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—*Analysis and Translation*—

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Literaturas Estrangeiras Modernas

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Resumo

O cenário da poesia moderna de língua inglesa congrega uma série de autores ingleses e norte-americanos que criaram obras com estilos, formas, problemáticas e visões de mundo altamente diversificados. Uma ampla gama de recursos linguísticos e estéticos foi desenvolvida, incluindo o uso da colagem, a sintaxe fragmentada, o verso livre e a linguagem coloquial algumas vezes intercalada com a solene. Dentre tais autores modernos, o poeta norte-americano Hart Crane se destaca por sua obra poética de alta originalidade e complexidade e suas perspectivas estéticas bastante individualizadas. Em sua obra, Crane articulou recursos e referências literárias e filosóficas variadas. Sua poesia se caracteriza por uma versificação que contempla do pentâmetro iâmbico branco elisabetano ao verso livre moderno; uma sintaxe que se distancia da língua falada com inversões e rupturas; um vocabulário eclético que une arcaísmos a neologismos; uma retórica rica em figuras de linguagem; e um ideário simbólico e temático compreendendo as ideias e imagens místicas e metafísicas do simbolismo francês e a exploração de sentimentos individuais do romantismo inglês. Além desses referenciais, Crane foi particularmente inspirado e instigado pelo poeta norte-americano moderno T. S. Eliot, cuja erudição e domínio de técnicas como a colagem e o verso livre Crane tinha como modelo, mas de cujas perspectivas estéticas classicistas e tradicionalistas e visões da modernidade pessimistas Crane discordava e tentou refutar. Assim, Crane concebeu sua obra poética em grande parte como uma resposta à de Eliot, buscando antepor ao seu pessimismo uma visão mais otimista, postulando uma espiritualidade própria à experiência moderna, que, segundo Crane, deveria ser explorada e registrada pelo poeta. Para tal, Crane desenvolveu uma teoria estética pessoal que enfatizava a subjetividade e as experiências do próprio poeta assim como a tradição literária, englobando, entre outros, elementos da filosofia transcendentalista norte-americana. Esse empreendimento resultou em uma obra breve, porém rica, cuja complexidade foi muitas vezes reprovada como excessiva ou confusa, mas cuja influência e interesse vêm aumentando nos anos após sua morte. Este estudo oferece uma apresentação das principais características da obra poética e das perspectivas estéticas de Hart Crane, centrando-se na análise formal e temática e em uma tradução para o português da sequência de poemas intercalados conhecida como "Voyages", presente no primeiro livro de Crane, *White Buildings*, e geralmente considerada uma de suas principais obras. Alguns dos mais significativos poemas de Crane são estudados à luz de suas próprias teorias estéticas e das avaliações de críticos com perspectivas variadas, como Allen Tate, Yvor Winters, R. W. B. Lewis, Margareth Uroff, Thomas Yingling e Lee Edelman, entre outros. Buscam-se uma compreensão de sua obra e a apresentação em língua portuguesa de um de seus principais trabalhos líricos com o objetivo de familiarizar o leitor e o estudioso brasileiro com as obras e ideias de um poeta de língua inglesa cuja importância vem sendo atestada ao longo dos anos.

Palavras-chave: Hart Crane. Tradução Poética. Poesia Moderna.

Abstract

The scenery of modern English language poetry congregates a number of English and North-American authors that created works with highly diversified styles, forms, problematic and worldviews. A wide range of linguistic and aesthetic resources was developed, including the use of collage, fragmented syntax, free verse, and the intercalation of colloquial and formal language. Among these modern authors, the North-American poet Hart Crane stands out due to his highly original and complex poetic works and his strongly individualized aesthetic perspectives. In his work, Crane articulated various philosophic and literary references and resources. His poetry is characterized by a versification that comprises both the Elizabethan blank iambic pentameter and the modern free verse; a syntax distanced from the spoken language with inversions and breakages; an eclectic vocabulary conjoining archaisms and neologisms; a rich and ornate rhetoric including complex figures of speech; and themes and symbols associated to mystical and metaphysical images and ideas from French Symbolism and the English Romantic exploration of subjective feelings. In addition to these references, Crane was particularly inspired by the North-American modern poet T. S. Eliot, whose erudition and mastery of techniques such as the collage and the free verse Crane had as a model, but with whose classicist and traditionalist aesthetic perspectives and pessimist views of modernity Crane disagreed and attempted to counter. Thus, Crane's poetic work was largely conceived as a response to that of Eliot, aiming at opposing to his pessimism a more optimistic view, postulating a form of spirituality that is proper to the modern experience, which should be explored and registered by the poet, in Crane's view. For such, Crane developed an aesthetic theory that emphasized the poet's own subjectivity and personal experiences, encompassing elements of, among others, the American Transcendentalist school of thought. This endeavor resulted in a brief, but very rich poetic oeuvre, whose complexity has been often reproached as excessive or confusing, but whose influence and interest have been increasing in the years following his death. This study provides a presentation of the main characteristics of Hart Crane's poetic work and aesthetic theories, focusing on the formal and thematic analysis and the translation into the Portuguese language of the poetic sequence known as "Voyages," included in Crane's first book and generally considered one of his main works. Some of Crane's poems are here studied according to his own aesthetic perspectives as well as the evaluations of varied perspectives, such as those of Allen Tate, Yvor Winters, R. W. B. Lewis, Margareth Uroff, Thomas Yingling and Lee Edelman, among others. An understanding of Crane's work and the presentation in Portuguese language of one of his most celebrated lyrical works are aimed at in order to familiarize the Brazilian reader and student with the works and the ideas of an English language poet whose importance has been attested throughout the years.

Keywords: Hart Crane. Poetry Translation. Modern Poetry.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most frequent evaluations of modern poetry is that it is a poetry of crisis, loss of reference and confusion. In continental Europe, this fragmentation became evident in the many vanguard movements arising in the beginning of the Twentieth Century. Futurism in Italy and Dadaism and Surrealism in France may have had different perspectives and propositions, but all of them were similar in the rejection of the past and tradition and the urgent search for adapting literature and the arts to the dynamics of their time. Their main predecessors, Baudelaire and the French Symbolists, saw modern times with disillusioned eyes, but could not satisfy themselves with the cultivation of a past tradition that was as distant to them as their own period. In England, even though Symbolist influence was milder than in the countries cited before, to the point of no actual vanguard movement having arisen, some changes and discomforts of the same kind were felt. Vivian Pinto, in *Crisis in English Poetry* (1958) points to an integration of Apollonian and Dionysian characters, of the colloquial and the lofty diction as features of English poetry from Chaucer to Donne; these features would be lost throughout the centuries, reaching a peak of dissociation in the modern period, which is, according to her, the main feature of the modern world itself.

The United States had its own version of modern poetry in which the British legacy was stirred by vanguard strokes partly inspired by European movements. A strong tradition of rebellion and renewal in the free-verse colloquial poetry of Walt Whitman, fired by Emerson and the transcendentalists, shared space in the Nineteenth Century with a poet such as Emily Dickinson, whose linguistic innovations did not discard, but actually revived, the language and worldview of Shakespeare and the then almost forgotten English metaphysical poets. These movements would flow into the Twentieth Century, when English traditionalist T. S. Eliot would find inspiration in the iconoclastic poetry of French symbolists such as Arthur Rimbaud and Jules Laforgue; and when Pound, another admirer of the French symbolists, would emphasize the importance of the European tradition and at the same time launch American-bred vanguard movements such as Imagism and Vorticism. Eliot and Pound, the two main figures of modernist poetry in the United States, assumed an uncompromising conservative and pessimistic view in relation to the disruption and fragmentation of tradition of the modern times in the new world. On the opposite end, William Carlos

Williams would praise a native experience, searching for a poetic language and themes that could account for a typical American poetry, written in legitimate American English; while a poet like Wallace Stevens reacted to modern times with a sublime lyricism, providing what is probably the most accomplished example of the ‘pure poetry’ endowed by a significant section of the French symbolists. It was in this scenery that the idiosyncratic poetry of Hart Crane appeared.

Hart Crane, born in 1899, belonged to the generation immediately following that of the first American modernists listed above. For him, Eliot, Pound, Stevens, and Williams counted as masters *and* colleagues. He shared with them the modern environment and received their works and opinions in a very individual manner, forging an aesthetic conception that would produce an original and unequalled body of work in modern poetry. Haunted by the fast and changing rhythms of the modern world, he would not reject it as a sterile ambient where tradition was lost. He would actually reject the pessimism he saw embodied in the figure of T S. Eliot in favor of a spiritualized and somehow romanticized view of modernity and the New World. On the other hand, he would also reject the attitude of a wholesale break with the past and what he saw as inconsequent innovations of vanguard movements. A lover of the Elizabethan tradition in English verse, he would conjoin the lessons of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Donne and Jonson with those of Rimbaud and Laforgue, as his antagonized master T. S. Eliot; however, contrarily to Eliot, he would welcome the search for a legitimate American spirit he saw in the poetry of Walt Whitman, the essays of Emerson and the fiction of Hermann Melville. The results of such an admixture would be disastrous in the hands of an uninspired poet (and for many a critic, they were), but Crane’s genius was able to create a work of unmatched aesthetic quality and spiritual depth which would be more and more studied throughout the years and come to influence the works of poets as varied as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Robert Lowell and Frank O’Hara.

Hart Crane wanted to sing the perennial values of beauty and spirituality that were developed throughout Western literature, embodying it in modern terms and images. His greatest literary ambition was to celebrate American history as a myth in an epic poem. This ambition would take form in the long poem *The Bridge*, published originally in 1930, which, along with the collection of lyrics *White Buildings* (1926),

would account for all the work published by Crane in his short lifespan.[*] In his own time, his lyrical work was received with admiration by critics such as Yvor Winters and Allen Tate, both friends of Crane, while his epic, in which he had invested his greatest energies, would be deemed a failure by the same critics, even if they admitted the quality of its separate sections as lyrical poems. For the critics of his time, who witnessed his debut in literary magazines, his development as a promising lyrical poet, his debacle as an epic poet and his suicide at the age of thirty two after years of alcohol abuse and an erratic life, Crane would remain the unhappy figure of the unaccomplished genius whose tumultuous life and lack of formal education stood in the way of a satisfactory literary achievement.

In years to come, however, Crane's literary works saw an increase in prestige and interest. Curiously enough, it was *The Bridge*, considered a failure during his time, which would attract the attention of most scholars, to the point of Crane becoming a sort of anthemic national poet to the United States. Other critics saw him as a *poéte maudit*, focusing on his innovative lyricism and his unconventional life as a homosexual and rebel who could never adapt to social and academic standards. The true fact is that his work is complex enough to be the object of a variety of types of study. His intricate symbolism and imagery, filled with cryptic references to personal conflicts regarding his sexuality and family problems, provide abundant material for biographical and psychoanalytical studies. On the other hand, his disruptive and inventive syntax and his ornate and refined rhetoric, which often render his poetry difficult, almost impenetrable, as well as his rich versification, are an immense and fertile field for more text-focused or formalist critics. In this vein, it should be remembered that the aforementioned critics, Allen Tate and Yvor Winters, are considered exponents of the so called New Criticism, known for focusing on the texts' formal features rather than extrinsic material and for aesthetic classicism. Not only Tate and Winters, who were after all Crane's friends, but other pundits of this movement, such as John Crowe Ransom and R. P. Blackmur, reproached Crane's intellectual confusion and immaturity, but never dismissed him and actually often privileged his work in their literary analyses. These critics believed Crane's work was invaluable, since it presented a living example of the philosophic and moral problem assailing the mind of the modern man: the spiritual

[*] A second collection of lyrics, *Key West: an Island Sheaf*, would come to light only posthumously integrating the different editions of his collected poems, never as an isolated book.

schism between reason and emotion, life and imagination or, as Tate put it, vision and subject.

From the lines above, it becomes blatant that Hart Crane's work, regardless of the critical point of view, is an extremely important chapter of modern poetry in the English language and in general, a work in which past and present meet in an unsolvable tension. In Brazil, the modernist movement in poetry was very rich, encompassing many of the elements that we find in its North-American counterpart. The use of colloquial language and everyday life themes that we see in Williams are present in Manuel Bandeira and Carlos Drummond de Andrade, among others; and the tendency towards the sublime and mysticism found in Stevens and Crane can be seen in poets such as Murilo Mendes and Jorge de Lima. In Brazil, also, many high modernist North-American poets had their works translated and divulged. Eliot and Pound have more than one translation of their poems in book form. Williams, Stevens, and Marianne Moore were all contemplated in bilingual collections edited by Companhia das Letras publishing house. Hart Crane, on his turn, does not enjoy this disclosure. In fact, his name has been mildly present in our literary circles throughout the years. In the 1950s, some comments on Hart Crane and even translations of the poem "Praise for an Urn" appeared in Brazil by Mário Faustino and Oswaldino Marques. These translations are now difficult to find. In 1994, Augusto de Campos published his own translation of the same poem in a literary supplement. His work elicited the response of poet Bruno Tolentino, who in an article published in the same year in another supplement offered a translation of his own plus a strong charge of insults against Campos, who, on his turn, responded with a petition against Tolentino's article signed by numerous famous names in Brazilian show business and artistic medium; for one instant, the name of Hart Crane had a greater projection in the country. The controversy is documented in Tolentino's *Os Sapos de Ontem* (1995). In 2006, Augusto de Campos reissued his translation of "Praise for an Urn," along with those of six other poems, in his book *Poesia da Recusa*. The book also includes a sensitive essay on Crane's poetry and life, making it the most thorough work on Crane ever published in Brazil.

Since I became acquainted with the poetry of Hart Crane, its high qualities, both aesthetic and philosophic, were evident to me, even though I needed some time to grasp some of its messages. Not only is Hart Crane an excellent poet, but also his aesthetic theories and spiritual positions bring important issues to the debate on art and beauty.

This study offers a presentation of the lyrical work of Hart Crane by providing a discussion of its general features and a translation of one of his major works, the six-poem-sequence "Voyages." It is true that Hart Crane became especially known as the author of *The Bridge*, but it is also true that his previously published book of lyrics, *White Buildings*, displays the main qualities that would mould his following epic in a clearer manner and, above all, it contains some of Crane's best works. The book is composed of 23 poems varied in form, tone and theme, but displaying also a unity of vision and style and an implicit inner progression. In addition to the already mentioned "Praise for an Urn," the book includes poems frequently discussed by critics, such as "Legend," "Chaplinesque," "The Wine Menagerie," and "At Melville's Tomb," and two of his longest and more ambitious endeavors, "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" and "Voyages," a sequence of love poems that is considered Crane's lyrical masterpiece and his most unified work, in which he better displays his qualities and features. The corpus of this study will be this book with the focus on "Voyages." Chapter 1 presents an overview of literary and intellectual currents which were particularly influential in Crane's views of poetry, aesthetics and spirituality, such as the American transcendentalist school and the traditionalist theories of T. S. Eliot and Allen Tate, to culminate with an exposition of his own views; to this discussion, the recent ideas of literary theorist Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht are added due to being particularly cogent to Crane's ideas and for providing helpful considerations in the reading of his poems. Chapter 2 will discuss the main characteristics of modern poetry, the main critical perspectives on the work of Hart Crane, and finally an analysis of the principal characteristics of Crane's lyrical work as found in *White Buildings*; the objective is to understand Crane's poetry in the context of poetical developments that have led to it in its time. Chapter 3 will be a thorough analysis of "Voyages," paying attention to its stylistic features, ideas and worldview. Finally, Chapter 4 will be divided in two: the translation of the six poems composing "Voyages" into Portuguese and a discussion of the translation procedures and choices.

As I have already remarked, Hart Crane's work has been studied under various critical perspectives. In his time and soon after his death, it received particular attention by the New Critics, who studied the difficult and, according to them, problematic articulations of its sophisticated rhetoric and confused intellectual views. Afterwards, some critics attempted to find a thematic unity which was considered absent from his

work. In recent days, deconstructive theory and the so called "queer studies" have focused on his condition of a vanguard and homosexual poet. All of these readings are unquestionably valuable, and all of them will be somehow contemplated in this study. My focus here, however, will be the symbolic, stylistic, and aesthetic features. The common view is that Hart Crane was mainly an instinctive poet whose works surged from immediate experiences and disparate readings without an integrated conception and poetical view. However, the few and brief theoretical essays he left, and some remarks found in his correspondence, show that he had a consistent, if inchoate, perspective on poetic creation and clear objectives as to his role as a poet. My aim, in the analysis of these poems, is to track throughout the symbols and structures of his poetry, the development and actualization of his views on poetry, human spirituality and the relation between them. Moreover, this type of analysis is especially fit for the translation of his lyrical masterpiece, providing an analytic preamble for the practical task of translation.

The translation of poetry is in itself a problem about which numerous pages have been written throughout the centuries. In the world of English poetry, this problem was already placed by Dryden (1992, originally published in 1680), who classified poetic translations into *metaphrase*, in which the text is conveyed from one language to another word by word; *paraphrase*, which is a freer form of translation, but still mainly focused on the work translated; and *imitation*, wherein the original text is a starting point for the translator to produce a work of his own. He remarks that, while in the first type the poetry is lost; in the last, it is the thought of the author that is sacrificed. The poetry translator, then, should be attentive of both the thoughts and mind movements of the author (as expressed in the poem) and the particularities of his language, so as not to turn what is meaningful into something senseless, and what is elegant into clumsy. In a similar vein, Ezra Pound (1992), commenting on his translation of a sonnet by Guido Cavalcanti, points out that, in translating a poet, the translator-poet creates a language of his own. The translator is faced with weight, melody, and specific values of the poetry, not only of one specific language, but one specific stylist in one specific period of that language. Likewise, the translator has in front of him the numerous styles and periods of his own language, and the many linguistic possibilities they offer. The choices of a translator will always include the sacrifice of important qualities of the original work.

Gregory Rabassa (1989), talking about the general difficulties in translation, reminds us that a word is primarily a metaphor for an object. A correlative word in another language is also a metaphor for that object, but, for the translator, it is a metaphor for the original word, rendering it a second-degree metaphor. To complicate it even further, the object being metaphorized can have very different emotional or intellectual tenors in the cultures of the two languages and, in the specific case of poetry, one has to be careful also with the particular emotional tenor of the *sound* of that word (for instance, a drum may not have such a drumming sound in every language as it has in English). All these facts pose the question of whether it is actually possible to translate poetry at all.

Yves Bonnefoy (1992) is unambiguous in relation to this question. The answer is unarguably no. According to Bonnefoy, the everyday language of a people preserves a share of a primordial transparent language which poets so avidly seek. The poet's attachment to his or her language is also an attachment to the wisdom of the people that carry that language. Bonnefoy says with accuracy that "the 'felicities' of languages do not coincide" (1992, p. 187). However, he also notes that a poem is, first of all, a *mean*, not an end. As a spiritual statement, it conveys a living experience that emerges before linguistic awareness. The poet, working within language, starts his work from something that is before and beyond language, and which is accessible, even if difficult to access, to every human being, regardless of the language. These remarks are extremely valuable to this study since they bear a close resemblance to Crane's own poetic theories, which hold that the language of poetry is closer to an emotional primordial language and its starting point are experiences whose substratum the poet should render in linguistic form to be shared by the reader. Returning to Bonnefoy, the poet is faced with an experience that he or she has to adapt to the constrictions of a specific language and the specific form or style he or she decided to adopt. The translator, trying to render the result in another language, has to understand something of the originating experience; from then, he or she is faced with the same constrictions that haunted the poet, only in another language. Poetry translation, then, is poetry re-begun.

It was based on these reflections that I set to provide my own version of Hart Crane's "Voyages" into Portuguese. The sequence has not been, to my knowledge, translated into Portuguese in its entirety, although the third poem of the series received a

translation by Augusto de Campos, which I had as one of my sources. My attention to the symbolic and syntactic organization of the poems, the form and versification, as well as linguistic tenor, was accompanied by the critical inquiry into the emotional and intellectual movements one finds in the poetry of Hart Crane in general and, more specifically, in "Voyages." I translated the poems with the objective of finding the best possible ratio between content and expression (or *presence*, to use vocabulary dear to Gumbrecht and Bonnefoy). My translation is obviously far from perfect and not, in any way, beyond reproach, but I believe it can provide a first sight into the masterpiece of a poet of great value and who has so much to teach us.

1 SOURCES OF LIFE AND MIND

An American Experience

Hart Crane's oeuvre is the culmination of various, sometimes disparate lines of thought and aesthetics. It is often difficult to be sure how consciously distinct elements were present in a writer's mind since, in forming his or her culture during a brief lifespan, at first an author obviously receives these references monolithically, not inserted in an exact timeline of movements and works, while some important references are received partially or wholly in an indirect manner, that is, through the writings of another writer who brings these references in his or her work. If this is true for any artist, it is more so in the case of Hart Crane. As Allen Tate once said, "with the instinct of genius he read the great poets, but never acquired an objective mastery of any literature, or even of the history of his country" (TATE, 1999, p. 311) to which he adds the ironic detail of this defect being present in a poet whose ambition was to write an American epic.

To a great extent, this is indeed an interesting irony and even an ambiguity. On the other hand, however, this defect is crucial in configuring Crane's work and uppermost in the originality of his contribution. To say that an artist's work is ultimately inseparable from whom he was as a person, from his history, is to say the obvious. The difficulty is to perceive how and why some particularities of his history, and some defects, impacted on his output and vision to make it completely original. "Instinct," a keyword in Tate's passage, is actually a most important element in Crane's creation. To use Tate's example, although Crane had read extensively on American history to create his epic *The Bridge*, the America that arises from this poem is much more the America experienced by Crane in his life and in his mind with the information he collected in history books more or less promiscuously meeting in one whole. Or, to quote Alvarez's study "The Lyric of Hart Crane," "if there is any theme to Crane's epic… the theme is Crane himself." (1971 p. 112) Hart Crane's is a paradigmatically American experience.

Crane was born in July 21, 1899 in Ohio, the son of a successful entrepreneur in the candy business and a sensitive and unstable mother who transmitted to her son part

of her taste for the arts and mysticism, yet also familiarized him with the reality of death at an early age, having attempted suicide twice when Crane was still very young, a path he would eventually follow, regrettably with more success. The experience Crane had of his parents as a couple was that of the polarity between a man and a woman achieving perverse heights. Clarence Arthur Crane, a financially self-made man, was often brutal; Grace Hart, his mother, was fragile. The memories the poet sheds in his early letters are those of suffering.

In terms of instruction, Crane had a regular education and showed interest in literature as a boy. In finishing high school, Crane moved to New York to apply for Columbia University, but his academic plans never went forth. Instead, he made friends with numerous artists and intellectuals and became an element in the city's bohemian artistic scene, already becoming known as a novice poet, attracting praise from important writers and editors and even publishing some of his poems in vanguard magazines. One important friendship was with painter and poetry lover Carl Schmitt. The scholars Brom Weber (1948) and Sherman Paul (1972), both authors of important books tracing Crane's literary development through his life (respectively, *Hart Crane – A Biographical and Critical Study* and *Hart's Bridge*), agree in saying that the lack of a university education was not only harmless but actually beneficial for Crane's development as an artist, and both point to the importance of Schmitt's influence. These two authors reinforce the idea presented in the beginning of this chapter that a fundamental feature of Crane's work is that it was largely born out of instinct and sensitivity. In any case, Crane's sensitivity and the frame of mind in which he was reading his authors and writing his poems were informed greatly by his experience of the city and its atmosphere.

Before going to New York, Crane was already writing poems, which he came to present to his newfound peers in the arts. Sherman Paul informs us that his early poetry, with its heavy romantic-symbolist imagery and its traditional metric forms, was deemed old-fashioned in the vanguard-fuelled literary scene of New York. Paul also sees in Crane's first poems a tendency to flee from the world outside, seen as menacing and hostile. New York would represent a going-forth into this same world, the modern world. There was indeed a search for the 'modern' or, in some cases, a questioning of what it meant to be modern, and the modern was associated to the machine world which was both fascinating and disrupting. Crane soon decided to avoid the view of the

machine and the modern world as a nemesis or a devilish element. However, he did not become an enthusiast of Dadaism or surrealism or other fashionable artistic movements. In addition to writing his poetry, he was discovering and structuring his references—his modernity would soon prove to be the modernity of Whitman and Emerson, but also that of Rimbaud and Laforgue, of Eliot.

In the brief allusion to the 'modernity' of Crane I made above, a dichotomy was set between Whitman and Emerson, on the one hand; and Rimbaud and Laforgue, and Eliot, on the other. Apart from the presence of T. S. Eliot in the second 'team', it could be imagined I am dividing his influences between American and French, or European authors, and this impression is not entirely wrong. It is, however, insufficient, mainly due to Eliot's seeming presence among the French, or European, despite his being an American. More than between two geographic origins, this dichotomy that has been sketched could be seen as one that exists between two types of attitude towards culture, the world and humanity; two conflicting attitudes that arise in Crane and can give us some material to understand the turbulence of his poetry and aesthetic conception.

An overlook into American poetry easily places Walt Whitman as the archetypical American poet, the poet who is his own country; and Eliot, his antithesis, as the expatriate who left America for the old continent, whose sensibility was more attuned to the French symbolists and the English metaphysical poets than to his would-be American forerunners. Folklore has it that Eliot was not sympathetic towards Whitman. However, Harold Bloom, in *The Western Canon*, placing Whitman at the center of American canon, interestingly remarks that Whitman's "authentic descendants are the strong American poets who tried to flee from him, but could not: T. S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens" (BLOOM, 1995, p. 248), immediately adding Hart Crane, "who wrote in the rhetoric of Eliot and Stevens, but with Whitmanian aspiration and stance" (id.). And further he affirms that Whitman's great influence on Eliot was in the poetic persona. Both Whitman and Eliot were major influences in Crane and their conflicting positions were present, providing the tensions one sees in Crane's poetry.

The same Harold Bloom, in the essay "Hart Crane's Gnosis," included in his *Agon* (1982), sketches this battle of father figures in what he calls Crane's "poetic religion" or "American orphism," an Emersonian religion inherited by Crane through Whitman and with which he daringly attacked the anti-Romanticism of his

contemporary antagonist and inspiration: T. S. Eliot. Crane was struck with Eliot since he started reading him and, in a now famous 1923 letter to his friend Gorham Munson, he admits that "my work for the past two years has been more influenced by Eliot than any other modern (…) There is no one writing in English who can command so much respect, to my mind, as Eliot" (CRANE, 2006. p. 308). He wrote this letter just in the wake of the publishing of *Waste Land* and the poem's powerful imagery and rhetoric certainly impacted Crane. But he adds that

> However, I take Eliot as a point of departure toward an almost complete reverse of direction. (…) I would apply as much of his erudition and technique as I can absorb and assemble toward a more positive, or (if must put it so in a skeptical age) ecstatic goal. (id.)

Eliot was a point of departure, a contemporary master and antagonist. Whitman's views, on the other hand, were more attuned to Crane's temperament and ideas. As Bloom puts it, Eliot's "anti-Romantic polemic provoked in Crane an answering fury of High Romanticism" (1982, p. 254). Bloom's idea of Crane undertaking an Emersonian-Whitmaninan "American religion" or "poetic religion" is highly fecund for our understanding of the genesis of Crane's poetics against Eliot.

In the same book, *Agon*, Bloom points to Emerson as the primal origin of what he deems an American religion. According to Bloom, "the mind of Emerson is the mind of America" (p.145), and the religion created by him should be called "self-reliance," the title of Emerson's most famous essay. Of extreme importance to our theme here is how Bloom interprets the phrase 'self-reliance': as in opposition to 'God-reliance'. The Emersonian religion was the religion of the *Self*, in other words, the Self in the place of God, or rather, the Self as the sole God. "To believe your own thought, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true for all men,—that is genius" (Emerson, 2010 p.29) and "Trust thyself: every heart vibrates to that iron string" (id. p.30) are some famous Emersonian quotes that underpin this religion. It is, above all, a literary religion. Bloom reminds us that most American bred religions—Seventh Day Adventists, Mormonism, Christian Science (of which Crane's mother was an adept), and Jehovah's Witnesses—resulted in powerful and influential churches, but no significant religious literature. Emersonianism, on the other hand, did not spawn any church ("thankfully," Bloom says), but its doctrine or activity is disseminated in a line of strong literary texts, beginning obviously with Emerson's essays and including an

extensive poetic tradition which has its enthusiastic adepts in Whitman and Crane and some shyer ones in poets like Wallace Stevens.

The Coming of a New Adam

The tendency spawned by writers like Emerson can be seen as a quintessential American tradition, or, as some authors would say, an anti-tradition. R. W. B. Lewis, in his eloquently titled book *The American Adam* (1955), traces this Emersonian school throughout its main authors and identifies it with an attempt of a break with tradition—any tradition. Lewis informs us that the War of 1812 brought in a strong sense of nationalism not only among politicians or civilians, but also in American letters and thought. The attitude that would spring from this nationalism was characterized by an enmity against the past, leading even to some authors regretting the fact that Americans were burdened to communicate among themselves in an old, inherited language.

Merle Curti in his voluminous *The Growth of American Thought* (1964) informs us that colonial thought in the United States was unified by the Christian heritage, although the many trends and religious orders that sprouted in the English speaking New World were often at odds with one another. Whereas Catholics and Anglicans emphasized the importance of reading the Bible according to the authority of a church, the strong presence of the Protestant revolt firmed "the idea that the individual could determine religious truth on the compulsion of his own subjective intuitions rather than on the authority of a clergy or the traditions of a church." (p. 8) Some Christian thinkers, according to Curti, stressed how the Holy Spirit could speak through any man's tongue, regardless of his culture or social position, or that God could communicate His love immediately to anyone. This emphasis on the individual's autonomy of thought could not but grow. On another vein, Gertrude Himmelfarb, in *The Roads to Modernity* (2008), depicts the shaping of Enlightenment ideals in America leading up to the Revolution. Himmelfarb sees Enlightenment as a threefold development. The core value of British Enlightenment, according to this author, was virtue and the authors associated to it—most notoriously Edmund Burke and, even if in a deceptively minor scale, Adam Smith—emphasized the importance of continuity with

the past and millenary institutions, mainly the Church. On the other hand, French Enlightenment was based on reason and led to uncompromising revolutionary attitudes. The North-American Enlightenment, on the basis of the American Revolution, emphasized liberty as a core value and combined elements of both movements. In any case, the idea of dispensing with the past counted with some advocates in American soil.

This breaking with tradition was followed by Transcendentalism, the quintessential American philosophy-religion, and which Lewis remarks was "Puritanism turned upside down" (p.23). The Puritan mind as an "American tradition" is characterized by Charles Feidelson, Jr. in *Symbolism and American Literature* (1970) by the appropriation of the natural scenery to Biblical symbology. According to this critic, "the mental economy of the Puritans gave little scope for the aesthetic realization of the natural world," and yet "the word 'wilderness' inherently united the forty years of the ancient Hebrews with the trials of the New England forest" (FEIDELSON, p. 78-79). Puritans spread tradition all over American landscapes; Transcendentalism's task was, then, to strip these landscapes of this same tradition. To Lewis,

> Transcendentalism drew on the vocabularies of European romanticism and Oriental mysticism; but the only available local vocabulary was the one that the hopeful were so anxious to escape from, and a very effective way to discredit its inherited meaning was to serve it up in an unfamiliar context. (p.23)

Lewis indicates that the experience of these new philosophers, Thoreau, Emerson and others, in the New World was that tradition and convention came first and dominated nature, not the other way round. Emerson's essays are suffused with this feeling of naturalistic individualism. In "Self-Reliance" he asks "what have I to do with the sacredness of traditions, if I live wholly from within?" and posits that "no law can be sacred to me but that of my nature" (EMERSON, 1991, p. 32). In nature man finds a place in which "no history, or church, or state, is interpolated on the divine sky and the immortal year" (p. 311). Thoughts like this found what Lewis deems the new Adamism—the belief that American man is a newborn man. Christian tradition says all men throughout the centuries are stained by the original sin committed by Adam. The new man of the transcendentalists had nothing to do with the sins of another; here was a newborn man in communion with nature. It is no wonder that an exemplary author of the conservative school such as Russell Kirk considered that the "whole melioristic,

abstract, individualistic, tendency of their philosophy was destructive of conservative values" (KIRK, 2001, p. 241).

