poet. But his is an acutely inquisitive and critical imagination, and this along with his research lend The Bridge an epic objectivity.

At the same time we cannot overstress the objective. Michael André Bernstein in his illuminating book on the "modern verse epic" (his term) enumerates a number of characteristics of this genre, paying special attention to The Cantos. I summarize these here:

1. The modern verse epic is governed by a narrative of a "cultural, historical, or mythic heritage."
2. It expresses a "communal" voice as opposed to a "single sensibility."
3. Its audience is composed not of individuals but of citizens. Whereas the lyric addresses an individual consciousness regardless of class, the epic addresses the "tribe" and as a result projects social, political, psychological, ethical, emotional and aesthetic values.
4. It teaches a lesson of "the good"; it has a didactic function. (The Tale of the Tribe 14)

The foregoing particularly describes aspects of the Poundian epic as Pound originally conceived The Cantos. His initial plan, according to Bernstein, was to avoid a tragic view of the world in his work, to write a social/historical and not a psychological epic. But in the Pisan Cantos, especially, this objective became impossible. Pound was faced with the tragedy of his personal life and he withdrew from an impersonal/objective epic and the

"tale of the tribe." He could no longer speak for the polis, but principally for himself.

The "objective" epic that Bernstein outlines is frankly not, in my opinion, a suitable form for the twentieth century. This is due in part to the absence of universal values and ideologies, as Vogler has pointed out. In a world where God and the gods are dead, where individual heroic action is questionable, and where even history is devalued, how can the impersonal epic, the epic project in which the author disappears--how can such a form survive? It frankly cannot and does not.

But there are aesthetic reasons for the death of the objective epic as well. Dick Allen, arguing against the modernist epic, discloses some of these:

Most of the noble failures of the long poem in our century--and there have been many, Pound's Cantos, William's Paterson, among others--result from the poet's trying to write the long poem as if it were an extended imagistic lyric: with a minimum of explicit narrative and dramatic elements. Long poems which are pitched at high intensity, containing all the elements we have come to value in the lyric, particularly the "academic" lyric--ambiguity, layered meanings, a multitude of sophisticated rhythmic effects, concentration on the central image, primary attention to "how" a poem means--fail just as Poe said they would, and can only be treated adequately as a collection of parts. (79)

Allen is correct in his evaluation of what constitutes the modernist epic, but I do not believe these epics fail by virtue of their constitution. Allen does not take into account literary history, the dominance of the lyric mode

in the modernist epic and the personal makeup of the Romantic epic. Despite the rejection of Romanticism by Pound and Eliot, I believe they could not escape its influence. At the least they acquired its habits through Symbolism. Further, the modernist long poem came under the influence of the novel, and the novel itself was exercising dramatic and narrative elements. Ulysses was certainly a very important presence, and Gertrude Stein's highly experimental fiction was influential also. These fictions reduce transitions, reject narrative sequence and linear logic. Poe's argument against the long poem is demonstrative of his own disinterest in epic and perhaps his own inability to write a long work: A. Gordon Pym was his one attempt at a novel. Nevertheless, as Edmund Wilson points out in Axel's Castle, Poe's theoretical positions found a home in France, suiting the Symbolists' own passion for theory; and his positions were more influential than his poetry, which is rooted in a musical lyricism. This is not a criticism of Poe as much as it is an explanation of the dominance of the lyric from the nineteenth century to our own. The Symbolists became highly attracted to Poe's bias against the long poem, and this bias was in keeping with their own interest in music, their disinterest in society, and their fascination with various states of consciousness. The lyric mode, in short, was the best container for such aesthetics.

Eliot, Pound, Williams, Crane, as well as Yeats and Joyce, were tremendously influenced by the Symbolist movement--transforming it into a modernist guise. To this extent, the modernist long poem has a Symbolist or Romantic base and must be read within this frame of reference. As suggested in chapter one, the modernist long poem could not strip away these origins: they were rooted in the modernist poetic imagination. Additionally, the modernist long poem was competing with the novel, and if the novel in the hands of Joyce and Stein and Proust was breaking away from pure naturalism and becoming symbolistic and disjunctive, the long poem must do likewise. To return to conventional narrative and dramatic elements would have been to alter drastically the way these writers were looking at the world. In this period of experimentation, the long poem must itself experiment.

Further, I would maintain that poetic imagination itself was changing. The classical epic by its nature could not allow the dominance of the poet's consciousness; in the modernist epic the poet's consciousness has become, in fact, a central presence. Why? For one thing, because there are no shared values in the modern world, the poet must speak for himself. He cannot readily speak for a broad culture. But the individual also has generally taken on a more powerful stature. Romantic literature, forerunner of modernism, raised the individual to a lofty emotional status. And twentieth-century psychoanalysis,

though it has diminished the individual as "hero," has increased his self-consciousness by its close scrutiny of his emotional life. Poetic imagination has been shaped by this relatively recent phenomenon. The modernist epic is the product of this imagination and is sensitive to the new status of the individual.

Even Eliot and Pound, who were seeking impersonality in their early work, are "taken over" by subjectivity. Despite the "objective" beginnings of The Cantos, it too becomes in part subjective. It is this very tension between subjective consciousness and the "objective correlative" or Image, as they are transformed into epic, that characterizes this modernist genre. I do not believe we can evaluate this genre, as Allen seems to do, until we understand what precisely it consists of and the background of its making. We can only say at the moment that the genre is a hybrid of lyric and epic modalities, and as Vogler points out, an expansion upon lyric intensity. Unhappy with the limitations of the lyric, the modernist poet tries his hand at the objective epic in an attempt to expand both literary form and his knowledge of the world. Dick Allen maintains that the modern long poem is for all intents and purposes an "extended imagistic lyric"; because of the importance of method over matter in such a form and the accompanying lack of dramatic and narrative elements, it necessarily suffers the fate inherent in Poe's thesis and becomes merely a disunified "collection

of parts." But he does not account for the objectification of the epic mode, which fact alters the lyric form dramatically. If the modernist epic is built around the lyric, it is a lyric that is progressing to a higher plane, a more collective and social reality and a wider orientation.

If it does not ultimately address the "tribe," the modernist epic is at least an attempt to do so and begins out of the lyric I's impulse to engage historical and social realms, a world beyond its own internalized consciousness. In the case of The Bridge, one would question whether the term "imagistic lyric" can apply at all. Crane's epic is Romantic/modernist, and Crane as a poet evolves beyond the Imagist school.

Crane's need to write an epic, like the other modernists, is based on a desire to outstrip subjective consciousness, to become "objective"; and this objectivity represents the principal definition of the epic mode. It is the mode in which the poet uses voices or personae to represent himself, or, as in the Walt Whitman of "Cape Hatteras," where a figure is so dominant that the poet becomes less dominant himself. The "epic I" is the poet speaking through others or constituting others who become central to the action.

"Action" is also an important term. The epic mode is also the mode of action, sometimes heroic, but more often than not taking the form of the poet's journeys into

external reality. This outer "questing" is counterpoint to the meditative inner character of the lyric mode. Motion counters stasis. The last essential element of the epic mode is its historical dimension, to be examined directly.

The Historical Dimension of the Epic Mode

"An epic is a poem including history," Ezra Pound writes in his Literary Essays (86). Of course an epic includes a good deal more as well, but history must be considered an essential element, one that grounds the epic in reality. We must grant, however, that "reality" is more substantial in The Cantos than it is in The Bridge, because in The Bridge history takes on a more mythic status than in Pound's work. By way of defining the sense of history in Crane's poem, I would like to review those texts and ideas that acted as influences on Crane's new role as "cultural visionary."

If we allow that the modernist poet wishes by epic composition to become part of a community (it would be harder to argue for Eliot in this vein, but a case can be made), then history becomes of paramount importance to the life of that community. The transition is one from human memory (of the poet in the lyric mode) to human history (of the tribe in the epic mode). Crane's own evolution is from a Symbolist, who in his lyrical utterances remained aloof from society, to a social seer who would speak for a

culture at large. As cultural visionary, he must embrace history--this would be instrumental to his epic task. Of course, Crane did not suddenly wake to this new role: it was slowly developing, the result of an extended period of education as a poet and as an individual. Crane's growth to epos evolves out of his attitudes toward and education in social forces as well as his own ambitions as a poet.

His principal historical education derives from Walt Whitman and Waldo Frank. William Carlos Williams' In the American Grain is also a key text for the historical impressionism of The Bridge. P.D. Ouspensky and Oswald Spengler also lurk in the historical background, though they are of less substantive import.

Whitman's Democratic Vistas may represent the single most important text on the historical consciousness of The Bridge. Crane was probably led to it, and perhaps to Whitman in general, through Waldo Frank's Our America. Frank maintains, for example, that "Democratic Vistas is quite clearly our greatest book of social criticism." He goes on to assert that "...Emerson is pale and shredded and remote beside...this mighty prose" (205). Frank's view of Emerson might also apply to Crane's relationship with the poet-philosopher, which I believe to be essentially one of indifference (he mentions Emerson only once in his letters). Harold Bloom and R.W.B. Lewis perceive Emerson as a major influence on Crane, and Bloom considers Emerson the keystone of the American Sublime. But

Emerson's influence on Crane is indirect only--as it filters through Whitman. And Whitman's influence on Crane is in inspiration and ideas: Crane's makeup as a poet I believe to be different from Whitman's, both in technique and world view.

But the impact of Democratic Vistas on The Bridge is strong. Crane, for example, defended his homage to Whitman in "Cape Hatteras" by citing the book in a letter to Allen Tate of July 13, 1930. He accuses Tate of being unaware of "statements sharply decrying the materialism, industrialism, etc." expressed in Democratic Vistas (L 354). And Frederick J. Hoffman perceives the usefulness of Whitman's visions of evil and his transcendence in the following:

From Crane's reading of Democratic Vistas, he knew that Whitman had not been a superficial optimist concerning America; he liked Whitman's desire and his will to transcend the evidences of evil he had seen, and especially his attempts to translate material things into spiritual values. (262)

Whitman's doubts concerning the progress of American democracy would be educative for Crane in his American epic, an epic that applauds the American spirit and attempts to correct the nation's evils at the same time. Here in Democratic Vistas (1871) Whitman appraises the state of American democracy:

I say that our New World democracy, however great a success in uplifting the masses out of their sloughs, in materialistic development, products,

and in a certain highly-deceptive superficial popular intellectuality, is, so far, an almost complete failure in its social aspects, and in really grand religious, moral, literary, and esthetic results. (938)

Whitman's essay is a disavowal of democracy as it was evolving circa 1871. His tragic experiences in the Civil War were also cause for his pessimism. On a personal level, the war left him psychologically and physically exhausted, and he suffered a paralysis that would handicap him for the remainder of his life. His personal catastrophes affected his cultural views, as Crane's personal hardships affected his own; but Whitman was a full-fledged political animal and his service in the war taught him much. His hope for America is future-oriented: "I submit, therefore, that the fruition of democracy, on aught like a grand scale, resides altogether in the future" (956).

Emerson's call for a purely American literature divorced from Europe is echoed in the following:

America has yet morally and artistically originated nothing. She seems singularly unaware that the models of persons, books, manners, &c., appropriate for former conditions and for European lands, are but exiles and exotics here. (961)

Whitman proposes a union of poetry and science and an American literature of "futureness" as opposed to pastness. His essential demand, the one Crane was probably most attracted to, was for "great poems of death"; and he

writes: "The poems of life are great, but there must be the poems of the purports of life, not only in itself, but beyond itself" (988).

Is The Bridge a "great poem of death" (989)? In the Whitman sense of death, it essentially is. Whitman is calling for a visionary poetics, a poetics to transcend quotidian reality. The "great poem of death" looks through life into the future, and into the cosmically timeless and infinite. It perceives matter as spirit, and vice-versa. The sublime Bridge seeks just this conception of death--not as terminus but as continuation, and of life as matter becoming transfigured into spirit.

Whitman's bold program for "some great coming literatus, especially poet" (989), must have been very attractive to Crane. As such a poet, Crane would embrace and not reject science; he would create a contemporary poetry and not repeat the European past; and he would aestheticize love.

But The Bridge is far more complex than Whitman's formula for the new poem. Ambivalences predominate concerning science and love; and Crane does not repudiate the past as much as to make it integral in a continuous present. He owes as much to the past as to the present, if not more. And though The Bridge is a poem for the future, it is a future that offers uncertain promise.

Crane was drawn to Democratic Vistas, however, because while it recognizes evil and expresses a pessimistic view,

as Hoffman has pointed out, it is not overwhelmed by its own despair. Evil does permeate America, but it can be overcome and even employed in the service of the inclusive epic. This is the lesson that Crane learned from Whitman, perhaps more than any other, and it suited his aesthetics of suffering as well.

Of almost equal importance to Crane's historical views is Waldo Frank's mystical idealism. Frank was grimmer about the prospects of the Machine Age than Crane in Our America, but they share a similar hostility to pragmatic reality and to an overly materialistic America. Frank believed that a renewal of art and literature could rectify a faltering American spirit. He concludes his book in a spirit of missionary zeal: "We must begin to generate within ourselves the energy which is love of life"; and he terms this energy "religious" (232).

Crane did not, in my opinion, translate Frank's religious sentiment into his life and work, but he learned from Frank the optimistic life force, a notion similar to Whitman's "great poem of death." Frank's idealism, like Whitman's, could be utilized toward the positive social good. It could repair the damage to the spiritual realm brought about by materialism and self-seeking. Crane uses Whitman and Frank as social supports for his Romantic project: the "world-generating" activity of Romanticism becomes further enhanced, in short, by the social idealism of these two thinkers and creators.

Crane found additional riches in Frank's Virgin Spain, a book that was conceived as a "Symphonic History," according to its author. This work explores the origins of Spain and traces the roots of the New World discovery to its Spanish origins. Its symphonic form may indeed have influenced Crane's Bridge, and both works present "musical ideas" more than facts. In Virgin Spain, there is not argument as much as imaginative music, and it reads at times like fiction. Here Frank captures the movement of an erotic dance:

The male music works. The stomach, sudden, as if in unseen violation, wrenches, cascades, in passionate response. The shrilling pipes are visited whole upon the naked women. They shriek: their cry, overtone, fluted, pulsant, marries flesh and iron: blots out the music, and the music falls.
(23)

This ultimate in hypnotic language is enchanting in the same way as Crane's moments of sublimity. And Crane must have been attracted not only to the hypnotism of this passage but to the lush interfusion of music and dance along with the erotic element. "The Dance" was composed soon after.

Of more specific historical influence is Frank's portrayal of Columbus as a prophet, as author in fact of a book of Prophecias. Frank writes:

He has found and plotted in the Old Testament his rationale for a westward route to the Indies. God perhaps wrote down in Isaiah, not alone Christ and the Word of Christ in Europe, but Spain and how

Spain shall bring the Word to the East. Columbus a prophet? (He says there is gold in the Indies. Spain needs gold, for her crusade.) (148)

This passage and Frank's entire view of Columbus aided Crane in his own conception of Columbus as a visionary, as someone who would endow the New World with a visionary potential. Besides his prophetic status, Columbus was also a practical man: "He says there is gold in the Indies." Crane was also mindful of this materialistic aspect of Columbus, but it is secondary to the spiritual element. Nevertheless, the money-making passions of America are implicit in Columbus' quest for gold; and the dualistic character of America, a nation both strongly religious and materialistic, is partly determined by this phenomenon.

But the visionary-spiritual Columbus is the one Crane was most interested in as he originally conceived his Bridge--the one who would guide us into the poetic/mythic contours of America as opposed to its pragmatism. Frank's "Port of Columbus," a dialogue between Columbus and Cervantes appended to Virgin Spain, is itself a guide for Crane in his vision of the explorer. Here Columbus is presenting his formula for a "true New World":

When they have learned that they can not succeed: that all the Towers and all the machines and all the gold on earth can not crush down the unborn need in them for a true New World--then it will arise. (297)

He follows this with a profundity: "This golden-towered America is but the grave of Europe" (298).

This echoes Whitman's dissatisfaction with an American literature that was reproducing its European antecedents, and his view that American democracy must set about an entirely self-born course of action. In order for the New World to be truly born as Columbus conceived it, it must be more than "the Grave of Europe." At this point in the dialogue the towers fall ("Cervantes: The gleaming Towers are gone!") and Columbus seems to have his wish satisfied: "Now shall be the birth of the World which I discovered" (299). But one additional requirement remains for America to be truly born: to have the spirit of Spain invested in it. Addressing Spain, Columbus implores: "Give to the New World now your spirit, that it may surpass you" (300).

To create a New World out of the Old, to create a spiritualized world out of the spiritual seed of the father, is one hope of The Bridge. But this hope cannot be realized as America is proceeding (circa 1926): it must tear down its towers in order to attain its full promise. R.W.B. Lewis agrees, when he describes Crane's project of hope in The Bridge:

Its subject was hope, and its content a journey toward hope: a hope reconstituted on the ground of the imagination in action; while the thing hoped for was the creation in poetry of a new world--forged out of the old and fallen world, which had failed him, by the very vigor of the poet's own transfiguring vision. (231)

I would like to qualify the implications of Frank's message for The Bridge and Lewis' reading of the poem. Though Crane is engaged in an act of devolution in order to set in place a New World poetically, he does not destroy the Old World, nor does he believe it must be surpassed. I believe he is reaching for a new synthesis of Old and New, and their meeting place is in the civilization of Atlantis. (Helge Normann Nilsen, as we have seen, makes a similar point in her study.) Atlantis/America will rise again by virtue of this synthesis, providing there is the Will to do so. Further, Lewis' point assumes a strictly Romantic Crane, a poet centered in the lyric mode. In fact, Crane in his role as cultural visionary seeks not only self-resurrection but cultural resurrection as well, and this latter can be accomplished not only from the point of view of the poetic self but of the poetic self in relationship to others.

Another significant text for the historical views of The Bridge is William Carlos Williams' In the American Grain. What Crane learned from Williams was an "impressionistic" view of history, a means of treating history not so much as fact but as what Horace Gregory calls "fabulae" in his introduction to Williams' book. Both works seek out those historical events and figures that are "fabulous," that constitute fables, or stories with messages. They are less concerned with the concretions of history than with their spiritual phenomena, and both

works straddle the fence between fact and fiction. Virgin Spain is another exemplar of this conception of history.

Williams is more critical of the Old World than Crane, however. In his attempt to create an American idiom, a poetics of place, Williams thrust himself against the heritage of Europe. But he is also critical of the New World when he condemns Americans for not knowing their origins, and this historical mindlessness is the *raison d'être* of Williams' book. His work is an attempt to revivify lost moments, to give them living substance, to make them part of a continuous "presence."

He becomes eloquent in an indictment of America:

We believe that life in America is compact of violence and the shock of immediacy. This is not so. Were it so, there would be a corresponding beauty of the spirit--to bear it witness; a great flowering, simple and ungovernable as the configuration of a rose--that should stand with the gifts of the spirit of other times and other nations as a standard to humanity. There is none. (174)

The resonances with Democratic Vistas are apparent here. Williams also attacks our Puritan heritage, the machine, America's sexual mores--in America, virginity "means everything" (184)--and America's passion for making money--"Imagine stopping making money. Our whole conception of reality would have to be altered" (179-80). But he does praise the American Indian implicitly when he maintains that "almost nothing remains of the great American New World but a memory of the Indian" (157).

The spirit of the Indian is crucial to Crane as well--especially in "The Dance" and "Quaker Hill." The mythic reality of the Indian is potentially a purgation for a mechanistic, Puritanical nation. The marriage of the poet and Pocahontas in "The Dance" is a union of these two world views; and it is understood that the mythic can resuscitate the good aspect of science.

Poe is another object of praise for Williams, and here the relationship of the two works has concrete significance. Williams mourns the misunderstood Poe, offering a curious assessment of his value when he writes that "It is the New World, or to leave that for the better term, it is a new locality that is in Poe assertive" (216).

But Poe is a writer more European, in my opinion, than American. His work is insularly psychological, "in-reaching" as opposed to outreaching, universal as opposed to local. Waldo Frank writes: "Poe is the most famous of American artists whose imagination could not reside in the American world" (Our America 73). It was Poe's "sublime" darkness that the French were attracted to along with his theorizing. And it is this darkness that Crane was drawn to in his own conception of the writer. Despite Crane's statement of the symmetrical positioning of Poe in The Bridge with Williams' own (L 278), Poe has a different meaning and function in Crane's work.

Williams' view of history, however, is highly analogous to Crane's when he asserts that "History must stay

open, it is all humanity" (189). The two authors share the passion not only to reconstruct history but to make it breathe in the moment, to let history teach the contemporary reader through "fabulae." Finding their way to the heart of historical phenomena, these poets seek to make a new history out of the old, to correct the failures of twentieth-century America. Their hopes are individually ambivalent for such a correction, but their methods are very much alike.

Pound's and Eliot's influence on the historical dimension of The Bridge is of a broader, less strictly American, character. They were, after all, exiles. Their hopes for a new American Paradise were skeptical at best, or non-existent. Donald Davie writes of Ezra Pound, for example, that he did not share in the hope of the American Dream and that in Pound's view America must follow a European example in order to be truly creative (20-21).

Crane could not believe that he must look to the Old World for remediation, but he was closer to Pound's position than has been perceived. The synthesis of America and Europe, once again, is metaphorized through the civilization of Atlantis. In his brief career, Crane learned considerably from European tradition: from Donne, Blake, Marlowe, Webster, Rimbaud, and Shakespeare, among others, though Shakespeare is not usually mentioned as a literary forefather. There are references and allusions in The Bridge, also, to Seneca, Marlowe, Plato, Blake, and to

Greek and Roman mythology, as well as implicitly to Shakespeare's The Tempest. The synthesis of Europe and America accords with Crane's intentions in "Faustus and Helen," and the bridge symbol resonates with infinite bridgings in itself.

We have already observed how Crane was affected by Eliot's notions of tradition, and Pound was also influential in this sense. Eliot and Pound made important restorations of classical and Renaissance literatures, and Eliot did likewise for the Metaphysicals. But Eliot's contribution to Crane's historical education was mostly in terms of literary history. Eliot's references to social and political history in his early poetry and essays are sporadic, and he tends to be skeptical of history in general. He writes in "Gerontion," for example:

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted
And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving....

