# HART CRANE'S POETICS AND *The Bridge*

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THE BRIDGE AND THE CRITICS

The immediate critical response to the publication of The Bridge discouraged Crane. Although a few reviewers praised the poem unstintingly, Allen Tate and Yvor Winters, men whom Crane counted among his friends and peers, agreed that the poem failed of its epical ambitions.[1] Criticism centered around Crane's use of "the private lyric to write the cultural epic,"[2] his attempt "to put greater pressure of meaning upon a trivial symbol than it would bear."[3] Though individual passages of the poem were praised, the early critics repeatedly objected to the absence of that unity and coherence which they had been taught to expect from the traditional epic. Tate cogently stated the case against Crane's poem: "His pantheism is necessarily a philosophy of sensation without point of view. An epic is a judgement of human action, an implied evaluation of a civilization, a way of life."[4] Similar arguments evoked from Crane a response that drew the battle lines for the criticism of the following twenty-five years:

> Taggard, like Winters, isn't looking for poetry anymore. 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. Therefore--away with Kubla Kahn, out with Marlowe, and to hell with Keats! It's a pity, I think. So many true things have a way of coming out all the better without the strain to sum up the universe in one impressive little pellet. I admit that I don't answer

> the requirements. My vision of poetry
> is too personal to "answer the call."[5]

When Tate's objection and Crane's response are examined, the central point of the disagreement is clear. Tate wanted, as did so many other critics of his day, a poem that would tell a story of such scope and forcefulness as to serve as a rallying point for the entire culture. But Crane knew that "poetry as poetry" was neither doctrinaire nor dogmatic, and could not be accurately appreciated on those bases. Perhaps Crane was at fault in the argument, since he had compared The Bridge to The Aeneid. Still, the early critics took up this epic claim and used it against both the poet and the poem without admitting the possibility of a principle of order other than the traditional epic "point of view." Declaring in 1935 that The Waste Land, The Cantos and The Bridge were the most ambitious poems of his time, R. P. Blackmur pronounced all three failures "in composition, in independent objective existence, and in intelligibility of language."[6] The desideratum of "independent objective existence" recalls Tate's criticism of a "philosophy of sensation without point of view," and suggests a common criterion for the attack on the unity and coherence of Crane's poem.

The nature of the unity and coherence which both critics sought is suggested in Blackmur's disagreement with Crane's comment that poetry is an architectural art. Blackmur retorted that poetry "is a linear art, an art of succession,"[7] thereby implying his own predilection for the linear and sequential development most common to poetry of statement and dramatic movement according to Aristotelian "plot." Compare Blackmur's comment with a more recent

statement on the non-linear mode of presentation in the poetry of Crane's contemporaries:

> The reader who approaches Pound, Eliot, and Joyce alike as exploiters of the cinematic aspects of language will arrive at appreciation more quickly than the one who unconsciously tries to make sense of them by reducing their use of the new media of communication to the abstract linear forms of the book page.[8]

This mental tendency to prefer meaning to value, abstractions to concrete phenomena and images, this mental predilection which Whitehead called "the fallacy of the misplaced concrete," clearly interfered with earlier critical judgments of The Bridge. Tate and Blackmur might have learned from Crane's praise of Whitman to forget about point of view and consider the values of a living poetry dedicated to rendering the "incarnate evidence"[9] rather than the abstract meaning of the imagination's encounter with the world:

> . . . . O, something green,
> Beyond all sesames of science was thy choice
> Wherewith to bind us throbbing with one voice.[10]
> ("Cape Hatteras")

But the early attacks on the unity and coherence of The Bridge seem to have overlooked the possibility of a principle of order other than "point of view," and thus could only praise Crane's poetry for "the distraught but exciting splendour of a great failure."[11]

Several later attempts to discover a principle of unity in the poem have sought to establish parallels between The Bridge and archetypal patterns. Robert J. Andreach declares that "the

poem is a narrative of the fivefold division of the spiritual life"[12] according to the traditional stages of the mystic's progression toward salvation. He divides the poem according to these five steps: awakening, purgative, illuminative, dark night of the soul, and, finally, the unitive. Jerome W. Kloucek, on the other hand, believes that the poem follows the traditional three-stage pattern of the quest, as outlined in Joseph Campbell's The Hero With A Thousand Faces. He divides the poem accordingly, concluding with the third stage in "Atlantis," the unitive stage where the "hero faces the task of expressing his vision in terms of human understanding."[13] Both critics attempt to substitute a study of values for a study of plot, but the values they perceive are too dependent on a system (the mystic experience, the hero's quest) external both to Crane's avowed intentions and to The Bridge itself. They both utilize a "point of view" which of necessity must remain outside the poem itself. But their concern for process and structure is suggestive of the approach more thoroughly applied in the two book-length studies of Crane's poetry.

The most extensive, and in many respects the best, criticism of The Bridge has been given by L. S. Dembo and R. W. B. Lewis.[14] Dembo believes that the argument of the poem is the tragic one of Nietzsche: the tragic artist in himself must unite the Apollonian and Dionysian in order to see "his oneness with the primal source of the universe."[15] Thus the movement of the poem is "beyond tragedy to a knowledge of divinity."[16] The various sections and divisions of the poem, according to Dembo, are not

mere lyrical impulses disconnected from the whole, but rather are united with the central tragic argument in presenting one or more aspects of that larger movement where "resurrection always follows suffering and death."[17] Thus Dembo finds a unity in the poem on the basis of the poem's subject being a process rather than an abstract theme, such as "the greatness of America,"[18] or an external schema, such as the hero's quest. Dembo does not see the process as a simple linear movement from death to resurrection, but as a series of repeated movements according to the same process, culminating in the final resurrection of "Atlantis." Most important of all is Dembo's recognition of the act of creation going on in The Bridge. "It seems to me that, whatever his declared intentions, Crane's real purpose in writing The Bridge was to create an environment in which the poet was able to transcend the impotent-clown image that was his only face in a nontragic, nonheroic world. . ."[19] (italics mine). This notion of the poem as an act of creation, subordinate in Dembo's argument to the tragic nature of the process, seems to me really central in the poem. It speaks to the arguments that The Bridge is disjointed, unintelligible and disunified by suggesting an intrinsic process[20] as the principle of order in the poem.

R. W. B. Lewis ignores Dembo's concern with the Nietzschean aspects of the poem to develop the notion of The Bridge as process. He declares that the central symbol, the bridge, is a "myth. . . in the sense of revelation,"[21] and that "the story, such as it is, consists in the poet's journeying effort to arrive at such a revelation, and by means of it to see all of contemporary America,

and its intractable forces, as the bridge had been seen in 'Proem'."[22] He further notes that the movement of the poem is one of vision seen, lost momentarily, and finally recovered, and that a process of permeation of the external world by the poet's vision is occurring throughout the poem. There is not, according to Lewis, a beginning, middle and end in the Aristotelian sense, but rather an "epic rhythm,"[23] "an ebb and flow of consciousness and perception and emotion: a recurring rhythmic movement."[24] The middle is not a point on the line of sequential development but instead a series of moments "at which the action takes a series of new but analogous directions,"[25] and the end not the logical conclusion of some argument but a "supreme apocalypse of imagination, the revelation of a universal radiance and harmony"[26] wrought by the poet's own transfiguring imagination. This apocalypse, however, is "never final, nor can it ever be sustained."[27] Lewis argues that the purpose of the poem is to rediscover vision in contemporary America. The process is one of rediscovering this vision in various temporal and spatial locales, always in terms of the poet's own consciousness, with the bridge as symbol of this revelation and of the process of revelation itself. The subject of the poem is not the greatness of America but "hope, and its content a journey toward hope: a hope reconstituted on the ground of the imagination in action."[28] Thus "the plot of <u>The Bridge</u> is the gradual permeation of an entire culture by the power of poetic vision."[29] Lewis argues that the "succession of poetic twists and spirals and diversions"[30] are all unified in their shared allegiance to the myth of the bridge in the poet's

own consciousness. He, with Dembo, recognizes that a process of creation is taking place. He perceives the movement toward the unitive stage of "Atlantis." Finally, he provides an effective and forceful answer to the earlier criticisms of Tate and Winters, comparing the formal procession of the poem to that of music, to architecture, to "the cinematic aspects" of its language.

Neither Dembo nor Lewis, however, really develops any notion of the creative process or values of the imagination in The Bridge. Yet any accurate account of the poem as a "history" of the imagination at work, or what Crane called "an epic of the modern consciousness,"[31] must consider exactly what Crane conceived to be the nature and values of the imagination and its role in the poetic process. Is it only a matter of death preceding resurrection in the Nietzschean cycle, as Dembo would have it? Or does Lewis fully account for the growth of the imagination by noting the recurrent pattern of vision seen, lost, and regained? An examination of the writings of Crane himself, his letters and several extant essays, will help to determine what his poetic purposes were, and how the nature and values of the imagination as he conceived of it contributed to the working out of these purposes in The Bridge, the "incarnate evidence" of the imagination's experience of the world.

## POETIC THEORIES AND PURPOSES

> I attach no intrinsic values
> to what means I use beyond their
> practical service in giving form
> to the living stuff of the imagination. [1]

Crane's avowed poetic purposes, and the structural and stylistic devices used to implement those purposes, find their most elaborate embodiment in _The Bridge_. Indeed, Crane's "continuous and eloquent span"[2] is best assessed within the context of his own poetic intentions, for its very structure depends upon the movement of a fictional poet toward the creation of a poem, and that movement proceeds along lines most explicitly stated in Crane's theory of organic poetry, a poetry of life. Crane's scornful warning to the critic Gorham Munson not to seek "exact factual data (a graphic map of eternity?), ethical morality or moral classifications, etc.,"[3] in his poetry is still pertinent:

> you arbitrarily propose a goal for me
> which I have no idea of nor interest
> in following. Either you find my work
> poetic or not, but if you propose for
> it such ends as _poetry organically escapes_, it seems to me, as Allen Tate
> said, that you as a critic of literature
> are working into a confusion of categories.[4] (italics mine)

This warning against a criticism based on categories which Crane's "poetry organically escapes" is especially applicable to criticism of _The Bridge_, for the poem has as its central action the reiteration of the unitive act of the organic imagination. It is not simply that _The Bridge_ is a poem constructed along lines explicit in

Crane's theory of organic poetry, and hence to some extent necessarily dependent upon the process explained in his poetic theory. Rather, _The Bridge_ is a poem "about" the creation of an organic construct that can embody the truth of the fictional poet's imagination, the creation of a Bridge that is "one arc synoptic" of the organic process within the poem which produced it. The poem, then, not only results from a process of organic creation, it also continually celebrates and re-enacts that process as its proper subject. Thus to propose a goal for, or a critical appreciation of, _The Bridge_ which is based on categories or intentions not inherent in Crane's poetic purposes is to run the risk of a critical "confusion of categories." Neither Crane nor _The Bridge_ intend any more (nor any less) than is implicit in "giving form to the living stuff of the imagination."[5]

To some it may appear that Crane's repudiation of intellectual, reflective knowledge as a valid goal of poetry too severely limits the value of poetry. Crane's response to this objection is an appeal to a higher truth, that of the imagination, which, when embodied in poetry, renders the "actual (physical) representation of the incarnate _evidence_ of the very knowledge, the very wisdom"[6] that is the "genetic basis" of all reflective thought. Thus poetic knowledge, in Crane's opinion, is prior in both time and importance to intellectual, reflective knowledge, as all existential, "incarnate" experience must be prior to reflections on and abstractions from that experience. The "actual (physical) representation of the incarnate _evidence_" of the poem, then, must be the critic's first concern, if he is to

assent to the truth of the dictum that "a poem should not mean, but be" which underlies Crane's insistence on the supremacy of the poetic fiction. The intentions of The Bridge, of course, must be dictated by the poem itself; and no amount of fortuitous parallels between Crane's poetic theory and the poem itself justifies the assumption that the poem can be reduced to an embodiment of a theory best understood in the abstract. However, it is my contention that The Bridge renders the process by which the Bridge, the act of imagination, is achieved, and that this process is in fact based on Crane's poetic theories and purposes. Therefore, an understanding of the poetic theory illuminates both purpose and process in the poem, and is not simply another "confusion of categories."

The poetic theories and purposes explicit in Crane's prose writings, and implicit in his poetry, are not *sui generis*. Indeed, they serve to place him in a tradition of English and American writers, from Wordsworth through Emerson and Whitman. And they firmly link him with his contemporaries Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams. Other critics[7] have traced a rather distinguished lineage for Crane's poetry to place his work in historical perspective, and there is no need here to repeat the process. That The Bridge has important affinities with a tradition of Romantic poetry, with the "genre" of the Romantic "personal epic,"[8] as well as with the French Symbolists, is certain. My concern, however, is not with the historical categories most applicable to The Bridge, but with the more immediate phenomena of Crane's "poetry as poetry." The context of Crane's own state-

ments about poetry and the poetic process, derived from his first-hand experience in writing, is at least as relevant and certainly more immediate in tone than the historical or exclusively theoretical. It is in an attempt to convey Crane's attitude toward the living values of his poetry, as well as to elucidate a poetic process that has direct relevance to his most ambitious creation, that this discussion of his poetics proceeds.

There are three major aspects of Crane's poetic theory which bear on the nature and direction of the poetry he wrote: the process by which a poem is created, the kind of poem resulting from this process, and the function of the poem in relation to the reader. The creative process is, according to Crane, an organic one in which the poet submits to external sensations, assimilates and reorganizes them, then represents to the world the "incarnate evidence" of this experience embodied in a poem. The process is organic rather than mechanical because it involves a real grafting of poet and experience rather than a mere shifting of categories in the reflective mind. It is a vitalizing process involving the resurrection of inanimate elements within the "living stuff" of the imagination. And it results in an artifact which has a life paradoxically separate from but integral with that of the artist. Finally, the goal of the process is both moral and aesthetic, the evocation of what Crane called the only "absolute"[9] to which he subscribed, the aesthetic experience of a condition of "'innocence' (Blake) or absolute beauty"[10] by the "truth of the imagination"[11] embodied in the artifact.

Poetry, Crane wrote, is "both perception and thing perceived,"[12]

and the process of poetic creation is one of integration and assimilation, an organic union of experience and the living imagination. This creative process depends on the poet's active receptivity to experience, his "negative capability,"[13] rather than his abstracting intellect. Speaking of the influence of the machine and science on modern poetry,[14] Crane reflected on his own experience:

> I think that what is interesting and significant will emerge only under the conditions of our submission to, and examination and assimilation of the organic effects on us of these and other fundamental factors of our experience. It can certainly not be an organic expression otherwise.[15]

That the "organic effects" of experience on the poetic sensibility are more important than the intellectual estimation of the truth or falsity of that experience is evident in Crane's insistence on the poet's sensibility as the arbiter of "truth":

> The poet has a right to draw on whatever practical resources he finds in books or otherwise about him. He must tax his sensibility and his touchstone of experience for the proper selections of these themes and details, however,--and that is where he either stands, or falls into useless archaeology.[16]

The poet, then, does not ignore or neglect the past, but revivifies it through incorporation into his imagination's life. The modern poet:

> needs to ransack the vocabularies of Shakespeare, Jonson, Webster (for theirs were the richest) and add our scientific, street and counter, and psychological terms, etc. . . . The modern artist needs gigantic assimilative capacities, emotion, --and the greatest of all--vision.[17]

And Crane warned against the erroneous use of the "all-too-easily

employed crutch" of poetic allusion to tradition or myth. When such allusion was not organically justified with the "living stuff" of the poem it "obscured rather than illumined"[18] whatever approximation or relevance the tradition alluded to might have with the twentieth century.

Writing on the work of another artist, the photographer Steiglitz, Crane elaborated on the aspect of submission to experience, and associated the action with a mimetic process.

> It is the passivity of the camera coupled with the unbounded respect of this photographer for its mechanical perfectibility which permits nature and all life to mirror itself so intimately and so unexpectedly.[19]

The "passivity of the camera" corresponds to the necessary submission; and the image of life mirroring itself is best illuminated by a remark to Steiglitz himself:

> I feel more and more that in the absolute sense the artist identifies himself with life. . . in the true mystical sense as well as in the same sense which Aristotle meant by the "imitation of nature."
>
> The true idea of God is the only thing that can give happiness,--and that is the identification of yourself with all of life.[20]

This interesting view of Aristotle's famous dictum, that the artist rather than the artifact should mirror life, emphasizes Crane's belief that his poetry issues from the union of artist and experience. It also suggests that an intellectual judgment of poetry on the same bases as one usually judges the world must be fallacious, since poetry (Crane's, at least) is not meant as a copybook imitation of external reality but as a creation based

on laws of its own origination.[21] This, of course, is the basis for Crane's earlier warning against the use of "ethical morality or moral classifications" as criteria for criticism of his poetry.

Crane's description of the actual process that gives birth to the imagination's "living stuff" reveals the secondary role that the intellect plays:

> The actual fleshing of a concept is so complex and difficult, however, 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 fulfillment. It is all right to call this "possession," if you will, only it should not be insisted that its operation denies the simultaneous function of a strong critical faculty. It is simply a stronger focus than can be arbitrarily willed into operation by the ordinarily-employed perceptions.[22]

The organic metaphor for the creative process, "the fleshing of a concept," suggests the origin of the poem that will carry what Crane called "the very blood and bone of me."[23] Even words, the most extra-referential aspect of poetry, are first controlled by this organic process, rather than by intellect.

> 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. . . 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.[24]

The organic unity composed of the words of the poem evinces what Crane called "an interior form,"[25] a phrase that suggests that the first allegiance of the words is to each other rather than to external reality. Crane underscored his belief in an

exfoliating process of creation by deploring the "tiresome repetitions of sound or rhyme" and the "mechanical insistence of certain formal patterns"[26] that impose themselves from without, or seem to, in so many bad poems. An interior form built on the "superior logic of metaphor" is the goal of the organic process, and not that "system of judgment" based on "perfect sums, divisions and subtractions"[27] which the intellect imposes on reality. Crane noted the inadequacy of such logical systems in the creation of the imagination's art, and declared flatly that "the great energies about us cannot be transformed that way into a higher quality of life."[28]

Crane's belief in the "higher quality of life" embodied in the "living stuff of the imagination" committed him to the living present as well as to the rendering of values rather than logical "truth." The present, for Crane, is not the chronological present, but what in The Bridge is termed the "Everpresence" of the imagination's truth; that is, the present-ness of the aesthetic truth embodied in poetry, no matter when it was written. Though Crane realized that in terms of "ethical morality or moral classifications" the 1920's may have seemed a waste land, he believed that such judgments were irrelevant to a poetry concerned with rendering the values of the imagination's "Everpresence, beyond time." ("Atlantis") Accordingly, he bridled at the tendency, best typified in T. S. Eliot, to repudiate the present in favor of tradition.

> We suffer all-too-much from social malnutrition once we try to live entirely with the ghostly past. We must somehow touch the clearest veins of eternity

> flowing through the crowds around
> us--or risk being the kind of
> glorious cripples that have missed
> some vital part of their inheritance.[29]

Similarly, he repudiated the attempts to subsume the present as a stage, unpleasant but necessary, in the progress toward some glorious future, a characteristic peculiar to the propaganda literature of the Marxists, among others.

> I think that this unmitigated concern
> with the Future is one of the most
> discouraging symptoms of the chaos of
> our age, however worthy the ethical
> concerns may be. It seems as though
> the imagination had ceased all attempts
> at any creative activity--and had be-
> come simply a great bulging eye ogling the
> foetus of the next century. . . I find
> nothing in Blake that seems outdated,
> and for him the present was always eternity.[30]

"Ethical concerns" do not beget the "living stuff of the imagination," which renders what is and not what ought to be. In his quest for a "timeless vision" built on "the moment made eternal"[31] the poet's task is the articulation of "the contemporary human consciousness _sub specie aeternitatis_."[32] He performs this task by rendering "some absolute and timeless concept of the imagination"[33] in a poem, and not by appealing to ethical or intellectual classifications. The imagination's art appeals to the aesthetic sense, and hence the poet can only be an "unacknowledged legislator of mankind,"[34] at least until such time as the general world enters into some commonwealth of the imagination.[35] But Crane believed that the "truth of the imagination" embodied in the poem _was_ fundamental to, if unacknowledged by, the "truth" of logic.

> The entire construction of the poem is
> raised on the organic principle of a
> "logic of metaphor," which antedates
> our so-called pure logic, and which is
> the genetic basis of all speech, hence
> consciousness and thought extension.[36]

Crane's comments on Plato suggest some of the values of the imagination, and their primacy over the "so-called pure logic" which is associated with rational truth. Writing to Munson the critic, Crane declares:

> What you admire in Plato as "divine sanity" is the architecture of his logic. Plato doesn't live today because of the intrinsic "truth" of his statements: their only living truth today consists in the fact of their harmonious relationship to each other in the context of his organization of them. This grace partakes of poetry. . . No wonder Plato considered the banishment of poets;--their reorganization of chaos on basis perhaps divergent from his own threatened the logic of <u>his</u> system, itself founded on assumptions that demanded the very defense of poetic construction which he was fortunately able to provide.[37]

Here the "harmonious relationship" of Plato's statements, "in the context of his <u>organization</u> of them" displays a "grace" that "partakes of poetry." The values of the imagination are these: harmony, grace, organization, life, all evident in its creation from "chaos" of "the architecture" of its own logic. The organic and artful join again to produce what Crane calls the "living truth." The "reorganization of chaos" into a "system," is the goal and function of the imagination, and results in "the moment made eternal" in the continuing life of a poem. Plato's system is an organic construct because it evinces this "living truth" long after he has died, and is valuable insofar as it embodies that "truth of the imagination."

The nature of the poem which results from the act of the imagination is suggested in several comments Crane made on the photography of Steiglitz. He noted that "we are thrown into

ultimate harmonies by looking at these stationary, yet strangely moving pictures."[38] The union of art and growth, construction and organic vitality, is here suggested by the combination of stasis and vibrance which Steiglitz's work reveals. Crane proceeded to illuminate his conception of the "organic construction":

> If the essences of things were in their mass and bulk we should not need the clairvoyance of Steiglitz's photography to arrest them for examination and appreciation. But they are suspended on the invisible dimension whose vibrance has been denied the human eye at all times save in the intuition of ecstasy. . . Speed is at the bottom of it all--the hundredth of a second caught so precisely that the motion is continued from the picture infinitely: the moment made eternal.
> This baffling capture is an end in itself. It even seems to get at the motion and emotion of so-called inanimate life.[39]

Here "vibrance," "motion," "the moment made eternal," "the motion and emotion of so-called inanimate life" are the qualities praised in Steiglitz's work, and by extension in Crane's own poetry. The imitation of nature, the mimetic recording of three-dimensional phenomena, is not the goal of the imagination. The result of the organic process of creation is a living, vibrant, organic construction showing, like Crane's Bridge, "Vibrant reprieve and pardon," ("Proem"), resulting in "whispers antiphonal" that "swing" ("Atlantis") in a motion "continued from the picture indefinitely." The artifact, then, is "simply the concrete evidence of a recognition. It can give you a ratio of fact and experience, and in this sense it is both perception and thing perceived, according as it approaches a significant articulation or not."[40]

Writing in "General Aims and Theories" Crane described the nature of the organic construction of the poem as it related to

the reader, and hinted at the poem's relation to the organic process that engendered it.

> 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 preconceptions. It is as though the poem gave the reader as he left it a single, new word, never before spoken and impossible to enunciate, but self-evident as an active principle in the reader's consciousness henceforward.[41]

This image of the poem as a world with an "orbit" of its own suggests its independence from its creator, its self-sufficiency, as well as its constructed yet organic nature. More relevant to the poem's function for the reader are Crane's remarks on its evocation "toward a state of consciousness," a "condition" in which "certain spiritual illuminations" may appear "essentialized from experience directly." This state of consciousness is the aesthetic absolute of the imagination's truth to which the reader must assent. In this way the values that comprise the "truth" of the poem become "self-evident as an active principle in the reader's consciousness." The imagination communicates itself to the reader's own imagination, his pre-verbal, pre-reflective vitality, which is for him as for the poet the "genetic basis" of speech and thought. The "spiritual illuminations" and their "morality" have no reference to a Christian, theistic schema;

they refer to the aesthetic absolute of the truth of the imagination. It is the imagination's shaping, illuminating and unitive power, its moral and aesthetic "truth," which the poet hopes to embody in the poem and engender in the reader. In this way Crane unites the moral and aesthetic in an existential manner, ascribing to the experience of aesthetic "truth," which is "absolute beauty," a basis for moral action.[42] Just as the poet continually experiences new recognitions and fuses them with and recasts them into the living stuff of the imagination, so the reader will hopefully accept the poem as a new experience to be assimilated, integrated, into his own living imagination. The art for which Crane strives, then, is truly organic and living, born of a vital process and intended to engender further life. Its commitment is to the rendering of the imagination's truth, and through that to the continuance of the imagination's life, for as Crane noted, "new conditions of life breed new forms of spiritual articulation."[43] Its goal is not a cessation of speech, but an evocation of further speech, the "single new <u>word</u>" that breeds new spiritual articulations. Writing of Steiglitz, Crane described the process and its goal by quoting Blake:

> 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.[44]

The act of imagination, then, the organic construction of the poem, is a bridge to a new state of consciousness, a unitive state to which the reader silently assents. The organic process which results in this act of the creative imagination is one of assimilation and regeneration. The appeal of the poem is to the

reader's own imagination, and its goal is the liberation of the reader from "previous precepts and preconceptions" into the mythic[45] realm of the creative imagination, where he can perceive "spiritual illuminations, shining with a morality essentialized from experience directly," and begin to move toward his own "spiritual articulations." Thus the poem is not only a "chord" upon which to play the "major themes of human speculation--love, beauty death, renascence,"[46] but also a celebration of the power of the imagination, the "harp" that engenders the "chord," and hence a celebration of the life and act of the imagination. It is within this context that The Bridge, Crane's "epic of the modern consciousness,"[47] must be described.

STRUCTURE AND STYLE IN *THE BRIDGE*

> It all comes to the recognition that emotional dynamics are not to be confused with any absolute order of rationalized definitions; ergo, in poetry the *rationale* of metaphor belongs to another order of experience than science, and is not to be limited by a scientific and arbitrary code of relationships either in verbal inflections or concepts.[1]

*The Bridge* is a record, a "history" ("Atlantis"), which simultaneously renders and defines the process by which the poet becomes empowered to act, to embody his truth in an artifact, the poem itself. It is a dramatic narrative of the life of the imagination struggling to give form, and thereby meaning, to its experience of the world. Accordingly, the structure and style of the poem derive from and bear witness to the poet's commitment to the values of the living imagination. Crane's comments on the problem of writing a history of the discovery and exploration of the "body" of the continent (the subject matter of the first half of *The Bridge*) reveal this commitment.

> It seemed altogether ineffective from the poetic standpoint to approach this material from the purely chronological angle--beginning with, say, the landing of "The Mayflower," continuing with a resume of the Revolution through the conquest of the West, etc. One can get that viewpoint in any history primer. What I am after is an *assimilation of this experience*, a more organic panorama, showing the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present.[2] (italics mine)

This rendering of past experience "in terms of the present"[3] is but one aspect of the poet's movement through various stages of history and states of consciousness toward a formal integration of his "modern consciousness" in the perception-creation of the Bridge, the "one arc synoptic" of the process. That Crane believed the various sections of The Bridge to be unified within themselves and with each other is certain:

> For each section of the poem has presented its own unique problem of form, not alone in relation to the materials embodied within its separate confines, but also in relation to the other parts, in series, of the major design of the entire poem. Each is a separate canvas, as it were, yet none yields its entire significance when seen apart from the others. One might take the Sistine Chapel as an analogy.[4]

The structural principle of the poem, then, is bifurcated. Each section renders the achievement of the imagination's unitive truth, or the failure to achieve it. And the sections in series render the poet's movement through states of consciousness (note Crane's reference to the "body" of the continent in the previous passage) toward his own unitive act, the perception-creation of the Bridge. It is this latter act which liberates the poet into the mythic realm of the creative imagination, symbolized by Atlantis, in which state he is empowered to cast a "mythic spear" of his own, i. e. to write The Bridge. The poem, in turn, becomes itself a Bridge for the reader, for the poet's people, whereby they too may cross over to that state of consciousness symbolized by Atlantis.

The process by which the poet comes to "know" and finally

embody the experience of his knowledge is similar to the process which, in Crane's poetic theory, a poet comes to "know" anything which he wishes to incorporate in a poem. This organic process is one of recognition, assimilation and regeneration, and in The Bridge is accomplished by having the fictional poet encounter, respond to, and assimilate, then move beyond the experience embodied in each section of the poem. The process is one of self-knowledge, and not knowledge of a culture; hence it is a mistake to compare the glorious Indian civilization with the fallen modern epoch, as R. W. B. Lewis continually does.[5] The poet's growth toward his unitive act is the subject of the poem, not "the gradual permeation of an entire culture by the power of poetic vision."[6] The different locales and times of the poem, though they do vaguely span the history and breadth of America, have their main value in terms of the poet's developing consciousness, his movement toward the recognition of the "intrinsic Myth" ("Atlantis") of the unitive imagination. As Crane noted, the relationship of the poet to temporal or spatial locale is incidental to the creative act that is his desideratum:

> I put no particular value on the simple objective of "modernity." The element of the temporal location of an artist's creation is of very secondary importance; it can be left to the impressionist or historian just as well. It seems to me that a poet will accidentally define his time well enough simply by reacting honestly and to the full extent of his sensibilities to the states of passion, experience and rumination that fate forces on him, first hand. He must, of course, have a sufficiently universal basis of experience to make his imagination selective and valuable. His picture of the "period," then, will simply be a by-product of his curiosity and the

relation of his experience to a
postulated "eternity."[7] (italics mine)

That the poet's growth must be the fundamental act of the poem is evident from the fact that the Bridge, which after "Proem" does not appear symbolically until the last section, must indeed be, as Tate called it, "a trivial symbol"[8] inadequate to what it must support, unless it is seen as the natural culmination of the series of bridging, unitive acts which have occurred in previous sections of the poem. After all, it is not the Brooklyn Bridge but the symbolic Bridge, the act of the creative imagination, that capsulizes and crowns the poet's growth.

The poet's movement in The Bridge toward Atlantis, his "postulated 'eternity'," parallels the growth of his consciousness toward the recognition of the imagination's unitive power. "Proem" is at once prior and posterior to the rest of the poem, for there the poet prays to a Bridge symbolic of a truth and power he has experienced before ("And we have seen night lifted in thy arms") and asks that he may experience it again ("Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend,/And of the curveship lend a myth to God.") "Proem," then, is a reflection on an act completed for the purpose of beginning the act again, re-enacting it. Hence it is both beginning and end of the circular process rendered in The Bridge; or, rather, the end of the process and the beginning of the record of that process.

The subject matter of the first half of The Bridge ("Ave Maria" through "Cutty Sark") is the discovery and exploration of the body of the continent. But the subject is the growth of the poet in the wisdom of the flesh, its powers and limitations viz a viz

the imagination. In "Ave Maria" the fictional poet is absent, as the birth of the first consciousness of America as America (Columbus's discovery and struggle to bring back the "word" of the discovery) is rendered. This birth of consciousness is followed by the poet's emergence from sleep into modern Manhattan, from which he journeys retrospectively through "copybook" memory and blood memory into his own and the nation's past. "Powhatan's Daughter" renders the poet's pursuit of Pocahontas and liberating love through the body. He achieves physical integration and realizes the power of the flesh through union with Pocahontas in "The Dance," but sees the failure of this unitive truth to perpetuate itself through the body alone in "Indiana" and "Cutty Sark." Though generated by passion, the imagination's truth cannot be conveyed or transmuted by passion alone.

The subject matter of the second half of The Bridge is the exploration of the spirit of the continent (Crane's alternate title for "Cape Hatteras"), and the attempts to embody that spirit in an act of imagination. The subject is the fictional poet's increasing awareness of the limitations of reason and intellect (whose act is scientific, like the invention of air-plane or subway) and the possibilities of the poetic imagination (whose act is the creation of a living art.) In "Cape Hatteras" the poet awakes from his reverie of the past into a new "dream of act," a dream of creating an artifact that will embody the truth of the spirit. In place of the false god of gold which offered itself as a static alternative to the truth of the body and passion's regeneration in "Indiana," the poet is faced with

the acts of science and modern technology, symbols of the mind's attempt to render inert, or inertly mechanical, the living truth of the spirit. He learns from Whitman to choose "something green" and living, "beyond all sesames of science," as his proper act. In "Three Songs" and "Quaker Hill" the poet encounters the failure of traditional ideals of love and religion to embody a living truth, but grows in his awareness of the poetic act as the source of the enduring, living artifact. "The Tunnel" renders the poet's own movement through the labyrinth of the mental and mechanical, the mind's possibilities. The death of the intellect is followed by the dropping of "memory" itself into the waters of the harbor, as the poet has exhausted the possibilities of both body and mind in his quest for the bridging act of the unitive imagination. "The Tunnel" ends with the poet invoking the imagination's power, "O Hand of Fire/gatherest."

"Atlantis" renders, in a three-fold progression, the poet's perception-creation of the symbolic Bridge, his reflection on the powers of the Bridge as "intrinsic Myth," and his passage from the Bridge to Atlantis (an "attitude of spirit," Crane called it). The Bridge embodies in "one arc synoptic" the journey that has preceded it, and it leads "to Thee, O Love." It reveals the unity and harmony of the entire world under the aegis of the love-driven imagination, a revelation symbolized by the reaching of Atlantis. Further, the reaching of Atlantis is for the poet a self-realization of the "intrinsic Myth" of the imagination, and this realization empowers him to perform his final act, the writing of the poems itself, the casting of his own "mythic spear."

That the process of growth, a learning process ("inference and discard" yielding "faith" is the image from "Ave Maria"), is necessary to the poet's ultimate recognition of the symbolic Bridge is stated in "Atlantis."

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

The "cipher-script of time" fused by the Bridge is perceived only by the traveller who can see through the "smoking pyres of love and death," the subject matter of art, to the mythic act of creation that is art's true subject, that bears witness to the imagination's "Everpresence." This is the perception that empowers the poet to fulfill his own "dream of act."

Because the subject of The Bridge is a process, the values of the experiences rendered in the poem must be derived from their relationship to that process. Since the process is one of the development of consciousness, the poet is primarily a "mental traveller," moving through states of consciousness toward the recognition of the imagination's unitive truth. Values, then, are determined by the role of various phenomena in aiding or threatening the poet's growth of consciousness, advancing or retarding it, illuminating or obscuring its goal.[9] But this is not to say that some values are good and others bad in any ethical sense, for as the epigraph to this chapter declares, "emotional dynamics are not to be confused with any absolute order of rationalized definitions." Indeed, the unitive vision

cannot exclude any experience or value; rather, it prevails by incorporating and transforming everything in its creative act. Consequently, Whitman, termed by the poet the Meistersinger "Of that great Bridge, our Myth," is praised in "Cape Hatteras" for his "Sea eyes and tidal, undenying, bright with myth!" (italics mine).

Not only the structure but also the poetic style renders the "incarnate evidence" of this process, and thus fulfills its "Sanskrit charge," revealing the poet's commitment to a living art, one that possesses and is possessed by its own dynamic vitality. The dramatic narrative of the fictional poet renders "the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present." And the circular structure of this dramatic narrative allows the poem to move, not from past to present, but through the present to the "Everpresence, beyond time," of Atlantis. Poetic technique concentrates on a similar presence and immediacy, utilizing coalescence and juxtaposition of events rather than sequential and causal development to render the "continuous and eloquent span" of the poem. Coherence is achieved through metamorphosis[10] and repetition of images and symbols.