Kirk's evaluation could be reinforced by Paul F. Boller Jr.'s *American Transcendentalism* (1974). According to this intellectual and historical inquiry, Transcendentalism appeared in its own time as a wholesale refusal of Christian doctrines. As one might expect, Emerson's new ideas were harshly criticized by clergymen and theologians of the time. Some ascertained it was just a natural result stemming from the refusal of the Trinity effected by Unitarianism; others emphasized its tendency toward pantheism in its denial of a personal God; and some noticed how Emerson's beautiful sentences softened the subversive content of his ideas. In any case, Transcendentalism was a doctrine of rupture of great appeal for the young and rejected by the old. In tracing the forerunners of the new school of thought, Boller highlights the popularity of Kantian idealism and its critique of British empiricism—it then becomes interesting to notice how this new American philosophy paralleled a rupture with one of the most "English" philosophical schools.

Emersonian Transcendentalism was indeed a religious school of thought with its own concept of God and spirituality. The spirituality posited by transcendentalists emphasized a directness of contact between man and nature and between man and his inner self. To Emerson and his peers, institutions, society, and culture were dangerous to rely on, since they could stand in the way of this direct contact. As Emerson himself says, within nature man finds a place where "cities do not give the human senses room enough" (EMERSON, p. 312). The elements found in nature excited the senses in a variety of patterns which could only be divine, which were "the music and pictures of the most ancient religion" (id., p. 313). Man shared an intimacy with nature and all living things which was attributable to what was called by these thinkers the Universal Spirit, the deific energy pervading all things as the one source to every beauty, truth, and goodness. This idea clearly presupposes a sort of intentionality and intelligence in nature, a method of nature. Emerson's philosophy of nature resulted in a curious mirroring of ethics and natural science. According to it, the beauty of nature was the manifestation of an intrinsic and transcendental moral beauty. And this intermingling of physics and morals also provides Emerson with a substitute for the doctrine of judgment in the afterlife: the theory of compensation, which posits that reality stresses throughout

a series of pairs in eternal balance. This dynamic polarity would underlie macrocosms and microcosms, as Emerson says in the essay *Compensation*:

> Whilst the world is thus dual, so is every one of its parts. The entire system of things gets represented in every particle. There is somewhat that resembles the ebb and flow of the sea, day and night, man and woman, in a single needle of the pine, in a kernel of corn, in each individual of every animal tribe. The reaction, so grand in the elements, is repeated within these small boundaries. (p. 57)

This theory of compensations stretched itself as far as human morality. Or better, human morality was just another aspect of this great living organism which is nature. As Emerson says, "[e]very thing is made of one hidden stuff" (EMERSON, p. 59) and just as "[e]very thing in nature contains all powers of nature" (id.), so "[e]ach one is an entire emblem of human life; of its good and ill, its trials, its enemies, its course, and its end" (ibid.). We can permit ourselves to generalize this view to time and arrive at the idea that every moment contains in it all history. Hence, the contempt transcendentalists show for tradition and the past and their focus on the instant.

In imaginative literature, and most specifically in poetry, this doctrine would be most successfully represented by Walt Whitman, whose *Leaves of Grass*, according to Lewis, gave "[t]he fullest portrayal of the new world's representative man as a new, American Adam" (p. 28), in which "innocence replaced sinfulness as the first attribute of American character" (id.). The abovementioned idea that "[e]very thing is made of one hidden stuff" assaults us already in the all too famous first lines of his most well-known text *Song of Myself*:

> I celebrate myself and sing myself,
> And what I assume you shall assume,
> For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.(Whitman, 2006, p. 24)

Every human being contains the whole spirit animating human works throughout times when Whitman invites us to "[s]top this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems" and that "[y]ou shall no longer, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the specters in books" (id., p. 25). Also our reasoning on time seems to be confirmed by these very lines:

> There was never any more inception than there is now,
> Nor any more youth or age than there is now;
> And will never be any more perfection than there is now,
> Nor any more heaven or hell than there is now. (ibid., p. 25)

Indeed, as Lewis says, "[t]here is scarcely a poem of Whitman before 1867, which does not have the air of being the first poem ever written, the first formulation in language of the nature of persons and things and of the relations between them" (p. 44). The doctrine of compensation seems to make its appearance as well in section 8 of *Song of Myself*, where Whitman enumerates, in the same tone, a series of images depicting delicate, beautiful and horrid events:

> The little one sleeps in its cradle,
> I lift the gauze and look a long time, and silently brush away flies with my hand.
> The youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill,
> I peeringly view them from the top.
> The suicide sprawls on the bloody floor of the bedroom,
> I witness the corpse with its dabbled hair, I note where the pistol has fallen. (ibid., p. 29)

Every event in life has its importance and none can be more important than the other, since for every joy, there is also a gloom and "battles are lost in the same spirit in which they are won" (ibid., p. 37).

Tradition against the Disembodied Mind

This so called Adamic and tradition-rejecting perspective would drastically influence modern thought and art into a disruptive and groundbreaking path, which would be enforced by European vanguard movements. This thought, as we have already introduced, would influence much of Crane's views and poetry. However, this was not the only path followed by modernity, nor was it the only influence in Crane. Professor Langdon Hammer, in his *Hart Crane and Allen Tate: Janus-Faced Modernism* (1993) presents American Modernism as a twofold phenomenon, pointing toward a reactionary and a revolutionary path, represented respectively by Allen Tate and Hart Crane, having T. S. Eliot's work as vertex. It is well-known that the poetry of T. S. Eliot was a central influence on both Crane and Tate. According to Hammer, it was Crane who introduced Eliot's work to Tate, presenting him as a most formidable opponent. We have already touched upon the letter Crane wrote to Gorham Munson dated January 5 1923. The full citation is necessary here:

> There is no one writing in English who can command so much respect, to my mind, as Eliot. However, I take Eliot as a point of departure toward an almost complete reverse of direction. His pessimism is amply justified, in his own case. But I would apply as much of his erudition and technique as I can absorb and assemble toward a more positive, or (if [I] must put it so in a skeptical age) ecstatic goal. I should not think of this if a kind of rhythm and ecstasy were not (at odd moments, and rare!) a very real thing to me. I feel that Eliot ignores certain spiritual events and possibilities as real and powerful now as, say, in the time of Blake. Certainly the man has dug the ground and buried hope as deep and direfully as it can ever be done... (CRANE, 2006. P. 308)

It was with this antagonistic enthusiasm that Crane presented his discovery to his newfound friend Allen Tate, as young as him and also in the beginnings of his poetic apprenticeship. The impact of Eliot's work on both of them was evident. In a letter to Tate dated June 12 1922, Crane shows his sympathy to his smitten friend:

> What you say about Eliot does not surprise me,—but you will recover from the shock. No one ever says the last word, and it is a good thing for you, (notice I congratulate myself!) to have been faced with him as early as possible. I have been facing him for four years, - and while I haven't discovered a weak spot in his armour, - I flatter myself a little lately that I have discovered a safe tangent to strike which, if I can possibly explain the position, - goes through him toward a different goal. (CRANE, 2006, p. 278)

Unfortunately the original letter from Tate seems to be out of reach. However, in his 1968 essay "Poetry Modern and Unmodern," he recalls that after discovering the poetry of T. S. Eliot, he "couldn't write anything for several months" (TATE, 1999.p. 224), adding that the pieces "Gerontion" and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" contained everything Tate wanted to do in poetry. According to Hammer, the different appreciations of the two friends had were the pivot of their dissension that would end up in a fight both personal and literary. It is his guess that what Crane wanted in Tate was a fellow poet to help him counter Eliot's pessimism by studying what the master verse maker had to teach them, mainly because, in the beginning of their friendship, Tate had positioned himself as an apprentice of Crane, who would lead him to modernity in verse. It turned out that Crane, in introducing Tate to the poetry of T. S. Eliot, unwittingly turned his would-be partner into a dissident as Tate lined up with Eliot in his views. The quarrel between Tate and Crane seems to reproduce the scission between classicism and romanticism.

T. S. Eliot was a pivotal figure in English language poetry of the 20th century. From his prestige as poet and critic he could rise to fame also as an authority in cultural

and moral matters with the views Crane disagreed with. As we have seen in the letter to Gorham Munson quoted above, Crane felt that Eliot's "pessimism is amply justified, in his own case." In a 2012 Yale lecture on Crane available in the internet, Professor Hammer hints that Crane was referring to some insight he had had into Eliot's private-sexual life. Maybe he was, but here we should investigate what the reasons for Eliot's pessimism were, beyond his private life. Born in the United States, Eliot's moving to the United Kingdom exceeds the geographic dimension; it was, if we are allowed to say so, a spiritual move, since not only did he become a legal English citizen, but he also positioned himself, as we can see in many of his lectures, as an English citizen, and there was no doubt that he saw the modern poetry being written in English, whether it was written in the United States or in the United Kingdom, as deeply indebted to the English tradition of verse. Modernity, for Eliot, made sense only as a continuance of tradition.

Douglas Bush in *English Poetry* (1968) characterizes modern poetry as deeply marked by an era in which firm and consecrated transcendent and eternal certainties of religion had glided into the obtuse and timely claims of science. Whereas the spiritual values of, say, the Christian view (in case of Western civilization) were eternalized by a tradition organically rising from a unique divine revelation; the impressive discoveries of empirical science, stemming solely from the hardness of matter, seemed to change day by day, providing a very unstable ground for men's beliefs. Eliot, a child of that age, was very sensitive to its dilemmas and insecurities, and responded to them in a conservative manner, affirming against them Christian and classical Western values, a position that would culminate with his conversion to Anglicanism (something similar would happen in Allen Tate's conversion to Roman-Catholicism). The turn toward an affirmation of the Christian belief would become more pronounced in his later poetry, as the vision of redemption in *Ash Wednesday*, but his early work points to a complete destruction of Christian and Western classical values.

Perhaps his most celebrated piece of literary criticism is the essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, whose titling dichotomy is addressed by emphasizing the importance of the former over the latter. Or rather, it is tradition that actually shapes individual talent, making it indeed individual. In Eliot's own words,

> One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his

> work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. […] Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously. (ELIOT, 1975, p. 37-38)

An English language poet in the 20th Century had no reason to be less attached to the European (or in this more specific case, English) tradition than one writing in any previous era, since his works could only be assessed against the background of European tradition. The Nigerian critic Abiola Irele, to apply Eliot's views on African literary tradition, remarked that 'tradition', for Eliot, was

> not so much an abiding, permanent, immutable stock of beliefs and symbols, but as the constant refinement and extension of these in a way which relates them to an experience that is felt as being at once continuous and significantly new. (IRELE, 1990, p. 174)

This experience 'once continuous and significantly new' is probably what Eliot called the indispensable historical sense, which included "the timeless and the temporal and the timeless and temporal together" (ELIOT, 1975, p. 39). The obtainment of a tradition could only be achieved by great labor, and the development of an artist that comes with this obtainment could only be achieved by "a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (id., p. 40). Becoming an artist included disposing of one's personality to give way to tradition, to open space for the dead poets to assert their presence in one's consciousness. This process of depersonalization did not necessarily require the poet not to use his own feelings or emotions as material for his work, but these feelings or emotions should be sifted by the artist's tradition, since "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates" (ibid., p. 41).

These views were in tune with what Eliot believed it meant to be an individual. He addressed the issue from a different perspective than that of liberal democracy, characterizing its view on individuality as a fallacy, as he says in "Religion and Literature" (1975). For Eliot, one could only be an individual if within a tradition, in his case the Christian tradition. Eliot saw the liberal fallacy as one which posited that "if everybody says what he thinks, and does what he likes, things will somehow, by some automatic compensation and adjustment, come right in the end" (id., p.103). Extending this to literature, Eliot reminds us of the strong and often direct effect a literary

education has on a person's behavior. An immature reader, according to Eliot, has his "undeveloped personality" inundated by "the stronger personality of the poet" (ibid., p.102). It is only with more extensive reading that the reader's mind will be able to confront the different authors and form a kind of inner tradition, or an inner canon. The drifting away of literature from religious knowledge could only result in a myriad of authors whose works derived more from their subjectivities than from a long-standing tradition. And the problem, to Eliot, is that this so called individual knowledge is more based on prejudice than sound thinking. As we can remember, Eliot ascertained, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that the work of a poet is more individual wherein his forerunners affirmed their presence more strongly. As a direct conclusion to these ideas, Eliot found that

> It is not only that the reading individual today (or at any day) is not enough an individual to be able to absorb all the 'views of life' of all the authors pressed upon us by the publisher's advertisement and the reviewers, and to be able to arrive at wisdom by considering one against another. It is that contemporary authors are not individuals enough either. It is not that the world of separate individuals of the liberal democrat is undesirable; it is simply that this world does not exist. (ELIOT, 1975, p.104)

The turns the modern mind had taken as influenced, or at least reflected by, literature was one of Eliot's main concerns. In another essay, "The Metaphysical Poets," Eliot, reviewing a then recently published collection of lyrics by the so called seventeenth century "metaphysical poets," meticulously examines the features of lyrics written in the seventeenth century by Donne and his peers and measures them against the features of the poetry of later times, arriving at a conclusion about the poetry of his own time. Eliot reminds us that to Samuel Johnson, who coined the term 'metaphysical poets', the poetry of Donne and Herbert seemed repulsively new, a kind of degraded intellectualization. For Eliot, however, the better path to take in evaluating these poets was the opposite: they should not be seen as the first examples of a budding new form of sensitivity, but as the last resources of a previous sensibility that was lost after them. Eliot reminds us that, for a poet such as Donne, a thought was an experience as concrete as scenting a flower, having a direct influence in his sensibility; to put it more simply, feeling and thought were narrowly linked in these poets, to the point in which they came naturally together. This kind of sensitivity, said Eliot, was lost after them, or in Eliot's own words, "[i]n the seventeenth century, a dissociation of sensibility set in, from which we have never recovered" (ELIOT, 1975, p. 64). And this dissociation can be

sensed in poets such as Milton and Dryden, in which “while the language became more refined, the feeling became more crude” (id.).

Allen Tate came in agreement with these views and adopted them as a pillar to his critical ideas, as seen in many of his essays. In one brief essay, “To Whom Is the Poet Responsible?”, Tate takes these ideas to a wider and social plane, remarking that

> The total complex of sensibility and thought, of belief and experience, in the society from which the poetry emerges, is the prime limiting factor that the poet must first of all be aware of; otherwise, his language will lack primary reality, the nexus of thing and word. (1999, p. 27)

But it is in two major essays, “The Angelic Imagination” and “The Symbolic Imagination” (TATE, 1999), that Tate offers his more perceptible contributions to this line of thought. The two imaginations referred to in the titles are two modes of sensibility perceived in the poetry of two different eras. As examples of each Tate uses, respectively, Edgar Allan Poe and Dante Alighieri. The angelic imagination, which was the one that characterized modern poetry at large, is a kind of disembodied imagination, in which the poet tries to overcome material reality and actually *create* reality through language, instead of expressing or construing it. The name Tate cunningly gives to this mode of imagination comes from the theological tenet that “[s]trictly speaking, an *angelic imagination* is not possible. Angels by definition have unmediated knowledge of essences” (TATE, 1999, p. 415*n*). On the other hand, the symbolic imagination, that which moved the poetry of Dante, recognized the physical world in its fullness, not as a reality per se, but as a reality symbolic to the essence entertained in God. By working with the reality as directly as it appears to him, the poet of the times of Dante could convey in his words the real object and the object imagined, therefore enabling a more precise, and analogical, apprehension of essence, which the poet, as a man, is aware that is inaccessible while essence to him.

That disembodied reality, that escape from reality was the sign of modern poetry, was the reality in which the modern poet—and Crane is one of the most paradigmatic of them—moved and wrote. It could never be denied or ignored by the modern poet, but he surely had to take a stand in face of it.

The Logic of Metaphor

So far I have sketched two blocks of thought that stand as somewhat opposite to one another. On the one hand, I have examined the views of those writers associated to American Transcendentalism, as Emerson and Whitman. On the other hand, I have sketched the critical and cultural ideas of thinkers such as Allen Tate and T. S. Eliot. These authors were chosen because all of them were directly influential to Hart Crane's own ideas and poetical practice. Furthermore, these two lines were very present in Crane's mind and he positioned himself in relation to them.

We remember how Harold Bloom depicted Crane's standpoint as that of an opposition to Eliot (his 'father-figure') in which he felt supported by the Whitmanian poetics. In countering what he saw as Eliot's misguided pessimism he relied on the optimism of Emerson and Whitman. However, if it is true that Crane rejected Eliot's traditionalism, he was far from rejecting the importance of tradition as his forerunners tried to do.

The critic Lee Edelman, in his *Transmemberment of Song* (1987) points to this position of Crane's poetics between the impersonal modernism of Eliot and Pound and the romanticism of Whitman. There is clearly a dialectical tension between these two trends since one indicates the past as a source of knowledge and the other emphasizes the importance of the present, the here and now. Crane did not have Eliot's erudition neither did he rely on a long-standing religious, or spiritual, and scholarly tradition to cohere his ideas and readings. As we have seen before, Tate stated that Crane had read the great poets of the past with the instinct of a genius, but not with the discipline needed to acquire a historical sense of his literature, and he was often seen, as Sherman Paul (1982) says, as a case of "individual talent without tradition" (p. 166). The scholarliness of Crane's friends and early evaluators such as Allen Tate and Yvor Winters no doubt compelled them to overemphasize the lack of a tradition in Crane, but it is also true that Crane's poetics gave the poet's individuality more room than the theories of T. S. Eliot and his followers.

It is important to remember that Crane saw Eliot as a point of departure toward an opposite goal; thus he had to sketch a poetical theory that could accompany his writing and largely justify it. During his time, Crane's lyrics often found bewildered assessors who did not seem to know where to place the modernist images packed in that

traditional form and rhetoric. Crane's metaphors were enigmatic and subjective, but not really random as surrealist imagery tended to be. The novelty of his methods has puzzled editors and critics and Crane felt inclined to outline an explanation.

The main error of Eliot's pessimism, in Crane's opinion, lied on a wrong evaluation of the modern world's spiritual status. As we have seen, Eliot did not believe in the kind of freedom proposed by liberalism, in which each person should follow his or her subjective convictions to arrive at truth. For Eliot, truth could only be achieved in surrendering oneself to a spiritual tradition. The very concept of individuality endorsed by liberal democracy was, for Eliot, a mistake. Eliot's view on poetic creation paralleled his view on society and spirituality and we should refer again to his belief that the more a poet disposed of his personality to give room for the old poets to speak through him, the more individual he will be.

This idea could not be accepted by Crane. Although he had no personal religion and rarely talked about it in an institutional sense,[†] spirituality was a frequent and strong concern for him, both personally and poetically (as we will see, these two dimensions were not separate for him), but his views on spirituality were not conventional. Contrarily to Eliot, Crane believed that modernity had a spirituality of its own which was somehow different from the spirituality of the past. This spirituality had its specificity not only in temporal, but spatial terms, since Crane believed that the American experience had something new to give. In this sense, there is some proximity between Crane and the standpoint of new Adamism held by Emerson and Whitman. However, Crane was not entirely in agreement with the transcendentalists about the novelty of American spirituality. Crane believed that the "deliberate program of a break with the past" was a "sentimental fallacy" (Crane, 2006, p. 161). Crane harmonized these two seemingly contradictory stances by saying that

> I am concerned with the future of America, but not because I think that America has any so-called par value as a state or as a group of people… It is only because I feel persuaded that here are destined to be discovered certain as yet undefined spiritual quantities, perhaps a new hierarchy of faith not to be developed so completely elsewhere. And in this process I like to feel myself as a potential factor; certainly

[†] Brom Webber tells us that, through the influence of Carl Schmitt, Crane had a closer contact with Catholicism, whose symbolism-laden liturgy was aesthetically far more appealing to Crane than the Christian Science adopted by his mother. Nevertheless, Crane's interest in Catholicism remained in the aesthetical plane.

> I must speak in terms and what discoveries I may make are situated in its experience. (CRANE, 2006, p. 161)

It is clear that Crane was not naïve concerning, as he says, "the relation of tradition to the contemporary creating imagination" (p. 160). His rejection of Eliot's pessimism has been emphasized, but neither could he accept the optimism of some of his forerunners to whom American man was a new man. Therefore, the age he was living in, the machine age, was not one of decadence, nor of renewal, but of "transition from a decayed culture toward a reorganization of human evaluations" (p. 161). Crane did not deny Eliot's views entirely, since he agreed with his master that our traditional culture was in decay; the difference was that he saw this decadence as pointing to new forms of experience in the construction of which the poet should have an important part.

These observations set the groundwork for the justification to Crane's radical poetic methods. For him,

> The great mythologies of the past (including the Church) are deprived of enough façade to even launch good raillery against. Yet much of their traditions are operative still in millions of chance combinations of related and unrelated detail, psychological reference, figures of speech, precepts, etc. These are all a part of our common experience and the terms, or at least partially, of that very experience when it defines or extends itself. (id., p. 161)

This perception could be confirmed by a remark by the already mentioned Nigerian critic Abiola Irele on the relationship of the African writer to tradition in comparison to that of the modern European writer:

> Baudelaire strove to take French poetry beyond the rhetorical limits within which it was confined when he began to write, to make it a means of knowledge. Neither he nor those poets who followed his lead—from Rimbaud right up to the Surrealists—were able to find coherent cultural references for their visionary aspirations. The collapse of Christianity as the great myth of Western culture has forced these poets to create an individual mythology, each one for himself. […] The great fortune of African writers is that the world-views which shape the experience of the individual in traditional society are still very much alive and continue to provide a comprehensive frame of reference for communal life. (IRELE, 1990, p. 195)

Crane undoubtedly shared the predicament observed by Irele and was aware of it, as well as he was aware that the lack of a common mythology resulted in the existence of "few common terms, general denominators of speech that are solid enough or that ring with any vibration or spiritual conviction" (CRANE, 2006, p. 161). These

common terms or denominators of speech are the poet's raw materials; it is by using them that he can communicate with his readers and convey experiences he thinks are valuable. The poets, then, had to find strategies to overcome the scarcity of raw poetic materials. Eliot, as we saw, circumvented this by returning to the worn-out Christian symbolism, which, he believed, could retrieve some of its sacred force. Crane, to whom this instability was more an opportunity than a misfortune, plunged in his own perceptions, his own personal mythology to find symbols he believed could be significant to others, knowing the difficulties that poems constructed upon such materials could bring to readers. We could also draw on the words of Waldo Frank, for whom Crane was a mystic writing within the great tradition (i.e., the Western tradition) but in a secularized world; his problem of language emerged from the difficulty to find words that could convey his visions (FRANK, 1933).

This theory of poetry obviously relied much upon individual inspiration and the poet's capacity to draw symbols from his subjective experiences that could account for a valid poetic experience. However, a valid poetic experience must be somehow generalizable; even the most hermetic poem must have some resonance to the reader or it will be ineffective. Crane's subjective hermeticism was often criticized as engendering symbols that were so difficult to grasp by the reader that his poems would become irrelevant. An example of this criticism is that by Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry* magazine, to which Crane had sent one of his poems ("At Melville's Tomb"), who considered it nonsensical. A similar reaction often came from such qualified readers as Allen Tate, who, in receiving the poem "Recitative," admitted not having understood it.

Crane never disregarded these drawbacks his poetry presented to the reader and he always made clear that it was not his intention to make poems difficult just for the sake of it. As Crane wrote to his evaluator Harriet Monroe, in response to her remarks on his poem, he was "much more interested in certain theories of metaphor and technique" than in "vindicating any particular perpetrations of my own" (CRANE, 2006, p. 165). The theory of metaphor Crane was referring to was the one on which he grounded his poetical practice, which was, as Crane says in the same letter, at odds with the editor's views. Crane was convinced that it was the task of the poet to find new expressive pathways in language to open new areas of experience in feeling and thought for the readers. Since the traditional pools of symbols (the old mythologies) were dry,

he had to find new resources. These new resources, Crane believed, lied on the perceptions of the poet and language itself, on an unexplored emotive dimension of language. As Crane himself explains,

> As to technical considerations: the motivation of the poem must be derived from the implicit emotional dynamics of the materials used, and the terms of expression employed are often selected less for their logical (literal) significance than for their associational meanings. Via this and their metaphorical inter-relationships, the entire construction of the poem is raised on the organic principle of a "logic of metaphor," which antedates our so-called pure logic, and which is the genetic basis of all speech, hence consciousness and thought-extension. (CRANE, 2006, p. 163)

This “logic of metaphor” from which the “emotional dynamics of the materials used” sprung, since it was the genetic basis of all speech, as Crane posited, was shared by all humanity, even if unconsciously. It was Crane’s belief that the poet could, and should, achieve this area of consciousness in the readers through the use of these unusual methods. Crane admits that, due to theories such as this, he came to receive the label of “absolutist” in poetry; a label which he did not reject, since

> […]certain aesthetic experience (and this may for a time engross the total faculties of the spectator) can be called absolute, inasmuch as it approximates a formally convincing statement of a conception or apprehension of life that gains our unquestioning assent, and under the conditions of which our imagination is unable to suggest a further detail consistent with the design of the aesthetic whole. (id., p. 162)

The objective and sensorial reality was a springboard for the poet to achieve these symbolic modulations. The results should provide a grasp into this absolute experience whose existence was posited by Crane. The efficacy of the poem would depend not upon the reader understanding its “meaning” or the *quality* of experience that originated it, but upon reaching a determined *quantity* of emotion when faced with a certain image as used by the poet that made this image emotionally significant. Crane guessed if

> 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 the usual description and dialectics, which the artist ought to be right in trusting as a reasonable connective agent toward fresh concepts, more inclusive evaluations? (CRANE, 2006, p. 168)

In other words, Crane was betting on the existence of an unconscious area of subjective experience shared by humans that could be accessed by a poet if he used the

right methods. The result was the reader having access to certain "spiritual illuminations," a completely new experience. Or, as 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. (CRANE, 2006, p. 163)

Margaret Uroff (1974) in *Hart Crane: The Patterns of his Poetry*, makes a comparison (with which I am in complete agreement) of Crane's ideas and the description made by the German philosopher Ernst Cassirer of the mythical mind. In *Language and Myth* (1953), Cassirer places the origin of mythology in a twist of language, or a misinterpretation of words to define the objects, more than in the objects themselves. A human being is in constant touch with the objects that surround him, and which he comes to understand through a kind of adaptation of these objects to some forms preexisting in the human mind. The way of apprehending the objects within these mental forms is language; man names to understand. Language, however, is in itself polyvalent, and each word brings, along with a rudiment of definition, an emotional energy which takes over the human mind, and from the relationship of this emotional-imaginative dimension of language with the object a deity is born. The first deities, Cassirer tells us, are spontaneous and subjective; only in a further moment of human evolution the gods start to be shared within a society, defining its culture.

The similarity of these ideas to Crane's is remarkable. The production of a spontaneous god from a sudden intensification of emotional energy reminds us of Crane's theory on how a poetic image surges from an emotional intensification in the poet that can come to occur in the reader as well and create a kind of communication. Curiously this dimension of divinity in poetry is also present in Crane's ideas when he tells Gorham Munson, in a letter of March 17 1926, that poetry, in relation to religion, does not elucidate it, but gives the reader "the real connective experience, the very 'sign manifest' on which rests the assumption of a godhead" (p. 437).

The ideas being sketched can be illuminated by recent literary theory in the works of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, particularly his book *Productions of Presence* (2004). In this text, Gumbrecht proposes a way to view aesthetic experience based on what he calls its dimension of presence. Gumbrecht defines the presence paradigm, or dimension, of an aesthetic experience in opposition to what he terms its "meaning"

dimension, much more emphasized in modern culture. The meaning dimension, or hermeneutic dimension, of an aesthetic experience refers to what it *stands for*, what it is replacing or signifying; whereas the presence dimension refers to the ways in which this experience *touches* us, its sensorial and emotional immediate effects on us, regardless of what it *says* to us. Gumbrecht tells us that these two dimensions are present in any culture, but their weight may differ. A presence-based culture relies not so much upon the signification of symbols, but their material, spatial presence. The religious rites in these cultures are not intended to invoke a distant god, but to *intensify* the presence of a god who is already there. *Intensification*, and not *understanding*, is the main process in an aesthetic experience in a presence-based culture. Gumbrecht tells us how the notion of quantities is important in these cultures, since they tend to quantify emotions, sensations and other phenomena which are only seen under a qualitative light in meaning cultures. As we remember, Crane emphasized how the novelty of spiritual experiences in the modern, and American scene, was not in their quality (since he did not believe in "par values" to be found in America), but in their *quantities*, in other words, in the way they could provoke emotional intensifications leading to spiritual illuminations.

The direction taken by Crane's ideas leads to a kind of aestheticism. Indeed, in the brief essay "Modern Poetry" (2006), he classified poetry as an architectural art. But he goes as far as positing, in the aforementioned letter to Gorham Munson, that even the merits of philosophy were due to its aesthetic dimension. Crane says to Munson that he (Munson) admired Plato because of "the architecture of his logic," since the living truth of Plato's ideas were the "'fact' of their harmonious relationship to each other in the context of his organization of them" (CRANE, 2006, p. 437). Truth and morality, for Crane, were primarily aesthetical, contrarily to Eliot, for whom "the greatness of literature cannot be measured solely by literary standards" (ELIOT, 1975, p. 97). The primacy of aesthetics for Crane is visible in another letter to Gorham Munson, in which he writes about his poem "Black Tambourine," a piece which deals with the symbolic figure of the black man in America representing isolation and alienation. For Crane, "[t]he value of the poem is only, to me, in what a painter would call its 'tactile' quality,—an entirely aesthetic feature" (CRANE, 2006, p. 249).Crane added that "a propagandist for either side of the negro question could find anything he wanted to in it" (id.). The poem should *touch* or *affect* the reader in a way that was singular. Providing

this aesthetic experience seemed to be more important, at least as far as the poet's task is concerned, than morally educating his readers.

The poetic views held by Crane were, then, closer to the aesthetics of pure poetry as held by the symbolist movement. In the following chapter, the relationship between these views and the poetry being written in his own time as well as the way they impacted on his own writings will be examined.

2 WHITE BUILDINGS, BRIGHT LOGIC

Crossroads of Consciousness

Hart Crane's poetry, it should be clear by now, enclosed greatly ambitious artistic and intellectual plans, and many of his evaluators were unanimous in saying that his intellectual resources were insufficient to achieve his goals. Some of Allen Tate's remarks on this particularity have already been exposed in the previous chapter. Although Tate would eventually, as already mentioned, turn toward a contrary position to that of Crane, the two men actually shared some views and plans in the beginning of their friendship and Tate was always an insider into Crane's poetry. This familiarity appeared in Crane's enthusiastically agreeing on Tate writing a foreword for his first book in 1926. Despite its briefness, this foreword became a classic piece of criticism on Crane, and it can be said that all subsequent evaluations of his poetry somehow took it into consideration.

Tate places Crane within what he terms the neo-symbolist movement and detects in his work some of the difficulties found in modern poetry. Crane's poetry, says Tate, presents some ambivalences, such as being modern and "in the grand manner," metaphysically conceived and unmistakably American. Although he does find some influences of the Imagist movement, Tate sees his friend's poetry as more cohesive than those of Pound's followers. As he says, "[a] series of Imagistic poems is a series of worlds. The poems of Hart Crane are facets of a single vision." (TATE, 1982, p. 19) Nevertheless, he acknowledges that the mode of composition of the poems and the poetic methods employed by Crane render the grasping of this unity of vision rather difficult. Tate believes that this difficulty arises mainly from the fact that the perception underlying this vision is itself fragmented: "The poet no longer apprehends his world as a Whole. The dissociation appears decisively for the first time in Baudelaire. It is the separation of vision and subject" (id., p. 19). This separation of vision and subject dominates the landscape of modern poetry and is one the modern poet cannot escape from. Even T. S. Eliot, in whose work Tate sees vision and subject more traditionally articulated, shows an unavoidable lack of unity, since "the unity would have been

false.” (ibid., p. 19). For Tate, what began with Baudelaire reaches a formulation with Rimbaud and his revolt against the unity of human consciousness presented in a thematically unified poetry. Crane’s poetry is an inheritor of this revolt, and Tate points as one of its greatest obstacles the lack of a theme: the poems’ unity sustains itself in the vision underlying them, which means the poet’s (Crane’s) vision, not in a theme that can seam them together. However, it is a vision of a modern subject, one whose perception is fragmented. The difficulty of the poetry is, therefore, unavoidable.

