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AN INTERPRETATION OF HART CRANE'S THE BRIDGE

by

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ABSTRACT

An Interpretation of Hart Crane's The Bridge

by

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This dissertation is a reading of Hart Crane's The Bridge. The first chapter outlines the interpretations of three critics (Tate, Winters, and Weber) who have found the poem a failure and three (Dembo, Vogler, and Lewis) who have found it a success. The general criteria used by these writers in judging the work are discussed, as are the major problems confronting any critique of the poem. The relationship of the present study to these previous interpretations is also pointed out. The second chapter examines the Cranian logic of metaphor. The contention is that Crane views poetry as an extended process of creative naming and that his metaphoric practice consists of reducing the deep-structure predication "tenor is vehicle" to a complex name on the level of surface structure, a name which then becomes the vehicle in a new metaphor which is in turn collapsed into another complex name and so on. A related process is found to be at work in the structure of The Bridge: a chronological narrative on the level of deep structure is transformed by narrative gaps and time shifts into a circular sequence on the level of surface structure to create the circular, still movement of the poem, its fusion of temporal and spatial form. Chapters three and four are devoted to the interpretation of the poem. The thesis is that Crane,
in the writing of *The Bridge*, distinguishes between three types of myth—the true-believed myths of religion and science and the personal myth of the poem. Religion and science are considered true-believed myths in that they are felt by those who share them to be real pictures of the external world. Personal myth, on the other hand, is a self-consciously entertained convenient fiction; it is myth *per se*. Religion and science are both myths of continuity; they assert that man is continuous with his environment. But the types of continuity which they embody are directly opposed. Religion views the external world as human like man and attempts to impose a human order on physical nature. Science views man as material like the world and attempts to derive a material order from physical nature. The personal myth of the poem is a myth of discontinuity; it asserts that man is uniquely different from his environment and opposes the ordered anti-world of the poem to the chaos of the external world. In his symbolic circular journey in *The Bridge*, the poet attempts to sustain religion and science as true belief, but he is unable to do so. He opts for the self-conscious personal myth of the poem which understands religion and science as earlier unself-conscious myths that sprang from the human ordering impulse. They are viewed as unself-conscious attempts of the human imagination to reveal itself to itself as the source of order. In the poem’s fusion of spatial and temporal form, human history is grasped in a single spatial image: the circular movement of the human imagination through the man-made symbol and back to itself as the conscious creator of order. The
poem takes itself and its genesis as its subject; the symbolic bridge created by means of naming in the poem is the poem itself.
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CHAPTER ONE
CRITICAL APPROACHES TO THE BRIDGE

Most of the early criticism of The Bridge takes its tone from the work of two men—Allen Tate and Yvor Winters. Both were friends of the poet—Tate a close friend, Winters a more distant friend who eventually quarreled with Crane. Both had been among the most sympathetic and encouraging critics of his poetry, and thus their unfavorable judgment of The Bridge was doubly influential. One could expect reviewers who had always found Crane's work willful and obscure to react in the same way to his most ambitious effort, but when Tate spoke of the "fragmentary and often unintelligible framework of the poem"\(^1\) and when Winters wrote, "The work as a whole is a failure. It builds up to two climaxes, one in The Dance, and one in Atlantis, both of which are incomprehensible,"\(^2\) then the poem's reception was virtually settled. I have taken the evaluations of Tate and Winters as a starting point for this survey of some of the major criticism of The Bridge, not simply because of their preliminary importance, but because they raise between them most of the questions to which subsequent interpreters of the poem have addressed themselves. Tate's "Hart Crane" and Winters' "The Significance of The Bridge by Hart Crane" are essays strikingly similar in form though in critical merit Tate's study is by far superior. Each is a combination of personal reminiscence and critical evaluation, with the
writer's personal knowledge of the poet being presented in each case as added authority for the critical statement. Tate remarks,

As I look back upon his work and its relation to the life he lived, a general statement about it comes to my mind that may throw some light on the dissatisfaction that he felt with his career. It will be a judgment upon the life and works of a man whom I knew affectionately for ten years as a friend.

Suicide was the sole act of will left to him short of a profound alteration of his character. I think the evidence of this is the locked-in sensibility, the insulated egoism, of his poetry. . . .

Winters, speaking of the widely acknowledged influence of Whitman on Crane and particularly on the composition of The Bridge, notes that his own impression in this area "is derived not only from a study of the works of Crane and of Whitman, but also from about four years of frequent and regular correspondence with Crane and from about four long evenings of uninterrupted conversation with him."

With both critics the drift in their evaluations is from the life to the work. In Tate's comments about Crane's suicide, the "locked-in sensibility" of his poetry is not so much presented as evidence of his suicidal bent, as the fact of his suicide, which is mentioned first, is presented as proof of "the insulated egoism" of Crane's work. A similar reasoning process in Winters' treatment of Crane's death begins early in his essay with the remark that most of Crane's thought was derived from Whitman whose thought was in turn derived from
Emerson. Later, after recounting the circumstances of the suicide, Winters states, "The doctrine of Emerson and Whitman, if really put into practice, should naturally lead to suicide . . ." What we find in these statements is a motif that runs through much of Crane criticism. An implicit judgment about the facts of Crane's life and consequently about the quality of his mind is allowed to color subsequent judgments about the quality of his work. In the case of The Bridge the result is a dubious image of the poet as a semi-educated man, as a wild, largely untutored lyric talent incapable of writing a great long poem. Tate says, "With the instinct of genius he read the great poets, but he never acquired an objective mastery of any literature, or even of the history of his country—a defect of considerable interest in a poet whose most ambitious work was an American epic." Indeed, Crane's life is compelling. The creation of beauty in the midst of frustration and anguish is a heroic theme. Winters calls Crane "a saint of the wrong religion," and Tate says "If he is not our twentieth-century poet as hero, I do not know where else to look for him." But the difficulty here is that the poet's biography begins to exercise too much influence on the criticism of his work. If one becomes more interested in Crane as hero than as poet, his poetry tends inevitably to be viewed through the refracting glass of his life. The remark by Tate quoted earlier that Crane never acquired an objective mastery of any literature or the history of his country is followed in the essay by the contention that
In any ordinary sense Crane was not an educated man; in many respects he was an ignorant man. There is already a Crane legend, like the Poe legend—it should be fostered because it will help to make his poetry generally known—and the scholars will decide it was a pity that so great a talent lacked early advantages. It is probable that he was incapable of the formal discipline of a classical education, and probable, too, that the eclectic education of his time would have scattered and killed his talent. 

It is not, I think, a great jump from this view of Crane to the image of the "natural" highly-specialized lyric poet who wrote in a Dionysian frenzy of wine and music. Indeed, though the "Crane legend" has made his poetry more "generally known," it has not always made it more generally understood. In interpreting The Bridge one must come face to face with this curious image of a poet who, in Winters' words, possessed "the gift of style without the gift of thought," the image of a man whose formal education ended in high school and whose talent was of a type that functioned best over a short distance. In other words, one must meet the presumption that Crane possessed neither the mental powers to effect the synthesis of material for a long poem nor the structural talent to carry it off.

Clearly, of those men who have written long poems in this century, Crane must be ranked near the bottom in terms of general education. But a long poem is not a college board exam, and the lack of a general education is not debilitating to a poet as long as there is no lack of that specialized education proper to his art. Further, Crane's talent was of that intuitive variety
which can make much out of little. Where an ordinary man might need to read
a hundred books to grasp the outlines of a subject, the man of natural intuition
can often read ten and guess the contents of the rest. It is simply the difference
which talent confers. My own interpretation of The Bridge rests on the belief
that we are dealing with a poet who, in relation to the material of his poem,
is neither uneducated nor ignorant. What intuition did not supply, years of
specialized reading did. This, of course, is not to say that Crane was fully
aware of the intention being embodied in his work. Crane understood his
materials, but he often wrote better than he knew. It is no digression to
point out that a poet does not master his subject and then write. Rather,
the act of mastery is the very act of writing. The mutual interaction of
thought and word along with the heuristic value of more or less arbitrary
poetic forms makes the poem a continuing operation in broadening the mind.
Auden's remark "How can I tell what I think till I see what I say" depicts
the poem as issuing from a struggle between the general impulse of thought-
emotion and the need to settle on a given set of words. One does not know
exactly what he is capable of thinking until one sees what the words he can
find allow him to say. Great poetry is an experiment in "what can be said."
Indeed, in a long complex poem such as The Bridge the process can go so far
that even after seeing what he says the poet may still not know exactly what
he thinks. The statements which Crane made in conversation and correspondence
during and after the composition of *The Bridge* about his intentions in the work are generally at variance with the poem's actual accomplishment. This variance is not an indication of ignorance of his materials but rather an indication that in the writing of the poem he had been led to say more than he knew. I bring this up because in dealing with the impingement of extra-poetic material, such as the poet's biography, on the evaluation of his work, we must confront the variety of statements which Crane made about his intentions in the poem.

Crane was a brilliant and prolific correspondent, and one of the most frequent subjects of his letters was *The Bridge*. At one moment calling it a "continuation" of the materials of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" and a further answer to the pessimism of *The Waste Land*, at another describing it as the myth of America, at yet another calling it an epic and comparing it to the *Aeneid*, he built up in the minds of the very people who were to be the poem's first reviewers images of *The Bridge* which the poem itself did not match. In fact Crane's statements about the poem varied, for like the composition of the poem, they ranged over a period of more than seven years. Most of the remarks in the essays of Tate and Winters regarding the intention of *The Bridge* derive from Crane's correspondence. Tate calls it an "American epic," notes that Crane "had looked upon his 'Faustus and Helen' as an answer to the pessimism of the school of Eliot, and *The Bridge* was to be an even more complete answer,"\(^{10}\) and defines the poem's subject as "the greatness of America."\(^{11}\) Winters says, "*The Bridge* endeavors to deal in some measure with the relationship of the
individual American to his country and to God and with the religious significance of America itself." Then speaking of "The River," he remarks, "... when Crane was writing this poem, he informed me that he was rewriting Sandburg in the way in which he ought to be rewritten." Taking Crane's statement as a hint, Winters views "The River" as an apotheosis of the Mississippi, and he concludes that "nothing save confusion can result from our mistaking the Mississippi Valley for God." But surely poetic intention must derive from the poem itself and not from a letter of intent. Extra-poetic material such as correspondence can often clarify intention, though it can just as often obscure, particularly if the poet's statements are made, as most of Crane's were, in the midst of composition. But whatever extra-poetic material can do, it can never define the intention of a poem or set the limits within which its success is to be judged, and all too often this is just what the statements that Crane made about The Bridge are allowed to do. They are set up as a standard against which the poem itself is measured and when the poem does not match what Crane variously said he intended it to be, it is judged a failure. Indeed, this use of Crane's correspondence can reach the point where one who feels the poem is a success is in the position of having to argue with the poet himself. Tate says,

In the summer of 1930 he had written to me that he feared his most ambitious work, The Bridge, was not quite perfectly "realized," that probably his soundest work was in the shorter pieces of White Buildings, but that his mind, being once committed to the larger undertaking, could never return to
the lyrical and more limited form. He had an extraordinary insight into the foundations of his work, and I think this judgment of it will not be refuted.15

As I said earlier, Tate and Winters establish between them most of the categories to which subsequent critics of The Bridge have in one way or another addressed themselves. The image of Crane as incapable, in terms of education and ability, of writing a great long poem is one of these categories, the weight given to Crane's various statements of the poem's intention in judging its achievement is another. But of course, the most important contention made by Tate and Winters is that The Bridge is not a unified whole, that it is not one long poem at all but a series of more or less loosely related short poems. Tate says, "The fifteen parts of The Bridge taken as one poem suffer from the lack of a coherent structure, whether symbolic or narrative: the coherence of the work consists in the personal quality of the writing—in mood, feeling, and tone."16 Calling it "a collection of lyrics," he finds it difficult to agree with those critics who feel it is a single poem "and as such an artistic success." Winters holds that "the incomprehensibility and the looseness of construction are the natural result of the theme . . . "17 In each case the critic feels that the poet has attempted an epic which will embody the American myth and that this myth centers around the symbol of the bridge and the whole concept of bridgesship or mediation. But according to Tate, Crane never really understood his subject. His theme, the greatness of America, "the passage into new truths," was a "dead abstraction,"
an "emotional over-simplification of a subject-matter that Crane did not, on
the plane of narrative and idea, simplify at all."\textsuperscript{18} Because of this lack of
understanding of American history and the American experience, "the historical
plot of the poem, which is the groundwork on which the symbolic bridge stands,
is arbitrary and broken. . . ."\textsuperscript{19} Indeed Tate even doubts that American
history can sustain a myth. Winters feels that the total symbolism of the poem
has "something of the nature of an unrestrained pun: Crane's poem is a bridge;
it joins the past to the present, the present to the future, life to death, non-
being to birth, the old world to the new; the United States is a bridge which
joins the two oceans."\textsuperscript{20} Tate also has misgivings about the poem's principal
symbol, feeling that because it is used variously as metaphor, symbol, and
analogy it makes the poem static. It does not fill the poet's mind but merely
serves as a starting point for "a series of short flights."

Connected with Tate's and Winters' evaluation of \textit{The Bridge} is their
judgment about the poetic tradition to which Crane belongs. Tate holds that
"Crane not only ends the Romantic era in his own person; he ends it logically
and morally."\textsuperscript{21} One might note in passing that this again seems to be a judg-
ment of Crane's work based on a prior judgment about his life. Speaking of the
poem, Tate remarks that Crane "falls back upon the intensity of consciousness,
rather than the clarity, for his center of vision. And that is Romanticism."\textsuperscript{22}
Asserting that Crane derives most of his thought from Whitman who in turn
derives his thought from Emerson, Winters characterizes Emersonian doctrine as "merely the romantic doctrine with a New England emotional coloration." 23

For Tate and Winters, as for many critics since, Crane is a latter-day Romantic poet, though the term "romantic" is variously understood. With Winters it represents impulse as opposed to reason. Speaking of Emerson, he says, "In life and in art the automatic man, the unreflective creature of impulse is the ideal . . . " 24 With Tate it stands for impulse, for the irrational, and the sentimental, for intensity of emotion and sensation as against clarity of thought. He refers to Pocahontas in The Bridge as "a typically romantic and sentimental symbol"; the poem is "an irrational symbol of the will," and Crane is the "Romantic modern poet of the age of science" who, in the failure of understanding, "attempts to impose his will upon experience and to possess the world." Perhaps Tate's crucial statement regarding Crane's romanticism deals with the poet's relation to nature:

> He is the blameless victim of a world whose impurity violates the moment of intensity, which would otherwise be enduring and perfect. He is betrayed, not by a defect of his own nature, but by the external world; he asks of nature, perfection—requiring only of himself, intensity. The persistent, and persistently defeated, pursuit of a natural absolute places Crane at the center of his age. 25

Needless to say, my own interpretation of The Bridge differs from that of Tate and Winters, but I have spent a good deal of time in summarizing their views and have quoted them at length because I wish to do their position (which
is an influential one) full justice. I differ not only with their conclusions about the poem but with the categories under which they judge it. Hart Crane's biography does not, I feel, form the best commentary to his verse. The relationship between a writer and his material is so complex, the balance between life and art so intricate that to see the probability of Crane's suicide as being evidenced by the "locked-in sensibility" of his verse or to find in his highly personalized style a solipsistic quality with implications of the writer's homosexual deviation is to oversimplify matters. In another area I think the whole question of The Bridge as an epic arises not so much from the poem itself as from the statements Crane made about it in his correspondence. Indeed, his stated intentions in letters have exercised far too much influence on the evaluation of his work. In this same vein the question of the American myth which the poem is supposed to embody has been a category productive of little significant information. More often than not, it is used as a means of faulting the poem because it fails to embody such a myth, particularly in those sections where Crane deals with segments of American history. Clearly, one of the subjects of the poem is the entire concept of myth, but to contend as Tate does that the poem attempts to create an American myth which will have the social and cultural force of religious truth is to allow too much weight to statements which Crane made during the poem's composition. A poem's intention is revealed by its form and not by the poet's letters and if the two vary, the
poem takes precedence. The Bridge cannot be judged a failure simply because it does not match Crane's various remarks about it. Another area in which I differ with the criticism of Tate and Winters is their view of Crane as a Romantic poet. In either case, the term "romantic" is defined somewhat negatively but even with a recent critic like R. W. B. Lewis whose definition is broader and more approving, it remains a term which in its application to the poet of The Bridge is essentially misleading. Obviously, Crane was influenced by Romantic poetry but in my opinion Crane is no more a Romantic poet than is Wallace Stevens.

Most of the approaches to Crane's work which I have pointed out in the criticism of Tate and Winters are taken over by Brom Weber in his volume Hart Crane: A Biographical and Critical Study, published in 1948. However, this is not to imply that Weber does not add a good deal of interesting and helpful information of his own. As its title indicates the Weber book is a combination of biography and criticism with biography occupying a dominant position. An earlier biographical study of Crane, Philip Horton's Hart Crane: The Life of An American Poet, had appeared in 1937, but Weber's is the first book-length treatment of the poet to include a large scale critical study of his work. It is not surprising that Weber, who later edited Crane's correspondence, should make repeated use of passages from Crane's letters in his discussion of poetic intention in The Bridge. Dealing with the mythic aspect of the poem,
Weber begins by quoting from the well-known letter to Otto Kahn written in 1927 in which Crane says that it seemed ineffective from the poetic standpoint to approach his material "from the purely chronological historic angle." 27 What he intends, Crane continues, is an assimilation of experience "showing the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present." 28 Weber comments that "because Crane made no effort to grasp the meaning of American history, The Bridge does not fulfill its assigned task of organic assimilation, of relating the historical past and present in emotional terms; it could not be expected to do so, because Crane did not attempt to arrive at any mastery over the subject." 29 As an example of how "intrinsically unimportant" the materials of history were to Crane, Weber cites the epigraph for the "Powhatan" section of the poem calling it "a third-hand reference."

The epigraph is a quotation from Strachey's history of colonial Virginia which W. C. Williams had included in his book In the American Grain. But an abridgement of the quotation, made by Kay Boyle for her review of Williams' volume in transition, was Crane's actual source. Because of Crane's relative indifference to the materials of history, Weber claims that it would have been impossible for him "to demonstrate convincingly that the past with its glory and ideals lives in the present." 30 Connecting the question of myth with the epic intentions of the poet, Weber quotes side by side two of the best known sentences from Crane's letter to Kahn: "What I am really handling, you see, is the Myth
of America," and "I am really writing an epic of the modern consciousness . . . "  
Weber contends, however, that Crane never understood his principal symbol well enough "to make it function as the unifying integer of the poem" and thus fulfill the mythic task of strengthening tradition by tracing that tradition back to a higher, better world. The poem also fails as an epic because "the understanding and faith which Crane did not possess were requisite in the construction and maintenance of a central narrative, idea or hero, one of which is necessary at the very least to provide the structural unity of an epic."  

For Weber, the failure of The Bridge as myth and epic is evidenced by its lack of unity. Speaking of the loose transitions between sections, he maintains that neither the symbol nor the poet's faith are able to "span the large gaps of time, place, and theme which separate most of the poems in the sequence."  
Like his predecessors, Weber singles out "Indiana," the "Three Songs," and "Cape Hatteras" for particular attention. "Indiana," which Tate had called "a nightmare of sentimentality," contains, according to Weber, lines which are "probably the worst in The Bridge, excepting some of the decorative lines in 'Cape Hatteras.'"  
"Cape Hatteras" is in turn a failure "both as a complete poem and as a contributory part," its excesses arising from Crane's "desire to show his virtuosity and the resultant expansion of a few images to unnecessary lengths."  
Weber's comments on the "Three Songs" are another example of the extreme influence of biographical material on interpretation. Holding that the "Three Songs" have no
thematic relationship to the poems directly on either side, he explains their presence in The Bridge by pointing out "Crane's Oedipus complex." In "The Dance" the poet identifies himself with the Indian chief who becomes one with Pocahontas, the earth mother. In "Indiana," the poem which follows "The Dance," the pioneer mother says good-bye to her son. Weber contends that "if we follow the sexual implications" we find that the "Three Songs" are "related to the theme of frustration in 'Indiana,' and survey the failure of Crane's love for woman." In his analyses of "The River," "The Dance," and "Indiana," Weber uses quotations from Crane's correspondence to establish poetic intention in each case, and then judges the poems by how closely they match these external statements of purpose. Dealing with "Indiana," he says "There is no need to recapitulate the narrative in this poem: it is best to concentrate on Crane's intentions. According to one synopsis which Crane sent to Otto Kahn . . . " In the lengthy passage which Weber then quotes, Crane says that he hopes to show in "Indiana" the transference "of the role of Pocahontas to the pioneer white, or from another angle, the absorption of this Pocahontas symbolism by the pioneer white woman," and to make this section psychologically "a summary of Powhatan's Daughter in its entirety." Weber asserts that it is difficult, if not impossible, for the reader to experience both the "transference" and the psychological summation. For Weber, the failure of "Indiana" is a failure of belief on the part of the poet—the disintegration of the myth. Weber's
overall view of The Bridge is that "nothing useful can be accomplished" by considering it as a unified whole; the poem is "a collection of individual lyrics of varying quality." As for the poet, "it must be recognized that Crane, despite his ambition, was unqualified by virtue of his aesthetics, his life, and his lack of knowledge to handle a didactic poem or a poem of faith."38

So far I have dealt with three critics who have found The Bridge a failure. I now turn to the work of three more-recent critics, L. S. Dembo, Thomas Vogler, and R. W. B. Lewis, who have found it, in one sense or another, a success. This is not to imply that the general viewpoint of Tate, Winters, and Weber is no longer current. As recently as July, 1969, Louis Simpson, the Pulitzer-Prize-winning poet, contended in his review of Unterecker's biography of Crane that

I don't see how anyone who reads The Bridge without prejudice can find a real structure or meaning in it. Crane's failure was suggested by Yvor Winters and Allen Tate while Crane was alive, and I think in this matter they were correct.

... Pocahontas and Columbus are no myth; they have nothing to say to this century. The flashes of poetry were there, but there was no structure to it all, only his own desperation, trying to pull things together, a pressure to be great. For a work of art to have structure there must be, first of all, an organization of the artist's feelings. And as Unterecker shows, Crane's personality was extremely disorganized. ... The result is a poem with no central thought, no sincerity; lyrical fragments tortured out on a Procrustean bed.
... Crane was no fool. He knew that The Bridge was a failure and unlike his critics, he lived by poetry. So he jumped off the boat on his way back from Mexico. He was destroyed not by drink or homosexuality, but by his failure to think clearly.39

Indeed, the number of scholars who still consider The Bridge as lacking in structural unity is probably substantial. Those interpreters who disagree and have tried to make a case for it as a single long poem have been led into a gradual alteration of the categories under which it is judged.

In my opinion the first large step towards a new appreciation of the poem was made by L. S. Dembo in his book Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge: A Study of The Bridge, published in 1960. Dembo confronts what he says are the three most serious charges made against the poem by its early critics—first, that Crane does not really deal with "meaningful events in American experience as an epic poet should"; second, that he lost faith in his subject during the poem's composition thereby destroying any logic the original plan contained; and third, that the poem's imagery is "generally unfathomable." Redefining what he considers to be the poem's intention, he starts with the question of myth: "The Bridge is not a naïve attempt to set up a national myth based on technology for its own sake, but an account of the exiled poet's quest for a logos in which the Absolute that he has known in his imagination will be made intelligible to the world."40 The Bridge is that logos; it is "the myth by which the Absolute makes itself understood in the modern world"—the new embodiment
of the Word. In Dembo's opinion Crane tried to find in American history "some evidence that this society was capable of a psychological experience essentially identical with the poet's ecstatic apprehension of the Ideal as Beauty." In a quest journey the narrator of the poem travels to a mythic Indian past to find Pocahontas, the symbol of the Absolute in a lost world. He becomes one with Pocahontas in the ritual death of "The Dance," and "having thus learned the Word" he returns to the present, where, though plagued by doubt, he "keeps his faith and concludes the poem with a hymn celebrating the Bridge as a modern embodiment of the Word." Pointing out the influence of Nietzsche, Dembo finds in Crane's work, particularly in The Bridge, an "acceptance of tragedy"—the proposition that "resurrection always follows suffering and death." The tragic view makes the poet's biography and social history analogous, so that the poet's cycle of "suffering, destruction, and redemption" corresponds to a similar cycle in society. According to Dembo, Crane did not lose faith in his myth—"in the manifestation of the Absolute in the modern world"—but rather he began to doubt "the ability of the poet to communicate the Word and of society to accept it." The proposition on which The Bridge is based then is that society "holds within it the possibility of its own redemption," though as yet unredeemed, and, as the critic points out, "Crane was willing to take comfort in possibilities."
Dembo feels that in *The Bridge* the poet's intention was not "to celebrate some transcendental force in the world," but "to invest the poet and his world with tragic dignity." Of the many masks which the poet wears in his search for the Absolute (Van Winkle, Maquakeeta, the hoboes, the sailor, etc.) the "most significant," according to Dembo, is that of Christopher Columbus, the speaker in the "Ave Maria" section. This section is an "introduction to and a summary of all that follows it." By conquering space and chaos, Columbus attained a knowledge of the New World, and the narrator faces the same problem when he attempts to find order in the chaos of the modern world. As Columbus tried to complete the bridge between dream and reality by bringing back word of his discovery so the narrator "tries to join myth and reality by returning with the crucial sign" from the past to the world of the present. As Pocahontas was a symbol of the Absolute in the past, the Bridge is its symbol in the technological present. They are images of unity—the integration of time and space. The ancient unity represented by Pocahontas was broken by the white man's "iron dealt cleavage" of the land and his absorption in the conquest of space. It was this preoccupation with space which cut him off from the flow of time and his mythic past. The means by which man dominates space is the machine, and in that integrative act of the poetic imagination which makes the Bridge the embodiment of the Word, the machine must be acclimatized in the way that nature was in the past. Dembo contends that
Crane tried to create in the poem a "romantic correspondence between the mechanical and the divine," to replace "the 'nature' of nineteenth-century romanticism with a 'new hierarchy of faith'" symbolized by the Bridge. In the "Atlantis" section which completes the poem we are presented with a vision of the bridge which, according to Dembo, is "not the declamation of a dream realized, but rather a proposition or recitative. The Word had been revealed to the poet; his duty was to announce it to the world. If nobody listened, then he failed—but with dignity and in keeping with the ways of the universe." 47

Dealing with the question of genre Dembo calls The Bridge "a romantic lyric given epic implications." 48 He contends that, despite appearances, the poem does not really handle the subject of America in the way that a work like Leaves of Grass does by trying to develop a faith in democracy. Instead "it tries to present American history as an enlarged or collective version of the romantic poet's biography." 49 Acknowledging Crane's reference to The Bridge as his Aeneid, Dembo says that critics have generally taken the poem's genre for granted, but that this position is difficult to maintain faced with a poem in which "the usual epic hero, who embodies the positive ideals of his world and is in tune with it" has been replaced by "a figure who stands outside society." 50 In The Bridge Crane is "fashioning society in the image of himself; and it is here that the distinction between lyric and epic is wholly obscured." 51

One might remark at this point Dembo's strategy regarding Crane's statements of
poetic intention. In those sections where he feels they correspond more or less to what is happening in the poem, he uses them to reinforce his interpretation. But they are in no sense primary and at those points where they vary from his reading of the poem, he does not hesitate to assert that whatever the poet's declared intention, Crane was in fact doing something else. On still other occasions Dembo maintains that Crane in his statements of purpose was using a specialized vocabulary that is as much in need of explication as the poetry itself. Thus, in analyzing "The Dance" he begins with a lengthy quotation from the letter to Otto Kahn, but comments that "it is improbable that Kahn or anyone else unfamiliar with Crane's way of reasoning was really enlightened by this explanation."52 Dembo then interprets the quotation in light of what he feels is actually taking place in the poem. In his treatment of material from Crane's correspondence, Dembo fairly covers the spectrum of possibilities—he accepts stated intentions where they seem to fit, rejects them where they do not, and reinterprets them where he feels they need it. Clearly, he puts this material to better use than any writer on Crane up to his time. However, though he keeps the poet's declared intentions from dominating the poem, he does on occasion allow Crane's comments, even when he disagrees with them, just enough influence to mislead his interpretation. For example, in his reading of "Indiana" he quotes the same passage from Crane's letter to Otto Kahn that Weber employed in his interpretation, i.e., that the purpose of the poem
is "to signalize the transference of the role of Pocahontas to the pioneer white." Dembo notes that "the pioneer woman was the natural inheritor of Pocahontas' role since she knew the meaning of space and could also be characterized as an enduring mother," but he contends that as the poem stands it is "not at all what Crane said it was." In fact what Crane does in "Indiana," Dembo asserts, is to reverse his symbolism. The male figure (the poet narrator) is represented by the mother (the person engaged in recollection), while the female figure (Pocahontas, the dream vision) is represented by Jim, a memory, and Larry, his "reincarnation." Crane's original plan, the critic points out, was to have Jim speak and the mother die, but the poet changed his mind and was apparently "unaware of the direction his symbols actually took, that by making the sailor the image of Pocahontas he was 'compiling' his own 'too well-known biography.'" Dembo claims that the symbolic meaning of the son's leaving his mother to become a sailor is "Pocahontas' leaving the poet to become a drowned goddess." Putting aside the psychoanalytic remark about Crane "compiling his own too well-known biography," it is evident that Dembo's interpretation of the role transference which takes place in "Indiana" has been indirectly influenced by Crane's stated intention. Clearly, a kind of transference between Indian and white occurs in the poem—the homeless, wandering squaw and her child pass on their environmental disorientation to the pioneer mother and her roaming son. But to see that transference as centering around the image of Pocahontas as visionary goal, even though maintaining
that the embodiment of Pocahontas in "Indiana" differs from Crane's statement, is still to be led by something outside the poem.