As Crane wrote to Waldo Frank:

> Are you noticing how throughout the poem motive and situations recur--under modifications of environment, etc? The organic substances of the poem are holding a great many surprises for me. . . . Greatest joys of creation.[11]

These "organic substances" include, for instance, the metamorphosis of the Female, symbolic of the love that finally liberates the man

of vision into the mythic realm of the imagination, from the Virgin of "Ave Maria" through the fictional poet's own mother and Pocahontas, to the Christian types of Woman ("Eve, Magdalene, or Mary, you?") who are the subjects of "Three Songs" and the "Wop washerwoman" met on the ride through "The Tunnel." Each symbolizes love _sub speciae aeternitatis_, and as symbols, rather than allegorical figures, they are immediate and living. As Crane wrote to Frank, in an exuberant expression of those "greatest joys of creation," conceiving his Columbus: "My plans are soaring again, the conception swells. Furthermore, this Columbus is REAL."[12]

Correlative with Crane's attempt to render the imagination's life through his use of symbolism is the use he makes of allusion. The purpose of the connective act, the making of a bridge, is, as delineated in "Proem," to "lend a myth to God." Within _The Bridge_ the unitive act occurs (or significantly fails to occur, thereby affirming itself dialectically through negation) under various modifications of environment; thus the "God" it seeks takes on different names. Columbus "merges the wind in measure to the waves" and thereby makes the ocean a bridge which reveals to him the truth of the "incognizable Word/Of Eden and the enchained Sepulchre," the "sounding heel" of "Elohim." Maquokeeta, the Indian shaman, performs a dance that makes him a living bridge between heaven and earth, and thereby proves to his own satisfaction the truth of the Indian myth of the "largesse" of the "immortal" Earth-Mother goddess Pocahontas, she who is "virgin to the last of men." The insufficiency of the Christian myth to God

is evident in "Three Songs," where the poet laments the inefficacy of the symbolic types of Woman and the loss of "God--your namelessness." And finally, it is the "intrinsic Myth" of the Bridge that connects the poet with "Deity's young name." Thus the poet moves toward his own definition of "God" by experiencing and assimilating earlier definitions. The allusions to the myths of other times, "other calendars" or other "indexes of night" ("Atlantis"), are not merely decorative acknowledgements of a "useless archaeology."[13]

Crane's purpose is not to acknowledge a tradition, but to shape and present the living stuff of the imagination in whatever terms are organically justified:

> The great mythologies of the past (including the Church) are deprived of enough facade to even launch good raillery against. Yet much of their traditions are operative still--in millions of chance combinations of related and unrelated detail, psychological reference, figures of speech, precepts, etc. These are all a part of our common experience and the terms at least partially, of that very experience when it defines or extends itself.[14]

The fictional poet of The Bridge lives through the experiences of Maquokeeta and others in order to revivify them in terms of his present living imagination. Thus the allusions to old mythologies are actually made to celebrate the present Myth of the Bridge, made to come alive as elements of the poet's experience of life.

As the symbolic Bridge is the organic construct by which the poet unites time and space (puts "The serpent with the eagle in the leaves" of his poem) in one unitive act that condenses

"Tomorrows into yesteryear," so the device of paradox is the construction by which the poet yokes opposites to render an implicit but vibrant harmony of "things irreconcilable." The Bridge itself is described in paradox: "Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!" And the significance of the Bridge's freedom-in-stasis, its "motion-in-repose," in "Proem," is indicated as its "implicit" comment on the possibilities of attaining the reconciliation of "things irreconcilable," of achieving a similar unitive yet vital state: "Vibrant reprieve and pardon thou dost show." The device of paradox is admirably suited to the rendering of a vital and living art, generating as it does a unitive meaning implicit in the dualities it yokes.

The Bridge of "Atlantis" functions as a sort of perpetual paradox, "translating time" and the manifold separate voices of time "into what multitudinous Verb the suns/and synergy of waters ever fuse, recast/In myriad syllables--Psalm of Cathay!" This unitive act of the Bridge, of bridging, is the "Psalm of Cathay," the unceasing song to that unitive state symbolized by Cathay-Atlantis. And it is essentially the same act as that performed by paradox. Indeed, in "Ave Maria" the life of man is defined as the "parable of man," a phrase suggesting not only the riddle of man's existence "between two worlds" but also the means by which the riddle is solved, through the creation of the parabola of a Bridge or the paradox of language. As "Deity's young name/ Kinetic of white choiring wings. . . ascends," the absolute of the imagination's truth is rendered, kinetic and vibrant. The evocation of passion and "synergy" achieved through the use of

paradox recalls a statement by Kierkegaard on the nature of paradox: "The paradox is the source of the thinker's passion and the thinker without paradox is like a lover without feeling, a paltry mediocrity."[15] In a real sense the paradox, the linguistic act of bridging, is the source of the poet's passion in The Bridge, and thus instrumental in rendering the living act of imagination.

Another important technique in the rendering of the imagination's efforts to fuse and thereby recreate experience is the use of etymology. Crane's predilection for the dictionary, his constant search for unique words and a uniqueness of words, is well known. Throughout The Bridge Crane employs words in their radical sense, drawing upon their etymology to suggest significant ambiguity, to force latent meaning to the surface. This important tool in the conquest of consciousness is used effectively in such words as "bedlamite" ("Proem"), "threshold" ("Proem"), "chevron" ("Ave Maria"), "Sabbatical" ("Van Winkle"), "dorsal" ("Cape Hatteras"), to fulfill the "Sanskrit charge" to reveal in the present the living evidence of the past in terms of language itself.

The language of the poem, justly praised for its sensuous and concrete qualities, is equally important in rendering the "continuous and eloquent span." Questions, for instance, are frequent: not "why" questions, which would suggest causes, but "how" questions, which suggest new patterns, new shapes, changes for their own sake. Exclamations punctuate the poem, as intensity of feeling becomes a thematic principle in an organic process concerned with growth and regeneration. Static, abstract state-

ments, propositional dicta, scientific "theorems sharp as hail" ("Cape Hatteras") are anathema to the organic process, and are used within the poem only to suggest a state of mind which is antagonistic to the imagination's growth.

One of the keys to an appreciation of Crane's use of language to construct his "architectural art" is the recognition of the generative function and thrust of what Crane called his "logic of metaphor."

> As to technical considerations: the motivation of the poem must be derived from the implicit emotional dynamics of the materials used, and the terms of expression employed are often selected less for their logical (literal) significance than for their associational meanings. Via this and their metaphorical inter-relationships, the entire construction of the poem is raised on the organic principle of a "logic of metaphor," which antedates our so-called pure logic, and which is the genetic basis of all speech, hence consciousness and thought-extension.[16]

Defending his use of this technique in one of his poems, Crane explains a particular image in this way:

> Although the statement is pseudo in relation to formal logic--it _is_ completely logical in relation to the truth of the imagination, and there is expressed a concept of speed and space that could not be handled so well in other terms.[17]

That this use of language depends for its effect on the receptivity of the reader's imagination is clear:

> It implies (this _inflection_ of language) a previous or prepared receptivity to its stimulus on the part of the reader. . . .
> If one can't count on some such bases in the reader now and then, I don't see how the poet has any chance to ever get beyond the simplest conceptions of emotion and thought, of sensation and lyrical sequence. If the poet is to be held com-

> pletely to the already evolved
> and exploited sequences of imagery
> and logic--what field of added
> consciousness and increased per-
> ceptions (the actual province of
> poetry, if not lullabyes) can be
> expected when one has to relatively
> return to the alphabet every breath
> or so?[18]

The use of language to push back the frontiers of consciousness and perception by building an organic construct is Crane's hope and his goal. "Language has built towers and bridges, but itself remains as fluid as always."[19]

Within The Bridge the use of the logic of metaphor is abundantly evident. An example is the flow of the River toward the Gulf rendered at the end of "The River." The River proceeds, accumulating and reworking all the diverse elements that "feed it timelessly," toward union with the Gulf; and it is this passionate junction of Time and Eternity that carries the poet into the next section of the poem and the timeless "mythic" land of "The Dance." The thrust of the River, then, is toward a new, mythic, state of consciousness, and the movement of this thrust is internal and inferential. The River's force and flow, "O quarrying passion, undertowed sunlight," moves both linearly and internally, as it "flows within itself, heaps itself free," until":

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

Here in the concluding lines of "The River" are examples of many of Crane's poetic techniques, including the logic of metaphor. The

allusions to the Christian Passion and Atonement heighten the significance of the fusion of Time and Eternity in terms of the poet's experience of that fusion. The paradox of "hosannas silently below" suggests the implicit yet powerful impulse to praise the necessary but painful union. The logic of metaphor is evident in such images as that of the River "poised wholly on its dream," which suggests simultaneously the lifting of the River upwards and the balancing of the River for one moment "wholly" (with a pun on "holy") on its heaping "dream," its will to flow. Or consider the "mustard glow" of the River, an image that suggests the suffering of the River as it meets the "stinging sea" by inferring the connection between the hot (hence glowing) and stinging taste of mustard and the mustard color of the River's "undertowed sunlight," earlier imaged as "ochreous and lynx-barred." The "implicit emotional dynamics" of the passage are perhaps "pseudo in relation to formal logic" (how could the River be at once a dreamer and poised on top of its dream? how can mustard "glow"?), but are "completely logical in relation to the truth of the imagination."

Further, the effect of the passage is not impressionistic but constructive, not imitative but creative, evocative of a new state of consciousness. The clustering of images and metaphors in the passage does not allow for mere "retinal registration" or "psychological stimulation,"[20] but forces the reader's sensibility in a "predetermined direction" which is imaginatively rather than intellectually assented to. As Crane noted about another of his poems:

> A poem like Possessions really
> cannot be technically explained.
> It must rely (even to a large
> extent with myself) on its or-
> ganic impact on the imagination
> to successfully imply its meaning.[21]

The impact of the poem is pre-reflective, and, as Eliot remarked about great poetry, is felt before it is understood. It conveys itself immediately and vitally, by "organic" impact on the imagination rather than the impressionistic "retina," what Crane called "the readiest surface of consciousness, at least relatively so."[22] And it succeeds insofar as the audience has "an active or inactive imagination as its characteristic."[23] The poet, of course, is liable to error and excess in this process, but as Crane noted, "it is part of the poet's business to risk not only criticism--but folly--in the conquest of consciousness."[24]

Crane's dependence on the reader's imagination for help in the conquest of consciousness is indicative both of his goal and his method in _The Bridge_. Both structure and style in his long poem are engaged in the "actual (physical) representation of the incarnate _evidence_" of the poet's experience of the world, in an attempt to make _The Bridge_ itself a Bridge for the reader. Accordingly, a critical reduction of the "incarnate _evidence_" to ideas and abstractions about the world to some extent begs the question. A recent critic formulated the problem:

> A work of art encountered as a work
> of art is an experience, not a state-
> ment or an answer to a question. Art
> is not only about something; it is
> something. A work of art is a thing
> _in_ the world, not just a text or
> commentary _on_ the world.[25]

The protean nature of The Bridge is not conducive to argument; rather, it invites description, analysis, illumination. The following chapters attempt to suggest the poem's structural relationships and the values inherent in those relationships. My thesis is that the values affirmed in The Bridge, both structurally and stylistically, are those explicitly stated in Crane's aesthetic theory, and that an appreciation of the poem is best gained by a perception of the relationship of the aesthetic theory to the "living stuff of the imagination" embodied in The Bridge.

## PROEM

"Proem" dedicates The Bridge to the Brooklyn Bridge, that organic construction which measures the sun and spans the harbor with pure and "unfractioned idiom," and propels the poem and the fictional poet on towards Atlantis, where his own act of imagination occurs. The muse to whom the poet prays in this prelude to what Crane called his "symphonic" poem is the Bridge, and he hopes to draw succor and inspiration from this symbol of the completed and successful act of imagination. Such a hope is in accordance with Crane's three-fold poetic process, for the poet addresses the Bridge in "Proem" as "harp and altar of the fury fused," a completed act, and declares that "we have seen night lifted in thy arms." The Bridge, then, is the embodiment of the truth of the imagination, the unspoken but "active principle" which propels the poet toward "new spiritual articulations." Thus the relationship between the poet and the Bridge in "Proem" is exactly that which Crane hoped to establish between his poem and the reader.

In "Proem" a symbolic expansion occurs, as the literal Brooklyn Bridge of the dedication grows into the particular act of imagination, "Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced," and finally comes to symbolize not only an act of imagination but the imagination itself, "Sleepless" and vital, "Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod." The poet comes to recognize the Bridge as symbolic of the imagination itself, invoking it as Muse for

aid in his journey toward his own act, emphasizing his commitment to the laws of the imagination. By dedicating his poem to, and drawing his inspiration from, an artifact, the poet asserts his belief that the act of imagination begets further acts. By asking the Bridge for a "myth to God" he reaffirms his faith in the only absolute to which Crane ever ascribed, the "truth of the imagination."

A key to the form of "Proem" comes from Crane's letter to Waldo Frank of July 24, 1926. Crane was emerging from two weeks of deep despair over possibilities not only of his poem but of civilization itself. The cause of his despair is uncertain; he had been reading Spengler, and had also been suffering from abscesses in both ears. Critics have used his letters of this period as evidence that he knew _The Bridge_, with its optimism, to be a failure, if not insincere. However, it seems that the circumstances of his remarks were mitigating. Certainly his following comments on "Proem" are not pessimistic:

> I feel an absolute music in the air again, and some tremendous rondure floating somewhere--perhaps my little dedication is going to swing me back to San Cristobal again. . . That little prelude, by the way, I think to be almost the best thing I've ever written, something steady and uncompromising about it. Do you notice how its construction parallels the peculiar technique of _space and detail division_ used by El Greco in several canvasses--notably the _Christus an Olberg_? I've just been struck by that while casually returning to my little monograph as I often do.[1]

The musical and architectural analogies, which Crane applies

elsewhere to his poetry, are used here to express his joy at the renewed recognition of the power of the imagination and the "tremendous rondure," recalling Whitman's image of the unitive act of the imagination, "floating somewhere." In a sense, "Proem" seems to have served to rededicate Crane to The Bridge and its possibilities, for it was written midway through the composition of the larger poem. There is a "steady and uncompromising" quality about this "prelude," due to several factors. It has the reposeful motion of a mobile, suspended yet turning within its own certain structure. It begins with the question-exhortation "How" and concludes with the resolution of "O." A sense of eternal motion is achieved through the use of indefinite time words, rather than the poem's frequent immediate and strong verbs, as in "How many dawns," "Then," "Never," "All afternoon," "still," "dost," "Again." And the diurnal progress from morning to night contains the piece. Against this subdued background is set the Bridge, emphasized by exclamation and the imagery of deity in the fourth stanza, invoked for its "myth to God" in the last. As in El Greco's Christ on the Mount of Olives, the central figure shines out against an obscure background. Vignettes occur on the periphery of the Bridge, where the multitudes stare at the cinema and the bedlamite rushes from his "scuttle cell" to leap from the Bridge; but at the forefront of the poet's vision and consciousness is the Bridge itself, "silver-paced" in sunlight, shining with "immaculate sigh of stars" at night.

The use of the analogy to El Greco's painting, and his "space and detail division," is apt. Not simply because there is a rough correspondence between the figures of "Proem" and the

painting, but because of a more important correspondence in the technique of spatial representation. It is perhaps significant that El Greco did not use fixed-point perspective, which McLuhan has correctly associated with rationalistic modes of thought, and that Crane likened himself to the painter on this score. For in "Proem" the central figures derive their significance from a symbolic rather than rational relationship to their surroundings, a relationship derived from their synthesis of and relevance to their environment. Whitehead, a contemporary whom Crane read, suggested the nature of such a relationship:

> Every actual thing is something by reason of its activity; whereby its nature consists in its relevance to other things, and its individuality consists of its synthesis of other things so far as they are relevant to it.[2]

In "Proem" the technique of spatial division assumes the form of juxtaposition, with emphasis achieved through description and exclamation, position, and contrast. The stanza is the unit of composition, similar to the shot in the movies, and the poet's consciousness, vision and memory zoom up, around, down, but always return to the Bridge, each time imaging it as a more inclusive and more powerful symbol. Several critics have noted that all of the themes of The Bridge are found in "Proem," and in fact there seems to be a rough correspondence between the eleven stanzas of "Proem" and the development of The Bridge. The point is not that "Proem" exhibits a one-to-one correspondence in development with The Bridge, but that in its symbolic mode of presentation as well as its thematic commitment to the life and

power of the imagination "Proem" stands as prelude and icon to The Bridge.

The first image of "Proem" is of the seagull rising from the harbor of Manhattan at dawn, flying up towards the new sun and out towards the ocean, leaving behind the "chained bay waters" and "building high" in its flight "Liberty." The act is a natural one, and cyclical, occurring every day at dawn; it draws from the poet an exclamation-question, "How many dawns," which suggests his wonderful appreciation, his awe, perhaps even his longing for a similar release. The image of the gull rising at the sign of the sun, "Shedding white rings of tumult," suggests regeneration, renewal, and subtly associates the gull image with a later one, that of "Time like a serpent"; for here in "Shedding" is the hint of the sloughing off of old skins, old lives and times as well as spaces, of the movement toward life through death and metamorphosis. This movement, it will be seen, is emblematic of the movement of The Bridge, which is just such a "Shedding" of past times and other places. The activity of the gull is imaged in an architectural metaphor, that of "building high," and the artifact is "Liberty," both the quality of liberty and, literally, the Statue of Liberty. Just as the warmth and light of the sun have freed the gull from his cold "rippling rest" on the harbor waters, so his creative flight symbolizes Liberty for the poet. Here "Liberty" suggests both freedom and love, for the Statue of Liberty is one image of the Woman symbolic of liberating Love whom the poet invokes throughout the poem. The result of the gull's constructive flight is the unitive act of the "inviolate curve," his perfect bridge-like

sweep that has emerged from the "white rings of tumult" and arches over them as the Bridge arches over the harbor.

From the image of the ascending gull the poet's vision turns downward, and the confinement and redundancy of the Manhattan "multitudes" are described: dealing in abstractions, "figures to be filed away," they work in the office buildings of the city until elevators "drop" them "from our day." For them the sight of the gull's inviolate curve is "apparitional," deprived of its flesh-and-blood vitality, and in its place are "cinemas, panoramic sleights," the "flashing scene/Never disclosed, but hastened to again." Where the sight of the gull was a revelation to the poet, the failure of the mechanical repetition of the cinematic scenes lies precisely in the fact that they are "never disclosed," never fully revealed in any completeness or unity, never capable of the inviolate curve. The poet, who saw with his eyes the gull, here "thinks" of the multitudes watching the cinemas, subtly acknowledging the distinction between immediate and vital experience and abstract reflection, a division united in the Bridge.

The transitory organic freedom of the gull and the perpetual mechanical confinement of the cinemas are harmonized in the description of the Bridge:

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

The Bridge is a union of the organic and the mechanical, the great artifact of the machine-age which measures the sun. Where the gull was urged to flight by the sun, and the office buildings shut out

the sun, confining the poet to "thought," the Bridge and the sun are mutually defining. Like musical notes and the staff on which they are set, the sun takes "step" of the Bridge yet leaves "Some motion ever unspent" in its stride. The image foreshadows that of "Atlantis," where the supporting cables of the Bridge are "gleaming staves." The Bridge joins in concert the sun and steel, the gull and the cinema, the body and the mind. It joins the rhythms of life itself, the flight of the gull, the motion of the sun, with the permanence of the artifact; it is not static, but dynamic, evincing "Some motion ever unspent" in its "stride." It is the act of the imagination, serving for the poet as an absolute, the deific "Thee" which is both the source and goal of the poetic process, the new condition of life which generates "new spiritual articulations." From the gull's act of creating, building, "Liberty" the poet has turned to the symbolic artifact itself, the more permanent Bridge.

The Bridge, the completed act of imagination, suggests the same implicit but certain freedom the Bridge evinces: "Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!" In "staying" lies the paradox of the living truth of the imagination, for the Bridge is simultaneously supported by and confined to its harmonious system. It is a freedom to be itself, but a freedom which demands that it be nothing else. It is the freedom of the "Ding an Sich," Crane's absolute of the truth of the imagination which must be assented to as "self-evident," implicit.

An abortive response to the implicit freedom of the Bridge is made by one of the multitudes in the next stanza. The "bedlamite"

rushes from his "subway scuttle, cell or loft" and leaps from the Bridge while unconcerned motorists continue on their "speechless caravan." The bedlamite's fall into the harbor is contrasted with the gull's ascending flight, and with the Bridge's arching freedom, and his failure is imaged in terms of speech, for he is but a "jest" that "falls from the speechless caravan" crossing the Bridge. His attempt to emerge from the confinement of his "cell" and its "scuttle" darkness into the light and freedom of the Bridge is not, however, an act of despair, but a search for a rebirth, as the etymology of "bedlamite" suggests. Crane's penchant for using words in their radical sense is well illustrated here, for "bedlam" refers both to the famous lunatic asylum in London called Bedlam and to the full name of that abbreviation: the hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem. Thus the bedlamite is associated not only with insanity but also with Bethlehem and the birth of the Word-made-Flesh, and while he fails to achieve a similar rebirth here his intentions are clear. He is seeking the same sort of freedom, that of the integrity and harmony of the truth of the imagination, which the Bridge evinces. As Rollo May suggests, "to be drowned in order to be born again--this is the myth of the positive integrative aspect of experiencing truth."[3] The death by drowning is a necessary descent, the process of purification and assimilation as the poet describes it in "The River," which prepares for the eventual rebirth of the truth of the imagination, the embodiment of the truth of the imagination in the act of the imagination, which the poet here images as the Incarnation of the Word-made-Flesh that in Christian tradition occurred in

Bethlehem. In "bedlamite" Crane initiates a series of images centering around the Christian myth of the Incarnation which persists throughout The Bridge, and which describes not the birth of Christ but the recurrent birth of the imagination's truth, the continual recreation by the Bridge of the "multitudinous Verb" of "Atlantis." This use of the Incarnation as image of the creation of the poem further extends to the unification of time and space in one moment, for the act of the imagination puts "the serpent with the eagle in the leaves," joins time and space, just as in Christian tradition the Incarnation represents the total unity of time and space in one moment (as witness our dating of time from Christ's birth). Thus the bedlamite, who tilts on the Bridge "momently," attempts a similar act of unity.

The death by drowning of the bedlamite is followed by an image of the Bridge as living, as its "cables breathe the North Atlantic still," suggesting again the enduring life of the act of the imagination. The sun of noon "leaks" into the city, "Down Wall, from girder into street," in an image of liquid fire, as "A rip-tooth of the sky's acetylene." The simultaneous suggestion of creation and destruction in the "rip-tooth" subtly carries on the association of birth through death that characterized the bedlamite, but with the difference that here the creation is the organic construction, where the vital sun is imaged as the mechanical acetylene torch that shapes, as it were, the city itself by firing the space around the buildings, ordering them by its light into definite forms. It is the image of architectural

construction, the harnessing of life forces to make and shape, the flow of the vital on the inanimate that involves both destruction and creation, juxtaposed with the living Bridge.

The next four stanzas amplify the qualities of the symbolic Bridge. It promises a "guerdon" that is "obscure as that heaven of the Jews," an image which suggests the this-worldly quality of the act of the imagination. The heaven of the Jews is a heaven-on-earth, a unity and harmonization of the natural, not a place removed from the world. It is "obscure" because it is indefinite, shrouded, though its force is felt. The "accolade" which the Bridge "bestows" has a similar "anonymity" that "time cannot raise" or, by the pun, "raze." The association of "anonymity" with the powerful "Accolade" of the Bridge recalls Crane's belief that the force of the absolute truth of the imagination is felt rather than named, "impossible to enunciate, but self-evident" (in "Southern Cross" the poet specifically associates his absolute with this anonymity, declaring "It is/God--your namelessness"). It is this pre-verbal quality of the Bridge that moves the poet toward his own "spiritual articulations," and that sets it beyond the power of time and change. The Bridge "shows" a "Vibrant reprieve and pardon" to the poet, a living and harmonious freedom from time and death, the same sort of freedom that attracted the bedlamite. Here it invites the poet to lift up his eyes to consider the Bridge's "reprieve and pardon," and the upward motion, in contrast to the bedlamite's descent, suggests the emergence and release which the act of the imagination offers.

This uplifting motion occasions religious imagery to describe the Bridge as an object of prayer: "O harp and altar, of the fury fused." The literal resemblance of the Bridge to both harp and altar seems clear, but on the symbolic level this description suggests a dual role for the Bridge: it is both the instrument of harmony and the place of sacrifice and worship, the altar, where the power of the absolute of the truth of the imagination is celebrated and made manifest. By joining the symbol of the poet (the harp) and the deity in one, the poet suggests that the impetus to God is really the impetus of the imagination toward its mythic truth. The Bridge is "Terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge,/Prayer of pariah and the lover's cry." As "threshold" it is associated with growth, and since the poet is at this point beneath this threshold there is the suggestion of the subliminal reception of the act of the imagination as well as of the motion upwards and onwards that characterizes the organic life of the imagination in its movement toward its truth in utterance. The image foreshadows the symbolic union of nature and the machine that occurs under the aegis of the Bridge in "Atlantis," where "the cities are endowed/ And justified conclamant with ripe fields/Revolving through their harvests in sweet torment." As "prayer of pariah" the Bridge, as the act of the imagination, serves as symbol of the desire of the outcast for union, integration, the full disclosure denied the multitudes at the cinemas. As the "lover's cry" the Bridge symbolizes the act of the imagination in its hope for a response from the world, for a renewal of life gained from the poem's efficacy

on the reader's consciousness. The "lover's cry" involves both joy and pain, and the cry is concomitant with the birth of the truth of the imagination, rendered in the poem itself.

In the next stanza night has fallen, and the Bridge in darkness is beaded by traffic lights "that skim" its "swift/ Unfractioned idiom." The "inviolate curve" of the gull has here become, with an important change, the "Unfractioned idiom" of the Bridge. The speech imagery in the "Unfractioned idiom" and the "immaculate sigh of stars" emphasizes that, rather than the merely natural flight of the gull, the Bridge as act of the imagination is an artifact of words, of poetry, an organic construction, and that The Bridge is the attempt to create such a Bridge, such a "multitudinous Verb." It harmonizes the mechanical traffic lights as well as the "immaculate sigh of stars" in its "path," its "stride," its "Unfractioned idiom," and by so doing it can "condense eternity." Thus the Bridge in "Proem" is a sign, a Muse, a symbol of possibilities for the poet himself, who hopes to accomplish in his poem a similar harmonization. His hopes lie in the fact that "we have seen night lifted in thine arms," that in the past he has known the power of the act of the imagination to bring light out of the darkness. He prays not to the natural gull, nor to the mental figures and fractions, but to the act of the imagination itself, the Bridge that unifies both nature and the mental-mechanical in its "Unfractioned idiom."

As "Proem" draws to a close the process by which the poet has moved from the vision of the gull flying toward the sun finds him under the shadow of the Bridge, waiting. He has moved through

the City to the Bridge, from the natural through the mechanical to the imaginative, and he declares that "Only in darkness is thy shadow clear." The season of Christmas is suggested: "The City's fiery parcels all undone,/Already snow submerges an iron year." And in conjunction with Christmas and the earlier "bedlamite" the waiting of the poet suggests a waiting for an epiphany, a birth, an insight. The paradox of the shadow of the Bridge being clear "only in darkness" suggests that the ultimate reality of the Bridge resides within the poet himself, that he has had to undergo a symbolic blinding of his mental faculties in order to truly perceive the force of the Bridge within himself as an "active principle" in his own consciousness. The organic construct of the act of the imagination is light-ridden, glorious, but the reader's final acceptance of it must be in the dark inarticulate regions of his consciousness, where it will serve to generate further acts of the imagination. This is the relationship of the poet to the Bridge at the end of "Proem," where he has finally come under the Bridge to wait for it to "sometime sweep, descend/And of the curveship lend a myth to God." He has come to recognize that the arching curve of the gull and the Bridge's "Unfractioned idiom" embody a truth that is his truth too, that of the life and power of the imagination which lies dormant, like the "prairies' dreaming sod," within him.

Thus, he prays to, invokes, the imagination itself, what Crane called the "power-in-repose" that is "Sleepless as the river under thee," the power of the life of the imagination. He recognizes that the "Unfractioned idiom" of the arching Bridge

is an arc on the circular process whereby the act of the imagination results from the life of the imagination and begets further imaginative life. Thus he perceives that he himself is the other half of the arching Bridge, and necessary to the unitive life of the imagination, that the "curveship" of the act of the imagination finds its source and goal in the life of the imagination itself, that he and the Bridge together form a unitive circle. Thus he introduces _The Bridge_, the record of how the imagination became empowered to create the Bridge, to embody its own truth in its own act so as to become a new condition of life that, as Crane believed, would generate "new spiritual articulations."

## AVE MARIA

"Ave Maria" records the struggle of Columbus, the American prototype of the man of imagination, to bring back home the "word" of his discovery of "Cathay." His initial discovery of land is told in retrospect, for as the poem opens he has already experienced this revelation. The imagery suggests that his problem is that of the second step in Crane's three-fold poetic process, namely the bringing to light for others, the making of a bridge to, the truth of the imagination. Columbus succeeds in transforming the ocean that threatens his "word" into a bridge that carries "Cathay" back to Europe. But Columbus discovers by his act, the harmonization of wind and water in one "teeming span," the regenerative nature and "Everpresence" ("Atlantis") of the imagination itself. Thus it is that the second step of the poetic process leads to the third, where the new discovery of the imagination's truth becomes a "condition of life" that begets further "spiritual articulations." And "Ave Maria," begun with a prophecy, concludes where it began, with Columbus affirming "still one shore beyond desire!"

The relationship of "Ave Maria" to The Bridge derives from its relationship to this same circular process of the imagination's life. Since consciousness must precede memory, etc., in the process of cognition, it is proper that this "history" ("Atlantis") of the "modern consciousness" begin with the first consciousness

of America. Columbus is an historical personage that the poet of The Bridge must move through if he is to re-enact the American Myth in a contemporary setting, rediscover Cathay-Atlantis via the Bridge. Columbus is the first representative of the American consciousness, as depicted by his warning to the Spaniard Ferdinand and his repudiation of the materialism which he senses to be both the basis of the European caste system and a threat to the imaginative exploitation of the newly-discovered Cathay. The association of Columbus with consciousness is further emphasized by the fact that the entire section is direct discourse, a product of his speech, a dramatic monologue delivered in the present from which the protagonist of The Bridge is absent. The rest of the poem is presented in terms of the protagonist's present existence, and constitutes a descending movement through memory to blood memory, then upwards to the realization of the act of the imagination in the present. As the sighting of the gull began the movement of the protagonist toward the Bridge in "Proem," so here the presentation of Columbus and his men, the "Great White Birds" of the American consciousness, begins a movement toward the Bridge of The Bridge, which is the protagonist's own act of the imagination. "Ave Maria," then, serves as a sort of farewell to Europe and European values and originates the development of the American consciousness in terms of the life of the imagination. Thus "Ave Maria" represents the first consciousness of America as "Cathay," through which the poet must move in order to embody the "truth" of America in The Bridge.

Within "Ave Maria" Columbus moves from a conscious evocation of historical personages, and the ritual forms of the prayer "Ave Maria" and hymn "Te Deum," to a recognition of a new mode of consciousness, that of the creative, mythic imagination. Within man the imagination emulates the Logos itself, the hidden source of the energies of the universe. Columbus's movement is characterized by a transformation of the mental abstractions into existential realities, vital specifics. The transformation is a stripping process whereby the historical Queen and King and Luis de San Angel, the theological Maria and Deus and Angelus, come down to love, system and music, finding their true source in "kingdoms naked in the trembling heart." This movement through reflective consciousness and the sentience of the body finds its resolution in the "parable of man," the organic construction of the imagination's "kindled Crown," the circular, unitive emblem of those "kingdoms naked." And as the poet moves through Columbus's conquest of consciousness to the conquest of the "body of the continent" in "Powhatan's Daughter," "Ave Maria" initiates a larger movement through The Bridge which it itself reflects.

"Ave Maria" stands in prophetic relationship to The Bridge in the same way that the introductory epigraph[1] from Seneca stands in prophetic relationship to "Ave Maria." In The Morning of the Magicians the authors quote from a speech by the historian René Alleau concerning the relevance of the epigraph from Medea to Columbus:

> Even in the case of still more important discoveries than these, we underestimate the influence of data supplied by the Ancients. Christopher Columbus admitted openly how much he owed to the old philosophers, poets and sages. It is not generally known that Columbus copied out twice the chorus in the second act of Seneca's tragedy Medea, in which the author speaks of a world destined to be discovered in future centuries. This copy can be examined in the MS. of Las profecias in the Library at Seville. Columbus also remembered Aristotle's observations regarding the roundness of the Earth in his treatise De Coelo.[2]

The significance which Columbus attached to the epigraph seems to be that of both intellectual knowledge and ritual-incantation, with the latter being more important. The epigraph served as a talisman for Columbus, and his invocation of it suggests that he considered himself in a line, a tradition, of voyaging explorers whose calling resembled a kind of manifest destiny. In the "Atlantis" section of The Bridge the kinship of Columbus, and of the poet himself, with earlier explorers is established, as the Bridge unites Tyre, Troy and "you, aloft there--Jason!" with Columbus and the poet in their efforts to "wrap harness to the swarming air!" Thus, as Columbus saw himself in the line of the Ancients, so the poet suggests that he is in the line of Columbus, the prototype of the American imagination. And just as Columbus invoked the Ancient prophecy as justification for his voyage, so the poet invokes Columbus himself, the discoverer of America, for justification in this initiatory stage of The Bridge. The epigraph from Seneca has the power of rubric for Columbus; it

is a set form, a ritual invocation, rather than a source of geographical knowledge, and his problem in "Ave Maria" is to infuse new vitality, new truth, into this rubric, to make Seneca's prophecy come true for him. The poet too has this problem, for he must make Columbus's discovery of "Cathay" (which in "Ave Maria" and in Crane's notes is more an "attitude of spirit" than a physical locale) come true in modern America. Thus his discovery of Atlantis is a discovery of "Cathay" as well, and a recognition of the fundamental truth that underlies the state discovered, no matter what its name.

The form of "Ave Maria" follows its function as initial step in the creation of the Bridge, for it imitates the process whereby the imagination assimilates and integrates all disparate elements into itself for the purpose of recreating them in a unified construct of its own making. The subject of "Ave Maria" is the consciousness of Columbus attempting to bring to light and life "the word" of its discovery, its "truth, now proved." The movement is one of descent from the initial discovery into the dark heart of the stormy and immediate situation in which Columbus finds himself, followed by a regeneration, an ascent into light and an assent to the truth of the imagination's accretion-creation of "This turning rondure whole." A "Te Deum" hymn in praise and recognition of the power that supports the unitive nature of the cosmos concludes the poem. Briefly, then, the structure of "Ave Maria" is that of a struggle resolving in a song, which of course is the same structure of The Bridge itself.

Writing to Waldo Frank, Crane commented on the rhythms of the poem: "observe the water-swell rhythm that persists until the Palos reference. Then the more absolute and marked intimation of the great Te Deum of the court, later held,--here in terms of C.'s own cosmography."[3] This movement from the "Crested and creeping, troughing corridors" of the rough sea which threatens the ship to the harmonization of sea and ship where "Dark waters onward shake the dark prow free" rhythmically reflects the pro--cess of harmonization which characterizes the act of the imagination, and results from "Some inmost sob, half-heard" which "Merges the wind in measure to the waves." Similarly, the movement from the light of Columbus's recollection of Spain and his first sighting of Cathay down into the darkness which surrounds the central action of "Ave Maria," the merging of wind and wave by the "inmost" sob, and from there up with the "modulated fire" of "The kindled Crown," reflects the integration of consciousness and experience into the life of the imagination which must precede the enlightened recognition of the unitive nature of the truth of the imagination. "Ave Maria," then, traces in its movement a curve that is the opposite of the arching Bridge: from light to dark to light, from the opening speech of Columbus down through the churning rhythms of the sea and, finally, up in measured song. Where the central figure of "Proem" was the completed Bridge, here the central figure is Columbus descending into the subterranean depths of the self, the dark heart, in search of the "inmost sob" that can create a "teeming span," a Bridge, out of the threatening ocean. Thus "Ave Maria" centers on the other

half of the circular process by which a Bridge is created, the assimilation and integration of disparate elements by the living imagination.