This rupture between vision and subject has been the theme of many critical enquiries on modern poetry throughout the 20th Century. Modern poetry would be characterized not only by its stylistic traits or subjects, but mainly by the outlook adopted by the poets, an outlook in which the ties between the subjective self and outer reality are cut. Harold Bloom, in the introduction to his *The Visionary Company* (1971), points to the Romantic Movement as a first step towards this rupture. The romantic ethos, according to Bloom, arises within social, political, and religious changes occurring in Europe at the end of the 18th century, having their center in the French Revolution. However, more than political, it is in a religious turn that Bloom sees the essence of Romantic English Poetry, which, for him, could be seen as a form of Protestant poetry, although neither the founders of Protestantism would most likely admire Romantic poetry, nor the Romantic poets themselves were actually Protestants. Puritanism, in particular, with its highly individualized view of religious truth, according to which God and the meaning of the Scriptures were to be sought only within oneself, would be the trigger for the subjective stances of truth adopted by the romantics. Indeed, Bloom posits the existence of two major lines of English poetry: one, Protestant, Romantic, radical; the other, Catholic (or Anglican), Classical, conservative. This scission could be seen as an origin to that duplicity Professor Langdon Hammer sees between Crane and Tate. T. S. Eliot and the new critics (among them, Allen Tate) were advocates of the former tradition and the poets praised by them, as Bloom points out, were Catholics or Anglicans, such as Donne, Dryden, and Hopkins. If this vision seems to hold true in the case of Tate, Crane’s is more complicated, for his ethos as a poet was not straightforwardly Romantic.

In the same essay, Bloom writes that the innovation of the Romantic theory of art is in the concept of art as creation. This idea, which seems so obvious today, was totally anathema to the neoclassic sensibility, which saw art as imitation. The idea of

creation was that of a godly act, something inaccessible to men. The Romantic view emphasizes the individual genius, or subjectivity, as the only source of truth against a more depersonalized view held by the neoclassic theory. The self as experienced in modern poetry is neither one nor the other, but passes through both. Modern poetry here is the poetry that arises, since the work of Charles Baudelaire, as a result of his poetical practice and aesthetic theories. This classification has already been mentioned here in Allen Tate's foreword, but it is more utterly investigated and discussed in the works of Hugo Friedrich (1974) and Michael Hamburger (2007). Both critics regard modern poetry not only in its artistic, but also philosophic and social dimensions. According to them, the modern poet is the poet as castaway, an isolated person in his visions and ideas, one that cannot be understood by anyone else. So far the situation of the modern poet seems indistinguishable from that of the romantic poet. For the neoclassic, the poet is ascertaining the same truths as the man of science, with the difference that he is ascertaining it in a more elegant, beautiful manner; in other words, poetry would exist to render truth beautiful. With romantic poetry, the view emerges that the poet is dealing with a different, subjective kind of truth. The same view is seen in modern poetry.

Notwithstanding the similarities, the romantic and the modern experiences in poetry are different. For the romantic poet, there is a one-to-one identity between his poetic self and his empirical self, i.e., the voice speaking in the poem is the voice of the poet as a person. As Hugo Friedrich says,

> Definitions based on German romanticism (and employing improper generalizations) claim that poetry is the language of the heart, the emotions, the individual soul. This concept of Gemüt points to an easing of tension through self-communion in a psychical habitat which even the loneliest of men can share with anyone capable of sentiment. Such communicative coziness is exactly what the modern poem eschews. It prefers, instead, to disregard humanitarianism in the conventional sense of the word, "experience," feeling, and often even the personal "I" of the poet. (FRIEDRICH, 1974 p.4-5)

Not surprisingly Friedrich calls modern poetry a "deromanticized Romanticism."

The rupture between the empirical and poetic self is effected in Baudelaire's work. Friedrich and Hamburger draw our attention to the strange and ambiguous situation of this French poet. Baudelaire lived and was affected by the Romantic shift in which the poet no longer imitates reality, but actually creates, from the feelings that lie only within him, an inner reality. However, he was too attached to classical ideals to

bask in his own subjectivity. Both human subjective reality and the surrounding objective reality appeared to Baudelaire as intrinsically corrupt. Man, in his very nature, was corrupt; as was nature itself. We already have seen how American Transcendentalism saw a mirroring between man and nature; the romantic theory held the same view as visible in Wordsworth's claim that the poet "considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature" in the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (WORDWORTH, 2008, p. 607). For Baudelaire, both nature and the human mind in brute and spontaneous form were too low to be the objects of poetry. However, following some tendencies of the mysticism of his days, mainly the works of Swedenborg, he believed that nature, more than a sanctuary of pristine beauty, was a "forest of symbols" as he says in his very famous sonnet "Correspondences."

According to Anna Balakian (1969), Swedenborg's doctrine was a huge influence on both romantics and symbolists, although it has taken different colors in each case. Balakian depicts Swedenborgianism as a mystic doctrine concerned with the harmony between the celestial and the terrestrial worlds. The elements existing in nature would be symbols of an order existing in heaven. The words themselves have a literal and spiritual sense. Baudelaire refined these ideas with his theory of synesthetic correspondences among the diverse data of the senses. For him, the correspondences between colors, sounds, words, and scents perceived by certain sensitive persons were actually a sort of "map" for the superior reality that was lost for man. The task of the poet would be to discover the architecture of these correspondences through his craft. In poetry, thus, the words would invoke sensorial data, sketching the harmony that would lead men to find this lost reality. However, this transcendent reality posited by Baudelaire distances itself from the Christian visions of Swedenborg in that Baudelaire never invokes the existence of a personal God in its center and as its ruler. This reality is composed of pure and ethereal notes and notions, of what Baudelaire calls in his poem "Elévation" "the language of the flowers and the mute things."

Friedrich reminds us that, if Baudelaire advanced in his ideas many of the characteristics of modern poetry—its elusiveness and difficulty—, he did not always put them into practice. Baudelaire's poetry is well constructed and sophisticated, but not difficult and incomprehensible. The thematic unit of his poems is clearly stated and the relation between its metaphors and a discursive center is easy to grasp. Moreover, if

Baudelaire predicted an elusive and symbolic poetry which turned from the horror and vulgarity of his contemporary life to the sublime, his own poetry very frequently visited the corrupted and dirty sceneries of contemporary urban life. All these characteristics will be retaken by Baudelaire's admirer Arthur Rimbaud, who will also transcend them and move toward the poetry that Baudelaire had predicted, but not actually practiced. As Friedrich states, in Rimbaud's poetry, the quintessence "is no longer the theme but an ebullient excitement" (FRIEDRICH, 1974, p. 40). Rimbaud searches for the unknown, and in this search, the empirical self is no longer abandoned, but utterly destroyed in favor of a more "primitive self," reaching a power of, as Friedrich says, "prepersonal nature" (id., p. 42) and attaining a transcendence devoid of content, an "empty supernaturalism."

Tate had already compared Crane to Rimbaud in his foreword, where he refers to the two poets' thematic elusiveness. Ten years later, in an essay written in 1936, Tate would reaffirm the kinship of the two poets:

> Rimbaud achieved "disorder" out of implicit order, after a deliberate cultivation of "derangement," but in our age the disintegration of our intellectual systems is accomplished. With Crane the disorder is original and fundamental. That is the special quality of his mind that belongs peculiarly to our own time. His aesthetic problem, however, was more general; it was the historic problem of romanticism. (TATE, 1999, p. 310)

Indeed, as Friedrich shows, Rimbaud's program exceeded the moving forward in the field of poetic expressive resources and reached the dimensions of a total revolt against tradition and even against the structure of reality in attempting to go beyond human senses and consciousness. Crane's poetic ideas sketched in the previous chapter are appallingly similar to Rimbaud's program; however, as Tate says, this objective could be achieved by Rimbaud after a revolt against tradition and society; Crane had inherited this same derangement of the senses as a state-of-affairs, thus he could take it as a point of departure which even included the tradition and the society that were rejected to give way to this disorder. To Crane, the failure of intellectual systems was a context, and the disorder of the senses, a discipline. His poetry would result from this combination, as Tate said, as a "philosophy of sensation without a point of view" (TATE, 1999, p. 319) which the critic regarded as a form of implicit pantheism. Crane's poetry was a poetry of sensation, since, as Tate says, when he attempted to be more

philosophical in his writing, he failed, for this exuberant surface of sensitive metaphors enclosed only “dead abstraction” (id., p. 316).

Tate logically binds the forces underlying and driving the poetry of Hart Crane to his evaluation of Eliot’s pessimism, which is very disparate from Tate’s own evaluation. As we can remember, Professor Langdon Hammer saw the views on Eliot’s pessimism adopted by Crane and Tate as defining their poetic positions as revolutionary and reactionary respectively. Tate, having adopted Eliot’s pessimistic view on the modern age, described this view as springing from the awareness of the dissolution of intellectual systems and the breaking down of individual consciousness. According to Tate, not only was Crane unable to refute Eliot’s view, but he actually exemplified it in his own work and career. The value of Crane’s work was immense, then: apart from its aesthetic quality (never denied by Tate), it showed the historical dead end to romantic consciousness. Very similar views are held by Yvor Winters, another of Crane’s friends and unmerciful evaluators, who did not share a bit of Tate’s enthusiasm for Eliot. “[T]he fragmentary, ejaculatory, and overexcited quality of a great many poems of Hart Crane is inseparable from the intellectual confusion upon which these particular poems seem to rest,” says Winters, adding that “Crane possessed great energy, but his faculties functioned clearly only within a limited range of experience” (WINTERS, 2001, p. 22). Quite similar to Tate’s claim that Crane’s poetry rested on “dead abstraction,” Winters saw in his mysticism a kind of escapism in which the poet pointed toward a vague superior-transcendent reality as a way to deny his concrete experiences.

During the first half of the Twentieth Century, this was how Crane’s work was viewed. Waldo Frank wrote a valuable Introduction to the 1933 edition of Crane’s *Collected Poems* in which he saw the poet as a mystic in the grand Christian and Western tradition writing in a skeptical age; Crane’s language problem was due to the difficulty of finding the right words to express his visions in a world hostile to them. Partly disagreeing with Frank, R. P. Blackmur (1957) believed Crane had mischosen his masters or, at least, was not able to organize his influences. Blackmur compares the influences of Baudelaire, who rendered his disorderly experience in an admirably ordered and accurate language, and Whitman, whose voluntary disorder of language was employed to express a well-ordered sensibility; and posits that, while Crane’s sensibility was more attuned to that of Baudelaire, he ended up choosing Whitman’s methods, resulting in a confused language. Finally, Alvarez (1971), in an essay

published originally in 1958, stresses the spontaneity and fugacity of Crane's sensibility and ascertains that his greatest contribution to poetry was his "strange inner rhythms" (p. 112), a purely structural quality. In other words, the basic evaluation of Crane's career by his first critics was that he was an unaccomplished talent.

Logic of Metaphor or Ideology of Catachresis

From then on, the poetry of Hart Crane was not forgotten nor was interest in it diminished. Instead, different aspects of it have been evaluated by different perspectives not only in brief critical articles, but also in full-length studies, alongside biographies. Voluminous books such as the already mentioned biographical-critical studies by Brom Weber and Sherman Paul, and R.W.B. Lewis's *The Poetry of Hart Crane* (1967), try to find the link between his poetry and his life, studying the poems in the order in which Crane wrote them and tracing his maturation as man and poet. Other studies try to find the thematic unit whose absence was one of the most common of early reprimands. *Hart Crane: the Patterns of his Poetry*, by Margaret Uroff (1974) seeks to organize the seeming chaos of his poems in continuous thematic patterns. Crane's poetry, according to this author, is characterized by five basic attitudes toward the external world: violence, possession, flight, stasis and mastery, which are seen both in his lyrics and in his epic. Ernest Smith (1990), on the other hand, maps a kind of thematic progression in Crane's first collection, *White Buildings*, which tends to be seen as particularly fragmented. Another trend in American criticism tends to explore Crane's identity as a subversive poet. Thomas Yingling finds in Crane's homosexuality the key to the understanding of his poetry in *Hart Crane and the Homosexual Text: New Thresholds, New Anatomies* (1990). Brian Reed in *Hart Crane: After his Lights* (2006) questions Crane's place as a typical American, homosexual, and modern poet, finding different threads and paths of interpretation especially by evaluating the impact of his work on younger poets. Langdon Hammer's study on his contrast with Allen Tate, both artistically and socially, has already received some attention in the previous chapter.

However, the most innovative and productive study on Crane's poetry is perhaps Lee Edelman's *Transmemberment of Song: Hart Crane's Anatomies of Rhetoric and*

Desire (1987). Drawing upon post-structural theory, Edelman strays from those who tried to rehabilitate Crane by searching for the thematic unit supposedly lacking from his poems and curiously aligns himself with his early detractors in stressing Crane's fragmentariness and discontinuity as a poet. The originality of Edelman's approach is that these features previously considered flaws and weaknesses are seen as the strength of Crane's work. It is interesting to remember how critics like Tate and Winters said that Crane's poetry was founded on an elaborate rhetoric; Edelman starts from this idea and reads the poetry based on the recurrence of three little studied rhetorical figures: anacoluthon, chiasmus and mainly catachresis, which Edelman sees as the heart of Crane's poetic method, questioning the poet's own assertion that his poetry was organized around a "logic of metaphor."

Edelman reminds us that anacoluthon consists of a syntactical break introduced in the text; chiasmus is a mirroring figure in which objects exchange characteristics; finally, catachresis is the lending of an already existing name for something that has no proper name of its own and could be seen as a more radical kind of metaphor. The critic considers these rhetorical figures as the bases of three processes common in the poetry of Hart Crane: the processes of breaking, bending and bridging. Catachresis (i.e., the process of bridging) is seen as the central figure in his work, thus his "logic of metaphor" was actually an "ideology of catachresis," since the semantic and rhetoric breakages are too violent to be seen under the more regular substitutions of metaphor. Edelman sees that Crane's work can best be read in its rhetorical manipulation of language defying its common use.

As we can remember from the previous chapter, Crane's interest as a poet moved toward verbal art that could enhance the area of perception and consciousness to places not previously explored, even at the cost of often arriving at obscure figures that could firstly cause more confusion and discomfort in the reader than aesthetic and intellectual pleasure. Poetry's mission of discovering new areas of consciousness would often require this challenge. Crane gives an example of this procedure with the image of "Adagios of islands" used by him in the poem "Voyages II" which was elicited by the movement of a boat through thickly-clustered islands. There is no mention of a boat or anything that could stand for it, because the reference is not the scene Crane saw at sea, but the emotion he felt while witnessing this scene, which stands somewhere within the realms of vision, motion, and music. The image is clearly a catachresis since Crane is

trying to solidify in language a hazy state of consciousness and not a concrete scene. The ideology of catachresis Edelman refers to is in action here: Crane's view exceeds the merely technical procedures and engages in a moral question of what poetry is entitled or even intimated to do. Interestingly enough Edelman's reading emphasizes Crane's role as a poet of rupture without associating it to his personal characteristics and even to his themes. According to Edelman, it is the structure of Crane's poetry that can help us understanding its novelty.

Also interesting is that this critical approach bears some affinity with Gumbrecht's investigations in literary theory previously sketched. We remember that this theoretician was interested in an approach to art that concentrated more on its materiality than its meaning. This material dimension of art as it is experienced is called by Gumbrecht presence dimension. Art therefore engages in what could be termed a "production of presence":

> […]to speak of "production of presence" implies that the (spatial) tangibility effect coming from the communication media is subjected, in space, to movements of greater or lesser proximity, and of greater or lesser intensity. That any form of communication, through its material elements, will "touch" the bodies of the persons who are communicating in specific and varying ways may be a relatively trivial observation—but it is true nevertheless that this fact had been bracketed (if not—progressively—forgotten) by Western theory building ever since the Cartesian cogito made the ontology of human existence depend exclusively on the movements of human mind. (GUMBRECHT, 2004, p. 17)

A parallel could be drawn between Gumbrecht's concern with exploring a dimension to aesthetic experience that has been relatively left aside by Western culture and Crane's interest in using a more sensorial and emotional poetic language to find uncovered experiential grounds in human consciousness. A similarity can also be seen in the emphasis of both on intensities and quantities rather than meanings and qualities. This approach goes beyond the simple emphasis on form over content, since the form of a work of art is as determined as its content, in other words, a form is a quality. Gumbrecht and Crane do not seem interested in what can be determined and qualified, but in what can be intensified and presented. Gumbrecht stresses the adequacy of his ideas to poetry in particular:

> Poetry is perhaps the most powerful example of the simultaneity of presence effects and meaning effects—for even the most overpowering institutional dominance of the hermeneutic dimension

> could never fully repress the presence effects of rhyme and alliteration, of verse and stanza. (id.)

Rhyme, alliteration, verse, and stanza here are not formal categories but material means a poet uses to produce the impression he wants in the reader. The similarity of Crane with the already mentioned school of 'pure poetry' is undeniable. Important as the themes and meanings of his poetry are, it seems that these themes and meanings should not be searched on their own rights but actually elicited by scanning the placing of words and symbols in the syntactical structure of the poetry and how this placing acts to produce the movements of intensification and presentation that can guide us to a better appreciation of Hart Crane's poetry.

In Search for the Bright Logic

In the study of Hart Crane's work there is always the question of which order should be followed and which aspects should be highlighted. Hart Crane famously lacked the discipline and the formalized knowledge of literature that was present in many of his peers. Indeed, there are always doubts on what exactly he knew and what he only intuited, and some of the syntactical breaks and semantic irregularities used by him have frequently puzzled critics as to whether they should be attributed to voluntary inventiveness or simple lack of grammar knowledge.

This puzzlement has also appeared in the decision on the order the poems should be studied. The two most celebrated and studied volumes—*White Buildings* and *The Bridge*—consist respectively of a collection of separate lyrics and a long narrative poem, each presenting the type of organization that is characteristic of its genre. However, even *The Bridge*, which due to its narrative nature could be expected to present an intentional organization, has been seen by many of its evaluators as actually a collection of lyrics that was supposed to display a narrative continuity but failed to do so. To tackle this problem, some critics decided to make no distinction at all between Crane's lyrical work, on the one hand, and his epic poem, on the other. Others decided to study his chronological evolution rather than the order Crane himself gave to the poems within the books. Some of his early lyrics which were left out of any of his volumes (appearing only in posthumous collections of his complete poems) display

interesting characteristics that would be developed in his further work. However, as the focus of this work is his lyrical poetry, mainly that of *White Buildings*, it seems more logical to study the poems according to the way they were organized by Crane.

White Buildings is a volume composed of 23 lyrical poems of varied extensions. Two of the pieces, “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen” and “Voyages,” are longer works divided into sections. These two poems have been regarded, by critics and by Crane himself, as the culminating poems of the collection. The latter in particular is often seen as that in which Crane displays his best qualities and achieves an integration not displayed by the other poems. A whole chapter will be dedicated to this long piece, which is the focus of this study.

Regarding the appreciation of the two books that Crane published while still living, there is a strange contradiction, which is noted by Ernest Smith (1990). His debut volume, *White Buildings*, was generally praised with enthusiasm even by such severe critics as Allen Tate and Yvor Winters; *The Bridge*, on the other hand, did not enjoy the same fate, having been frequently seen as a failed and unfortunate work. However, *The Bridge* has been the subject of many critical studies, while his first collection of lyrics continued to be treated as a minor achievement or even work that was done in preparation of his epic.

It is possible that the only complete book focused only on White Buildings is Ernest Smith’s *“The Imaged Word”: The Infrastructure of Hart Crane’s White Buildings*. In this study Smith looks for a thematic progression in the organization of the poems. He sees the order of the pieces as a growing sequence toward the attainment of visionary truth, beginning with the disorientation and indecisiveness of “Legend” and ending with the architecture of “Voyages.” Within this sequence, Smith believes that the poems could be disposed in four groups. The first one, ranging from “Legend” to “Praise for an Urn,” the book’s sixth piece, comprises some of his earlier lyrics and stresses the relationship between the artist with his work and with the external world. The second group, from “Garden Abstract” to “North Labrador,” shows the external world as indifferent and impersonal. The third group presents the poetic self in an intensified relationship with the same external world, seen as oppressive and harsh, yet able to yield visions and spiritual fruits for those willing to endure it and solve its enigmas. The fourth and final group is seen by Smith as a search for resolution, which

can be attained in the inner world of poetic imagination; as we will see in the chapter dedicated to "Voyages," in the six-poem suite that ends the volume there is a progression from the "incarnate word" to the "imaged word."

Smith's structuring of the volume is not beyond objections, but it surely provides a valid way to guide the reading of the book. Interestingly enough, this organization is in touch with Sherman Paul's observations about Hart Crane's biographic evolution as a person and a poet. Paul sees the conflict between self and external world as the major theme of Crane's poems of the formative years, which clearly display a puerile naivety absent in the pieces that would compose his first book. Nevertheless, this conflict remained an important focus for Hart Crane. As already mentioned, another critic who attempted to focus on thematic continuities, Margaret Uroff, structures her reading of Crane's work around the display of five alternate impulses of the self toward the external world: violence, possession, flight, stasis and mastery. Violence and possession are intrinsically intertwined, as are violence and poetic creation. It is by violence that the poet can possess the external world:

> To create is to violate the certainties of the world, to free oneself and move beyond all accepted limits; but it is also to suffer the violence of self-expenditure as well as the torment of the world's scorn. (UROFF, 1974, p. 6)

These two directions the violent impulse takes show an active-passive relation that is reflected in the following patterns Uroff sees in Crane's poetry: those of flight and stasis. It is important that, as Tate indicates in his foreword by saying that Crane's poetry is metaphysically conceived but restricted to an American experience, the external world for Crane is mainly the modern industrialized world, the machine world; and this world is associated to moments of flight and ecstasy in its growing speed, but also with moments of stasis in its oppression and indifference. All these patterns are enclosed by the pattern of mastery, which appears through the mystical and religious imagery of Crane's poem; it is an impulse to master a world which is beyond the objective world, a truth that supports this world, but which is nevertheless not focused on a personal figure of an almighty God. Here Crane's affinity with the "empty transcendence" of the symbolists and his "implicit pantheism" sensed by Tate are fully displayed.

With these remarks in mind, it can be said that poetry, for Crane, was a kind of mystical and personal discipline whose objective is to enable a relationship with the world. This relationship, however, is never harmonious or friendly. On the contrary, the poet either possesses and violates it or is possessed and violated by it. This conflict and the discipline needed to overcome it are already displayed in the opening poem of White Buildings, "Legend":

> As silent as a mirror is believed
> Realities plunge in silence by...
>
> I am not ready for repentance;
> Nor to match regrets. For the moth
> Bends no more than the still
> Imploring flame. And tremorous
> In the white falling flakes
> Kisses are,—
> The only worth all granting.
>
> It is to be learned—
> This cleaving and this burning,
> But only by the one who
> Spends out himself again.
>
> Twice and twice
> (Again the smoking souvenir,
> Bleeding eidolon!) and yet again.
> Until the bright logic is won
> Unwhispering as a mirror
> Is believed.
>
> Then, drop by caustic drop, a perfect cry
> Shall string some constant harmony,—
> Relentless caper for all those who step
> The legend of their youth into the noon.

There is a rupture between the two lines and the rest of the poem. In fact, these two lines seem to be especially well-chosen to introduce not only the poem, but the whole book. Edelman remarks that these enigmatically ambiguous lines can be read in two different ways: "as silently as a mirror is believed" and "as silent as a mirror is believed to be." Actually I believe they can be read in three different ways:

1. A mirror is believed as a reality (in the act of plunging in silence) is silent.
2. Realities, in plunging in silence, are silent as a mirror is silent in being believed – here there is an important contrast between the predicate to the subject of the second line, "realities" (plunge by – active) and that of the subject of the first line, "mirror" (believed – passive)—another way of writing this, according to this interpretation

would be, as Edelman says, "As silently as a mirror is believed,"' i.e. the adjective "silent" here has an adverbial function.

3. Realities are silent as a mirror is believed to be (also indicated by Edelman), i.e. a mirror is not necessarily silent, it is only believed to be silent; the realities that plunge in silence display the silence that we usually attribute to a mirror; it is also possible to write: "realities are silent when they plunge in silence, and mirrors are silent when they are believed."

The chiastic pattern pointed out by Edelman is here on full display in the correlations between mirror and reality, believed and silent. There is an interplay of attributes (silent and believed) between the substantives. It is important then to observe the relations between these words. The pair "mirror" and "reality" are metaphorically associated, since a mirror is supposed to provide a faithful reflection of reality; both "believed" and "silent" give the idea of "taken for granted" or "not to be doubted." However, these words also show their ambiguousness since something that is "believed" always leaves a margin for doubt, and something that is "silent" can be something that is not questioned, but also something that conveys no message, that is opaque. Under this light, the pair of participles questions the reliability of both reality and the mirror (and it should be remembered that, as faithful as it is, the image of reality displayed by a mirror is always inverted). The remaining pair, that of the verbs, also shows a contrast between the neutrality of the copula and the activeness of the intransitive verb 'plunge'. The 'silence' of the second line is clearly related to opacity. The realities plunging in silence are the realities losing their reliability, becoming mute or unknowable.

The interplay between passive and active and the chiastic movements become apparent also in the next stanza. After a first-person, subjective claim ("I am not ready for repentance;/nor to match regrets") we face another chiasmus in "For the moth bends no more than the still imploring flame," in which the moth is no more passive than the silent (still) flame that will destroy it. The causal conjunction "for" binding the two sentences points to a blurring between culprit and punishment or punishing agent. The last sentence introduces the symbolic value of the color 'white' in Crane (prefigured in the title of the book) as 'transcendence'; the 'tremorous kisses' (sensual, bodily) enclosed by the white falling flakes (cold, pure, almost ethereal) are "the only worth all

granting," the only reliable values, characterizing a violent equation between the sensual and the ethereal.

This stanza presents a discipline, a kind of ascetic method of overcoming contraries and preconceived ideas which the next stanza tells us "is to be learned […] only by the one who spends out himself again." The characterization of this method as a "cleaving" and a "burning" and a "spending" stresses the idea of learning by suffering and pain. The word "again" is obsessively echoed in the next stanza: "Twice and twice (Again the smoking souvenir, Bleeding eidolon!) and yet again," indicating that this method can only be effective by repetition until the "souvenir/eidolon" which stands between illusion and reality turns to smoke and blood and "The bright logic is won/unwhispering as a mirror/is believed." The last stanza reiterates the prize reserved for those who undergo this ascesis in images of light and stability (constant harmony, noon).

"Legend" can be read as a call to personal discipline but also as a metaphor for poetic craft; since the 'perfect cry' which is produced after the repeated 'caustic drops' and is able to 'string some constant harmony' can be seen as the poem, the aesthetic product of a personal discipline which can provide a transcendent experience. Here we already see the pattern of possession by violence pointed by Margaret Uroff, which is linked to artistic making. We should remember also that Smith classifies the first poems in *White Buildings* as focused on the relation between the artist, his art, and the external world. The second poem in the book, "Black Tambourine," can easily be put under this thematic. Crane described the poem to Gorham Munson as "a bundle of insinuations, suggestions bearing on the negro's place somewhere between man and beast," (CRANE, 2006, p. 249) adding that the word 'mid-kingdom' is perhaps the key to the poem:

> The interests of a black man in a cellar
> Mark tardy judgment on the world's closed door.
> Gnats toss in the shadow of a bottle,
> And a roach spans a crevice in the floor.
>
> Aesop, driven to pondering, found
> Heaven with the tortoise and the hare,
> Fox brush and sow ear top his grave
> And mingling incantations on the air.
>
> The black man, forlorn in the cellar,
> Wanders in some mid-kingdom, dark, that lies,

> Between his tambourine, stuck on the wall,
> And, in Africa, a carcass quick with flies.

Crane also remarked that

> The value of the poem is only, to me, in what a painter would call its "tactile" quality,—an entirely aesthetic feature. A propagandist for either side of the negro question could find anything he wanted to in it. My only declaration in it is that I find the negro (in the popular mind) sentimentally or brutally "placed" in this midkingdom. (id.)

Here Crane makes a dangerous deployment of the "pure poetry" aesthetics to a very controversial and contemporary (to his age as well as ours) theme. This most interesting discussion is unfortunately out of the scope of this study, which is focused on the aesthetic and thematic aspects of Hart Crane's poetry. "Black Tambourine" is formally much more regular than "Legend," being composed of three quatrains in the ABCB rhyme pattern. The first interesting trait of this piece is the organization of the theme within the stanzas: it does not show a logical progression from the first to the last, but presents two "pictures" which ought to be compared by the reader. The "black man" is the main figure of the poem, appearing in the first and the third stanzas; the second stanza is surprisingly dominated by Aesop, the Greek fabulist. The relation between the two "characters" is not obvious at first sight.

Uroff and Smith agree in that the poem is centered in the alienation of the artist within a hostile and indifferent world. The black man and Aesop are here "poets" surrounded by animals. Yet their conditions are very different, as well as the animals surrounding them and the relationship they establish with them. While Aesop, surrounded by tortoises, hares, saws and foxes, was able to give meaning to these animals and suffuse the air around him with "incantations"; the black man, surrounded by roaches and gnats in a shadowy closed cellar, is forlorn and expressionless. His artistic instrument—the tambourine—is "stuck on the wall," mute, and useless, and the symbol of his memory and past—Africa—is reduced to the image of a dead animal surrounded by more flies. The artist here (the black man) is seen in quite a different light than in the previous poem. In "Legend" the artist overcomes the confusing world by the painful artistic discipline; here he is mute and expressionless.

In "Praise for an Urn," the reflection about art and the artist acquire a less pessimistic tone. The title obviously alludes to Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and the allusion goes beyond the title. If the style of the poem, straightforward and simple

(which is not common in Crane), is far from the convoluted sentences of Keats's masterpiece, the theme of the power of beauty over death is central, although in a different manner:

> It was a kind and northern face
> That mingled in such exile guise
> The everlasting eyes of Pierrot
> And, of Gargantua, the laughter.
>
> His thoughts, delivered to me
> From the white coverlet and pillow,
> I see now, were inheritances—
> Delicate riders of the storm.

It is important to mention that the poem is dedicated *in memoriam* to an artist, Crane's friend, Ernest Nelson. The first stanza presents the dead artist as an exiled northerner with tender and joyful expression. The second stanza induces one to think of a love relationship in its references to a coverlet and pillow. For me it recalled the long metaphysical conversations between Ishmael and Queequeg in *Moby Dick*. More than a place for love, the bed is also a place for sleep, dreams, intimacy and quietude, particularly suited for such reflections. Dead, the artist's thoughts remain in the poet's mind as delicate and powerful.

> The slant moon on the slanting hill
> Once moved us toward presentiments
> Of what the dead keep, living still,
> And such assessments of the soul
>
> As, perched in the crematory lobby,
> The insistent clock commented on,
> Touching as well upon our praise
> Of glories proper to the time.

The nocturnal, oneiric character of his inheritance is strengthened by the reference to the moon over a steep hill. The repetition of the word 'slant' is noteworthy as referring to the oblique statements of the moon, not directly accessible. In the fourth stanza, the ticking of the clock in the crematory lobby gives a message of mortality and the briefness of life. The clock, standing for the measurement of human time, evokes the moon, whose seasonal changes traditionally favor it as time measurer in ancient societies.

> Still, having in mind gold hair,
> I cannot see that broken brow
> And miss the dry sound of bees
> Stretching across a lucid space.

Scatter these well-meant idioms
Into the smoky spring that fills
The suburbs, where they will be lost.
They are no trophies of the sun.