Dembo's contribution to criticism of The Bridge is great. Though, like his predecessors, he refers to Crane as a Romantic poet and though his treatment of the Cranian "logic of metaphor" is in my opinion over-simplified, yet he shows the imaginative strides which can be made in bridging the narrative gaps between sections of the poem if one simply works on the premise that The Bridge forms a unified whole. Ultimately, my own interpretation of The Bridge does not agree with Dembo's, but his remains an opinion to be reckoned with and to be grateful for.

Another significant reading of the poem is that of Thomas Vogler in his article "A New View of Hart Crane's Bridge," published in 1965. Vogler begins immediately by confronting the problem posed by "Crane's own statements of purpose and achievement in writing the poem." He notes that there are various frames of reference in which a poem can be judged, adding that "the context of the poet's conscious intentions is only one of the many possible contexts and one of the more suspect contexts at that." Vogler contends that if The Bridge is approached without a "precommitment to Crane's own statement of its theme," one can find in it a theme that provides a structural unity:

The poem is a search or quest for a mythic vision, rather than the fixed, symbolic expression of a vision firmly held in the poet's mind. The vision sought is one that will be
based on a knowledge of a glorious past, and will provide a bridge from that past to the hopeful future, in spite of the dearth of hopeful signs in the actual present. Vogler holds that the poet is engaged in a personal quest but one which contains broad implications for society. The poem itself "labors to move from a state of desire to one of conviction, to see in the curve of the Bridge the arc of a rainbow promise not dependent on any text or tradition, but on the poet's own power to see into the nature of things." The poet carries on his quest by traveling back into history and into his own youth seeking "signs of an immanent regeneration." In the "Ave Maria" section he becomes identified with the first of a series of quest figures—Christopher Columbus returning with the word of his discovery of a new world. Vogler points out that Crane picks the return voyage as the setting for Columbus' monologue because he sees "his own attempt to sustain a vision as a return to the world of the present after a timeless moment of vision." The attempt "to return from somewhere with something of value" is a continuing metaphor throughout the poem. The identification of the poet and Columbus is such that the terms of their quests are "symbolically interchangeable." Thus the poet tries "to find his 'Madre Maria' in a series of elusive, mythical female figures" and "to come to terms with a 'Hand of Fire' in the 'interborough fissures' of his own mind in 'The Tunnel' section." Journeying back in time in search of his dream vision Pocahontas, the poet reaches the mythic Indian world of "The Dance" and in the ritualistic death
of the Indian Maquokeyta, with whom the poet is identified, he becomes one with the virgin goddess. Vogler feels that "in the death of Maquokeyta, Crane sees for the first time that his own experience is to be a dying into life before he can achieve a poetic image of the rebirth of America." 60 Returning from the mythic past to the present, the poet's problem is to establish a historical continuity and "to find the pattern of his own rebirth after his visionary death with Maquokeyta." But with his return to the present in the "Cutty Sark" section, he finds that "time has conquered the vision" and that his "historical excursion has only succeeded in reaffirming the spiritual poverty of his existence." 61

At this point, Vogler contends, the poem makes a change in direction. The poet finds the possibility that "acceptance of the failure of his vision" can be "the means of transcending that failure, as his acceptance and participation in the death of Maquokeyta was an attempt to transcend it by seeing it as the preparation for a rebirth." 62 In "Cape Hatteras," "Three Songs," "Quaker Hill" and the beginning of "The Tunnel" the message of the lost vision and the failed historic quest is repeated in various forms, yet at the same time these sections "attempt to lay the groundwork for an affirmative vision of the poet's present state that will hold in spite of the failed quest." 63 In "The Tunnel" the poet begins "an exploration of an inner state of consciousness" in search of a vision that will last. Vogler concludes that for the poet "the 'Word that will not die,' even though every particular embodiment of the vision
the poet finds must die, is the vision of his continually reborn desire to find a vision." Vogler points out that the final section, "Atlantis," must seem, at first, incongruous with "The Tunnel" section because it returns to the Bridge "as an acceptable symbol," and makes a claim for the vision "palpably at odds" with what the poet has actually experienced. Its tone of "triumphant enthusiasm" and "heady ecstasy" seems to conflict with that of the preceding section. But, says Vogler, this conflict of tone "does not 'ruin' the section or the poem," for it forms "a genuine poetic summation of the lived-through experience of seeking a vision." It depicts the state of the poet who can never find his vision but who can never stop searching for it, one who must "live without hope in a state of desire." Thus Vogler contends that in "Atlantis" the Bridge "is assigned a symbolic meaning which it cannot bear within the context of the poem as written; it belongs rather, to the poem the poet hoped to write, to the vision he hoped to achieve," and we feel that the poet "must lose his vision after the poetic ecstasy of expression passes." For Vogler the success of a poem like The Bridge does not depend on whether the poet actually finds the vision he seeks nor whether the reader accepts it, but "the degree of poetic honesty and skill the poet exhibits in pursuing his quest." The relationship between the approaches of Vogler and Dembo is instructive. While Dembo takes into account Crane's statements of intention concerning The Bridge, Vogler obviates the problem by simply affirming that
the poem is capable of meaning on its own and that it operates under no obligation to match Crane's remarks about it. Each critic views the poem not as the formulation of an American myth from the elements of history, but as the embodiment of a poetic quest—one man's search for a unifying, harmonizing vision, the quest for meaning in the chaos of modern life. The subject is the quest. It is not the myth of America which the poem embodies but the myth of myth-making, "the vision of his continually reborn desire to find a vision." Speaking of the cyclic character of the poem and the Nietzschean theme of destruction and rebirth, Dembo notes in a later work that "there is nothing but the literary principle of anticlimax to prevent another cycle of despair and ecstasy from being added to the poem and extended indefinitely," a phenomenon which may be inherent "in any attempt to achieve 'continuity with chaos,' when that chaos is represented by modern industrial life." Vogler's contention that the symbolic meaning of the Bridge in "Atlantis" belongs not to the poem as written but "to the poem the poet hoped to write, to the vision he hoped to achieve" reminds one of Dembo's statement that "the poem is not the declamation of a dream realized, but rather a proposition or recitative." For each critic the poem's success hinges not on whether the poet achieves the vision he ostensibly seeks or whether the reader accepts it, but on the embodiment of the quest for vision. Even though the poet fails in the quest or the world fails to respond, the poem in the very attempt to find order still manages, according to Dembo, to invest
the poet and his world with tragic dignity. For Vogler the failed quest does not detract from the triumphant theme—the poem is "the expression of a man as poet, trying by sheer will and faith to find an acceptable purpose and meaning in his life." Though Vogler does not call the poem an epic, he contends that its subject, the quest for meaning, is the closest thing we have in our age to a theme "that can excite anything like an epic response from our poets." The final critic of _The Bridge_ whom I wish to discuss is R. W. B. Lewis. His book _The Poetry of Hart Crane_, published in 1967, attempts "to chart the career of Crane's imagination—of his vision, his rhetoric, and his craft" and to relate those elements to the "Anglo-American Romantic tradition: in particular, to the work of Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley in England; and of Emerson, Whitman, Melville, and Emily Dickinson in America." As a valuable step toward analysis of _The Bridge_, Lewis discusses early in his work the image of the poet as clown in Crane's verse. Centering his discussion on "Chaplinesque," Lewis points out the influence of Laforgue's clown-figure "Pierrot" on the poem. The clown is a kind of modern "Everyman confronting the absence of God, Everyman as he peers through a materialistic culture at an increasingly absurd universe in which he recognizes his own being—the human being itself—as irredeemably clownish." But the clown is also an image of the artist—in the world's view "a laughable entertainer," in his own view, "a voice of sadness, even despair, muffled behind his clownish make-up." Lewis finds the figure of
the poet as clown in such varied embodiments as the narrator in Whitman's _Leaves of Grass_, Crispin in Stevens' "The Comedian as the Letter C," and the circus-clown hero of Cummings' _him_. He maintains that in "Chaplinesque" Crane creates an image of the poet which participates in "the long-standing modern view of art as derided and humanity as debased," yet sees the poet's very clownishness as the basis for the transfiguring imaginative act. The poet's ability to find the miraculous in the common points to the apocalyptic moment when "the foolish become the source of wisdom, and the world shall renew itself by honoring the ridiculous, the disgraced, the outlaw." 73 This conscious elaboration of the poet as clown in Crane's verse not only casts light on the presence of a surrogate figure like Van Winkle in _The Bridge_, but it also illuminates the traditional image of Crane himself. I remarked earlier that one of the obstacles to criticism of _The Bridge_ in the past was the presumption that its author lacked the depth and seriousness for a great long poem. This presumption was based in part on Crane's limited formal education but in a larger measure on his uproarious conduct. Whatever Crane's psychological problems or his natural proclivities for riotous living, one feels in reading his life that he often consciously played the fool, that his conduct was purposely clownish. In short, that having elaborated the role of the poet as clown in his verse, he came gradually to act it out in life. By as much as this insight makes Crane's conduct meaningful, then by just so much does the image of the
wild, lyric poet lacking the discipline or depth for a long, sustained work become suspect as a basis for approaching the poem.

Confronting the question of The Bridge as an epic, Lewis quotes the letter to Otto Kahn in which Crane compares the poem to the Aeneid. Lewis points out that "there was some real basis to the claim," yet "nothing could, finally, be more misleading." Though it may have been Crane's ambition at one point to show a "Virgilian conversion" of an iron age into a golden age, that is, to show the hostile elements in modern industrial society "overcome by an actual nobility of spirit and largeness of vision in America," Lewis contends that before The Bridge was fully under way Crane had "in fact abandoned the Latin model" and "later references to it simply belie what his imagination had long known and what his creative vision had already built for him." For Lewis, the genre of the poem must be sought not in the classical tradition but in the romantic. Borrowing a phrase from M. H. Abrams, he calls The Bridge "an apocalypse of imagination." In its strategy it resembles Blake's Jerusalem and Shelley's Prometheus Unbound, poems which attempt "to reconstitute the grounds of hope" (Abrams' phrase again) by formulating a new relationship between consciousness and reality, a relationship which, while "valid in and for the poem as the issue of the creative imagination, might somehow and some day extend its validity beyond the poem, by inseminating the consciousness of others." For Lewis, the subject of The Bridge is neither the actual nor the
latent greatness "of a real, contemporary America." Rather, its subject is hope and "its content a journey toward hope: a hope reconstituted on the ground of the imagination in action." The thing hoped for is "the creation in poetry of a new world—forged out of the old and fallen world" by "the very vigor of the poet's own transfiguring vision." Thus The Bridge is an attempt not only to integrate and assimilate the diversity of modern industrial society but to transform it by an act of the imagination. Lewis points out that Crane believed this transforming, visionary act had to be "an act, on the part of the observer, of self-integration and self-transformation." The "apocalypse of imagination" then is an "imaginative act by which the human spirit will again be married to the nature of things: but a spirit reunited with itself, and a nature become transparent and susceptible to vision." The act is also one of emancipation. Quoting Emerson, Lewis describes the poet as "a liberating god who 'unlocks our chains and admits us to a new scene.'" In the poem, when Columbus, a surrogate for the poet, says that the purpose of his voyage is to "bring back Cathay," we are presented, according to Lewis, with a metaphor for the poet's attempt to renew an "attitude of spirit by the resources of poetry ..., to liberate the American consciousness." Discounting The Bridge's "deceptive initial affinities" with the Virgilian epic, Lewis concludes that its true genre is close to that of the personal or romantic epic. It is a poem which "grows out of the personal reminiscences
and the private urgencies of an individual man and poet," its hero "is essentially the poetic imagination itself, vaguely personified," and its context "is a welter of contemporary actuality." The real problem, however, according to Lewis, is not the genre of the poem but its structure. Borrowing a phrase from Kenneth Burke, Lewis maintains that _The Bridge_ does not show and never intends to show "'conventional form': form which draws attention to itself, form for its own sake—form, in the Aristotelian sense, as the fundamental cause or source of the poem's very existence." A sign of the absence of conventional form is that "nothing in the poetic conception dictates the exact order or the exact number of its parts." Indeed, Lewis contends that in the later portions of the poem, "sections could be shuffled a little and one or two of them could have been deleted from the published text without the reader feeling any sharp sense of loss." Moreover, other sections could have been added. Instead of a classical symmetry in which each part has its unalterable place, _The Bridge_ possesses "a recurring rhythmic movement," an "ebb and flow of consciousness and perception and emotion." Again borrowing a phrase from Burke, Lewis speaks of the poem's "repetitive form"; he points out that in _The Bridge_ we are presented with a continuing re-enactment of the same kind of experience—"vision briefly enjoyed, vision lost, vision recovered." But this does not mean that the poem is static. It has a movement which Lewis describes as "the progressive realization of the true nature of things," a realization, on the one hand,
of the actual degradation of modern industrial life but on the other of the sudden, momentary transfiguration of the world in the imaginative act. For Lewis, what gives the poem its momentum is "an unflagging process of permeation," the permeation of a large given entity by an overwhelming characteristic. Thus the plot of The Bridge is "the gradual permeation of an entire culture by the power of poetic vision." When this force "has invaded and uncovered and transformed as much of the culture as it knows, beauty and harmony have come again; it gives voice to its ultimate hymn of praise, and the poem is done." 

Lewis feels that The Bridge is a religious poem, not in that traditional Christian idiom which stresses "human finitude, sinfulness and spiritual incapacity," but in a post-Christian idiom which treats poetry as "redemptive of human life" and as "the major modern source of revelation." This does not mean that Crane, like Wallace Stevens, considered poetry a replacement for the belief in God. Rather he viewed it as "a visionary force capable of creating, of bringing into view, new objects of religious belief." Lewis contends that The Bridge is a poem fully aware of the "cultural event known as the death of God." Indeed, it attempts to discover the real nature of that death, "finding it not simply in the waning power of Christianity but in the loss of the religious consciousness itself." Yet ultimately the poem is more concerned with the birth of God than the death. As the poem progresses, the word "God" is replaced more and more by the word "poet" and by the names of great poets:
Blake, Whitman, Dickinson, Poe. Though they are not themselves gods, they are embodiments of that archetypal poet whom Whitman called "the true son of god," the great mastersinger "destined to restore the religious consciousness to modern man, to requicken the sense of divinity hovering within the actual."

Like Dembo, Lewis makes varying use of Crane's correspondence, employing stated intentions wherever they coincide with his interpretation or questioning Crane's statements wherever they seem at variance with the poem. Yet clearly, for Lewis, Crane's statements of intent are a matter with which he feels the critic must come to terms. He refers to Crane's letter to Otto Kahn outlining the poem's structure as "the most important document connected with the poem." Even when disagreeing with the poet as in the case of Crane's comparison of The Bridge to the Aeneid, Lewis goes to great lengths to point out the deceptive similarities which might have led the poet to make the statements.

There is no doubt that Lewis' contribution to interpretation of The Bridge is great, yet there are in his work crucial judgments about Crane and the poem with which I differ. Lewis' view of Crane as a latter-day Romantic poet derives from a modern reconstruction of the notion of "Romanticism" that turns it into a general category for most of what has been written in the last hundred and fifty years. Obviously, Crane was greatly influenced by Romantic writers, but that does not of itself make him a Romantic writer.
Much of what comes after the Romantic movement would not have been possible without it, but to call it all by the name of "Romanticism" is to belie real differences and to restrict ourselves in the choice of terms for making important distinctions. In my opinion Crane is a modern symbolist poet—something much different from a Romantic poet. A full treatment of this distinction is not possible at this point but later, in my own interpretation of the poem, I will discuss this distinction as it hinges on the relationship of the individual mind to physical nature and the question of whether or in what sense the poem mediates between the actual and the ideal.

Another of Lewis' judgments which I consider doubtful concerns the poem's structure. His contention that the poem shows a repetitive form in which the same kind of experience is enacted again and again does not, I think, validate the remark that in the poem, particularly in the latter part, sections could be shuffled, added, or deleted without greatly changing the form. There are narrative gaps between sections (indeed, intentionally so), but this does not mean that the sequence of the sections is flexible. One gains the impression that Lewis considers the poem's movement a more or less indiscriminate process of accumulation. As long as all the elements are there, their order is not crucial. He contends that the process of permeation is complete when poetic vision has invaded and transformed as much of the culture as it knows and that then it gives voice to its ultimate hymn of praise and the poem is done. Yet
this is clearly at odds with his statement that sections in the latter part of the poem could be shuffled or deleted without the reader feeling a sharp sense of loss, or that other sections could be added. In what sense has poetic vision invaded and transformed as much of the culture as it knows if sections can be added or deleted? Is the process of permeation complete the first time the cycle of "vision briefly enjoyed, vision lost, vision recovered" is enacted? Or the fifth time? Or the tenth? Lewis' notion of the poem's "repetitive form" seems to envision a modular structure with no inherent factor determining the poem's conclusion. In short, the poem does not conclude, it simply happens to stop. This resembles Dembo's contention that there is nothing but the "principle of anticlimax to prevent another cycle of despair and ecstasy from being added to the poem and extended infinitely." Part of my interpretation will be to show the logical development which dictates the sequence from "Cutty Sark" on and which culminates in "Atlantis."

In this brief treatment of three critics who have found *The Bridge* a failure and three who have found it a success, I have tried to outline some of the major questions in the critical evaluation of the poem—the influence of Crane's biography and his stated intentions on interpretation, the problem of the poem's genre and the unity of its structure, the question of *The Bridge* as a religious poem or the embodiment of a myth. It has not, of course, been possible to present completely each of these critic's interpretations of the poem,
and my remarks on their interpretations should in no way be considered as an assertion that my reading supersedes theirs or minimizes their contributions. Rather, the remarks are intended to establish the relationship between my effort and previous criticism of the poem. Even in the interpretations with which I am least in agreement, those which find the poem a failure, there is much information that is necessary for my own reading. For example, Tate's study demonstrates that if one makes the poem's correspondence to Crane's statements of intention the criterion of its success, then the poem must be judged a failure, it does not correspond. Because of this, readers like myself who feel that The Bridge succeeds have been moved to seek new criteria by which to explain its achievement. Criticism evolves, and my interpretation, though differing from those which I have outlined, grows out of that previous work in one way or another. Beyond the general debt which I owe to the critics whom I have discussed, there are specific debts to them and to others which I have acknowledged in the course of my own interpretation. But before we can proceed with that interpretation, there remains one more preliminary step: an examination of Crane's poetic strategy—the much-discussed "logic of metaphor."
CHAPTER ONE: FOOTNOTES


3. Tate, p. 285.


5. Winters, p. 590.

6. Tate, p. 284.


8. Tate, p. 284.


10. Tate, p. 286.

11. Tate, p. 288.


15. Tate, p. 285.

16. Tate, p. 287.

17. Winters, p. 598.

18. Tate, p. 288.
19. Tate, p. 288.


21. Tate, p. 294.

22. Tate, p. 293.

23. Winters, p. 599.

24. Winters, p. 578.

25. Tate, p. 291.


41. Dembo, pp. 9-10.

42. Dembo, p. 10.

43. Dembo, p. 11.

44. Dembo, p. 17-18.

45. Dembo, p. 18.

46. Dembo, p. 22.

47. Dembo, p. 130.


49. Dembo, p. 131.

50. Dembo, p. 133.

51. Dembo, p. 133.

52. Dembo, p. 73.

53. Dembo, p. 82.

54. Dembo, p. 84.


56. Vogler, p. 381.

57. Vogler, p. 382.


60. Vogler, p. 390.
63. Vogler, p. 393.
64. Vogler, p. 405.
65. Vogler, p. 405.
67. Vogler, p. 408.
69. Vogler, p. 408.
70. Vogler, p. 408.
72. Lewis, p. 57.
73. Lewis, p. 79.
74. Lewis, p. 222.
75. Lewis, p. 226.
76. Lewis, p. 230.
77. Lewis, p. 231.
78. Lewis, p. 237.
79. Lewis, p. 245.
80. Lewis, pp. 375-376.
81. Lewis, p. 377.
82. Lewis, p. 377.
83. Lewis, p. 381.
84. Lewis, p. 382.
85. Lewis, p. 282.
86. Lewis, p. 285.
87. Lewis, p. 221.
CHAPTER TWO

THE ACT OF NAMING

Writing of his poetic practice, Hart Crane remarked in the essay "General Aims and Theories":

. . . 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" . . .

In his famous letter to Harriet Monroe published in Poetry, he again discussed "the dynamics of metaphor," pointing out that as a poet he was "more interested in the so-called illogical impingements of the connotations of words on the consciousness (and their combinations and interplay in metaphor on this basis)" than "in the preservation of their logically rigid significations at the cost of limiting my subject matter and perceptions involved in the poem." One of the points which I tried to make in the first chapter is that Crane's statements of poetic intention concerning The Bridge are generally suspect, and indeed one might be tempted at first glance to make the same observation about his statements of poetic practice. However, there are important differences in the kind of statement involved. Most of Crane's expressions of intention regard-
ing *The Bridge* were made in private correspondence, whereas those just quoted were destined in one form or another for publication. Further, his remarks about *The Bridge* occur for the most part during the period of the poem's composition, while the two quotations about poetic method refer to practices embodied in completed poems—"For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" in the first and "At Melville's Tomb" in the second. Because of these considerations, I feel that Crane's remarks about his poetic method are somewhat more judicious than his statements of intention about *The Bridge* and that as a result they form a more or less acceptable starting point for an examination of the logic of metaphor and the poetic structure which that logic creates.

Judging from the two statements quoted above, it would appear that Crane, in the writing of poetry, was more interested in the connotations of words than in their literal significance, and that he was particularly concerned with the interaction of connotations in metaphor. The difficulty that this immediately presents the reader is that connotations often tend to be private. As Owen Thomas points out in his discussion of metaphor, connotations "frequently vary from culture to culture, and even from person to person... A good writer knows that the connotations he associates with a particular word may not be shared by his reader and may sometimes be antithetical to those which his reader holds."  

Certainly, a large part of the difficulty of Crane's shorter poems is due to the private quality of the connotations of key words.
Indeed, this is a problem which we find to a greater or lesser degree in many modern poets. Usually the solution is that the poet in producing a large, coherent body of work uses his key words and images often enough to clarify and establish the network of associations which they have for him. Thus with Yeats no single poem gives us enough information to understand the nexus of connotations surrounding the word "dance," but the whole of his poetry does. With Crane, no one of his shorter poems provides a context sufficient to establish the associations of key words like "white" or "name." But in The Bridge a context of sufficient size does exist, and Crane uses it to establish the myriad associations of central images and, as it were, to redefine key words within the poem, redefine them with the ultimate purpose of making the language of the concluding "Atlantis" section as self-referential as possible.

The private nature of connotations, however, is only part of the difficulty which Crane's verse presents. The continual startling ellipses, both syntactic and logical, which he makes in juxtaposing words whose connotations are to interact is the rest of the difficulty. He was aware of the demands this placed on the reader. In the letter to Harriet Monroe, he acknowledged that there "are plenty of people who have never accumulated a sufficient series of reflections (and these of a rather special nature) to perceive" the metaphorical relationships embodied in a certain kind of poetry. These people would always have a "perfect justification" for claiming that his lines were obscure "until by some
experience of their own the words accumulate the necessary connotations to complete their connection."5 But, he points out, "in the minds of people who have sensitively read, seen, and experienced a great deal, isn't there a terminology something like short-hand as compared to usual description and dialectics, which the artist ought to be right in trusting as a reasonable connective agent toward fresh concepts, more inclusive evaluations?"6 The important words in these last two quotations are "connection" and "connective agent." Under Crane's theory the principal connection between the tenor of a metaphor and its vehicle lies in the connotations or peripheral associations of the words of the metaphor. Whatever form a metaphor takes on the level of surface structure, whether it be synecdoche, oxymoron, metonymy, etc., it corresponds on the level of deep structure to an affirmation of the relationship "A is B," even though one knows full well that A is literally not B, that is, that "one or more features of B are incompatible with one or more features of A."7 Between the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor, then, there is an obvious area of incompatibility; an area of difference which keeps the relation "A is B" from being literal. But there must also be an area of similarity between tenor and vehicle which justifies, makes appropriate, or at least makes understandable the calling of A by the name of B, that is, one or more features of B must be compatible with one or more features of A. The power of metaphor derives from a balancing of the similarities and differences between tenor and vehicle. The difference
between the two gives the metaphor its novelty and striking force, the similarity gives it its justice and appropriateness. The greater the number of compatible features between A and B or the more obvious the compatibility, then the less novel is the metaphor until it becomes merely a cliché. On the other hand, the fewer the number of compatible features, then the less appropriate or just the metaphor—until it becomes obscure. Metaphor, then, "involves the acquisition by some word—generally a nominal—of features that are not normally associated with the word and that frequently are incompatible with one or more of its normal features," and this acquisition of figurative (nonliteral) features by a word always "involves some violation of the normal linguistic system." The violation can be in lexicon, syntax, or a combination of the two, but as a violation of normal linguistic structure, it places on the poet the responsibility of repaying the reader for the privilege of breaking the rules by making such violation significant. If the connection between vehicle and tenor is obvious, the reader is unhappy; if the connection is impossibly remote or obscure, he is just as unhappy. In either case he feels that he has not received sufficient compensation for the annoyance of the dislocation in normal structure.

Certainly, Crane's metaphors never offend by being obvious, and this is due to his practice of seeking the connection or similarity between tenor and vehicle not in the area of the literal, dictionary significance of words but in the area of connotation, that is, the realm of the emotional coloring or peripheral
association which lies outside the dictionary definition but which is felt somehow
to be the property of the most experienced users of language and observers of
life. If this sounds elitist, it is. Most modern poetry is aimed at the few
rather than the many. Crane makes this distinction himself when he speaks, on
the one hand, of those who lack sufficient experience of life for words to
accumulate "the necessary connotations to complete their connection" in meta-
phor, and, on the other hand, of those "who have sensitively read, seen, and
experienced a great deal" and who as a result possess "a terminology something
like shorthand as compared to usual description and dialectics, which the artist
ought to be right in trusting as a reasonable connective agent." Indeed, one
would be less than candid in not admitting that the charm of many metaphors
is that they function as an intellectual password between minds of a similar
type. A metaphor in which the link between tenor and vehicle is subtle,
tenuous, and wholly connotative is a kind of compliment paid by the poet to
any reader who can grasp it. There are thoughts and emotions common enough
to be sure that everyone shares them, but there are others of which one wonders,
"Has anyone thought this or felt this way before?" Such a thought or emotion
may be of a subtlety that defies literal expression and that can only be hinted
at or suggested in metaphor. When the reader confronts such a metaphor and
understands it out of his own resources, there occurs an exhilarating moment
in which the isolation that always surrounds fine perception or sensibility is
temporarily breached and an improved kind of human communication seems imminent—a language in which all verbs and connectives are understood. In such a language the mere juxtaposition of tenor and vehicle is sufficient, since the highly perceptive reader, experienced in a kind of associative short-hand, will supply the connective links.

This presumption of the reader's ability to make the necessary connections between tenor and vehicle by reason of his thorough understanding of the connotations of words is the basis of Crane's elliptical style. Characteristically in Crane's verse, the metaphoric relationship "A is B" takes, by ellipsis, the form of a complex word or phrase "AB" and this complex word or phrase becomes in turn part of the metaphoric relationship "C is AB," and so on, with mounting complexity. Take as an example the phrase "adagios of islands" from "Voyages." Crane cites it himself in the essay "General Aims and Theories" in discussing the dynamics of metaphor:

... when, in "Voyages" (II), I speak of "adagios of islands," the reference is to the motion of a boat through islands clustered thickly, the rhythm of the motion, etc. And it seems a much more direct and creative statement than any more logical employment of words such as "coasting slowly through the islands," besides ushering in a whole world of music.

