HART CRANE'S "MYSTICAL-EMPIRICAL" POETRY AND 
ITS RELATION TO NINETEENTH CENTURY TRADITIONS

by

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M.A., University of Manitoba, 1967

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to
the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December, 1975

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation defines and analyzes a conflict which is present in all of Crane's poetry. The conflict is based on the opposition between two outlooks which are called mystical and empirical. Because both of these outlooks were central to Crane's vision, their apparent deep opposition troubled him. Crane's personal tensions both in his early private life and in his sensibility are important considerations in understanding this conflict. However, since he tried to discover a balance in life through his poetry, his art rather than his life is the central focus of this study.

Crane turned to the literature of three Nineteenth Century traditions--Romanticism, Transcendentalism and American Symbolism--for his solution. In the works of these traditions, he found the same troubled conflict and the search for a solution in a unified statement. Consequently, he examined their art closely and was greatly influenced by it. At times, this influence appears to be an unconscious absorption of principles or techniques; at others, it is expressed in obvious, conscious imitation. Crane's ability or inability to incorporate the work of these earlier traditions is closely related to the success or failure of his own vision. His life-long relationship with these traditions is, therefore, the central energy behind his work. It is this relationship which is the concern of this dissertation.
Chapter 1 defines the terms "mystical" and "empirical" as they are applied to Crane's art. It also provides a brief overview of Crane's poetry and letters in order to demonstrate how the tensions represented by the two terms are developed throughout all of his work.

Chapters 2 to 5 deal with Crane's relationship to English Romanticism. Crane's earliest work is found to be an imitation of the anti-"empirical" literature of the fin de siècle. His maturer work is then studied in relation to the poetry of the High Romantics—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Blake. The works of these poets are compared to Crane's both through analyses of individual poems and through studies of themes and poetic techniques.

Chapters 6 and 7 explore Crane's debt to American Transcendentalism. The "mystical"-directed ideas and works of Emerson and Whitman are explored in relation to Crane's poetry and poetic. Inherent contradictions in the works of the two Transcendentalist figures appear again in Crane's.

Chapters 8 to 10 deal with the American Symbolists—Poe, Dickinson and Melville. Crane found that these writers differed from the American Transcendentalists, mainly because of their distrust of a completely optimistic-minded outlook. The relationship of Crane's work to theirs demonstrates his share in this distrust.

Chapter 11 is the conclusion. It summarizes Crane's relationship to the three Nineteenth Century traditions, as a difficult and uneven, but courageous, attempt to renew poetic faith in the Twentieth Century.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I.</th>
<th>INTRODUCTION: THE SEER AND THE SEEN, CRANE'S EMPIRICAL AND MYSTICAL DUALISM</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>CRANE AND FIN DE SIECLE.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>HART CRANE AND HIGH ROMANTICISM: WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>CRANE AND HIGH ROMANTICISM: SHELLEY AND KEATS</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>HART CRANE AND HIGH ROMANTICISM: BLAKE</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>HART CRANE AND AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM: EMERSON</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>HART CRANE AND AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM: WHITMAN</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>HART CRANE AND THE &quot;OTHER AMERICANS&quot;: POE.</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>HART CRANE AND THE &quot;OTHER AMERICANS&quot;: DICKINSON</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X.</td>
<td>HART CRANE AND THE &quot;OTHER AMERICANS&quot;: MELVILLE</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI.</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS CONSULTED</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To my friends, especially to Ingrid, who provided me with more assistance and support than I can ever hope to acknowledge here and, of course, to Kitty.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE SEER AND THE SEEN, CRANE'S EMPIRICAL AND MYSTICAL DUALISM.

Did one look at what one saw
Or did one see what one looked at?
("Hieroglyphic")

Hart Crane's poetry and poetic manifest a deep-felt relation to the mainstreams of nineteenth century English and American literature. This relationship stems from the poet's attempt to explore and, eventually, to resolve a dichotomy which posed his "mystical" and "empirical" outlooks as separate and antagonistic forces. Crane found presentations of this essential conflict in the works of four literary groups: the English fin de siècle writers, the High Romantics, the American Transcendentalists, and the American Symbolists, Poe, Dickinson, and Melville. He saw that these artists were concerned either with arriving at some way of harmonizing these two outlooks, or with accepting them as the uncompromising "vortices" of man's predicament.

Since Crane's career was largely that of an apprentice poet, attempting to reach some understanding of this dichotomy, his imitation and study of other poets are hardly unexpected. More importantly, however, he turned to the nineteenth century artists because he was attempting to locate some foundation which would support his vision of cosmic unity. In fact, much of his prophetic "epic", The Bridge, is concerned with consciously organizing the works of his predecessors into a tradition or collective "faith". The poems that were composed before and after The Bridge also reflect considerable, although at
times less obvious, affinities with the writers of the previous century.

Crane's responses to his predecessors were not, of course, equal or constant. In fact, the course of Crane's change in allegiance from the English Romantics through to the Symbolists roughly reflects the chronological development of his poetry and poetic. It also suggests the pattern of his movement from a "mystical" outlook to a balanced relationship between the "empirical" and the "mystical", to an "anti-empirical" outlook.

Consequently, a careful analysis of Crane's relationship with the works of the preceding century is essential to an understanding of the shape and direction of his outlook. Such a study could scarcely be handled by a mere intertextual analysis or a listing of influences, however, for three reasons:

(1) Crane did not always represent the artists accurately. He either misunderstood or refused to accept their visions as they presented them. Often, instead of taking on their voices, he obliged them to take on his.

(2) Crane's changing relation to these artists also changed his conception of their relation to his work.

(3) Because of his urge to achieve a unity of vision, he often wilfully overlooked contradictions between the outlooks of the various artists, or within the works of any one of them. At times, the drive for a harmonic vision forced him to repudiate the existence of his empirical nature.
Subsequent chapters will attempt to analyse Crane's relationship to the four movements mentioned above. The remainder of this chapter presents a more thorough definition of the nature and scope of Crane's dual outlook.

I. "Mystical" and "Empirical": a Question of Terminology

Since Crane never reached a full understanding of the tension that existed in his art, and since his attitude towards it was frequently coloured by his own intuitive and nervous temperament, no really adequate terms can be found to give it accurate definition. The words "mystical" and "empirical" are used here to designate the polarities of this tension since they have a close relation to the poet's own understanding of his art.

The word "mystical" is not an alien one to apply to Crane's work. The poet figure in his first extant poem, "The Moth That God Made Blind", is identified by the "mystical sign" which indicates the special nature of his role among the rest of his fellow beings. Crane also used it as a leading term in his definition of The Bridge as a "mystical synthesis of 'America'" (Letters, p. 124). Several of his critics also employed it as a key word to describe the nature and direction of his writing. Waldo Frank, one of Crane's personal literary friends, found that the reason for the poet's eventual loss of creativity was his failure to preserve his own belief in the authenticity of the mystic's role. According to Frank, "the mystic is a man who knows by immediate experience the organic continuity between his self and the cosmos". This was a continuity which Crane desired with
all his being.

Amos Wilder sees Crane as "a mystic and in some sense a pan-
theist". He approaches the poet as a "religious" figure whose "work
betrays a search after the absolute". His terminology appears some-
what vague and inconclusive, however, because he does not define his
terms with any amount of precision.

In his book, Studies in Structure, Robert J. Andreach states
that Crane, Joyce, Eliot and Hopkins are "not mystical poets; a desig-
nation which all too frequently means almost anything to anyone". Andreach is wary of using such a term too loosely:

Since the experience of the mystic is the unitive way of
infused contemplation, or the experimental perception of
God's presence in the soul, which sets him off from other
men, it is imperative that we recognize that the state of
infused contemplation is not presented in their works. .

Nevertheless, he does not deny that the "words mystic and mystical" have been applied to Crane's works; nor does he altogether refuse to use them himself: ". . . his poetry is mystical in the popular sense
in that it contains a suspension of the rational faculties, a heighten-
ing of perception, and a suspension of the experience of time and
space...". Andreach qualifies his discussion by suggesting that his
use of the word "mysticism" will "mean always Crane's sense of
mysticism". This outlook presents problems, however. How can a
definition be based on something not yet defined? Furthermore,
Andreach has turned the discussion from "mystical" and "mystic" to
"mysticism". The latter term refers to a totally different subject,
since it applies not to a quality or propensity, but to an organized
systematic view-point: something which Crane never claimed to have, and which should therefore never be looked for in his work. Although Andreach's qualification of the term "mystic" is justified, it should be grounded on the influence of the impure nature of poetic quests for transcendence and on the "empirical" nature of Crane's sensibility, not on a refusal to label the poet a mystic, a subject which has little relevance here.

The central problem of Crane's pursuit of a unitive poetry of organic continuity originated in the antagonistic nature of the empirical world which Frank describes as a "jungle of machines and disintegrating values". The word "empirical" may not have appeared in Crane's work, but it is not an entirely new term to apply to Crane criticism. Michael Hamburger has used it to diagnose a stylistic incoherence in the poet's work. For Hamburger, this unresolved alternation was based on a conflict between Crane's allegiance to "empiricism and the imagination".

According to the "empirical" outlook, the only reality is that which comes to man via the powers of sense perception. Nothing exists anywhere in man's experience, even in his mental reaches, which is not first based on sense experience. The world which man discovers in this way must be a fragmented, aggregative one, since the senses are not immediately experiencing anything in a complete and undetermined way, but are dependent on their various data to resolve themselves into a proximate harmony. According to the empirical view, reality is outward and strictly phenomenal. Man's share in such a world is
limited to the nature of his response to it. He can never say whether it is, in fact, different from or other than the world he uncovers through his senses. The soundness of such an outlook resides in the irrefutable concretion and plausibility of its "real" world, provided that one overlooks the questionable nature of sense experience as verifiable and constant and is satisfied with an indirect perception of an order that is extra-mental. From such a viewpoint, the finite conditional world possesses a degree of substance and accuracy, but only within a framework determined by perception.

The "mystical" outlook is based on man's belief in a power of coalescence which unites the self and the universe in a single harmony. This power transcends an oblique and conditional, empirically-based view. It abrogates the controls of all relational or mediating factors in the discovery of reality. If such factors have any meaning at all, they serve only as signs of a hidden, immanent world. The pursuit of a noumenal outlook renders everything in human nature meaningful only as a part of an undifferentiated design that is whole and unanalyzable. Any viewpoint which is grounded on the location of reality has no function here. It is neither "inner" nor "outer", neither "up" nor "down". Nor is there any purpose to stating that reality is of the mind or outside of it. All distinctions are erased, including the major one of the "I" and the "non-I". In her book, Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness, Evelyn Underhill defines the "mystical" experience as "non-individualistic":

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It implies, indeed, the abolition of individuality, of that hard separateness, that 'I, Me, Mine', which makes of man a finite isolated thing. It is essentially a movement of the heart, seeking to transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to ultimate Reality; for no personal gain, to satisfy no transcendental curiosity, to obtain no other-worldly joys, but purely from an instinct of love. 

Such a view has a strong immediacy and absoluteness. Unconditioned by any structure or order, the mystical self finds the world because it is the world. On the other hand, modern man has a difficult time being sympathetic to this outlook, since he is a product of the individualistic and self-determining outlook of the Western Weltanschauung. For this reason, his outlook does not allow him to disappear so completely into a concordant generality which effaces the central authenticity of the self as an independent phenomenal being.

Crane's art could hardly have grown out of an outlook that was as directly philosophical and abstract as the purely "empirical" or as non-rational and altruistic as the purely "mystical". His belief in the common-sense world of sense experience was rooted in his social and cultural heritage of mid-Western pioneer commercialism. In 1919, after being pressed for some time into a Christian Science frame of mind, he found himself forced to abandon that faith because of its "total denial of the animal and organic world" (Letters, p. 16). His acceptance of the "empirical" as the basis or raw material of his "mystical" experience was something that he found difficult to deny. He realized, as he stated to his friend, Munson, that his poetry would "lose its impact and become simply categorical" if he denied "the more direct terms of physical-psychic experience" (Letters, p. 239). Crane felt the need
for a reality that was common and a part of the external world to
support his vision. The absence of the agreement between the substance
of the external world and the order of the subjective consciousness of
the poet is what troubled him so much in the late days of composition
of *The Bridge*:

> These 'materials' were valid to me to the extent that I
> presumed them to be (articulate or not) at least organic
> and active factors in the experience and perceptions of our
> common race, time and belief. . . . The symbols of reality
> necessary to articulate this 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. I may amuse and delight and flatter myself as much
> as I please—but I am only evading a recognition and playing
> Don Quixote in an immorally conscious way. (Letters, p. 261)

Crane's image of the artist who "more and more licks his own vomit,
mistaking it for the common diet" (Letters, p. 259) demonstrates his
distrust of an art that did not first absorb the "empirical" before
pursuing any new directions beyond it.

Possibly Crane's dilemma would not have been so great if his only
task had been the rejection of his heritage and his past. Indeed, part
of his poetry does seem to put the blame on these sources for hampering
the "mystical" progress of his art. The situation is a much more
complicated one, however. The main problem stems rather from the
nature of Crane's and, indeed, of all artistic pursuits. Although
Crane believed these pursuits to be means of exploring his mystical
nature, the empirical aspect, not only of his age but of art itself,
proved a constant opposing force. The rationale of the balance and
imbalance in Crane's art can be traced to the very nature of poetic
practice, which, if mystically directed at all, is oriented toward an impure version of this outlook. When Denis Saurat stated in his book, *Literature and Occult Tradition*, that he preferred the term "visionary" over "mystical" for the poetry that works an "alliance of reason, intuition and myth", he was explaining the course of Crane's writing as well as its deviation from Underhill's definition of the purely mystical outlook. For Saurat, the poet could not be "mystical" since "the pride which is characteristic of our poets is quite incompatible with the abdication of personality, the incorporation of God, which is perhaps the most persistent feature of mysticism". Louis Dembo also qualifies the mystical nature of art by speaking of "aesthetic mysticism" as a special outlook which pursued "a new word and a new vision in itself". He shows how this outlook relates to the Imagist practice:

The implication is that the image is not simply a vehicle for transcribing a sensation but represents part of the sensation itself—or, better, it is an idealized recreation, a 'new vision', which has come to be a thing-in-itself.

Crane's awareness of the full "mystical" potential of his verse depended on the "coadunating" powers of his artistic outlook. In achieving a continuity between his self and the eternal cosmos, attained at the "mystical-sensationalistic moment, the moment of ivresse", the artist must remain aware of his double allegiance. Dembo insists on this point when he quotes Richard Aldington's remark on the "sense of reverence", a sense which is the origin of "mystic-aesthetic" pursuit:
By 'reverence' I understand no false or affected humility, but an intimate and spontaneous conviction that what is not me, what is outside me, is far greater and more interesting than I am, although the only account I can give of it is how it appears to me and through me.25

Undoubtedly, the mystic and the mystic-aesthetic do share a similar quest for transcendence. Underhill has shown that their temperaments can be closely compared:

In mysticism the will is united with the emotions in an impassioned desire to transcend the sense-world, in order that the self may be joined by love to the one eternal and ultimate object of love; whose existence is intuitively perceived by that which we used to call the soul, but now find it easier to refer to as the 'cosmic' or 'transcendal' sense. This is the poetic or religious temperament acting upon the plane of reality.26

However, these two temperaments always remain discrete on the one fundamental issue which Dembo and Saurat suggested in their works. While the mystic's object is to "escape the sense world", the "intuition of the Real"27 remains an integral part of all artistic experience. Since this intuition "must be present if these arts are to justify themselves as heightened forms of experience", the mystical outlook can only be present "in a modified form in the arts".28

Therefore, while the arts and the mystic experience may be closely interrelated, each must finally go its separate way:

But we do not call everyone who has these partial or artistic intuitions of reality a mystic, any more than we call everyone a musician who has learned to play the piano. The true mystic is the person in whom such powers transcend the merely artistic and visionary stage, and are exalted to the point of consciousness, and who has definitely surrendered himself to the embrace of Reality. As artists stand in a peculiar relation to the phenomenal world, receiving rhythms and discovering truth and beauties that are hidden from other men, so this true mystic stands in a peculiar relation to the transcendental world. . . . 29
The absolutist approach to the Absolute, the purist approach to the Pure, renders mysticism an experience of "passionate emotion"\textsuperscript{30} distinct from artistic experiences grounded in the phenomenal world. "Mysticism, in its pure form, is a science of alternates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else. . . ."\textsuperscript{31}

The phrase, "in its pure form", acts as an important qualification to Underhill's definition. Poetry relates closely to impure mysticism since it develops the experience of a movement toward transcendence without the completion of that movement. Once transcendence is experienced, poetry is not only unnecessary but impossible. Language will not allow complete disembodiment or detachment; nor will art divest itself of its role as approximator or dissimulator. Nevertheless, poetry does have its rightful heritage as a power akin to mysticism, especially when language becomes most symbolic:

All kinds of symbolic language come naturally to the articulate mystic, who is often a literary artist as well; so naturally, that he sometimes forgets to explain that his utterance is but symbolic—a desperate attempt to translate the truth of that world into the beauty of this. It is here that mysticism joins hands with music and poetry. . . .\textsuperscript{32}

Crane did not fail to explain the symbolic purpose of his art by accident; rather, he resolved to overlook such a conscious interpretation of his poetry because he hoped it could stand free of all connections with the limitations and approximations of the "empirical" world. Because he pursued an absolute art which reflected nothing but its own perfection, his poetry lost its imaginative strength and stability. Such was the essential flaw of his vision. Without the
"empirical" alloy to temper it, his art was totally susceptible to the corrosiveness of skepticism and nightmare.

II. "The Moth That God Made Blind"

Written in 1915, when Crane was sixteen years of age, "The Moth That God Made Blind" is a minor, juvenile work, of little interest in itself. It is, however, the first extant poem of Crane's career. Furthermore, it indicates his very early preoccupations with the "mystical-empirical" dichotomy and his attempt to formalize it in poetic expression. For these reasons, it merits careful examination. While this poem demonstrates Crane's fears of the threat of the "empirical" world to the poet's being, it also suggests a contradictory urge to escape from a narrowly "mystical" one. What this opposition means to Crane is indicated by the figures he uses to represent these two worlds: the moth and the Sun.

The moths are exotic, delicate figures who have very limited eyesight. Their distant, dreamy world ("far oasis") is surrounded by the hot, infertile desert. In their own world, they are not victims because their nocturnal vision is restricted for a beneficial purpose, namely "for sweetness". Any attempt to scan other "horizons" would be dangerous since it "would only mar" the "joy" that the moths can experience in their "own small oasis". The desert and the sun thus represent a force inimical to their "paradise". The undertones of such remarks indicate that Crane is conscious of the narrow and precarious nature of existence in such a shaded "hot-house" world.
One moth, with "signs mystical/And rings macrocosmic", lives even beyond the range of vision of those dedicated to exotic beauty. He dares to take flight, experiencing a moment of voluptuous contact with the world of daylight: "Swinging in spirals round the fresh breasts of day". But in order to achieve this moment, he is forced to sacrifice everything that made him admirable among his own kind. The sun, to him "a black god", destroys his honey wax (i.e., his Icarian) eyes. "His wings atom-withered", he falls to the desert below. This destruction, however, is not an act of intentional maliciousness on the sun's part. The frail moth simply finds the rays too warm to endure. If the sun seems somewhat cruelly enticing ("Seething and rounding in long streams of light/The heat led the moth up in octopus arms"), its baiting of the moth and the apparent malice of its "octopus arms" still suggest an invitation and an embrace in spite of the cost of this event to the moth.

Still, because he has dared this flight, the lone moth experiences a momentary vision of "what his whole race had shunned". Furthermore, this vision is experienced at the same time as he creates his "song", an experience which cannot be separated from the flight itself ("and the torrid hum of great wings was his song"). The moth makes an important discovery here. Moons do exist that are sunned without being destroyed. His world appears, by contrast, isolated, infertile and disembodied because its creatures are restricted by their own narrow self-conception. Once he has achieved this knowledge, however, the moth cannot return to his "paradise", but must fall "still lonely"
to the desert, the land of hostile sun.

In the final stanza of his poem, Crane makes an abrupt and somewhat irritatingly didactic shift from the narrative approach and conception to a largely personal one. Naturally, the reader is meant to assume that the poet has been speaking of his own condition all along. In the desert, lost to the world of the oasis or the world of flight in the open sunshine, this poet hunts for a "spark in the sand". But his contact with the sun and his complete dependence on the dark world of "Arabian moons" which made him have left him injured beyond repair. The three means by which man expresses his contact with any experience have atrophied: "These things I have:--a withered hand;--/Dim eyes;--a tongue that cannot tell". The speaker cannot act, see or tell. The irony is complete in that his physical impairment suggests his poetical one. He cannot evoke any poetic experience, since he cannot write, cannot envision, cannot articulate.

Crane's personal intrusion at the end of "The Moth That God Made Blind" suggests that he is setting up a central dichotomy between the poetic world and a non-poetic one. There are, however, several questions that the poem leaves unresolved. What has caused the moth to change momentarily and voice his allegiance to the sun world? Why must he fail? Why does he desire a foothold in two worlds which are so apparently opposite? Why does the opposition appear to be so strictly a "given", when other moons seem to be able to survive in the presence of the sun? Is the sun invariably an inimical force for the poet-figure? Or is the blind moth merely destroyed because of his
Crane's confused and unresolved allegiance in this poem indicates a pattern that continued throughout the rest of his work. If he had been content to accept this conflict as the order of the universe, his poetry might have grown into mature tragic vision. He, however, interpreted the poet's role as an obligation to resolve this antagonism which he feared, because it seemed capable of annihilating both his human and his artistic natures. His most unusual precocity in discovering this tension led him to some fascinating and painful struggles within his work and within his quest for the recognition of a poetic identity. At times, he managed to resolve this tension, but only in the acceptance of tragedy. Because such a solution would not suit his search for a harmonious cosmic order, Crane always returned to the same fundamental problem. How can the poet try his wings and yet survive?

III. Evidence for the "mystical-empirical" tension in Crane's Letters and Poetry.

Crane's letters and poetry testify to his continued interest in resolving the dichotomy between his "empirical" and "mystical" natures. His awareness of the existence of a solid and tangible world was based, in turn, on a recognition of the world of commerce, the machine age and social and historical events. Thus, in a 1919 letter to William Wright, he openly states that "The commercial aspect is the most prominent characteristic of America and we must all bow to it sooner or later" (Letters, p. 19). The "empirical" world is thus the
"given" world, the world of his heritage, against which he sought to project his private artistic self. Consequently, seven years later, while working on *The Bridge*, Crane reasserted that the artist can invent symbols, but, unless they contact a common world, they are not "symbols of reality" (*Letters*, p. 261). His words "forms, materials, dynamics" (*Letters*, p. 261) used to describe this world invest it with a solidarity, at the same time as it provided him with the basic structure for the exploration of what he termed the "nobler and better" element "in our aspirations" (*Letters*, p. 19). This exploration had to depend on a solid structure to render its achievement substantial and whole.

The poet's ego was not necessarily disembodied and vague, however. In fact, part of his "empirical" outlook was grounded in his very own flesh and blood. Crane was wary of the consequences of a "systematically objectivised" (*Letters*, p. 244) approach to artistic creativity because, as he wrote to his mother, he saw "literature as very closely related to life--its essence, in fact" (*Letters*, p. 191). The life of the poet's creation did not reside in the objective world but found its core in the "necessary 'subjective lymph and sinew'' (*Letters*, p. 244) of the poet's own being.

Crane frequently interpreted his dualistic outlook as a conflict between what he believed "emotionally" and what he believed "intellectually" (*Letters*, p. 261). At times, however, this same dualism was represented by a division between his inner being and the outer world:
I somehow feel about as solitary as I ever felt in my life. Perhaps it's all in the pressure of economic exigencies at present—but I also feel an outward chaos around me—many things happening and much that is good but somehow myself out of it, between two worlds. (Letters, p. 166)

The letter goes on to state, however, that "of course none of this would be were I creating actively myself". Was Crane then inventing the division or was it really there, beyond his own will and ego? The whole nature of reality was based on the answer to this question. It was a problem he never really solved, although it continued to obsess him throughout his career.

The significance of the battle for control over dual sensibility through art was established at a very early time as central to Crane's moral outlook. In 1917, when still in his teens, he was impressed by "ideas about artistic, and psychic balance" (Letters, p. 5). His attempt to find and preserve an order between opposing outlooks was, without doubt, based as much on his personal search for a sexual and artistic identity as on the search for a larger principle that would unite the world and the self:

I realize more entirely every day that I am preparing for a fine life: that I have powers which, if correctly balanced, will enable me to mount to extraordinary latitudes. There is constantly an inward struggle, but the time to worry is only when there is no inward debate, and consequently there is smooth sliding to the devil. There is only one harmony, that is the equilibrium maintained by two opposing forces, equally strong. When I perceive one emotion growing overpowering to a fact, or statement of reason, then the only manly, worthy, sensible thing to do is build up the logical side, and attain balance, and in art—formal expression. (Letters, p. 5)
The positive sobriety and calm assurance of this early statement unfortunately did not always remain with Crane. At times, his letters were shrill and hysterical, self-indulgent and self-pitying:

I have not been able to write one line since I came here . . . .--And my poem was progressing so beautifully until-- -- -- took it into her head to be so destructive! How silly all this sounds! However--it's a cruel jest of Fate--and I doubt if I shall continue to write for another year. For I've lost all faith in my material--'human nature' or what you will--and any true expression must rest on some faith in something. (Letters, p. 264)

Crane's personal traumas and his neurotic disposition, combined with his self-indulgence and his emotional inconstancy, made such a balance as he sought more and more desirable and less and less possible as time went by. If this were the only issue behind Crane's poetry, however, his work would remain interesting merely as case-history. The problems with such a balance stemmed not merely from Crane's increasing efforts to lie to himself as his own fragmented identity continued to trouble him, but from the deepening awareness of the "spiritual disintegration" (Letters, p. 323) of his time.

A brief examination of Crane's poetic development demonstrates how the two opposing forces fascinated and troubled him throughout his career. Since the "formal expression" of art was his way of understanding his central conflict and of establishing the balance between its opposing forces, poetry was both the educative process of his life and the way to his salvation.

Early works following closely after the composition of "The Moth That God Made Blind" show that the initial attempts at a solution originate in efforts to confine his outlook to an anti-empirical
direction. The world in "Love and a Lamp", an earlier version of "Interior", published in 1919, presents the world as "jealous and threatening". The poet, in order to survive, must live "wide from the world". Humanity was, for the young Crane, an enemy which "pecks, claws, sobs and climbs" the walls of the poet's heart, that it would invade and destroy. The poet must withdraw, then, to an "interior" world which is fragile, gentle and dreamy, if he is going to survive:

I have drawn my hands away
Toward peace and the grey margins of the day.
The andante of vain hopes and lost regret
Falls like slow rain that whispers to forget,—
Like a song that neither questions nor replies
It laves with coolness tarnished lips and eyes.

("Meditation")

In 1919, at the age of twenty, Crane wrote "North Labrador", a poem which showed the first signs of a change in attitude toward the empirical world. The feeling of the absoluteness of alienation between subject and object suggests that both worlds remain incomplete. The "land of leaning ice" is the geography of a world without man, a place of complete isolation and total suspension:

'Has no one come here to win you,
Or left you with the faintest blush
Upon your glittering breasts?
Have you no memories, O Darkly Bright?'

Cold-hushed, there is only the shifting of moments
That journey toward no Spring—
No birth, no death, no time nor sun
In answer.

The humanizing metaphor, which envisions the Labrador world as an unsought woman without even the memories of love, ironically only succeeds in dehumanizing the world untouched by man. At this time,
Crane still found that the poet was an unwanted creature, scorned and imprisoned, restricted to his "bedroom occupation". He began to feel that while a world separate from the imagination might continue to exist, it could never really be fulfilled, never really come to life without mankind's love, but would remain in its unformed condition of absolute zero.

In "Black Tambourine", Crane diagnosed the poet's situation as that of a prisoner and slave who "wanders in some mid-kingdom" behind the "world's closed door". Knowing that this world needed the poet's "mystical" insights, which could find the "spiritual gate" for a life restricted to employing only primitive tools, "the plough, the sword/The trowel,—and the monkey wrench", he sought the way of "meek adjustments" and "exile guise" in "Chaplinesque" and "Praise for an Urn". This course still would involve the "sidestep", but would now manifest, behind its evasion, the fact that the poet "can still love the world". Divorced from the "empirical" by his special role, but still bringing his "mystical" qualities to it, the poet becomes the master comic who can transform an empty stage into a world of magic and beauty:

The game enforces smirks; but we have seen
The moon in lonely alleys make
A grail of laughter of an empty ash can,
And through all sound of gaiety and quest
Have heard a kitten in the wilderness.
("Chaplinesque")

From this outlook on the poet's role to the "neo-Platonic" course of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" was a quick and easy step. This ambitious poem led Crane to a closer contact with the occult
centre of the poet's mystical capacity. The transfigurative role of the imagination is developed through the images and language of alchemy and the Mass. Like the priest, the poet's main role is to change the "baked and labeled dough" into "the white wafer cheek of love" through an act of transubstantiation. Like the alchemist, the poet has an alembic in his language which takes the "graduate opacities" and changes them into something without dimension or equivocation. The dimensional world may exist, but it is not for poets:

"For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen"

"For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" indicates the widening of Crane's poetic scope and the achievement of a balance in his troubled dichotomy because he now recognizes the poet's role and can relate it to the empirical world. The unity behind apparent disunity is achieved through love, both spiritual and profane, based on the acceptance of all pain and suffering imaged by a secret communion service and the privacy of sexual union:

Inevitable, the body of the world
Weeps in inventive dust for the hiatus
That winks above it, bluet in your breasts.

The empirical world, the world as body, yearns for its Incarnation, an escape from the transparency that now threatens it ("the earth may glide diaphanous to death"). Paradoxically, the world as body is, in spiritual terms, bodiless until it is redeemed. Its body is only a temporary form and may, at any given time, be forced into becoming a lifeless diaphane. For Crane, at this time, the redemption of the
fallen world can only be achieved in individual private experience, "in that eventual flame" which unites passion with spiritual sublimity.

"Voyages", Crane's great sequence of love poems written over a span of six years, develops the theme of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" with greater care and with a marvellous poignancy found in the magnificence of its incantatory language. The metamorphosis or "transmemberment" in these songs of love gradually erases the distinctions between pain and ecstasy, between flesh and spirit. The poet known that "the bottom of the sea is cruel". He warns the uninitiated that the cosmic totality which the sea symbolizes is a destructive as well as a creative power. Those who go "beyond" the "line" and immerse themselves in the powers of love feel the embrace of the universe, which brings about an even "greater love" beyond time and space ("this mortality alone/Through clay aflow immortally to you"). The love is destroyed, however, when time and space "together in one merciless white blade" come to part the lovers and reawaken them to their doubts and disillusionments ("'There's/Nothing like this in the world'""). The poet does find a consolation, however, in the "higher innocence" achieved after the dismemberment of love. "The imaged Word" suggests a transcendent vision, cool and serene like "April's inmost day", which provides spiritual nourishment to the voyager who, once surviving the perilous baptism, can return home. Crane has, in this poem, achieved the seemingly impossible balance between his empirical and mystical natures without denying the substance of either outlook.

In The Bridge, the poet undertook the ambitious task of discover-
ing the synthesis of vision in a whole larger than the individual person. It is the exploration of a vision which, as its epigraph from The Book of Job suggests, sought to derive its strength "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it". Having gained the confidence that a mystical nature was part of his own person, Crane wanted to discover it without himself as well, in order to gain assurance that it was not, after all, a mere solipsistic illusion.

Although "The Dance" cannot evoke in itself the full expanse of Crane's climactic vision, it provides an example of his course following the exploration of the "empirical" and "mystical" forces in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" and in "Voyages". Now the spiritual alembic is not the matter of personal mannerist exploration through obscure metaphor. Rather, it is the "vision of life enhanced by myth", the return to the collective unconscious of the "pure mythical and smoky soil" (Letters, p. 307). Here the "empirical" world with its "undespoilable, physical beauty" and the "mystical" "vision of spiritual nobility" become one. The power of myth is the power of a spiritual embodiment that exceeds private predications or presuppositions. Myth offers its own interpretation as it appears to generate itself, to gather material and change imperceptibly, to accrete and conflate in its directions and points of reference while remaining essentially constant. Any apparent change in myth is really a new discovery of something contained therein rather than an overthrowing of its truth.
Crane's is a myth of ritual sacrifice leading to metamorphosis. The dance is a combination of the Indians' ritual worship and expression, with the Dionysian return to the primal. The mythical characters, Pocahontas and Maquokeeta, are cosmic figures expressing the course of creation, as the forces of moon and sun, continent and sky, spring and winter. Yet they are also man and woman, she the "bride", he the "chieftain lover". The "I", who stands for the personal poet-figure, decides to go in search of this primal myth which has been submerged in the soil: "I left the village for dogwood". The poet's trip on the canoe becomes an expression of an inward voyage beyond time: "I/Drifted how many hours I never knew". This voyage is a discovery of a heritage that embodies both the physical and cosmic as one, within the self and within his culture. Thus, as Crane stated in his letter to Kahn, "I also become identified with the Indian and his world before it is over, which is the only method possible of possessing the Indian and his world as a cultural factor" (Letters, p.307).

Because Crane felt the opposition of the empirical world to such mythical regeneration, he began to doubt the possibility of achieving such a unified vision. Thus the speaker in "The Dance" joins in a ritual of annihilation as he beseeches the medicine-man to "lie to us". Crane began to realize that the poetic surge, the call upon magic which he wished to effect, demanded a lie, a rejection of the discursive powers that preserve distinctions and "circumstances" which he would not otherwise have "surpassed". When working on "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" he stated that "Our 'real' world was
to "act somewhat as a spring-board and to give the poem as a whole an orbit or predetermined direction of its own". But the contradiction between this authentic "stab at a truth" and the lie of "The Dance" which was necessary to realize it was too great for him to deny.

With these doubts upon him and with the increasing need for a "mystical" course that would provide him with the path of salvation and a rationale for his poetry, Crane decided to abandon the epic outlook and to retreat once more to an anti-empirical attitude as he had done in his earliest work. Following the composition of The Bridge, he wrote to Allen Tate of his failure to "sum up the universe". The reason was a simple one: "My vision of poetry is too personal to answer the call". Henceforth, Crane resolved that "if [he would] ever write any more verse it [would] probably be at least as personal as the idiom of White Buildings" (Letters, p. 353).

The late poems of Key West derive their title from Blake's "Introduction" to Songs of Experience, a poem which enforces the outlook that pity is the key to visionary understanding. In Crane, this pity comes close to mere self-pity. In "0 Carib Isle!" the exotic world is not lush and fertile but a source of death. The natural world is indifferent to man ("No, nothing here/Below the palsy that one eucalyptus lifts/In wrinkled shadows—mourns") and God is absent ("But where is the Captain of this doubloon isle/Without a turnstile?"). The ending of the poem is well-phrased but suicidal:

Slagged on the hurricane—I, cast within its flow, Congeal by afternoons here, satin and vacant. You have given me the shell, Satan—carbonic amulet Sere of the sun exploded in the sea.
Poems which follow the inclination of this one must be either "against humanity" or cynical about the "idols of Futurity". In an attempt to escape to an anti-empirical view, Crane turns his back on America and celebrates the "forever fruitless". The poems which grow out of such an attitude, like "Lenses" and "Eternity", are hysterical and hypnagogic efforts to escape facing the reality behind their fevered impressions:

The morrow's dawn was dense with carrion hazes
Sliding everywhere. Bodies were rushed into graves
Without ceremony, while hammers pattered in town.
The roads were being cleared, injured brought in
And treated, it seemed. In due time
The President sent down a battleship that baked
Something like two thousand loaves on the way.
Doctors shot ahead from the deck in planes.
("Eternity")

The fragmentary nature of this passage indicates the loss of any moral centre to Crane's vision. The sacrifice to mystical vision becomes a sacrifice of that same vision to the dislocated nightmare world of "a vast phantom" and "screaming rain".

"Hieroglyphic", the epigraph to this introduction, might also act as an epigraph to Crane's work. It is only a two-line fragment; the text without the lesson. If this statement involves him in a circular monologue, it does have a completeness of its own, as a closing text to the poet's life. It brings Crane back to the ab ovo nature of his dilemma. What is the hieroglyph—the external empirical substance, or the internal mystical core?
References: Chapter 1


2 I use the word "groups" here, since the word "movement" is too strong a term to apply to the American Symbolists.

3 The word is, of course, Melville's (c.f. Moby Dick, Chapter 35, "The Masthead": "Over Descartian vortices you hover"). I will return to this important phrase in a subsequent chapter on Melville.


5 The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane, ed. with an Introduction and Notes by Brom Weber (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1966), p. 122. All references to Crane's poems will be to this edition, unless otherwise indicated.

6 Crane also referred to "Atlantis" as "the mystic consummation" (Letters, p. 290) of his poem, The Bridge.

7 Waldo Frank, "Hart Crane", "Appendix" to The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane, p. 270.


9 Ibid.

10 Studies in Structure: The Stages of the Spiritual Life in Four Modern Authors (Fordham University Press, 1974).

11 Ibid, p. 4.
12 Ibid.

13 Ibid, p. 103.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 Frank, p. 271


18 Ibid., p. 228


20 Ibid., p. 11


22 Ibid., p. 56


24 Ibid.

25 Ibid.

26 Underhill, p. 71.

27 Ibid., p. 74
28  
\textit{Ibid.}

29  
\textit{Ibid.}, p. 75

30  
\textit{Ibid.}, p. 72

31  
\textit{Ibid.}

32  
\textit{Ibid.}, p. 80

33  

34  
The phrase is from Crane's "Porphyro in Akron".

35  
Crane, "Emblems of Conduct".

36  
Crane, "Porphyro in Akron".

37  

38  
\textit{Ibid.}

39  
\textit{Ibid.}

40  

41  
\textit{Ibid.}
CHAPTER II

CRANE AND FIN DE SIECLE

"... song of minor, broken strain"
("C 33")

The earliest period of Crane's poetic career was deeply influenced by the literature of the fin de siècle. In fact, the influence was so strong that this apprentice work has little voice of its own. Crane's later decision to ignore its existence must have been based not only on his awareness of its inferiority to his maturer work, but also on his recognition of its excessive imitativeness of its predecessors. It is, of course, juvenile verse that contains little evidence of the powerful visionary poetry which would follow it.

Consequently, this poetry, in itself, is of little worth or interest. It does have an important place, nonetheless, in relation to the shape and direction of Crane's career. Certain outlooks generated by this early approach to poetry continued to haunt him in later periods of his poetic development.

The poets of the fin de siècle period who interested Crane--Dowson, Johnson, Wilde and Swinburne1--were obvious figures for him to imitate. First of all, they were very influential on all young writers who were composing poetry in the early years of the twentieth century. Other American poets like Pound, Williams and Frost, imitated the fin de siècle writers considerably in their pre-"Renascence" works. Unlike the Romantics or mid-Victorians, the fin de siècle artists seemed to provide the new artists of the twentieth century with a youthful and rebellious
example which they were eager to follow. Both groups of artists were involved in the re-definition of the nature of the self and of the world of art: "The problem for these artists might be described as one of self-definition in a society whose values they felt they could not accept." This difficult quest involved the artist in a painful crisis of self-discovery:

Role-playing was a matter of dead seriousness with the men of the nineties. For some, such as Dowson, Johnson, and Symons, the pattern of their lives grew out of a very clear perception of their own unclarity and indeterminateness. Am I really there? Look in the mirror to see. And like Wilde many of the so-called 'decadents' sought the sort of ego-protection that the mask might provide. . . . For what Wilde said of Symons could be applied to all his contemporaries: All were 'sad example[s] of an Egoist who has no Ego.' This is the basis of our interest in them: The way both their lives and their art are transported into a shadowy no-man's-land where neither life nor art can achieve substantial existence. This point is obviously an important one for Crane, a poet who, from the very beginning, searched for the substance of his own ego in a world of art. One of his earliest works, "C 33", demonstrates Crane's affinity with the fin de siècle artists' view of this search. In this poem, Crane identified himself with Oscar Wilde, seeing the crisis of self-definition in his terms. This point will be discussed later on in this chapter, when we turn to an examination of Crane's early poetry in more detail.

There were other more specific reasons, however, for Crane's great interest in the work of fin de siècle artists. Their radical views on art and life lent support to his own rebellions. As a young man in search of a poetic voice, Crane felt his own isolation from his mid-Western American background. His family was deeply rooted in the bour-
geois mercantile world. The young poet's devotion to art not only isolated him from his heritage, but also made him more vulnerable, especially to the attacks of his father, who could not understand how writing poetry differed in any essential way from sports like playing golf. Whereas his father wanted him to inherit both the candy-manufacturing business and the abilities to run it, Crane was ambitiously directing his energies towards a career as a poet. In the fin de siècle writers, he found an unconditional devotion to this same goal. It was not a profession—but a life.

Furthermore, Crane was clearly facing the problems of his own sexual identity at the time when he was writing his first poems. The fin de siècle writers were notorious for their open confessions of their commitment to bold and unorthodox views in this area. Even more important, they lived according to these views. Young Crane was a very nervous and high-strung adolescent, who, it seems, had already made attempts on his own life. He was torn by his parents' sexual incompatibility and emotionally consumed by a mother whose wholesale control over him was the single most important formative influence of his early life. Family tensions, culminating in his parents' divorce, became increasingly unbearable for him. The heroically unconventional and, at times, self-sentimentalizing work of the fin de siècle writers must have been a real source of inspiration for him during these difficult years.

Finally, Crane must have been drawn to the poetry of this period because it was so deeply rooted in the "mystic-aesthetic" outlook which had a special affinity with the poet's sensibility. According to this
outlook, the artist could only find reality in a world of his own mind. 

*Fin de siècle* artists were often sad and lonely because of the ephemeral and illusory, the isolate and misunderstood, nature of their private world:

The most succinct and influential statement of their position is Walter Pater's 'Conclusion' to *The Renaissance*. Its premise is that nothing outside the mind has any meaning save that given it by the mind. Everyone creates for himself a reality which is personal, incommunicable, and imprisoning. However, each individual has sensory experience as a means of escape to the world outside the mind. Such experience may be an illusory escape, but the question of its truth or falsehood simply does not apply, for the mind gives it reality.6

Such an outlook took the writer out of the prison of one reality—the distrusting and distrustful outer world—but then placed him in another one:

In the 'moment' they had not a "proper basis upon which to form a self. The consequence of their attempt to put it to that purpose was the Decadent self, impermanent and insubstantial, a self dependent upon the moment, a series of selves, separate and distinct from one another, appearing and vanishing on the continuum of time.7

According to such a view, the artist becomes dedicated to an autotelic art "with the consequence that the artist can employ in his art whatever he finds suitable, however irrational or inexplicable it may be."8 The world of the exotic and strange becomes his province, his "réality", not the world of "the common sense and commonplace."9

Crane's poetry of this period is full of the essential contradictions of this view. The artist is not one with the world, but is separated from it. Such separation can bring him to momentary visions, but it also makes him a martyr of time. Ironically, the artist who stresses the
need for self-definition ends up with an undefined ego that has no world other than itself. Escaping the substantiality of a cruel and harsh world, the fin de siècle artist often degenerates into an insubstantial and indistinct self.


Crane quickly recognized that his early fin de siècle-influenced poems were too effete and unoriginal to be retained as a respectable part of his poetic output. Bibliographical evidence reveals his lack of interest in preserving them as part of his canon. His decision to ignore them completely when preparing his first volume, White Buildings, is evidence of his lack of belief in the durability and worth of their statements. These poems finally made their appearance either in the posthumously published Collected Poems (1933) or in Brom Weber's biography, Hart Crane, published in 1948. In fact, we have only a small sampling of Crane's work from this period, since "the poet destroyed the manuscripts of most of his early verse." "The Moth That God Made Blind" and the poems in Seven Lyrics were not published until the 1960's, more than three full decades after Crane's death.

During the years 1916–1919, however, Crane did everything he could to achieve publication of these works. He established contacts with Mrs. William Vaughan Moody and Rev. Charles C. Bubb in hopes that they would acknowledge his work and find it worthy of printing. He also communicated with two magazines, Bruno's Weekly and The Pagan, that were dedicated to an artistic outlook similar to his own. Bruno's Weekly published Crane's first poem, a celebration of Oscar Wilde's martyr-
idealism, in 1916. Guido Bruno, the editor, had for his literary idols "the poets of the 1890's, notably Oscar Wilde, Algernon Swinburne, and Ernest Dowson." The Pagan was devoted to a fin de siècle sensibility as well, in spite of its attempts to appear more modernized and experimental. In 1916 Crane wrote a brief statement to Joseph Kling, editor of The Pagan, praising his magazine as a "new and distinctive chord in the present American Renaissance of literature and art." This communication is a "somewhat patronizing note" written by an immature poet, attempting to pose as an experienced artist. Crane's basic ploy appears to have been to introduce himself to the editor as a worldly critic before sending him his poems for publication.

The story of Crane's brief relationship with The Pagan encapsulates the period of his fin de siècle associations. After the magazine accepted his poem "Annunciations" in 1917, he continued to send his works to Kling throughout the following year. In fact, he joined The Pagan as a regular contributor under the title of associate editor. His contribution was a "column called 'The Last Chord' ... a critical commentary on the concerts, exhibitions and drama about town, as seen and heard by 'A Pagan Knight'." As early as the fall of 1917, however, he expressed his doubts concerning the value of associating with Kling in his publications. He wrote to his friend, Schmitt:

I don't trust Kling's criticism very far judging by the 'tone' generally prevalent in the magazine. But I am improving and would just as soon be a little deceived as not."

By November, 1919, he repeated the view of the bookdealer, Laukhuff, that The Pagan "is getting too tame" (Letters, p.23). Crane looked for
other publishing outlets and found one for a short while in The Modernist, a similar magazine, which he quickly rejected as a source of "literary rubbish." By January of 1920, he dubbed The Pagan "that fetid corpse" (Letters, p. 31), in spite of the fact that the magazine continued in 1921. In effect, before his twentieth year, Crane had decided to discontinue his relationship with the fin de siècle climate.

II. Crane's Early Work and the Fin de Siècle.

Crane's association with The Pagan, The Modernist, and Bruno's Bohemia, as well as his reading in fin de siècle writing, especially Swinburne, Wilde, and Lionel Johnson, were strong factors in determining the form and content of his early works. Certainly, he was fascinated by Wilde's rebellious poses through which he cultivated a certain amount of flippancy and amorality, of self-importance and flamboyance. Swinburne, "the poet par excellence of adolescence", was a figure who had dared to explore Satanism and perversion in his lyrics. Lionel Johnson had a sense of "aristocratic remoteness", a sense of moral and cultural superiority which allowed him to retreat from vulgar diurnal existence. Such figures had a powerful influence on Crane, an adolescent searching for a way of expressing his own precocious artistic sensibility.

A few of Crane's early poems, most noticeably "Modern Craft" and "Carmen de Boheme", are his attempts at projecting the voice of one experienced in the world of modern love. The poet-figure in these works attempts to flaunt an image of himself as a young man caught up in a world of sin and corruption which he cannot, and would not, escape. The
props, including the women, are standard elements of a bizarre and exotic Decadent scene:

Bright peacocks drink from flame-pots by the wall,
Just as absinthe-sipping women shiver through
With shimmering blue from the bowl in Circe's hall.
Their brown eyes blacken, and the blue drops hue.

("Carmen de Boheme")

The whispering "andante" of the verse is certainly imitative of Swinburne, while the setting is indebted to the atmosphere of Wilde's The Picture of Dorian Gray. The poem is a failure, however. Not only is it stylistically clumsy, but it fails to establish the authentic voice of a man determined to accept his fate as one who cannot escape "Carmen's mystic face." In fact, this woman never becomes more than "some dream". She is a wooden figure, the composite of a rather rigid and jaundiced anatomy, rather than an irresistible passion. Crane obviously had not experienced the feelings he was trying to evoke. The expression of Carmen's devastating beauty is inadequate because her presence in the poem is limited to the rather fragmented "flaunts" in the latter stanzas:

Carmen! Akimbo arms and smouldering eyes;--
Carmen! Bestirring hope and lipping eyes;--
Carmen whirls, and music swirls and dips.
'Carmen!', comes awed from wine-hot lips.

This woman lacks any pervasive control over the magic of the poem as its femme fatale. In reality, she is only part of the "tapestry"-like atmosphere. Strangely enough, the "gestureless and mute" woman in "Modern Craft" has more life in her, probably because the poet's voice is a stronger one here. His observation on the witch-like nature of this woman ("My modern love were/Charred at the stake in younger times than ours") makes both the lover and his woman a little more believable
than they appear to be in the previous poem. Nevertheless, this woman is still a statuary creation, a mannequin ("She hazards jet; wears tiger-lilies;--"), more than an object of man's desires. These poems, then, are true to the ostentatious atmosphere of fin de siècle, but fail to achieve any emotional or dramatic authenticity mainly because the poet's self-conception is practically non-existent. The "flappers" and "vamps" should be "unreal" but the man who desires them should make their unreality his passion.

The largest portion of Crane's early poems present the poet as someone who dwells alone in his fragile, disembodied dream. "The Moth That God Made Blind" and the majority of his Seven Lyrics, especially "Naiad of Memory," "To Earth," "Exile (after the Chinese)," "Echoes," and "Meditation," suggest the poet's feelings of weakness and capitulation in the face of the stronger "empirical" world. The subject of each poem involves an attempt to escape this world in a "moment of dissolving happiness." The poet's world is an interiorized one, "wide from the world" that is inimical to "the lamp's brief glow." A victim of the tyrannical control of the "Earth," who is the mother of the physical fate of all men, the poet prays she will "be earnest ... and kind." The poet is like the fragile "flower that opened in the storm" that will perish if the Earth decides to express her full power. He can only survive if she will be gentle towards him.

"Naiad of Memory" shows that "the world has had its way ... ", eventually destroying what the suspended imagination managed to create for itself. The vague, semi-mythical, abstract title of the poem
suggests the elusive nature of the life that has been lost because the "world" will not let the poet be. Man's life will not nurture the dreams for long, because, as the fin de siècle poet eventually realizes, this life is a very feeble, ephemeral substance, which will eventually be consigned to oblivion. Crane's main authority here is probably Swinburne, a poet who was strongly obsessed by this same theme:

Could not one day withhold,  
One night; and like as these  
White ashes of no weight,  
Held not his urn the cold  
Ashes of Heracles?  
For all things born, one gate  
Opens,—no gate of gold;  
Opens; and no man sees  
Beyond the gods and fate.  

Swinburne was the poet who made Crane aware of love's brief bitter-sweet respite from time:

Time that made us and will slay  
Laughs at love in me and thee;  
But if here the flowers may see  
One whole hour of amorous breath,  
Time shall die, and love shall be  
Lord as time was over death.  

Crane's "Love and A Lamp" refers to a similar "stolen hour" lived in the privacy of "our small room":

And even should the world break in,  
Jealous and threatening with guile,  
The world at last must bow and win  
Our pity and a smile.

For Crane, the feelings of love were best compared to "a tardy flower. . . in the lamp's brief glow" ("Love and A Lamp"). They will not last since, as Dowson revealed in one of his most famous poems, man's glorious moments are as short-lived as his humiliating ones: "They are not
long, the weeping and the laughter,/Love and desire and hate." 29
Although he would like to believe in the eternal power of his sublimest
moments, man is only self-deceived since they are all subject to the
same ending. For Crane, the only preservative is escape, in a "stolen
hour" of love's oblivion. This love must be fragile, however, since a
more complete oblivion will force the lovers to a "farewell". Eventu­
tally, each man, after losing himself in the "opal pools" of his lover's
eyes, will have to look into the eyes of a Medusa-like reality, 30 who
will say: "Behold thy lover—-/Stone!" 31

Although Crane was fascinated by Swinburne's works because of their
"andante" rhythms and their themes of the ephemeral nature of love and
joy, perhaps the most obvious influence his poetry had on Crane's was
based on his image of the sea as eternity or oblivion. This image was
to remain of constant importance to Crane's work, most notably in
"Voyages" but also, of course, in "Atlantis" and in late poems like "O
Carib Isle!" In "Love at Sea", Swinburne wrote of the voyage as a quest
for a private and secure harbour of eternal love that is beyond human
experience:

Land me, she says, where love
Shows but one shaft, one dove,
One heart, one hand.
--A shore like that, my dear,
Lies where no man will steer,
No maiden land. 32

The male voice knows that such love is not possible for man. In "Les
Noyades", the young warrior is pleased to drown with the lady, since he
is in this way given "What man was never yet given of God":
For never a man, being mean like me,
Shall die like me till the whole world dies.
I shall drown with her, laughing for love; and she
Mix with me, touching me, lips and eyes.33

Swinburne is always conscious of the passing of time and the failure of love on earth, but such a consummation is a baptism in eternal oblivion:

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives forever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea. 34

Crane's early poems contain similar images of hands, doves and hearts but, more importantly, they turn to the Swinburnian vocabulary of the sea as oblivion. In "Meditation", the poet speaks of escape from the common world towards that of the "ungathered rose":

I have drawn my hands away
Like ships for guidance in the lift and spray
Of stars that urge them toward an unknown goal.