The dark tones of the first stanzas shift to lighter ones in these two last stanzas. Here, along with his smile and gleeful eyes, it is the gold hair, the beauty of youth that will remain in the poet's mind, not the dead and broken face. Lewis interprets this 'dry sound of bees' that is ignored by the poet as an undistinguished meaningless noise, which is here overpowered by the lucidity of the space. The last stanza has an apparently pessimistic tone in the idea that the poet's 'idioms', his verses, his poetic legacy will be burnt and lost. However, this reading seems to contradict the rest of the poem. The reference to the sun can lead us into another interpretation. The sun is symbolically opposed to the moon in its idea of clarity, lucidity and constancy; the fact that verses 'are no trophies of the sun' indicates that these poems' nature is closer to the oneirism of the moon than the rationality of the sun. The legacy of an artist, defying death, lives on in the unconscious recesses of our mind, not in the sunlit bright intellect.

The reflections on the artist, art and nature seem to reach a peak in "Sunday Morning Apples," inspired by the work of painter William Sommer, another friend of Crane. The poem presents a more open form than "Black Tambourine," with no stanzaic or metric regularity. In addition, it is composed of visual and intellectual observations that spread through the stanzas without a definite pattern and do not aim to resolve themselves in a clear picture, but actually compose an emotional scenery in which the objects and the subjective impressions on them appear to have the same importance:

The leaves will fall again sometime and fill
The fleece of nature with those purposes
That are your rich and faithful strength of line.

But now there are challenges to spring
In that ripe nude with head
reared
Into a realm of swords, her purple shadow
Bursting on the winter of the world
From whiteness that cries defiance to the snow.

In the first stanza, the leaves (concrete) of autumn cover the snowy ground (the fleece of nature) with purposes (abstract) that form the artist's "rich and faithful strength of line," presenting a rich metaphor for the transformation of natural phenomena into sensorial and emotional impressions that become the artist's material. As Sherman Paul

suggests, the second stanza presents the feminine figure of nature (that ripe nude with head reared) that, according to Margaret Uroff, is Crane's recurring metaphor of the outside world that must be dominated by the poet (this will become more evident in the analysis of "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" and especially "Voyages").

Another recurring and very important element in Crane's poetry that presents itself in these first two stanzas is the color white, symbolizing transcendence and the inhuman reality to be sought beyond the material world. Here we have two kinds of whiteness: the snowy whiteness of winter, which, according to Paul, symbolizes death, and the whiteness of the woman/nature, a living, pure, spiritual, whiteness that, with the purple of royalty, can defy the mortal whiteness of winter. In addition, these two first stanzas show a wrestling of the seasons: the opulence of spring colors against the paleness of winter, a struggle that is suggested in line 1 of the second stanza in the word 'challenges' and the double reading (substantive and verbal) of 'spring'.

> A boy runs with a dog before the sun, straddling
> Spontaneities that form their independent orbits,
> Their own perennials of light
> In the valley where you live
> (called Brandywine).

The puerile imagery of the first line of the third stanza (the boy with the dog) receives a high sexual charge in the next line with the "orbital spontaneities" that are straddled by the boy. Paul emphasizes the idea of innocence of these lines, since neither boy nor dog seem to be able to grasp the scientific or spiritual dimension of the landscape and the light that surrounds them. In this stanza there is also a step of localization in the naming of the place where the artist lives (Brandywine), reinforcing the colloquial and familiar tone of the poem.

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

The apples of the title finally appear in the two last stanzas, in which the poet urges the painter to position the apples next to a pitcher, to manipulate and transform them into art according to the secrets that were tossed and the "aerial wine" gently offered by the apples themselves. This ending stresses the artist's power to penetrate the

objects' intimate nature and manipulate them through a knowledge that is above all based on the love he or she feels for the only apparent lack of logic of nature, since the apples are "beloved" in spite, or because, of their 'madness', which, in the end, is 'seasonable', in other words, present regularity and pattern, being knowable.

The stress on the artist's ability to approach and manipulate the objects we find in "Sunday Morning Apple" is emphasized by contrasting it with the poem "Garden Abstract," also focused on the relation between nature and human and having as its central symbol, an apple. The apple here, however, has a totally different meaning and behavior:

> The apple on its bough is her desire,—
> Shining suspension, mimic of the sun.
> The bough has caught her breath up, and her voice,
> Dumbly articulate in the slant and rise
> Of branch on branch above her, blurs her eyes.
> She is prisoner of the tree and its green fingers.
>
> And so she comes to dream herself the tree,
> The wind possessing her, weaving her young veins,
> Holding her to the sky and its quick blue,
> Drowning the fever of her hands in sunlight.
> She has no memory, nor fear, nor hope
> Beyond the grass and shadows at her feet.

Contrarily to "Sunday Morning Apples," and closer to "Black Tambourine," which it possibly exceeds in insinuative power, there are no clues to the poetic self's emotions or attitude regarding the scene described. Lewis (1967) reminds us how Crane described this poem as "a highly concentrated piece of symbolism, image wound with image" (Crane, 2006, p. 229) and points to the possibility of reading it as a cluster of symbols or the presentation of real objects: a real tree, a real apple, a real girl. It is interesting to remember how William Wimsatt, Jr. points in "The Structure of Romantic Nature Imagery" (1970) to the tendency of romantic poetry of loading natural phenomena with human characteristic until nature becomes a human being itself, something that appears in "Sunday Morning Apples." Here the contrary occurs: in her attempt to reach to the apple, the girl of the poem has all her human physical and emotional characteristics totally absorbed by the tree, until she herself becomes the tree. The relation between nature and human here is closer to that which appears in Arthur Rimbaud's poem "Le Dormeur du Val," where the description of a beautiful valley

teeming with assorted plants is matched with the description of a young soldier who sleeps on the grass, until, in the last line, we discover that the soldier, expressionless, is actually dead.

The structure of the poem has a pictorial effect of imprinting the happenings described in the poem onto the page. The apple, an isolated tone of red in a poem composed by brownish and green objects, is in the first line with her eyes that look at it. The following lines sequentially refer to the tree's boughs and the girl's mouth (her breath and voice), her veins and hands and finally, in the last line, to her feet as well as the grass. The poem then draws a human body as a tree in its own textual body.

Smith places "Garden Abstract" in the group of poems dealing with the indifference of the external world. This tendency seems to reach its peak in the short "North Labrador," the last poem of this group:

> A land of leaning ice
> Hugged by plaster-grey arches of sky,
> Flings itself silently
> Into eternity.
>
> "Has no one come here to win you,
> Or left you with the faintest blush
> Upon your glittering breasts?
> Have you no memories, O Darkly Bright?"
>
> Cold-hushed, there is only the shifting of moments
> That journey toward no Spring—
> No birth, no death, no time nor sun
> In answer.

The indifference of the external world is clearly depicted in the wintry scenery whose "shifting moments" follow not toward spring but a silent eternity. The mysterious feminine figure appears again, of a brightness that seems dark to the poet in its impenetrability. "Have you no memories?," asks the poet, and this poem is followed by a group of poems in which memory, perception and the external world mingle almost inseparably with a striking opening in "Repose of Rivers":

> The willows carried a slow sound,
> A sarabande the wind mowed on the mead.
> I could never remember
> That seething, steady leveling of the marshes
> Till age had brought me to the sea.

The intermingling of perception and external world is evident in the first two lines, wherein the relations between the willow and the wind over a field are given musical patterns. Margaret Uroff remarks the symbolic importance of fire and wind in Crane's poetry as correlates of the creative process; a process that destroys and purifies. She reminds us that, in Romantic poetry in general, "the actual wind playing upon the landscape correlates with the complex subjective process of renewal in the poet" (UROFF, 1974, p. 24) to add that the wind, as a destroyer in Crane's poetry, destroys everything but what is pure essence and brightness. Here, as we can see in the following lines, the wind on the landscape becomes associated with a remembrance of the "seething, steady leveling of the marshes," the ebullient yet organized logic underlying reality, something that could be retained by the poet in facing the sea, the original waters.

The process of remembrance, of regaining original truth, after this soft introduction, becomes violent and dangerous:

> Flags, weeds. And remembrance of steep alcoves
> Where cypresses shared the noon's
> Tyranny; they drew me into hades almost.
> And mammoth turtles climbing sulphur dreams
> Yielded, while sun-silt rippled them
> Asunder...

The memories are covered with morbid, destructive or challenging elements (the steep alcoves, cypresses and sulphur dreams) and the now catastrophic landscape is teemed by giant turtles. It is important also to stress here the reappearance of the noon. As we can remember, in "Legend" the "bright logic is won" by those who "stepped the legend of their youth into the noon"; the noon stands for the clarity that enlightens and enables the grasping of truth. Here, however, its light is tyrannical, it invades the poet's sight and memory, and the truth it conveys is notwithstanding dark and hurting.

> How much I would have bartered! the black gorge
> And all the singular nestings in the hills
> Where beavers learn stitch and tooth.
> The pond I entered once and quickly fled—
> I remember now its singing willow rim.

The third stanza seems to present exactly the same physical reality as the second. But here the steep alcoves become singular nestings, and the hard, cold and menacing reptiles are replaced by learning and building beavers. The poet laments in the first line "How much I would have bartered!" his desire and powerlessness to reinvent memory.

And finally, in that memory all things nurse;
After the city that I finally passed
With scalding unguents spread and smoking darts
The monsoon cut across the delta
At gulf gates... There, beyond the dykes

I heard wind flaking sapphire, like this summer,
And willows could not hold more steady sound.

"Finally," the poet says, he arrives at the city; the city whose symbolic value both as a place of confusion and violence and of logic and truth will become stronger in later lyrics. The wind returns in the last two-line stanza, as well as the willows in a very similar verse to the first; the sound of the wind now has gone from "slow" to steady" in an attainment of pattern and logic.

Resuming Gumbrecht's terminology, more than in meaning, it is in the presence dimension of the poem that memory's movement is apparent. The whole poem presents a mirroring between elements. The reference to the sound carried by the wind in the two first and two last lines, and the relation between the second and the third stanzas were already referred to. In addition to these, there are recurrent images of natural niches and staging which receive varied emotional hues, such as the "seething, steady leveling of the marshes," the "steep alcoves" and the nestings in the hills. More than developing a plot, the poet seems to articulate the different perspectives in which his memories appear to him. The desire to recreate memory and history appear in the lines of "Passage," another of Crane's autobiographical pieces:

Where the cedar leaf divides the sky
I heard the sea.
In sapphire arenas of the hills
I was promised an improved infancy.

Sulking, sanctioning the sun,
My memory I left in a ravine,—
Casual louse that tissues the buckwheat,
Aprons rocks, congregates pears,
In moonlit bushels
And wakens alleys with a hidden cough.

Here the landscape (particularly the sea) waves toward a possibility of reinventing the world. Memory, however, appears as a parasite that impedes this reinvention. Poetry is in a better position to do that. Edelman notes that the names of the two books published by Crane during his life, *White Buildings* and *The Bridge*, bring metaphors of construction and architecture as well as an urban flavor. Poetry, Edelman

reminds us, was for Crane an architectural art, and the idea of construction was associated to an organic relation between the natural and mechanical. Poetry, then, did not belong entirely to the realm of subjectivity nor objectiveness, but was prone to build a bridge between the two. Poetry provided a "ratio of fact and experience" as memory does, but if memory is a "louse" that acts independently of the one who possesses it, and harms him, poetry is built by the poet, it can be manipulated and, therefore, bring a world into existence.

In the poems examined up to now, the relations between artist and reality were reflected mostly in metaphors of natural objects and phenomena, which have the feature of existing beyond and previously to human action and therefore being independent of it. Metaphors linked to machinery and chemistry, of man-made objects, take the forefront in poems like "The Wine Menagerie" and "Lachrymae Christi." If the reference to alcohol is clear in the title of the first, it may be helpful to inform that "Lachrymae Christi," in addition to translating as "tears of Christ," was also the name of a brand of wine. "The Wine Menagerie," an eleven-stanza poem, is particularly successful in depicting the shift of perception and, then, of reality under the influence of alcohol, showcasing narrative moments, a rare feature in White Buildings:

> Invariably when wine redeems the sight,
> Narrowing the mustard scansions of the eyes,
> A leopard ranging always in the brow
> Asserts a vision in the slumbering gaze.

The effect of wine is redemptive, sanctifying and it arouses poetic craft and sensibility as the 'mustard scansions of the eyes' imply. The slumber and numbness it brings is notwithstanding accompanied by a sort of sagacity and sharpness symbolized by the leopard who asserts a vision. The progressive altering of the images of reality is depicted in the two following stanzas, where the poet focuses the street, the bar and a scene that unfolds in front of him:

> Then glozening decanters that reflect the street
> Wear me in crescents on their bellies. Slow
> Applause flows into liquid cynosures:
> —I am conscripted to their shadows' glow.
>
> Against the imitation onyx wainscoting
> (Painted emulsion of snow, eggs, yarn, coal, manure)
> Regard the forceps of the smile that takes her.

Percussive sweat is spreading to his hair. Mallets,
Her eyes, unmake an instant of the world...

The actions evoked in the couples' quarrel are tinged with strong subjective elements: the man's smile is a forceps, his sweat is percussive and the woman's eyes are mallets. The whole scenery is influenced by the poet's drunkenness:

Each chamber, transept, coins some squint,
Remorseless line, minting their separate wills—
Poor streaked bodies wreathing up and out,
Unwitting the stigma that each turn repeals:
Between black tusks the red roses shine!

Until the 7th stanza where the effect of alcohol is finally celebrated:

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

The two last stanzas bring in a host of myths where the idea of a man destroyed by a woman recurs:

"Rise from the dates and crumbs. And walk away,
Stepping over Holofernes' shins—
Beyond the wall, whose severed head floats by
With Baptist John's. Their whispering begins.

"—And fold your exile on your back again;
Petrushka's valentine pivots on its pin."

The poem's title is especially well chosen and illustrative: Wine becomes a glass or a fence between the poet and the external world. Through this glass the world can be captured by the poet as an object, transformed to be perceived by him and become art. "Lachrymae Christi" presents the processing of reality through the mind's eye in an even more abstract way:

Whitely, while benzine
Rinsings from the moon
Dissolve all but the windows of the mills
(Inside the sure machinery
Is still
And curdled only where a sill
Sluices its one unyielding smile)

A first, general remark on this very strange stanza is that it presents a static scenery in which no human element is visible. The second feature to be pointed out is the dominance of, as commented before, images of machinery and chemistry: the scene

is set in a mill of which both the exterior and the interior are referred. The chemical imagery appears in the benzine rinsings that curiously enough flow from the moon, turning the only natural element present in the scene into the source of a chemical product. A third remark is that here Edelman's observation is perfectly applicable: instead of metaphors, the stanza resolves itself in catachreses: It should be asked first to what the adverb in the beginning, 'whitely', is referring. The only possible answer is that it refers to the whole scene, which resolves itself 'whitely'. The second markedly catachrestic element is the unyielding smile that is sluiced by the window sill. Both the general adverb 'whitely' and the dissolution effected by the moon's benzine rinsings have a parallel with the wine in "The Wine Menagerie" in their effect of infusing the scene with a varied, if not very clear, meaning.

> Immaculate venom binds
> The fox's teeth, and swart
> Thorns freshen on the year's
> First blood. From flanks unfended,
> Twanged red perfidies of spring
> Are trillion on the hill.

In the second stanza the general hue turns from whitely to the darkish of the thorns and reddish of the blood. This change of coloring follows the bursting into scene of both animal (fox, blood) and vegetal (thorns) images. The immaculate venom of the beginning and the twanged red perfidies which fill the hill combine to destroy the mechanical-chemical purity of the first stanza.

The flank to be dilacerated by the fox's teeth and the thorns is a reference both to the lamb as the symbol of innocence and to Jesus Christ, who will return after two stanzas in the isolated phrase: "Thy Nazarene and tinder eyes." The stanzas in between present a condensed yet disjointed sequence of references to sacred music and songs paired with feelings of innocence and mercifulness:

> And the nights opening
> Chant pyramids,—
> Anoint with innocence,--recall
> To music and retrieve what perjuries
> Had galvanized the eyes.
>
> While chime
> Beneath and all around
> Distilling clemencies,—worms'
> Inaudible whistle, tunneling
> Not penitence

But song, as these
Perpetual fountains, vines,—

Thy Nazarene and tinder eyes.

The eyes of Christ are deemed fruitful fountains of wine and flammable, productive of emotions. This sequence is followed by a stanza between parentheses in which a first person appears for the one and only time:

(Let sphinxes from the ripe
Borage of death have cleared my tongue
Once again; vermin and rod
No longer bind. Some sentient cloud
Of tears flocks through the tendoned loam:
Betrayed stones slowly speak.)

“Let” here can only be read as an adjective, underscoring the wildness of the sphinxes that have cleared the poet’s tongue. The poet’s inspiration, a condensation of the human passion, is here paralleled with Christ’s passion. The rest of the stanza resolves itself in biblical imagery.

Names peeling from Thine eyes
And their undimming lattices of flame,
Spell out in palm and pain
Compulsion of the year, O Nazarene.

Lean long from sable, slender boughs,
Unstanched and luminous. And as the nights
Strike from Thee perfect spheres,
Lift up in lilac-emerald breath the grail
Of earth again--

Thy face
From charred and riven stakes, O
Dionysus, Thy
Unmangled target smile.

The last three stanzas reinforce the idea of suffering as productive and poetic in the names that peel from Christ’s eyes, the victory of his luminosity over the darkness of the boughs that maintains him suspended. His fertile blood flows without stoppage while he lifts again the ‘grail of earth’. In the last stanza the figures of Christ and Dionysus are identified. Implicitly, the figure of the poet is aligned with them—the poet is the one who brings out ecstasy from suffering.

Suffering, for Crane, would frequently take the form of carnal or sexual urge, to be overcome by spiritual elevation through an exercise in individual ascesis which

translates itself in poetry. As one advances through the pages of *White Buildings*, the attainment of this transcendent and pure reality becomes more patent, and the book could be seen as a positive spiritual journey towards this attainment. “Legend,” the opening poem, presents a kind of a ‘method’ to arrive at it, and is immediately followed by poems, such as “Black Tambourine,” in which isolation, alienation and bewilderment seem to be the condition of the artist in face of a broken and menacing world. Some critics point to the sketching of this broken and menacing world in Crane’s early lyrics, which would not appear in *White Buildings*. “Sunday Morning Apples” shows a more optimistic view in which the artist comes to terms with nature and penetrates its secrets, while nature completely absorbs the human element in “Garden Abstract” and overwhelms it in “North Labrador.” Poems like “Repose of Rivers” and “Passage,” more complex and difficult than those studied before, present the mind starting to pierce the world, and although it is still overwhelmed by it, it can already retrieve a meaning. Notwithstanding the images of pain and suffering, the artist is victorious in “Lachrymae Christi” wherein he is compared to Jesus, the symbol of glory attained by suffering, and ultimately Dionysus, whose image is implicit in the role of wine as a conduct to the visionary state in “The Wine Menagerie.” The next step expectedly is a way into clarity, and this step is effected in a most tortuous way in “Recitative,” conveniently placed right before the long and ambitious “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen.” Before delving into this hermetic text, it is interesting to look into “Possessions,” in which the path to be followed is previewed:

> Witness now this trust! the rain
> That steals softly direction
> And the key, ready to hand—sifting
> One moment in sacrifice (the direst)
> Through a thousand nights the flesh
> Assaults outright for bolts that linger
> Hidden,—O undirected as the sky
> That through its black foam has no eyes
> For this fixed stone of lust...

The tortured and harsh syntax and the chaotic disposition of the symbols in this stanza faithfully reproduce the arduous combat taking place in it. The core motive is the relation between the sky (symbol of transcendence and purity) and the human subject. Three elements symbolize the disruption in this relation: the rain, which discretely (softly) but fatally strays the human element from the direction to transcendence; the night, when the flesh actively attacks searching for the hidden bolts; and the black foam

which interposes itself between men and the sky, which cannot perceive 'this fixed stone of lust'. We should ask if the fixed stone of lust is the same as the bolt that lingers hidden.

It must be remarked that the poem begins in the imperative mood: Before the distraction and disruption of the dark elements, the reader is told to "Witness now this trust," a hopeful commandment. The first lines of the second stanza resume the imperative mood with Crane telling us to "Accumulate such moments to an hour: Account the total of this trembling tabulation." These lines remind us that the first stanza is referring to one moment (the direst, as the poet says) in which the conflict rages. Moments such as these must be accumulated, repeatedly experienced, as we are told in "Legend" that the 'bright logic' will be won "only by the one who spends out himself again."

> And I, entering, take up the stone
> As quiet as you can make a man...
> In Bleecker Street, still trenchant in a void,
> Wounded by apprehensions out of speech,
> I hold it up against a disk of light—
> I, turning, turning on smoked forking spires,
> The city's stubborn lives, desires.

Here the poet faces the city, his place of brokenness, which is filled with 'lives, desires' and whose streets are "still trenchant on a void." However, the stone he has found in his ascetic experience, when held against the sun (a disk of light), allows him to go beyond this void. The ascetic exercise here appears in the relation between two opposite symbols: the stone is solid and opaque, whereas the light is intangible and luminous; the conjugation of the two opens up a path into a brighter understanding, which can be attained as explained in the last three lines of the poem:

> The pure possession, the inclusive cloud
> Whose heart is fire shall come,—the white wind rase
> All but bright stones wherein our smiling plays.

The black foam of the first stanza yields to an "inclusive cloud whose heart is fire." Fire and wind, the two violent agents of redemption cited by Uroff, make their appearance here again. The wind is white as the "bright stones wherein our smiling plays," which are the only things that seem to resist the razing action of the wind.

These verses could be read as a presage to the pathway Crane finds in "Recitative." The relation between these two poems can already be seen in the

predominance of the imperative mood—the poet is commanding or reciting. Despite displaying a much more regular form than possessions—seven unrhymed quatrains composed of iambic pentameters—and a less disrupted syntax, it has the same symbolic complexity, consisting of one of the most enigmatic poems written by Crane. When Allen Tate said to be puzzled by it, Crane suggested him to

> Imagine the poet, say, on a platform speaking it. The audience is one half of Humanity (in the sense of Blake) and the poet the other. ALSO, the poet sees himself in the audience as in a mirror. ALSO, the audience sees itself, in part, in the poet. Against this paradoxical DUALITY is posed the UNITY, or the conception of it (as you got it) in the last verse. In another sense, the poet is talking to himself all the way through the poem, and there are, as too often in my poems, other reflexes and symbolisms in the poem, also, which it would be silly to write here—at least for the present. (CRANE, 2006, p.375-376)

We return then to the motive of the mirror as both reflector and deflector of reality. As we have seen in the first two lines of "Legend," the mirror (the artificial image) and reality are both revealing and delusive to the point that both cover a reality beyond. The poet should find their revealing dimension. In the same letter quoted, Crane said the poem was not purposefully complex, since he tried to simplify it for weeks. We could say that complexity is inherent to the task the poet undertakes in its verses:

> Regard the capture here, O Janus-faced,
> As double as the hands that twist this glass.
> Such eyes at search or rest you cannot see;
> Reciting pain or glee, how can you bear!
>
> Twin shadowed halves: the breaking second holds
> In each the skin alone, and so it is
> I crust a plate of vibrant mercury
> Borne cleft to you, and brother in the half.

The character of task or undertaking is visible in the imperative mood. Janus, the two-faced Roman god, here stands for the duplicity the poet sees in himself and the humanity to which he recites. It is impossible to separate one from the other as reality from the mirror that reflects it. The mirror appears in the second line, twisted by hands that are as "double" as the "capture" referred to. This capture is parallel to the "moment" referred in "Possessions." The poet draws the audience's attention to a specific moment, which is captured and seen in its duplicity. The glass can also be seen not as a mirror, but as an originally transparent barrier between the poet and his audience, which is also another projection of himself, a glass that has been blurred, so

none of the parts can see the truth in each others' eyes. "How can you bear" such duplicity?, asks Crane around ten years before Eliot ascertained that "human kind cannot bear very much reality" (ELIOT, 1969, p. 172) in a poem Crane would not live to read.

The "breaking second" of the second stanza is a reference to the "capture" in the first—that one moment which, regarded with attention, displays its duplicity, its "twin shadowed halves": the two faces of reality, the poet and the other; they cannot exist separately, since they are only halves of a whole, yet the relation between them is blurred, so much so that they appear as shadows for each other. The split of the moment holds only the skin of each parcel, that is, their outer appearance. "I crust a plate of vibrant mercury"—the symbolism of this verse deserves closer attention. Jean Chevalier and Stephen Gheerbrant, in their dictionary of symbols (1982), pose that the element mercury, related to the Roman god Mercury or his Greek correspondent Hermes, is associated to the idea of mediation, of something in-between two realities and linking both, a value it also has in astrological symbolism. The verse echoes that in "Possessions" in which the poet holds a stone "against a disk of light." The two verses show an action by the poet to clear away the obscurity between the two realities.

Inquire this much-exacting fragment smile,
Its drums and darkest blowing leaves ignore,—
Defer though, revocation of the tears
That yield attendance to one crucial sign.

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

The "smile" is an important feature in Crane's poetry. In "Possessions" it characterizes the bright stones associated to transcendence. Here the smile is fragmented, torn in two, but it is half way to the poet's discovery, since, being "much-exacting," it must be inquired. The drums and darkest leaves, as the verse shows, are linked to dimness and confusion and, thus, are an aspect of this "fragment smile" that must be ignored. The drum here has some echo of the muted tambourine stuck on the wall of "Black Tambourine" and will be echoed again in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." To retain only the salutary aspect of the smile, it must be questioned or revoked by its counterpart, the tears "that yield attendance to one crucial sign," that is, direct the poet to the unity he seeks.

Again the wind has its razing and redeeming action "as it sets the brain in motion once more" (Uroff, p. 34) against the threat of lust, an action much needed since the brain's disk is shivered, corrupted and frightened, and would obviously not be able to overcome lust on its own. Darkness, just as the ape-face, stands for the primitive, animalized portion of humanity, the dimness that hinders the apprehension of its truth. When it falls away, "gradually white buildings answer day," another key-verse, since it brings together many important elements in Crane's poetic-ascetic method: the gradualness (already referred in "Legend" and "Possessions"), the color white as the symbol of purity, and the city, represented by the buildings, that now start to show their bright and spiritualized side, which the poet had been looking for. It is also interesting to remember how Edelman points out to a participal reading of 'buildings', in which they could also stand for the poet's works, his poetic 'buildings', constructions.

> Let the same nameless gulf beleaguer us—
> Alike suspend us from atrocious sums
> Built floor by floor on shafts of steel that grant
> The plummet heart, like Absalom, no stream.
>
> The highest tower,—let her ribs palisade
> Wrenched gold of Nineveh;—yet leave the tower.
> The bridge swings over salvage, beyond wharves;
> A wind abides the ensign of your will...

The poet urges his audience/himself to the challenge of bearing the weight of this "nameless gulf," this cleft of mystery, as the steel barriers, shaft that here prevents any expression. The next stanza brings out another Biblical symbol of deceit in the "wrenched gold of Nineveh." The highest tower can contain this deceitful and corrupted gold. The bridge, which will be the central symbol of Crane's epic achievement, leads into the bright city, beyond harbors, where the redeeming wind is now dominated by the human will.

> In alternating bells have you not heard
> All hours clapped dense into a single stride?
> Forgive me for an echo of these things,
> And let us walk through time with equal pride.

Optimism and ecstasy glow in these stanzas. The hours, which should be read both in the sense of time measurement and in that of religious services,—the dire moments of "self-spending" and sacrifice, punctuated by bells—are now finally seen as one, can finally come to a coherent unity. Somehow ironically, the poet excuses himself

for the repetitions of themes and symbols and invites his audience to "walk through time with equal pride."

Maybe one of the main achievements in this poem is seeing the "bright side" of the city, the place of modernity, of artificiality. Like Eliot, Crane saw modernity as confusing and deceiving. However, as he frequently announced, he believed it had a spirituality of its own, something that went beyond pure brokenness and artificiality. This poem seems to point to a possible success, which will be broadened in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen."

Crane developed many of his theoretic ideas in the essay "General Aims and Theories," probably the main exposition of his views. This essay begins with an explanation of his objectives in writing "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," evidencing the importance of this piece in Crane's work and poetical project:

> When I started writing "Faustus and Helen" it was my intention to embody in modern terms (words, symbols, metaphors) a contemporary approximation to an ancient human culture or mythology that seems to have been obscured rather than illumined with the frequency of poetic allusions made to it during the last century. The name of Helen, for instance, has become an all-too-easily employed crutch for evocation whenever a poet felt a stitch in his side. The real evocation of this (to me) very real and absolute conception of beauty seemed to consist in a reconstruction in these modern terms of the basic emotional attitude toward beauty that the Greeks had. And in so doing I found that I was really building a bridge between so-called classic experience and many divergent realities of our seething, confused cosmos of today, which has no formulated mythology yet for classic poetic reference or for religious exploitation. (CRANE, 2006, p. 160)

"For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" would be the poem in which Crane would explore the absolute values within the scenery of the modern city in its rhythm and images. According to Paul Mariani (2000) in his biography of Crane, elements of modern culture would consciously influence its composition, such as jazz and Isadora Duncan, who Crane admired and could fit his idea of a muse. The poem, according also to Mariani, was greatly admired by Crane's reduced circle of readers at the time he wrote it. Thomas Parkinson, in his book *Hart Crane and Yvor Winters—Their Literary Correspondence* (1978) says that Winters saw the composition as one of the greatest poems of their times, comparing it to the best work of Pound, Eliot, and Stevens. As

happened to Crane's work as a whole, the prestige of the poem would wane after his death. Allen Tate, in his 1936 essay on Crane, would say that the great originality of "Faustus and Helen" was in its rhythm, and, apart from some interesting passages, it was "an abstraction empty of any knowable experience," (TATE, 1999, p. 314) adding that Crane himself became dissatisfied with the poem and decided upon the more ambitious task of writing *The Bridge*.

The poem should be read primarily as Crane's response to the work of T. S. Eliot and his pessimism. Its construction is heavily influenced by the labyrinthian and erratic mental movements of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," and the images seem to remind us of those in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" and the "Preludes." Lee Edelman points to the theme of memory as the vertex in which Crane differentiates himself from Eliot; the city offers its rendition of memory as twisted and dirty, this is something the two poets seem to agree upon. In "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," under an anxious light in the nightly streets, "dissolve the floors of memory," since "midnight shakes the memory as a madman shakes a dead geranium" (ELIOT, 1969, p. 24); while memory mixes with desire in The Waste Land. Memory, as the recess of the history in which, for Eliot, man's identity dwells, is so corrupted by the incoherent memories of modern life that it can appear only as "a heap of broken images" (The Waste Land), thus Eliot's fragmented poetics, which, as Allen Tate said, could only display unit if the unit was false. In the first stanza of "Faustus and Helen," Crane is conceding Eliot's point:

> The mind has shown itself at times
> Too much the baked and labeled dough
> Divided by accepted multitudes.
> Across the stacked partitions of the day--
> Across the memoranda, baseball scores,
> The stenographic smiles and stock quotations
> Smutty wings flash out equivocations.

The mind is a vulgar, common, and homogeneous paste, equally shared and taken for granted. The adjective 'divided' suggests the mind's quality as a common good at the same time that it brings out its fragmentary character: it is fulfilled by ephemeral and incoherent objects, such as baseball scores and stock quotations. These images that make up the journey of a day are nothing but "equivocations" flashed (the verb accentuates the idea of artificiality) by dirty wings.

The mind is brushed by sparrow wings;
Numbers, rebuffed by asphalt, crowd
The margins of the day, accent the curbs,
Convoying divers dawns on every corner
To druggist, barber and tobacconist,
Until the graduate opacities of evening
Take them away as suddenly to somewhere
Virginal perhaps, less fragmentary, cool.

*There is the world dimensional for
those untwisted by the love of things
irreconcilable...*

The 1st and the 2nd stanzas are joined by pairs of wings. Edelman points out that the sparrow, an urban, American counterpoint to Keat's nightingale, is the index of transcendence in Crane's poem. The 2nd and the 3rd verses present a complex relation in which abstract reality—the numbers—is rejected by concrete reality—the asphalt—at the same time that it gives it shape, accenting its curbs, and accompany the fractured reality—dawn is not one, but many for the different perceivers. However, this fragmentariness can become more and more coherent as night approaches. This is the point where Crane starts marking his difference from Eliot. Crane welcomes the romantic notion of night as magic and transcendent. For Eliot, night is the scenery where memory is obscured; for Crane, on the contrary, as evening progresses, these fragments of dawn are taken somewhere "virginal perhaps, less fragmentary, cool."