Eliot was in pursuit of a timeless, ahistorical culture. His sense of tradition was a literary tradition, one that could be transformed into the blood and bones of the contemporary writer--to become continuous, universal, eternal.

Pound's historical position is also endowed with the continuous present, but he writes in historical time, not

eternal timelessness, and his epic is indeed one that contains history. Crane's position is somewhere between his two contemporaries. History does not give way to a religious world view as it does in Eliot, nor does it manifest itself in the objective/scientific formulation of Pound. History is rather an amalgam of fact and myth in The Bridge, and the historical and mythic world views balance against each other. Even Pound's myths in The Cantos are objectively presented, as critics have discerned. Crane's view of history is most similar to Williams' "fabulae," but Crane's history is more visionary than Williams', and than the other two poets for that matter.

2. Reading of Select "Epic" Sections

The Voyage-Poem

The epic mode is the mode of objectivity. In rhetorical terms, it is the mode in which the lyric I is mediated by other voices or personae, where there is a distance, that is, from subjective consciousness. But the person of the author does not vanish altogether, by virtue of what Käte Hamburger calls the "epic I." She writes:

We are dealing with the concepts of subjective and objective, which are usually applied to literary genres such that epic and drama as objective are contrasted to the lyric as a subjective genre, but with the difference of degree that, due to the "epic I," the epic is more subjective than the drama, though not as subjective as the lyric. (142)

Authorial presence vanishes entirely in the drama where other voices predominate. In The Bridge, the epic I, as conceived by Hamburger, still continues to be present though at a second remove from the lyric I. The narrator does not fade, but excludes himself as subject, or reduces his subjectivity.

The epic mode is also characterized by its historical dimension and its presentation of physical action. We might say that the epic mode is the mode of motion through space, while the lyric mode is the mode of stillness and meditation. Other counterparts would include "immensity" in the epic mode and "intimacy" in the lyric, an historical sense in the epic and personal memory in the lyric.

Physical action in The Bridge is principally manifested through the voyage motif. There are five voyages as I perceive them in the work: the sea voyage of Columbus in "Ave Maria"; the train voyage in "The River"; the river/land voyage in "The Dance"; the air voyage in "Cape Hatteras"; and the fire voyage in "The Tunnel." These are voyages through the four elements, and they frame the overall quest motif of the work. They have symbolical reference as well: water as the source of all life is the appropriate medium for the work's beginning; earth as the realm of the natural, as the solid element, suits the poet's journey into the interior of the American continent and into consciousness; air is the transcendent element, the medium of the spiritual, but it is also the ironic

medium through which man can become bird; and finally, fire is the destructive/creative element through which the poet undergoes the terrors of the inferno and the redemption that follows this trial. The conjunction of water and earth in "The Dance" is an index of the marriage of the poet and Pocahontas.

Various critics have alluded to the journey motif in the work and/or the importance of the four elements: Horton, Weber, Dembo, and Nilsen, for example. But there has been no thoroughgoing analysis of the role of the four elements in the poem. Indeed, they seem to be so prominent as to indicate structural and thematic weight; and I believe an examination of the epic mode can be aided through this frame of reference.

Each voyage-poem, it will be seen, duplicates the development of most of Crane's important lyrics. This development is identified by the "aesthetics of suffering" already alluded to. Harold Bloom might refer to these poems as Romantic crisis poems, while Herbert Leibowitz has discussed this phenomenon in terms of the Romantic ode. But putting aside formal terminology, each of the voyage-poems projects first a problem (or crisis), then prolonged endurance (or voyage) through crisis, and a redemption or recuperation. Alfred Hanley charts this development in his book on White Buildings:

White Buildings is about the pained pursuit of that holy truth that begins in quiet speculation and

passes through the clamor and fire of experience to tranquil illumination. (20)

He also perceives this movement in the The Bridge. But his religious reading of Crane is a critical position I cannot agree with; and with respect to The Bridge the phrase "quiet speculation" is inadequate to describe the inception of the crisis cycle, the beginning of the voyage. Further, though these poems describe a passage through crisis and imitate the cycle of Crane's major lyrics, they are "epic" poems and their crisis is not only personal but cultural.

The voyage-poem has its background most directly in the "Voyages" sequence, but indirectly as well in "Faustus and Helen." In the first, the passage by sea is through crisis and to redemptive love. Here in "Voyages, VI" the fire metaphor signifies devastation:

Waiting, a fire, what name, unspoke,
I cannot claim: let thy waves rear
More savage than the death of kings,
Some splintered garland for the seer.

But as the sequence ends, fire is converted into the redemptive Word:

The imaged Word, it is, that holds
Hushed willows anchored in its glow.
It is the unbetrayable reply
Whose accent no farewell can know.

Destructive fire also plays a key role in "Faustus and Helen," but the only voyage is one by airplane:

Accept a lone eye riveted to your plane,
 Bent axle of devotion along companion ways
 That beat, continuous, to hourless days--
 One inconspicuous, glowing orb of praise. (Part I)

These sequences are psychological voyages more than physical ones, passages through the mind to redemptive love and consolation, whereas the voyage-poem of The Bridge is involved with physical motion and physical force. In the case of "Voyages," Crane was perfecting a sea motif that would be beneficial to The Bridge; and the visionary aspects of the poems--vision through voyage, through the rhythms of the sea--are of consequence to The Bridge. What Crane translated to his epic from "Faustus and Helen" was vision in place, as eyesight becomes in that poem a means of seeing beyond exteriors. I am thinking particularly of the magical conjuring of Helen in Marlowe's Faustus, a work of which Crane must have been aware. The metamorphosis of the invisible into the visible becomes symbolic of ultimate supernatural powers. These powers become transfigured into a positive apocalypse rather than into demonic devastation in the terminal line of Part I: "One inconspicuous, glowing orb of praise."

Formally speaking, the "static" envisioning of "Faustus and Helen" has particular value for the lyric mode of The Bridge, as the "visionary motion" of "Voyages" has relevance for the epic; but of course these two types of vision (stasis/kinesis) interfuse. The two sequences,

we must remember, are exemplars of the lyric mode, though "Faustus and Helen" begins a new role for Crane as a social poet. And "Voyages" is strictly lyrical, despite whatever it may have taught Crane about epic passage.

The "Epic" Bridge

"Ave Maria"

After the crucial meditation of the "Proem," the poet is ready to set sail. He does so through the persona of Columbus, the consummate navigator/explorer/prophet. Important predecessors to Crane's text are Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Pound's translation of "The Seafarer," and Williams' "The Yachts," texts, that is to say, that have their origins in sea struggle and suffering. "Ave Maria" is perhaps the closest we come to epic action in The Bridge and to what Pound refers to as the "surge and sway" of "epic music" in his chapter on Dante in The Spirit of Romance (161). The poem does not, however, imitate the impersonal epos of "The Seafarer," but rather charts a visionary path through water, the element of the life-origin, to the heart of The Bridge. Out of the sea of Columbus emerges America. Columbus was the first of course to see America (among his entire crew in fact), but he was also the first to envision the very real possibility of discovering it. That he could foresee America makes him a supreme visionary; that he is the first to discover it is a mark of his superhuman skills of navigation.

Of course his visionary qualities are not without their irony. It was Cathay he hoped to find, not America. It was America that he found, thinking it was Cathay. Brom Weber defines the Cathay symbol in relation to the purposes of The Bridge:

The poem was to revolve about the symbol of "Cathay," which bore the dual burden of referring to the "riches" in that land, thereafter "transmuted" into the religious doctrines which the voyage to Cathay was intended to disseminate, the intellectual knowledge achieved, and the feeling of union with God. (Hart Crane 258-59)

This dualism between matter and spirit is a central one for The Bridge, as is the dualism implicit in the epigraph from Seneca to this section. Frederick J. Hoffman comments on this in a note:

The epigraph of "Ave Maria" is taken from Seneca's Medea, in which the chorus prophesies that a time will come "when Ocean shall unloose the bonds of things" and there will be new worlds. This is offered as a prediction of chaos, not of happy fulfillment, and of this fact Crane must have been aware. (265)

In the dualism of matter and spirit there is a sustained tension in The Bridge that has a prospective resolution in "Atlantis." In the dualism between chaos and order there emerges the promise of order out of chaos. Crane was unquestionably aware of the suggestion of chaos in the Medea passage, but it is a chaos of an apocalyptic character, bringing about, through disintegrations, new integrations, "new worlds." In fact, Crane was probably

led to this passage through his reading of Columbus' Journal of First Voyage to America (the Boni edition), which includes the passage as part of an appended note and offers a translation:

In the last days there will come an age in which Ocean shall loosen the bonds of things; a great country will be discovered; another Tiphis shall make known new worlds, and Thule shall no longer be the extremity of the earth. (247)

The note goes on to read: "This prediction may assuredly be considered as accomplished in the person of the Admiral" (247).

The above translation and the ensuing commentary might suggest a more positive meaning of the Seneca passage than Hoffman has given it, but granting its ambivalence, we may consider The Bridge to be an apocalyptic poem as opposed to a demonic one in the Frye terminology of his Anatomy of Criticism. Dembo and Nilsen have also recognized the importance of these terms for the poem; The Bridge is apocalyptic because though it tears down it also builds anew. It also demonstrates moments of a demonic character, but not to the same finality as say Eliot's "The Hollow Men," which suggests terminus without reparation:

This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
This is the way the world ends
Not with a bang but a whimper.

But the New World discovered by Columbus and envisioned by Crane does not embody chaos, at least as The

Bridge concludes. The New World can never be truly new with the death of the old: a new configuration must evolve out of the fusion of the two. Hoffman is correct, nevertheless, in perceiving Crane's awareness of the chaos-meanings of the Seneca passage. This chaos is implicit in the very discovery of America, and America is at best a dubious paradise. The promise of paradise embodied in America becomes, that is, more questionable as the project and the poem unfold.

I believe these distinctions to be very important. Though there is a tragic dualism inherent in the poem's very beginning, this dualism becomes more marked as we near the end. The cycle of crisis, endurance and redemption (or illumination), though it spans the entire poem, appears in later sections contrived or strained and less authentic. The artificial rhetoric of much of "Cape Hatteras," one of the last sections completed, is one illustration of what I mean. And the abrupt recuperations of "Quaker Hill" and "The Tunnel" represent another illustration. Certainly the interrogative at the end of "Atlantis" carries doubt. If there is any possibility of a positive apocalypse, it is one that must be sought for. It is not assumed.

The tragic interpretations given to The Bridge by Brom Weber and L. S. Dembo are both somewhat in error. In Weber's view, The Bridge is tragic in a negative sense--despairing and depressing. He refuses to see any recuper-

ation in the poem, nor for the most part the magnificent ecstasy of its poetry. His basic position is that Crane's vision died with the debilitating years of composition. Dembo, on the other hand, would make us believe that Crane built into the work Nietzsche's positive view of tragedy from the very beginning. Though there is a tragic aspect in all of Crane and in the beginnings of The Bridge as well, this aspect becomes sharper and darker as the disillusionment intensifies. We can certainly read the poem in terms of Nietzsche's theory of tragedy, but we can do so only after a realization of the despair that wracked the work: this theory was not imposed upon the work from its inception.

In the case of "Ave Maria" the forementioned cycle of crisis and redemption does seem to hold true. The crisis, if we may call it that, is one of anxious anticipation to utter the word of the American discovery. Columbus begins his narrative in the imperative mode:

Be with me, Luis de San Angel, now--
 Witness before the tides can wrest away
 The word I bring, O you who reined my suit
 Into the Queen's great heart that doubtful day;
 For I have seen now what no perjured breath
 Of clown nor sage can riddle and gainsay;--
 To you, too, Juan Perez, whose counsel fear
 And greed adjourned,--I bring you back Cathay!

This return voyage (and Crane was rather faithful to the Journal) is threatened by storm or, more symbolically, by the God whom Columbus sought to please. The first stanza

is written in the prospective mode, an invocation as the gloss suggests. It is the mode of "future recollection." Columbus' memory of the scene in the Spanish court when he first sought aid is reproduced in a very similar scene of his exclamation of discovery. He projects his imagination forward and back at the same time, while also invoking the beneficial presence of the "two faithful partisans of his quest." This scheme contains what is most significant about Columbus, that is, his visionary powers. He has an exceptional ability to see forward as well as to see what he has not seen before: "For I have seen what no perjured breath / Of clown nor sage can riddle or gainsay." The terminus of this stanza--"I bring you back Cathay!" --embodies present and future tenses (the moment of his invocation and a future episode in Spain) and interlocks with "The word I bring" of line three. This "word" is Cathay and it is the "new word" of Crane's conception of poetry. It is wrought with religious meaning, but it bears a metalinguistic meaning as well. It is language, in a sense, that discovers the New World. Without language, Columbus' physical act would slide into the darkness. This is the poet's view more than it is that of Columbus, who was, after all, first and foremost a sailor.

Columbus' sea world and sea prowess are conveyed through the diction and the rhythms of the second stanza:

Here waves climb into dusk on gleaming mail;
Invisible valves of the sea,-- the locks, tendons

Crested and creeping, troughing corridors
 That fall back yawning to another plunge.
 Slowly the sun's red caravel drops light
 Once more behind us....It is morning there--
 O where our Indian emperies lie revealed,
 Yet lost, all, this keel one instant yield!

Is this Columbus speaking? Very clearly not. Columbus' Journal is written in a straightforward, navigator's language (actually an abstract of the original made by a companion, Las Casas, occasionally incorporating the direct speech of Columbus). Herbert Leibowitz comments on the question of voice that "Crane could not write narrative poetry, ballads, or even dramatic monologues (Columbus in "Ave Maria" sounds like Crane). His main subject was himself" (278). I would not go this far in assessing Crane's narrative abilities. The foregoing stanza, in fact, demonstrates quite a vital narrative voice. The language is active and kinetic, and conveys the rhythms of the sea, Columbus' true world. The navigator's expertise resides in this world, which Crane expresses in his own poetic idiom. Though Crane does not create a character who possesses his own speaking voice, he does bring into being the consciousness of Columbus, and he is faithful to Columbus' instincts and spirit. Columbus may be a persona for Crane, but Crane nevertheless captures the essence of the man and the contours of his mind.

The crucial line, "Yet lost, all, let this keel one instant yield!," from this stanza is sustained in the fourth stanza's threat of catastrophe:

And lowered. And they came out to us crying,
 "The Great White Birds!" (O Madre María, still
 One ship of these thou grantest safe returning;
 Assure us through the mantle's ageless blue!)
 And record of more, floating in a casque,
 Was tumbled from us under bare poles scudding;
 And later hurricanes may claim more pawn....
 For here between two worlds, another, harsh...

These "Great White Birds" possess the seed of impending disaster for Indian civilization as Helge Normann Nilsen implies:

According to the Journal, the natives of the West Indies thought that Columbus and his men came from heaven, and their sailing ships quite naturally came to look like great white birds...To the natives of America the coming of the white gods meant the downfall of the existing Indian empires and the beginning of a new era, a new world. (45)

These birds may resonate as well with Coleridge's albatross, a harbinger of doom, and they suggest once again the duality of the New World's discovery. Certainly this "discovery" meant the downfall of the native Indian civilization and with it the ultimate dissolution of the primitive/mythic world view in America.

The ambivalence of the white man's conquest serves as a crucial theme in The Bridge, as the mythic attempts to reassert itself through poetic imagination. Further, the chromatic intrusion of white is pervasive in Crane's poetry, as Leibowitz and Coffman point out. Coffman compares Crane's use of "white" in The Bridge to Melville's "white horror" (72), and indeed Moby Dick's whiteness in general is a strong corollary.

The invocation of "Madre María" in this stanza introduces the theme of the Eternal Feminine that contains its own ambivalence. This "Maria" interlocks with the title "Ave Maria" that is itself a prayer, and it presages the third of the "Three Songs," "Virginia," whose Mary is an ambivalent savior. The Eternal Feminine of Mary becomes transposed to Pocahontas, as the poet takes over the quest-voyage from Columbus into the heart of the continent. Columbus' prayer to Mary is indicative of the importance of Woman to the ideal realization of the New World. Whereas Woman in the lyric mode is by and large the object of the poet's Romantic quest, in the epic she is essentially the embodiment of cultural completion and perfection. Without her, the New World cannot reproduce itself; it will become racially dead. In the context of "Ave Maria" she represents the hope of Columbus to "bring" the word; she can reverse the religious formula and give the word the flesh it requires. The crisis that Columbus is experiencing is of course a crisis of frustration: he is less interested in his own safety than in the deliverance of the word--the discovery of America, the perfection of his mission. Having been inspired by God (Nilsen 51), he must at any cost deliver the fruits of his prophetic dream. Fearing calamity, he throws overboard a cask ("casque" is Crane's incorrect spelling) in order to preserve records of his voyage. And is this not the fundamental work of the poet as well: to preserve records, that

is, of the life lived? I believe this meaning implicit in Crane's recounting of the episode. The sea voyage represents the "narrated" in Käte Hamburger's terminology, but the narrative action has no meaning without the poet's recollection and record of it. Experience is incomplete without a language to express it. Columbus' "word," then, is of course the poet's as well.

The crisis culminates and then ends in the fifth stanza:

This third, of water, tests the word, lo, here
 Bewilderment and mutiny heap whelming
 Laughter, and shadow cuts sleep from the heart
 Almost as though the Moor's flung scimitar
 Found more than flesh to fathom in its fall.
 Yet under the tempest-lash and surfeitings
 Some inmost sob, half-heard, dissuades the abyss,
 Merges the wind in measure to the waves...

This "third" world of water between the Old and New Worlds is a treacherous one that can destroy the word; it indeed "tests the word" as it tests Columbus' prowess and courage. This world is also a liminal one between two states of consciousness or two world views, a bridge, that is, between these other worlds. As one of the four elements through which The Bridge constitutes voyages, water contains the potential for both destruction and creation. It can drown the word with Columbus, but it can bring it as well to Spain. As origin of life, it can (and will) engender life in the word.

But in this stanza water is fraught with devastation, with "bewilderment and mutiny" and with "tempest-lash."

The reference of "the Moor's flung scimitar" is to the war between the Spanish and the Moors in which the Spanish were victorious against the pagan threat. The physical terror contained in "flung scimitar" has an analogue in the spiritual terror of the Moors' pagan fervor. The Christian victory can be compared to Columbus' conquest of the Indian universe; and we cannot forget in our reading the background of the Great War as an ironic counterpart--as anything but a religious war.

The crisis subsides in the final lines, turning as they do from the chaos and devastation of the outer to an inward point: "Some inmost sob, half-heard, dissuades the abyss, / Merges the wind in measure to the waves." This is Columbus' sob (and perhaps the continent's) as he reaches an emotional overflow. The sob contains a recognition of self-despair and ultimately symbolizes a fusion of biography and history. Perhaps Columbus' prayer to Mary is answered by virtue of this recognition: the crisis is endured, the self is mended, and the voyage can proceed.

This stanza is, I believe, one of the more crucial in "Ave Maria." Multiple themes are embedded in its lines. Water as a liminal medium also bears within itself Columbus' self-involved rite of passage. This passage is personal in the spiritual crisis of the explorer, but it is historical as well. The New World has been discovered, but its word must cross the threshold-sea before it can be genuinely discovered. The personal/cultural passage is

further heightened by the reference to the Moors' war and the religious antagonisms implicit in this, both because of its ironic resonance with the First World War and because the reference draws us away from narrative events into historical matters outside the immediate purview of Columbus. The "inmost sob" carries us into a psychological space that we have not experienced yet and will not again in the poem. All these resonances, in short, seem to drift together with the voyage itself.

The crisis movement in the poem is not over, in fact, as Columbus issues a warning to Ferdinand not to take too much of "that eastern shore"; but this warning is rejected by the king, resulting in famine and ultimate tragedy (Dembo, Sanskrit Charge 58). The devastation wrought on the new continent has a symbolic value, as articulated by Dembo:

Columbus' voyage is both the epitome and the beginning of the Western tragedy. The arrival of the white man brings the ruin of Eden on the continent, but, paradoxically, it is precisely through men like Columbus--voyager and poet--that redemption is possible. (Sanskrit Charge 61)

This underscores the cultural crisis of the stanza in question and embodies the poetic recuperation of the following:

An herb, a stray branch among salty teeth,
The jellied weeds that drag the shore,--perhaps
Tommorrow's moon will grant us Saltes Bar--
Palos again,--a land cleared of long war.
Some Angelus environs the cordage tree;
Dark waters onward shake the dark prow free.

The natural imagery, the end of war, and the calming angelus, produce a sense of hope in Columbus' narrative for the first time, but the continuing "dark waters" of the final line force Columbus to his closing prayer, the final movement of the poem.

This prayer is directed to God the Father as the earlier was to Mary the Mother. It represents the final stage in a redemption cycle. Though it maintains echoes of Columbus' Journal (in the reference to Teneriffe, for example), it departs from the narrative mode and compares with the hymnal sublime of the "Proem" and "Atlantis." The "Thou" of the prayer is both God and metaphorically the bridge. In the ninth stanza, for example, the bridge is implied in the closing lines: "Urging through night our passage to the Chan;-- / Te Deum laudamus, for thy teeming span!" This "span" is explicitly the ocean and implicitly a prefigurement of the bridge as well. Columbus, through his God, is its first engineer; and he is the first to give utterance of it through his word, to make it live as a symbol in the imagination. This is the Bridge before the Brooklyn Bridge, the ideal bridge constructed through Columbus' visionary and real voyage.