In "Naiad of Memory", he speaks of the eventual surrender to oblivion which is inescapable:

The world has had its way...
Though the smiles of many an adolescent moon
Have held her,
The sand of time flows barren through my fingers
And even memory will be erased
As a cameo the waves claim again.

The recurring image of the poet as a martyr-idealist is fundamental to the thematic development of Crane's early work. In "The Hive", he presents the poet's suffering in a Christ-like image, reminiscent of the Sacred Heart:
Up the chasm-walls of my bleeding heart
Humanity pecks, claws, sohs and climbs;
Up the inside, and over every part
Of the hive of the world that is my heart.

Such an image relates closely to that of the fin de siècle artist,
alienated from and misunderstood by his fellow man. For Crane, this is
the nature of the poet's identity. One of the strongest statements of
this theme is "C 33". In this work, Crane presents the Oscar Wilde of
De Profundis, the sad, abused prisoner of Reading Gaol. Crane seems
to be more interested in the private Wilde than in the public one,
represented by the light-hearted dramatist or the Decadent poseur. In
this poem, Crane pities Wilde even more than Wilde pitied himself.
Nevertheless, the outcast figure is a sacrificial hero, who continues to
sing. The few who listen and understand him can recognize the purity
of his song beyond the "searing sophistry" of humanity:

But you who hear the lamp whisper thru night
Can trace paths tear-wet, and forget all blight.

Crane's early poems are also stylistically imitative of the fin de
siècle writers. His language certainly follows their slow, ceremonial
phrasing:

Drift, O wakeful one, O restless soul,
Until the glittering white open hand
Of heaven thou shalt read and understand.
("Meditation")

Wilde's frequent use of the apostrophe and of antiquated diction to
create a world out of time (see especially "Charmides" and "Humanitad")
is a definite influence here. Since Crane's poems deal mostly with dreams
and departures, with the interiorized life of the soul's desires, this
language is often abstract and rarefied, torpid and melancholy:
I have drawn my hands away
Toward peace and the grey margins of the day.
The andante of vain hopes and lost regret
Falls like slow rain that whispers to forget,—
("Meditation")

The origins for the almost frozen movement of this passage can be found in almost any of Dowson's poems:

Calm, sad, secure; behind high convent walls,
    These watch the sacred lamp, these watch and pray;
And it is one with them when evening falls
And one with them the cold return of day.

Lewis has also demonstrated the Swinburnian influence on Crane's "expansive rhythm" by comparing his "Annunciations" to the self-parodying "Nephelida".

Images in Crane's poems of choristers, lamps, the heron, "jasmine moon", "circles of cool roses", "the desert", "transient blooms", "gold head", the "moth's descent", are all part of the fin de siècle poet's props for creating his elusive and "mystical" atmosphere. Precious stones, opal and jade, appear both in Crane's work and in that of the master of Decadent atmosphere, Oscar Wilde, wherein they suggest the priceless exotic romance of the poet's vision. The "jade-green" rain in Crane's "Echoes" is reminiscent of the "rippled jade" image of the "pale Green Thames" in Wilde's "Symphony in Yellow".

In fact, the more Crane's poems are examined, the less they seem to contain any features that are really his own. A study of one poem like "Naiad of Memory" shows that Crane manages to create the feeling of memory's erasure through the melancholy vagueness of the music and the softness of the passive images. The submerged atmosphere of surrender, the sense of being "adrift", "a waif of the tides", is well-created.
But there is little else of significance in the poem beyond this slight, suggestive atmosphere. Part of the fault belongs to the *fin de siècle* outlook, since it is both extremely restricted and diffuse. If this movement's poems have any energy at all, it is mainly on the surface. The poet has no chance to explore tensions, since the purpose behind his writing is to glorify and sentimentalize capitulation. "Naiad of Memory" contains a little of Crane's own dynamism in the pun-like image of tossing which "Rounds off my memory". This image is picked up again in the erosion-erasure of the cameo. Like the very image itself, however, the purpose for the appearance of this pun is to advance the hazy and suggestive nature of the poem's theme. It is a device which lacks clear organic relation to the rest of the work. In general, the poem is too limply precious, too clichéd and cloying ("smiles of many an adolescent Moon", "sand of time") to be of even minor worth. The simile of the memory as cameo is irritatingly forced, although the feeling it creates is tonally consistent with the theme of the poem. Crane's poem is weepy because it is unfelt; it lacks the desolate inevitability which Dowson can achieve with the consistency of tone and tightness of form. Hence Crane's poem "Exile (after the Chinese)", with its fatally juvenile title that attempts to echo Dowson and possibly Pound, has the same inevitable limpness. "Stinging gentleness" is too forced an oxymoron to elicit any response other than impatience.

Consequently, when his work is compared with *fin de siècle* poems, its inferiority is evident. Crane superficially imitated Johnson's and Dowson's world-weariness without really understanding the experience
fully. He lacked the utter acceptance of fate that Johnson expresses in so much of his work:

O rich and sounding voices of the air.
Interpreters and prophets of despair:
Priests of a fearful sacrament! I come,
To make with you mine home.

He also fails to achieve anything like the dramatic sense of loss and weariness found in Dowson's well-controlled statements:

Words are so weak
   When love hath been so strong:
Let silence speak:
   'Life is a little while, and love is long;
   A time to sow and reap,
   And after harvest a long time to sleep,
   But words are weak.'

In general, Crane can evoke a fragile and evanescent atmosphere and attitudinize about it. He lacks, however, the ability of his predecessors to dramatize the inveterate reality of the "empirical" world which they strive so desperately to deny. The strength of the true fin de siècle work is based on the way it spites reality and then loses to it. Crane's poems lose before they even begin, since his anti-empiricism is based on fear and false sentiment rather than on bravery and necessity. Certainly, his motive for eventually rejecting his early poems for publication is based on their superficiality and juvenile imitativeness. Nevertheless, they do provide evidence of Crane's poetic origins and of the narrow vision which he had to overcome before reaching his maturer outlook.
III. Conclusion

Through his imitation of fin de siècle poetry, Crane recognized the poet's role as that of a special prophet, a vates or seer, out of sorts with the crudity of the external world. A reading of Crane's complete works demonstrates a confused reassertion of the poet's role as that of martyr-idealista (see, for example, "C 33", "The Hive", "Chaplinesque", "Lachrimae Christi", "The Dance", and Purgatorio"). Gradually he saw himself less and less the passive martyr and more and more the individual who not only responds to the suffering, but who also endures it, by rising above it and incorporating it into his new vision. Eventually, Crane realized that pain was not merely an alienating force, but an aspect of the situation to be either endured in order to gain this new wisdom or glorified as a part of the way to acceptance. "Voyages" shows the true grasp of this awareness.

This acceptance was only possible once Crane had discovered the true central core of the double tradition wherein he existed—that of the Romantic-Symbolist and that of the American modernist. Fin de siècle helped him to reach backward to the Romanticism of the major poets and ahead to Symbolism. In this sense, it allowed him to contact one half of this tradition. The distrust of nature and the development of the artificial remained with Crane throughout his poetic career. In essence, fin de siècle is the proto-modern climate, with its focus on city life and the attitude or pose of the urbane sophisticate. Its literature also stresses the feelings of alienation from the outer world, brought about largely by industrialization, and developing into
escapism and the twilight world of aberrant or hallucinatory experience—the dream world of drugs, alcohol and sexual inversion.

Although Crane's first poems were merely imitative of poetry of the 1890's, he could not repudiate his identity as the heir of a hard-headed American middle-class tradition. The fin de siècle poets gave up in the quest for unity by masking one half of the Januskopf, the outward-looking one, for the complete concentration on the inward-looking one. Crane recognized this decision and realized the danger of its self-limiting outlook. The fin de siècle tradition, and especially "the two chief influences—Wilde and Swinburne", were the ones "that Crane had to escape before he could arrive . . . at an idiom and melody of his own". At the same time, he could never be completely sure of a way out of the situation. He could see that the poetry of irony and mockery, of negation and self-belittlement, was evasive. At moments, however, when his inspiration failed, he could not resist deceiving himself by advocating the escapism of an effete consciousness, reduced by its repudiation of the external world.

Thus, the fin de siècle provided him with one vision magnified out of proportion and the other blinded. Crane's achievement rose out of his awareness of this problematic position, followed by the struggle to reassert a balance. The first step was to recognize how this problem was handled by the High Romantic figures.
Swinburne is not a figure who can be grouped with the fin de siècle writers without at least making some defence for taking this position. Literary historians have located him with the mid-Victorians and with the Pre-Raphaelite figures. I am following Barbara Charlesworth, who groups him with the Decadents in her book, Dark Passages: The Decadent Consciousness in Victorian Literature (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965). Although most of Swinburne's work was written before the 1890's, he was a major influence in determining the course of the fin de siècle movement.

Charlesworth, xiv.


Dowson was enamoured of a twelve-year-old girl; Johnson and Wilde were both homosexuals. Swinburne was possibly homosexual as well. His poetry at least suggests a strongly cultivated effeminacy as well as his fascination with the masochistic role which he indulged in while at college.


Charlesworth, xv.

Ibid., xvi.

Miyoshi, p. 293.

Ibid.


Kenneth Lohf, "Preface" to Seven Lyrics
12  Ibid., n.p.


14  Horton, p. 33

15  Ibid., p. 58

16  quoted in Horton, p. 56.

17  Unterecker, p. 145.

18  see Unterecker, p. 32 for evidence that Crane possessed copies of these works.

19  Horton, p. 31.

20  Charlesworth, p. 88.

21  see Joseph Schwartz and Robert C. Schweik, *Hart Crane: A Descriptive Bibliography* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972), p. 78 for evidence that the *Seven Lyrics* were not the group of poems sent to Rev. Bubb as Lohf had suggested in his "Preface".

22  "Naiad of Memory" appears as "Legends" in *Complete Poems* with alterations. "Exile (after the Chinese)" appears as "Carrier Letter"; "Love and a Lamp" as "Interior" and "Echoes" under the same title, in each case with considerable variations in text.

23  Crane, "Meditation" in *Seven Lyrics*.

24  Crane, "Love and a Lamp" in *Seven Lyrics*.

25  Crane, "To Earth" in *Seven Lyrics*.
Crane's poetry demonstrates that he is more capable of realizing the image of the cruel mother than that of the cruel lover. Such evidence provides interesting insight into Crane's psychological state during adolescence.


Swinburne, "Before Sunset", Ibid., p. 552


Crane, "Medusa" in Seven Lyrics


I have found the word "hand" at least seven times in Crane's early works. "Dove" appears in two poems and "heart" in two. Other favourite words are "night", "dawn", "white", "shell", "moon" and "rose".

My interpretation of the concluding lines of this poem differs from M.D. Uroff's (see Hart Crane: The Patterns of His Poetry, Urbana: University of Illinois, 1974, pp. 18-19). Uroff sees the "Materna" or "the spirit of poetry" as the "you" in the penultimate line of the poem.

Dowson, p. 5.

Lewis, p. 16.


Dowson, p. 67.

Lewis, p. 15.

Witness the relative failure of several Key West poems: "A Name for All", "Royal Palms" and especially the very weak "To the Cloud Juggler", the formless "Moment Fugue" and "The Mango Tree".
HART CRANE AND HIGH ROMANTICISM: WORDSWORTH AND COLERIDGE

One can respond only to certain circumstances; just what the barriers are, and where the boundaries cross can never be completely known. And the surest way to frustrate the possibility of any free realization is, it seems to me, to wilfully direct it. (Letters, p. 301)

I. Introduction: The Romantic "Tradition" and Crane

In 1930, Crane wrote a letter to Allen Tate, responding to the latter's review of The Bridge in The Hound and the Horn:

The fact that you posit The Bridge at the end of a tradition of romanticism may prove to have been an accurate prophecy, but I don't yet feel that such a statement can be taken as a foregone conclusion. A great deal of romanticism may persist—of the sort to deserve serious consideration, I mean. (Letters, p. 352-353)

Crane's refusal to accept Tate's conclusion that The Bridge would "logically and morally"1 end "the romantic era" defines the difference between two important interpretations of Romanticism. For Tate, it was an "era", a particularly restricted tradition or school that had had its day. Its importance, for him, was a historical one. The self-critical nature of the twentieth century refused to follow the Romantic poet's impulse to "impose his will upon experience".2 Although Tate did not suggest that its "impulse may not rise and flourish again",3 he refused to believe that Romanticism would once more gain any significant power or meaningfulness. Crane, on the other hand, saw this movement as a living tradition that could not be rejected through any "foregone conclusion" like Tate's. For Crane, the sense of separation between the
"I" and the "non-I" and the struggles to explore a way to re-establish a synthesis between the two were the main preoccupations of the Romantic outlook. The persistence of this problem and the search for a vision powerful enough to grasp and shape it depended on this outlook for its renewed strength.

Crane would have agreed with writers like Harold Bloom, who refuse to confine Romanticism to the European, and especially British and German, poetry and poetic of the early nineteenth century. For Bloom, the possible origins of Romantic literature may have to be traced all the way back to The Odyssey, wherein the "internalization of quest" involves the struggle to redeem the self in a knowing, unified whole. If this quest goes back to the living origins of Western civilization, it may also extend forward to the present day, with its continued and possibly even increased need for a sense of unity. Romanticism appears, in fact, to have a significant relation to Western Culture, particularly to those periods when a sense of divisiveness is felt between the worlds of the self and the non-self.

Crane did not always have faith in his Romantic outlook. In fact, he insisted that he was "unresolved as to any ultimate conviction" (Letters, p.260) on the point of this divisiveness. The problem became especially obvious during the composition of The Bridge when he was searching for "the background of an age of faith" which would give his "romantic attitude" more than "subjective significance". (Letters, p.261) The factors in the "common race, time and belief" simply did not have the cohesive, organic propensity which he found in the self. Neverthe-
less, the struggle to achieve such a unity of outlook continued to obsess him even when he was forced to turn inward for the impetus which he needed for his belief.

Romanticism encouraged Crane in pursuing his "mystical" direction through the glorification of the "I". Whether we accept it as truth or not, this tradition placed a sacred value on the poet's role as the attempt to achieve a transcendent unity above and beyond the rational "dualistic world view". Its principles are fundamentally unorthodox, anti-Christian and frequently self-worshipping:

If one impulse can be singled out as central to the romantic aspiration, it is the Sehnsucht, the yearning toward the absolute, the aspiration to oneness and wholeness and organic unity, the dream of perfection.6

Such a view, aimed at the glorification of the individual as potentially divine, gave the poet a special vatic mission, and tended to deny the reality of evil. The Romantic's aspiration confronts varying "established dichotomies" which relate directly to Crane's "mystical-empirical" dualism. For Gérard, these dichotomies are found in three areas: "between spirit and matter in ontological thought, between subject and object in the theory of knowledge, between content and form in the sphere of art".7 Certainly they illustrate instances of the over-riding tension between an empirical, sense-experience based view and a mystical, supra-rational and absolutist one.

Crane shared the Romantics' troubled feeling concerning this tension between the "intuition of cosmic unity" and the awareness of individual experiences in fragments of time and sections of space:
The fact remains, however, that this intuition of oneness clashed not only with certain assumptions which they were not always eager to shed, but also with the most compelling data of everyday experience. The poet's struggle to unite two antagonistic worlds, "to come to terms with the actual condition of man without betraying the ideal conveyed through the visionary experience", is, then, the heart of the Romantic's dream.

The power which realizes a deep affinity between a "mystical" outlook and poetic experience is the imagination, which pursues a direction that is uncommon, anti-rational or super-rational, and transcendental in nature:

The mediating power of the imagination is, in a sense, an extension of its esemplastic power in that the latter combines diverse elements into a coherent, harmonious whole, while the function of the mediating power is to serve as a link between the known universe and the transcendent realm. . . . The tinge of mysticism is undeniable, and equally undeniable is the fact that on this point the Romantic poets demand an unquestioning belief, which is often a stumbling-block for the reader of a more practical mind. During the Romantic period, artistic creativity became nothing short of a sacred activity, an esoteric communion with a divine fountainhead. To this the artist was thought to have access because he partook of the creative power of the divinity.

The transformative force of the imagination could discover the relationships between all discrete forces, thereby helping the self to realize a more absolute Self. At times, however, this power was misdirected. The attempt at realization of wholeness through balanced vision is the province of the mature Romantic. More youthful or less realized figures essayed to achieve the "mystical" vision through ignoring the "empirical" condition. This approach, which "consist[s] chiefly in denying or
deifying the sensuous world", was also a crucial part of Romanticism's influence on Crane.

II. High Romanticism

Crane's earliest poetry could hardly have been a response to the influence on a fin de siècle outlook without being at the same time subject to some of the effects of the High Romantic movement. After all, fin de siècle belongs to the direct line of the Romantic tradition, of which it is an extreme and somewhat erratic outgrowth. Consequently, Crane's first poem, "The Moth That God Made Blind", could develop a setting suitable for Oscar Wilde or Beardsley while relying on Shelley's vision for its image of the poet as a winged, transcendent being. Shelley's identification of flight with song in "To a Skylark" ("And singing, still dost soar/And soaring; ever singest") relates directly to Crane's interpretation of the same theme ("And the torrid hum of great wings was his song"). However, the "desire of the moth for the star" appears in Crane's poem as a fragile yearning of a blind creature lost in a gloomy and semi-grotesque setting. The lamp in Crane's poems (see "Love and a Lamp" and "C33") refers back to the Romantic's conception of the imagination found in Shelley ("When the lamp is shattered"), Wordsworth ("Scorn not the sonnet") and Coleridge ("Christabel"). Crane's lamplight is, however, a "brief glow" rather than the power of eternal lumination.

By 1921, when he was twenty-three years of age, Crane had wearied of his youthful fascination with Swinburne and the Decadents. At that time, he turned directly to the poetry of "Keats, Shelley, Coleridge"
(Letters, p.67) for a fuller grasp of the subjective and expressive base of Romantic poetry. The High Romantics' search for an understanding of the dualism they experienced and their passionate quest for the wholeness beyond it obsessed each of the major poets of this movement, i.e., Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats and Shelley. Their attempt to explore the subjective and the objective as one, to experience the unity of the emotional and the cognitive via the "form of Knowledge" generated through poetry, culminated in their desire to realize a full "intuition of cosmic unity". This struggle for harmony was explored through an outlook which interprets poetic experience as a "matter-spirit continuum" originating in a belief in spiritualistic powers. Each Romantic had his own way of achieving his sense of balance, although the "quasi-mystical experiences that stirred their imaginations had much in common":

Although many of the romantic's finest works are poems of vatic assertion, underneath their overt design there runs a more or less conscious, more or less perceptible trend of uncertainty and anguish. It is true that when they tried to work out the abstract, metaphysical implications of their visionary insight, the young romantics resorted to a variety of philosophical attitudes ranging from Coleridge's devout Unitarianism to Shelley's rather ostentatious "atheism". But they had a common proclivity to translate it in spiritualistic terms; their first impulse was to treat the sense of oneness it imparted as a unity of substance, and it is in this sense that we may legitimately speak of Wordsworth's "pantheism" or of Shelley's "idealism". The fact remains, however, that this intuition of oneness clashed not only with certain assumptions which they were not always eager to shed, but also with the most compelling data of everyday experience.

III. Wordsworth: "Behold the Child"

Although Crane responded with excitement and enthusiasm to English Romanticism, nowhere in the Letters does he mention the poet who was the
father of this movement. Whereas he is willing to stress his fondness for Keats, Shelley, Coleridge and Blake, and his dislike for Byron, he remains totally silent about his opinion of Wordsworth's very large and very significant contribution to Romantic literature. Furthermore, a study of Crane's poetry reveals only the slightest amount of direct response to the work of this important poetic ancestor.16

Such an oversight may seem curiously amiss in a poet who strongly stressed his dedication to the Romantic "faith". Nevertheless, there are reasons that help to explain Crane's general lack of interest in commenting on Wordsworth. This central figure of the Romantic period was well-known even amongst those who were not too well-educated. His name had reached the point of becoming an institution; his poetry and its derivatives provided the backbone of the literature read at home and in school. Thus, Crane was not overlooking Wordsworth, but was simply taking his presence for granted. In fact, he might well have believed a conscious response to such a well-known poet to be either tedious or presumptuous.

A more direct reason for Crane's lack of response to Wordsworth's verse must be based on an unsympathetic attitude toward its rather discursive nature. When compared with the efforts of other Romantic poets, Wordsworth's comes closest to registering the most comfortable pantheistic position. His proximity to the eighteenth century world and its stress on order and clarity influenced the shape of his Romanticism
towards "right reason". Wordsworth does not forget "moral purpose" or
the "intellectual eye" in his pursuit of "pure imagination, and of
love". His interest in the effects of social life on defining man's
nature, his concern with duty and with the aspect of the imagination
that is oriented towards "steadfast laws", separates him from the other
Romantics, who were more "mystical"-minded in their pursuit of an
interior visionary life uninhibited by too much reason or too many laws
of proportion. Crane's interpretation of Wordsworth's self-satisfied
optimism would have been exaggerated and distorted since the poems that
were favourites at the time of his childhood and youth would still be
chosen by the vestigial controls of a nineteenth-century opinion of
poetic values. The more troubled works were overlooked for those of
"inspirational" value. However, recent criticism has suggested that
Wordsworth's position is not to be accepted at face value since it rests
more on a foundation of "symbolic perception" than might be initially
apparent. 17 This "symbolic perception" would hardly have found much
following amongst the Wordsworthians of Crane's day.

The way in which Crane's poetry presents themes that are common in
Wordsworth shows how it grows out of the earlier poet's version of
Romanticism, but in new directions. For example, "Garden Abstract"
presents a moment of ecstatic nature-worship that verges on pantheism.
The poem, which exposes a moment of surrender to nature, carries strong
overtones of Eve's fascination with the prospect of eternal wisdom and
of Daphne's final succumbing to Apollo. Here the woman and the natural
world come closer and closer together, until by the end of the poem they
arrive at a complete fusion of identities. Because the woman's individual nature has been annihilated, her personal vision and voice is lost in the "hypnagogic" ecstasy of the experience:

The bough has caught her breath up, and her voice,
Dumbly articulate in the slant and rise
Of branch on branch above her, blurs her eyes.

This merging with the god-like power of the tree causes her to disappear completely as an entity in the concordant forces of the natural world:

And so she comes to dream herself the tree,
The wind possessing her, weaving her young veins

Crane's portrayal of "mystical" absorption in nature is not without its own symbolical overtones. He is less satisfied than Wordsworth is with viewing nature as the prime mover of man's thoughts:

A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things ("Tintern Abbey", 11.100-102)

Crane's natural force is equated with the sexual power of the male, in the suggestive image of the tree as phallus and bearer of the fruit of forbidden knowledge. The male sexual power can only be possessed once the "I" is clearly possessed by it, worshipping it as its "prisoner". The overtones of "possessing" in Crane's work suggests a Dionysiac, if not demonic, ecstasy which is certainly alien to Wordsworth's salutary interpretation of Nature's role.

For Wordsworth, "Nature never did betray/The heart that loved her". Nature and the earth are frequently interpreted in his poetry as feminine influences or as guardians:
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my mortal being ("Tintern Abbey", ll. 110-111)

or a teacher:

Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher.

For Crane, on the other hand, the external world could never be so
completely a parent, because of its hostility to the inner self, its
apparent lack of interest in man outdone only by its moments of cruel
destructiveness. While, like Coleridge, he strove to "make the external
internal, the internal external", Crane experienced a feeling of the
breakdown between the two experiences as well as the fascination with
immersing himself completely in one or the other. Thus the apple, which
represents the natural world and the power of male generation, is a
"mimic of the sun", Crane's symbol of external experience. The female
side of his being, i.e., the poet's nature, desires the apple but it can
only have it if it surrenders completely to the masculine side. Eve's
need to choose between the Tree of Knowledge and Paradise is reflected
in the poet's choice between the internal or the external world. The
loss that is a consequence of Eve's decision is, of course, his as well.
Thus, the trusting relationship between the "mystical" and "empirical"
aspects of life is not an evident aspect of Crane's outlook.

Although their motives for their disbelief were different, Crane
shared Blake's position of refusing to accept Wordsworth's beneficent
nature and his confidence in its interfusion with the soul that leads to
a nearly pantheistic outlook:
How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external world
Is fitted—and how exquisitely, too—
Theme this but little heard of among men
The external World is fitted to the Mind.
("Prospectus" to "The Excursion", 11.63-68)

Blake's annotation to this passage reflected his rejection of the natural religion that it suggests: "You shall not bring me down to believe such fitting and fitted. I know better & please your Lordship". According to Blake, the confusion of nature with vision was one of the worst fallacies of the secularized eighteenth century outlook. Crane also wanted to make a diaphane of nature, to see through and beyond it. Through his symbols and through his optimistic belief in man's visionary powers, he struggled to realize a sense of assurance of the eventual interfusion of physical and spiritual experience. His favourite symbol of the bridge manifests his search for such a synthesis. But he also realized the dichotomizing powers in the world and the threats to a belief in such a balance. His distrust of nature, which would not allow him to believe so fully in this congruent relationship of empirical and mystical experience, was based on an antagonism to the behaviourist outlook of modern science which would reduce man to an automaton.

In reality, Wordsworth was not a completely positive poet. Certainly his outlook was not so facile that he persisted in an unawareness of the nature of evil in the world. His poems are frequently realistic statements of the gloomy nature of man's life. What Gérard says of "The Thorn" is true of much of Wordsworth's poetry:
What stirred his poetic faculty has nothing to do with the shallowness of concrete facts, of legal guilt, of class struggle, or of institutional abuses: his theme was the fallen condition of man.  

The tone throughout Wordsworth's work is, then, hardly one of thorough optimism. Unlike Crane's spiritual father, Whitman, he was "not assertive . . . but tentative and exploratory" throughout much of his writing.  

Although Crane may not have been completely aware of the hesitant aspect of Wordsworth's optimism, he certainly responded to his portrait of the fragile wisdom of the pre-rational childhood world. Both poets present images of youth as a precarious state, about to be threatened by the world that would either deprive it of its perfect innocence or reveal its previously unnoticed imperfection. In "Voyages I", the children can enjoy their innocence unscathed, as long as they keep within their limits:

... but there is a line
You must not cross nor ever trust beyond it
Spry cordage of your bodies to caresses
Too lichen-faithful from too wide a breast.
The bottom of the sea is cruel.

("Voyages I", ll. 12-16)

"Lichen-faithful" sounds the note of "like unfaithful", the true nature of the world that surrounds them and threatens to destroy their Eden. The speaker advises the children to preserve their naivete by remaining within the confines of their sheltered and innocent world. In this way, they will escape the pains that lie at the "bottom of the sea", i.e., at the very end of their attempt to sound the spiritual depth of their lives. There is no chance that this warning will be heeded, however.
Once the children mature, they will feel the need to find a greater understanding of their purpose, beyond that provided by their prelapsarian world. As their own desires and ambitions enlarge, they will yearn to explore the unknown depths of love, which contains annihilation and suffering ("I/Must first be lost in fatal tides") in the midst of its most ecstatic moments. In the adult world, gain depends on its counterpart, loss. Wordsworth's image of the child presents him as an infinitely wise creature, "the father of the man", but living a precarious existence which will soon be threatened by his maturing into a world larger than his innocence: "Shades of the prison-house begin to close/Upon the growing boy". In both poets, the surrendering of this innocence is as unavoidable as the suffering that follows it. Both also believe in a new wisdom, a "strength in what remains behind", or the "unbetrayable reply", which gratifies their painful search. This new wisdom presents them with a new version of innocence, less unchallenged than the other but also more stable and more profound. Wordsworth seems morally on guard always to reaffirm man's position as one "trailing clouds of glory", no matter how fallen he has become. The situation was more hazardous for Crane. As much as he would have liked to believe in such a destiny, he felt the continued presence of evil and of loss. At times, his dream of renewed innocence seemed either an unattainable goal or a mere illusion. "Love", for Crane, may become "A burnt match skating in a urinal". 22 Thus, whereas he frequently shared Wordsworth's faith, he experienced a much more devastating doubt.
The most obvious point of comparison between Crane's and Wordsworth's work is found in their poems, "The Idiot" and "The Idiot Boy", studies of the primitive innocent soul, wise beyond reason. In both cases, the boys are "Above all reason", although Crane's youth is not so ignorant of sex as Wordsworth's would be:

The boy straggling under those mimosas, daft
With squint lanterns in his head, and it's likely
Fumbling his sex. (Crane, "The Idiot", ll. 2-4)

Although both of them are "alone", they have a world beyond the discursive and "trespass" vision of the normal man. Wordsworth's poem has been discussed as a comic work, or as a work which delights in celebrating motherly love. However, the narrator is too obscure to be believed. Certainly there is a good deal of irony implied in this "psychological poem". This narrator, like Crane's, is one who intrudes on a world he does not comprehend:

Johnny was sent for the doctor, but instead spent his time in the moonlight and by the waterfall and listening to the owls, and the poem proves him to have been right. When his mother forgot to send the doctor, she did just what her child had done before her, and nature blessed them both.24

In "The Idiot Boy", Susan Gale is cured not because of some medical treatment but because of nature's kindness to those who trust in her and who give way to their most honest feelings. Crane's narrator, on the other hand, is repelled by the boy ("I hurried by") and yet fascinated as well ("Passed him again"). While his idiot does not have the same "direct line" to nature that Wordsworth's has, both boys belong to a world clearly separate from reason, and "above" it. Both poets glorify the Romantic principle of the supremacy of innocence above and beyond reason.
IV. Coleridge: "The Mariner's Trance"  

Coleridge was a poet who interested Crane greatly, from the time of his first mention of him in 1921, through the period of the composition of The Bridge. Crane called him "Kubla Khan" (Letters, p. 353) because he thought of him as the poet of exotic, magical dreams that led to the "mystical" world beyond, with its "sacred river", "caverns measureless" and its "sunless sea". Coleridge's experiments with opium in his search for a visionary world made him an adventurer in Crane's eyes. Of course, the great voyage was to be found in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner", a sea-poem which developed the theme of the death and regeneration of the imagination. Crane's debt to this poem is reflected in his lyrics of the sea. In "Voyages", the "chilled albatross's white immutability" suggests Coleridge's "pious bird of good omen", a symbol of the spiritual power of the imagination. In "Cutty Sark" the subject's meeting with the strange half-mad mariner repeats the story of the narrator's meeting with the "ancient mariner" in Coleridge. Even the rhythm of the first two lines in each of the poems suggests this echo:

I met a man in South Street, tall
("Cutty Sark")

It is an ancient Mariner
("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner")

The "landscape of leaning ice" in "North Labrador", Crane's symbol for the world without imagination, finds its parallel in Coleridge's south pole, the land where "ice was all between". Lewis has compared Crane's use of the wind in "Repose of Rivers" with Coleridge's symbolic wind in "Dejection: an Ode". This "Wind", which symbolizes the spiri-
tual power of inspiration, plays on the poet's imagination ("this Aeolian lute"). It is also the power that blows the mariner home, following the breaking of the curse. In fact, both poets shared more than one of the central Romantic metaphors for the powers of the imagination. The image of all animated nature as "organic Harps" in "The Aeolian Harp" also compares with Crane's image of the bridge as a "harp", since for both poets the discovery of "one intellectual breeze" which would play such an instrument exposed the "myth to God" in the "curve-ship", the pantheistic "Soul of each, and God of all" that was so much a central obsession with Coleridge.

Crane's composition of The Bridge involved him in sharing more than a few Coleridgean images, however. While preparing the poem for publication, he decided to imitate the "gloss notes" found in "the version of 'The Ancient Mariner' as printed in the Oxford Anthology" (Letters, p.343). For Crane, this interpretative marginal commentary was a "great help in binding together" the theme which he wanted to explore in the central section, "Powhatan's Daughter". He also used the Coleridgean technique in "Ava Maria" since he explained that "it simply silhouettes the scenery before the colors arrive to inflame it..." (Letters, p.343). Neither poet restricts the device to functioning as a mere narrational pointer. Whereas it distills the information provided in the poem itself, the marginal notation also suggests that there is another level of significance which may be otherwise lost to the reader. Crane's marginal notes develop the submerged dream of the American continent and explore in abstracted, timeless phrasing,
the authenticity of Pokahontas' role as the image of that continent. The gloss notes in Coleridge also allow him the omniscient viewpoint of timeless objectivity, which can expose the additional implications in the poem at the same time as it summarizes the external action. While he talks about how the mariner's killing of the bird is the slaying of his own "good luck" and can mention how the crew members "make themselves accomplices in the crime", he can also refer his reader to "the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellous" in order to suggest the philosophic overtones which he is developing in the poem.

Crane was fascinated by "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" because it explored the sea not only as physical setting but as a symbol of the noumenal aspects of human experience. The mariner, "Alone on a wide wide sea", was faced with a conflict between the unknown destructive and creative elements of a hidden world. Because of its huge formlessness, its unsounded depths and its ability to act as a mirror to the rest of the universe, both in its reflective powers and its changeability, the sea functions as a symbol that manifests the nature of the occult aspect of man's existence. Both Coleridge and Crane recognized the ambivalent nature of sea-voyages as journeys back to "the prerational sense of the world", wherein man encountered a dream state beyond logic or reason. As a physical setting, the sea suggests the huge external universe before which stands the dwarfed and inconsequential self. More significantly, however, it functions as a clue to the nature of the unknown universe within. The sea, with its many ambiguous faces, is a multifaceted hieroglyph that must be experienced to be understood. It is the
"great wink of eternity" in Crane's "Voyages" which generates a language of a cosmic order ("whose diapason knells/On scrolls of silver snowy sentences") that would expose the invisible noumenal world to man. Coleridge's interpretation of the sea as a clue to the "mystical" world behind the "empirical" one is evident in the epigraph to his poem: "Facile credo, plures esse Naturas invisibiles quam visibles in rerum universitate". This epigraph states that it is a good idea for the "soul to contemplate as in a picture the image of a larger and better world". Such contemplation is achieved through the power of the imagination to generate symbols.

V. "Sign Manifest": Crane and Coleridge's Poetic

Crane was aware of Coleridge's theories of poetry through his reading of the poet and of I.A. Richards' Principles of Literary Criticism. He called the latter "a great book" (Letters, p. 314) since it got "to bed rock" on a subject that was central to his own art. Richards' discussion of the imagination is, of course, indebted to Coleridge. He also mentions that Coleridge is a poet who "takes the step into mysticism unhesitatingly". Coleridge recognized the power in symbols which allows them to convey "an idea, in the highest sense of that word". For this reason, he employed them in his poetry not as technical devices but as the language of inspiration, an occult or "mystic-aesthetic" way which leads to a comprehension of the most sublime orders of experience. Thus, in The Statesman's Manual, he defined a symbol as a medium "characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the
universal in the general; above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal". In his Notebooks, his definition of a symbol as a "language for something within me that already and forever exists" testifies to his belief in its special powers as a key to a hidden, eternal world.

For Crane, the symbolic function of poetry was found in its role as "the real connective experience, the very 'sign manifest' on which rests the assumption of godhead" (Letters, p. 237). He believed that the poet's power of generating these symbols was beyond the control of the individual's volition:

The actual fleshing of a concept so complex and difficult... as to be quite beyond the immediate avail of will or intellect. A fusion with other factors not so easily named is the condition of fulfilment. It is alright to call this 'possession' if you will, only it should not be insisted that its operation denies the simultaneous functioning of a strong critical faculty. (Letters, p.245)

In "Possessions" the way to "pure possession" involved the poet in casting off the "assaults" of the flesh by distilling all of its moments and suffering them. After having managed to "accumulate such moments to an hour", the poet's agony "on smoked forking spires" brings him to a catharsis, whereby he is rid of all but the lapis philosophorum, the "bright stones wherein our smiling plays". The process in this poem is a movement away from a lowly existence to a higher form of vision.

Whether Crane sought transformation through nature ("Passage"), love ("Voyages") through liquor ("The Wine Menagerie") or mythical reintegration of culture and history (The Bridge), his quest involved him in the "condensed metaphorical habit" (Letters, p.232) which was "an act of
faith besides being a communication". The discovery of the "imaged Word" or the "multitudinous Verb" was the achievement of "conversion of all things" that the poet found "imminent in his dream". Such was the pervasive occult powers that the symbol had for Crane.

Thus, the echoes of Coleridge in Crane are really symptomatic of a shared pursuit for a "mystic-aesthetic" creativity which would accept the material world and its "objects of Nature" before transfusing them through the imagination, Coleridge's "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I Am", into a "new phaenomenon". "...I have always an obscure feeling as if that new phaenomenon were the dim Awaking of a forgotten or hidden Truth of my inner Nature/It is still interesting as a Word, a Symbol!" This most important influence of Coleridge on Crane arose from the fact that both poets were dealing with the crises of the Romantic's conflict between the inner and outer worlds.

Coleridge attempted to interrelate these two realities through the imagination, which he labelled the "esemplastic power". This power invests man with a God-like control over experience which allows him to recreate the fragmented and dead universe in a unified and alive one: "It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to imply. It is essentially vital, even if all objects (as objects) are essentially fixed and dead". This statement implies that if the artist cannot rearrange the world, he may have to re-invent it himself. In essence, it broaches the possibility that the world may be
only a mental structure.

Coleridge had, however, condemned idealism in Berkeley, since it "removes all reality and immediateness of perception, and places us in a dream world of phantoms and spectres, the inexplicable swarm and equivocal generation of motions in our own brains".\(^{34}\) His outlook denied dualism since the "body and spirit are. . . no longer absolutely heterogeneous, but may without any absurdity be supposed to be different modes, or degrees in perfection, of a common substratum".\(^ {35}\) Coleridge had the problem of trying to preserve the Imaginative power's freedom to create at the same time as he was obliged to restrict this freedom to one that avoids poetic apotheosis. His definitions of the Imagination as an "intermediate faculty" always showed the precarious balance of his viewpoint:

There are evidently two powers at work, which relatively to each other are active and passive; and this is not possible without an intermediate faculty, which is at once both active and passive. (In philosophical language, we must denominate this intermediate faculty in all its degrees and determinations, the Imagination. But, in common language, and especially on the subject of poetry, we appropriate the name to a superior degree of the faculty, joined to a superior voluntary control over it.)\(^ {36}\)

Because of the insecurity of the balance in his vision, Coleridge's poetic inspiration waned and gradually died altogether. In "Dejection: An Ode", the poet feels his "genial spirits fail". He cannot relate the outward and the inward any more:

I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life, whose fountains are within

O Lady! We receive but what we give,
And in our life alone doth Nature live.
Coleridge's view finds its only preservation in denying the outward reality for a solipsistic view ("by abstruse research to steal/ From my own nature all the natural man"). The decision to cast reality aside ("Hence. . ./ Reality's dark dream!") and to immerse himself only in the imagination's private world ("I turn from you, and listen to the wind") is hardly a very salutory or convincing conclusion, however.

Coleridge's dilemma involves, most centrally, the need both to accept and reject the pantheist's outlook. In "Aeolian Harp", he suggests that each living thing may be given its life by one supreme Spirit contained in it:

And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic Harps diversely fram'd,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all?

In attempting to cope with Cartesian dualism, Coleridge poses pantheism as an answer to reintegrating matter and spirit into a single unified cosmos. But his outlook is essentially uncertain. He only says "what if" the universe were pantheistic, and is then quickly chided by his wife Sara for indulging in such fantasies. Sara is representative in the poem of the other half of Coleridge's outlook, the Christian one. Man would, by the first point of view, be God himself and thus the Christian side is shocked by the belief in human self-worship:

Well hast thou said and holily disprais'd
These shapings of the unregenerate mind.

The pantheistic approach not only takes on the position of apotheosizing man but also violates another premise that Coleridge holds valuable—the freedom of will. In "Religious Musings", the "Soul" loses
itself in its attempt to center itself in God:

All self-annihilated it shall make
God its identity: God all in all!
We and our father one!

The most blessed are those who reject the empirical world, who "patiently ascend/Treading beneath their feet all visible things". However, if this God is to be discovered through Nature as its "essence, mind and energy", isn't this abandonment of the visible world a possible abandonment of God himself? Thus, Coleridge remained caught between pantheism and the Christian outlook:

And so he bore the pain of conflicting interests rather than choose the anodyne of a solution that did violence to the claims of either side of the conflict.37

Crane's share in the dilemma of the "I am" versus the "it is" is reflected in poems like "A Name for All" and "Stark Major". In the first of these two works, the poet dreams of a world united and "holy in one Name always". The God-like unifying force which would suffuse all things would cancel death—which all must, at present, endure "to understand". The first of these two views is a pantheistic one, the second one based on Christian eschatology. While the one view would centre all things in an "I Am", the other can only define the distinctions of "it is". In "Stark Major", the separateness of man from woman indicates a divorce of the ego from the "empricial" world. Man has created this separation himself in that his love has roused her to conceive. He "cannot ever reach to share" the suffering and joy ("cries", "ecstacies") of the childbirth which she experiences. Through the dramatic revelation of this relationship, Crane symbolizes man's impregnation of the
world by the creative power of his imagination. Because he has caused
the world to conceive, he has, in effect, contributed the powers neces-
sary to give shape and meaning to the external, non-human world. At
this point, he finds himself separate, no longer necessary to this world
and unable to share in its expansion from within. The sun, Crane's
reality symbol, intrudes and awakens the lover, causing a "sundering".
Once man has loved the world to the point of fertilizing it, to ful-
filling its possibilities, it becomes autotelic, rendering him expen-
dable.

Although Crane shared Coleridge's ambitious desire to preserve the
imagination as an intermediate faculty that would create "symbols of
reality", he also experienced a breakdown in its balance because its
"mystical" side became all too pervasive. Gradually, throughout his
poetic career, he increased his emphasis on the importance of the
"postulated 'eternity'" behind the "accidentally defined" ("General Aims
and Theories") statement of a "temporal location". The important
aspect of a poem was its assertion of an "absolute experience", whether
it existed in reality or not:

But it seems evident that certain aesthetic experience... can be called absolute, inasmuch as it approximates a
formally convincing statement of a conception or apprehension
of life that gains our unquestioning assent, and under the
conditions of which our imagination is unable to suggest
a further detail consistent with the design of the aesthetic
whole.  

This dedication to the absolute generates a poetry which "really cannot
be technically explained". The poetry of such an outlook is meaningful
only because it has Coleridge's "organic form". Since the ideas in the
artist's mind are "living and life-producing. . ..!", they are found to be "essentially one with the germinal causes in nature". For this reason the artist's creation has the innate organic form which "shapes and develops itself from within". When Crane speaks of the "organic impact" of his work, he is referring to an outlook which, like Coleridge's, is dangerously near to becoming either chaotic and involuntary or self-generated and self-willed. In "The Wine Menagerie", for example, the pursuit of "new thresholds, new anatomies" leads the poet to a "boozy" vision wherein his own will fragments as he disappears into another's:

New thresholds, new anatomies! Wine talons
Build freedom up about me and distill
This competence—to travel in a tear
Sparkling alone, within another's will.

The order imposed on the poem from without preserves it from chaos but later works, like "Lenses" or Havana Rose", are merely incoherent self-willed nightmares.

Crane's dejection and irresolution in his last poems reflected internal conflicts that he could not resolve. Like Coleridge, he felt the confusion between his hopes and the reality which destroyed his belief in poetry. The cruelty of this confusion is evident in "The Visible the Untrue":

The window weight throbs in its blind partition. To extinguish what I have of faith.
Yes, light. And it is always
always, always the eternal rainbow
And it is always the day, the farewell day unkind.

His declining inspiration followed a pattern similar to Coleridge's. In fact, the dying wind in an early work, "Passage", recalls not only the "Wind" and the poet's imaginative failure in "Dejection: An Ode" but
also forecasts the "want of breath" in his own poem "Q Carib Isle!"
and the absence of "breath of friends" in "Key West". Throughout the
Key West poems, this wind is no inspiring force, but a cosmic hurricane
of destruction and submission. Crane's attempt in the post-Bridge poems
to find relief in a private world had ended in self-contradiction,
nightmare, or incoherence.

In those lyrics of Key West where he expressed the "transcending
... of sex and death",\(^{43}\) he is forced to rely on natural symbols from
the external world. In essence Crane is dealing with one heterocosm by
way of the symbology of another one. The Palm is "launched above/
Mortality", the Air Plant an "Angelical Dynamo", with hardly a shadow of
its own. Both appear, like the pure poet, to be free of any but the
most minimal dependence on nature. Yet, not only in spite of but because
of these disembodiments, they appear "Forever fruitless" or grotesque:

Inverted octopus with heavenward arms
Thrust parching from a palm-bole hard by the cove.

Like Coleridge, then, Crane felt both the need to move towards a
monistic position as well as the impossibility of doing so. Like
Coleridge's "counterfeit infinity" and Stevens' "supreme fiction", his
art of the "multitudinous Verb" was based on conscious deception:

... Medicine-man, relent, restore--
Lie to us,—dance us back the tribal morn.
References Chapter 3


2. Ibid., p. 313

3. Ibid., p. 322


5. Ibid., p. 7.


7. Ibid., p. 3.

8. Ibid., p. 6.


13. Ibid., p. 6.
14 Ibid. pp. 4-6.


17 Gérard, p. 69 passim

18 This interpretation is more evident from the early free-verse version of the poem, clearly a pagan homosexual paean:

I am a prisoner of the tree
And its green fingers.

Like scimitars
The green leaves shine.
Like serpent tongues they twine
Around the bough,
Around the fruit. (Weber, p. 76)


20 Gérard, p. 86

21 Ibid, p. 110


24. Ibid., p. 98.


26. Lewis, p. 190.


32. Coleridge, Notebooks, II, 2546.


34. Ibid., p. 92.

35. Ibid., p. 88.

36. Ibid., p. 86.

38  Crane, "General Aims and Theories", The Complete Works, p. 218.

39  Ibid., p. 219.

40  Ibid., p. 222.

41  Abrams, p. 172.

42  Ibid., p. 173.

CHAPTER IV
CRANE AND HIGH ROMANTICISM: SHELLEY AND KEATS

In sapphire arenas of the hills
I was promised an improved infancy.
("Passage")

The works of Keats and Shelley belong to a second wave of High Romanticism which is strongly based on the first wave created by Wordsworth and Coleridge. Since they were strongly influenced by the "mystical" direction of Romantic thought and because they were young poets who never reached a maturity of vision, both Keats and Shelley wrote a poetry which may not be totally unique in conception, but which is original in the power of its aspirations. The power of their work is based on the ardour of their great idealism and the eloquence of their passion to express it. For this reason, their poetry is marked off from that of the first Romantics by the boundless spirit of its hopes and the crushing sadness of its defeats: "The antinomy of the ideal and the real weighed upon them even more harshly than it did on the author of Tintern Abbey."¹ The appeal of their works to Crane was bound to be great because he, too, was a young poet once more attempting to do battle with the same odds. For Crane, the collapse of the age of faith was proof of the fragmentation of an idealistic outlook:

It is a terrific problem that faces the poet today—a world that is so in transition from a decayed culture toward a reorganization of human evaluations that there are few common terms, general denominators of speech that are solid enough or that ring with any vibrations of spiritual conviction. The great mythologies of the past (including the Church) are deprived of enough facade to even launch good raillery against.²
Consequently, Keats and Shelley were more aware of the extremes in the conflict between the ideal and the real worlds than Wordsworth and Coleridge were. Because they expressed this conflict from the emotional core of their own beings, they appealed to Crane's equally ambitious attempt to project a poetic vision from his own sensitive and temperamental nature. Like these two young Romantics, he realized the bitterness and joy that such a vision could manifest. Like them, too, he hoped to find a way of achieving a whole vision beyond that of the self, even though the private self would provide the stimulus to such a vision.

I. Shelley: "The frailty of all things here"  

Although Crane's 1921 letter (Letters, p. 67) mentioned Shelley amongst those Romantics who excited his poetic faculties, "The Moth That God Made Blind" shows that he had been drawn to Shelley's idealistic vision at the very earliest stage of his poetic career. The similarity between Shelley's skylark and Crane's moth might seem coincidental if the relation between flight and song were not an important part of both poems. Beyond his mere early imitation and celebration of Shelley, however, Crane was also absorbed by an issue that troubled the most airborne of Romantics. Shelley's quest for the "mystical" world beyond accident or mortality led him towards an outlook that approached the extreme of solipsism. Shelley's poetry reflected his increasing urge to create his own world of the imagination, unconstrained by the "empirical" law which he epitomized in one paradoxical phrase: "Nought may endure but Mutability" (p. 523). Nevertheless, from a very early stage in his career he was aware of the implicit dangers of this quest. Crane was to
experience similar urges and temptations throughout his poetic career.

In "Alastor; or The Spirit of Solitude" (pp. 14-30), written when he was only twenty-three, Shelley had already insisted that the rejection of the "empirical" world for one of his own making is destructive of the poet's powers. He condemns the "spirit of solitude" because it leads the poet to an unfruitful, selfish life, where he is no longer kindred with the "beloved brotherhood" which includes both the rest of mankind and the "earth, ocean, air" (line 1). Without this kinship, the poet loses his "natural piety" (line 3), a trait which Shelley found celebrated in Wordsworth's poetry. As Alastor's quest becomes more and more fantastic, his situation increases in its isolated irreality, culminating in a wish for death:

It will be readily perceived that the whole process runs directly counter to the Platonic scheme, which passes from admiration for physical beauty to the appreciation of intellectual and ethical beauty, and ends with fulfillment in the mystic contemplation of the transcendent Idea of Beauty. In its rapid shifting from the ideal to the corporeal and thence to frustration, the Alastor vision sets a pattern which prefigures the entire course of the poet's doom.

Shelley recognized that the poet's quest for a world "higher still and higher" (p. 602) would result in its antithesis, if the poet based his solitary dreams on his denial of the external world and of the rest of humanity.

The poet in "Alastor" has experienced "solemn vision" and "strong inspiration." He has seen the "inaccessible" and has been Nature's companion in her explorations of the unknown. But his vision becomes "languid" like his dreams, "ineffable" as the tale of the "veiled maid",
and as full of "excess" as his love. Eventually, his being becomes a "passive" one. Shelley demonstrates that the "mystical" vision of transcendence is achieved only through a "syncretic" outlook, not through solipsism.

In "The Moth That God Made Blind", Crane's poet figure shares the same fate as Alastor because he too is a creature from a solipsistic world. A silent and motionless oblivion is the pervasive atmosphere at the end of the poem. Crane's return to this solipsistic outlook in his lonely and anti-human poems of the post-Bridge period indicates his inability to preserve the moral of his early work: the collapse of the transcendent outlook without a foothold in reality. In "Key West", he is forced to deny his membership in humanity in order to find his way to his state of "mystical quiescence":

Here has my salient faith annealed me.
Out of the valley, past the ample crib
To skies impartial, that do not disown me
Nor claim me, either, by Adam's spine--nor rib.
("Key West")

His decision to abandon his dream of "mystic" America ("a dead conclusion") leads him to a "frugal noon" existence without "breath of friends."
The outlook of such a poem controverts Crane's earlier optimistic vision of the "multitudinous" nature of the poetic "Verb". In "0 Carib Isle!", there is "nothing here/Below" since God, "the Captain", is missing and his abstracted "Carib mathematics", the universe at its lowest common denominator of energy and life, destroys the poet's vision ("web the eyes' baked lenses!"). The poet's death is the shell-amulet which Satan, the negater, gives him in order to save him from the poverty of
an existence in a world where man is ghost, and God "the blue comedian's host":

    You have given me the shell, Satan,—carbonic amulet
    Sere of the sun exploded in the sea.

The word "sere" of course puns on the willed destruction of the "seer" who wishes to escape the infertile death-in-life existence on earth. These poems are remarkable and brilliantly evocative statements of the poet's wish for death. The destructiveness of their Godless and misanthropic view upset the balance of Crane's inspiration, however. The poems that followed them were not only statements of self-annihilation but were self-annihilating in themselves.