The phrase occurs in the third stanza of the poem:
And onward, as bells off San Salvador
Salute the crocus lustres of the stars,
In these poinsettia meadows of her tides,—
Adagios of islands, O my Prodigal,
Complete the dark confessions her veins spell.

Now in the poem, how and what does the phrase "adagios of islands" mean?
Crane says it refers to "the motion of a boat through islands clustered thickly,
the rhythm of the motion, etc." Though there is no explicit reference to a
boat in the third stanza (indeed such a reference only occurs near the end of
the poem in the line "O minstrel galleons of Carib fire"), there is in the
second line of the poem a clear suggestion of sailing in the nautical phrase
"unfettered leewardings." More, in this hint of a boat adrift, there is, I
think, a reference to the whole "drunken boat" motif that runs through such
poems as Shelley's "My soul is an enchanted boat" in Prometheus Unbound,
Rimbaud's "Le bateau ivre," and Thomas' "The Ballad of the Long-Legged Bait."
It is the theme of man adrift on the ocean of life, but more, of the human
consciousness or poetic imagination adrift on the ocean of the subconscious.
Because of the symbolic connection between water and the sexual act, the
ocean of the subconscious is seen as a reservoir of sexual energy on which
the boat of the imagination floats seed-like. Beyond the implication of poetry
as a sublimation of the sexual drive, there is the suggestion of poetry and love
as analogous forms of the incarnation of the Word. The imaginative act and
the sexual act are each a kind of generation or creation in which the logos is
embodied or made flesh. In the case of poetry, the logos is the ordered world of the poem; with love it is the microcosmic human child. The strategy of using images of the poetic incarnation of the Word to describe love is clearly at work in "Voyages II" when Crane says of the sea that its "diapason knells / On scrolls of silver snowy sentences," and when he speaks of its "superscription of bent foam and wave." Further, by describing his love affair in terms of the poetic incarnation of the Word, the poet suggests that the real offspring of this love is the poem which embodies it. Thus in "Voyages VI" though the love affair itself is waning, the child of that love, the imaged Word, remains:

Beyond siroccos harvesting
The solstice thunders, crept away,
Like a cliff swinging or a sail
Flung into April's inmost day—

Creation's blithe and petalled word
To the lounged goddess when she rose
Conceding dialogue with eyes
That smile unsearchable repose—

Still fervid covenant, Belle Isle,
—Unfolded floating dais before
Which rainbows twine continual hair—
Belle Isle, white echo of the oar!

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

From the ocean of love, he has reached a "Belle Isle" of the imagination.
With this network of associations established, we are in a better position to approach the phrase "adagios of islands." (To the objection that not all of these associations have been presented at the point where the phrase appears in "Voyages II," the answer is simply that one reads the poem more than once and that references work backward and forward across the text.) At first glance the phrase would seem to be a metaphor in which the word "adagios" is the vehicle and "islands" is the tenor, that is, features of the word "adagios" are being attributed to the word "islands." And indeed, there is a sense in which the metaphoric relationship "Islands are adagios," on the level of deep structure, is appropriate. One of the meanings of "adagio" is "a slow movement or part in music" with the connotation of a contrastive section between faster movements. This sense of "adagio" as a contrastive entity between movements is roughly appropriate to the image of an island surrounded by the rhythmic motion of the sea. Clearly, this is a possible reading and one which we may wish to keep in mind, but I think if we examine the phrase within the context of its own poem and within the larger context of the "Voyages," we will find that its surface form is in fact the result of multiple ellipses, that "adagios" and "islands" are both vehicles in a complex metaphor whose tenor is understood, and that the single relationship "Islands are adagios" on the level of deep structure does not really correspond to the variety of relationships embedded in the phrase "adagios of islands."
In "Voyages II" love is being described in terms of different networks of imagery. One of these, already mentioned, is the poetic incarnation of the Word. Another is the sea. The appropriateness of describing love in terms of the sea derives from a variety of connections: the association of water with the sexual act, the correspondence between the rhythmic motion of the sea and the sexual rhythm, the suggestion of a lover's embrace in the caressing, enfolding movement of the waves, and so on. Thus in the first stanza of "Voyages II" the lovers are adrift, as the phrase "unfettered leewardings" suggests, on the sexual ocean whose "undinal vast belly moonward bends, / Laughing the wrapt inflections of our love." The unitive power of love is suggested throughout the poem by the interpenetration of imagery, as in the phrase "the crocus lustres of the stars, / In these poinsettia meadows of her tides," where images of land, sea, and sky fuse. It is this unitive power of love, i.e., sexual union, that is also being suggested in the phrase "adagios of islands." We noted earlier that one meaning of "adagio" was "a slow movement or part in music." This reference to the rhythmic motion of music not only evokes the movement of the waves and the sexual rhythm but also it calls up the whole image of the harmonizing power of music as an emblem of the unifying power of love. This is a continuing motif in Crane's verse which finds its most explicit statement in the Platonic epigraph to the "Atlantis" section of The Bridge: "Music is then the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system." In the second stanza of
"Voyages II" the poet speaks of the sea's "diapason" or "swelling burst of harmony."
Another of the possible meanings of "adagio" is "a slow ballet dance requiring
skillful balancing," quite frequently a *pas de deux*. This connotation of partners
embracing in a rhythmic dance movement fits well with the image of the lovers
adrift on the undulating waves of the sexual ocean. Gradually, the total image
begins to emerge. In the phrase "adagios of islands," love, or more particularly
sexual union, is evoked as a water passage or journey which joins isolated beings
or islands. The only way for the isolated speaker to reach his islanded lover is
through the rhythmic waves of the ocean of love. In "Voyages III" he says,

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

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

It would appear that in the phrase "adagios of islands" the words "adagios" and
"islands" are both vehicles of a metaphoric relationship taking the form "Love
is adagios of islands," but with the tenor "love" understood on the level of
surface structure. I pointed out earlier that in "Voyages" love is being described
in terms of different networks of imagery, three of which are the poetic incarna-
tion of the Word, the sea, and music. What seems to be at work then in
"Voyages" is a continuing metaphor whose tenor is always "love," a tenor generally considered as understood on the level of surface form, and whose vehicle is variously taken from one of several networks of imagery or from a metaphorical combination of these networks. These sources of imagery (music, the sea, the poetic incarnation of the Word) are related not only by the fact that each is a traditional context for describing love but also by inherent similarities which favor metaphorical relationships between them. The rhythmic motion of sea waves corresponds to the rhythmic movement of music, the harmonizing power of music corresponds to the ordering, harmonizing power of the poetic act, the relationship of the poetic imagination to the subconscious corresponds to the lover adrift on the ocean of sexual energy, and so on indefinitely. Because of the high number of compatible features between the image networks, Crane is able to link them in a metaphorical relationship, A is B, which is then reduced by ellipsis to a complex name, AB, that becomes in turn the vehicle in that continuing metaphor whose tenor is understood. So, underlying the phrase "adagios of islands" is a metaphor which links music and the sea on the basis of rhythmic motion, a metaphor whose vehicle and tenor have been telescoped into a phrase which, as the vehicle of a new metaphor, attributes combined associations of music and the sea to love.

I think a similar process, using these or other image patterns, is at work throughout "Voyages" in phrases like "this great wink of eternity," "O
minstrel galleons of Carib fire," "the silken skilled transmemberment of song," "the chancel port and portion of our June," "bright staves of flowers and quills," etc. What all of this finally indicates is that for Crane one of the major forms of metaphor is a special kind of nominalization, i.e., the production of elliptical noun phrases or "complex names," names which represent on the level of surface structure the embedding of multiple metaphoric relationships. One might point out in this connection that Josephine Miles in her statistical study Renaissance, Eighteenth-Century, and Modern Language in English Poetry lists Hart Crane as being a poet of the phrasal mode, as opposed to the clausal or balanced modes. These three stylistic modes represent various emphases in the proportions of nouns, verbs, and adjectives contained in a poet's work. In poets of the clausal mode there is a higher proportion of verbs "with consequent complexity of clausal structures"; in those of the phrasal mode there is a higher proportion of nouns and adjectives "with consequent phrasal, especially participial, emphasis."10 In those of the balanced mode the numbers of verbs and adjectives are nearly equal. By far the majority of modern American poets belong to this last category—Pound, Eliot, Williams, Stevens, Cummings, and Roethke, to name only a few.11 It is significant to note that the only major American poet besides Crane that Miss Miles lists as employing the phrasal mode is Walt Whitman, generally acknowledged as the greatest single native poetic influence on Crane. Characterizing poetry of the phrasal mode, Miss Miles calls it
"sublime": "This is high style in the traditional sense, high as above the balances of narrative epic, in the realm of ode and rhapsody, of Greek tragic chorus and of Hebraic psalm." Miss Miles' listing of Crane as a phrasal poet, based on the high proportion of nouns and adjectives to verbs in _The Bridge_, fits in with what I maintain is one of Crane's major practices in the making of metaphor, i.e., the reduction of a metaphor, on the level of surface structure, to an elliptical noun phrase or complex name. For a poet of the phrasal mode, such a practice would lie at the very core of his style.

I contend that with Crane this process of collapsing metaphors, on the level of surface structure, to noun phrases or complex names is not merely central to his style but central to his idea of the poetic act. For him the ultimate act of the poetic imagination is a kind of naming which creates an ordered world in opposition to the chaotic world of physical nature. It is the poetic incarnation of the Word by means of a creative naming. Indeed, names and the act of naming are a frequent subject of his verse. In the poem "A Name for All" he says,

I dreamed that all men dropped their names, and sang
As only they can praise, who build their days
With fin and hoof, with wing and sweetened fang
Struck free and holy in one Name always.

In "O Carib Isle!" the naming motif carries inverse echoes of the Apocalyptic promise that those who hold fast to the Name will receive on the last day
"a white pebble, and upon the pebble a new name written, which no one knows except him who receives it": 13

The tarantula rattling at the lily's foot
Across the feet of the dead, laid in white sand
Near the coral beach—nor zigzag fiddle crabs
Side-stilting from the path (that shift, subvert
And anagrammatize your name)—No, nothing here
Below the palsy that one eucalyptus lifts
In wrinkled shadows—mourns.

And yet suppose
I count these nacreous frames of tropic death,
Brutal necklaces of shells around each grave
Squared off so carefully. Then

To the white sand I may speak a name, fertile
Albeit in a stranger tongue. Tree names, flower names
Deliberate, gainsay death's brittle crypt. Meanwhile
The wind that knots itself in one great death—
Coils and withdraws. So syllables want breath.

In The Bridge the naming motif takes various forms. There is the image of

Adam making a defined model of the undefined world by naming:

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

There is the image of the poet's inchoate desire in "Southern Cross"—the

"nameless Woman of the South":

I wanted you... The embers of the Cross
Climbed by aslant and huddling aromatically.
It is blood to remember; it is fire
To stammer back... It is
God—your namelessness.
And most important, there is the extended process of naming that forms most of the "Atlantis" section, in which the Bridge is called successively the "Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage," "O Choir, translating time," "Psalm of Cathay," "O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm," "O Thou steeled Cognizance," "Swift peal of secular light, intrinsic Myth," "O River-throated," "Deity's glittering pledge," "Deity's young name," "whitest Flower, O Answerer of all,—Anemone," and "One Song, one Bridge of Fire."

The idea of the poetic act as one of creative naming is closely related to a Cranian motif pointed out earlier—the poetic incarnation of the Word. In "Voyages IV" the incarnation of the word is a metaphor for the love of the partners adrift on the sexual ocean:

In signature of the incarnate word
The harbor shoulders to resign in mingling
Mutual blood, transpiring as foreknown
And widening noon within your breast for gathering
All bright insinuations that my years have caught
For islands where must lead inviolably
Blue latitudes and levels of your eyes . . .

But with the waning of that love and the departure of the loved one, the poet, in lines reminiscent of "Southern Cross," tells in "Voyages VI" of his inability to speak the name:

O rivers mingling toward the sky
And harbor of the phoenix' breast—
My eyes pressed black against the prow,
—Thy derelict and blinded guest
Waiting, afire, what name, unspoke,
I cannot claim: let thy waves rear
More savage than the death of kings,
Some splintered garland for the seer.

Crossing the sexual ocean to his islanded lover, the poet has found that this island is impermanent, unstable. Indeed, there is a hint of this movement or changeableness in the very phrase "adagios of islands." Yet this journey through the ocean of love, by its embodiment in the poem, has led him at last to a permanent island—the "Belle Isle" of the imagination. In contrast to love's "adagios of islands" and the "unfettered leewardings" of the lovers, the imaged Word of Belle Isle "holds hushed willows anchored in its glow"; in contrast to the "flagless piracy" of love's impermanence, a love which has resulted in no human offspring, i.e., the incarnation of the Word, there is the poetic incarnation of the Word, the poem as offspring of this love, whose permanence represents "the unbetrayable reply / Whose accent no farewell can know." I pointed out earlier that in "Voyages" love is being described in terms of various networks of imagery. I think it is apparent now that it is a special kind of love which the poet is attempting to define—it is love ultimately viewed as the mode of the poetic imagination, love as the creative energy that causes the poetic incarnation of the Word.

It may seem at this point that we have wandered far from the original purpose of examining the logic of metaphor as a basis for understanding the
structure of The Bridge, but in fact in discussing the motifs of creative naming and the poetic incarnation of the Word as they appear in "Voyages" and other Crane poems we are treating the forces behind the logic of metaphor. Because Crane views the poem as an attempt to embody the Word by a creative act of naming, he tends on the level of surface structure to turn his metaphors into complex names. We noted earlier that on the level of deep structure the metaphoric relationship takes the form "A is B," that is, the form of predication. But for Crane, the mode of predication in metaphor is usually collapsed on the level of surface structure to one of elliptical juxtaposition or conjunction. As we said, metaphor always demands some violation of linguistic rules—rules of lexicon, of syntax, or both. With Crane the mode of elliptical juxtaposition or conjunction characteristically involves multiple violations of syntax and lexicon, violations so frequent at times as to dissolve syntax and its logical relationships and create a limpid medium of speech in which juxtaposed words are able to associate and interact in ways more complex and more numerous than any single, logical syntactic structure would convey. In the phrase "adagios of islands" the lexical incongruence of the words "adagios" and "islands" coupled with the grammatical ambiguity of possible relationships which the genitive "of" represents (i.e., subjective genitive, objective genitive, partitive, etc.) results in a structure which holds words in suspension and allows them to relate to one another beyond the locked-in, one-track relationship of normal unviolated
syntax. In the first chapter I quoted Allen Tate's remark that Crane wrote "a poetry of will," and if we understand "will" as not meaning simply "willful" there is a sense in which that remark is true. For Crane, that connection which suggests two words as possible candidates for the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor is often some remote link in connotation or some mere similarity in surface form, a connection so frail as to seem insufficient as the basis for metaphor, yet the metaphor is made and it is made by an act of the poet's will, a kind of poetic fiat which turns the act of naming into something creative rather than just descriptive. R. P. Blackmur in his essay on Crane's use of metaphor employs the phrase "created observation":

In the part of The Bridge called "Virginia," and in scores of places elsewhere, there is a single vivid image, of no structural importance, but of great delight as ornament: it both fits the poem and has a startling separate beauty of its own, the phrase: "Peonies with pony manes." The freshness has nothing to do with accurate observation, of which it is devoid, but has its source in the arbitrary character of the association: it is created ob-

Indeed, the freshness of the metaphor "peonies with pony manes" does derive from "the arbitrary character of the association," but if Blackmur's statement is to constitute a real insight, we must make clear in exactly what sense that association is arbitrary. It is arbitrary on the level of the real, physical objects "peonies" and "pony manes," objects with no strikingly appropriate
inherent connection, but it is not arbitrary on the level of language, for on that level the words "peony" and "pony" are connected by the obvious similarity in their surface forms.

One might be tempted to ask, "Isn't this link on the basis of surface form just a kind of punning?" More to the point I think is the question "Isn't there something reminiscent of the later Wittgenstein in this linking, aren't we dealing with the way in which relationships inherent in the structure of language play a role in creating our ordered, knowable model of the world, isn't that role a continuing one in the poetic act of creative naming?" Certainly a link between tenor and vehicle on the basis of surface-form similarity would suggest a pun, and some of Crane's critics have noted what they felt to be a punning aspect in his use of language. However, I think that what we are dealing with in Crane's linking of tenor and vehicle on the basis of similar surface forms is something much more serious and consistent than a pun if one understands the word "pun" in its older, pre-Richards, pejorative sense as merely a trifle of verbal wit. R. W. B. Lewis, who seems to feel that punning is what Crane is reduced to whenever his lyric talent fails him, comments on the following lines from the "Ave Maria" section of The Bridge,

Yet under tempest-lash and surfeitings
Some inmost sob, half-heard, dissuades the abyss,
Merges the wind in measure to the waves . . .
that the word "surfeitings" is an "effective pun." In my opinion a broader view of this production of a new word, "surfeitings," is to see it as simply another example of the poetic act of creative naming, of Crane's nominalizing impulse, an example of things linked on the basis of a similarity inherent in their names rather than in the things themselves. There is no inherent connection between the condition "surfeit" or "excess" and the thing "surf." The basis of their union in the new word "surfeitings" ("excesses of surf") is the similarity in their spellings. However, once they are linked by a similarity in surface form, once they are fused into a new name, remote connotations begin to interact. Within the context of this description of a storm at sea, the word "surfeitings" recalls one of the meanings of "surfeit"—"nausea resulting from overindulgence in food or drink." The picture of a ship caught in a storm, the rocking and pounding of the sea, the "excesses of surf," the sailors' nausea and seasickness resulting from these "excesses"—all these images begin to group themselves around the new word "surfeitings," images born of the creative interaction of the connotations of "surf" and "surfeit." But let us be quite clear about what is happening: the words "surf" and "surfeit" were originally linked and then fused into a single word not on the basis of similarities in the things which they name but on the basis of the similarities in the forms of the words themselves and the interaction of their connotations. Instead of the relationships among things determining the relationships among
words for the poet, the language-based connections among words (whether the similarity of surface form, the interaction of connotations, or whatever) are used by the poet to link words in new complex names or to fuse them in new words which enable us to see new relationships among things, enable us to see these relationships through the very existence of a new word by which to enunciate them. The links inherent in the structure of language are thus used to create new groupings for things.

New groupings of things in the external, physical world? No, as far as poetry is concerned, I think not. But new groupings in that ordered, internally-coherent, knowable model of the world which we build in the realm of language. One is reminded in this connection of Crane's letter to Harriet Monroe. Miss Monroe had objected to the line "Compass, quadrant and sextant contrive no farther tides" in Crane's poem "At Melville's Tomb" on the grounds that compass, quadrant and sextant do not "contrive tides, they merely record them."16 He replied,

Hasn't it often occurred that instruments originally invented for record and computation have inadvertently so extended the concepts of the entity they were invented to measure (concepts of space, etc.) in the mind and imagination that employed them, that they may metaphorically be said to have extended the original boundaries of the entity measured?17

It strikes me that something very like this is the relationship between names and things in Crane's poetry. Whether as in "adagios of islands" a new complex
name is created for "love," or as in "surfeitings" an entirely new word is formed, whose meaning is a multiple of the two older words it fuses, language in Crane's poetry is attempting to break a purely mimetic relationship to the external world, a relationship in which the links among words simply record the pre-existing connections among things; it attempts to break this and to establish in its place a creative relationship wherein the conjunction or juxtaposition of words on the basis of linguistic features enables us to see, within our language-based model of the world, new relations between the things they name. In this process of linking through linguistic features, internal coherence is finally more important than external correspondence, that is, the incarnation of the Word, the creation of an ordered world-model in the poem, is in a sense a work of opposition—the making of an anti-world. Such a world, made in and by language, is called forth by man's need for stability and order; thus internal coherence is more important to it than external correspondence. But more, it is a world-model meant to oppose its stability to the entropy of the physical world, its order to the chaos of external objects. In short, built within and by means of the human artifact of language, it is a world of man's own making. In "Voyages" the instability of the external world characterized by the "unfettered leewardings" of the lovers and the "flagless piracy" of change is opposed by the poem's stability, its permanent incarnation of this love in the Imaged Word which holds "hushed willows anchored in its glow,"
the Word that is "the unbetrayable reply / Whose accent no farewell can know." This incarnation of the Word by the creative act of naming is at the very heart of Crane's metaphoric practice, it is the building of a stable, internally-coherent anti-world through the linguistically-based joining of words into new metaphoric names. In "General Aims and Theories" Crane says, "It is as though a poem gave the reader as he left it a single, new word, never before spoken and impossible to actually enunciate, but self-evident as an active principle in the reader's consciousness henceforward." In Crane's poetry the principal thrust of metaphor is the production, on the level of surface structure, of new names, new words with which to create in the poem a new embodiment of the Word. It is this embodiment that is the "single, new word" which a poem gives the reader; it is a word "impossible to actually enunciate" because it can only be "embodied" or "incarnated" through the enunciation of other new words in the poem; it is the enclosed, ordered anti-world of the poem itself.

I said earlier that metaphor always involves some violation of lexicon or syntax, and that in Crane's poetry it frequently involves a combination of lexical incongruence and syntactic ambiguity, a combination which suspends the normal one-track relationship of syntax and allows words juxtaposed within a single structure to form as many relationships as the interaction of their connotations permits. It should be pointed out in this connection that while Crane wishes to neutralize the logical one-track relationship of syntax he wants to
retain its sound aspect, that is, he wants to use the word-group cadence of syntax to provide an emotional context for the poem. Briefly stated, word-group cadence means that in our language certain recurring word-groups (e.g., noun phrase, verb phrase, prepositional phrase, etc.) have associated with them characteristic cadences and, as it were, broad emotional colorations. Word-group cadence is one of the principal building blocks of poetic rhythm and the linking of word-groups in structures of varying complexity is a function of syntax. While Crane suspends the single explicit relationship among words that normal syntax strives for, he retains the sleeve of sound which the word-group cadence of syntax provides, retains it as an emotional context within which the connotations of words held in a suspended structure can interact. This context of sound is, to use a phrase from Crane's letter to Harriet Monroe, one of the "necessary emotional connectives to the content" which the poet must supply. For example, the extended process of naming which takes place in the "Atlantis" section of The Bridge could have easily generated a listing cadence. Such a cadence would not only have been monotonous but misleading, misleading because it would imply a mere application of titles to a pre-existing entity as in the drone of a Marian litany. But in "Atlantis" the syntactic structure, which holds these complex names for the bridge in a state of suspension where the connotations attached to them in the course of the poem can interact, generates an exuberant rhythm which suggests the mingled joy and
power of this naming which creates, within the poem, the thing named in the very act of naming it. The "thing" which the act of naming creates within the poem is, of course, no physical object but the ordered anti-world of the poem itself.

The charges of some critics that Crane frequently writes an accidentally defective syntax and that his metaphors on the literal level are at times meaningless derive, I believe, from a too simplified approach to the logic of metaphor. L. S. Dembo, in his discussion of Crane's poetic language, holds that:

As practiced, the logic of metaphor theory is reducible to a fairly simple linguistic principle: the symbolized meaning of an image takes precedence over its literal meaning; whether or not the vehicle of an image makes sense, the reader is expected to grasp its tenor.  

Dembo feels that the imagery in The Bridge is not so difficult to comprehend as that in other Crane poems simply because "the context is developed to such an extent that an ambiguous image often turns up again in a clearer form." But, he maintains,

The most serious problem in understanding Crane's imagery occurs in such lines as these:

while time clears
Our lenses, lifts a focus, resurrects
A periscope to glimpse what joys or pain
Our eyes can share or answer.  ["Cape Hatteras"]

Literally, the notion of resurrecting a periscope borders on nonsense. Yet Crane is relying here on the reader's awareness that the poet is a drowned voyager, who has
been blinded by the meaningless infinity of the sea
or the apparent chaos of life. In resurrecting a
periscope—in giving the poet a glimpse of the Abso-
lute experience in which he is united with Pocahontas
—time actually resurrects the voyager himself and
gives him a new vision.22

When Dembo says that on the literal level the notion of resurrecting a periscope
borders on nonsense he is referring to the obvious lexical incongruity of the
words "resurrects" and "periscope." As native speakers we recognize that the
noun "periscope" is not one of the class of words which normally functions as
the object of the transitive verb "resurrect." Generally, the act of resurrecting
has to do with bringing back to life someone or something which is now dead
but which was once alive, and it is difficult to see how this notion could be
appropriately applied to a mechanical object such as a periscope. However,
there is a sense in which "resurrects," meaning "to raise again into view
something which has been hidden," could be applied to a periscope raised
above the surface of the water. Yet one tends to feel that if the slim appro-
priateness of this link is all that the metaphor has to offer, it is not worth
the violation of lexicon which it involves. I think one must go deeper than
the literal level to the level of connotation to discover that appropriateness
of connection which justifies lexical rule-breaking. I think we will also dis-
cover a highly original way in which Crane has made words "mean." The OED
shows the verb "resurrect" as a back-formation from the noun "resurrection"—a
noun whose various senses all derive in one way or another from its primary meaning, "Christ's raising of himself from the dead." Within the context of The Bridge this suggestion, in the word "resurrect," of the central act of a dying god myth immediately recalls the ritual death and rebirth of the Indian god Maquokeeta in "The Dance"—Crane's embodiment of this archetypal myth within an agriculturally-based society. I view the quest journey of the dramatic speaker in The Bridge as the tracing of the basic human impulse for order through the course of history—the impulse of man not to be at the mercy of a chaotic environment. It is an impulse whose ultimate form is man's desire to live in a world of his own making. In an older agriculturally-based society, such as that evoked in "The Dance," this impulse took the form of a dying god myth which explained the seasonal cycle of birth, decay, death, and rebirth. This myth revealed the hierarchy of powers that controlled external phenomena, explained man's relationship to this hierarchy, and prescribed rituals by which man could gain the favor of these unseen powers and, through their good grace, a partial control over his environment. When the agriculturally-based society started to die out, as presented in the "Indiana" section of The Bridge, the dying god myth (an attempt to order natural phenomena) began to wane. But the impulse of man not to be at the mercy of his environment took a new form in the modern industrial society which replaced the agricultural way of life. It took the form of a Faustian domination of the physical environment by means of
science and technology as evoked in "Cape Hatteras." Thus within the context of the whole poem, the phrase, time "resurrects a periscope," suggests that man's impulse not to be at the mercy of his environment, embodied at one period of history in a dying god myth evoked by the word "resurrects," has, with the death of that myth, come to life in a new form—the attempt to dominate physical nature by technology, evoked in the word "periscope." The phrase, time "resurrects a periscope," is a kind of verbal emblem. It was never intended to have a literal meaning at all, never meant to convey the bringing of a mechanical object back to life. Rather, it is meant to link, via the connotations of "resurrects" and "periscope," the world-views of religious myth and of scientific myth, showing them as successive forms of a single impulse. It is intended to link them in a single metaphoric structure as indicative of the fact that the attempt to build an enclosed anti-world in the poem by metaphor is yet another form which man's impulse to live in a world of his own making takes.

In this sense of religious myth and scientific myth, evoked in "The Dance" and "Cape Hatteras" respectively, as successive historical forms of the same human impulse, Crane confronts the doctrine of progress, the belief that the scientific view is an advancement over the religious. Where religious myth prescribed rituals by which man could gain the favor of the unseen powers who controlled physical nature, science allows man to take the place of those powers through the technological domination of environment. Though this might seem to
be an advance, it has been, according to the poet, just the opposite. Instead of being at the mercy of physical nature man is now at the mercy of the machines which he built in his attempt to dominate nature. He is bombed by the airplane in "Cape Hatteras" and entombed in the subway train of "The Tunnel," and he has not even the comfort of a religious myth to humanize phenomena. This explication of the phrase, time "resurrects a periscope," becomes even clearer if we quote a somewhat larger context than that given by Dembo:

And from above, think squeaks of radio static,  
The captured fume of space foams in our ears—  
What whisperings of far watches on the main  
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—then deflects  
Us, shunting to a labyrinth submerged  
Where each sees only his dim past reversed . . .  
But that star—glistening salver of infinity,  
The circle, blind crucible of endless space,  
Is sluiced by motion,—subjugated never.  
Adam and Adam's answer in the forest  
Left Hesperus mirrored in the lucid pool.  
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 trying not to be at the mercy of his environment, man attempts to dominate that environment through technology, but what seems historical progress is in fact a kind of regression; time has deflect ed us, shunting us to a labyrinth where
we see our own "dim past reversed"—man, surrounded by the machines he has built to dominate nature, finds himself more at the mercy of physical objects than ever, objects which he himself has created. One is reminded of the lines in Eliot's "Gerontion":

Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities.