The situation of Columbus at the beginning of "Ave Maria" is similar to that of the poet at the end of "Proem," for both "have seen" a truth that they are presently attempting to translate into a "word." Columbus is trying to bring back the word of his discovery of Cathay, and the poet is trying to write a record of his vision of the Bridge. And as the poet begins his effort with the example of Columbus, so Columbus begins his effort with the remembrance of "Luis de San Angel. . . O you who reined my suit/Into the Queen's great heart that doubtful day." A response from the "Queen's great heart" made possible the journey of Columbus, just as the answered prayer to "Madre Maria," the "inmost sob, half-hear," calmed the stormy ocean. The Queen is the mediatrix between Columbus and Ferdinand, just as the Virgin in Christian tradition stands between man and God, and just as the Bridge in "Proem" stands between the poet and "a myth to God." But, as Crane noted in his letter to Frank, the "cosmography" of Columbus provides merely the "terms" of "Ave Maria," so Crane is not necessarily appealing to the truths of the Christian religion. Rather, he is imaging what was for him a more fundamental truth, that of the life of the imagination, and it is the movement into the "heart" that is important, for from it the "love" necessary to the act of imagination is drawn. The heart is the vital center of life itself, the source of the passions that can be turned to poetry by the imagination's act.[4] In the beginning

of "Ave Maria" the sea itself is alive with "Invisible valves. . . locks, tendons," like some great heart, but it is "harsh," and "tests the word" of the initial discovery. It must be harmonized, pacified, if the word is to survive. Columbus recalls his first sighting of "The Chan's great continent," when "faith, not fear/ Nigh surged me witless." He remembers that earlier, more propitious juxtaposition of the ocean's energies and human vision:

> . . . . Hearing the surf near--
> I, wonder-breathing, kept the watch,--saw
> The first palm chevron the first lighted hill.

This sighting is his inspiration, his breath of "wonder" that turned fear to "faith." Yet implicit in this image of the "first palm" as "chevron" of the "first lighted hill" (note the emphasis on the "first," the prototypical) is the descent and death that must follow if the vision is to be brought back in a "word." For in the choice of "chevron" Crane invokes the word's etymological association with the goat of sacrifice and the tragic note that is the "goat's song." Paradoxically the palm, the tree of life, is linked with the goat of death and sacrifice, suggesting the inseparable union of death and resurrection which Crane uses to image the purifying, atoning process of the imagination throughout The Bridge. The Christian allusion implicit in the image is more explicit in the later reference to the "incognizable Word/Of Eden and the enchained Sepulchre," and supports the relationship between this death and the birth of the "word."

Significantly, Columbus's sighting of the palm on the "hill" is followed immediately by a descending notion, that of "lowering." Exactly what is "lowered" is uncertain, whether the anchor, the

small boats of the ship, or even Columbus himself from his look-out in the masts; but this indefiniteness functions to emphasize the motion itself, the descent that follows the revelation, and which, hopefully, leads to the recording of that revelation in the "word" of the discovery. The voyage of Columbus is associated with the flight of the gull in "Proem," for the Indians greet him and his sailors "crying,/'The Great White Birds!'," and by inference the sighting of the palm on the hill is linked with the gull's ascending flight, both natural inspirations that encourage man to embody their truth in the act of the imagination, the "word." Columbus attempts a birth of the word in the abortive gesture of dropping into the sea a "casque" containing news of his discovery and "record of more," which falls, foetus-like, from "under bare poles." This historically and poetically fruitless attempt to convey the word of his discovery, to bring it to birth, ends as mere "pawn," with the derogatory pun on "spawn," for the sea, and echoes the similarly abortive death of the bedlamite, the "jest" from the "speechless caravan" of "Proem," who drowns in that world of water which "tests the word."

Contrasted with the aborted word of the casque and the bedlamite is the vital "inmost sob" which "dissuades the abyss,/ Merges the wind in measure to the waves," and leads to the hymn _Te Deum_ at the conclusion of "Ave Maria." The motion of descent continues from the image of the casque being dropped into the water to the image of the "shadow" that "cuts sleep from the heart/Almost as though the Moor's flung scimitar/Found more than flesh to fathom in its fall," and the descending rhythm and

lengthening vowel sounds of the last line echo the sense. The descent has become interiorized, moving into the heart of Columbus, threatening that faith that is "more than flesh," both his Christian faith and his faith in his vision of Cathay. But it is at this point that the "inmost sob, half-heard" and by implication half-spoken, like the "whispers antiphonal" at the end of "Atlantis," occurs to "dissuade the abyss" and instigate an outward, upward motion that results in the harmonization and unification of the entire cosmos. This "inmost sob" is the paradoxical cry of joy and pain that heralds the emergence, the birth, of the act of the imagination; it is the perfect fusion, the point of atonement, which precedes the resurrection of the vital "word." It emanates from the heart, the center of vitality and love, and moves through the eyes and mouth, the seat of voice, vision, and system, into the light as music. The outward, expansive movement proceeds through "Series on series, infinite,--til eyes/Starved wide on blackened tides, accrete-enclose/This turning rondure whole, this crescent ring." The circle symbolizes the unitive vision that is accreted-created by the upward motion through the eyes of that initial "inmost sob," an act that recalls the gull's constructive upward flight through "white rings of tumult." And the "inviolate curve" of the gull is here the "crescent ring," the arc on the curvature of the earth which is now perceived as part of the whole circle and will not "forsake our eyes," as did the natural gull. For this "crescent ring" that bespeaks a "turning rondure whole" is an organic construction "Sun-cusped and zoned with modulated fire/Like pearls that

whisper through the Doge's hands." The "hands" suggest a human maker and shaper of this organic construction, and foreshadow the later "Te Deum laudamus/O Thou Hand of Fire." It is not God who is the maker, though Columbus's "cosmography" terms him so, but the Promethean and human imagination itself, the source of the "inmost sob." And the comparison of the gradually lightening earth to "pearls that whisper through the Doge's hands" emphasizes the role of the human maker, for it is based on the fact that pearls take their color and warm glow from contact with human flesh. The source of the circle of unitive vision is Columbus himself, Crane's prototype of the American man of imagination, who has embodied his "inmost sob" in the "turning rondure whole," and now proceeds to assent, through his concluding hymn Te Deum, to the truth of his imaginative vision.

Between the description of Columbus's struggle with the sea and his hymn of praise occurs a transitional stanza, separated from the rest by asterisks, which functions to modulate the tone and rhythm of the "water-swell" crescendo and prepare for what Crane called "the climacteric vision of Columbus."[5] Columbus has come near to "Palos again,--a land cleared of long war," which was the starting point of his circular journey, and his peace is matched by his freedom as "Dark waters onward shake the dark prow free." His return is heralded by an "Angelus" that environs the cordage tree," and the image of the "Angelus" suggests that the Annunciation of the birth of the word has been made to Columbus, which of course it has, since it is this "word" that he utters in his concluding hymn. The image also presents

a transformation of the earlier image of the "palm chevron," both in the play on the "chevron-environs" sound and in the sense of the change from the tragic to the joyful song of the "Angelus." The descent and death that were necessary to transform the initial vision of Cathay into the word of the act of the imagination have led to this song of imminent birth ascending round "the cordage tree," and "Ave Maria" moves into the final Te Deum.

Columbus's concluding hymn is, on the literal level, a Te Deum to God Himself, but several things indicate that the God of Columbus is best understood as the Imagination. First there is the comment by Crane that he wrote "Ave Maria" in terms of the cosmography, etc., of Columbus, as well as his acknowledgement that the only absolute to which he ascribed was that of the imagination. There is also the persistent imagistic association of the God of Columbus with the Bridge of "Proem" and "Atlantis," which is the poem's symbol of the imagination. And, the use which Crane makes of the Christian tradition suggests that is the concept of the Logos and the Word made Flesh, concepts which are peculiarly suited to his belief in the absolute of the imagination, which are of major interest to him. So far from suggesting that Christian dogma is the substantive element of his poem, Crane actually presents Columbus moving through the forms and terms of Christianity to a recognition of his more fundamental relationship with the order of the unitive imagination. This is the order that governs "kingdoms naked in the trembling heart," the realm to which Columbus assents at the end of "Ave Maria."

The concluding section of "Ave Maria" evinces a steady, controlled rhythm, as befits the solemnity of a Te Deum, and in this regard contrasts with the earlier description of the turbulent, tumultuous sea. The section stands as a song in relation to the first section of "Ave Maria," and, as Crane noted in his letter, is "later" in time, and "more absolute and marked," than the first section. The agony of Columbus wrestling with the ocean and himself for mastery of "the word" is done. Here Columbus delivers a measured and harmonious prayer to the Word itself, to the power which enabled him to give birth to his "word" of discovery, and to the process by which he became empowered to do so. Columbus recognizes not only the truth of his particular act of the imagination in calming the sea but also the truth of the unitive nature of the imagination itself, the Logos that is the source of all particular imaginative acts. This is the ultimate revelation for the man of imagination, for it means that he has discovered the true source of his being in a power of which he partakes but which endures beyond his particular acts. Thus the man of imagination recognizes, as Columbus here does, "still one shore beyond desire."[6]

The concluding section moves from a consideration of the paradoxical nature of "Thou who sleepest on Thyself" and the deity's relationship to man to the recognition of the power of this deity in the world and in the universe itself. It ends with a recognition of the unitive nature of all things in the circle of "thy purpose." The deity of Columbus, who "sleepest on Thyself," is self-supporting and self-regenerating. He is

compared to that third world "of water," the ocean which is both "apart" and "athwart lanes of death and birth." The reversal of the usual progression from birth to death in this phrase suggests the process by which the man of imagination moves through death to birth, as Columbus has just done, descending into the ocean of his heart in order to ascend with the word of Cathay. The ocean is specifically associated with human life in the image of "all the eddying breath between" these poles of death and birth. The deity searches "Cruelly with love thy parable of man" says Columbus, recognizing the paradoxical nature of the search and its resolution in the unitive nature of man's "parable," his bridge-like "breath between" the "lanes of death and birth." Just as man is God's "parable," His symbol of the union of physical and spiritual in Columbus's "cosmography," so man's own creative act of imagination is his "parable," his symbolic union of disparate, antithetical elements in the harmonious whole of the song or poem, the "word." And it is this Logos aspect of the deity which Columbus addresses: "Inquisitor! incognizable Word/of Eden and the enchained Sepulchre." This is the paradox which Columbus must recognize in God and in himself, the seeming contradiction between the God of creation and life and the God of suffering and death, the central mystery of Christian tradition. The triadic movement from glory through ruin to restoration is not only the process by which Christ redeemed the world but also the process by which the man of imagination brings back his "word." The inclusive Bridge is only possible after the curve under has been completed, so the process describes a complete circle.

Crane suggested, by placing the quotation from Blake as epigraph to "The Tunnel," "To Find the Western path, Right thro' the Gates of Wrath," how the man of imagination must proceed. The descent and death of the "enchained Sepulchre" is a necessary part of the restoration of "Eden." Hence Columbus ends this stanza with an affirmation of that process: "Into thy steep savannahs, burning blue,/Utter to loneliness the sail is true." The paradox of this process is reflected in the "steep savannahs" and "burning blue," and the imagery recalls Whitman's description of the voyage that is dangerous "but safe" as the navigator's blood "burns" in his veins---suggesting as Crane himself does that the voyage is an internal as well as external one. "Utter to loneliness" recalls the "inmost sob, half-heard" of Columbus's earlier voyage, and suggests that the act which calmed the sea was a human act, efficacious without the intercession of divinity, done in "loneliness." The act was for Columbus the evidence of his experience of a recognition, as Crane said a poem should be, and its effectiveness as "significant articulation" is evident in its harmonizing of the sea and wind. It did not express any philosophical truth, nor did it appeal through ritual forms or terms to any God. It is to this "loneliness," this absence of direct evidence of God, that the "sail is true," and by implication it is this "loneliness" which is the truth, a power within man which he himself must bring to light. This is the significance of the contrast between the set forms of "Ave Maria," "Madre Maria," and "Te Deum" and the ultimate recognition of Columbus that it is the "kingdoms/naked in the/trembling heart" which are

finally the source of his success and his act of imagination. The movement of The Bridge is similar to the movement of "Ave Maria" through such honorific terms to the existential realities of "heart" and "love" and "music" as loci of the "truth" of the man of imagination. Once Columbus has been divested of his honorific role as discoverer of America and seen more existentially as a man of imagination, the poet can begin to discover in himself the same quality which Columbus discovers at the end of "Ave Maria." Just as the gull of "Proem" built freedom by "shedding white rings of tumult," so the poet proceeds through The Bridge as Columbus proceeds through "Ave Maria," by assuming, living in, and then shedding, sloughing off, different skins, different "white rings of tumult," different states of consciousness, all in search of what Crane called "the conquest of consciousness" by the organic imagination.

From the paradoxical description of the nature of this unseen power Columbus moves to a recognition of that power in terms of nature, of the scientific knowledge of his time, and finally of a synthesis of nature and science in the unitive order of the imagination. The progression culminates in the "kindled Crown," the circle encompassing the whole cosmos and harmonizing all elements in its unitive vision, and then settles into the recognition of the true source of the power:

"And kingdoms
naked in the
trembling heart--."

The movement of the stanza describing the existence of this power in nature proceeds from the antithetical terms of the paradox to its resolution. The power is that which "grindest oar, and

arguing the mast/Subscribest holocaust of ships," who destroys and, ambiguously, "Subscribest," underwrites in some inscrutable providential manner this "holocaust." It lies beneath as the Word or Logos that provides an order, a raison d'etre even for death by fire. The power is the curving eye "Within whose primal scan consummately/The glistening seignories of Ganges swim," an image recalling the Bridge whose "unfractioned idiom" spanned "all tides below," for here the "primal scan" encompasses the whole earth, "this turning rondure whole" which Columbus's vision accreted-created on his voyage. This power not only destroys but "sendest greeting by the corposant,/And Teneriffe's garnet--flamed it in a cloud,/Urging through night our passage to the Chan." The power, later named "Thou Hand of Fire," employs fire to purge, to destroy, but also to save, and the movement from this death to resurrection by fire is reflected in the movement from submergence to emergence, from sinking ships to flaming clouds, in the stanza. Columbus himself is moving in his speech from descent to ascent, and, as the paradoxical nature of this power is resolved, to assent. The purgative nature of fire, and the apearance of God-like power in a flame, recalls the earlier mention of the prophet Isaiah and suggests that his relevance to the process of resurrecting the "word" from a death by fire stems from his image in the Old Testament as the prophet whose lips were cleansed by a burning coal sent from God. Columbus resolves this description of a paradoxical power in the same way Isaiah did, by praising the purgation that leads to truth: "Te Deum laudamus, for thy teeming span!" The "teeming span,"

associated by rhyme with the previous "primal scan," is more explicitly a bridge that encompasses all "teeming" elements below, and the use of the dynamic "teeming" recalls the description in "Proem" of the Bridge as having "Some motion ever unspent in thy stride." Both images suggest the active nature of the Bridge, the vitality of the "organic construct" that embodies the truth of the imagination or, for Columbus, the truth of the Word.

From this description of the power whose "primal scan" encompasses all space Columbus moves to a consideration of the "amplitude that time explores," the enduring quality of the power everpresent, "The orbic wake of thy once whirling feet." The science of navigation, through the instrument of the compass, depends on this power as much as does the natural phenomena of fire and rivers. And the compass emulates the process of birth through death, of affirmation through negation, for it is "A needle in the sight, suspended north,---/Yielding by inference and discard, faith/And true appointment from the hidden shoal." Through "inference and discard" comes "true appointment," and it is this stripping, purging quality, this finding of position by "disposition," that characterizes the assimilating, integrating action of the imagination. Like the _deus absconditus_, the god of fire and whirlwinds that Columbus addresses, it can only be known by its effects, its signs, just as the "parable" must be known through indirection. The stanza concludes with Columbus's affirmation of the power he cannot see:

> This disposition that thy night relates
> From Moon to Saturn in one sapphire wheel:
> The orbic wake of thy once whirling feet,
> Elohim, still I hear thy sounding heel!

The entire universe is united in the circle of "one sapphire wheel," which is "the orbic wake," the residue of a dance of "thy once whirling feet." That the act of the Logos, the creation of the universe, should be imaged as a dance not only suggests Crane's appropriate use of the Renaissance notion of the cosmic dance but also initiates a motif of creation imaged as a dance or music which persists throughout the poem: in "The Dance," the epigraph to "Atlantis," and the image of the Bridge as "harp," among other places. The dance symbolizes the unitive act, as here it symbolizes the ordering act of the Logos. Further, this act integrates, embodies, both dancer and dance, as Columbus declares, "Elohim, still I hear thy sounding heel!"[7] The symbol of the unitive truth, the absolute of the imagination rendered in an act, a dance, is the circle, for the act itself is one of drawing within the circle's scope or "scan" or "span" all diverse elements, as the whirlwind fuses all in its motion.

This affirmation of the unitive nature of the universe is followed by a steady, triumphant description of the power of the imagination in the present raising day out of night. It is the assent of Columbus to the truth of the imagination's unitive and regenerative nature, and it leads him through an assent to the unitive nature of the cosmos to a recognition of the existence of that same power within himself. The unitive labor of the universe is imaged in a manner that recalls the gull of "Proem":

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

The unitive nature of the universe musters "all sails," supports and "subscribes" them in their voyage to "knowledge," urges them on to "new spiritual articulations." The constructive act is associated with the organic growth cycle of "fields" and "seething wheat," the organic nature that draws its energies from the same source that musters the "sails" of the voyaging men of imagination. The image recalls that of the Bridge "Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod," and similarly suggests the unitive nature of the imagination, the truth of Yeats' statement that "the laws of the imagination are the laws of the universe," as well as the concomitance of growth and decay. The "kindled Crown" is the symbolic circle that signals the absolute of the imagination, here for Columbus the absolute of Christ the King of the World, the Word risen in glory. This final resurrection continues the motion of the orbic earth, for "acceded of the poles/And biassed by full sails, meridians reel/ Thy purpose." The image of the movement "acceded of the poles" suggests that the parable, the parabola of the earth, has been released, sent spinning, given, as Crane hoped he could give his poems, "an orbit or predetermined direction of its own." The "evocation" of this "kindled Crown" and the earth it sends spinning is for Columbus what Crane hoped his poems would be for his readers, a bridge toward "a state of consciousness." The new state of consciousness for Columbus is the recognition of his own part in the unitive nature of the universe and of the laws of the imagination operative within him. Thus the poem concludes with Columbus recognizing "still one shore beyond

desire" and other "kingdoms naked in the trembling heart" of which he must still bring back the word, bring into the light of the "kindled Crown." For this recognition he praises the source of the purgative fire and the unitive vision, the love-driven imagination itself, "O Thou Hand of Fire." Thus Columbus comes at the end of "Ave Maria" to the same recognition that the poet came to at the end of "Proem," namely the recognition of the power of the imagination itself that lies beneath and informs all particular acts of imagination, all particular bridges. He comes to realize the regenerative life of the imagination in himself. The use of the circle to symbolize the process by which the imagination unifies all elements within its "primal scan," and by which it begets itself out of itself, leads to the next section of The Bridge. There the journey is imaged in the epigraph as a turning of cartwheels at the command of Pocahontas, the symbol of the "body of the continent" which Columbus has just discovered and which the poet must now explore.

THE HARBOR DAWN

Writing to Otto Kahn about the first section of "Powhatan's Daughter" Crane noted that "this legato, in which images blur as objects only half apprehended on the border of sleep and consciousness, makes an admirable transition between the intervening centuries."[1] The contrast between the triumphant concluding hymn of "Ave Maria" and the smoothly modulated rhythm and even tonality of "The Harbor Dawn" serves several structural functions. Most importantly, the legato is a bridge between the "climacteric" vision of Columbus, a conclusion, and a new beginning heralded by the waking of the poet himself into consciousness. The "border of sleep and consciousness," the "waking dream" of the poet, is exactly the psychic locale of those dumb but urgent "new conditions of life" which give impetus to "new spiritual articulations."[2] Objects "only half apprehended" mark this synesthetic interpenetration of water and land, this passage from the ocean of Columbus to the body of Pocahontas, as "The Harbor Dawn" renders the formless but potentially harmonious elements which the poet's imagination must work with. The imagery of gestation, dominant in this section, suggests the state of the poet's consciousness in this first section of "Powhatan's Daughter." And the dawn begins a movement through one day in which the poet, via dream and memory, explores his American heritage, recovering it in terms of the present, integrating it into his living imagination until he

can carry it "home across the Bridge" ("Cutty Sark"), and finally into the radiant light of Atlantis.

An examination of "The Harbor Dawn" reveals its structural parallels with "Ave Maria," always, of course, "under modifications of environment, etc." In "The Harbor Dawn" the poet is between sleep and consciousness, as "a tide of voices--/. . . meet you listening midway in your dream." In this "waking dream," this "midway" point, he resembles Columbus floating "between two worlds"; and, indeed, the poet's state is imaged as a watery "pillowed bay" where voices come in a "tide." The similarity continues in terms of action, for as Columbus moved from his midway point to a union of the poles by an act of creation-accretion of "this turning rondure whole," so here the poet meets Pocahontas in his "waking dream" and engenders a movement toward a new "spiritual articulation," symbolized by the freeing of "The sun, released--aloft with cold gulls hither." This sun is not the full-blown "turning rondure whole" of Columbus, but rather an impetus to further action, to the pursuit of Pocahontas and the total union with her in "The Dance." The sun functions as the gull in "Proem," with which it is linked, as a sign of natural vitality. And where in "Ave Maria" the symbolic circle of the earth prepared for the song of praise, here the "released" sun urges the poet on toward his unitive act of "The Dance."

Other parallels between the two sections serve to forge a continuity within the poem. The quest motif of Columbus is continued here in the subtle allusions to Ulysses and his odyssey, specifically in the images of the "sirens" and the "Cyclopean

towers across Manhattan waters" and "The sun, released." This submerged metaphor of the quest, which links the poet and the poetic process with the quest-hero and the quest-process, culminates in the explicit reference to Jason and the Argonauts in the "Atlantis" section, and provides just one of the multiple dimensions which Crane fuses in The Bridge. The imagination's power, imaged at the end of "Ave Maria" as a "Hand of Fire," becomes here a hand of sleep and dream which begins the shaping process. Appropriately for this initial section of "Powhatan's Daughter," which Crane compared to "the sowing of the seed,"[3] the hands are those of lovers in mutual embrace, where "your hands within my hands are deeds," of both trust and action, whose effects are not immediately known. The image of the hand as maker, shaper, creator, suggests the creative activity of the imagination; and in "The Harbor Dawn" the hands suggest the first coupling of materials, the prelude to creation.

The element of love which accompanies this creative union recalls the function of the Virgin in "Ave Maria," the source and object of that "inmost sob, half-heard" by which Columbus "merges the wind in measure to the waves." In a letter Crane discussed this love-motif:

> The love motif (in italics) carries along a symbolism of the life and ages of man (here the sowing of the seed) which is further developed in each of the subsequent sections of "Powhatan's Daughter," though it is never particularly stressed. In 2 ("Van Winkle") it is childhood; in 3 it is Youth; in 4, Manhood; in 5 it is Age. This motif is interwoven and tends to be implicit in the imagery rather than anywhere stressed.[4]

In both "Ave Maria" and "The Harbor Dawn" this love-motif extends not only to the human but to the natural as well: the sowing of the seed is prepared for by a similar imaging of conception in terms of the natural world. The fog on the harbor is a "blankness," and "Somewhere out there. . . steam/Spills into steam, and wanders, washed away/--Flurried by keen fifings, eddied/Among distant chiming buoys--adrift." The random union of steam spilling into steam, the funereal associations of the accompanying "keen fifings," suggest the unproductive and hence foredoomed motions of natural energy unconverted by the act of the imagination. The image recalls the "bewilderment" of Columbus before his act of imagination, and prepares for the passionate flow of the River which precedes the act of the imagination in "The Dance." The conversion of natural energy into the imagination's artifact must come about in conjunction with love: just as Columbus appeals to the Virgin, so here the poet merges with Pocahontas to order the chaos of unshaped nature, to form the "Music" which is "the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system" ("Atlantis"). Thus one task of the unitive imagination is to turn the vital energy of nature to human, imaginative purposes, to move beyond the gull to the Bridge. In "The Harbor Dawn" this movement is from the harbor to the poet's room, where the fruitful merger of lovers occurs.

That purpose is one aspect of the act of the imagination is evident from the transformation of the steam that "eddied/ Among distant chiming buoys--adrift" through a process of distillation into the dawn which the eyes of Pocahontas "drink"

while "a forest shudders in your hair!", an obvious image of sexual consummation. A marked similarity between the image of steam wandering "Among distant chiming buoys" and that of Columbus wandering "between two worlds" as "the eddying breath" between "lanes of death and birth" further emphasizes the Cranian definition of man as a "parable." The act proper to the imagination is the distillation and reproduction in human and potent form, like the sperm of the poet-lover here, of the abundant natural energies in a poem that can embody the imagination's truth and lead to "new spiritual articulations." Here the distillation of the harbor fog by the "sky/Cool feathery fold" results in the symbolic birth of the sun which the poet must follow through and beyond its circuit to recover his lover Pocahontas and possess the Indian culture and America's past. For this beginning of the circular journey, as for the beginning of the journey that results from the completion of the Bridge in "Atlantis," the poet knows that "love strikes clear direction for the helm."

"The Harbor Dawn" concludes as did "Ave Maria," with the suggestion of beginning rather than finality, with an impetus onward; thus it emulates the life of the imagination, which is always moving, even when it seems to have successfully completed an action. That a conception has occurred is suggested both in the description of the lovers'union and the subtler image of the "mistletoe of dreams," which recalls the Christmas season, the "bedlamite," and another Incarnation. The image of "still one shore beyond desire" which concluded "Ave Maria" is here echoed

in the disappearance of the star, "As though to join us at some distant hill," which "Turns in the waking west and goes to sleep." The woman of the poet's dream has vanished, but there is the promise of her future appearance if the poet can move through time and space, and it is with a certain confidence that he proceeds toward the star and distant hill in "The Dance."

## VAN WINKLE

"Van Winkle," the second section of "Powhatan's Daughter," continues the movement backward in time and westward in space begun in "The Harbor Dawn," and continues as well the subtle but definite growth of the poet's life and the "ages of man" through childhood. Crane explained the action of this section in a letter to Waldo Frank:

> The protagonist has left the room with its harbor sounds, and is walking to the subway. The rhythm is quickened; it is a transition between sleep and the immanent (sic) tasks of the day. Space is filled with the music of a hand organ and fresh sunlight, and one has the impression of the whole continent--from Atlantic to Pacific--freshly arisen and moving. The walk to the subway arouses reminiscences of childhood, also the "childhood" of the continental conquest, viz., the conquistadores, Priscilla, Capt. John Smith, etc. These parallelisms unite in the figure of Rip Van Winkle, who finally becomes identified with the protagonist, as you will notice, and who really boards the subway with the reader. He becomes the "guardian angel" of the journey into the past.[1]

The two movements, the descent of the poet into the past of the continent and the ascent of the poet from birth through childhood and youth to Manhood, appear antagonistic rather than parallel. But the exploration of the American past is simultaneous with a remembrance of the poet's own past, and both movements aim for an

integration of experience in terms of the poet's present consciousness. This integration comes from the unitive act of "The Dance," where the poet not only recovers the Indian culture in its mythic entirety but also undergoes a symbolic sexual encounter that initiates him into Manhood. He learns on both levels the power and limitations of the passions, and thus prepares for his exploration of the continent's spirit in the second half of The Bridge.

In "Van Winkle" the importance of time is evident in the title itself, which invokes the American legend of the man who slept for twenty years, wakening to find himself "not here/nor there." As Crane noted in a letter, Van Winkle functions as Dante's Vergil, a "guardian angel" to lead the descent into the past. The past of continent and childhood is here connected by the fact that as a schoolchild the poet "walked with Pizarro in a copybook,/And Cortes rode up, reining tautly in." The breakdown of chronological time and temporal suspense which characterized "The Harbor Dawn" is continued here, as "space is filled with music" and the poet perambulates the surface of land and "copybook" memory on "gold arpeggios," preparing to descend into "blood memory." "Van Winkle" evinces circular form, beginning and ending with the same stanza. And the interspersion of italicized stanzas of nusery-rhyme rhythm maintains the force of the poet's initial injunction to "Listen! the miles a hurdy-gurdy grinds--/Down gold arpeggios mile on mile unwinds." The cinematic unwinding of "mile on mile" and image after image appeals to the surface consciousness, defeating efforts to abstract meaning

or deep significance, and thus aptly renders the imagination's activity at this stage of the poet's progress. He is not recreating or reordering materials, but rather allowing them to flit across the surface of consciousness, the "copybook" of rote memory. "Van Winkle" specifically links music with the associational processes of memory, as the hurdy-gurdy encourages "memory, that strikes a rhyme out of a box,/Or splits a random smell of flowers through glass." This activity allows the poet to emulate Van Winkle's movement out of time, becoming "time's truant" as "The grind-organ says. . . Remember, remember."

The initial image of "Van Winkle" is one of transformation as well as transition, and thereby sets the pattern for the rest of this section: "Macadam, gun-grey as the tunny's belt,/Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate." The image of macadam spanning the continent in one leap recalls the description of the Bridge "Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod" in "Proem," and continues the connecting of past and present, East and West, which is the goal of "Powhatan's Daughter." But this bridge of macadam involves more than a mere transition from "Far Rockaway to Goden Gate," as, indeed, the Bridge itself involves more than motion; the connective Bridge, the "organic construction" of the highway "gun-grey as the tunny's belt," involves the integration and transformation of nature and machine, the vital and the mechanical, in the life of the imagination. Here the imagistic union of the natural and the mechanical reflects this integration. But also suggested is the fact that the leaping macadam is the result as well as the embodiment of the transforming life-process of the

imagination. Connections are generated out of the tension of the integrative process of the imagination, and a certain amount of destruction is necessary for creation of the "parable of man." The necessity of death, of destruction through integration, for creation is here implied in the image of the tunny's "gun-grey. . . belt." The movement from the sea of "The Harbor Dawn" to the land of "Van Winkle" is imaged as a shifting of energy, the transformation of the fish's grey belt into the macadam over which the poet will move through the land, and this transformation involves the integration, hence destruction, of the sea life. The living and "leaping" bridge of macadam that results from this transformation of energy is one of the poem's many synecdoches of the Bridge itself, and the process of life proceeding from death via the connective experience is synecdoche of the process by which the unitive imagination lives and moves.

The theme of transformation established in this initial image of "Van Winkle" continues throughout. Past and present time blend in the reverie evoked by the hurdy-gurdy music, and the poet remembers "Times earlier, when you hurried off to school,/It is the same hour though a later day." The standard of time here is the circuit of the sun through one day, not the linear abstraction of historical time, for the connection between present and past depends on the recognition of time as "the same hour though a later day." The use of a point on the sun's circuit rather than a point on the mind's line insures that past and present can merge, and emphasizes the circular and regenerative nature of the imagination's life, whose time perception resembles

that ancient symbol of the snake eating its tail, turning in a never-ending (or beginning) circle. For the imagination time is an eternal Now, and the imagination lives in an "Everpresence, beyond time." ("Atlantis") Van Winkle, of course, is a perfect symbol for this stage of the poet's life, for he has seen urban Broadway transformed from a "Catskill daisy chain in May."

The transformation of fleeting reminiscences of the poet's past into major symbols of experience later in The Bridge provides another example of the imagination's regenerative process. The stoning of "young/Garter snakes under. . . And the monoplanes/We launched--with paper wings and twisted/Rubber bands," both cryptic shorthands of memory here, are, in "The River" and "Cape Hatteras," transformed into major symbols of experience. Similarly, the poet's memory of "the whip stripped from the lilac tree/One day in spring my father took to me" and of "the Sabbatical, unconscious smile/ My mother almost brought me once from church/And once only, as I recall" are metamorphosed forms of the suffering and death (in the "whip" of "lilac") and liberation through love (the "Sabbatical," hence liberating, "unconscious smile") which are elements integral to the creative act of imagination. The evanescent smile, especially, reminds us that the poet's childhood is unredeemed at this stage of the journey, but that Love (recall the lover of "The Harbor Dawn") is both source and goal of the imagination's life in The Bridge, and capable of liberating the poet into creative action. As if sensing this the poet (now fused with Van Winkle, Crane tells us) tucks the newspaper, the "Times," under his arm, and descends to the subway that will carry him to the River and beyond, into the "timeless" and mythic realm of "The Dance."

## THE RIVER

In "The River" the poet moves beyond the reminiscences of his and the nation's childhood to a fuller exploration of the body of the continent and his own youth. The poet is led onwards by his quest for Pocahontas and the liberating love she symbolizes; and he journeys by train to the Mississippi River, then descends to the Gulf. The River is, as Crane called it, "a great River of Time," and its thrust, its passion, is for a release from time into eternity. This is its "dream," and it is similar to the poet's own "dream of act." The dominant value of "The River," suggested in the energetic rhythms and the imagery, is passion; and the act of "The River" is the poet's movement through passion to the mythic land of "The Dance." The allusions to the Passion and Atonement of Jesus clustered at the end of "The River," where the flow dies in the Gulf, suggest an analogy for the movement out of time. In Christian tradition the Passion and Death of Jesus are necessary preludes to the Resurrection and entrance into the Kingdom of God. The Atonement fuses past, present, and future in one moment, and prepares for time's redemption and Christ's Resurrection. The exhaustion of natural energies in death prepares for entrance into the spiritual, as in *The Bridge* the death of the River and its natural energies leads the poet into a mythic state. There his resurrected

body can know Pocahontas "truly," and thereby truly know itself. "The River," then, renders the fusion of mechanical and organic motions, passions, in the "great River of Time," and renders the exhaustion of time's passion, and passion itself, in the Gulf. "The creative act of time appears first then as a death of time itself."[1]

The structure of "The River" is tripartite. The three divisions deal with, respectively, the machine and mechanical rhythms, the organic and the diurnal and seasonal rhythms of nature, and, finally, the integration and harmonization of these opposites in the "great River of Time" itself, which is imaged as the final measure of the mechanical and organic tributaries. The formal aspects of the poetry of these three sections reflects their function in relation to the attempt of the imagination to unify and harmonize them. The "telegraphic night" of the machine is rendered in an incantatory series of jumbled images and broken phrases, what Crane called "the strident impression of a fast express rushing by."[2] The wandering of the tramps across the country, and of the poet through his recollections of youth, is rendered in "a steady pedestrian gait." The final section, where train and tramps merge with the River, is characterized by a poetry of convoluted rhythms, a language thickened with puns and paradox that emulates the River as it "flows within itself," until finally the River (and the poetry) "spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow," as it meets the Gulf, with "hosannas silently below." This final suffering is "The Passion" generated from the River's efforts to unite and harmonize in "its one will" the

conflicting rhythms that feed it; and that one will is to "flow," to live and move beyond its fatal union with the "Gulf."

Various themes and motifs are clustered around this tripartite structure, and they flesh out the "parable of man" which the structure reflects, the Bridge that is "one arc synoptic of all tides below" ("Atlantis"). The machine is associated with all the accoutrements of the rational mentality: abstractions, such as clocks and the printed word, an urge to power through dominance rather than assimilation or loving union, a predisposition to logical reflection rather than intuitive feeling. The organic is associated with the body and the body's vitality, with Pocahontas herself, the body of the continent, who exists "beyond the print that bound her name." Neither machine nor land, urban nor pastoral, man nor woman, are in isolation self-sustaining or reduplicating; hence, though seeming opposites, they depend on one another for their own generation and regeneration, and this relationship, this antagonism, can only be reconciled through a third party or third principle, a bridge. In order that the poet may posit and act on the imagination's "Everpresence," he first destroys the segregative assumptions about time and space that threaten it. The purpose of this destruction of absolute, or classical, time in "The River" is similar to the purpose of the destruction of absolute space in "Cape Hatteras," and of absolute simultaneity throughout the poem. As Crane knew and felt, the classical rationalist framework that supported these assumptions had been seriously questioned by the formulation of the Relativity Principle (if not by something more mundane, hence poetic, like

the cinema or the light bulb). Hence he images the failure of reason and passion to achieve in isolation the unitive truth which he seeks, and then posits the imagination as the human faculty emulative of and capable of attaining to the love that is the foundation of his universe, the source and end of "spiritual articulations."