This symbol and the continent are treated to a towering sublime as "Ave Maria" concludes:

White toil of heaven's cordons, mustering
 In holy rings all sails charged to the far
 Hushed gleaming fields and pendant seething wheat
 Of knowledge,--round thy brows unhooded now

--The kindled Crown! acceded of the poles
 And biassed by full sails, meridians reel
 Thy purpose--still one shore beyond desire!
 The sea's green towers a-sway, Beyond

And kingdoms
 naked in the
 trembling heart--
 Te Deum Laudamus
 O Thou Hand of Fire

The perfection of wholeness conveyed by the circle imagery is the realization of God by Columbus, the union of the human explorer with the ideal or archetypal explorer in heaven. God is a Circle as is the bridge and the Circle is the perfect form. The continent joins in this perfection, a beautiful one, in the third line--"Hushed gleaming fields and pending seething wheat." This is both a foreshadowing of the fruits of Columbus' discovery and of the journeys to come in The Bridge over the fertile continent.

This union with God through prayer presages Columbus' success in his pursuit of Spain. He will have his day of the word; he will have his redemption (as the ending of the poem already confers). But it will be a split redemption: "The sea's green crying towers a-sway" carries in it both a suggestion of the bridge and the towers Columbus refers to in the Virgin Spain dialogue. The "towers" are ocean towers that are "crying" and swaying, but they are also metaphorically the towers that must crumble in order for Columbus' conception of the true New World to come into being. Though Columbus reaches God, it is a tenta-

tive union; in order for the word to be fully formed and to carry the truth, America (as we look forward with Columbus) must acknowledge its own originating spirit.

And this is also the message in the image of fire at the very terminus of "Ave Maria." It has destructive and creative meanings. Fire is the consuming element and the element of the hearth: it can both burn to ash and provide heat and light. These meanings are implicit here: for God is the kingdom and the glory, but also the destroyer; and the bridge does burn at the very end of Crane's epic.

The structure of the sea voyage assures this duality. As the origin of life, water will also bring into being the word of the New World. But it can also bury it forever or sweep it forward to a consuming fire. This fire, however, can also be redemptive: it can become a phoenix fire of renewal.

"The River"

The voyage by land, in the earth element, does not reach golden perfection either. The train journey of "The River" is characterized (and disturbed) by the paraphernalia of twentieth-century life. After the heroic saga of Columbus, this is a descent into the quotidian, at least in its inception. But there are moments of exquisite poetry and of the sublime here as well, and even a redemption at terminus, though an ambivalent one, as in "Ave Maria." As "The River" opens, Crane is in love with

names, as he was also in "Ave Maria." K. L. Goodwin maintains in fact that Crane's fascination with proper names derives from the example of Pound in poems like "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" (169). Here, in the beginning of "The River," names are joined by a rhythm duplicating the rhythm of a train:

Stick your patent name on a signboard
 brother--all over--going west--young man
 Tintex--Japalac--Certain-teed Overalls ads
 and land sakes! under the new playbill ripped
 in the guaranteed corner--see Bert Williams what?
 Minstrels when you steal a chicken just
 save me the wing for it isn't
 Erie it ain't for miles around a
 Mazda--and the telegraphic night coming on Thomas
 a Ediford...

Goodwin identifies some of the meanings in the above when he writes that:

...with the mention of 'Minstrels', Crane seems to be suggesting that culture in modern America is a debased affair of travelling troupes; and with 'Mazda' he seems to be suggesting that the desire for spiritual light has been sublimated into satisfaction with modern inventions, just as the values of 'Thomas a Ediford' have supplanted the values of Thomas à Kempis or Thomas à Becket. (170)

And R. W. B. Lewis also notes the debt to Shakespeare's As You Like It, as the terminus of the second stanza--"as you like it...eh?"--would seem to bear out.

Crane also manages with aplomb to convey the nervous speed of the modern, particularly in the second stanza when he strings capitals together in the kind of compression he was striving for throughout The Bridge. The jux-

tapositions of old and new represent a strategy of Eliot, who in turn learned this from Pound's juxtapositions of the beautiful and the ugly. William Carlos Williams was also to use this latter strategy in important moments of Paterson.

The third stanza introduces the rather featureless prototypes of the new century:

So the 20th Century--so
whizzed the Limited--roared by and left
three men, still hungry on the tracks, ploddingly
watching the tail lights wizen and converge, slip-
ping gimleted and neatly out of sight.

These hoboes are deserted by the rushing train and the rushing century (with a pun on "Limited": Vogler, Preludes to Vision 160). They are timeless, not in the sacred sense of timeless but rather as leftovers from a previous era. Vogler writes in Preludes to Vision that these tramps "have no sense of time as either running out of life, or as going on in an upward flight to an ultimate consummation" (161). They are forever stuck, "outsiders" in the Victor Turner conception, always at a distance from the events of time. They are cultural misfits with a different perception of the world than the mainstream of society; or they have no perception whatsoever.

But despite their outsider status they demonstrate in succeeding stanzas a curious vitality, one rooted in a fresh idiom distinguished from the social mainstream or contemporary reality. For one thing they have the life of

song around them: "...singing low / My Old Kentucky Home and Casey Jones, / Some Sunny Day, I heard a road-gang chanting so." They have, in short, their own fellowship. They share the instinctual and the physical life: they hunt, fish, drink, and sing their songs.

The poet then turns in a lyric memory to men he has known like these in his youth. This nostalgia represents an interruption of the journey, a turn to inner space away from "epos." "Nostalgia," in fact, derives from the Greek "nostos" ("return home") and "algos" ("pain"), and this is one of many instances of return in The Bridge. But this return is not so much painful as sorrowfully sympathetic in the end:

Behind

My father's cannery works I used to see
 Rail-squatters ranged in nomad raillery,
 The ancient men--wifeless or runaway
 Hobo-trekkers that forever search
 An empire wilderness of freight and rails.
 Each seemed a child like me, on a loose perch,
 Holding to childhood like some termless play.
 John, Jake or Charley, hopping the slow freight
 --Memphis to Tallahassee--riding the rods,
 Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods.

Yet they touch something like a key perhaps.
 From pole to pole across the hills, the states
 --They know a body under the wide rain...

Like "Ave Maria," "The River" can be read through two perspectives: the structure of the voyage motif, using voyage loosely for journey; or the cycle of crisis/endurance/redemption. "The River" as a train voyage over earth begins in the nervous speed of the twentieth century in

its penetration into the continent away from Columbus' sea. It passes into the consciousness (or lack of consciousness) of the hoboes, who cannot include themselves in the journey of the train. However, though the train passes them by, as has society, the voyage continues. But it does so less in terms of physical action than in terms of consciousness or perception. At the point of the foregoing stanzas we are in the consciousness of the poet and the voyage ceases for this period.

In the second "psychological" reading, the cycle crisis/endurance/redemption, there are variations here from "Ave Maria." For one thing the crisis is more implicit and cultural than personal/cultural. For another, since there is no "crisis" to speak of in the usual definition of the word, there is also no period of "endurance." In "The River" we are presented with a problem as the poem begins, offered a partial resolution through self-recognition (also an element in "Ave Maria"), attain a hopeful sublimity, and undergo an ambivalent redemption.

In the foregoing stanzas, we are at a point of partial resolution of the initial problem through self-recognition. The poet's memory contains a qualified salvation. The hoboes he meets upon his voyage ignite feelings of nostalgia. They remind him simply of his youth, of those same liminal figures who stood "behind" his "father's cannery works" and aroused his curiosity. They are like infinite children because they bear no worldly responsi-

bilities (and the poet becomes himself a child again as he remembers them). As infinite children, "holding to childhood like some termless play," they amount to no more than "blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods."

"Yet they touch something like a key perhaps" in the following stanza. This is the "key" to the poet's heart as well as the heart of the country. They are reminders of the pioneer civilization from which America was built-- that nervous, ravaging, physical race who were once dynamos in the nation's formation despite whatever they may have become. They possess some of the primitive element that the poet is seeking in the person of Pocahontas and are in direct contradistinction to the race of twentieth-century Americans described in the first two stanzas. Indeed, the line, "They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast," appearing later in this stanza, implies not only an instinctual, physical knowledge of the continent, but a sexual knowledge of Pocahontas as well. They recall for the poet the objective of his quest and in this sense they are a real "key" for him. He becomes self-aware of his spiritual mission and this translates as well to cultural hope: the mythic aspects of the hoboes can be curative to the failure of spirit of twentieth-century America. That they are like children reminds him of his own childhood, and this equates with their mythic "innocence": the childhood purity they symbolize is bathed in a light

of timelessness outside a rigid logic and the degenerate products of time.

The last line of this stanza--"As I have trod the numerous midnights, too"--returns us directly to the poet's quest voyage taken up by the following stanza, which presents an "aching sublime":

And past the circuits of the lamp's thin flame
 (O Nights that brought me to her body bare!)
 Have dreamed beyond the print that bound her name.
 Trains sounding the long blizzards out--I heard
 Wail into distances I knew were hers.
 Papooses crying on the wind's long mane
 Screamed redskin dynasties that fled the brain,
 --Dead echoes! But I knew her body there,
 Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark,
 And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair.

The longingness of this stanza is communicated through the emphatic sensuality, the repetition of the word "long," and the sense of distances and anticipation in numerous images and phrases, such as "Have dreamed beyond," long blizzards out," "Wail into distances," wind to long mane," and "--Dead echoes!" The tramps have accompanied us to the dimension of myth and to the body of Pocahontas, who represents in Crane's view the American earth.

He describes her important role in a letter to Otto Kahn:

Powhatan's daughter, or Pocahontas, is the mythological nature-symbol chosen to represent the physical body of the continent, or the soil. She here takes on much the same role as the traditional Hertha of ancient Teutonic mythology. The five sub-sections of Part II are mainly concerned with a gradual exploration of this "body" whose first

possessor was the Indian. (L 305, letter of September 12, 1927)

The foregoing stanza, then, amounts to a skillful intertwining of the romantic-personal and the mythic-cultural. Pocahontas is the poet's dream-lover of "The Harbor Dawn." He pursues her West in the train of "The River" and into the past of "The Dance." But she is also an earth-body, a natural metaphor for the entire continent. As a member of a pre-civilized culture, she contains the seed through which a true New World can come into being. She is also the romantic object of the poet's longing, a facet of the lyric mode.

The earth symbolism of Pocahontas accords with my reading of "The River" as a voyage over earth and as structurally one of the five principal element-voyages of The Bridge. The earth element is the only solid one of the four. It has substance in ground, rock, and soil, which Crane needs at this point of The Bridge. It is the mother-element, the female principle, the body. In Crane's conception, it is the American body of the continent. Pocahontas is the potential bearer of a new configuration of America as she is the embodiment of an old order.

In general terms, "The River" is a panorama of the land; it is the epic voyage over the continent, as Columbus' voyage was the epic voyage over the sea. What will it teach the poet? In our psychological schema we

are at a point in the poem of self-recognition when the poet must satisfy his longing--"O Nights that brought me to her body bare!" Pocahontas, though a virgin and a symbol of the chaste earth, is not without her sensuality. Her nakedness equates with the love sublime described in the previous chapter. But as the poet seeks out her love body, he will also be embroiled in a mythic dream: "Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark, / And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair." Pocahontas' sensuality becomes transfigured into the mythic and metaphysical. The poet, in order truly to possess her, must make love to the myth as well.

If there is a partial recuperation in the love and myth topoi of the previous stanza, the next carries a rupture already evoked in the first movement of the poem:

Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain,
 The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools
 Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain
 And re-descend with corn from querulous crows.
 Such pilferings make up their timeless eatage,
 Propitiate them for their timber torn
 By iron, iron--always the iron dealt cleavage!
 They doze now, below axe and powder horn.

These are the gods of the old order, as Pocahontas is the pure female principle of the past. In terms of the previous stanza, she is the intersection of time and space, the serpent being a time-symbol and the eagle being one of space, as Unterecker in his essay "The Architecture of The Bridge," and others have pointed out. Not only is she in

fact a metaphoric intersection of the two, but she herself forms the image of the cross or religious icon--with time being the vertical axis and space being the horizontal. This icon gives to her a Christian resonance, to go with her Pagan heritage. In a curious sense, then, she is a cross between a European civilization, transplanted to America, and the primitive world view. This represents further proof, in my reading of The Bridge, that Crane's vision of America incorporates both European and primitive elements in a new formula.

Though "Iron Mountain" is of course a real place, we come to realize by the end of the stanza, and in the entire Bridge from the "Proem" on, that "iron" has a rather negative connotation. It is a hard, cold, and crude substance, and it is unyielding. It is the metallic element converted into weapons, into trains, into all those products of an increasingly "scientific" twentieth century. It is the symbol and substance through which the old primitive order is destroyed. Of course, iron is also that which is employed in the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge; so that ultimately, like so many other imagistic ratios of the poem, it is ambivalent. In this stanza, however, we can assume its negativity. The fourth line nevertheless points toward Pocahontas, the goddess of vegetation, whose growth of corn will arouse the gods in "The Dance." As for now, we must voyage with the poet through the psychological and cultural deficit of "the iron dealt cleavage" before we can rediscover the gods.

The next movement of "The River" revives the train voyage, and we are cast fully into the throes of the Mississippi. The tramps are fellow passengers with the poet at this point, at least until the final movement is well underway. Their songs swing in the moving air:

And if it's summer and the sun's in dusk
 Maybe the breeze will lift the River's musk
 --As though the waters breathed that you might know
Memphis Johnny, Steamboat Bill, Missouri Joe.

One of the "epic" aspects of "The River" is this very empathy with the tramps: the poet crosses blood with them as he travels, and they are his guides to the old order of Pocahontas. They continue the function of Rip Van Winkle who is himself a liminal outsider, someone who though a loser in the larger society, can teach the poet something of the originating spirit of the nation--and thus conduct him to the fertile female principle of Pocahontas. As previously argued, I do not read these tramps as Whitman's en masse prototypes: they are spiritual signs more than real people. Nevertheless, they do evoke some of the diversity of America and are important in the epic panorama of the poem. But Crane is not as much a democrat as Whitman: his purview is more selective than is Whitman's and he has no interest in a "catalogic" view of America.

The last movement of the poem possesses some of what Pound has called "epic music." This is the music of the Mississippi, as the poet marries his consciousness to the

rhythm of the river itself. Except for the last stanza Crane returns to his favorite form: the quatrain. Crane used the quatrain regularly through his career, and even "The Broken Tower," his last poem, is a masterly quatrain composition. Leibowitz writes of the suitability of the form's control and rigor for Crane's temperament, maintaining that it has the capability to "enclose" a "crescendo" of feelings (194). Crane was also aware of the quatrain's effectiveness in Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" and in Eliot's early lyrics.

In the last movement of the poem, the quatrain's controlled music is appropriate to epic distancing. The first three stanzas read as follows:

Down, down--born pioneers in time's despite,
Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow--
They win no frontier by their wayward plight,
But drift in stillness, as from Jordan's brow.

You will not hear it as the sea; even stone
Is not more hushed by gravity...But slow,
As loth to take more tribute--sliding prone
Like one whose eyes were buried long ago

The River, spreading, flows--and spends your dream.
What are you, lost within this tideless spell?
You are your father's father, and the stream--
A liquid theme that floating niggers swell.

After the first stanza in which the tramps lead us to the natural phenomenon of the River, the mighty Mississippi becomes the dramatic focus. Though Crane does not lose himself entirely in the force and flux of the stream, his consciousness is less controlling here than in most of The

Bridge. Pound succeeds in doing this very thing in many of The Cantos, that is, in allowing nature to have a distinctive "consciousness," a realm of its own. Crane, a less objective poet than Pound, perceives nature principally as subject rather than as object, as a dimension of his own consciousness. He is governed, in this sense, by a Romantic world view. Certainly in the third stanza above, there is an echo of Wordsworth in line three: "You are your father's father" reverberates with "The child is father of the man." "Lost within this tideless spell," as the poet is in the previous line, the suggestion of "father's father" is that the child (assuming the equation with Wordsworth) signifies the figure most empathetic with this state of hypnosis. In short, the poet as he has done earlier, is granting the child medicinal powers for the adult River-observer (the poet). The child is also a remedial figure for the culture: by his very lack of self-consciousness, he can teach us again to integrate external reality with inner reality. Unlike the adult, the child does not separate outer from inner, and this is true of the primitive consciousness as well. The River will attain its elemental proportions, as will the culture, if we allow its magnificence to go undisturbed by our consciousness.

This idealization becomes somewhat realized through a later line--"Patience! and you shall reach the bidding place!" The poet's self-command translates to: wait and

you will have your desire fulfilled. This is a reference to the realm of Pocahontas, whose world exists beyond the River. To what extent now, with the dramatic focus of the Mississippi, can we read "The River" as a voyage over the earth? In fact, the train is still the means of travel in this movement, and the poet as voyager is a near-observer of the River's monstrous force. The voyage is not a river voyage as much as a voyage that accords with the tempo of the River; and it is this very tempo that leads us into the mixed voyage of "The Dance," where the poet descends in water and ascends onto mountainous crag.

As this movement and "The River" along with it come to an ending, we are confronted once again with a redemptive state that is by no means undiluted:

Poised wholly on its dream, a mustard glow
 Tortured with history, its one will--flow!
 --The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and
 slow,
 Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below.

Why is the River "tortured with history" if it has been described in such sublime terms in earlier stanzas? As Vogler points out in Preludes to Vision, the River is the very essence of time. He is referring of course to time as ceaseless motion, and the phrase, "its one will--flow!," is related to the mindless travel of time. And L. S. Dembo has written of the importance of the River for Crane:

As the geographical center of America, the Mississippi could logically be associated with the heart of Pocahontas. Moreover, its serpentine course, no less than in its part in American history, made it an apt personification of time and of American history itself. (Sanskrit Charge 72)

But "tortured with history" carries another meaning, and that is that the River has been abused by the assaults of modernity. It is not the same river that flowed at the inception of the nation's history. History--time with a "story"--has ravaged it; and the poet, as earth-voyager, is condemning the rape of the continent.

But there is a possible redemption in the next lines as the River, with its capitalized Passion, drives forward despite the onslaught of modern America. Nevertheless, "passion" has its root in the Greek to "suffer," and Crane who was etymologically astute, must have been aware of this. The River drives forward as a mighty sufferer, "tortured with history," with the ravages not of time--because it is time--but of a civilization that despoils it. The whole poetic line, of course, has erotic poignance: "--The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and / slow." The River becomes the poet/lover and the epic merges with the lyric. The poet is now ready to approach the body of Pocahontas, but it is with anxious longing and the fear of suffering-Passion. He will meet her, nevertheless, as the River meets the Gulf, and will sing "hossannas" to her as the sea sings to the plummeting Mississippi. This is his god to merge with and to praise.

"The Dance"

"The Dance" is the marriage poem of The Bridge, the epithalamium for the marriage of Maquokeeta and Pocahontas, and by identification the poet and the Indian maiden as well. But it is also a "dance of death," and as such an epithalamium only in idea, confronting us again through irony with death and devolution. We are saved though from depression by an apocalyptic transcendence at the end of the poem, and by the raw energy of the Indian dance carried in the poem's rhythmic quatrains. We gain a proximity to the Indian spirit in this poem that the poet perceives as redemptive. Crane in fact excitedly wrote to Otto Kahn of this section:

Here one is on the pure mythical and smoky soil at last! Not only do I describe the conflict between the two races in this dance--I also become identified with the Indian and his world before it is over, which is the only method possible of every [sic] really possessing the Indian and his world as a cultural factor. I think I really succeed in getting under the skin of this glorious and dying animal... (L 307, letter of September 12, 1927)

Crane is attempting here to merge his consciousness with that of the Indian, and this attempt represents the "depersonalization" of the epic mode. As in the last movement of "The River" the poet does not surrender his consciousness exactly, but he becomes self-aware that his consciousness could be an intrusive element in nature--and thus checks it. He is thus more able to step out of his lyric frame and to empathize with the River, or in this

case with the Indian. "The Dance" is also epic in its mythic dimension and in its voyage over water and earth.

The first two stanzas suggest the vegetation rites and natural locus of the mythical dimension:

The swift red flesh, a winter king--
 Who squired the glacier woman down the sky?
 She ran the neighing canyons all the spring;
 She spouted arms; she rose with maize--to die.

And in the autumn drouth, whose burnished hands
 With mineral wariness found out the stone
 Where prayers, forgotten, streamed the mesa sands?
 He holds the twilight's dim, perpetual throne.

The first line prepares us for the dance of Maquo-keeta, a dance that reverberates with Frank's erotic dances in Virgin Spain. The first stanza is clustered with natural adjectives: "glacier," "neighing," "spouted," and the verb "rose" suggesting the flower. Pocahontas, very simply, is blossoming for her marriage with Maquo-keeta. But her vegetation into "maize," a grain first harvested by the American Indian and stolen by the European, is accompanied by a postscript--"to die," and this resonates with the life/death cycle of nature and Pocahontas' loss of virginity to come.

Natural images also crowd the second stanza: "autumn drouth," "burnished hands" (from the sun), "mineral wariness," "streamed the mesa sands." The final line, "He holds the twilight's dim, perpetual throne," foreshadows the death of Maquokeeta, as Crane tells us (L 307), but suggests as well a psychological ambivalence over the

Indian's conquest of Pocahontas. This ambivalence continues in the next two stanzas as the poet grieves Pocahontas' loss of virginity. He wishes to replace Maquoqueeta in the marriage, and figuratively and literally he does, through the process of identification and the ensuing death of the Indian.

The next movement of the poem is the voyage by water, reminding us in its dramatic propulsion of Rimbaud's "Le Bateau Ivre." It consists of stanzas five through seven, stanza five reading:

I left the village for dogwood. By the canoe
Tugging below the mill-race, I could see
Your hair's keen crescent running, and the blue
First moth of evening take wing stealthily.

The verb "see" becomes, as earlier suggested, a kinetic one in this stanza. This is both the visionary "see" as applied to Pocahontas and the empirical "see" as applied to nature. Indeed, "The River" and "The Dance" are perhaps the strongest nature poems in Crane's entire canon. Additionally, the lines, "Your hair's keen crescent running, and the blue / First moth of evening takes wing stealthily," represent a good illustration of the logic of metaphor. Beyond the eroticism of hair, they also suggest a rising moon, a figure carried forward into the next stanza. They further suggest danger in the image of the ephemeral moth, and "crescent running" will have a parallel in the "crescent die" of the following stanza.