Contrasted with the technological attempt to order the world and do away with environmental subservience by dominating nature is the older effort of religious myth to impose human order on the physical world by the act of naming, an order whose humanized explanation of phenomena no longer leaves man at the mercy of blind, chaotic nature:

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

Here, a physical object, the evening star, ceases to be an unexplained phenomenon and becomes part of an ordered world-picture through the act of calling it by a god's name. But the old religious mythic world-view has been replaced by the scientific, and as a result we find ourselves at the mercy of machines—"We know the strident rule of wings imperious." In this image of the warplane I think we can find a motif which accounts for the use of the word "periscope" to represent technological dominance in the emblematic phrase, time "resurrects a periscope." One of the meanings of "periscope" is "an all-inclusive view,
a view in all directions." There are connotations of dominance to this meaning, a suggestion of being able to look down from a height—the sort of all-inclusive view one would have in an airplane. And of course, a few lines later the warplane makes its appearance as "a flash over the horizon." But there are even more connections at work here. Surely the object most commonly associated with the periscope is the submarine, and particularly in the context of phrases like "thin squeaks of radio static" and "whisperings of far watches on the main." Through the connotations of the word "periscope" the poet establishes a motival link between two machines originally intended to dominate physical nature but which have in fact been used in war to dominate man. Indeed, a large part of the subject of "Cape Hatteras" is the perverted use of the machine in war, and Crane returns to this motival image of warship and warplane later in the poem:

Low, shadowed of the Cape,

Regard the moving turrets! From grey decks
See scouting griffons rise through gaseous crepe
Hung low . . .

From this extensive explication, what have we discovered about the way in which words are used in the phrase, time "resurrects a periscope?" Clearly the words have not been employed for their literal meanings; there is no sense of restoring an inanimate object to life. Rather the words have been joined on the basis of connotations; they have been linked as representatives of two dif-
ferent vocabularies which correspond to two separate world-views, one of religious
myth, the other of scientific myth. One of the points that Crane tries to make
in "The Dance" and "Cape Hatteras" is that these two world-views grow out
of the same human impulse, and in the phrase, time "resurrects a periscope"
he manages a microcosmic embodiment of this theme, a verbal emblem as it
were, by joining in a single structure words representative of these two different
views. In short, we are meant to be struck by the lexical incongruity of
"resurrects" and "periscope," and thereby forced to delve into their connotations
to find the appropriate link between them, a link which reproduces on a lower
structural level the same connection which exists, on a high structural level,
between "The Dance" and "Cape Hatteras."

It would be possible to go on indefinitely giving examples of Crane's
highly complex metaphoric practice, but I think that we have given enough
examples to make more or less a satisfactory statement about the kind of
large poetic structure which the logic of metaphor creates in The Bridge. In
discussing metaphor we have distinguished between deep structure and surface
structure, saying that on the level of deep structure the metaphoric relation-
ship took the form of the predication "A is B" and that with Crane this rela-
tionship was frequently reduced on the level of surface structure to a con-
junction or juxtaposition of tenor and vehicle in a complex name. The
movement from deep structure to surface structure in Crane's metaphors is
through ellipsis; the predicative link is dropped and tenor and vehicle are conjoined or juxtaposed. It is then up to the reader to explore the connotations of tenor and vehicle to discover the appropriate links between them, links which the poet has assured us are there by his joining of the words in metaphor. What the poet seeks are multiple connections between tenor and vehicle and the more rigidly explicit the surface structure, the less these are possible. He strives for a language of suggestion rather than explicit statement, a language in which the reader must do his own share in making the connections between juxtaposed words. I contend that something very much like this is at work in the formal structure of the entire poem. On the level of deep structure there is a chronological narrative but by ellipsis and juxtaposition this has been transformed on the level of surface structure into a sequence with large narrative gaps and without strict chronological order. Just as Crane used a combination of lexical incongruity and ambiguous syntax on the level of metaphor to dissolve the logical, one-track relationship inherent in normal grammar, thus allowing the words, held in this suspended medium, to interact via connotation and produce multiple meanings, so on the larger level of the poem he uses time shifts and narrative gaps to dissolve the strict chronological narrative and thus allow the sections, held in this suspended structure, to interact via associations, and produce a variety of meanings for the poem. A related view of the poem's form is expressed by Bernice Slote in her essay on Crane and Whitman:
One crucial thing here is that the sensibility of the reader is required to fuse the relationships of the metaphor as it evolves. The preem is not given to the reader, but the reader helps to create it. Thus the technique demands something of the generative quality of life itself. In a larger sense than the individual metaphor, this organic principle is exactly illustrated by transmutations in imagery. As one form blends into another, a kind of generation goes on within the poem, a cycle of life that repeats but is never exactly the same. The reader participates in its psychological movement, its ritual creation.*

On the level of deep structure the poem has a kind of conventional narrative form with beginning, middle, and end, but on the level of surface structure it has a circular form. It begins with an extended process of naming in the poem in which the bridge is called a harp, an altar, a threshold, a prayer, a lover's cry, etc., and it ends with another extended process of naming in "Atlantis." The difference is that we do not understand the appropriateness of these names at the beginning but we do at the end because in the course of the poem Crane has created the networks of connotations on which these complex metaphoric names depend. On the level of surface structure the poem ends where it began; the poem's is a circular movement which encloses its ordered anti-world. It is a circular movement within language to make the language of the poem self-referential. Realistically, I think that the anti-world of the poem is never totally enclosed just as the poem's language is never completely self-referential. But in The Bridge Crane
wants to make them as nearly so as possible. As he says in "General Aims and Theories," "It is my hope to go through the combined materials of the poem, using our 'real' world somewhat as a spring-board, to give the poem as a whole an orbit or predetermined direction of its own." With his sense of the right word, Crane speaks of the poem's "orbit" conveying not only the idea of circularity but also of the path which a self-contained world follows.

When I speak of the anti-world of the poem as self-contained or enclosed, I do not mean in any sense that it is inaccessible to the reader. Rather, I mean that the principle of its construction is one of internal coherence among words instead of external correspondence to physical objects, that is, the link between tenor and vehicle in metaphor derives from connections inherent in the nature of the words themselves (connotations, surface-form similarities, etc.) instead of connections inherent in the material things to which they correspond. In the poem, language attempts to free itself from a purely mimetic role and assume a creative one, but to do this the poem as far as possible must be enclosed and the language must refer to itself. Indeed, Crane writes a uniquely personal language but not so personal as to be unsharable, for in the course of the poem he establishes the references and associations, the image patterns, and the connotations by which his complex names operate. He redefines words within the poem by combining them in new ways.
I said earlier that by time shifts and narrative gaps Crane dissolves, on the level of surface structure, the chronological narrative line of the poem and replaces it with a kind of suspended structure in which the sections are allowed to interact and form multiple meanings. This dissolving of the chronological narrative line, however, does not mean that there is not a real sequence in the sections of the poem which prevents their being shifted or rearranged, as Lewis would have it. Crane wants to thwart the one-track relationship of chronological narrative and allow in its place multiple relationships between sections, but he does not want an uncontrolled process of free association. A suspended structure, which allows sections to interact, operates by juxtaposition and conjunction, and they in turn operate by spatial proximity. Such a structure at once suspends the one-track relationship of chronological narrative so that sections can form multiple connections, but it also indicates priorities in these connections on the basis of spatial proximity. In short, on the level of surface form the order of the sections does make a difference. We have, I think, reached the point at which further discussion of the poetic structure generated by the logic of metaphor can best be carried on within an interpretation of the poem itself.
CHAPTER TWO: FOOTNOTES


3. "General Aims and Theories" is, according to Weber, "apparently the set of 'notes' prepared by HC in 1925 for Eugene O'Neill in writing a foreword for the projected White Buildings." (Poems, p. 293) The letter to Harriet Monroe was published in Poetry, 29, (October 1926) as part of an interchange of correspondence between Crane and the editor of Poetry.


7. Thomas, p. 42. The terms surface structure and deep structure are borrowed from the vocabulary of transformational grammar (see, Noam Chomsky, Aspects of the Theory of Syntax, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1965, pp. 16-18). In adapting these terms to a description of metaphor, I understand deep structure as that relationship, A (tenor) is B (vehicle), which underlies all of the forms that metaphor can take in actual practice, i.e., surface structure. Tenor and vehicle are, of course, I. A. Richards' terms for the elements of metaphor, the vehicle being that to which the tenor is compared.

8. Thomas, p. 60.


11. Miles, p. 43.

12. Miles, p. 41.


17. Poems, p. 239.

18. Poems, p. 221.


21. Dembo, p. 34.

22. Dembo, p. 36.


CHAPTER THREE

VARIETIES OF MYTH

In The Bridge Hart Crane deals with the forms which man's impulse to order has taken through history—that human impulse not to be at the mercy of a disordered environment. Crane is dealing with the subject of myth, but it is crucial to an understanding of the poem to realize that, according to the poet, myth takes different shapes which are successive stages of an evolving human consciousness. The earliest stage which he confronts may be designated as religious myth. Embodied in "Ave Maria" and "The Dance," it presents itself as a true representation of relationships inherent in the world of phenomena. It posits an external being who has made the world or who at least controls it and who operates in the world through a mediating or bridging principle. Every myth revolves around the relationship of man to his environment, of the "I" to the "non-I." The ordered relationships embodied in religious myth are felt by the sharers of that myth to be true, that is, to correspond to a real order built into and maintained in the world by a supreme or superior being. Such a myth is an object of belief, it dictates a course of communal action, it prescribes a ritual, it forms the basis of man's operations in the physical world. Most important, it fulfills at one period of human history man's need for order.

Another type of myth, associated with a later stage in human development, may be designated as scientific. Embodied in the opening lines of "The River"
and in "Cape Hatteras," it is related to religious myth in that those who share it believe that its ordered relationships correspond to a real order which exists in the external physical world. It differs, however, in that it is a dehumanized myth. Where religious myth explained external cause and effect in terms of human emotions, science explains it by means of impersonal, material forces. In the older myth, if rain fell on the earth it was because there was a "love" between water and earth which brought them together; if rain extinguished fire it was the result of an "enmity" between them. Phenomena were personalized, and the relationships among external objects were humanly understandable. But in science external cause and effect are explained not in terms of love and hate but of attraction and repulsion, of gravity and inertia. In comparison with religious myth, scientific myth has given man a greater control of his environment, but to achieve this it has given up the power to comfort man that comes from explaining the world in human terms. In science, physical nature is transformed into a gigantic machine, and in the midst of a nature so conceived man is lost and disoriented. The differences between the religious and the scientific myths are great, but let us not slight their important likeness—they are, as the poet presents them, both "true-believed" myths. As embodied in various sections of The Bridge, they are both myths which people at different times believed, or still believe, to be real pictures of the world, myths whose
ordered relationships correspond to an order which really exists in physical nature.

Opposed to this true-believed myth is a more sophisticated type of mythic world-view which may be designated personal myth, the type to which I feel Crane ultimately commits himself in the writing of The Bridge. An excellent summary of personal myth is given by David Minter in The Interpreted Design as a Structural Principle in American Prose. Discussing The Education of Henry Adams and Adams' attempt to formulate for himself a world-view appropriate to the twentieth century, Minter writes,

In recognition that his formula is an invention of himself for himself, Adams must add that he finally cares "no more" for "his dynamic theory of history . . . than for the kinetic theory of gas" (p. 501). Like the "true" lie of Joseph Conrad's characters, Adams' intellectual formula is a heroic act in an ironic mode. His invention affirms human affirmation. When made in full knowledge that man's formulas are his own invention, the act of affirming formulation is supremely an act of life. Adams' man finally is moved by needs that no enervating recognition of the bleakness of man's fate can extinguish. Knowing that all specifically human visions of meaning are "illusions" (to use Conrad's word) or invented "formula[s]," mere "convenient fictions[s]," (to use Adams' own), Adams nonetheless defines man's final wisdom as recognition that the illusions are "necessary": that the formulas are "infinitely precious," the fictions man's highest "achievement"; that in the end they are, all ironically, man's "only truth."

The personal myth then is myth sophisticatedly entertained in an awareness that its internal order corresponds to no real external order. As opposed to the
true-believed myth whose sharers consider it "true" in that its order mirrors real relationships inherent in physical nature, the personal myth, the "true" lie, is considered "true" in that its order corresponds to a real internal human need. This myth consciously entertained as human invention or artifact is personal because, unlike the true-believed myth which is communally formed and which in turn forms the basis of communal action, it is created by a single individual and does not become the basis for any subsequent communal action. Indeed, the only action connected with the personal myth is the individual's act of formulating it in the work of art. Religious myth exists as the basis for ritual and observance; scientific myth as the basis for technological domination of environment. But personal myth exists for its own sake, for the sake of the order which it embodies. With personal myth there is no sense of discovering an order inherent in the world, or of imposing its order on the world; rather it opposes its order to the world. The true-believed myth strives for a kind of continuity between man and his environment, whereas the personal myth is built on the discontinuity or opposition of man and his environment.

If we understand these three types of myth—the true-believed myths of religion and science, and the personal myth embodied in the work of art—we are in a position to grasp the principal theme of The Bridge. In the poem Crane embodies the communal myths of religion and science, and shows the inadequacy of both for modern man, a man in this case symbolized by the poet. Faced
with the inadequacy of these communal myths, the poet commits himself to the personal myth which he creates in the very writing of the poem. It is a myth which forms the basis for no group action. It does not propose a ritual for propitiating an external supreme being or express formulas for the technological domination of environment. Its thrust is not outward but inward. Its invented order corresponds to the real human impulse for order. The poem itself embodies a quest which moves through the outward-directed myths of religion and science to the inward-directed personal myth of the poem. In short, the poem is about itself and its genesis.

The opening section of *The Bridge*, a forty-four line poem entitled "To Brooklyn Bridge," sets forth in one form or another the major recurring motifs for the entire work. In the poem our attention is focused on the Brooklyn Bridge through the circuit of a single day (morning in stanza one, afternoon in stanza six, evening in stanza nine.) We must make clear, however, that the poem is in no sense a description of the real Brooklyn Bridge. Rather it is the creation within the poem of an ordering entity or unifying symbol one of whose many names is "Brooklyn Bridge," a unifying symbol created through the very process of naming. Probably the most important recurring motif in *The Bridge*, the image of circularity, is introduced in the first stanza of the poem when the seagull rises from the waters of the bay, "shedding white rings of tumult," and then "with inviolate curve" banks above the bridge. This quality of cir-
cularity, of self-contained unity, is attributed to the bridge itself in the last stanza of the poem when the poet calls upon it to "descend / And of the curve-ship lend a myth to God." The bridge is the ordered and ordering symbol whose self-contained unity is created in the poem and by which the poem is ordered. Indeed as the poem progresses, symbol and poem coincide; they share attributes —circularity, still movement, self-containedness. The act of naming in the poem creates the symbol and the symbol in turn orders the work. But more, the bridge as created in the poem and the poem itself are both symbols, visible signs, of the ordering power of the human imagination. In religious myth the being who created the ordered world was called God and that ordered world was his symbol. In the personal myth the human imagination, which creates the ordered anti-world of the poem and the self-contained unity of the symbolic bridge, is a god, an orderer. Thus the bridge, whose circularity is implied in the word "curve-ship," is, through its creation in the poem, an expression of the personal myth whose creative force or god is the human imagination.

Closely connected with the quality of circularity as applied to the bridge is that of freedom in restraint. In the first stanza of the poem we find this quality in the image of the seagull's flight, "building high / Over the chained bay waters Liberty." This juxtaposition of the "chained" bay waters and Liberty, of restraint and freedom, is echoed by the description of the bridge in stanza four:
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!

This freedom which stays itself, this still movement, is attributed to the symbolic bridge, but clearly it is an attribute of the poem as well, the poem which in its fusion of spatial form and temporal form is, to use Murray Krieger's phrase, "at once frozen and flowing ... at once objective and immediate." I said earlier that the symbolic bridge was both ordered and ordering; it is ordered by the human imagination through the creative act of naming in the poem and it in turn forms the ordering focal point around which the poem moves. Something very similar can be said of the poem; it is ordered by the human imagination of the poet and it orders the human consciousness; it is at once formed and forming. Thus the symbolic bridge which is created in the poem is the poem itself. By the bridge of the poem the human imagination is brought to a state of self-awareness. In a reflexive act, the poem turns the imagination inward and reveals that it, rather than the god of religion or the impersonal force of science, is the creator of order.

In the poem a variety of names and attributes are applied to the symbolic bridge; indeed they create the symbolic bridge. We have already mentioned two of these qualities—circularity and freedom in restraint. Some of the names given the bridge are "O harp and altar, of the fury fused,"
"terrific threshold of the prophet's pledge," "prayer of pariah," and "the lover's cry." As part of this naming, the bridge, in stanza nine, is described in terms usually associated with the Virgin Mary:

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

The phrase "beading thy path" suggests the beads of the rosary, the chief Marian devotion made up of five groups of ten "Ave Marias" each. The "immaculate sigh of stars" recalls the Virgin's immaculate conception as well as that iconographic tradition which depicts her as having a crown of seven stars. The line "And we have seen night lifted in thine arms" suggests the characteristic representation of Mary lifting the child in her arms for the world's adoration. The correspondence between the Virgin and the bridge, suggested in this description, is an important linking motif between the poem and the next section, "Ave Maria," but before we turn to that section, let us be quite clear about what has happened in "To Brooklyn Bridge." In a kind of invocation by naming the symbolic bridge has been created before our eyes. It has been given names and attributed qualities the appropriateness of which is not clear at the very start. But the circular journey of the poem will bring us finally to the "Atlantis" section and another extended process of naming in which the appropriateness of the names will be clear because their significance will have been established
in the movement through the poem. The point of ending and of beginning in the poem will be the same, but we will be different. The symbol will have revealed the mind to itself; we will be aware of the human imagination as the creator of order.

"Ave Maria," the next section of the poem, is the prayer of Columbus to the Virgin on the return voyage from the New World. In it Columbus is established as a type of the seeker after unity, the visionary whose intuitions have made him an exile in his own land:

I thought of Genoa; and this truth, now proved, That made me exile in her streets.

Clearly, he is related to the modern American poet who also feels himself an exile on his native soil. Both are seekers of unity, both journey in search of order and the orderer. Columbus seeks that order in the external world and finds the orderer in the supreme being of true-believed religious myth. The poet cannot find that order in external phenomena but only in the enclosed anti-world of the poem which opposes its order to the external world. And the orderer of that anti-world is himself. To understand the full significance of Columbus as a type of the outward-directed seeker of order, we must realize what Crane considered to be the major aspect of the discoverer's achievement. Indeed, Columbus' voyage was a remarkable feat of seamanship, but more than that it was a triumph of navigation. In "Cape Hatteras" there is a comparison
of Whitman and Columbus in which the latter is called the "Great Navigator."

In "Ave Maria" Columbus thanks God for a kind of stability in nature which enabled him to cross the sea guided by a compass:

Of all that amplitude that time explores,
A needle in the sight, suspended north—
Yielding by inference and discard, faith
And true appointment from the hidden shoal.

Underlying this feat of navigation was the intuition of unity in the midst of a multiplicity of sea and shore, the intuition that land and sea were on the surface of a sphere and that thus one could reach the east by sailing to the west. That was Columbus' true discovery—the realization that in his voyage the world would show the unity of a circle. In this connection we should note just how complex, how dual a figure Columbus really is. He is a man who believes in religious myth, yet who carries out a scientific journey to delimit the world. On the return voyage, Columbus is, as it were, between worlds—between the old world of religion and the new one of science. His scientific voyage of discovery carried out under the aegis of the Virgin, i.e., religious myth, is an attempt to delimit the world, to encircle the environment as the first step to dominating it, and that ultimate domination of environment spells the end of religious myth. Why? To answer this, we must go back to the distinction made earlier between the true-believed myths of religion and science. We pointed out that religious myth tried to humanize phenomena by explaining external cause and effect in
terms of human emotions, while scientific myth dehumanized physical nature by explaining it in terms of material forces. Religious myth conferred very little human control of environment but made up for this by its ability to comfort through a humanized world-view. Scientific myth, on the other hand, provides a high degree of environmental control but small comfort. Science gained this control by making man's mind conform to the nature of things. The relationships of material objects were elevated into a kind of world order. But Crane's point is that what constitutes "order" among material objects is chaos for human beings—science's order is the chaos of human values. Science controls the external world by understanding and treating it like a machine, but in this world-view man ends up being just another material object. He too is understood and treated like a machine. The movement from religion to science is, then, in Crane's view, the movement from humanism to materialism, from a world-view based on human emotions to one based on the efficacy of material relationships. Man's impulse for order, his impulse not to be at the mercy of a random, unexplained environment took at one period of history the shape of a religious myth which tried to make the world conform to human relationships, but as man advanced in knowledge he found that he could control environment if he would conform himself to its relationships. If he would remake his view of the world, man could dominate his surroundings, but this domination of physical nature could only be achieved on nature's terms—on non-human terms.
Man made the mistake, according to Crane, of thinking that the physical domination of the external world was an ordering of that world, failing to understand that order is not so much a physical necessity as a human need.

We remarked earlier that Columbus' true discovery was the realization that in his voyage the world would show the unity of a circle. Again we should point out that circularity is one of the primary linking motifs of the poem. Consider the three related circular journeys embodied in The Bridge. In the space of twenty-four hours the poet travels from Brooklyn to Manhattan and back to Brooklyn. In the poem he crosses the bridge into the city with the morning crowds going to work ("the speechless caravan"); in "The Tunnel" he returns home late that night on the subway under the East River. Related to this trip is the poet's journey across country ("from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate") and back in time ("The River" and "The Dance") to discover a period in our history when a native religious myth flourished, and then, on the return trip, to understand how that myth was absorbed by another religious myth (Christianity) and the two finally supplanted by scientific myth. The third journey, of course, is Columbus' voyage of discovery. The parallel character of these journeys is clear—each is circular, ending where it began, and in each the sequence of directions is the same: from east to west and back to east. The poet's trip is from Brooklyn to Manhattan to Brooklyn; the continental journey is from Far Rockaway to the Golden Gate and back to the east coast; and Columbus' voyage is from Spain to the New
World and back to Spain. The importance of the circle and curve imagery in *The Bridge* derives in part from the circular character of the work itself, from the attempt to enclose the anti-world of the poem and to produce the still movement which results from the combination of spatial and temporal form; but its importance also derives from the fact that Crane has chosen the mystical tradition, which intersects poetry, religion, and science (in its alchemical beginnings), as a category under which to treat the relationship of the personal, religious, and scientific myths. In mysticism, curve and circle are primary images. One uses the curve to intuit the unity of the circle and the stillness of its center; one moves from the contemplation of the part to contemplation of the whole and from that to the contemplation of the entity which maintains the whole in existence. In 1922 Crane read P. D. Ouspensky's mystical synthesis *Tertium Organum*, one chapter of which is devoted to a presentation of those images and symbols used by mystics in the course of history to express the unifying vision. For a short time Ouspensky's book exercised a substantial influence on Crane's thought. However, its ultimate influence on him was more as an adaptable source of related and explicited poetic images than as an acceptable world-view. In *The Bridge* the imagery of the mystical tradition is entertained as myth. The mystic movement from curve to circle, as adapted to the poem's world of personal myth, is the movement from the implicit circularity of the curved symbolic bridge
to the explicit circularity of the poem itself. With Columbus, midway between
the new world of science and the old world of religion, it is the inference of
the spherical nature of the earth from the curvature of the horizon, an inference
inextricably bound up with his belief in a Supreme Orderer. For Columbus,
believing is the basis of seeing. In "Ave Maria" he gazes at the horizon; his
eyes

... enclose
This turning rondeur whole, this crescent ring
Sun-cusped and zoned with modulated fire.

From contemplating the curvature of the globe, he turns to the spherical heavens
and their Maker:

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!

In the "Atlantis" section the symbolic bridge is called "the arching path"; it makes
"one arc synoptic of all tides below" and lifts "night to cycloramic crest of deepest
day." And above it are the heavens:

And still the circular, indubitable frieze
Of heaven's meditation, yoking wave
To kneeling wave, one song devoutly binds.

This reference to the song that binds the "circular indubitable frieze" of heaven,
taken in connection with the poem, reminds one of the circular, still movement
of the frieze on Keats' Grecian urn and the whole ekphrastic principle in art.
The extended process of naming in "Atlantis" completes the circle of the poem, returning us to the naming of the poem.

Crane draws our attention to the circular character of the poet's journey and its relation to Columbus' voyage by the quotation from Blake with which he begins "The Tunnel":

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

At first it seems a strange epigraph, for the poet is not travelling to the west but to the east; he is going from Manhattan to Brooklyn. As Lewis has pointed out, in Blake's symbolic geography Wrath is situated in the eastern quarter of the world.\(^6\) And indeed Crane goes out of his way to make the direction of his journey clear when he says at the end of the subway ride "Here by the River that is East." Yet this journey to the east is "to find the Western path." The meaning would appear to be that just as Columbus by his unifying intuition of the earth as a sphere understood that he could reach the east by sailing to the west, so the poet in his circular journey understands that he can find the Western path by travelling to the east. The whole question of direction on the surface of a sphere is significant. The concept of the external world as four-square, as having four directions, was an ordering imposition of religious myth. Under such a view it was inconceivable that one could reach one's goal by travelling in the opposite direction. But Columbus' intuition that
the earth was a sphere rather than four-square allowed him to defy the world-view of religious myth. His voyage marked the movement from an order imposed on the world in terms of human emotions to an order derived from the world in terms of material relations; the movement from humanism to materialism. As Columbus says in "Ave Maria," he is "between two worlds"; he is a dual figure caught between desires. On the one hand, he wants the human values of religious myth; on the other, he wants the environmental control and the precision of action afforded by scientific myth. He understands the danger inherent in his voyage of discovery:

—Yet no delirium of jewels! O Fernando,
Take of that eastern shore, this western sea,
Yet yield thy God's, thy Virgin's charity!

—Rush down the plenitude, and you shall see
Isaiah counting famine on this lee!

By defying the four-square world-view of religious myth, Columbus, as a side effect, has called into doubt the reality of the Supreme Being who stands behind that view, thereby endangering the human values which that anthropomorphic Being represents. The control of environment which a world-view derived from material relationships confers can lead to the exploitation of environment and of human beings—the kind of exploitation and enslavement associated with the Spanish conquistadores for whose adventures Columbus' voyage paved the way. It is as a dual figure, as a man who wants both the human values of religious
myth and the environmental control of scientific myth, that Columbus forms a kind of analogue to the poet. The poet would like truly to believe in religious myth, to believe in the sort of ordered, integrated world which he embodies in "The Dance." But in the modern world he cannot sustain that belief. On the other hand, he is fascinated by the accomplishments of science, yet cannot accept the death of human values which the scientific world-view and its materialism entails. For the poet, the religious and the scientific myths vitiate each other. The human values of the religious myth make the materialism of science unacceptable; the environmental effectiveness of science makes the religious world-view unbelievable. The poet's solution is the personal myth of the poem which holds the myths of science and religion in an ordered relationship. The personal myth of The Bridge entertains the unself-conscious, true-believed myths of religion and science as "convenient fictions" of varying purpose and appeal, and then opts for itself on the grounds of superiority through self-awareness. The human order which religion attempts to impose upon the world leaves us at the mercy of physical nature, the material order which science attempts to derive from the world is the chaos of human values. The personal myth, the self-conscious fiction, the affirmation of order in the face of chaos, is the heroic response of man to his environment.

In "Ave Maria," Columbus is presented as a type of the bridging figure, the man who stands midway between the new world of science and
the old world of religion. Indeed, the whole concept of bridgeship permeates this section of the poem. In journeying to the west to reach the east, Columbus discovers a continent which lies midway between East and West, and which forms, as it were, a land bridge between the two. In Whitman's *Passage to India*, a poem which critics have pointed out as an influence on Crane's work, it is this image of America as a continental bridge that the poet evokes:

Bridging the three or four thousand miles of land travel,  
Tying the Eastern to the Western sea,  
The road between Europe and Asia.

(Ah Genoese thy dream! thy dream!  
Centuries after thou art laid in thy grave,  
The shore thou foundest verifies thy dream.)

In Columbus' world of religious belief, the bridging figure between man and God is the Virgin. In "Ave Maria" Columbus prays to the Virgin as intercessor before he directs his hymn of praise to God:

(O Madre Maria, still  
One ship of these thou grantest safe returning,  
Assure us through thy mantle's ageless blue!)

We noted earlier that in the proem the symbolic bridge is described in Marian imagery. The poet speaks of the traffic lights "beading thy path," he refers to the "immaculate sigh of stars," and he says of the bridge, "We have seen night lifted in thine arms." The correspondence between the word-created bridge and the Virgin which the poet draws suggests not only that the Virgin is symbolic but also that every symbol is in a sense a bridge. In this regard,
however, we must make clear the duality involved in the figure of the Virgin. In the Christian world of true-believed myth which Crane embodies in "Ave Maria," the Virgin was considered a real being who stood as a bridging figure between God and man; she was, to use one of the titles from her litany, "the mediatrix of all grace." She was felt to be truly operative in the world. Thus Columbus in the midst of the storm invokes her aid, and, according to his view, she acts to quiet the sea:

Yet under tempest-lash and surfeitings  
Some inmost sob, half-heard, dissuades the abyss,  
Merges the wind in measure to the waves,

Series on series, infinite,—till eyes  
Starved wide on blackened tides, accrete—enclose  
This turning roundure whole . . .