"The River" opens with the "telegraphic night" of the subway-express train speeding across the country, a movement westward in space and backward in time which continues the descent motif that concluded "Van Winkle." The journey across the continent in "The River" follows this pattern of descent, for the train joins the Mississippi River and the poet follows the flow "Down, down" into the Gulf. In a letter on this section, Crane wrote:

> the subway is simply a figurative, psychological "vehicle" for transporting the reader to the Middle West. He lands on the railroad tracks in the company of several tramps in the twilight. The extravagance of the first twenty-three lines of this section is an intentional burlesque on the cultural confusion of the present--a great conglomeration of noises analogous to the strident impression of a fast express rushing by. The rhythm is jazz.[3]

The "telegraphic night" that introduces "The River" represents a powerful shift from "Van Winkle," where "space is filled with the music of a hand organ and fresh sunlight" and the urban and pastoral motifs intermingle in the figure of Van Winkle, for in this express-train confusion, space is seen through "windows flashing roar" and

the "EXpress makes time like/SCIENCE" in this exercise of the Faustian demiurge that subverts and parodies the pastoral "as you like it. . . eh?" The process of mental abstraction associated with science is subtly caught in the "EXpress" and "WE HAVE THE NORTHPOLE/WALLSTREET AND VIRGIN BIRTH WITHOUT STONES OR/WIRES OR EVEN RUNning brooks connecting ears." Here objects are proper nouns dissociated from all material attachments, murderously "breathtaking" rather than inspiring. The threat to the unitive imagination is suggested in the ironic exclamation at science's achievements: "can you/imagine." The music of "Van Winkle" that urged the poet to "remember" has become a cacophony of dismemberment. A "brother" is just a "patent name on a signboard," another example of the extreme isolation of word and thing, mind and body, which the Faustian mentality of "Thomas/a Ediford" substitutes for the integrating act of the imagination. And the mechanical repetition of disjointed images never unified recalls the "panoramic sleights" of the "flashing scene,/Never disclosed" which drove the bedlamite to the Bridge in "Proem." The association of synthetic words, "Tintex--Japalac--Certain-teed Overalls," with the product-oriented methodology of "SCIENCE--COMMERCE" further suggests the mind-making habits of a society that has forgotten, perhaps fatally, the organic processes of the unitive imagination. Here the Faustian urge isolates and dismembers the developing world of The Bridge, setting the machine against nature and the vitality of man himself. The shining "multitudinous Verb" of the Bridge seems irrevocably fragmented in this "telegraphic night."

This failure of the "Twentieth Century Limited," science's

supreme fiction, to satisfy man is imaged as the failure to "feed" him, a metaphor of the act of nourishing the imagination throughout the poem. Here the train "roared by and left/three men, still hungry on the tracks," the hoboes, pariahs of the machine-age who roam the land by rail. The metaphor of feeding suggests the assimilative progress of the imagination, its movement via incorporation and recreation into its own "living stuff." Here it is finally the River itself that swallows the "trainmen" and hoboes who "feed it timelessly," as passion attempts to recreate itself out of time.

The death by drowning of Dan Midland, and the assimilation of the trainmen by the River, reveal not only the self-destructive aspects of the Faustian urge _in extremis_ but also, paradoxically, the salutary effects of such a destruction, and explains further the function of the "telegraphic night." Writing of "The River" Crane explained its movement:

> The reader is gradually led back in time to the pure savage world, while existing at the same time in the present. It has been a very complicated thing to do, and I think I have worked harder on this section of _The Bridge_ than on any other.[4]

The movement backward in time to the "pure" Indian world is paralleled by a movement through time and time's passion to the ever-present imagination. The essential movement is the one through states of mind, as "The River" renders the movement through reason and passion into the realm of the mythic imagination. Thus the process of descent and death via assimilation that occurs in "The River" prepares for the ascent to the source of the "Appalachian Spring"

in "The Dance." The "telegraphic night," then, renders the destructive aspects of the abstracting mind that are later assimilated, via the drowning of Dan Midland, into the flow of the River toward realization of its "dream." This defeat of the Faustian will to power is a necessary prelude to the act of creation, for it renders the poet's recognition of the "Limited" possibilities of the mind in isolation from love, and lends impetus to further exploration of the "body of the continent" and his own psychic regions.

In a letter Crane linked the hoboes of the second part of "The River" with the early pioneers moving into "interior after interior" toward the "pure savage world" of the Indians:

> The rhythm settles down to a steady pedestrian gait, like that of wanderers plodding along. My tramps are psychological vehicles also. Their wanderings as you will notice, carry the reader into interior after interior, finally to the great River. They are the left-overs of the pioneers in at least this respect--that their wanderings carry the reader through an experience parallel to that of Boone and others. I think I have caught some of the spirit of the Great Valley here.[5]

This simple nature, significantly, exists "under a world of whistles, wires and steam," beneath the modern "Iron Mountain" which science and commerce have constructed. The poet is searching through the land of the continent and his own recollections of a time when both he and the hoboes were "holding to childhood like some termless play" for the repossession of Pocahontas, the lover who vanished with his dream in "The Harbor Dawn." And in this second part of "The River" he experiences and moves through the "Strange

bird-wit, like the elemental gist/Of unwalled winds" which the hoboes "offer," a type of knowledge in which "Time's rendings, time's blendings" are construed "As final reckonings of fire and snow." This ascribing of change to the elemental forces, in a passive, even fatalistic fashion that sets the "unwalled winds" above any human control, is not the philosophy of the poet who, in "Atlantis," compares himself to "Jason. . . Still wrapping harness to the swarming air!" Nor, of course, is it the murderously "breathtaking" domination of man by a machine that leaves him "still hungry on the tracks" in the "telegraphic night." But, this natural philosophy, or, this "ratio of fact and experience," is a stage through which the poet must pass, a skin he must inhabit and cast off, in order to reach the truth of the imagination.

The contrast between the scientific and organic in terms of their methods of measuring time is presented in the first stanza of this second section:

> Keen instruments, strung to a vast precision
> Bind town to town and dream to ticking dream.
> But some men take their liquor slow--and count
> --Though they'll confess no rosary nor clue--
> The river's minute by the far brook's year.

The difference between time as mathematical abstraction from natural motion and time as accumulation and growth is obvious here; but what is more important in terms of the poem itself is the fact that this organic measure of time is, like the hoboes, closer to the process of assimilation and integration which is the law of the poet's imagination. The mind abstracts from the change of the universe its concept of time, and in so doing removes change and

process from the growth and vitality that support the mind itself. Life, and man, then become products of the mind's abstractions, rather than processes, and art must be a product too. The unitive vision, generated by the integrative and creative action of the imagination, depends on the recognition of life as process and warm vitality. Elsewhere in The Bridge the loss of vision is imaged as a freezing or killing, as with the sailor of "Cutty Sark" who lost his sight and sense of time as process in that "damned white Arctic." The affinity of the organic process of measuring time with the imaginative process is suggested in the image of the "rosary," where the series of prayers begins and ends with the crucifix, symbol of the unitive Atonement of Christ. This reflects the fact that the descent through the mind to the body is a movement toward the unitive truth of the imagination itself.

The hoboes are closer to Pocahontas because in their repudiation of mechanical civilization for the life of the wanderer "they touch something like a key perhaps," for "they know a body under the wide rain." The body is Pocahontas, symbol of the land of the red, white and blue U. S. A., "Snow-silvered, sumac-stained or smoky blue." They are "wifeless or runaway," which suggests their isolation and failure to achieve a unitive relationship with that "love" that is necessary for "Music" and the act of imagination; and their isolation suggests, conversely, the relevance of the poet's search for Pocahontas and his pursuit of the unitive vision. The "Hobo-trekkers" are "Possessed, resigned," to the necessity that they "forever search/An empire wilderness of freight and

rails" for the "yonder breast" of Pocahontas, but at least they know that she lives "past the valley-sleepers, south or west," beyond their dreams of her; and their wandering pays homage to their willingness to seek beyond the known and settled, as did the pioneers, for the Woman or experience that will fulfill their longing for a sense of completeness. Similarly, the poet expresses his own unitive urge as a force that moves him "past the circuit of the lamp's thin flame," where he has "dreamed beyond the print that bound her name." He, too, is on the move in "Powhatan's Daughter," wheeling, as the epigraph suggests, all the land over because Pocahontas (Love) has so decreed. The movement through circle after circle of "the lamp's thin flame" recalls the image of the gull "shedding white rings of tumult" in its flight, to suggest the metamorphic development of the poem. The poet is even closer to Pocahontas than the hoboes, for where they knew her "without name" he has "dreamed beyond the print that bound her name" in his desire for union. The hoboes are ignorant of whom they seek, of her "name," and hence can never totally identify with her. The poet's dream "beyond the print" is a counterpart of the "parable of man," a bending of the linear series of print toward a parabolic union "beyond," and prepares subtly for the destruction of linear time that occurs at the end of "The River." The poet recognizes as "Dead echoes" the "copybook" possession of history by memory, and repudiates the mental possession of the past by "print" in his recording of "redskin dynasties that fled the brain." The full import of "brain" is seen when in "The Dance" the margin notes

indicate that the true knowledge of Pocahontas comes through "blood remembering" rather than this ineffectual "brain" remembering, another of the mind-body contrasts that mark "The River." The "Dead echoes" from the copybook of childhood must be sloughed off in this search for the symbol of the love necessary for the act of imagination that puts "The serpent with the eagle in the leaves" of the poem itself, that incorporates the poet's experience of the body into his living imagination.

The contrast between the mythical Indian world which the poet must possess and the mechanical world of the present which the poet hopes to redeem through a marriage of Faustus and Helen in the Bridge is imaged in the next stanza, which is both a summary of the antagonisms and a preparation for their assimilation in the descent of the River into the Gulf. The "old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools. . . Under the Ozarks, domed by Iron Mountain," attended by "eyeless fish" who must "curvet a sunken fountain" to "re-descend with corn from querulous crows." The imprisoning "Iron Mountain," a spatial parody of the Bridge that domes and, by a pun, "dooms" the "old gods" to an "eyeless" existence is associated with the "iron dealt cleavage" that science and the machine have wrought, separating present from past, mind from body. The image of the sunken fountain not only suggests the containment of the imagination but also prepares for the poet's return to the source of the "Appalachian Spring" in "The Dance," a return necessary to the possession of the "old gods" and their myth in terms of his present living imagination.

The passage through the "telegraphic night" and the "dream" of the hoboes is signalled by the appearance of "Pullman breakfasters" who "glide glistening steel/From tunnel into field--iron strides the dew--/Straddles the hill, a dance of wheel on wheel." Dawn, breakfast and early morning "dew" accompany a new movement within "The River," as the poet approaches the Mississippi. He has reconciled the mechanical and organic rhythms here in a sort of concordia discord, "a dance of wheel on wheel" that falls short of the imagination's hopes for wheels within wheels (recall Elohim's "orbic wake"). Now he is ready to descend with the River to a final destruction of time and a purification of all desires to locate the imagination's "Everpresence" solely in a temporal realm. The poet dies to this desire in order to be reborn beyond time, into myth; he emulates the "bedlamite" in this death by drowning, seeking individuation and liberation through "The Gates of Wrath" ("The Tunnel").

The River is masculine, having the smell of "musk" and imaginatively speaking, of "Memphis Johnny, Steamboat Bill, Missouri Joe," songs of river men now dead. It is fed by the trainmen too, the "Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority" who, in spite of their efforts to dominate time by stopping it through abstraction, still "feed the River timelessly." Both the hobo-riverman's resignation and the Brakeman's resistance fail as strategies for coming to terms with time, for as the poet notes, "few evade full measure of their fate." The figures of "Authority" especially, those who attempt to impose rather than discover unity, are guilty of hypocrisy as "they smile out eerily

what they seem." The poet notes ironically the imprisoning nature of this hypocritical and even insane belief in the superiority of abstractions, machines and reason to the processes of the universe in his image of the death of a trainman: "I could believe he joked at heaven's gate--/Dan Midland--jolted from the cold brake-beam." The casual, accidental death or, even worse, the act of divine retribution in the form of a jolt, undercuts Dan Midland's jocular attitude toward his right to a place in the heaven of a universe operating on the same principles that regulated the "Twentieth Century Limited." His fall from the "brake-beam" recalls the bedlamite's plunge from the Bridge, but the difference is that the bedlamite was intentionally seeking a rebirth, as his name suggests, whereas Dan Midland felt certain that the same cocksure attitude he carried through life would carry him through death, a feeling the poet does not share. Where the bedlamite sought a new integration of himself with the "tides below" the Bridge, Dan Midland remains thoroughly un-integrated, and hence unredeemable in terms of the unitive imagination, by his death. The masculine River flows on through the body of the continent in its attempt to flow forever, to regenerate itself, to beget its own beginning and hence turn linear history into the circle of infinity, to create "this turning rondure whole" in temporal terms. The hoboes and trainmen move with it, "Down, down--born pioneers in time's despite"; and their death by drowning in the River signals, paradoxically, their birth as "pioneers," a reversal of the birth-death movement that recalls the "lanes of death and birth" in "Ave Maria" and

suggests a similar movement here toward the "parable of man." The poet is individuated from the others, as Columbus was from his men, by his recognition of this process, and he addresses them and the reader as well. He knows "They win no frontier by their wayward plight,/But drift in stillness, as from Jordan's brow." They are "pioneers" by default, "in time's despite," by virtue of their feeding of the River of time, which itself has the passion to "flow" onward. It is only the poet, the one who recognizes and engages in this same passion, who is the true pioneer. The image of the men feeding the River as "Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow," with the pun on "grim," recalls the "jest" that fell from the "speechless caravan" streaming across the Bridge ("Proem"). The "bedlamite," in his attempt to give birth to a word by dying, is individuated from the "speechless" others precisely on the basis of his urge toward utterance. Here it is the poet's identification with the River's passion to liberate itself, the failure of which is imaged as the failure of speech ("wide tongues, choked and slow"), that individuates him from the hoboes and trainmen who do not share his urge toward the imagination's unitive word.

This unitive urge of the River is poetically rendered through a style characterized by paradox, internal rhyme, and continual metrical inversions and displacements within a rather closely limited line and stanza form. The effect of such a style is the creation of a sense of turbulence within order, which of course emulates the movement of an energetic, powerful river within the confines of its narrow banks. The River evinces the natural urge

toward freedom through unity which the gull of "Proem" did, and follows a similar process of moving through turbulence toward its goal. It assimilates all time in its "alluvial march of days," all space as it "drinks the farthest dale," and man himself as it "spends" his "dream" of eternal life, making him instead his "father's father" in a paradox by which, in the flux of time, those living beget those dead by being in a present that begets a past, by unifying in their flow elements which have settled out of time's river through their "quarrying passion." The primitive power of the River's flow is suggested by its "jungle grace," a counterpart of the "pure impulse inbred" which the poet feels within himself to be the energy source of the unitive life of the imagination; and the River attempts to use this force to liberate itself as it "flows within itself, heaps itself free." Moving through the land, it finally approaches the Gulf, where the natural urge toward total self-embodiment will fail in the dissipation of the River in the "stinging sea." This urge toward unity is imaged as an impetus to move from the sleeping state which begets a dream into the dream itself, as "The River lifts itself from its long bed,/Poised wholly on its dream, a mustard glow/Tortured with history, its one will--flow!" It is the unitive urge toward regeneration and continual life and "flow"; but the attempt to move beyond time, beyond the natural state to the imagination's "Everpresence," is preceded by a "passion" and atonement of the River "Poised wholly on its dream" while it is "Tortured" with "history," with the accumulation of time and times. The urge of the River is the urge of

all nature to create itself out of time, to embody itself in an "organic construct" that can live beyond itself, but the River's "dream" holds it only for a moment before it plunges into the Gulf. The image recalls the bedlamite on the Bridge, "Tilting there momently" before his plunge, and indicates via the Christian imagery the possibilities of resurrection associated with this death of the River: "--The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow, Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below." The dissipation of energy and the diffusion of speech are greeted by "hosannas silently below," a paradoxical expression of the triumph implicit in this death just as it was in Christ's death. As in the Christian Atonement, the River's death unites all time in one moment, and prepares for a resurrection out of time into the imagination's "Everpresence" in "The Dance."

THE DANCE

"The Dance" is the section of "Powhatan's Daughter" in which the poet accomplishes his desire to "see truly" the Female-lover who shared his "waking dream" in "The Harbor Dawn." Pocahontas is Crane's symbol of the "body of the continent," and it is her "smile" which has urged the poet through the "telegraphic night," across the land to the River, and down to the merger with the Gulf. His movement has been a descent through time and space, through his "copybook" recollections of the nation's past and his own reminiscences of childhood, through the attempts and subsequent failures of the mechanical and organic strategies to organize truly the life of man or the nation. Concomitant with this descent has been the poet's growth from conception through youth to, in "The Dance," manhood and the full realization of his sexual and creative potency. Thus his exploration of the "body of the continent" has been accompanied by the development to potency of his own body, so that in terms of both movements, ascent and descent, "The Dance" is the section of "Powhatan's Daughter" in which the poet is ready to engage in a union with Pocahontas. He is ready to perform the dance itself, in which his body and the "body of the continent" are joined in marriage, harmonized and liberated.

The union of the poet and Pocahontas occurs at the level of myth, beyond historical and chronological time which was

destroyed in "The River." Poulet's Studies in Human Time explains not only the relationship of myth to time but also the relationship of myth to the unitive imagination in The Bridge. Poulet notes that "the creative act of time appears first . . . as a death of time itself."[1] The "death of time" which occurred in "The River" was prelude to the entrance into a mythical world beyond time, what Crane called "the primal world of the Indian."[2] That Crane considered this a passage to myth is evident from his Letters, where he speaks of "the pure mythical and smoky soil" of "The Dance."[3] The poet's return to the "mythical and smoky soil" of the Indians leads to the creative act of the Dance itself, which not only unites heaven and earth according to the Indian cosmology but also renders the poet's experience of physical union with the Earth-Mother Pocahontas. It is the unitive act by which he comes to possess in his living imagination the knowledge of the body, and thus prepares for his later exploration of the spirit of the continent in the second half of The Bridge. The Dance, then, is truly a "creative act of time," for it liberates the body into a timeless realm of myth, discovering its enduring innocence (as Pocahontas is "virgin to the last of men") and rendering this truth in the medium appropriate to the flesh, the inarticulate but harmonious dance.

The liberation from time which is signalled by the poet's entrance into the "pure mythical and smoky soil" parallels a liberation of Pocahontas herself as an active inhabitant of the smoky soil. The poet has moved "beyond the print" that "bound" her "name" in the "copybook," to "see her truly," his "blood

remembering its first invasion of her secrecy, its first encounters with her kin, her chieftain lover." The poet is simultaneously in the present and the past, for "The Dance" is rendered in the past tense, as an episode which the poet remembers. But it is a much different form of memory than that rote "copybook" recitation of names in "Van Winkle," for here the "blood" memory of the "modern consciousness" has been awakened and the dark gods of the blood make themselves felt. Pocahontas and her lover live in the poet's remembrance of "first encounters," and it is by this remembrance that the poet shows "the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present."[4] His blood memory reveals the past incorporated within it, and his imagination proceeds to animate it. The "winter king" and the "glacier woman" he squires "down the sky" at the beginning of this section are generalized terms appropriate to the poet's initial remembrance of the inhabitants of the Indian world. But as his blood memory comes into sharper focus Pocahontas and Maquokeeta are named, individuated, enlivened, as the imagination inspires them with an immediacy and vitality that reaches its climax in the dance, where for a short but intense passage the present tense replaces the past as blood memory gives way to living imagination. A parallel movement reveals the poet approaching and joining with Maquokeeta in the dance as he recaptures his past by this unitive act. In a letter Crane described this recapturing of the past:

> Not only do I describe the conflict
> between the two races in this dance---
> I also become identified with the
> Indian and his world before it is

> over, which is the only method
> possible of ever really posses-
> sing the Indian and his world
> as a cultural factor.[5]

This possession through identification, a process identical with the assimilation through integration by which the artist operates, is the unitive act of the poet's imagination. It is his way of identifying the past in the present, of giving life to the past, of liberating it and liberating himself from it into the present, freeing himself for further movement. In "The Dance" the poet of The Bridge recovers the past which is necessary for his freedom in the present. At the end of "The Dance" the Indian shaman Maquokeeta has freed himself, after having been "assumed into the elements of nature,"[6] to hold "the twilight's dim perpetual throne." Within the natural elements which his dance united and harmonized, within his act of imagination, he has embodied his imagination's "truth." The result is his own freedom from time, a "perpetual throne." The poet, who lived through the dance with Maquokeeta, has also been liberated in terms of his past and physicality, not by transcending them, but by uniting them into his living imagination.

The poet's movement in "The Dance" is one of ascent, as he climbs to the source of the River of Time, to the Appalachian Spring, where he is able to cross the bridge-smile "that eastward bends/And northward reaches" to the mythical land of the Indians and Pocahontas where the dance takes place. Pocahontas's "Steep, inaccessible smile" is the bridge here between time and myth, and it is a bridge of love and to love, as is the Bridge of "Atlantis." But the poet's ascent to the Appalachian Spring

is placed within the context of his previous descent through time in "The River," and of his simultaneous presence in the twentieth century, for "The Dance" begins and ends with a recollection, an acknowledgement of action past. Similarly, throughout this section the poet suggests that the ascent is taking place within the context of the present, through use of the past tense, through mention of the "years between" his present existence and his blood memory recapture of the past, and through punctuation (the ". . ." suggesting time elapsed, as opposed to the "--" which fills "Atlantis" and suggests simultaneity). The poet's recapturing of the past in terms of his present existence suggests that the present-ness of the imagination is, after all, what is most important in the creation of the Bridge. And the form of "The Dance" suggests that it is the incorporation of the past within the present that is here taking place. The poet is growing, and his present living imagination is developing and freeing itself from the past through this incorporation of it into the present. Thus the ascent within "The Dance" not only leads to the unification of nature, the Indian world and its shaman, but also provides the impetus for further ascent and creation within The Bridge itself.

"The Dance" begins with the poet acknowledging in general terms the cycle of the seasons, the Indian myth of the eternal return of life and spring, and the unitive nature of the physical universe. But accompanying this general recognition are questions of identity and, by extension, of identification: who are the persona of the myth, how can the poet identify with them, integrate

their "truth," their life, into his imagination?

> The swift red flesh, a winter king--
> Who squired the glacier woman down the sky?
> She ran the neighing canyons all the spring;
> She spouted arms; she rose with maize--to die.
>
> And in the autumn drouth, whose burnished hands
> With mineral wariness found out the stone
> Where prayers, forgotten, streamed the mesa sands?
> He holds the twilight's dim, perpetual throne.

The cycle of the seasons is here imaged in terms of water, as frozen, flowing or re-found "in the autumn drouth," and growth is linked with this water cycle in the pun on "sprouted" in "spouted." The "winter king," the un-individuated "swift red flesh," is the figure who brings rain in spring and finds the hidden waters of autumn, recalling the Indian summer. He is at once body and mythical personage, a combination that suggests the union of flesh and imagination which the poet is seeking in this stage of his "exploration of the body of the continent"; and his ability to control the flow of water suggests, in conjunction with the preceeding River of time, that he is capable of controlling Time itself, of liberating the Indian culture from the natural seasonal cycle by evoking both the Indian summer "in the autumn drouth" and the "glacier woman" in the spring. Further, his success in liberating himself from this natural cycle is imaged in his occupation of "the twilight's dim, perpetual throne," where as Crane said in his letters, he has been "assumed into the elements of nature,"[7] embodied in the "truth" of his imaginative act. He is the one capable of finding the "sunken fountain" and the "old gods of the rain" which in "The River" were "domed by Iron Mountain," and it is his "mineral wariness" which

the poet must learn before he can proceed to the dance. Thus the poet reenacts in the remainder of "The Dance" the role of the "winter king" in these first two stanzas, assimilating the "truth" of the Indian myth by possessing it in his living imagination, possessing it and passing through it. The process of assimilation is one of individuation also, for the poet moves in "The Dance" from this general statement of the Indian myth to a particularized re-enactment of that myth. There he is identified with the Indian shaman Maquokeeta as he dances for the now-revealed Female of "Powhatan's Daughter," Pocahontas herself, who is identified by name. The full integration of the elements of nature in the dance is followed by the casting off of the role of Maquokeeta by the poet, who has thus freed himself to move onward toward the Bridge of "Atlantis." The questions of identity that introduced "The Dance" are answered at the end, and "Who" has become "We" through the poet's assimilation of the Indian myth into his own living imagination.

The poet prepares himself for the dance by learning to recognize the unitive impulse in nature itself, and by recognizing the necessity of death and suffering as prelude to rebirth even in the natural cycle of day and night:

> I left the village for dogwood. By the canoe
> Tugging below the mill-race, I could see
> Your hair's keen crescent running, and the blue
> First moth of evening take wing stealthily.
>
> What laughing chains the water wove and threw!
> I learned to catch the trout's moon whisper; I
> Drifted how many hours I never knew,
> But, watching, saw that fleet young crescent die,--
>
> And one star, swinging, take its place, alone,
> Cupped in the larches of the mountain pass--

> Until, immortally, it bled into the dawn.
> I left my sleek boat nibbling margin grass. . .

Leaving the "village" for "dogwood" is the symbolic act of leaving the known for the unknown, civilization for the wilderness. "Dogwood" suggests both the "Princess whose brown lap was virgin May," i. e. Pocahontas, and the suffering involved in discovering this Princess, for dogwood is traditionally associated with Christ's Passion. The poet learns "to catch the trout's moon whisper" as it leaps out of the "laughing chains" of the water, much as he learned from the soaring gull in "Proem" which is imagistically recalled here; and as the "fleet young crescent" dies "one star, swinging, takes its place, alone," much as the Bridge of "Proem" replaced the gull's "inviolate curve." The notion of the Christian sacrament of the Mass is subtly caught in the imagery of the star "Cupped in the larches" which "bled into the dawn," and suggests the paradox of death preceding rebirth which has occurred elsewhere in the poem. The paradox implicit in a death occurring "immortally" recalls the "perpetual throne" which the star occupies, and suggests the myth of the eternal return which is central to the Indian myth of this section. But the larger associations are implicit in the rendering of the unitive urge of nature itself, the passion of the moth for the moon's light, the trout's leap out of the enchaining waters toward the silver moon, a "whisper" as "antiphonal" as those that answer the poet himself in "Atlantis." The poet learns to measure this passion in terms of metamorphosis rather than chronology, for he forgets "how many hours" in his fascination

with a process whereby the river's "keen crescent" gives way to the leaping arc of the trout, then to the "crescent" moon, whose death issues into a "swinging" star that bleeds "immortally" into the dawn. The expansion of arc over arc resolves in the dissolution of the star into the dawn, but the process is perpetual and circular within itself, and the recognition of this natural urge toward unity propels the poet onward in his quest for Pocahontas.

The poet proceeds to ascend the "upper flows" to the "very top" of the "Appalachian Spring," the source of the River of Time itself. His ascent has the same passionate energy as that of the nature he has just learned from, for he says, "I could not stop./Feet nozzled wat'ry webs of upper flows;/One white veil gusted from the very top." His feet have the pure urge to move that the horse has, and in their act of nozzling (with a pun on nuzzling) they are a metamorphosis of the horse-boat he had left "nibbling margin grass." The image of the "white veil" associates the Spring with the veiled Pocahontas, and the Spring is associated with the descent of the "glacier woman" from the sky in the form of water which opened this section. The reaching of the Appalachian Spring is the true end of the descent down the River, for here the poet has reached the source of the River itself, and from the Spring he can speed onward to the "Grey tepees" and the dance proper. The journey has been circular, with descent followed by an ascent to the source, and having circumscribed time he can move beyond it into pure myth and the "creative act of time" in the dance. Crane utilizes the water-cycle

as metaphor for this circular process, for the death of the River in the Gulf has become here a birth of the River in the Spring, and the word "gusted" suggests that the River water purified by the "stinging sea" is here precipitated from its sublimated vapor state into pure water. The unitive and regenerative nature of this water-cycle makes it a fine metaphor for the unitive and regenerative nature of the imagination itself, as envisioned in Crane's poetics, and the connection between the two processes affords another poetic proof that the laws of the imagination are the unwritten laws of the universe. The poet's discovery of the Appalachian Spring reveals that he has learned the lessons of the Indian shaman who could find water "in the autumn drouth," and this knowledge enables the poet to identify with Maquokeeta in the coming dance. The poet has reached the "Steep, inaccessible smile that eastward bends/And northward reaches," the bridge that ends "in that violet wedge/Of Adirondacks, wisped of azure wands."[8]

The parallels between the poet's journey to the Spring, his participation in the Dance, and earlier and later events in the poem reveal the unitive imagination at work. This intentional metamorphosis of images, symbols and situations bears witness to the assimilative and regenerative nature of the imagination's attempt to extend and define its activity, and to thereby liberate itself from this "history."[9] The process by which the poet's imagination became empowered to act, to write the poem, is the subject: the "conquest of consciousness" through the liberation of the imagination in the Bridge. The "orbic wake" which Columbus

saw as a sign of Elohim's cosmic dance is metamorphosed into the Indian ritual dance of Maquokeeta, which is a cyclone-like whirling that succeeds in unifying the cosmos and liberating Maquokeeta himself as a star in the firmament. Not only has the dance changed "under modifications of environment, etc.," it has become something done rather than seen, for the poet himself participates in the Indian dance, while Columbus had merely seen "the orbic wake of thy once whirling feet." This difference reflects the advance in the unitive life of the poet's imagination, for he has moved from observation to participation, from recognition to assimilation, in his progressive march toward the final embodiment which both in _The Bridge_ and Crane's poetic theory represents the culmination of the imagination's unitive and regenerative urge. Thus the subject of the poem is a qualitative development around the urge of the poet's imagination to embody its truth in an act.

The central act of "The Dance" is the union of heaven and earth in the dance of Maquokeeta, symbolized by the phenomenon of the whirlwind. The dance-whirlwind, in which the poet joins with Maquokeeta, is an epiphany of the imagination's unitive power that results in a new ordering of the entire cosmos of the Indian myth. The natural phenomenon of the whirlwind is fused with the human dance in a unitive act that measures and liberates both worlds: the "cyclone threshes," pulling all elements into its center, employing a process of transformation. The suggestion of the _deus absconditus_, the hidden God of the whirlwind that appeared in the _Book of Job_ (which, significantly, provides the epigraph for _The Bridge_), is rendered in the image of "the

padded foot/Within" the cyclone, and serves to continue Crane's use of Christian tradition as analogue for the process of the creative imagination. The connection between the whirlwind and the Bridge as mutual symbols of the unitive imagination is further indicated by the image of the cyclone purging the heart of the poet himself, drawing "the black pool from the heart's hot root." But it is finally the human dance of Maquokeeta which unifies the Indian cosmos, not the cyclone, which is the natural correlative of the act of the human imagination, just as it is finally The Bridge, the human artifact of the poem, that orders the world of the Bridge.

The dance of Maquokeeta is, as R. W. B. Lewis notes, "le mensonge sacré--which in the symboliste and modern Romantic tradition is the highest Truth the imagination can aspire to."[10] The dance is the "creative act of time," for in it man measures time rather than vice-versa; truth in this context then becomes harmony, the gracefulness of the act, and this grace "partakes of poetry."[11] The act of the imagination reveals the highest truth, the absolute of the imagination's unitive power, as "Music is then the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system," and the Dance of Maquokeeta has the power to reverse time, to bring back "the tribal morn," or, in the words of "Proem," to "lend a myth to God." His power resides in his ability to free himself from time, to live "beyond" time, to be "perpetual" and "immortal," and his power derives from his allegiance to the imagination, his belief that the unitive, loving nature of the universe is in man present in the unitive, loving urge of the imagination. The dance, however, expresses

the unitive truth of the body, poetry in motion but not in speech, and hence is inferior to the poetic act that seeks to render a "multitudinous Verb."[12]

As in "Ave Maria," the circle is used here as symbol of the unitive act. Maquokeeta is the center of his whirling dance, unifying the entire cosmos in its primal circumference, and finally dancing himself free of the circle itself. The dance-whirlwind not only draws all things to its center, it releases them from the gravity that keeps them earth-bound, setting up a simultaneous ascent-descent movement within the funnel of the cyclone. It becomes a sort of Jacob's ladder, an umbilical cord providing passage from earth to heaven, liberating the dancer in space as the dance liberates him in time. The paradox of simultaneous destruction-creation is a characteristic of the threshing cyclone, as it is of the dancing Maquokeeta, who knows that "death's best" who "casts his pelt" in order to live "beyond." The poet, too, is caught up in the dance, "liege/ To rainbows currying each pulsant bone," as he "Surpassed the circumstance, danced out the siege," moved through the destruction to a liberation. The evocation of "rainbows" aptly conveys the liberation that the act of bridging, of surpassing the "circumstance" and the circle, provides, and subtly continues the Christian analogue. The purpose of the dance is to bring back the smile of Pocahontas, the Indian summer, the "tribal morn," a state of "radical innocence" in which the "truth" of the imagination is supreme. The circle symbolizes this return to the beginning, for love, Pocahontas's smile, was what provided

the initial impetus for the dance, so that Maquokeeta's act of imagination is intended to provide a renewal of love. His death is imaged as a "dive to kiss that destiny/Like one white meteor, sacrosanct and blent/At last with all that's consummate and free/There, where the first and last gods keep thy tent." Though he had previously risen above the earth, so that "Flame cataracts of heaven in seething swarms/Fed down your anklets to the sunset's moat," his final act is a loving descent into the world he has ordered in his dance, where he is united and liberated within the circle of his own creation, dwelling in the "tent" kept by the "first and last gods," the alpha and omega of the myth he has just danced into existence. He has embodied his "living truth" in a mythical dance, and gained his freedom thereby, performing the quintessential act of "negative capability" by locating his own identity in his imaginative creation.

And yet Maquokeeta's artful ordering of the cosmos is inarticulate, unlike The Bridge, which is the verbal record of the poet's own creation of the "multitudinous Verb" of the Bridge. The "body of the continent" has been explored, and integrated into the imagination of the poet through his identification with Maquokeeta in the dance, but Maquokeeta's voice is silent as the poet concludes "The Dance" with his own words. The poet has learned the wisdom of the "body of the continent," and has freed himself for further exploration of the "spirit of the continent" (Crane's alternate title for "Cape Hatteras") in the second half of The Bridge. The circle of the dance gives way to the straight line of "other calendars" that "now stack the sky," the sky-scrapers

of twentieth century Manhattan, as the poet is back again in a later time. But he has learned from the dance the possibilities of the "creative act of time," its ability to free the man of imagination, for he affirms that Maquokeeta gazes through "infinite seasons" at his "bridge immortal in the maize." He has experienced the power of love to liberate, the truth of the "Sabbatical" smile, as Pocahontas has liberated Maquokeeta: "Thy freedom is her largesse, Prince, and hid/On paths thou knewest best to claim her by." These are the paths which the poet himself must find anew in the twentieth century in order to redeem himself and his world through union with love, and which he does find in his "Bridge to Thee, O Love" in "Atlantis." But the "truth" of the dance has lodged itself in the poet's consciousness, in accordance with the third step of Crane's poetics, and impels the poet onward, for it is the "new condition of life" that will "breed new forms of spiritual articulations." He recognizes that Pocahontas, Eros, is still "the torrent and the singing tree;/And she is virgin to the last of men. . . " Her "speechless dream of snow" is set to "singing" by the sun in a seasonal cycle which is never-ending, and the imagery of speech and song associates this cycle with the creative process of Crane's poetics. Pocahontas is a sort of Muse, urging the imagination to further efforts, and a symbol of Eros driving the unitive imagination to further creations of its forms. Life, unity, freedom in living, are the truths of the imagination, and are opposed to death, separation and confinement which are the characteristics of mind or body isolated from the erotic and

unitive "truth" of the imagination. The association of Pocahontas in the poet's consciousness with life, growth and love in the present is continued:

> West, west and south! winds over Cumberland
> And winds across the llano grass resume
> Her hair's warm sibilance. Her breasts are fanned
> O stream by slope and vineyard--into bloom!

The dance, the act of imagination, has generated further life, united man with the laws of the universe, brought "bloom" into the world. The water-cycle continues, the dream of "snow" becoming "winds" and finally a "stream," and the circle of the poet's journey is completed by the return "West, west and south" to the Appalachian Spring."