Here, Edelman, in his deconstructionist perspective, accentuates that for the poet, the "margins of the day" are more important than the day itself. Advancing from this reading, we could suppose that what is hidden in the margins of the day comes about as night appears. This "other side," the "world dimensional," is accessible for "those untwisted by the love of things irreconcilable." This last image recalls the recurrence of the ascetic, parallel to "those who have stepped the legend of their youth into the noon" or "the one who spends out himself again," in "Legend." We may imagine also that those untwisted by the love of things irreconcilable are those who can tell memory from desire.

And yet, suppose some evening I forgot
The fare and transfer, yet got by that way
Without recall,--lost yet poised in traffic.
Then I might find your eyes across an aisle,
Still flickering with those prefigurations—
Prodigal, yet uncontested now,
Half-riant before the jerky window frame.

"And yet" here, as in "Voyages II," marks a byway through which the poet follows. This byway is strongly marked by paradoxes. As the rest of the poem shows, the byway leads to finding Helen, which means beauty and transcendence, experiences that are associated with memory, as we have seen. However, in the first verse Crane announces that this path into memory is attained by forgetfulness. In the same way, forgetting, rejecting "the fare and transfer," the means of transportation, results in the poet's "transport" to this superior reality. Another paradox arises with "lost yet poised in traffic"—lost from the usual itinerary from day to night, yet firmly fixed in its flowing movement.

That is when Helen comes in, when the poet finds her eyes in this urban and decadent setting, still containing the "prefigurations" which display a morphologic similarity and a semantic dissimilarity with the "equivocations" of the first stanza. The adjectives attributed to Helen's eyes follow in the same vein as the paradoxes presented in the first three lines, but they broaden it. She is "prodigal" and "uncontested," "half-riant" framed by an ill-defined frame. We must remember now that this reality is open for those "untouched by the love of the things irreconcilable"; therefore, the many paradoxes presented in this stanza are not associated with irreconcilability, but actually point to a mid-kingdom: the forgetfulness in the first line is not the denial of memory, but actually an intermediate state, prior to memory itself; the same happens with the poet's lost and stable state within traffic and Helen's eyes. This character is reinforced by the suppositional tone of the stanza indicated by the expressions "And yet," "suppose" in the first line and the modal verb "might" in the fourth line. The byway found by the poet is nevertheless a possibility, not a concrete fact.

> There is some way, I think, to touch
> Those hands of yours that count the nights
> Stippled with pink and green advertisements.
> And now, before its arteries turn dark
> I would have you meet this bartered blood.
> Imminent in his dream, none better knows
> The white wafer cheek of love, or offers words
> Lightly as moonlight on the eaves meets snow.

Here is the poet's virile and courageous invitation to Helen. Still in a suppositional mood, Crane imagines a way of having access to Helen, to her hands that enumerate the nights numb with the lights of advertisement. The two following verses receive a daring and sophisticated reading by Edelman, incompatible with the primary

reading which sees the arteries as a metaphor for the streets and their darkening as night arriving. Edelman suggests that the reference for “its” in the fourth line is the blood of the fifth, and not the urban scene (whose arteries would be the streets). According to this non-mimetic reading, the process of the arteries turning dark with blood should be interpreted as undifferentiated matter receiving a shape, filling vessels that must conduct it. Crane seems to be searching for this blood before it becomes defined within pathways, as he was searching, in the previous stanza, for forgetfulness before experience becomes stiffened in memory.

The “bartered blood,” as Edelman says, is a reference to the Faustian pact. Here, this blood and the darkening of the arteries leads to the realm of dream. Edelman points out to the interesting use of the pronoun “his” in reference to the poet; the poem being in the first person, “his” reinforces the idea of otherness, another self to be found in dreams. The two last verses of this stanza pass from the darkness of the arteries to the whiteness and sanctity of the wafer of love (the dough of the mind having received a shape) and the lightness of the words offered, likened to the snow in the eaves. The reader is witnessing a complex process of conversion. Edelman reminds us to pay attention to the relationship between the inner and the outer world. The ‘I’ and the ‘his’ point to this dialectics. Similarly, the falling of the night in the outer reality is correspondent to the meeting of a white reality in dreams. The notion of conversion is evidenced in the next stanza:

> Reflective conversion of all things
> At your deep blush, when ecstasies thread
> The limbs and belly, when rainbows spread
> Impinging on the throat and sides...
> Inevitable, the body of the world
> Weeps in inventive dust for the hiatus
> That winks above it, bluet in your breasts.

The first line, composed of an abstract idea, contrasts with the series of concrete images presented in the others. The “deep blush” which marks the conversion of all things may refer to the blush of Helen’s cheeks, but also to sunset, marking the passage of day into night. The color red appears as a color of passage between the two opposites of black and white, so much so that it variegates in the next line into a rainbow, in parallel with an organic ecstasy pervading limbs, belly, throats, and side. From Helen’s body the poet transfers his attention to “the body of the world,” which finds itself in another paradoxical phrase: the “inventive dust”—decomposition that carries invention

within itself. The object of the world's craving is the hiatus "winking" above it, the cleft that divides one world from another, compared here to the blue flower (the traditional Romantic symbol of the supernatural and poetic inspiration, as used by Novalis) dividing the two breasts of Helen.

> The earth may glide diaphanous to death;
> But if I lift my arms it is to bend
> To you who turned away once, Helen, knowing
> The press of troubled hands, too alternate
> With steel and soil to hold you endlessly.
> I meet you, therefore, in that eventual flame
> You found in final chains, no captive then—
> Beyond their million brittle, bloodshot eyes;
> White, through white cities passed on to assume
> That world which comes to each of us alone.

The poet turns to Helen. The physical eyes of others who tried to possess Helen are too fragile and blood-irrigated to stare into the flame found by Helen; their hands too stained with soil and steel to hold her forever. Through whiteness the poet can reach "that world which comes to each of us alone," the individual, the inner world in which beauty and purity can be found. As the last lines stress, beauty and purity are discovered only in solitude:

> Accept a lone eye riveted to your plane,
> Bent axle of devotion along companion ways
> That beat, continuous, to hourless days—
> One inconspicuous, glowing orb of praise.

The second session of "Faustus and Helen" is already distinct from the first one as the rhythmic experiment in which Crane tried to incorporate jazz beat into poetry. The meter becomes shorter and the rhythms faster. Accordingly, this session describes a jazz party:

> Brazen hypnotics glitter here;
> Glee shifts from foot to foot,
> Magnetic to their tremulo.
> This crashing opera bouffe,
> Blest excursion! this ricochet
> From roof to roof—
> Know, Olympians, we are breathless
> While nigger cupids scour the stars!
>
> A thousand light shrugs balance us
> Throgh snarling hails of melody.
> White shadows slip across the floor
> Splayed like cards from a loose hand;

> Rhythmic ellipses lead into canters
> Until somewhere a rooster banters.

The images of dance and ecstasy, the party described as an "opera bouffe," are punctuated with discrete references to sublimity. In the first stanza, the poet invokes the Greek gods and instantly brings out the image of the black man, the jazz musicians, not as mute and expressionless, but as cupids scouring the stars. In the second, amid the frenetic scenery of dances, one sees discrete white shadows through the floor. And the idea of intermediateness is also touched upon here in the "rhythmic ellipses."

> Greet naively—yet intrepidly
> New soothings, new amazements
> That cornets introduce at every turn—
> And you may fall downstairs with me
> With perfect grace and equanimity.
> Or, plaintively scud past shores
> Where, by strange harmonic laws
> All relatives, serene and cool,
> Sit rocked in patent armchairs.

Here Crane's optimism in relation to the modern world appears in his invitation to Helen: to welcome these new harmonies, new poetics, this new music and the feelings they bring; these "new soothings, new amazements" may be read as the "spiritual quantities" Crane said to be looking for in his essay "General Aims and Theories." Helen can accept this invitation, naively and intrepidly welcome this new shapes to her beauty, fall downstairs, lose her floor, but maintaining her grace and balance; or she can reject it and "walk upon the beach" in sadness as Eliot's Prufrock does, observing "relatives," old passive figures seating in armchairs. The reference to Eliot becomes obvious in the next stanza:

> O, I have known metallic paradises
> Where cuckoos clucked to finches
> Above the deft catastrophes of drums.
> While titters hailed the groans of death
> Beneath gyrating awnings I have seen
> The incunabula of the divine grotesque.
> This music has a reassuring way.

Edelman recalls that "I have known" is obsessively repeated throughout "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": "For I have known them all already, known them all: Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons," "And I have known the eyes already, known them all," "And I have known the arms already, known them all" (ELIOT, 1969, p. 13-17). The tired and disillusioned Prufrock knows that this world will not yield

something spectacular. The poet in "Faustus and Helen" is not so sure. The metallic paradises he has known in modern world, the modern music, are violent, catastrophic, yet deft and reassuring.

> The siren of the springs of guilty song—
> Let us take her on the incandescent wax
> Striated with nuances, nervosities
> That we are heir to: she is still so young,
> We cannot frown upon her as she smiles,
> Dipping here in this cultivated storm
> Among slim skaters of the gardened skies.

The guilt in the songs of the first verse is associated by Edelman with Crane's revisionism of poetic tradition and his willingness to defy the authority of Eliot and ascertain a spiritual life for the new world. He does that by evoking the siren, the muse who is the source of those guilty songs, and taking her to incandescent wax (which Edelman associates with the modern technology for recording music, for capturing beauty) while Prufrock saw his mermaids "riding seaward on the waves," receding, abandoning the human world, and heard them "singing each to each," supposing that they would not sing for him. Crane's Faust is not passive as Prufrock in relation to this siren; intrepidly he possesses her body, where he can read many striae and nuances of tradition, of his heritage. For him, she remains young and productive, since he does not reject her smiles, but welcome them before she completely emerges in "this cultivated storm" of poetic tradition. To read this image, we must remember how Crane said in "General Aims and Theories" that his objective in writing "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" was using modern resources for representing "an ancient human culture or mythology that seems to have been obscured rather than illumined with the frequency of poetic allusions made to it during the last century," and here he tries to rescue his siren from the storm of poetic allusions that had obscured her.

The third and final section of the poem describes a downward movement, a descent into the next dawn as the whole poem has a temporal pattern of accompanying the arch of one night. Accordingly, in the third poem it is dawning:

> Capped arbiter of beauty in this street
> That narrows darkly into motor dawn,—
> You, here beside me, delicate ambassador
> Of intricate slain numbers that arise
> In whispers, naked of steel;
> religious gunman!
> Who faithfully, yourself, will fall too soon,

And in other ways than as the wind settles
On the sixteen thrifty bridges of the city:
Let us unbind our throats of fear and pity.

This downward movement is marked by the change in the poet's company from Helen to a figure associated with death and war, which Edelman identifies as Paris. The rendition of death as "capped arbiter of beauty" reminds us of Wallace Stevens when he says that "death is the mother of beauty" (STEVENS, 1997, p. 55). It is surely not by accident that this figure is associated with the dawn, which here receives the predication of 'motor' retaking the elements of urbanity and modernity which were, in the first section, associated with daytime city. This section's relation with death is evident also in many references to war such as the intricate slain numbers that arise in whispers, naked of steel" and the characterization of the death figure as a "religious gunman."

We even,
Who drove speediest destruction
In corymbulous formations of mechanics,--
Who hurried the hill breezes, spouting malice
Plangent over meadows, and looked down
On rifts of torn and empty houses
Like old women with teeth unjubilant
That waited faintly, briefly and in vain:

We know, eternal gunman, our flesh remembers
The tensile boughs, the nimble blue plateaus,
The mounted, yielding cities of the air!

The religious gunman presents essential differences with Helen: in addition to being male and associated to death and destruction (although also with beauty), he is identified with the poet, as they are side by side and the poet uses 'we' to refer to them. In the first stanza, as we saw, Crane says that the religious gunman will "faithfully fall too soon." Whereas Helen remains inhabiting the world of the sublime, the gunman is closer to humans and will suffer the same fate. The images in the second stanza, clearly viewed from a plane, reinforce the violent character of the modern world, as the "old women" here, unlike Helen, are helpless and devoid of beauty. Once again drawing upon Edelman's commentaries, it must be remarked that the imagery of destruction is also linked to poetry. In section II, poetry was associated with guilt, here again the violent character of poetry is brought out. We remember how Uroff said that, in Crane's poetry, artistic creation appears as a violent form of possessing the sublime reality that Crane yearns for; the destruction of the cities the poet looks down upon are correlative

with a destruction of material reality, to the search for the cities of the air, which are associated with the white cities of section I as ideal cities.

> That saddled sky that shook down vertical
> Repeated play of fire—no hypogeum
> Of wave or rock was good against one hour.
> We did not ask for that, but have survived,
> And will persist to speak again before
> All stubble streets that have not curved
> To memory, or known the ominous lifted arm
> That lowers down the arc of Helen's brow
> To saturate with blessing and dismay.
>
> A goose, tobacco and cologne
> Three winged and gold-shod prophecies of heaven,
> The lavish heart shall always have to leaven
> And spread with bells and voices, and atone
> The abating shadows of our conscript dust.

Poetry is an architectural art, as Hart Crane believes, which implies that it is closer to technological devices than to natural formations. Technology permitted men to tame the skies, the physical heights; poetry, Crane believes, is apt to make the same in relation to metaphysical heights. Humanity, in this stanza, appears under a fatalistic light ("we did not ask for that, but have survived"), men as survivors and strivers, who will continue to pursue these ideal cities, which have not "curved to memory" or posed a threat to Helen, to beauty. The goose, the tobacco and the cologne seen as prophecies of heaven recall the theory of correspondences examined before.

> Anchises' navel, dripping of the sea,—
> The hands Erasmus dipped in gleaming tides,
> Gathered the voltage of blown blood and vine;
> Delve upward for the new and scattered wine,
> O brother-thief of time, that we recall.
> Laugh out the meager penance of their days
> Who dare not share with us the breath released,
> The substance drilled and spent beyond repair
> For golden, or the shadow of gold hair.
>
> Distinctly praise the years, whose volatile
> Blamed bleeding hands extend and thresh the height
> The imagination spans beyond despair,
> Outpacing bargain, vocable and prayer.

These two last stanzas bring out mythological figures who "gathered the voltage of blown blood and vine." Crane invites his "brother-thief of time" to mock those who scattered the substance of beauty and dare not share with those of Crane's own times. Crane ends this major work in the optimistic tone he was seeking, praising the recent

and volatile times and the imagination which can surpass despair and include bargain, vocable and prayer.

Our Journey Up to Now

Our wanderings have taken us through long and complex labyrinths of symbols and have shown us that the seeming confusion of Crane's white buildings possess a logic that can be acquired. This tour, however, was the introduction to our main theme. Before we plunge into the variegated oceans of "Voyages," a brief overview of the path covered up to now would be advisable.

We were greeted in the beginning by the warning sign that said that "As silent as a mirror is believed, realities plunge in silence by…" advising us not to completely believe the images we see in the mirror and that silence, instead of leaving room for reality to express itself, can smother it. Thankfully, already in the first poem, we learned that there is a method to overcome the smothering action of silence and the mirror's deceit, but it is not an easy one—it requires continuous suffering and an accumulation of wounds. Are we able to follow these steps, a logic bright as noon will greet for us in the end.

Probably to ward off those unprepared to continue on the trip, we were faced with the sad figure of an artist in the image of an American black man, who, forgotten among roaches and gnats in a dark cellar, sees his artistic instrument, his "Black Tambourine," muted on the wall and his memory reduced to a carcass. However, memory, the poet tells us, is still the key to our achievement. It is in memory that dwells the figure of another artist, now a bright-haired northerner whose eyes and smile reminds us of merry figures of literature and whose thoughts guide us as horses. In the same text, the poet suggests that the nature of the idioms we will find is perhaps more congenial to the nocturnal, changing phases of the moon than the bright rays of the sun.

The artist, "Sunday Morning Apples" tell us, has what is necessary to understand the secrets of nature. We also found that there are two kinds of whiteness—that of death, likened to the silence we found in the first line of the book, and that of brightness

and transcendence. But if we have seen nature opening up for the artist, we also find out that its secrets can be dangerous and destructive for those who approach it too avidly and without the proper preparation, as the poor girl who, longing for a succulent apple, who was absorbed by the tree in “Garden Abstract.” We also discovered a facet of nature that is icy, unyielding and devoid of memories in “North Labrador,” where whiteness seems to be closer to death than transcendence. This facet of nature is undoubtedly feminine.

To oppose that terrifying organism without memories, the poet called us to a still deeper plunge into his own memories. In “Passage” and “Repose of Rivers,” we learned the ways in which this muse, which can be a parasite, has to bend reality according to its wills and that it can give origin to nightmarish landscapes of steep cliffs inhabited by monstrous reptiles and where the sun is tyrannical; such landscapes can be bartered to more constructive ones, and a song of infancy can be heard even in the chaotic city.

In “Wine Menagerie” and “Lachrymae Christi,” we discovered that, not only memory has this dissolving action on reality; it is performed by chemicals, too. Wine binds the figures of Christ and Dionysus, representing Greek and Christian heritages, and brings out some of their nature in the poet himself. Two extremely complex poems, “Possessions” and “Recitative,” finally enable us to face the tyranny of the sun with mystic devices such as a disk of light and a plate of vibrant mercury. The latter poem in particular, posed a challenge so great that even a sensitive reader as Allen Tate was bewildered. Actually what we find in this poem is what was already announced in the beginning. The myriad duplicities, apparently irreconcilable, are the way reality has to deceive us and to retreat into silence from those who are not prepared for it. Beyond the darkness of drums and an ape face, or black foam covering the sky in “Possessions,” the repeated exercise we are subjected to throughout Crane’s hermetic symbolism and tortured syntax, light can yield a smile and the white buildings of the same chaotic city can actually answer brightly.

We reviewed this whole journey in a more complete manner in “For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen,” where it is spread throughout the arch of a day, leading into a night and resuming to the light of the following day. The poet finds Helen, his muse, in the smutty passages of the city, whose fragmented, ‘striated’ imagery impede us to find the unity of existence. Night, the poet shows us, can also bring brightness in

dreams, in a white, cool, and less fragmentary reign cogent to Helen's nature. This reign can be seen though a cleft of sky that winks above us. This wink, we suppose, is what can lead us.

It is still in "Faustus and Helen" that we see how the same drums that beleaguered us in "Recitative" can lead us into ecstasies in jazz music, an example of the patterns of conversion we find in this poem, where night yields to light, and death to life. The poet here does not follow Eliot's advice to avoid the mermaids singing; he actually ransoms her without pity and remorse and takes her to the world of technology. This world of technology enabled men to gain the skies; the poet, with his friend, the religious gunman, is able to do the same by other means, which do not, in fact, exclude those of technology.

Leading us through this poetic journey, Crane tried to show that ancient values, symbols and emblems of beauty and spirituality are alive in our fast-changing days as ever. They are only more difficultly accessible. Accordingly, the path we had to cover throughout his verses could not be easy, since facility would only deceive us and obscure the path and the goals we have set to achieve. Equipped with these notions and symbols, we must continue into "Voyages."

3 VOYAGES

The Origins of the Quest

The long sequence “Voyages,” composed of six interrelated poems, is arguably Crane’s greatest lyric accomplishment and his longest and more ambitious work before his epical attempt *The Bridge*. Most critics ascertain that this is the piece in which Crane is able to integrate the themes and structures present in the other lyrics in *White Buildings*. Accordingly it was placed as the last piece of the volume. In Ernest Smith’s book it is considered “the culminating sequence,” encompassing the gloom and despair and the personal search of the first group of poems, the indifference of the external world of the second group, the conflict with it of the third, and the victory of the fourth.

“Voyages” was not conceived in its origin as a sequence of poems, but actually started with the writing of independent lyrics. It showed its first signs of life around 1921-1922[‡] when Crane wrote a free-verse poem on the Whitmanian motif of boys playing on the beach. This small piece already presented the sea as a dangerous and mysterious element in relation to the innocence of the young boys safely on the beach. Its last line read “The bottom of the sea is cruel.” Paul Mariani, Crane’s biographer, tells us that Crane was not enthusiastic about the new text, seeing in it nothing but “a kind of poster, […] a ‘stop, look and listen’ sign” and its final line was likened to “a skull and crossbones insignia” (MARIANI, 1999, p. 96). Initially, he thought of calling it by its last line or merely “Poster.” The next step was a poem Crane wrote in 1923 called “Belle Isle.” For around one year these two pieces remained unrelated. When Crane thought of writing a sequence of sea poems that were also love poems, the idea came of framing his long work with these two previous lyrics.

The central inspiration for the sequence came actually from a changing life experience: Crane’s love affair with a Danish sailor called Emil Opffer. The identification of his lover with the sea unquestionably influenced the direction it took,

[‡] There seems to be a problem in agreement about when the poem was written. Mariani, Lewis and Paul date it as being written in 1922. The 2006 Library of America edition of Hart Crane’s Collected Poems and Selected Letters brings in a letter to Gorham Munson dated October 1st 1921 in which the full poem is displayed. Brian Reed in his recent study *Hart Crane: After his Lights* presents 1921 as the actual date of its composition.

and it is probable that some metaphors were provided by Opffer's reports of his travels. Although it did not last long, this affair meant a transcendental experience for Crane; thence he could find a link between these two previously disparate poems and extend them into the long work that they would become. The impact of the affair on Crane's emotional and spiritual life can be perceived in one of his most famous passages, from a letter he wrote to his friend, the writer Waldo Frank, in April 21, 1924:

> For many days, now, I have gone about quite dumb with something for which "happiness" must be too mild a term. At any rate, my aptitude for communication, such as it is!, has been limited to one person alone, and perhaps for the first time in my life (and, I can only think that it is for the last, so far is my imagination from the conception of anything more profound and lovely than this love). I have wanted to write you more than once, but it will take many letters to let you know what I mean (for myself, at least) when I say that I have seen the Word made Flesh. I mean nothing less, and I know now that there is such a thing as indestructibility. In the deepest sense, where flesh became transformed through intensity of response to counter-response, where sex was beaten out, where a purity of joy was reached that included tears. It's true, Waldo, that so much more than my frustrations and multitude of humiliations has been answered in this reality and promise that I feel that whatever event the future holds in justified beforehand. And I have been able to give freedom and life which was acknowledged in the ecstasy of walking hand in hand across the most beautiful bridge of the world, the cables enclosing us and pulling us upward in such a dance as I have never walked and never can walk with another. (CRANE, 2006, p. 383-384)

The report of his inner experience is actually very important for the understanding of "Voyages." The work is, according to Sherman Paul, "a psychological progression" that "presents, and moves through, phases of love, and the despair of the concluding poem reaches back to the first, where the most notable thing is the poet's feeling of urgency and bitterness" (PAUL, 1972, p. 139). Indeed, throughout its six pieces, we accompany an emotional and metaphorical journey from innocence to mature transcendence, passing through the terror of discovery of love, the culmination and peace of its intimate conquer, the sadness for its decay, and the emptiness of its loss. In this aspect, the work reminds us of the symbolic night ride with Helen in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," but, if in this long poem, Crane developed the geographical metaphor of the city, "Voyages" was focused around the sea. This comparison is in agreement with Margaret Uroff's views, who sees the same pattern in the two poems: "the poet starts his musing in the daylight realm of bitter fact, then enters his dream and describes an ecstatic moment which he longs to perpetuate but

which fades almost instantly" (UROFF, 1974, p.58) and places the poem, in her typology of patterns in Crane's poetry, within the dream of possession. The fact, remarked by Uroff, that the musings begin in daylight is also important to the progression of the poems; again as in "Faustus and Helen," the lyrical sequence accompanies the changes of day into night and vice-versa, which helps to guide the emotional changes taking place within the lyrical self. Another important comparison, also pointed out by Uroff, is the presence of the muse in a female figure, which takes the form of Helen in the previous work and in this one, it is seen in the sea itself, which is, nevertheless, much more ambiguous and unpredictable.

This last comparison, however, fails in one point, which shows the greater complexity of "Voyages": if the sea is a female muse figure, the poem is actually directed to a nameless lover, whom biographical data already touched upon lead us to identify as a male lover. The importance of the theme of male homosexuality in it is a point of debate among critics. Most authors stress its universal quality, as Yvor Winters when he says that, in "Voyages II," in his opinion one of Crane's most accomplished works, Crane becomes "a universal symbol of the human mind in a particular situation" (WINTERS, 2011, p. 28). Lewis, who emphasizes the work's universal quality, notwithstanding recognizes in it "the only truly moving and beautiful poetry of male homosexual love in English with which I am acquainted" (LEWIS, 1967, p. 168). Edelman also sees in the poem's rhetorical structure, symbols of male homosexuality; but unarguably it is in Thomas Yingling's study, which dismisses universalist readings, that we have the strongest advocate for a homosexual reading of Crane's poetry in general and this piece in particular. Referring to the religious content of the letter to Waldo Frank, Yingling sees "Voyages" as the Crane text "where the metaphysical value of homosexuality is most carefully examined" (YINGLING, 1990, p. 92) and he also identifies the sequence's movement from innocence to ecstasy, then to a decrease and defeat as a "quest to inscribe homosexuality as a timeless and unmediated being" which eventually fails, portraying the triumph of homosexuality as "a historical impossibility" (id.).

The image of the sea has undeniably been very present throughout Western literature as its broadness and deepness provides an excellent metaphor for life and the relationship between men and infinity and the unknown. Among the works that surely influenced Crane, Harold Bloom (1982) and Lee Edelman point to the "Sea-drift"

poems by Walt Whitman, mainly the two first pieces “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking” and “As I ebbed with the Ocean of Life,” where the confrontation of the poet with the sea acquires a sense of maturation in which the former is faced with the overpowering forces of love, sexuality and death and, mainly, how these three are intertwined in the human life cycle. Another important reference, although very rarely mentioned, is Arthur Rimbaud’s long poem “Le Bateau Ivre,” in which the sea journey symbolizes a journey through unknown metaphysical realms in enigmatic and oneiric images of magic creatures and natural events taking place as mystical transformations. There is also the interesting, even if lesser, presence of Coleridge’s *Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner* and Baudelaire’s “L’Albatros” in “Voyages IV,” where the image of the albatross, central to both poems, is explored somehow in a discussion to them.

However, the main literary influence in the composition of “Voyages” seems actually to be Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick*, which Crane read more than once and kept as one of his favorite literary works. Joseph Warren Beach, in “Hart Crane and Moby Dick” (1982), points out to the many thematic and linguistic influences Melville’s novel had on Crane’s lyrical masterpiece, mainly in “Voyages II,” with its vision of the sea as the deep and mysterious vortex linking life and death, this world and the other. In fact, this vision of the sea is already explored in “At Melville’s Tomb,” a poem strategically positioned in *White Buildings* right before its end with “Voyages.” Many symbols and motifs that will people the great sequence are compressed in this four-stanza rhymed piece and it seems to pose the very question that will be answered in “Voyages.” Its importance, then, demands a close reading before entering our central interest.

At Melville’s Tomb

Often beneath the wave, wide from this ledge
The dice of drowned men's bones he saw bequeath
An embassy. Their numbers as he watched,
Beat on the dusty shore and were obscured.

And wrecks passed without sound of bells,
The calyx of death's bounty giving back
A scattered chapter, livid hieroglyph,
The portent wound in corridors of shells.

Then in the circuit calm of one vast coil,
Its lashings charmed and malice reconciled,
Frosted eyes there were that lifted altars;
And silent answers crept across the stars.

Compass, quadrant and sextant contrive
No farther tides . . . High in the azure steeps
Monody shall not wake the mariner.
This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps.

This poem was published in a 1926 issue of the *Poetry* magazine, and its complexity led the editor Harriet Monroe to delve into an epistolary discussion with Crane, from which some of his most important reflections on “the logic of metaphor” would arise. Indeed, in a fast reading one can perceive its many difficulties and mysteries.

Herman Melville appears here as a visionary figure who, watching the sea from afar (the ledge referred in the first verse), can see what no one else sees. Dead men lost in the depths of the sea, “beneath the waves,” invisible to eyes on the surface, were “visible” and meaningful to Melville’s imagination. The forgotten bones lost in the sea deliver a coherent and structured message (an embassy) which, notwithstanding, at first seems random, as the image of the dice suggests. As in “Faustus and Helen,” the numbers appear as an abstract index to concrete objects, in this case, the many drowned bodies.

The bells that are silent in the beginning of stanza two will sound in “Voyages II.” Here, they are mute, they do not announce the ship which is itself destroyed, the image of the ghost ship is implied. The calyx was one of the reasons for Monroe’s reprehensions, and Warren Beach agrees with her (so do I) in relation to its excessive obscurity. Had Crane not supplied the explanation to it (the vortex produced by a sinking ship), it would be almost impossible to understand. However, the overall idea provided by these two verses (The calyx of death's bounty giving back / A scattered chapter, livid hieroglyph,) can more easily be figured out as the blunt message the death of the seamen provides; the two syntactically similar phrases composing the second of these verses are also semantically alike: a scattered chapter—a message incomplete; a livid hieroglyph—a written document difficult to decipher. The same notion is repeated in the last verse of the stanza. Crane explained it as referring to the sound one hears when holding a shell against one’s ear: in its meaningless and confusing sound there is some narrative of the undersea.

The third stanza comes with a message of appeasement by death. Margaret Uroff calls attention to the circular pattern of movements developed throughout the other stanzas (as in the “calyx of death’s bounty” and the “corridors of shell”) resolving here in “one vast coil,” whose calm and steady, patterned movement is able to charm and tame the violent and cruel movements or moods of the sea. These movements represent, as Uroff says, the artistic act which can forge creativeness from the sea’s destructiveness. The last verses present a symmetry as those which will be apparent in “Voyages”: the “frosted eyes” of the dead undersea echo the coolness and brilliancy of the stars in the skies. Uroff also points to the importance of the “lifting” movement of the eyes which, as Crane himself said, refer to lifting the eyes to the sky in search for answers.

Finally the fourth and last stanza reaffirms the power of artistic creativity over that of technological accuracy: the tides reached by Melville’s imagination go beyond those produced by compass, quadrant and sextant. The “monody” alluded to in the third verse, powerless to wake the dead mariner, the “shadow only the sea keeps,” may refer to the kind of lyricism Crane was fighting against in the figure and work of T. S. Eliot: the sad, monotonous, dead, and lamenting song of modern poetry (as produced by Eliot and his disciples) cannot grasp the spirit of these ages. “At Melville’s Tomb” provides an important preface to “Voyages.”

The bafflement of Harriet Monroe in face of this small piece is not difficult to understand. It is, indeed, a complex poem. When we read Crane’s explanation of the metaphors, we perceive how compacted these images are, with a high charge of symbolism each. The impression aroused is that the theme developed by Crane is far too rich for these few verses and it ends up providing an unanswered question: what are the mysteries the sea holds in its inmost vaults? “Voyages” would be his extended answer to this question.

The Marine Suite

Structurally, “Voyages” is varied. The six poems that compose it show a total of 140 verses disposed as follows: I-16 verses, II-25 verses, III-18 verses, IV-25 verses, V-24

verses, VI-32 verses. The form varies according to the poem. The first one, as already remarked, is a free-verse piece with no regularity of verses per stanza. The second poem is a series of five-verse stanzas in regular blank iambic pentameter. The three following poems present no stanzaic regularity, but the blank iambic pentameter prevails, with some exceptions. Finally, the last poem presents regular four-line stanzas in rhymed iambic tetrameter. In the structural progression there seems to be a movement from the looseness of free verse to the stricture of rhymed stanzas. The poems also shows some of Crane's most daring syntactic innovations, and the syntax accompanies the feeling of the pieces. This structural variation made Gorham Munson, according to Lewis, call it a "suite," which is a precise enough definition. In Lee Edelman's classification of Crane's poetry according to the rhetorical figures of anacoluthon, chiasmus and catachresis, "Voyages" shows a predominance of the second in its many images of doubling and mirroring. The progression of the poem also shows three syntactic continuances between the odd and the even-numbered pieces: therefore, "Voyages I" links with "Voyages II"; "Voyages III" links with "Voyages IV"; and "Voyages V" links to "Voyages VI."