In "Ave Maria" Crane embodies what the Virgin was in medieval Christianity, but by the correspondence between the symbolic bridge and the Virgin which he suggests in the poem he indicates what she is in terms of the modern world of self-conscious myth—she is a symbol created in an unself-conscious myth to manifest order and the orderer. In the true-believed Christian myth, the Supreme Being who ordered the universe was reached by means of the Virgin; in the Indian world of Pocahontas as embodied in "The Dance," the Great Spirit operated in the world through the bird-serpent. But in the self-conscious world of personal myth, these true-believed religious myths are seen as steps in the process by which the human imagination became aware of itself as the source
of order. At an early stage in history the human imagination, in this process of self-awareness, made a personified abstraction of its ordering power which took the form variously of the God of Christian myth, the Great Spirit of Indian myth, etc. In each case, the imagination also made a symbolic representative of that abstraction, e.g., the Virgin, the bird-serpent, by means of which the personified abstraction manifested itself and through which it was reached. Within the historical perspective of a variety of different myths, the poet understands the movement from true-believed, unself-conscious myth to the self-conscious, convenient fiction of personal myth as the movement from tribal man to individual man—the individual human imagination gradually revealing itself to itself through its symbols, revealing itself as orderer, as its own god. For the poet every symbol is a bridge, but in the personal myth it is a bridge which leads the mind back to itself. In true-believed religious myth the symbol revealed the mind's order, but the mind did not realize the true source of that order. The replacement of the religious myth by the scientific, of one true-believed myth by another, called into doubt all myth as true belief, myth as a real picture of the world. This opposition of true-believed myths revealed all myths as simply human artifacts of varying purpose and appeal. The poet is attracted by different aspects of both the religious and the scientific myths but finally cannot accept or believe either. Instead he opts for the "true lie," for myth self-consciously understood as myth.
For the poet, one of the most appealing aspects of religious myth, as embodied in "Ave Maria" and "The Dance," is the integrated world-view which it presents to man. Because it explains the world in terms of human emotions, there is a continuity between man and his environment in religious myth. Even at the moments when he is at the mercy of his environment, his situation is still humanly understandable, because it is explainable in terms of human motivation rather than blind, indifferent, mechanical energy. Reminiscent of the figure of the Virgin in The Education of Henry Adams, the Virgin in "Ave Maria" is a unifying force, providing both historical and environmental continuity. But with the coming of the scientific myth, the integrated world-view of religious myth is shattered. Historical and environmental continuity are lost to man in the true-believed myth of science, for now the world and man's place in it are not explained in terms of human values but of material relationships. The humanness of man is isolated in a materialistic environment.

In the large section of The Bridge called "Powhatan's Daughter" which follows "Ave Maria," Crane attempts to depict his own disintegrated state in the modern world, and then to explain the cause of that disintegration first by journeying across country and back in time to the American Indian's integrated world of religious myth, then by imaginatively participating in that world-view and trying to return with it to the present, and finally by losing that integrated world-view on the way back, as it was lost historically, to the
materialism of scientific myth. In "Harbor Dawn," the first part of the "Powhatan" section, the poet in a state between waking and sleeping experiences an imaginary union with the land in the form of a dream woman, the Indian maiden Pocahontas. Like Columbus, the poet is between worlds—"a tide of voices" meets him "midway in [his] dream" of the old integrated world of religious myth; the disruptive voices are the noises of machines and of men reduced to machines:

And then a truck will lumber past the wharves
As winch engines begin throbbing on some deck;
Or a drunken stevedore's howl and thud below
Comes echoing alley-upward through dim snow.

In his dream he was united with the woman-continent:

Your hands within my hands are deeds;
my tongue upon your throat—singing
arms close; eyes wide, undoubtful
dark
  drink the dawn—
a forest shudders in your hair!

But with the disruption of that dream he asks, "Who is the woman with us in the dawn? . . . whose is the flesh our feet have moved upon?"

The sexual metaphor for environmental integration which we find in "Harbor Dawn" runs throughout The Bridge and unless we fully understand its implications, subsequent sections of the poem, i.e., "Three Songs" and "Quaker Hill," will remain something of a puzzle. One of the books which influenced Crane in his writing of The Bridge was William Carlos Williams' imaginative reconstruction of American history, In the American Grain, published in 1925.
In his chapter on Edgar Allen Poe, Williams says, "One is forced on the conception of the New World as a woman," and Williams embodies this conception in the chapter "De Soto and the New World," a dialogue between the explorer and the woman-continent in which she draws De Soto, in his journey across country, "nearer and nearer," trying "to make [him] lonesome, ready for my caresses." The sexual metaphor for environmental integration is also a major feature in Ouspensky's _Tertium Organum_. He writes,

> In the life of every man there are moments which act upon him more powerfully than others. Upon one a thunderstorm acts mystically, upon another, sunrise, a third the sea, the forest, rocks, fire. The voice of sex embraces much of that mystical sense of nature.

> In the sex impulse man puts himself in the most personal relation with nature. The comparison of the sensation of woman experienced by man, or vice versa, with the feeling for nature is met with very often. And it is really the same sensation as is given by forest, prairie, sea, mountains, only in this case it is even more intense, awakens more inner voices, forces the sounding of more inner strings.

In conceiving of the land as a woman, Crane embodies the impulse of religious myth to explain external phenomena in terms of human emotions. In religious myth, integration with one's environment is an intimate union with something human or human-like. Understanding this, we realize that part of what is happening in a section like "Three Songs" is the conscious frustration of the sexual metaphor as emblematic of environmental disintegration.
When the poet awakens from his dream in "Harbor Dawn," he loses the momentary experience of environmental unity, and, like Williams' De Soto, he sets out on a journey across country to recover that lost union with the land, the woman-continent. The comparison of the poet-voyager with the figure of De Soto in *In the American Grain* is, I think, significant. For both figures, the cross-country journey leads to the Mississippi River. De Soto is drawn by the woman-continent "nearer and nearer" until he dies on the banks of the Mississippi and is buried within its stream. Williams describes his burial thus: "Down, down, this solitary sperm, down into the liquid, the formless, the insatiable belly of sleep . . ."¹² In his search for the woman-continent Pocahontas, the poet also arrives, in the section called "The River," at the banks of the Mississippi, depicted in the poem as a river of time whose ceaseless flow one joins through death. The poet must join the flow imaginatively and journey back into the past to find the lost union with the land:

Yes, turn again and sniff once more—look see,  
O Sheriff, Brakeman and Authority—  
Hitch up your pants and crunch another quid,  
For you, too, feed the River timelessly.  
And few evade full measure of their fate;  
Always they smile out eerily what they seem.  
I could believe he joked at heaven's gate—  
Dan Midland—jolted from the cold brake-beam.

Down, down—born pioneers in time's despite,  
Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow—  
They win no frontier by their wayward plight,  
But drift in stillness, as from Jordan's brow. . . .
Over De Soto's bones the freighted floors
Throb past the City storied of three thrones.

To reach the river of time and journey back to the historical past, the poet must first go back into his own past. In the "Van Winkle" section which links "Harbor Dawn" and "The River," this journey through memory is begun. Suggesting a spatial trip in the opening lines,

Macadam, gun-grey as the tunny's belt,
Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate:
Listen! the miles a hurdy-gurdy grinds—
Down gold arpeggios mile on mile unwinds . . .

the poet shifts suddenly to reminiscence of his childhood,

Times earlier, when you hurried off to school,
—It is the same hour though a later day—
You walked with Pizarro in a copybook,
And Cortes rode up, reining tautly in . . .

The poet is walking to the subway that will take him across the bridge, and remembering, as he walks, the historic and mythic figures he read of as a child. Among these characters he finds Rip Van Winkle, a figure emblematic of the poet's state. He is a man whose memory of an integrated past makes him an outcast, a clown as it were, in the world in which he finds himself. As the legend goes, Van Winkle fell asleep one day and woke up twenty years later in a changed world. Like the poet he is caught between worlds; he cannot return to the world he remembers and he cannot accept the one in which he now exists. Van Winkle's relationship to the poet is made clear by his movement into a modern materialistic setting:
And Rip forgot the office hours
   and he forgot the pay;
Van Winkle sweeps a tenement
   way down on Avenue A— . . .

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

The strategy of the "Van Winkle" section is evident: just as the poet is a microcosmic representative of humanity, so his personal life is a microcosmic statement of human history. To go back into the mythic childhood of humanity and visit the integrated world of religious myth, he must journey through memory to his own childhood and find a time when he was in touch with nature:

   Remember, remember
   The cinder pile at the end of the backyard
   Where we stoned the family of young
   Garter snakes under . . . And the monoplanes
   We launched—with paper wings and twisted
   Rubber bands . . . Recall—recall

In the world of his own backyard, he finds a kind of environmental integration symbolized by the image of the snake and the monoplane—the equivalents, in his childish world, of the unifying bird-serpent symbol depicted later in the religious myth of "The Dance." But as the environmentally integrating power of true-believed religious myth was lost in human history, so in the poet's personal history the power of religious belief was also lost:
... is it the Sabbatical, unconscious smile
My mother almost brought me once from church
And once only, as I recall—?

It flickered through the snow screen, blindly
It forsook her at the doorway, it was gone
Before I had left the window. It
Did not return with the kiss in the hall.

The Sabbatical smile, brought from church, that flickers and fades for the poet is the loss of true belief in religious myth. With the memory of that belief and of the integrated world it provided, the poet begins the journey across country and back in time to discover the cause of its loss in human history.

The subway ride suggested at the end of "Van Winkle" ("Keep hold of that nickel for car-change, Rip,—") is transformed, in the beginning of "The River," into a ride on the 20th Century Limited heading west. In the eighteen lines of impressionistic verse that open the section Crane depicts the view from the train as it races across the countryside. It is a view of the disintegrated world of science and technology, of a landscape blotted out by billboards. Crane makes the turn on the train's name clear:

So the 20th Century—so
Whizzed the Limited—roared by and left . . .

The view from the train is indeed a view of the limitations of the twentieth-century world of scientific myth. It is a world of grinding materialism in which the landscape has been defaced and man distanced from nature by
machines. The train passes three hoboes walking along the tracks. Like Van Winkle, they are outcasts, clowns—"Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods."

Because they have remained in touch with the land, the 20th Century has passed them by. They are throwbacks to the old world of religious myth. The poet, still moving back into his own past, recalls,

**Behind**
My father's cannery works I used to see
Rail-squatters ranged in nomad railyery,
The ancient men—wifeless or runaway
Hobo-trekkers that forever search
An empire wilderness of freight and rails.
Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch,
Holding to childhood like some termless play.

The hoboes are in truth "ancient men"; they are men of another era, the period of man's mythic childhood. In "Van Winkle" the poet recalled his own childhood as a period in which he was in close touch with nature, when he experienced the integrated world of religious myth. But as he grew up, that belief and the sense of environmental integration which it provided were lost. The hoboes, on the other hand, have remained in touch with the natural environment by remaining children, by "holding to childhood like some termless play."

It has made them outcasts and clowns in the modern industrial world (Crane exhorts the riders on the train "Oh, lean from the window, if the train slows down, / As though you touched hands with some ancient clown . . . "), but in return the hoboes
. . . touch something like a key perhaps.
From pole to pole across the hills, the states
—They know a body under the wide rain;
Youngsters with eyes like fjords, old reprobates
With racetrack jargon,—dotting immensity
They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast
Snow-silvered, sumac-stained or smoky blue—
Is past the valley-sleepers, south or west.
—As I have trod the rumorous midnights, too,

And past the circuit of the lamp's thin flame
(O Nights that brought me to her body bare!)
Have dreamed beyond the print that bound her name.

The hoboés experience the continent as a woman. In touch with the land they
"know a body under the wide rain." But for the poet who has lost the true
belief in religious myth and, as a result, the sense of an historically and
environmentally integrated world, the union with the woman-continent Pocahontas
is the dream from "Harbor Dawn" that he must pursue. As he says, he is
"brought to her body bare" at nights when he has "dreamed beyond the print
that bound her name." The poet attempts to participate imaginatively in the
experience of the hoboés, but it should be made clear that this is an attempt
to join in an experience which he himself has created in the poem. So too,
in "The Dance" he attempts to participate in the American Indian's integrated
world of religious myth, but it is that world as created within the poem. In
short the effort at participation is simply the poet's own effort to experience
religious myth as true belief rather than as myth per se. His inability to sus-
tain that belief throughout the poem parallels his loss of religious faith as a child and the waning of religious myth in human history.

In "The River" the poet's imaginative participation in the hobo's experience brings him closer to the land and to the past. He hears, "Papooes crying on the wind's long mane," and though he realizes that they are only "dead echoes," he still senses the nearness of physical nature and the old world of religious myth:

But I knew her body there,
Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark,
And space, an eaglet's wing laid on her hair.

For the poet, imaginative union with the woman-continent Pocahontas represents participation in the historically (time) and environmentally (space) integrated world of religious myth symbolized by the bird-serpent. He knows that beneath the defacing machinery of the modern technological world, "below derricks, chimneys, tunnels," the land remains "our native clay . . . those continental folded aeons surcharged, / With sweetness." But for modern man the old relationship to the land has been lost. The Indian world of religious myth is dead:

The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools
Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain
And re-descend with corn from querulous crows.
Such pilferings make up their timeless eatage,
Propitiate them for their timber torn
By iron, iron—always the iron dealt cleavage!
They doze now, below axe and powder horn.
The gods of the rain, the fish, the corn are all suggestions of a people whose historical and environmental integration was the result of their drawing sustenance directly from the land. For Crane, religious myth is ultimately vegetative myth; it is the product of people who are more or less at the mercy of agricultural nature. The shift from agricultural society to industrial society is the movement from religious to scientific myth. As man through the course of history became more expert in dealing with his environment, he found that if he explained physical nature in terms of its material relationships rather than his human emotions he could gain control of that nature. But, according to Crane, man made the mistake of thinking that the physical domination of his environment was a human ordering of the world. Indeed, the external, physical environment can be dominated—but only on its own terms, only if man conceives of the world in terms of material relationships within which he must operate. But when man understands the world in other than human terms, he suddenly finds himself a stranger in a strange land. He has mistaken the mechanical task of subjugating physical nature, for the human and humanizing task of creating order. Thus, technology's "iron dealt cleavage" of the land broke the old historical and environmental integration of religious myth. In regard to true-believed religious myth, science severed the continuity with the past; it put all its emphasis on spatial domination, cleaving the eagle from the serpent. A modern mechanical corruption of the Indian's serpent of time, the
20th Century Limited is a kind of spatial serpent symbol of technology's domination of environment. It is part of the "iron dealt cleavage" of the land that has distanced man from nature. Enclosed within the train,

\[\ldots\text{Pullman breakfasters glide glistening steel} \\
\text{From tunnel into field—iron strides the dew—} \\
\text{Straddles the hill, a dance of wheel on wheel.}\]

The poet asks these people, who cross the land yet are cut off from the land by the machine in which they travel, to share imaginatively in the experience of the hoboes, these remnants of the world of religious myth who still retain some sense of environmental integration:

\[\text{Oh, lean from the window, if the train slows down,} \\
\text{As though you touched hands with some ancient clown,} \\
\text{—A little while gaze absently below} \\
\text{And hum Deep River with them while they go.}\]

Clearly, the request is ironic. From the opening description in which the Limited passes in a rush of noise, billboard slogans, and flashing lights, it is evident that the train does not slow down, that one of the concomitants of spatial domination is a blind, headlong speed.

At this point in "The River" the journey across country is transformed into the journey back in time. The image of the train, the spatial serpent of technology, moving along the banks of the Mississippi, fades into the image of the river itself, the temporal serpent of religious myth. The symbolic Mississippi, "sliding prone," dragging "a jungle grace ochreous and lynx-barred in lengthen-
ing might," is the river to the past which all feed timelessly through death. It
carries its "damp tonnage and alluvial march of days," "tortured with history,
its one will—flow." The hobo Dan Midland (the turn on the name), one of
those who were "born pioneers in time's despite," is "jolted from the cold
brake-beam," and dying, joins the river of time as one of the "grimed tribu-
taries to an ancient flow." It is on this temporal river that the poet, who has
tried to share the hobo's experience, journeys back imaginatively to the Indian
world of religious myth.

To understand the historically and environmentally integrated world
which Crane embodies in "The Dance" one must understand the implications
of the bird-serpent symbol which lies at the heart of the poem. In "The
Dance" Crane uses the symbol with what seems to be an exact knowledge of
its various meanings and associations as given in popular versions of Indian
mythology. Let me turn to one of these versions for background—Lewis Spence's
Myths of the North American Indians, published in 1914. Spence explicates the
bird and serpent symbols separately. Of the various meanings which the Indian
attached to the bird, he remarks,

. . . the Powhatans of Virginia believed that the feathered
race received the souls of their chiefs at death, and they
were careful to do them no harm, accordingly. . . . The
thunder is regarded by some Indian peoples as the flapping
of the pinions of a great bird, whose tracks are seen in the
lightning. . . . Many of the tribes of the north-west coast
hold the same belief, and imagine the lightning to be the
flash of the thunder-bird's eye.
Of all birds the eagle, says Spence, was particularly sacred to the Indians:

"The Zuni of New Mexico employed four of its feathers to represent the four winds when invoking the rain-god." Regarding the serpent symbol, he writes,

Some Indian tribes adopted the serpent as a symbol of time. They reckoned by "suns" and as the outline of the sun, a circle, corresponds to nothing in nature so much as a serpent with its tail in its mouth, devouring itself, so to speak, this may have been the origin of the symbol. Some writers think that the serpent symbolized the Indian idea of eternity, but it is unlikely that such a recondite conception would appeal to a primitive folk.

Among the Indians the serpent also typified the lightning. The rapidity and sinuosity of its motions, its quick spring and sharp recoil, prove the aptness of the illustration.

... The serpent as the type of the lightning, the symbol of the spear of the war-god, would lead to the idea that that deity also had power over the crops or summer vegetation, for it is at the time of year when lightning is most prevalent that these come to fruition...

In snake-charming, as a proof of magical proficiency, as typifying the lightning, which, as the serpent-spear of the war-god, brings victory in battle, and in its agricultural connexion, lies most of the secret of the potency of the serpent symbol. As the emblem of the fertilizing summer showers the lightning serpent was the god of fruitfulness...

For the Indian, bird and serpent together were a symbol of environmental union—the marriage of the sky (rain) god and the earth goddess, the fertilization of the land by water. The anthropological correctness of Spence's remarks of course is not an issue here. They are simply presented as typical of a popular understanding of Indian myth and symbology current in Crane's day. There is no
evidence that Crane read Spence's book, though it went through many printings and would have been readily available to anyone interested in Indian lore, but if we employ Spence's explications as background in approaching the poem then much of what is happening in "The Dance" becomes clear. At the very start of the poem, there are suggestions of the agricultural context. The earth goddess "ran the neighing canyons all the spring; / She spouted arms; she rose with maize—to die." Her "chieftain lover," the rain god, "streamed the mesa sands."

The rain god and earth goddess have been one:

There was a bed of leaves, and broken play;  
There was a veil upon you, Pocahontas, bride—  
O Princess whose brown lap is virgin May;  
And bridal flanks and eyes hid tawny pride.

Imaginatively identifying himself with the Indian, the poet journeys by canoe down a stream that is an extension of the river of time in the preceding section. With suggestions of the "drunken boat" motif, he says, "I drifted how many hours I never knew." His imagination floating on the river of the unconscious, the poet sees

. . . 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 . . .

It is the Morning Star, the sign of reunion with the woman-continent promised in the closing lines of "Harbor Dawn": 
Under the mistletoe of dreams, a star—
As though to join us at some distant hill—
Turns in the waking west and goes to sleep.

Leaving his canoe, the poet journeys overland. He arrives in the world of
the Indian at the very moment when a symbolic thunderstorm is breaking:

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

A cyclone threshes in the turbine crest,
Swooping in eagle feathers down your back;
Know, Maquokeeta, greeting; know death's best;
—Fall, Sachem, strictly as the tamarack!

In these lines, Maquokeeta, the chieftain-lover of Pocahontas, is identified
with the thunder that contains his "padded foot" and then with the eagle, the
thunder-bird whose feathers swoop down the chief's back. Immediately, the
symbolic storm merges with the ritual dance:

A birch kneels. All her whistling fingers fly.
The oak grove circles in a crash of leaves;
The long moan of a dance is in the sky.
Dance, Maquokeeta: Pocahontas grieves . . .

And every tendon scurries toward the twangs
Of lightning deltaed down your saber hair.
Now snaps the flint in every tooth; red fangs
And splay tongues thinly busy the blue air . . .

Dance, Maquokeeta! snake that lives before,
That casts his pelt, and lives beyond! Sprout, horn!
Spark, tooth! Medicine-man, relent, restore—
Lie to us,—dance us back the tribal morn!
Here, Maquoekaeta is identified with the lightning that is "deltaed" down his saber hair and with the snake that "casts his pelt, and lives beyond." From his description it is clear that Maquoekaeta is the bird-serpent, the lord of the thunder and lightning, the rain god. And his ritual dance that merges with the storm is the Snake Dance, the archetypal Indian dance for rain.  

Crane's strategy in portraying the rain god as the chieftain Maquoekaeta is to show at once the animism and the anthropomorphic quality of religious myth. Within that integrated world as created by Crane, the Indian conceives of his rain god as simply a supreme chief—indicative of religious myth's attempt to explain the world in human terms. In regard to the Snake Dance just mentioned, it is significant that in Indian ritual it was almost always performed in conjunction with the Corn or Maize Dance. Discussing the Indians' earth goddess, Frank Waters in *Masked Gods* says, "Throughout their life she gives her children everything they need to sustain them; she gives them their immemorial bread of life, or as the Navahos call it, their 'gift of life'—the indigenous New World maize... Out of corn, then, springs another image, the Corn Mother who is synonymous with the Earth Mother." So, in the opening stanza Pocahontas, the woman-continent, the earth goddess, "rose with maize—to die." And later, she is the "bride immortal in the maize" (stanza 21). Regarding the union of the rain god (bird-serpent) and the earth goddess, it is important to note that the serpent, besides being an almost universal symbol of the fertilizing inter-
action of earth and water, is also a phallic symbol. Thus the life-giving conjunction of rain and soil is rightly portrayed in terms of the sexual union between man and woman, Maquokeeta and Pocahontas. But Maquokeeta is more than just the rain god. As Crane depicts him, he is also the principal figure in a dying or vanishing god myth. The ceremony of the dance becomes Maquokeeta's ritual death by fire:

Spears and assemblies: black drums thrusting on—
O yelling battlements,—I, too, was liege
To rainbows currying each pulsant bone:
Surpassed the circumstance, danced out the siegel

And buzzard-circled, screamed from the stake;
I could not pick the arrows from my side.
Wrapped in that fire, I saw more escorts wake—
Flickering, sprint up the hill groins like a tide.

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

To participate imaginatively in the integrated world of religious myth and become one with the woman-continent Pocahontas, the poet identifies himself with her lover Maquokeeta and shares in the ritual by which the god dies into the land. The attempt at participation is, as we said earlier, the poet's attempt to sustain as true belief the religious myth which he has re-created. It is an effort which the poet knows is foredoomed to failure. He says to Maquokeeta, "Lie to us,—dance us back the tribal morn!" The religious myth of "the tribal morn" was
an unself-conscious lie which the poet, the self-aware individual, can neither believe in himself nor restore to the modern world. Yet in his attempt to hold religious myth as true belief and in his final inability to do so, he can perhaps discover how that belief was lost in the course of human history.

It would be difficult to overestimate the complexity and the depth of "The Dance." I contend that ultimately in this poem Crane, in creating the figure of the dying god Maquokeeta as the bird-serpent, is adapting to his own purposes the legend of Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent. To appreciate this adaptation and its meaning, it is necessary to examine the influence of D. H. Lawrence on Crane. We know that Crane read and admired Lawrence's work and that one of the books that he consulted as background for The Bridge was The Plumed Serpent. The chapter entitled "Marriage by Quetzalcoatl" in The Plumed Serpent seems to have been the source of much of the imagery in "The Dance." In the chapter, Ramon, who believes himself to be the living Quetzalcoatl, performs a marriage ceremony between the Englishwoman Kate and Cipriano, who believes himself the living war god Huitzilopochtli. They are married in a garden during a rainstorm:

They stood barefoot on the earth, that still threw back a white smoke of waters. The rain drenched them in a moment.

"Barefoot on the living earth, with faces to the living rain," said Ramon in Spanish, quietly; "at twilight, between the night and the day; man, and woman,
in presence of the unfading star, meet to be perfect in one another. Lift your face, Caterina, and say: This man is my rain from heaven."

Kate lifted her face and shut her eyes in the downpour.

"This man is my rain from heaven," she said.

"This woman is the earth to me—say that, Cipriano," said Ramon, kneeling on one knee and laying his hand flat on the earth.

Cipriano kneeled and laid his hand on the earth.

"This woman is the earth to me," he said.

"1, woman, kiss the feet and the heels of this man, for 1 will be strength to him, throughout the long twilight of the Morning Star."

Kate kneeled and kissed the feet and heels of Cipriano, and said her say.

"1, man, kiss the brow and the breast of this woman, for I will be her peace and her increase, through the long twilight of the Morning Star."

Cipriano kissed her, and said his say....

He [Ramon] made Kate put over Cipriano's head a blue cord bearing a symbol of Quetzalcoatl, the snake in silver and the bird in blue turquoise. Cipriano put over her head the same symbol, but in gold, with a bird in black dull jet, and hanging on a red cord.

"There!" said Ramon. "That is the symbol of Quetzalcoatl, the Morning Star. Remember the marriage is the meeting-ground, and the meeting-ground is the star."18
Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* gives a brief account of the legendary Quetzalcoatl and his connection with the Morning Star: "The Aztecs tell of the feathered serpent, Quetzalcoatl, monarch of the ancient city of Tollan in the golden age of its prosperity. He was the teacher of the arts, originator of the calendar, and the giver of maize. He and his people were overcome, at the close of their time, by the stronger magic of an invading race, the Aztecs. . . . The feathered serpent, king of the golden age, burned his dwellings behind him . . . and departed in great sorrow." Travelling across country, Quetzalcoatl came at last to the sea—"at the shore he immolated himself upon a funeral pyre, and birds with multicolored feathers arose from his ashes. His soul became the Morning Star."¹⁹ The metamorphosis of Quetzalcoatl into the Morning Star explains the poet's statement about the bird-serpent Ma quo keeta: "He holds the twilight's dim, perpetual throne." It also explains why the Morning Star is the sign of the poet's reunion with the woman-continent—to quote Lawrence, "That is the symbol of Quetzalcoatl, the Morning Star. Remember the marriage is the meeting-ground, and the meeting-ground is the star." Finally, it expicates the bird-serpent's metamorphosis in the pyre:

... I saw thy change begun,

And saw thee 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.
We should note that in the figure of the bird-serpent Maquokeeta, Crane is combining details from the figures of both Quetzalcoatl and Huitzilopochtli as they appear in the Lawrence novel. Lawrence writes of Cipriano, "And Cipriano the master of fire. The Living Huitzilopochtli, he had called himself. The living firemaster. The god in the flame; the salamander." So Crane, in describing Maquokeeta's ritual death by fire, says,

O, like the lizard in the furious noon,
    That drops his legs and colors in the sun,
—And laughs, pure serpent, Time itself, and moon
    Of his own fate, I saw thy change begun!

Understanding "The Dance" as an adaptation of and an allusion to the Quetzalcoatl legend, we sense a deeper significance in Maquokeeta's death. It is not simply the ritual death of a dying and rising god, it is his last ritual death, for the Indian religious myth itself is dying. Just as Quetzalcoatl and his people were overcome "by the stronger magic of an invading race," so in the poem the Indians and their myth of the dying god Maquokeeta are overcome by the white man and his myth of the dying god Christ. In The Plumed Serpent one of the hymns of Quetzalcoatl is a dialogue in which Jesus supplants the plumed serpent as the dying god of the New World. In the hymn Quetzalcoatl leaves the land, but as he goes he hears behind him "a cry of people dying" and sees "a flame of places burning." It continues:
"So the old god reached the top of the mountain and looked up into the blue house of heaven. . . . And beyond the darkness he saw one great star, like a bright gateway.