The poem concludes with the poet's new questions, cast in the present tense, as to the existence of the Indian civilization:

> And when the caribou slant down for salt
> Do arrows thirst and leap? Do antlers shine
> Alert, star-triggered in the listening vault
> Of dusk?--And are her perfect brows to thine?

The questions really concern the efficacy of the dance, the act of imagination, in saving from time the Indian civilization. The answer is ambiguous:

> We danced, O Brave, we danced beyond their farms,
> In cobalt desert closures made our vows. . .
> Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms,
> The serpent with the eagle in the boughs.

The only thing affirmed is the dance, and that in the past tense. But the poet identifies with Maquokeeta, acknowledges his participation in the dance, and affirms that the "strong prayer," which in the beginning of "The Dance" brought water to the "mesa sands," is no longer "forgotten" but "folded in thine arms."

INDIANA

Writing in reaction to those critics who found "Indiana" excessively sentimental, Crane defended this concluding section of "Powhatan's Daughter" by relating its emotionalism to its subject:

> Right now it is more fashionable to speak otherwise, but the subject (or emotion) of "race" has always had as much of sentiment behind it--as it has had of prejudice, also. Since "race" is the principal motivation of "Indiana," I can't help thinking that, observed in the proper perspective, and judged in relation to the argument or theme of the Pocahontas section as a whole, the pioneer woman's maternalism isn't excessive.[1]

An examination of "Indiana" reveals that by "race" Crane does not mean simply the chauvinistic dichotomization into "white race" and "Indian," but refers to the principle of generation itself, the sense of continuity derived from consciousness of biological lineage. The pioneer woman is conscious of the difference between herself and the Indian squaw she encounters, but she is more conscious of their similarities as mothers, their common kinship with the forces and rhythms of life itself. The theme of her monologue, addressed to her son Larry, is the continuity of her family, as Larry the "first-born" is the only son who has "eyes" like her first husband Jim, who died before his son was born. This continuity

of Jim with Larry through the pioneer mother is paralleled by a continuity of the Indian civilization with the pioneers, as Larry, held in his mother's arms, receives from the Indian squaw the "violet haze/Lit with love shine" of her eyes and vision. Thus the subject of "Indiana" is generation and the transmission of racial or inherited truths through generation. In relation to the whole of "Powhatan's Daughter" the subject of "Indiana" is the transmission from Indian to white, and from mother to son, of the truth of the "body of the continent" learned in "The Dance." In these terms the subject of "Indiana" is the attempt of the body to give birth to its own truth, to embody it in a product that will bespeak the process that produced it. This process is biological generation, the product physical birth. In "Indiana" the pioneer mother tells her son how she learned the difference between "gold" and "God," between the inert and the living, and points to her own son, her creation, as proof of the successful lesson. Where in "The Dance" the unitive act fused all elements, including the dancer himself, into a cosmos of the moment, here in "Indiana" the problem is how to extend this truth beyond itself, in terms of the body alone. At the end of "The Dance" the poet was conscious of the eternal presence of the body's regenerative power, of the Female who was "virgin to the last of men" and continually brought "bloom" into the world. But in "Indiana" is rendered the pioneer mother's plea to her son to keep his "pledge" to return home some day, and to "remember" his lineage and birthright as "First-born," to keep his "word." Her closing words reveal that she has given up the

rights of a mother over Larry, as he severs the umbilical cord and heads off to sea. As the mother's song fades into the dusk she asks her son to "hold me in those eyes' engaging blue," for she is old and "standing still," about to die. Thus the body's truth, expressed in "The Dance," is transmitted to Larry in "Indiana," and its failure to perpetuate itself provides the subject of "Cutty Sark."

The beginning of "Indiana" is accompanied by a margin gloss (". . . and read her in a mother's farewell gaze) that connects this section with the rest of "Powhatan's Daughter." The gloss ends the sentence begun at the opening of "The Dance" ("Then you shall see her truly. . . "), with the important shifts from "her" to "mother" and "see" to "read." The lover-Pocahontas has become a mother after "The Dance," both the pioneer mother who sings the song and the Indian squaw met on "the long trail back" from chasing false gods, fool's gold, in Colorado. Both women are widows bearing fatherless sons, the remnants of their marriages. And the pioneer woman's assumption of the Indians' "nature-symbolism"[2] comes from "reading," from reflection rather than re-enactment of the physical union of "The Dance," from a mediated mode of transmission. Similarly, the poet is either absent or dumb in this section, suggesting that the transmission of experience through physical generation is a silent process, even ultimately incommunicable. It can be known only through reflection, as we must "read" in a "farewell gaze" the implicit record of the sound and fury that accompanied the creative act itself, the "bison thunder" that,

as the pioneer woman says, "rends my dreams no more/As once my womb was torn, my boy, when you/Yielded your first cry at the prairie's door. . . "

In spite of the fact that "Indiana" is a monologue, the piece is characterized by pregnant silences: that of "all our silent men," of the squaw who "Knew that mere words could not have brought us nearer," and of Larry himself, who never interrupts or responds to his mother's words. "Indiana" begins with an image of silence, and a suggestion of coming death:

> The morning glory, climbing the morning long
> Over the lintel on its wiry vine,
> Closes before the dusk, furls in its song
> As I close mine. . .

The closing circles of the morning glory flower, the mouth of the singer and, in the second stanza, the womb of the pioneer woman, all suggest the cessation of creative activity. This is affirmed by the pioneer woman later when she exclaims, "I'm standing still, I'm old, I'm half of stone!" The "bloom" which concluded "The Dance" has here disappeared, and all that's left is the record of bloom and fruitfulness, which Larry and the reader both are instructed to "read" in the mother's "farewell gaze," to glean from her record of her experiences of hunting for gold and God. The "morning glory" is fading, and its only hope of survival is in the "eyes' engaging blue" of her son Larry. The pioneer mother has learned that continuing life, generation and birth, is truer than gold. And she acknowledges that in her son's eyes is "Where gold is true."

That the end and purpose of the body's truth is a further affirmation of life and motion is suggested in "Indiana" by the

contrast between generation, the "true gold," and materialism, the false God. The pioneer woman recalls her trip with Jim, her dead husband, to the gold fields of Colorado, where gold was "God." The theme of materialism, present but understated throughout The Bridge, here becomes dominant: the values of materialism are a threat to the continuing life of the imagination.

> A dream called Eldorado was his town,
> It rose up shambling in the nuggets' wake,
> It had no charter but a promised crown
> Of claims to stake.[3]

The threat of materialism to the life of the imagination is emphasized by the puns on "gold" and "God" in this section, and the particular threat is that of the static to the dynamic, of the dead and barren to the living and fruitful. It is appropriate, and significant, that materialism should be emphasized here as a threat to generation, for "Indiana" follows a successful unitive act, the successful assimilation and integration of the "body of the continent" into the poet's living imagination. In Crane's poetics the step following the successful assimilation and integration of experience into the living imagination is the process of giving birth to the imagination's "truth" in a poem or artifact, which will then bear this living truth onward into the reader's consciousness. Generation is threatened by materialism, as life and growth are threatened by excessive desire for permanence and stasis. The pioneer's search for gold "Won nothing. . . But gilded promise, yielded to us never,/And barren tears." The imagery of fruition, or lack thereof, aptly renders the contrast between gold and her son's "true gold," located in his eyes.

The symbolism of the "eyes" in "Indiana" is important. They are the bearers and conveyers of vision, and are opposed to the silence of material generation isolated from vision. The "silent men--the long team line" that watches the Indian squaw pass by is shunned by her in favor of the pioneer mother; and the "twin stars" of the squaw's eyes are "lit with love shine" at the sight of the mother and child. The "twin stars" recalls the "winter king" and the "glacier woman" of "The Dance," and suggests that the "truth" of the Dance resides in the squaw's eyes, and from them is passed to the pioneer mother. Similarly, the eyes of Larry are the circles which encompass the unitive truth of the pioneer mother's life, the beginning and the end of her "stubborn" and "still-born" years:

> I'm standing still, I'm old, I'm half of stone!
> Oh, hold me in those eyes' engaging blue;
> There's where the stubborn years gleam and atone,--
> Where gold is true!

The contrast by rhyme of "stone" and "atone" subtly points up the conflict of the inert and static materialism with the living and dynamic generation and regeneration of matter which the mother hopes will proceed from her son. The use of "atone" suggests the fact that Larry is, in terms of biological generation, the son who can reconcile the dead father with the living mother. He is a sort of bridge, for he has his father's eyes ("And you're the only one with eyes like him"), and his mother measures her life by the memory of her dead husband Jim ("As long as Jim, your father's memory, is warm").

But the Indians' experience of the "body of the continent," imparted from the squaw to the mother to Larry, does not survive.

The sailor's eyes in "Cutty Sark" have undergone a sea-change, and he keeps "weakeyed watches." The body's powers, so gloriously displayed in "The Dance," give way in "Indiana" to a rendering of the body's inherent limitations. The body has a fundamental role in the organic life of the imagination, providing the source of energy, the erotic "pure impulse inbred" ("Cape Hatteras"), that motivates the imagination's life. The impulse to creation and generation, the truth of the "body of the continent" and the poet's own body, is the essential beginning of "spiritual articulations," as the flight of the gull in "Proem" urged the poet toward the Bridge. But the knowledge of this "force that through the green fuse drives" the imagination must be fused with a knowledge of the "spirit of the continent" if it is to create spiritual articulations. Here physical generation is not enough to create an "organic construct" capable of embodying the truth of the imagination, as witness "Indiana" and "Cutty Sark." Hence the poet turns to other poets in the second half of The Bridge for instruction in the "spirit of the continent" and the articulation of the spirit, seeking a fusion of body and spirit in the Bridge itself.

CUTTY SARK

"Cutty Sark" is the last section of the first half of The Bridge, according to the division made by Crane himself in the first edition of the poem, and in circular fashion concludes the poet's journey backward in time and westward in space which began in "The Harbor Dawn." The time of "The Harbor Dawn" has given way here to the dawn of another day, as the poet finds himself crossing over the Bridge to his apartment, the "home" where he first glimpsed Pocahontas in a "waking dream." "Cutty Sark" divides into two parts, the first rendering the nocturnal meeting of the poet and the derelict sailor in a bar, the second the poet's vision of the glorious days of the clipper ships from his place on the Bridge. The subject of the first part is the failure of the derelict sailor, a metamorphosis of the ranging Larry of "Indiana," to keep the faith of his mother in the "true gold" of the unitive act of loving generation. The subject of the second part is the poet's vision of the success of "clipper dreams indelible and ranging" in tracing the symbolic circle as they circumnavigate the globe, realizing their unitive urge. They "Heave, weave/those bright designs the trade winds drive," with "Bright skysails ticketing the Line" as they "wink round the Horn/to Frisco, Melbourne. . . ." This vision inspires the poet, counteracting the failure of the derelict sailor, and urges

him onward toward the realization of his own "dream of act" and the Bridge.

The structure of "Cutty Sark" is illuminated by a quotation from Crane's Letters:

> "Cutty Sark" is built on the plan of a fugue. Two "voices"--that of the world of Time, and that of the world of Eternity--are interwoven in the action. The Atlantis theme (that of Eternity) is the transmuted voice of the nickel-slot pianola, and this voice alternates with that of the derelict sailor and the description of the action. The airy regatta of phantom clipper ships seen from Brooklyn Bridge on the way home is quite effective, I think. It was a pleasure to use historical names for these lovely ghosts. Music still haunts their names long after the wind has left their sails.[1]

The first half of the poem is "built," to use Crane's architecture metaphor, around the contrapuntal voices of time and eternity, the sailor and the jukebox song of "ATLANTIS ROSE," which finally merge and give way to the vision of the phantom ships seen from Brooklyn Bridge. The second half of "Cutty Sark" discards this musical form for a visual one, that of:

> a "cartogram," if one may so designate a special use of the calligramme. The "ships" meet and pass in line and type--as well as in wind and memory, if you get my rather unique formal intentions in the phantom regatta seen from Brooklyn Bridge.[2]

The "cartogram," as the word suggests, is meant to be a graphic "map," a visual replica of the circle of the world, describing the symbolic circle of the unitive vision in graphic and geographic terms. A "cartogram" is also a specialized term in painting,

describing a use of space in which perspective is omitted and figures fill up what appears as a two-dimensional surface. This sense of the word (which Crane probably knew, with his abiding interest in painting) describes accurately Crane's attempt to graphically fill space in his poem,[3] and indicates his interest in rendering presence rather than transparence, phenomena rather than ideas through phenomena. The movement from musical to visual form parallels the movement from the failed vision of the derelict sailor, who keeps "weakeyed watches," to the success of the poet himself in seeing "clipper dreams indelible." This movement emulates the relationship between music and poetry which pertains in The Bridge as a whole: music inarticulately expresses the imagination's truth, but poetry actualizes it in a word.[4]

The life of the imagination, of which The Bridge is a "history," is advanced in "Cutty Sark" in terms of this structural progression from music to vision. The structural principal is dialectical, with the antithetical voices of time and eternity resolving themselves in the synthesis of the poet's vision of the clipper ships, a fantasy at once in time and out of time. As a conclusion to the first half of The Bridge, which has dealt with the discovery and exploration of the "body of the continent," "Cutty Sark" appropriately renders the succession of the poet to the line that began with Columbus, led through Maquokeeta, and here concludes with the figure of the derelict sailor, the farm-boy whose journey to sea destroyed his vision of the timeless and regenerative truth of the land. But the poet here encounters

and overcomes the threat to the imagination's life which the sailor poses.

The epigraph of "Cutty Sark" suggests the "iron dealt cleavage" in terms of the sea and sailing: "O, the navies old and oaken,/O, the Temeraire no more!" (Melville). The derelict sailor of this section was "A whaler once," but now he's separated from those "oaken" navies and hired out to the iron-clads, caught up in the materialism that has separated modern America from the spiritual and mythic legacies of "The Dance." The generative possibilities of the organic, suggested in "oaken," have given way to the sterility of iron, and images of sterility cluster around the sailor. He is wifeless, like the hoboes of the River, and the admission that the "damned white Arctic killed my time" suggests his loss of sexual as well as imaginative powers. Further, his association with the "donkey engine" emphasizes the sterile nature of his allegiance to the iron machine. The "engaging blue" eyes of Larry have undergone a sea-change, for the sailor's eyes are "GREEN," his "eyes pressed through green glass/--green glasses, or bar lights made them/so--/shine--/GREEN--/eyes--." The color of hope and growth is ironically applied to this sterile denizen of South Street. He can't break the confining repetitions of the "donkey engine" to start "some white machine that sings," can't free his imagination to raise "ATLANTIS ROSE" and Love itself.

The identification of the sailor with the "voice of Time" which Crane suggested in his letter is obvious in his speech:

> 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 don't want to know what time it is--that
> damned white Arctic killed my time. . . "

Even such a subtle distinction between the voice of Eternity (the "Atlantis" theme) and the sailor's being a "Democrat," rather than a Platonic Republican, points up his identification with the world of time. The sailor is caught in a world of bar hours and sailing deadlines, his time and vision killed by the Arctic, that land inhabited by the "glacier woman," Pocahontas, who is available only to those who know how to claim her. Rather than being entertained by Pocahontas, the "singing tree" of "The Dance," the sailor's voice is contrapuntal with the juke box's song of "O Stamboul Rose," who is transmuted into "ATLANTIS ROSE" and the voice of eternity. The "voice of Eternity," rendered in italics, describes a general, eternally recurring process of which the sailor is a particular example, thus providing the basal motif of the fugue. The verbal shift from the initial "O Stamboul Rose--dreams weave the rose" through "O Stamboul Rose--drums weave--" and:

> Rose of Stamboul O coral Queen--
> teased remnants of the skeletons of cities--
> and galleries, galleries of watergutted lava
> snarling stone--green--drums--drown--

to the final:

> ATLANTIS ROSE drums wreathe the rose,
> the star floats burning in a gulf of tears
> and sleep another thousand--

is a shift (from "dreams" to "drums" and "weave" to "wreathe") which suggests the purgation the poet must undergo if he is to carry the truth of the first half of The Bridge through to

"Atlantis." It is a purgation which has "killed" the vision and time of the sailor. A descent to Atlantis must precede the raising of that condemned island, here associated with Pompeii and Vesuvius via the imagery of "water-gutted lava" and the creative imagination in general, that which has been too long submerged in the sailor. Further, the image of the "star" that floats burning in a gulf of tears prepares for the image of the poet floating on the "Anemone," whose "petals spend the suns about us," in "Atlantis." The contrast between the images reflects the difference between the stages of suffering and resurrection in the three-fold process of the imagination, between the death through assimilation and the subsequent liberation and individuation.

The poet is the one whose imagination transmutes the song on the juke-box into the voice of eternity, rather than the sailor, who remains impervious and unimaginative throughout. It is the poet who perceives the possibilities of the imagination, even in the sailor:

> I saw the frontiers gleaming of his mind;
> or are there frontiers--running sands sometimes
> running sands--somewhere--sands running. . .
> Or they may start some white machine that sings.
> Then you may laugh and dance the axletree--
> steel-silver--kick the traces--and know--
>
> ATLANTIS ROSE drums wreathe the rose.

The "white machine" is the imagination, which in the sailor is frozen. It is imagistically associated with the jukebox that is "weaving somebody's nickel," and whose song the poet himself is weaving to his imagination's purposes. The poet perceives in the sailor the possibilities of imaginative rebirth, his "bedlamite"

characteristics. The image of dancing "the axletree" recalls the Dance and the progression from "series on series, infinite" to the unitive vision of the "turning rondure whole" in "Ave Maria." It envisions the sailor's liberation from the linear "traces," the lines that lead from the pulling animal to the wagon, and his succession to the circle of "steel-silver," the turning "axletree." The result of this movement would be to "know . . . ATLANTIS ROSE. . . interminably," to realize in time the truth and "Everpresence" of the imagination's power. But the sailor does not proceed this way; instead, he leaves the bar, moving on up "Bowery way." The first half of "Cutty Sark" ends with the poet leaving the "cooler hells" of the bar, and the imprisoned and loveless sailor, as "the dawn/was putting the Statue of Liberty out--that/torch of hers you know--."

The concluding half of "Cutty Sark" presents the poet's vision from the Bridge of the clipper ships; the vision is rendered both graphically (by "cartogram") and imagistically (as in "Bright skysails ticketing the Line, wink round the Horn"). The fact that the poet is on the Bridge is not especially emphasized, since at this stage of the imagination's "history" the Bridge is yet to be discovered as the symbolic "Bridge to Thee, O Love." Still, the Bridge is here the construction from which the poet can project a fantasy out of that past through which he has just journeyed. The earlier emphasis on the imagination's power to redeem, to repossess the physical through creating an image of it, is continued here in the graphic rendering of the "clipper dreams indelible," by which the poet reminds us of his role as homo faber, the maker,

the shaper of words as well as meanings.

The metaphor of weaving renders both the motion of the ships over the oceans and , more subtly, the arrangement of the words on the page of the poem itself:

> Blithe Yankee vanities, turreted sprites, winged
> British repartees, skil-
> ful savage sea-girls
> that bloomed in the spring--Heave, weave
> those bright designs the trade winds drive. . .

The images of ships as "vanities" and "repartees" suggest their identification with their word-names on the page; and the force that motivates both ships and word-names to "weave/those bright designs" is that of the "trade winds," ("the vibrant breath" of "Sibylline voices" in "Atlantis") symbol of the shaping imagination. The designs themselves are both the flags the ships carry and the patterns of their motions across the surface of the sea: "Pennants, parabolas--/clipper dreams indelible and ranging,/baronial white on lucky blue!" And the design of "parabolas" recalls that earlier image of the life of man, the "parable of man," which associated the history of the imagination and the curve it traces with the curve of the Bridge itself. Here the curves of the ships on the sea's surface are a series of Bridge-like parabolas, associating their voyaging efforts with the poet's own journey toward the Bridge, the "Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage" of "Atlantis," and by extension contrasting the poet with the derelict sailor of the first half of "Cutty Sark." The poet's ability to envision this fantasy of "clipper dreams" suggests that he has successfully overcome the obstacles which defeated thevision of the derelict sailor, and promises that the "tragedy" of the sailor's failure

to "start some white machine that sings" has, for the moment at least, been averted by the poet. He has assimilated what in "Cape Hatteras" he refers to as "all that time has really pledged us," and is ready to confront "Space, instantaneous" in the second half of The Bridge, to wake from dreams of the past into the "dream of act." "Cutty Sark" (and the first half of The Bridge) end on a questioning invocation of the lost ship "Ariel," whose name suggests the sprite of The Tempest, the power which may help the poet "wrap harness to the swarming air" of the exploration of space to come.

## CAPE HATTERAS

"Cape Hatteras" begins the second half of The Bridge, according to Crane's own division of the poem, and as befits its position at the beginning of a major new stage in the "history" of the poet's imagination, "Cape Hatteras" introduces a new setting, new symbols, and a new diction into the world of the poem. The poet's progress toward the Bridge of Atlantis is here imaged as the "dream of act," the imagination's dream of embodying its truth in an organic construct that will "lend a myth to God" ("Proem"). In "Cape Hatteras" the construct that seems to offer this potential is the airplane. But the failure of the airplane, or more specifically the spiritual failure implicit in the use of the airplane for materialistic and destructive purposes, threatens the marriage of science and beauty which the imagination seeks. The section concludes with the poet finding encouragement for his continuing imaginative journey in the poetry of Walt Whitman, the "Meistersinger" of "that great Bridge, our Myth, whereof I sing," for Whitman is the poet who "first set breath in steel." In "Cape Hatteras" an invocation of poets begins, the most important of whom is Whitman, as the poet of The Bridge turns to previous "Recorders" of the imagination's truth for help in his own attempt to articulate the "spirit of the continent," to fulfill his "dream of

act." In "Cape Hatteras" the poet assimilates and learns from Whitman's "heritage," moving through the destruction of the airplane and the destructive energies of war in general to perceive "the rainbow's arch. . . /Above the Cape's ghoul-mound," the possibilities of turning the destructive energies to the creation of a "Bridge to Thee, O Love" ("Atlantis"). The poet's recognition of this dialectical unity of life and death in the processes of the living imagination empowers him to affirm Whitman's "faith" in the efficacy of poetry to convey love to "Recorders ages hence," to be, like the Bridge, "O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm. . . !" ("Atlantis").

"Cape Hatteras" is introduced by an epigraph which not only invokes Whitman but also indicates that the journey of the first half of The Bridge has been completed: "The seas all crossed,/weathered the capes, the voyage done." The initial images of the poem suggest some of the ramifications of this major conclusion-beginning in The Bridge. The opening lines continue the use of visual typographical arrangement which marked the conclusion of "Cutty Sark," thus providing a sense of continuity even within the dynamic change which the images themselves render.

> Imponderable the dinosaur
>                   sinks slow,
>                         the mammoth saurian
>                               ghoul, the eastern
>                                           Cape. . .
>
> While rises in the west the coastwise range,
>                               slowly the hushed land--
> Combustion at the astral core--the dorsal change
> Of energy--convulsive shift of sand. . .

The descent-ascent motion is visually represented, especially in the descending lines. The image of the "dinosaur. . . the mammoth saurian/ghoul," recalls the "serpent" of time, here dropping out of sight. The "eagle" of space in this second half of the poem "dominates our days," replacing time as the most important coordinate of the imaginative act, the spanning Bridge. The descent into the past and the body of the continent, which provided the subject of the first half of The Bridge, is here replaced by ascent into the present and the realm of the spirit and space, as the poet's imagination prepares for the act that will create the Bridge. The source of energy is still "Combustion at the astral core," the "Fire" which in "Ave Maria" symbolized the creative power of the Word. But the direction of the energy has shifted upwards in a "dorsal change." Both the spiritual analogue and the upward redirection of the imagination's "pure impulse" are rendered in the etymological ambiguities of "dorsal." The word suggests not only the dorsal fin of the fish (Crane's marine counterpart of the horse--both symbols of unadulterated natural energy) but also the "dorsal" of an altar, the place where the focus of the congregation is architecturally redirected from the minister upwards toward heaven. The "convulsive," "Imponderable" nature of this shift of primal energies at the heart, the "astral core" of the planet itself, the center of the earth, demands the recognition of a fundamental change in the momentum of the poem.

The "dorsal change of energy" is paralleled by the poet's return "home to our own/Hearths" (unindividuated at this point,

he uses the editorial "we"), a more human shift, as suggested in the subtle contrast between cosmic combustion and the homey fires of "hearths" (with perhaps a pun on "hearts"). The rounding of the world by the clipper ships of "Cutty Sark" is here completed: the result is the knowledge that "strange tongues" of other lands and cultures merely "vary messages of surf/Below grey citadels, repeating to the stars/The ancient names." The emphasis is on "vary," for the exploration of the physical body of the continent, or of the world via "clipper dreams," has taught the poet that nature's "messages of surf," and the "pure impulse inbred" of the imagination's unitive urge, are only varied by "strange tongues." The truth of the urge to loving union is eternal and unchanging, and only superficially modified by different lands and times. The ancient "names" that are repeated to the stars are older forms of "Deity's young name" ("Atlantis"); and they are uttered as a litany to invoke the "myth to God."

The poet suggests that the return "home" to "our own/ Hearths," to specifically American variations of "messages of surf," will be a return "to read you, Walt," to Whitman's poetic record of the message of the "wraith/Through surf, its bird note there a long time falling," and of the co-existence of "living brotherhood" and love with this "wraith." The circling of the world in "clipper dreams" gives way to the circle of the poet's unitive eye that encompasses the seeming opposites of war and love, destruction and creation, within its "primal scan."

Before proceeding to the airplane and Whitman's poetry, which are the two new subjects introduced in this section, the

poet presents an imagistic resumé of his experience in the first half of The Bridge, as if to show that it has been integrated into his imagination well enough to be summarily recapitulated. The resumé recalls Whitman's "Passage to India" as well as the first half of The Bridge. Its subject is the myths of the past which the poet must bring into the present in order that he can give song to what Whitman called the "voiceless earth" (here the "hushed land") and project himself into the future. The poet's movement through the American past is quite similar to the first half of Whitman's "voyage" of the "Mind's return./To reason's early paradise,//Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,/Again with fair creation."[1] The total return to "innocent intuitions" in the first half of The Bridge occurred in "The Dance," and was as necessary for The Bridge as for Whitman's "Passage to India" as a prerequisite to further movement "beyond," further progress and life for the organic imagination.

The poet's integrative journey through his own and the nation's pre-historic past has placed him "in thrall/To that deep wonderment, our native clay," to Pocahontas and the wisdom of the body, the "depth of red, eternal flesh of Pocahontas." Her flesh, and the earth itself, is "veined by all that time has really pledged us." In "veined" is the meaningful ambiguity of both "blood vein" and "gold vein," meaningful because both blood and gold have been used earlier as symbols of the primal power and "truth" of the imagination's "pure impulse inbred." The imagery of the "sweetness" of the "continental folded aeons"

lying "below derricks, chimneys, tunnels" continues the physical and sexual imagery which links poetic creation with generation itself (as the act of imagination becomes imagistically what Crane called in his poetic theory "the genetic basis of speech itself"). Thus the possibility of poetic generation takes over in the second half of The Bridge from the faith in physical generation which the poet recognized as inadequate in his encounter with the sailor of "Cutty Sark." Further, the masculine is associated with machinery, just as the Female is the fertile land. The union suggested by the penetration of "derricks, chimneys, tunnels" into the land suggests a union of the mechanical and pastoral (which is effected in "Atlantis," where the "cities are endowed/And justified conclamant with ripe fields"). Above these pledges of time sits the "world of wires and whistles" imaged briefly in "The River"; and "thin squeaks of radio static,/The captured fume of space foams in our ears." The first half of The Bridge is recalled in the "whisperings of far watches on the main" heard in "Cutty Sark" and "Ave Maria." They are now "Relapsing into silence, while time clears/Our lenses, lifts a focus, resurrects/A periscope to glimpse what joys or pain/ Our eyes can share or answer." This lifting of a "focus" is prerequisite to the poet's recognition of his new "dream of act." But following this resurrection is a defeat of vision, as time "then deflects/Us, shunting to a labyrinth submersed/Where each sees only his dim past reversed." These lines foreshadow as well as recall actions. The "labyrinth submersed," especially in conjunction with the word "shunting," suggests the descent on

the subway in "The Tunnel." But the phrase most immediately recalls the derelict sailor and the drowned "ATLANTIS ROSE" of "Cutty Sark," a deflection of vision more intense for the fact of its contrast with the unitive vision of "The Dance." Of key significance in this imagery of vision is the "periscope," which etymologically suggests "vision around," the encompassing vision of the symbolic circle. This inclusive scope is symbolic of the unitive act of imagination which is the poet's "dream," an act freeing both poet and poem from that labyrinth "where each sees only his dim past reversed." Mimesis is discarded in favor of inspiration (as Whitman is "joyous seer" and the inspiration a "white seizure" in "Atlantis") in this dream of creating new forms and new life, a "breed of towers" and a Bridge. The mirror gives way to the "periscope" which expands and extends rather than blocks and blinds the circle of the poet's eye. Further, the "periscope," in its common association with submarines, suggests that the poetic vision is generated out of the core, the "depth of red" which is the pure energy of life itself, the motive of the organic imagination. Thus resurrecting a periscope suggests the organic processes of poetic creation in Crane's terms.

The third stanza of "Cape Hatteras" opens with an affirmation that in spite of the deflection of vision, the absence at this stage of the imagination's life of a unitive "myth," the imagination's unitive impulse still abides in the poet's periscopic eye (what Whitman in "Eidolons" called the poet's "orbic tendencies to shape and shape and shape" the symbolic circles, eidolons, of the unitive

vision). Space, the realm of the airplane and the dimensional setting of the second half of The Bridge, is still susceptible to assimilation into the poet's imagination, hence capable of being liberated within the circle of his unitive act:

> But that star-glistered salver of infinity,
> The circle, blind crucible of endless space,
> Is sluiced by motion,--subjugated never.

The circle here is the round aperture of the periscope and the eye as well as the spatial circle of the horizon: it is the cipher of unity, what Emerson in "Circles" called the primary figure of the world. Here Crane uses words in their radical sense to suggest the importance and spiritual-imaginative possibilities inherent in this symbolic circle. "Salver," especially in conjunction with "crucible," associates the circle with the round plate held under the mouth of the religious communicant to keep the host from falling to the ground. The word's derivation from the Latin "salvare" ("to save") suggests the redemptive aspects of the unitive act symbolized by the circle, which the adjective "blind" directly connects with sight and the eye-vision-imagination motif. This circle-crucible-eye encompasses both destruction and creation, suffering and resurrection, unifying these seeming contradictories in its scope and sweep. Though "sluiced by motion" the unitive impulse is "subjugated never." The poet's insistence later in "Cape Hatteras" that man must not subjugate but "conjugate infinity's dim marge--/ Anew" emphasizes the organic, conjugal, relationship between the circle and the elements it encloses, between the creator and the creation of his "primal scan" ("Ave Maria").[2]

The stanza continues the vision imagery, expanding the scope of the deflection of vision to the "labyrinth submersed" by associating the Fall of Man with the failure of the mimetic ideal" how can a mirror-reflection of a fallen world give an image of man's interior "truth" and worth that is not solipsistic?

> Adam and Adam's answer in the forest
> Left Hesperus mirrored in the lucid pool.

The fall from grace begat a condition of disunion, the separation of man from God, leaving Hesperus (Venus) forever "mirrored" rather than united in love with man and earth. Modern man, unable to believe in "simian Venus, homeless Eve" ("Three Songs"), is hence unable to liberate himself through participation in the now-impotent Christian and pagan myths. He must create his own "myth to God." But in "Cape Hatteras" the search for God via the airplane fails (the search extensionally through "endless space"). The source of salvation, of spiritual articulations, is located within man, in the "pure impulse inbred" of the imagination. Thus the mimetic dream of reuniting man with God through subjugation and imitation is dismissed by the poet "in this new realm of fact," for man himself is waking into "the dream of act," a belief in and commitment to the existential power and self-sufficiency of man alone. The mirror-vision in which "each sees only his dim past reversed" gives way to unitive vision "undenying, bright with myth," and inspiration.

However, the "new realm of fact" is just as susceptible to distortion as the old realm of Christian and pagan myth, as the poem suggests in imagery that associates the earlier Adam with

the modern, grim Adam of "act":

> Seeing himself an atom in a shroud--
> Man hears himself an engine in a cloud!

Via the pun on "atom" and "Adam," and the fainter suggestion of the equally ironic replacement of the old deus ex machina by the "engine in a cloud," the bitter ironies inherent in man's using this new "realm of fact" for dimensional rather than imaginative purposes are rendered. There is nothing but old-fashioned hubris ("eyes raised in pride") motivating the Falcon-Ace who pilots the dogfighting airplane. Nevertheless, for modern man the old myths are no longer efficacious, and a new one must be found, not by returning to "useless archeology" but by resurrecting a "faith" in the unitive power of the mythic imagination, and in its everpresent potential to build a "Bridge to Thee, O Love." Each man must renew this faith by embodying his imagination's "truth" in an act, by conjugating infinity "Anew." This organic construct, then, the poem, will be a "new condition of life" engendering in "Recorders ages hence" new spiritual articulations. Consequently the dimension in which the poet now seeks his "God" is space, the dimension of construction, architecture, vision:

> Now the eagle dominates our days, is jurist
> Of the ambiguous cloud. We know the strident rule
> Of wings imperious. . . Space, instantaneous,
> Flickers a moment, consumes us in its smile:
> A flash over the horizon--shifting gears--
> And we have laughter, or more sudden tears.

In the electronic age space is not static but dynamic--in a sense space and time are continuous, as suggested in the phrase "Space, instantaneous." In terms of the poem, too, space is continuous with time, as The Bridge, an artifact in space, is also a process

unfolding in time as we read it. In this way poetry, an art of time, is also architecture, an art of space, as The Bridge is a "history" of its own creation. But space, in which the Bridge to Love must be constructed, is "ambiguous," threatening to transform the symbolic "smile," the promise of love shared, into a gaping mouth ("scuttle yawn" in "The Tunnel") which "consumes us," as much a gulf as that in which time's River died. It is this gulf of space which the Bridge must span, and for aid the poet turns to Whitman and his "undenying" vision, "bright with myth."

Whitman is invoked for his "syllables of faith," his stated belief that "Recorders ages hence" will find the same truth that he had:

> Walt, tell me, Walt Whitman, if infinity
> Be still the same as when you walked the beach
> Near Paumanok--your lone patrol--and heard the wraith
> Through surf, its bird note there a long time falling. . .

The symbolic circle of the unitive vision is identical with "infinity" by virtue of the earlier imagistic associations of "that star-glistered salver of infinity,/The circle"; and here "infinity" is also "eternity," the unitive condition beyond "the world dimensional" achieved when the imagination's act puts "the serpent with the eagle in the leaves."

Whitman's faith, significantly, is not only in the eternal presence of the imagination's truth, but also in the enduring ability of the poet to record that truth, to get down the "multitudinous Verb" on paper, to "put the serpent with the eagle in the leaves" of the poem.[3] Whitman's hearing the "wraith/Through surf," and the later references to his work as nurse in Civil

War hospitals, suggest his recognition of the unity, ultimately, of suffering and resurrection in the life of the imagination and the cosmos. This recognition saves him and his imagination's fire from the Arctic sterility and death-in-life of the "Cutty Sark" sailor, whose "weakeyed watches" could see only a "birdless mouth/With ashes sifting down," and not the affirmation implicit in the creative act, the "bird note." So the poet dedicates his poem to Whitman, his poetic father:

> For you, the panorama and this breed of towers,
> Of you--the theme that's statured in the cliff.
> O Saunterer on freeways still ahead!