The first line of this stanza--"What laughing chains the water wove and threw!"--suggests the theme of fate earlier addressed. The poet is chained to his pursuit of Pocahontas, as Pocahontas is chained to marital bonds. Her death of virginity is announced once again here and metaphorized in the death of the star in the following stanza. As in Pound's translation, "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter," nature plays a harmonic role, sharing in the human fate. The star, additionally, resonates with an earlier star, that of "The Harbor Dawn," which accompanies the poet, his lover, and dream-lover, then falls asleep. (The star of course has a rich history in Romantic literature: we might think of Keats' "Bright Star" and Shelley's "Adonais" as two examples.) The sympathetic relationship of nature and the human realm is an underlying characteristic of the primitive or mythic world. In twentieth-century America, a schism has developed between nature and humanity brought about by perversions of science and the machine. The bridge, of course, is a product of good science: it is a good machine. The poet is seeking in the Indian world a recuperation of the sympathy between the two realms via his marriage to Pocahontas. L. S. Dembo is lucid on this issue:

In the marriage of the poet, who represents the white man and his conquest of space through iron, and Pocahontas, who represents the immortal essence of that space, lies the apprehension of the imaged Word that Crane envisioned as the American myth lent to God. (Sanskrit Charge 75)

The poet's voyage gains speed as he instinctively realizes the proximity of Pocahontas. The next movement represents a voyage by land, a climb upward through the Adirondacks, into the natural sublime:

O Appalachian Spring! I gained the ledge;
 Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends
 And northward reaches in that violet wedge
 Of Adirondacks!--wisped of azure wands...

Approaching his beloved, the poet adjusts his figurative descriptions accordingly: the "laughing chains" of the sixth stanza here become an "inaccessible smile." We achieve something of an improvement in the poet's hopes for consummation, but Pocahontas is still unattainable; she is still only a vision in the poet's longing-heart. The nearer we come to Pocahontas, the faster and more intense the verse becomes, demonstrating magical flourishes as well: "wisped of azure wands," for example. The "azure" here reverberates with the "azure" of Stéphane Mallarmé: that sky-blue cloudless purity attractive to Symbolist temperament and aesthetics. The poet is producing a state of paradise through his magical "wands," and his voyage is one to a heaven on earth.

Finally, he attains the Indian paradise, but it is not the perfect one he had conceived:

A distant cloud, a thunder-bud---it grew,
 That blanket of the skies: the padded foot
 Within,--I heard it; 'til its rhythm drew,
 --Siphoned the black pool from the heart's hot root!

A cloud-change occurs, a sobering effect for the poet, but the disillusion worsens in the next stanza and converts to violence:

A cyclone threshes in the turbine crest,
Swooping in eagle feathers down your back;
Know, Maquokeeta, greeting; know death's best;
--Fall, Sachem, strictly as the tamarack!

The radical juxtaposition of nature and the machine, a common strategy for Crane, is here somewhat jarring and indicates a disharmony between the poet's world and the Indian's. The violent conclusion of this stanza both signifies the poet's wish-fulfillment and a cultural antipathy. The episode is presaged in the ominous eagle of line two, who loses his sublime status as attached to Pocahontas, and becomes the carnivorous animal he really is.

As the dance begins, in the next movement of the poem, the violent imagery is sustained. The engine image of the previous stanza is carried into the next in the line: "The oak grove circles in a crash of leaves." This engine and crash foreshadow the plane crash of "Cape Hatteras." Accompanying the sublime, as we have said, is a possible fall from the sublime climb. Paul de Man, in addition to Bloom, is drawn to Binswanger's theory of the dangers of sublimity. Here he paraphrases a passage of the psychologist's work on Ibsen:

The man who, by his own vision, climbed above the limits of his own self and who is unable to return to earth without assistance of others may well end up falling to his own destruction (47).

The poet must risk these dangers, nevertheless. He has climbed a mountain, in fact, in order to witness Maquokeeta's splendid dance, which, though a dance of death, is palpable, sexual, and regenerative:

Dance, Maquokeeta! snake that lives before,
That casts his pelt, and lives beyond! Sprout, horn!
Spark, tooth! Medicine-man, relent, restore --
Lie to us, -- dance us back the tribal morn!

If the dance must lie to us, then let it lie. If we need be seduced by the erotic performance as prerequisite to spiritual renewal, that also is desirable. The snake now becomes transfigured once more into the snake of sublimity, the symbol of never-ceasing time. It is through time that we can recapture our sense of the timeless: this is our medicine and Maquokeeta is our "Medicine-man." It is the "tribal morn" that the poet is longing for in his quest for self and cultural renewal. "Only through time time is conquered," Eliot writes in "Burnt Norton," but Crane would disagree with the earlier "To be conscious is not to be in time."

In the next movement, consisting of stanzas sixteen through eighteen, the poet becomes fully identified with the Indian and his dance. Stanzas sixteen and seventeen read:

Spears and assemblies: black drums thrusting on --
 O yelling battlements, -- I, too, was liege
 To rainbows currying each pulsant bone:
 Surpassed the circumstance, danced out the siege!

And buzzard-circleted, screamed from the stake;
 I could not pick the arrows from my side.
 Wrapped in that fire, I saw more escorts wake --
 Flickering, sprint up the hill groins like a tide.

The theater of death surrounding Maquokeeta is composed of three elements: the dance of death; the poet's identification with this dance and death (he himself "dies" in the second stanza); and the catastrophe wrought by nature that either accompanies or may be said to cause the death of the Indian. "Rainbows" in the first stanza is a common symbol in The Bridge, as Vogler has pointed out (LB xi). It represents a natural analogue to the bridge symbol. In this context its radiant hopefulness clashes with the rather macabre death of Maquokeeta, a death that the poet identifies with, but in a dramatic sense also wishes for. The ambivalence resulting in this conflictive attitude is a segment of that larger ambivalence that characterizes the relationship of the modern world with the mythic. It also is symptomatic of the poet's longing for Pocahontas and his implicit jealousy of the Indian.

Why is the Indian sacrificed in his marriage to Pocahontas? And why does the poet identify with this sacrifice? In terms of Eros, the sacrifice is the result of the ineffable quality of the Eternal Feminine: Woman

is the object of desire, but the unattainable one. She consumes the male in the act of love. The poet sympathizes with the sacrifice in psychological terms: he too experiences the psychic/sexual death, but not the physical one. In cultural terms, Maquokeeta's death is the genocidal metaphor of his race: Crane has suggested this (L 307) and it is another illustration of his role as cultural visionary. Pocahontas survives this genocide, perhaps because as woman she does not wage war, and symbolically as Eternal Feminine she survives the male's extinction. There is hope for the poet in her survival: she can satisfy his own love longings as well as purify his race.

Maquokeeta does not benefit from her survival, as we witness his death in the next movement:

O, like the lizard in the furious noon,
That drops his legs and colors in the sun,
-- And laughs, pure serpent, Time itself, and moon
Of his own fate, I saw thy change begun!

And saw thee dive to kiss the destiny
Like one white meteor, sacrosanct and blent
At last with all that's consummate and free
There, where the first and last gods keep thy tent.

The serpent-Time is now a rapacious creature, carrying forward its destroyer function. Nature assumes here and throughout "The Dance" a mocking presence, enjoying its powers over the human realm as it survives that realm in its continuity and cosmic perpetuity (stanza two of the foregoing). The final line of the second stanza under-

scores the absence of the gods, an absence we have already noticed in "The River." Of course the dominance of nature (more dominant because of the absence of the gods?) is not a negative phenomenon of the mythic world. It is the modern world, so the poet would infer, that seeks to dominate nature. But it is also the modern world (or the incipience of it) that destroys the Indian.

The last movement projects the afterlife and redemption of Maquokeeta, a redemption shared by the poet. It is an elegy to the brave and bitten warrior and a prayer of praise to Pocahontas, who retains not only her life but her virginity: "And she is virgin to the last of men." The tragic fall of the Indian is at least partially redeemed in the terminal stanza:

We danced, O Brave, we danced beyond their farms,
 In cobalt desert closures made our vows...
 Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms,
 The serpent with the eagle in the boughs.

The final line presents an image of transcendence to which Maquokeeta has been transfigured. He is an element now in a sympathetic cosmos, as time and space become fused in his strong prayer and become metamorphosed into the tree of his body. But this fusion also suggests the physical form of Pocahontas, who will remain an immortal among earthlings.

In the voyage structure of "The Dance," the journey first by water and then by earth (up mountain) has a sym-

metry with the marriage plot of the poem. Water as the source of life and earth as the solid element produce in combination a marriage that is only briefly consummated. In a larger reading this compares with the ambivalent success of Columbus, whose sea voyage falls short of full consummation. The four elements are represented in the poem by other than water and earth as well: for example, a destructive/redemptive fire enshrouds Maquokeeta's death -- "Wrapped in that fire, I saw more escorts wake --," sustained by the conspiring cosmos of the next stanza -- "Flame cataracts of heaven in seething swarms." This fire will kill the Indian but will purge him for the "infinite seasons" of the final movement.

The psychological reading I have applied to other sections of The Bridge holds up to some degree here as well. The poem's structure, in general terms, moves from prologue, to voyage, to attainment of the mythic world, to Maquokeeta's dance, to his death, and finally to his transcendence (and Pocahontas' immortality). The poet's crisis is inferred in the crisis of Maquokeeta through the act of identification; and the cultural crisis is in the antagonistic relationship between modern and mythic dimensions. The redemption, if we can perceive one, is in the continuation of the mythic realm and the prolongation of the Indian race through Pocahontas. Despite the fractured music of the modern, the poet must join in the dance of Maquokeeta in pursuit of the maiden.

"Indiana," "Cutty Sark," "Cape Hatteras"

I wish only to note certain key elements in these sections that have to do with epos. Many critics have considered "Indiana" to be the weakest section of The Bridge and I would tend to agree. In addition to its being on occasion sentimental, perhaps its most serious problem is in tone of voice. I believe its overall weakness results from Crane's trying to sound like a mother. He frankly cannot pull it off, although his attempt at creating a persona makes this section more epic than lyric. But there are two important thematic aspects embedded in the poem: one is the continuing pursuit of the Eternal Feminine -- here in the form of the Good Mother; the other is the background of the Gold Rush and the implicit (and continuing) deterioration of the American Dream.

Whereas Pocahontas has been the rejecting party in previous sections and will be in some to follow, the son in "Indiana" rejects his mother. She cannot serve the Eternal Feminine in its pure form as Pocahontas because she is associated with the Gold Rush. Nevertheless, as the gloss suggests, she may remind the son of Pocahontas in "her farewell gaze," and this is further incentive for his departure. He leaves for the sea in order to recapture the originating spirit of Columbus, and in continuing pursuit of Pocahontas, or the idealized female principle.

Crane's use of the Gold Rush is an interesting thematic device, in fact, as it resonates with that other

dimension of Columbus: the seeker after gold. The growth of America from its very inception is one of duplicity, and these ambivalent dynamics are a profound feature of The Bridge. These dynamics gain in intensity late in the work's composition, "Indiana" being one of the last sections completed.

The son's departure to the sea is carried forward into "Cutty Sark," which is about sea voyages and seamen. Its catalogue of ships as it concludes may remind us of a device in the Homeric epic. Like "The River" and "The Tunnel," it employs a variety of disjunctive strategies, specifically: quotationals, capitalization, italicization, diverse metrical patterns, songlike lyrics, indentation, and so on. The overall effect is one of speedy transitions in the mode of The Waste Land and The Cantos. Two important thematic items are the allusion to Atlantis -- "ATLANTIS ROSE drums wreath the rose" -- and the inclusion of "Ariel" among the catalogue of clipper ships. The former looks forward to the destination of the quest-voyage, and the latter has implications that will be elaborated on in the next chapter, namely the kinship relationship of The Tempest and The Bridge.

"Cape Hatteras" is a major section of Crane's epic, but as a number of critics have maintained, its rhetoric is strained and forced. As one of the last sections of The Bridge to be completed, it appears as a last strenuous effort to revive the originating vision. Crane attempts

this retrieval through one of the fathers of the American Sublime, Walt Whitman. His alliance to Whitman may have unfortunately added to the negative criticism of The Bridge, as reviewed in chapter one.

Crane called "Cape Hatteras" a "kind of ode to Walt Whitman" and it is indeed that. Its problems, however, stem not from this association as such (because Whitman is potentially a very good influence), but because Crane attempts to sound like Whitman through the voice of Hart Crane. Despite whatever borrowings there may exist from Whitman, most immediately the epigraph, this aspect of the poem may add to the problem, but it is not the problem itself. The problem is that Crane tries to imitate Whitman's rhapsodies, which he is not suited for to begin with, through his own diction, metaphors, and thematic obsessions. Lines like "O murmurless and shined / In oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy!" attempt to be rhapsodic or incantatory but become strident exclamations instead. And another exclamation seems to fall short of the Whitman inclusiveness: "New integers of Roman, Viking, Celt -- / Thou, Vedic Caesar, to the greensward knelt!" But there are other portions of the poem that are in fact magnificent -- the result, I believe, of Crane's not trying to conjure Whitman and not forcing the sublime.

And in fact, "Cape Hatteras" is a very important thematic addition to The Bridge without which, as Crane himself insisted, his epic work would suffer. The thematic

element I am principally referring to is the airplane voyage and related aspects. Allen Tate is incorrect to read the airplane as a symbol of mechanical sublimity. It is fraught with ambivalence, as so much else that is important in The Bridge. The airplane voyage takes place from the point of view of the poet, but he is not a passenger himself in any physical sense. It occupies several stages. The first is a general reference to the airplane in stanza 'three:

Dream cancels dream in this new realm of fact
 From which we wake into the dream of act;
 Seeing himself an atom in a shroud --
 Man hears himself an engine in a cloud!

In this age of logic -- not the logic of metaphor -- a new order predominates, one that can no longer dream and must act. Space is the only frontier left to conquer. But this could also be the realm in which the visionary aspect of humanity may be revived. This latter notion is supported in the episode of the Wright Brothers, who, like the Roebings, are the twentieth century's heroic counterparts to Columbus:

What ciphers risen from prophetic script,
 What marathons new-set between the stars!

But the sublime mode is checked as the airplane becomes a war machine:

This tournament of space, the threshold and chiselled
 height,

Is baited by marauding circles, bludgeon flail
 Of rancorous grenades whose screaming petals carve us
 Wounds that we wrap with theorems sharp as hail!

The Great War is evoked in the next movement (and in a later reference to "Somme") and the plane suffers first a volley -- "Lead-perforated fuselage" -- and then a dramatic crash at the very site of the Wright Brothers' flight:

....dispersion...into mashed and shapeless debris....
 By Hatteras bunched the beached heap of high
 bravery!

The air voyage of "Cape Hatteras" begins in an ambivalent logic of technology; progresses to the hopefully visionary conquest of space -- where man not only imitates the bird but supersedes him and attempts to equal the gods; and ends in a terrible and ironic crash at the site of the airplane's first flight. A sublime moment is attained, but it is negated in the tragic descent of the plane. This fall is the frequent companion of the sublime and it manifests itself here in a rather stark metaphor. Though the airplane momentarily reaches a spiritual apotheosis, as a war machine it faces a sure doom. And this cycle is further evidence of Crane's ambivalent histrionics over the machine.

This destruction of and by the machine is accompanied by a strenuous recuperation and psychological redemption through the figure of Walt Whitman. But I would not agree with Dembo when he maintains in Sanskrit Charge that the

war motif necessarily precedes the poem's resurrection. He writes: "War, then, is justifiable, in that beyond it lies resurrection and a new understanding of the Word" (101). He makes a related point when discussing "Cape Hatteras" in general: "What is important in "Hatteras' is not the ideal that Crane is setting forth, but the manner in which that ideal must be attained; namely, through tragedy" (103). These arguments seem to place Crane in a moral dilemma. Though we have seen how his aesthetics of suffering usually culminate in at least a partial redemption, Crane would never have wished for the Great War to happen -- for it is that war he clearly had in mind -- in order to satisfy his personal poetics. Nor does he ever seek out the tragic in order to experience resurrection. The Great War and the tragic in general were overwhelming for him, and tragedy at times depressed him to the point of dysfunction. This depression pervades The Bridge and it cannot be discounted. At the same time, his Romanticism is life-affirming, and as a cultural visionary he sought to erect a future world -- or at least provide a blueprint for one -- in the face of apocalypse.

"The Tunnel"

After the voyage by air, which is mankind's final conquest of space, comes the voyage by fire, which has never been accomplished. ("Three Songs," of course, represents an "interlude" between these sections.) Crane was

to read Dante after The Bridge, but could he not have been aware of the tunnel "voyage" in the Inferno, the journey, that is, between hell and purgatory? More than one critic has seen the parallels of this section with the Dantean Inferno and in general with the epic tradition of the underground passage for knowledge. Lewis writes, for example:

This section may be regarded as a traditional epic phase, corresponding to the visit to the underworld in the eleventh book of The Odyssey, the sixth book of the Aeneid, and the Inferno; and as Denbo [sic] has pointed out, the subway is "an ideal image" for Crane's purpose since it makes possible so close a parallel "between the literal action of the hero and the symbolic implications of a Dantean journey." (354)

And Brom Weber indicates that "The Tunnel" "From a traditional point of view...deals with the underground cavern into which the living descend in order to receive instruction about the future from the dead" (Hart Crane 372). But Weber does not finally read the poem as a journey for redemptive knowledge. Rather, he centers his attention on the tragic import of the poem and uses as evidence for his argument the fact that the last two stanzas (those exhibiting a redemption) were written late in the composition of The Bridge in order to offset "The Tunnel"'s negativity. Crane also added lines that were rejected from "Atlantis," according to Weber, in order to alleviate the pervading dark mood of the poem.

I would agree with the essence of Weber's argument: "The Tunnel" does seem arbitrarily redemptive, offering a recuperation that seems inorganic to the poem. Of course Weber's position must be understood in the context of his general antagonism to The Bridge, which he reads as negative-tragic. He is not sympathetic to and does not analyze Crane's aesthetics of suffering, which L.S. Dembo and Alfred Hanley have done in some depth. These aesthetics are at work in "The Tunnel" as well; but the redemptive mode does seem forced as it does as well in "Quaker Hill." Redemption becomes more difficult to realize as The Bridge project progresses, and the forced character of some of the late composition is a startling illustration.

Nevertheless, Weber's reading of The Bridge as negative-tragic is far too severe, as I have noted earlier. The Bridge is a poem of great joy as well as despair, and treats of the light as well as the darkness. "Life is an anarchy of light and dark," Georg Lukács writes in Soul and Form (152), and this aptly describes the perpetual flux of moods throughout the work. In the case of "The Tunnel," its despair must be read as a necessary component of the descent into the underworld, as a voyage of agony toward knowledge and purgatorial redemption. This motif explains some of the gloom in the poem and diminishes the problem of the forced redemption at terminus (though this nevertheless remains a problem). The contrastive dynamics or dialectics of The Bridge make it a highly rich and

multivalent work; we must be aware of its infinite possibilities at every turn.

The fire voyage of "The Tunnel" is no exception. This underground voyage by subway is fire-consuming, but allows for a preliminary resurrection through purgation. An existential escape exists from the fiery subway, at least for some of us, and the poet as well.

The voyage begins on ground in the swirl of New York, where hell is too close for comfort:

Performances, assortments résumés --
 Up Times Square to Columbus Circle lights
 Channel the congresses, nightly sessions,
 Refractions of the thousand theatres, faces --
 Mysterious kitchens....You shall search them all.
 Some day by heart you'll learn each famous sight
 And watch the curtain lift in hell's despite;
 You'll find the garden in the third act dead,
 Finger your knees -- and wish yourself in bed
 With tabloid crime-sheets perched in easy sight.

The Bridge is a poem of ceaseless tension between the One and the many. The One in Crane's poetic world view translates to the Absolute. It is the Word toward which all words and things converge, the transcending figuration of truth and beauty. The One is the potential integration of the many, but the many carries its own vitality for Crane. They are really interdependent concepts. But the many can disintegrate because it is composed of parts -- and in this stanza there is something of that disintegration. Crane so well captures the nervous movements of New York that we can understand why he is a preeminent urban

poet. His ability to present the manifold and the diverse is a major accomplishment of The Bridge. "The River" is another prime example of this panoramic style.

In the foregoing stanza Crane explores the anxious restlessness of the city dweller. Offered an almost infinite diversity of activity, he seems unable to choose, but the poet confronts him with the prospect of earthly sham: "And watch the curtain lift in hell's despite; / You'll find the garden in the third act dead." Nilsen points out the correspondences between "The Tunnel" and The Waste Land; certainly in the reference to hell and in the infertility of nature there are parallels. Though not a direct parallel, we may relate Crane's line about the dead garden with these from The Waste Land:

"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
 "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
 "Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
 (lines 71-73)

Like Eliot's London hell, Crane's hell is New York; and the hell fire is at this point one of disintegration. The many is crumbling into fragments -- becoming a spiritual void. This void is supported by both the image of vacuity in "crime-sheets" and the imminent descent into the subway, a descent the voyager hesitates to make.

The voyager finally decides on the subway because it "yawns the quickest promise home," and the next movement of the poem commences:

Be minimum, then, to swim the hiving swarms
 Out of the Square, the Circle burning bright --
 Avoid the glass doors gyring at your right,
 Where boxed alone a second, eyes take fright
 -- Quite unprepared rush naked back to light:
 And down beside the turnstile press the coin
 Into the slot. The gongs already rattle.

Of the four lines above that end in exact rhyme, Weber has noted that they communicate a "claustrophobic mood" and that they prepare us "for the compressing, trapping effect of the subway trip" (Hart Crane 373).

Weber identifies a single instance where the verse structure conveys the structure of meaning, a tendency rife in "The Tunnel" and throughout The Bridge. Furthermore, in this stanza, the second line parallels the second line of stanza one, and suggests the Dantean Circle through which the voyager will travel metaphorically, via his modern subway. But on further inspection, the "Square" may symbolize the rigid logic of contemporary man and the "Circle" might suggest either wholeness, completion, woman, or any of its other values, as it does throughout The Bridge. The ultimate circle is the Brooklyn Bridge itself, with its lower half invisible. This lower half is imaged in the subway tunnel, in which we descend and in which we suffer, in order to locate Perfection.