"Then fire rose from the volcano around the old Quetzalcoatl, in wings and glittering feathers. And with the wings of fire and the glitter of sparks Quetzalcoatl flew up, up, like a wafting fire, like a glittering bird, up, into the space, and away to the white steps of heaven, that lead to the blue walls, where is the door to the dark. So he entered in and was gone.

"Night fell, and Quetzalcoatl was gone, and men in the world saw only a star travelling back into heaven, departing under the low branches of darkness."21

As the defeated Quetzalcoatl immolated himself and became the Morning Star, so Maquoikeeta undergoes the ritual death by fire and occupies henceforth "the twilight's dim, perpetual throne." From this vantage point, Maquoikeeta views the destruction of his people by the white man:

Thewed of the levin, thunder-shod and lean,
Lo, through what infinite seasons thou dost gaze—
Across what bivouacs of thine angered slain . . .

Yet, though the Indian and his religious myth are gone from the land, the land remains, and remains accessible as an integrated world only to those who would approach it as the Indian did:

Totem and fire-gall, slumbering pyramid—
Though other calendars now stack the sky,
Thy freedom is her largesse, Prince, and hid
On paths thou knewest best to claim her by.
High unto Labrador the sun strikes free  
Her speechless dream of snow, and stirred again,  
She is the torrent and the singing tree;  
And she is the virgin to the last of men . . .

The poet attempts to participate imaginatively in the Indian's experience of the integrated world of religious myth, but in the modern world the poet is unable to sustain religious myth as true belief. The true-believed religious myth of the Indians no longer exists in the modern external world, yet as Maquokeeta after his ritual death assumed the form of the Morning Star, so the Indian religious myth after its death as true belief has survived in an altered form, incorporated into the personal myth of the poem where it is now entertained as myth per se. In this process the historical and environmental integration of the world of true-believed religious myth, the union of space and time symbolized by the bird-serpent, finds its self-conscious artistic equivalent in the anti-world of the poem's fusion of spatial and temporal form, its still movement. Thus the poet at the end of "The Dance" can employ the unifying symbol of the bird-serpent,

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 . . .

and echo it at the end of the "Atlantis" section when the anti-world of the poem has been enclosed and the fusion of spatial and temporal form completed,

Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring  
The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . .
Before turning from "The Dance" to the next section of The Bridge, let me make one last point about the relationship of Crane and Lawrence. Critics, in discussing the obscurity of Crane's verse, often imply that his vision was not merely personal but eccentric, so eccentric that there was no sharable way of expressing it. Yet Lawrence working within the context of the American Indian's ritualistic dances came to much the same conclusion as Crane about the difference between the religious myth of the Indians and the scientific myth of modern man, and he expressed that conclusion in much the same imagery. In three essays, "Indians and Entertainment," "The Dance of the Sprouting Corn," and "The Hopi Snake Dance," from the volume Mornings in Mexico, published in 1927, Lawrence depicts the Indian's relationship to his environment in terms of the Maize Dance and the Snake Dance and contrasts the Indian world-view with that of the white men who watch the dance. The last of these three essays, "The Hopi Snake Dance," is particularly rich in images and insights similar to those which we find in The Bridge. As Lawrence describes it, part of the ceremony of the snake dance is the sacrifice of an eagle. The mesa where the ceremony occurs is "a parched, grey country of snakes and eagles, pitched up against the sky."^22^ Contrasting the world-views of the white man and the Indian, Lawrence says that, for us, "the real conquest of the cosmos is made by science," but for the American Indian who "sees no division into Spirit and Matter," for whom "everything is alive," it is a question of "how to conquer the dragon-
mouthed thunder, how to capture the feathered rain." The Indian, Lawrence writes, "has to conquer, and hold his own, and again conquer all the time. To us, science is our religion of conquest. Hence through science, we are the conquerors and resultant gods of our earth. But to the Indian, the so-called mechanical processes do not exist. All lives. And the conquest is made by the means of the living will." For the Hopi, the task is particularly difficult: "Some inward fate drove him to the top of these parched mesas, all rocks and eagles, sand and snakes, and wind and sun and alkali. These he had to conquer. Not merely, as we should put it, the natural conditions of the place. But the mysterious life-spirit that reigned there. The eagle and the snake." The Indian "sought the conquest by means of the mystic, living will that is in man, pitted against the living will of the dragon-cosmos." But the white man has "undertaken the scientific conquest of forces, of natural conditions. . . . To us, heaven switches on daylight, or turns on the shower-bath. We little gods are gods of the machine only. It is our highest. Our cosmos is a great engine. And we die of ennui. A subtle dragon strings us in the midst of plenty." I think that one cannot help but be struck by the similarity of outlook and imagery in Crane's and Lawrence's treatments of religious and scientific myth, nor fail to be reminded, by the Lawrence sentence "Our cosmos is a great engine," of the line from "Cape Hatteras": "Man hears himself an engine in a cloud!" For all the personal quality of Crane's vision, he is, in
embODYING THE CONTRASTING WORLDS OF RELIGIOUS AND SCIENTIFIC MYTH, OPERATING IN A SHARED AND SHARABLE TRADITION.

"Indiana," the poem which follows "The Dance" and which forms the last section of "Powhatan's Daughter," is ostensibly a pioneer mother's lament for her son who is leaving the land and going away to sea. Tate calls it "a nightmare of sentimentality," and he is correct. But that sentimentality is part of its point, for the poem embodies the way in which religious myth, once it begins to wane as true belief, degenerates into the merely sentimental. As "The Dance" dealt with the loss in America of the Indian religious myth through the invasion of the white man and his Christian myth, so "Indiana" deals with the failure in America of the Christian myth as true belief through the effects of materialism. Written in a ballad stanza, "Indiana" presents itself as a cloyingly sentimental folksong. In the opening lines one immediately senses the note of self-pity:

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 . . .

In her song the pioneer mother acknowledges that her son, in going away to sea, is only completing the break with the land which she and her husband began years earlier when they took part in the gold-rush:
. . . we, too, Prodigal, once rode off, too—
    Waved Seminary Hill a gay good-bye . . .
We found God lavish there in Colorado
    But passing sly.

The pebbles sang, the firecat slunk away
    And glistening through the sluggard freshets came
In golden syllables loosed from the clay
    His gleaming name.

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.

But we,—too late, too early, howsoever—
    Won nothing out of fifty-nine—those years—
But gilded promise, yielded to us never,
    And barren tears . . .

As Crane depicts it, it is the crucial moment when the American pioneer turns from being a farmer, a cultivator of the land who draws his sustenance from his environment, to an exploiter of the land, a miner who tries to wrest his fortune from his environment. In his search for gold, the pioneer finds a god in nature who is "passing sly," a god whose name is present only in "golden syllables loosed from the clay." The vegetative dying god has begun to vanish.

It is the moment when the religious myth of the old agricultural society has begun to be supplanted by the scientific myth of the new materialist society.

The town which the pioneers reach in Colorado has "a promised crown of claims to siûke." This phrase, coming at the point when Christian religious myth begins
to wane as true belief and God starts to vanish from nature, is clearly an inver-
sion of the triumphal moment in "Ave Maria" when Columbus "sees" God in
nature:

Hushed gleaming fields and pendant seething wheat
Of knowledge,—round thy brows unhooded now
—The kindled Crown!

In these lines Columbus' ability to maintain religious myth as true belief is
presented in terms of an agricultural image, the "gleaming fields" and "pendant
seething wheat," and it suggests by contrast the loss of the integrated world-
view of religious myth with the waning of an agriculturally-based society. The
town at which the pioneers arrive is called Eldorado, literally "the gilded," and what they win from the land is "gilded promise" and "barren tears." But the name "Eldorado" also suggests that mythical golden land which the Indians of Central and South America described to the Spaniards and which formed the
goal of those Spanish expeditions of conquest in which the Indians were enslaved and decimated. An indication of Crane's interest in this entire subject is the
fact that he intended to use the Guggenheim Fellowship which he received in
1931 to do research in Mexico for a long poem or play on the conquest of
Montezuma by Cortez. In the "Van Winkle" section, Cortez appears as one
of the figures in American history whom the poet remembers studying in his
childhood. The reference to him is an associative foreshadowing of the Quetzal-
coatl legend, for in Cortez's conquest of Montezuma the story of the plumed
serpent played a major part. The Aztecs believed that Quetzalcoatl was a fair-skinned, bearded god who had once lived among them but who had departed to the eastward, prophesying his eventual return. When Cortez landed in Mexico, Montezuma and his people thought that he was the returned god-king, and their welcome facilitated Cortez's conquest of Mexico. There is a strong suggestion of the Cortez story and his welcome as the returned bird-serpent in the passage from "Ave Maria" where Columbus describes his own landing in the New World:

   ... And they came out to us crying,  
   "The Great White Birds!"

In his discovery of America, Columbus unwillingly paved the way for the voyage of Cortez and the latter's use of the Quetzalcoatl legend to dispossess the Indians in his search for gold. It is what Columbus himself had feared when he said,

   —Yet no delirium of jewels! O Fernando,  
   Take of that eastern shore, this western sea,  
   Yet yield thy God's, thy Virgin's charity!

The white man's materialism, which drove the Indian from the land, ends, in the "Indiana" section, by dispossessing the white man himself. The search for gold breaks his agricultural tie to the environment and leaves him a wanderer. On the pioneer woman's return journey from the Colorado gold-fields, a symbolic meeting occurs:

   The long trail back! I huddled in the shade  
     Of wagon-tenting looked out once and saw  
     Bent westward, passing on a stumbling jade  
       A homeless squaw—
Perhaps a halfbreed. On her slender back
    She cradled a babe's body, riding without rein.
Her eyes, strange for an Indian's, were not black
    But sharp with pain . . .

The "homeless" twilight figure, half-Indian, half-white, suggests at once the
redman dispossessed by the white man's greed and the white man himself, the
wandering frustrated pioneer, uprooted from the land by his own lust for gold.
The moment of recognition occurs; the squaw's eyes

    . . . seemed to shun the gaze
    Of all our silent men—the long team line—
    Until she saw me—when their violet haze
    Lit with love shine . . .

    I held you up—I suddenly the bolder,
    Knew that mere words could not have brought us nearer.
    She nodded—and that smile across her shoulder
    Will still endear her . . .

The search for gold has cost the pioneer woman her husband, who died on the
trail, her eldest son, who has gone away to sea, her true belief in religious
myth, and her touch with the land. It has left her only the sentimental world-
view of the folksong:

    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!

Her son has left the land; she wonders—"Will you be a ranger to the end?"
On that note, "Indiana" closes and with it "Powhatan's Daughter"—the poet's
journey back to his own embodiment of the world of true-believed religious
myth. From "Cutty Sark" onward, the poet is once again in the embodied world of scientific myth, moving toward the enclosed anti-world of personal myth—the completion of the poem.
CHAPTER THREE: FOOTNOTES


8. Lewis, p. 289, n. 2.


10. Williams, p. 48, 55.


12. Williams, p. 58.


20. Lawrence, p. 318.

21. Lawrence, p. 222.


CHAPTER FOUR
CLOSING THE CIRCLE

"Cutty Sark," the eighth section of The Bridge, is one of the crucial segments of the poem and, in my opinion, one of the most easily misunderstood. So much is going on, so much being suggested in such a short space that often a great deal of the information that it supplies for the rest of the poem is missed. Its link with the preceding section, "Indiana," seems clear: the sailor in "Cutty Sark" is the modern American descendant of the pioneer woman's son who left the land for the sea. The image of the son's blue eyes at the close of "Indiana" ("Oh, hold me in those eyes' engaging blue") fades into the image of green eyes of the sailor in "Cutty Sark":

His eyes pressed through green grass
—green glasses, or bar lights made them so—

shine—
GREEn—
eyes—

The sailor, whom the poet meets in a South Street bar, is a wanderer. In the modern world of scientific myth he is without historical or environmental integration. He says,

"No—I can't live on land—!

"I'm not much good at time any more keep weakeyed watches sometimes snooze . . . "
"I know what time it is— No
I don't want to know what time it is—that
damned white Arctic killed my time . . ."

As Crane depicts it, the materialism of scientific myth not only destroys
man's environmental integration, it deprives him of a human purpose or goal as
well. In religious myth the physical world exists as the stage for the working
out of human destiny. In one version, it is the "vineyard" in which man
labors to gain the kingdom of heaven. But in scientific myth the physical
world is simply a gigantic indifferent machine of which man is a part. Man
can dominate his environment but only on its terms, only by submitting first to
his own "materialization." And once that occurs, human goals vanish. The
description of the sailor's aimless wandering in the world of scientific myth
suggests a modern inversion of Columbus' purposeful voyage of discovery:

"I ran a donkey engine down there on the Canal
in Panama—got tired of that—
then Yucatan selling kitchenware—beads—
have you seen Popocatepetl—birdless mouth
with ashes sifting down—?
and then the coast again . . ."

In "Cutty Sark," Crane's contrasting of the worlds of religious and scientific
myth takes the form of a continuous inversion, corruption, or mechanization of
religious symbols in the modern world. The reference to the sailor's selling
beads recalls by contrast Columbus' "Ave Maria," the prayer said on the beads
of the rosary. This image of Marian devotion had already been mechanized in
the poem; the lights on the bridge had been described as "beading thy path."

We should also note that the reference to the sailor's selling beads to the
natives in Yucatan, taken in connection with the poem's location on South
Street in the Bowery, suggests the Indian's loss of Manhattan Island to the
white man for twenty-four dollars' worth of beads and trinkets. The image
of the volcano Popocatepetl and its "birdless mouth with ashes sifting down"
is the modern corruption of the volcanic isle Teneriffe in "Ave Maria," the
island which Columbus had taken as a sign from God:

Who sendest greeting by the corposant,
And Teneriffe's garnet—flamed it in a cloud,
Urging through night our passage to the Chan—
Te Deum laudamus, for thy teeming span!

The "corposant" is the atmospheric electricity sometimes referred to as St.
Elmo's fire. The word literally means "the body of a saint" (corpus sancti)
and suggests the humanizing of natural phenomena by religious myth. As
atmospheric electricity in the form of the corposant was considered the corona
around a holy body in the world of Christian myth, so in that of Indian myth
this electricity in the form of lightning was the flash of the thunderbird's eye
or the serpent spear of the rain god. In the context of "Cutty Sark" with its
epigraph from Melville and its references to whaling, one is reminded of the
appearance of the corposant in Moby Dick. In the chapter entitled "The
Candles" the Pequod is caught in an electrical storm:
"Look aloft!" cried Starbuck. "The corporants! the corporants!" All the yard-arms were tipped with a pallid fire; and touched at each tri-pointed lightning-rod-end with three tapering white flames, each of the three tall masts was silently burning in that sulphurous air, like three gigantic wax tapers before an altar.¹

The atmospheric electricity which gathers around Ahab's harpoon is portrayed in a serpent image:

... from the keen steel barb there now came a levelled flame of pale, forked fire. As the silent harpoon burned there like a serpent's tongue, Starbuck grasped Ahab by the arm—"God, God is against thee, old man; forbear! 'tis an ill voyage! ill begun, ill continued; let me square the yards, while we may, old man, and make a fair wind of it homewards, to go on a better voyage than this."

Overhearing Starbuck, the panic-stricken crew instantly ran to the braces—though not a sail was left aloft. For the moment all the aghast mate's thoughts seemed theirs; they raised a half mutinous cry...²

Ahab, seizing his harpoon, threatens to kill the first man who casts loose a rope, and then, in a Promethean tone, he says,

"And that ye may know to what tune this heart beats; look ye here; thus I blow out the last fear!" And with one blast of his breath he extinguished the flame.³

As the corporant in "Ave Maria" was taken as a sign of God's favor for the voyage, so in Moby Dick it was read as a sign of God's disfavor. Clearly, the method which I am employing with "Cutty Sark" is highly associative, but the very form of the poem, its stream-of-consciousness technique, demands it.

I see the wandering sailor as a modern inversion of the Columbus figure, and
I see the suggestions of Moby Dick in the sailor's conversation as balancing the voyage of the Pequod against the voyage of Columbus. This linking of the two triggers an interaction of associations. In each voyage the captain carries out his will over the objections of the crew. At the appearance of the corporant in Moby Dick the crew nearly mutinies. In "Ave Maria" Columbus says, "Lo, here / Bewilderment and mutiny heap whelming / Laughter, and shadow cuts sleep from the heart." In the incident of the corporant Ahab makes it clear that his voyage is proceeding in defiance of God. With Columbus the corporant is viewed as a token of divine favor; his trip is under the protection of the Virgin; his flagship bears her name. Yet the comparison of the two voyages suggests the doubleness of Columbus' role. He believes in God and the Virgin, yet his voyage to reach the east by sailing to the west is in defiance of the four-square world-view of Christian myth, a mythic world-view derived from the shape of the temple at Jerusalem. His intuition of the world as spherical and his journey to delimit that world are the first steps in the attempt at physical domination of environment. Paradoxically, his is a scientific voyage carried out under the banner of religion. Whatever Columbus' intentions, the final thrust of his journey is Promethean; it topples the gods.

I said earlier that in "Cutty Sark" a large number of allusions are made in a short space. In this regard let me return for a moment to the image of the volcano Popocatepetl in the sailor's description of his wanderings. I took
it as a modern corruption of the volcanic isle Teneriffe which Columbus had considered to be a sign from God. I think it can also be seen as an inverted reference to the legend of Quetzalcoatl. In the hymn of Quetzalcoatl from The Plumed Serpent, the god immolates himself in a volcano and ascends as a glittering bird: "Then fire rose from the volcano around the old Quetzalcoatl, in wings and glittering feathers. And with the wings of fire and the glitter of sparks Quetzalcoatl flew up, up, like a wafting fire, like a glittering bird. . . ."

Emblematic of the loss of Indian religious myth in the modern world, the Mexican volcano Popocatepetl is described as a "birdless mouth with ashes sifting down."

In the modern scientific world, the sailor of "Cutty Sark" is a wanderer, a man without a goal. As the poet remarked of the hoboes in "The River" that "they win no frontier by their wayward plight," so he says of the sailor,

I saw the frontiers gleaming of his mind; . . .
or are there frontiers—running sands sometimes,
running sands—somewhere—sands running . . . .

Yet there cling to the sailor memories of the past. He says that he was "a whaler once." He seems to remember a time when man, even on the sea, was in closer touch with his environment—the days of the sailing ships. Travelling under sail, man was at the mercy of his environment; he needed to be a keen observer of wind and weather, just as the man in the agriculturally-based society needed to be a close observer of rainfall and sunlight. As environmental inte-
gration was lost on land by the movement from an agricultural society to an
industrial, technological society, so on the sea the close touch with environ-
ment was lost by the movement from sail to steam—the distancing of man from
nature by the "iron dealt cleavage" of machinery. It is significant that the
epigraph to "Cutty Sark" is from Melville's "The Temeraire," a poem which
laments the displacement of the sailing vessel by the iron-clad:

But Trafalgar is over now,
The quarter-deck undone;
The carved and castled navies fire
Their evening-gun.
O, Titan Temeraire,
Your stern-lights fade away;
Your bulwarks to the years must yield,
And heart-of-oak decay.
A pygmy steam-tug tows you,
Gigantic, to the shore—
Dismantled of your guns and spars
And sweeping wings of war.
The rivets clinch the iron-clads
Men learn a deadlier lore....

Though the sailor of "Cutty Sark" is a wanderer in the modern world
of science, yet he is not free, he is at the mercy of the machine. When he
leaves the bar on South Street, he is almost hit by a truck:

Outside a wharf truck nearly ran him down
—he lunged up Bowery way while the dawn
was putting the Statue of Liberty out—that
torch of hers you know—

The extinction of human liberty in the mechanical world of scientific myth haunts
the poet. He longs for the human values of the past. Yet at this moment in
the imaginative apparition of the clipper ships, he must confront the past as irretrievably past. He says, "I started walking home across the Bridge..."

The form of the statement is significant. The incomplete aspect of the verb, the ellipsis at the end, the sudden break to the vision of the clipper ships, all indicate that this symbolic trip "home" across the bridge is one which he knows cannot be completed. He cannot get back physically to the lost world of religious myth and he cannot sustain that myth as true belief within the modern world. The clipper ships are an apparition—one which had been fore-shadowed in the poem when the flight of the seagull above the Statue of Liberty was said to be "as apparitional as sails that cross / Some page of figures to be filed away." In his mind the clipper ships pass in review, but at the end he asks,

    Rainbow, Leander
    (last trip a tragedy)—where can you be
    Nimbus? and you rivals two—

    a long tack keeping—Taeping?
    Ariel?

The answer, of course, is that they are gone forever in the past. Only their names remain.

    I have kept for last the discussion of what is probably the most important symbol in "Cutty Sark"—the lost city of Atlantis. During the meeting of the sailor and the poet in the South Street bar, a nickelodeon is playing in the back-
ground. The song it plays is "Stamboul Nights," and an altered version of its verse weaves in and out of the poem's stream-of-consciousness movement. I said earlier that in Crane's embodiment of the modern technological world there was a continuing inversion, corruption, or mechanization of the unifying symbols of the old world of religious myth. Music as an emblem of order and harmony receives its mechanical inversion in the tune of the "nickel-in-the-slot" piano, the tune whose lyrics recall the loss of the island city of Atlantis. One of the recurring symbols of order in almost all religious myth is the archetypal city. Its forms are various. Sometimes it is the city of a golden past to which one attempts to return, a Camelot; at other times it is the eternal city of the future, a New Jerusalem. The island city of Atlantis, as it is described in Plato's Timaeus and Critias, was built by the sea-god Poseidon to be the greatest city in the world. It was to be the home of his sons by a mortal woman. At first his descendants, the inhabitants of the city, were virtuous; they "found the weight of their gold and other possessions a light load. Wealth made them not drunken with wantonness."4 But with the passage of time, materialism and the will to power corrupted the people; they took "the infection of wicked covet- ing and pride of power."5 For this they were punished by the gods and their island city sunk beneath the sea. The lyrics of the song in "Cutty Sark" em-
phazise the destruction of the island:
Rose of Stamboul O coral Queen—
teased remnants of the skeletons of cities—
and galleries, galleries of watergutted lava
snarling stone—green—drums—drown—

The phrase "galleries of watergutted lava" suggests the eruption of a volcanic
island and its shattered submergence. It is significant that this portion of the
song immediately follows the sailor's reference to the volcano Popocatepetl,
considered earlier as a possible allusion to the volcanic isle of Teneriffe in
"Ave Maria." The peripheral associations begin to interact. In Columbus'
time Teneriffe and the rest of the Canary Islands were thought to be the rem-
nants of the sunken Atlantis whose inclusion on maps of the fourteenth and
fifteenth centuries had made it the object of numerous voyages of discovery.6

In Plato's account, Atlantis was destroyed because of its materialism and "pride
of power"—its Prometheus defiance of the gods. Balanced against this is the
voyage of Columbus, the voyage past Teneriffe and its suggestion of the lost
Atlantis. This journey, carried out under the banner of religious myth, was
in fact one of the first steps in delimiting the physical world as a prelude to
its spatial domination. Whether intended or not, Columbus' voyage opened the
way for the greed of the Spanish conquistadores, and in discrediting the four-
square world-view of religious myth by proving the earth a sphere, it formed
part of the movement toward the materialistic world-view of science, a view
derived from the mechanical relationships of external objects. His journey
was therefore a kind of defiance of the gods of religious myth, and the dehu-
manizing materialism of the world which resulted is the punishment for that
defiance.

Within the context of "Cutty Sark" and its allusions to Melville's
*Moby Dick*, the image of the lost Atlantis creates even more associations.
In Plato's *Critias*, Atlantis is described as an island city consisting of a cen-
tral islet surrounded by alternate concentric rings of sea and land. \(^7\) The rings
were linked by bridges and subterranean canals. All the arteries of the city
radiated outward to the sea, the realm of its founder Poseidon. Considering
that the setting of "Cutty Sark" is Manhattan and that one of the poem's al-
lusive backgrounds is *Moby Dick*, one is reminded of the description of the
island city that occurs in the first chapter of the Melville novel:

> There now is your insular city of the Manhattoes,
belted round by wharves as Indian isles by coral reefs—
commerce surrounds it with her surf. Right and left, the
streets take you waterward. Its extreme down-town is
the battery, where that noble mole is washed by waves,
and cooled by breezes, which a few hours previous were
out of sight of land. Look at the crowds of water-gazers
there. \(^8\)

According to Plato, on the central islet of Atlantis, Poseidon caused
"two fountains to flow from underground springs, one warm, the other cold,
and the soil to send up abundance of food plants of all kinds." \(^9\) Like the
bird-serpent, the fountain in the world of religious myth is a symbol of vitality,
the life-spirit, the fruitful interaction of earth and water. In "The River" when the poet describes the lost world of vegetative myth, he says,

The old gods of the rain lie wrapped in pools
Where eyeless fish curvet a sunken fountain.

In "Cutty Sark" the description of the sunken city is followed immediately by a transmuted fountain image; the sailor says,

"—that spiracle!" he shot a finger out the door . . .
"O life's a geyser—beautiful—my lungs—
No—I can't live on land—!"

The reference to the spiracle (the blowhole of a whale) and the comparison of life to a geyser suggest two chapters in *Moby Dick*—"The Spirit-Spout" and "The Fountain." In "The Fountain," the spouting of the whale is seen as a symbol of vitality. The whale breathes through its spiracle and as Melville remarks, "in any creature breathing is only a function indispensable to vitality."10 In "The Spirit-Spout" *Moby Dick*’s jet of water-vapor is sighted by the crew of the Pequod at night, and it is described in terms that suggest the plumed serpent:

"Lit up by the moon, it looked celestial; seemed some plumed and glittering god uprising from the sea."11 And again: "But calm, snow-white, and unvarying; still directing its fountain of feathers to the sky; still beckoning us from before, the solitary jet would at times be descried."12 That we are intended to make an associative connection between Plato’s story of Atlantis and certain details in *Moby Dick* is, I think, clearly indicated by the lines describing the poet’s encounter with the sailor:
Murmurs of Leviathan he spoke,
and rum was Plato in our heads .

But what is the connection that is being suggested? We noted earlier that the fountain and the bird-serpent were both symbols of vitality, of the fruitful interaction of water and earth. In Atlantis, the fountains at the center of the island caused the soil "to send up abundance of food plants." In "The Dance" the bird-serpent was the rain god who married the earth goddess to make the land fruitful. The serpent is a phallic symbol, and the sexual connotation of the fountain's jet of water is obvious. In short, fountain and bird-serpent are related symbols. In William Cullen Bryant's poem "The Fountain," a work which Lewis thinks that Crane knew and was influenced by, \textsuperscript{13} the images of the eagle, the snake, and the fountain are all connected within the theme of man's possible defilement of the landscape:

\begin{verbatim}
Is there no other change for thee, that lurks
Among the future ages? Will not man
Seek out strange arts to wither and deform
The pleasantest landscape which thou makest green?
Or shall the veins that feed thy constant stream
Be choked in middle earth, and flow no more
For ever, that the water-plants along
Thy channel perish, and the bird in vain
Alight to drink? Haply shall these green hills
Sink, with the lapse of years, into the gulf
Of ocean waters, and thy source be lost
Amidst the bitter brine? Or shall they rise,
Upheaved in broken cliffs and airy peaks,
Haunts of the eagle and the snake, and thou
Gush midway from the bare and barren steep?
\end{verbatim}
In these lines it is interesting to note the Atlantis motif in the image of the green hills sinking "into the gulf of ocean waters."

In "Cutty Sark" the fountain, the vital symbol of the sunken city of Atlantis, is linked with the bird-serpent, the vital symbol of the lost world of the Indians, and the bridge between the two is the allusion to Moby Dick and the description of the whale's spout (an image of vitality) as a "fountain of feathers" and as a "plumed and glittering god." The linking of these symbols of vitality from the world of religious myth is itself, within the personal myth of the poem, symbolic of the way in which religious myth attempted to impose order on the world by conceiving of the world as vital, as human. A connection is also being made in "Cutty Sark" between the island city of Atlantis and the island city of Manhattan. Atlantis, the lost city of religious myth, fell from greatness through the materialism of its inhabitants and was punished by the gods. Modern Manhattan, the city of scientific myth, has risen to a position of technological dominance through the materialistic world-view of its inhabitants, a view which toppled the gods, but that materialism has been its own punishment. It has made a city in which man is at the mercy of machines—the nightmare world of "The Tunnel." In scientific myth, man mistook the coherence of material relationships and the resulting spatial domination for a human ordering of the world. As a result, the city, once the Apollonian symbol of human order, is now the symbol of dehumanization and environmental disintegration.
In the modern world the whole meaning of the city as the epitome of the human and the humane has been lost through materialism just as the city of Atlantis was lost.