This "breed of towers" suggests the combination of "organic construction" which is The Bridge, and the image of the "theme that's statured in the cliff" associates this poetic effort with those impulses that earlier led "strange tongues" to "vary messages of surf/Below grey citadels." Whitman is compared to the visionary and voyaging Columbus, who brought back the "record" of his discovery of Cathay. But Whitman's "truth" is not yet "proved," and at this stage he is "without ship." The "empire" of the imagination he promised to "Recorders ages hence" is still "labyrinth." It waits to be discovered by the poet himself, whose assimilation of Whitman's "heritage" via the reading of his poetry will provide the "ship" for the older poet, the vessel by which Whitman is enabled to move "onward, without halt" along that "span of consciousness" which he "named/The Open Road."[4] But here he is still a "pariah":

> Not this our empire yet, but labyrinth
> Wherein your eyes, like the Great Navigator's without ship,
> Gleam from the great stones of each prison crypt
> Of canyoned traffic. . . Confronting the Exchange,

> Surviving in a world of stocks,--they also range
> Across the hills where second timber strays
> Back over Connecticut farms, abandoned pastures,--
> Sea eyes and tidal, undenying, bright with myth!

The poet identifies himself with Whitman in their attempted creation of a common empire of the imagination, "our" empire, and hints at the journey to come before Atlantis is raised. He must go through the city of "canyoned traffic" in "The Tunnel," and "Across the hills where second timber strays," where older empires and dreams have fallen into wilderness on "Quaker Hill."[5] To liberate the "eyes" of Whitman is to liberate them within the poet's creative act, as Whitman urged his readers to liberate him within his poetry, to acknowledge that he himself was there with them. And the image of the eyes "undenying" links Whitman with that other poetic ancestor, Poe, who in "The Tunnel" is asked if he "denied" the "ticket," denied the necessary union of death and creation in the processes of the organic imagination.

This imprisoning obsession with power, and power's failure to liberate man and unite him with Love, is imaged in a parody of the earlier phrase, applied to poetry, "this breed of towers":

> The nasal whine of power whips a new universe. . .
> Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky,
> Under the looming stacks of the gigantic powerhouse
> Stars prick the eyes with sharp ammoniac proverbs.

The phallic "spouting pillars" beget "proverbs" that are "ammoniac," painful, rather than the "old persuasions" with which, the poem later says, "the stars have grooved our eyes." In the etymology of "ammoniac" the distortion of spiritual possibilities, the meaning of "ammoniac proverbs," is rendered, for the word derives

from the name of the god "Ammon," the Egyptian counterpart of Zeus (and from Ammon comes the Christian "Amen" at the end of prayers), so that the word's history reflects the corruptive transformation of spiritual aid into that sharp and painful substance, ammonia. The "sharp ammoniac proverbs" into which the spewing of smoke into the atmosphere has transformed the messages of the stars is paralleled by the mechanical transformation of speech into wire, "Power's script,--wound, bobbin-bound, refined--. . . harnessed jelly of the stars." Power and money, the two vices of the materialistic attitude of spirit, are united in "Power's script," which images the wire carrying the electricity generated by dynamos, the power source that drives the machines (counterpart of the "Sanskrit charge" that drives the unitive imagination). "Spurred" and "harnessed" imagistically contrast this mechanical power source with the horse symbolic of natural energies. But in the case of mechanical, or electric, power the question remains: motion "Towards what?" The motion of the machine, unlike that of the imagination, does not result in freedom. The circle of mechanical motion, like the "panoramic sleights" of "Proem," is confining, inclosing rather than disclosing, the reverse of the "orbic wake" of Elohim or the whirlwind-like dance of Maquokeeta.

> Towards what? The forked crash of split thunder parts
> Our hearing momentwise; but fast in whirling armatures,
> As bright as frogs eyes, giggling in the girth
> Of steely gizzards--axle-bound, confined
> In coiled precision, bunched in mutual glee
> The bearings glint,--O murmurless and shined
> In oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy!

The suggestion of an act of procreation through destruction opens the passage, with the "forked crash of split thunder," but no birth follows, for the "bearings" remain as inclosed "In oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy" as "frogs' eyes" confined in the maw of some animal, swallowed alive. The bearings are "fast in whirling armatures," both speedy and "stuck fast," doomed to endless repetition. The image of bearings "axle-bound, confined" recalls the images from "Cutty Sark" of the sailor's potential liberation through kicking the "traces" and dancing "the axle-tree," if only he "may start some white machine that sings." The machine described in this passage is, obviously, not a "white machine that sings"; it is "murmurless" and "blind," lacking the voice and vision which are the two essentials of the man of imagination. Its circular activity is repetitious and confining, unlike the gull's "white rings of tumult" which enabled it to "build Liberty." And in the image of the bearings existing side-by-side in "mutual glee" is the suggestion of the grim laughter of earlier men of the machine, like Dan Midland and the "bedlamite," who must be redeemed by the unitive act that reveals Cathay-Atlantis, a new "attitude of spirit."

The poem continues with a description of the invention of the airplane and its use as a vehicle of destruction rather than creation. This long description, fraught with imagistic inversions of the imagination's unitive and creative act, serves as contrast to the poetic flight of Walt Whitman, the subject of the third and final section of "Cape Hatteras." The Cape is the locale of both the destruction of the airplane and the raising of the

"rainbow's arch," signal of the reclamation of Whitman's "heritage." It suggests the unitive relationship of the seeming contradictories of destruction-creation in the processes of the dialectical imagination, doing so by allusion to the "ghoul-mound," Golgotha, of Christian tradition: the hill of Calvary. The destruction of and by the airplane is integral in this section with the conquest of space, with the building of the Bridge, fused in Whitman's "heritage" of the unity of destruction-creation, machine-pastoral, war and love. Thus the poet's final affirmation that he has reclaimed that "heritage" suggests that he has liberated himself from the threat posed by the airplane for further progress toward the realization of his "dream of act" in the creation of the Bridge.

The airplane is described in images that parody (convert downwards) the imagination's unitive and creative act. Animal imagery abounds: "Behold the dragon's covey"; "War's fiery kennel masked in downy offings"; "convoy planes, moonferrets"; "scouting griffins." This animal imagery suggests the dehumanization of the process whereby the airplane is made an instrument of war and separation rather than love and union. The animal imagery clashes grotesquely with imagery of medieval chivalric glory (here used ironically, of course) that renders the "tournament of space," the "cavalcade" ("on escapade," a further ironic reduction) with "escutcheoned wings" that falls from the sky, crashing into a "shapeless debris" of "high bravery." This Open Road leads not to love but war: "The soul, by naphtha fledged into new reaches/Already knows the closer clasp of Mars." The

traditional chivalric conflict of Mars and Venus (Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" comes to mind as example) parallels the earlier images of union (the Prince and Pocahontas in "The Dance") and, by the laws of the dialectical imagination, disunion (the wifeless or runaway hoboes of "The River," the sailor of "Cutty Sark"). War is "dispersion," love is union, and union results in further love according to the laws of the imagination. The central symbol of the unitive act, the circle, is also parodied here, for the plane spirals downward and in its flight spins "What ciphers risen from prophetic script,/What marathons new-set between the stars!" Her "prophetic script" is at once contrasted and compared to the earlier "Power's script," for the "ciphers" (circles) offer simultaneously promise and perversion of promise--all and nothing--as suggested in the ambiguous meaning of the word "cipher." In the "tournament of space" the "threshed and chiselled height/Is baited by marauding circles," circles of destruction. And at the height of the airplane's dogfighting flight the poet raises the exclamation-question of the truth of a vision that can unify war and love, and raises it in terms of the eye's ability to encompass in its periscopic vision the destructive squadron of the fleet of airplanes: "Surely no eye that Sunward Escadrille can cover!" Again the etymological device is used, for "Escadrille" ultimately derives from "squarare" ("to square"), so that the circle of the eye (symbolic of the unitive vision) is being set against a seemingly intractable square, a form antithetical to the "parable" of man and its geometric counterpart, the parabola of the Bridge.

The description of the airplane's flight concludes in an imagistic and visual rendering of its "down whizzing" path to "mashed and shapeless debris," the reversal of the artfully shaped "cartogram" of the sea-ships at the end of "Cutty Sark." Rather than an extended bridge, the machine is "bunched" and "beached" wreckage, as form and shape are dispersed in "gravitation's vortex," the destructive reverse of the unitive act. The poet's directive to the "Falcon-Ace" who pilots the airplane, whose vision and eyes have become "bicarbonated white by speed," is not followed here, but stands as indication of the path that must be taken if the imagination is to realize its "dream of act":

> Remember, Falcon-Ace,
> Thou hast there in thy wrist a Sanskrit charge
> To conjugate infinity's dim marge---
> Anew. . . !

Union rather than domination is the "Sanskrit charge," the original directive, the "pure impulse inbred," which must be the standard for the humanization of machines. The anti-Faustian import of this "Sanskrit charge" to "conjugate" rather than "subjugate" infinity is evident: the marriage of Faustus and Helen must be a conjugal relationship, and the obsession with aggression and domination defeats this hoped-for union. The image of the "Sanskrit charge" continues the association of the primal force of the imagination and the recording of that primal act in language, and prepares for the invocation of Whitman, with his "New integers of Roman, Viking, Celt," as the poetic master whose records of the word redeem the destruction of war and of the body in war by turning that destruction to imaginative creation.

Whitman's "heritage" resides in the poet, and provides an answer of ascension to the death of the airplane, for it is Whitman who has performed the unitive act that joins heaven and earth, death and rebirth, war and love:

> The stars have grooved our eyes with old persuasions
> Of love and hatred, birth,--surcease of nations. . .
> But who has held the heights more sure than thou,
> O Walt! -- Ascensions of thee hover in me now
> As thou at junctions elegaic, there, of speed
> With vast eternity, dost wield the rebound seed!
> The competent loam, the probable grass,--travail
> Of tides awash the pedestal of Everest, fail
> Not less than thou in pure impulse inbred
> To answer deepest soundings! O, upward from the dead
> Thou bringest tally, and a pact, new bound
> Of living brotherhood!

This is the beginning of a long and even paean which stands in glaring contrast to the near-grotesque gyrations of language in the rendering of the descent of the airplane. To the knowledge of the body is here added the loving force of poetry; as "The competent loam, the probable grass" are linked with the "rebound seed," of Whitman's poetry. Religious imagery, associating the efficacious influence of Whitman's "heritage" with the Resurrection, contrasts with the animal imagery (and imagery of the empty chivalric ideal) to suggest the redemptive relationship of poetry to the Faustian spirit; Whitman's records of "Junctions elegaic, there, of speed/With vast eternity" become "Easters of speeding light" when rendered in poetry, as the imagination affirms itself in its creations. And "upward from the dead" Whitman resurrects a "new bound," "rebound" pact, a vibrant unitive vision of "living brotherhood." His efforts are generated out of the "pure impulse inbred" that links the unitive creative

impulse, the imagination, with the laws of nature, "loam. . . grass. . . tides." Whitman's response to the "old persuasions" of the "stars," the "theme that's statured on the cliff," has generated a poem, "a pact new bound/of living brotherhood," (what Crane's poetics calls a new "ratio of sense and experience,") that embodies the imagination's rebinding "The stars" and "deepest soundings."

The symbolic function of Whitman uniting the furthest reaches of space and the "deepest soundings," the "pure impulse inbred," is emphasized in the next stanza, where Whitman is a bridge spanning "beyond/Glacial sierras and the flight of ravens" to "this, thine other hand, upon my heart." For the poet Whitman is the bridge uniting in "The Open Road" suffering with exaltation, descent with ascent. Whitman is the poet who "Hast kept of wounds, O Mourner, all that sum/That then from Appomattox stretched to Somme!", the poet of suffering as well as of optimism. And it is this "truth" of Whitman's poems which the poet of _The Bridge_ integrates into his living imagination, in the same way that he integrated the unitive myth of the Indian culture by identifying with Maquokeeta and participating in the Dance. The next stanza simultaneously describes the poet's first reading of Whitman and parallels that experience with the action of "The Dance," another proof that _The Bridge_ is a "history" that involves the simultaneous definition and performance of the imagination's unceasing urge toward "the articulation of the human consciousness _sub specie aeternitatis_." The similarity between the poet's journey to the Appalachian Spring (and from

there to the violet wedge of Adirondacks--wisped of azure wands,")
and the first few lines of this stanza is evident:

> Cowslip and shad-blow, flaked like tethered foam
> Around bared teeth of stallions, bloomed that spring
> When first I read thy lines, rife as the loam
> Of prairies, yet like breakers cliffward leaping!
> O, early following thee, I searched the hill
> Blue-writ and odor-firm with violets, 'til
> With June the mountain laurel broke through green
> And filled the forest with what clustrous sheen!

Whitman's poetry is identified with nature itself, with land and sea in their common impulse toward fruition and renewal. The reading of the poetry is identified with a reliving of that poetry, a searching of "the hill/Blue-writ and odor-firm with violets." The poet remembers that "White banks of moonlight" (like "white buildings") were "How speechful," as he responded to them "vibrantly," hearing "thunder's eloquence" and "trumpets breathing." His movement through the organic world of Whitman's poetry continued until "Gold autumn, captured, crowned the trembling hill!" This image renders the achievement of the unitive act, here for Whitman's poetry in terms of the circle of the unitive vision, the "crown" (recalling the "kindled crown" of "Ave Maria"), with the added implication of organic fruition as concomitant with the organic imagination and the "organic construct" of the imagination. Perhaps the most important addition here is the association of speech and writing with the unitive act (recall that Maquokeeta was dumb), for it suggests that the new imaginative stage involves the recognition of the possibility of embodying the imagination's "truth" in poetry, in a record which can live beyond the death of the poet himself. Whitman has not only united in his imagination's "truth" death

and resurrection, he has left a record which lives "beyond."

The next stanza relates the significance of Whitman for the poet in terms of the Bridge. Whitman is "Panis Angelicus!" He is the angelic bread, food for the imagination (and contrasted with the machine that leaves men "hungry on the tracks"); and Whitman's eyes are "tranquil with the blaze/Of love's own diametric gaze, of love's amaze!" The image of "love's amaze," via a pun on "maze," renders the resurrection (verbally, at least) of the "labyrinth" (sunken Atlantis) by the force of love, locating the "empire" of the imagination in the poems of Whitman (although that "empire" has not yet been founded in the confining "world of stocks," Manhattan). The symbolic circle of the unitive vision is suggested in the image of "diametric gaze," and the paradox of "tranquil with the blaze" renders the unity of opposites which characterizes the symbolic circle. Whitman's poetry is for the poet "onward yielding past my utmost year," a living thing that lives with the poet, and is organic ("yielding") as the poet himself is organic. Whitman is "Familiar," and "Evasive--too--as dayspring's spreading arc to trace is," a sort of organic element residing in organic nature, as much liberated in the elements of his cosmos--his poetic world--as Maquokeeta was in the elements of his nature-myth. Whitman's connection with the Bridge is definite:

> Our Meistersinger, thou set breath in steel;
> And it was thou who on the boldest heel
> Stood up and flung the span on even wing
> Of that great Bridge, our Myth, whereof I sing!

This is the "Myth" proper to Whitman and the poet, rather than the

nature-myth of Maquokeeta; it is the myth of the imagination's power to embody itself in poetry, to build a Bridge "to Thee, O Love." The image of the "boldest heel" associates Whitman with Elohim and the "sounding heel" of "Ave Maria," suggesting the association of poetic creation and cosmic creation, and the inclusion of the Bridge in that same breath defines the goal of the poet himself: the creation of a world through a word, the setting of "breath in steel," the Bridge, as the Logos set breath in human clay itself.

The ability of Whitman to move through death to a new life through the embodiment of his living imagination in his poems is the subject of the next stanza:

> Years of the Modern! Propulsions toward what capes?
> But thou, _Panis Angelicus_, has thou not seen
> And passed that Barrier that none escapes--
> But knows it leastwise as death-strife?--O, something green
> Beyond all sesames of science was thy choice
> Wherewith to bind us throbbing with one voice,
> New integers of Roman, Viking, Celt--
> Thou, Vedic Caesar, to the greensward knelt!

The "Barrier" is known "leastwise" (both "at least" and in the unwisest fashion) as "death-strife" (death and war and destruction), and Whitman has "passed" death by incorporating him self (and "us") in "something green," a poem "throbbing" (the imagination's organic pro-pulsion) "with one voice." The organic imagination is set against the logic of "science," the hocus-pocus of scientific "sesames," as capable of providing "New integers," which unify in a "pact, new-bound" the "living brotherhood." In "greensward" is a pun on "green word," the living word, the organic "Multitudinous Verb" (Verb, rather than noun, to suggest action) of the poem itself. Whitman made a "choice," a conscious

selection of alternatives, kneeling to "something green," the "greensward," life itself as well as the living imagination. He made this "choice" which the poet of The Bridge makes in this and the sections following, as he is henceforth empowered by Whitman's example.

This acknowledgement of Whitman's "heritage" empowers the poet to perceive space as a circle made up of "abysmal cupolas," depths and heights simultaneously. Whitman's poems, paradoxes of man's "parable," are "endless terminals, Easters of speeding light" toward which the poet's imagination, a resurrected airplane, moves "with seraphic grace/On clarion cylinders pass out of sight." The poet's imagination has assimilated and overcome the Faustian spirit embodied in the airplane, liberating itself to "course that span of consciousness," the "history" of the Bridge itself; and Whitman's "vision is reclaimed!/What heritage thou'st signalled to our hands!" Here the poet invokes his own "hands," the instruments of creation (as in the "Hand of Fire"), as well as Whitman's, and affirms the "heritage" and the freedom for further movement which it has given him:

> And see! the rainbow's arch--how shimmeringly stands
> Above the Cape's ghoul-mound, O joyous seer!
> Recorders ages hence, yes, they shall hear
> In their own veins uncancelled thy sure tread
> And read thee by the aureole 'round thy head
> Of pasture-shine, Panis Angelicus!
>
> yes, Walt,
> Afoot again, and onward without halt,--
> Not soon, nor suddenly,--no, never to let go
> My hand
> in yours,
> Walt Whitman--
> so--

Concrete language and primal symbols (rainbow and ghoul-mound, veins

and pasture-shine) abound in this conclusion, organic imagery that affirms the organic legacy of Whitman, heard in the "veins uncancelled," read in the unitive circle of Whitman's poetry. "Recorders ages hence, yes," including the poet of The Bridge, shall affirm Whitman's poetry as a "condition of life" demanding "new spiritual articulations," as a record that lives, as a Bridge to further life. And the poet's recognition of his filial relationship with Whitman, and his concomitant recognition of the continuing life of Whitman's choice of "something green," frees him for his own movement "onward without halt" toward his own unitive act in "Atlantis" and the recording of it in The Bridge.

## THREE SONGS

With "Three Songs" the poet invokes the other partner of that union necessary for the "organic construct" of Crane's art, a union envisioned in the very title of his earlier poem "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." The scientific, Faustian urge to conquer space has been seen as reconcilable with the life of the imagination through the example and mediacy of Whitman's poetry. Whitman's "heritage" of "faith" in "infinity," the absolute of the imagination's truth, has been reclaimed. The poet has perceived in poetry itself a possible fulfillment of his "dream of act," and as if to bear witness to this new recognition his voyage launches into song. But among the ironies that abound in "Three Songs" is the fact that they have for their subject the failure of song to invoke an ideal Woman. The only Song that approaches success is the final one, "Virginia," and that for a reason consonant with Crane's repudiation of the Romantic expressionism of song in favor of his own aesthetic allegiance to the "organic construct" of a poem. The "dream of act" is the dream of creating a construct by which "the imagination spans beyond despair" (Faustus and Helen), a "Bridge to Thee, O Love"; and the architecture metaphor is fundamental to the "organic construct." Expression, simple song, is not enough (just as Columbus's discovery of Cathay was "all lost" without his "record" of that discovery).

In "Three Songs" the poet turns the Romantic song against itself, reveals its inadequacies in "this new realm of fact," and then in "Virginia" changes it into a form more appropriate to the "organic construct" of The Bridge.

The poet not only frees himself from the merely expressive form of the song in his progression through "Three Songs," he also frees himself from the unquestioning affirmation of or desire for the types of Woman (both pagan and Christian) which other myths have bequeathed to modern man. In "Three Songs" the poet explores the possibilities of love in the modern world, of union with the symbolic Helen which both Faustian man and the poet himself desire. The Songs are each addressed to a type of Woman: Eve, Magdalene or Mary. These types are associated with mind, flesh, and imagination, thus making the progression an analogue of the three-step poetic process delineated by Crane, as well as synecdoche of the process by which The Bridge itself is given existence. Crane employs the traditional Christian schema of Eve, Magdalene and Mary only to pass through it, for the "Cathedral Mary" that is erected in "Virginia" and asked to "shine" inhabits a "white building" of the poet's own making. Her domicile is one of the "breed of towers" (both contextually and formally, as witness the visual shape of the poem's type) which the poet dedicated to Whitman in "Cape Hatteras." And her epithet "Cathedral" conjoins the Christian and architectural in an image that culminates the stone-building-architecture motif which is the "construct" half of the "organic construct" of the poem itself. Thus the poet

rejects the "ancient names" of Eve, Magdalene and Mary for a "Cathedral Mary" of his own making, an artifact built out of and dedicated to his desire for liberating love.

The epigraph to "Three Songs" is taken from Marlowe's Hero and Leander, and functions to associate the poet's songs with the attempt to bridge a strait to Love. The two cities of the legend, "The one Sestos, the other Abydos hight," are opposite each other on the Dardanelles Straits. In the classical story (and in Marlowe's poem) Leander swam the Hellespont each night to Hero, guiding himself by a light that shone from the tower where Hero attended the swans and sparrows dedicated to Venus. He drowned one night when a tempest arose as he was swimming toward his tower beacon. The parallels between the poet's efforts to unite with Love in "Three Songs" and Leander's nightly swim to Hero's "love light" (recall that phrase from "Indiana") is emphasized by the role of the tower light in each case, for Cathedral Mary is urged to "Shine. . . Out of the way-up nickel-dime tower shine." But Cathedral Mary is a construction of the poet's own imagination, the occupant of a song he made (a "virgin in the act of being 'built'),[1] so that invoking her is invoking the power of his own imagination as well. Just as Leander was driven by love to swim the Hellespont toward love, so too in The Bridge the poet's journey toward the Bridge is motivated by a unitive urge, an urge to bridge to Love. But the very invocation of Leander (in "Cutty Sark" the "last trip" of the ship Leander was a "tragedy") suggests the possibilities of death involved in each bridging. The possibility

of death, if not death itself, is a concomitant of the search for rebirth and creation through union with love in The Bridge. Thus the movement of "Three Songs," like that of Leander toward Hero, is a spanning of the "lanes of death and birth" ("Ave Maria") that dares failure and death by drowning for the sake of love.

The first song, "Southern Cross," renders the failure of the poet to discover in a traditional Female type of love, Eve, someone to share "utterly" his urge for love and union in love. The poet wants the "nameless Woman of the South" (Eve, Magdalene, or Mary--he tries all three names in the three Songs) as a mate in marriage, "No wraith, but utterly." But in "Southern Cross" his call to Eve "falls vainly on the wave," and she does not come alive or materialize as other than "wraith of my unloved seed." The implied sexual union of the Southern Cross and night that parallels the poet's hoped-for union with Eve fails, and the poem concludes in an imagistic reductio of the white buildings hoped for: "Light drowned the lithic trillions of your spawn." The spawn of "lithic trillions" drowned by light, like the flesh rendered "sandstone grey" by the failure of light in the next Song, are failed architectures, constructs too poorly structured to support love, stillborn acts of the imagination. The imagery of speech ("utterly," "call," "whispering hell," "namelessness") which renders this failure suggests its association with poetry and the fulfillment of the "dream of act" through the creation of poems. Unlike the desired "organic constructs" of Crane's poetics, they beget no new "spiritual

articulations." The Southern Cross moves upward in the night's sky, removing "girdles" from night as it goes (spiralling upwards, but not "building Liberty"). The Cross and the "nameless Woman" are "high, cool,/wide from the slowly smoldering fire/Of lower heavens" such as that of the National Winter Garden or Manhattan described in the next two Songs. They are too high for the poet's song to reach, for "Whatever call--falls vainly on the wave." The Christian myth that served Columbus so well is impotent here in the twentieth century, and as the poem ends the poet recognizes not only that Eve is a "wraith" but that the Cross is "a phantom," and he must search elsewhere for a "myth to God."

This lament is imagistically contrasted with the affirmation of "The Dance" by the fact that "homeless Eve" makes the "wind-swept guitars" of mariners "grieve" her loss, a reversal of the situation in "The Dance," where the dance itself was performed because "Pocahontas grieves" and affirmed the call to union (the smile) delivered by Pocahontas herself. Eve here is negligent, refusing to answer the poet's song except "within one grave." She is "Unwedded, stumbling gardenless," and possessing a "stinging coil" like the serpent itself. She has deserted the poet, remaining aloof, unlike Pocahontas who sought union with "the swift red flesh." Eve's isolation from the flesh, her existence as "wraith," destroys any possibility that she might return love. And here the poet's "unloved seed" is contrasted with the "rebound seed" of Whitman's fruitful unitive act. The "orbic wake" that in "Ave Maria" signalled the unitive truth of the cosmos has here become "this long wake of phosphor, iridescent/

Furrow of all our travel--trailed derision," and the symbolic smile has become mocking rather than inviting:

> Eyes crumble at its kiss. Its long-drawn spell
> Incites a yell. Slid on that backward vision
> The mind is churned to spittle, whispering hell.

The poet is speaking of the mind's vision (as opposed to the blood memory of the flesh in "The Dance" or the parabolic inclusive vision of "Atlantis"), the mental apprehension of the loss of the Christian myth and the passage of time: it is a "backward" vision, looking into the past, and thereby implicitly separating past from present. It fragments time, slices space and denies the imagination and the possibility of myth. Rather than the "whispers antiphonal" of Cathay, the backward vision here draws response only from a "whispering hell." Significantly, this backward vision is associated with the past tense.

One of the types of progression through "Three Songs" is the temporal, from past through present to future, and in "Southern Cross" the poet casts his desire for the "nameless Woman of the South" in the past tense: "I wanted you." The past tense subtly links his longing for the past of tradition and its "nameless Woman" with his childhood longing for his own mother's "unconscious, Sabbatical smile," an association emphasized in "Virginia" where "Cathedral Mary" is also "Saturday Mary." But more importantly the past tense indicates recognition that both ideals are lost, and longing for them in those terms is futile. The present tense is the tense of the flesh, and the ideal love is debased ("simian Venus, homeless Eve") precisely because it cannot survive isolated from the

flesh in "this new realm of fact." Even the Southern Cross, which "takes night" so high and cool above the fires of "lower heavens" has to pass through their burning "vaporous scars" first. The poet indicates his recognition of the failure of Eve (and the Christian tradition) to satisfy his unitive urge by shifting the object of his search and casting it in the present tense:

> It is blood to remember; it is fire
> To stammer back. . . It is
> God--your namelessness. And the wash--

Here he substitutes "God" for the "Woman of the South," a substitution reinforced in "Atlantis" where the object of the search is imaged as "Deity's young name." He seeks a "myth to God," the absolute of the imagination's truth, and in "Southern Cross" he records the failure of Eve and Christianity, the "phantom" Cross, to survive the "light."

The aspect of love explored in "National Winter Garden" is the physical, the type of woman invoked is Magdalene, and the setting is Minsky's, the famous burlesque house in lower Manhattan. Rather than the high, cool abode of night in the "Southern Cross," this locale is one of the "lower heavens,--vaporous scars," a smoke-filled noisome auditorium. The poet's desire for Eve as "No wraith, but utterly" is ludicrously burlesqued by the flesh: "Outspoken buttocks in pink beads/Invite the necessary cloudy clinch/Of bandy eyes." The poet is assaulted by the flesh, repulsed by its similarity to and debasement of his ideal, and yet at the end of the poem has come to recognize that he cannot "flee her spawn through a fleshless door," cannot

avoid the flesh, but must come back to "die alone" in the flesh if he is to move from the "backward" vision of "Southern Cross" to the "lifeward" vision that Magdalene and the flesh offer. His choice for life involves the loss, the "death" of his ideal of escape through repression of the flesh (the "fleshless door" recalls the "sesames of science" which Whitman ignored in favor of "something green" and living); and for aid in this movement from death to birth the poet invokes Magdalene, "the burlesque of our lust--and faith," the Christian whore-with-the-heart-of-gold who was not only redeemed in the flesh by Christ but also discovered Him similarly liberated from the "enchained Sepulchre" of the Tomb, risen _in the flesh._ Thus she knows how the flesh can be liberated in a way that neither Eve nor Mary could, and appropriately invites the "necessary cloudy clinch," the physical union "necessary" to the eventual individuation and liberation of the poet, his rebirth "bone by infant bone" which will enable him, free him, to "build" the virgin of "Virginia."

Not only the theme but also the many instances of imagistic burlesque of earlier ideals of love (Pocahontas, the Virgin, Eve) recall Yeats' poetic dictum: "Love has pitched his mansion in/The place of excrement;/For nothing can be sole or whole/That has not been rent."[2] This is the lesson the poet learns in "National Winter Garden," that "Fair and foul are near of kin," that Magdalene is the burlesque of both "our lust--and faith." The ambiguity of fair and foul in burlesque is similar to the ambiguity of the "bedlamite" of "Proem," that "jest" that fell from the Bridge, as the etymology of "burlesque" (a "jest") suggests:

redemption is inextricably joined with death, the lofty with the low, in the unitive vision of the imagination. The name National Winter Garden and the dance burlesque the dance that led to "bloom" in "The Dance," as well as "gardenless" Eve; and the music of "A tom-tom scrimmage with a somewhere violin" recalls both "The Dance" and the "windswept guitars" of "Southern Cross," reducing both noble and romantic music to "the lewd trounce of a final muted beat." But if the dancer burlesques "our faith," she also burlesques "our lust," for her attractiveness comes not from the flesh itself, but from the play of lights on her flesh: she is one of the "panoramic sleights" of "Proem," a "flashing scene" that is never "disclosed," that depends for its effect on speed and light, illusion rather than substance:

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

Even lust is an illusion, a light-trick that fails when a "caught slide" cuts off the light source and leaves the dancer "sandstone grey," an unilluminated white building, the not-so-exciting foundations of Love's "mansion." Light is just as inimical here to the flesh as it was to the ideal of Eve in "Southern Cross," since in both cases it is a light from without rather than from within, which is the loci of light in the imagination's white buildings. It might be noted too that the repudiation of the projective light of the poet in favor of the radiant light of the artifact (the Bridge, finally) is another way in which Crane is not solely Romantic; so that the dancer of "National Winter

Garden" burlesques the "faith" in the power of the imagination to illuminate Love by showing the failure of "panoramic sleights" of Romantic projective poetry. The symbolic circle of the unitive vision is here burlesqued: "Her eyes exist in swivellings of her teats," an image that recalls the bearings with their "oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy" from "Cape Hatteras." The serpent image associated with Eve (her "stinging coil") in "Southern Cross" is recalled here, as the dancer's "silly snake rings begin to mount, surmount/Each other--turquoise fakes on tinselled hands." But the threat that Eve posed in "Southern Cross" is here mitigated in the case of Magdalene, and done, typically, through the etymological argument; the modifying "silly" renders not only the ridiculous aspects of the "snake rings," but also, via, the etymology, the "innocent" aspects of the serpent rings, suggesting the value this second Song affirms: the flesh is not only a burlesque of our faith, it is innocent (as Eve the mental ideal is not) of evil intent, and it can "Lug us back lifeward--bone by infant bone," if we do not flee it through the "fleshless door" of the mind. The "National Winter Garden" concludes on the subtle affirmation that the individuation necessary to imaginative creation, and hence to further life in terms of Crane's poetics, can come only when to the flesh "each comes back to die alone" (a use of "die" suggestive of the Renaissance double entendre denoting both death and the act of sexual intercourse, an ambiguity based on the integrative aspects of both acts). Thus the second stage of Crane's three-stage poetic process, the assimilation and

integration into the living flesh, is affirmed in this second of "Three Songs."

The aspect of love explored in "Virginia" is the responsive and regenerative (hence loving) possibilities of the "organic construct" of the imagination's own making. In a letter Crane explained the title by referring to this Song as "virgin in process of being 'built,'" and significantly the type of Woman invoked is "Cathedral Mary," a virgin inhabiting a construct of the imagination, something humanly aproachable (as opposed to the high, cool heavens of Eve in "Southern Cross"). The Song progresses from plain Mary to Cathedral Mary, as the poet builds up the working girl mentioned in the first stanza, so that he is in effect creating his own ideal, an ideal of the constructive imagination. Interesting too is the imagery of chance[3] that surrounds this building process: "Gone seven--gone eleven,/ And I'm still waiting you--," and "Crap-shooting gangs" suggest that the poet's Song consciously invokes Luck as a necessary ingredient in the building process (recall the "lucky blue" banners of the clipper ships). Crane in his letters made it clear that his concept of the creative process (and experience with it) involved luck, chance, a factor on which sometimes the artist must "simply wait,"[4] as here the poet is waiting for Cathedral Mary to "shine." The life of the imagination is fraught with dangers, as here Mary is threatened by the "boss." "On cornices of daffodils/The slender violets stray" while "Crapshooting gangs in Bleecker reign." The poet multiplies potential threats by subtly echoing earlier situations: "Peonies

with pony manes--/Forget-me-nots at windowpanes" recall the "neighing canyons" of "The Dance" and the mother's smile seen through the window in "Van Winkle." Many things are at stake in this attempt to create a construct for the imagination's truth.

Against these threatening elements are set "Saturday Mary" (where "Saturday" is etymologically connected with "Sabbath" and freedom) and the "golden hair" that abides in the "high wheat tower" (recalling the "pendant, seething wheat/Of knowledge" to which the Bridge is "threshold"). Liberation into a new "attitude of spirit," with a morality threshed, "essentialized from experience directly," are the objects of the imagination's creative efforts, and the objects the poet here invokes. He wants a Cathedral Mary that will shine out as a beacon to guide his spanning journey, and he realizes that he will have to create her himself. Thus "Three Songs" ends with an invocation to the Woman of the creative imagination, the modern Muse whose light will come to the poet, not from afar but from the interior of his own constructions, his own act. Poetry, then, and the truth of the imagination which poems evince, do truly provide their own justification, for they invoke other poems, they beget themselves in imitation of the living imagination itself. The "white stones wherein our smiling plays," the new cathedrals of the imagination, are inhabited by Cathedral Mary and the love she symbolizes.

## QUAKER HILL

"Quaker Hill" continues the quest for a living symbol of Love's unitive truth within the world of the real which provided the subject of "Three Songs," and looks forward to the agonized descent beneath the surface of Manhattan and the East River in "The Tunnel" that is a necessary prelude to the raising of the "intrinsic Myth" of the Bridge in "Atlantis." The dominant symbol of "Quaker Hill" associates death and aloofness. A building overlooking a Quaker graveyard, "old Mizzentop, palatial white/Hostelry," stands atop Quaker Hill itself as a sort of tombstone marking the death of a dream. It is abandoned, vacant of life, and its windows gleam "like eyes that still uphold some dream" only at "sunset," reflecting the feeble light of the dying sun rather than radiating their own light, as the white buildings of the imagination must do (as Cathedral Mary was implored to "shine" even brighter than the "noon of May"). "Old Mizzentop," with its "dormer/Portholes" for windows, imagistically invites comparison (and contrast) with the radiant nautical Bridge of "Atlantis," whose "White tempest nets" ring "the humming spars,/The loft of vision, palladium helm of stars." The construction on Quaker Hill substitutes a "silent, cobwebbed patience" for the "humming spars" of the organic construction of the Bridge, and symbolizes a stoic attitude toward death and suffering which the

affirmative poet of The Bridge must move beyond. The "patience" that, at the conclusion of "Quaker Hill," "shields/Love from despair" is like the passion it is etymologically and psychologically derived from, an insufficient good, and the institutionalization of patience, the building of a permanent shield "from despair," ultimately blots out the light of "Love" that it was meant to protect.

The function, then, of "Quaker Hill" is not simply to render the discrepancy between former dreams and present reality which stoicism only seems to resolve, but to render the poet's movement through a stoicism which resulted in the failure of former dreams to create an architecture that lives and shines with its own light. The poet does not simply learn the need of suffering, which in any case he has learned previously in The Bridge, he learns the failure of the stoic, Quaker attitude to construct an architecture commensurate with the imagination's "living truth."[1] The "palatial white/Hostelry" stands over the dead Quakers in a spatial relationship that recalls the "alabaster chambers" of Emily Dickinson's famous poem that housed "the meek members of the resurrection/Untouched by morning, and untouched by noon," shrouded in darkness. "Old Mizzentop" houses death, not life, unlike the white buildings of poetry built by and for the living imagination. The abandoned hotel stands in stark contrast to the legacy of the "Meistersinger" of the myth of the Bridge, Walt Whitman, whose poems evinced the radiant light of "Sea eyes and tidal, undenying, bright with myth" in the "Cape Hatteras" section, for the "stoic

height" of the construction atop Quaker Hill shows only "death's stare in slow survey," a mode of vision neither "bright" nor "undenying."