The next movement, now that entrance has been made to the subway, is the actual subway voyage. At its inception, it is presented through metrical variations, dia-

logue, proper naming. We overhear bits of conversation. One illustration of this fragmentary discourse follows:

"Let's have a pencil Jimmy -- living now
at Floral Park
Flatbush -- or the fourth of July --
like a pigeon's muddy dream -- potatoes
to dig in the field -- travelin the town -- too --
night after night -- the Culver line -- the
girls all shaping up -- it used to be --"

What can we make of these bits of talk, except for the nervous, disjointed speech characteristic of the Machine Age? Crane captures the speech of the subway, which is a specially coded discourse apropos of the speed of the new age and indicative of the brevity and transient quality of human relationships. Crane's dialogue is even more clipped than The Waste Land's, which Crane was probably conscious of:

"My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
"I never know what you are thinking -- Think.
(lines 111-14)

The Eliot passage has even more specific reference to the next dialogue fragment of "The Tunnel, after an interruption by the poet:

-- "What

"what do you want? getting weak on the links?
fandaddle daddy don't ask for change -- IS THIS
FOURTEENTH? it's half past six she said -- if you
don't like my gate why did you swing on it, why
didja swing on it anyhow --"

Crane picks up the rhythms of Eliot as well as the theme of sexual anxiety. In the case of Eliot, of course, this anxiety is the emptiness at the other end of the "line." In the case of Crane, it is woman's anger in giving her favors. These sexual wars are symptomatic of both poems and of the modern infernos they dive within. In "The Tunnel," this episode is one more example of the failure to achieve the Eternal Feminine.

This failure is elaborated upon in the next full stanza:

The phonographs of hades in the brain
 Are tunnels that re-wind themselves, and love
 A burnt match skating in a urinal --
 Somewhere above Fourteenth TAKE THE EXPRESS
 To brush some presentiment of pain --

The image of the labyrinth in the second line juxtaposed with the pollution of love in lines two and three together illustrate the logic of metaphor's compression. In fact, the first line of this stanza is another example of the speed of transition that Crane particularly employs in "The Tunnel" (and "The River" resembles the latter in this respect as well). We cannot make sense of these lines "logically": we must use the principles of the logic of metaphor to comprehend them. They are not obscure in themselves as much as they are complicated by their very juxtaposition. They illustrate the monotony of modern existence and its concomitant terror by their connection with an earlier phrase -- "And repetition freezes." We

are hearing broken records; they spin endlessly and make no sense. This broken music reminds the poet of the tunnel labyrinth of Hades; we are eternally lost, making our way endlessly through passages we have walked before. We are stuck forever, trapped now in the allegorical inferno of the subway.

This terror of modern boredom is of course a major theme of The Waste Land:

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
(lines 64-65)

Edmund Wilson lucidly interprets this terror of the modern when he writes of Eliot's poem:

The terrible dreariness of the great modern cities is the atmosphere in which "The Waste Land" takes place -- amidst this dreariness, brief, vivid images emerge, brief pure moments of feeling are distilled; but all about us we are aware of nameless millions performing barren office routines, wearing down their souls in interminable labors of which the products never bring them profit... (106)

I believe Wilson's comment also captures the sense of "The Tunnel." It is Crane's Waste Land poem. The subway is the spatial metaphor of the age: it is the collective vehicle for the fire voyage through the modern metropolis. This plunge into tragedy gains a focus in the hypnagogic mirage of Poe, who haunts the poet -- and the age -- in the next movement of the poem. It consists of two stanzas, the first of which reads:

Whose head is swinging from the swollen strap?
 Whose body smokes along the bitten rails,
 Bursts from a smoldering bundle far behind
 In back forks of the chasms of the brain, --
 Puffs from a riven stump far out behind
 In interborough fissures of the mind...?

Why does Crane conjure Poe in this movement of the poem? I have argued earlier that Crane's conception of Poe and Williams' are rather different, but this difference is more implicit in these lines than obvious. Poe is an anti-American figure, a figure who, according to Waldo Frank, suffered the American machine both as physical fact and as symbol. He writes: "Only Poe guessed the transfiguring effect of the Machine upon the forms of human life, upon the very concept of the person" (LB xxxiv). The "transfiguring effect" takes the form in Poe of horrid distortions to the person as well as psychological torments, and a separation between head and body: "Whose head is swinging from the swollen strap? / Whose body smokes along the bitten rails." Poe is the archetype of the infernal; he embodies the fire in his own person, and explodes here in a conflagration of terror.

Furthermore, Crane must have been aware of the "mechanical horror" of "The Pit and the Pendulum" and Roderick Usher's "strange picture of a fantastic tunnel," as Vogler points out in a note (Preludes to Vision 189). And in general, Poe's fixation with inner spaces -- on tombs, caverns, crevices, on psychological interiority -- must have been on Crane's mind in this section of The Bridge.

These obsessions are less the spiritual terrain of American literature than they are of European Romanticism -- of Novalis, for example, or of Nerval, or of the Gothic novel (somewhat earlier), or even of Coleridge in "Christabel."

In the reference to Poe's "The City of the Sea" ("And Death, aloft -- gigantically down" in the following stanza), Weber maintains that there is an important anticipation of "Atlantis":

In that poem Poe described his vision of a city of the dead sinking into the sea, its towers and riches unable to preserve it from its fate, "While, from a proud tower in the town / Death looks gigantically down." (Hart Crane 378)

This is very similar to Columbus' vision in Virgin Spain. This devastation is a necessary prerequisite to renewal. Poe is Crane's guide to Atlantis. He directs the poet through fire and toward a quasi-redemption: "Probing through you -- toward me, O evermore !," as Crane goes on to write. Crane grafts the best of Whitman (the American pointing toward America) and the best of Poe (the American pointing toward Europe) into a new flower: a hybrid "literatus" and a hybrid culture. Poe's humiliating death, as Crane goes on to describe, implies Crane's disenchantment with America but also contains a possible later cleansing.

After the episode of the Poe apparition, we find ourselves in the center of the Inferno itself, in the middle of the fire voyage, and the tunnel of doom. We are truly

in the grips of the diabolic: "Demented, for a hitching second, humps." The ensuing stanza, in fact, would seem to express the difficulty of an American-European synthesis, as we approach catastrophe:

And does the Daemon take you home, also,
Wop washerwoman, with the bandaged hair?
After the corridors are swept, the cuspidors --
The gaunt sky-barracks cleanly now, and bare,
O Genoese, do you bring mother eyes and hands
Back home to children and to golden hair?

We are at the edge of the fire itself; and the hope for any redemption in a transfigured civilization is non-existent. This phenomenon is underscored by the fact that the washerwoman is Genoese and therefore a descendent of Columbus, but an unfortunate perversion, it would seem, of the visionary voyager. She, like almost every other woman of The Bridge, fails the poet.

Then, in the next stanza, we encounter the death by fire:

Daemon, demurring and eventful yawn!
Whose hideous laughter is a billows mirth
-- Or the muffled slaughter of a day in birth --
O cruelly to inoculate the brink of dawn
With antennae toward worlds that glow and sink; --
To spoon us out more liquid than the dim
Locution of the eldest star, and pack
The conscience navelled in the plunging wind,
Umbilical to call -- and straightway die!

This stanza projects not only a death, however, but a termination of birth. This world is demonic to the extent that nothing can breed, and produces a fire that consumes

not only the voyager but life itself. The foreshadowing in the fifth line to Atlantis is highly negative, and the spirit of redemption remains distant.

But the subway emerges from the tunnel in the following stanza, and the voyager like Lazarus experiences a rebirth. Hope exists even after such agony, and a redemption and transcendence take place: "-- A sound of waters bending astride the sky / Unceasing with some Word that will not die...!" as "The Tunnel" ends in the final movement in the lyric frame of the poet. We have completed the voyage through fire with him -- and so he prays: "And this thy harbor, O my City, I have driven under, / Tossed from the coil of ticking towers...." But can he continue to live after such agony: "Or shall the hands be drawn away, to die?" His final prayer (turning us back to "Ave Maria") offers promise, however: "Kiss of our agony Thou gatherest, / O Hand of Fire / gatherest --."

To what extent can we accept this redemption? It is, I believe, a forced one because it comes upon us too abruptly -- after so many heavy and dark movements of the poem. Though the fire element contains the destructive dynamo as well as the purgative, its purgative aspects seem inorganic to the demonic themes of the poem. It would have been better, in my opinion, for Crane to have remained in the tunnel, which is after all Poe's true lesson, and then to arise by his tortured example into a Purgatorio. The Purgatorio would then bridge hell with

the prospective paradise of "Atlantis." The Bridge as a whole would have been thematically and structurally improved if, as I believe, another section had been added: one previous to the finale that describes a civilization that Crane held up as an image of heaven on earth.

CHAPTER IV: THE HYBRID BRIDGE AND ITS RELATIVES

1. The Hybrid Bridge

Definition and Formal Aspects in General

The last two chapters have viewed The Bridge in its lyric aspects and epic aspects respectively. The lyric mode has been principally defined as the mode of subjective consciousness; the epic mode, on the other hand, has been examined as an objective phenomenon. To what extent can these two rather diametric world views exist in the same work; or to what extent does their coexistence affect the unity of a long poem? Can The Bridge attain unity, given the presence of two antithetical modes acting rather equally as an organizing aesthetic principle?

We can assume that lyric consciousness is more dominant than epic consciousness in The Bridge because of the prominence of the Romantic-subjective poet; but the poem acquires its real character by virtue of the balance and interaction of lyric and epic. The epic mode's objectivity through the constitution of voices and figures apart from the lyric poet, along with the epic voyage and so on, add to the richness of the work and express as well the public values of the poem. The Bridge is a cultural poem,

a poem that grows out of and concerns American culture, and has a greater ambitiousness than the lyric mode can allow within its limited domain. Vogler expresses this phenomenon after an analysis of several Romantic epics including The Bridge:

The basic attempt of the poems...has been to move from a lyric mode of vision, centered in a moment of perception, toward a larger vision that would retain the immediacy, the quality of felt truth, of the subjective moment. As such, it is not a movement away from subjectivity, but an attempt to combine the quality of feeling in the lyric moment with a structure that goes beyond its limitations. The goal is to combine two modes of perception or states of consciousness that are usually kept separate, both in literature and in life. (Preludes to Vision 200)

I agree with the heart of Vogler's statement, but I would take exception with his notion that subjectivity is maintained even in a transit to the objective point of view. It is precisely this surrendering of the subjective world view to the objective that creates the hybrid form or phenomenon. Though we do not, again, lose Crane entirely in the epic mode, there is a definitive transfer of poetic "power" from the lyric I to the epic. This hybridization is in fact what constitutes the differentiation between the Romantic epic of the nineteenth century and the modernist epic of the twentieth. The Romantic epic, with which The Bridge shares certain characteristics, is based more solidly on the lyric mode than on a hybrid interrelation of lyric and epic. The speaker of

the Romantic epic, if we may generalize, is more consistently the lyric poet attempting to expand the "subjective moment." If there are speakers other than himself, they tend to be aspects of himself in the end. Though this is certainly one facet of the epic mode in The Bridge (we are never that far from Crane), we feel that the other speakers or exemplary figures are positing issues of a cultural nature outside the typical purview of the lyric poet. There is history in The Bridge and there is vital physical action, characteristics even of the classical epic. But the subjectivity of the poet disqualifies it from membership in the latter species.

The Bridge is a coalescence of subjective and objective reality, an interfusion of the immediate lyric voice and the mediated epic voice, or voices. Formally speaking, it is more than a lyrical series or "collection of lyrics" because it has epic distance and epic aspirations. The hybrid form is the birth of the harmonic coexistence of lyric and epic modalities. There is something of a synthesis in the very unity of the work (for I consider it unified), but as Alistair Fowler maintains in his study, the hybrid form is more than likely "unfused" (252). His definition of hybrid may be somewhat at variance with my own, however. He writes that works are hybrid "where two or more complete repertoires are present in such proportions that no one of them dominates" (183). I have already maintained that lyric consciousness domin-

ates The Bridge, but again its dominance is not significant and objective consciousness is present to practically the same degree. Fowler might call The Bridge a "modulation," or mixture, which is not a pure hybrid; but in my analysis the modes are roughly equal (at least in terms of distribution of sections) and no one "consciousness" dominates to any appreciable degree. "Hybrid," then, certainly seems an acceptable descriptor.

I define the hybrid form of The Bridge as an "epic sequence." While the classical epic is continuously sequential in its arrangement into books, The Bridge breaks from tradition in its radical juxtapositions, its departures from and its violations against progressional flow. It is ultimately one poem because it presents in its formalist variousness a world that is itself various: it imitates the modern universe. It contains the "immediacy" of twentieth-century America and of the poet's voice in the lyric mode (the present tense), as well as the romance of the individual; but by its adoption of the epic it projects a sympathy with the past and with the larger social picture. It is both personal lyric and cultural epic.

The relationship between sections of the poem is only implied; it is not stated. There are thematic interconnections even if we have to strain for them. But The Bridge is an "epic sequence" because its parts do not remain separate and discrete. We may remember Crane's

words in this connection: "Each is a separate canvas, as it were, yet none yields its entire significance when seen apart from the others" (L 305). Though the sections do not demonstrate intimate connections, they suggest an implicit order. As only a lyrical sequence or "collection of lyrics," the sections would perhaps be either more or less related, but they would only represent, to use the lexis of M. L. Rosenthal and Sally M. Gall, a series of charged moments. They would not transcend these moments through history and the social domain. And the poem would remain essentially a private poem. The typical lyrical sequence or series could not find its way to an order of reality beyond the self; the epic sequence outbounds sequential isolations. It nevertheless maintains the integrity of its parts.

To go one step further, "sequence," by its root meaning of successiveness, assumes that each point along a continuum is dependent on the next point. Each point is to some extent "incomplete" and is only completed through the succeeding point, through the evolution of the continuum. In the case of The Bridge all sections are in fact structurally complete: they stand on their own syntactically and semantically. But they are not complete in terms of voice. Each section anticipates a future voice, a succeeding utterance. In some sections, the continuum is more indicated than in others; at the point of closure, for example, by either the typographical arrangement of

the text or by actual statement, a response seems required of the succeeding point or section. Generally, the evolution of the continuum is more subtle: a voice is successive in its attributes of pitch, mood, melody. We often intuit a sequential voice; nevertheless, we are not psychologically and aesthetically satisfied until the final lines of the last section, "Atlantis," where the poet is still grasping for a paradise, however problematic or ambiguous.

The idea of succession, furthermore, is accompanied by the idea of antecedence, on which point I am indebted to Thomas Parkinson. As we look ahead in the work, we also look back. Crane's poetic requires the memorial. "Completion" of one section demands a recall of the previous section or sections. No one section has a fixed and finite vocal character. Regarding Crane's general poetic flux, Parkinson maintains: "The poems communicate the sense of an ongoing poetic life rather than an enterprise, and the appeal is to an antecedent experience rather than one contained and finished" (xxii). He may be thinking more of Crane's lyrics than of The Bridge, as I certainly cannot agree that The Bridge is anything less than an "enterprise"; but even in that poem one does feel the motion of "tides" forward and back, the progressive and regressive action and disturbances we might not find in a traditional epic or long narrative poem. C. S. Lewis writes of the conventional epic, for example, that "Conti-

nunity is an essential of the epic style" (45), a characteristic he develops and illustrates.

On the other hand, the rhetorical dimension of discontinuity must be considered central to The Bridge -- the modulation of voices. The Bridge is a sequence of voices, a succession of lyrical intensities and epic "discourses," and this voice sequence is both a consequence and a constituent of the poem's true form. The Bridge is not a long narrative poem with a continuous and consistent narrative voice, but an epic sequence of multiple voices, describing in their multiplicity the rondure of a world. In the hybrid form, the self touches the public realm and becomes a transfigured phenomenon through its contact with collectivity.

In general, the unity of The Bridge has represented a critical issue since the work was first published, as was examined in a review of criticism in chapter one. Winters, we may remember, perceived the work only as "a collection of lyrics," declining to read it as an epic. Margaret Dickie in a recent article refuses to read the poem as a sequence whatsoever:

The Bridge as published cannot be read as a sequence if we mean by that term a poem that responds in its form to the poet's progressive understanding of his purposes. (96)

She goes on to assert:

Nor can The Bridge be considered a sequence in the sense that it is a series of poems with continuity and connection. It moves erratically through history from Columbus to the present and then back into the far past of the Indian and up again to the near past of the pioneer and the clipper ships, and forward into World War I and the subway. (96)

I believe Dickie is only partly correct in her application of the term "sequence" to The Bridge. My own conception of the word has more to do with musical structure than with a typically discursive literary work, which her sense of sequence appears to refer to. Further, we have seen in Crane's letters and programmatic statements that he was extremely aware of his "purposes," and if these do not demonstrate a "progressive understanding," it is because they were far grander than he originally imagined, and because he had no intention from the beginning of creating a conventional sequence poem. He writes, for example, on September 12, 1927 to Otto Kahn:

It seemed altogether ineffective from the poetic standpoint to approach this material from the purely chronological angle -- beginning with, say, the landing of "The Mayflower," continuing with a résumé of the Revolution through the conquest of the West, etc. One can get that viewpoint in any history primer. What I am after is an assimilation of this experience, a more organic panorama, showing the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present. (L 305)

The last sentence of this passage is Crane's version of a continuous present and represents a counter to Dickie's criticism of the poem's chronological disunity. Crane's strategy is in keeping with the modernist aes-

thetic of temporal and spatial disjuncture: certainly we find this dislocation in Pound and Eliot, as well as in Williams. Crane is not interested in linear narrative, in time sequence, but in transforming crucial historical events and figures into vital presents. To narrate events chronologically would have been to concede their pastness, their historical temporality, when they are in some sense "timeless" for Crane as being very much a part of the present.

Philip Horton writes of the continuous present in relation to the general structure of The Bridge:

It was indicative of the loose and flexible structure of The Bridge that Crane could discard three major sections of the poem, as he had conceived it, without finding it necessary to replace them by other parts. Contrary to the opinion of many critics, this structure was intentional, for Crane imagined each poem as a separate excursion into the historical and cultural past of America, always in terms of the present, and always having as a common denominator the spirit of the poet-protagonist.
(234)

Horton is referring to "The Cyder Cask," "The Calgary," and "1927 Whistles," which Crane abandoned, but I believe Horton is somewhat in error as to the formal reasons for this abandonment. The Bridge does not have the loose structure of Leaves of Grass, which Crane mistakenly compared it with. Crane writes, for example: "For all I know, the Bridge may turn into something like the form of 'Leaves of Grass,' with a number of editions, each incorporating further additions" (qtd. in Unterecker, Voyager

590). This sentence is from a letter of 1929 to Caresse Crosby in which Crane agrees to have The Bridge published, and indicates his ambivalence over its "completeness" at the time. But The Bridge as published is not formally related to Whitman's work, and of course Crane did not bring out future editions.

Margaret Dickie is closer to the truth when she writes:

But The Bridge was neither conceived nor written as an open-ended poem in the style of Leaves of Grass. From the very start, Crane knew where he was going and toward what end, and, if the poem did not fulfill the plan, individual sections were nonetheless written to be wrenched into a pre-determined scheme. (86)

What Horton is maintaining on the one hand is that the poem has a flexible form that can allow for inclusion or exclusion of individual sections -- its openness is in this sense parallel to Leaves of Grass. But despite his positive opinion of the poem's form, his statement mistakes what the form is in actuality. Horton does not, in short, perceive The Bridge as a sequence poem. Crane did not write each section as a "separate excursion" into the past, but as interrelated "in series." The sections do in fact form a sequence, and I hope this will become patently clear in an overview of the poem. On the other hand, Dickie's opinion, though negative, seems more accurate to the poem's form. I believe The Bridge is a highly conscious work, and though the addition of at least one section may have enhanced the poem thematically and stylisti-

cally, it is still a unified poem. What Crane built was a work very similar to those other fragmentary epics of the modernist movement, namely the works of Pound and Eliot (anticipating Williams as well). He was conscious of these other epics, and though he may have wished for and planned a more organic work, he was also obeying the aesthetics of the modernist movement. His plan for the poem's chronological discontinuity is an obvious illustration of modernist poetics.

Both Horton and Dickie, then, are only partly correct about the formal character of The Bridge. The work is a sequence poem and not merely a collection of lyrics. Its sections do have a thematic correspondence, in fact, but their connections are more implicit than explicit. In this vein, John Unterecker maintains in "The Architecture of The Bridge" that The Bridge's structure is mosaic like Moby-Dick, The Waste Land, and Ulysses. Brom Weber also has discussed Crane's mosaic style in which Crane used bits and lines from earlier poems for later compositions (Hart Crane 47-48); so Unterecker may indeed be on the right track. And Crane's adoration of Moby-Dick, The Waste Land, and Ulysses is apparent from his letters. But the term "mosaic" may suggest an open-endedness that the poem does not possess. The arrangement of the sections of The Bridge is, I believe, more crucial than the arrangement of parts in the other works cited above; or at least these other works seem more "arbitrarily" inclusive than

Crane's epic by virtue of their structures. The modulation of lyric and epic in The Bridge and its thematic directions are crucial to both composition and meaning.

By the same token, The Bridge does function like these other works in its ellipses, its leaps and transitions and its chronological dislocations. It functions most like The Waste Land in these respects; -- and their parallels may have to do with their both being poetic works -- not fictions -- and their relative brevity and compression. Their transitions therefore are sharper. The Bridge, however, is a longer poem than The Waste Land and has perhaps an epic ambitiousness that Eliot's work does not. But these analogies will be taken up in section two of this chapter.

For the moment, I would like to read The Bridge in its hybrid manifestation, as an epic sequence. It is a poem built on a principle of modal modulation; it is an "epic sequence" because it ultimately attains an epos, the outgrowth of its various parts as they evolve one to the other, as they look forward and as they look back.