In "Cape Hatteras," the next section of The Bridge, technology's corruption and mechanization of the unifying, vital symbols of religious myth is presented in the threatening image of the airplane—the mechanical bird. Indeed, part of the rationale of the four sections which precede "Atlantis"—"Cape Hatteras," "Three Songs," "Quaker Hill," and "The Tunnel"—is that they embody the scientific world's mechanical parody of the integrated religious world of "The Dance." The unifying, vital symbol of the bird-serpent is separated and mechanized respectively in the plane (bird) of "Cape Hatteras" and the subway train (serpent) of "The Tunnel." The two metaphors for environmental integration found in "The Dance"—love and death, i.e., the sexual union of the rain god and earth goddess, and the vegetative god's dying into the land—are embodied, in "Three Songs" and "Quaker Hill" respectively, in terms of the modern disintegrated world.

In "Cape Hatteras" Crane not only depicts science's mechanization of the world, he also examines how paradoxically that dehumanizing world-view grew out of the human impulse for order. In Ouspensky's Tertium Organum there is an illuminating passage on the hope that man had placed in machinery, and particularly in the airplane, as instruments for ordering the world. Ous-
pensky quotes R. M. Bucke's *Cosmic Consciousness* on "the material, economic and social revolution which will depend upon and result from the establishment of aerial navigation." Bucke prophesies that

Before aerial navigation national boundaries, tariffs and perhaps distinctions of language will fade out. Great cities will no longer have reason for being and will melt away. The men who now dwell in cities will inhabit in summer the mountains and the seashores; building often in airy and beautiful spots, now almost or quite inaccessible, commanding the most extensive and magnificent views. In the winter they will probably dwell in communities of moderate size. As herding together, as now, in great cities, so the isolation of the worker of the soil will become a thing of the past. Space will be practically annihilated, there will be no crowding together and no enforced solitude.¹⁴

*Cosmic Consciousness* was published in 1901. But Ouspensky, writing after World War I, comments that "... aerial navigation, toward which men had looked forward for milleniums, finally achieved, is used first of all for purposes of war."¹⁵ The quotation from Bucke in Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum* would no doubt have had a special interest for Crane in the writing of "Cape Hatteras," for Bucke was the close friend and official biographer of Walt Whitman, the major figure in this section of *The Bridge*. Crane begins this section with the image of a returning sea voyage rounding the cape. It is at once a link to the apparition of the sailing vessels at the end of "Cutty Sark" and a development of the Whitman epigraph to "Cape Hatteras": "The seas all crossed, weathered the capes, the voyage done ..." The quotation suggests not only the com-
pletion of a voyage but indeed the completion of all sea voyages of discovery. The surface of the earth has been delimited and spatially dominated. Man must now turn his desire for spatial domination to a new realm—the air.

The setting of this section, Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, is, of course, the site of Kitty Hawk where the first airplane flight occurred. The image of the cape at the beginning of the poem is similar to the image of the land in "The River." Beneath the defacing machinery the earth retains its freshness. It is "our native clay" whose "continental folded aeons" are "sur-charged with sweetness below derricks, chimneys, tunnels." It is "veined by all that time has really pledged us." But modern man, engaged in the physical subjugation of his environment, has lost the old relation to the land. Man's impulse to order, the impulse not to be at the mercy of a chaotic environment, took, in the course of history, a wrong turning in which spatial domination was mistaken for human ordering. On his historical path man was deflected, shunted "to a labyrinth submersed / Where each sees only his dim past reversed"—seeking not to be at the mercy of his environment, man has ended up at the mercy of machines. And now with the invention of a new machine (the airplane), man has begun his attempt to dominate a farther realm—the air, and ultimately outer space. But, says the poet,
... that star-glistened salver of infinity,
The circle, blind crucible of endless space,
Is sluiced by motion,—subjugated never.
Adam and Adam's answer in the forest
Left Hesperus mirrored in the lucid pool.

These are, in my opinion, among the most important lines in the entire poem.
The scientific world-view which attempts to derive a material order from the
environment is contrasted with the religious world-view which tries to impose
a human order on nature. In religious myth, Adam, the first man and himself
a product of myth, attempts to impose human order on the world by naming
physical objects and incorporating them into an ordered mythic system. In the
dark, chaotic "forest" of the physical world, Adam gives the name Hesperus to
a physical object, the planet Venus, and thereby removes it from its nameless
and inchoate condition to be mirrored henceforth in the lucid pool of man's
mind. That it is the planet Venus which Adam names in these lines is signifi-
cant. He calls it Hesperus, but whatever its name—Venus, Hesperus, the Morn-
ing Star, the Evening Star—it is the same physical object which, under a variety
of names, has entered into different religious myths. Indeed, the motif of the
Morning Star that runs through The Bridge is meant to symbolize the way in
which religious myth attempts to impose order on the world by explaining physical
objects in human terms. In Christian myth the Morning Star was associated with
the Virgin; in Indian myth it was the soul of the metamorphosed Quetzalcoatl;
in the world of "The Dance" it is the "dim, perpetual throne" of Maquoikeeta;
in "Cutty Sark" it is associated with the lost city of Atlantis,
ATLANTIS ROSE drums wreath the rose,
the star floats burning in a gulf of tears
and sleep another thousand—

and in "Cape Hatteras" it is given the name Hesperus by Adam. But religion
has been replaced by science, human order by spatial domination. In the
breakdown of historical and environmental integration the eagle of space has
been separated from the serpent of time:

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.

The sky, the realm of the gods in religious myth, has been invaded by man
and his machines. The cloud, one of the symbols of God's presence in the
Judeo-Christian tradition, is now beneath man's sway; scientific myth has deposed
the gods of religion:

Dream cancels dream in this new realm of fact
From which we wake into the dream of act;
Seeing himself an atom in a shroud—
Man hears himself an engine in a cloud.

The physical efficacy of scientific myth ("the dream of act") has cancelled out
the old dream of religious myth. By accepting a materialistic view of the world
and his place in it ("Seeing himself an atom in a shroud"), man has been able
to control his environment and become a kind of mechanical, spatial god ("an
engine in a cloud"). We note here that once again a symbol from the world
of religious myth (the cloud) has been corrupted in the world of scientific myth.
At this point in "Cape Hatteras" the figure of Walt Whitman is introduced. (Indeed, from this section of The Bridge onward, the figures of poets and artists begin to appear in the poem as individuals who have confronted in one form or another the same problem that Crane faces.) Whitman is depicted as one who, in the midst of the industrial world, remembered the past and man's connection with the land; his eyes "gleam from the great stones of each prison crypt / Of canyoned traffic," they confront the Exchange, survive in a world of stocks, and "range / Across the hills where second timber strays / Back over Connecticut farms, abandoned pastures." From the brief introduction of Whitman, the poem turns suddenly back to a description of the inhuman world of technology. Sixteen lines of impressionistic verse beginning "The nasal whine of power whips a new universe" embody the maniacal environment of the machine. As the poet's judgment of man's attempt at spatial domination took the form of a corrupted circle image,

The circle, blind crucible of endless space,
Is sluiced by motion,—subjugated never.

so his reaction to the glinting gears and bearings of the machine is the apostrophe "O murmurlless and shined / In oil rinsed circles of blind ecstasy!" The circle, the symbol of God in religious myth and of visionary unity in mysticism, is, in the world of scientific myth, associated with blindness and the machine. The mechanization of the circle continues in the poet's description of the airplane:
O bright circumferences, heights employed to fly
War's fiery kennel masked in downy offings,—
This tournament of space, the threshed and chiseled height,
Is baited by marauding circles . . .

In a brief evocation of the first airplane flight by the Wright brothers, the poet suggests its similarity to Columbus' voyage. As Columbus' discovery of the New World paved the way, unintentionally, for the greed and plunder of the conquistadores, so the Wrights' venture into the new realm of air travel led unintentionally to aerial warfare:

    New latitudes, unknotty, soon give place
    To what fierce schedules, rife of doom apace!
    Behold the dragon's covey . . .

Crane's lengthy description of air combat in "Cape Hatteras" is clearly a mechanical inversion of the integrated world of "The Dance." The bird-serpent, the symbol of historical and environmental unity in Indian religious myth, was the rain god, the lord of the thunder and lightning, who made the earth fruitful. But in the disintegrated world of "Cape Hatteras" the thunder and lightning of the mechanical bird, the airplane, rain death on the land:

    . . . until a conch of thunder answers
    Cloud-belfries, banging, while searchlights, like fencers,
    Slit the sky's pancreas of foaming anthracite
    Toward thee, O Corsair of the typhoon,—pilot, hear!
    Thine eyes bicarbonated white by speed, O Skygak, see
    How from thy path above the levin's lance
    Thou sowest doom thou hast nor time nor chance
    To reckon . . .
The phrases "conch of thunder," "Corsair of the typhoon," "levin's lance," "sowest doom" all suggest the mechanical inversion of that scene in "The Dance" where the eagle-serpent Maquoikeeta, the rain god, approaches in a thunderstorm to fertilize the woman-continent Pocahontas. The image of the serpent-spear of the rain dance finds its corrupted equivalent in the phrase "levin's lance" and in the lines:

       Each plane a hurtling javelin of winged ordnance,
       Bristle the heights above a screeching gale to hover.

In the circling, ritual dance of the Indian world, Maquoikeeta underwent his fiery death into the land and became one with the continent:

       A birch kneels. All her whistling fingers fly.
       The oak grove circles in a crash of leaves;
       The long moan of a dance is in the sky.
       Dance, Maquoikeeta: Pocahontas grieves. . . .

But in the mechanical corruption of this dance in "Cape Hatteras," the spiralling fiery crash of the airplane, the pilot does not become one with the land; he is merely scattered over its surface as fragmented debris:

       Now eagle-bright, now
       quarry-hid, twist-
       -ing, sink with
       Enormous repercussive list-
       -ings down
       Giddily spiralled
       gauntlets, upturned, unlooping
       In guerilla sleights, trapped in combustion gyr-
       -ing, dance the curdled depth
       down whizzing
Zodiacs, dashed
(now nearing fast the Cape!)
down gravitation's vortex into crashed . . . dispersion . . . into mashed and shapeless debris. . . .
By Hatteras bunched the beached heap of high bravery!

The paradox of the machine, the fact that the dehumanizing mechanism grew out of the human impulse to order, is suggested in Crane's address to the pilot of the warplane:

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

The pilot's wrist controls the dropping of an explosive charge which has the power to kill those below and launch them into the dim marge of infinity. Yet this inhuman action which treats men like physical objects results paradoxically from the modern scientific version of the ancient human charge or commission to order, a charge as old as the Sanskrit Vedas which attempted that ordering not by spatial domination and the machine but by the verbalization ("conjugate infinity's dim marge") of religious myth. To be human is to order. In scientific myth man believed that he could free himself from the grip of a chaotic environment by using machines to order that environment. But the first step in using the machine is to accept the ruthless logic of materialism and of mechanical relationships, and from that logic, once accepted,
There is no breaking out. In a real sense, the machine cannot serve the ends of human order; it serves its own mechanical ends, and in a technological environment man finds that he must serve those ends as well.

From the airplane crash on the beach at Cape Hatteras, the poem shifts suddenly back to the image of Walt Whitman. Whitman is depicted as the spiritual predecessor of the poet; he is an individual who in the shaping of his own personal myth asserted the claims of human order and vitality against the materialism of science. In a lengthy description of the landscape Whitman is identified with all that is vital, alive:

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 the breakers cliffward leaping!

He is the "meistersinger" who "set breath in steel" and began the work of the personal myth—the bridge of the poem which would ultimately lead the human mind back to itself as the source of order:

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!

The juxtaposition of the mechanical world of scientific myth and the figure of Walt Whitman contrasts science's image of man as a mechanical god of spatial dominion ("an engine in a cloud") with personal myth's revelation of the human mind as the anthropomorphic god-like source of order. In "Cape Hatteras"
Whitman is described in terms usually applied to God. He is called "Panis Angelicus!" (heavenly bread), the title applied to the Eucharist in Catholic hymnology. He is associated with the rainbow, a sign of God, and with resurrection from the dead:

O, upward from the dead
Thoubringest tally, and a pact, new bound
Of living brotherhood!

Whitman symbolizes the individual imagination as maker of the personal myth, the ordered world within language which exists for the very sake of the order it embodies. He is Crane's forerunner, though of course Whitman's own personal myth will not suffice for Crane. He must make his own. Thus the image at the end of "Cape Hatteras" of Crane and Whitman advancing hand in hand into the future is simply another image of momentary imaginative participation, like that which ends "The Dance":

We danced, O Brave, we danced beyond their farms
In cobalt desert closures made our vows . . .

As the poet's inability to sustain religious myth as true belief was indicated by the disillusionment of the "Indiana" section which followed "The Dance," so the insufficiency of the Whitmanian personal myth for the poet is indicated by the disillusionment of the "Three Songs" section which follows "Cape Hatteras." The poet must persevere to the creation of his own personal myth—the completion of the poem called The Bridge.
The two sections of The Bridge which came next, "Three Songs" and "Quaker Hill," have generally, along with "Indiana" and parts of "Cape Hatteras," borne the brunt of critical dissatisfaction with the poem. In the case of "Three Songs" and "Quaker Hill" this dissatisfaction takes the form of questioning the structural purpose of these sections—put bluntly, what do they contribute to the poem? As I said earlier, I view "Three Songs" and "Quaker Hill" as treating, respectively, the two principal metaphors for man's relationship to his environment—union by love (sexual union) and union by death. These two metaphors are related in the concept of sexual union as "the lesser death," and indeed are handled virtually as one in "The Dance." Emblematic of man's historical and environmental disintegration in the modern world, they are, in the latter half of The Bridge, handled in two separate sections.

In "Three Songs" Crane embodies the corruption of the sexual metaphor in modern life, but he also begins to define a kind of love appropriate to the world of personal myth, for if to be human is to order, to be human is also to love. In the world of religious myth as Crane embodies it, the environment was conceived of as vital, as human, and the outward-directed impulse which moved man toward union with another human being also moved him toward integration with his humanized environment. As Ouspensky remarks, "In the sex impulse man puts himself in the most personal relation with nature." But when, as in scientific myth, the world is conceived of in materialistic terms and people are
reduced to inhuman physical objects, then love no longer moves man toward union either with others or with his environment. In "Three Songs" Crane examines within the context of the modern world the human object of love (woman) under three archetypal aspects: mother, harlot, and virgin—Eve, Magdalene, and Mary. He finds in each case a dehumanization of the modern woman which makes love a materialistic parody of itself.

The epigraph to "Three Songs" from Marlowe's Hero and Leander, "The one Sestos, the other Abydos sight," suggests the by-gone time when love was an outward-directed impulse, when it formed the motive force for a voyage—Leander's nightly crossing of the Hellespont. In the apparition of the sailing vessels in "Cutty Sark" when the poet recognizes the past as irretrievably past, there is an ironic allusion to the modern condition of love in the remark "Leander (last trip a tragedy)." The Marlowe epigraph also suggests the voyage of Columbus, carried out under the aegis of the archetypal woman of Christian myth, the Virgin Mary. In "Southern Cross," the first of the "Three Songs," the poet's sea voyage is a modern inversion of the love-inspired journey. The poet is moved by desire but it is desire reduced to a material force:

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

or Mary, you?

Whatever calls—falls vainly on the wave.

If the act of naming was man's way of humanizing his environment, then the woman's namelessness is symbolic of her dehumanization in the materialistic world. Whatever name he uses, the call "falls vainly on the wave." Reduced to an inhuman physical object, a "simian Venus," the nameless woman fulfills none of the traditional roles of the human object of love. In the opening lines she is associated with the environment, with the Southern Cross and the night. But the association is ironic, for the Southern Cross, like the Morning Star, is an emblem of religious myth's attempt to humanize environment by naming physical objects, and as the poet says again of the woman,

It is blood to remember; it is fire
To stammer back . . . It is
God—your namelessness.

In the world of scientific myth, the humanizing impulse of religious myth vanishes:

"The Cross, a phantom, buckled—dropped below the dawn." On his voyage, Columbus, by love and belief, could see the anthropomorphic God manifest in the starry heavens—"the orbic wake of thy once whirling feet." But the poet, on his voyage, sees

... this long wake of phosphor,
iridescent
Furrow of all our travel—trailed derision!
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.
Details from Columbus' journey in the old world of religious myth are inverted in the poet's voyage through the modern materialistic world. In "Ave Maria" an Angelus was sung by the sailors gathered around the mast ("Some Angelus environs the cordage tree"), but in "Southern Cross" there are only "windswept guitars on lonely decks forever." Columbus, beneath the light of the corposant, praised God for his "teeming span"; the poet at the approach of dawn makes his curt address to the nameless, dehumanized earth-mother: "Light drowned the lithic trillions of your spawn." The reference in this line seems to be to the phosphorescent plankton common in the Caribbean Sea. This plankton would have given the ship its "long wake of phosphor," and, as any phosphorescent body loses its glow in the full light of day, these "lithic trillions" would have been drowned in the light of dawn. In this image love and the human sex impulse are reduced, within a materialistic world-view, to the level of the blind procreation of amoebic sea-creatures.

The nameless woman of "Southern Cross" cast successively in the roles of mother, sensual lover, and virgin is a corruption of the figure of Pocahontas—the earth-mother, the lover of Maquokeeta and the poet, and "the virgin to the last of men." In the role of Eve, the nameless woman is referred to by the poet as the "wraith of my unloved seed." This suggests by contrast the poet's moment of imagined union with Pocahontas in "Harbor Dawn" when the first light of day "recalls you to your love, there in a waking dream to merge your seed." The embrace of the poet and Pocahontas in "Harbor Dawn,"
... singing
arms close; eyes wide, undoubtful
dark
drink the dawn—
a forest shudders in your hair!

has its contrasting image in "Southern Cross":

All night the water combed you with black
Insolence. You crept out simmering, accomplished.
Water rattled that stinging coil, your
Rehearsed hair—docile, alas, from many arms.

This inversion of the Pocahontas image continues in the figure of the burlesque dancer in "National Winter Garden," the second of the "Three Songs." The music for her performance is "a tom-tom scrimmage with a somewhere violin," the word "tom-tom" immediately recalling the Indian ritual dance in which Maquoieeta and Pocahontas became one; but in the burlesque dance, man and woman are separated—at the end the poet says, "We flee her spasm through a fleshless door." In "The Dance" Pocahontas was called the "glacier woman," but in "National Winter Garden" Crane says of the dancer:

And shall we call her whiter than the snow?
Sprayed first with ruby, then with emerald sheen.

The fruitful phallic symbol of the Indian dance, the serpent, is debased in the burlesque performance to the image of the dancer's "silly snake rings" which "begin to mount, surmount each other—turveyse fakes on tinselled hands."
The burlesque dancer, the degraded sensual lover, offers to the poet no possibility of a union like the love-death dance of Maquoieeta and Pocahontas. He says,
Yet, to the empty trapeze of your flesh,
O Magdalene, each comes back to die alone.

The dancer is at once "the burlesque of our lust—and faith," a dehumanized parody of the human sex impulse and of love. Yet she produces life, she "lug[s] us back lifeward—bone by infant bone." But it is not human life; it is, as at the end of "Southern Cross," an image of animal procreation. Indeed, as Crane examines in the course of "Three Songs" and "Quaker Hill" the love and death metaphors for environmental relationship he asserts more and more the uniqueness of human life as opposed not only to the materialism of scientific myth but to the animism of religious myth as well. In Crane's view, scientific myth aims at a continuity of man and his environment by conceiving of man as material like the world, while religious myth aims at this continuity by conceiving of the world as human like man. He can accept neither as true belief, but if he had to choose between the two as myths, he would select the religious, for though it blurs the uniqueness of human life, it does not abolish it by a materialistic world-view as does science. But the poet has a third choice—the personal myth which asserts a kind of discontinuity of man and his environment and holds for the uniqueness of human life, love, order, and the human imagination.

In "Virginia," the third of the "Three Songs," Crane's depiction of the modern dehumanization of woman as the object of love continues in the
figure of Mary, the office virgin. Unlike the Virgin of Christian myth, this
Mary's virginity represents no exalted human ideal. It springs from a commercial
coyness, an inability to love. She keeps "smiling the boss away," yet she is no
more receptive to the poet, who says in exasperation,

    Mary (what are you going to do?)
    Gone seven—gone eleven,
    And I'm still waiting for you—

What the poet has in mind is clear from the imagery; it is

    . . . Spring in Prince Street
    Where green figs gleam
    By oyster shells!

Green figs and oysters are traditional aphrodisiacs, and in folklore the fig tree,
because of its fertility, was invoked as the symbolic husband of barren women.

It is in this context that the poet, with a play on the idiom and an allusion to
the fairy tale, entreats Mary, "Let down your golden hair!" Clearly, the
modern virgin, whose virginity represents her inability to love, is a dehumanized
parody of the Virgin of Christian myth. Referred to ironically as "Cathedral
Mary," she inhabits "a nickel-dime tower," and instead of an Angelus on
cathedral bells she has only "high carillon from the popcorn bells."

From his examination of the love metaphor in "Three Songs," Crane
turns to an examination of death as a metaphor for environmental integration
in "Quaker Hill." The setting of "Quaker Hill" is an autumnal world of
change and decay. The epigraph from Emily Dickinson evokes the season:
"The gentian weaves her fringes, / The maple's loom is red." In this environment where "leaf after autumnal leaf break off," the poet finds death everywhere: "But I have seen death's stare in slow survey / From four horizons that no one relates . . . " In the world of scientific myth he must confront the view of death as a material dissolution which annihilates personality, but he must also confront the prior death of human values which this view entails.

The poem opens with the image of cows grazing in a field; theirs is a dumb, animal indifference to the decaying physical world:

They keep the docile edict of the Spring
That blends March with August Antarctic skies:
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 animals are "awkward, ponderous and uncoy"; they represent life at a low level. The men who watch them feel superior, they boast much of their "store of faith in other men." Yet these people, who would "stalk down the merriest ghost," who would admit the existence of nothing beyond the material world, have by this very world-view reduced human life to the level of animal life. The emblem of dehumanization in "Quaker Hill" is the modern despoiling of the remnants of the human past. The Quaker Meeting House, from the world of religious myth, has been remodeled into the New Avalon Hotel, the commercial establishment. No chaotic, inhuman environment defaced this relic of the past, but man's own materialism.
In "Quaker Hill" the poet must face the paradox that religious myth and scientific myth grew out of the same human impulse, that as much as he likes the humanizing aspect of the one and dislikes the dehumanizing aspect of the other they are both part of man's experience, they are successive steps which have made possible the self-awareness of personal myth. He must "shoulder the curse of sundered parentage"—the conflicting world-views of religious and scientific myth. For him these two myths have cancelled each other out as true belief. He cannot accept that man is material like his environment or that his environment is human like man. He asserts the discontinuity of man and the physical world, the uniqueness of human life, and consequently the isolation of the human condition. In asserting this discontinuity he avoids science's view of man as a biological mechanism, but in return he must give up religious myth's use of seasonal renewal as an analogue for human survival. Because of the uniqueness of human life and the resulting isolation, the poet understands that the love and death metaphors for environmental integration are just that—metaphors. Expressions of a human need in an inhuman world, assertions of the human ideals of creative generation and survival in a chaotic environment. For the poet, to be human is to assert the human ideals—love, order, perseverance, etc.—and to assert them in the very face of chaos. In this connection, the other epigraph to "Quaker Hill" becomes clear—Isadora Duncan's statement that "I see only the ideal. But no ideals have ever been
fully successful on this earth." The holding to the ideal in the full self-conscious knowledge of its unsuccess in the external world is what makes man human. The poet says,

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!
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—

From the materially-oriented spatial domination of "the hawk's far stemming view" man must descend to the "worm's eye," to the reality of his own death, to understand that his destiny lies not in identifying himself with the external world or in attempting to subjugate it, but in affirming all that makes him uniquely different from that world. He does not despise the world, he does not reject it; he loves it—we must "descend as worm's eye to construe / Our love of all we touch." But this love is uniquely human; it is an unselfish
love which knows that the world is non-human and which consequently expects absolutely nothing in return. This love is no metaphor for union with the environment, rather it is the highest expression of the uniqueness of the human ideal—it is pure benevolence towards a world of blind indifference.

In this connection we can understand the presence of Emily Dickinson and Isadora Duncan in the poem. In "Three Songs" where the dehumanization of the love metaphor was a symbol of modern environmental disintegration, woman was considered as the object of love—Eve, Magdalene, and Mary. But in the context of a uniquely human love which does not seek an environmental union based on a continuity wholly human or wholly material, the movement is from woman as the object of love to woman as the subject of love—the unselfish lover. For the poet, Emily Dickinson and Isadora Duncan were women who loved and expected nothing in return, artists who loved the world in the very face of pain and despair. The poet himself must confront the desperate possibilities which decay and death present. He does not know what happens to man after death, but even if the most disheartening possibility is true, even if it is an annihilation, he can, through this specifically human, unselfish love which expects nothing in return, assert that, while it lasts, human life is unique and uniquely valuable; and the proof of this uniqueness is the very ability to affirm the human ideal in the face of death. The poet must "take the sheaf of dust upon (his) tongue" and "in one last angelus lift
throbberg throat." This affirmation of the human ideal in the face of pain and despair, this song which confronts decay and death, springs from an unselfish love become the motive force of art. It is an act of self-denial which, paradoxically, is also an act of self-exaltation, an assertion of uniqueness and value. The song of the "whip-poor-will" (with the play on the name as emblematic of self-denial) is "that stilly note / Of pain that Emily, that Isadora knew." It arises from that human confrontation with all that is most threatening to human life in a chaotic, indifferent world, from that suffering which

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. . . .

But it is not enough for the poet to make that confrontation though the surrogate figures of Emily Dickinson and Isadora Duncan, he must make it for himself in "The Tunnel" and affirm the human ideal in the completion of the poem.

In "Quaker Hill" the poet said that we must take "our love of all we touch" to "the Gate as humbly as a guest who knows himself too late," and, continuing this motif, Crane begins "The Tunnel" with the Blake quotation: "To Find the Western path / Right thro' the Gates of Wrath." The setting of this section is the modern city of scientific myth, Manhattan. It is evening and the poet is preparing to ride the subway back to Brooklyn, completing the circular journey which he began when he crossed the bridge in the morning. The opening lines of the poem evoke the metropolis:
Performances, assortments, resumes—
Up Times Square to Columbus Circle lights
Channel the congresses, nightly sessions,
Refractions of the thousand theatres, faces—
Mysterious kitchens.... You shall search them all.

The collocation of Times Square and Columbus Circle suggests that this modern city is the end product of the materialism unwittingly introduced into the New World by Columbus' circular journey in defiance of the traditional four-square world-view of religious myth. In the poet's circular journey back to Brooklyn on the subway, he must confront the decay and death of human values in the mechanized world, he must face near-despair and the possibility of his own death. Riding the subway through the tunnel under the river, he goes down into the grave of the material world. The danger of despair is suggested at the very start: "As usual you will meet the scuttle yawn: / The subway yawns the quickest promise home." The word "scuttle" immediately reminds us of the suicide in the poem:

Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft
A bedlamite speeds to thy parapets,
Tilting there momentarily, shrill shirt ballooning,
A jest falls from the speechless caravan.

In this connection the line "the subway yawns the quickest promise home" takes on a sinister undertone.

The subway ride in the serpent-train completes the mechanized parody of "The Dance" begun in "Cape Hatteras." One after another the symbols of
human order and of human values are dehumanized. Music as an emblem, as
"the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system," is degraded
in the inhuman music of the train:

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

The intent escalator lifts a serenade
Stilly
Of shoes, umbrellas . . .

The image of the coin in the slot and the gong recalls the "nickel-in-the-slot
piano" of "Cutty Sark" and its mechanical version of the song of Atlantis.
Significantly, the image which immediately follows the turnstile reference,

And so
of cities you bespeak
subways, rivered under streets
and rivers . . .

suggests the subterranean canals of the island city of Atlantis in Plato's descrip-
tion and, consequently, the connection between this mythic city destroyed by
its own materialism and the modern island city of materialism, Manhattan. In
the subway ride, the disconnected talk of the passengers heard through the roar
of the train is a kind of inhuman music; the poet describes it as "the phono-
graphs of hades in the brain." He says, "Our rongues recant like beaten
weather vanes." In the mechanical inversion of human symbols, the bird-
serpent and its connection with the fertilizing thunderstorm is also parodied:
Bolting outright somewhere above where streets
Burst suddenly in rain. . . . The gongs recur:
Elbows and levers, guard and hissing door.
Thunder is galvothermic here below. . . .

Toward corners of the floor
Newspapers wing, revolve and wing.