The movement through "Quaker Hill" from the "death's stare" of the tower of the abandoned hotel to the affirmation of the need to "descend as worm's eye to construe/Our love of all we touch" is rendered in a style more propositional (rather than dramatically alive) than any other section of The Bridge, reflecting the intellectual subjugation of passion to thought which here threatens the living imagination. The ironic tension and distance between the real and the ideal is delivered through a suitably restricted form, as stanzas of alternating end-rimes give way only to the even more restrictive rimed couplets of the concluding two stanzas; and the attitude of the poet matches this style. Whether or not this ironic posture derived from Crane's flagging faith in the success of The Bridge, or the possibilities of an optimistic poem in an age of cynicism,[2] the fact remains that the use of irony in "Quaker Hill" is consonant with the function of that section and its relation to The Bridge as a whole. The recognition of discrepancy and distance which irony bespeaks and affirms, a recognition of the intellect rather than the imagination (which, like the Freudian id, does not negate or segregate, a fact noted by Crane in his statement that "the true idea of God is the identification of one's self with all of life"[3]), suitably conveys the contrast between the early dream that America might be the "Promised Land" and the present reality of "Adams' auction" and "the

persuasive suburban land agent" whose materialism repudiates that dream. But "Quaker Hill" is more than a bitter diatribe against modern materialism, and the ironic distance as well as the propositional style that conveys it, are thematically and formally destroyed (a destruction for the purposes of eventual recreation) at the conclusion of the section. The poet moves beyond "the resigned factions of the dead" and the irony that is their solace in factionalism to a recognition and affirmation of the need to transmute the "silence" of death and the separation of irony into a unitive expression, a "stilly note" of poetry that, paradoxically, "Breaks us and saves." The poet's descent from the "stoic height" of "death's stare" to a "worm's eye" view of the flesh is imagistically joined with a renewed participation in the organic cycle of the seasons, a recognition of the unitive nature of life and death. And the final line of the poem is an affirmation of this need to descend from the "stoic height":

> Leaf after autumnal leaf
> break off,
> descend--
> descend--

From the intellectual heights through the flesh of "worm's eye" the poet has moved to the unitive vision of the imagination and the record of that vision in poetry. This final image not only urges the poet downward into "The Tunnel" but also subtly returns him to the epigraph of "Quaker Hill," the "maple's loom" that weaves the red "autumnal leaf" and the poem of Emily Dickinson, the product of another kind of loom.

Two epigraphs preface "Quaker Hill." They serve to establish the tension between the ideal and the real which characterizes the contrast between the dream of the Quakers and the reality of the materialistic tourists to Quaker Hill; but the epigraphs also suggest the source of the resolution of this tension, the affirmation by the poet's "throbbing throat" of the imagination's unitive truth, for the epigraphs are drawn from artists who have themselves transmuted silence by their creative acts. Thus the epigraphs subtly bear witness to the central value of "Quaker Hill," the imperative that the unitive imagination embody its truth in an act that lives beyond the death in time and space (as with "Old Mizzentop") that philosophies or dogmas always suffer. Only an organic construct of the creative imagination such as the Bridge can fuse time and space in a myth of its own making, a living construct that bears witness to and depends on "some absolute and timeless concept of the imagination."[4] The first epigraph, taken from the dancer Isadora Duncan, a favorite of Crane's, is the more propositional of the two: "I see only the ideal. But no ideals have ever been fully successful on this earth." This statement does not hold out any immediate suggestion of the possibility of a reconciliation through art of the tension it speaks to, but then Isadora Duncan's medium of creation is not the word but the dance. The second epigraph, however, does:

> The gentian weaves her fringes,
> The maple's loom is red.
> --Emily Dickinson

The theme of the inseparability of life and death is imaged in

terms of nature in this excerpt from a poem Crane knew as "Summer's Obsequies," as purple gentian and blood-red maple weave blossoms that must die. The epigraph prefigures the image from "Atlantis" of "ripe fields/Revolving through their harvests in sweet torment." The weaving metaphor is one of those used likewise in The Bridge for the poetic process. In Dickinson's ironic[5] poem the speaker's statement that "My departing blossoms/Obviate parade," and her sardonic "Amen" to the performance of a mock ritual commemorating a death that must signal their own, reveals "Bee and Butterfly" as uncaring for "the seasons fleeting" as the residents of Quaker Hill. But the poet cares, and by her transmutation of silence into song Dickinson creates an organic construct, a poem, that survives her death as well as the death that is its subject. Thus the second epigraph to "Quaker Hill" not only establishes the conflict between the ideal and the real, it also bears witness to the resolution of that conflict which the unitive poetic imagination can provide, a resolution in terms of the organic construction of the poem itself.

The first two stanzas of the poem contrast the Quakers' faith in the providential sufficiency of the natural order with the poet's own sophisticated scepticism. The Quakers are free of modern society's materialistic preoccupations, but their passive acceptance of the strife concomitant with change and death is still a threat to the active imagination. The Quakers possess an organic perspective that "never withers," and they keep the "docile edict of the Spring/That blends March with August Antarctic skies," an adherence to the organic processes

of the earth. This pastoral abandonment to the inevitability of "Time's rendings, time's blendings" has its limitations, however, in the view of a poet who takes his inspiration from organic <u>constructions</u> like the Brooklyn Bridge or white buildings:

> 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.

The Quakers have settled for the pastoral version of "the world dimensional," that habitat sufficient only "for those untwisted by the love of things irreconcilable." They do not see <u>through</u>[6] the "rich halo" of the Northern Lights that fill "August Antarctic skies" (a familiar image from Emily Dickinson) to anything beyond; rather, they resemble the hoboes ("The River") "peering in the can," a deflection rather than projection of vision in which "each sees only his dim past reversed" since they perceive "no other thing/Than grass and snow, and their own inner being" (the "inner being" possibly an allusion to the Quaker doctrine of the Inner Light). Their stoic acceptance of the suffering imaged in the purple Northern Lights is a subtle negation of life and life's imaginative possibilities which tends towards death, as the Quakers' failure to "cast" (both "reflect" and "sow") on the "seasons fleeting" puts them in danger of death by starvation, a symbolic malnutrition used elsewhere in <u>The Bridge</u> to suggest spiritual, i. e. imaginative, deprivation. Thus the Quakers, "awkward, ponderous and uncoy," avoid the "panoramic sleights" of a mechanical and materialistic cast of mind only to fall into a "never disclosed" pattern of another

sort, the simplistic routine of "cows."

Set against the Quakers are the poet and his friends, "we who press the cider mill. . . who with pledges taste the bright annoy/Of friendship's acid wine. . . boast much of our store of faith in other men/Who would, ourselves, stalk down the merriest ghost." The poet's attitude toward himself and his companions' talk of "faith in other men" is sceptical, ironic, urbane. Hard cider creates an aura of friendship that is illusory, an inconstant faith, and their "boast" of the brotherhood of man is no more enduring than the Quakers' individualistic but passive reliance on nature's providence.

From the "seasons fleeting" which doom the Quakers' Inner Light to the "shifting reprisals" that belie the "store of faith" in the brotherhood of man, the poem's focus turns to a building, old Mizzentop, the white edifice that crowns Quaker Hill. The "palatial white/Hostelry" is one of those "other calendars" that now "stack the sky" ("The Dance"), and it bears witness to the death of the Quaker dream that America might be "the Promised Land." It is the antithesis of the white buildings which the imagination erects to house its "living truth,"[7] for the "Portholes" and the "central cupola" of the hotel launch only "death's stare in slow survey." But the alternative architecture of the tourist trade, the "New Avalon Hotel" (a remodelling of the "old Meeting House"), though filled with the noisy roar of music "Fresh from the radio," is as doomed by its faith in novelty and constant change as old Mizzentop was by its adherence to "some dream" out of time, and the "New Avalon" does not promise to last

any longer than the "gin fizz" that "bubbles in time to Hollywood's new love-nest pageant."[8]

The recognition of this juxtaposition of failed architectures draws from the poet an ironic declamation of the historical condition:

> What cunning neighbors history has 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?

This is the recognition of the waste land cast of mind that he must find a way through, the despair at the substitution of material for spiritual values, of the disintegration of the spiritual values themselves and the "patriarch race." It is from this recognition that the poet draws the ironic attitude that characterizes the first part of "Quaker Hill," his detachment from the "world dimensional." "Adams' auction" (a pun on Adam's action) images the imperfect state, the historical state that threatens the timeless mythic vision; the American dream is sold out to a European type, "Powitzky,"[9] and the "woodlouse" eats "the ancient deal/Table" no matter who owns it. These are the truths of "this new realm of fact," as the old dreams (like the dream still "upheld" by old Mizzentop) are cancelled out. This inescapable recognition of the failure of stoicism's passivity to support the dream of the ideal in the materialistic present causes the poet to cast aside his own aloofness and detachment. He descends into and transforms in his own

living imagination the waste land which his intellectual vision had perceived, discovering in the process an active "patience" that will take him through the Tunnel to the Bridge.

The recognition that the "resigned factions of the dead" preside on Quaker Hill issues into a summary acknowledgement that "the curse of sundered parentage" haunts both the poet and the nation[10] (and, in conjunction with "Adams' auction," the Christian postlapsarian world); it is the curse of separation and antagonism: Indians vs. Yankees, the poet's mother vs. his father, the world's body from the abstracting intellect. These are the dichotomies the unitive imagination must fuse in order to liberate itself for the creative act.

> 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? Yes, while the heart is wrung,
> Arise--yes, take this sheaf of dust upon your tongue!
> In one last angelus lift throbbing throat--
> Listen, transmuting silence with that stilly note
>
> Of pain that Emily, that Isadora knew!

The organic perspective of "the hawk's far stemming view," the Quakers' stoic aloofness that "never withers," is incomplete without the "worm's eye" perception that "all we touch" must die, that life is inseparable from death, and that "our love of all we touch" is impermanently housed in the flesh.[11] The poet's descent into the flesh is not a rejection of the intellect in favor of the flesh, but a movement from intellect through the flesh to the act of imagination that can unify the two in an affirmation of its own truth,[12] the "one last angelus" of the

"throbbing throat" that can transmute the silence of death into life. The descent is followed by the command to "Arise," a call to resurrection and renewal as well as a call to action, to creation; and what is created, "wrung" (and "rung") from "the heart," is a "stilly note/Of pain," a paradoxical (and, by a pun on "silly" used previously in "National Winter Garden," radically "innocent" in Blake's sense)[13] song about silence similar to the poem from Emily Dickinson which provides the epigraph. The religious imagery of the "angelus" and the act of communion in taking the "dust," like the Host, "upon your tongue," recalls Crane's substitution of the aesthetic for the religious absolute.[14]

As if to prove the truth of Yeats' dictum that the laws of art are the hidden laws of the world, the poet locates in nature an objective correlative for the aesthetic act which he is called:

> While high from dim elm-chancels hung with dew,
> That triple-noted clause of moonlight--
> Yes, whip-poor-will, unhusks the heart of fright,
> Breaks us and saves, yes, breaks the heart, yet yields
> That patience that is armour and that shields
> Love from despair--when love foresees the end--
> Leaf after autumnal leaf
>                                         break off,
>                                                         descend--
>                                                                 descend--

The transmutation of pain into song which the sound of the whip-poor-will suggests provides the poet with a natural affirmation of the truth that neither the stoic neglect of life nor the materialistic attempt to dominate it affords any salvation. The "dim elm-chancels hung with dew" signal the coming of the dawn (a favorite time for the whip-poor-will's song), and the "triple-

noted clause of moonlight" suggests not only the three-noted song of the bird (the triadic "clause" uniting the antinomies of life and death in a rendering of the "parable of man") but also the death of the moon that, in the unitive cycle of the universe, is concomitant with the birth of the sun. The whip-poor-will, then, at once expresses and bridges the "sundered parentage" of moon and sun, signalling not only a death but also a birth by his song, so that the "triple-noted clause" urges the poet onward to further life by its example. The bird's cry, like the "terrific threshold" of the Bridge ("Proem"), "unhusks" the poet's heart of "fright," and "yields" (to continue the threshing imagery) a "patience" that protects "Love from despair," enabling it to accept the descent of the autumn leaves in the hope of eventual regeneration within the world. The "autumnal leaf" subtly returns us to the "maple's loom" and Emily Dickinson's poem, a muted reminder that the unitive truth of the living universe finds its ultimate human pattern in the creative act of the living imagination embodied in the white buildings of poetry itself. It is toward his own poetic Bridge that the poet now moves, armed with a patience learned on Quaker Hill that will aid his passage through the "Gates of Wrath" of "The Tunnel."

## THE TUNNEL

In "The Tunnel" the poet descends through the surface remnants of the past he has already explored to the source <u>in the present</u> of the energy which will enable him to create-perceive ("accrete" is the anagram for this dual relationship in "Ave Maria") the Bridge of "Atlantis." The action is a death-descent for the purposes of resurrection and ascension, and the poet is the "bedlamite" of "Proem" who here is reborn through the power of "some Word that will not die." That "Word" is not the Christian Logos, but the force of the imagination itself, the "pure impulse inbred" which empowers the poet to create the "Bridge to Thee, O Love." The poet's unitive "pact, new bound," is rendered in the Bridge, which unites in "one arc synoptic" the city with "ripe fields," past with present, and points toward the future and further "spiritual articulations." In "The Tunnel" the poet submits himself to all the disjunctive forces of modern civilization, of his time and locality, in order to assimilate them by fusion with the imagination's living "Word." His mediate states of dream and memory finally drop away, as he encounters in this section the immediate forces he must fuse to "build Liberty" and realize his "dream of act." The examples of the past, the myth of the Indians and the poetry of Whitman and Dickinson, are replaced by Poe, the symbol both of the need to descend to the

ground of the present time and place and the difficulty of doing so and surviving to tell about the descent. The journey through the Tunnel is not escape but excavation, the following out of that "quarrying passion" ("The River") beneath "dead echoes" of the past to the source, the living "Word" in the present. It is the act of assimilation, identification with "all of life," that in Crane's poetics precedes the construction of white buildings or the building of a Bridge.

The call to "descend--/descend" that concluded "Quaker Hill" is heeded in "The Tunnel," as the poet travels via the subway beneath the fragmented surface of Manhattan and the oily waters of the East River, finally arriving on the Brooklyn side of the Harbor, opposite the "ticking towers" of the Manhattan skyline. The journey describes a semi-circle, the nether side of the circle that might be traced if the curve of the Bridge were extended. The descent is thematically as well as literally the complement of the Bridge, for where the Bridge is "one arc syhoptic of all tides below" the Tunnel is rendered through a series of demonic images as the slope-loop disjunctive of all the events that have preceded it in the poem. Thus the loving smile and flowing hair of Pocahontas are reduced to "the toothpaste and the dandruff ads" that adorn the subway, and Columbus's beloved Virgin becomes a "Wop washerwoman" who rides the "Daemon" subway with the poet. The journey descends through the present "performances, assortments, resumes" of events that have preceded it in The Bridge to the "worm's eye" appreciation of "our love of all we touch" and the "kiss of our agony," as the poet

seeks in the present the affirmation of existence which he has previously known in mediated, veiled form--in memory or through others' poetry. The epigraph to "The Tunnel," taken from Blake, links this subway trip with the passage through the "Gates of Wrath" that is necessary for he who seeks "The Western Path" to life's renewal. In Blake's poem it is the Sun itself which is liberated by this journey. Thus the epigraph suggests that the poet's nocturnal subway trip is complement to the diurnal cycle of the Sun, and by extension to the organic processes of life itself. Thus the descent via subway is a necessary prelude to the liberation of the organic light in the machine age, and prepares for the construction of the Bridge, "breath" and life set "in steel."

The descent of the subway recalls the "unlooping" fall of the airplane in "Cape Hatteras," for disjunction, centrifugal motion rather than centripetal, characterize the trip. Since the central symbol of the poem, the Bridge, is a connective one, this disjunctive action represents the reverse of the unitive act of the Bridge, and thus poses a grave threat to the imagination's unitive life. In a letter Crane wrote of the divisive character of "The Tunnel" in terms of its composition:

> Work continues on "The Tunnel" now.
> I shall have it done very shortly.
> It's rather ghastly, almost sur-
> gery--and, oddly almost all from
> the notes and stitches I have
> written while swinging on the
> strap at late midnight going
> home.[1]

The image of composition as surgery stands in contrast to the fusing, welding, building by which Crane usually images his

"architectural method" of poetic creation; and it suggests the organic nature of the poetic process by comparing the poem to a body. The "notes and stitches" that abound in "The Tunnel" render the "never disclosed" repetitions of the scientific, industrial society. The unitive circle of the cyclone of "The Dance" is reversed in the subway descent until it "Lets go" of those disparate elements it would unify.

The American poet invoked in "The Tunnel" is Edgar Allan Poe, whose severed head is met in the midst of the journey. The function of Poe is suggested by a letter Crane wrote concerning William Carlos Williams' book, <u>In The American Grain</u>: "I was so interested to note that he puts Poe and his 'character' in the same position as I had <u>symbolized</u> for him in 'The Tunnel' section."[2] Crane stated that he had not read Williams' book before writing "The Tunnel," but there is a remarkable similarity between Williams' Poe and Crane's. For one thing, the chapter on Poe is the last of Williams' book, and follows a chapter entitled "Descent," in which Williams talks of the need for the truly American poet to descend to the "ground" for the source of his poetry:

> Poe can be understood only in a
> knowledge of his deep roots. The
> quality of the flower will then be
> seen to be normal, in all its
> tortured spirituosity and paleness,
> a desert flower with roots under
> the sand of his day.
> Whitman had to come from under.
> All have to come from under and
> through a dead layer. . .
> (The poet) wants to have the feet
> of his understanding on the ground,
> his ground, <u>the</u> ground, the only
> ground that he knows, that which <u>is</u>

> under his feet. I speak of aesthetic satisfaction. This want, in America, can only be filled by knowledge, a poetic knowledge, of that ground.[3]

The "aesthetic satisfaction" mentioned here as the poet's goal is elaborated on in the chapter on Poe, who "gives the sense for the first time in America, that literature is serious, not a matter of courtesy but of truth."[4] Poe revolted from the formless masses around him, and their transposition of European culture to America, and sought to develop and enforce his own method of forming the elements in which he lived: "His greatness is that he turned his back and faced inland, to originality, with the identical gesture of a Boone."[5] Poe sought to build a method that would stand on the ground of his locality and his time, an original and wholly American creation. But, his method "failing, truth turning to love, as if metamorphosed in his hands as he was about to grasp it," he became "defenseless, the place itself attacked him," and he was forced to despair.[6] Because of this failure of intellectual method in his poetry "the place itself comes through,"[7] his person is eliminated and the truth and love his creation bespeaks exists solely. Thus Poe symbolizes the search for a truly local, hence original, ground for "aesthetic satisfaction," and the failure to find it through intellectual method. In "The Tunnel" he is exemplar of that final descent through "performances, assortments, resumes" to the original source, the living "Word," for the purpose of finally moving upwards to the creation of a Bridge "synoptic of all tides below."

"The Tunnel" opens with a description of Manhattan by night, as "lights/Channel the congresses" of people, the "Refractions of the thousand theatres, faces," along Broadway "Up Times Square to Columbus Circle." The streams of people recall the famous image from The Waste Land of people streaming over London Bridge, and the diffusion and refraction of light suggests that the city itself is one of those "panoramic sleights" that are "never disclosed, but hastened to again" night after night after night. The initial line establishes this connection between the city of night and the "panoramic sleights," for these refractions are "Performances, assortments, resumes," masks and masques that conceal rather than reveal. These surface "refractions" of "theatres, faces" that flow towards Columbus Circle form the river in which the bedlamite-poet must immerse himself if he is to reach the "biding place" of "some Word that will not die," and thereby assimilate them into his living imagination. The necessity of gaining an organic, rather than superficial or intellectual, knowledge of them is imaged as knowing them "by heart":

> . . . You shall search them all.
> Some day by heart you'll learn each famous sight
> And watch the curtain lift in hell's despite;
> You'll find the garden in the third act dead,
> Finger your knees, and wish yourself in bed
> With tabloid crime-sheets perched in easy sight.

Along with the irony of a "famous sight" that fails to disclose itself to the sight-seeing people streaming by, there is the implication that the sights really must be learned "by heart," by direct existential encounter ("apprehensions out of speech" is the phrase from "Possessions") rather than the "easy sight"

by which one reads the daily newspaper. The images of the "famous sight" and the "garden in the third act" which is "dead" suggest that the historical and traditional are mere "archeology," and that the "performances, assortments, resumes" of them are devoid of meaning for the modern bedlamite. These surface phenomena, remnants of a glorious past that is now vanished, are as dead as "Old Mizzentop" of "Quaker Hill"; and the return to Eden, the "third act" of the Christian myth, isn't even as convincing (or entertaining) as the "tabloid crime-sheets" that reflect the enterprises accompanying the Fall. The failure of these "refractions" to satisfy the hunger for unity or the "dream of act" sets the bedlamite to wishing himself back in "bed," a dreamland where his "easy sight" is effective, though illusory.

The descent beneath this surface begins with the bedlamite leaving the theatre and walking out onto the street. His routine, "as usual," is a performance of another kind, but equally unrevealing:

> Then let you reach your hat
> and go.
> As usual, let you--also
> walking down--exclaim
> to twelve upward leaving
> a subscription praise
> for what time slays.

This routine, rendered in equally monotonous verse, recalls Eliot's lines about preparing "a face to meet the faces that you meet." The "twelve upward leaving" vaguely suggests that the modern role of the Apostles is that of theatre-goers, attendants at a performance of "what time slays" rather than possessors of "some Word that will not die." The indecision of the bedlamite

is evident in his inability to make up his mind about taking the subway or walking, and he is carried along toward the subway entrance in this quondam state. His drift is imagistically contrasted with the purposive flight of the gull that in "Proem" built "Liberty," for he prepares "penguin flexions of the arms," contracting himself, being "minimum" in order to "swim the hiving swarms" of people in the streets. Physical reduction accompanies visual refraction in his confining bedlam, as death looks "Gigantically down."

The bedlamite, "as usual," "will meet the scuttle yawn:/ The subway yawns the quickest promise home." The "scuttle yawn" images the coal-black abyss of the modern, inert hell through which the bedlamite must move to be reborn and empowered to act, and as he drifts toward it there is repeated the symbol of the unity toward which he unknowingly moves: "Out of the Square, the Circle burning bright." The dropping of the identifying adjectives used previously in "Times Square" and "Columbus Circle" suggests the symbolic expansion which these figures have undergone, for the "Circle burning bright" stands as the goal of the unitive act to be wrought in steel by the imagination's "Hand of Fire." But here the bedlamite chooses, or, rather, accepts without conscious choice, the dark curve of the circle----the abysmal yawn of the subway entrance that leads to the "labyrinth submersed" ("Cape Hatteras") of the winding tunnel. On his way to the subway he is ironically cautioned:

> Avoid the glass doors gyring at your right,
> Where boxed alone a second, eyes take fright
> --Quite unprepared rush naked back to light:

> And down beside the turnstile press the coin
> Into the slot. The gongs already rattle.

The image of eyes "boxed alone" recalls the deflection of vision where "each sees only his dim past reversed" mentioned as a quality of the labyrinth in "Cape Hatteras"; this recognition of the reverse vision of the modern bedlam is what the bedlamite must avoid if he is to continue to believe in the sufficiency of the labyrinth. And, paradoxically, this recognition is precisely what is necessary if he is to be reborn in terms of the imagination, to emerge "naked" in the light and stay there. In other words, the fear and trembling that accompany the recognition of nakedness and existential isolation are a necessary prelude to the imagination's construction of "Liberty." Though the bedlamite, indecisive and monotonous, would avoid this painful recognition, he is being carried toward a Tunnel where din and clang press and distill the living "Word that will not die."

In the subway the manifold refractions of the street lights give way to the monotone of motion and the monotony of the repetitious conversation "of other faces, also underground." The effect of the disappearance of the lights of the streets is similar to that produced in "National Winter Garden," when "a caught slide" in the light projector playing on the burlesque dancer took away her artificial color and left her "sandstone grey." The "overtone of motion/underground" in the subway is one sound reductive of all the conversations on board, and the conversations themselves are meaningless remarks, stitches:

> Our tongues recant like beaten weather vanes.
> This answer lives like verdigris, like hair
> Beyond extinction, surcease of the bone;
> And repetition freezes--"What
>
> "what do you want? getting weak on the links?

Death and endless repetition mark the subway conversation, which exists disjointed from both abstract meaning and organic life. The subway system is imagistically linked with the human brain, that source of the "theorems sharp as hail" ("Cape Hatteras") which threaten to destroy life itself:

> The phonographs of hades in the brain
> Are tunnels that rewind themselves, and love
> A burnt match skating in a urinal--

Stasis, repetitious motion rather than the harmonious equilibrium which the imagination seeks in the Bridge and its "whispers antiphonal," is the product of this "hades in the brain"; and the tunnel is the artifact wrought according to this mental plan. The lack of liberty and love is imaged by the "burnt match skating in a urinal," a degradation of the Lady Liberty, and pain is the sensation engendered by the gray matter of the cerebellum.

The pain and confusion of the subway call to the poet's mind the figure of Edgar Allan Poe, that American poet who sought to turn the powers of intellect to the services of the imagination and art:

> Whose head is swinging from the swollen strap?
> Whose body smokes along the bitten rails,
> Bursts from a smoldering bundle far behind
> In back forks of the chasms of the brain,--.
> Puffs from a riven stump far out behind
> In interborough fissures of the mind. . . ?

The separation of head from body, of mind from organic vitality, characterizes Poe and his poetic methodology. His body is left behind, in terms of his art, "in back forks of the chasms of the brain," as his severed head swings from the swollen strap by which he sought to hold his balance on the iron horse of mental method. The swollen strap recalls the "empty trapeze" of the stripper's "flesh" in "National Winter Garden." The suggestion is that Poe was severed by that swing instead of lugged back "lifeward" from the necessary death in the flesh, for as Williams says, Poe couldn't accept love in place of the intellectual and imaginative truth he sought. One of the forms of the "Gates of Wrath" is the gate of love in the flesh, and the "Western Path" can only be found after submission to the "kiss of our agony." As one of the broken conversations of "The Tunnel" asks:

> . . . if
> you don't like my gate why did you
> swing on it, why didja
> swing on it
> anyhow--"
>
> And somehow anyhow swing--

Somehow, anyhow, a passage must be made through the empty trapeze of the flesh if the imagination is to be liberated for creative action.[8]

Poe, with head and body severed in "The Tunnel," seems to symbolize the disastrous attempt to write a poetry that ignores or represses the body; he appears at this stage of the poet's imaginative journey as a warning and a threat, for the broken, meaningless conversation of the subway is dangerous in the extreme

to the imagination's unitive desire, and the degradation of love could be for the poet, as it was for Poe, an insurmountable barrier:

> 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 did their eyes like unwashed platters ride?
> And Death, aloft,--gigantically down
> Probing through you--toward me, O evermore!

The image of Poe's "eyes like agate lanterns"[9] flashing "on and on," recalls the derelict sailor of "Cutty Sark" whose "eyes pressed through green glass" and shone like neon lights. Poe too is intimately connected with the bedlam and the bars of the sunken city, but there is in the poet's mind the question of whether Poe was drowned by the sea of faces or ultimately assimilated and moved beyond them. The eye image has been used before in this connection, with Whitman in "Cape Hatteras," whose "Sea eyes and tidal, undenying, bright with myth" accepted all the sufferings and destruction of war as concomitant with the imagination's unitive life, and was thereby able to forge a new-bound pact of love. The key to the difference between Whitman and Poe lies in the image of "undenying" eyes, as the poet suggests in his final question of Poe:

> 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?

The image of the "ballot rounds" associates Poe's trip with the "congresses, nightly sessions" of faces that crowded the streets at the beginning of "The Tunnel," as well as with the "I'm a Democrat" derelict sailor of "Cutty Sark." And "trembling hands"

suggests that Poe's vaunted powers of mind, and allegiance to a poetry of the mind, did not save him from the force of the formless masses of his society. The question is whether he was able to wield in those shaking hands "the rebound seed," to bring back from the dead a "pact," or whether he simply denied to the end the existence and power of the masses and the flesh, repressing both with alcohol. The image of "Death, aloft,--gigantically down," taken from Poe's "The City in the Sea," suggests that the city simply sank without eventual resurrection, and that Poe sank with it to remain a ghastly inhabitant of a subway system, equally unable with the drunken sailor to "live on land."

After the poet's encounter with Poe the train prepares for the final dive beneath the River of time itself. The subway stops to let off those who would not go under the River, and they ascend "above where streets/burst suddenly in rain," there failing to find a refuge from the deluge that must be undergone if Atlantis is to be raised. The subway then proceeds to the Tunnel under the River.

> . . . . . . The gongs recur:
> Elbows and levers, guard and hissing door.
> Thunder is galvothermic here below. . . The car
> Wheels off. The train rounds, bending to a scream,
> Taking the final level for the dive
> Under the river--
> And somewhat emptier than before,
> Demented, for a hitching second, humps; then
> Lets go. . . Toward corners of the floor
> Newspapers wing, revolve and wing.
> Blank windows gargle signals through the roar.

The recurrent gongs (recall the "gongs in white surplices" of "The Harbor Dawn") herald the second phase of the trip, the nadir of the

"curveship" of the Bridge (that "altar" of "Proem") in a subtle inversion of the Elevation of the Host at Mass. Not unity but disjunction is signalled by these unreligious gongs, for the subway "Lets go" and winging newspapers scatter toward "corners" of that imprisoning square that threatens the unitive circle. The poet sinks further beneath the River and darkness in an atmosphere of "galvothermic" thunder, control and will defeated, in a situation recalling Columbus amidst the tempest in "Ave Maria." At this stage he encounters the "Genoese" "Wop washer-woman," the modern metamorphosis of the Virgin, who herself has left the heights of "gaunt sky-barracks," the office building where she scrubs, to take the subway "home." The poet's question of her recalls his question of Whitman in "Cape Hatteras" ("tell me, Walt Whitman, if infinity/Be still the same as when you walked the beach. . . "), for he is equally sceptical at this point of his journey:

> And does the Daemon take you home, also,
> Wop washerwoman, with the bandaged hair? . . .
> O Genoese, do you bring mother eyes and hands
> Back home to children and to golden hair?

The last two lines recall the childhood incident of the poet related in "Van Winkle," where his mother "once, and once only" brought back from church a "Sabbatical, unconscious smile" of liberating love to her son. But the poet questions the efficacy of the washerwoman's intercession, her ability to bring mother-love back to her children, down from the "gaunt sky-barracks" where she scrubs floors and "cuspidors." The ideal of Love figured in the Virgin, and even the childhood hope of the mother's smile, are reduced to this washerwoman riding the Daemon subway;

she is subjected to the same fate as the poet himself, and obviously cannot serve as an ideal or liberating agent, "high and cool," from whom aid may be implored.

This recognition casts the poet back on the Daemon subway itself, the machine that in fact does take the poet "home." The subway offers as substitute for the liberating mother's smile a "demurring and eventful yawn" that threatens to swallow the poet whole. To return home the poet must proceed through the mechanical gates of wrath, must assimilate this new threat to the imagination's unitive life. The promise of rebirth that the subway seems to offer ("the quickest promise home") is imaged as the frustration of spiritual, imaginative rebirth:

> Whose hideous laughter is a bellows mirth
> --Or the muffled slaughter of a day in birth--
> O cruelly to inoculate the brinking dawn
> With antennae toward worlds that glow and sink;--
> To spoon us out more liquid than the dim
> Locution of the eldest star, and pack
> The conscience navelled in the plunging wind,
> Umbilical to call--and straightway die!

The "brinking dawn" is the female principle which the phallic subway impregnates ("inoculates"); but the children of this union, the modern bedlamites, are severed from their natural parentage, their "conscience navelled in the plunging wind" with the remnant of the umbilical cord to "straightway die." The fragmenting action of the Faustian Daemon is here suggested in the severing of "conscience" (not the moralist's sense of right and wrong, ethical classifications, etc.), that apprehension of "knowledge with," of the union of man and the rest of the living universe. This fragmentation of the modern "conscience" and consciousness

of the human relationship with other life forms is the true threat and no amount of material comfort can substitute for this loss of the unitive, spiritual imaginative life. The traditional moral (religious) ideal may have been ineffectual in Crane's terms, but there still remained the "aesthetic satisfaction" of unity, that "conscience" which is the goal of the imagination's life. It is this type of "knowledge" toward which Columbus moved at the end of "Ave Maria," and which the poet of The Bridge now seeks.

In this subway bedlam beneath the River the agony is intense:

> 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.

This is the nadir of submission to the forces of the Faustian intellect, an agony imaged as a "kiss" in a paradox recalling the scrutiny of God in "Ave Maria," as he searched "Cruelly with love" his "parable of man." It is the moment of atonement, the fusion of time and eternity in the act of total surrender, death. The bits and snatches of subway conversation, "shrill ganglia/Impassioned with some song we fail to keep," is the voice of time which sounds before the poet's resurrection into the imagination's "Everpresence." It is the quintessence of negative capability, in terms of the poetic creation (a relationship of course paralleled by that of the Atonement to the Resurrection), as the poet lies "trenchant in a void" ("Possessions"), waiting for the "pure impulse inbred," the "pure possession whose heart is fire" ("Possessions") of the creative imagination:

> And yet, like Lazarus, to feel the slope,
> The sod and billow breaking,--lifting ground,
> A sound of waters bending astride the sky
> Unceasing with some Word that will not die.

This "Word" is that same "inmost sob, half heard" by which Columbus calmed the tempest, and that "stilly note" that in "Quaker Hill" transmuted silence. It is the epiphany of the only Absolute to which Crane ascribed, that of the imagination itself, which can "start some white machine that sings" the imagination's truth. The poet, like Lazarus, is by this power raised from the death in the Tunnel, feeling the life force shared by "sod and billow" as he moves "upward from the dead" with a new bound pact.

An asterisk separates this resurrection out of the Tunnel from the conclusion of "The Tunnel." The poet has been liberated from the Daemon subway, and individuated as well, for he shifts to the first person in this conclusion. He has been lugged back "lifeward" after the death in time and the flesh, as the initial image of the "tugboat" lunging up the River of time suggests, and now what remains is to create his Bridge. He has discovered the immortal power of the imagination <u>within himself</u>, the Word that endures beyond the death of "shrill ganglia" and the kiss of agony that "spends out" ("Legend") the passions. He stands beside the River:

> I counted the echoes assembling, one after one,
> Searching, thumbing the midnight on the piers.
> Lights, coasting, left the oily tympanum of waters;
> The blackness somewhere gouged glass on a sky.

The poet has now fused these attenuations of shrill ganglia into echoes of the unitive, living Word, joining the voices of time

with the Word of eternity and the Everpresent imagination. He has learned "by heart," fusing them with his own pure impulse inbred. He searches them as he would a book, "thumbing the midnight" and its blackness that puts out the eyes of the Cyclopean towers of the city, reading the echoing reverberations of his unitive Word. The "thousand theatres, faces" that lined the way from Times Square to Columbus Circle, light refractions, here become internalized, as city lights go out and the poet listens to midnight echoes of these refractions fused with the Word that wells up within him. The tenses of this concluding section progress from past to present to future, as the poet expands the significance of his act by postulating it as eternally recurrent (as indeed it has been throughout The Bridge):

> Tossed from the coil of ticking towers. . . Tomorrow,
> And to be. . . Here by the River that is East--
> Here at the waters' edge the hands drop memory;
> Shadowless in that abyss they unaccounting lie.
> How far away the star has pooled the sea--
> Or shall the hands be drawn away, to die?
>
> Kiss of our agony Thou gatherest,
> O Hand of Fire
> gatherest--

The poet has successfully passed through the Gates of Wrath, tossed from the time-measuring towers of the city towards morning ("morrow") and the future; and now he stands liberated in the present. The past is symbolically laid to rest in the River of time, as the "hands drop memory" in the abyss of the Harbor. The search without has ceased, as hands "lie unaccounting," inactive. The transition from images of eyes to those of hands suggests that the poetic stages of recognition and assimilation have been passed through, and that the poet now waits for the stage

of creation, making, building. Standing on land, the poet feels the pull of the sea, beckoning him to final rest and death in its abyss. In this moment of uncertainty the poet invokes the "Hand of Fire," the instrument of creation that can build a Bridge <u>over</u> the sea to the stars and Love, as he prepares to realize his dream of act.