Voyages I

The first poem of the series was also the first written by Crane. In comparison to the other poems in the sequence, "Voyages I" presents a more narrative structure, with a freer versification and stanzaic pattern. The syntax is also closer to that of prose, in which the verses are sentences that finish each other as prose pieces.

> Above the fresh ruffles of the surf
> Bright striped urchins flay each other with sand.
> They have contrived a conquest for shell shucks,
> And their fingers crumble fragments of baked weed
> Gaily digging and scattering.

The first stanza places us in a *locus amoenus*: a beach, where young boys play without concern. There is an echo of the 11th session of "Song of Myself" ("Twenty-eight young men bathe by the shore"). The first verse presents "the fresh ruffles of the surf" as the line that divides earth and sea and the adverb "above" to inform us of where the scene is set. The pair of adjectives in the second line helps to define the character of the children playing on the sand, and both of them can be read as referring to concrete-

physical as well as abstract features. “Bright” can be read as “fair-skinned” or “fair-haired,” if we remember how the gold hair is in Crane’s poetry a symbol of beauty and purity, and also as “vivid” and “luminous”; “striped” may refer to the boys’ swimwear, and, in an abstract note, we should remember how Lewis assesses the adjectives ‘streaked’ (from “The Wine Menagerie”) and ‘striated’ (from “Faustus and Helen”) as “meaning morally or otherwise tainted” (LEWIS, 1967, p. 196). Their innocence hides impurities, as well as their playing in the sand exhibits a violent character indicated by the verb ‘flay’. There is a paternal tone in the way the lyrical self refers to their playful adventure in search of shell shucks; here elements of the sea—the shell shucks and the weed—are harmless toys, since they are already “processed” and distanced from their marine origin: the shells are fragmented in shucks, and the weed is already dried by the sun. They can be manipulated by the children with gaiety.

And in answer to their treble interjections
The sun beats lightning on the waves,
The waves fold thunder on the sand;
And could they hear me I would tell them:

A pattern of communication between the elements is set: the children’s vocalizations are answered, but in a language they cannot understand. It is important to mark how the answering agent here is primarily the sun: the sun sends its rays over the water, which communicates it by the waves to the safe land on which the children play. In the last line also, the poetic self is revealed to be speaking from within the sea. Despite the stanza’s mainly prosaic tone, its structure presents a parallelism more typical of the poetic text; Edelman draws attention to the chiastic pattern of the stanza: the first and the fourth lines refer to discursive attitudes of response external to the children having two different sources: the sun and the poet; the second and third lines describe nature’s response in the transmission from the sun to the earth via the sea. In addition, points Edelman, the chiastic pattern is apparent in the beginning words: *And, The, The, And*.

We can also point to the quality and the result of the answers provided by the sun and the poet—both are incomprehensible, since the sun’s can be heard but not understood, and the poet’s cannot be heard at all. In addition, the parallelism of lines 2 and 3 bear an important symbolic pattern: first of all, there is a transformation from sight into sound, since the sun throws its answer in the form of light on the waves, which transmit it in the form of a thundering sound on the sand. Second, this pattern of

communication will dominate the entire metaphysical dynamics of the poem: the sky, unreachable to men (by natural means, of course) provides the message and the meanings; the sea, reachable but dangerous and inhabitable by men, transmit this communication to the earth, which is the element in which men can and do live. The sea's symbolic meaning here is, as said before, love, which leaves us with a metaphor for the platonic idea of love being the messenger between the gods (and therefore the skies) and men (earth).

> O brilliant kids, frisk with your dog,
> Fondle your shells and sticks, bleached
> By time and the elements; but there is a line
> You must not cross nor ever trust beyond it
> Spry cordage of your bodies to caresses
> Too lichen-faithful from too wide a breast.
> The bottom of the sea is cruel.

This full stanza is the would-be answer of the lyrical self to the children "could they hear him." The adjective 'brilliant' echoes the 'bright' of the first stanza in meaning 'vivid' and the dog echoes "Sunday Morning Apples" to reinforce the sense of innocence. The second line brings a sexually high-charged image with the presence of genital symbols, which are "bleached by time and the elements," in other words, as the shells and the weeds of the first stanza, these shells and sticks have been "softened" by earthly presence and have lost part of their menacing-sexual charge. The line not to be crossed is the line referred to in the first verse of the poem: the division between sea and earth, between childhood and adulthood. We can guess that crossing this line would annul the softening action of time and the elements over their shells and sticks.

The structure of the 6th and the 7th lines obscures the meaning, mainly the lack of a definite article before "spry cordage." The caresses of the sea attract the children's bodies, here compared to ships; however, the sea's congeniality and commitment is not with the children, but with the lichens, its own "children": the wide, far-reaching breast of the sea, that attracts them with seductive caresses, will smash their bodies against the rocks and sink them to the ground. The image of the siren imposes itself here: the seductive female sea creature that attracts men to the sea to drown them, but this siren seems less tamable than "the siren of guilty songs" of "Faustus and Helen." The last verse of the session speaks for itself, but it should be added that Lewis remarks that Crane referred to it as a "stop, look and listen sign" and a "skull and crossbones insignia."

Voyages II

The second poem of the series has a more typically "poetic" or musical pattern than the first. The poem is divided within stanzas of five verses each. The verse is blank (i.e., has a regular metrical pattern, but no rhymes) and predominantly in iambic pentameter. There are some verses that exceed the ten standard syllables and some are shorter, but these exceptions do not seem to have a special meaning, their different in extension being probably due to the need of accommodating the ideas they enclose.

As indicated above, there is a syntactic linkage between the end of the first poem and the beginning of this one. The connective "And yet" has a concessive value: "the bottom of the sea is cruel, and yet…" It is interesting to notice that this connective should introduce a concessive clause, yet there is no verb that could be read as the main verb of a concessive clause introduced by "and yet." This syntactical break could be interpreted as meaning that the whole poem works as a concessive idea to be posed against the assertion that "the bottom of the sea is cruel." In fact, most of the poem has an appositive and coordinative character, in which the images "beat" as waves against the reader's mind depicting the menacing character of the sea. This sensation is reinforced by the slow rhythm of the verses, composed of many words of Latin origin, usually longer than those of Anglo-Saxon origin, providing the pentameters with a less marked and more distended cadence.

—And yet this great wink of eternity,
Of rimless floods, unfettered leewardings,
Samite sheeted and processioned where
Her undinal vast belly moonward bends,
Laughing the wrapt inflections of our love;

Edelman points to two conversions from the first poem to this one: first, there is the conversion from day to night, from sun to moon; and second, there is a conversion from time to space. The time that "bleached" shells and sticks in the first poem loses its force in the unfathomable extension of the sea, which condenses eternity into a 'wink'. Eternity, as we can recall, is associated to the sky in our threefold symbolic relationship; the sea here provides us with a spatial correlative for eternity in its vastness. On the other hand, 'wink' gives us an idea not only of space, but action, too. The sea is

compared not to an eye, but to the action of an eye winking. Edelman also reminds us how this ‘wink’ echoes the ‘hiatus’ winking above the body of the world in “Faustus and Helen.” In these two images, we have the world participating in eternity only through a quick movement within space.

Lines two and three present us two pairs of features: the ‘rimless floods’ and the ‘unfettered leewardings’ (this word is an echo of *Moby Dick*) point to the savage and untamable character of the sea, which, in its extension, provides no ‘rims’ for the moving masses of water; ‘samite sheeted’ and ‘processioned’ introduce a regal character that will be maintained throughout the whole poem. Finally, the third line reintroduces and reinforces the sea as a female character (remember the wide breast of the first session) whose belly is pregnant with water spirits. Margaret Uroff calls attentions to the rhythmic-plastic relations here: the curve of the eye with the curve of the belly; the roundness of the belly and the roundness of the moon; and the rhythmic relationships between the moon and the tides. Finally, the fifth verse recalls the perverse, the cruel personality of that queen, who attracted the boys with caresses to drown them in the first poem and mocks human love in this stanza.

> Take this Sea, whose diapason knells
> On scrolls of silver snowy sentences,
> The sceptred terror of whose sessions rends
> As her demeanors motion well or ill,
> All but the pieties of lovers' hands.

The imperative “Take this sea” is unanimously seen as directed to the lover. Its meaning, however, is not so unanimous. For Edelman, it is an invitation to sexual transgression; Uroff, on the other hand, sees it as a realization of what she terms Crane‘s impulse to possession; Eric Selinger (1991) sees in it “a gesture towards stability” (p. 93). It is undoubtedly a violent gesture of domination toward the sea, which will be answered in a violent manner in the third verse. The image of the diapason knelling on “scrolls of silver snowy sentences” shows us the contrary logic of the communication between the sun and the sea in the first poem: there, sight turned into sound; here sound turns into cold and shining sentences on a scroll, which reminds us of the ‘scattered chapter’ or ‘livid hieroglyph’ of “At Melville’s Tomb.” Enigmatic and distant, the sentences of the sea are notwithstanding readable to the poet. These images and the imperative that precedes them, then, have a logical connection not visible at first: the

sea can be tamed insofar as its message passes from musical sound into written language, even if a language that must be deciphered.

The “sceptred terror” reaffirms the frightening and violent regality of the sea, the “sessions” recall the samite-sheeted procession of the first stanza and depict the sea as diverse and unpredictable, impossible to be understood as a whole, a character reinforced in line three by the varying moods of the sea presented in the mirroring liquid consonants of ‘well or ill’. This terror, springing from its frightening unpredictability, destroys or shreds into pieces “all but the pieties of lover’s hands”—here we have a transformation: the last line of this stanza is paralleled with the last line of the first as it shows the attitude of the sea toward human love, and the transformation occurs insofar as the sea, who laughed at human love, is notwithstanding unable to destroy it.

> 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.

The adverb ‘onward’, as Lewis states, affirms that the lovers’ voyage through the sea continues. The image spread over the first two verses again inverts the relationship between sight and sound. “San Salvador,” according to both Lewis and Beach, was a legendary sunken city about which Crane had heard from Emil Opffer—the bells chime from under water while the stars shine from the sky with the same whiteness of the snowy sentences of the scrolls. A similar pattern appears in the whiteness of the poinsettia meadows, the reflection of the stars on the waves, where the “adagios of islands” are played. There is a curious parallelism between sight and sound and the dimensions of space and time shown in the conjunctions in the first and third lines: the main action of the stanza—the adagios of island completing the confessions of the sea’s veins—occurs *as* the bells chime and *in* the poinsettia meadows. As Edelman says, in the relations between sound and vision, movement is generated as time and space are articulated.

The lover is addressed, unnamed but referred to as “Prodigal,” which, as Ernest Smith says, brings out a reflection of sea and lover, since both are prodigal in their lavishness and ultimate inaccessibility. The last line has a kind of irony, since the confessions of the sea, which are spelled within this reign of white stars reflected in the sea as poinsettia and snowy sentences, are notwithstanding “dark.” Maybe they are so

because they are spelled within the sea's veins, its innermost spaces, which reflect the blood darkening the arteries of "Faustus and Helen."

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

Edelman reminds us of the power attributed to the sea in this first verse: the motion of the waves *creates* the hours, creates our notion of time. However, some elements in this stanza and the next, and especially in Voyages III, impel us to read these 'hours' also as religious services, as we did in our interpretation of "Recitative" in the previous chapter. This religious reading becomes stronger in the paradox of 'penniless rich palms', that Joseph Warren Beach associates with the Biblical passage wherein Christ, asked by his disciples if they should pay the tribute demanded by Caesar, answers: "Show me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it?" and urges them to give Caesar what is Caesar's and God what is God's, a passage that strongly marks the division between spiritual-religious power and regal-legal power. The sea has been seen as regal; here a religious character seems to appear, since the riches of the sea are not pennies, and her superscriptions are her foam and waves.

The "bending" of these foam and wave seems to refer to the way poetic imagination "bends" or reinvents reality. Edelman posits that this passage shows the poet and his partner having a more active role, since they have already learned how to "take this sea." The poet urges his lover, now, to hasten while they are alive, in a very interesting observation: sleep and death are closely linked, since one is the preparation for the other; desire seems more associated to life and vitality. However, 'death' and 'sleep' are true only within a lifespan, although they seem to present the negation of it, while desire presents its affirmation. Sleep and death—the consciousness of death as the end of life—and desire—the very principle that impels life—are ultimately intertwined in providing us a reason to "hasten." They are inextricable since all of them define life as a frail flower that fades within an instant. This instant echoes the "wink of eternity" as a little point in time in which eternity is (or should be) grasped.

> Bind us in time, O Seasons clear, and awe.
> O minstrel galleons of Carib fire,
> Bequeath us to no earthly shore until

Is answered in the vortex of our grave
The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise.

Finally, as in “At Melville’s Tomb,” circular or cyclical movements dominate this stanza, appearing in the first and last lines. The cyclical movements of the seasons here are, however, clear, not obscure, not frightening as the sessions of the sea in the second stanza. Continuing the previous stanza, the poet reaffirms a will to live, a will to remain “in time” and “in awe,” in the bewilderment of life. The “minstrel galleons of Carib fire” depict again the poet and the poetizing as a vehicle for navigation throughout life; maybe this ‘Carib fire’ is what makes the seasons “clear,” as Uroff recalls that fire, in Romantic poetry, means both destruction and enlightenment. These minstrel galleons, these poetic vehicles may return them to earth—earth, as we have said, stands for the human element, the element in which human beings can live, but it is also to earth that the human body is given back after death; therefore, here earth comes to stand for death. This conversion marks an important change in the poet’s spiritual condition—earth now meaning death, he came to accept the sea—the deep, frightening, and mysterious reign of love and death—as the place where his life passes, and life as a spiritual adventure that must be undertaken in search for an answer. The “vortex of our grave” is paralleled to the “calyx of death’s bounty” in “At Melville’s Tomb,” death as a circular movement into a void. The question to be answered in this vortex is posed by a spindrift, a spray of water, toward heaven, from the seal that will mark the end of his life.

Voyages III

The third poem of the series adopts an irregular stanzaic pattern and also a more irregular verse pattern. Although the iambic pentameter is still the main form used, there are more verses which escape this pattern. The tone here is calmer as the images are clearer. Night is past and the sunlight once again shines over the ocean. The image of clarity as transcendence and understanding was already apparent in some of Crane’s poems analyzed in the previous chapter, particularly in “Legend” (The legend of their youth into the noon). We should also remark how this tripartite arch of day-night-day characterizes also the three sessions of “Faustus and Helen.” Both in this poem and in the three first pieces of “Voyages,” this arch is linked to a movement of coming to consciousness, the first daylight session associated with unconsciousness and confusion (in “Faustus and Helen”) or naivety (in “Voyages”); the night session, with a

bewildering trial or inner fight which the poet has to endure to find the “bright logic”; and the third, daylight session again corresponding to logical brightness.

> Infinite consanguinity it bears—
> This tendered theme of you that light
> Retrieves from sea plains where the sky
> Resigns a breast that every wave enthrones;
> While ribboned water lanes I wind
> Are laved and scattered with no stroke
> Wide from your side, whereto this hour
> The sea lifts, also, reliquary hands.

The first verse presents the idea of clarity and serenity both in its phonetic and semantic features. Phonetically, it is a decasyllable composed of only four words, with two long Latinate words providing an airy and slow phonetic display; mark also the dominant presence of the close front unrounded vowel sound /i/ to reinforce the elevated tone of the verse. Semantically, the verse points to a consecution of transcendence. We have already seen how the lover and the sea were closely related in the previous poem; here this consanguinity extends into infinity. However, the next verse tells us that the bearer of such consanguinity is neither the poet nor the lover, but the “theme,” the song or the poem that the lover “offers” the poet through inspiration, and a parallel is presented when we reach the next verse: the light (intellectual element) retrieves this song from marine plains (physical, submersed and mysterious elements) as well as the poet retrieves the theme from his lover. The light, coming from the sky, is an agent here, capable of extracting poetry from the seemingly irrational topography of the sea. However, a conflict between sky and sea is also shown. I am not in total accordance with Lewis when he reads the enthronement of the sea’s breast as performed upon the “submissive sky” (LEWIS, 1967, p. 162). Actually, the sea’s breast, its sensuousness, is “resigned,” refused by the purity of the sky, as well as “enthroned” or celebrated by the waves, pointing to an ultimate irreconcilability between sensuousness and ethereality; celebrated, it must be remembered, in a regal manner, reaffirming the sea as a queen.

The next verses appear in the same stanza, but a semicolon marks a strong separation between the first four verses and the next four. The adverb ‘while’ marks a turning of attention from the theme to the poet. Edelman points to an important movement by the poet from passivity to activity in the attribution of the verb ‘wind’ to him, whereas in the previous poem it was attributed to the maternal sea. The ribbons adorning the water lanes he winds are in agreement with the regal adornments worn by

the sea in the previous poem; here, however, they are reconfigured by the poet. And this sense of reconfiguration is reinforced in the two actions that accompany that winding of the water lanes: lave and scatter. 'Lave', as Edelman reminds, echoes from Whitman's "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking," in which the poet is laved by the sea, here the contrary occurs; and "scatter" remembers the playing of the children in the sand in "Voyages I." The poet stresses that this reconfiguration of the sea requires "no stroke" and therefore is performed peacefully.

The next verse ("Wide from your side whereto this hour") evokes the sound pattern of "while ribboned water lanes I wind" with its glides, reinforcing the sense of wide, flowing and slow movements through which the sea is transformed. The last verse of the stanza is fundamental: the sea now lifts 'reliquary hands', abiding from its awing royal character to a religious character. As we can see, the contrast between regality and religiosity in the acts of the sea is very important and the passage from one to the other mark the opening up of the sea, as we are going to see in the next stanza.

> 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!

The poet is finally admitted in the sea's innermost realms. The blackness of the swollen gates through which he is admitted contrasts with the classical architecture of "whirling pillars and lithe pediments." This is the contrast of the border between the nightly and terrorizing sea and the lightened and welcoming one, internal. These gates "must arrest all distance otherwise," submitting space and hindering the passage of those unwanted. But the poet is now wanted. After these gates, the poet arrives at a shrine of grace and luminosity, with the already mentioned classical motifs and a stage for the matching of equals—light wrestles with light and star kisses stars—which provide a strong symbol for the pairing of the two lovers as well as the lover with the sea or the poet with the sea. It is curious that Thomas Yingling, in studying the metaphysics of homosexuality presented in this text, has not drawn attention to these images of completeness achieved through the union of equals and not in the polarity of complementary opposites. In these internal realms, in the bottom of the sea discovered not cruel, but holy and welcoming, after this purifying experience of poetry, it is the

body of the beloved which is found, the equal with which the lover must find his completeness. But the physicality of love has acquired new, broader dimensions:

> and where death, if shed,
> Presumes no carnage, but this single change,—
> Upon the steep floor flung from dawn to dawn

Carnality and death are found to enclose not an end, but a transformation. The physical body is equaled to death, since death is 'shed' as the outer, harder skin of a crustacean, while what lies within this rude, desiring body is something more delicate, yet indestructible. The pairings found in the previous lines receive a phonetic realization in the verse "Upon the steep floor flung from dawn to dawn," characterized by the voiceless labiodentals /p/ and /f/ and two liquids in the same phonetic contexts (f<u>l</u>oor and f<u>r</u>om). The fricative /f/ signals with lightness to contrast with the steepness of the sea's floor and, in its flinging from dawn to dawn, we once again find the idea of movement as resulting from space changing through time.

> The silken skilled transmemberment of song;
>
> Permit me voyage, love, into your hands...

With the mirroring sounds of "silken skilled" and the neologism 'transmemberment' collapsing, as Augusto de Campos (2006) says, into the word "song," the penultimate verse describes the whole process occurred in the poem. The 'song' referred to here is unquestionably the 'theme' mentioned in the beginning of the poem, but the change occurred with the lover and the poet has occurred with the song as well. Edelman calls attention to how the neologism includes the destructiveness of "dismemberment" and the renewal of "transformation," resulting in the cyclical movements of eternal destruction and recreation of "remember," of memory. Indeed, the whole movement witnessed in the arch of these three poems ascertains that the "single change" that leads into indestructibility obligatorily passes through an experience of destruction, of dismemberment. The song is, thus, "transmembered," its parts are set in another whole, but it maintains its essence. The adjectives "silken skilled" reaffirm the lightness and serenity with which this transformation occurs in the third poem after the nightmare of sleep, death and desire of the second. The transformation is 'silken'—soft and subtle—and 'skilled'—knowledgeable and artful. There is no tension and turbulence in this process. The final verse of this poem is, as the last verse of the first poem, very straightforward. The poet puts himself in the hands of love, no longer the

lover, but of love itself, whose serene core was found and discovered as trustworthy and benign.

Voyages IV

After this culmination experienced in "Voyages III," where could our two lovers go? Is there any further experience after this? Is there some place else to go? Lewis is emphatic in ascertaining the lessening of poetic force of "Voyages IV" in relation to its predecessors, mainly "Voyages III," seeing the numerous alliterations in this poem as tiring and abusive. Smith sees a movement of expansion and reception, but remarks that "overall the rhetoric of the poem is forced, but there are individual moments of lyric beauty" (p. 120). Returning to Lewis, he points that the decrease in intensity and quality of the poem may correspond to a decrease in the feeling Crane was experiencing and poetizing. Formally, there seems to be a kind of hesitation. In its four irregular stanzas (respectively of 8, 5, 3 and 7 verses) and its two-line coda, it does not present the short intensity of the three stanzas of the first and the two of the third poems or the very organized and rhythmically regular five-line stanzas of the second. As said before, "Voyages IV" presents the second syntactical link with the previous poem we find in the sequence:

> Whose counted smile of hours and days, suppose
> I know as spectrum of the sea and pledge
> Vastly now parting gulf on gulf of wings
> Whose circles bridge, I know, (from palms to the severe
> Chilled albatross's white immutability)
> No stream of greater love advancing now
> Than, singing, this mortality alone
> Through clay aflow immortally to you.

The first verse, a relative clause expressing possession, refers to the last verse of the previous poem. Recalling "Faustus and Helen," we remember how Helen's hands "count the nights"; the sea's hands, into which the poet asks permission to voyage, present the same "quantitative" nature. The symbolism of parts of the body is noteworthy, and the hands, contrasting with the eyes, stand for the active and sensuous, not the meditative and intellective. In the previous poem, the poet finds wholeness in the depths of the sea and asks to wander in its hands; here he finds in these same hands a "counted smile of hours and days": the previous wholeness is segmented in time

measures. We seem to discover that this height of emotional intensity is not able to sustain itself throughout temporal existence, it will eventually wear out.

From the verb ending the first verse (which the preceding comma leads us into reading as an imperative again directed to the lover) to the whole second verse, the movement is from actuality to virtuality: the smile, now fragmented in time, can only be known as a supposition, as a 'spectrum' and a 'pledge', no longer as a presence. The vast, fragmented movement is reinforced in the counted gulfs of the third verse, surmounted by the wings of the albatross. The circles produced by these wings will return in *"*To Brooklyn Bridge*"*:

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

The same circles are here attributed to the wings of the albatross. In Coleridge's "The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner," a careless mariner sees his ship invaded by death after killing this mystic bird. In Baudelaire, the albatross' power has waned and it is unable to defend itself from the violence and the mockery of the vulgar crew. But Crane's albatross is seen by a poet who knows that the circles produced by its wings can connect the warm and green physicality of tropical seas to the cold and white immutable ethereality of the northern seas (which will finally be reached in "Voyages VI," as we will see). This line could be read as an assurance that what was conquered by the poet in the reign of love will never be lost, even if its presence wanes across the commonality of temporal life. "No stream of greater love" advances and the poet is left to sing only the mortality of clay, of the body. But this clay, he knows, guards a flow of immortality.

> All fragrance irrefragably, and claim
> Madly meeting logically in this hour
> And region that is ours to wreathe again,
> Portending eyes and lips and making told
> The chancel port and portion of our June—

Here the morphological repetitiveness sets a tense rhythm to convey the parting of the poet and his lover from their discovered shrine. Some conquers will not be lost: the fragrances are irrefragable and the physical region will be available to be 'wreathed' again by poetry. However, infinity becomes an hour in which logicality and illogicality are still one, though their separation is fatal in the foreseeing of eyes (logicality, intellect) and lips (illogicality, sensuousness); the wholeness of the spirit will be again

fragmented in portions and scattered through different parts of the body as the end of their journey approaches in space (the chancel port) and time (June).

> Shall they not stem and close in our own steps
> Bright staves of flowers and quills today as I
> Must first be lost in fatal tides to tell?

There is great semantic intensity and condensation in these verses. There is a double pattern in the periodicity of their steps toward the physical world: they still bear some of the spiritual lightness capable of stemming bright poetic flowers (the 'poinsettia', 'crocus lustres' and the 'floating flower' of the second poem), but they already show a portion of bodily weight that makes the flowers close almost at the same time as they blossom. But these flowers are already a fruit of human creation, there must be a distance from the world of infinity for them to appear, and we should notice that they are 'closed', not 'dead'. They will remain closed, the poet supposes, until he is "lost in fatal tides" to tell what he has seen.

> 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,—

The word was made flesh—the result of their voyage acquires religious dimension. In opposition to the sea's shoulders of "Voyages II," now it is the harbor shoulders that they see. The blood they experience here is again the "bartered blood" the poet offers Helen in "Faustus and Helen." Progressively, the blood of infinity mingles with the blood of mortality. The image of noon as clarity and understanding returns here again, in the breast of his beloved what was insinuated throughout his years now is gathered and understood. Inviolably, fatally, the blue of the sky, the sea, and the lover's eyes will lead to islands.

> In this expectant, still exclaim receive
> The secret oar and petals of all love.

Critics diverge in the grammatical reading of the first of these lines. Lewis believes that 'still' is the noun modified by 'expectant' while 'exclaim' and 'receive' would be verbs coordinated by an elided 'and' and sees in it "plainly a moment of final celebration, and the gift of the symbols of universal love" (LEWIS, 1967, p. 168).

Smith, on the other hand, suggests reading 'exclaim' as the noun and finds in it a movement toward the annihilation that will occur in "Voyages V." Edelman notices that this last reading is strengthened by the recurrence, in Crane's poetry, of structures in which a noun is qualified by both a polysyllabic and a monosyllabic adjective, as 'undinal vast belly' and 'penniless rich palms', but he also points out that 'exclaim' may be seen as an imperative verb, meaning that the lover is supposed to exclaim: "receive the secret oar and petals of all love." The reading proposed by Smith and Edelman seems the most satisfying of the three, 'exclaim' functioning as a noun and referring to the poem itself. The homoeroticism of the last line is pointed out both by Lewis and Edelman. The sea resumes to physicality. The oar recalls the male genitalia, while the "petals of all love" can both be the product of poetic activity referred to before or a metaphor for sperm, in its character of fertility, which it shares both with flowers and poetic activity. In any case, the lovers are definitely parting from the metaphysical sea and returning to the physical land—without dying they are bequeathed to earthly shores.

Voyages V

Mortality and fragility under a now unmerciful sky dominate the irregular stanzas of "Voyages V" (3-5 verses) filled with enjambments and sentences broken and disposed in minuscule verses of incomplete syntax. Smith compares the movement from "Voyages III" to "Voyages IV" to a post-coitus sleep being slowly broken. "Voyages V" is, unarguably, the wake from its sleep, and terror and insecurity are the feeling assaulting the lovers. I have pointed out that the sequence of the poems accompanies the arch of a day. In this poem we return to the nighttime as in "Voyages II." However, if both poems convey terror, this terror in II has the character of awe in face of the sea's unending and unpredictable possibilities; in V, terror comes with the foreshadowing of an end and a kind of destruction. Symbols and notions constant throughout the poems reappear here under a different guise, especially those of the second poem.

> Meticulous, past midnight in clear rime,
> Infrangible and lonely, smooth as though cast
> Together in one merciless white blade—
> The bay estuaries fleck the hard sky limits.

The first three lines consist of a succession of appositive predicates to qualify 'the bay estuaries' of the fourth line. The Latinate adjective (very much to Crane's

liking) ‘meticulous’ has many nuances of meaning; it seems here to invoke a realistic and cold character in opposition to the dreamy and flowing seascapes of the preceding poems, something which will resonate in ‘merciless’ and ‘hard’. Smith refers this rich adjective to its Latin roots, indicating that it condenses the ideas of ‘fearful’ and ‘perilous’. Poetic making, as we have seen, is a constant motive behind the images and feelings. The poetry of the ‘bay estuaries’ are no longer fluid, but regular, with its rhymes whose clearness echo their meticulousness and mercilessness instead of brightness.

There seems to be unanimity among critics about the relation between ‘infrangible’ here and ‘irrefragably’ of the previous poem. The difference, however, is in what is being predicated and what it means for the lovers. In “Voyages IV” the sweet fragrances of their discovery were irrefragable and would not be lost; here, the menacing bay estuaries are infrangible in their regularity. They are smoothly disposed “in one merciless white blade” which has become horizon, and they ‘flack’ the ‘hard sky limits’; in other words, the relations between sea and sky are no longer friendly, if secretive, but conflicting. Edelman points to a passage between the maternal images in “Voyages II” to paternal, limiting images in “Voyages V.” Let us just remark, regarding this point, that the first stanza of “Voyages II” is filled with semicircular forms, such as an eye winking, a pregnant belly bending towards the circle of the moon, invoking the smoothness of a female body. Here the images are straight, linear, hard, and sharp. We should also mark that circular forms always reminds us of the idea of continuity and flexibility, while these sharp images declaredly impose ‘limits’.

> —As if too brittle or too clear to touch!
> The cables of our sleep so swiftly filed,
> Already hang, shred ends from remembered stars.
> One frozen trackless smile... What words
> Can strangle this deaf moonlight? For we

The obsessive image of clearness is here associated to fragility. The sharpness and clearness of the cables of their sleep render them so fragile that at any touch, they will break, and the lovers will wake from their dream. Here the saluting stars from “Voyages II” are shredded and hanging. The smile, broken in “Voyages IV,” is now altogether frozen to dwell in memory only, as the stars. And the words, poetic craft, seem not to be able to overcome the deafness of moonlight. This stanza ends in a broken

sentence; these rhythmic breakages are frequent in this poem and they reinforce its 'filed', 'hard', and disrupted character.

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

"We are overtaken" is a clear enough claim. The defeat of their love moves like a tidal wedge, remembering the vortex of "Voyages II" and "At Melville's Tomb," which cannot be stopped by a cry or countered by a sword. The natural world and, metaphorically conversely, the world of human nature, resumes to the indifference of poems such as "North Labrador" and "Garden Abstract." The nocturnal sea of "Voyages II" was cruel, that is, it presented feelings, even if perverse, and therefore it could be bended by poetry. Here, the sea and the surrounding elements are indifferent: the moon is deaf, and the sea is insensitive to pleads (cry) or attacks (sword). But in the third verse of this stanza, moonlight receives a much stronger character: it is now tyrannical, slowly, but inevitably, in agreement to its nature, it changes, and so does the love which is inflected by its cyclic movements. Another breakage ends this stanza.

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

This stanza marks an even greater, and severer, rupture: that of the two lovers, who were so far intertwined in feeling. The lover is still enchanted by the beauty of the sea nature and he knows how the two have drifted apart. The poet cannot partake in the feeling of the lover; the sky the lover looks at in amazement has lost all its transcendent beauty for the poet and has become only a cleft in which no god is to be found. Contrarily to the lover, the poet does not see the image of the waves, but of sand, dead sands in meaningless flashes of memory.

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

The lover seems shielded from the ravage of their love by his inability to 'quite understand' what the poet sees. We remember how in "Voyages I" the children are met with a 'skull and crossbones' insignia (The bottom of the sea is cruel), which the poet had found and decided not to obey, engaging in the voyages we have accompanied

throughout these poems. Now, in the ships that navigate his lover's hair, piracy lurks without a flag, and the poet is defenseless from it.