Because of his early acceptance of an atheistic position, Shelley's search for "some other absolute or absolutes" led him to defining a pantheistic monism wherein God functioned as "the world-soul, the infused mind animating the material universe." Since he could not remain content with a dualistic position, he searched for a way of bringing mind and matter together as one undifferentiated power through positing the existence of this all-suffering world soul. Although Wordsworth and Coleridge had played with a belief in such a power, their outlook never reached the definitive stage of idealism that Shelley's did. Because he lacked the Christian spirit-matter distinction in his outlook, the existence of an all-embracing spirit that denied this distinction was a strong possibility for him. Shelley's repudiation of materialism brought him to a position where "being and mind, inasmuch as mind is its awareness of itself, are interchangeable terms." There was, in fact, a greater potential danger for Shelley than for his predecessors that he
would accept an Alastor-like position. Although Shelley's poetic quest
did not culminate in a conclusive philosophic stand, it brought him to a
fuller understanding of the province of the poetic act. Therefore, he
did not transmogrify this position into a solipsistic one simply by
saying that the mind generates its own reality. In order to be known,
reality must be perceived, although this perception in fact depends on
the mind to give it existence:

The mind is intuitively conscious of itself and sensorily
aware of those received percepts that we call the 'external'
world; and these awarenesses, taken together, constitute
reality to the individual mind.

Eventually, the complex is realized without its parts being separated
out, since the mind is both a sensory and conscious organ at one and the
same time.

Thus, for Shelley, the distinction between the world and the self
are but mere illusions, created by our "immersion in mortal existence."\textsuperscript{9} Neither one nor the other alone generates reality. Like Shelley, Crane
dreamed of an undifferentiated position wherein the world-spirit tension
would be subsumed. However, he could not accept a view based on defin­
ing the material world as illusion. Although he felt himself a victim
of the "empirical" world, he also depended on it for his inspiration.\textsuperscript{10}
The sense of the complete inter-dependence of the two worlds could be
evoked in his poetry, but only as the climactic balance of tension that
had to be continually sought after and re-balanced each time he began
another poetic quest. At times, however, Shelley's achievement of the
unified vision of a monist view grows out of a Neoplatonic outlook
similar to the gradual discovery of wholeness in Crane:

Look steadily—how the wind feasts and spins
The brain's disk shivered against lust. Then watch
While darkness, like an ape's face, falls away,
And gradually white buildings answer day.

("Recitative")

This outlook is evident in "To a Skylark", wherein the bird's movement to "Heaven" or a place "near it" is the establishment of an "unbodied joy" beyond premeditation or satiety:

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;

(p. 602)

Crane's "Recitative" and Shelley's "Mont Blanc" (pp. 532-535) both deal with the poet's attempt to arrive at the monist's position in a link between two incomplete halves of man's existence. Crane's poem explores the subject of man's dual nature, and its resistance to the achievement of a unity which it depends upon in order to exist in any complete way. Each side is a "fragment" or a "brother in the half" to the other. The "vibrant mercury" is the poetic half which mirrors in itself the "half of Humanity" (Letters, p.176). For Crane, the two sides of man's nature come together because the imagination provides the essential fusion. It is both the mirror and the wind which "abides the ensign of your will." In Shelley, "human thought" emanates from some large source:

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark--now glittering--now reflecting gloom--
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters,--with a sound but half its own.

(lines 1-6)
The same "alternating rhythm" found in Crane exists between this universe and the mind. While the mind may act as its creator since it holds all of its elements together in a harmonized whole, the universe may also have a role in creating the mind:

My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around.
(lines 37-40)

While the earth, stars and sea would be nothing without the "human mind's imaginings" (line 143), even the naked earth can "teach the adverting mind" (line 100).

Both of these poems are therefore searching for a unity which does not deny the authority of either side of man's nature. While Crane did not turn to Shelley's belief in any single power above and beyond this division, he stressed the interdependence and the fusion of inner and outer worlds in one "single stride" ("Recitative"). Crane believed in a power like Shelley's "secret Strength of things" (line 139) which could generate the joint mirror-image of two souls. Instead of pursuing a pantheistic force as the source of this unity, however, Crane found it in the "imaged Word" (Voyages, VI") of the imagination itself.

Although they could not agree on the source of unified vision, Crane nevertheless shared Shelley's view that mutability would eventually disappear within the larger province of continuity. The structure of The Bridge is based on the cycle of mythical regeneration. Whether the terms are folk-lore or history, romance or industry, dream or actuality, Crane sees lurking behind the "multitudinous" nature of experi-
ence a "synergy" that is constantly pursuing its goal, to "ever fuse, recast/ In myriad syllables" the one "Verb" or "pervasive Paradigm."

In "Voyages", the theme of the discovery of the constancy within inconstancy is handled in the structuring of the "plot" of the love affair along Blakean lines of innocence—experience—higher innocence. The subject's desire to lose himself in the cosmic powers of love is expressed in a language of urgency and desire, where commands are transformed into prayers:

Mark how her turning shoulders wind the hours,  
And hasten while her penniless rich palms  
Pass superscription of bent foam and wave,—  
Hasten, while they are true,—sleep, death, desire  
Close round one instant in one floating flower.

In this stanza, the speaker indicates that he is aware that the sea, the symbol of man's limitless spiritual love, will not always be true. Thus, he must hurry to realize his "instant" of perfection in a world beyond the earthly one:

Bind us in time, O Seasons clear, and awe.  
O minstrel galleons of Carib fire,  
Bequeath us to no earthly shore until  
Is answered in the vortex of our grave  
The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise.

The failure of this love which attempts to unite the mutable in the immutable stems from the illusion on which it is based. Although it has been a "mingling" of "mutual blood", the speaker "must first be lost in fatal tides" in order to preserve it from destruction. Because he has not reached this state, his love is betrayed and changed:
... For we

Are overtaken. Now no cry, no sword
Can fasten or deflect this tidal wedge,
Slow tyranny of moonlight, moonlight loved
And changed . . . . 'There's

Nothing like this in the world', you say,
Knowing I cannot touch your hand and look
Too, into that godless cleft of sky
Where nothing turns but dead sands flashing.

'--And never to quite understand!' No,
In all the argosy of your bright hair I dreamed
Nothing so flagless as this piracy.

In order to achieve the immutable vision of his love, the speaker must
die to materiality and then look for a resurrection ("the sky/And harbor
of the phoenix' breast") beyond physical passion and desire. Although
his love began as an earthly force, its cool perfection can only be
realized if it becomes the "imaged Word." Nevertheless, the earthly
mutable experience and its failure to achieve the eternal state have
been crucial to the achievement of a higher vision, since the speaker's
suffering of this failure has made him recognize that there is a love
that transcends all limitations of the flesh. In essence, love must
realize the immortal powers it contains before it can realize that it is
contained by immortal powers.

In his early poems, Shelley expressed his awareness of the ever-
presence of change and death in a "world of hate" ("To Harriet," p. 522)
where man's "state/Is strange and full of doubt and fear" ("To Mary
Wollstonecraft Godwin," p. 522). Even at this time, however, he hunted
for something beyond death which would free him from the pains of
"Mutability." The passivity of man's life in the "empirical" world and
the ironic sameness of all the difference and inconstancy which he experienced troubled him:

We are as clouds that veil the midnight moon;
   How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly!—yet soon
   Night closes round, and they are lost for ever:

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
   Give various response to each varifying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
   One mood or modulation like the last.

("1816 Mutability", p. 523)

According to Shelley, death seemed terrifying to man because it stops the condition of change which is the guiding principle of his existence. It thus seems to be a cruel and terrifying force that must be evaded for as long as destiny will allow. However, Shelley explains that only those without nobility in life should fear the absence of nobility in death. Man must realize for himself what the power of mutability signifies:

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
   And terrorless as this serenest night.

("A Summer Evening Churchyard," p. 525)

Shelley's suggestion that man will pass to an immutable futurity indicates that this world is only the veil hiding the next one:

This world is the nurse of all we know,
   This world is the mother of all we feel,
And the coming of death is a fearful blow
   To a brain unencompassed with nerves of steel;
When all that we know, or feel, or see,
   Shall pass like an unreal mystery.

("On Death", p. 523)

In a maturer work, "Ode to the West Wind," the poet, in fact, sees his fusion with the Wind's power as the realization of a pattern of life-death-rebirth similar to that found in the natural world:
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit Fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!

(p. 579)

For Shelley, this renewal is also an imaginative one, since the "uncontrollable" Wind is an "unseen presence" which is both "destroyer and preserver" at one and the same time.

In the last years of his life, Shelley's attitude towards the mutable nature of life darkened and saddened. Like the early poem of the same title, the 1821 "Mutability" shows how man is, once more, a victim of irrevocable change:

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
   Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
   Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
   Dream thou--and from thy sleep
    Then wake to weep.

(p. 641)

At this time, Shelley had felt that the "Spirit of Delight" ("Song", p. 640) was becoming one of his rarest visitors. Eventually he felt that joy would "never more" ("A Lament", p. 643) be his, because, while
nature was renewable, the main forces in man's existence were not:

After the slumber of the year
The woodland violets reappear;
All things revive in field or grove,
And sky and sea, but two, which move
And form all others, life and love.

("To--", p. 646)

In the last years of his life, with his "lamp" (i.e., the imagination) "shattered" (p. 667), Shelley felt himself scorned by life and abandoned to its destructive powers. Any attempts to recapture peace in immutability were false because the "spirit interfused" gave the poet only a cheating momentary tranquillity:

Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind,
Than calm in waters, seen.

("To Jane: The Recollection", p. 670)

While Crane also experienced the same drive to find a still point in a frantic and Godless world, and while his power to do so also failed in his later work, he could never quite successfully envision the eternal power as a disembodied spirit that informed all of life, since his outlook was based on the acceptance of Christianity and the assertion of "empirical" reality as a base of human experience. The ideas of "extinction and beatitude" which Winters finds basic to Crane's role of "enthusiastic pantheistical mystic" represent a conflict of views that the poet never managed to clarify. The problem is the one that Winters diagnosed when he stated that Crane "refers to an idea which he cannot define and which probably never had even potential existence." More fundamental was the problem of fusing contradictory views which grow out of two mutually exclusive epistemologies: the Christian one which does not deny matter but would sacramentalize it through the power of the
Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection in order to restore a fallen world, and a Gnostic one which would expose matter as illusion or as the absence of spirit.

Critics of Romanticism continue to confront basic contradictions in its outlook which are difficult to explain. Because it discourages rational systematization in favor of acknowledgement of an organic whole, its outlook resists all efforts to give it precise definition. Indeed, contradictions appear to be basic to the explanation of what Romanticism is all about. Possibly the understanding of its combination of antagonistic premises of faith, namely a Christian and a Gnostic one, may help to explain this unresolved opposition.

From the beginning of Christian times, Gnosticism existed as a heresy which undermined the teachings that stressed the importance of Christ's incarnation and his suffering. The Gnostic did not follow the Christian's pattern of salvation, since he refused to admit the reality of matter and of sin in his pursuit of his soul's "absorption into its source:"

Indeed, the view of God and man which it implied often led to the denial of the reality of Christ's sufferings and sometimes of the incarnation. Creation was an accident, a mistake, even the malevolent act of an antigod. Resurrection and judgement were re-integrated to refine their 'crudities.' Sin had become a defilement which could be sloughed off.

The Romantic's belief in his powers as seer often led him to envision himself as a free creator who had complete control at least over his verbal universe. His poems, which emanated from a God-like power within him, appeared to have a purity of knowledge which was all their own.
Thus his art was a repetition of the infinite act of creation in the finite mind. At times, the distinction narrowed almost into non-existence. The "mystical"-minded elements of Romanticism, particularly found in its pursuit of a world of unity beyond earthly fragmentation and its fostering of a pantheistic outlook, which suffused the material world, often led the Romantic towards a point of view which envisioned redemption as "the soul's escape from corporeal defilement."15 Both the tales of "Endymion" and "Alastor" dabble in such notions, as do Coleridge's "The Aeolian Harp" and Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality." In each case, however, the reality of the "empirical" world returns to the poet in order to challenge the dangerous pride of such a view or to ground it in the drama of human passion. In spite of their search for a "mystical" viewpoint, their individualism and their need to communicate through art brought them back to a Christian outlook. This outlook envisioned man's life as fallen and itself illusory, although it was working toward redemption through an understanding of the disparity between its actuality and its aspirations. The contradiction between a Gnostic and a Christian view may thus be basic to Romanticism, since these two teachings present the fluctuations in faith which an artist, dedicated to achieving his "infinite Finiteness,"16 "Finite Infinity,"17 "supreme fiction"18 or "multitudinous Verb" ("Atlantis"), would have to endure.

These contrasting epistemologies are evident in Shelley's and Crane's roles as "mythopoeists". Crane's major mythology, generated around his symbol, the Brooklyn Bridge, refers back continually to a world grounded in sense-experience. The inter-relationship of folk tale
(e.g., Rip van Winkle), historical fact (e.g., the voyage of Columbus), and aggregations of both legend and history (e.g., the tale of Pocahontus), resides in the larger story of fallen humanity searching for redemption through dreams and discoveries.

Shelley's major mythology, which is presented in *Prometheus Unbound* (pp. 204-274), projects the existence of a level of reality which is static and perfect. Although this world is hypostatized and Prometheus remains a human figure in the dramatic unfolding of events, the poem is a highly idealized statement of a supernal world. Prometheus is, at least before his fall, "immortal and immutable:"

The essential subject of *Prometheus Unbound* is the One Mind; the extramental actuating power is the source of its events; and the drama is the history of the One Mind's evolution into perfection.

On the other hand, Crane's referential point, the Brooklyn Bridge, is man-made and thus succeeds in demonstrating that if a god-like power inheres in man, it must not be confused with the absolute source from which it is derived. Thus, Crane's Bridge is not its own Creator but will merely "lend a myth to God."

The difference in approach here may very well stem from Crane's basically Christian vision and Shelley's basically Gnostic one. Since Crane's "mystical" dimension is dependent on a Christian God for its authenticity, he sees man as less than perfect, dependent both on the future eternal world and on the present material one to provide him with his identity. Shelley's mysticism, on the other hand, can celebrate both a hero who knows a secret "Which may transfer the sceptre of wide Heaven" (line 373) and the unity of an immaterial world that is free of the hierarchy of divine and human rights. Nevertheless, Crane's poem
still envisions the Bridge as a harp with a glory that dwells in independence as its own "intrinsic Myth", and Shelley's "lyrical drama", with its "beautiful idealism of moral excellence" ("Preface" to *Prometheus Unbound*), is "mimetic art" with a moral purpose, in spite of his "abhorrence" of "Didactic poetry";

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
   to defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
   Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like they glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.
   (Act IV, lines 570-578)

Thus, the Romantic poet continues to vacillate between his two incongruous worlds.

Both Crane and Shelley were interested in the syncretic power of mythology, in its ability to create an archetypical, universal form. Although both poets were "mythopoeists", neither achieved this distinction by the sheer invention of his myths, but by the ability to interrelate those that already existed. Crane was, however, much more faithful to the existing myth (in his case, that of the American Dream) because of his sense of tradition, and of his main goal in this area—to achieve a sense of continuity that carries over even into the modern scientific world with its emphasis on behaviorism and materialism. On the other hand, Shelley was interested in approaching myth "by reconstructing the imperfect ones that already exist" into an almost "amythical" archetypical arrangement. His reader is, in fact, discouraged from tracing the myth to some origin instead of accepting it as a single example of pure archetype. Although Crane also avoided using myth as any particular illustration, he was not as sure as Shelley was of the
potential pre-existence of the relationships inherent in the myths themselves. For Crane, this continuity had to be created by a reassertion of the traditions already in existence. He also attempted to give voice to these traditions once more in a myth that would be true both to them and to the spatio-temporal world, the "empirical" reality of a twentieth-century industrial America. A myth that was incapable of supporting the faith of the man who lived in this world could not, itself, be considered alive.

To achieve their mythopoeic visions, both Crane and Shelley use synaesthesia as a means of poetically evoking the continuity between the "empirical" and "mystical" worlds. Like Crane's "logic of metaphor", synaesthesia allows poets to create a feeling of a harmonic interrelationship between the different senses and between different orders of experience. Crane used this technique mainly to represent the dramatic moments of merging, as in "Voyages II", where the sea represents the violent beauty of love's power, the way to metamorphosis. Here the sea acts as the creator-destroyer who imposes her own laws on man:

Take this sea, whose diapason knells
On scrolls of silver snowy sentences.

The effect of the use of synaesthesia here is to achieve a concentrated statement of the power of the sea through auditory ("diapason knells") and visual ("scrolls of silver") interfusions. In "Voyages III", the acts of coition bring about the "sea-change", the trans-figurement of the private experience into heights of poetic ecstasy, "the silken skilled transmemberment of song". Here Crane uses synaesthesia to effect an actual transmemberment—the complete and sudden "mystical"
shift from the tactile to the auditory that suggests an experience both physical and metaphysical.

At other times, Crane uses this synaesthesic technique largely to suggest the confusion between the states of consciousness or unconsciousness. In "The Harbour Dawn", sirens "weave us into day", while "Gongs in white surplices", "beshrouded wails", are heard as "soft sleeves of sound", since the state presented here is the twilight one between sleep and awakening. In "Lachrimae Christi" the moment of ecstatic suffering, of death and resurrection, is captured in the synaesthetic image of the grail being raised in "lilac-emerald breath". "The Wine Menagerie" suggests a state of intoxication, with the loss of the distinguishing powers of reason. Drunkenness combined with the anguish of conscience at the sense of death in the hands of depraved reality causes this subject to see himself in a dramatically inspired vision. Before the vision reaches articulation in the "logic of metaphor", he feels that "Percussive sweat is spreading to his hair." In the hypnagogic state of alcoholic vision, the sweat of fear and primitive desire seems to beat out a steady sound as it flows in rhythm with his strongly throbbing pulse. Crane has managed to suggest both the state and what happens to the one experiencing it when he sees the destructive woman, via the compact synaesthetic image of "percussive sweat."

At times, Shelley uses the synaesthesic technique to suggest the achievement of a state where all the senses are in harmony and reflect a divine unity:

I pant for the music which is divine,
    My heart in its thirst is a dying flower;
Pour forth the sound like enchanted wine,
    Loosen the notes in a silver shower;
    ("Music", p. 657)
The extent of the appearance of synaesthesia in Crane is limited when compared with its appearance in Shelley. Whereas Shelley continues to employ it throughout his poetry for its "general symbolic value" of effecting "his equation of sensory perception with moral discernment", Crane continued to insist upon the dual nature of these orders and the individual nature of each sensory organ's experience. Since for him the synaesthetic state could only be climactic, a state which revealed the culmination of a struggle for unity, its appearance was infrequent and subject to considerable control. Crane was to find a more meaningful technique in the "logic of metaphor" and in his development of the symbolic outlook with its analogical sensibility. There is, thus, less use of synaesthesia in Crane's great poetry or in his later verse except for the instances where the confusion it orders is a desired dramatic effect. In itself, the confusion of senses was not a technique towards which Crane could be wholly sympathetic, since it failed to preserve the differentiated natures of the "empirical" and "mystical", even when they were brought together in a unified vision.

II. Keats: "Twixt Ape and Plato"²²

R.B. Lewis finds that Keats' and Crane's biographies run curiously parallel to one another. There are several fundamental similarities: their short lives, their greater mastery in their short poems than in their long ones, their drive to fulfil the promise of their early major works, dedicated to exploring "the poetic soul in man seeing communion with the spirit of essential Beauty in the world".²³ The most significant comparison, however, is based on their mutual attempt to create a poetry that would realize fully "the naive, untutored idealism that existed side by side with [their] strong empirical sense".²⁴ Because of
this shared motivation, Keats' works were frequently an inspiration to Crane, even to the point of providing a direct text for his own work.

Keats was included in Crane's 1921 list of those poets whose work had the greatest affinity with his own creative ambitions. Like Shelley, however, Keats had already interested him enough to have affected the direction of at least one poem in his early verse. "Modern Craft", like Keats' "Modern Love", examines the superficial and selfishly calculated imitation of "divine" love found in contemporary society. In both cases, the comparison of the new faddish interpretation of love as a mere social pose to the background of great traditional love exposes the former's hollowness and vulgarity. In Keats' poem, the pretending lovers are really only "silly youth" that are playing with the trappings of the real thing. Their imitation of true love in a game of mock-epic intrigue and pretension cheapens and devalues its real significance:

Till Miss's comb is made a pearl tiara,
And common Wellingtons turn Romeo boots;
Then Cleopatra lives at number seven,
And Antony resides in Brunswick square.

(p. 394)

These people are "fools" because they feel that they can be exalted creatures of divine passion merely by aping its "agonies." For Keats, the proven existence of such love is "no reason why" the experience should be vulgarized into something "more common than the growth of weeds."

In Crane's poem, the speaker is not as freely removed as Keats' subject is from the adolescent love that finds a woman worthy of worship because she is a fashionable paragon of female desirability. His expression of worship for this "flapper"-femme fatale is also based on appearance:
She hazards jet; wears tiger-lilies;—
And bolts herself within a jewelled belt.
Too many palms have grazed her shoulders:
Surely she must have felt.

This woman, with her devastatingly "decadent" appearance, posing as "innocence dissolute", is only a papier-mâché imitation of real woman. Like Keats, Crane compares her to a traditional sublime woman in order to show how love has been secularized and blasphemed. She is not a divine figure but a witch that would be chastized and destroyed in a world of real love:

Ophelia had such eyes; but she
Even, sank in love and choked with flowers.
This burns and is not burnt....My modern love were
Charred at a stake in younger times than ours.

Because Crane's woman has created a harlot of love, like Keats' "doll dress'd up/For idleness", her lover is "yawning and doting" while condemning her heartlessness. Keats would only believe that the "modern love" is real if the imitators could "make me whole again that weighty pearl/The Queen of Egypt melted".26

Keats' work continued to have strong appeal for Crane, since, of the High Romantic poets, he is the one whose sensibility is most completely attuned to the reality of the outer world. This sensibility involved him in continual exploration of his own powers, mainly subjective and sensual to begin with, but later, more disinterestedly objective and moral in direction. Whatever philanthropizing Keats did in his lifetime was based on his own experience, rather than on the influences of philosophical and ethical writers that he might have read. While Shelley had the educated background for exploring these subjects, Keats, as a student of medical science, witnessed the immediate reality
of much of human misery, particularly in his job as "dresser" of wounds, as well as in his experience of the illness and poverty of much of the life in London. Thus, while he became devoted to creating in art a force that "actualizes the ideal," he could not overlook the external world but felt the need to render "perceptible the presence of the ideal in the actual." 27

Because of the poet's drive to assert a balanced vision, Keats' "Endymion" (pp. 53-157) develops a statement on the theme of the dangers of idealized solipsism found in Shelley's "Alastor." Like Shelley's Poet-hero, who suffers the cost of pursuing extreme solitude, 28 Endymion strives for something beyond the human grasp. His yearning after Cynthia in his world of "dream within dream" leads him to distraction and desperation. Having committed the sin of "hubris", he experiences the same confusion as Icarus:

... He who died
For soaring too audacious in the sun,
When that same treacherous wax began to run,
Felt no more tongue-tied than Endymion.
(Book IV, lines 441-444)

Endymion becomes an exile, complete in self-pity, alienated from loving either the "empirical" universe, symbolized by the Indian maiden, or the "mystical" one, symbolized by Cynthia.

Endymion has "no daedale heart" (Book IV, line 459). In fact, he has had inklings of the source of happiness, and the way to achieving it. Undeluded in his vision of the way to this happiness, he nevertheless attempts a short-cut, by quickly by-passing the lowliness of his destiny. He thus experiences "the deadly feel of solitude" (Book II, line 284), the Alastor-like state of exile and precarious bliss achieved
in the quiet luxury of dream. Keats shows that this state is extremely fragile since it completely denies a whole aspect of human experience. Like Crane's moth with his "honey-wax eyes" and Shelley's hero who "overleaps the bounds," his Icarian figure is threatened by the same disaster if he does not learn to resist bending "His appetite beyond his natural sphere" (Book IV, line 647).

In Book III, the story of Glaucus, Endymion's "twin brother" in suffering and destiny, provides a lesson for the young exile, since the former has read in the heavens that man can be saved from the constant "ebb and flow" of experience:

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... --If he utterly
Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds
The meanings of all motions, shapes and sounds;
If he explores all forms and substances
Straight homeward to their symbol-essences;
He shall not die.
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(Book III, lines 696-701)

This is the lesson that Keats' hero must learn. Endymion's sudden about-face at the end of the poem does not, then, lack thematic consistency although it may seem weak in dramatic verisimilitude. Endymion, once a sybarite, now discovers the way to his ideal through Christian-like virtues of humility and renunciation:

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What is there to plain of? By Titan's foe
I am but rightly serv'd. . .
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(Book IV, lines 943-944)

At this point, of course, the Indian princess reveals that she is really Cynthia. Thus Keats completes his statement that man's way to the ideal must be in and through the real, and that this reality is not to be rejected except by the man who would be, at the same time, an exile from the ideal he pursues.

Crane's "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" follows Keats' poem not only in theme but in its basic structure and dramatic development.
Whether his poem is a direct outgrowth of "Endymion" or not, certainly Crane was aware of Keats' means of handling the quest of the sensuous world for its counterpart, the "mystical" one, through the symbol of man's quest for a woman he passionately loves. Faustus' Helen is also a goddess-figure like Cynthia, who can change life into a dream:

Reflective conversion of all things
At your deep blush, when ecstasies thread
The limbs and belly, when rainbows spread
Impinging on the throat and sides...

For Crane, as for Keats, the ideal is achieved through endurance and humility, rather than through any proud and wilful attempt to search it out. Thus, Cynthia is revealed to Endymion only after he turns to his earthly "Indian bliss." Suddenly "this mortal state" (Book IV, line 991) which is "dull, uninspired, snail-paced" (Book IV, line 25), is transformed into immortality: "by some unlook'd for change/...spiritualiz'd" (Book IV, lines 992-993). Likewise, Helen's pure spiritual beauty is manifested to Faustus because he too has realized the full expression of his human desires instead of attempting to deny them:

We did not ask for that, but have survived,
And will persist to speak again before
All stubble streets that have not curved
To memory, or known the ominous lifted arm
That lowers down the arc of Helen's brow
To saturate with blessing and dismay.

Keats explores the theme in this way not only in "Endymion" but in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and in "The Eve of Saint Agnes." The last of these poems was of such significance to Crane that he chose to write his own ironic version of modern man's poetic quest for the absolute in the industrialized city by re-exploring Keats' theme of Porphyro's wooing of Madeline. "Porphyro in Akron" undercuts the Romantic theme with elements
from the poets of "negation," Eliot and Laforgue, to reveal the bitter nature of the poet's life in the modern world. Porphyro is idle in a ridiculous world of mechanical waste and demoralization. Since the name, Akron, means "high place," it serves only to render the poem's irony even more devasting. In a world where the "weight of many cars" can only function by "Absorbing and conveying weariness," the poetic vehicle can do nothing but submit to the same fate. Although the mature Crane definitely became the poet of the city, at the time when he was writing this poem, he felt, like the young Keats, the need to escape "the city's din" in order to compose his works. These works had to be concealed, since they were not what the urban life demanded of the poet:

O City, your axles need not the oil of song.  
I will whisper words to myself  
And put them in my pockets.

The only way the modern Porphyro can flee to the realm of his predecessor is by shutting out the contemporary "empirical!" outlook and the external world it realizes:

Pull down the hotel counterpane  
And hitch yourself up to your book.

Crane's attitude to Keats' world and to Romanticism in general is reflected in this poem. He sees it as a way of escape, of subterfuge, of exile: "in this town poetry's a/Bedroom occupation". The poet must keep his poetry private because it would be destroyed by the outside world. This world has also restricted the frame of reference that poetry has. It belongs to the passive, sentimental and possibly erotic aspect of man's life symbolized by the bedroom.

"Porphyro in Akron" more than suggests Crane's understanding of what Keats was evoking in "The Eve of Saint Agnes." Alone in the
external universe, Crane's hero does not have a Madeline of his own to whom he can turn. His ideal is a borrowed one, found only through escape and retrogression. Caught between illusory fantasy and bitter reality, the modern Porphyro can only escape through irony and self-denigration:

But look up, Porphyro,—your toes
Are ridiculously tapping
The spindles at the foot of the bed.

The stars are drowned in a slow rain,
And a hash of noises is slung up from the street.
You ought, really, to try to sleep.

The Laforguian attitude juxtaposes staccato tedium, inviting Porphyro to Laxity, with the penetrating awareness and true noble pathos found in the face of cosmic disorder. Crane could not keep this attitude free of his own sentiment, however. Thus his poem recalls his childhood days:

'Connais tu le pays...?'
Your mother sang that in a stuffy parlour
One summer day in a little town
Where you had started to grow.

Those memories of his mother reflect an idyllic prelapsarian world which contrasts with his life in Akron that was forced on him to earn his father's respect. This contrast is a self-evident one, since it was his father who once told him that poetry was to be, like golf, something for the gentleman's spare time.

Crane's re-appraisal of man's quest for the ideal in the symbolic terms of his quest for a passionate relationship grows out of an attitude which he shared with Keats, namely that love is the supreme principle. Love is the "unseen film, an orbed drop/of light" that is "at the tip-top" of Keats' pleasure thermometer. Thus, in two of his greatest poems that are devoted to this quest, "Voyages" and "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen", Crane explores the theme through the lover's pursuit
of his beloved. Throughout these works, Crane frequently employs terms of courtship, of desire and, especially in the former poem, of erotic frankness. For both poets, the love relationship is not only a metaphor for the pursuit of an ideal, however, but is an actual part of that very quest.

Both because of his rejection of "consequentive [sic] reasoning" in favour of the imagination's intuitive spanning power and because of his strong "empirical" nature, Keats could write: "O for a Life of Sensations rather than of Thoughts." Since he believed the world to be a "School intuited for the purpose of teaching little children how to read", each man was obliged to pay attention to the lesson if he were to make the grade. Thus, the world of books could be inspirational, but, by itself, it is found to be "wanting" since "Nothing ever becomes real until it is experienced". Throughout Keats' poems, however, the stress on autobiography or the authenticity of his particular experience is not as great as the one placed on the authenticity of the poet that these experiences created. Thus, Bate writes:

What distinguished Keats from his contemporaries, and from almost all the other major English poets except Shakespeare, is the highly empirical nature of his philosophy.

At the same time, he did not find it contradictory to assert that the "quality" which "went to form a Man of Achievement" was "Negative Capability",

... that is when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason—Coleridge, for instance, would let go by a fine isolated verisimilitude caught from the Penetrarium of mystery, from being incapable of remaining content with half knowledge.

For Keats, the poet could write his best poetry through openness of mind that involved the negation of a Sophoclean outlook. Man did not have to
know himself to write poetry since the "only means of strengthening one's intellect is to make up one's mind about nothing—to let the mind be a thoroughfare for all thoughts". The lack of a systematized knowledge, whereby man "has made up his Mind about everything", allows the artist a freedom from the narrow life of an equally controlled and systematized ego. With this freedom, he can go in pursuit of a spiritual "Capability" which is unrestricted by formalized presuppositions that narrow the range of his exploratory powers. Keats does not deny a "personal identity" to man, but he does reject an outlook that insists upon the structuring of this identity on the basis of a system of knowledge. Essentially, Keats' outlook involves the act of "negating one's own ego" not to deny the mind but to renew it in a new openness.

Crane's "logic of metaphor" or his "dynamics of inferential mention" (Letters, p. 240) were based on a similar attempt to realize "what can be done if potentialities are fully freed, released" (Letters, p. 139). Like Keats, Crane wanted to reach after "Mysteries, doubts" that existed beyond "fact and reason". He, too, was searching for a way to project the self into an uncramped and unbounded "new order of consciousness" whereby "the artist identifies himself with life" (Letters, p. 139). Crane's "projecting" is like "Negative Capability" for two reasons, which he explains:

The great energies about us cannot be transformed that way [i.e., through a "system of judgement"] into a higher quality of life, and by perfecting our sensibilities, response and actions, we are always contributing more than we can realize (rationalize) at the time. We answer them [i.e., "those who deny the superior logic of metaphor"] a little vaguely, first, because our ends are
forever unaccomplished, and because, secondly, our work is self-explanatory enough, if they could 'see' it. (Letters, p. 138)

Like Keats, Crane wanted his poetry to move away from "indifference" and "boundaries" towards a "Whole", whether it "can be grasped from such fragments or not". At the same time, he was also attempting to create a poetry which did not rely on outside systems but was self-explanatory. In this way, the poet "gather[ed] together those dangerous interests outside of [him]self into that purer projection of [him]self" (Letters, p. 139). These mutual interests in Keats and Crane bring the pursuit of "Negative Capability" and "logic of metaphor" close together as "mystic-aesthetic" objectives which transcend superimposed orders or frames of reference through the search for what the former calls "a thoroughfare for all thoughts"\textsuperscript{34} and the latter a "synthesis of life" (Letters, p. 139).

Keats did not suffer as anguished a struggle in his acceptance of the "empirical" world as Crane did, however. Aware of his position as American poet, following the tradition of democratized Romanticism created by Emerson and especially by Whitman, Crane felt obliged to celebrate the urbanized and mechanized twentieth century world he lived in by becoming its Pindar (Letters, p. 129). Since this world seemed so inimical to his art, Crane wanted to assert the spiritual values which were concealed within it in order to make it a suitable subject for his poetic vision. For Crane, these values were not substantial and constant. Thus, he frequently saw his efforts to transform them into poetry as acts of illusory or insipid Quixotism. For this reason, his poetry
frequently fails to exemplify one of Keats' "axioms": "That if poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree it had better not come at all." 35

Crane wanted his poetry to be spontaneous and inspirational. The task seemed easy when writing from the lyrical self, but not when projecting the image of the public poet celebrating a large national myth. When writing The Bridge, Crane stated that he was especially in need of a "keyed-up mood" in order "to have the necessary inspiration to keep steadily at it" (Letters, p. 231). The letters written during 1926 show the problems he had in preserving his faith in his material and his attempt to understand the cause for these crises. Although he could not trust Winters' recommended "methodical and predetermined . . . method of development" (Letters, p. 301), his poetry was nonetheless the "recording of sensations" that were "very rigidly chosen" (Letters, pp. 301-302). Thus, many of Crane's problems in his work arose from his attempt to balance spontaneity with the "problem of form" and the question of faith.

At times, most significantly in the post-Bridge writing, Crane attempted to escape the urban world where "elevators drop us from our day" and to turn to primitive non-industrialized cultures with their more fundamental senses of mythology and of the power of mysticism in order to contact the spiritual universe directly. Keats also made his escape into the dream world, into the past, in poems based on myth or legend. He remained, in fact, the poet of "Sleep and Poetry", wherein poetry's end is "To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man" (p.48, line 247). In a minor poem, "Fancy", Keats diagnoses the Romantic aim in a
Ever let the fancy roam,  
Pleasure never is at home.  
(p. 212)

For him, poetry had an autotelic existence as "might half slumbering on its own right arm" ("Sleep and Poetry", p. 48, line 237). Crane was aware of this deification, since in his own poem "Ave Maria", he wrote of God, the powerful "incognizable Word", as "Thou who sleepest on Thyself".

In his great odes, particularly "Ode to a Nightingale" (p.207) and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (p.209), Keats attempts to find some balance between the "empirical" and "mystical" worlds. The balance is not achieved, however, in any systematically philosophic sense. Thus, abstracting the words, "'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'" from the drama of the latter poem, where they are the imagined communication of the urn, and transmogrifying these words into Keatsian platitudes or philosophic observation, is as absurd as answering the question "Do I wake or sleep"?

Keats' poems work out a dramatic tension between the sensuous world and the world of the imagination. The urn attempts to "tease us out of thought" and yet there is something poignant, as well as blissful, about the unfulfilment which the urn displays in its pattern. There is an essential drama witnessed in the "Bold Lover" who cannot kiss. The tone throughout is an attempt to establish a conviction, at times by the poverty of questions and exclamations. This poverty, however, is not Keats', but belongs to all men who must feel some essential loss, some sense of repulsion in the face of the "Cold Pastoral". The urn not only calls to mind the stasis of immortal art, life frozen in eternity, but
also the sense of unreal and artificial unfulfilment ("Unravish'd bride")
and of death to the earthly, sensuous nature which we are forced, by our
very natures, into valuing highly.

Thus the most complete communication for man with the "mystical"
world must still be filtered through his earthly life. What the urn
communicates about truth and beauty is all that man can "know on earth",
because of his earthliness. The expression of immortality can only be
communicated through an analogue:

> Art is not eternity, but only the analogue of it.
> Not until he reaches a better world will man be able to know more and to elucidate the strange interconnections of the ideal and the actual. But in this world, art is man's highest endeavour because it makes perceptible the presence of the ideal in the actual.36

Keats' two odes, one with the "Cold Pastoral" and its words on beauty and
truth, the other with the "wake/sleeping" confusion, provide another quintessential statement of the Romantics' struggle for survival in a dual universe. In fact, like the "counterfeit infinity" in Coleridge, or the "centripetal and centrifugal gang" in Whitman, these paradoxical dualities find their modern counterpart in a mystic-aesthetic balance which Crane reasserts in his poetry of the "multitudinous Verb".
References Chapter 4

1
Gérard, p. 136.

2
Crane, "General Aims and Theories", p. 218.

3

4
Gérard, p. 145.

5
Butterfield, p. 223.

6

7
Ibid.

8
Ibid., pp. 11-12.

9
Ibid., p. 15.

10
Whereas Shelley's idealism found the distinction between subject and object, internal and external, a mere nominal point of view, for Crane it was much more real, a situation which had to be faced head on, since he could not deny a reality to the world of sense experience. Crane's outlook was never as philosophic as Shelley's. Nor was it ever developed outside of its poetic context except for scattered comments throughout the letters. It is obvious, however, that Crane holds on to the realist's position concerning the distinction between the inner and outer worlds, and that his attempts at repudiating such a distinction, when presented from the idealist point-of-view, fail to work very convincingly. His generation of a transcendent vision in his poetry does not deny the "empirical" but arises out of it. He could scarcely convince himself, as Shelley had, that "nothing is, but all things seem".

12 Ibid.


14 Ibid., p. 473

15 Ibid.


19 Wasserman, p. 31.


23 Lewis, p. 80.


26 The reference to the pearl in Keats suggests the "orient pearl" which Antony sent Cleopatra in Shakespeare's play (Act I, Scene iv). This pearl suggests the solid and eternal nature of his love for her before she weakens (i.e., melts) it by making too many claims on his manhood and his potential strength. Crane's allusion to the pearl suggests the same weakening of the divine power of love. Like Cleopatra, his flapper dissolves a pearl in alcohol ("drowning cool pearls in alcohol").

27 Gérard, p. 235.

28 Keats call his hero "the solitary" (Book II, line 633).


30 Ibid., p. 250.


32 Keats, Letters, p. 43.


34 Ibid.

35 Keats, Letters, p. 70.

36 Gérard, p. 235.
CHAPTER V

HART CRANE AND HIGH ROMANTICISM: BLAKE

For years, remember, perfectly honest people have seen nothing but insanity in such things as Blake's "The Tiger"—the only pity is what can be done about it. (Letters, p. 294)

I. Blake and Crane: A Meeting of "Mystical" Sensibilities

Evidence in the letters and in biographic material demonstrates that Crane read Blake's poetry and was fascinated by its visionary strength. Horton states that Mrs. Crane gave her son a copy of "the works of William Blake in the summer of 1917", when he was eighteen years of age and on the threshold of his poetic career. Crane's interest in Blake never waned. In 1931, a year before his suicide, a friend, Lorna Dietz, sent him a copy of the poet's works which he started avidly reading again. Crane believed that he and Blake shared an essential affinity in their visionary outlooks. While in France, in one of his drunken stupors, he shouted out this ecstatic identity of souls for everyone to hear, when he equated himself with Blake as well as with his other visionary favourites, Baudelaire, Whitman, and Marlowe. Indeed, Sy Kahn is not exaggerating too much when he says that "Blake was as important as Whitman to Crane in shaping his own language and vision".

Undoubtedly, Crane's identification of himself with Blake does contain a strong element of personal drama. He enjoyed entertaining a belief that he was a reincarnation of the revolutionary visionary poets that he so much admired. His hero-worship of these poets extended to a dramatization of himself as one of their crew. Nevertheless,
there is more involved in Crane's affinity with Blake than merely a self-gratulatory projection of himself as heir to his visionary favourites.

Crane experienced a need for serious spiritual affinity with Blake's myth. Carrying on a tradition remained for him an essential part of the value of poetic enterprise, in spite of the fact that this tradition had disappeared into the background during his lifetime. Modern poetry, like the modern world it reflected, had either denied the reality of spiritual values or had bemoaned their loss. For Crane, however, these values were still present, although they had to be rediscovered by being framed in new terms capable of expressing their significance to the twentieth-century world as well as to their continuity with the past:

I feel that Eliot ignores certain spiritual events and possibilities as real and powerful now as, say, in the time of Blake. (Letters, p. 115)

In his attempt to achieve a fuller grasp of Blake's visionary poetry, Crane read S. Foster Damon's book, William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols, in 1922. His enthusiasm for both the book and its subject is suggested in a letter written to Munson at this time:

I was especially thrilled at the Damon book on Blake. You know how much Blake has always interested me. (Letters, p. 100)

This enthusiasm surfaced strongly at the particular period in Crane's life when he was working on the concluding section of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" and was beginning his visionary "sea poem" (Letters, p. 99), "Voyages". His interest in achieving a new spiritual
scope led him to Waldo Frank's Rahab, wherein the heroine defines "the background of life as essentially Tragedy". (Letters, p. 99) Frank's mysticism has "a slight touch of sentimentality" (Letters, p. 98), however, a touch that Crane found rather unsympathetic and distasteful. Blake, on the other hand, had a strength of vision and a sense of positive courage that he admired.

Crane could only be in complete sympathy with a poet who said that "Man's perceptions are not bounded by organs of perception", and who thus valued all of life, because his outlook of total acceptance was based on the belief that "everything that lives is Holy" (Blake, p. 160). In Blake, Crane found a poet who believed that man could escape "the same dull round" (Blake, p. 97) of a material life by believing in his desires, his infinity, and in the "true Man", the title for the Imagination or Poetic genius. For Blake, God was found in Man, not outside of him. Consequently, man's main direction should not be merely for "More! More!" in his life, but for a complete fulfilment of his infinite possibilities. For Blake, "less than All cannot satisfy Man" (Blake, p. 97). This belief in man and in his true immortal self was the basis of his art. Since Crane was looking for such assurance and a means of articulating it, the discovery of Blake's poetry and poetic was a very great step in the realization of his own creative direction.

Damon presented Blake as a mystic who recognized the "cosmic tragedy" of the fall from unity and who pursued the recapturing of this sense of wholeness by understanding the nature of the fall, and
of "experience", known as the state of "Disillusionment" in a world of materialism. Crane could be completely sympathetic with this kind of a mystical stand, since, unlike Frank's, it did not pass away into vague emotionalism and dreaminess but was dynamic and fully aware of the fallen state of man:

The test by which the Mystic is positively recognized is the 'ecstacy'. During such moments, he enters a peculiar state of mental illumination, in which he is exalted above the world as we know it, into a supersensuous state, where he is violently united with Ultimate Truth.

For Crane, the initial realization of his visionary powers rendered the poetic state an ecstatic experience. He felt that he had achieved a supersensual height, arrived at through the senses but existing beyond them. In Blake's "A Vision of the Last Judgement", he found a statement concerning the Imagination which equated it with Vision. This equation stimulated the new direction in his poetry, since Crane was looking for a poetry which moved "toward a state of consciousness, an 'innocence' (Blake) or absolute beauty":

Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists, Really and Unchangeably. (Blake, p. 604)

Looking for a way to articulate his spiritual and occult intuitions and yearnings in a genuinely "mystical" verse, Crane found Blake's positive comments an encouragement and a guide toward the way of achieving this goal. Blake denied the reality of the Material world, calling it "Error" and "Fallacy":

Mental things alone are Real; what is call'd Corporeal, Nobody Knows of its Dwelling Place: it is in Fallacy, & its Existence an Imposture. Where is Existence out of Mind or Thought? (Blake, p.617)

And yet he did not eliminate this material world from his vision in spite of its origins in the Fall. This Fall and the state of Generation were, after all, a reality. To deny their illusion would thus create an even greater one. This illusion, said Blake, will only become clear on the Last Judgement:

Many Persons, such as Paine & Voltaire, with some of the Ancient Greeks, say: 'we will not converse concerning Good & Evil; we will live in Paradise & Liberty'. You may do so in Spirit, but not in the Mortal Body as you pretend, till after the Last Judgement. (Blake, p. 616)

Crane felt a very deep affinity with this position, since it was optimistic about consolidating Error, the Mortal Body and Evil in the Last Judgement. Thus, in the moment of transcendence, Blake abandons all negation. Nevertheless, he continued with full "empirical" awareness, to insist upon the need to recognize mortality as a universal situation:

... while we are in the world of Mortality we Must Suffer. The Whole Creation Groans to be deliver'd. (Blake, p. 616)

In this way, the dualism of man's "empirical" and "mystical" natures is not denied, although poetry works to envision a way out of this fragmentation.

Thus, for both poets, "Eternal Identity is one thing & Corporeal Vegetation is another thing" (Blake, p. 607). The distinction must never be lost. And yet the Corporeal World, although it must be "cast off" (Blake, p. 613) for the artist to achieve true greatness, can serve as a temporal imitation of the eternal reality, the "Vegetable Glass of Nature" (Blake, p. 605) which reflects the "Eternal World".
II. The Blakean Nature of Crane's "Mystical" Poetic

The evidence that Crane found the "Vision of the Last Judgement" a clear source of inspiration for the definition of his own mystical aesthetic is found in the statement of his "General Aims and Theories". Here Blake's distinctions between the eternal and temporal and the "looking thro'" the eye and "not with it" help Crane outline his own "logic of metaphor":

Blake meant these differences [i.e. the differences between those "absolutists" interested in "(metaphysical) causes" and the impressionists only interested in "retinal registration"] when he wrote:

- We are led to believe in a lie
- When we see with and not through the eye.

The impressionist creates only with the eye and for the readiest surface of the consciousness, at least relatively so. If the effect has been harmonious or even stimulating, he can stop there, relinquishing entirely to his audience the problematic synthesis of the details into terms of their own personal consciousness.

It is my hope to go through the combined materials of the poem, using our 'real' world somewhat as a spring-board, and to give the poem as a whole an orbit or predetermined direction of its own--Its evocation will not be toward decoration or amusement, but rather toward a state of consciousness, an 'innocence' (Blake) or absolute beauty. In this condition there may be discoverable under new forms certain spiritual illuminations shining with a morality essentialized from experience directly, and not from previous precepts or perceptions.10

Crane's logic of metaphor, with its "thought-extension" and its achievement of tonal nuance, of suggestivity in symbolic as well as linguistic and textual significance, gathers most of its shape and direction from Whitman and French Symbolism. Blake, however, provided a definite influence here, too. Crane envisioned his "logic of metaphor" in terms of Blake's pursuit of the poet's approximation to Divine Vision. A letter to Stieglitz written in 1923 proves this point without question:
'What is now proved was once only imagined', said Blake. I have to combat every day those really sincere people, but limited, who deny the superior logic of metaphor in favor of their perfect sums, divisions and subtractions. (Letters, p. 138)

Crane saw his logic of metaphor, then, not only as a way of transcending logic but of improving on it, of cutting across it, as his concentrated but infinitely suggestive vision of Brooklyn Bridge is the way to mystical progress and reversion. A myth, once generated, is returned to its source. "Vaulting the sea", spanning time to eternity, it will "lend a myth to God". For Crane this spanning is possible by way of the joint aesthetic and technical process imaged in "To Brooklyn Bridge":

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

This condensation of eternity is suggested by Blake's stress on the importance of "Minute Particulars" as microcosms containing the whole universe, as instants of time containing an eternity:

To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
And Eternity in an hour. (Blake, p. 431)

In contrast with the 18th century and its rational stress on classifying and generalizing, Blake emphasized his support for the unity and necessity of each "particular":

To Generalize is to be an Idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit. General Knowledges are those Knowledges that Idiots possess. (Blake, p. 451)

Crane's poetry was dedicated to reaffirming this point of view.
When writing his "General Theories and Aims" Crane may have had Damon's thoughts on Blake's symbolism in mind. Like Crane, with his contrast between the impressionist and the absolutist, Damon distinguishes between the "literalist" who "copies photographically what he sees or feels" and the symbolist, in this case, Blake himself, who can interpret "objects to show their relation to, and their expression of, mankind". The symbolist is the supreme poet because he reveals the eternal truth in a way that transcends the literal, even while working through it:

Everything he [Blake] saw revealed to him its inner essence, which was in turn the revelation of a truth. Only through this method could Truth be approached. This Isis cannot be seen unveiled, for the mortal eye itself is her vesture. The great secrets cannot be told; the very syllables are their mask.11

The way is then very close to that suggested by Crane, especially since it both acts as the springboard to spiritual heights and is achieved through condensation which eliminates the traditional logical "cloven fiction" between subject and object:

Higher yet [i.e. than simile] is the metaphor, which, by eliminating the conjunctive words, 'like to' and 'as', practically identifies the object with its emotional equivalent.

The symbol, however, uses this identity, yet discards the named object for the Eternity which is thus evoked.12

Crane uses the phrase, "adagio of islands", as his example of how this technique works for him. At one and the same time he uses the words to suggest motion, mood, music, and image. Crane refrained from calling the result of this fusion of the inner and outer a "symbol". Possibly this term suggested an undesirable affinity with the aesthetic of
French Symbolism. Such an affinity threatened to de-emphasize the spiritual significance of Crane's experiment by presenting it as strictly a technical conceit.

Crane was aware of the relationship between the achievement of what he calls "the moment made eternal" and the symbolist approach offered by Blake. In a letter to Stieglitz, he quotes a few paragraphs from an essay he proposed to write on the photographer, which he never completed. These paragraphs indicate Crane's own attempt to "capture" the moment, to achieve the balance between speed and constancy, motion and fixity, the temporal and the eternal. Crane struggled to find the artistic position between passivity and activity, which he referred to when speaking of "the passivity of the camera coupled with the unbounded respect of this photographer for its mechanical perfectibility" (Letters, p. 130). This process, whereby he would respond to the poetic traditions passively by accepting them and their verse forms and actively by reasserting them in modern frames of reference and language, would allow him to achieve the fusion of his empirical and aesthetic-mystic worlds. The camera in Stieglitz's hands achieves such a bonding:

But they [i.e. the essences of things] are suspended on the invisible dimension whose vibrance has been denied the human eye at all times save in the intuition of ecstasy.  
(Letters, p. 132)

Crane sought these moments of ecstasy in his art. As the controlling motivation and aura of his work, they led him to heights of poetic magnificence as well as to depths of shrieking hysteria or manic
volubility. Balance, however, was an objective that he pursued all of his artistic life. This balance obsessed him in his very early stages of creativity, as we can see in a letter written to his father in 1917:

There is only one harmony, that is the equilibrium maintained by two opposite forces, equally strong. (Letters, p. 5).

In "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell", Blake stated that such antagonistic forces shaped the whole nature of man's life:

Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate are necessary to Human existence. (Blake, p. 149)

These contrary forces were the base of the dramatic action in the mythologies of his epic poems and provided the fundamental dialectical design for the Songs of Innocence and the Songs of Experience. Blake's poetry was dedicated to creating a "fearful symmetry" which expressed the active nature of a universe abounding in creative energy. In this universe, "Man creates life, and does not only receive it from God". Thus his poetry is dialectical and cyclical, avoiding the traps of overgeneralized systematizations that would freeze life in a jejune morality:

"I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Man's. I will not Reason & Compare: my business is to Create". (Blake, p. 629)

The poet's creativity as well as the attainment of the Human Form Divine depend on the existence of these contraries and a desire for their eventual synthesis:

They [i.e. the gods] must renew their brightness, & their disorganiz'd function
Again reorganize, till they resume the image of the human,
Cooperating in the bliss of Man, obeying his Will, 
Servants to the infinite & Eternal of the Human form.

Crane's awareness of Blake's position on the question of balance and 
equilibrium and of man's quest for these ends is evidenced in the 
final quote from the notes on Stieglitz:

Alfred Stieglitz can say to us today what William Blake 
said to as baffled a world more than a hundred years ago 
in his 'To the Christians':

'I give you the end of a golden string; 
Only wind it into a ball,-- 
It will lead you in at Heaven's gate, 
Built in Jerusalem's wall'.