The Bridge was obviously not published as it was composed; its final section, "Atlantis," was composed first, and other sections were worked on simultaneously and intermittently. But Crane was very conscious of the arrangement of these sections, and this arrangement tells much about meaning and organization. One has the feeling in those other works cited that sequence is of less impor-

tance, that one section does not necessarily have to follow another; or at least that the possibility of shifting sections is greater without losing the force of the "mosaic" structuring. The Bridge is more than these works, in my opinion, a delicate balance of modes, a fluctuation between lyric and epic intensities.

2. Overview of the Hybrid Bridge

The epigraph to the entire poem from the Book of Job indicates thematic directions. "From going to and fro in the earth, / and from walking up and down in it" signals the whole cycle of suffering and redemption that will accompany the poet to the Promised Land as abstraction. Job's trial is the trial of the poet, as well as the culture. The Promised Land has a prologue in "To Brooklyn Bridge," which sets in motion thematic and metaphoric tendencies for the entire Bridge. "Lyric consciousness" is assertive in this first section and in the finale, "Atlantis," and these sections represent the points of departure and terminus in the act of bridging. They form a metaphoric circle and thus a means of reading the poem thematically. The "Proem" is the entrance point into the realm of a new America. The sublime of the seagull's flight is the apotheosis toward which the poet is questing, but it is a sublime that cannot be maintained for very long. These moments of transcendence here and in the entire Bridge are magnificent, but they are never purely

maintained. They are countered by other moods of a demonic or suffering nature, so that there is a constant tension and fluidity between apocalyptic and demonic matrices in the poem. Suffering, likewise, is never unending but mitigated by redemptive surges.

In the "Proem" subjective consciousness is very assertive, as the lyric I is the definitive speaker. This "I" encounters the sublime through a seagull, through an abstraction like "Liberty," through the "Thee" of the bridge itself; and the bridge becomes epitomized as a religious sublime in the final movement of the poem. Yet there is also, as the "I" assumes cultural status, a declination away from the sublime. The seagull is "apparitional as sails," illusive; the work world is empty and monotonous: "-- Till elevators drop us from our day"; and the movies do not offer spiritual meaning: they are but fragmentary distractions for the masses. A suicide takes place in stanza five, in radical juxtaposition to the sublime praise of the bridge in stanza four. These "contrapuntal" movements in the "Proem" will determine the broad rhythms of The Bridge as a whole. The Bridge is a strongly emotional poem, rhapsodic in its heights and melancholic in its depths.

In "To Brooklyn Bridge" the poet positions himself in immediate relationship with his subject. Curiously enough, the rhetorical aspect of the lyric mode corresponds with the actual experience of the poem. The poet

as poet is in direct contact with his subject, the bridge; and the poet as man is an immediate perceiver of the bridge in its harbor home. He acts out several roles: that of physical observer and social observer and of sublime visionary. The lyric poet is the emotional center of this first poem and it is a poem that evolves out of a meditative mood.

In "Ave Maria" the epigraph from Seneca serves as prophecy both of chaos and disaster and of apocalyptic redemption. The "Proem" ends in a surge of promise -- "And of the curvship lend a myth to God" -- but immediately following this the Seneca epigraph interrupts the surge; and indeed The Bridge contains multiple interruptions on a thematic and syntactic level.

Whereas the "Proem" is a lyric meditation, "Ave Maria" is an epic voyage. Columbus is the first quest voyager after the poet and functions as a persona or alter ego for the poet-narrator. He is the "other I" of the poet, and in metaphoric terms, another eye for the poet-observer. He speaks the poem, and it is a poem that has a "factive" aspect outside the poet's experience or personal vision. Columbus' Journal is the historical record upon which "Ave Maria" is based: it is the one poem in The Bridge in which history functions as history. But this is only a partial truth; for the historical record becomes metamorphosed into the poet's visionary kinetics. What is curious about this transformation is that the poet locates a

language suitable to the visionary Columbus, whereas the language of the Journal is more suited to the pragmatic navigator.

Crane accomplishes two things in this procedure: he narrates an epic voyage through the mouth of Columbus as based on his Journal; and he creates a sublime music. Nevertheless, despite the presence of the sublime, this is an epic section of The Bridge: it takes the "Proem" into physical action, replacing a pure meditative mode with an active rhetorical one, epic "motion" as opposed to lyric "stasis."

The voyage motif is an excellent one for the structure of The Bridge. It operates in multiple fashion. On an elementary level, by its very nature it activates the poetry; the poetry moves from place to place, from time to time -- it restlessly seeks out. On another level, it offers promise of future gratification: when we take a voyage, we anticipate a destination. Within each individual section of The Bridge we look forward as we do throughout the entire poem. Of course this narrative structure is not continuous as much as discontinuous. We do not advance in the poem in a normal chronological sequence; but the discontinuity of the poem makes our anticipation all the greater and the ultimate objective all the more mysterious. On yet another level, the voyage becomes both a personal one for the poet and a cultural one for the American race in particular. The Bridge as poem and

the bridge as symbol are like a ship upon which we make our collective crossings. And the bridge as reality is both static object and a passageway for travelers in motion.

Specifically in "Ave Maria," the voyage represents a structural frame for the real voyage of Columbus and the quest voyage taking place in the imagination of Columbus and the poet himself. The concept of America Columbus is seeking, via Frank's perception of the navigator, is the same concept the poet is seeking. They both want Cathay but locate America, though Columbus is of course unaware of this. Nevertheless, they both long for the ideal, and if America falls short of this, it must reconstitute itself -- perhaps destroy itself -- in order to realize that ideal.

In terms of genre the epic mode of "Ave Maria" counterpoints the lyric mode of "To Brooklyn Bridge." From meditation and observation we move to epic action. From a speaker who is still, we move to a speaker who is in motion. The voicing of each, however, is not dramatically different, as they both illustrate the sublime. But despite the vocal similarity through the sublime, the epic I of "Ave Maria" modifies the meaning of this sublime. Columbus is mask for the poet, but he also has symbolic heroic meaning beyond the poet's world. The lyric I, as it were, becomes replaced by an epic I, and in such a displacement the lyric I becomes enlarged. The subjective

grows into the objective and the statement made is not merely personal but cultural and historical.

"Ave Maria" initiates The Bridge's cultural "personality." If the work were no more than a series or collection of lyrics, "Ave Maria" would seem out of place. It is proof against lyric uniformity and in favor of the hybrid structure I am arguing. Through its storm scene and the ensuing survival of Columbus, "Ave Maria" accords with Crane's aesthetics of suffering as well. The mood dialectics are characterized by Columbus' heroic humility in the face of God's vast cosmos, by a sublime prayer to the Godhead, and by an ultimate redemption and purgation. This cycle is communicated in psychological and religious terms and is a mirror for the cycle of the American culture at large. Columbus' experience as discoverer and indeed the experience of the entire Bridge represents the implicit cycle of the American tragedy and prospective redemption.

In the lyric mode, this redemption has its ground in romantic love. "The Harbor Dawn" is the first section to examine this, as we return to the pure lyric voice of the poet. The lyric poet can never surrender his principal role in The Bridge, but that he does at times enhances its "rhetorical" and thematic aspects. The heart of The Bridge is seen through lyric eyes; other eyes make that vision grander and more persuasive. The scene of "The Harbor Dawn" is the same scene as the "Proem," and this

motif of journey and return is paramount in The Bridge. An antecedent text for this motif is of course Odysseus, and its modernist corollary, Ulysses, is an influential text for Crane. The Bridge's movement is a continuous spinning away and spinning back, an attempt to find home by leaving it and in so doing to return to it with a clearer vision. This is why "Atlantis" becomes a different poem by the end of the project. In its earlier versions as a hopeful overture, it changes radically by the project's end through Crane's correction of his original vision and because its textual location follows more overtly pessimistic sections. This argument will be taken up in due time.

"The Harbor Dawn" is perhaps the one authentic love poem in The Bridge, having its antecedents in "Voyages." A stanza from "Voyages, V" is illustrative of the correspondence:

But now
 Draw in your head, alone and and too tall here.
 Your eyes already in the slant of drifting foam;
 Your breath sealed by the ghosts I do not know:
 Draw in your head and sleep the long way home.

Here in "The Harbor Dawn," we experience an equivalent intensity:

And you beside me, blessed now while sirens
 Sing to us, stealthily weave us into day --
 Serenely now, before day claims our eyes
 Your cool arms murmuringly about me lay.

Night is the love-time for lovers, the time when the absence of light is protective and shields against a world that can potentially dissolve their union. The day, contrarily, with its suggestions of responsibility, of routine business and occupations, can destroy the haven of love-bliss. The sea is a natural metaphor of lovers' freedom; and sleep is the biological state in which love can incubate. Promised in all these rhythms -- the sea, the night, and the silence of sleep -- is the kingdom of dreams. And in "The Harbor Dawn" it is the dream that brings the poet Pocahontas, she who embodies both object of love and cultural salvation -- a sort of mythic Joan of Arc. It is through Pocahontas that the love theme becomes married to the cultural ambitions of The Bridge. She represents completion for the poet and completion for the race. The lyric becomes wedded to the epic, and the quest motif is both personal and social.

The poet is seeking the Absolute both in metalinguistic terms -- the "Unfractioned idiom" of the "Proem" -- and the thematic dialectics of personal/social. One of The Bridge's important features is that it is a self-conscious language construct, as Crane demonstrates in his use of metalinguistic metaphors. Behind the linguistic character of The Bridge is Crane's theory of the logic of metaphor and the one word. Through the logic of metaphor two disparate elements are juxtaposed, creating a third term that is the strange offspring of this union. Perhaps

we can call this third term the "one word" or "Unfractioned idiom," the Absolute toward which Crane always strove. On a thematic level, the union of two racial antagonists, the poet and Pocahontas, potentially can bring into being an Absolute race. In terms of genre, the juxtaposition of lyric and epic can realize the epic sequence, the hybrid phenomenon that might be interpreted as structurally Absolute (though this interpretation assumes a normative value that may not be inherent).

These three frames of reading -- the metalinguistic, the thematic, and the generic, adopted by this dissertation -- are instrumental to the ultimate world view or meaning of the work. They represent a totalization, and they are all three necessary for a "completion" of The Bridge. By world view I am referring to the poet's attitude to the world; and in this instance it is not only a personal attitude but a "tribal" one. The meaning of The Bridge must be perceived as both private and public. The world of the poem is not only the world of the lyric poet, but the world of the race, and the poem projects an idealist world as well, a Utopia beyond us all.

In order to reach forward, however, as the poem incessantly plays with the mode of time, the poem must reach back. In "Ave Maria" it has done this in an epic sense, with Columbus assuming command of the quest voyage. In "Van Winkle" the poet assumes the narration as he has also done in "The Harbor Dawn." We might interpret the charac-

ter of Van Winkle as something of an epic persona for the poet, but Van Winkle never attains the stature of Columbus, or of Whitman. Van Winkle, rather, is a symbolic emblem of the poet's imagination. He is a vehicle through which the poet can espouse his notions of memorial time. "Van Winkle" is therefore a poem in the lyric mode and it continues the lyric movement from the previous section; this movement is prerequisite to the more sweeping epic sections to follow. Indeed, The Bridge can be viewed as a set of movements, as a musical composition with various rhythmic "strokes." Alfred Hanley portrays White Buildings and The Bridge as musical constructions when he writes:

...in a broader sense, in their larger cycles, both books move from introductory overture, to a preludial movement, through an obliterating emptiness at their centers, through a grappling with the carnal and time-bound, through incremental apprehensions of the numina, to rapt and grateful hosannas to the Numen. (111)

I would disagree with the assertiveness Hanley applies to the final stage of this cycle, and I do not perceive in Crane's work the same religious overtones, but Hanley's "musical" analysis seems essentially correct.

My own reading of the poem's music is centered in the modulation of lyric and epic movements or episodes. I have applied the term "movement" to segments of each section, but it also has implications between sections as well. The variation of lyric and epic tonalities adds to

the richness of the work and defines in part the sequential structure. These tonalities indeed are one evidence of the presence of sequence. This is the voice sequence I have earlier referred to, a rhythm sequence of high and low points, of the quiet and the ecstatic, of sublime rhapsody juxtaposed with the fragmentary or demotic.

"Van Winkle," though I have termed it a lyric poem, is far from melodic. Its "lyricism" is in its subjectivity, a consciousness that reads hope in memory and that strives strenuously for a continuous present. Rip Van Winkle is the antithesis of this ideal. He sleeps through history and he awakes to a tragic dislocation; his wife has died and the American Revolution has overturned the world that he once knew. The world that he wakes to in Crane's poem is the nervous world of the poet, and though Van Winkle suffers a psychic rupture in this world, he is sturdy enough to lead the poet West into the flux of time itself, into "The River."

"The River" initiates an epic movement that will continue into "The Dance," and is actually sustained, though with modification, until "Three Songs." "The River" moves us closer to Pocahontas, and yet presents an ambivalent view of American culture at the same time. The very look of the poem has the feeling of space about it. Its long stanza units have a parallel only in "Cape Hatteras," which is a voyage, in part, by air. "The River" is a

voyage by land to water, to the crater of American time itself, the Mississippi.

The poem maintains and develops certain formal strategies contained in "Van Winkle." These include the use of italics, quotation, indentation, and colloquial speech. "The River" demonstrates of course a greater inclusiveness than "Van Winkle"; its modulations between high and low speech are stronger than in the latter section, or anywhere else in The Bridge for that matter. It makes, in short, an epic effort to include different styles of language and various views of the world. It begins its voyage, by train, in a satirical critique of American culture. Modernity has obliterated the original spirit of the nation. The tramps that emerge in the poet's journey are suggestive of this deterioration: they are perennial outsiders who have no interest in American modernity, but who have no interest in life either. "Yet they touch something like a key perhaps" in the poet and he equates these tramps with men from his youth. By their indifference to the things of time -- the ephemeral emblems -- they draw him closer to the mythic and to Pocahontas -- the sacred emblems of eternity.

Though "The Harbor Dawn" represents the one authentic love poem in The Bridge, the love theme is persistent throughout the work. Here in "The River," the mythic and sensual realm of Pocahontas are now immanent:

And past the circuit of the lamp's thin flame
 (O nights that brought me to her body bare!)
 Have dreamed beyond the point that bound her name.

But this immanence includes a problematic aspect: "Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain, / The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools"; and further: "By iron, iron -- always the iron dealt cleavage! / They doze now, below axe and powder horn." The mythic gods lie dormant, and only an engendering poet can awaken them, one sustained by Pocahontas.

That the poet is retreating from a world that has deserted its gods is apparent. His voyage is away from modernity. But The Bridge as a whole is not a repudiation of modernity, and is rather a curative for it. The poet travels to a mythic and historical past in order to cleanse himself and his race. The Mississippi will be his purgative, a river "tortured with history," as is the culture. Time can be overcome through a combination of time and the timeless.

The epic modality of "The River" is sustained in "The Dance," a poem that has its ground "on the pure mythical and smoky soil," in Crane's words. This is a poem of empathy in the Whitmanian sense. Whereas the poet surrenders to the natural element in "The River," in "The Dance" he makes an active identification with human suffering and with the natural context of that suffering. But Maquokeeta's suffering is not altogether unwished for:

his is a necessary sacrifice for the perpetuation of Pocahontas and her meaning, and for the poet's marriage to her. She is the hope of the white race, but it is a hope that demands the sacrifice of an Indian male -- a ritual slaughter. This is Pocahontas as negative archetype. the poet is entrapped by this archetype, the Eternal Feminine as emasculator, and he will suffer his own (psychic) death later in The Bridge. But Maquoqueeta is granted at least a partial redemption in heaven, and the cycle of ecstasy, sacrifice, and redemption is intact in this poem as well.

The antithetical aspect of Woman in Crane is well articulated by M. D. Uroff when she writes that Crane's woman is both "the divine grotesque and the engulfing mother" (113). But Uroff also characterizes Crane as a great love poet, a trait prominent in "The Dance." The sensual music of this poem is paralleled only by "Atlantis," although the music in the latter is more strictly rhapsodic and cosmic, not sensual. Nevertheless, in both poems there is a kind of orgasmic ecstasy. "The Dance" is an apotheosis of intensity, after which there is a marked falling off until "Cape Hatteras." But the music of the latter is strained in comparison. Though Crane referred to "Cutty Sark" as the center of his work, I perceive "The Dance" as a true center -- a spiritual focus and crescendo.

If The Bridge is a poem of opposites, as I believe it is, then "The Dance" is highly illustrative, with the

crucial opposition in it being racial. The poem is a marriage of opposites, of the white and the red races, of the machine and myth. Its dance is erotic and cultural, and a dance of death as well; and love and death become intimately entangled here and for the remainder of The Bridge. "The Dance" represents, then, an erotic consummation and cultural synthesis; but in the wider rhythmic strokes of The Bridge it is only one episode. Indeed, the poem itself is fraught with resistances to fulfillment, and its terminal reconciliation -- "The serpent with the eagle in the boughs" (an image reflecting the influence of D. H. Lawrence's The Plumed Serpent) -- is earned only after great suffering and death. Nevertheless, a transcendence does occur, and a promise is offered for racial continuity and revitalization.

"Indiana" does not prolong this promise. It represents a spiritual falling away, an "emptiness," to use the Hanley expression. As a poem late in the composition of The Bridge, it demonstrates the depression and cultural disillusionment that Crane was undergoing. I have called it "epic" because its speaker is not the lyric poet, but it has lyric insularity and suffering at its heart. Its voyage is more interior than exterior, an inner as opposed to an outer "stroke." However, the otherness of the mother prolongs the epic movement of this segment of The Bridge; the poet's presence is withdrawn in the continuum of events. The "event" of "Indiana" is of course not the

event of the poem itself -- its central action, that is, takes place outside the poem in its reference to the Gold Rush. But the son's departure to the sea is a significant event within the poem and of thematic importance. It represents an escape from the mother-trap, the prison aspect of the Eternal Feminine; and it is the beginning, or rebeginning, of the poet's pursuit of Pocahontas, after a marriage that has been only briefly consummated.

Like so many other image complexes in Crane, the sea carries a double meaning. It is freedom, of course, and a medium of liberated sexuality and love -- "apocalyptic," in Frye's sense of the term. But the sea is also "demonic," destructive without potential redemption. "Cutty Sark" illustrates this doubleness very keenly. It is one of the more typically modernist sections of The Bridge with its use of dashes, indentation, italics, quotation, abrupt transitions and fractured speech, capitalization, ellipses, proper naming, and so on, and it is very related to The Waste Land in these strategies. The overall effect is one of a broken text. It represents a curious contrast to the prominent music of some of "The River" and all of "The Dance," which flow with little interruption and with sublime rhapsody. Though the poet is present here, as he is in various guises in other epic sections, the centrality of another character and the scope of this poem make this epic in nature.

"Cutty Sark" is one of the least continuous sections of The Bridge and may suggest a kind of thematic fracturing through its style. The poet is clearly lost and his speech is the speech of intense anxiety. The reference to "Atlantis Rose" in one stanza provides further evidence of a psychic rupturing. It reads:

ATLANTIS ROSE drums wreathe the rose,
the star floats burning in a gulf of tears
and sleep another thousand--

The poet is haunted by the image of a sinking continent: his own body is sinking along with an American culture he is losing faith in. The star is a prominent image in The Bridge as well. It is mostly associated with disaster in the work, or with sleep, as it is most apparently here. Will the American star ever rise again? Crane may also be thinking of Shelley's "Adonais" in which Keats takes his place among the stars -- as does Maquokeeta in "The Dance." But Keats is granted a more definitive or pristine immortality. In the foregoing stanza and in the dialectical structure of The Bridge, this star also foreshadows natural disaster, as stars so often do in Shakespeare.

The Shakespeare connection is not to be taken lightly. Frederick J. Hoffman has pointed out the possible parallel between "Ariel," one of the ships referred to in a catalogue of clipper ships in "Cutty Sark," and the Shakespeare play (269). Though the similarities between

The Bridge and The Tempest are of a general nature and not structural, there are points of comparison that carry thematic weight. Shakespeare was very interested in the discovery of the New World (at Jamestown) at the time of the writing of The Tempest, as is fairly well known, and though the actual location of the play is an island in the Mediterranean, resonances to America might exist in the playwright's mind. There are references to colonization in the play, for example, and the figure of Caliban might suggest the new Indian element in America that the European must contend with. The "tragicomic" aspects of The Tempest could also have been attractive to Crane, and he was perhaps aware of all these resonances in his reference to Ariel in "Cutty Sark" and in a sonnet entitled "To Shakespeare." It reads:

Through torrid entrances, past icy poles
 A hand moves on the page! Who shall again
 Engrave such hazards as thy might controls --
 Conflicting, purposeful yet outcry vain
 Of all our days, being pilot, -- tempest, too!
 Sheets that mock lust and thorns that scribble hate
 Are lifted from torn flesh with human rue,
 And laughter, burnished brighter than our fate [,]
 Thou wieldest with such tears that every faction
 Swears high in Hamlet's throat, and devils throng
 Where angels beg for doom in ghastr distraction
 -- And fail, both! Yet thine Ariel holds his song:
 And that serenity that Prospero gains
 Is justice that has cancelled earthly chains.