> But now
> Draw in your head, alone and too tall here.
> Your eyes already in the slant of drifting foam;
> Your breath sealed by the ghosts I do not know:
> Draw in your head and sleep the long way home.

It is clear to the poet how the physical proximity to his lover (here) is not followed by emotional proximity (since the lover is 'too tall'). His eyes are already fixed on the movement of the waves and he is ready to part again, now alone. His eyes are distant and his breath is sealed by unknown ghosts, probably the ghosts of the drowned men of "At Melville's Tomb" or the lover's ancient partners. Their companionship is fatally over; the map of their voyages should be drawn in his head, not to be forgotten, and the poet sends him into another sleep, now final, to their home. Only in dreams and in eternity they will find each other again.

Voyages VI

In all the formal variations among the poems of the sequence, this sixth piece stands out as totally disparate from the others. Firstly, it is constituted of eight regular stanzas, a feature shared only by the second poem. Secondly, the previous slow cadence of the iambic pentameter now yields to the shorter and more compressed iambic tetrameter. And finally, and most notably, there is the regular presence, with few exceptions, of ABCB rhymes in all the stanzas. As indicated in the first verse, here the flowing waters gives place to frozen waters, and the poetic form seems to reproduce this constraint of movement. Italian esotericist Julius Evola, in his alchemic treatise *The Hermetic Tradition* (1995), points to the symbolic meanings of flowing and frozen waters and the passage between them. He tells us that the flowing waters stand for matter unformed and thus able to change, and the frozen waters recall matter which has taken a fixed form. Winter, he tells us, symbolizes the spiritual principle that is able to cohere shapeless matter into a fixed and unchangeable form, being, in its nature, bitter and unmerciful. This change clearly takes place in "Voyages VI" and is one of its core motifs. It is also important to remark that between "Voyages V" and "Voyages VI" we find a third syntactical continuity present in the sequence:

> Where icy and bright dungeons lift
> Of swimmers their lost morning eyes,
> And ocean rivers, churning, shift
> Green borders under stranger skies,

The home to which poet and lover shall go in their final sleep is the northern sea full of bright and icy dungeons. As we have seen in Evola's comments, the winter cold is harsh, but not cruel, actually purifying and cohering. Here the winter sea presents itself in heavenly images. The eyes, we have seen, are consistently used as the symbol of transcendence, in "At Melville's Tomb," it is the eyes that lift to the sky contriving altars. Here the northern seas are able to recover the eyes that were lost by those who, like the poet and his lover, have swum throughout the hot Caribbean seas. This image has a strong character of redemption, since the eyes were 'lost' in the warmth of physical love, but this sea is able to retrieve them and return them to their original heavenly realms. The third and four verses resume the images of revolutions and changes in nature; however, these changes are not part of an ongoing cycle, but are culminating in stability. It is curious how, throughout five sea poems, not once the word 'ocean' or derivatives has been used. In the realm of marine symbols, 'ocean' brings the idea of completeness, wholesomeness, and it is only in the last poem that 'ocean rivers' in their constant revolving are able to change the green (evoking both tropical climate and unripe state) to fit the stranger, purer skies.

We should remember how images of whiteness and even coldness have recurred throughout the poem, and here they have their culmination. In the second poem, we had the meaningful 'silver snowy sentences' of the sea's scrolls as well as the crocus lustres of the star and the poinsettia meadows. Most importantly, in "Voyages IV," we saw how the circles produced by the wings of the albatross could bridge green palms to its cold and white nature. The palms have been with us throughout the poems, here we find the chilled white albatross immutability, and we see how these circles were indeed able to bridge these two natures.

> Steadily as a shell secretes
> Its beating leagues of monotone,
> Or as many waters trough the sun's
> Red kelson past the cape's wet stone;

The images of stability and uniformity resume here with more strength. The words 'as' in the first verse and 'or' in the third point to the appositive character of the whole stanza, qualifying the actions taking place in the first. The 'beating leagues' are

interpreted by Edelman as verse measures of a poem, and nowhere in these poems metric was so steady, the poetry of the sea is secreted by a shell in the monotonous, uniform image of a pearl, round and continuous. We see how several images of disruption, dismemberment and segmentation appearing in the sequence (especially in "Voyages II" and "IV") here seem to regain the unity found in "Voyages III." In relation to the second image, we should pay attention to Edelman's urge for a catachrestic reading of it. The kelson does not stand for any particular feature of the sun, but actually simply reinforces it as metaphorized in a ship, this one ship is 'troughed' by many waters after the 'wet stone', an image condensing the hardness and solid steadiness of a stone and the fluidity and changeability of water.

> O rivers mingling toward the sky
> And harbor of the phoenix' breast—
> My eyes pressed black against the prow,
> —Thy derelict and blinded guest

These rivers, it is obvious, are the same referred to in the first stanza. In direction to the sky, the different courses of water mingle and become one. The harbor the poet arrives at now is the breast of the phoenix, a promise of regeneration. This regeneration comes, he seems to know, with humility. The poet, as many swimmers, has lost his eyes, his are 'black' pressed toward the hardness of a ship prow. If we think of the ship here referred as the sun, as the previous stanza indicates, his eyes have been blinded in the direct encounter with the sun in a gesture of spiritual surrender. Derelict, but a guest (not a trespasser, as Edelman remarks), the poet blinds himself and surrenders his eyes, his spirit, to the rivers that will take it to the sky, where he ultimately belongs.

> 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.

This stanza begins with fiery expectation. The poet is 'afire' by his encounter with the sun, and afire he waits for a name he cannot claim, some secret word that lies beyond his vision or poetic apprehension. Humble, he asks the sea for a broken gift from the waves, from their furious movements that here do not enthrone anything, as they did in "Voyages III," but destroy regal authority. Lewis also refers this image to the shifting, in Romantic poetry, of the hero locus from the image of the king or warrior to that of the poet.

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

In the first two verses, references to two pieces of literature dealing with the waning of beauty and desire to time can be drawn. The sirocco is a Mediterranean wind that can have damaging effects both to land and to people, since it often spreads diseases. In Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, the sirocco destroys Achenbach's health leading to his death and that of his sublime questing. In addition, we have a reference to the solstice, the point in which the sun is able to *stand still* and shine brighter. Let us remember how in Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress" the lovers "cannot make our sun stand still / Yet we shall make him run." Here the poet has surpassed the point in which the siroccos, agent of decadence and aging, can harvest the solstice thunders, the intensity of life. The subject to 'crept away' will appear in the next stanza. And Lewis provides a sound interpretation for the two apparently disjunctive images in the third verse:

> […] [I take] the two similes as visual images, first from the vantage point of the water (whence a cliff, as it is passed, can seem itself to be in motion), and second from the vantage point of land (whence the ship disappears over the horizon). In combination the two images expand the notion of significant movement—of the passage of consciousness from one place and condition to another. (LEWIS, 1967, P.175-176n)

The reference to April's inmost day is, then, a reference to renewal and it is significant that the verb used, 'flung', is the same in "Voyages III," where "the silken skilled transmemberment of song," the whole orchestral recreation of the two lovers' theme, is 'flung from dawn to dawn' upon the steep floor of the seas. As the next stanza tells us:

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

It is the jovial and petal-ornamented word of creation which has crept away beyond the action of siroccos and flung into April. This word represents an evolution from the song in "Voyages III": where the song was a product of human creativity, here the word is the agent of creation itself, of the godly source of all creatures. This word, presented to the lounged goddess of "Voyages II," the tyrannical goddess of sexual lust,

now impels her to concede ‘dialogue with eyes’ in which the human hastily sexual dimension is cooled and then able to communicate with the eyes, the transcendent and purely spiritual dimension which smiles with a repose unimaginable, and then unsearchable.

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

Belle Isle is the floating dais, unfolded since now secrets are finally revealed in which the poet sees the figures of rainbows—the Old Testament symbol for the covenant between heaven and earth after the storm is over—reaffirming the fervid covenant. The ‘continual hair’ reminds us of the lover’s hair whose argosy was assaulted by a flagless piracy. Here this hair is uninterrupted by the assaults of siroccos or other agents of destruction. As well, the phallic oar of “Voyages IV” now becomes a white, and therefore pure and clear, echo, dwelling in memory and purified.

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

Finally the ultimate change. The carnality of the word in “Voyages IV” now yields to the imaged word, the transfiguring word of poetry which can bring in itself the very word of creation. The willows, symbol of death, which in “Repose of Rivers” carried a slow sound through the wind, are now silenced in their melody of decease. The poet has arrived at the indestructibility searched beyond death. This imaged word is the answer to his intense and transformative effort of poetical and spiritual search. Alone, without the lover, he is faced with it—the waning of sexual desire or merely human love cannot betray it and, beyond temporality, no farewell can know it.

Indestructibility Attained

A biographical reading is not the objective of this work. The letter Crane sent to Waldo Frank in which he describes his experience of subjective transformation during the relationship with Emil Opffer has, however, become a consecrated text in Hart Crane

studies and all the authors consulted refer to it in order to understand his masterpiece. The spiritual progression witnessed in the poem can easily be matched with the progression of a love affair which ends with the separation of the two lovers. Crane had, nonetheless, remarked that in this love affair he had discovered such a thing as indestructibility, even if the actual relation between him and the lover had in itself ended. In his mystical vocabulary, Crane also said that he had seen "the Word made Flesh." Evangelic images were not central in Crane's poetry, but they were present. The Word made Flesh refers to the divine principle acquiring a human form, an incarnate and perishable shape. The word, or the inward spirit, is eternal, indestructible, regardless of the vicissitudes of the body. In the same letter quoted above, Crane says: "I think the sea has thrown itself upon me and been answered, at least in part, and I believe I am a little changed—not essentially, but changed and transubstantiated as anyone is who has asked a question and been answered." Here again Crane turns to a religious term, 'transubstantiation', to express what he had lived. Transubstantiation, as we know, refers to bread becoming the body of Christ, and wine becoming his blood. The same body, without being altered in its physical features, acquires a whole different metaphysical character. That is what Crane is reporting and that he has registered in the stanzas we have just studied.

The personal-spiritual transformation we witness in "Voyages" is actually already in course throughout his previous poems. Arguably, "Voyages" should be seen as a lyrical culmination that would lead to the consecution of his longest poem, *The Bridge*. In the previous chapter, we have seen that Yvor Winters saw the mysticism in Crane's poetry as essentially escapist, a rejection of concrete reality toward a hypothetical superior realm of being. In his turn, Michael Hamburger, in *The Truth of Poetry*, characterizes Crane's trajectory, comparing it to Lorca's, as going from a practitioner of the so called pure poetry, guided only by aesthetic concerns to "the inclusion of history and hence of a more than aesthetic commitment" (HAMBURGER, 2007, p. 209). The poem Hamburger uses as an example of Crane's phase as a 'pure' poet is the already studied "Black Tambourine," which strongly states in favor of this aestheticism by using it within a theme that is impregnated with political and social concerns—that of racial discrimination. This passage from a "pure poetry" to a greater commitment with history and concrete reality can be seen as a result of Crane's

maturation; and, although “Voyages” is aesthetically and thematically closer to the pure poetry paradigm, the evolution experienced it in somehow points toward this direction.

The direct language and free verse of the first poem recalls many of Crane’s juvenile verses in their naivety. An important difference is that here the poet is no longer in the place of the innocent and menaced child, but that of an adult who must warn the children of the dangers he has already experienced. In the sixth and last poem, we see a serenity and abstraction that is not common in Crane’s poetry. Indeed, there are important differences between the first and last poems and the intermediate pieces, as well as important differences between these two. In terms of form and language, the first poem is written in free verse and in an almost spoken and informal language, two very rare characteristics throughout Crane’s work; the last, on the other hand, is written in regular rhymed eight-syllable stanzas, also an uncommon form to Crane. In terms of perspective or direction of attention by the lyrical self, in the first poem attention is directed to an external object—the children playing on the sand; in the sixth, attention is directed essentially to a place described, which surges as an interior, spiritual realm. In the four intermediate poems, the poet is unmistakably accompanied by his lover and his attention is focused alternately on the lover and on the sea itself; the form, on the other hand, is the blank iambic pentameter generally used by Crane. Therefore, it is safe to say that, from the first to the last poem, there is a shift of attention from personal, if external, objects to a totally impersonal one, marking these two framing poems as exceptional among the pieces, as if both were ‘outside’ the lovers’ journey.

From the second to the fifth poem, as we have seen, the journey follows a progression from awe and terror (II) to the climax of the achievement of love (III), a slow and gradual departure from the realm of love discovered (IV), to the extinction of love and physical separation of the lovers (V). Some observations come to mind:

1. The tone with which Crane hypothetically addresses the children in the first poem is that of an experienced ‘traveler’ who already knows the dangers that the sea brings. We should consider that this experience is acquired in the travels depicted in the four following poems; therefore, in a temporal line, the scene observed in the first poem occurs *after* his spiritual travels.
2. The scenery described in the last poem is one of serenity and endurance, which seems in perfect agreement with Crane’s ascertaining that he had discovered the

existence of indestructibility. However, the end of the travel described in "Voyages V" lead us to a different conclusion. There, in a mournful tone, Crane describes the departure of the lover and the end of the love affair. Where does the indestructibility reportedly found lie? Was it really achieved or was it an illusion?

The answer, in my opinion, lies in some of the symbolic movements that occur in the fourth poem. As we have seen, "Voyages IV" presents a departure from the shrine of love found in "Voyages III." But we have also seen that some symbols point toward something that was achieved and will not be lost, actually some symbols point to the glacial imagery of "Voyages VI." The first is the albatross, whose chilled wings will lead from the hot Caribbean seas to the gelid dungeons of the northern sea. Then, an important hint is in the verses: "Than, singing, this mortality alone/ Through clay aflow immortally to you." As we have seen in the analysis of this piece, this complex image presents a dialectic between the mortality of the body made of clay and the immortality that was flown into it. Hence, the references to the flowers that are born and close at the same time in their steps.

But there are also two very important elements in "Voyages IV" that account for this change, being echoed in "Voyages VI." The first is the reference to "the incarnate word" which will become "the imaged word"; the other, more subtle, is in the verses "For islands where must lead inviolably/ Blue latitudes and levels of your eyes." Let us say once again that the eyes stand for intellect and spirit, and here the blue levels of the lover's eyes lead inviolably to islands. These islands can be read as a foreshadowing of the "Belle Isle" of the sixth poem. We remember how Crane had stressed that he had seen "the Word made Flesh." It is in the slowly descending movement of the fourth poem that he finds this word made flesh. The word is still flesh, since the lovers are "bound in time." But in "Voyages VI," the poet is no longer in time, he is in a spiritual place congealed from the changing of time and the changing moods of the sea. The idea of renewal can be found in a seeming paradox of time, since from "Voyages IV" to "Voyages VI" we go from June to April. There he finally has access to the "imaged word," pure and metaphysical, no longer bearing the impurity of flesh.

Another pertinent question would be whether the shrine of love discovered in the depths of the sea, in "Voyages III," where "death if shed presumes no carnage but this

single change," is the same sacred place described in "Voyages VI." I would point to an affirmative answer to this question; the difference, however, lies not in the place, but in the spiritual attitude of the poet. The first encounter with this shrine was a glimpse of eternity in the culmination of the love affair; as we see in the following poem, the lovers were unable to remain there. In the sixth poem, the poet now alone (for this purity can only be achieved in loneliness), pure spirit, has this same shrine as home. The cold he finds there, absent in the third poem, is not inhabitable but is the very index of stability and eternity, the very index of the indestructibility which was, indeed, found by the poet along his journey.

There is yet another evolution throughout the series that also point to this culmination in "Voyages VI" in the presence of the color white. We have already seen how this color plays an immensely important role in Crane's lyricism, to the point of appearing in the name of his book, *White Buildings*. It is generally a symbol of purity and transcendence, a visual equivalent to the bright logic that is aimed at since the beginning of the book. However, we have also seen, in the poem "Sunday Morning Apples," that Crane posited the existence of two kinds of whiteness: that of death, usually seen in images of winter, as in the poem mentioned and "North Labrador; and the pure whiteness of transcendence, the "whiteness that cries defiance to the snow." In "Voyages," the color white appears for the first time in "Voyages II" in the form of 'silver snowy sentences', displaying its merciless quality, and of the reflection of the stars on the sea forming 'poinsettia meadows'. Then, the white appears again in "Voyages IV" in the 'chilled albatross's white immutability' bridging the world of tropical seas to that of the gelid northern seas. Finally, in "Voyages V," the color resumes its deadly character as a 'merciless white blade' that cuts the lovers' dream into pieces. In "Voyages VI," whiteness is clearly associated to snow and ice, and therefore to death; but it is also associated to the attainment of transcendence, of heavenly purity. The great evolution that is seen here is that the two characters of the color white are finally seen as one and the same, since now death is only a change, and not an end.

The culminating character of the "Voyages" suite is in the fact that it presents the most complete rendering of Crane's quest for transcendence and the most vivid report of its attainment.

4 *TRANSMEMBERING THE SONG*

Translation

Voyages

I

Above the fresh ruffles of the surf
Bright striped urchins flay each other with sand.
They have contrived a conquest for shell shucks,
And their fingers crumble fragments of baked weed
Gaily digging and scattering.

And in answer to their treble interjections
The sun beats lightning on the waves,
The waves fold thunder on the sand;
And could they hear me I would tell them:

O brilliant kids, frisk with your dog,
Fondle your shells and sticks, bleached
By time and the elements; but there is a line
You must not cross nor ever trust beyond it
Spry cordage of your bodies to caresses
Too lichen-faithful from too wide a breast.
The bottom of the sea is cruel.

Viagens

I

Acima do fresco marulho da espuma
Moleques claros e listrados se chicoteiam com areia.
Eles tramaram uma demanda por cascas de conchas,
E seus dedos despedaçam algas secas
Que cavam e espalham com alegria.

E em resposta às suas estrídulas interjeições
O sol bate raiando sobre as ondas,
As ondas dobram trovejando sobre a areia;
E pudessem me ouvir eu lhes diria:

Ó crianças luminosas, brinquem com seu cão,
Afaguem suas conchas e gravetos, pálidos
Do tempo e dos elementos; mas há uma linha
Que não devem cruzar, nem após confiar
O ágil cordame de seus corpos às carícias
Ao líquen tão afeitas de um seio tão distante.
O fundo do mar é cruel.

II

—And yet this great wink of eternity,
Of rimless floods, unfettered leewardings,
Samite sheeted and processioned where
Her undinal vast belly moonward bends,
Laughing the wrapt inflections of our love;

Take this Sea, whose diapason knells
On scrolls of silver snowy sentences,
The sceptred terror of whose sessions rends
As her demeanors motion well or ill,
All but the pieties of lovers' hands.

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.

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

II

—Ainda assim, este imenso piscar de eternidade,
De inundações rompendo a sotavento,
Em um cortejo de folhas de samite
Onde seu vasto ventre undíneo ao luar se volta,
E ri o emaranhado das flexões de nosso amor;

Toma este mar, cujo diapasão soa sobre
Rolos de níveas sentenças de prata,
Cetrífero terror de cujas sessões talha
No que indicam seus humores soez ou são,
Tudo salvo as piedades das mãos dos amantes.

E adiante enquanto os sinos em São Salvador
Saúdam o lustro de açafrão dos astros,
Em campos de lírios de suas marés,—
Adágios de ilhas, Ó meu Pródigo,
Concluem as negras confissões de suas veias.

Vê as horas que ela agita com seus ombros,
E apressa-te, suas palmas ricas sem vintém
Sobrescrevem de curvadas onda e espuma,—
Apressa-te! Ainda são reais – sono, morte, desejo,
Encerram-se no instante de uma flor flutuante.

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

Uni-nos no tempo, ó claras estações, e espanto.
Ó galeões aedos do fogo caribenho,
Não nos reponham a litorais terrestres
Enquanto não responde-se no vórtice do túmulo
Do selo o olhar em esguicho rumo ao paraíso.

III

Infinite consanguinity it bears—
This tendered theme of you that light
Retrieves from sea plains where the sky
Resigns a breast that every wave enthrones;
While ribboned water lanes I wind
Are laved and scattered with no stroke
Wide from your side, whereto this hour
The sea lifts, also, reliquary hands.

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!
and where death, if shed,
Presumes no carnage, but this single change,—
Upon the steep floor flung from dawn to dawn
The silken skilled transmemberment of song;

Permit me voyage, love, into your hands...

III

Guarda infinita consanguinidade—
De ti o tema ofertado que a luz colhe
Das planícies marinhas onde o céu
Resigna um seio que cada onda entrona;
Enquanto sendas d'água em fitas singro
Banhadas e espalhadas sem um golpe
Pra longe do teu lado ao qual agora
O mar ergue também mãos relicárias.

E aceito por largos portais de trevas
Que afora hão de apreender toda distância,—
Após leves frontões, gráceis pilares
Luz com luz digladiando sem cessar,
Astro beijando astro, de onda a onda até
Teu corpo que se agita!
e a morte, segregada,
Presume não carnagem, somente mudança
Sobre o íngreme chão ejeto de aurora a aurora
O lábil ardil transmembramento da canção;

Concede, amor, viaje eu em tuas mãos...

IV

Whose counted smile of hours and days, suppose
I know as spectrum of the sea and pledge
Vastly now parting gulf on gulf of wings
Whose circles bridge, I know, (from palms to the severe
Chilled albatross's white immutability)
No stream of greater love advancing now
Than, singing, this mortality alone
Through clay aflow immortally to you.

All fragrance irrefragably, and claim
Madly meeting logically in this hour
And region that is ours to wreathe again,
Portending eyes and lips and making told
The chancel port and portion of our June—

Shall they not stem and close in our own steps
Bright staves of flowers and quills today as I
Must first be lost in fatal tides to tell?

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,—

IV

Cujo sorriso contado em horas, dias, supõe
Sei como espectro do mar e promessa
Vasto, agora partindo golfo a golfo de asas
Cujos círculos unem, sei (das palmas à austera
Alva imutabilidade do gélido albatroz)
Corrente de amor maior agora não avança
Que, a cantar, somente esta mortalidade
Por barro afluxa imortalmente a ti.

Toda fragrância irrefragável, e clama
Louca e logicamente a esta hora se encontrando
Região que a nós de novo se engrinalda,
Portando olhos e lábios, e anunciando
Porto cancela e porção de nosso junho—

Não hão de brotar e fechar-se em nossos passos
Claros versos de flores e penas hoje enquanto
Devo perder-me em marés fatais para contar?

Na assinatura do verbo feito carne
Ombros do cais a resignar mesclando
Sangue mútuo, transpirando qual predito
Tarde que esparge-se em teu seio a recolher
Cada clara insinuação que meus anos tomaram
A ilhas aonde invictos vão levar
Latitudes azuis e níveis de teus olhos,—

In this expectant, still exclaim receive
The secret oar and petals of all love.

V

Meticulous, past midnight in clear rime,
Infrangible and lonely, smooth as though cast
Together in one merciless white blade—
The bay estuaries fleck the hard sky limits.

—As if too brittle or too clear to touch!
The cables of our sleep so swiftly filed,
Already hang, shred ends from remembered stars.
One frozen trackless smile ... What words
Can strangle this deaf moonlight? For we

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

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

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

But now
Draw in your head, alone and too tall here.
Your eyes already in the slant of drifting foam;
Your breath sealed by the ghosts I do not know:
Draw in your head and sleep the long way home.

VI

Where icy and bright dungeons lift
Of swimmers their lost morning eyes,
And ocean rivers, churning, shift
Green borders under stranger skies,

Steadily as a shell secretes
Its beating leagues of monotone,
Or as many waters trough the sun's
Red kelson past the cape's wet stone;

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.

Neste expectante, silente exclamar, acolhe
Remo secreto e pétalas de todo amor.

V

Meticulosos, após meia-noite em clara rima
Infrangíveis e sós, suaves qual se lançados
Juntos em uma só lâmina alva e inclemente—
Estuários da baía mancham os duros limites do céu.

—Qual se frágeis ou claros demais para tocar!
Os cabos de nosso sono tão refilados,
Já pendem, rasgos de astros relembrados
Sorriso gélido perdido... que termos
Podem sufocar este surdo luar? Pois nós

Fomos surpreendidos. Gemido ou gládio algum
Pode conter ou desviar este cone das marés
Lenta tirania de luar, luar amado
E transmutado... "Não há

Nada assim no mundo", tu dizes
Sabendo que não posso tocar tua mão e olhar
Também, essa fenda de céu sem divindade
Onde nada torna, só lampejam areias mortas.

"—E nunca de fato entender!" Não,
Na frota de tuas claras mechas não sonhei
Algo tão clandestino qual tal corso.

Mas agora
Marca em tua fronte, só e aqui tão alto.
Teus olhos já no aclive da espuma que deriva
Teu hálito selado por fantasmas que ignoro:
Marca em tua fronte e dorme rumo ao lar.

VI

Onde masmorras gélidas e claras erguem
Dos que nadam perdidos olhos matinais
E rios oceânicos em convulsão deslocam
Sob céus estranhos verdes litorais

Pertinazes qual uma concha secreta
Suas léguas pulsando monotônicas
Ou águas a abaular do sol a quilha
Rubra além do cabo, úmida pedra.

Ó rios a se mesclarem rumo ao céu
Porto enseada do seio da fênix
Meus olhos pretos contra a proa premem
Teu hóspede cegado e solto ao léu.

Em chamas, aguardando, qual nome, não dito
Que não declaro: restituam tuas vagas
Mais furiosas que a morte de monarcas
Para o vidente uma grinalda em lascas.

Beyond siroccos harvesting	Para além dos sirocos que ceifam
The solstice thunders, crept away,	Trovões de solstício, lento sumiu,
Like a cliff swinging or a sail	Qual penhasco oscilante ou velame
Flung into April's inmost day—	Ejeto ao mais interno dia de abril—
Creation's blithe and petalled word	O verbo da criação ledo e petalado
To the lounged goddess when she rose	À deusa reclinada quando ergueu-se
Conceding dialogue with eyes	Concedendo diálogo com olhos
That smile unsearchable repose—	Que sorriem repouso inescrutável
Still fervid covenant, Belle Isle,	Pacto ainda férvido, Belle Isle
—Unfolded floating dais before	Flutuante palco que se descortina
Which rainbows twine continual hair—	A arco-íris trançando infindas mechas
Belle Isle, white echo of the oar!	Belle Isle, o remo que branco retine!
The imaged Word, it is, that holds	O verbo feito imagem, tal é, que mantém
Hushed willows anchored in its glow.	Salsos silentes ancorados em seu lume
It is the unbetrayable reply	É a resposta iniludível
Whose accent no farewell can know.	Cujo acento adeus nenhum resume.

Discussion

Technical Considerations

The difficult character of poetry translation has already been touched upon in the introduction. We have seen that, according to Yves Bonnefoy, poetry translation is poetry re-begun. Poets, at least those who are especially careful with the quality of their writing, will pay attention both to the semantic and the prosodic aspects of their language. As we remember, Bonnefoy had also said that languages have different felicities, which means, different resources, traits, weights and possibilities. Hart Crane is prodigal in the use of the resources of his mother tongue. Not only does he employ words that are archaic and lofty, as well as colloquial words, neologisms and syntactic breaks; he also combines these divergent sorts of words and structures in very unusual phrases and sentences to create strange and sometimes irreproducible effects. As Augusto de Campos has observed, Crane's poetics are impregnated with alliterations and sonorous-metaphorical effects peculiar to the concision of the English language, which render his poems very difficult to translate. However, one point that should be counted as favorable for somebody translating Crane into Portuguese, or any other Latinate language, is his already mentioned taste for Latinate words, which provides many of his verses with a flowing and more distended rhythm that is different from the hardly stressed verses consisting mostly of Anglo-Saxon words; these rhythms are

closer to those of Portuguese, enabling a more faithful translation. Moreover, the use of Latinate words frequently enables cognate and more secure translations. In "Voyages III," for example, the neologism 'transmemberment' may be a nuisance for somebody translating Crane into a Germanic language, but for the Portuguese translator it offers no difficulty at all.

Translating poetry, then, demands paying attention to the different felicities of both the original and the target language. Burton Raffel, in *The Art of Translating Poetry* (1988), points out that "[n]*o two languages having the same prosody, It is impossible to re-create the prosody of a literary work composed in one language in another language*" (p. 83, italics by the author). He illustrates his observation with numerous examples. One of the most productive is the comparison between French and English, two languages that are entwined, at least in the English context, by the Normand conquest of England. Since then, many Latinate words entered the English vocabulary; however, prosodic patterns were not altered. French possesses a syllabic prosody, while English prosody is clearly stress-governed. From the contact with French prosody, many English poets started to use a combined method of syllable counting and stress principles, resulting in the particular forms of the tetrameter and the pentameter we find in the language. Moreover, Raffel also remarks that "*what we call a syllable in the one language is not necessarily equivalent to a syllable in the other*" (p. 85, italics by the author). The word 'infinite' displays four vowels separated by consonants (no diphthongs), but only three of them are pronounced, the final '-te' being muted. In French syllables which are elided in spoken language are nevertheless included in poetic syllable counting.

From his perceptions on the difference of prosodies across languages, he arrives at the notion that linguistic imperatives should be privileged in relation to metric imperatives. First of all, trying to render a metric pattern of a poem in one language into its exact correspondent in another is not always productive. A concise language, with many monosyllables and stresses as English finds a long enough verse in the ten syllables of the iambic pentameter, its more traditional verse form; in French, however, wherein words tend to be longer and lines to have less stresses, the decasyllable is sometimes insufficient, thus the predominance of the twelve-syllable alexandrine. In English, twelve-syllable verses are, in Raffel's words, "heavy to the point of boredom" (id., p. 87). Those familiar with the works of Edmund Spenser and John Donne know

that these poets often employed twelve-syllable verses as the finishing line for poems mostly composed in decasyllables. It could be said, then, that often what can be said in ten syllables in English may need twelve in French, but also that sometimes an English decasyllable, with many stresses and words, sounds more like a twelve-syllable French verse.

These notes are also valid in the case of Portuguese. In our language, the standard verse is, like in English, the decasyllable, but there are differences between a standard Portuguese decasyllable and the English iambic pentameter. In Portuguese, a language which, like French, is mostly composed of longer words than those of English, the classical decasyllable (often called 'heroic') is characterized by having an obligatory stress in the sixth syllable, and a first stress which frequently falls on the second syllable or the third (in this last case, it receives the alternative name of 'martelo') and less frequently on the fourth. There is also a variation of the Portuguese decasyllable called 'Sapphic', stressed in the fourth and the eighth syllables. The English iambic pentameter is, as its very name says, composed of five iambi (i.e. rhythmic units formed by one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed one). The difference is notorious: whereas the Portuguese decasyllable resolves itself in three stresses (since the last syllable is included), the English iambic pentameter has five, characterizing a far heavier verse. Therefore, the translation of English iambic pentameters into alexandrines in Portuguese is a commendable and natural choice.

The alexandrine, however, has not always enjoyed the merriest of reputations in Portuguese. As early as1874, the Viscount of Castilhos, in the first comprehensive handbook of Portuguese versification, warned against the frequent and mistaken prejudice against the twelve syllable-verse in Portuguese due to its being the French national verse; nationalistic considerations, then, used to proscribe the use of a verse which, according to Castilhos, provided considerable room for thought with a beautiful cadence. The same controversy was common in Brazil, where the Parnassian movement popularized, not without reproaches, the twelve-syllable verse. These reproaches, however, referred to facts that have no relation whatsoever to aesthetic considerations. Aesthetically, the Alexandrine is extremely cogent to the features of the Portuguese language, often providing a more natural sound even than the consecrated heroic decasyllable.

This is what the poet and translator Lawrence Flores Pereira perceived in his translations of *Hamlet*. Pereira (2009), in comparing the numerous translations of Shakespeare's works, noticed that the usual decasyllabic translations of Shakespeare's rich iambic pentameters often compressed the thought and the semantic traits which were conveyed in the English original with a natural sound. Another frequent problem was the necessary elision of particles such as pronouns, conjunctions and other connectives, resulting in the loss of significant syntactic and semantic traits. On the other hand, the alexandrine was able to accommodate these syntactic features and thought in Portuguese, in addition to being a very flexible and agile verse, since it counts with at least two major variations: the classical alexandrine, with one stress in the sixth syllable, dividing the verse into two symmetrical parts, and the romantic alexandrine, stressed in the 4th, 8th, and 12th syllables, somehow similar to our Portuguese Sapphic decasyllable. Another possibility regarding the classical alexandrine is maintaining a caesura in the sixth verse but enlarging the second hemistich to thirteen syllable, as in the verse "Ainda assim este imenso piscar de eternidade," present in my translation of "Voyages II."