*(Letters, p. 132)*

Significantly enough, Damon calls his chapter on Blake's symbolic 
technique "The End of the Golden String", quoting these same lines 
before stating that "Blake's method of concealing his ideas is known as 
Symbolism".14 Surely Crane and Damon were sharing an insight into 
Blake's technique, a technique which became the one Crane pursued as 
the best road towards his own Jerusalem.

III. The Visionary "Epic" in Crane and Blake

When Crane began to project his visionary outlook in a long 
prophetic poem, *The Bridge*, he turned to Blake's major "epics" for 
inspiration and support. Crane did not see these difficult and often 
obscure works as Blake's private mythology, lost in some distant past. 
Blake's contemporaneity arose out of his dedication of his poetry to 
future generations, who would be the ones to understand it and its 
purpose. It also arose out of his belief in the co-existence of an 
individual moment and all of time. Crane was inspired by this belief:
I find nothing in Blake that seems outdated, and for him the present was always eternity. (Letters, p. 322).

In spite of modern achievements in science and philosophy, Blake's achievements never became passe: "indeed some of Blake's poems seem more incontrovertible than ever since Relativity and a host of other ideologies, since evolved, have come into recognition" (Letters, p. 324).

In fact, Crane found his Pocahontas and Maquokeeta in Blake's Los and Enitharmon, who also represent the sense of the inter-relatedness of space and time, the continuum so essential to Einstein's theory. Crane thus came by his awareness of the notion of Relativity not only through his readings in the modern time-philosophy of Wyndham Lewis, Oswald Spengler and Alfred North Whitehead, but through his readings in Blake and in Damon:

The great hero is Los, who represents the Poetic Instinct. He is the ruler of Time, the Sun God (his name being an anagram for Sol)--Associated with him is his wife, or 'emanation', Enitharmon. She rules the moon, and is Goddess of Space.15

Crane's vision, then, reaps much of its strength from a renewal of Blake's visionary discoveries. Both writers attempted to create complete poetic statements of the voyage through the mystic way, Blake especially in The Four Zoas and Jerusalem, Crane especially in "Voyages" and The Bridge. In each case, the mythologies are based on the same essential structural movement, from innocence to experience to higher innocence. The terms are different: Blake's London, Albion, Los, the poetic spirit, the Zoas, or "'Living Creatures'" and Jerusalem;16 Crane's America, the Poetic "I" and his lover, American folk heroes, Columbus, the poets and Atlantis. However, both are working toward the
same end, the achievement of the "imaged Word" ("Voyages VI"). This Word brings the lost soul home to the dawn and new creation, a unity that exists beyond all limitations of space and time:

> It is the unbetrayable reply
> Whose accent no farewell can know.

The Bridge is scarcely an epic, any more than "Voyages" is. Nevertheless, its conception encompasses the whole universe since, as in Blake's notion of the "minute particulars", the universe is contained in each grain of sand:

> From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

In diction, in size, especially in its "symphonic" development, the poem has epic pretensions. Each section reiterates what has been said before in the preceding parts. The organic composition of each "lyric" also contains images, themes and myths that reach out towards the others, establishing strands of interconnections moving towards the accumulation of one Divine Vision, its fall and its recrudescence. Crane's "condensed metaphorical habit" (Letters, p. 232) had finally found a theme worthy of it. The power would be tested to its fullest performance in a poem of immense scope and of tight inner cohesion, a poem with the multitudinous expanse of dreams and the verbal necessity of destiny. What Crane saw as his achievement in "Atlantis" became his purpose throughout all of The Bridge:

> It is symphonic in including the convergence of all the strands separately detailed in antecedent sections of the poem—Columbus, conquests of water, land, etc., Pokahontas, subways, offices, etc. etc. . . . The bridge in becoming a ship, a world, a woman, a tremendous harp (as it does finally) seems to really have a career. (Letters, p. 232)
The poem's unity is not that of the traditional epic, however, since it lacks the objectivity and objective necessity demanded by this form. Crane's poem is, rather, like Blake's and Whitman's masterpieces, a visionary prophecy, generated from the strength of the ego with its own private "empirical" base and from the sublimity of the poetic genius with its eternal "mystical" core.

Although Blake's poems have a stronger sense of plot and of objective narrational direction than The Bridge, both poets' works are quite obviously achieved through the powers that they bring to them from themselves, rather than from the pressure of any external reality. Their presence in the poems as the transmitters of these visions is something that is very difficult to overlook. Crane is definitely more traditional here than Blake, who plays his own private and parochial loves and hatred alongside those of his eternal Zoas. Crane develops the personal voice within that of the timeless prophet. This voice develops not through the strength of biographical evidence or through obvious direct contact with the reader, but through the individual interpenetration of historical and legendary materials, and the personal hallmark of his rhetoric and diction. Crane is an interpretive poet who, like any able conductor of music, reveals his presence within essentially well-known material by filtering it through his highly sensitized personality. The epic poet acts as the absolute diaphane for the advancement of the "paideuma", while the lyric poet insists on the recognition of his presence in his statements, even if only through conventional exposure. The poet of Crane's visionary work acts
as the medium for the meeting of both the personal and public worlds.

IV. Blake, Crane, and Poetic Dionysianism

Thus, while Crane was attempting to write revolutionary art with his favourite poets—Whitman, Blake, Rimbaud—, he remained dedicated to traditional views of the poet's role and of the personality he exposes in his poems much more than they did. Crane felt a strong elation in reading these writers because they cast off stern morality and its deadly imprisoning forces that destroy the poet's ego.

Although Crane was not always friendly to such an attitude which cultivated excess, especially in art (as can be witnessed in his disapproving, almost stuffy, comments on Gertrude Stein, Dadaism, and various avant-garde experiments), he resisted any controls on his life or on his art that would restrict their natural development. Thus Blake's most Dionysian poem, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and Joyce's much-damned *Ulysses* were among his favourite readings. Blake's refusal to deny a positive function to excess would have delighted Crane. In "Legend", the latter writes of his attitude towards piety and reservedness:

I am not ready for repentence;
Nor to match regrets. For the moth
Blinds no more than the still
Imploring flame. And tremorous
In the white falling flakes
Kisses are,—
The only worth all granting.

This celebration of complete surrender to love suggests that it is the only possible route for the true poet-saint. One becomes a saint and achieves the distinction of a legend by suffering. The artist achieves
a "perfect cry" not by escaping life's pains, but by experiencing them and their cleansing powers. The way is also sexual, a way that Blake found most meaningful in achieving the new vision of wholeness:

Those who restrain desire, do so because theirs is weak enough to be restrained; and the restrainer or reason usurps its place and governs the unwilling.

(Blake, p. 149)

Love, joy, excess and even lust are all "Proverbs of Hell", but Hell is only evil for those caught in the passive chains of reason. Such people are lost to all creativity, victims of the belief in the cloven fiction of body and soul and of the "One Law" which is "oppression". Blake can thus present alarming maxims in his attempt to invert the code which he finds so damaging:

The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.
Eternity is in love with the productions of time.
The lust of the goat is the bounty of God.
Sooner murder an infant in his cradle than nurse unacted desires.

(Blake, p. 150-151)

Crane, in "Legend", stresses the need to face love, to endure all of its suffering, to win all of its beauty. Throughout his work, he is continually aware of the fact that suffering brings about "Not penitence/But song" in the soul that accepts it unremittedly.

Certainly, the Dionysianism of "The Wine Menagerie" is also as much Blake's as it is Nietzsche's. The "Leopard ranging always in the brow", who "asserts a vision", plays a role similar to Blake's "tyger". He acts as a correlative of the "fearful symmetry" of artistic vision found in Blake's poem. "The Wine Menagerie" also presents an image of Blake's destructive woman, the female will, a figure who had a deadly reality in Crane's own life. Here woman enters the vision of
the poet in a "hypnagogic state", redeemed by the freedom from reason and the derangement of senses allowed by the alcoholic consumption.

This woman's eyes "unmake an instant of the world". Like Enitharmon, she is the emanation of the poet's soul, from whom he is divided. If the poet can be seen here as a Los-figure, the ruler of Time, then this woman's destruction of an instant is also his destruction:

What is it in this heap the serpent pries--
Where skin, facsimile of time, unskins
Octagon, sapphire transepts sound the eyes;

The serpent's skin is cast off when it is outgrown, with the arrival of the new season. Sloughed off, this time is but a "facsimile" of what it was once, and begins to expose the eternal "transepts" contained in the shape of the eyes, the shape of vision. The unmaking power the woman exercises over the man is thus cruel, but its cruelty is the way towards the Blakean contrary,--regeneration in "new purities".

V. Poetry of Apocalypse: The Occult Image in Crane and Blake

The title to Crane's first volume of verse, White Buildings, comes from the poem, "Recitative", a poem about dualism and the alchemical, mystical powers which attempt to reunite the "twin shadowed halves". Crane attempted to explain the poem to Allen Tate, presenting it in Blakean terms:

Imagine the poet, say, on a platform speaking it. The audience is one half of Humanity, Man (in the sense of Blake) and the poet the other. ALSO, the poet sees himself in the audience as a mirror. ALSO, the audience sees itself, in part, in the poet. Against this paradoxical DUALITY is posed the UNITY, or the conception of it (as you got it) in the last verse. (Letters, p. 176)
The doubleness, presented by way of the Janus myth, mirror-image and fragmentation, moves toward occult suggestions of reunification ("Vibrant mercury", "twin shadowed halves", "white buildings", "the bridge") which blend alchemy, platonism, Blakean myth, and Crane's own vision into one whole. "White Buildings" appears to suggest Albion (the word is said to derive from albus (L), white), who is Blake's Man, alluded to above in Crane's analysis of the poem. The final image of "walk[ing] through time" suggests once more Blake's seeing "through the eye".

The most constant influence of Blake's occult images on Crane, however, is found in The Bridge. According to Blake, man had fallen from a Golden Age of eternity to the Iron age of reason, with its abstractions and its mechanism. Jerusalem presents the story of the fall and the exchanging of roles of the four Zoas as one occurrence, each Zoa giving up his territory, his emblematic metal and his function in exchange for those which are not truly his. Following the consolidation of error through divine intervention, the Golden Age is restored once more.

Crane's The Bridge moves from innocence to experience to higher innocence and is also imaged in the move from the fragmenting world of iron to the millenium of richer metals—sometimes gold, but especially silver. Although the original innocence for both poets is part of the past—for Crane with Columbus, for Blake with the original integration—it does exist as a dramatic backdrop to the "epics" of both poets.

In "To Brooklyn Bridge", Crane presents the City symbolically
clad in its wintry "iron year". In this world of the "apparitional", of "sleights", of the "speechless" and "obscure", the visionary dream is lost or unfulfilled. The harmonic curves of the gull's flight and the curve of the bridge are misunderstood. They are seen only as the shadows of their real symbolic selves that span time to eternity. These real ones are fused by the fury, the "fearful symmetry" of great art that would terrify those of the world of iron and acetylene with its might beyond "mere toil". Whiteness and the pristine dazzle of silver ("white rings of tumult", "immaculate sigh of stars", "silver-paced") suggests the purity and other-worldliness of the vision, the magnificent "guerdon... Accolade" that is both "terrific" and "inviolate": "Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry".

The function of iron in Crane's myth is evident from its appearance in "The River", in the Iron Mountains which conceal and repress the past with its myth and its gods, and in the destructive iron which formed the railroads and axes that invaded the primeval forests:

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 pilfering make up their timeless eatage  
Propitiate them for their timber torn  
By iron, iron--always the iron dealt cleavage!

Iron, then, suggests divisiveness, while gold, as is evident in "Indiana", represents the American dream, which "the gilded promise, yielded to us never" since it was pursued as a debased material objective. The mother, in this section, finds that "gold is true" not in matter but in her son's spirit. Since this mother, the once commer-
cial New America, has pursued a false dream, the young visionary has abandoned her, looking for his true mother who will be fixed in his poetic vision, held "in those eyes' engaging blue". But now that she realizes the true source of gold, she can become included in his vision along with the spiritual mother, Pocahontas, mother of Old America.

In "Atlantis", the ecstatic climax to The Bridge, Crane's vision reaches its completion. The recurring appearance of "white" and "silver" throughout this section demonstrates the full discovery of the "intrinsic Myth". The bridge reaches "the loft of vision" as it transcends space and "translate[s] time", now achieving its ultimate magnificence as the symbol of the eternity beyond all of life's apparent limitation. It becomes a kind of over-soul, or rather an anima mundi, containing within it all the symbols, myths, images and historical events that act as keys to this transcendent outlook. "One arc synoptic of the the tides below", it is the "white, pervasive Paradigm", the "multitudinous Verb" that is all-containing, the source of all meaning.

The arc and its completion suggests another core of imagery that recurs throughout the poem. Arc, curves, rings, circles, are all repetitions of the eternal "curveship" of the myth contained in the Bridge. Other words, "vaulting", "rondure", "wheel", suggest the shaping, the rounding out of the cycle of this myth. Of course, the vision of eternity as a completed circle is a traditional image.

Crane would have found it in Plato, Emerson, and in one of his favour-
ite poets, Vaughan:

I Saw Eternity the other night
Like a great Ring of pure and endless light.19

In Nietzsche and Emerson, he would find the cycle of infinite recurrence that he explores not only in The Bridge but again in "The Broken Tower", his last poem.

The circle, arcs and arches are, in fact, frequent devices he uses throughout his poetry to suggest the movement towards vision or the completion of that vision. In The Bridge, this development is evident in Crane's manipulation of images that suggest welding, fusing or binding, as well as in images that suggest alchemical processes of purification and synthesizing (e.g., "sky's acetylene", "fury fused", The sky . . . distills", "weave us into day", "connecting", "bind town to town", "rosary", "span of consciousness", "whose lariat sweep encinctured").

Blake also employs the images of cycle and synthesis in his poetry, as well as those of the baser and richer metals. In Jerusalem, these images are found, functioning together in ways very similar to those used by Crane. Some of this shared symbolism may originate from Blake's visual rendering of Noah's ark and arc-shaped, a kind of moon with a dove hovering over it. In "To Brooklyn Bridge", Crane's gull hovers over the vaulted bridge before disappearing. Noah, of course, was the only one saved in the flood that, for Blake, destroyed Atlantis. Following this deluge, appeared "the rainbow's arch". This arch is Crane's bridge, the "eternal rainbow" which acts as a sign of the achievement of peace and harmony in a new stability.
Thus both Crane's and Blake's visionary "epics" work out a similar "Circle of Destiny". The poems both move from the fallen state back to unity by means of comparable images and myths that gather and accrete in their pattern of meaning towards the climactic rendering of salvation. Iron in Blake is the "nadir" of fallen man and is associated with Urthona, the figure of the imagination. Since the world is unbalanced and reversed with the fall, the zenith, represented by Urizen, the figure whose metal is gold and who represents intellectual powers, is found at the bottom of the universe's hierarchy. Like Crane, Blake's dramatic action attempts to restore the metals to their original positions as signs of the base and sublime aspects of life. While both Jerusalem and The Bridge end with the re-establishment of harmony, both equally suggest that there will be a continuing cycle beyond this point. It will not, however, be that cycle of innocence to experience spiralling back on itself once more, but an eternal dialogue, the balance of contraries in a single harmony. The Bridge is now a harp in eternity:

... 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 . . . ?
Whisper antiphonal in azure swing. ("Atlantis")

Since everything works towards this harmony, the "antiphonal" natures swing together in the cradle of one arch-rainbow. Blake's creations continue to come and go as well, but theirs is also the active movement in Beulah and Eden, Blake's higher states in his cosmology:
All Human Forms identified, even Tree, Metal Earth & Stone: all Human forms identified, living, going forth & returning wearied Into the planetary lives of Years, Months, Days & Hours; reposing, And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality. (Blake, p. 747)

In Crane's last organized group of poems, which were to appear as the Key West volume, he chose a quote from Blake as his epigraph:

The starry floor,  
The wat'ry shore,  
Is given thee 'til the break of day.

This quote, from the "Introduction" to Songs of Experience, indicates that man lives in a world of Reason and Time and Space until the coming of the apocalypse. The title, Key West, suggests that the key to the Blakean path is the way of compassionate love. Crane searched for this path in "The Tunnel", a poem with an epigraph from Blake's "Morning":

To Find the Western Path  
Right thro' the Gates of Wrath

The poems of Key West do not find their way back to love since "Blake's presence", which was "indispensable" in "The Tunnel" as a "counter force to the ghastly image of Poe", does not come through in these works as a force of renewal and resurrection through love and pity. Instead, the poems seem to advocate escape or despair. The power of Blake's vision, which had been so strong for Crane, must have been eclipsed by the Gates of Wrath, which, instead of opening and leading the poet into a renewed vision, engulfed him in an inhuman darkness. The result of this inability to follow Blake beyond the gloomy vision of a defeated world to a new conception of humanity is found in Crane's
last works. Apart from "The Broken Tower", these are bodiless poems that lack any but the narrowest outlook of a lost soul.

VI. Conclusion

The evidence of Crane's relation to British Romanticism demonstrates an affinity to a poetry obsessed with the same dualism that tortured the American poet. The fin de siècle influence was found to be a short-lived one which, nevertheless, prepared him for the extreme anti-empirical direction that his later poetry followed. On the other hand, the influence of the British High Romantics was most pervasive during the height of Crane's creative expression. At this time, he searched out a balance between his "mystical" and "empirical" natures in a poetry that was dedicated to a mystic-aesthetic tradition. The failure of the High Romantics to maintain this balance, or to explore it in any new way, is evident in their later works. Although Wordsworth's mature poetry is ambitious, it is either more discursive and dull than his earlier work or is gloomier in its estimation of man's situation. Coleridge's inspiration fails and lapses into silence. Shelley's last poetry, although it is some of his most honest and profoundly moving work, is sad and defeated. Blake's Jerusalem is a culminating major prophecy, but it is often crotchety and dogmatic. Only Keats creates something powerful and mature in his final works, although they suggest a longing for death as a silent perfection beyond life's uncertainties.

Crane's inspiration in his later works is much feebleler and more fragmented than that of the High Romantics, however, because of his
increasingly desperate need to preserve his visionary powers, which were evidently failing him. This need is based on Crane's version of Romanticism, which was much more troubled than that of the High Romantics. This version was, after all, that of a modern poet living in a world that was very low in faith. It was also the poetry of a man who grew up in the environment of American Transcendentalist's somewhat simple-minded and tortured need for the mystic-aesthetic outlook to establish itself not only in the individual's private vision but as part of a large "en-masse" public consciousness.
References Chapter 5

1
Horton, p. 49

2
Unterecker, p. 641.

3
Horton, p. 287

4

5
A point of confusion concerning this reading of Damon has not yet been straightened out. Crane appears to have read the book in 1922, since no other writing of Damon's would fit the description of "the book on Blake". However, it was not published until 1924. Crane must have read the book in manuscript, then, although it is somewhat difficult to believe it was written two years before it was printed. The only other conclusions possible are that Crane read it while it was still incomplete or that the letter is chronologically misplaced.

6
Blake: Complete Writings, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 97. All subsequent references to Blake's poetry will refer to this text and will be made internally.

7

8
Ibid., p. 2.

9
Crane, "General Aims and Theories", in Collected Poems, p. 221.

10
Ibid., pp. 220-221

11
Damon, p. 65.

12
Ibid., pp. 64-65.

14 Damon, p. 64.


17 Crane, *Complete Works*, p. 43.


20 Lewis, p. 356.
CHAPTER VI

HART CRANE AND AMERICAN TRANSCENDENTALISM: EMERSON

"What I am really handling, you see, is the Myth of America" (Letters, p. 305)

Throughout Crane's letters and poetry there are numerous striking references, or indirect allusions, to America and to American literature. Crane's life, disposition, and dreams remained first and foremost those of an American artist, dedicated to creating a poetry that grew out of his indissoluble links with his country. His consciousness was an American one in his dedication to the historical traditions, cultural attitudes and spiritual aspirations defined by that nation.

Thus, he was proud of Frank's comment that White Buildings was to be "an event in American poetry—a major event" (Letters, p. 223). The "mystic consummation" (Letters, p. 240) of his most ambitious poem, The Bridge, is located right "at the center of Brooklyn Bridge" (Letters, p. 240). This is no haphazard arrangement, since the visionary outlook which he attempted to project in this poem was directed toward "enunciating a new cultural synthesis of values in terms of our America" (Letters, p. 223). While writing The Bridge, Crane discovered that the origins of the "Myth of America" reach back to Columbus' voyages, and even beyond that, to the spirit of the North American Indian and his mythology. He realized, however, that the conscious ordering of the American dream and the incarnation of its "Adamic Man", a being who was given a new chance in a new Eden, was accomplished in the writings of two poets of Transcendentalism, 1 Emerson and Whitman.
I. Emerson and Transcendentalism

Emerson's "The Transcendentalist"\(^2\) is one of the most revealing attempts at defining the somewhat unreal position fostered by this philosophic outlook. Not only was there "no such thing as a Transcendental party"; there was "no pure Transcendentalist" (Essays, p. 92) in existence. Transcendentalism, in effect, was "Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842" (Essays, p. 87). Founded on "consciousness" rather than on "experience", it was a "spiritual doctrine" without the dogmatic core that doctrines usually expound. Beginning as an attempt to restore the supersensual element to religion, which had been secularized by empiricism's total reliance on "human reason grounded in natural experience", \(^3\) Transcendentalism became an unorthodox, iconoclastic outlook which believed in the power of individual consciousness to realize its own divinity. All individuals and all aspects of nature were parts of a larger Whole, of which they were the existing signs. This philosophic view, which preserved America's "double tendency towards standardization and anarchy"\(^4\) originated, then, from a double-natured epistemology that attempted to relate "Nature" and the "spirit" as the appearance and reality of one existence.

Because of his consciousness of the dualism that is the nature of the present reality, the Transcendentalist is frequently "lonely", solitary and withdrawn. He experiences the disparity between the existing situation and the ideal one:

These two states of thought diverge every moment, and stand in wild contrast. To him who looks at his life from these moments of illumination, it will seem that
he skulks and plays a mean, shiftless and subaltern part in the world . . . The worst feature of this double consciousness is, that the two lives, of the understanding and of the soul, which we lead, really show very little relation to each other; never meet and measure each other: one prevails now, all buzz and din; and the other prevails then, all infinitude and paradise; and, with the progress of life, the two discover no greater disposition to reconcile themselves. (Essays, p. 100)

His goal, however, is to master this dualism by realizing the presence of the divine nature in himself and by discovering the purpose of his "empirical" existence as a potential expression of this greater realization.

There are several obvious links between the stands taken by English Romanticism and American Transcendentalism. Both movements are directed towards discovering a "mystical" wholeness beyond "empirical" divisiveness. In fact, the Romantics provided the example that their American counterparts followed. They too rebelled against the institutionalized philosophy of Lockian empiricism, a philosophy which determined the nature and course of their contemporary religious thought. To the Transcendentalists, what had happened to the public faith in their churches was an ominous sign of the downward direction of their own spiritual beliefs. This faith had become less and less a question of illumination and more and more a matter of rational common-sense observation. Its purpose in existing began to seem rather questionable since it expressed little more than a belief in the powers of that same reason and in the desirable pursuit of human perfectibility.
The Transcendentalists joined the Romantics in reasserting the existence of irrational, unrevealed powers because they recognized the restrictive nature of an outlook based strictly on the revelations of sense-experience. Like Coleridge, "the most immediate force behind American transcendentalism," they went to Kant for a way beyond the "illusory" philosophy of sense-experience. Their philosophy was dedicated to a belief that there were "facts not affected by the illusion of sense" (Essays, p. 87), which would only be "explained" by an outlook with idealistic tendencies that would transcend the narrow range of an "empirical" viewpoint:

It is well known to most of my audience that the Idealism of the present day acquired the name of Transcendental from the use of that term by Immanuel Kant, of Konigsberg, who replied to the skeptical philosophy of Locke, which insisted that there was nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the experience of the senses, by showing that there was a very important class of ideas or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquired; that these were intuitions of the mind itself; and he denominated them Transcendental forms. (Essays, p. 93)

Like the English Romantics, the Transcendentalists were interested in Kantian philosophy only because it provided them with a frame of reference for an outlook that rejected the limitations of empiricism. In his "Introduction" to Selected Writings of the American Transcendentalists, Hochfield calls the movement a "manifestation of Romanticism":

The divinity of nature, the glory of human aspiration and freedom, the power of intuition as opposed to reason, the creative energy of the poetic imagination—these are some of the themes imported into America by writers like Hedge, Brownson, Ripley, and Fuller, as well as Emerson. Indeed, Transcendentalism, as a radical and innovating movement, invented the typical American avant-
garde strategy of allying itself with European masters as both an offensive and a defensive measure against conservative resistance at home.\textsuperscript{6}

In itself, the American movement was no more interested than Romanticism was in defining a clear and systematic world view.

Nevertheless, there are distinctions between the two outlooks. To begin with, this conservative resistance is more "at home" than Hochfield implies. It was not without its impassioned existence in the writers themselves. In fact, Roy Harvey Pearce, in his book, The Continuity of American Poetry, describes American poets as "conservatives—often so radical in their conservatism as to seem to be revolutionaries."\textsuperscript{7} Like the Transcendentalist, the American poet has refused to accept the prevailing view of reality. He exists without law and thus, as Emerson suggests, "easily incurs the charge of anti-nomianism":\textsuperscript{8}

In short, the power of American poetry from the beginning has derived from the poets' inability, or refusal, at some depth of consciousness wholly to accept his culture's system of values. By the nineteenth century that refusal, freed from its matrix in Puritan dogma, has been in effect transformed into its opposite, a mode of assent; and the American poet again and again imaged himself—in Emerson's and Whitman's world—as an Adam who, since he might well be one with God, was certainly one with all men. The continuity of this narrative is that of the antinominian, Adamic impulse, as it thrusts against a culture made by Americans who come more and more to be frightened by it, even as they realize that it is basic to the very idea of their society: one (in Whitman's words) of simple, separate persons, yet democratic, en-masse.\textsuperscript{9}

The American poet thus becomes a refuser, although he tries, in all desperation, to make this refusal a "yes" by confronting the norm of a strictly practical sensation-based outlook with a workable counter-vision. This vision may stimulate the creation of a counter-culture
dedicated to spiritual enterprise. And yet, this poet always feels the need to be on guard against anarchy and despair.

Since the American poet feels the desperateness of living in a dualistic condition much more than the English Romantic did, his obligation to achieve a sense of unity is a much more compelling one. The unmitigated antagonism between his place in a democratic tradition wherein he is one man among many, and his vatic role which insists that he is a special person communicating exclusive knowledge, has caused him to live a life based on a severe conflict of loyalties. From his very origins within the Puritan tradition, wherein art is always subordinate to faith, this poet has always felt the uncomfortableness of creating a poetry expressive of the private ego alone. English poets, on the other hand, were more interested in exploring this rift than in sacrificing it to the new expression of some third thing. Such a sacrifice would involve the loss of the aristocracy of the ego as well as the nobility of its self-discovery. The suffering of this ego was, thus, enhanced as part of the way to its own self-enrichment. If the situation that this ego was forced to endure was a sad and painful one, the poet expressed it as such, without feeling the American's drive to master it through an obsessive cosmic optimism, which envisioned faith not as a challenge or crisis but as a virtue which a Calvinistic-minded God was obliged to reward. If the Romantic was forced to abandon either foothold, he could more easily give up the "empirical" one, since the "mystical" one could always provide its own illusion. The poet celebrating the nobility of the self could hardly
be expected to choose the route that would lead him to celebrating sense-experience as the limit of human experience.

The American poet's resolution of this debate would be a difficult one, even if he managed to escape its conflict of interests in a third world of art:

To the true romantic, however faithful an artist he might be, the language of a poem could never take on this autonomous quality. However carefully elaborated, the words remained a self-expression, the vehicle of personal ideas or emotions; the literary work was formed in the writer's soul, and language was merely the instrument of expression. For Wordsworth, 'all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'—an emanation, generalized by the poets' basic resemblance to all other men, from the personality of the poet. For Eliot, on the other hand, the prime fact is that 'the poet has, not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways.' Here the romantic conception of self-expression has passed into a totally different ideal: exploitation of the medium.10

The poet's conception of this symbolizing process is obviously complete in its self-consciousness. Nevertheless, such a view contradicts the very basis of a democratic-minded Transcendentalism which fostered Crane's view of "literature as very close to life,—and its essence, in fact" (Letters, p. 191). The American poet's attempt to resolve the dualism always obliged him to turn back to it for its own resolution, since the theory of symbols, the pantheistic outlook, the pursuit of harmony and the realization of individuality were aspects of an organically disposed ontology developing out of a dialectical consciousness. Radical and unorthodox, conservative and self-vindicating, the Transcendentalist was, paradoxically, forced to preserve
Emerson's outlook in order to be able to overcome it: "And so always the soul's scale is one, the scale of the senses and the understanding is another" (Essays, p. 265). Of course, Emerson's own career was dedicated to transcending this dualism which he felt compelled to define over and over again.

II. Crane's Relation to Transcendentalism

Crane's relation to the tradition upon which the works of Emerson and Whitman are based is evident throughout the body of his works. This tradition is particularly significant to the scope and rationale of The Bridge, a non-epic "epic" of Transcendental-minded self-justification. Crane's poem was an attempt to relate his poetic and pragmatic outlooks in a magnum opus which would place him in direct relation to a culture wherein democracy was not mere egalitarianism but the realization of each man's awareness of his sacred part in the plan of a harmonic cosmos.

Born to a mid-Western family that held considerable social status in its community, Crane was made aware of his responsibility to his society and to his country from a very early age. Since his family members belonged to a solid upper middle class, they encouraged the cultivation of self-reliance and the achievement of social solidarity and material success. Crane's early letters to his father affect a manly pose of balance and sound judgment. In 1919 he wrote to his friend, William Wright, that "the most prominent characteristic of America", namely its "commercial aspect", did not force the poet to "surrender. . . everything else nobler and better in his aspirations"
Thus, at this early time in his career, his father's influence caused him to envision himself as a truly American poet, dedicated to celebrating his country's spiritual and material progress as parts of one democratic utopia.

Crane's mother was a member of the Christian Science congregation, Mary Baker Eddy's curiously American amalgam of idealism and pragmatism which advanced great testimonials of medical "cures" by paradoxically denying the actual existence of diseases. 11 Crane's drive for an inspirational optimism and the quest for success and admiration in his mother's eyes are thus aspects of the Transcendental-rooted background. In spite of his inability to absorb his mother's religion completely, his comments to his father in a letter written after his parents had separated reflect his religious outlook as well as his dedication to his family as one of its trio of sufferers:

But please, my dear Father, do not make the present too hard,—too painful for one whose fatal weakness is to love two unfortunate people, by writing barbed words. I don't know how long we three shall dwell in purgatory. We may rise above, or sink below, but either way it may be, the third shall and must follow the others, and I leave myself in your hands. (Letters, p. 8)

In spite of the fact that Crane eventually became dissatisfied with his relations with his parents and attempted to break contact with them completely, he remained always very much their son. Thus when he became obsessed with escaping his mother's influence, his major poem, *The Bridge*, was frequently involved in searching her out in his vision of America as mother-country. In his last years, he was trying to find a balance in his creative and sexual urges that was
based on his father's example of the successful self-disciplined parent. The exemplary role his father had for him is evident in a letter written at the time of the former's death:

> And if my father had to go thus early in life—I'm very grateful that at least I am left with a fuller appreciation of his fine qualities and of his genuine love for me than might have been possible without the course of some recent events. I can say that his character and the impress of it that I lately received will be a real inspiration to me. (Letters, p. 377)

Crane felt the same way about his country as he did about his family. He could distrust America's barbarity as it was represented by those nationalists who celebrated its "futile & fussy inanities" by staging a crude and showy "'pee-rade'":

> ... I spent two hours of painful rumination ending with such disgust at America and everything in it, that I more than ever envy you your [i.e., Munson's] egress to foreign parts. No place but America could relish & applaud anything so stupid & drab as that parade ... Our people have no atom of a conception of beauty—and don't want it ... If ever I felt alone it has been today. (Letters, p. 62)

Nevertheless, he was celebrating Anderson's fiction at that time and writing his poem on the "pantomime of Charlie", "Black Tambourine". By 1923, Crane not only expressed the view that he felt "him[self] directly connected with Whitman" (Letters, p. 128) but envisioned his poetic future as that of America's machine-age prophet.

By this time he had established even more significant ties to his Transcendental heritage through his close friendship with Munson and, especially, Waldo Frank. The latter figure, with whom he began a regular correspondence in 1922, was, Crane believed, "the most vital consciousness in America" (Letters, p. 130). Frank, a writer of some
repute, had sent Crane letters celebrating his poem, "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." Crane read these reactions and concluded that Frank was the only one who "gripped the mystical content of the poem so thoroughly that I despair of ever finding a more satisfying enthusiast" (Letters, p. 129). Frank's *Our America* (1919) and *The Rediscovery of America* (1929) were Whitmanian books that attempted to bring his country to a full awareness of its mystical potential. Frank was a much-touted author at this time. His *Our America* had been acclaimed "the Manifesto of the Twenties." In 1923 Munson had hailed him as "the most exciting figure in contemporary letters."

For Frank, America could recognize her full potential of mystical self-recognition if she would turn to Whitman:

> I look on Whitman today not so much as a cultural possession of America . . we have not yet won him . . but rather as a Challenge. He is a challenge to our literature, to our criticism, to our institutions, to our entire social polity, to grow up to his own universal Norm. The prophets were such a challenge to the Hebrews . . and they accepted it. Let us do likewise.

Such a recognition had to go beyond "mere passive love" of America's great poet-prophet to an attempt to apply his message towards a complete renewal of life-style. Crane's decision to write *The Bridge* grew out of the acceptance of Frank's "symphonic" and "mystic" prophecies, not as mere words but as the heart of America's true poetic vision. Crane had to rise above his dislike of Frank's "thoroughly logical and propagandistic" outlook in *Our America*, his own strong anti-Semitism (Letters, p. 34) and his dislike of Frank's rather neurotic prose style. Only then could he celebrate
Frank's work by acclaiming its Whitmanian urge to "touch the clearest veins of eternity flowing through the crowds around us" (Letters, p. 145).

Having already identified himself with the dualism in English Romanticism, Crane had now found a way of handling the inherent conflict between the "I" and the "non-I" that was closest to his own native ambience. By looking for a symphonic style and scope that would contain the "I" in the collective history of a new Eden, Crane was rediscovering the promise of American Transcendentalism.

III. "Two Laws Discrete:”16 Emerson's Bi-Polar Vision

Emerson's essay, "The Over-Soul," suggests the bi-polar vision of the soul's scale and the scale of the senses, but also the attempt to master this division. In that essay, he attempted to show the limitations of an empiricist-based outlook and to discover the fulfilment of human nature in the recognition of "the eternal ONE" (Essays, p. 262), which unites "the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object." For Emerson, the present life is a mere potency, a particle of its true whole, since "Man is a stream whose source is hidden." The empirical view is too delimiting since man has yearnings that exceed its hopes which he must strive to fulfil:

Our faith comes in moments; our vice is habitual. Yet there is a depth in those brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences. For this reason the argument which is always forthcoming to silence those who conceive extraordinary hopes of man, namely the appeal to experience, is forever invalid and
vain. We give up the past to the objector, and yet we hope. He must explain this hope. We grant that human life is mean, but how did we find out that it was mean? What is the ground of this universal sense of want and ignorance, but the fine innuendo by which the soul makes its enormous claim?

(Essays, p. 261)

At times, however, this quest for unity seemed very distant. The honesty of his poetry and essays is based on his recognition of the divisiveness of life and the problems the poet faces in attempting to overcome it.

In "Ode, Inscribed to W.H. Channing" Emerson attempted to answer a problem that Channing had diagnosed concerning this dilemma that ran throughout Emerson's writings. Channing's perception was a very accurate one:

I feel distinctly my honored friend, in relation to this address Emerson's Divinity School Address, what I feel in relation to all that I have read of your writings, that there is one radical defect, which, like a wound in the bark, wilts and blights the leaf and bloom and fruit of your faith. You deny the Human Race. You Stand, or rather seek to stand, a complete Adam. But you cannot do it.17

Emerson's answer could really only serve to outline the problem once more:

There are two laws discrete, 
Not reconciled,—
Law for man, and law for thing;
The last builds town and fleet,
But it runs wild,
And doth the man unking.

(Poems, p. 62)

The division was, then, something that he fully acknowledged. In fact, he wrote a poem called "The Problem" which presents his fascination
with the vatic, priestly role for the poet simultaneously with his attempt to recoil from this role because of some feeling of unpleasantness associated with it. Although Emerson begins with the line, "I like a church; I like a cowl", he feels obliged to end his poem with:

And yet, for all his faith could see,
I would not the good bishop be.

(Poems, p. 78)

Emerson's journal provides interesting commentary on this same point:

It is very grateful to my feelings to go into a Roman Cathedral, yet I look as my countrymen do at the Roman priesthood. It is very grateful to me to go into an English Church and hear the liturgy read. Yet nothing would induce me to be the English priest. I find an unpleasant dilemma in this, nearer home. I dislike to be a clergyman and refuse to be one. Yet how rich a music would be to me a holy clergyman in my town. It seems to me he cannot be a man, quite and whole; yet how plain is the need of one, and how high, yes, highest, is the function. Here is division of labor I like not. A man must sacrifice his manhood for the social good. Something is wrong. I see not what. 18

Once again, in "Saadi", a poem of the Emersonian persona, the dilemma is presented, and remains painfully unsolved:

Yet Saadi loved the race of men,—
No churl, immured in cave or den;
In bower and hall
He wants them all,
Nor can dispense
With Persia for his audience;
They must give ear,
Grow red with joy and white with fear;
But he has no companion;
Come ten, or come a million,
Good Saadi dwells alone. 19

Channing had accurately diagnosed the situation. Emerson was able to love the race, but not the man. The love was that of one dependent on
men for an audience, of one who would love them for what they would be through him and his action, not for themselves. Thus, like his Transcendentalist, Emerson was "alone" and "lonely," suffering the feeling of detachment and alienation in spite of his ambition to love mankind. All of his "other" was like that. It could be accepted as his audience, the screen for his vision, only after it was generalized and filtered through his own ego. Thus, in "Nominalist and Realist," he defines his position as one content to be a universalizer who transcends the fragmentary world of the great particularizer, Nature:

Let us go for universals... Human life and its persons are poor empirical pretensions. A personal influence is an ignus fatuus. (Essays, p. 437)

In this abstracted world, Emerson found that he could avoid having to face the flaws and inconsistencies of imperfect life, including his own imperfection and that of his fellow human beings. And yet Nature, and of course human nature, will not relent:

Nature will not be Buddhist: she resents generalizing, and insults the philosopher in every moment with a million of fresh particulars. It is all idle talking: as much as man is a whole, so is he also a part; and it were partial not to see it. (Essays, p. 441)

Emerson would not simply abandon the problem of this contradiction as one of "idle talking", however, but insisted on finding a way through it. For this reason, he draws a portrait of man as an "amphibious creature, weaponed for two elements, having two sets of faculties, the particular and the catholic" (Essays, p. 437). Although his outlook is mainly directed towards the order of the universal, the particularizing acts as a kind of counter-current, a conscience that
would not be foregone.

Thus Emerson presents all his fascination with the "mystical" world— the world of generalities, of priesthood, of teacher of men, only to follow it with the "and yet" of the empirical one. Without first making considerable effort at dehumanization and self-delusion, he was unable to pass completely into the realm of his egocentricity wherein the poet would create his own universe. The denaturing of the ego at times left the poet a hopelessly disembodied, passive force adrift in the cosmos:

I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing;
I see all; the currents of the Universal Being
circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.

(Essays, p. 6)

The direction he allowed himself to take was only charted by a one-way sign: "Every materialist will be an idealist; but an idealist can never go backward to be a materialist" (Essays, p. 87). The material world could be a "hieroglyph" for the real world of the spirit:

We are symbols and inhabit symbols; workmen, work, and tools, words and things, birth and death, all are emblems; but we sympathize with the symbols, and being infatuated with the economical uses of things, we do not know that they are thoughts. The poet, by an ulterior intellectual perception, gives them a power which makes their old use forgotten, and puts eyes and a tongue into every dumb and inanimate object.

(Essays, p. 328)

Once he had accepted its possibilities as the groundwork for his fuller realization, the Transcendentalist could safely abandon the empirical world for an ideal one. That safety was only ensured, however, for the length of time that the subject refused to look back.
If he did, he would then realize that what had been achieved was illusory.

Like the angel in his poem, "Uriel," Emerson had rejected the line for the circle, the law for the truth. He had shown how the question of uniform law made no sense; since, if life really were cyclical, nothing could remain constant but would eventually go back on itself: "Evil will bless, and ice will burn" (*Poems*, p. 34). He could not, however, accept this confusion, but felt a need to believe in man and his impulses as the source of wholeness and of the way to achieving it. He also needed to believe that "Nature never wears a mean appearance" (*Essays*, p. 5). Hence, for Emerson's poet, man directs himself toward a millennium of restored vision:

>'The kingdom of man over nature, which cometh not with observation--a dominion such as now is beyond his dream of God--he shall enter without more wonder than the blind man feels who is gradually restored to sight'. (*Essays*, p. 42)

If this achievement is truly possible, then the discovery of impermanence, that "medial" quality of life, does have some law beyond it. But can this situation really ever be realized, or do we experience the "blush" that "tinged the upper sky" (*Poems*, p. 35) in "Uriel" for shamefully believing in its possibility? Emerson was never able to answer this question for himself in any complete and final way.

IV. Crane's Emersonianism

With such perplexity and turmoil in his background, it is no wonder that Crane was confused and troubled in the face of his struggle to write a poetry of realization. Although his letters cite but one
brief reference to Emerson, undoubtedly Emersonianism, especially as transmitted through the "saner" ego of Whitman, was the foundation of his thought. Winters clarifies this argument in his study, "The Significance of The Bridge, by Hart Crane, or What are We to Think of Professor X?", an essay which attempts to expose Emerson and to condemn him and Whitman for instigating Crane's suicide.

Winters recognizes Emerson's ideas as "the commonplace ideas of the romantic movement, from the time of the third Earl of Shaftesbury to the present." He vaguely implies that Emerson's restating of these ideas was of importance, especially when they were moved from their initial position to "the American context". Because he sees Romanticism as a devolutionary movement in poetry and an aberration to cultural growth, Winters always presents it in negative terms, as the enemy. He could not understand how Crane could accept its simplistic doctrines in such an equally simplistic way:

I once argued this issue i.e., [the Emersonian issue that "man in death remains immortal while losing his identity"] with Crane, and when he could not convert me by reason, he said: 'Well, if we can't believe it, we'll have to kid ourselves into believing it.'

For Crane, the powers of reason would never have been able to explain this faith anyway, since this "lie" of the "incognizable Word" defies any capacity for rational judgment.

No matter how bewildering the Transcendental position appeared when subjected to Winters' rational approach, Crane felt more comfortable trapped within it than without it. Crane wrote to Winters that he felt "a good deal of sympathy with [his] viewpoint in general"
Nevertheless, he stated that he believed the rational approach to "the complete man" to be too "logical, so much so that I am inclined to doubt the success of your program even with yourself" (Letters, p. 299). Although his response to Emersonianism was not completely uncritical, Crane found this outlook the fundamental unchallengeable faith supporting his poetic vision. Consequently he was content with "such moments of 'illumination' as are occasionally possible" (Letters, p. 302). For Crane, a "methodical and predetermined... method of development" was something he could not "trust" (Letters, p. 301.)

Pointing out correspondence between Crane's and Emerson's work is a simple task. A study of the transfiguration of Nature in Crane's "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" reveals an outlook closely parallel to Emerson's, as found in his essay, "Nature." For Emerson, as for Crane, the poet takes up the Transcendentalist position which sees the world as "the shadow of that substance which you are" (Essays, p. 90). In realizing this substance, he is also achieving a place in "the whole connection of spiritual doctrine":

He believes in miracle, in the perpetual openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power; he believes in inspiration, and in ecstasy. He wishes that the spiritual principle should be suffered to demonstrate itself to the end, in all possible applications to the state of man, without the admission of anything unspiritual... (Essays, p. 90)

Crane's Faustus is dedicated to the fulfilment of his desires to know the beauty of his woman, Helen. Before long, however, he has climbed Emerson's "spires of form" and is searching for a less material goal.
At this point, he sees that beyond "the body of the world" which is limited by its mortality ("may glide diaphanous to death"), there is a world of "hourless days" which manifests a complete and timeless vision of beauty ("glowing out of praise"). For Crane's poet-hero, Nature serves what Emerson calls "a nobler want of man . . . namely, the love of Beauty" (Essays, p. 9). Such a love offers man clues to "the presence of a higher" (Essays, p. 11) state of the spirit, a "universal soul" which is found "within or behind his individual life":

Every natural fact is a symbol of some spiritual fact. Every appearance in nature corresponds to some states of the mind, and that state of the mind can only be described by presenting the natural appearance as its picture.

(Essays, p. 15)

Emerson's view of Art as an alchemical route to the realization of Nature's perfection is found in Crane's poem as well, wherein the quotation from Jonson's "The Alchemist" and the reference to "conversion", especially achieved through Transubstantiation, are clues to the realization of the power of poetic vision. This poetic vision effects a metamorphosis of the spirit through its contact with the wholeness that lies behind the apparent beauty of an individual substance or creature:

The standard of beauty is the entire circuit of natural forms— the totality of nature . . . Nothing is quite beautiful alone; nothing but is beautiful in the whole. A single object is only so far beautiful as it suggests this universal grace. The poet, the painter, the sculptor, the musician, the architect, seek each to concentrate the radiance of the world on one point, and each in his several work to
satisfy the love of beauty which stimulates him to produce. Thus is Art a nature passed through the alembic of man. Thus in art does Nature work through the will of a man filled with the beauty of her first works.

*(Essays*, pp. 13-14)

Crane's poet strives to achieve this transcendental vision of beauty through the realization of the ideal in the actual. The poet's worship of his woman and the act of sexual intercourse lead to the realization of a union beyond the flesh, expressed by the sacred terms of consecration.

There are other terms which Crane uses to describe this spiritual change, which are similar to Emerson's. At first Faustus' life is "divided", a sequence of "stacked partitions". Emerson, in "The Over-Soul", also reminds man that he lives "in succession, in division, in parts, in particles" *(Essays*, p. 262). He sees that "the axis of vision is not coincident with the axis of things, and so they appear not transparent but opaque" *(Essays*, p. 41). For Crane's hero, the eventual realization that the mortal life may be, after all, transparent ("diaphanous"), opens the way to the achievement of "the kingdom of man over nature" *(Essays*, p. 42). Man will no longer be "'a god in ruin'" *(Essays*, p. 39), but a new innocent, full of the immortality which he has achieved. In place of the "million brittle, bloodshot eyes", Crane's poet-hero finds "one inconspicuous, glowing orb of praise", his visionary counterpart to Emerson's "transparent eyeball" that looks beyond the life of "all mean egotism" *(Essays*, p. 6).

In "Sunday Morning Apples", both the subject and its actual mood
relate to the Emersonian praise of the spontaneity of impulse.

Nature, as man's subjective experience, transfigured in his imagination, becomes the source, the secret "mystical" integration that man would recapture:

I have seen the apples there that toss you secrets,—
Beloved apples of seasonable madness
That feed your inquiries with aerial wine
Put them again beside a pitcher with a knife,
And poise them full and ready for explosion—
The apples, Bill, the apples!

Emerson's reckoning of the world as "an appearance" sees nature as a "reflector" or a "subjective phenomenon" (Essays, p. 89), subject to the control of the mind, "the only reality" and, hence, its creator. Sommers, the painter who inspired Crane's poem, and the "Bill" in its last exclamatory line, in such a creator. The natural world "toss[es] ... secrets" to this artist, since his imagination projects an energy outward to the dead world of appearances, which makes it alive and "ready for explosion." The apples, signs of a new Eden, are thus the raw materials for a new "intoxication." Like the figure in Emerson's poem, "Bacchus," Crane's "I" is searching for a "wine which never grew/ In the belly of the grape" (Poems, p. 45). It is the "wine of wine", or, as he calls it, the "aerial wine", which comes from inspiration and which man consumes in order to reach the state of spontaneous flow with nature, a highly personal "mystical" height:

A boy runs with a dog before the sun, straddling
Spontaneities that form their independent orbits,
Their own perennials of light
In the valley where you live
(called Brandywine)
Crane's images of freedom and of confluence with Nature, of impulsive spontaneity and individuality of experience, of innocence and eternity, owe a strong debt to Emerson. Like the "I" in "Bacchus", his "I" would also have the true wine so that he would achieve total regeneration of the external world in his "real" imaginary paradise:

That I intoxicated,
And by the draught assimilated,
May float at pleasure through all nature.

(Poems, pp. 45-46)

The fascination with the apple appears also in "Garden Abstract," an Edenic vision of disappearance into nature ("Reason in Nature's lotus drenched", "Bacchus", Poems, p. 47). The woman experiencing the vision "has no memory, nor fear, nor hope/Beyond the grass and shadows at her feet."

Emerson also advocated what Winters called the "concept of automatism as the equivalent of the mystical experience." This concept led Crane to write "automatic poems" like "Havana Rose", which depict the state beyond logic, between the worlds of hallucination and vision:

Place yourself in the middle of the stream of power and wisdom which flows into you as life, place yourself in the full center of that flood, then you are without effort impelled to truth, to right, and to perfect contentment.

(Essays, p. 198)

The advice that Crane's Doctor gives, who "was an American, also" (an aside which shows Crane's awareness of the Americanness of this approach), stems directly from an outlook which pursues Emerson's optimistic quest for wholeness:
You cannot heed the negative--so might go on to understand doom... must therefore lose yourself within a pattern's mastery that you can conceive, that you can yield to--by which also you win and gain mastery and happiness which is your own from birth.

In "Eternity", the feverish state takes the speaker on a hallucinatory voyage. The eternal cosmic disorder of the severe hurricane quickly becomes the feverish inner state, full of discordant graphic nightmare visions that lead to the vision of "Eternity" as the "vast phantom" horse-creature of the Apocalypse. "The Bridge of Estador" presents a bit of Emersonian anti-rational advice:

Do not think too deeply and you'll find
A soul, an element in it all.

In Crane, as in Emerson, the way to pantheism is through the individual's quest for vision:

High on the bridge of Estador
Where no one has ever been before,--
I do not know what you'll see,--your vision
May slumber yet in the moon, awaiting
Far consummation of the tides to throw
Clean on the shore some wreck of dreams.

"Legend" is Crane's version of the way to sainthood, in particular to the poet-saint state, achieved through an individual non-conformist, non-repentant involvement in life and love. The speaker's statement, "I am not ready for repentance;/Nor to match regrets," is an echo of the sentiment expressed in "Self-Reliance":

I do not wish to expiate, but to live. My life is for itself and not for a spectacle. (Essays, p. 149)

For Emerson this attitude was not one of mere rebellion against society but reflected the largeness of the Transcendentalists' "antinomianism" which was not about to be restricted by some narrow, dogmatic morality.
Transcendentalism thus earned for itself the title of "the Saturnalia or excess of Faith" since it was ready to believe "that there was no crime but has sometimes been a virtue" (Essays, pp. 91-92). This dialectical minded view, which was also voiced in Blake's "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell," appealed to Crane since it freed him from the constrictions of a rigid rationalistic morality. For Blake, Emerson and Crane, "excess" always led to greater wisdom because it preserved spontaneity and freedom.

In "A Name for All", the loss of freedom involved in naming the particulars of a natural world echoes Emerson's essay, "The Poet", wherein he speaks of language as "fossil poetry". The poet is the one who must rename things, since the old language "is made up of images or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin" (Essays, p. 329). These names are not chosen arbitrarily, however:

He [i.e. the poet] uses forms according to the life, not according to the form. This is true science. . . By virtue of this science the poet is the Namer or Language-maker, naming things sometimes after their appearance, sometimes after their essence, and giving every one its own name and not another's, thereby rejoicing the intellect, which delights in detachments or boundary. (Essays, p. 329)

Because of his roots in an Emersonian quest for a monism, for a "transcendent Oneness of all being", Crane sees all creation "free and holy in one Name always".