The serpent-train, the mechanical thunder and lightning ("galvothermic"), the rain that falls not on fertile land but on city streets, the bird-like newspapers that "wing, revolve and wing" are all modern corruptions of details of the marriage of the rain god and earth goddess in "The Dance." In this mechanical world, love is reduced to "a burnt match skating in a urinal," and the gate of death which appears as a motif at the end of "Quaker Hill" and in the epigraph to "The Tunnel," the gate which the poet must enter imaginatively and still attempt to affirm the human ideal, is crudely parodied in terms of a de-humanized sexual death; a girl overheard on the subway says,

". . . if
you don't like my gate why did you
swing on it, why didn't
swing on it
anyhow—"

In the midst of this inhuman ride the poet encounters imaginatively the figure of Edgar Allen Poe, a writer who, exiled in his own society, died on the streets of Baltimore. Crane recognizes him as an analogue of his own possible fate:
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!
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 Poe dragged through the streets of Baltimore refers to one of the legends about Poe's death—that, down and out, he was seized by a gang of political rowdies who made him drunk, took him from polling place to polling place as a multiple voter, and then discarded him on the street. In the poem the incident is symbolic of the individual confronting a materialistic environment, the dehumanization of his fellow men, and the death of human values. When Crane asks Poe, "Did you deny the ticket?" he is asking him if, at the moment of confrontation, at the moment of this nightmare-like ending to his life, he was able to affirm the uniqueness and value not only of human life, but of his own individual human life as well. For it is to this point that the making of the personal myth leads Crane: in asserting the discontinuity of man and his environment, the uniqueness and value of human life, and the consequent isolation of the human condition he is brought finally to affirm the uniqueness and value of the individual life, the discontinuity of the I and the non-I, and, as it were, the isolation of one being from another. In the long passage quoted above, the
image "And death, aloft,—gigantically down / Probing through you—toward me" refers to a line in Poe's poem "The City in the Sea." As Lewis has pointed out, it is this very line which Williams quotes in his chapter on Poe in *In the American Grain;* Williams says, "It is especially in the poetry where 'death looked gigantically down' that the horror of the formless resistance which opposed, maddened, destroyed him has forced its character into the air, the wind, the blessed galleries of paradise, above a morose, dead world, peopled by shadows and silence, and despair—it is the compelling force of his isolation." 17

The isolation of the individual human being in the modern world not only from his environment but from other human beings is evoked in the senseless uncommunicative conversation which the poet overhears on the subway:

"Let's have a pencil Jimmy—living now
at Floral Park.
Flatbush—on the fourth of July—
like a pigeon's muddy dream—potatoes
to dig in the field—travlin the town—too—
night after night—the Culver line—the
girls all shaping up—it used to be—"

The reference to Poe's "The City in the Sea" pointed out earlier is significant in that it suggests again the connection which Crane is drawing between Atlantis and Manhattan. "The City in the Sea" begins,

Lol! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West,
Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best
Have gone to their eternal rest.
The city is compared by Poe to the worldly city of Christian myth; he speaks of its "Babylon-like walls," and he predicts that one day it will sink beneath the sea,

And when, amid no earthly moans,
Down, down that town shall settle hence
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
Shall do it reverence.

This city of death which will sink beneath the sea suggests the sunken city of Atlantis punished for its materialism and the modern city of Manhattan, dehumanized and death-oriented. In Manhattan even the subway stations reflect the pervasive atmosphere of death:

For Gravesend Manor change at Chambers street.
The platform hurries along to a dead stop.

For the poet the moment of confrontation has arrived. Facing the death of human values in the modern world, the dehumanization of his fellow men, and the fact of his own eventual death as an isolated being, he must, by the energy of a truly human (because unselfish) love, try to affirm the human ideal. He singles out one of the subway passengers, an Italian washerwoman returning from the city, and says,

And does the Daemon take you home, also
Wop washerwoman, with the bandaged hair?
After the corridors are swept, the cuspidors—
The gaunt sky-barracks cleanly now, and bare,
O Genoese, do you bring mother eyes and hands
Back home to children and to golden hair?
That the affirmation takes the form of a question is significant: he does not know for sure whether she is a mother returning to her children, but in his own life-affirming act of unselfish love he wills her, through pure benevolence, the highest good he knows—that she, as a mother, should experience this same unselfish love for her children. This willing of good to another for the other's sake, accomplished in the very face of the possible personal loss of all that is most human, is for the poet the supreme affirmation of the human ideal—the uniqueness and the value of human life and love. From this point on in the subway ride the imagery evokes resurrection and rebirth. The train begins the ascent from the tunnel:

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.

The poet knows that the affirmation of the human ideal cannot be accomplished once and for all; it must be reaffirmed from moment to moment. The poet, like all men, must continue to suffer in the material world, "caught like pennies beneath soot and steam." But he has faced the worst and affirmed the human ideal, and in so doing has "unhusked the heart of fright." In confronting all manner of death and yet asserting the uniqueness and value of human life, he has experienced finally the death of past illusions ("Here at the water's edge, the hands drop memory") and the birth of the self-conscious human individual.
In this totally self-conscious state he uses images like Lazarus, the Word, and the Hand of Fire from the old world of religious myth, images reminiscent of Columbus' address to God in "Ave Maria" after the voyager's moment of near despair, but he now uses them with an entirely different meaning. In the most sophisticated sense they are employed as symbolic language. They are symbolic not only of various aspects of the human ideal but of the way in which that ideal was, in the world of unself-conscious myth, embodied in the concept of God. The poem's movement toward the totally self-conscious human individual is the progressive understanding that man's mind is the source of that order formerly attributed to God, that the unselfish love once called "divine" is uniquely human, and that God is in fact a symbol by which man, in the world of unself-conscious myth, attempted to reveal himself to himself. In this connection it is significant to note that the movement of the final sections of The Bridge represents an adaptation of the mystical or contemplative approach to God to the progress of the unself-conscious man toward an awareness of himself as the source of order and love. The ideals of suffering, self-denial, and unselfish love in "Quaker Hill," the dark night of the soul in "The Tunnel," and the moment of final illumination, of total self-consciousness in "Atlantis" are the poet's equivalent of the mystic's steps to God.

In the scene which concludes "The Tunnel" the poet, after his subway ride, is standing on a pier in Brooklyn at midnight looking back at Manhattan. Having experienced the death of past illusions, he says,
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—

Religious myth and its attempt to impose order on the world by an Adamic
naming (the star motif) are things of the past. The poet understands that
human order cannot be forced on a non-human external world, that, as Isadora
Duncan said, "no ideals have ever been fully successful on this earth." But
within the human realm of language, particularly language divested of a mimetic
role, the poet can, in making the anti-world of the poem, oppose human order
to the external world. In that non-human world man's lot is one of suffering and
death. And though by the self-conscious personal myth his understanding of
suffering, as simply the abrasion of the human being by the non-human environ-
ment, differs from that of religious myth which viewed it as God's testing of
man, yet his reaction to suffering and death in that external world is similar
to that proposed by religious myth—acceptance. While acceptance and endur-
ance form his course in the physical world, his reaction in the human realm of
language, in the enclosed anti-world of the poem, is the opposition of human
order to external chaos—the affirmation of the uniqueness and value of human
life and love. By an unselfish human love become the motive force of art,
the human imagination incarnates the Word, embodies the Logos, in the anti-
world of the poem—an embodiment which survives the personal death of the poet and which is for him the "Word that will not die."

In "The Tunnel" the circular symbolic journey of the poet from Brooklyn to Manhattan and back to Brooklyn was completed; in "Atlantis" the circular movement of the poem is completed in an extended process of naming which returns us to that act of naming begun in the poem. "Atlantis," the last section of _The Bridge_, is the moment of total self-awareness. If in "The Tunnel" the symbols of human order were dehumanized and degraded, in "Atlantis" they are raised to the highest humanly symbolic level, for they are entertained not only as symbols of various aspects of the human ideal but as symbols of the very process of symbolization by which man reveals himself as the source of order and love. Significantly enough, the process of self-consciousness is yet another aspect of the uniqueness of human life which the poet asserts. In the "Atlantis" section the symbolic bridge which is the poem is identified with all those symbols of human order which, in the course of the poem, Crane has depicted as bridges used by man in the past in his attempt to become aware of himself. Indeed, the poet's own circular journey across the bridge represents the movement of man from an unself-conscious state through the symbol to a self-conscious state. The identification of the bridge with these human symbols is, as we said earlier, accomplished by an extended process of naming—the bridge is simply called by their names. In connection with this
act of creative naming, we might note that William Carlos Williams in the foreword to his imaginative shaping of American history, In the American Grain, remarks, "In letters, in journals, reports of happenings I have recognized new contours suggested by old words so that new names were constituted." We observed in this and the preceding chapter the probable influence of Williams' book on Crane, and clearly Williams' statement seems to anticipate the way in which Crane creates new names on the basis not of external physical correspondence but of internal linguistic coherence, new names based on "contours suggested by old words."

The very first name given to the symbolic bridge of the poem in this section is "Atlantis." In the context of The Bridge Atlantis represents the mythic ideal city considered as an archetypal symbol of human order. In the Atlantis legend the order and the human values of the city were destroyed by materialism, but by the identification of Atlantis with the poem, the city is, as it were, symbolically restored as an emblem of human order through the anti-world of the poem's opposition of that order to the chaos of the material world. In the epigraph to "Atlantis," the poem is identified with another symbol of human order—music. The epigraph, "Music is then the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system," is taken from Plato's Symposium (187c). It suggests that the enclosed anti-world of the poem is an ordered, harmonious system similar to that mythic model of the universe based on the music of the
spheres that we find in Plato's cosmology. Just as in Plato's myth the spheres were moved by love and created music in their movement, so an unselfish human love, become the motive force of art, moves the imagination to create the poem—"One Song, one Bridge of Fire." By the identification of music with the poem, music is raised to the level of a self-conscious symbol of human order; in its emblematic use by Plato it is understood as an attempt to embody human order with the ultimate goal of revealing man's own unique nature to himself through the symbol. It is significant that the Platonic epigraph to "Atlantis" is spoken in the Symposium by Eryximachos in a general discussion of love and, in particular, of a quotation from Heraclitus: "The One at variance with itself is brought together again, like a harmony of bow and lyre." Indeed, it is as a harp or lyre that the symbolic bridge of the poem is evoked at the beginning of "Atlantis":

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

In the poem the bridge was called the "harp and altar, of the fury fused," and the harp image is kept up throughout "Atlantis" with the cables of the bridge being successively referred to as "octaves," "arching strands of song," "deathless strings," and "oriphic strings."
The image of the harp or lyre as applied to the poem is rich in associations. We recall that the lyre was one of the symbols of Apollo, the Greek god of order. In some legends he is credited with its invention; in Plato's Republic (III, 399e), the lyre is referred to as the instrument of Apollo; it and the cithara are to be the only instruments allowed in Plato's ideal city. In his description of the symbolic bridge in the first stanza, Crane says, "Sibylline voices flicker, waveringly stream / As though a god were issue of the strings. . . . " In antiquity the sibyls were usually oracles of Apollo, and it is only natural to assume that this god who is "issue of the strings" of the harmonizing, symbolic lyre is Apollo, himself a symbol, now consciously entertained as such within the poem, of the god-like ordering power of the human imagination. In this connection we should note that in Greek culture Apollo was also the god of the city as opposed to Dionysus, the ecstatic, frenzied god of the countryside.

As the god of order, the god associated with the city, Apollo accords well with Crane's attempt to restore Atlantis, by identifying it with the ordered anti-world of the poem, as the archetype of the ideal city considered as symbolic of human order.

From what has been said, so far it is apparent that in "Atlantis" myths and symbols from the past are being raised, one after another, to the level of self-consciousness. By identifying them with the conscious myth and symbol of the poem, Crane clearly understands them as earlier, unself-conscious attempts
of man to reveal his nature to himself and ultimately to discover himself as the unique source of order and love. Thus the symbolic bridge of the poem, that bridge from unself-conscious to self-conscious man, is synoptic; Crane describes the bridge as

threading with its call
One arc synoptic of all tides below—
Their labyrinthine mouths of history
Pouring reply as though all ships at sea
Complighted in one vibrant breath made cry,—
"Make thy love sure—to weave whose song we ply!"

The personal myth of the poem, consciously entertained as myth, is symbolic of all mythic systems of order. It is the self-conscious work of art, the song created by the human imagination whose motive force is love.

The image of the ships at sea in the lines quoted above introduces the next major name given to the symbolic bridge; it is identified with the ship in the quest voyage. The associational link is, obviously, that as the bridge is a means of getting from one place to another, so also is the ship. Crane speaks of the bridge's "cordage," its "humming spars," its "helm"; imagining the cables of the bridge as a ship's rigging, he introduces the image of the seafarer Jason setting sail ("And you, aloft there—Jason! hest ing Shout! / Still wrapping harness to the swarming air!"); he calls the bridge the "Tall Vision-of-the-Voyage"; he refers to it as the "Psalm of Cathay," recalling Columbus' voyage and the moment in "Ave Maria" when Columbus, believing he had reached the
East Indies, said, "I bring you back Cathay." The idealized land of Cathay becomes in "Atlantis" a symbol of the ordering power of the human imagination, and the poem which has been made by and about that imagination is thus the "Psalm of Cathay." Continuing the image of the bridge as a ship, Crane evokes a symbolic sea journey, which gradually turns into an image of the circularity of the poem:

We left the haven hanging in the night—
Sheenèd harbor lanterns backwards fled the keel.
Pacific here at time's end, bearing corn,—
Eyes stammer through the pangs of dust and steel.
And still the circular, indubitable frieze
Of heaven's meditation, yoking wave
To kneeling wave, one song devotedly binds—
The vernal strophe chimes from deathless strings!

That the symbolic bridge is indeed the poem itself is clear from the fact that the bridge is described throughout "Atlantis" in linguistic images. It is called a "multitudinous Verb," the "Psalm of Cathay," a "pervasive Paradigm," a song, a "canticle," the "intrinsic Myth," and "Deity's young name."

As a personal myth self-consciously synoptic of the humanly symbolic aspect of previous unself-conscious myths, the bridge of the poem is associated in "Atlantis" with the Indian vegetative myth of "The Dance"; looking at the bridge, the poet's eyes

Pick biting way up towering looms that press
Sidelong with flight of blade on tender 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 poet, the imaginative traveller into the mythic past, has experienced, by his imagined participation in the rain god Maquokeeta's ritual marriage and immolation, the "smoking pyres of love and death," i.e. the love-death metaphor for environmental integration in the world of religious myth. The phrase "mythic spears" clearly recalls the beginning of the ritual dance, "Spears and assemblies: black drums thrusting on"; and the phrase "timeless laugh," evokes the fiery death of Maquokeeta who "laughs, pure serpent, Time itself."

The next major name given to the symbolic bridge in "Atlantis" is that of God. The bridge of the poem is called a "steeled Cognizance," "Deity's glittering Pledge," "Deity's young name," "Love," "whitest Flower," "Answerer of all," "Anemone," "Everpresence, beyond time" and "one Bridge of Fire." As in the Christian dying-god myth, the Word was made flesh and the Word was God, so in the personal myth, the god-like human imagination embodies its order, the Logos, in the poem and this incarnate Word (the poem) is called by the names of the deity. As the concept of God was an unconscious embodiment of the ordering power of the human imagination, so the poem is a conscious embodiment of that power. Thus Crane can address the poem, "O Thou whose radiance doth inherit me / Atlantis,—hold thy floating singer late!" The poem is the embodiment of the unique order of the poet's personal imagination and as such "inherits" him, retaining that order past his death. The anti-world of the poem, the island city of Atlantis, will thus
"hold [its] floating singer late"—the uniqueness of the poet's imagination suspended within the poem.

The appropriateness of some of the deific names applied to the bridge should be pointed out. In calling the poem the "whitest Flower," the "Anemone," Crane evokes three separate vegetative, dying god myths in a single word. The word "anemone" literally means "daughter of the wind" and suggests the image of the earth goddess Pocahontas as the self-renewing land at the end of "The Dance":

West, west and southl 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 anemone is also known as the pasqueflower; the entry in the OED under "anemone" elucidates this name: "The wild anemone is called the pasque flower, from the Paschal solemnity of our Savior's death." Another citation in the OED connects the anemone with the vegetative myth of Adonis: "Scarlet and white anemones are there, some born of Adonis' blood, and some of Aphrodite's tears." In calling the poem "one Bridge of Fire," Crane associates it with the Incarnate Word of Christian myth, who, being both human and divine, was a bridge of love from man to God. In a discussion of Crane's poem, Sister M. Bernetta Quinn has pointed out this image of the Word as bridge in the writings of Saint Catherine of Siena; repeating a message received from God, Saint Catherine writes,—"And so, wishing to remedy your
great evils, I have given you the Bridge of My Son, in order that, passing across the flood, you may not be drowned, which flood is the tempestuous sea of this dark life." The poem, created through the motive force of human unselfish love, is a bridge by which man reaches the self-conscious understanding of human nature as the source of the order and love formerly embodied in the concept of God. In calling the symbolic bridge the "Everpresence, beyond time," Crane makes what is probably his most complex attribution to the poem. He gives it one of the qualities of God—eternity. This attribution is prepared for in the course of "Atlantis" by such images as "the timeless laugh of mythic spears," the "deathless strings," the "intrinsic Myth / Whose fell unshadow is death's utter wound," and the statement,

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

Indeed, the quality of eternity is remarkably appropriate to the poem and to Crane's theme. Eternity, the everlasting "now," is in a sense a fusion of time and space; it is the experience of all of time in a single intellectual glance, the sense of time not as flux but as everpresence; in short it is the experience of time in terms of spatial form. In the world of religious myth, eternity as an aspect of the human ideal was evoked by Crane in the symbol of the bird-serpent, the emblem of religious myth's goal of simultaneous environmental and historical integration. He says of the symbolic earth goddess of Indian myth,
But i knew her body there,
Time like a serpent down her shoulder, dark,
And space, an eaglet's wing, laid on her hair.

But in the world of personal myth, Crane is led to assert the discontinuity of man and his environment: the environment is not human like man and man is not material like the world. He does not reject the world, or the fact that man must suffer and die in it, but he does claim that man is uniquely different from the world. The human ideal "has never been fully successful" in the physical world; indeed, it is a mistake to try to impose that ideal on a non-human environment, rather we must oppose it to that environment. The human ideal, unsuccessful in the material world, succeeds in the human realm of language; it is embodied in the enclosed anti-world of the poem, that world of man's own making which confront the chaos of the environment with its order and the indifference of things with its love.

In the anti-world of The Bridge, the ideal of eternity, the fusion of time and space, is embodied in the poem's union of spatial and temporal form. In the second chapter of this study we spoke of the levels of surface structure and deep structure in the poem and we noted that on the level of deep structure there is a kind of chronological narrative line or temporal form which by narrative gaps and time shifts is suspended on the level of surface structure in a spatial form—the circularity of the poem. This union of spatial and temporal form is the ekphrastic principle, the still movement of the poem, its fusion of
stasis and flux, the apprehension of the flowing in terms of the fixed. The poet's
symbolic circular journey presents us with a geometric figure of the poem's union
of spatial and temporal form. In the morning the poet crosses over the river on
the bridge; in the evening he returns under the river through the tunnel. As it
were, the curves of bridge and tunnel form a circle which encompasses the river
of time. It is the perfect emblem of the poem. In "The Tunnel" the poet's
circular journey closes with his return to his starting point; in "Atlantis" the
circular movement of the poem closes with the return to the process of creative
naming begun in the poem. As the journey of the poet and the movement of
the poem are toward the state of self-consciousness, so the poem's eternity, its
fusion of spatial and temporal form, is the height of self-consciousness. It is
the attempt to grasp the whole flux of human time in a single spatial image—
the circular journey of man through the man-made ordered symbol back to him-
self as the self-conscious source of order. Thus in its union of spatial and
temporal form (its circular still movement) the poem is what it is about. It is
the consciously mythic embodiment of the self-conscious ordering power of the
human imagination. In the last lines of "Atlantis" Crane challenges us to this
self-conscious understanding of the poem:

—One Song, one Bridge of Fire! Is it Cathay,
Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring
The serpent with the eagle in the leaves...? Whispers antiphonal in azure swing.
The symbolic bridge which the poet creates by the process of naming is the poem itself, the song. Cathay, the idealized goal of the journey across the symbolic bridge of the poem, is the human imagination self-consciously understood as the source of the order embodied in the poem and in all human symbols. The question "Is it Cathay?" is meant to provoke us to an understanding of what Cathay and the other symbolic names in the poem represent—the ordering power of the human imagination (the mental word) and its embodiment in the poem (the incarnate word) by means of words. The poem's fusion of spatial (serpent) and temporal (eagle) form creates its still movement—that circular, enclosed anti-world wherein words used creatively have ceased to be simply the mimetic names of physical objects but have become human objects in themselves. It is the circular world of poetic language as the emblem and effective means of the mind's turning back on itself; it is the bridge of the poem built out of words—"Whispers antiphonal in azure swing."

CONCLUSION

With this, the formal interpretation of the poem is completed; there remain, however, a few final observations. In number of lines, The Bridge represents more than half of the poetry which Hart Crane published in book form
during his lifetime and almost a third of all of his extant poetry. He worked on it over a period of seven years out of a life of only thirty-two years, and it is the crowning achievement of that life. By confining myself in this study to an interpretation of The Bridge rather than undertaking an examination of the entire body of Crane's work, I have not wished in any way to give the impression that my reading of the poem considers it as unrelated to his other work. On the contrary, I consider The Bridge to be Crane's most mature and self-conscious treatment of his major recurring themes; it is the paradigm of his unique accomplishment, and as such it illuminates all of the work which leads up to it. We have already noted in the second chapter of this study how the theme of creative naming so important in The Bridge appears in other poems like "Lachrymae Christi," "Voyages," "A Name for All," and "O Carib Isle." The idea of the poem as the incarnation of the mental word, the incarnation made by the imagination through the motive force of love, is also an important part of the theme of "Voyages," as are the quest journey and the image of the enclosed anti-world of the poem embodying the order of the unique, isolated individual, i.e., the "Belle Isle" of the imagination, the insular city of Atlantis. The theme of religion and science as conflicting true-believed myths which have, paradoxically, grown out of the same human impulse appears in an earlier, more simplified form in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." The concept of God as a once-unconscious-but-now-conscious symbol of the human imagination
and the human ideal is at work in a poem like "Lachrymae Christi." The image of the poet's acceptance of suffering in a non-human world evoked in "Quaker Hill" appears in such poems as "Black Tambourine" and "To Emily Dickinson." The figure of the clown (Van Winkle, the hoboes) as representative of man's condition in modern industrial society occurs in "Chaplinesque." One could go on indefinitely pointing out the relationships between The Bridge and Crane's other work, but my point is simply that those relationships do exist and that my reason for confining this interpretation to The Bridge is not that my reading of the poem makes it atypical within the body of Crane's work, but rather that, since The Bridge represents the single most complete, most self-conscious embodiment of Crane's major recurring themes, to explicate these themes in their most fully realized form is implicitly to illuminate them in their subsidiary forms.

I said in the first chapter of this study that within the context of my interpretation of The Bridge I viewed Crane as a modern symbolist poet rather than as a latter-day Romantic poet, the category in which he is usually placed. This is not to say that Crane was not greatly influenced by Romantic poets or that the modern symbolist movement does not owe a large debt to Romanticism. However, to be influenced by the Romantics is not necessarily to be one, and to call most of what has occurred since Romanticism by that name alone is to deprive oneself of the means of distinguishing important changes and developments. Of those who view Crane as a modern Romantic poet, R. W. B. Lewis
is the critic whose definition of Romanticism is the most subtle and far-reaching. Probably the best way to explain my view of Crane as a modern symbolist poet is to point out some of my differences with Lewis' definition of Crane's Romanti-
cism. He contends that "it was one of Crane's staunchest and most Emersonian convictions that the orders of being—of man and God, the temporal and the timeless, the actual and the ideal—though calamitously dislocated within the modern consciousness, could again become continuous and contiguous one with another: exactly by being so envisioned by poetry." Crane "in his modern Romantic manner and by his Romantic strategy" approximated the great theme "that nature is perfected by grace rather than opposed, rejected, destroyed, and utterly transcended."22 As I read The Bridge, Crane makes a distinction between continuity and contiguity; he is thoroughly willing to admit in his conscious ordered fiction that man is in the physical world and that that world impinges on him at every moment, but he will not admit that man is continuous with that non-human world. He asserts man's unique difference from that world, and he does this because, at various points in the poem, he has tried imagina-
tively to entertain two opposing myths of continuity (religion and science) as true belief and he has been unable to do so. Indeed, the very opposition of these true-believed myths of continuity reveals them to the poet for what they really are—myths. He is, as it were, forced to the true-believed myth that all myth is a convenient fiction, a fiction whose "truth and value" rest not in
its correspondence to the external physical world but in its correspondence to internal human needs. In asserting the discontinuity of man and his environment, Crane is neither rejecting nor destroying the physical world, he is simply opposing human order to the world's chaos and human love to the indifference of things. Indeed, for him, to assert a continuity—either that the world was human like man or that man was material like the world—would be the real work of rejection and destruction, for it would blur and ultimately destroy the uniqueness and value of human life.

Since Lewis views Crane as affirming the continuity of man and physical nature, he understands the symbol as mediating between the real and the ideal. He says that Crane's is "the Emersonian effort to restore 'original and eternal beauty' to the world by bringing the axis of vision into harmony with the axis of things—for example, and to begin with, by seeing Brooklyn Bridge, that thing of steel and wire, as a mediator between the actual and the ideal." 23

In my view, Crane is never talking about the real physical object, the Brooklyn Bridge, in the poem. The bridge which he creates in the poem through words is always symbolic. It is the concept of bridgeship reified in the name Brooklyn Bridge, and it is to that concept as it applies to all symbols and to the poem in particular that he refers when he uses the name. For Crane, the symbol does not mediate between the actual and the ideal but between the unself-conscious and the self-conscious in man; it is circular, it is man-made and leads man back
to himself. It reveals his true nature to himself. It is in this regard that Crane seems to me to be a modern symbolist poet rather than a Romantic. For Lewis, the Romantic visionary act alters the world. But the question is "Which world?" The man-made, internal, ordered world or the external, material, chaotic world? Since Lewis believes that Crane holds for the continuity of man and his environment, he believes that, for Crane, to alter and order the former world is also somehow to alter and order the latter. But the question remains: does changing the way man envisions the physical world actually change that world in itself? It strikes me that one of the main points which Crane makes in The Bridge is that it was not enough for man in religious myth simply to view the external physical world as humanly ordered, he had to operate in it as well, and what he gradually discovered was that to operate successfully he had to act on the world's terms, he had to submit to a mechanical logic (science), to a non-human, depersonalized material "order," an "order" that is the chaos of human values. Indeed, it is the very opposition of religion and science as myths of continuity which reveals to the poet the discontinuity between human order and the non-human, mechanical "order" (chaos) of the material world. He asserts that discontinuity in the personal myth and opposes the ordered anti-world of the poem to the physical world.

In reading The Bridge as an assertion of the discontinuity of man and his environment and an affirmation of the uniqueness both of human life and of
the individual human life with the attendant isolation of man from the physical
world and of one man from another, I realize that I have laid the poem open
to the possible charge of solipsism. It is no new charge to The Bridge. Roy
Harvey Pearce in The Continuity of American Poetry writes,

Perhaps The Bridge is to be taken as an abortive attempt
to create a creation myth. Thus the closing words of the
Proem: "... of the curvesship lend a myth to God."
The Bridge is a human creation; the impulse to make it
is super- (or supra-) human; making it is a sign that human
making is subsumed by super-human making. Making it is
thus a way of making possible "making" itself. The "myth"
is, then, solipsistic—that of man the myth-maker who must
feed upon the myth he makes. 24

Pearce contends that in the poem Crane brought forth a "multitudinous Verb,"
but that "in spite of all he could do, it was his Verb and his only." 25 If by
the word "solipsism" one understands the self as being aware of nothing but its
own internal states or the self as admitting that nothing is real but itself, then
clearly that is not what my reading of The Bridge sees Crane as asserting when
he affirms the uniqueness of the individual human life and accepts the attendant
burden of isolation. Indeed, the very idea of a poem "communicating" isolation
is a kind of paradox: it is the paradox that isolated individuals somehow "share"
the sense of isolation. And my evidence for this sharability is the interpretation
of the poem which I have presented in this study. Yet I must acknowledge that
the interpretation as evidence is not absolutely conclusive, for the modern, com-
plex poem is a kind of one-way "communication" wherein the poet writes and
the critic reads but in which the poet cannot be quizzed on his intentions.
One realizes that interpretations, like myths, are various with differing purposes
and appeals, that no single interpretation can possibly say all that needs to be
said about a great poem, and thus one presents one's own view with the sense
of humility which that realization entails.
CHAPTER FOUR: FOOTNOTES


5. Plato, *Critias*, 121b.


7. Plato, *Critias*, 113d.


18. Williams, p. v.


20. Ibid.


22. Lewis, p. 283.

23. Lewis, p. 251.


25. Pearce, p. 111.
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