This sonnet was first published in 1933, but written somewhere between 1927 and 1930 with The Bridge still in process. It represents a Romantic reading of Shakespeare,

showing him as a creator with a capacity for suffering through tempest and demonic forces, and as such equates with Crane's own aesthetics of suffering, where transcendence, as we have seen, can be the prize of earthly turmoil. Ariel himself undergoes this redemption cycle as he gains his freedom after many trials. His master, Prospero, experiences a similar redemption after his magic engenders a better world. The good magic that Prospero practices and that Ariel carries out as agent is described by Harry Levin when he writes of the origins of magic itself and the distinction between magicians practicing either "white" or "black" magic:

Magicians, however, were rigorously distinguished on the basis of whether they practiced white or black magic: whether they sought to control the elements, through natural philosophy and supernatural wisdom, as Prospero does in The Tempest, or whether they trafficked with the devil and conjured up the dead, through witchcraft and particularly necromancy, as does Marlowe's ultimate protagonist. (The Overreacher 108-09)

Crane clearly had in mind the good magic of Prospero and the agency of Ariel: it is this magic that will save him at this juncture of The Bridge. Of course the "evil" magic that Levin describes is also attractive to Crane, as evidenced in "Faustus and Helen" and in "The Tunnel." Frye's apocalyptic/demonic polarity is again in operation in "Cutty Sark" as it is in the sonnet. Further, the reference to Ariel in the latter -- "Yet thine Ariel holds his song" -- has a curious parallel in the final line of

"Atlantis"'s eleventh stanza: "Atlantis, -- hold thy floating singer late!"

The suggestion in "To Shakespeare" is that Ariel's song (along with Prospero's magic) will negate both the tyranny of the devils ("and devils throng") and the self-destruction of the angels ("Where angels beg for doom in ghast distraction"), and in such negation will erect a "justice that has cancelled earthly chains" -- that is, a system of spiritual order and transcendence. Ariel's song equates with the paradigmatic Romantic poem that has curative powers and the capacity to regenerate. The "floating singer" in "Atlantis" possesses the same kind and strength of song, but his song is failing him because Atlantis is self-destructing, sinking through its own greed and imperialism. Because The Bridge is a cultural-personal poem, this failure of culture sinks the poet as well. It is America that represents Atlantis for Crane and it is sinking in the same way and out of the same self-interest. America can, however, resurrect itself if it listens to Ariel's song through the poet's voice -- if it locates within itself a powerful Will. Nietzsche's notion of a positive tragedy applies here, wherein a tragic descent is not necessarily abysmal unless it inspires little response. The audience response, as I have earlier maintained along with Dembo, is crucial for recovery from the tragic wound. This recuperation can in fact be interpreted as tragic grandeur in Nietzsche's

conception: an uplift that is stronger by virtue of the critical fall. And this grandeur characterizes Shakespearean tragedy as well, though we must grant a depressive component here also.

In cultural terms, America has suffered a great tragedy, but it can revive the spirit of self, its own spirit, if it responds to its tragic death, if it listens, that is, to the recuperative song of the Ariel-poet. The poet stands in the same relation to Ariel as Ariel does to Prospero, and Prospero's magic might be considered the ultimate source of spiritual resuscitation.

As cultural shaman, Crane himself needs restoration, and this is his reason for calling on Ariel in "Cutty Sark." Ariel will be a spiritual guide, whose song in the context of "To Shakespeare," will revive the poet and his sunken civilization. Though the poet is desperate in "Cutty Sark" and lost in "Atlantis," a resurrection from this tragedy -- both personal and cultural -- is still within reach.

The poet seeks yet another guide out of his desperate state in the Walt Whitman of "Cape Hatteras." It is Whitman that gives the poet promise for the future and hope in a mechanical present -- but here too the poet suffers an ambivalence. The epic voyage of "Cape Hatteras" is one of sublime ascent -- man can become a bird through the airplane and conquer space -- and of total destructiveness as well -- man can become a bombar-

dier in a warplane and obliterate himself, others, and his earth-home. "Cape Hatteras" may be Whitman's "great poem of death" in the hands of Crane, but its ambivalence is too overwhelming to make it a likely candidate. Though a transcendence does occur, it is a broken one and one strained at poem's terminus:

And see! the rainbow's arch -- how shimmeringly stands
 Above the Cape's ghoul-mound, O joyous seer!
 Recorders ages hence, yes, they shall hear
 In their own veins uncanceled thy sure tread
 And read thee by the aureole 'round thy head
 Of pasture-shine, Panis Angelicus!

Afoot again, and onward without halt, --
 Not soon, no suddenly, -- no, never to let go
 My hand

in yours,

Walt Whitman --

so --

"The rainbow's arch" of line one is the symbolic bridge, with the rainbow here being a colorful consort to Whitman's spirit: both arch and spirit are a great source of strength and hope for the poet. But the recuperation is again a strained one because the music of "Hatteras" up to this point is itself strained, and a divisiveness exists concerning the machine as psychological and cultural remedy.

The true force of "Cape Hatteras," and one reason why it is in fact a central poem in The Bridge (as Crane had understood), is that it is a powerful epic stroke. Despite its frequently strained character, it towers above adjacent sections. Crane had called it an "ode" to Walt

Whitman, but it is more like a hymn to the act of poetry itself. In terms of the lyric-epic modality, its epic tonality achieves a crescendo, a rhetorical sublime, and it represents stylistically the sublime bridge itself. The Bridge would not have been the same without this section: in its long lines, its exclamations and proclamations, its rich adjectival compounds, it represents the operatic movement within The Bridge's musical structure. And I have already discussed its thematic importance.

"Cape Hatteras" acquires additional intensity when we read it in relation to "Three Songs," the subsequent section. These lyric "tableau" are miniscule next to the towering skyscraper of "Hatteras" and "Hatteras" in turn becomes a thundering rhapsody next to "Three Songs." Their music is more modest and yet nevertheless essential to the structure of the work. These three love lyrics return us to the Romantic love theme of the lyric mode, to the personal realm from the grandeur of "Cape Hatteras." The poet, alone now, sings his longing songs, whereas in the previous section he led an operatic ensemble. But this personal longing also has cultural ramifications. The incompleteness and unrequited love the poet suffers applies to the national dimension also: as he cannot find Pocahontas in contemporary woman, he cannot find fulfillment in his nation either.

This cultural frustration becomes acute in the next section, "Quaker Hill," which sustains the lyric mode

through the subjective I. But it is an "I" that is feverishly commenting on the country and its fallen position from the original Promised Land. "Quaker Hill" is the only lyric section of The Bridge, other than for its last two stanzas, written in an ironic mode. This is once again in accordance with Crane's psychological condition at this late stage in composition and his rather aggravated emotions over America's potential. Its music is ponderous but stately. It does not sing like "Three Songs" but presents the music of exposition and argument; it breaks free from its duteous tone in its last two stanzas, but its recuperation from disillusionment is too late. It is important to note that the subjective I regains its centrality in three of the last four sections of The Bridge: the poet returns from his prolonged voyage and his surrender to the Other, and his personal consciousness supplants the consciousness determined by the epic mode.

"The Tunnel," however, interrupts this lyric surge with its voyage into fire. As the airplane is a modern machine that promises partial hope, the subway is the vehicle through the inferno of the twentieth century. I see no problem in this contrast; the machine is an ambivalent product of modern civilization in Crane's mind, and the airplane contains in "Cape Hatteras" its own symbolic ambivalence. The inferno is further intensified through the conjuring of Poe, who rises from the dead by virtue of

the black magic Harry Levin had earlier alluded to. The fire catastrophe of this poem evolves out of earlier sections, which are the record of a growing psychological and cultural breakdown. "The Tunnel" is very simply a poem of explosion, a fiery culmination of all the catastrophe that has been accumulating to this point. Like "Cutty Sark," "The Tunnel" is a broken text, and its brokenness accompanies a psychic rupture, but the rupture here is far greater than in previous sections and more culturally oriented. If "Cape Hatteras" represents an operatic sublime (though it suffers also from an ambivalence), "The Tunnel" is a prolonged tragic outcry, an expression of extreme agony, such as we might find in Poe or in moments of Shakespearean tragedy. It is a suicide poem, and this suicide is not only personal but social. Its recuperation at terminus does not succeed, in my opinion, because its agony is too forceful, its fire too overwhelming. The poet and his country are being consumed in flames and their purgation must await the rhapsodies of "Atlantis."

It is logical that Crane should choose an utterance from Plato on music to serve as an epigraph for the final section. This epigraph represents an appropriate summation of all that has gone before, and the heart of "Atlantis" as well. The music between sections of The Bridge, the balance of the parts, can be located in the radical juxtaposition of tonalities and in the significant shifts in musical tone and character. The relational

harmony must be conceived as a product of musical disharmony, so that The Bridge resembles a Stravinsky composition in the collision of musical elements. We experience the world both as sound and noise, as exquisite music and the racket of automobiles. But we also experience silence. The effect of the separations of sections (divided by title pages) is one of an interruption of the text, a brief interval between movements. These are the silences or interstices in the poem's progress and they complete the musical universe of The Bridge, a universe imagined by Plato in the epigraph: "Music is then the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system." It is love, however fragile, that holds the bridge together, and it is music that is the utterance or "silence" of that love.

"Atlantis" is certainly a musical and thematic consummation of The Bridge, offering in its love motif consolation for the dying poet and his culture. Despite the fact that "Atlantis" was composed first, it makes sense to be located last in the sequence, even granting the adjustment in Crane's vision. Its position accords in some fashion with the musical structure of the work, as Hanley has pointed out -- a rhapsodic crescendo at terminus to compensate for the "emptiness" at the work's center and for the suicidal plunge of "The Tunnel." But again The Bridge would have been musically and thematically more "logical" if a purgatorial middle stage had taken place between the

hellish depths of "The Tunnel" and the heavenly heights of "Atlantis."

To review briefly the movements of the modes, The Bridge begins in a high lyric voice, with the lyric I interpenetrating with the sublime bridge; it moves into the epic persona of Columbus and his voyage, as the poet surrenders his lyric I, and the cultural "thesis" of the work begins. In the first two sections, then, we are introduced to the lyric/epic duality. "The Harbor Dawn" immediately replaces the epic modality with the lyric and we return to the poet's intimate space (New York), and the love theme is forcefully initiated. The lyric "intimacy" is sustained in "Van Winkle" as the pursuit of the Eternal Feminine is undertaken and as personal memory becomes an important instrument for the epic poet. Three of the first four sections, then, are lyric and this is matched at the close of the work with an equal ratio. The next five sections, however, are epic as the poet undertakes his various quest voyages. He is frankly leaving himself, giving over his solitary lyric self to seek personal and cultural completion. Of the final four sections, "The Tunnel" is epic, and The Bridge returns to the more dominant lyric and solitary I. But it is an "I" that has grown remarkably in passage; it is an "I" that is historical and cultural as well as lyrical-insular.

That "Atlantis" is a culmination poem is apparent in its music and its thematic contours. Herbert Leibowitz

has written of it, for example, that "Thematically, 'Atlantis' seeks to reconcile history and myth, time and space, time and eternity..." (137). Harold Bloom perceives a similar potency in "Atlantis" when he compares it to The Waste Land:

Crane's bridge is to Atlantis, in fulfillment of the Platonic quest of Crane's Columbus. Eliot's bridge is to the Inferno, in fulfillment of the neo-Christian condemnation of Romantic, Transcendentalist, Gnostic quest. (Agon 264-65)

These commentaries, however, do not realize the ambivalent dynamics also inherent in the poem, though they are essentially accurate about its passion for organic unity.

Stanza six is an excellent illustration of this unity as it collects crucial themes for the entire Bridge:

From gulfs unfolding, terrible of drums,
Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage, tensely spare --
Bridge, lifting night to cycloramic crest
Of deepest day -- O Choir, translating time
Into what multitudinous Verb the suns
And synergy of waters ever fuse, recast
In myriad syllables, -- Psalm of Cathay!
O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm...!

In one stanza we have conjunctive references to the voyage motif; to the musical thematics and structure of The Bridge; to the work as a metalinguistic construct; to the quest theme implicit in "Cathay," or the cultural level of the work; and finally, to the love motif and theme, where love is the center of a life force that energizes bridge-making in life and poetry.

"Atlantis" recovers the poet from the precipice of suicide, and it offers promise to a depleted America. It does so, however, only after we accept its crucial ambivalence. According to Plato, Atlantis was a great civilization blessed by fertile land, by inventive builders (bridge builders among them), and in general by a "divine nature." He goes on to write:

But when the divine element in them became weakened by frequent admixture with mortal stock, and their human traits became predominant, they ceased to be able to carry their prosperity with moderation. To the perceptive eye the depth of their degeneration was clear enough, but to those whose judgement of true happiness is defective they seemed, in their pursuit of unbridled ambition and power, to be at the height of their fame and fortune. And the god of gods, Zeus, who reigns by law, and whose eye can see such things, when he perceived the wretched state of this admirable stock decided to punish them and reduce them to order by discipline. (145)

As the legend has come down to us, the Atlanteans also went to war with Europe, perhaps to expand their empire and thus increase their wealth and power. All of these transgressions against its original divine nature, in short, brought upon it the wrath of the gods and it was ultimately sunk into the sea. The parallels with America are apparent. America's fertile land, its industrialization, its engineering, and most importantly its spiritual origins, were all critical elements in Crane's imagination and in his conception of The Bridge. As the project continued, however, Crane's sense of America had changed, and his disappointment and personal exhaustion were factors in

his entitling the final section, "Atlantis," as Weber has pointed out (Hart Crane 375-76). The First World War is another point of parallel with Atlantis, as America became militaristic, though for different reasons. America had very simply "sunken" from its original state of spiritual promise.

This thesis is further supported in the final stanza of "Atlantis" with the question beginning "Is it Cathay...?" Columbus' real search for Cathay and Crane's symbolic search are in doubt: is America Cathay, in fact, that locus that represents for Crane "consciousness, knowledge, spiritual unity" (L 241). Can it ever be again? In order for America-Atlantis to achieve Cathay, assuming Cathay to be the idealized state of America's origins, it must become conscious of its tragic fall and assert its Will for recovery. The poet and his Ariel-song are instruments for this. But an inner-directed consciousness is insufficient. The ultimate cultural Bridge will be one that reconciles the Old and New Worlds, and Atlantis is this bridge. For Lewis Spence, Atlantis has an historical basis and many bridge islands existed between Europe, Atlantis, and America. In Crane's poem, Atlantis is the symbolic bridge that can bring about a cultural integration, and ultimately serve as a threshold to the timeless, or Cathay.

In the musical structure of The Bridge, "Atlantis" is the rhapsodic conclusion, the finale of a set of tonali-

ties beginning with the very first poem, "To Brooklyn Bridge." To chart the musical movements or episodes of the work, a high music is sustained, except for "Van Winkle," through "The Dance," which represents a musical and thematic consummation to that point in the work. There is a falling off in the middle of the work with "Indiana" and "Cutty Sark," but "Cape Hatteras" regains the high plateau through its operatic performance. This level is sustained for the remainder of the work, though not consistently, with "Atlantis" being an orgasmic culmination. This pattern is similar to the compositions of classical music, as well as to the musical structure of the highest tragedy: an intensity at beginning, a flattening at center, and a crescendo at terminus, all critical to the organization and "content" of the work. In the case of The Bridge, as in much tragedy, the ultimate music is unheard, the final paradise is invisible.

2. The Bridge and Its Relatives

The Bridge is not an isolated work with an isolated history, but one that belongs to a genre, a new genre of the century -- the modernist long poem. As I have indicated in the last section, and as Vogler and others have pointed out, this genre is a development from the lyric mode into the epic. More than likely, however, it is a hybrid of the two. The Cantos, The Waste Land, and Paterson along with The Bridge exhibit a modal tension, a

subtle balance of counterforces that give the genre its real character. Dick Allen, we have seen, has criticized the tendency in the century's long poems to utilize the strategies of the imagist lyric and to subordinate narrative and dramatic elements; but there are many reasons for this tendency, and I would like to investigate these further here.

For one thing, the modernist long poem placed itself in competition with the novel. The novel was easily becoming the more commanding of the two genres, and poetry needed to rescue its true province in order to survive. Ezra Pound was particularly sensitive to this competitive problem and undertook a rather massive effort to revive poetry in his Cantos. According to Bernstein, the novel for Pound represented artifice and irony and lacked among other things the ability to communicate what endures and what is transient (21). For Pound, only poetry can represent the good and the positive, and ultimately the theological. Poetry, Pound says, "asserts emotional values," whereas the novel is a "presentation" of circumstances and conditions (LE 324; Bernstein 22). Perhaps Georg Lukács' definition of the novel is also relevant here: "The novel is the epic of a world that has been abandoned by God" (The Theory of the Novel 88); so that Pound's goal is in one sense to restore God, or the gods, to the epic.

But his view of the epic also has pervasive social meaning. According to Bernstein, Pound perceived language

as social discourse, and not as autonomous. Poetry shows the active human intelligence, whereas the novel is merely a passive registration of social and psychological determinants (Bernstein 23). For Pound, The Cantos "demand to be taken as literally and historically true" like the Divine Comedy, and not a vision (Bernstein 31). (In this vein, The Cantos is in contradistinction to The Bridge, which is governed by a visionary poetics.) Further, in the kind of epic that Pound was conceiving, Bernstein maintains:

The poet, in other words, does not invent anything...; like any epic bard he merely arranges what is already there, apparently letting the tribe's own history narrate itself for the edification (judgment) of its hearers, the truth of the narration guaranteed by the poet's strategic refusal to assume the sole and originating source of articulation. (38-39)

But this objectivity deserts Pound. He becomes tragically involved in his own work, and the lyric mode insinuates itself -- making The Cantos a hybrid composition.

In its competition with the novel, the modernist long poem found it necessary to exclude novelistic devices such as dramatic and narrative techniques. It did not merely wish to duplicate the novelistic performance. This is one reason it evolved out of an imagistic base; and as I have argued in chapter one the modernist epic can be understood as a development from Pound's Image, or variations thereof. Vogler has maintained that the long poem (and he

includes the Romantic epic) is an attempt to retain the intensity of the lyric mode in a more ambitious epic work. The modernist long poem is a development from the lyric germ, and retains by virtue of this some of the properties of the lyric mode.

However, it attempts at the same time to be all-inclusive, still employing the strategies of its lyric origins -- or those strategies learned in the poets' early craft. These techniques could now be applied to present history objectively, as the Image presented intellection and emotion (Bernstein 37). The ideogram, an early instrument of Pound, would be very crucial to epic generation. It both compresses and includes, conflates and expands, and contains in its horizons the power of suggestion. Juxtaposition will be another important device for inclusiveness, as well as rapid transitions, spatial and temporal leaps, and the inclusion of prose. Most of these have been examined as they function in The Bridge and most have application to all modernist long poems.

K. L. Goodwin has pointed out the influence of the ideogrammic structure of The Waste Land on The Bridge, and of Pound's use of montage as an influence on Crane as well (168-9). And David Perkins has written of montage in The Waste Land that:

The technique resembled cinematic montage, which was developed at about the same time, though Eliot did not learn his methods from films. (499)

statement, which is one reason for the anaphora in the above passage in general. One feels that he has suffered because of vanity, and he wishes to correct what has been perhaps a false view of the world: it is a view, simply, that is too selfish. Nevertheless, in the final stanza he asserts that it is not vanity "to have done" and "to have gathered from the air a live tradition." He is not negating his project as the passage ends; he is redefining it. The dialectics of the passage synthesize in a balanced view of the world, one to which the poet has not adhered in the past and now is in need of after undergoing the tragedy of his life.

This passage describes in microcosm the kind of work The Cantos ultimately becomes, as well as the aesthetic orientation of the modernist long poem as a genre. It strives to find an appropriate relationship between the poet and his world. It is not, as Davie might suggest, only an outcome of scientific observation, of an objectivity that subordinates the private realm. On balance, Pound is a more "objective" poet than Yeats or Eliot, Crane, or even Williams. But the passage records a truth for the entire Cantos: the modernist long poem must be constituted of a subtle balance of subjective and objective modalities. Bernstein writes of Pound's project, for example: "He wanted...to be true to two spheres: in the subjective, inner dimensions of his own mind and poem, and also in the objective, public world around him" (116).

But Bernstein also maintains that Pound's project altered in Pisa, that the element of personal tragedy caused a fragmentation in the work and a drift toward the subjective pole. This alteration, Bernstein goes on to assert, saves the work from "Time's destructiveness." I quote him in full:

Paradoxically, it is the freedom to assent to loss, to admit the difference between his individual longing and the structure of history, that succeeds in negating Time's destructiveness, that grounds the articulation of desire in the one locus where Time is undeniably permeable to the contingencies of the present. (179)

Pound's project, and the modernist long poem in general, was forced to reconceive the epic poem to suit modern demands for form and content. To include dramatic and narrative elements to any extensive degree, would have meant a repetition of the character and quality of the classical epic, or at least a duplication of the novel's form. Pound himself maintained in an interview:

An epic is a poem containing history. The modern mind contains heteroclitic elements. The past epos has succeeded when all see a great many of the answers were assumed, at least between author and audience, or a great mass of the audience. The attempt in an experimental age is therefore rash. (qtd. in Schulman 33)

The modernist epic must therefore include a heterogeneous set of values and ideas as well as the poet's own view of the world: it must include history and culture, but also the history of the poet -- himself as histori-

cal/biographical being. To be true to the world, the modernist epic must also be true to the self, and must encompass a hybrid of historical and private tonalities. Bernstein summarizes the subjective/objective mix of the modernist epic when he maintains of The Cantos:

Much of the richness of The Cantos, and a large part of their immense legacy to subsequent writers, arises directly from Pound's struggle to unite two narratives -- the personal and lyric affirmations of a single voice with the "objective," communally guaranteed certitudes of traditional epics -- in a new kind of text, a poem whose precise modes of coherence we are still only beginning to know, and, in Williams' sense, adequately "measure." (182)

Bernstein is describing the hybrid phenomenon that is a characteristic trait of all modernist epics and that represents the heart of this new genre. He does not include The Bridge or The Waste Land in his study, and this omission I believe to be a shortcoming. His definition of "modern verse epic" includes analyses of The Cantos, Paterson, and Charles Olson's Maximus Poems only -- and his exclusion of Eliot's poem, and I assume Crane's as well, is based on the dominance in these works of lyrical and psychological tonalities. He maintains that The Waste Land is spiritual and psychological rather than geographical and political, like the modern verse epic, and is addressed to the individual rather than the citizen, who represents the audience of this latter genre. The Waste Land also offers no logical or historical argument, whereas The Cantos once again "demand to be taken as literally and historically true" (32).