Crane's approach in The Bridge is also much determined by Emerson's thought. Since, as Emerson wrote in his essay, "The Poet", "the Universe is the externization of the soul" (Essays, p. 329), history
is the externization of the record of one mind's discoveries:

There is one mind common to all individual men. Every man is an inlet to the same and to all of the same . . . Who hath access to this universal mind is a party to all that is or can be done, for this is the only and sovereign agent.

Of the works of the mind history is the record. Its genius is illustrated by the entire series of days. Man is explicable by nothing less than all his history. (Essays, p. 124)

For Emerson, "All history is sacred", since it represents "the universe . . . in an atom, in a moment of time" (Essays, p. 278). Therefore, in relating the vision of America through history and folklore, Crane believed he was not relating the story of one person alone, or of one country, but of the realization of one universal mind. Because he wanted to believe in Emerson's "universal impulseto believe" (Essays, p. 358), he struggled to create a poem that showed how the history of the American continent and the construction of Brooklyn Bridge was of a spanning; an attempt to reach ever-onward toward the realization of a myth dedicated to the "Everpresence, beyond time" ("Atlantis").

Emerson saw the Ideal as something on the horizon, always beyond reach, that man aims to achieve. Experience is always directed onward, and skepticism, the backwash, must be transformed into affirmation—the "no" into the everlasting "yes":

Onward and onward! In liberated moments we know that a new picture of life and duty is already possible; the elements already exist in many minds around you of a doctrine of life which shall transcend any written record we have. The new statement will comprise the skepticisms as well as the faiths of society, and out of unbeliefs a creed shall be formed. (Essays, p. 358)
That such was Crane's basic motivation is patently illustrated in his words to Charlotte Rychtarik:

I want to keep saying 'Yes' to everything and never be beaten a moment, and I shall, of course, never be really beaten. (Letters, p. 148)

There is a degree of pathetic naivete both in this statement and in the attempt to make the "cipher-script of time" read eternity or to make "like hails, farewells." At the same time, the poetry is built on an adamant resolve to force such cosmic optimism to work at any cost. For Crane, the cost would be very great, but unavoidably so. In The Bridge he could make "The Tunnel" lead to "Atlantis", but, after that, he would never again be sure that he could carry off the spoils in a contest of "yes" and "no".

Consequently, the parallel between Crane's work and Emersonian Transcendentalism is a less than perfect one. Because he could not deny the reality of evil and pain in human experience, Crane's poetry of mature vision inevitably accepts the existence of an alternate outlook which is more critically skeptical than Emerson's. Certainly Crane was frequently emotionally committed to Emerson's doctrine, or at least willed himself to be. This wilful struggle was based on his attempt to counteract an undesired awareness of the possible illusory nature of Romanticism that was stubbornly entrenched in his consciousness. Crane fought against himself, either to realize this chimera more fully in his art or to overwhelm it in his life.

Ironic as it may seem, the evidence in Crane's art of his heretically anti-Transcendentalist doubts is clearest in the very poems that
are full of Emerson. Because this Emersonianism is handled with such clarity and enthusiasm, the surrounding shades of skepticism are silhouetted all the more precisely here. For example, the achievement of spontaneity in "Sunday Morning Apples" is countered by the capturing of it in an ordered poem. In "Garden Abstract", the liberating pantheistic aspect of nature also has a prisoning effect, probably because Crane realized that the loss of the ego that dwells in the "empirical" world was an undeniably painful sacrifice. In "The Visible the Untrue", the bitter truth of the "untrue" cannot be repudiated. Crane emphasizes the subtler emotional sense of "untrue" as "unfaithful" rather than the more obviously rational one of "untrue" as "inaccurate" or "wrong". In "Havana Rose", the advice of the doctor has a satirical undertone since the loss of freedom to "heed the negative" was an aspect of experience that Crane knew so well in his obsessive-ness with pursuing a positive outlook.

Of course he realized the negative, prisoning powers of this kind of Romanticism that closed off a part of life from him, only forcing it upon him in a subtly different way. "Eternity" presents the fundamental inescapable equivocation--that eternity may exist, but only as a moment in the middle of hallucinatory fragmentation which may be the more difficult of the two experiences to face. Or are they indissoluble experiences? In "The Bridge of Estador", the Emersonian advice against using rational powers may only be a bit of romantic irony. The "Love/Of things irreconcilable" is, after all, a twisting, torturing experience. In "Legend", the "I" may refuse expiation but the
refusal only opens the door for suffering, an undeniable part of the way of all saints. In "A Name for All", the achievement of uniform experience among all beings may be, as Elizabeth Atkins suggests, only a bit of "nostalgia" and, hence, a cruel reminder of what has been lost. Finally, in *The Bridge*, the yea-saying may be less plausible that ever before. The flight to the beyond is never completely secure.

As Crane suggests in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen", there are "equivocations", since even "The mind is brushed by sparrow's wings". The vision may, also,

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  . . . forsake our eyes
  as apparitional as sails that cross
  Some page of figures to be filed away;
  --Till elevators drop us from our day. . .
  ("To Brooklyn Bridge")
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Emerson believed that poetry depended on a dialectical shift between "form and liberation, between balance and restraint" if it were to achieve a full expression of "the ballast of experience". Crane was conscious, however, of the poet's even greater need to face his darker self. Thus, Emerson was more subject than Crane was to his own challenge of insincerity:

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One weakness of his poems that he deplored was that they did not contain sufficient evidence of the 'polarity' of existence, of how its inevitable law is action and reaction, of how every statement contains the seed of its opposite. He said: 'I am always insincere, as always knowing there are other moods.'
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Only in his late works did Crane finally submit to such insincerity. It may have existed throughout his works, but he always strove to master it by joining his acceptance of a world "less fragmentary,
"cool" with an equal acceptance of death:

... And it is always
always, always the eternal rainbow
And it is always the day, the farewell day unkind.
("The Visible the Untrue")

Emerson's poetry was never allowed to become as emotive as this is. For Crane, however, the singular emotions of the poet were important since they were part of his imagination's very existence. Because his poetry involves constant self-examination, it contributes to his biography just as his biography contributes to an understanding of the poetry. Crane's poetry tells the story of a positive Whitmanian ego that suffered from Emersonian insecurity and dehumanization. While Crane recognized the power of his own imagination to make him the true prophet of the spirit of America, the recognition of the possible insincerity of his claims forced him to rely even more on the private chimera which he had created, in order to escape the greater terrors of a fragmentation in vision.
References Chapter 6

1 As a recognizable historical movement, American Transcendentalism was parochial and short-lived. A group of New England intellectuals living in or about Boston and eastern Massachusetts organized themselves as a collective group of American radicals interested in religious and social reform and in the quest for a Utopia of "perfect democracy." (George Hochfield, "Introduction" to Selected Writings of the American Transcendentalists, Toronto: New American Library of Canada, Ltd., 1966, xxvii.) The "heyday" of this organization lasted "roughly the decade 1836-1846". The effects it had on the direction of American thought were, however, far-reaching ones.

2 The Complete Essays and Other Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, ed. Brooks Atkinson (New York: The Modern Library, c. 1950.) Subsequent quotations from the Essays will be made internally and will refer to this edition.

3 Hochfield, p. xiii.


5 Ibid., p. 6.

6 Hochfield, p. x.


8 Ibid., p. 91.

9 Ibid., p. 5.

10 Feidelson, pp. 45-6.

11 see Mary Baker Eddy, "Fruitage" in Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures (Boston: Trustees under the Will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1934), pp. 600-700.


15 Ibid.
Poems of Ralph Waldo Emerson, selected by J. Donald Adams (New York: T.Y. Crowell Company, 1965), p. 62. Subsequent references to Emerson's poems will be documented internally and will refer to this edition, unless otherwise indicated.


Ibid.


Winters, "The Significance of The Bridge, by Hart Crane, or What Are We to Think of Professor X?" in In Defense of Reason, pp. 575-603.

Ibid., p. 578.

Ibid.

Ibid., p. 579.

Ibid., p. 580.

Pearce, p. 161.


Matthiessen, p. 63.

Ibid.
There are in things two elements fused though antagonistic. One is the bodily element, which has the quality of corruption and disease; the other is the element, the soul, which goes on, I think, in unknown ways, enduring forever and ever.1

Any search for the origins of Crane's most fully realized poetic vision leads to his spiritual forefather, Whitman. Crane first became aware of this heritage in 1923. At that time, he wrote to Munson that his initial conception of The Bridge had brought him to the recognition that he was "directly connected with Whitman" (Letters, p. 128).

With the discovery of his Whitmanian discipleship, Crane's poetry underwent a major change in conception. The most important individual change was the widening of his poetic scope beyond the vision of the private ego. Through Whitman's example, Crane realized the importance of the poet's role as representative man, reflecting the hopes and dreams of the American nation. The poet's sacred mission was to make each man realize his historical and mythic significance beyond the apparent privacy of his individual life. Each man was, if he would only realize it, part of a chain of being that extended from origins to future aspirations. Crane's new attitude towards his poetic citizenship had to exceed private vision, since the Whitmanian poet could never exist in vacuo, indulging in his own reveries and fantasies. Instead, he was forced to be more exoteric in his approach to spiritual unity, since the integrity of his achievement affected more than the isolated self. Crane now lived in a world where every insight and
experience was connected to one large overview. Whitman helped him achieve this expansion of the ego and unity of purpose.

I. Broom vs. Secession: Crane's Contemporaries and Whitman

Crane had no difficulty in openly admitting his allegiance to Whitman when corresponding with his friends, Munson and Frank. They, after all, had strongly encouraged America's young writers to claim this heritage. At that time, such a point of view did not go unchallenged, however. While *Leaves of Grass* is now accepted as an American classic, the majority of Crane's contemporaries were decidedly unsympathetic toward it. The popularity of Transcendentalist thought, and particularly of Whitman's poetry, was at a low point, except among a relatively small group of nationalist-minded artists who were considered a rather stodgy and parochial old guard.

The anti-Whitmanism of America's young 1920's poets was based on their desire to identify themselves with a cosmopolitan-intellectual artistic world. They scorned all attempts to render poetry a source of inspiration for the masses. The desire for a sophisticated, international image was a reflection of America's attempt to come of age by rejecting her apparently uncivilized, pioneering background for a place in the contemporary world. The post-war climate brought dissatisfaction to many young artists who had abandoned their restricted backgrounds for a life of diversified adventure and experience in Europe. In an attempt to avoid associating themselves with the putatively over-sentimentalized inspirational poetry of their predecessors, they turned to the experiments in European art and, above all, to the
works of Pound and Eliot. These two poets had left America in order to find an atmosphere which would be conducive to encouraging a new avant-garde or experimentation with the verbal arts. Since the period of the Gilded Age, American literature had become satisfied with its private emotional indulgence. Little of its poetry had any life in it, either in its intellectual content or in its language. Through their exile, Pound and Eliot attempted to restore American poetry to the realm of the arts. Part of this restoration was to be achieved through the rejection of a parochial and mystic-sentimental poetry for an intellectual one, grounded in a precisely defined aesthetic. The modern movement had, above all, encouraged man to be self-critical. This virtue was sadly lacking in the world of American letters. Only by consciously rejecting their background and by turning to Europe's experimental work in the arts, which encouraged the recognition of poetry as a respectable discipline of a controlled and ordered sense of language, could American artists hope to survive.

Crane's anti-Whitman friends—Matthew Josephson, Malcolm Cowley, and Allen Tate—were influenced by the efforts of Pound and Eliot at creating a hard and analytical poetry. Tate was a strong admirer of Eliot's ironic and imagistic efforts which rejected all private emotional indulgence and naive optimism. The other poets, who followed the experiments in European art, and especially in French poetry, were influenced by Pound's efforts to nourish cosmopolitanism in America.

For Pound, Whitman was the "Uncouth American"\(^2\) whose work epitomized the false emotionalism in their nation's poetry. Pound felt
that the "barbaric yawp" of *Leaves of Grass* was full of the heavy-handed nationalism which had made his country's poetry a pulpit for preaching a self-complacent philosophy:

Villon never forgets his fascinating, revolting self. If, however, he sings the song of himself he is, thank God, free from that horrible air of rectitude with which Whitman rejoices in being Whitman. Villon's song is selfish through self-absorption; he does not, as Whitman, pretend to conferring a philanthropic benefit on the race by recording his own self-complacency.3

He could not abide Whitman's raw, undisciplined work with its indulgence of the unartistic ego. In *Lustra* (1916), he made "A pact" with Whitman, whom he rather begrudgingly accepted as his forebear:

> I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman--
> I have detested you long enough.
> I have come to you as a grown child
> Who has had a pig-headed father.4

Such acceptance, however, was to be no more than toleration.

In order to associate themselves with the new poetry of Pound and Eliot, Crane's young aesthetic-minded friends were obliged to take a stand against a Whitmanian-directed poetry. As self-conscious artists, they could hardly ally themselves with a seemingly unstructured poetry that fostered anti-intellectual spontaneity, a celebration of the average, and the superiority of life over art.

The conflict of interest between their stand and Frank's was made evident to Crane in 1923 when a meeting of the writers "who contributed to various vanguard reviews like *Broom* and *Secession" was called in order to discuss their "common problems and to consider combining forces." These goodwill efforts were arranged in order to help little magazines "work more effectively at publishing and fund-raising."5
Crane was anxious for this meeting to work out well since he was sympathetic to both sides.

From the very beginning, however, such a meeting could only bring disaster. The group from Broom was characteristically irreverent and iconoclastic. Josephson, a rather cynical and unsympathetic critic, "not knowing or considering Munson's feeling in the matter, had lately published in Broom a rather disparaging review of Frank's latest book in the form of a rather harsh satire of that author." The more serious-minded Secessionist authors felt that they were being badly treated by these "immature" writers. The anti-Whitmanians, who never tired of "deriding [Frank's] Messianic ideas about sexual freedom and the New Dawn" were hardly willing to seriously entertain the notion of joining forces with their Whitman-supporting opponents.

Crane's position was the most impossible one of all. He "actually tried to keep on terms with both the Munson-Frank faction and that of Broom" in spite of his awareness of how inimical the two groups were. This situation was not a pleasant one, but would have been easier to bear if it had been strictly based upon a personal choice of friends. It epitomized, however, a conflict of loyalties within Crane that he had defined in the 1919 letter to Munson wherein he distinguished Josephson and Anderson as "opposite poles" and placed himself "somewhere between them" (Letters, p. 27). This conflict was based on the clash between Crane's Transcendental-based spirit and his links with his own century, "a classic, hard and glossy" (Letters, p. 27) period that had rejected Whitman as hopelessly naive and sentimental. Crane
was, nevertheless, dedicated to a poetic exploration of cosmic consciousness and to creating a work that not only showed the way to vision but also was an evocation of that way.

He had, therefore, to acknowledge his Whitmanian heritage and to write from within it. In a letter to Tate, written after he had completed *The Bridge*, Crane outlined his position on Whitman to an unsympathetic figure. Although he took a somewhat defensive stand here, he insisted on the complexity of Whitman's outlook. Other poets, in their blind opposition to Whitman's visionary "mysticism", had overlooked a certain undercurrent in his poetry which Crane had found:

But since you and I hold such divergent prejudices regarding the value of the materials and events that W. responded to, and especially as you, like so many others, never seem to have read his *Democratic Vistas* and other of his statements sharply decrying the materialism, industrialism, etc., of which you name him the guilty and hysterical spokesman, there isn't much use in my tabulating the qualified, yet persistent reasons I have for my admiration of him, my allegiance to the positive and universal tendencies implicit in nearly all his best work. You've heard me roar at too many of his lines to doubt that I can spot his worst, I'm sure. (*Letters*, pp. 353-354)

Because this allegiance was not without qualification, it may appear a very tenuous and fickle profession of loyalty. The fact is, however, that Crane had read Whitman carefully in order to locate his heritage and the roots of his enthusiasm for the Transcendentalist point of view. Thus, he had recognized a complexity in Whitman's work that others had denied. Although Crane rejected what he could not help but find ridiculous and tedious in Whitman's work, he also acknowledged him the major voice of American poetry. This response
was a judicious one, since it strove to locate its enthusiasms cautiously, with the greatest amount of fairness to both sides of the question.

II. Whitman: "The Mystic Evolution"

The alternate titles of "true Emersonian man" or "Emerson realized" best summarize Whitman's role in the Transcendentalist tradition. Because of the unresolved confusion between the provinces of "Me" and "not-Me" which permeates all of his work, Emerson's ego was too denatured to achieve a synthetic vision which would integrate these "empirical" and "mystical" natures. Whitman's ego, on the other hand, was almost too over-powering to fill this position. At times his "I" is so obtrusive, idiosyncratic and conceited that it almost ceases to function outside of its "empirical" role. Nevertheless, it is the force which unifies *Leaves of Grass* and gives it a consistency which is the closest thing to artistic form. In spite of its strong "empirical" nature, this "I" fills the symbolic function of representing, if not every man, at least every American. For this reason, it circumvents the charges of provincialism, solipsism, or, at worst, the extreme of narcissism. At times, this escape becomes a very narrow one. The odor of Whitman's armpits may come a little too near, and it is then less than fascinating.

Because of the commanding power of his "I", Whitman's poetry can be as contradictorily "empirical-mystical" as he cares to make it without the final contradiction tearing its whole structure apart. Furthermore, if this "I" is self-contradictory in its simultaneous
roles of a "simple separate person" and "The Modern Man" ("One's-Self I Sing", p. 15), it is at least always there. It is at least always Whitman.

Whitman's assurance of this cosmic egotism allows him to reach as far as he likes outward, or as close as he likes inward. He can be a man of paradox by acting out his roles of "dialectician" or "organici- 
st" at the same and different times: "Strange and hard that paradox true I give,/Objects gross and the unseen soul are one" ("A Song For Occupations, 5", p. 211). Whitman's definition of his dialectical position reveals his awareness of the distinction between "objects" and the "soul", at the same time as he construes the traditional hierarchy of material things as "gross" and the spiritual as pure in their "unseen" mystery. At the same time still, by rejecting this distinction for a unified oneness, he is taking the symbolist's pos­
tion of extreme organicism:

Whitman, 'militantly hostile to reason,' abandons 'the habit of mind which views the material world as separable from ideas and speech.' His symbolistic point of view focuses on the act of perception, the seeing, rather than the seer or the thing seen, thereby eliminating the distinction between subject and object, poet and reader.11

In the above passage, Waskow quotes from Feidelson to demonstrate that Whitman is a true symbolist. And, undoubtedly, he is right. At the same time, he can take selections from another critic, Richard Chase, to prove that Whitman is a dialectical thinker who sees the world in dualistic terms. For Chase, "Despite the 'merging' and 'identifying' tendencies of the poet, despite the timeless, flowing universe he speaks of, he preserves... his modes of distinction and 'extrica-
Thus, Whitman's position fuses the "empirical" and "mystical" experiences because they are consolidated in the single but dual-minded persona of the "I". His main achievement is discovered in his ability to pull off the joke on the universe of squaring the circle, or of achieving a "unified duality". In setting out to define himself, he knows he has also set out "to define America" ("To Foreign Lands", p. 17). In becoming Whitman, he knows what it is "To be indeed a God"! ("A Song of Joys", p. 181).

Since he is both reputable and irreputable, prankster and serious mystic, tramp and saint, Whitman sets the critics an impossible task in the latter's quest to order his poetry. The poet's erotic fantasies, for example, cannot be separated from religious vision, since they are part of an all-containing self who would embrace "the life-force in all of nature". Adhesiveness may be a sublime and selfless desire for brotherhood with man, or it may be a lusting after some desirable male. The issue of the true Whitman has been wilfully lost in the legends that began to develop immediately after the appearance of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1855. The loss was inevitable, however, in order to gain the Whitman myth—the image of the wise, clean, healthy, bearded wise-man, patriarch of America. When Bernice Slote says that "Whitman is not the jolly chauvinist, champion of America, the wild-eyed gusty busy formless citizen-poet" in order to affirm the fact that he is a serious poet, she does no justice to his achievement. Whitman is all of these things, as well as father..."
of some of the worst religions—"worship of country", narcissism, materialism, progressivism,—at the same time as he is "a religious poet", "poet of artful control", and "a mystic, a poet of cosmic consciousness".  

III. "Cape Hatteras:" Whitman's Role in The Bridge

Because Whitman fathered Crane's vision of America, his presence in The Bridge is a pervasive one. "To Brooklyn Bridge" is, undoubtedly, Crane's first thorough poetic acknowledgement of his membership in Whitman's family. It reads as a direct rendering of a passage in Democratic Vistas, The Bible of American mystic-aestheticism:

Always and more and more, as I cross the East and North rivers, the ferries, or with the pilots in their pilot-houses, or pass an hour in Wall Street, or the gold exchange, I realize (if we must admit such partialisms,) that not Nature alone is great in her fields of freedom and the open air, in her storms, the shows of night and day, the mountains, forests, seas—but in the artificial, the work of man too is equally great—in this profusion of teeming humanity—in these ingenuities, streets, goods, houses, ships—these hurrying, feverish, electric crowds of men, their complicated business genius, (not least among the geniuses,) and all this mighty, many-threaded wealth and industry concentrated here.

Crane's poem includes some of the same geography in an equally panoramic vision. More significant than this shared vision of America's vistas are the poets' mutual realization that Nature is "great" not only in her own creations, but in the "artificial" ones that man creates as well. For Crane, this outlook was a reason for optimism, since it provided a mandate for the twentieth century world of industrial-commercial progress to join in the pursuit for the true America.
Because a "great moral and religious civilization" was necessary for the justification of a "great material one" (Whitman, p. 387), both Whitman and Crane realized that America's achievement of "all life's material comforts" would not, in itself, be enough, since "the soul of man will not with such only. . . be finally satisfied" (Whitman, p. 384).

"Cape Hatteras" was Crane's most conscious effort to analyze his relation to Whitman. In Democratic Vistas, Whitman called on future visionary poets to follow his initial steps into the new territory of a mystical-centered America. Thus, Crane asked Whitman whether a continuity still existed between the worlds that both knew:

Walt, tell me, Walt Whitman, if infinity
Be still the same as when you walked the beach
near Paumanok. . .

The Wright Brothers' experiments with aerodynamics and air travel were, for Crane, the obvious instances of man's attempt to enter a new age, while redefining a relationship with eternity. Since the airplane was man's vehicle for ascending above the earth on mechanical wings, it became not only his imitation of Nature's bird, but also an "artificial" expression of his yearnings to transcend himself and his earthly life. It was a trial-run at uniting the industrial and imaginary geniuses. This airplane, the symbol of man's attempt to close the gap between the mechanical and the mystical, creates in man a drunken, giddy feeling of power and of glory because of his achieved transcendence of the natural world:

Thine eyes bicarbonated white by speed, O Skygak, see
How from thy path above the levin's lance
Thou sowest doom thou hast nor time nor chance
To reckon—as thy stilly eyes partake
What alcohol of space . . .!

Man must learn, however, to cope with this new power, by allowing it to shape him just as much as he has shaped it. The genuine mastery of space must not be pursued for its own sake, but must be linked with the great Whitmanic dream for the fulfilment of mystic America.

Whitman distrusts the pride of the man who seeks to stand totally on his own, above and away from the rest of mankind, since it is "democracy's rule that men, the nation" must stand "on one broad, primary, universal, common platform" (Whitman, p. 396). Democracy is the search "not for grand material personalities only, but for immortal souls." There can be no hierarchy here: in fact, Whitman suggests that, in the true democratic man, one finds that the achievement of pride comes through humility:

The common ambition strains for elevations, to become some privileged exclusive. The master sees greatness and health in being part of the mass; nothing will do as well as common ground. Would you have in yourself the divine, the vast, general law? Then merge yourself in it. (Whitman, p. 397)

Crane warns of the same disaster in the face of pride. The suffering and failure of the war-time flight, the collapse "into mashed and shapeless debris", is caused by the loss of control of the ship: "Giddily spiralled/gauntlets, upturned, unlooping/In guerrilla sleights, trapped in combustion gyr-/Ing . . ." Both physical and metaphysical flight demand an experienced and able pilot. The fliers at "Cape Hatteras" forgot the risk involved (". . . see/How . . . /Thou sowest doom"), since their great power must be acknowledged with humility:
Since Whitman has "held the heights more sure" than anyone, Crane calls on him to be his guide to the achievement of his flight. The "pact . . ./Of living brotherhood" formed between the two poets is not like the one Pound grudgingly made with Whitman. This pact allows Crane to call his predecessor by his first name because of the intimacy of their relationship.

Because Crane recognized and shared Whitman's doubts, he could speak to Whitman of "thine other hand." In Democratic Vistas, Whitman suggested the infinite possibilities of America's future. He also, however, recognized the atmosphere of hypocrisy and faithlessness in his country, which opposed the fulfilment of these dreams. The mere fact that Whitman spoke of "vistas" suggested that the vision he held was both expansive and distant, fulfilling and future-oriented. America's destiny was to "justify God", and the greatness of the "American-born populace, the peaceablest and most good-natured race in the world, and the most personally independent and intelligent" (Whitman, p. 393). There were, however, great odds to be overcome.

Although there was "a power" (Whitman, p. 402) ready to crush these odds, evil was still a test for man. Man in America was, for Whitman, still a vulgar creature, caught up in "money-making" while ignoring the depths of the soul:

Never was there, perhaps, more hollowness at heart than at present, and here in the United States. Genuine belief seems to have left us. (Whitman, p. 385)

... Remember, Falcon-Ace,
Thou hast there in thy wrist a Sanskrit charge
To conjugate infinity's dim marge—
Anew . . .!
Thus even for the most optimistic of Transcendentalism's prophets, evil is not without its reality. Whitman projects a plan that will accomplish a real "United States". At the same time, he realizes the need to deal with the forces that would resist the "onward" motion by facing them and incorporating them into his work. Crane follows this thematic pattern in "The Tunnel", a Poesque nightmare which is part of a Whitmanian plan--to acknowledge evil before outstripping it.

IV. Crane and Whitman's Poetry

In Leaves of Grass, Crane discovered a book of songs dedicated to celebrating the theme that he held so dear, the "identification of yourself with all of life" (Letters, p. 140):

Of Life immense in passion, pulse and power, 
Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine, 
The Modern Man I sing. 
("One's Self I Sing", p. 15)

Whitman knew of no essential distinction between singing of the self and singing of the cosmos. If he sought out an epic theme like war, he realized it only in cosmic terms ("the field the world", the opponents "life and death") which eventually return to the self: "I above all promote brave soldiers" ("As I ponder'd in Silence", p. 16)

This ego becomes tedious at those intervals when it seeks to contain aspects of experience that do not happily fuse with it. Nevertheless it saves itself from the fear of illusion and the sense of fragmentation found in The Bridge at those moments when Crane attempts to project an ideal beyond his own ego, while simultaneously realizing that the whole plan may be nothing but an illusion. Whitman
avoided these epical pretensions since he did not believe in their realization during his lifetime and since he already had the full Transcendentalist ego to explore:

... we have to say there can be no complete or epical presentation of democracy in the aggregate, or anything like it, at this day, because its doctrines will only be effectually incarnated in any one branch, when in all, their spirit is at the root and centre. Far, far, indeed, stretch, in distance, our Vistas! How much is still to be disentangled, freed! How long it takes to make this American world see that it is, in itself, the final authority and reliance!

(Whitman, p. 405)

The disentangling or freeing of his own ego in his poems was part of the discovery of this spirit. Thus his optimism about man's victory over death ("methinks certain") stemmed from his own strength of being. "I project the history of the future", he wrote in "To a Historian", a poem in which he celebrates his role as "Chanter of Personality". Whitman asserts a personalist outlook, which philosophizes that "man and God are One--we might say one Personality, and that man's personality is immortal in the personality of God". The continuity between self and non-self erased all distinctions and permitted him to write of both his "mystic" and "empirical" selves in the scope of fully harmonized contradictions.

Throughout "Song of Myself", Whitman constantly counterpoints supreme egotism with innocent altruism:

In all people I see myself, none more and not one a barley-corn less,
And the good or bad I say of myself I say of them.

... One world is aware and by far the largest to me, and that is myself. (p. 57)
Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself, 
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)  

(p. 95)

The basis of this free unity of contradiction is found in Whitman's belief in the whole man, in whom the desires of both body and soul dwell in harmony:

Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul.

Lacks one lacks both, and the unseen is proved by the seen,  
Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn.  

(p. 41)

Crane's outlook depends strongly on Whitman's pantheist vision for its integrity of prophecy. "Hankering, gross, mystical, nude" (p. 56) Whitman does not turn his back on the "empirical" world but centres his vision in it"

I accept Reality and dare not question it,  
Materialism first and last imbuing.  

(p. 60)

His pantheism is not, then, devoid of the influence of the external world rendered internal. He sees nature as a res signatura, "a uniform hieroglyph" ("Song of Myself", p. 43) that must be read:

Although his pantheism is essentially mystical, it is unlike either the Oriental or Carlylean mystical pantheism, both of which regard the objective world as un-real and chimerical.  

The ability of the bridge to "condense eternity" and of the airplane to "conjugate infinity" rests on Crane's belief in the Whitmanian version of pantheism.

Because of Whitman's belief in the body as equal to the soul, he accepts the seer's advice to "glean eidolons", images which reflect
the spirit or soul of each object. Man has the power to "really build eidolons", those spiritual effluxes of the material world that are immutable. Since America is a commercial and material world releasing eidolons, the visible is part of an everlasting destiny. For Crane, the bridge in the New York harbour was the supreme eidolon, a link between the shores of the worlds of the spirit and the flesh, whose arcs and curves express Whitman's "orbic tendencies to shape and shape and shape,/The mighty earth-eidolon" ("Eidolons", p. 19).

Whitman called the life-principle not only "thou centre" but "thou orb of many orbs", since roundness was his image of completeness, the eidolon "the rounding of the circle". The cyclical nature of life that "goes onward and outward" ("Song of Myself", p. 44) originates in his belief in the cycle of eternal recurrence:

Wider and wider they spread, expanding, always expanding, Outward and outward and forever outward. ("Song of Myself", p. 45)

Thus Crane's bridge is "the arching path upward" ("Atlantis") since he, like Whitman, would create a poem constructed of "arching strands of song". Both poets build their visions in the same way--originating in their own egos and reaching out towards cosmic heights. They take within themselves the arcs and strands of events and elements, both natural and artificial, to build of them one perfect circle, "one arc synoptic of all tides below" ("Atlantis"). Because Crane's outlook at times lacked such assurance, it remained, even to his last poem, "a broken arc" ("A Postscript") of unrealized wholeness. The Whitmanian inspiration, however, aimed toward completeness of the circle.
"Voyages" contains other elements that are essentially Whitmanian, especially the image of the sea as the "mystical" realm as opposed to the firm material reality of the land:

The sky o'erarches here, we feel the undulating deck beneath our feet,
We feel the long pulsation, ebb and flow of endless motion,
The tones of unseen mystery, the vague and vast suggestions of the briny world, the liquid-flowing syllables,
The perfume, the faint creaking of the cordage, the melancholy rhythm,
The boundless vista and the horizon far and dim are all here.  
("In Cabin'd Ships At Sea", p. 16)

In Crane, the "cordage" is in the bodies of the children. The "boundless vista" is that of "timeless floods, unfettered leewardings". The evocative "tones" and "suggestions" of Whitman's sea with its "liquid-flowing syllables" speak once more in Crane's sea, with its "silver snowy sentences." The "melancholy rhythm" is caught in the "adagios of islands" while the "I" sees the "earthly shore" as the safe limits rejected for the vanquishing of the ego in the lovers' acceptance of immersion in the "rimless floods".

Crane's "mystical eroticism"21 in "Voyages" was the most complete balance of his inner and outer selves that he was ever to achieve. The poem grew out of a love relationship that gave the poet a sense of contact with the infinite. As a true Whitmanian Transcendentalist, Crane had to feel such experience in his own "empirical" nature before his "mystical" self could realize it fully in the realm of art. The Whitmanian realization of the "unseen mystery" and the desire to face all odds, ("To confront night, storms, hunger, ridicule, accidents, rebuffs", "Me Imperturbe", p. 23) gives "Voyages" a great inner strength.
Crane's lyrical voice can say to his sea what Whitman said to his: "I am integral with you, I too am of one phase and of all phases" ("Song of Myself", p. 59). Like his spiritual father, he admits that "I believe in the flesh and the appetites" ("Song of Myself", p. 61).

Whitman was the one who communicated to Crane "the mystic deliria, the madness amorous, the utter abandonment" ("From Pent-Up Aching Rivers", p. 98) of the sexual act. Since the body is the soul, coition is the "act divine". Crane's "Voyages III" sings the sacredness of the flesh and the act of love as the "infinite consanguinity" which the sea, both the source of life and the mother of all, "bears" for man:

And so, admitted through black swollen gates
That must arrest all distance otherwise,—
Past whirling pillars and lithe pediments,
Light wrestling there incessantly with light,
Star kissing star through wave on wave into
Your body rocking!

Whitman's "song of procreation" also interprets the source of sexual desire as a cosmic force imaged in the flow of water, this time in "pent-up aching rivers". Whitman sees woman as "the gates of the body... the gates of the soul" ("I Sing the Body Electric", p. 102). Crane's "gates" are definite suggestions of the way the phallic power obtains fulfilment ("pillars", "pediments") although the suggestion may have overtones of the homosexual act ("black swollen gates").

Because Whitman saw love as "the base of all metaphysics", his most memorable contribution to life was that of one "Who was not proud of his songs, but of the measureless ocean of love within him" ("Readers Ages Hence", p. 125). This love accepts "empirical" reality ("Bind us
in time": Crane, and "I accept time absolutely": Whitman, "Song of Myself", p. 60) in order to transmute it into an eternal state, "whose accent no farewell will know." But for Crane suffering is part of this achievement ("as I/Must first be lost in fatal tides to tell") since Whitman showed him that only dying into love's hands will effect a resurrection. Whitman projects an image of the Christ-like poet shedding his blood for man:

Stain every page, stain every song I sing, every word I say, bloody drops,
Let them know your scarlet heart, and let them glisten,
Saturate them with yourself all ashamed and wet.
("Trickle Drops", p. 128)

Crane expresses this same interpretation of his poetic role through an image of the immolation of the flesh in the sexual act. This immolation reflects its alternative, the sacredness and healing power of the flesh in love, as a cleansing unifying force:

While ribboned water lanes I wind
Are laved and scattered with no stroke
Wide from your side, whereto this hour
The sea lifts, also, reliquary hands.

The power is reminiscent of that in "Legend", the cauterizing force that brings about healing following pain:

It is to be learned--
This cleaving and this burning,
But only by the one who
Spends out himself again.

Of course the word "spends" suggests not only the rejection of miserly hoarding but the feeling of being sexually spent after the moment of orgasm. In "Voyages", death is not annihilation but "transmemberment".

Of course, in Whitman, Crane found the acceptance of all of love,
including love between man and man. Full acceptance of his homosexuality was possible for Crane—but only at particular times. His affair with Peggy Baird during the final year of his life was his only known heterosexual relationship. It was Crane's desperate attempt to find a way out of the degenerate, fragmented state of his life during his last years, a period which sustained very few creative moments. While he was still full of the strength of hope and promise, he could speak of his homosexual affairs with an openness sometimes akin to bravado. In general, however, they were not sordid episodes, as far as he was concerned. He not only accepted these experiences as part of himself but made them part of his art.

There is a difference in the treatment of the sexual motif in both poets, however. Whitman feels the real poems are not only the acts of love but the actual penises, the "man-roots" that "plant so lovingly now" ("A Woman Waits for Me", p. 108) the seed of future generations.

The real poems (what we call poems being merely pictures), The poems of the privacy of the night, and of men like me, This poem drooping shy and unseen that I always carry, and that all men carry, (Know once for all, avow'd on purpose, wherever are men like me, are our lusty lurking masculine poems,) Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, love-yielding, love-climbers, and the climbing sap, Arms and hands of love, lips of love, phallic thumb of love, breasts of love, bellies press'd and glued together with love, Earth of chaste love, life that is only life after love, The body of my love, the body of the woman I love, the body of the man, the body of the earth. ("Spontaneous me", p. 109)

Crane, on the other hand, believed in drawing a line of distinction
between his artistic life and his personal sexual adventures. However, his letters and poetry indicate the presence of a creative strength that stems from the providential influences of blissful and fulfilled sexual encounters. His love affair with Opffer was an experience of intense joy that he could compare with the religious-mystical realization of God's presence in the Incarnation:

I have wanted to write you more than once, but it will take many letters to let you know what I mean (for myself, at least) when I say that I have seen the Word made Flesh. I mean nothing less, and I know now that here is such a thing as indestructibility. (Letters, p. 181)

Crane was, nonetheless, fully aware of how the other side of this life could drag him down:

When I see you ask me to tell you more about him for he is worth more and better words, I assure you. O yes, I shall see him again soon. The climax will be all too easily reached, --But my gratitude is enduring--if only for that once, at least, something beautiful approached me and as though it were the most natural thing in the world, and enclosed me in his arm and pulled me to him without my slightest bid. And we who create must endure--must hold to spirit not by the mind, the intellect alone. These have no mystic possibilities. O flesh damned to hate and scorn. I have felt my cheek pressed on the desert these days and months too much. (Letters, p. 127)

Consequently, the acceptance of his role of homosexual is not without its sufferings and its isolation. Evidence of the dark side of this experience is found not only in "Voyages" and "Legend" or in the annihilation of "Garden Abstract" but in "Possessions" where the flesh encumbers the spirit and destroys creativity before the achievement of "pure possession". This suffering is indicated in terms suggestive of the pain endured by the passive homosexual--pain both physical and metaphysical:
I, turning, turning on smoked forking spires,
The city's stubborn lives, desires.

Tossed on these horns, who bleeding dies,
Lacks all but piteous admissions, to be split
Upon the page whose blind sum finally burns
Record of rage and partial appeties.

In "The Visible the Untrue", a poem dedicated to Emile Opffer, Crane sees himself as the victim again, since the parting from his lover forces him "to extinguish what I have of faith". "Reply" may be quite simply a statement of Crane's to this same lover, having been caught with another ("in my moment's shame") and condemned for his unfaithfulness. The speaker sends the "brother" away to enjoy the "bliss" of successfully shaming him. In "Island Quarry", the choice of the left (i.e., the sinister) path is evidently the choice of barren homosexuality. It is presented as an admirable decision since the one who takes it avoids the path of lust for woman (i.e., "the goat path") and of the softness of "tears and sleep" for the hard, mature stoicism of self-knowledge on a barren path. Nevertheless, it is not the easy way to fulfilment:

This [homo]sexual symbolism and the need to resolve life's contradictions we have seen before in Crane's poetry: but generally it has been the maternal and consuming sea in which he has sought refuge from emotional fury. This firm, mature resolution (or at least the desire for it) is something new. There is here the unfamiliar strength of a man determined to be toughened by experience and not defeated by it.22

The obscurity of Crane's love poetry suggests that he did not feel fully comfortable in the self-revealing role that Whitman accepted so completely. Whitman's stand is even more self-exposing than that of a confessional poet since he does not feel the need for secre-
tiveness or apologies to begin with. Not only was Crane more reticent than his forebear but he remained also more deeply interested in objectifying or projecting his private life into a symbolic world of art. Thus, while he wrote to Frank of his happiness found with Opffer, he also saw that the private experience was being "transformed" into a symbolic one expressed in terms of his artistic visions:

And I have been able to give freedom and life which was acknowledged in the ecstacy of walking hand in hand across the most beautiful bridge of the world, the cables enclosing us and pulling us upward in such a dance as I have never walked and never can walk with another. (Letters, p. 181)

Because of the lack of full and sustained belief in himself, Crane could not fully accept his own homosexuality. Lacking Whitman's ordered sense of self-arrangement, he could not accept that the "I" was individual and self-contained in its contradictions. Thus he could not believe in the absoluteness of a Whitman-like ego but pursued a symbolic outlook that would go beyond the self, "to view the subjective and objective worlds as functions of each other by regarding both as functions of the forms of speech in which they are rendered." 23

Crane's greatest debt to Whitman originates most certainly in his response to the great lyrics of Leaves of Grass, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and "Passage to India", as well as the magnificent Sea-Drift poems. These works contain the heart of Crane symbolism, as well as the symbols themselves—sea, passage, Manhattan, crossing and spanning, circles, sea gulls, wires, and cables, the past as mythical root,
railroads and plains— all of which work toward the establishment of a "mystical" unity.

In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", the act of voyaging back and forth "from shore to shore" is the central motion in a poem virtually obsessed with crossings of numerous sorts and of numerous orders. Whitman's main concern here is the same as Crane's in the opening of The Bridge, namely to show the sure flow of time into eternity, and the complete positivity of the Future, the millennium when all the universe will be one. Examples of the separate elements that will be united are the "I" and "not-I", the "me" and "them", the past and future, the self and the current of life, the individual of the present and mankind of the future. But the way Whitman handles these varied themes is to speak of them all at once, thus suggesting the intricate nature of their interrelationship. Crane's letter to Kahn, which outlines his labours in creating The Bridge, indicates that he was bent on re-establishing Whitman's approach in the twentieth century:

Thousands of strands have to be searched for, sorted and interwoven. In a sense I have to do a great deal of pioneering myself. (Letters, p. 305)

The approach was more than a technical feature in both poets, however; it was aimed at fulfilling a definite goal which Crane outlined in terms derived directly from his spiritual forebear:

There are so many interlocking elements and symbols at work throughout The Bridge that it is next to impossible to describe it without resorting to the actual metaphors of the poem. Roughly, however, it is based on the conquest of space and knowledge. The theme of 'Cathay' (its riches, etc.) ultimately is transmuted into a symbol of consciousness, knowledge, spiritual unity. (Letters, p. 241)
Both Crane's and Whitman's "walk in the street and the passage over the river" ("Crossing Brooklyn Ferry", p. 159) are vision of "condense eternity". In the former's statement, "the traffic lights" are "beading thy [i.e., the bridge's] path"; in the latter's "the glories are "strung like beads on my smallest sights". Whitman's ferry "passage over the river" is Crane's bridge "vaulting the sea". Both poets' visions are centered in Manhatten; for both "time nor place--distance avails not" in the face of the sea's tides "pouring-in" and "falling back". Whitman's sea-gulls are "high in the air floating with motionless wings" in "slow-wheeling circles" while Crane's gulls are also masters of the heavens and of harmonic orders imaged by the "rings" and "curves":

The seagull's wings shall dip and pivot him,
Shedding white rings of tumult, building high
Over the chained bay waters Liberty--

The with inviolate curve, forsake our eyes
As apparitional as sails that cross
Some page of figures to be filed away.

Whitman's sighting of the "fires from the foundry" also finds its counterpart in Crane's vision of the moon as "A rip-tooth of the sky's acetylene". Both poets also make attempts at fusing the "clefts of sheets" caused by the technological world.

For Crane, as for Whitman, the quest for a "New World" is metaphorically rendered as a search for the north-west passage, the way to infinite riches. Whitman's poem, "Passage to India", presented Crane with the metaphor for the achievement of man's spiritual quest. Like "India", "Cathay" was for Crane the discovery of both a new spirit and
"the infinite greatness of the past" ("Passage to India", p. 380).

Columbus, in "Ave Maria", acts out the same role as in Whitman's poem, since the discovery of America was, for both poets, the true completion of the voyager's mission:

(Oh Genoese thy dream! thy dream!
Centuries after thou are laid in thy grave,
The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream.)
("Passage to India", p. 382)

... Then faith, not fear
Nigh surged me witless... Hearing the surf near--
I, wonder-breathing, kept the watch,—saw
The first palm chevron the first lighted hill.
("Ave Maria")

America, as "Cathay", the true "Passage to India", is the verifier of the dream. "This turning ronduire whole" is Columbus' realization of both his speculation and his dream. His speculation, i.e., that the world was round, once made him "exile" but, "now proved", renders him "absolute". This discovery of roundness is also a reflection, however, on the completeness of the voyage, the discovery of the image of infinity in the material world. The infinite series of the waves, the inconstant motion "turning ronduire" is, at this point, "thou ronduire of the world at last accomplished" ("Passage to India", p. 382). Both poems move on to a Te Deum, a prayer in praise of God and his almighty powers, because man's realization of infinity in his midst could not but merit such praises. The passage of the soul to "primal thought" takes the poets to the same theistic realization:

O Thou transcendent
Nameless, the fibre and the breath
("Passage to India", p. 386)
O Thou who sleepest on Thyself, apart
Like ocean athwart lanes of death and birth
("Ave Maria")

Besides humility, this soul also demands of them the fullest expansion of vision. Since the world responds totally to this God as a servant to a master, man is expected to risk everything in pursuing the "pendant seething wheat of knowledge" that is "beyond" in Crane and "farther, farther, farther" ("Passage to India", p. 388) in Whitman. Even when alone and weary, Whitman's old Columbus continues to rest his faith in God:

My terminus near,
The clouds already closing in upon me,
The voyage balk'd, the course disputed, lost,
I yield my ships to Thee.
("Prayer of Columbus", p. 390)

Crane does not show his readers the "batter'd, wreck'd old man," but his Columbus, too, resorts to his faith in a terrifyingly powerful God to be merciful towards him.

In the Sea-Drift poems, Whitman finds himself alone on the beach. Although he knows that his separateness is not an eternal condition since "a vast similitude interlocks all" ("On the Beach at Night Alone", p. 252), he still faces the possible unreality of his own ego, up until this point the hub of his universe. The sea, for Whitman, acted as the symbol of man's dying and his spiritual rebirth. These Sea-Drift poems share a feeling with Crane's greatest moments, especially in "Voyages", since they were not without a tone of sadness and isolation, not without the fascination with the "delicious word death".

Whitman's position is a humble, solitary one, full of the recognition
of the interrelationship between death and rebirth, between loss and fulfilment:

Never more the cries of unsatisfied love be absent from me,
Never again leave me to the peaceful child I was before
what there in the night,
By the sea under the yellow and sagging moon,
The messenger there arous'd, the fire, the sweet hell within,
The unknown want, the destiny of me.

("Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking", p. 245)

The uncertainty amidst all his arrogance is unfolded in his poem, "As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life". Here Whitman realizes that he is the drift, caught in a motion larger than himself. There are thus "the shores I know" and "the shores I know not" (p. 246), the former the physical universe, the latter the mystical one. Whitman realizes that he has only known his personal physical world, not the impersonal "impalpable breezes". Such awareness leads him to a humbling moment of self-reckoning, wherein he faces his own confusion and ignorance:

0 baffled, balk'd, bent to the very earth,
Oppress'd with myself that I have dared to open my mouth,
Aware now that amid all that blab whose echoes recoil upon
me I have not at once had the least idea who or what I am,
But that before all my arrogant poems the real Me stands yet
untouch'd, untold, altogether unreach'd,
Withdrawn far, mocking me with mock-congratulatory signs and
bows,
With peals of distant ironical laughter at every word I
have written,
Pointing in silence to these songs, and then to the sand
beneath.
I perceive I have not really understood anything, not a single
object, and that no man ever can,
Nature here in sight of the sea taking advantage of me to
dart upon me and sting me,
Because I have dared to open my mouth to sing at all.

("As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life", pp. 246-247)

This passage challenges the whole base of Whitmanian Transcendentalism since its daring egotistical outlook, which has been the full source
of its energy is, after all, only grounded in embarrassing and empty self-love. The "I" is now "oppressed" by its courageous act of self-assertion rather than nourished by it. The "I" that has created a whole universe from the belief in its own infinite powers must face the possibility that all it has generated is mere "blab" and that, in spite of all the forcefulness of apparent self-belief, "I have not at once had the least idea who or what I am." His outlook has been based upon self-delusion, since the true, "the real Me", remains both "un-reach'd" and unreachable. "No man ever can", as it seems, grasp anything in a knowing way, let alone his own nature which has "withdrawn far". Thus, in this rare passage in Whitman, man is suddenly aware of his own isolation, even from himself. He plays the fool, victimized by the "mock-congratulatory signs and bows" and the "distant ironical laughter" of the real self. Even nature, always a true companion and passive reflection of man in all his pride, is an antagonistic force, "taking advantage of me to dart upon me and sting me".

Crane had always been aware of the fatalistic outlook which saw the world "all dark and desolate" ("Tears", p. 248) and the self as a "speck, a point on the world's floating vast" ("To the Man-Of-War Bird", p. 249). For this reason, Whitman's realization in Sea-Drift of man's smallness and of his limitations as one of several creatures created and determined by the natural order, would have been particularly meaningful to him. Whitman's feeling that man was caught up in something larger than himself, which reflected his own meagreness, was but a temporary setback for a poet of the "supreme I". For Crane,
however, it was a recognition that could never be completely effaced from his view of the cosmic order. The recognition that "the sobbing dirge of Nature" was as much for man as for the things of this world was certainly disillusioning to both poets:

We, capricious, brought hither we know not whence, spread out before you,
You up there walking or sitting,
Whoever you are, we too lie in drifts at your feet.
("As I Ebb'd With the Ocean of Life", p. 248)

For both, the sea was also the image of this great chaos of mystery and terror, the eternally possible and impossible, the way of death and rebirth, the great "unloosen'd Ocean" ("Tears", p. 249). Crane would have liked to have joined Whitman in returning to the belief that there was "something . . . more immortal even than the stars" ("On the Beach at Night", p. 251); indeed, at times, he succeeded in doing so. Whitman's confrontation with his own self-alienation would have been a realization for Crane, as it was for Melville, of a division between inner and outer nature that was an ever-present fact.

For Whitman, however, the mere confrontation with his alien self was enough to render it assimilable, through an attitude which smacks of personal repatriation. Thus he could return to his reassurance of a moving link, a "similitude" of "change onward from ours to that of beings who walk other spheres" ("The World Below the Brine", p. 252).

In spite of uncertainty, the motion remains sea-ward, with man as both ship and cargo:

But 0 the ship, the immortal ship!  O ship aboard the ship!
Ship of the body, ship of the soul, voyaging, voyaging, voyaging.
("Aboard at a Ship's Helm", p. 250)
For Crane, life was from the very beginning "a cameo the waves claim again". The potentiality of the sea's cruelty thus affects his interpretation of the land as well. Although he wanted to recognize the gods and goddesses in the American soil, especially the mother of the New World, he was unsure of finding them without the aid of the "lie". The inconstancy of Crane's symbology is, therefore, a key to the lack of consistency in his art. Whitman's spontaneity is not always authentic, but it rarely reaches the extremes of sentimentalism or hysteria found in Crane. Nor does he try to mask his confusion with art and cunning symbolism as does his disciple. The attempt to find "syllables of faith" in a world "bright with myth" led Crane to write some of his great poetry, as in the following passage from "The Dance". This passage is a successful one since it is dramatically elevated in tone and rhetoric in order to equal the sublimity of Maquokeeta's apotheosis:

I heard the hush of lava wrestling your arms,  
And stray teeth foam about the raven throat;  
Flame cataracts of heaven in seething swarms  
Fed down your anklets to the sunset's moat.

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!

In "The River", Crane realizes the dramatic flow of events in a truly Whitmanian passage. The rhythms of the poetry are true to the rhythm of events they describe:

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.

However, Crane's shaky rendition of Whitmanism also led him to write
some of his worst poetry. He could mythicize the nation, the pioneers,
the land, but its mechanical inventions only forced his poetry to
become a kind of mechanical monster in its own right. "Imponderable the
dinosaur sinks slow". We frequently wish it would sink more quickly:

The nasal whine of power whips a new universe . . .
Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky,
Under the looming stacks of the gigantic power house
Stars prick the eyes with sharp ammoniac proverbs,
New verities, new inklings in the velvet hummed
Of dynamos, where hearing's leash is strummed . . .

The desire to include in his poetry what his own aesthetic conscience
would not absorb is transparently evident in this passage. At times
Crane's poetry is swamped in cosmic and exclamatory rhetoric:

While Cetus-like, O thou Dirigible, enormous Lounger
Of pendulous auroral beaches,—satellited wide
By convoy planes, moonferrets that rejoin thee
On fleeting balconies as thou does glide,
—Hast splintered space!

The language of such a passage may not seem "poetic" even today.
Probably it never will be, now that the machine is part of history, no
longer a convincing subject for glorification. The major problem
reflected in these passages is the "splintered" vision. As part of an
era which denied that all-inclusiveness was a possibility, Crane's
poetry was at some point obliged to nullify its own Whitmanism.