ATLANTIS

"Atlantis," the concluding section of The Bridge, is the culmination of one long process and the beginning of another. At the end of "The Tunnel" the poet was left waiting for the advent of the "Hand of Fire," the Promethean force of imaginative redemption and creation that would bring light into the dark world and alleviate the "Kiss of our agony." The poet had "counted the echoes" of earlier attempts to move up the River of Time to its source, but had failed to find a key in history or his own past experiences that would enable him to return to that mythical, timeless realm of radical innocence. Thus he had dropped "memory" into the abyss of the harbor and fully submitted himself to the destructive element of the "Kiss of our agony." His "dream of act" is submersed with his hands, the agents of creative action; and he can only wait and pray for the "Hand of Fire" to come. Atlantis is the mythical island reputed to be the origin of language and laws in Western civilization, and the symbol for the poet of that "attitude of spirit" which, like Columbus's Cathay, is characterized by the apprehension of the absolute and timeless truth of the imagination. It seems a long way off, and the poet's journey seems doomed to failure, at the end of "The Tunnel." And yet the action of the "Atlantis" section is the successful reaching

and realization of that "attitude of spirit," that mythic state emergent from the abysmal ocean. And it is this discovery of that mythic state which provides the impetus for the poet's act of writing The Bridge, the record of how the discovery, the conjugation of "infinity's dim marge," was made "Anew." Thus "Atlantis" concludes the poet's search for that mythic state, and begins the process by which he performs the act of writing the poem, hurling his "mythic spear." By this final act he makes The Bridge itself a Bridge to that mythic state of consciousness, a span over which society may cross by reading the poem. He thus emulates the epic hero, redeeming society by his act, defining the poet as savior.

The poet's movement from the harbor of Manhattan to Atlantis is effected through the agency of the symbolic Bridge. The revelation of the Bridge wrought by the "Hand of Fire" can only be described as an epiphany, and yet one that has been thoroughly prepared for. The Bridge is perceived as the "index of night," the key to the book which the poet had been "thumbing" hopelessly at the end of "The Tunnel," and its appearance is as inspirational and involuntary as that of the purifying "Hand of Fire." But the poet's preparation for its appearance, his searching (learning "by heart") progress through the earlier stages of the poem, has enabled him to perceive the full mythic significance of the epiphany. He sees the Bridge "condense eternity," press:

> --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.

The learning experience necessary to his imagination's growth toward the unitive act has been both internal and external, as the poet has learned new terms by which to define his sensibility and has grown internally toward a recognition of the synthesizing, parabolic, relationship of the imagination to the body and mind, passions and reason. Thus his recognition of the symbolic Bridge is a perception-creation: the Bridge is symbolic because the poet has reached the stage of his imagination's growth where he can perceive it as symbolic. The relationship between poet and Bridge is similar to that between Columbus and the "inmost sob, half-heard," and by implication half-spoken, in "Ave Maria." The unitive act, like the act of creation in Crane's poetics, is not the result of will but of inspiration, the epiphany of the "Hand of Fire" or the harmonizing sound of the "inmost sob, half-heard," half-spoken. In "Atlantis" the poet comes to realize that the Myth of the Bridge is just such an "intrinsic Myth" of the "Everpresence" of the "pure impulse inbred" in man.

This relationship of the "intrinsic Myth" of the creative imagination to the poet, and its existence beyond the control of will, is suggested in a letter Crane wrote on the subject of the act of creative imagination:

> The actual fleshing of a concept is so complex and difficult, however, 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 fulfillment. It is alright to call this "possession," if you will, only it should not be insisted that its operation denies the simultaneous function of a strong critical faculty. It is

> simply a stronger focus than can
> be arbitrarily willed into operation
> by the ordinarily-employed perceptions.[1]

It is this "possession" (the "white seizure" in "Atlantis") by the "intrinsic" power of the creative imagination that is the Myth of the Bridge, the myth of the act of bridging whereby the truth of the imagination, or Atlantis, is reached. This "possession" lies beyond the avail of will, as does the creation of the Bridge, a fact the poet acknowledged in "Proem": "How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!". The "Hand of Fire" that makes the Brooklyn Bridge the "Bridge of Fire" is the creative imagination, and its appearance is of the nature of epiphany, a rebirth of the poet himself that enables him to act.

As the previous discussion has suggested, myth is central to the "Atlantis" section; and specifically, the Myth of the Bridge. The island of the title is, of course, a mythical island; and within the section there are allusions to Tyre and Troy, Jason and Aeolus. More importantly, the symbolic Bridge becomes for the poet an "intrinsic Myth" by which he crosses to a state of consciousness symbolized by Atlantis, which has more affinity with myth than, say, the rational "theorems" of "Cape Hatteras" or the reflective stoicism of "Quaker Hill." By enabling the poet to reach Atlantis the Bridge has answered the invocation of "Proem" that it "lend a myth to God," at least for the poet; for it must always be held in mind that the progression through the poem is the progression of a fictional poet (poet because he does progress toward the

writing of the poem) through states of consciousness, attitudes, and emotions toward the final "Absolute" state of "Atlantis." His changes of mind, his learning "by heart" and attendant liberation for new learning throughout the poem, is the fundamental act of The Bridge: the infinity conjugated is within the poet himself, for infinity in the poem is the imagination's "Everpresence." It is this process of growth which allows The Bridge to be itself a Bridge for other readers, as in Crane's poetics it is the new "condition of life" embodied in the living artifact that begets in the reader "new spiritual articulations."

Thus the poet's allusions to myth in "Atlantis," and his identification of the Bridge as "intrinsic Myth," suggests that in this final section of The Bridge he enters into a mythic mode of consciousness. By a mythic mode of consciousness I mean also a mythopoeic mode, in which the consciousness is liberated from the mediated vision of reality of the reflective mind and empowered to directly create a myth. This type of consciousness recreates both subject and object in the act of perception. It is mythic in the sense that its act is grounded in the activity of the "absolute and timeless"[2] creative imagination, and as Crane noted "is quite beyond the immediate avail of will or intellect." The mythopoeic mode of consciousness is, especially, a mode of being, as poets have so often insisted, rather than merely another way of doing--the intrinsic Myth of the Bridge, the poet finally recognizes, is "iridescently upborne/Through the bright drench and fabric of our veins." The poet's perception of the Bridge signals a change of state (he's now able to read the message of the Bridge, the unity of the "cipher-script of

time," as he was not before), and his ultimate perception of the Bridge is that he himself is a Bridge, that the "steeled Cognizance" of the Bridge bears witness to the intrinsic Myth which he himself possesses and is possessed by. Thus his perception of the Bridge has recreated him (or signalled his recreation), as it liberates him from time into the eternity of "Atlantis." His perception has also recreated the Bridge, moving it from the literal to the symbolic. The Bridge has always been there, but the poet's ability to perceive it symbolically has not. Thus the poet's unitive act, symbolized by the perception-creation of the Bridge, enables him to move to that state of consciousness symbolized by Atlantis.

That the poet's perception of the "harp and altar" of the Bridge leads to his recognition of love as the kind of knowledge implicit in the imagination's truth is suggested by the epigraph (from Plato's Symposium) to the section: "Music is then the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system." The Bridge is imaged as musical instrument: a harp with "choiring strings," and a "Choir" translating the voice of time into the "Psalm of Cathay," an act which is Love's "white, pervasive Paradigm." And at the end of "Atlantis" music and instrument are conjoined in "One Song, one Bridge of Fire," which leaps toward the "Everpresence, beyond time" of Atlantis and of Love. The identification of Atlantis, symbol of the imagination's unitive truth, and Love, suggests that Love is indeed the object of the poet's journey. Further, the "pity" that "steeps the grass" at the conclusion

of the poem is etymologically associated with the more overtly religious "piety," as well as that state of love which Blake termed "pity." In short, the identification of Atlantis and a state of Love in which "the cities are endowed/And justified conclamant with ripe fields," in which time and space are harmonized and fused in one moment and state that puts "The serpent with the eagle in the leaves," is for Crane an identification of aesthetic and moral truth. The identification thus allows the poem to "lend a myth to God" in terms of the absolute of the truth of the imagination.

The justification in terms of the poem of the introduction of Love, and of the final identification of aesthetic and moral truth, of the imagination and Love, has seemed to some insufficient.[3] But from the beginning of The Bridge, in the submerged metaphor of the Bridge as the Madonna in "Proem" (noted by Lewis), Love has been vitally linked with the unitive act of the imagination. In "Ave Maria" it is the Virgin to whom Columbus prays for cessation of the storm and safe passage back to Spain. In "Powhatan's Daughter" the Dance of Maquokeeta is performed at least partially because "Pocahontas grieves," and the unification of the cosmos in terms of the Indian myth is accomplished under the aegis of Pocahontas. Imaginatively impotent characters such as the hoboes of "The River" and the derelict sailor of "Cutty Sark" are characterized by their wifelessness, their lack of love-relationships. The poet in his childhood considers his mother's loving smile, delivered once only, as "Sabbatical" and liberating. Whitman is credited with

having achieved an imaginative, poetic, rendering of the imagination's truth in terms of "living brotherhood." "Three Songs" obviously deal with love, and the final one, "Virginia," renders an attempt to "build" a modern Virgin out of a common secretary. "Quaker Hill" associates the poetic, unitive act of imagination with a shielding of "love from despair." And "The Tunnel" introduces the "Wop washerwoman," a mother figure again, as a dubious agent of love on the subway. Obviously, various aspects of Love are figured in these differing characters, each appropriate to the section of the poem and the state of the poet's development in which he appears. But if the Bridge is truly "one arc synoptic of all tides below," it requires little stretch of the imagination to perceive the "Love" of "Atlantis" as symbolic of all its aspects previously rendered in the concrete. After all, the love suggested in the epigraph from Plato is a generalized love, a pervasive condition of life rendered sympathetically and symphonically in the music it begets, music which itself (as a medium) bespeaks a generalization not only from particular life-instances but from words themselves, as evidenced by the inarticulate but symphonic "whispers antiphonal" at the conclusion of "Atlantis."

Thus reaching Atlantis signals the liberation of the poet into a state of consciousness characterized by apprehension of the universality of sympathetic love as well as by the unity of the "world dimensional" and the eternal, ubiquitous truth of the imagination. It is a truly mythic mode of consciousness, for the poet is liberated into a world where the laws of his

imagination have become the laws of the universe, where his "dream of act" can be transformed into reality, where action and being coincide in direct immediacy. It is in the reaching of Atlantis that the identification of the aesthetic and the moral implicit in Crane's poetic theory is achieved. The connection is suggested in many ways, as for instance the poet's recognition that the myth of the Bridge to Love has as its central event the eternal return of the original act of creation of "Deity's young name." It is always new, always original, and a continual re-achievement of that mode of consciousness symbolized by the discovery of Atlantis or Cathay, that "attitude of spirit." The "canticle" of the Bridge, the imagination's union of all things under the aegis of universal love, is always the same. The unitive act is always the same: "rapt inception and beatitude," the assimilation and recreation of the present (and the poet too) in terms of the truth of the imagination, which bespeaks the Everpresence of Love. In this state of absolute beauty or "beatitude" the Beautiful and the Good and True unite:

> In this condition there may be
> discoverable under new forms
> certain spiritual illuminations,
> shining with a morality essen-
> tialized from experience direct-
> ly, and not from previous pre-
> cepts or preconceptions.[4]

The Beautiful, the embodiment of the truth of the imagination, is also the beatific, and the achievement of this state of "absolute beauty" is made possible by the creation of a Bridge to "God."

The movement toward this unitive goal is evident in the tripartite structure of "Atlantis." The first section, stanzas one through six, renders the harmonizing and pervasive illumination of the night by the Bridge, the mediating force linking time and eternity, earth and stars, in its act of harmonious and universal Love, the "Psalm of Cathay." In this section the poet moves from description to direct address of the Bridge, and the "white, pervasive paradigm" of "Love" which the Song of the choiring strings of the Bridge articulates. The poet assumes the attitude of the undifferentiated observer in this initial stage of recognition of the power and mythic import of the Bridge. He is not passive, for his "eyes, like seagulls stung with rime," pick their way up the "towering looms" of the Bridge. But he is unindividuated at this point from travellers in general, and hence liable, like Jason (whom he addresses), to shipwreck and loss of the word of his new discovery. It is not enough to see the golden fleece or Cathay--a record of that discovery must be brought "home."

In the second section of "Atlantis," stanzas seven through ten, the poet generalizes the fictional "I" and separates his person from the Bridge: "We left the haven hanging in the night." From this new vantage point he is able to see the unitive nature of the truth that the circle of the Bridge encloses, much as the eyes of Columbus in "Ave Maria" could "accrete-enclose/This turning rondure whole" after his uttered-answered prayer had made a bridge of the ocean. Looking "backward" now the poet can still see "the circular, indubitable frieze/Of heaven's

meditation," the Bridge and its "one song." And he turns to a reflection on the "steeled Cognizance," a poetic meditation possessing a solemnal tone and rhythm that recalls Columbus's own Te Deum to the "incognizable Word/of Eden and the enchained Sepulchre." The Bridge at this point is a living artifact symbolic of "heaven's meditation" embodying its own mythic truth completely. The poet knows this truth, having participated in it in the first section of "Atlantis," just as Columbus, having come through the stormy seas, knew the "truth" of the incognizable Word that saved him. In other words, the poet at this point has assimilated the "truth" of the Bridge; and to bear witness to his new knowledge he addresses the Bridge as "Swift peal of secular light, intrinsic Myth. . . iridescently upborne/Through the bright drench and fabric of our veins." Having picked "biting way" up the Bridge, and then separated himself from it, he can now recognize the internalization of the "truth" of the Bridge within himself--he has assumed its knowledge with its mythic power, which is now "leading" him from "time's realm" to the "Everpresence, beyond time" of the state of universal Love of which the Bridge's song is "Paradigm." Significantly, the poem shifts to "Forever" and "Always" to describe the eternal presence of the "white seizure" of the poet by the intrinsic Myth of the creative imagination and its "Kinetic" truth.

The third and concluding section of "Atlantis," the final two stanzas, completes the ascending individuation of the poet, as he becomes the "floating singer" of the myth of the Bridge.

The poet asks "Thy pardon for this history, whitest flower," as he has at last reached Atlantis (and the Love imaged as flower in "ATLANTIS ROSE" of "Cutty Sark"). He has been delivered up from the ocean of time by the power of love liberated within him by his assimilation-perception of the "steeled Cognizance" of the Bridge. He has been recreated and liberated from time by the unitive act symbolised by the Bridge. He is a bedlamite reborn into the "Everpresence" of the imagination and the Love that drives it, into the mythic state of Atlantis. Time and space, love and hope, fuse in the primal images of the final lines, as the poet asks:

> . . . . . . . . Is it Cathay,
> Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring
> The serpent with the eagle in the leaves. . . ?

Now that unity and harmony have been established by the perception-creation of "One Song, one Bridge of Fire," is it Cathay? Has the discovery been made of that "attitude of spirit" which bespeaks the truth of the imagination, and which is the "genetic basis of all speech, hence consciousness and thought-extension" that provides the impetus for "new spiritual articulations" and fulfillment of the Sanskrit charge?

The answer to this question is affirmative, and affirmative of the entire journey of _The Bridge_:

> Whispers antiphonal in azure swing.

This concluding line of the poem, itself antiphonal of the "multitudinous Verb" displayed in the movement from "Ave Maria" to "Atlantis," possesses a surety of tone and rhythm which bespeaks

that "power in repose" that is "the source and antecedent of all motion." The dynamic stasis of "Whispers antiphonal" recalls in theme and measured movement the image of the Bridge in "Proem." "Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!" But here at the end of the poem exclamation is not necessary, for the poet no longer speaks to the Bridge but through it, in unison, with "One Song, one Bridge of Fire." The music of the human voice, muted into whisperings, beginnings of speech, swings free in the azure dawn, as the poet wakes from the "dream" of act into action itself. He will fulfill his Sanskrit charge by recording in words, poetry, his discovery of Cathay, in order that Cathay might be brought back to his people. The final word of the line, the verb "swing," recalls the prayer for a "curveship" to "lend a myth to God" in "Proem," and emphasizes the cyclical nature of the act of curveship (worship). Implicit in dynamic stasis, motion in repose, is further motion, "one shore beyond desire," as the entire poem has attested to the truth of Crane's statement that "new conditions of life breed new spiritual articulations." The poet himself has become a Bridge "translating time" into speech, recording his own "multitudinous Verb" in the poem itself, and the "whispers antiphonal" which conclude _The Bridge_ also signal its beginning, the beginning of the poet's utterance of his poem. The movement to light has been concluded, and the poet is at one and at peace with the universe, a harmonious state achieved not through stoic resignation but through active acceptance and assimilation of the vitality and energy evinced

by all creation. The poem ends in affirmation of the organic process to which it owes its existence, a process of poetic creation that affirms life itself. In this way *The Bridge* bears witness to the truth of Crane's own pronouncement on it:

> The poem, as a whole, is, I think, an affirmation of experience, and to that extent is "positive" rather than "negative" in the sense that *The Waste Land* is negative.[5]

NOTES

The Bridge and the Critics

[1]Allen Tate, Reactionary Essays (New York, 1936); and Yvor Winters, "The Progress of Hart Crane," Poetry, XXXVI (June, 1930), 153-165.

[2]R. P. Blackmur, The Double Agent (New York, 1935), p. 126.

[3]Allen Tate, "A Poet and His Life," Poetry, L (July, 1937), 223.

[4]Allen Tate, "Hart Crane," in The Man of Letters in the Modern World (New York, 1955), p. 290.

[5]The Letters of Hart Crane, ed. Brom Weber (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965), number 343. Hereafter cited as Letters; my citations are to the letter numbers, which are more convenient for the reader than the page numbers.

[6]Blackmur, p. 121.

[7]Blackmur, p. 129.

[8]Marshall McLuhan, "Sight, Sound, and the Fury," Commonweal (April 9, 1954), p. 9.

[9]Letters, 234.

[10]The Collected Poems of Hart Crane (New York, 1933). Since no line numbers are given in the text, my citations are to sections of the poem.

[11]Blackmur, p. 140.

[12]Robert J. Andreach, Studies in Structure (New York, 1964), p. 104.

[13]Jerome W. Kloucek, "The Framework of Hart Crane's The Bridge," Midwest Review (Spring, 1960), p. 22.

[14]L. S. Dembo, *Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge: A Study of "The Bridge"* (Ithaca, New York, 1960); and R. W. B. Lewis, *The Poetry of Hart Crane: A Critical Study* (Princeton, 1967).

[15]Dembo, quoting Nietzsche, p. 13.

[16]Dembo, p. 18.

[17]Dembo, p. 16.

[18]Tate, "Hart Crane," in *The Man of Letters*, p. 288.

[19]Dembo, p. 19.

[20]Both Stanley K. Coffman, Jr., "Symbolism in *The Bridge*," *PMLA*, LXVI (March, 1951), pp. 65-77, and Bernice Slote, "The Structure of Hart Crane's The Bridge," UKCR, XXIV (March, 1958), pp. 225-238, deal with aspects of the poem's process. Coffman examines "the pattern of language through which Crane hoped to make his symbol effective as intellectual or emotional complex." (p. 65). Slote argues that the symbolic curve which is repeated through the poem "means whatever its lines trace upon the consciousness" (p. 232), and speaks of the sense of wholeness, and the sense of lift and resolution, which the symbolic curve effects. She further notes the symphonic and architectural analogies which Crane used to describe the poem's form.

[21]Lewis, p. 255.

[22]Lewis, p. 255.

[23]Lewis, p. 220.

[24]Lewis, p. 378.

[25]Lewis, p. 320.

[26]Lewis, p. 365.

[27]Lewis, p. 242.

[28]Lewis, p. 231.

[29]Lewis, p. 362.

[30]Lewis, p. 380.

[31]*Letters*, 289.

## Poetic Theories and Purposes

[1]*Letters*, 238.

[2]*Letters*, 289.

[3]*Letters*, 234.

[4]*Letters*, 234.

[5]Hart Crane, "General Aims and Theories," in Philip Horton, *Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet* (New York, 1957), p. 328.

[6]*Letters*, 234.

[7]See Lewis, pp. 219-245.

[8]Lewis, p. 375.

[9]Crane, "General Aims and Theories," in Horton, *Hart Crane*, p. 325.

[10]Crane, "General Aims and Theories," in Horton, *Hart Crane*, p. 327.

[11]Crane, "General Aims and Theories," in Horton, *Hart Crane*, p. 327.

[12]*Letters*, 234.

[13]John Keats' famous phrase may be found in *English Romantic Poets*, ed. James Stephens, Edwin L. Beck, and Royale H. Snow (New York, 1952), p. 622.

[14]Hyatt Howe Waggoner has an interesting discussion of the relationship of the machine and science to modern poetry in his book *The Heel of Elohim* (Norman, 1950), whose title is taken from an image in *The Bridge*.

[15]"General Aims and Theories," p. 325.

[16]"General Aims and Theories," p. 324.

[17]<u>Letters</u>, 138.

[18]"General Aims and Theories," p. 323.

[19]<u>Letters</u>, 142.

[20]<u>Letters</u>, 149.

[21]This Coleridgean view is acknowledged by Crane in "Modern Poetry," Appendix B, in <u>Collected Poems</u>, p. 176. The commitment to art as phenomena rather than statement about phenomena is evident. See Susan Sontag, <u>Against Interpretation and Other Essays</u> (New York, 1961), p. 21.

[22]<u>Letters</u>, 239.

[23]<u>Letters</u>, 137.

[24]<u>Letters</u>, 82.

[25]<u>Letters</u>, 85.

[26]<u>Letters</u>, 89.

[27]<u>Letters</u>, 148.

[28]<u>Letters</u>, 148.

[29]<u>Letters</u>, 154.

[30]<u>Letters</u>, 301.

[31]<u>Letters</u>, 142.

[32]"Modern Poetry," p. 175.

[33]"Modern Poetry," p. 178.

[34]Percy Bysshe Shelley's phrase, and "A Defense of Poetry," are found in <u>English Romantic Poets</u>, p. 531.

[35]This phrase is used to describe the imagination's goal by the character Pursewarden in <u>Clea</u> of Lawrence Durrell's <u>The</u>

Alexandria Quartet (New York, 1962), p. 761.

[36]"General Aims and Theories," p. 327.

[37]Letters, 234.

[38]Letters, 142.

[39]Letters, 142.

[40]Letters, 234.

[41]"General Aims and Theories," 327.

[42]Lewis, pp. 267-286.

[43]"General Aims and Theories," p. 328.

[44]Letters, 142.

[45]The term "mythic" is used by Crane in The Bridge (cf. "Atlantis" and its "mythic spears") to describe his goal. Generally speaking, mythic is opposed to historic, as imagination to intellect, on the basis of the difference between the laws of the imagination and the laws of the abstracting mind. A "mythic realm" operates on pre-reflective laws, and reason does not mediate between passion and imagination. Accordingly, the "morality" of myth is, as Crane noted, "essentialized from experience directly," and to see is to create. For an interesting discussion of the mythic, see Myth: A Symposium, ed. Thomas A. Sebook (Bloomington, 1965), especially the essay "Myth, Symbolism, and Truth" by David Bidney. See also Lewis, p. 255.

[46]"General Aims and Theories," p. 324.

[47]Letters, 289.

Structure and Style in The Bridge

[1]Crane, "Letters to H. Monroe," in Horton, p. 332.

[2]Letters, 289.

[3]Letters, 289.

[4] *Letters*, 289.

[5] Lewis, pp. 15-16 *passim*. Lewis repeatedly suggests that the poet's purpose is to transform the fallen modern epoch by applying lessons learned from his encounter with the glorious Indian world. Though partially correct, this view tends to make the poem more about the world than about itself, about its own creation, which seems to me to be the true subject. Lewis tends to draw the aesthetic out of the moral; I follow Crane's stated intentions in trying to derive the moral from the aesthetic.

[6] Lewis, p. 382.

[7] "General Aims and Theories," pp. 324-325.

[8] Tate, "A Poet and His Life," p. 223.

[9] Crucial misreadings of "Three Songs" and "Quaker Hill" have occurred because of the failure to perceive the central function of the poetic process as arbiter of value.

[10] See Sr. M. Bernetta Quinn, *The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry* (New Brunswick, 1955), for an interesting discussion of metamorphosis in *The Bridge*.

[11] *Letters*, 261.

[12] *Letters*, 254.

[13] "General Aims and Theories," p. 324.

[14] "General Aims and Theories," p. 324.

[15] Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*, trans. David F. Swenson (New York, 1936), p. 29.

[16] "General Aims and Theories," p. 327.

[17] "General Aims and Theories," p. 327.

[18] "Letters to H. Monroe," pp. 330 and 332.

[19] "General Aims and Theories," p. 328.

[20]"General Aims and Theories," p. 326.

[21]"General Aims and Theories," p. 328.

[22]"General Aims and Theories," p. 326.

[23]"Letters to H. Monroe," p. 333.

[24]"General Aims and Theories," p. 328.

[25]Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation and Other Essays, p. 21.

Proem

[1]Letters, 253.

[2]A. N. Whitehead, Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effect (New York, 1927), p. 26.

[3]Rollo May, Psychology and the Human Dilemma (Princeton, 1967), p. 103.

Ave Maria

[1]The epigraph, from Seneca's Medea, is freely translated as: "In a distant age Ocean shall release the chains binding the whole broad earth, sailors shall discover new worlds, and Thule will not be the farthest land."

[2]Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels. The Morning of the Magicians, trans. by Rollo Myers (New York, 1968), p. 84.

[3]Letters, 254.

[4]It is the location of that same "pure impulse inbred" for which Crane praises Whitman in "Cape Hatteras," and which he hopes to discover in himself in the creation of The Bridge. Here Columbus descends from sight through memory into the darkness of "Some inmost sob" of the heart (with a pun on "throb") in order to draw forth the harmony of the unitive vision of "This turning rondure whole." He taps "the heart's hot root" ("The Dance") in order to draw forth his song of praise, just as his initial voyage was the result of a ride into the "Queen's great heart." The belief in love and passion as the starting point of action is evident in the repetition of this heart image throughout The Bridge.

[5] *Letters*, 289.

[6] The expansion from the particular act to the recognition of the all-pervasive force of the imagination resembles a similar movement in "Proem," and echoes the expansion rendered in Whitman's "Passage to India," where the voyage to India becomes:

> Passage to more. . .
> To reason's early paradise,
> Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions,
> Again with fair creation.

The paradox of a progression back to the source is evident in these lines. In "Ave Maria" the source is symbolized by the "Hand of Fire," the same power of imagination the poet invokes at the conclusion of his own poetic journey for help in seeing-creating the Bridge.

[7] The phrase recalls Whitman's statement in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" that he himself will be crossing with us as we read his poem. The creator is inseparable from his creation in the cosmic consciousness.

## The Harbor Dawn

[1] *Letters*, 289.

[2] The relationship of dreams and consciousness which Crane assumes here is similar to that in Freud and Yeats, two contemporaries of Crane.

[3] *Letters*, 289.

[4] *Letters*, 289.

## Van Winkle

[1] *Letters*, 289.

## The River

[1] Georges Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, trans. by Elliott Coleman (Baltimore, 1956), p. 36.

[2] *Letters*, 289.

[3] *Letters*, 289.

[4]*Letters*, 289.

[5]*Letters*, 289.

The Dance

[1]Poulet, *Studies in Human Time*, p. 36.

[2]*Letters*, 289.

[3]*Letters*, 289.

[4]*Letters*, 289.

[5]*Letters*, 289.

[6]*Letters*, 289.

[7]*Letters*, 289.

[8]The imagery also recalls the poet's childhood memories of the "Van Winkle" section, his mother's elusive smile and his father's "lilac" whip, suggesting that the return to the source of the River is paralleled by a return to the source of childhood itself, that the "Steep, inaccessible smile" is an "arc synoptic" of earlier elements in "Powhatan's Daughter," and that his "creative act of time" will embody both the Indian myth and his personal history.

The conjunction of the symbolic smile of love and the reaching of the source of the Appalachian Spring should remind us that love is both source and goal of the act of imagination in *The Bridge*. The bending smile ("steep, inaccessible") here recalls the image of the Bridge as a "lover's cry," as well as the "Sabbatical, unconscious smile" of the poet's mother, seen only once, in "Van Winkle." The smile, of course, traces the "curveship" of the under side of the Bridge, forming the other half (a necessary one) of the symbolic circle, as the Bridge ("harp and altar") renders a music that is only possible with "the knowledge of that which relates to love" (epigraph to "Atlantis").

[9]Sr. Quinn remarks on this process, noting that Crane "meticulously and subtly converts one image into another, the poem itself becoming its subject: a bridge from one insight into another." *The Metamorphic Tradition*, pp. 8-9.

[10]Lewis, pp. 311-312.

[11]Letters, 234. This is Crane's phrase concerning Plato's harmonious writings.

[12]I would disagree with Lewis, then, on the question of the importance of "The Dance" to The Bridge. The Dance is an appropriate symbol for the unitive act in terms of the body, and hence appropriate for this stage of the poet's journey toward the Bridge, but it is not capable of begetting "new spiritual articulations" in the way that poetry is. Indeed, this is the point of "Indiana," and the reason for the poet's invocation of other poets in the second half of The Bridge.

## Indiana

[1]Letters, 348.

[2]Letters, 289.

[3]The religious imagery here is obvious enough, and the alternating ironical lines, as well as the mention of the "charter" and the "promised crown," recall the poetry of Emily Dickinson. Similarly, the mention of "Eldorado" recalls Poe's famous poem. Both poets are later invoked in The Bridge as followers of the imagination's "God."

## Cutty Sark

[1]Letters, 289.

[2]Letters, 270.

[3]Other instances in The Bridge of Crane's concern with space have been cited. In "Proem" Crane's remark about "space and detail division," and his analogy with El Greco's painting, were noted. Similarly, his comment on "Van Winkle" ("space is filled with music and sunlight") was cited. His concern with visual effects is evinced by his inclusion of photographs in the first edition of The Bridge, with one of a tugboat inserted just after "Cutty Sark," suggesting the mid-point of the poem and the poetic process, the "lugging back lifeward" of the imagination's truth, the escorting of it "home" to its embodiment in a word. For an interesting discussion of the ramifications of the use of the "cartogram" in painting (and, by implication, in poetry), see Henri Focillon, The Life of Forms in Art (New York, 1948).

[4]The discovery of the Bridge, the "harp" that plays music, leads to the writing of The Bridge, the recording of the "history" by which the harp and music were created.

## Cape Hatteras

[1]Whitman's poems, herein cited by title for the reader's convenience, may be found in The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman, ed. Gay Wilson Allen and E. Sculley Bradley (New York, 1961).

[2]Crane's belief in an "interior form" that could convey "the blood and bone of me" reflects this belief in organic creation.

[3]The use of "leaves" to suggest the pages of the poem suggests Whitman's similar use in his title Leaves of Grass.

[4]The image of the reader organically related to the poet's creations and thereby to the poet himself, recalls Whitman's "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and Auden's "In Memory of W. B. Yeats."

[5]The architecture imagery of skyscrapers as "great stones" from which Whitman's eyes "Gleam," especially in its immediate conjunction with the image of the "theme" written in the stone "cliff," subtly recalls the title of Crane's first volume of poetry, White Buildings. There the poems themselves, organic constructions, were imaged as "bright stones wherein our smiling plays." The transformation of imprisoning skyscrapers into "white buildings," a "breed of towers," is symbolic of the transformation of dead and inert elements in the life of the imagination, recorded in The Bridge itself. The image foreshadows later sections of the poem, especially "Quaker Hill," with its major symbol of "Old Mizzentop, palatial white/Hostelry."

## Three Songs

[1]Letters, 272.

[2]W. B. Yeats, "Crazy Jane Talks With The Bishop," in The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats (New York, 1956), p. 255.

[3]For an interesting discussion of the common belief of artists that chance plays an important role in creation, see Henri Focillon, The Life of Forms in Art, p. 74.

[14]*Letters*, 289.

## *Quaker Hill*

[1]*Letters*, 234

[2]Cf. Philip Horton, *Hart Crane*, p. 263.

[3]*Letters*, p. 140.

[4]Crane, "Modern Poetry," p. 178.

[5]Cf. Dembo, *Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge*, p. 118.

[6]"General Aims and Theories," p. 326. Crane quotes Blake on the need to see through reality:

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

[7]*Letters*, p. 238.

[8]Cf. Dembo, *Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge*, p. 116, for the significance of "Avalon."

[9]Lewis, p. 349. Lewis cites an omitted stanza dealing with the cynical European attitude toward the American dream.

[10]Cf. Dembo, *Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge*, p. 117, for personal application to Crane's life.

[11]Crane wrote to Yvor Winters that he was "not a Stoic, though I think I could lean more in that direction if I came to (as I may sometime) appreciate more highly the imaginative profits of such a course." *Letters*, p. 300.

[12]See Dembo, *Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge*, p. 118, for a different interpretation.

[13]"General Aims and Theories," p. 326.

[14]"It may not be possible to say that there is, strictly speaking, any "absolute" experience. 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." Horton, Hart Crane, p. 325.

## The Tunnel

[1]Letters, August 23, 1926.

[2]Letters, 256.

[3]William Carlos Williams, In The American Grain (New York, 1956), p. 213.

[4]Williams, In the American Grain, p. 216.

[5]Williams, In the American Grain, p. 226.

[6]Williams, In the American Grain, p. 232.

[7]Williams, In the American Grain, p. 233.

[8]The relationship of brain to body and imagination suggested by Poe's symbolic separation of head and body recalls a passage from Crane's short poem, "Recitative." There brain and body are dialectically related, and the imagination (the creator of "white buildings," poems) is the synthesizing element, the tertium quid:

> 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.

The "wind" is the force of the imagination eating, fusing (not without sparks and shivering) the brain and "lust" until, in an image reminiscent of Poe, the "ape's face" drops away, and the human, enlightened and imaginative white buildings "answer" the primal light of the sun.

[9]The image of Poe's eyes "like agate lanterns" echoes Poe's own image of the beautiful Helen standing with "agate lamp" in hand ("To Helen"). The borrowing is ironic, for here Poe inhabits Hades, rather than the "Holy Land" of Helen and beauty.

<u>Atlantis</u>

[1]*Letters*, 239.

[2]"Modern Poetry," p. 178.

[3]See Hyatt Howe Waggoner, *The Heel of Elohim*.

[4]"General Aims and Theories," p. 327.

[5]*Letters*, May 22, 1930.

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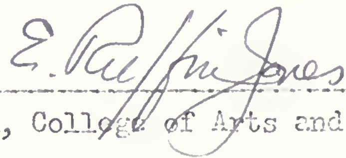
Richard P. Sugg was born in St. Louis, Missouri, on July 31, 1941. He attended St. Louis University High School from 1955 to 1959, graduating with a Latin diploma. In 1963 he was awarded a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Notre Dame, with a major in English literature. From 1963 to 1965 he served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in West Cameroon, West Africa. There he taught English and French, and made occasional road traces. From 1965 through 1969 he attended the University of Florida, holding in succession a Peace Corps Fellowship and a National Defense Education Act Fellowship. He received the Master's Degree in 1967, and the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 1969.

This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the chairman of the candidate's supervisory committee and has been approved by all members of that committee. It was submitted to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate Council, and was approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August, 1969



Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Dean, Graduate School

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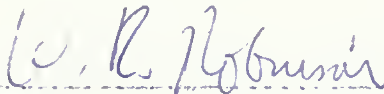

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