But Bernstein does not take into account the panoramic effects of Eliot's poem and these same effects in The Bridge, as well as their other "epic" aspects. It is true that the view of history in both poems is influenced by the "mythic" or the fabulous (the "fabulae of history"); but they are also commentaries, in their implicit ways, on historical phenomena and circumstances. Further, my definition of "epic" varies from Bernstein's, is more flexible, I believe, and is less purely historical. The modernist epic is also one in which the poet surrenders his subjectivity through rhetorical means -- via other voices and figures in particular. The "epic voyage" is also a principal feature of The Bridge.

Eliot's poem demonstrates an amazing ability to be all-inclusive given its short length. It creates a totalization through its rapid transitions, its ellipses, as well as its dramatic tonalities and shifts. David Perkins discusses the poem's panoramic effects in the following:

Yet the panoramic range and inclusiveness of the poem, which only Eliot's fragmentary and elliptical juxtapositions could have achieved so powerfully in a brief work, held in one vision not only contemporary London and Europe but also human life stretching far back into time. (514)

Eliot's style is influenced by Pound's Cantos and Joyce's Ulysses, and the transitional effects are also the direct result of Pound's intensive editing. The Waste Land, like The Cantos, is an outgrowth of Eliot's previous

work, an expansion upon the concept of the objective correlative.

The objective correlative for The Waste Land is the myth of the Fisher King. Here Eliot found an objective paradigm, or correlative, for his own emotions, as well as the devastation to contemporary culture he was acutely sensitive to. The Fisher King myth could serve a multiple function for Eliot's purposes: first, as aesthetic principle -- it would objectify the private emotions of the poet; second, as cultural reference-point -- in its myth-history; and third, as a vehicle for commentary on the contemporary scene, as a tool for Eliot's continuous present.

The beauty of The Waste Land is that we can read it, as perhaps we can read all modernist epics, as either a work of private grief or cultural criticism. Some critics have stressed either possibility to the loss of the poem's richness. Early criticism, in general, focused on the poem as an expression of the deterioration of Europe after the Great War. Later criticism has been principally interested in the psychological aspects of the work. Eliot admits to some of the latter when he writes:

Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it, indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling. (qtd. in Valerie Eliot 1)

The psychological element has been considered an underlying determinant in the poem, as John Porter Houston explains in his study:

Present-day critics, for example, no longer take The Waste Land as primarily a lament for European civilization or the direct result of the First World War. We now see that the poem is about personal relations and only incidentally a Blick ins Chaos. (123-24)

The truth of the matter is that we cannot give emphasis to either private or cultural values in the work; they exist in equilibrium, in hybrid modulation. To give weight to either dimension is, I think, to reduce the aesthetic wealth of the poem. The fact that the First World War was very much on Eliot's mind is evident in the following passage written in 1917:

...everyone's individual lives are so swallowed up in the one great tragedy that one almost ceases to have personal experiences or emotions, and such as one has seem so unimportant, where before it would have seemed interesting even to tell about a lunch of bread and cheese. (qtd. in Valerie Eliot xiii)

It is perhaps impossible to separate the social from the private tragedy, The Waste Land as cultural poem and as expression of private grief. Though not a perfect paradigm of these value-sets, the first part of "What The Thunder Said" gives some indication of the hybrid "drift":

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
 After the frosty silence in the gardens
 After the agony in stony places
 The shouting and the crying

Prison and palace and reverberation
 Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
 He who was living is now dead
 We who were living are now dying
 With a little patience

Here is no water but only rock
 Rock and no water and the sandy road
 The road winding above among the mountains
 Which are mountains of rock without water
 If there were water we should stop and drink
 Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
 Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
 If there were only water amongst the rock
 Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit
 Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit...

Eliot considered the first part of "What The Thunder Said" to be the best portion of the poem (the above represents a segment of this). In fact, it does seem to reach the highest register of "high" style, with a very sustained and moving lyrical patterning. A line, for example, like "Of thunder of spring over distant mountains" is buoyed by prepositions. The prepositions also tend to retard the line. The three occurrences of "After" in initial position also promote the passage and suggest a religious meaning in trinity. ("Ash-Wednesday" begins with three occurrences of "Because" in initial position -- a more patently religious poem.) The anaphora of this stanza serves some of the same purpose as in the Pound passage, but it has greater resonance to the Other in its religious motif and implications.

The second stanza is characterized by the deictic "Here" and the repetition of no/only (in the segment not quoted). These two procedures point to the absence of

water in this landscape, and of course the dimension of the Fisher King can never be revived without water. The sustained cadence is broken dramatically by the indentation of "If there were water," which follows the second stanza, followed in the succeeding stanza by a shortening of line and acceleration of pace. An onomatopoeic construction represents the penultimate line -- "Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop" -- and this is a playful and deadly serious gesture at the same time. It is prelude to the final line, "But there is no water," which closes the stanza with a click of death.

The first part of "What The Thunder Said" ends with the destruction of London and the downfall, I assume, of all earthly cities. This "demonic" apocalypse is foreshadowed in previous lines and in various episodes of The Waste Land, most of which represent psychic and cultural rupture. The above passage of the poem (and following lines) is a collocation, in fact, of cultural and psychological breakdown. Eliot writes in his notes about this section: "In the first part of Part V three themes are employed: the journey to Emmaus, the approach to the Chapel Perilous (see Miss Weston's book) and the present decay of eastern Europe" (53). His programmatic statement indicates the conflation of religious, mythic, and historical themes; but he makes no suggestion of the psychological/lyrical resonances also implicit.

We can easily read into the first stanza an element of the agon. It is an agon not only of the Other, but of the

poet and of all the "characters" in The Waste Land. "We who were living are now dying" indicates, I believe, an inner "swerve" as well as an outer, and the earlier anaphora, as we have said, intensifies the agon. The life/death dialectics are everywhere manifold in the poem: it is a collective agon the poet is dwelling upon, as well as his own. We may remember some earlier lines in this connection:

Unreal City,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.

The second stanza of the foregoing passage dwells on the theme of fertility/sterility. This theme has been foreshadowed in the sexual episodes of the poem, all of which show sex as corrupted, as an aggressive arena of the human condition. Interrelated with this aspect of the poem is the sterility of nature itself. The very important second movement of Part I is an excellent illustration:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is a shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

This movement represents another religious allusion -- as Eliot indicates in his notes -- but taken with the movement from Part V, we can discern psychological correspondences as well. Eliot's Waste Land is an earth without water, of desert rock, of "stony rubbish," of "broken images." The sky that covers this earth gives off only a "sterile thunder without rain" (appearing later in stanza two). Juxtaposed with this natural sterility is the sterility or terror of the human situation. In the second movement of Part I, a rather terrifying shadow follows "us," the readers, and the terminal warning, "I will show you fear in a handful of dust," conflates terror and death. In the movement from Part V a death theme is presented in stanza one, and in stanza two, a number of demonic images are presented: the absence of the possibility of thought in "Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think"; the awful human visages of "carrious teeth" and "red sullen faces" that "sneer and snarl" (later in stanza); and the general physical discomfort of "Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit."

This is not an earth, in short, in which human life can exist. The human being will become "wasted" in this waste land; like the aridity and fertility of the land he will also rot -- within. The Fisher King perishes in this earth and all his kingdom with him; and the soul of the poet perishes as well.

With the demonic apocalypse at the close of the first movement of Part V --

Falling towers
 Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
 Vienna London
 Unreal

-- we witness the deconstruction of civilization (all civilization), but by extension the crumbling of the lyric self as well. This latter notion is supported, I believe, by several elements -- one being the very intimacy of natural and human decay in a juxtapositional presentation; another being the very accumulation of thematically related movements in the poem, or the recurrence of image clusters. Helen Gardner in examining the principles of organization in the poem points out in fact that "the progress in The Waste Land...is not the progress of narrative, movement along a line," but rather "a deeper and deeper exploration of an original scene or theme" (96).

What we feel in the poem is not so much a naked lyric I, a confessional subjectivity, but the lyric agonies of someone who is suffering in private. Gardner earlier maintains in this regard:

The Waste Land is a series of visions: it has neither plot nor hero. The protagonist, or poet, is not a person. Sometimes he is a silent listener, sometimes a voice that asks questions, but gives no answers or only cryptic ones. (89)

I would not go to this extreme: the poet is a person, but one who remains behind the scenes that he creates, the scenes of suffering that are his own in his private soul. The cultural devolution in the work, which has equal importance to the psychological breakdown, makes the latter more charged; and the psychological impacts on the cultural as well. The lyric-epic modalities of the poem work hand in hand to strengthen meaning, and the alternation of lyrical effusions and colloquial speech intensifies the poem's music.

Eliot is highly conscious of the catastrophe to Europe. The Great War had much to do with not only physical destruction, but with spiritual and psychological breakdown as well. The downfall of these cities is interestingly paralleled earlier in the poem by the fall of the London Bridge. This fall has an analogue in Crane's work with the fiery destruction of the Brooklyn Bridge in "Atlantis." But Crane's apocalypse is prerequisite to a higher civilization on earth; Eliot's "demonic" apocalypse seems to represent a definitive end, or a disaster that can only be recovered in the purer civilizations of the past or a rarified "civilization" beyond earth. Both poems, however, behave according to the hybrid phenomenon, and both, despite their philosophical differences, embrace the tragic.

William Carlos Williams continues the hybrid phenomenon in local regions in Paterson, a poem that is antici-

pated in the earlier epics of Pound, Eliot, and Crane. In his Autobiography he defines the program for his poem, and in discussing its city-subject he writes:

I took the city as my "case" to work up, really to work it up. It called for a poetry such as I did not know, it was my duty to discover or make such a context on the "thought." To make a poem, fulfilling the requirements of the art, and yet new, in the sense that in the very lay of the syllables Paterson as Paterson would be discovered... (392)

Williams was seeking an aesthetics of the local and a poetics based on the American idiom. His epic would be one of place, of the city as man, and would be grounded in the speech of the New World. Like The Bridge, Paterson is a stroke against The Waste Land, at least programmatically, in trying to construct a city-civilization as opposed to laying "waste" the contemporary world. But as in The Bridge, there would also be ruptures in Williams' poem -- a library fire, for example, as analogue to the bridge fire in Crane's poem. Like Crane's romantic incompleteness, also, a central theme of Paterson would be divorce.

Another parallelism between the two works is in the very metalinguistic character of their purposes and poetry. As Williams points out in the autobiographical passage, the city of Paterson would be constructed out of language blocks, an appropriate analogue to the real bricks of city building. As Crane deconstructs his bridge in order to build it anew out of language, Williams would take his city apart, bit by historical and cultural bit,

in order to reconstruct it as a structure of "syllables." In both works this aggressive construction comes to an apocalypse of both text and world -- though a regeneration occurs either explicitly or implicitly at terminus.

Like the other modernist epics examined here, Paterson evolves out of Williams' earlier poetry and poetics. His "no ideas but in things," articulated in his program for Paterson, had a long foregrounding in his work, beginning with the imagistic lyrics of his early and middle career. The "things" of his earlier poetry, the objects of his contemplation -- one thinks readily of the red wheelbarrow -- are converted in Paterson to an actual and conceptual place. If a thing takes up space in a point of time, then a city takes up space within an historical epoch. As Williams had once studied the red wheelbarrow or the grief of the widow in springtime, he would now study Paterson. The city would have the same kind of "livingness" and it would be compared to the life of a man.

Dr. Paterson would be the major protagonist of the poem, a persona for Dr. Williams himself; and his presence assures that this too would be a subjective as well as objective epic. For Paterson also springs out of the lyrical roots of Williams' earlier work, and yet of course it is an expansion upon these roots as well. The work would investigate themes that Williams had never pursued before, and it would be formally an experiment like the other works of this new genre.

To accomplish this epic task, Williams would have to become a member of a community, would have to, that is, acquire a feeling of communitas away from the solitary lyric I. His city would be the ground of this conception, the concrete manifestation of universal and communal epos. Bernstein maintains, however, that Williams' portrait of his city is not authentic, when he writes:

It is the political, historical, and economic reality of Paterson, its existence as a city, that is curiously missing, a virtual blank at the poem's core. (209)

I take exception with this point of view for two reasons: first, political, historical, and economic data do in fact exist in the poem, though not for the sake of a sociological case study of the place; and second, the city is a man (or men and women) more than it is a geographical place. This is to say, Paterson is less a place than it is a living organism. No matter what Williams may have announced about his poem, it is principally a work about the human condition as it happens to locate itself within a place and less about the place as such. At the same time, the aesthetics of "thingness" do in fact evolve to an aesthetics of place: Williams is taking on a broader study of the world. But in this translation, the human factor becomes all the more important and the dramatic aspect stands out. Bernstein discusses the "voices" in the work as one element in its human drama:

This network of voices that are other than and yet constituent elements of a single text, functions, I believe, much like Pound's literary citations and historical exempla, serving to deflect our subjectivization of the narrative into a unified, lyric utterance. (221)

When I spoke of Williams' "thingness," I did not mean to exclude his dramatic capacity or his humanistic strengths, that are well known. Characters such as the springtime widow or Anthony are memorable, and Williams of course wrote novels and plays as well. However, I believe dramatic scope in general widens in Paterson, and the human element becomes deeper.

The cultural, historical, and demographic concerns of Paterson are modulated by a subjective voice that occasionally rises above the other voices in the poem, those that appear principally through the prose inclusions. The most lyrical segment of the work appears in Book II, section III. It is in fact a poem unto itself. Its beauty needs no introduction, and selections from it follow:

The descent beckons
 as the ascent beckoned
 Memory is a kind
of accomplishment
 a sort of renewal
 even
an initiation, since the spaces it opens are new
places
 inhabited by hordes
 heretofore unrealized,
of new kinds --
 since their movements
 are towards new objectives
(even though formerly they were abandoned)

No defeat is made up entirely of defeat -- since

the world it opens is always a place
 formerly
 unsuspected...

...For what we cannot accomplish, what
 is denied to love,
 what we have lost in the anticipation--
 a descent follows,
 endless and indestructible .

This passage represents Williams' own aesthetics of despair and redemption. It is the subjective consciousness, the lyric I, strongly asserting itself in a world wounded by a hopelessness: by divorce, by death, by love gone wrong, by cultural decay and dislocation. The psychological descent of the self, a psychic death, is, according to Williams (and Crane as well), a necessary prerequisite to redemption; but even more, this descent has positive attributes given the powers of memory. Loss is never final; it is always recoverable through memory, which plants the seed for new worlds. And it is indeed a new world that Williams has in mind: American civilization, American language, can, in proper hands, be remedial to past loss, to the European experience. It is in this sense that Williams and Crane divide; for I believe again that Crane was seeking a bridge-solution, a linkage between Old and New. Williams finds a solution in the American project, the true epos of Whitman, a poetry that will violently break from the past.

But the American project has fallen short of perfection, and Paterson is strewn with images and episodes of

rupture. The lyrical efflux of the foregoing passage is an attempt to recover from this cultural loss (as well as the loss suffered by self). Nevertheless, it fails to do so entirely because Williams found it necessary to add a fifth book to his epic, which sees art and the imagination as the true curative instruments, means by which loss and death can be reasonably accepted. Memory, in short, is insufficient without the record of art.

Paterson becomes that record, a work in which lyric and epic modalities balance against one another and in which the man is the city and the city is the man. In this hybrid "environment," the city's river is the bloodstream of its doctor-poet -- the bard who sings its life along with his own.

In the four modernist epics examined here, there exist different calibrations of lyric/epic, subjective/objective. The Bridge is definitively the most lyrical of the four: it is an effusion of the Romantic spirit as well as a modernist paradigm. Here, the lyric I is more dominant than in the other works and is less willing to surrender its voice to others. But it does surrender, and the poem becomes like the others a hybrid phenomenon.

This is a genre that I believe, along with Bernstein, needs further investigation. We must realize, however, that though there are common properties inherent in the genre, there are also distinctions in the generic matrix between the individual works. The Cantos is perhaps the

only true epic of the four by virtue of its inclusiveness and length: we may call it a universal epic. It possesses cultural and lingual diversity and is a work of the broadest stroke. The Waste Land is a mythic epic, using mythic material as the objective correlative of private and public values. Its formal method is "mythical," which is Eliot's term for a new kind of narrative procedure initiated by Ulysses. This method is circular rather than linear, and applies, again, to all modernist epics in general. Paterson is a local epic, finding its material in a place -- a place that contains the human factor and potentially the entire universe. Finally, The Bridge is a visionary epic, treating of the American condition and seeking a new formula for civilization and presumably for the self as well.

In spite of these gradations, all four share one important phenomenon beside the hybrid matrix: that is, a tragic modality. Other than The Waste Land, which from its very conception had the tragic within it, the other works take on tragic contours despite their original intentions. Both The Cantos and The Bridge are "overcome" by the tragic, and Williams was compelled to add a fifth book to Paterson to save it from its tragic closure. These poets "fall" to tragedy, and the epic posture is impossible to sustain. Despite their various strategies for impersonality, the works they produce are substantially subjective -- articulations, in part, of grief and

rupture. At the same time, these works are all answers to tragedy. The Waste Land may again be the exception, but even Eliot's work despite its pessimism, attempts, in my opinion, to reconcile itself to tragedy by embracing its deepest gloom. It cannot overcome the tragic defeat, but it can at least give meaning to it. In any event, the modernist epic constitutes a genre that is highly eclectic, one poised between lyric, epic, and tragic world views.

3. Conclusion to the Dissertation

The Bridge is a poem of many moods and many ideas, as the number of possible readings would reflect. Because its meanings are so layered, I believe only a multiple reading approach, as this dissertation has attempted, can do justice to its diversity and wealth. We can near its ultimate world view only by entertaining its various worlds. Frederick J. Hoffman is one of the few critics who judged the poem's importance within literary history, when he identified it as an experimental work of the experimental twenties. His interpretation, however, does not locate the work in terms of the Pound and Eliot climate and the modernist epic.

The social and political background of the twenties is also a powerful factor in the poem's composition. The Great War in its physical and psychological devastations indeed altered the whole structure of human conscious-

ness. Though Crane was not directly involved in the war, he was highly sensitive to its social ramifications and was influenced by the texts of Frank, Pound, and Eliot that demonstrated, implicitly or explicitly, the terror of the conflict and the world-wound it left behind. Frank's Our America, Pound's "Hugh Selwyn Mauberley," and Eliot's The Waste Land all present a world monumentally affected by the war and were crucial texts for The Bridge.

But Crane hoped to reconstruct this world in his work. "Faustus and Helen" was the first step, the first poem in which he recognized himself as a social poet, hoping to expand upon his Symbolist beginnings. Crane would discover, however, that his effort at rebuilding would be exhausting and almost futile given the deeply tragic tone of the world after the Great War, a tone that would never disappear from his work, in fact. This tone would leave its imprint on The Bridge, and indeed would grow stronger as Crane suffered through his project and became increasingly disillusioned with his American ideal.

In fact, the only way the bridge finally was constructed -- and the world "reconstructed" -- was for Crane to embrace the tragic fully and to mollify it through a Nietzschean spirit of Will. His "society" would have to be tragically deconstructed in order to be tragically reconstructed. This cycle amounts to Crane's aesthetics of suffering, in which recuperation can take place only after tragic rupture and loss.

What Crane was really doing was locating (and therefore constructing) an American tradition. He reenergized the fabulae of American history in the same way as Williams; but In the American Grain may be more successful in this than The Bridge. Williams truly found a mythos of the American experience, digging under the skin of the culture into its genetic bloodstream. But The Bridge is more successful than Williams' Paterson in reviving a wounded America. Crane "re-bridged" Old and New Worlds: his poem is an idealized attempt to strike a new synthesis and to compose a new tradition. His project is not a rejection of the European father, but a reconciliation of the two worlds -- toward a visionary future. And the American literature of this future would body forth the seed of both worlds.

In Crane's scheme, the Romantic lyric poet would not desert this epic task. The theme of love and Crane's "logic of metaphor" are both instrumental to the activity of cultural regeneration. It is the poet's love power and love need as well as the generative powers of language that are fundamental elements in the construction of the bridge. The Bridge is both a love poem and a metalinguistic undertaking: it strives out to the Other and it draws in to its own words. Ultimately, it fuses these two streams in its progress toward a collective Other, toward society and the divine.

It shares with other modernist epics a hybrid structure, a tragic view, and a great sense of ambitiousness. But, of course, it has its own special purposes and thematic obsessions as well. Its attitude to tragedy, for example, is certainly at variance with The Waste Land, and to some degree with The Cantos and the later Paterson as well. But these works all embody the lyric-epic modality, the tension of the "solitary singer" and the social seer. And they all evolve out of the lyric Image, or variations thereof.

In fact, Crane's poem is a hybrid-bridge of lyric and epic modes. It swings between an exquisite love poem and an expansive visionary epic. It is both at the same time. And it is a sequence of voices as well, an epic sequence that constitutes one poem. Perhaps it is the only sequence as such among the modernist epics cited, and I believe it has more organic order than these -- though it is of course not a linear narrative by any means.

The history of criticism of the poem has been a mixed one. Early critics were confused by the poem's lack of linearity, its absence of a hero and a clear morality, and its plotlessness. They read it according to the standards of the classical epic and therefore labeled it a failure. Later critics have understood its form, though perhaps have not analyzed this aspect closely enough.

Indeed, The Bridge's formal coding of lyric-subjectivity and epic-objectivity bears much on the thematic level

of the work and on its overall world view. It is a poem of inner and outer, of love longing and quest-voyage, of social collectivity and the individual psyche. It is a work that seeks to locate a place for science within a highly poeticized world view.

The Bridge is the perfect poem for Crane, one that grew out of lyrical roots and matured into a lyrical epic. It can be fuller in its historical and social dimensions, as I have recommended, but it is a large enterprise, an extremely ambitious work, and as a whole a masterpiece. It is a poem with symphonic force and with sublime music, but it speaks as well as sings. And it creates a new view of history where the historical realm can be illuminated and influenced by the Romantic Will. Despite the poem's ambivalences, this Romantic Power remains manifest, and the poem is essentially an affirmative statement. It is a work, finally, that bridges the historical and the sublime, and one in which transcendence is palpable in the here and now.

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