From the very beginning, when Crane placed his allegiance "to the
positive and universal tendencies implicit" (Letters, p. 354) in Whitman, he was essentially de-Whitmanizing the poet, since the latter's "Universal" aspects only grow out of the particular ones. Crane could not be satisfied with a world originating out of a full glorification of the self, since he felt obliged to authenticate a "world of things irreconcilable" which would support his ego. Thus, he remained within the Whitman tradition, at the same time as he was constantly looking beyond it. By the time Crane was composing the latter sections of The Bridge, he had lost the initial Whitman-like sense of affirmation because of the lack of belief in his own spiritual hugeness, and in his own generating power. The true Transcendentalist poet, like the true Romantic, must be large enough to invent a meaning where there is none, to create out of chaos, to play God and admit that he dared.

V. Conclusion

Crane's attempt to project a unified vision through his identification with the Transcendentalist outlook helped him to realize a true poetic direction. Like his two fathers of America's cosmic optimism, he experienced the implicit sacrifices and sufferings of this double-minded tradition. Emerson could never have anything but a bi-polar vision. The denaturing of his own ego, based on his need to resolve a general theory by forfeiting the particular elements of the world and his own being, caused him to become a writer of inspirational passages instead of the complete visionary prophet. Uncomfortable in the self-contradiction of an outlook which he could never precisely formulate, he failed to become the poet that, by his vision, he should have been.
Whitman could never, on the other hand, let the myth of his sane ego lapse for long, since it was the single foundation of his poetry. Although he accomplished a more integrated form of Transcendental statement than Emerson, he was obliged to turn his back on anything outside of his self-contradictory posture.

Crane experienced similar problems in his work, except that his consciousness of them was even more acute. He had, after all, three other ancestors, not, perhaps, from as direct a line, but present all the same. They would render his Emersonian-Whitmanian heritage more bearable, by providing a balance, a counter-pressure, to such relentless myth-making. They would also make it more unbearable, by shaking cosmic consciousness to its very roots with the storm of their ironic and ambiguous heresies.
References Chapter 7


3 Ibid., p. 168.


6 Ibid., p. 232.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p. 264.

9 "Song Of the Universal" in Leaves of Grass (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1909), p. 221. Subsequent references to Leaves of Grass will be documented internally and will refer to this edition.

10 "Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from,/The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer" ("Song of Myself", p. 62).


13 Bernice Slote, "Views of The Bridge" in James A. Miller, Jr., Karl Shapiro, and Bernice Slote, Start With the Sun: Studies in the Whitman Tradition (The University of Nebraska Press, 1963), p. 10.

14 Ibid., p. 6.

15 Ibid., p. 5

16 Ibid., p. 6.

18. e.g., Wall Street, the crowd-bound bridge with its "unfactioned idiom" of traffic lights, the river, the hurrying feverish, electric world of "flashing" cinematic scenes, of the "bedlamite" who "speeds to the bridge's parapets", and the "motion ever unspent" of the bridge's "stride".


20. Ibid., p. 260.


22. Ibid., p. 217.

23. Feidelson, p. 56.
CHAPTER VIII

HART CRANE AND THE "OTHER AMERICANS": POE

Well, perhaps I need a little more skepticism to put me right on The Bridge again . . .

(Letters, p. 262)

Because he wanted to write a poetry dedicated to honestly evaluating the meaning of a search for "mystic America" in the twentieth century, Crane was obliged to become a poet not merely of optimism but of skepticism as well. From a very early stage in his development, his idealist-oriented sensibility had readied him for a discipleship in the Transcendentalist tradition. Crane was aware that this tradition was not without its own tribulations of doubt and disillusionment. He gave witness to this awareness in his mentioning of Whitman's "other hand" in "Cape Hatteras" and in the trials of self-annihilation prior to vision in "Voyages", a poem which owes a considerable debt to the anxiety-ridden "Sea Drift" section of Leaves of Grass.

Crane experienced, however, a different kind of insecurity, which was to prove much more frightening to him. This deeper skepticism lacked the ordering optimistic principle which always returned to reinforce the Transcendentalist outlook, even at its most apparently negative moments. Crane expressed this feeling of fragmentation in a statement which outlines his awareness of his moral "schizophrenia":

Emotionally I should like to write The Bridge; intellectually judged the whole theme and project seems more and more absurd. A fear of personal impotence in this matter wouldn't affect me half so much as the convictions that arise from other sources . . . (Letters, p. 261)

Although this statement is rather vague about the sources of
these doubts, certainly the work of the "other Americans", Poe, Dickinson and Melville, has a pervasive influence here. Because they were torn between their ideals and disbeliefs, these writers had a significant role in determining Crane's poetic formation. If he were honestly determined to define a truly American vision, he could hardly overlook a large portion of his country's heritage, represented by their writings. Whether they appear under their own names or not, their "heretical" presence is frequently felt throughout Crane's poetry, especially when he is attempting to deal honestly with the counter-thrust to visionary idealism. For his reason, each of them has an important role in The Bridge, a poem which involves this essential struggle. In fact, Poe and Dickinson both have sections in Crane's "epic" dedicated to them, while Melville's influence pervades in at least two others.

I. The "Other Americans": A Definition

The problem involved in designating the importance of the "other Americans" for Crane's work rests, above all, on the question of their collective identity. Certainly they are far from being co-members of a tradition in the way Emerson and Whitman are. They had no influence over one another's work; nor did they even experience the kind of periodic association of dark-visioned minds as in an off-and-on friendship like that of Hawthorne and Melville. Poe, Dickinson and Melville were, in fact, quite unknown to one another. Even their shared response to their American identity is, by its very nature, expressed in different ways since each writer outlines an attitude unsympathetic to the collective platform of Transcendentalism because of their concern
for each man's individualized self-encounter. They believed that their unsystematized and unorthodox positions could only be arrived at through self-knowledge. Any attempt to make of them a school or a group of mutually sympathetic thinkers is, therefore, bound to falsify their essential purposes.

There are, however, definite elements in their writings which they share. First of all, their unorthodoxy, which defines them as separate identities, also unifies them. Each of them goes beyond Transcendentalism in the severely antinomian, extremely anti-authoritarian interpretation of self-reliance as a sine qua non to the "long encounter" with the self. They shared in the same distrust of orthodoxy not because they wanted to be radical individualists out to boost their own egos but because they had to allow their natures to achieve knowledge in their own authentic ways. Because of their unorthodox outlooks, each of them suffered an isolation which he found painful to endure.

Secondly, each of these writers was influenced by the Transcendentalist outlook, while remaining distinctly separate from it. The idealist-directed philosophy of Emerson and Whitman was the main current of contemporary intellectual thought. Naturally, the "other Americans" could not help envisioning the artist as one who sought out a purpose beyond the sensation-based outlook of "empirical" reality. Nevertheless, they also shared a distrust of the simple-minded optimism of the Transcendentalist viewpoint. They could not believe that both halves of their natures—i.e., the "empirical" and "mystical"—
could be fused merely through the acknowledgement of their mutural existence, through the domination of the ego, or through a profession of faith in the analogous relationship of these antagonistic natures.

The central anti-Transcendentalist element in the outlooks of these writers is based on the third feature which their writings share, namely their admission of the powerful presence of evil. None of them was able to acknowledge evil merely as the failure to recognize goodness or as the mere absence of it. For them, evil was, in fact, a power that had a strong role in determining the nature and scope of experience. If they believed in a possible goodness or innocence in man, it was not eternal or constant, but a precarious or changeable state of being.

Fourthly, they distrusted nature as well, and hence disapproved of the Transcendentalist's penchant towards pantheism. For them, the world was not simply an Edenic creation of a benign god. It was a place full of ambiguities, ironies, and shortcomings. Nature was, then, not a kind matron to mankind, but a frequent cosmic enemy or a reminder to man, even at his most optimistic moments, of his mortality or of his smallness.

Finally, these "other Americans" shared a desire to return to a positive answer in evaluating man's life, after confronting the evil and suffering of this world in a forthright and heroic way. Their object was to find a way to the "immortal yes" through the experience of enduring the "mortal no". The failure to acknowledge the fallenness of humanity was, they believed, the creation of an unreal outlook
which would deny man the chance of ever realizing complete fulfilment. On the other hand, they knew that the achievement of any absolute or positive stand was not for this life, constantly upset as it was by change, the incalculable event or the unknowable elements in human nature.

In his study, *Symbolism and American Literature*, Charles Feidelson applies the word "symbolist" to the American writers of the nineteenth century instead of the word "romantic", since the former term describes a distinctly separate way of handling the poet's "intercourse with the world":

> The pattern of American romanticism, which began a generation late, was something more than romantic. . . Emerson, Melville, Hawthorne, Poe and Whitman inherited the basic problem of romanticism: the vindication of the imaginative thought in a world grown abstract and material. But the problem is still before us today; and their solution . . . is closer to modern notions of symbolic reality than to romantic egoism.

These writers sought a way of transcending the antagonism between the "empirical" and "mystical" worlds by exploring language as an autonomous world free from all divisiveness. Their artistic world was "not behind the poem in the writer's mind or in front of the poem in the external world" but in the very substance and texture of art itself. In this way, the poet achieved a means of unifying his double nature in a third world, without having to contradict himself or deny his own ego. The terms of such a debate lose their significance because they are dissolved in a new unity.

Certainly Poe searched for a controlled art which could not be
judged by applying moral or sentimental values to it. An art dedicated to effect had to divorce itself from every world other than its own. Melville sought the ambiguous world of the symbolic white whale, Ishmael's "grand hooded phantom", who opens "the great floodgates of the wonder-world". Feidelson quotes Babbalanja's words from *Mardi* as a consummate statement of "the whole doctrine of symbolism":

> 'Of ourselves, and in ourselves, we originate nothing. When Lombardo set about his work, he knew not what it would become. He did not build himself in with plans; he wrote right on; and so doing, got deeper and deeper into himself; and like a resolute traveler, plunging through baffling woods, at last was rewarded for his toils. "In good time", saith he, in his autobiography, "I came out into a serene, sunny, ravishing region; full of sweet scents, singing birds, wild plants, roguish laughs, prophetic voices. "Here we are at last, then," he cried; "I have created the creative."'

Dickinson, too, was a "resolute traveler" in the realms of consciousness. In the majority of her lyrics, her "I" is the vehicle for the poem rather than the poem the vehicle for her ego. Thus, each of the "other Americans" has a definite contact with the symbolist view of art. The problem with the word "symbolist" as Feidelson uses it stems from its rather large applicability. Both the Transcendentalist writers and the doubting "other Americans" are categorized within it, albeit as polar opposites:

If we look for characteristic products of the complex tradition outlined in the preceding chapter, Whitman seems too pure a type; and Hawthorne and Poe, though more deeply involved than they knew, are too far off-center. Emerson and Melville are the poles. Between them these two ran the gamut of possibilities created by the symbolistic point of view. Emerson represented the upsurge of a new capacity, Melville the relapse into doubt. Emerson was the theorist and advocate, Melville the practicing poet. Emerson embodied the monistic phase of
symbolism, the sweeping sense of poetic fusion; Melville lived in a universe of paradox and knew the struggle to implement the claims of symbolic imagination. Yet neither was really an independent agent: their methods were reciprocal, and each entailed the other. Though Melville speaks to us today as Emerson does not, they stand on common ground, which is also common ground with our own sensibility.5

Certainly Feidelson's suggestion that the two "groups" of poets are affiliated closely in sensibility cannot be denied. The term "symbolist" would have more accuracy, however, if it were applied only to the non-Transcendentalist writers. Unlike the Transcendentalists, they were much less prone to being influenced by the English Romantics' conception of poetry as the subjective experience of a specially refined creative ego. The contrast between the "I" in Dickinson and the "I" in Whitman is enough of a clue to the difference between a romantic—and a symbolist-oriented art. In fact, important evidence for drawing a distinction between Transcendentalism and symbolism can be found in Crane's treatment of them in his poetry.

Crane recognized his affinity with the symbolist-oriented "other Americans" not merely because he shared their divided outlook but also because they helped him to cope with the tension between his positive ideals and the negative elements in human experience. Probably his favourite book in all of literature was Moby Dick, a study of the very conflict between the self and the cosmos raised to the level of the serene tertium quid of art. He returned to it, and to the works of Poe and Dickinson, because they helped him to cope with the indubitable presence of evil in the world. In an age when poetry was epitomized by Eliot's "amply justified" (Letters, p. 114) vision of "pessi-
mism", Crane knew that his loyalties were with the "more positive, or (if I must put it so in a skeptical age) ecstatic goal" (Letters, p. 115). Nevertheless, he could not remain the complete cosmic optimist without becoming the victim of a sentimentalized notion of evil or the prophet of a foolishly inhuman and impractical vision. Thus, when his poetic conceptions were most positive, they relinquished their attempts to render the sense of evil as illusory or effete. At such a point, Crane could speak from a profound sense of his association with the symbolist Americans and their "tradition":

I tried to break loose from that particular strait-jacket [i.e., Eliot's "fashionable pessimism"] without however committing myself to any oppositional form of didacticism. Your diffidence in ascribing any absolute conclusions in the poem [i.e., The Bridge] is therefore correct, at least according to my intentions. The poem, as a whole, is, I think, an affirmation of experience, and to that extent is 'positive' rather than 'negative' in the sense The Waste Land is negative. (Letters, p. 351)

Poe, Dickinson and Melville helped Crane to achieve this stand. It originated in a view that resisted "absolute conclusions" without resorting to the cosmic optimist's denial of negation found in Whitman and Emerson.

II. Poe and "The Oval Portrait": Crane and Anti-Empiricism

In a letter written in 1921 to his friend, William Wright, Crane mentions Poe in his list of those writers "I do run joyfully toward" (Letters, p. 67). This tribute takes on additional significance, however, when the list is read closely. The only other American included in it is Whitman, and Poe's name is placed immediately next to his. Crane was to bring these writers together once more in The Bridge
in the two main contrasting visions of "Cape Hatteras" and "The Tunnel".

In 1916, one of the books that Crane had "invested in" was a copy of Edgar Allan Poe's Tales of Mystery and Imagination. These stories held more than the usual fascination for him since he read them, not merely as simple ghost tales or as exotic nightmares, but as studies of a particular kind of aesthetic consciousness. It was this copy of Poe "on one of the end papers of which he had jotted down what looks like an analysis of the short story 'The Oval Portrait'". Crane's analysis reveals evidence of his precocious critical abilities. More important, however, is the insight it provides into his interest in the relationship between art and life, represented by the "mystic-aesthetic" and the "empirical" worlds:

Simone's death is caused by the annihilation of her beauty in the portrait and as useless beauty vanishes so her spirit takes wing and only the casein (?) on the portrait (really the perfect reproduction of her soul and form) remains to mock the artist, her husband.

The artist poses her as Destiny although he never can know destiny; he is so absorbed that he does not notice how she (is) melting and like a crimson rose brushed (?) by the frost she wilts and passes.

This prose analysis reflects Crane's early sentimental view of the artist's role both in its choice of diction and in its angle of interpretation. A disciple of the fin de siècle outlook, Crane emphasized the superiority of the artistic world to the "empirical" one:

Crane was not much given to marking up his books, but annotations such as this one, in which he focuses on the triumph of art over life, are characteristic of the kinds of material to which he was drawn. In the same edition of Poe, Crane marked passages concerned with the nature of artistic composition. What art is and how art is made were for him serious matters.
Early poems, written on or about the time of this reading in Poe (see "The Moth That God Made Blind" and "C 33") reveal that Crane viewed the artist's victory over the antagonistic forces of life as a pyrrhic one. In "The Hive", the speaker's "bleeding heart" suffers at the hands of human cruelty:

    Humanity pecks, claws, sobs and climbs;
    Up the inside, and over every part
    Of the hive of the world that is my heart.

Suffering, however, creates the issue of "mercy and love". For this reason the pain and alienation are not only endurable but are essential elements to the artist's identity:

    Mercy, white milk, and honey, gold love—
    And I watch, and say, "These the anguish are worth".

The image of the artist as martyr, whose poetic soul is misunderstood and cruelly exploited by a material minded-world, remained with Crane throughout his poetic career. "Chaplinesque", "Black Tambourine" and "Emblems of Conduct" are poetic statements on this theme, although it continues to appear in late poems like "Imperator Victus" "The visible the Untrue", where the speaker admits that he is "the terrible puppet of my dreams". Certainly the image of the suffering, alienated poet was derived from reading the "decadents", who professed their alienation from a cruel world that would defeat their art. But it was derived from Poe as well.

Crane was aware of what Poe had to sacrifice for his art, and of how expensive that sacrifice could be. Thus, even while he wrote poems which praise the artist for alienating himself from the "empirical" world that would destroy his sensibility, and even while the
suffering could be transformed into the exalted self-sacrifice of the martyr, Crane was also aware that this artist had to give up much of his humanity in order to exist outside of contact with the world of shared experience among men. The blindness, the fall, the complete loss of articulation in "The Moth That God Made Blind" was Crane's projection of this sacrifice. He found the same theme in "The Oval Portrait".

Poe's story presents the opposition of the two forces of art and life in the artist and a "young girl", the subject of his portrait. That such an opposition is the foundation of the story's theme is obvious from the observations Poe makes concerning them and from the very structure of his prose:

He, passionate, studious, austere, and having already a bride in his Art; she a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee; all light and smiles, and frolicsome as the young fawn; loving and cherishing all things; hating only the Art which was her rival; dreading only the pallet and brushes and other untoward instruments which deprived her of the countenance of her lover.

Here Poe clarifies the mutual exclusivity of the worlds dedicated to art and to life. They are not at all co-existential forces, but define themselves in total opposition to one another. In fact, Poe shows that once the portrait of the girl is finished, her life is taken away, since she cannot live both in the realms of art and of life at the same time. Art is a jealous lover. She insists on possessing her artist completely, even by depriving his subject of her life by taking all for herself:

And he [i.e., the artist] would not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sat beside him. (Poe, p. 313)
Poe's italicizing of the word "would" suggests the wilfulness of the artist before his passively "humble and obedient" subject. The "passionate" nature of the artist involves him in an act of vampirism, by encouraging him to feed upon the very "Life itself" (Poe, p. 313) in order to accomplish his own goals.

Crane's early fascination with Poe's tale led him towards defining an aesthetic that was based on an escape to beauty. For Poe, the only real way for an artist to deal with life was to annihilate it and then recreate it in art. Thus his outlook is extremely anti-empirical; it can only accept the outer world once it has been transformed into part of his inner aesthetic consciousness. "The Poetic Principle" and "The Philosophy of Composition", Poe's central essays on poetry, demonstrate that his view on the independence of art was his central obsession. The latter essays, a study of the scientific rendering of mood in "The Raven", is an unrealistic analysis of the way a poem is generated. It also reveals that his is an art completely devoted to effect. Since Poe is trying to create a world separate from the every-day one, the artificiality and exoticism of the artistic climate are of central importance to him. He thus emphasizes "keeping originality always in view" (Poe, p. 812). He also rejects the spontaneity of emotional involvement in the poem's creation since "no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition" (Poe, p. 813). Finally, he insists on the "Unity of impression" (Poe, p. 813) since the lack of it would permit the invasion of the "empirical" world. Poe's world of poetry is hyper-aesthetic, unnatural and almost unattainable:
It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such, only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating, the soul: and all intense excitement are, through a psychal necessity, brief. (Poe, p. 813)

Art is the escape to "beauty", the "sole legitimate province of the poem". The effect of this escape, namely "the pure elevation of the soul" (Poe, p. 814), is achieved through whatever means the author has at his avail for generating unusual, aberrant and exotic excitation. Since Poe could not believe that the outer world would have anything to offer the artist other than a defeating anti-aesthetic approach, there was no other way for the creative consciousness to stress itself.

In "The Poetic Principle", Poe elaborates on his aestheticism, particularly in his discussion of the purpose of art. His rejection of "the heresy of The Didactic" (Poe, p. 768), for an autotelic view of art reveals the extreme of his alienation from an empirical-based viewpoint:

... would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls we should immediately discover that under the sun there neither exists nor can exist any work more thoroughly dignified, more supremely noble, than this very poem, this poem per se, this poem which is a poem and nothing more, this poem written solely for the poem's sake. (Poe, p. 769)

Eventually everything is sacrificed to Beauty, since it alone saves man from the distinctive "Vice" of the non-artistic world, found in "her disproportion, her animosity to the fitting, to the appropriate, to the harmonious" (Poe, p. 769).

Crane was not attracted to an anti-empiricism similar to Poe's for emotional reasons alone. His early and late poetry provide two versions of a retreat from the outer world because of Crane's refusal
and then his failure to expand his vision beyond his own imagination's yearnings. Even while working towards his mature and balanced statements of his middle period, however, Crane continued to assert his interest in a Poesque aesthetic. In 1921, he wrote a letter to Gorham Munson which shows his interest in analyzing the artist's "problem of form". His answer, much influenced by the aesthetic of the painter, Sommer, demonstrates Crane's continued fascination with a philosophy of art very similar to Poe's:

One must be drenched in words, literally soaked with them to have the right ones form themselves into the proper pattern at the right moment. When they come, as they did in 'Pastorale' (thin, but good), they come as things in themselves; it is a matter of felicitous juggling!; and no amount of will or emotion can help the thing a bit. So you see I believe with Sommer that the 'Ding an Sich' method is ultimately the only satisfactory creative principle to follow. (Letters, p. 71)

Of course, Poe would not accept the Dionysian tone in Crane's approach to art. Because he was so conscious of the artist's need to measure language carefully in order to arrive at the right effect, Poe would scarcely have been satisfied with epitomizing creativity as "a matter of felicitous juggling". Nevertheless, both he and Crane were interested in "the right moment" rather than the slowly unfolding vision. The results were the same: Poe's belief in the poem "per se" or Crane's in the poem as "'Ding an Sich'". Crane went on looking for "a form that is so thorough and intense as to dye the words themselves with a peculiarity of meaning, slightly different maybe from the ordinary definitions of them separate from the poem" (Letters, p. 77). Poe also wanted the "meaning" of words to be secondary to their effect or
"suggestiveness". Consequently, he advocated "some undercurrent, however indefinite, of meaning" (Poe, p. 819) that is based on the theme of the poem:

It is the excess of the suggested meaning—it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under-current of the theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind), the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalist. (Poe, p. 820)

With this objective in mind, Poe was moving towards what Pearce called "the poem as self-assertive act". At this time, he "will have made a world of words released from its obligation to take note of . . . semblances [of reality]."

Crane, of course, went on to write larger epic and "panoramic" poems which were based on a vision wider than that of the private imagination. Even The Bridge, however, may be seen as a composite of smaller lyrics, Poe's only acceptable interpretation of the nature of a long work (Poe, p. 766). Even more important, Crane eventually reaffirmed the value of "poetry as poetry" in the post-Bridge period, as well as his own lack of the "requirements" to "sum up the universe" (Letters, p. 353). This return to the short personal lyric might be reviewed as a return to a Poesque aesthetic.

III. An "Eidolon, Named Night": Poe's Radical Anti-Transcendentalism

Poe's rejection of any affiliation with "Emerson and his other major contemporaries" was based on his desire "to leave the world behind for the one he would create". There was, however, a distinct reason for his anti-Transcendentalism, which is embedded in the remarks written in his satirical tale, "How to Write a Blackwood Article":
'In the ["tone transcendental"] the merit consists in seeing into the nature of affairs a very great deal farther than anybody else. This second sight is very efficient when properly managed. A little reading of the Dial will carry you a great way. Eschew, in this case, big words; get them as small as possible, and write them upside down. Look over Channing's poems and quote what he says about a "fat little man with a delusive show of Can". Put in something about the Supernal Oneness. Don't say a syllable about the Infernal Twoness. Above all, study innuendo. Hint everything—assert nothing. If you feel inclined to say "bread and butter", do not by any means say it outright. You may say any thing and every thing approaching to "bread and butter". You may hint at buck-wheat cake, or you may even go so far as to insinuate oatmeal porridge, but if bread and butter be your real meaning, be cautious, my dear Miss Psyche, not on any account to say "bread and butter."'" (Poe, pp. 741-742)

For Poe, the denial of the "Infernal Twoness" was the most damaging element of Transcendentalism's tailor-made optimism. Poe could not admit that genius was possible among men who would deny one aspect of human nature in order to affirm another. Goodness, Oneness, and even genius itself could hardly exist without the willingness to admit the reality of their counterparts:

The ambition of a great intellect is at best negative. It struggles—it labors—it creates—not because excellence is desirable, but because to be excelled where there exists a sense of the power to excel is unendurable. Indeed I cannot help thinking that the greatest intellects (since these most clearly perceive the laughable absurdity of human ambition) remain contentedly 'mute and inglorious'. At all events, the vacillation of which I speak is the prominent feature of genius . . . Its supposed 'inevitable' irregularities shall not be found,—for it is clear that the susceptibility to impressions of beauty—that susceptibility which is the most important element of genius—implies an equally exquisite sensitiveness and aversion to deformity. (Poe, p. 960)

Whitman's admission of death into his poetry was subject to the influence of a positive-minded outlook. For this reason, he found the "bitter hug or mortality" an "idle . . . alarm" ("Song of Myself", p.
94). Poe, however, provided a contrast to Whitman's "Eidolons everlasting" in his "Eidolon, named Night" that reigned over the world "on a black throne" (Poe, p. 16). Thus, the sympathy between his view and the Transcendental one had a very real breaking-point.

Poe's art grew out of a strong need to reject what Pearce calls the "'official' philosophy of his society, Scottish Common Sense". His feelings of alienation and his desire to escape this world that suppressed imaginative experience led him to define his theory of the autonomy of art. Poe was reacting against the didactic view of his age which found fiction "trite" and useless for the achievement of the main object of the study--knowledge of human nature. Dr. James Gray's remarks to the "Philadelphia Academy for the Instruction of Ladies" are typical of what Poe was up against:

I say . . ., when we shall see great orators formed by silent mediation, and great anatomists formed by the study of copper-plate skeletons and dissections, then, and not till then, shall we behold judges of human life and character produced by novel reading. To study human nature you must mix with mankind: it is in the drawing room, not in the library, in the forum, not in the cloister, that the nature of man can be learned, because it is the former places, not in the latter, that it is displayed in its true colors and proportions.

With such a doctrinaire view of the human condition, dedicated to achieving the rational orthodoxy of a world confined to "the narrow limits of sober reality", Poe's age could hardly encourage his quest for a world of fantasy:

Ghosts, goblins and enchanted castles, do for children; Masters and Misses are enraptured with the sentimental novel; but, unless a morbid taste for fiction be contracted, or the growth of mind be stunted for a want of nutriment, men and women demand fact and doctrine.
In fact, Poe pursued such a literature in order to escape the narrow "sanity" of his cultural ambience. The act was a conscious one based on a desire to inculcate and encourage the very falsities and vices that his age condemned. Poe's poem, "To M.L.S.", defines the Common Sense heritage which formulated his initial outlook and his subsequent change to an extreme aesthetic viewpoint:

Not long ago, the writer of these lines,  
In the mad pride of intellectuality,  
Maintained 'the power of words'—denied that ever  
A thought arose within the human brain  
Beyond the utterance of the human tongue;  
And now, as if in mockery of that boast  
Two words—two foreign, soft, dissyllables—  
Italian tones, made only to be murmured  
By angels dreaming in the moonlit 'dew  
That hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon hill,'—  
Have stirred from out the abysses of his heart,  
Unthought-like thoughts that are the souls of thought,  
Richer, far wilder, far diviner visions  
Than even the seraph harper, Israfel,  
(Who has 'the sweetest voice of all God's creatures'),  
Could hope to utter.  
(Poe, p. 8)

The angelism of such an outlook, in fact, encourages the belief in a non-linguistic art which would escape all the controls of intellec-
tion. The perverse and melancholy tone of Poe's art originated in his feelings of alienation and self-annihilation. This gloomy sensibility was also nourished by his anti-Common Sense outlook. Poe encouraged the very "morbid taste for fiction" that Gray and his colleagues condemned, by actually cultivating it in his stories and tales. The stimulus of such a weird and fantastic vision created an awareness of a counter-vision to the sane and logical one. Unfortunately, Poe's "mockery" of the "boast" of "Common Sense" philosophy leads to a self-
annihilating outlook, evident in the inherent conflicts of his poetry:

It is tragic that the value of Poe's poems lies primarily in their over-insistent exhibition of an imagination trying in vain to demonstrate its power to reach beyond itself.18

Poe's aestheticism is dedicated to a negative transcendence through its cultivation of an autotelic depersonalized approach to creativity. Art belongs to the controlled world of dream and artificiality. Its restrictive and negative rationale is founded on its calculated attempt to isolate a particular effect, without indulging the artist's ego or depending on spontaneity. The absolutely schematic and delimiting nature of such a definition of art was forced upon Poe, not only because he wanted to deny the Common Sense approach to art but also because he was unable to escape its influence as the norm to his imaginative process:

The poems take Poe's anti-poetic world as a given and strain to expose the mysterious poetic power which he feels informs it. That such a world exists is a prime assumption without which the poems could have little or no meaning. They depend for their force upon a dialectic of simple opposition to the world for which they were written. Yet they make little or no contact with that world. They exist, as it were, to remind the readers of a possibility, 'Out of SPACE--out of TIME', which by definition is never actualizable in a 'real', common-sense situation.19

The inherent self-contradiction of Poe's desire to escape Common-sense and his dependence on its premises for this escape is most evident in *Eureka*, his monistic "Romance*. This treatise-like tale is Poe's last work, and, to some, purportedly his masterpiece of creativity. In reality, however, it exposes the inconsistencies of his art and develops a highly spurious critical and philosophic viewpoint.
Poe tries to escape having the work criticized for its apparently intellectual, philosophic statements by calling it "A Romance" and by dedicking it "to those who feel rather than to those who think". Nevertheless, the tone it presents and the arguments it develops suggest at least the appearance of a system of thought. In effect, Eureka is little more than an attempt to escape to an extreme form of Romanticism through the hopelessly unsympathetic belief in the powers of scientific and logical analysis. The logic and the anti-empiricism, the proof of the possible resistance of all philosophic statements to their own proofs, meet head-on in a maze of philosophical and fictional vagary. Eureka demonstrates Coleridge's belief, stated in Biographia Literaria, that a distinction between materialism and idealism is merely based on point of view, not on fact. Poe thus presents a "what if --" philosophy which denies the existence of separate material and spiritual universes. Such a distinction is meaningless for him, since he believes in a "Oneness" from which the material universe once projected itself in an act of "diffusion". This material world, a temporary "abnormal diffusion", will experience a "plainly inevitable annihilation" (Poe, p. 832) as it returns to its original source. Poe's material-spiritual continuum is thus a full expression of that anti-human, mechanical and dreamlike world Coleridge saw as the result of such thinking. Science and mathematics are employed in Poe's treatise, but not as orthodox tools of empirical research, "for, whatever the mathematicians may assert, there is, in this world at least, no such thing as demonstration" (Poe, p. 821). Since the universe now involves the material, these areas of study aid in "defining" the spiritual, by resolving the
unity of which they are a part. For Poe, any other use of these faculties is a falsification of their meaning:


—God—the material and spiritual God—now exists solely in the diffused Matter and Spirit of the Universe; and that the re-gathering of this diffused Matter and Spirit will be the reconstitution of the purely Spiritual and Individual God. (Poe, p. 889)

Eureka attempts to capture both the worlds of science and of fiction in a monistic universe of "empirical" romanticism. The impossibility of such an outlook is evident in what happens to the logical and imaginative elements in the tale. Both are neutralized by one another until they have little correspondence to any human world that man knows of. The experiment was interesting, but it only proved the impossibility of Poe's position as anti-empiricist poet with a strong empiricist heritage.

Allen Tate, in his essay "Our Cousin, Mr. Poe", emphasizes the point that "Poe as poet accepted certain limits of language". He then contrasts him with the French Symbolists, Mallarme and Rimbaud, and with Crane, since their poetry "results from the belief that language itself can be reality, or by incantation can create a reality". This contrast appears to be inaccurate for more than one reason. In spite of his attempt to form an almost rigorous science of language, Poe experienced moments when he admits "the pen falls powerless from my shivering hand". Nevertheless, the "perfection" (of language) in "Angelic intelligences" as the "physical power of words", with each and "every word an impulse on the air" (Poe, p. 258), is imitated in the poet's creativity of his own language dedicated to Beauty rather than to the heretical accuracy of meaning. The effect of such an outlook is evident
in the verbal hypnotics of repetition, onomatopoeia, constant rhymes, bizarre and obsolete diction and the use of aliteration, in spite of the fact that Poe knows the poet cannot "dwell/Where Israfel/Hath dwelt". On the other hand, Crane's search for a "logic of metaphor" only took him to a belief in verbal synergy and the power of the "multitudinous Verb" by way of a poetry of referential meaning. Only in his late poems did he attempt to pursue a Mallarmeist poetry that unfolded from within. Even in these works, however, the escape was based on the private urge to fantasize rather than on a complete assurance of the autotelic powers of language. Like Poe, another would-be "mystical" poet who wanted to escape the background that nourished his art, Crane sought a mystical-aesthetic vision that brought its "empirical" powers along with it. At times, when he wanted to change escape into vision, he turned to an alcoholic mysticism to help him out. He could never be sure that it was honest, however, any more than Poe could. Thus in "Cutty Sark", the vision of the Melvillian sailor is blurred by the Poesque opium and tea so that he may dream his dreams. At the same time, the poem is the very defeat of this approach to vision, since the statement it makes is an inept and fuzzy one.

IV. Poe in The Bridge; "The Tunnel"

By devoting a section of The Bridge to Poe, Crane made his fullest and most sympathetic acknowledgement of the "other" vision of America. "The Tunnel", the most negative counter-Transcendentalist lyric in the poem, shows America as a vision of hell, full of death, cruelty and denial. The depravity and emptiness of such a world related closely to Poe because Crane believed that his poetry of the under-world was the
most revealing delineation of its presence.

In an atmosphere of nightmare, Poe was Crane's obvious guide, not only because his tales and poems were full of the horror of neurosis, but because his art symbolizes the trapped soul of every artist whose idealism is scorned and rejected. Crane's enthusiasm for Williams' essay on Poe in his book In the American Grain, suggests that he, too, was responding to the extremeness of Poe's position as a counter-Whitmanian prophet:

Williams' American Grain is an achievement that I'd be proud of. A most important and sincere book. I'm very enthusiastic—I put off reading it, you know, until I felt my own way cleared beyond chance of confusions incident to reading a book so intimate to my theme. (Letters, pp. 277-278)

In his essay, Williams quotes a passage from Poe's "Mr. Griswold and the Poets" which demonstrates Poe's particular use of mathematical and scientific powers in the determined annihilation of all empiricism:

'That we are not a poetical people has been asserted so often and so roundly, both at home and abroad that the slander, through mere dint of repetition, has come to be received as truth. Yet nothing can be farther removed from it. The mistake is but a portion, or corrolary, of the old dogma that the calculating facilities are at war with the ideal; while, in fact, it may be demonstrated that the two divisions of mental power are never to be found in perfection apart. The highest order of the imaginative intellect is always preeminently mathematical; and the converse'.

Such anti-empiricism was important also to Crane's interpretation of Poe's relation to his heritage. Whereas Crane had presented Whitman in "Cape Hatteras" as a poet with a vision large enough to incorporate machines into prophecy, Poe becomes the poet of a fatally cruel and lifeless mechanical vision in "The Tunnel".
Because the Transcendentalists held on to the "anti-poetic world" in an effort to include it in their vision, they were rejected by Poe as a suitable group of peers. In fact, Poe may be defined as the Transcendentalist outre, since the extreme anti-empirical nature of his outlook completely out-Transcendentalized Transcendentalism:

Driven to want to leave the world behind for the one he would create, he set himself apart from Emerson and his other major contemporaries. Poe had to grant an absolute disjunction between the world of common sense and the world of the imagination. The others were by and large concerned, in the name of man, to see the worlds as one.  

Poe, in fact, went to the even greater extreme of fusing both worlds under a single outlook, in the name of "One". Whereas the Transcendentalists preserved the two-in-one outlook, Poe achieved a unified order by annihilating one side of the dualist outlook altogether. Since, for him, the material world was an abnormality seeking to return to its rightful role in a spiritual universe, to live in it without pain was impossible. The darkness of his vision must be seen, then, not merely as the personal tragedy of a tormented soul. Poe would have resisted such an interpretation. Rather it stems from the suffering originating from the calculated undoing of the psyche. Crane's comments on Williams' essay suggest that they shared the interpretation of Poe's position as the prototype of American idealism martyred:

I was so interested to note that he puts Poe and his 'character' in the same position as I had symbolized for him in 'The Tunnel' section. (Letters, p. 278)

As in Crane, Williams' poetic outlook was sympathetic with Whitman's optimistic vision for the future of his country. On the other hand, Poe's art represented for them the failure of the acceptance of this
vision, both on the part of the poet and on the part of the people.
Since Williams saw Poe as a martyr, however, who would have been a poet of vision had his cruel and heartless country listened to his voice, the blame for this failure rests with the people. From Williams' Whitmanian interpretation of Poe, the isolation of his work could hardly have been his by choice. Whitman had, after all, stressed how representative the poet was of all his people, and Williams accepted this notion on faith. For Williams, Poe began the tradition of defining America as a New Locality, a tradition which is, of course, Whitman's true origin. Even the phrasing of this view sounds very Whitmanian:

It is the New World, or to leave that for the better term, it is a new locality that is in Poe assertive; it is America, the first great burst through to expression of a re-awakened genius of place.

Poe gives the sense for the first time in America, that literature is serious, not a matter of courtesy but of truth.24

Poe, however, was not accepted by his country. Thus his spirit became a broken and disembodied one, martyr to a faith that America refused to nurture in herself:

Here in poetry, where it is said, 'we approach the gods', Poe was caught, instead, in his time.

Now, defenseless, the place itself attacked him. Now the thinness of his coat, the terror of his isolation took hold.

Had he lived in a world where love throve, his poems might have grown differently. But living where he did, surrounded as he was by that world of unreality, a formless 'population'—drifting and feeding—a huge terror possessed him.25

America's failure to respond to her poet defeats his cause. For Crane as for Williams, the Transcendentalists' faith in the powers of their country to realize its full spiritual potential is really shaken here, since Poe's story indicates that America also has a cruel and unsympa-
thetic side to her nature.

Lewis demonstrates that the shared symbolic rendering of Poe in Crane and Williams is evident in the appearance in the latter of "the same phrase of Poe's that Crane would use". Williams associated it with the isolationist poetry of an imagination that was not allowed the freedom to express itself:

It is especially in the poetry where 'death looked gigantically down' that the horror of the formless resistance which opposed, maddened, destroyed him has forced its character into the air, the wind, the blessed galleries of paradise, above a morose, dead world peopled by shadows and silence, and despair—it is the compelling force of his isolation.

The phrase, "Death looks gigantically down", comes from "The City in the Sea", one of Poe's most perceptive statements on man's fall to a world of madness and despair. Crane had already presented a similar view of the sea in "Voyages". Poe's "melancholy waters" find their symbolic counterpart in Crane's image of man adrift in the formless sea of unconsciousness:

But now
Draw in your head, alone 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.

Crane knew that the sea possessed Whitman's generative, life-giving powers. At times, however, he also recognized with Poe that an essentially negating force existed behind the apparent calmness ("the bottom of the sea is cruel"). The motion in Poe's poem is an undeniable one. As man descends, the lowly fallen world of course appears to rear itself and rise upward. Eventually the fallen "proud tower" with its "Babylon-
like walls" (a suggested tower of Babel) ascends, or at least appears to do so, since everything else has been sinking. The new kingdom beneath the sea is only an "as if" realm, however:

As if the towers had thrust aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide—
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy Heaven.

The City is defined as supreme not because it has any ascendant forces of its own, but because the dead fall beneath its control. This underworld is nothing like the world man lives in. It is full of its own illusion, frozen in its own nightmarish irreality:

There shrines and palaces and towers
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)
Resemble nothing that is ours.

(Poe, p. 14)

The poem hardly seems a study in evoking "the future inevitable destruction of the ruins of Gomorrah by an earthquake"; nor is it involved strictly in "the thought of death and its consequences", with the city as "a cemetery, ... the symbol of the soul's temporary quiet after death before it begins to sink into oblivion, which is symbolized by the sea". It is, rather, Poe's encounter with what Lawrence called his absolute concern, "the disintegration-process of his own psyche". The city represents an order, a sense of cultural, social and political heritage, as well as the integrated ego, which submerges in the sea of chaos and illusion—possibly even of madness. The rationale for this descent into hell is hardly grounded on Christian ethos:

Where the good and the bad, and the worst and the best,
Have gone to their eternal rest.

(Poe, p. 14)
This hell is not choosy in the least; it is only an ironic version of the Christian one. In fact, "good", "bad", "eternal rest", "Hell", "Heaven", are all painful hallucinatory mockeries of their counterparts in an orderly Providence-designed world. Here, they belong to a world where there is "nothing that is ours". Hell is not even going to rule here. Instead, in his act of "rising from a thousand thrones", he is going to submit himself to the role of humble servant before this city, in the compulsion to "do it reverence".

Poe's disintegrative irreality was a theme that fascinated Crane. Thus, "The City in the Sea" presented him with the material to explore the "other" vision of America. "The Tunnel" presents a winter world of mock transcendence ("penguin flexions of the arms"), of a dead Eden ("You'll find the garden in the third act dead"), where passivity and a death-wish seem all that is available to man. In this world, you "wish youself in bed" and offer only "praise/for what time slays". The will to destruction presented here is encapsulated in Crane's version of Poe's potential symbolic denial. Maybe he will not ride through this jungle to escape recognizing its faces. Crane sees the pride in the denial and is fascinated by it. The "Quaker Hill" question suggests that the continuation of this way of looking at the depravity of "fallen-ness" advances an outlook which does not obviate it but which transforms it into part of a larger vision:

Must we descend as worms eye to construe
Our love of all we touch, and take it to the Gate
As humbly as a guest who knows himself too late
His news already told?
The question involved in "The Tunnel" is whether Poe will be able to commit himself to such a rendering of disintegration. The salutary effects of descent seem to be outweighed by the fear of its damaging effects on the poet's psyche. The refusal of the ticket to ride involves simultaneously the refusal of another ticket:

Crane is alluding here to the unsubstantiated account of what happened to Poe immediately before his death. According to this account, Poe was found unconscious at a polling place in Baltimore, and some believed that he had been made drunk and dragged throughout the city as a 'repeater'. 'Ticket' here refers to the list of the candidates of one party, the ballot that was forced on Poe. Crane seems to be asking here whether or not Poe was able to maintain his moral strength, even at the time of his most obvious humiliation, that is, did he have an inner integrity despite his apparent outer disintegration. For Crane personally and the narrator symbolically, the problem was the same: could the poet prevent himself from yielding to despair—the probing of Death—and disintegrating internally at the external rending of his dream by a hostile world.  

Crane was unsure that such a denial, an attempt to render the negative positive through an annihilation of everything before one's own inconsistent integrity, would be possible for one who was aware of so many disintegrative possibilities. For Crane, Poe's retreat to an anti-empirical dreamland was an annihilation of all of his connections with the physical world. Disembodied and alone, Poe acted heroically to escape the "world of unreality" which surrounded him, but his art remained an impossible denial of life, and eventually of itself. The image of Poe's severed head "swinging from the hand-strap in the car" was Crane's symbol for the suffering and loss of a poet reduced to a ghastly intelligence by his inability to face the "empirical" side of his nature. Crane's study of Poe certainly showed him the other side of
the Whitmanian promise as well as the supreme sacrifice forced on the artist by a cruel and heartless America. He also realized from this study that when the poet loses sight of his natural body, he surely forfeits his mystical soul.

"The Tunnel" projects Crane's understanding of Poe's "disintegration . . . process", a course of self-destruction which he must have realized in himself but which he found clearly delineated in Lawrence's essay on Poe:

Moralists have always wondered helplessly why Poe's 'morbid' tales need have been written. They need to be written because old things need to die and disintegrate, because the old white psyche has to be gradually broken down before anything else can come to pass.

Man must be stripped even of himself. And it is a painful, sometimes a ghastly process. Poe had a pretty bitter doom. Doomed to seethe down his soul in a great continuous convulsion of disintegration, and doomed to register the process. And then doomed to be abused for it, when he had performed some of the bitterest tasks of human experience, that can be asked of man. Necessary tasks, too. For the human soul must suffer its own disintegration, consciously, if ever it is to survive.

Lawrence found in Poe a dangerous over-accentuation of the will, an extremism that Crane had discovered in his reading of "The Oval Portrait":

Poe had experienced the ecstacies of extreme spiritual love. And he wanted those ecstacies and nothing but those ecstacies. He wanted that great gratification, the sense of flowing, the sense of unison, the sense of heightening of life. He had experienced this gratification. He was told on every hand that this ecstacy of spiritual, nervous love was the greatest thing in life, was life itself. And he had tried it for himself, he knew that for him it was life itself. So he wanted it. And he would have it. He set up his will against the whole of the limitations of nature.

This is a brave man, acting on his own belief, and his own experience. But it is also an arrogant man, and a fool.
No response to Poe could be closer to Crane's than this one. In fact, the terms for describing the tragedy become the same in both writers. In Lawrence, Poe drove the "vibrations" which are created "most intensely in spiritual unisons" and which he calls "sympathetic ganglia" to a point "beyond any human pitch of endurance". In Crane, the "Daemon" of the annihilatory will effects the same results:

O caught like pennies beneath soot and steam,
Kiss of our agony thou gatherest;
Condensed, thou takest all—shrill ganglia
Impassioned with some song we fail to keep.

Crane's acknowledgement of Poe in the penultimate section of The Bridge was, then, a recognition of the other side of mystic America, the doomed, "morbid", disintegrating dream seen not by "the Visionary Eye", but by "the 'worm's eye' of the bedlamite". In one of the few instances in his poetry, Crane attempts to calmly and completely accept the counter-thrust to the positive vision of his "mystical" outlook. Unlike the "Quaker Hill" section, wherein Crane castigates America for its failure to preserve its fraternity, the theme of the failure of vision in "The Tunnel" is not tainted by irritation or by compromise.

Through this interpretation of Poe's role, Crane describes the ascendancy of "Death", the deification of denial and disintegration, after suggesting the fragmentation and lack of transcendence, the cheap and tawdry Wasteland world, wherein one is forced to "be minimum". This is the ascendancy Poe experienced, the ultimate in mock-Transcendentalism:

And why do I often meet your visage here,
Your eyes like agate lanterns—on and on
Below the toothpaste and the dandruff ads?
--And did their riding eyes right through your side,
and Death, aloft--gigantically down
Probing through you, toward me, O evermore!
And when they dragged your retching flesh,
Your trembling hands that night through Baltimore--
That last night on the ballot rounds, did you
Shaking, did you deny the ticket, Poe?

Poe's "once" established "visage full of meaning" in "The Valley of Nis" is "now" part of the "motionless" world full of "unsteady light", exposed to a "terror-stricken" sky. In this "evermore" of "Nevermore", this "Valley of unrest" (the eventual title of "The Valley of Nis"), the only constancy is over-riding Death:

Ah, by no wind those clouds are driven
That rustles through the unquiet Heaven
Uneasily, from morn till even,
Over the violets there that lie
In myriad types of the human eye--
Over the lillies there that wave
And weep above a nameless grave! (Poe, p. 14)

These are the "eyes" that Crane's "I" sees, eyes of the blackest imagination ("agate lanterns") that go "on and on/Below". In this degraded world beneath the world, to which man's dejected imagination has descended, they belong to Poe, the guide that Crane chooses to follow.

V. Poe and Crane: Contrast and Comparison

There are basic distinctions between Poe and Crane, which can be best defined by examining the places where their writings converge.

"The Wine Menagerie", Crane's poem of vision achieved in the "hynagogic state", finds the world of unconsciousness and world-distortion, a world without the control of time or conscience, in the "glozening decanters". This interior voyage is not without its squalor and violence, imaged in the "leopard", the "shadow's glow", the "imitation onyx wainscoting", the "sweat", and particularly in the woman with "the forceps of the
smile" and "mallets" for "her eyes". Poe's vision of the "dream within a dream" is full of agony, sickness, cruelty and perversity:

I dwelt alone
   In a world of moan,
   And my soul was a stagnant tide.
   (Poe, p. 17)

It is a world "haunted by ill angels only" (Poe, p. 16). The major difference is that Crane's vision, unlike Poe's, does not sink beneath its own weight, down into the gloom of some sub-terranean world. On the contrary, his poem concludes with "rise", "walk away", the order to go "beyond the wall". These commands come from the "wit" or conscience, which, now "anguished", calls the visionary back to reality, away from the destruction of cruel love. Because the vision does not recoil from vice and cruelty, from lust and imperfection, especially in the sexual act ("Poor streaked bodies wrestling up and out"), but eventually accepts these destructive elements in an unconditional way, it finds that "between black tusks the roses shine!"

After beginning a poetic career with a Poesque attitude towards life, Crane strove for a greater acceptance, which culminated in a Whitman-like vision. As early as "Chaplinesque", he had decided to take up the poet's martyred role, thereby transmuting "an empty ash can" into a "grail of laughter". Although his poetry turned in an anti-humanist direction in his later works where "There is no breath of friends and no more shore" ("Key West"), at the time of the composition of "The Tunnel" Crane was aware that the world's denial of Poe was only worsened by Poe's compulsion to deny it back. Because he had known and judged Poe's failure sympathetically but honestly in terms of his annihilation of the body, his own attempt to live in a world apart from man "that do[es]
not disown me/Nor claim me, either, by Adam's spine--nor rib" could only be a bitter retrogression, not a renewal of his poetic faith. For this reason, Crane's most Poe-like poems came at the end. When he was trying to escape a world that seemed hostile to his vision in these works, however, he should have been aware that he was actually trying to escape facing his fear of his own loss of inspiration. "The Broken Tower" was Crane's last effort to return to life by entering "the broken world/To trace the visionary company of love". Unfortunately, he was not capable of effecting the renewal.
References Chapter 8

1 Feidelson, p. 7.

2 Ibid., p. 4

3 Ibid., p. 45.

4 Ibid., p. 173.

5 Ibid., p. 120.

6 Unterecker, p. 32.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid. The interpolations are his, not Crane's.

9 Ibid., pp. 32-33.

10 see Chapter II.


12 Pearce, p. 150.

13 Ibid., p. 144.

14 Ibid., p. 142.


16 Ibid., p. 68.

17 Ibid.

18 Pearce, p. 152.

19 Ibid.

21. Ibid.


23. Pearce, p. 144.

24. Williams, p. 216.


27. Williams, p. 231.


32. Ibid.

33. Ibid., p. 18.

34. Ibid.

35. Dembo, p. 121.
CHAPTER IX

HART CRANE AND THE "OTHER AMERICANS": DICKINSON

The bridge would cease to be 1

Although Emily Dickinson was one of Crane's favourite poets, she is hardly mentioned in his letters at all. At the point where he does refer to her specifically, however, he compares her to Blake, one of the major sources of his poetic inspiration:

I still state some claim on the pertinence of the intuitions; indeed some of Blake's poems and Emily Dickinson's seem more incontrovertible than ever since Relativity and a host of other ideologies, since evolved, have come into recognition. (Letters, p. 324)

This comparison provides a valuable insight into how much worth Dickinson's poetry had for Crane; it also suggests the reasons for his high esteem of her work.2 Crane realized that Dickinson's achievement rated comparison with Blake's, since she was also a poet who existed beyond her own time. Her work was that of a radical prophetic figure who refused to fit into the predetermined mold of her cultural environment. Because of her powerful visionary nature, she joined Blake in bearing witness to an eternal world which existed beyond all artistic, religious and philosophic preconceptions.

Blake's and Dickinson's originality of vision could elicit considerable sympathy and interest from the twentieth century reader because of the way their poetry reflected his comparable feeling of separation from the ordered psyche of previous ages that had grown out of solid and eternal ideological traditions. In contrast with these ages, the post-
Romantic modern period reflected the birth of fluctuating internal de-
bates and crises of self-knowledge. In fact, Blake's and Dickinson's
need to isolate themselves from their own time and their dedication to
their audiences—Blake to future generations, Dickinson to the conscious-
ness in crisis—led them to speak for the modern soul. Crane responded
sympathetically to their efforts to renew mankind through poetry.

Blake's poetry has had a definite appeal for Crane and for other
twentieth-century readers, because of their awareness of the absence of
any visionary strength in their own time and their desire to realize such
a power. Blake, in fact, provided the twentieth century with a systematic
exploration of one of its major obsessions—the fascination with apoca-
lypse or with what Kermode calls "the sense of an ending". Dickinson's
poetry, on the other hand, qualifies as a major key to the modern period
for a very different reason. Her work deals with the other central twentieth
century obsession, the critical birth of what might best be called "the
phenomenological man". Whereas Blake helped Crane to synthesize a "mytho-
logy" in The Bridge, Dickinson's radically empirical frame of mind forced
him to analyze it for its imperfection.

I. Dickinson: Romantic and anti-Romantic

Dickinson's poetry is the expression of a multi-faceted consciousness.
Her work rejects the Romantic's organic order which, at its most realized
moments, conceives of a poetic method existing beyond the province of the
particularized ego. Her outlook contains a considerable portion of Roman-
ticism, however, which is certainly not without its influence in her work,
even as the object of her critical disbelief. In fact, in his book, The
Long Shadow, Griffith speaks of the "Weltanschauung which Emily Dickinson inherited" as one that "may be loosely described as Transcendentalist, or, better yet, as Emersonian". Dickinson, however, realized the problems with this view and hence proceeded, through her darker vision, to undermine its essential optimism:

Emily Dickinson matured under the influence of this outlook, and it is a mistake to assume that she ever wholly discarded it. Had she done so—had she successfully wiped from her mind all the vestiges of Transcendentalism—Miss Dickinson's life and attitudes would have been very different, and quite possibly she would have written no poetry. The trouble was, however, that she could dismiss, as blithe and facile, Emerson's conclusions, yet still find herself drawn irresistably to many of his basic premises. Or, to put the case more specifically, she could perceive a lamentable want of realism in the way Emerson theorized about man's kinship with the cosmos; yet she was much preoccupied with the same elemental kinship, and continued to think of it in fundamentally Emersonian terms. Accordingly, Miss Dickinson could not—and did not—abandon Emersonian principles. Much more complexly, she inverted them.4

This aspect of Dickinson is central to an understanding of her work. Among her poems are those attempts to retreat into the womb of Romantic belief,—naive works where she would be the little girl again, fully confident of the authoritative parental order around her. These innocent poems can turn out to be bitterly ironical, although there are sentimental efforts among them wherein she strives to abandon her maturity in order to retreat to the comfort of an Edenic consciousness. The complete body of her lyric is also arrived at from an ego-centric position. This ego-centrism does, however, have the power to undermine itself in the creation of a reductionist approach to the "I", preparatory to founding a poetry based on a methodology not at all unlike that of existential-phenomenological investigation.
The originality and depth of Dickinson's work can only be truly understood when examined against the backdrop of the Romantic view of poetry. Certainly, she never escaped the influence of this view in any complete way. In fact, much of her poetry is written in its vein, although its inferiority to her "post-Romantic" work is more than self-evident. The Romantic Dickinson is an irritatingly cute, naive individual without much drama of spirit. This persona is responsible for some of her most mundane and tritest statements:

If I can stop one heart from breaking,  
I shall not live in vain;
If I can ease one life the aching,  
Or cool one pain,  
Or help one fainting robin  
Unto his nest again,  
I shall not live in vain.  

(Poems, p. 5)

In verses like this one Dickinson leaves herself open to attacks that do not have to depend on brutal cynicism for their scorn. Such writing is strangely antithetical to the view of a poet who insisted on "strict economy" (Poems, p. 41) not only in word-usage but in the projection of any self-indulgent emotion. Nevertheless, a Dickinson does exist who celebrates the self as the naive creature of a prelapsarian, ordered universe. At this time, nature is a friend ("The pretty people in the woods/Receive me cordially" Poems, p. 95) and the poet is happy being a "nobody" (Poems, p. 15) or a "gay little heart" (Poems, p. 148). With such a view of the world and the self, life is superior to art ("Drama's vitalest expression/Is the Common Day") because tragedies "were tenderer enacted/In the human heart" (Poems, p. 288). At times,
Dickinson stresses her sentimental belief in a private religion ("Sufficient troth that we shall rise--/To that new marriage (Poems, p. 134). At other times, she accepts the cliche of life as an "everlasting race" which she is prepared to leave behind ("Now I am ready to go!", Poems, p. 208).

Whether these poems were as significant for Dickinson as her more predominantly sober and penetrating studies of consciousness, or whether they were the "paste" she played at "Till qualified for pearl" (Poems, p. 16), they are nonetheless representative of part of her work. At times, in fact, her poems develop along a "mature" line, but then turn backward towards her "immature" vision again. Such poems present a bewildering instance of an uncontrolled self-undermining art. At other times, Dickinson is a master of this apparent self-contradiction, as in poems like "Papa above!" (Poems, p. 255) where the disjunction between the innocent voice and the more cynical self is exploited with the fullest control. Her famous statement of unqualified-faith-qualified is another instance of the single-minded poet's mastery of double vision:

I know that he exists
Somewhere, in silence.
He has hid his rare light
From our gross eyes. (Poems, p. 39)

The best explanation for the unmastered contradictions in Dickinson's work does not stem from her unseasoned and unintellectual background, a legend which she herself helped to exaggerate and perpetuate. Instead, it originates in a doubleness of vision which she continued to explore throughout her work, but which she was not always able to control. For
this reason, the words "mature" and "immature" have application to Dickinson's work only within their own comparative context. She did not live or write through one phase and then move on to the next but continued to represent both polarities throughout her work. A famous poem delineates the discovery of this doubleness as a dramatically sudden and major change in her life:

    I felt a cleavage in my mind
    As if my brain had split;
    I tried to match it, seam by seam,
    But could not make them fit. (Poems, p. 49)

However, she does not move on from here to write a new poetry, but continues to try to regain innocence, as well. In fact, the contrast between the "whole" and "wide" Edenic "child's faith" and the adult's doubt that "hold[s] mistaken/His pretty estimage/Of prickly things" (Poems, p. 286) is the very foundation of Dickinson's poetry.

The fullest estimation of Dickinson's anti-Transcendental achievement can best be realized by juxtaposing her heretical persona with that of the Transcendentalist prophet, Whitman. Since this is a definite part of the task that Crane set about performing in "Cape Hatteras" and "Quaker Hill", the relationship between these two authors has to be understood in order to grasp the contrasting purpose of their roles in The Bridge.

The contrasting achievement of Dickinson's and Whitman's poetry is so self-evident because they begin from similar basic premises. Both poets concentrated almost all of their creative energy on the composition of their lyrics rather than on prose works or an epic poem; both achieved
their universal realizations through their parochial vision; both nourished rather than denied their barbarity and naivety; both created a poetry of an essentially egocentric outlook which indulged their private selves yet sought to unfold a vision beyond them. Whereas Whitman's vision is grand, expansive and all-inclusive, however, Dickinson's is grounded in the tightness, terseness and stasis of its poetic statement. Whitman's line is long, Dickinson's short; his outlook general, hers grounded in the specific; his attitude overt, hers covert; his ego self-confident and revealing, hers self-conscious and secretive.

These technical or thematic differences are only symptomatic of a major divergence in epistemology. Although its poems are wide open, all-inclusive and rambling efforts, *Leaves of Grass* has a centre, after all. The individual existence of each undiscoverable leaf belongs to one two-part configuration, a private inner landscape and a unified vision of man living within a cycle of birth-death-rebirth. Whitman insisted on the public image as much as on the private one, although he wanted to deny that such a distinction necessarily existed. Unlike Emerson, he could never recede from mankind, but insisted on being its prophet. He wanted to be published, to announce himself, to receive and be received by the universe. Consequently, while his desire for fame might be seen as a conceited and selfish desire for recognition, it was also a necessary groundwork to his poetic vision. For this reason, he could say: "I know perfectly well my own egotism" ("Song of Myself", p. 85).

Dickinson, on the other hand, had no titles for her poems. She also worked without any concept of their collective order, except as it might
define itself through the infinite shades of a single voice recognized only by gradual acquaintance. In a sense, Dickinson's art was more spontaneous than Whitman's, because of her diffidence towards succeeding as a publically recognized artist. Nevertheless, she was not casual or sloppy about her craft, but was most determined to search for the right phrase and rhythm for the most concentrated expression of experience. She remained supremely dedicated to her art, since it was the way to self-recognition. Whereas Whitman could not "lose himself in what he celebrates" because "he was compulsively a person, a single person", Dickinson lacked this obsession with manifesting the largeness and supremacy of her own ego. Instead, she pursued the narrowness, precision, and economy of an inward-directed, self-examining mind. Her poems remained in fascicles, unpublished and unprepared for printing, largely because of their inherently unresolved nature as explorations of consciousness, and because of her own undecidedness concerning their variant lines and phrases. For her, a poem could be one and many in its shifting tones. She felt no need, once her searching lyrics had been written, to make the final absolute choice among the various possible phrasings available to her to express her discovery. Even when she allowed a few rare poems to be published, she could quite happily do so anonymously, as in the case of the printing of "A narrow Fellow in the Grass". The lack of personal recognition never really troubled her since her work depended on the preservation of her privacy of vision.

These distinctions all reduce to one that not merely involves Whitman's awareness of his role as public artist and Dickinson's absence of this self-image, but centres on the movement in Dickinson towards the
reduction of the "I" to a minimal medium for expressing consciousness, counterpointed by the movement in Whitman to the reduction of everything, including consciousness, to the inclusion in the maximum "I". Poetry was a vehicle for the more significant projection of the shifts and tones of this' consciousness.

II. Dickinson's Radical Empiricism

Pearce represents the difference between Dickinson, on the one hand, and Emerson and Whitman on the other, as an opposition between anti-Transcendentalism and Transcendentalism proper:

In Emily Dickinson there is not, as there is in Emerson and Whitman, the compulsion to be oneself in spite of the world and yet somehow to be oneself in terms of the world--no compulsion, in short, towards the transcendental dialectic. In Emerson and Whitman--particularly in Whitman--poetic egocentrism, striving so often to be itself expressively and something else "philosophically", emerges in powerful fits and starts, almost out of control, as a result of a break in the dialectical tension (between self and world) which the poets' very artistry (taking the form of an overwhelming sense of the claims of self) will not let them maintain. This sort of tension does not exist in Emily Dickinson's poems. Rather, she is simply and starkly concerned with being herself and accommodating her view of the world to that concern.6

This view seems justified except that it does not define Dickinson's "egocentrism" precisely enough. The concern with the self is, as Pearce suggests, "simply and starkly" developed. This concern is direct and self-exposing, however, not strictly because "her poems concern the egocentric predicament"7 in the sense of celebrating or advancing her own private ego as the centre of the world, but because the self is the base of the consciousness which is Dickinson's central concern. Surely as Pearce suggests, "the conceiving self is primary", but the advancement
of the self is unimportant in comparison with the advancement of the conceptions that the self generates within it. In a sense, Dickinson's art is more egocentric than Whitman's, then, because she accepts the self as the natural centre of her poetic universe without having to re-assert this point in his boasting, strutting way. If this were not the case, surely Dickinson would have been more concerned with arranging everything around herself than she was. This lack of an external, systematic coherence in her work does not merely stem from a philosophic naivete but from the generation of a "radical empiricism"\(^8\) which has a method akin to a phenomenological one, developed along psychological-aesthetic lines. Dickinson obviously lived before, and outside of, such philosophic views, but surely she was attempting to cope with the dualism of Cartesianism, whether she knew it as such or not, by employing a method similar to Husserl's:

Husserl had no system; on the contrary his lack of systematization rivals that of Nietzsche, whose vehement criticism of the monolithic Hegelian system he renews (but without Nietzsche's considerable understanding of Hegel's philosophy). The system, Husserl tells us, signifies a refusal to continue questioning. Unlike Hegel, Husserl never arrives at any settled or unquestionable phenomenological truths, for he is ever in the process of redoubting old conclusions and revising older conceptions of his method. This is not to say that Husserl did not propose several purportedly absolute truths (for example, his doctrine of the *Ego* and his positing of *essences*).\(^9\)

Dickinson's poetry certainly lacks any system, since, as Pearce says, "the matter of a coherent world-view is hardly material to the comprehension and appreciating of her poems".\(^10\)

Crane's major limitation in handling Dickinson on these grounds arose from his inability to believe without reservation that such fragmentation could be necessary, and even fruitful, in regaining a new and fresh vision.
He did, however, respond sympathetically to the pain suffered in such alienation and reductionism.

Where Crane could not really follow her was into the area of complete "possibility". Because Dickinson's poetry "restrict[s] itself to pure description" not of objects but "of the object of consciousness", its approach compares with the phenomenological one:

The phenomenologist takes as a central principle of method that he is concerned with the objects of consciousness only insofar as they are conscious, and not at all insofar as they are 'real' objects in the world.

Dickinson's caution before the unknown eternal world shows her hesitancy at poetically expressing anything not part of her own consciousness:

What I can do — I will, Though it be little as a Daffodil. What I cannot, must be Unknown to possibility. (Poems, p. 313)

We are brought very close to the unknown, "mystical" world in her poetry, however. It was the desire for the "impossible" in Dickinson that fascinated Crane, the "almost" that appears so frequently in her work. In 'These Are the Days When Birds Come Back", she finds that the advent of Indian summer is nearly credible as a restoration of life:

Oh, fraud that cannot cheat the bee, Almost thy plausibility Induces my belief. (Poems, p. 106)

In "Its Thoughts and Just One Heart", she deals with the grand deception which man strives to accomodate and satisfy himself. Like Stevens' "Supreme Fiction" or Crane's "lie", the achievement of the perfect consciousness is "counterfeit", although Dickinson is more troubled than they are by inconclusiveness:
And Immortality can be
Almost --
Not quite -- content. (Poems, p. 392)

For Dickinson, the "beyond", the "beautiful", may exist, but these are not directly the province of her poetry. She made this point very clearly in her poems themselves, thus preserving her constant "empirical" foothold:

To pile like Thunder to its close,
Then crumble grand away,
While everything created hid --
This would be Poetry:
Or Love, -- the two coeval came --
We both and neither prove,
Experience either, and consume --
For none see God and live. (Poems, p. 271)

Immortality can only appear as the unknown expanse suggested in the last line of her lyrical statements or as the superficial harbour of a child-like dream which can reverse itself at any minute.

Dickinson's poetry is, then, as Pearce suggests, "not so much a philosophy as [a] method". 13 This method is ultimately achieved by pursuing the detachment which dwells within unchallenged egocentricity. If the theme of her poetry is "the achievement of status through crucial experiences", 14 the experiences had first to be reduced to primal consciousness before they were worth exploring. At her most powerful moments, Dickinson is too frugal in her quest for understanding to search out experiences just because they happen to be her own. If self-celebration had been her role, she would certainly have chosen a grander tone and would have avoided revealing her folly or her own lack of assurance. First and foremost, she believed that her experiences had to have some relationship with the 'brain', the aspect of man which is "wider than the
sky" (Poems, p. 56), rather than with the subservient "single Hound", the personal "identity" which accompanies the soul. The mind may be necessary for the assertion of an absolute reality, but Dickinson is not ready to conclude that such an argument professes the mere subjective extreme of solipsism:

Heaven is so far of the mind
That were the mind dissolved,
The site of it by architect
Could not again be proved. (Poems, p. 330)

Since the awareness of heaven depends on "our capacity" or "our idea", it is a realization of the individual mind. But it is only "so far" of the mind in terms of how man is able to tune in to it in his own consciousness. It increases in value and hence in size with the parallel increase in man's capacity to realize it. In itself, however, nothing can really judge it or affix its reality. The phenomenological-mindedness of such a view is evident in Dickinson's constant reiteration of the importance and unimportance of perception:

Perception of an
Object costs
Precise the Object's loss.
Perception is itself a gain
Replying to its price;
The Object Absolute is nought,
Perception sets it fair,
And then upbraids a Perfectness
That situates so far. (Poems, p. 226)

Again, as in the previously quoted poem, the words "so far" appear. They provide a conscious pun which is used to insist on how far man has gone and how far he has yet to go. Heaven may be "so far" of the mind because the mind has advanced to a certain state in its accomplishment of perfect
perception. At the same time, it is still "so far" in the sense of dwelling far from the mind because the gain of perception is still the loss of its own immediate contact. In order to know, man must place himself before the unknowable. In this way, he also makes the unknowable less knowable than ever since he is in the way of his own direct contact with it.

Each of Dickinson's poems contributes to achieving the affirmation of the soul as both a real and unreal element in human nature, fixed at the point of "polar privacy":

A Soul admitted to Itself: 
Finite Infinity. (Poems, p. 230)

The paradox of this dialogue with the self indicates that Dickinson's poetry resolved the "mystical" yearnings of the ego in so far as the implicit "empirical" controls of that poetry would allow. The state projected in her poems is not the "solitude" of a Romantic egocentric, but "a profounder sight" which is beyond the poem and which can only begin to be reached when language starts annihilating its own meaning and order in paradox. Crane's poetry shows an understanding of such self-definition, but also the inability to be satisfied with it as the province of his vision.

III. "To Emily Dickinson": Crane's Interpretation of Dickinson as Reluctant Mystic

Crane's treatment of Dickinson in "Quaker Hill" as one of his American ancestors who bestowed on him the challenge of mystic possibilities was preceded by his eulogistic sonnet, "To Emily Dickinson", written according to Weber, in November, 1926, and published in The Nation in
June, 1927. This poem has received little intelligent treatment from Crane's critics. Winters found it a "charming but uncomprehending poem" which only further demonstrated Crane's "complete failure to understand Emily Dickinson" in "Quaker Hill". Butterfield disposes of the poem in short order by mentioning that Dickinson was a "kindred spirit" for Crane since he saw her as "an exultant mystic". Lewis overlooks the poem completely. Paul gives the longest and most sympathetic study of it, although his analysis of the concluding lines seems to be not merely vague and exclamatory, but misdirected and groundless as well:

Emily's poems are true—note the shift to the present tense—because she, like the questors of The Bridge, has "descrived" the "harvest" (the gleaming fields beyond) but not been permitted to gather it. Her universe, like theirs, is one of radical estrangement (distance) from the ideal, and nothing she can do or that can be done brings the "reconcilement" which, the syntax tells us, lies only within the power of someone else. Emily's world and the reason for her song are not unlike those of the poet of "North Labrador", who now, in images recalling her poems as well as his, depicts the desolation of lovelessness. Without the "reconcilement of remotest mind"—what infinite reaches of space 'Eternity' opens! how terrible the need for anchorage expressed by the use of the substantive and in the determined m's and t's!—even the possession of Ormus and Ophir, fabulous places of the Orient, cradles of religion and sources of gold, would be valueless, empty, and cold.

The poem does not consist of a completely clear statement concerning Dickinson; nor does it suggest that Crane understood her work in any absolute way. Such comprehension is, however, clearly an impossibility, as Butterfield suggests, because "the poetess is herself so various and so contradictory, it seems to me to represent less a misunderstanding of her than an interpretation, valid but incomplete". The poem is not, on the other hand, as confused as Paul's rendering of it.
"To Emily Dickinson" indicates that Crane recognized Dickinson's mystical aspirations, in spite of the absence of a completely "exultant" positive outlook in her work. For Crane, Dickinson "desired so much", at the same time as she knew that it was "in vain to ask" for it. The contradiction between "mystical" yearnings and "empirical" skepticism is what Crane recognizes in Dickinson's art and what he shares with her. But even more important to him was her "dare" to go ahead with the "quest":

You fed your hunger like an endless task,
Dared dignify the labor, bless the quest--
Achieved that stillness ultimately best,

Crane suggests that Dickinson fed her hunger, not in order to sate it, or even to suppress it, but rather to keep it alive. The "hunger" here is not a bodily sort since the feeding of it involves an "endless task". Crane suggests that the acceptance of such a position, the sacrifice to "task", "labor" and "quest", necessarily involves a strain on the poet's spirit. But the pain involved in this sacrifice becomes transmuted into a worthy experience if it is dignified and blessed by the nobility of the one who suffers it. Since Dickinson had no goal in mind but this very involvement, Crane felt that she did not realize that she was actually achieving the essential "stillness" of poetic perpetuity, an unexpected version of the immortality she was obsessed with but that always moved out of range of her aspiration.

For Crane, Dickinson achieved what she thought it was "in vain to ask" because of her humility and her sacrifice, evidenced in the creation of poems which rendered life a valuable experience in art. Ironically,
she receives the "best" because it was "least sought for". Crane's poetic argument may be thus rendered into a simplified statement: although Dickinson scarcely went in pursuit of immortality through her poetry, that is how she has achieved it. Her art thus becomes the final distillation of her interior quest.

Dickinson outlined one version of the "stillness" Crane speaks of in her poetry:

I heard a fly buzz when I died;  
The stillness round my form  
Was like the stillness in the air  
   Between the heaves of storm. (Poems, p. 212)

Death was for her the magnificent obsession, the province of both doubt and annihilation, and of awe and eternity. Much of her great poetry stemmed directly from her "aesthetics of dying". In "I heard a fly", death effects the final interposition:

   And then the windows failed, and then  
   I could not see to see.

In fact, death becomes the absolute limit to vision in this as in her other poems. Crane recognized, however, that Dickinson's ordering of such experiences in the fine stasis of her poetry achieves a much greater "stillness": that of the absolute rendering of the experience in the immortal dignified language of art. He thus calls her the "sweet, dead Silencer" and refers to her moment of achievement as

   . . . most suddenly clear  
When singing that Eternity possessed  
And plundered momently in every breast

Her songs originate from this "perilously balanced experience" between the moments of fullest gain and completest loss, those moments when
Eternity is both rightfully realized and yet is still a stolen dream.

Since Dickinson's art reaches such an immortal state, "no flower yet withers in (her) hand". The pain involved in achieving this immortality was evident to both Crane and Dickinson in very different ways. Crane's doubts, debauchery and suicide were more extreme signs of suffering than Dickinson's skepticism, isolation and retreat from life. His art evolved, however, out of self-Romanticizing and Romantic exhibitionism whereas Dickinson's developed out of a reductionism, both personal and aesthetic in nature. (See especially "Essential Oils are Wrung"). Nevertheless, Crane could respond to her poetry because it was attempting to find a way to immortal unity beyond the "cleavage" of this life. Since immortality transcends the human situation, it "Needs more than wit to gather, love to bind". The demands of a search for an absolute world involve a superhuman strength that must draw upon life and then abandon it for distant ideals:

Some reconcilement of remotest mind--

Leaves Ormus rubyless, and Ophir chill.
Else tears heap all within one clay-cold hill.

Crane saw how Dickinson's distilled poetry was an attempt to absorb the richest aspects of earthly paradise into the world of art. The material world must then be abandoned, since it provides no real attraction for the genuine artist. For Crane the visionary poet can effect a "reconcilement" between his "mystical" and "empirical" natures because he has the "remotest mind" that absorbs only the valuable spiritual riches from this life in its pursuit of a higher one. Once the "mystical" experience of
existence is separated out from the life man lives, a separation that is achieved through the powers of the imagination, the remainder of life is only "rubyless" and "chill". In "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen", Crane contrasted the poet's "love of things irreconcilable" with the mere "world dimensional". There, too, he stressed how the search for the "mystical" one was painful, while the "empirical" world was simple and painless ("untwisted"). This "empirical" existence is, nevertheless, dependent on the "mystical" one to save it from death ("Else tears heap all within one clay-cold hill"). For Crane, without the example of aspirants to immortality like Dickinson, the daily life man lives would be intolerable, since all of mankind would be anonymously "heap(ed)" in the imagination's grave.

In many ways, "To Emily Dickinson" is truthful to its subject's vision. Like much of Dickinson's poetry, the tone of Crane's sonnet is definitely characteristic of her noble and elegaic statements. Crane's terse diction, irregular syntax, tightness of form, and use of irony, suggest further places where his poem reflects an outlook coincidental with hers. Above all, in both poets, the proximity of pain and joy, of time and Eternity, of possessing and plundering, and of death and immortality originates from the mutual interdependence of those contraries.

Crane's sonnet cannot be called pure Dickinson, however. His conclusion to the poem would have been both too sentimental and too consciously aesthetic to suit her. Little evidence can be found in her writing to support a belief that she would have valued her poetry as her supreme achievement. The diffidence in her attitude towards her art
was not only a way of self-defense but an indication that her main
interest was in the art of salvation. Certainly her poetry was part
of this art, but not all of it. Crane's argument from a point of
stasis that rejects all the "empirical" world that cannot properly be
corporated into a mystic - aesthetic view is also more his ambition
than hers.

Crane is right, however, in one very important aspect of his in-
terpretation. At a time when Dickinson seemed only an eccentric or a
cutely inspirational versifier to many readers, Crane recognized that
she subscribed to a skepticism concerning the idealistic belief in
Nature's beneficence. He knew that she was too conscious of the "clay-
cold hill" interpretation of the natural world to indulge in Transcen-
dentalist optimism. Although at one point, she describes Nature, "what
we see", as "Heaven" and "Harmony", she scarcely approves of the pan-
theistic direction in Emerson and Whitman any more than Melville does.
For Dickinson, however, skepticism cannot stop here. God can be as
cruel a force as nature, even to their joint creation:

    Apparently with no surprise
    To any happy flower,
    The frost beheads it at its play
    In accidental power.

    The blond assassin passes on,
    The sun proceeds unmoved
    To measure off another day
    F  For an approving God.

    (Poems, p. 106)

Since man, because of his "brain" and "soul", sometimes experiences a
feeling of separation from his general situation, he realizes how much
he is being betrayed by the forces that control his inner and outer worlds, his temporal and eternal creators. His only haven is the retreat of his own integrity. At such a moment, Dickinson is far from sharing Crane's outlook and his interpretation of her course, since she feels alienated from both reality and the immortal world that appear to act in collusion to destroy their joint creations. Nature's creatures are "happy" to live in such an "accidental" world and to accept "with no surprise" the destructiveness of an "unmoved" Mover and the cruel "assassin", reality, who performs for him. "Apparently", in the first line of Dickinson's lyric, is the clue to the poem's intent. The speaker not only has a hard time adjusting to such an order, but also feels alienated from those creatures that can do so. How can any creation be content without an order and a purpose? How can it be satisfied with dying due to some "accidental" display of "power"? No one can know what they truly feel: no one, with Dickinson's doubts, could suggest anything more than the apparent situation or agree that the lack of surprise was any more than apparent.

In spite of these qualifications in accepting Crane's reading of Dickinson, there is still much worth preserving. First of all, Crane is not presenting a dispassionate critical statement of Dickinson's achievement but a poem on what he believes she has achieved. He thus shows that, although it was not her prime goal, and although she did not recognize such a solution, herself, her art is, nevertheless the realization of the "stillness" that she constantly pursued. No matter how peaceful and sentimental his vision of its outcome may seem, Crane had at
least recognized through Dickinson that the continuing painful and relentless search for immortality is central to the poetic act. He was also justified in seeing her distrust of the natural order as less torturing than her distrust of the spiritual one, and in emphasizing the role of her poetry in pursuing the painful road to this discovery. Dickinson's work is that of a poet who is attempting to work out her salvation. The course she takes often involves painful alienation. She does not, however, fail to keep her sights on the immortality she often feels welling within her. In "Quaker Hill", Crane was to be much truer to Dickinson's own course by providing a less than sentimental examination of the "worm's eye" nature of her outlook.

IV. "Quaker Hill": Dickinson and "Mystical" Descent

The clues in "To Emily Dickinson" concerning Crane's view of the works of the poetess are borne out in "Quaker Hill", the passage in The Bridge wherein Crane attempts to place Dickinson among the poets of his own heritage. For him, her vision begins the process of winding down or of descent to the confrontation with the nightmare behind idealism manifested in "The Tunnel". The recognition that Dickinson experiences is the first step towards achieving an idealism that is not simplistic, but profoundly realized. This mature idealism is envisioned in the concluding lyric, "Atlantis", Crane's culminating unification of contrasting outlooks found in Whitman and Melville. As the first step downward (see "descend—descend—" at the end of "Quaker Hill"), Dickinson's outlook was, for Crane, the link between the extremes
of idealism and the complexity of Melville's dark and noble vision. The movement towards Melvillian vision begins, in fact, with Dickinson. The direction is natural, since these two writers were the ones who presented the maturest outlooks in the face of the failure of American idealism:

Together with Melville, Miss Dickinson was plagued by philosophical uncertainties, and bedevilled by a world which struck her as a place of mystery, ambiguity, and obscure horrors. She shared with Melville essentially the same view of man's predicament, seeing him as a finite creature, craving order and infinity, but set down in a "multiverse" that thwarts his cravings and remains deaf to his appeals. More often than Melville, Miss Dickinson sought to resist her tragic vision: her poetry—indeed her whole way of life—show her trying to devise means of escape which would never have occurred to him. In her most meaningful poems, however, the tragic vision prevails. And the themes of the most meaningful poems are not basically different from those explored in *Moby Dick* or *Pierre*.23

As the last completed section of *The Bridge*, "Quaker Hill" received varied responses both from its author and his critics. Crane found it a rather difficult lyric to write. While he worked on various emendations throughout it in efforts to achieve a finished and worthwhile statement, he was wearying under the long strain of poetic creativity. At the same time, he was conscious of the need to finish it hurriedly in order to include it in *The Bridge*, which was about to go to press. Crane expressed only hesitant evaluation of its worth. Writing to Caresse Crosby, he stated that "'Quaker Hill' is not, after all, one of the major sections of the poem; it is rather by way of an 'accent mark' that it is valuable at all". (*Letters*, p. 347)

Weber considers it a mere afterthought, and Lewis, after stressing its contribution to *The Bridge*, still finds it "a somewhat depressing
piece of writing". Paul, on the other hand, sees it as perhaps the most impressive and valuable part of the whole poem:

This poem, which Crane mistook for an "accent mark" perhaps because in its historical aspect and nostalgia it is comparable to such characteristic works of the time as Van Wyck Brooks' 'Old America', presents a personal landscape of anxiety and a moment of tragic realization—one of the finest moments, perhaps the unsurpassed moment, of The Bridge.

Butterfield's estimate seems to be the most sensible one, however. Along with Crane, he accepts its inferiority in comparison with the sections of the poem that precede and follow it, at the same time admitting to its essential function in the overall scheme:

However, its presence in The Bridge is necessary and logical, for without it there would have been an inexplicable plunge from the radiant note on which "Virginia" ended to the infernal regions of "The Tunnel". The discovery in "Virginia" that an ideal of purity can still be erected in contemporary America has encouraged the protagonist to press on towards Atlantis. . . . The purpose of "Quaker Hill" is to confirm the decadence of contemporary America, and thus to make clear the necessity of a descent into "The Tunnel"; and also, by the example of the disillusioned idealist, Isadora Duncan, and of the stoic, Emily Dickinson, . . . to equip the protagonist with patience and courage for the journey.

The place where Crane located "Quaker Hill" had initially been intended for "Three projected sections that were never completed—'The Cyder Flask', 'Calgary Express', and '1927 Whistles'. The reason for the change in plans grew out of a reconception of The Bridge's original scheme, especially that of its second half. "Three Songs", poems of sexual love, had to be followed, Crane felt, by a profounder study of the role of the feminine ideal in the creation of a mystic America. Woman was, after all, not merely a sexual creature, destined to find
her total meaning in some man's life. Like Isadora Duncan, the other of Crane's ideal women in "Quaker Hill", Dickinson chose to express herself mainly in her art rather than in the marital role. Her dedication to her own private dreams, and her wearing of white, suggested not only that she had retired from life and would remain a virgin, but that she dedicated herself to a private interiorized search, objectified in her art.

Since The Bridge was becoming shakier and shakier as an expression of faith in mystic America, Crane was obliged to turn his externalized search for this visionary utopia into a more interiorized one. Dickinson's and Duncan's art provided an example for him here, since they had also found it necessary to abandon reconcilement with daily life in order to pursue this creativity with its greater spiritual reconcilement.

Crane also felt that his poetic study of America had to, at one point, deal with the New England colony, the historical origins of the American way of life. For Crane, New England was not merely as an expression of Puritan morality, which his two favourite literary historians, Waldo Frank and William Carlos William, had dealt with so critically. Instead, he chose to emphasize how it had fostered the feelings of brotherly love, now replaced by "friendship's acid wine". The slow, pastoral life of those who shared a tankard at the "Mizzentop", happy with their "Promised Land" was, also, now replaced by "the persuasive suburban land agent", "bootleg roadhouses" and "the New Avalón. Hotel". Lewis sees how the movement from "Three Songs" to "Quaker Hill" involves a shift "from the longing for heterosexual union to reflections on the
The thoughts on the central significance of love to the founding of any ideal led Crane back to the origins of the American dream in the New Englander's dedication to one another and to the cause of generating a "patriarch race":

Crane, as usual, exploits the actuality. Quaker Hill had, from the late eighteenth century onward, been the site of a Quaker Meeting House, where the 'Friends' regularly foregathered; it was, indeed, a distinct and homogeneous colony, a recognizable community, and for a while it even had its own post office. From all this, Crane derives words, phrases, and motifs which supply much of the substance of the poem. The Quaker doctrine of brotherly love provides the occasion for meditating questions about the amount of trust one can really place in mankind . . .

The origins of Crane's dark and ironic descent to the "other side" of America stemmed from a feeling of the loss of this order because of the advancement of selfish and base motives among the descendents who failed to follow in the footsteps of such a noble parentage. In "Quaker Hill", brotherly love is found, ironically enough, not in man but in the two women, Duncan and Dickinson, who suffered great personal sacrifices and who were denied the great recognition they deserved. Their preservation of the race and the ideals of mystic America was, Crane realized, a lonely mission, which led them to painful moments of doubt and disillusionment. The ironic and elegaic nature of "To Emily Dickinson" thus prepared the way for a realization of Dickinson's role in Crane's synthesis of "sundered parentage".

The first "Quaker Hill" epigraph, the opening lines of "The Gentian weaves her fringes", suggests an autumn atmosphere, preparatory to the departing life. The poem is Dickinson's "prayer" for readiness when time comes for departure. It follows the course of Christian mediation.
Examining the natural world, man realizes his own smallness, and the brevity of his existence. The trust in a future immortality leads the speaker to compare the inevitable but willing departure of the natural world with her own hopeful willingness. The prayer then ends, traditionally, with the "sign of the cross" and an "amen". It provides a fitting epigraph to Crane's study of "Quaker Hill" and of Dickinson's art, since it is a poem of descent which stresses the great demands made on faith, and the great demands that faith itself makes, in the face of a possible meaningless and cruel world of decay and fatalism. Dickinson's creation of a geography of mortality and immortality depends on Christian interpretation of the cosmos and on the eschatology stemming from that interpretation:

A brief, but patient illness,
An hour to prepare;
And one, below this morning,
Is where the angels are. (Poems, p. 80)

The prayer-form of the poem is, after all, its poetic order, which harmonizes the tension between the worlds of time and eternity. The combined strength and weakness of the poetic statement is evoked in its positively, and then beseechingly, prayerful lines:

We trust that she was willing,—
We ask that we may be.

Without faith, the willingness of nature's departure may be called into question. Man's need for this faith suggests that he, too; may be of the natural world and not of the eternal one. The simple-minded parallel between the bee, butterfly, breeze and the Father, Son, Holy Spirit may be the realization of a complete sense of interrelationship between the
two worlds of time and eternity. But without the slender binding rule of faith, such parallelism is apocalyptic nonsense. The autumn-like setting of Dickinson's poem and its return to the question of faith thus provided Crane with a tight and allusive epigraph to his study of Dickinson's poetry of descent and reaffirmation.

"Quaker Hill" sometimes seems a simple attempt at presenting a vindictive and tiresome satire of modern life, empty in contrast to the traditional cultural situation in the once "Promised Land". Features of the Wasteland motif do appear here, and they are handled in a blatant and ill-humored way. This aspect of "Quaker Hill" renders it an inferior section of The Bridge, although the harshness is perhaps not as irritating as the hysteria found in "Cape Hatteras". This critical contrast is nonetheless a simple-minded and uncontrolled aspect of Crane's poem, as destructive of its finely written sections as the somewhat mawkish sentimentality is in "Indiana".

Crane's intention was not as simplistic, however, as it may first appear, although the unpleasantly obtrusive moralizing is capable of impeding the dramatic motion he was attempting to realize. The bovine, pastoral existence of the past is not necessarily an Edenic world placed in contrast with the irritating, artificial modern climate. Crane seems to see it this way at first, but the attitude is part of a dramatic recognition of a more deeply tendentious point of view discovered further on in the lyric.

Thus the pastoral life has vision, a constant "perspective". The cows obey the seasons unquestionably: the issue is as simple as that.
Their existence is regular and natural, however, because they have no minds to trouble them. Their perspective also remains constant because it is limited to its own instinctualness:

These are but cows that see no other thing Than grass and snow, and their own inner being Through the rich halo that they do not trouble Even to cast upon the seasons fleeting Though they should thin and die on last year's stubble.

Crane suggests they are not only existing in confluence with nature, but are prisoners of this confluence. Initially, there may be joy in living the "docile" life, in simple agreement with all surroundings. But Crane finally demonstrates the prisoning power life has over creatures who, in their innocence, "do not trouble" with what he calls "their own inner being". This innocence is an enforced existence, not an idealized one, since it allows neither growth nor independence. Those who live the pastoral life cannot even offer their damp breath (often associated with the inner being) to feed the parched or dying crops and thus save their own lives. They lack even the "aspirations" of survival. Conscious man, on the other hand, has the aspirations, although they seem to be the major source of his problem. Watching the "awkward, ponderous and uncoy" cows, he may be envying them. He has certainly lost their communal peace. The shared cider is now "friend-ship's acid wine", full of "annoy", "shifting reprisals" and "the just" that is "too sharp".

The "dream" preserved in the Mizzentop, of harmony and comraderie, is now "cancelled". The old order has been scattered and now the "cen-tral cupola" reveals only destruction:
High from the central cupola, they say
One's glance could cross the borders of three states;
But I have seen death's stare in slow survey
From four hungry horizons that no one relates . . .

Man cannot look backward to an Edenic state since it would be too unnatural, too limited now, for his satisfaction. Eden is only possible for the prelapsarians. And yet he can do little else, since he can find no present meaning. Thus he bemoans the loss of the purity of the original order—a purity now interpreted falsely in terms of kinship, race and traditional class-consciousness. Surely Crane's attitude towards the racism and "laissez-faire" elitism in this passage is full of bitter sarcasm and is not to be accepted at face value. This irony is not of Eliot's absolute variety but of the tradition of Dickinsonian self-parody, whereby the poet carries out his own idealism to its devastating extreme of self-annihilation:

What cunning neighbors history his in fine!
The woodlouse mortgages the ancient deal
Table that Powitzky buys for only nine-
Ty-five at Adams' auction,—eats the seal,
The spinster polish of antiquity . . .
Who holds the lease on time and on disgrace?
What eats the pattern with ubiquity?
Where are my kinsmen and the patriarch race?

The paranoia of such a passage is certainly out of sorts with the rest of The Bridge. At any rate, it is both unpleasant and shoddy poetry, even if it is meant to act as a vehicle for expressing spiritual decay.

In the midst of a climate where "the dead preside", Crane presents the poet's mission as a need to "shoulder the curse of sundered parentage" and to go on to "a new destiny". A downward motion is necessary, however, since the poet must locate humility and the heart of love before
he can proceed to uncover the limits of his idealism:

So, must we from the hawk's far stemming view,  
Must we descend as worm's eye to construe  
Our love of all we touch, and take it to the Gate  
As humbly as a guest who knows himself too late,  
His news already told?

The virtues promulgated here are certainly directly contradictory to the paranoia of the previous passage. The "consolidation of error" in the earlier part of this section, however, is dramatically necessary for the descent to the "worm's eye" view. The poet has proved himself as much a part of the hypocritical modern world as those he criticized. Now he will descend with it to its dark night of self-examination. The text behind Crane's sermon here is Blake: "I have said to the Worm: Thou art my mother & my sister". The Gate referred to as the place where "we take" love is surely one of the gates of Blake's title, "The Gates of Paradise", which must be found after passing through "the Gates of Wrath", the subject of Crane's next epigraph.

The descent is, then, not strictly an event of pain and suffering, but of self-examination preparatory to the balm of regeneration. The "yes" repeated throughout this gradual subsiding is achieved through the presence of Dickinson and her modern counterpart, Duncan. They are the ones who realized that pain "breaks the heart, yet yields/The patience that is armour and that shields/Love from despair". This armour is present in Dickinson's poetry. In fact, it is her poetry.

"Quaker Hill" is certainly not a masterpiece, let alone a consistently valid poetic statement. For this reason, it fails to do justice
to Dickinson's excellence. Nevertheless, it does begin to work out Crane's attitude towards the role of poetry in man's salvation, especially the poetry that grows out of more than simple idealism. Crane's recognition of Dickinson's pain and achievement is certainly not without its sentimentality. Her poetry is ever eluding Crane's less than precise interpretative grasp. On the other hand, an attempt to discredit his handling of Dickinson's poetry and of her place within the American poetic tradition must discredit the reader's ability to follow Crane's directives. Part of the problem of understanding Dickinson's role in his work arises from Crane's inner confusion and weariness in the face of a theme which is no longer clear and objectified and which, in order to be saved, must thus become increasingly interiorized, increasingly embedded in his own private ego. The other part of the problem stems from the inability or a refusal of Crane's critics to recognize and sympathize with this confusion and the terrors it created in face of his poetic ambition. Careful reading of The Bridge reveals, more and more, the poet's attempt to achieve an authentic response to his ancestral figures and their heritage, even when this authenticity was beyond his powers.

V. Conclusion: Dickinson and the Post-Bridge Period

In the post-Bridge period Crane continued to be influenced by Dickinson's art. The hardness of vision in "Island Quarry" and "Old Song" shows how Crane attempted to rescue himself from despair and intellectual cowardice by turning toward a poetry exemplified by her sinewy statements of inner resolve. The latter poem especially has
a tight Dickinson-like structure, employs a "metaphysical" imagery akin to hers which joins the abstract and the concrete ("thy absence overflows the rose,"—") and chooses the sharp, painful and endurable control of "the thorn in sharpened shade" over the "overflown" rose. The choice involved in going "on into marble that does not weep" is also a Dickinson-like choice of the hard and impersonal over the soft and self-indulgent. Such a decision was, as Butterfield says, "something new" for Crane, although it was less optimistic than the interpretation the critic gives to it. The marble suggests "prison slabs", tombstones, and infertility as much as the determination to be "toughened by experience". These poems show the wisdom of a search for order in the midst of inner chaos. Such a quest was unfortunately uncharacteristic of Crane, however. Instead of tempering his character through following Dickinson's example of self-examination, he proceeded to lose himself in fantasies.
References Chapter 9


2. Kenneth A. Lohf mentions that Crane had a copy of The Complete Poems of Emily Dickinson signed "Hart Crane/N.Y.C./11/16/27" (see Proof, vol. 3, 310).


5. Pearce, p. 170.


7. Ibid., p. 175.


9. Ibid., p. 145.

10. Pearce, p. 175.


12. Ibid., p. 152.


17. Ibid., p. 163.


27. Lewis, p. 348.


30. Ibid., p. 217.
CHAPTER X

HART CRANE AND THE "OTHER AMERICANS": MELVILLE

O life's a geyser--beautiful--my lungs--
No--I can't live on land--!
("Cutty Sark")

Sea-voyager and sea-poet, Melville held a very special place among Crane's literary ancestors. For Crane, he was an inspirational force behind the voyage into "mystical" realms and the dark conscience that engendered disbelief in a harmonious co-existence between the inner self and the outer world. Crane may have been an inlander by birth, but his discovery of the Atlantic, of Brooklyn Bridge, of the New York harbours, the sea-gulls and the sailor's life was, in turn, the realization of the essential analogue for his own soul. Like Ishmael, Crane experienced an "itch for things remote".¹ This desire for contact with the "mystical vibration" (Moby Dick, p. 3) within led him to the holy sea, "the image of the ungraspable phantom of life" which is "the key to it all". Melville represented the exotic and romantic as well. While in the West Indies, Crane wrote that "the mountains, strange greens, native thatched huts, perfume, etc. brought me straight to Melville" (Letters, p. 252).

A highly symbolic work, Moby Dick deals with two concerns central to Crane's poetry: first, the discovery of the self with its relation to the world and, second, the never-ending attempt to grasp the ungraspable "pre-eminent tremendousness" (Moby Dick, p. 176) of life. For
these reasons, it was more than Crane's favourite novel. It provided him with a kind of Bible of the imagination against which he strove to measure his faith. Crane read it again and again until it became a central part of his consciousness. In fact, Horton states that as early as 1926, "during the agonizing days in Grand Cayman", Crane had read *Moby Dick* "for the third time". His affinity with Melville eventually had a strong effect on the voice and direction of his poetry. In Crane's mature works, the appropriation of Melvillian rhetoric and symbology and, more importantly, of Melvillian vision, is unmistakable.

Crane's comments in his letters and his poems, in particular "At Melville's Tomb", speak eloquently of the great respect he had for Melville. They also demonstrate his understanding of the purpose behind Melville's symbolic conception of the great indomitable and "ubiquitous" Sperm-Whale, Moby Dick, enshrouded in "unearthly conceit" and dwelling beyond the chase and hunt of "mortal man" (*Moby Dick*, p. 177). Crane was aware of how Melville found poetry and philosophy in what might have seemed, at first sight, a less than promising poetic and philosophic subject. The size of the whale, his unexpected appearances, his legendary feats and power stirred Melville's imagination which, like Ahab's, "eventually invested Moby Dick with new terrors unborrowed from anything that visibly appears" (*Moby Dick*, p. 176).

Melville's white whale achieves the ultimate in abstraction by defying all the limits of concretion. And yet the crippling of Ahab, the incidents of destruction, and the eventual sinking of the Pequod
are hardly the acts of a creature without a solidity of its own. The characteristic inward-outward conception of the world, the dualist's vision which Melville explores throughout his novel, loses its safe bearings whenever and wherever Moby Dick is the central concern. At such a point, the whale, analyzed through the rigorous categorization of cetology, is transformed into "thy apotheosis" (*Moby Dick*, p. 105). Melville also warns the pantheist of the precariousness of any attempt to correlate the two discrete realms of experience by forcing the actual world to disappear in its metaphysical counterpart. Standing with "the mystic ocean at his feet", the Transcendentalist-minded visionary "loses his identity" which he interprets as "the visible image of that deep, blue, bottomless soul, pervading mankind and nature" (*Moby Dick*, p. 150). Consequently he will drown--both in the vengeful metaphysics and in the actual sea. "Over Descartian vortices you hover".

Thus Melville refused to allow Moby Dick to become a pantheistic watershed. Nor could he remain a mere whale. There were enough black ones to fill that role. Both possibilities, taken in isolation, lead to destruction since they deny the symbolic whale his essential authenticity. Moby Dick broke the confines of the wilful preconceptions of the Pequod's crew when they tried to categorize him in either of these two ways. Crane demonstrated his awareness of Melville's outlook in his interpretation of Moby Dick as the ultimate figure whose "mystical" and "empirical" natures are inseparable:

In *Moby Dick* the whale is a metaphysical image of the Universe, and every detail of his habits and anatomy has
its importance in swelling his proportion to the cosmic role he plays. (*Letters*, p. 404)

Such was Crane's mature recognition of the symbolic nature of the Melvillian whale. Significantly enough, it came to him less than a month before his suicide by drowning.

I. Melville: Transcendentalism and Anti-Transcendentalism

Melville's vision is not wholly out of sympathy with the Transcendentalist's outlook. In fact, his bi-polar vision and his search for a metaphysical reality behind the world of the "pasteboard mask" relates very closely to the basic tenets of Emerson's philosophic stand. His belief in hidden powers that are beyond logical formulation and that are larger than any human conception of them led him to a position of occult assertion. Furthermore, Melville insisted on the power of love to transcend all differences. Consequently, the strange friendship between Queequeg and Ishmael leads to the latter's rejection of isolation for a membership in humanity. This credo was an acknowledgement of the power of a fraternity to give existence a meaning in a unity and solidarity larger than the individual self. Like Whitman, Melville believed that man's individual purpose was also defined by his position "en-masse".

Nevertheless, the essence of Melvillian vision is essentially skeptical of the Transcendentalist view. Because of his firm sense of the positive presence of evil in mankind and in nature, Melville would not allow pantheistic optimism or a Pelagian-like Transcendental faith in man's own power of moral resolve to become a part of his artistic
consciousness. In his novel, Pierre, he portrays innocence, passive
goodness and unmitigated virtue. But since the novel also had the
alternate title, The Ambiguities, Pierre's innocence is always about
to be challenged, even from the very beginning of the novel, where
its essentially static nature exposes it to all the counter-currents
that afflict it. Even when Pierre, Billy Budd and Peter, the "mizen-
top lad" in White Jacket, are destroyed or maimed by the bitterness
of a cruel life, their innocence is exposed as a self-victimizing
position, since they are without understanding of the world in which
they live. Each is a kind of docile Transcendentalist virgin, raped
and ravaged by the cruel violent virility of the "actual" world. The
exposure of Peter's back in White Jacket, preparatory to his flogging,
is the passage in Melville's writing which comes closest to making
this allusion to sexual violation:

As he was being secured to the gratings, and the shudderings
and creepings of his dazzlingly white back were revealed, he
turned round his head imploringly; but his weeping entreat­
ies and vows of contrition were of no avail. 'I would not
forgive God Almighty!' cried the captain. The fourth boat-
swain's mate advanced, and at the first blow the boy, shout-
ing 'My God! Oh! my God!' writhed and leaped so as to dis-
place the gratings and scatter the nine tails of the scourge
all over his person. At the next blow he howled, leaped, and
raged in unendurable torture.3

His eventual change to bitterness and despair before the "arbitrary
laws" which punished him is reflected in his statement: "I don't care
what happens to me now!". Like a virgin, he has lost the innocence
that was the essential meaning of his life, and without which he is
unable to survive. Melville pities man in such a position, but also
shows how static innocence is a punishable offence in a cruel world.

Thus he finds the unreality of the Transcendentalist's position a subject for stern criticism. Babbalanja in Mardi criticizes the Whitmanian pantheist's stand by insisting on nature's hostility or indifference:

Through all her provinces nature seems to promise immortality to life, but destruction to beings . . . . If not against us, nature is not for us.  

Melville denies that the simple inspirational belief in harmony and implicit goodness in the universe can be anything but illusory. Mapple tells his congregation that man dwells on board "the ship of this base treacherous world" (Moby Dick, p. 47). This ship is, like the Pequod, "a noble craft, but somehow a most melancholy!" (Moby Dick, p. 68).

Nature, "God's great, unflattering laureate" (Moby Dick, p. 186), is the source of deceit and cruel infidelity, especially to those who would try to make of her something she is not, "so that all deified Nature absolutely paints like the harlot, whose allurements cover nothing but the charnel-house within" (Moby Dick, p. 192).

If taken in itself, however, this anti-Transcendentalist outlook arrives at what is, for Melville, an equally false and simplistic stand. Nature is not to blame any more than God is for man's sufferings. It is man's own making. Ignorance is a human invention. Thus, Moby Dick does not seek man out, but "'it is thou, thou, that madly seekest him!'" (Moby Dick, p. 560). The "malicious intelligence" of the whale is "ascribed to him" (Moby Dick, p. 540), since the human attempts to know the unknowable, and the failures, must end in disaster
except for those few individuals like Ishmael who can absorb the experience as part of themselves. Melville's marginal comments on Emerson's essay, "Prudence", demonstrate his own constant return to the experience of life for the authority of his art: "To one who has weathered Cape Horn as a common sailor, what stuff all this is". In fact, *Pierre* may be read as the tract of a once Transcendentalist-minded author who has been converted to a counter-faith. Pierre's individual meagreness, the vulnerability of his innocence, his failure to search for any moral order, his inability to reckon with life's cruelties make him Melville's example of the perilousness of all Transcendentalist thinking that must end either in unreality or in a curse to life.

II. Melville and Crane's Lyrics

Several elements derived from Melville found their way into Crane's poetry—most centrally the whiteness, water and sea-travel, the mariner and his ships, the tropics, and the whale itself. The ways in which these various subjects appear in the poetry, and their projection of a manifold of meanings and tonal evocations, suggest their origin in Melville.

"Black Tambourine", a poem written in 1921, has been mentioned as one of the earliest alleged instances of Crane's borrowings from Melville. Weber appears to be the first to compare the poet-figure in Crane's work with Melville's Pip, a black man who also played a tambourine. Bloomfield disputes such a reading since biographical material suggests that "Crane did not read *Moby Dick* until at least twelve
months after writing the poem". Lewis, on the other hand, positively asserts that Crane read the novel in 1920, "before the summer was out", although he does not provide any evidence or source for this statement. Philip Horton may be the authority behind Lewis' comment, since he remarks that Crane, while living in Washington, D.C. in 1920, shared "literary fare", including "Melville's _Moby Dick_", with his friend Underwood before "his father summoned him back to Cleveland in October". Lewis also presents evidence for a reading of _Moby Dick_ before the usual given date, 1922, by comparing a phrase in "Chaplinesque", written in 1921, with one in the novel. This evidence of a reading prior to 1922 seems to be reasonably solid. At any rate, Crane's comment made on the reading of the novel in 1922 does not dispense with the possibility of an earlier acquaintance with the book.

A further argument for the suggested allusion to Melville arises from the inclusion of "Black Tambourine" in a volume called _White Buildings_. Although these two colours are used by Crane for his own dramatic contrast, part of their effect seems to stem from a reference to Melville's original thematics coloured in white and black. In Crane's poetry the black refers, as in Melville, to the dark, primitive, sometimes savage but always basic element in life which is not as terrifying as it seems because it is plain and visible. The white, on the other hand, has an ambiguous referential purpose in the volume--pure but potentially negative. Pip's desperate prayer for mercy in "Midnight, Forecastle", presents this essential opposition:

Oh, thou big white God aloft there somewhere in yon dark-
ness, have mercy on this small black boy down here; preserve him from all men that have no bowels to feel fear.

(Moby Dick, p. 173)

The white God, associated with "white squalls" and the "white whale", terrifies him to the point of making him "jingle all over like [his] tambourine" (Moby Dick, p. 173). Blackness, for all its strength, nobility and primitive power, is held subservient by whiteness, as the negro is held slave by the white man. Above all, "blackness is the rule" (Moby Dick, p. 137). It is the "proper element of our essences" (Moby Dick, p. 53), which afflicts the dreamer who would escape to prophecy.

Crane's "Black Tambourine" presents a Melvillian "black man", forced to dwell in a catacomb-like location, "in some mid-kingdom, dark", a prisoner of the world. Like Aesop, this man is the artist who is a slave of cruel and unsympathetic controls that are large and powerful before his apparent inferiority. However, because he is "driven to pondering", he is the one who finds "heaven" in his creativity. Certainly Crane had himself in mind when composing this poem, especially since he had just replaced a Negro working in the "basement of his father's restaurant" as supervisor of a storeroom. Crane's father represented the authority of the white man's world—cold, material, unimaginative, while the black man represented the warm, artistic, imaginative world forced to subservience. Crane identified with the black man, not only because he was placed in this job but also because he believed that his father, and the world he represented, was hostile to his poetic nature. Unterecker's biographical material
on this situation also contains some interesting analysis of the poem
which was written out of it:

Grace, when Hart wrote her of his transfer, felt that CA's
assigning of Hart to this job in this place—particularly
because Hart had replaced a discharged Negro handyman—was
a deliberate effort to humiliate son and mother; but Hart,
lacking Grace's prejudices, managed to thrive on the under­
ground life. For the first time in months he set to work
on a poem and in the leisure of his storeroom turned out
the first drafts of 'Black Tambourine', a study of the
store's porter, who, 'forlorn in the cellar', seemed caught
between two unavailable worlds: lost Africa nothing more
than racial memory, and the white, smiling world of the
restaurant upstairs barred to him by 'the world's closed
door'. Aesop, at the poem's middle, reminds us that this
fable has a moral, that it carries a 'tardy judgement' on
those who close doors.11

The "mid-kingdom" of Crane's poem is, however, between the "tambourine"
and "a carcass", rather than between Unterecker's "lost Africa" and
"the white, smiling world". The position defined by this latter si­
tuation is no mid-kingdom but the "cellar", definitely the bottom of
any structure. This aspect of the poem is not, however, the most sig­
nificant one. Crane realized that "a propagandist from either side of
the Negro question could find anything he wanted in it" (Letters, p.
58).

Crane's remarks in his letters to Munson suggest his attempt to
avoid presenting an analysis of the deeper metaphysical side of the
poem. First he underplayed its significance by saying that "it cannot
be as good as I had thought it". When pressed to interpret it, he
excused his "apparent evasion" of the request, before calling the poem
a "bundle of insinuations" (Letters, p. 58). Clearly there was material
in "Black Tambourine" that he was hesitant to expose in any prose
analysis. The poem may suggest that the black man as social creature has an inferior position to bear. As a prophetic being, however, he is caught in a much different dilemma, found only within himself. The tambourine, of course, represents his poetic nature, but the "carcass quick with flies" is a much more difficult symbol to interpret. This carcass has life only so far as it is "quick", or alive and swarming, with flies that feed on it. It may represent a racial memory for the black man as Negro, a memory that is being eaten away by the subjection and despair of his social condition. But for the black man as isolated prophet, it represents the fatalistic vision of his own martyrdom at the hands of inferior parasites. The African world, rich with music, mystery and imagination, should be his dwelling-place. But in that world, he is little more than a corpse. He can only live apart from his art and the imagination that inspires it since both have been consumed by the cruel white world—the inferior world of devouring flies. Thus the tambourine is "stuck on the wall" where it cannot vibrate, cannot sound its rhythm. Aesop's example provides the only solution for the artist. He can only escape his infertile mid-kingdom existence by accepting a life in the imagination:

Aesop, driven to pondering, found
Heaven with the tortoise and the hare;
Fox brush and sow ear top his grave
And mingling incantations on the air.

Such a situation is hardly in confluence with earthly success. A mid-kingdom dweller has a difficult time sacrificing life for art in this exemplary way.
Melville's Pip is such a mid-kingdom character, not only subjected to the control of a social power because of his minority blackness but victimized by his fear of the big metaphysical "white" world. Crane must have found in him the perfect instance of the dangerous position into which artists may easily fall. Pip is the complete victim of his own nature, since his lucidity and his music depend on his madness and his fears. His comprehension of the possible powers of the whale is also the cause of pain and hysteria.

In "Porphyro in Akron", a poem written at approximately the same time as "Black Tambourine", Crane also showed how the world's control on the poet is compounded by his own default in the face of the challenge thrust upon him to rationalize the existence of his poetic identity. He prefers to indulge himself in romantic irony and Laforguian self-belittlement, the easy course of escape. In "A Persuasion", written over the same summer, the theme is again one of escape from the world to a private delicate state of pallid softness, wherein the "heart and mind" are "curved and blent":

If she waits late at night
Hearing the wind,
It is to gather kindness
No world can offer.

She has drawn her hands away.

The situation in "Black Tambourine" is, once more, one in which the artist survives by feeding on his own self-pity. The word "mark" suggests a grading, a valuing, and more significantly, an act of setting something aside, of distinguishing it from the norm. All of these
experiences happened to the African slave in America, and Crane sees them occurring once more in the poet's life. The "metaphysical black man" has poor contact with reality but appears to succumb to the social and financial power of the material world which would annihilate his "interests". His judgement is weak and tardy, since he is an isolato who cannot relate to the life that has shut him out. America has, then, proven itself to have an aspect which is cruel and alienating to those who are not part of its system. Crane sees the pitifulness of the situation, and recognizes it in himself. But the artist who wanders between the "mystical" world of art and the "empirical" world, without having a life in either, is bound to remain "forlorn" and to eventually suffer the perils of his own madness, as Melville demonstrated in his portrait of Pip.

The central Melvillian poems in White Buildings are, of course, "Voyages" and "At Melville's Tomb". The latter is Crane's most explicit poetic acknowledgement of Melville's achievement. Like "To Emily Dickinson", this poem is an elegy which expresses Crane's understanding of the poet's testament left to mankind, and especially to future poets. Again Crane is defining his role as heir to a poetic legacy, preparatory to taking up that legacy in The Bridge. While this poem works out a study of Melvillian consciousness, it also shows how that consciousness is being redefined in a new artist. The tenor and vehicle are, thus, both derived from Melville. The tomb of the title is, of course, the sea, which is, as Crane realized most fully in "Voyages", the womb of regeneration as well.
Melville's vision of man's life as a "strange mixed affair" (Moby Dick, p. 224) in a universe that is, on the one hand, "finished" (Moby Dick, p. 9) and on the other, "that howling infinite" (Moby Dick, p. 105) which he calls "endlessness" (Moby Dick, p. 58), finds its re-definition in Crane's poem:

Often beneath the wave, wide from this ledge
The dice of drowned men's bones he saw bequeath
An embassy. Their numbers as he watched,
Beat on the dusty shore and were obscured.

And wrecks passed without sound of bells,
The calyx of death's bounty giving back
A scattered chapter, livid hieroglyph,
The portent wound in corridors of shells.

The magnificent, awesome and horrible sea seems to be, at times, a place of chaos and circumstance. Man is "drowned" in it and his bones become mere "dice", part of a fickle game of chance. Melville realized that out of change and chaos, the man of vision could realize a new consciousness. For Crane, Melville's vision was the source of energy that allowed him to achieve his recognition of the order beyond circumstance. Melville is the myth-maker because "he saw" the bones "bequeath an embassy" which would define the new consciousness. Beyond the apparent haphazardness of life, a guiding control did exist:

But wherefore it was that after having repeatedly smelt the sea as a merchant sailor, I should now take it into my head to go on a whaling voyage; this the invisible police officer of the Fates, who has the constant surveillance of me, and secretly dogs me, and influences me in some unaccountable way—he can better answer than any one else. And, doubtless, my going on this whaling voyage, formed part of the grand programme of Providence that was drawn up a long time ago. (Moby Dick, p. 5)

Thus there is a calyx or cornucopia in life's symbolic force as "hiero-
glyph" or "portent". The contents, however, of the artist's horn of plenty, are a generous portion of "death's bounty". Aware of his potential ideal, man still suffers tremendous set-backs and constant defeats in wrestling with an unconquerable ambiguity. For Crane, Melville discovered the most distant tides by accepting death and meaninglessness. His vision stems from an imaginative power that measures the universe from within, not from without:

Compass, quadrant and sextant contrive
No farther tides . . . High in the azure steeps
Monody shall not wake the mariner.
This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps.

Crane's defense of the "elliptical and actually obscure" nature of this poem in his famous letter to Harriet Monroe involved him in important poetic interpretation. Among the major examples of analysis of his own work, this statement is most revealing of the creative procedure he followed in realizing his poetry. More significant than the interpretation of the poem, therefore, is this analysis of the approach he used to arrive at it—namely his "dynamics of metaphor".

Crane defined this approach more familiarly as the "logic of metaphor" in a statement of his "General Aims and Theories" and in a letter to Munson, written at approximately the same time. 1926 was a crucial year for Crane, since he not only discovered the real significance of this poetic approach at that time, but also began his work on *The Bridge*. These two major artistic realizations were closely linked. *The Bridge* was becoming a place where he could fully explore his discovery of a "condensed metaphorical habit" (*Letters*, p. 232).
This approach allowed him the "range and symphonic power" and the way to metamorphosis which are so basic to The Bridge. "At Melville's Tomb" was crucial to this discovery; and, of course, one of its central sources was Moby Dick.

The "logic of metaphor" is Crane's claim for a new logic: one which is, according to the restrictions of commonly held axiomatic renderings of the terms, full of "apparent illogic", since it is "quite independent of the original definition of the word or phrase or image thus employed". However, Crane attempted to define a new approach to the poetic process before he could use the term as a key to a new artistic experience:

It implies [this inflection of language] a previous or prepared receptivity to its stimulus on the part of the reader. The reader's sensibility simply responds by identifying this inflection of experience with some event in his own history or perception—or rejects it altogether. The logic of metaphor is so organically entrenched in pure sensibility that it can't be thoroughly traced or explained outside of historical sciences, like philology or anthropology.

Crane's defense, which deals with the approach largely as a technical matter, finds its major recourse in non-poetic arguments from "philology and anthropology", but especially from the psychological criticism of I.A. Richards. Once it is studied in relation to Moby Dick, however, other angles of defense for the poem, which rest quite fundamentally on Melville's own interpretation of the symbolic course of art, begin to surface and to define themselves. They are grounded in mystic-aesthetic origins which lie beyond the reach of a human comprehension that is striving, nonetheless, to understand them. Of course, The
Bridge, as a larger conception, would be a better place to explore the powers of "emotional dynamics" that transcend "pure rationalistic associations." Crane does not deny that the approach has been handled before, however, as in the examples he provides from the poetry of Eliot and Blake. "At Melville's Tomb" is not, then, merely Crane's study of Melville in these terms but a statement on how the latter had discovered for himself the implications of "logic of metaphor".

In "Ambergris", Melville suggests the same inextricable nature of good and evil which Crane expresses in his lyric:

> Now that the incorruption of this most fragrant ambergris should be found in the heart of such decay; is this nothing? Bethink thee of that saying of St. Paul in Corinthians, about corruption and incorruption; how that we are sown in dishonour, but raised in glory. (Moby Dick, p. 406)

This same possibility is evident in Melville's grand symbol, the whale, and especially in its whiteness, which transcends the normal evaluative approach to symbolism. The "mystic sign" can never be completely interpreted: "Not yet have we sowed the incantation of this whiteness"; nor will the possibility of doing so ever be achieved.

In his whale's whiteness, Melville had created a symbol that outstrips any approach that reads correspondence as a one-to-one ratio of experience, whereby items of equal value from two separate worlds are brought into play, the one responding to the other as a missing term that must simply be located to be understood. Symbolic correspondence fuses tenor and vehicle. They exist at once as one being:

> Therefore, in his other moods, symbolize whatever grand or gracious thing he will by whiteness, no man can deny that in its profoundest idealized significance it calls up a
peculiar apparition of the soul.
But though without dissent this point be fixed, how is mortal man to account for it? To analyze it, would seem impossible. (Moby Dick, p. 188)

Thus when Crane writes of the "livid hieroglyph", he demonstrates, and thematically introduces, the unanalyzable nature of certain experiences. Melville defined the necessary approach to such experience when he insisted that "without imagination no man can follow another into these hells" (Moby Dick, p. 189). The extremes of contrasting values contained in the whiteness of Melville's whale demonstrated, for Crane, an outlook that was compelled to go beyond logic and its ordering of the levels of spirit and matter in a literature of allegorical experience towards a new and deeper "dynamics of metaphor":

... why, as we have seen, it is at once the most meaning symbol of spiritual things, nay, the very veil of the Christian's Deity; and yet should be as it is, the intensifying agent in things the most appalling to mankind. (Moby Dick, p. 192)

Crane's "frosted" vision is true to the beauty and terror that Melville recognized in Moby Dick. The calm of a new consciousness is really the eye of a storm:

Then in the circuit calm of one vast coil,
Its lashings charmed and malice reconciled,
Frosted eyes there were that lifted altars;
And silent answers crept across the stars.

In spite of his tendency to break away from such an outlook and to return to the more optimistic and untroubled hieroglyph-hunting of the Romantics, Crane's critical and creative response to Melville's vision, especially in "Voyages" and The Bridge, is a testimonial to the major scope of his art. These two poems, concluding with "Belle
Isle" and "Atlantis", do find a haven after the voyage. Crane is determined to follow Whitman to the point beyond all crises, "the voyage done". Melville does not accept such a conclusive outlook: "Yes, the world's a ship on its passage out, and not a voyage complete ... " (Moby Dick, p. 39). Unlike Whitman, he denied the inevitability of the eventual creation of a bridge uniting man's two worlds, which accomplishes the "rondure of the world", the re-discovery of Atlantis and the one nation. Nor would he accept Whitman's belief that the body "includes and is the soul". Ishmael defines the difference:

Methings [sic] my body is but the lees of my better being. In fact take my body who will, take it I say, it is not me. (Moby Dick, p. 36)

The universe can hardly be anthropomorphic or anthropocentric. Man had to realize the "intolerableness of all earthly effort" (Moby Dick, p. 58) and discover the reality behind the "pasteboard masks", Ahab's term for "all visible objects". The voyage to discovery was never to be completed in this life:

... that one most perilous and long voyage ended, only begins a second; and a second ended, only begins a third and so on, for ever and for aye. (Moby Dick, p. 58)

Melville did not deny the possibility of a more idealized rendering of the human situation, but it could only be achieved through struggle and through spiritual mastery:

... but man, in the ideal, is so noble and so sparkling, such a grand and glowing creature, that over any ignominious blemish in him all his fellows should run to throw their costliest robes. (Moby Dick, p. 113)

Although Melville believed in the powers of democracy to realize
an ideal condition, the "divine average" outlook of Whitman would not have suited him. The struggle for this realization was constant and God, not man, was "the center and circumference of all democracy" (Moby Dick, p. 113). Thus, while in these works Crane strove to be as faithful to Melville as possible, he came up against the Whitmanian base of his faith. Eventually, certain compromises were necessary.

In "Voyages", the recognition of the cruelty at the bottom of the sea,—especially for the innocents, who must be warned not to "cross nor ever trust beyond" the line which defines the safe regions,—stems from Melville's view of life. Undoubtedly, the sea as "vortex of our grave" is Crane's response to Melville's vortices over which man must "hover". Like Melville, Crane faced what Joseph Warren Beach calls "the dualistic opposition of Atheism and Christian Theism". Beach refers to Crane's struggle to effect a "'mystical synthesis'" as the aim of Crane's work. He sees, however, that Crane is subject to Melville's skepticism:

But Crane was first of all a poet, and he was also a man tragically acquainted with sorrow, with frustration, and with what an Eliot, a Melville, would call Evil.18

Crane's individual, like Ishmael, must endure suffering to make himself "one of that crew" before he can define his essential difference. Only those who can master their craft should be pushing out to the destructive-creative waters. Melville also recognized the need to experience immersion in the universe, as a way to regeneration. Like Crane, he saw that "Love is God of all".19 Crane speaks of love as the redemptive act of human experience, the embrace of the infinite and sacred nature
of the universe that exists through but beyond the flesh:

Infinite consanguinity it bears—
This tendered theme of you that light
Retrieves from sea plains where the sky
Resigns a breast that every wave enthrones;
While ribboned water lanes I wind
Are laved and scattered with no stroke
Wide from your side, whereto this hour
The sea lifts, also, reliquary hands.

Love has a very large role in life as "this world's great redeemer and reformer" (Pierre, p. 57). Both authors realized that it put them in communication with another world as well:

Love's secrets, being mysteries, ever pertain to the transcendent and the infinite; and so they are as airy bridges, by which out further shadows pass over into the regions of the golden mists and exhalations; whence all poetical, lovely thoughts are engendered, and drop into us, as though pearls should drop from rainbows. (Pierre, p. 107)

In Crane's "Voyages", as in Moby Dick, the seascape acts as the correlative of the "mystical modes" (Moby Dick, p. 178) in human experience. Melville had shown Crane the infinite nature of both love and the symbolic sea, since, "in landlessness alone resides the highest truth".

Thus, Crane wrote his "mystical love-poems" as voyages on "this great work of eternity/Of rimless floods, unfettered leewardings". The text for this symbolic outlook was surely Moby Dick, Chapter 23, "The Lee Shore", wherein Melville contrasted the "worm-like" nature of those who would "crawl to land" with the dangerous but unconstrained course of "open independence" found in the sea, away from the "treacherous, slavish shore" (Moby Dick, p. 105). Beach finds the source for the word "leewarding" in "one of Captain Ahab's lyrical monologues". Certainly, any source other than Ahab, the "grand, ungodly, godlike
man" (Moby Dick, p. 79) who was obsessed by the whale and the "changelessness of the ocean", would have been less than suitable for Crane's poem.

Crane also found in Melville a noble acceptance of pain as the best and most heroic way for man to endure his lot. More than once in the course of the novel, Pierre, Melville states that pain is essential to man's understanding of the profounder aspects of his life:

For ever is it seen, that sincere souls in suffering, then most ponder upon final causes. The heart stirred to its depths, finds correlative sympathy in the head, which likewise is profoundly moved. Before miserable men, when intellectual, all the ages of the world pass as in a manacled procession, and all their original links rattle in the mournful mystery. (Pierre, p. 138)

Thus the "gloom" and the "light" are inseparable:

But it is through the malice of this earthly air, that only by being guilty of Folly does mortal man in many cases arrive at the perception of sense. (Pierre, p. 196)

Crane also insists upon the inevitability of pain and fragmentation. The "merciless white blade" of the waters creates a division as well as the realization that the loss of love arises from the dependence of immortality on mortality:

Whose counted smile of hours and days, suppose
I know as spectrum of the sea and pledge
Vastly now parting gulf on gulf of wings
Whose circles bridge, I know, (from palms to the severe Chilled albatross's white immutability)
No stream of greater love advancing now
Than, singing, this mortality alone
Through clay aflow immortally to you.

But while he believes in the inevitability of the "tidal wedge", Crane cannot follow Melville into the severely stoical seas, without eventual harbour or retreat:
For it is only the miraculous vanity of man which ever persuades him, that even for the most richly gifted mind, there ever arrives an earthly period where it can truly say to itself, I have come to the Ultimate of Human Speculative Knowledge; hereafter, at this present point I will abide. Sudden onsets of new truth will assail him, and overturn him as the Tartars did China; for there is no China Wall that man can build in his soul, which shall permanently stay the irruptions of those barbarous hordes which Truth ever nourishes in the loins of her frozen, yet teeming North; so that the Empire of Human Knowledge can never be lasting in any one dynasty, since Truth still gives new Emperors to the earth. (Pierre, p. 197)

Thus Crane's poem locates a place of rest where he can secure his ship:

The imaged Word, it is, that holds
Hushed willows anchored in its glow.

Even here he is not so far from agreeing with Melville's vision, since the secure abode is not an earthly one, but what Lewis calls "a more permanent kind of gratification in a vision of transcendent beauty or of God or paradise". However, he must find the peace of a place which transcends doubts and examinations. Melville, on the other hand, must continue to ask questions: "Ah, if man were wholly made in heaven, why catch we hell-glimpses?" (Pierre, p. 135). His vision can never be at rest in anything more than the troubled contradiction of a momentary grasp of infinity:

Both ambidexter and quadruple-armed is that man, who in a day-labourer's body, possesses a day-laboring soul. Yet let not such an one be over-confident. Our God is a jealous God; He wills not that any man should permanently possess the least shadow of His own self-sufficient attributes. (Pierre, p. 297)

Crane fought off such recognition, and, when it finally won out, he did not have the strength to follow it through in his poetry. In spite of great moments, he became less a Melville, more a Pierre. In "Voyages", 
however, he achieved the magnitude of vision equal to the grandiloquence of the poem's phrasings, because he had admitted to the reality of pain implicit in love's transmemberment.

III. Melville and The Bridge: "Cutty Sark" and "Atlantis"

Melville's role in The Bridge is a considerable and extensive one. His figure and his influence make their most significant appearances in "Cutty Sark" and in "Atlantis". He is present at other points throughout the poem, however. There is a definite Melvillian tone directly reminiscent of Moby Dick in "Ave Maria". It is found especially in Crane's presentation of Columbus' voyage as a grand pursuit of mystery. Melville's voice is heard in the assertion of God's providential presence and man's smallness without it. It is also evident in Columbus' Ishmael-like feeling of "exile in her [i.e., Genoa's] streets" before the discovery of greatness in the world of "the waves/ Series on series infinite". Like Melville, Crane sees the sea as a world separated from the dualism of man's usual existence:

For here between two worlds, another, harsh,

This third, of water, tests the word;

Melville is also present in "Cape Hatteras". Here Crane compares the Dirigible to Melville's whale as a dweller of another infinite sea, the spatial one:

While Cetus-like, 0 thou Dirigible, enormous Lounger
Of pendulous auroral beaches,—
...--Hast splintered space!

Melville saw the whale as a symbol of "a peculiar apparition of the
soul" (Moby Dick, p. 188), experienced especially by the American man. Such a man is troubled by the "subtile acid" (Pierre, p. 29) of democratic aspirations. He is involved in those yearnings in a way that could lead to an Ahab-like destructive monomania. Evidence for the particularly American nature of the experience rests in the statement made in Moby Dick that "there are plenty of whalenmen, especially among those whaling nations not sailing under the American flag, who have never hostilely encountered the Sperm Whale" (Moby Dick, p. 176).

Crane attempted to continue the definition of a "mystical" encounter as an American one. He also wanted to find new symbols for it, as in the Dirigible, which had a similarity in appearance to the original mighty whale. His failure stems from his often hysterical attempt to give life and metaphysical purpose to a mechanical world without, initially, establishing a firm sense of the greatness of such ventures in themselves. The image is as ponderous, calculated and pedantic as the language which phrases it. It is tasteless Melvillian rhetoric, swollen, yet torpid and sluggish. The spaceship is fated to sink, like a bloated whale, beneath the weight of such a conception.

Unlike Poe, Dickinson and Whitman, Melville makes no actual appearance in The Bridge under his own name. The allusions to him and to his work in "Cutty Sark" and "Atlantis" are focused through Crane's interpretative control. The motive for this management of the Melvillian material must be based on two particular reasons. The first one is obvious. Melville is such a complex writer, such a master of ambiguity, that any attempt to project his poetic role must be, by
definition, restrictive. The second reason, not so apparent as the first, must be based on Crane's realization of the need to dilute Melville's strength of vision to make it fit his own central thesis. In order to be able to bring Whitman and Melville together in "Atlan­tis", some definite editing was necessary. Because the implicit di­rection that Crane so desperately pursued in The Bridge rested on the fundamentals of a "mystical" vision of unity, it was Melville who had to submit to interpretative undermining.

In "Cutty Sark", the epigraphic quote from Melville's "The Temeraire" becomes weakened by the sentiment of nostalgia. Whatever reaction Melville has to the disappearance of an era, he maintains a masculine stoicism, a gloom without petty melancholy:

'The gloomy hills, in armor grim,
Like clouds o'er moors have met,
And prove that oak, and iron, and men
Are tough in fibre yet.

But Splendors wane. The sea-fight yields
No front of old display;
The garniture, emblazonment,
And heraldry all decay'.

These are the words that Melville wrote before coming to the concluding lines of his poem that Crane uses to introduce "Cutty Sark". Melville recognizes that "Cutty Sark", a world of strength ("tough", "fibre") and of nobility of soul ("splendors", "display", "heraldry"), is passing. If the poem represents the thoughts of "an Englishman of the Old Order", to see his conclusive statement as a sentimental bemoaning is too sim­plistic:

'0, the navies old and oaken,
0, the Temeraire no more!'
These are the words of a man, who is, like the ship, "brave and rare", and who sees that the decline of this way of life is the loss of a "Titan" world.

Crane's sailor, the narrative figure in "Cutty Sark", remembers the great ways of the past, but the memories are frequently distorted by his boozy vision. He still has his noble reminiscences which he shares with the speaker:

Murmurs of Leviathan he spoke, and rum was Plato in our heads . . .

The comradeship among men, the belief in Democracy, the memories of struggles with "that damned white Arctic", which suggests the struggle of Ahab with the Whale, are echoes of the *Moby Dick* world. Crane's poem also echoes the distrust of the constricting land-dwelling existence in the sailor's words: "No--I can't live on land--!" Melville was the one who taught Crane that "better is it to perish in that howling infinite, than be ingloriously dashed upon the lee, even if that were safety!" (*Moby Dick*, p. 105). Unlike Ahab, however, Crane's sailor lacks the strength of divine madness, which has been debilitated by alcohol and by nostalgia. He has survived beyond his time, and is now only a local "character" at the bar. He does have some of his greatness still. The confusion of his ships and the weaving of his dreams of the "Stamboul" and "Atlantis" roses are matched, however, by the confusion in his mind and the weaving of his body in his drunken state. The latter is suggested by his "shark tooth" which "swung on his chain":

'It's S.S. Ala--Antwerp--now remember kid to put me out at three she sails on time. I'm not much good at time any more keep weakeyed watches sometimes snooze--' his bony hands got to beating time . . . 'A whaler once-- I ought to keep time and get over it--I'm a Democrat--I know what time it is--No I dont want to know what time it is--that damned white Arctic killed my time . . .'  

The fallenness of Crane's sailor is not responsible to the poem's inferiority to Melville's vision. Its failure arises from Crane's attempt to romanticize this state so that its sadness and ambiguous nobility are lost in the nostalgic dreaming of the "I". The sentimental self-indulgence in this portrait of the sailor emasculates the Melvillian force the passage should have had. Thus, "Cutty Sark" ends with a private Whitmanian list of "clipper dreams" and the names of the ships that fed them. Each of these dreams, which recalls a long-departed world of magic, myth and nobility, can only continue to exist in the reverie of the poet's imagination. With "Cutty Sark", the problems of Crane's poem begin to define themselves as aspects of a major weakness—the retreat to the solipsistic poetic self in the midst of a celebration of a universal and absolute purpose. Obviously this purpose broke down, and Crane was henceforth obliged to proceed on a salvaging mission. If the "I" is really meeting "his drowned alter ego" in his confrontation with the mariner, he forgets to respect the latter's role as the one "whom he associates with annihilation".  

Although intoxication provided Crane with "one of the most reliable routes to the mystical experience", in this instance the blurriness of the inebriated state provides only self-delusion and self-indulgence.
Although Crane was reading *White Jacket* during his composition of the "Cutty Sark" section of the poem, he was certainly not responding to Melville's work in any but the most superficial of ways. Thus, he called the book "delightful" (*Letters*, p. 235) and recognized it only as a disquisition on a way of life now lost. To read the novel in this way is certainly a discredit to its complexity. William Plomer rejects such a reading as simplistic:

> If *White Jacket* were only a 'documentary' with a reforming purpose, it would be a wonderful book, but less wonderful than it is. In fact it is an amazing gallery of characters. 28

Even more significant, *White Jacket* is Melville's trying-out of the symbological approach to fiction explored the following year in his *Moby Dick*. The Jesus-like role of Jack Chase, suggested not only by his initials, but by his oracular nature, his gentlemanly appearance, and his role as "father image", is of significance here. Plomer reminds Melville's readers that "as dedicatee he [i.e., Chase] is found presiding, years later, over the tremendous legend of Billy Budd, where another form of the manliest beauty falls a sacrifice to the appalling machinery of destiny—and of naval discipline". 29

Certainly, if Crane had been reading the novel closely, he would have recognized the symbolic importance of *White Jacket* 's baptism, when he rejects the deathly security of his "very-white" (*White Jacket*, p. 17) identity for the freedom and challenge of an open existence. At the point of writing "Cutty Sark", however, Crane was unaware of this challenge. In fact, he strove to preserve his self-deception by re-
treated to the womb of nostalgia, symbolized by "sweet opium and tea".

"Atlantis", Crane's summing up of the dramatic action of The Bridge, is an ecstatic climax that links all the themes that have been previously evoked. The bridge, the image of this unity, is completed "through the bound cable strands". This "symphonic" feat is realized over and over again in the images of fusion and infinite variety—"cycloramic crest", "Choir", "multitudinous verb", "synergy of waters", "myriad syllables", "Psalm of Cathay", and "white, pervasive Paradigm".

Melville plays a definite part in the realization of this "intrinsic Myth". The phrase, "white, pervasive Paradigm" could, in fact, be an accurate definition of what Moby Dick really encompasses. Possibly because "Atlantis" was created so early in Crane's work on The Bridge, it has a strength of conviction that gives it a peculiar power of its own. Crane, characteristically, found the culminating vision before he really knew the power and scope of his own ability to see. Because he had such a desperate need to build a poetic structure on a foundation of faith in man's infinite reach, he discovered the end result of his voyage before he knew either the course he would take or the perils he would meet along the way. While Crane was working out the charts for this journey, many of its phases that had been overlooked began to haunt him and to distort the "tall Vision-of-the-Voyage".

Thus, the leap in logic between "The Tunnel" and "Atlantis" lacks inner necessity or purpose. In itself, however, "Atlantis" has a genuine honesty based on its own infinite self-confidence. It is the kind of poetry Crane knew so much about and wanted so much to write. Further-
more, it contains a surprisingly accurate and consistent synthesis of previously stated themes and images. This synthetic aspect of "Atlantis" can be studied, from at least one major point of view, by examining how Crane brings Melville into close company with Whitman in a climactic lyric.

Dembo's commentary on "Atlantis" is the only critical statement that suggests the significance of Melville in Crane's synthesis of vision:

Crane might well have chosen Herman Melville as the guiding spirit of 'Atlantis'. For as he was characterized in Crane's elegy ('At Melville's Tomb'), Melville had the wide spindrift gaze toward paradise that was answered in the vortex of the grave . . . . Emerging from the one vast coil of the Tunnel, the poet with frosted eyes, eyes that have gazed through Arctic emptiness, lifts the altar of the Bridge, which reconciles the malice of the sea (destruction and chaos) and reveals the 'loft of vision, palladium helm of stars'.

Certainly Melville was the only one of his masters who could show Crane the ambiguous nature of experience, namely the interdependence of the terrors of annihilation and the joys of renewal. If Melville, alone, did not direct Crane to the "Ever-presence, beyond time", he certainly did not deny the existence of such a force. The balance of contraries in the concluding lines of the lyric may suggest Blake more than Melville. They do, however, preserve Melville's dynamic tension between the forces of the interior and exterior worlds:

Is it Cathay
Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring
The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . . ?

Crane's Atlantean vision also depends on Melville for much of its imagery, phrasing and maturity of conception. The slow, sonorous and
processional nature of much of this lyric originates from the Melvillian diction Crane discovered in *Moby Dick* and in the poetry. Melville's main source was Shakespeare. He attempted to preserve the somnolence and grandiloquence of the great master in his highly rhetorical, introspective prose. At times, however, his composition becomes unwieldy, excessively ponderous, or defeats the verisimilitude of scenic development and of characterization. In *Pierre*, Melville writes thus of Love:

> Oh, praised by the beauty of this earth, the beauty, and the bloom, and the mirthfulness thereof! We lived before, and shall live again; and as we hope for a fairer world than this to come; so we came from one less fine. From each successive world, the demon Principle is more and more dislodged; he is the accursed clog from chaos, and thither, by every new translation, we drive him further and further back again. Hosannahs to this world! so beautiful itself, and the vestibule to more. Out of some past Egypt, we have come to this new Canaan; and from this new Canaan, we press on to some Cir-cassia. Though still the villains, Want and Woe, followed us out of Egypt, and now beg in Canaan's streets; yet Cir-cassia's gates shall not admit them; they, with their sire, the demon Principle, must back to chaos, whence they came. (*Pierre*, pp. 55-56)

Such is an example of the weightiness of the rhetoric to which Melville frequently resorts for his poetic effect. In itself, the passage has beauty and magnificence in phrasing and is in tune with its subject. In the novel, however, it is followed by pages of more of the same. Such ornate prose can be a definite hinderance to the verisimilitude and the dramatic movement of a novel, especially if its original purpose is overlooked or forgotten. At this point, these stylisms become indulged in largely for their own sake.

In poetry, however, this ornate style can be a valuable vehicle
in directing the vision and, at the same time, in revealing both meta-
physical dimensions and grand emotional overtones. Crane capitalizes
on the power of Melvillian rhetoric by rendering "Atlantis" the moment
of the soul's cohesion and the discovery of the "arc synoptic" within:

And through that cordage, threading with its call
One arc synoptic of all tides below--
Their labyrinthine mouths of history
Pouring reply as though all ships of sea
Complighted in one vibrant breath made cry,--
'Make thy love sure--to weave whose songs we ply!'
--From black embankments, moveless soundings hailed,
So seven oceans answer from their dream.

Crane was also guilty of using this polysyllabic, polychromatic phrasing,
full of majestic latinate diction, to simulate poetic afflatus. In
such instances, his mishandling of Melvillian phrasing leads him to
some of the worst kinds of self-parody. Within this poem, however, the
marriage of tenor and vehicle is definitely a happy one.

Naturally, the mature "tensely spare" and masculine "Vision-of-
the-Voyage" also owes much to Melville. The realization of this vision
comes only to those strong enough in spirit to recognize it in the
"gulfs unfolding, terrible of dreams". Because it is frightening in
its magnificence, cowards or those unexperienced with such metaphysical
sea-travel will never recognize its splendor. Melville was one who,
for Crane, had this virility. Dembo's comment on Crane's use of the
Jason-figure is accurate as far as it goes. "Crane's choice of Jason
as guiding spirit was no less logical since Jason, Columbus and Melville
are only masks of the poet-voyager". Such an observation should have
included Whitman, however, since his mastery of his own "multitudes"
led him to a share in the "multitudinous Verb". Dembo could have also referred to the brave and masculine strength of the noble mythic soul that sought out the Golden Fleece, and emphasized the repetition of his archetypical nature and role in the poets that Crane recognized as his fathers, namely Whitman and Melville:

And you aloft there--Jason! hesting Shout!
Still wrapping harness to the swarming air!
Silvery the rushing wake, surpassing call,
Beams yelling Aeolus! splintered in the straits!

The repetition of the word "white" ("white tempest", "white, pervasive Paradigm", "white seizure", "white choiring wings", "white escarpment", "whitest Flower") recalls Moby Dick once more, and the "cosmic role he plays" (Letters, p. 404). The discovery of the lost continent that reunites the world, and symbolically rejoins the divided worlds of the empirical and mystical selves, is also envisioned in Melville's terms of the great sea-voyage. Perhaps the most significant of all the Melvillian aspects of the lyric is the one that repeats Ahab's notion of the empirical world as a series of "pasteboard masks" that man must look beyond to discover the "unknown but still reasoning thing" (Moby Dick, p. 161) behind them:

Sheerly the eyes, like seagulls strung 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 traveller reads
But who, through smoking pyres of love and death,
Searches the timeless laugh of mythic spears.

In this passage, Crane reveals his understanding of the importance of vision for man's salvation. Unlike Melville, he is positive that the
power of love will render this grand vision the "Answer of all". The whiteness holds fewer ambiguous possibilities for him than for his visionary guide:

Though neither knows where lie the nameless things of which the mystic sign gives forth such hints; yet with me, ... somewhere those things must exist.

Though in many of its aspects this visible world seems formed in love, the invisible spheres were formed in fright. (Moby Dick, pp. 191-192)

Crane's outlook, however, is less simplistic than it might have been without the influence of such a guide. The words suggesting pain in the passage quoted above have not been noticed enough by Crane's critics. "Stung", "biting way", "blade on tendon blade" suggest that he is aware of the suffering and struggles that must be endured to attain the "timeless laugh". The way is not one of simple "flight", but must pass "through smoking pyres of love and death". The need for continual search and the examination of time for the signs of timelessness repeat a profound position of Melvillian wisdom. If Crane could not keep this maturity of outlook alive in himself, but retreated constantly to the incantatory phrases of hypnotic poetry and the easy charm of Whitmanian idealism, he at least managed to respond to it here with some overtones of Melvillian profundity. It is realized not only in the unity of "canticle and chemistry", "secular light" and "intrinsic Myth", or in the fusion of "steeled Cognizance", but in the "sound of doom" and in the recognition of the Myth's relation to its "fell unshadow", which is, for Crane, "death's utter wound".

IV. Melville and the Post-Bridge-Writings

In the poems written after The Bridge, Melville's influence was
never as strong as it might have been. Crane explored the tropics and the romance of the tropical setting in his *Key West* manuscript, but the vision was generally more fragmented and more personal than in his earlier poetry. If these works reflect any of Melville at all, the early romantic accounts of sea-travel, *Typee* and *Omoo*, which evoke the enchantment of the exotic world of tropical South-sea islands, are the ones mirrored here rather than the maturer symbolic novels with their grand philosophic scope of vision. The sea as a place of struggle and contest, particularly for the realization of the internal conflict, is abandoned for the "undersea", the unconscious and escapist world of the inspired *isolato* who must remain in this retreat to preserve his visionary wholeness:

Leave us, you idols of Futurity--alone,  
Here where we finger moidores of spent grace  
And ponder the bright stains that starred this Throne.

The world envisioned in such poetry is a "banished" one which can only survive if it remains hidden and submerged. The blindness here is less like that of King Lear, who is referred to in the epigraphic quote to "The Merman", than it is like that of the moth in Crane's first poem. Instead of battling to re-attain a cosmic vision, the subject of this poem prefers to retreat to Eliot's Prufrock-like world of the mermaids, who inhabit the passive and precarious fantasy world of those who cannot bear to live in the "real" one:

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

Crane's first major choice in *Key West* was to be smothered by a
"mystical" unity larger than the self or to retreat to the past, the primitive, the irrational. His second choice involves a sterile rejection of the soft, sensuous world for a hard and impersonal one. This pursuit of the "azured height" of the "forever fruitless" is envisioned in "Royal Palm", in the world of "Island Quarry" which is "against mankind", and in the "Old Song" where the "thorn" endures to "weather all loneliness". The Spartan outlook which these poems appear to advocate in their move towards a "state of mystical quiescence" is only another version of escape, however. The choice of a sternness, a "frugal noon", a life "out of the valley", abandons sex and death not simply because it is beyond them but because these life-forces have been frightening and disillusioning. Transcendence is, thus, an act of fear and disgust. Crane's anti-humanism originates in his refusal to be grouped with mankind ("Nor claim me, either, by Adam's spine—nor rib"). Like Robinson Jeffers, he indulges in self-pitying misanthropy:

Because these millions reap a dead conclusion
Need I presume the same fruit of my bone
As draws them towards a doubly mocked confusion
Of apish nightmare into steel-strung stone?

Crane has cancelled his membership in "that crew" called the human race. He has returned to step one in Ishmael's voyage, satisfied with living in the "November of the soul". Melville would never have rejected America ("these millions") in order to be able to salve his own conscience. Crane tried to believe that there was a magnanimous and heroic force behind such rejection, which involved an exiled wandering
in a world where "there is no breath of friends and no more shore". This world is, however, a pariah-hood, the retreat of an equally frugal and cowardly heart and soul. Because Melville would never "strike a single march/To heaven or hades" his work remained ambiguous and tortured. Yet he preserved something that Crane eventually abandoned along the way—the strength and courage of the bravest beings, those who choose to battle Eternity without surrender or reconcilement.

V. Conclusion

Crane's response to the works of Poe, Dickinson and Melville indicates that he integrated the outlook of these three "symbolists" as a counter-vision to Transcendentalism. Their attempts to work out the division between their "empirical" and "mystical" natures were in sympathy with his view, since he was also tortured by ambiguities and moments of skepticism, particularly as a poet of a century that was low on faith. Crane had difficulties remaining in complete sympathy with their work, however, since it represented to him a negative outlook which could undermine his need for a positive direction. These authors accepted the awareness of the evil and limiting side of life as a positive element in human knowledge. An attempt to live without this knowledge would lead to self-delusion. Crane, on the other hand, was vulnerable to such a delusion since he was prepared to give up anything to preserve his poetic afflatus.
References Chapter 10

1 Herman Melville, Moby Dick, or The Whale (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 6. Subsequent references to this novel will be documented internally and will be to this edition.

2 Horton, p. 204.

3 Herman Melville, White Jacket or The World in a Man-of-War (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1956), pp. 138-139. Subsequent references to this novel will be documented internally and will be to this edition.

4 Quoted in Matthiessen, p. 406.

5 Quoted in Matthiessen, p. 158.

6 Bloomfield, p. 331.

7 Lewis, p. 9.

8 Horton, p. 87.


10 Unterecker, p. 188.

11 Ibid.


13 Ibid., p. 235.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid., p. 237.

16 Ibid., p. 236.

17 Joseph Warren Beach, "Hart Crane and Moby Dick", Western Review XX (Spring 1956), 186.
18. Ibid.


21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 184.

23. Lewis, p. 151.


26. Ibid.

27. Ibid., p. 91.


29. Ibid., ix.


31. Ibid.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

I am only interested in adding what seems to me something really new to what has been written. Unless one has some new, intensely personal viewpoint to record, say on the eternal feeling of love, and the suitable personal idiom to employ in the act, I say, why write about it? Nine chances out of ten, if you know where in the past to look, you will find words already written in the more-or-less exact tongue of your soul. And the complaint to be made against nine out of ten poets is just this,—that you are apt to find their sentiments much better expressed four hundred years past. (Letters, p. 67)

Crane's poetry is the work of a man who remained constantly dedicated to his objective of adding "something really new" to the body of literature. Throughout his life, he was continually aware of the need to build on to the tradition established by those poets who went before him. For Crane, the continuance of this poetic tradition was to be of value not only to poets, however. Like any "real work of art", poetry was "something that maybe can't be sold or used to help sell anything else, but that is simply a communication between man and man, a bond of understanding and human enlightenment" (Letters, p. 170). Consequently, his decision to extend the poetic tradition into the twentieth century was not the act of a closed-minded individual writing in isolation, but the task of every poet who believed in his work as "an act of faith besides being a communication" (Letters, p. 261).

If the ten preceeding chapters could be reduced to a simple statement, it would read as follows: Crane's poetry and poetic, with its struggle to retain the "empirical" base of experience and yet to project
a "mystical" synergy, is a direct outgrowth of his response to the work of his nineteenth-century predecessors. His major poems, "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen", "Voyages", and The Bridge, collectively form the most significant effort of any twentieth century poet to directly acknowledge and renew the heritage of his poetic ancestors. Blake, Coleridge, Whitman, Melville, Poe, and Dickinson have a distinctive presence in The Bridge. Most of them not only appear under their own names, but also comprise the "visionary company" which provided Crane with the inspiration to achieve his poetry of unified vision.

The renewal which Crane attempted to establish in his work was precarious, however, because of his deep conflicts concerning his own identity. In 1930, having finished The Bridge, Crane sensed the poem's failure to achieve a synthetic vision. At this time, he became increasingly critical of those who attempted to look for the extra-literary in art:

> Taggard, like Winters, isn't looking for poetry any more. Like Munson, they are both in pursuit of some cure-all. Poetry as poetry (and I don't mean merely decorative verse) isn't worth a second reading any more.  
> *(Letters, p. 353)*

In the same breath, however, he suggested that he was in some way restricted by his own private poetic vision which would not permit him to "sum up the universe in one impressive pellet". Consequently, he was obliged to admit defeat:

> I admit that I don't answer the requirements. My vision of poetry is too personal to 'answer the call'.  
> *(Letters, p. 353)*

The inconsistency of this outlook--mainly whether the poet should be
writing poetry qua poetry or whether he should create a statement that would act as a communication and a synthesis of his culture's vision—was a needless one. The personal and the impersonal need not be at odds any more than the "mystical" and "empirical" elements in human nature. The Romantic poets had proved this point adequately.

Because of his own emotional problems, however, and above all because of the antipathy of his age to poetic vision, Crane found a disparity between his ambitions and his achievement to be too great to bear. He therefore retreated into solipsism.

Even as an adolescent, Crane believed that the world of art had a special meaning for him as the source of the "expression and form" (Letters, p. 9) in his life. In fact, life and art became impossibly confused for him. In his 1917 letter to his father, his search for "artistic, and psychic balance" (Letters, p. 5) was expressed in the language of rationality and manliness. Unfortunately, after having set ambitious objectives for himself, and after creating some of the most promising poetry of the 1920's in America, Crane finally suffered defeat, both in his life and in his art.

Much of this failure was based on Crane's inability to recognize the fact that the writers on whom he grounded his work, most ostensibly the Romantics and Transcendentalists, were careful to protect their art from developing into an absolute "mystical" faith in language as Deity. While these writers insisted on the special nature of their roles as seers and prophets, they maintained a balance in their art by identifying themselves with mankind. Furthermore, they concentrated on the
limitedations of language while at the same time trying to transcend them. These writers did not forget that their work originated from "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM".¹

Crane's art, on the other hand, was never secure in its balance, in spite of his deep urge to achieve such a stability. The eventual problems that Crane had in The Bridge were based on a contradiction between his private symbols and what he called the "symbols of reality" (Letters, p. 261). The difficulties Crane had with the "empirical" side of his nature were based largely on his own confusions. This predecessors understood the theory of Locke and his followers. They reacted against such an outlook not by refusing it any authority, but by looking beyond it. Crane lacked any such systematic understanding of the philosophy of the "empirical". He was also without any substantial world order which would lend support to his art. Instead, he acknowledged the positive existence of a sense-based world and spoke of its reality as the "!materials!" of his poetic conception, at the same time as this reality became increasingly difficult for him to harmonize with his poetic ambitions.

Crane's attempt to interrelate the works of the nineteenth century poets into one ancestral line, or to make these poets fit into roles which he drew up for them, showed the limitations of his comprehension of their achievements. He was a most penetrating reader of poetry, who could analyze with accuracy and imitate or absorb with considerable effectiveness. Nevertheless, he frequently denied important distinctions
between Romanticism and Transcendentalism, or between writers like Whitman and Melville, because he wanted to find their objectives sympathetic to his own and because he was dependent on the unified authority of their "faith" to save him from defeat.

Any search for the reasons for Crane's confusions and his eventual failure to achieve integrated vision must consider his personal handicaps: his immature nervous life, and his poorly structured education. The problems Crane faced would not have been so great if he had had more of the psychic balance for which he yearned and had understood what the "empirical" outlook really represented as an intellectual conception, along with the inherent dangers of anti-empiricism. These disadvantages can be over-stressed, however, because of the tendency among Crane's readers and critics to mythicize his life. Furthermore, Crane's own willingness to make his career and his letters a confession of private ecstacies and depressions, at times indulged in for sympathy, must be taken into account here. Certainly if these factors were such all-controlling features in his art, he could never have written his profound love lyrics or undertaken his major task of writing a twentieth century Romantic "epic" in *The Bridge*.

Yvor Winters comes close to diagnosing the reason for the failure of Crane's quest by attacking the Romanticism in his poetry, the "doctrine" which the critic finds directly responsible for causing the poet's suicide:

The doctrine of Emerson and Whitman, if really put into practice, should naturally lead to suicide: in the first
place, if the impulses are indulged systematically and passionately, they can lead only to madness; in the second place, death, according to the doctrine, is not only a release from suffering but is also and inevitably the way to beatitude. . . . During the last year and a half of Crane's life, to judge from the accounts of those who were with him in Mexico, he must have been insane or drunk or both almost without interruption; but before this time he must have contemplated the possibilities of suicide. 2

This approach to evaluating Crane's work may seem highly judgemental and severely condemnatory. Its observations, nonetheless, when applied to Crane's uneven poetic career, cannot be overlooked. Instead of working towards a moral and rational balance in his work, Crane felt himself encouraged to forget such objectives and to indulge in a naively optimistic trust in his own emotions. An anti-Romantic approach such as Winters' again fails, however, to adequately account for the success of some of Crane's masterful lyrics which are rendered with the balance of formal expression.

Although Romantic literature, and particularly Crane's early fascination with fin de siècle, contributed to the anti-empirical outlook which upset the balance of his art, the fault lies really with the poet, not with the poetic outlook which he accepted and followed. Crane, in fact, wrote poems that definitely proved that his fellow-poets were wrong when they denied the possibility of the continued authority of Romantic faith. However, he finally asked this faith to do something which could only upset its inner balance,—namely to deny the very meaning of human experience by denying the reality of evil and of imperfection. Thus, he himself begged to be returned to the magic, pre-rational past: "Lie to us--dance us back to the tribal morn".
After beginning optimistically with the assertion of a balance, and after aspiring to be the "Pindar for the dawn of the machine age" (Letters, p. 129), Crane ultimately felt that all "empirical" advancement only proved itself inimical to poetic pursuits. The Bridge failed to unite the "empirical" world and the "mystical" one. Consequently, Crane returned to the personal and dropped his synthetic outlook altogether.

The stories of Crane's loss of his identity are now legion. Katharine Anne Porter records this collapse in her reminiscence of Crane's period in France:

He talked about Baudelaire and Marlowe, and Whitman and Melville and Blake—all the consoling examples he could call to mind of artists who had lived excessively in one way or another. Later, drunk, he would weep and shout, shaking his fist, 'I am Baudelaire, I am Whitman, I am Christopher Marlowe, I am Christ' but never once did I hear him say he was Hart Crane . . .

Nevertheless, a Hart Crane did exist—even in the midst of all this bewilderment and pain. The story of his gradual collapse is one which we return to again and again because it so clearly delineates what Crane himself called the "tragic quandry (or agon) of the modern world" (Letters, p. 238). Crane diagnosed this quandry as one which "derives from the paradoxes that an inadequate system of rationality forces on the living consciousness". His attempt to transcend this feeling of inadequacy in his poetry led him to write some of the great visionary lyrics of our century. Although Crane may not have found the "image of the 'complete man'" (Letters, p. 298), he did leave us with a problem which we continue to face:
But the question always will remain as to how far the conscience is justified in compromising with the age's demands.  (Letters, p. 298)

Because Crane belonged to this "broken world", at the same time as he wanted to restore it to unity, his conscience suffered more than that of any of his contemporaries. His poetry is the record of that suffering—a record full of intensity even in the midst of its lies. The greatest work Crane committed to paper was based on the authentic recognition of a need to bridge the increasingly antagonistic "mystical" and "empirical" natures which he knew so well. If we look for the real Crane, we can hear him say, "that I am living in the shadow of that bridge" (Letters, p. 181).
References Chapter 11


2. Winters, p. 590.

3. Horton, p. 287.
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