Raffel, however, goes even further and suggests the possibility of discarding metric equivalence and replacing it with other resources. Commenting on two alternative translations of Baudelaire's *Le Balcon*, and offering one of his own, Raffel shows how these translations, in attempting to render Baudelaire's impeccable alexandrines into English iambic pentameters to ensure the correspondence of the two standard meters in each language, end up compromising the mental movement of Baudelaire's verses. The classic French Alexandrine, the one used by Baudelaire, as mentioned before, employs a strong caesura in the sixth syllable. In its most classic renderings, to this phonetic caesura corresponds a semantic one; the message conveyed in an alexandrine would then possess two clearly distinct parts corresponding to its metric partition. The translations examined by Raffel, in trying to maintain metrics, disposed of the caesura. Raffel, on the other hand, completely disposed of metrical regularity but maintained, in his English version, caesuras similar in meaning and weight to those of the French original version.

In my translation of Crane's "Voyages" I took into consideration that his prosody and versification are not regular. The text is mostly poured in iambic pentameters, but this pattern is frequently broken and we often have iambic tetrameters

and even nine or eleven-syllable verses that echo the sonority of the iambic pentameter. In addition, as said before, Crane's iambic pentameter frequently features long words, acquiring a sound pattern closer to Portuguese decasyllables. In some of these situations I was able to translate the pentameters into regular decasyllables. In many others, the alexandrine, in its various renditions, was necessary. Usually I tried to maintain the overall pattern of the poems. The first one is written in free verse, and my translation followed the same procedure. The second and the third poems are more regular in their iambic patterns; correspondingly, I sought to maintain the aforementioned regular rhythms in Portuguese. The fourth and the fifth poems are still mostly in iambic pentameter, but their semantic and syntactic breaks are so violent, and their internal rhythms so varied and irregular, that I allowed myself more freedom in the versification. Finally, the sixth poem is written in four-line rhymed stanzas of iambic tetrameters with minor metric variations. Maintaining the eight syllables without significant loss of content was impossible. I reproduced the regularity of the piece by using standard verses (decasyllables or alexandrines) and maintaining the rhymes, not always in the same pattern as the original. In some situations I had to replace rhymes with assonances.

The title of the poem was rendered cognately as "Viagens." Firstly, it seemed that a more unusual and formal word in Portuguese would better reproduce the tone of "Voyages" in English. However, I could not find a Portuguese word that could translate the meaning without implying other ideas that were totally strange to the work.

Voyages I

The free verse scheme of the first poem was reproduced in the translation. As well, the more casual and prosaic language was maintained. In the first verse, the adverb 'above' brings not only the idea of a physically higher position, but also the idea of distance, therefore the choice of the Portuguese adverb 'acima' instead of 'sobre' or 'por sobre'. The light agitation of the waves are here referred through the accurate image of the 'fresh ruffles of the surf', 'surf' referring to the foam on the crest of the waves. In addition to the images, the words in this verse reproduce the rustling sound of foam. I decided upon 'marulho' (according to Houaiss Portuguese Dictionary, "a steady agitation of the sea water, constituted by the ongoing movement of small waves, sometimes imperceptible") to translate the 'ruffles' and preferred 'espuma', referring

specifically to the foam rather than the waves. The resulting verse, “Acima do fresco marulho da espuma,” seems to me to reproduce both the idea and the sound of the original verse.

The second verse presented a far greater challenge. The word “urchin,” according to the Oxford Dictionary of English, means a mischievous child, a child not raised properly, but also the sea urchin. This ambiguity is unfortunately irreproducible in Portuguese. The word ‘moleque’ maintains the first sense as well as the tone that mingles disapproval with affection. ‘Flay’ would literally translate as ‘esfolar’, a word that reproduces the violence, but not the playful character of the scene; another possibility would be ‘açoitar’, with an even stronger violent character; finally ‘chicotear’ seemed to enclose the violent action and the playful idea, referring also to a very concrete movement, providing concretion to the image, arriving at the verse “Moleques claros e listrados se chicoteiam com areia.” There is a paternal tone in the next verse, as parents pointing to their child and commenting on their play; to reproduce this tone, I have opted for the use of the pronoun ‘eles’, which has not the grammatical obligatoriness of pronouns in English. ‘Contrive’ has the idea of ‘planning’, but is a more specific, rarer word, which made me opt for ‘tramar’; as well ‘conquest’ could be translated as ‘busca’, but there is an elevated and medieval sense that would be lost, which made me opt for ‘demanda’. In the third verse, ‘secas’ better reproduces the state of the weeds referred to as ‘baked’, even if the literal senses are different. The rest of this verse and the next present no difficulties.

In translating the first verse of the second stanza, I took advantage of the prosaic tone of this poem for a more precise, even if not euphonic, solution: ‘estrídula’ has the same sense of ‘acute sound’ and the same trembling sound of the *tr* in ‘treble, being the best translation, even if its length and its proparoxytonic sound compromise the musicality of the verse. ‘Lightning’, if seen as a noun, could be the direct object for ‘beats’ as well as ‘thunder’ for ‘fold’. However, a gerund rendering seemed a better choice for these words to provide the idea of process, in other words, the shimmering of the sunlight on the water and the thundering sound of the waves on the sand. A straightforward translation was sufficient for the last verse.

The only problem presented by the first verse of the last stanza would be the word ‘frisk’. Despite the physical sense of ‘jump’ and ‘caper’ found in ‘frisk’, the verb

'brincar' (play) was the only one I could find that transmitted the idea of joyfulness presented in this line. The two next verses present no difficulties. The fourth verse brings the verb 'trust' that, in this context, has a sense of 'risk' (verb); the verb 'arriscar' seemed a good choice at first, but, in addition to the direct object to trust ('spry cordage'), there is also an indirect object ('caresses'); clearly the idea is that they should not trust their bodies *to* the caresses; the Portuguese construction 'confiar… a' (trust… to) is analogous, therefore to be preferred. There seems to be no explanation for the lack of the definite article in front of 'spry cordage', thus I decided to supply it in the translation, rendering the sentence more comprehensible. "Too lichen-faithful from too wide a breast" presents a preferred destination of caresses (the lichen) and their origin (the wide breast); these two directions were evidenced in the verse "Ao líquen tão afeitas de um seio tão distante." Finally, the last verse allows a word-to word translation.

Voyages II

The more musical or lyrical cadence and the stanzaic regularity of the second poem demanded a different approach to the free verse used in the first poem. The verses are mostly in iambic pentameter. As already discussed, it is not always possible to translate the English iambic pentameter into the Portuguese classic decasyllable. On the other hand, the lines in "Voyages II" show some variation in metric. I allowed myself to vary between the decasyllable and the alexandrine, sometimes extending it into 13 syllables, but maintaining the caesura in the sixth syllable.

The first two lines can only be read as iambic pentameters if we include the final non-stressed syllables of 'eternity' and 'leewardings'; otherwise they count as tetrameters. In a first moment, I thought about translating the 'and yet' of the first line into 'e ainda', and the 'wink' into 'íris' or 'olhar' therefore maintaining the decasyllabic metric. However, these renderings would ruin the idea of the verse completely. First, 'and yet' has clearly a sense of opposition, which is only weakly conveyed by 'e ainda', if at all. Second, in translating 'wink' for 'íris', I would be disposing of the sense of action, which is very important, and with 'olhar', although I would maintain the idea of action, I would lose the fugacity of this action, deforming Crane's verse. For the first problem, the conjunction 'mas' could be a solution, but its sense of opposition is too

strong, I opted for ‘ainda assim’; and the ‘wink’ I translated into ‘piscar’, arriving at a thirteen-line alexandrine.

I used one same procedure for the next two verses. First it should be noticed that they bear some structural similarity, each presenting two phrases coordinated by the conjunction ‘and’. In both cases, however, there is an intimate relation between the elements expressed in the phrases; the ‘rimless floods’ and the ‘unfettered leewardings’ jointly express the idea of wildness and unrestraint; and ‘samite-sheeted’ and ‘processioned’ introduce the character of regality. In my translation, I subordinated the expressions in each verse, providing a joint idea, which I think can better reproduce the original impressions. ‘Sem bordas’ does not convey the same idea of unrestraint as ‘rimless’, therefore I arrived at “Inundações rompendo a sotavento,” uniting the two elements in the verse and providing the idea of wildness. In the third verse, ‘samite-sheeted and processioned’ account for the regality and the variety of colors and motives, the junction of this idea, as in the previous verse, seemed to present a stronger image. It is also important to point out that ‘procissão’ in Portuguese has a strong religious feeling that is absent in the original, whereas ‘cortejo’ would be more exact.

‘Undinal’ is a neologism referred to ‘undine’, a female water spirit. The Portuguese word is ‘ondina’, and a neologism would also be needed. Instead of ‘ondíneo’, which would be more expectable, I decided to remain closer to the English neologism and rendered it ‘undíneo’, guaranteeing the sensation of profoundness that the sound of /u/ provides. Finally, the last line presents both the lack of an ‘at’ after ‘laughing’ and the strange verb form ‘wrapt’ enclosing the senses of ‘wrapped’ and ‘rapt’. This effect is irreproducible in Portuguese; therefore I preferred the former sense, translating it as ‘emaranhado’. In relation to the first ‘anomaly’, I followed Lewis’s interpretation, according to which, “[t]he sea’s laughter, unimpeded by the customary preposition ‘at’, fairly pours down upon the wrapt nature of the lover’s rapture […] and almost drowns it” (LEWIS, 1967, p. 156). Accordingly, I suppressed the preposition ‘de’ in the Portuguese, arriving at the strange, but more accurate, sentence of “Rindo o emaranhado das flexões de nosso amor.”

The second stanza is probably the most challenging one. The first line could be rendered in a straightforward manner. In the second line, the word ‘scrolls’ could be translated as ‘pergaminhos’, but ‘rolos’ would provide a better physical image of the

paper unfolded throughout the sea; ‘snowy’ and ‘silver’ were easily translated; ‘sentences’, however, was not so easy. In both English and Portuguese, the cognate words ‘sentence’ and ‘sentença’ have the meanings of penalty imposed and coherent grammatical unit, the latter very rare in Portuguese, but common in English. My first impulse was to translate it as ‘frases’, which is a more common word to the second meaning of ‘sentence’. However, Smith, Paul, and Uroff are unanimous in ascertaining the juridical and penal character of these sentences, which is in line with the sea’s regal, but also terrifying character; therefore, the ambiguity of ‘sentenças’ became necessary. ‘Sceptred’ and ‘rends’ are unusual words; thankfully, for the first, I came across the even rarer Portuguese word ‘cetrígero’ with its variation ‘cetrífero’, which I preferred. ‘Rends’, not as rare in English, received the also not as rare translation of ‘talha’. My translation for the next line may seem strange; the use of ‘humores’ for ‘demeanors’ seemed to be more cogent to the oscillation of the waves; but ‘soez ou são’ for ‘well or ill’ needs an explanation. This decision was based on the capital importance of both the idea of benign and cruel and the sound pattern; ‘well’ can be translated into ‘são’ without problems; ‘ill’ for ‘soez’ may be more discussible. ‘Ill’ has primarily the sense of sickliness, while ‘soez’ remits us to the idea of vulgarity and cheapness. However, both of them are linked in the idea of hostile and mischievous, which is more in line with the sea’s character in this poem. The phonetic reason for my decision, which was the main point, was that ‘well or ill’ presents a consonantal pattern of one rhotic liquid consonant between two lateral liquid consonants, with a clear contrast between the hard /ɹ/ sound and the soft /l/. With ‘soez ou são’, I could provide a similar pattern: two occurrences of the voiceless sibilant /s/ with one of the voiced sibilant /z/ in the middle, substituting the contrast rhotic/lateral with voiced/voiceless.

My idea for the first verse was to maintain the decasyllabic pattern, suppressing the ‘as’ and rendering it ‘e adiante, os sinos de São Salvador’, but the conjunction ‘as’ is important, as I ascertained in the last chapter, to provide the temporal contrast with the spatial idea provided by ‘in’ in the third line, then a twelve syllable verse was needed: “E adiante, enquanto os sinos em São Salvador.” The second verse could be kept as a decasyllable without problems. In the third, it could be asked why ‘lilies’ instead of ‘poinsettia’; the reason is simple: the feature of the poinsettia which is being stressed here is its whiteness, which it shares with the lily, and in Portuguese, the word ‘lírios’ was able to give a more euphonic character to the verse. One of the poem’s most

important lines, “Adagios of islands, O my Prodigal,” is also one of the easiest to translate. Finally, the last verse could be rendered a romantic alexandrine. It should be said, however, that some critics read the verb ‘complete’ as an imperative directed to the lover; I am not in agreement with this reading, it seems clear to me that the subject of ‘complete’ are the ‘adagios of islands’.

So far, I had not dealt with an important problem: the sex of the sea. The references to a breast and to a pregnant belly show the sea as female. Notwithstanding, in English this idea is strengthened by the frequent use of the possessive pronoun ‘her’ (‘her demeanors’, ‘her veins’), which could only be reproducible in Portuguese by using the pronoun ‘dela’, equivalent to ‘hers’. None of the verses could support this pronoun maintaining musicality. Translating “Mark how *her* turning shoulders wind the hours” by “Vê as horas que *ela* agita com seus ombros,” I could stress the female sex of the sea and maintain the idea of its activeness in relation to the hours. ‘Palmas ricas sem vintém’ is, in my opinion, a precise enough translation for ‘penniless rich palms’. ‘Pass superscription’ was condensed into the verb ‘sobrescrevem’ and ‘bent’ was translated into ‘curvadas’. For the next verse, I decided to suppress the adverb ‘while’ and transform ‘Hasten while they are true’ into ‘Apressa-te! Ainda são reais’ with no loss of meaning and emotional tenor and avoiding an excessively long verse. In the last verse of this stanza, the adjective form of ‘close’ was substituted with the verbal ‘encerram-se’ for euphonic reasons.

Some of Crane’s verses are very syntactically ambiguous. “Bind us in time, O seasons clear, and awe” has been alternatively interpreted by Edelman as ‘Bind us in time and in awe, O seasons clear’, ‘Bind us in time and awe us’ and ‘Bind us and awe us in time’. My translation tried to preserve this ambiguity by maintaining the structure of the sentence, including the comma after ‘O seasons clear’. In the next one, ‘minstrel’, a popular singer in ancient times, a troubadour, could be translated by ‘aedo’. The two next verses presented no difficulties, and finally the last one presented many. First there is the very precise word ‘spindrift’, according to Oxford Dictionary of English, ‘spray blown from the crests of waves by the wind’. In his *Poesia da Recusa*, Augusto de Campos suggests ‘spindrift gaze’ could be translated into ‘olhar de espuma’. ‘Espuma’ conveys the physical features of ‘spindrift’, but not its idea of movement, which is, in my opinion, central here. Although far from perfect, ‘esguicho’ was the best solution I could conceive to convey the idea of a gaze as a quick spray of foam. In addition, the

syntax of the sentence is also complex, with two adjective expressions (wide and spindrift), modifying ‘gaze’. I could translate the sense of and maintain musicality only by transposing the genitive expression ‘do selo’ to the beginning of the sentence, a rare but possible solution in Portuguese. It was unfortunately impossible to maintain the idea of ‘wide’.

Voyages III

To my knowledge, “Voyages III” is the only poem of the series that has received a Portuguese translation, by Augusto de Campos. Undoubtedly this translation provided me with a model. There is no reason to avoid comparisons.

The first verse, “Infinite consanguinity it bears,” was translated by Campos as “Há uma infinita consanguinidade.” I have preferred the more literal translation “Guarda infinita consanguinidade.” The second verse and the third verses, “This tendered theme of you that light/Retrieves from sea plains where the sky,” were rendered “No tema que me estendes e que a luz/traz dos campos marinhos onde o céu” by Augusto de Campos. I did not fully agree with his choices, since the verb ‘tendered’ is clearly not attributed to the lover, who has no active role. In addition, the phrase ‘of you’ seems closer to ‘about you’ than ‘belonging to you’ or ‘originating from you’, a reading that is reinforced by the third verse, which says that this theme is retrieved ‘from sea plains’. The interplay between ‘of’ and ‘from’ points to an identification between the lover and the sea, but while ‘from’ indicates the sea as an origin of the theme, the ‘of’ suggests that the lover is a subject. Therefore I decided upon “De ti o tema ofertado que a luz colhe/Das planícies marinhas onde o céu,” maintaining also the geographical reference. The fourth verse I first thought of translating as “Resigna um seio ungido pelas ondas,” which is a euphonic enough solution. However, the contrast between the regal character with which the sea has been so far presented and the religious character which will spring in the last verse of this stanza is of major importance, and ‘enthrones’ possesses a strongly regal character, while ‘ungido’ (anointed) is a religious term. Therefore, I opted for the not as euphonic, but more faithful to the character of the poem, “Resigna um seio que cada onda entrona.”

“While ribboned water lanes I wind” was rendered “Enquanto sendas d’água em fitas singro.” ‘Fitas’ provide a very exact translation for ‘ribbons’ aiding in the accuracy of the image. The verb ‘singrar’ reproduces the active character the poet assumes in this verse and has a marine feel which is welcome. The verb ‘lave’, used in the next verse, was translated cognately by Augusto de Campos as ‘lavar’. I stuck to Edelman’s suggestion that this verse has a resonance of Whitman’s “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking,” wherein the same verb has a strong erotic tenor, and decided upon ‘banhadas’, and ‘scattered’ I translated into ‘espalhadas’, echoing the first poem (“Que cavam e espalham com alegria”). The penultimate verse brings the notion of wideness and distance, in which the water lanes are thrown far away from the lover’s side; “Pra longe do teu lado ao qual agora” preserved, in my opinion, the concreteness of the original. The last verse presents no difficulties, and I decided upon the same solution as Augusto de Campos, “O mar ergue também mãos relicárias,” no other solution seeming reasonable.

In the second stanza, Campos preferred a literal translation to the first verse, and “And admitted through black swollen gates” became “E admitido por portões negros, inflados.” I decided on a slightly modified version: “E aceito por largos portais de trevas,” which preserves, notwithstanding, the ideas of blackness and breadth. The second verse may present some difficulty to be understood. The idea is that these gates that admitted the poet must usually ward off intruders and protect the haven into which he arrives, ‘otherwise’ being an extremely helpful word. Campos’s translation was magnificent: “Que sóem sofrear toda distância,” enclosing all the ideas contained in it and possessing musical elegance. I was not able to come up with a solution as satisfying as this, finding the best translation to ‘otherwise’ as ‘afora’; thus the verse became “Que afora hão de apreender toda distância.” “Após leves frontões, gráceis pilares” seemed to reproduce the lightness and grace of “Past whirling pillars and lithe pediments,” even if the idea of movement attributed to the pillars is lost. “Light wrestling there incessantly with light” was elegantly translated by Augusto de Campos as “A luz em luta eternal contra a luz.” However, the gerund in this and the next verse is extremely important, since it conveys the idea of never-ending movement; I decided upon “Luz com luz digladiando sem cessar,” in the version of the Portuguese decasyllable known as *martelo* (stresses in the 3rd and the 6th syllables). Likewise, I maintained the gerund in the next verse and the pairings: “Astro beijando astro, de onda a onda até.”

"Your body rocking" received from Campos the translation of "A dança do teu corpo." It seems to me that 'rocking' is a much more violent and random movement than the elegant and planned gestures of a dance; "Teu corpo que se agita" was my translation. 'Shed', from "And where death if shed," as remarked in the previous chapter, resonates the idea of an insect or a shellfish disposing of its outer skin, in a metaphor for death, or the body, being shed to reveal the subtlety of the spirit. My version "E a morte, segregada," was born out of some considerations. First, 'segregar' seems an exact enough translation for 'shed' in this context. Second, I decided to suppress the 'if' and substitute it for a comma, which evinces the character of possibility of death's shedding, which would not be clear had I translated it "E a morte segregada." This procedure allowed me to render these two symmetric parts of an iambic pentameter ("Your body rocking/and where death if shed") into the two hemistiches of a typical alexandrine, with six poetic syllables each. In relation to the next verse, 'carnagem' is cognate to 'carnage' and allows for more space than Campos's 'carnificina'.

Finally, the two following verses are among the most difficult to translate of the entire series. "Upon the steep floor flung from dawn to dawn" provides an agile and soft alliterating sound in 'f' and an obscure meaning. Augusto de Campos's solution, "No fundo fim a flux de aurora a aurora," seems to preserve only the former. My solution, "Sobre o íngreme chão ejeto de aurora a aurora," does exactly the opposite. The meaning of the verse is important, in my opinion, to preserve, since it conveys the recurring idea of time and space transforming one another. Besides, the same verb in the same tense, 'flung', will appear again in the last poem and its repetition is important. Even though my version has not the same strong alliteration, the interplay of post-alveolar fricative phonemes /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ in 'chão' and 'ejeto' provides the verse with a sort of phonetic repetition. I must add that I thought about rendering the verse shorter by translating 'from dawn to dawn' to 'a cada aurora', but the pairing of repeated words is recurrent and important in the previous instances (light with light, star with star, wave on wave), which was to me a strong enough reason to preserve it in Portuguese.

"The silken skilled transmemberment of song" may sound strange or senseless even in English. The interpretation of this verse was already provided in the previous chapter. Here let us remark that it was fundamental to maintain the mirroring diphthong-like sound of 'il', the idea of softness and skillfulness provided by 'silken skilled' and a translation for the neologism 'transmemberment'. The latter is very easy

to do in a Latinate language, since it has a clear and marked Latinate origin; in Portuguese, the problem is solved by adding a simple 'o' to 'transmemberment'. The 'silken skilled' is not so simple. Augusto de Campos translated it into the delightful "ductil sutil transmembramento da canção." Thankfully, I could find a solution in "O lábil ardil transmembramento da canção." In my opinion, my version gains in one point and loses in other in relation to Campos's. The advantage of my version is that, in the original, it is more likely that 'silken' is actually modifying 'skilled' than 'transmemberment', meaning 'the transmemberment which is skilled in silk' or in 'silkening' or with silken abilities. In using 'lábil', which would correspond to Crane's 'silken' and Augusto's 'dúctil' in their idea of malleability, to modify 'ardil' (a 'trick'), I preserved that logic. The disadvantage is that I had to subvert the original syntax, insofar as 'silken skilled' is, in its whole, clearly an adjective phrase, whereas 'lábil ardil' is a noun phrase. The result, 'lábil ardil transmembramento', is a paratactic expression not in full agreement with Portuguese syntax. Since these breakages in syntax are usual in Crane, this drawback seems acceptable and the verse as a whole is, in my opinion, successful.

The last verse is simple to translate. I would guess that Augusto de Campos, in translating 'permit' to 'consente', aimed to maintain the more distant and formal character of Latinate words in English. That was what I thought of in translating it to 'concede' instead of the cognate 'permite'. The whole verse by Augusto de Campos is "Consente, amor, que eu viaje em tuas mãos agora." I could not find a strong enough reason for the adverb 'agora', but that of an attempt to rhyme with 'aurora' two verses before. This did not seem necessary, in my opinion, and I translated it simply, "Concede, amor, viaje eu em tuas mãos," suppressing the relative pronoun 'que', which, in my opinion, renders the verse more light and airy. And ultimately, there is the quasi-rhyme of 'mãos' with 'canção' from the verse before.

Voyages IV

The verses of the fourth poem in the series are frequently more difficult to translate within a regular metric pattern. In the first verse, "Whose counted smile of hours and days, suppose," 'smile' and 'counted' cannot be translated but directly for 'sorriso' and 'contado', thus considerably augmenting the length of the verse to 13 syllables. The

verb ‘suppose’ can both be read as 3rd person singular subjected to ‘smile’ or as a 2nd person imperative (the last reading, as pointed in the last chapter, is favored by the comma). Thankfully, this ambiguity could be kept in Portuguese, since the verb remains equal in both conjugations. The word ‘promessa’ to translate ‘pledge’ was intended to maintain the idea of virtuality of the verse. The idea of the third verse, I figured, would not suffer from rendering the adverb ‘vastly’ into the adjective ‘vasto’ and the gerund form ‘parting’ into the simple present ‘parte’. The longer verses that follow received also an extended length into Portuguese.

The same turning of gerund into present tenses was used in the verse “No stream of greater love advancing now” into (“Corrente de amor maior agora não avança”) and “Than, singing, this mortality alone” (“Que a cantar, somente esta mortalidade”). To explain this choice, a brief discussion should be sketched about the use of the gerund in the second stanza of the previous poem and the first of this one. First, it is important to remember that the last stanza of “Voyages III” and the first of “Voyages IV” are syntactically linked by the relative pronoun ‘whose’. Rather than continuity, this linkage corresponds to a passage from one state to another. In the previous stanza, as the analysis of the poem has shown, the poet and the lover are met in a sea-depth shrine where eternity is witnessed (although not gained). In the passage now being analyzed, they begin their return to the temporal world. Therefore, gerund passages of the previous poem refer to never-ending, cyclical processes (the struggle of light with light, and the union of stars on each wave), agreeing with the eternity found there, making gerund indispensable in the translation; on the other hand, the return to temporality in the stanza being dealt with now attribute the character of present to its gerunds, therefore enabling the use of the present in Portuguese without loss of meaning.

In the second stanza, the two verses could be translated almost literally. The third one had its meaning slightly changed to guarantee the aesthetic quality: “Região que a nós de novo se engrinalda” is, in my opinion, a beautiful verse in Portuguese and presents the idea of something that will belong to the lovers after their departure. Another change of meaning was effected in the fourth verse for aesthetic reasons. The verb ‘portend’ is synonymous with ‘foretell’, ‘foreshadow’ and ‘presage’; in Portuguese, the verb ‘portar’ means ‘carry’. Semantically, translating one for the other is not accurate. However, the repetition of the particle ‘port’ is essential to the fourth and the fifth verse since it announces the end of their sea travel. Moreover, the idea of

these verses is that their present situation foretells their return to a physical world, the world of eyes and lips; the verb ‘portar’ suggests that this situation ‘carries with it’ eyes and lips, in other words, carries the presence of the physical world, a different but not disparate idea.

In the three-line stanza that follows the multiple meanings of the word ‘stave’ (stick, verse, stanza, music sheet) cannot be, unfortunately, reproduced in Portuguese. Since poetic-making is one of the themes, or metaphors, recurring in “Voyages,” ‘versos’ was, in my opinion, the best option. In the following stanza, ‘o verbo feito carne’ preserves the evangelical idea of ‘the incarnate word’. In the penultimate verse, I resumed to the resource of rendering an adverb (‘inviolably’) into an adjective (‘invictos’). The adverb refers to the action (leading to islands) effected by the ‘blue latitudes and levels of your eyes’, while the Portuguese adjective refers to the agents (blue latitudes and levels of your eyes); the focus was, then, changed from the action to the agent, but the general idea of an action that cannot be stopped was maintained.

Finally, the first verse of the ending couplet is one of the most problematic in the poem. In the discussion, we have seen that there was no agreement among critics in relation to the syntactic functions of the words in “In this expectant, still exclaim, receive.” In one reading, ‘still’ was the noun and ‘exclaim’ and ‘receive’ would be coordinated verbs; in a second reading, ‘exclaim’ would be a verb functioning as a noun; and in the last reading, ‘exclaim’ was an imperative verb. The second reading seems to me more plausible. In the first reading, the coordination of ‘exclaim’ and ‘receive’ seems strange, since there is no coordinating element (a comma or ‘and’) between them, and no reason for this syntactical breakage; moreover, ‘exclaim’ and ‘receive’ seem too different verbs to be referring to the same object. The third reading would have the same problem: no element separating the imperative (‘exclaim’) and the exclamation (‘receive the secret oar and petals of all love’). In the second reading, which I have chosen, the attribution of ‘still’ and ‘expectant’ to ‘exclaim’ gives this action a double character of anticipation and quietness, and ‘exclaim’ could be referring to an interjection of surprise in face of their journey’s ending or to the poem being written. Since ‘exclaim’, even if functioning as a noun, refers more to an action of exclaiming than to an exclamation, I chose the infinitive ‘exclamar’ to translate, rendering this couplet as:

Neste expectante, silente exclamar, acolhe
Remo secreto e pétalas de todo amor.

Voyages V

The fifth and penultimate poem of the series has some problems not found in the others. The verses remain mostly iambic pentameters, but longer verses become more common. The syntax of this poem is very fragmented, and some verses are broken in the space of the page. The rhythm of the verses becomes more irregular and enjambments abound. In my translation, I allowed myself a greater freedom in using long (and sometimes very long) verses to contain the ideas presented by the English verses, resulting in a quasi free verse poem. Some verses have a mostly prosaic rhythm, such as the last verse of the first stanza, “The bay estuaries fleck the hard sky limits,” which became “Estuários da baía mancham os duros limites do céu.”

Except for the last verse cited, the first stanza could be constructed mainly in alexandrines, if all elisions are counted. The first verse, though, was lengthened to 13 syllables. The Latinate adjective in the first verse could be translated cognately, maintaining the significance of its etymology, commented on in the previous chapter. In the third verse, the use of ‘alva’ instead of ‘branca’ to translate ‘white’ provided more space and a swifter rhythm.

In the second stanza, I preferred to translate ‘filed’ to the somehow rare adjective ‘refilado’ than the more common ‘afiado’, due, in part, to the poet having chosen ‘filed’, a rarer adjective than ‘sharpened’. The idea of ‘ends’ in the following verse could not be reproduced to secure greater euphony, and I believe that the character of ‘shredded’ attributed to these stars is more important than that of ends, more in line with the feeling of desolation and loss of this fifth poem. “Já pendem, rasgos de astros relembrados” has the internal resonance of ‘r*as*g*os*’ and ‘*as*tr*os*’ and provides a rhyme with the previous verse, in my opinion, a welcome one. Euphony was also a strong criterion in my choice of “gélido perdido” to translate ‘frozen trackless’. A literal translation would be ‘Um sorriso congelado e irrastreável’, which, in addition to the cacophonic sounding, has an unsuccessful neologism.

‘Overtaken’ in ‘We are overtaken’ could be translated as ‘vencidos’ or ‘surpreendidos’. The first solution would be exceedingly strong and would lose the idea

of ‘surprise’, so the second solution seemed the best. A musical quality was provided for this verse by using the alliterative words ‘gemido ou gládio algum’, compensating for its excessive length. In the fourth verse, ‘mudado’ seemed too soft to transmit the idea of alteration that we see in ‘change’, so I opted for the rarer ‘transmutado’. The word ‘godless’ is sometimes translated as ‘infiel’, ‘ateu’, ‘ímpio’. These adjectives are successful in referring to humans or human constructions (a society, a culture, or an artwork); here it is attributed to a natural phenomenon, more associated with an indifferent character to it than an irreligious one, thus I opted for ‘sem divindade’, preserving the sense of emptiness. In the following verse, ‘lampejar’ can translate the visual and ephemeral character of ‘flashes’.

There is no Portuguese cognate to ‘argosy’, but ‘frota’ provides the same idea; by translating ‘hair’ into ‘mechas’ instead of ‘cabelos’, I could maintain a syllabic regularity: words with one or two syllables could provide a marked, almost martial rhythm for the ships of this verse. The precision of ‘flagless’ was unfortunately untranslatable, I had to use the more general adjective ‘clandestino’, which is notwithstanding piratical enough. ‘Pirataria’, in addition to being too long, has a popular and vulgar meaning very widespread in Portuguese that is absent from its English sister ‘piracy’; ‘corso’ has almost the same meaning, and is more distant and euphonic.

The last stanza was, in my opinion, the most successful one. Translating ‘head’ into ‘cabeça’ would ruin any possibility of maintaining the soft and dreamy cadence of the verb. The first words that I thought of were ‘cenho’ and ‘rosto’. However, these two words imply the idea of a facial expression, whereas ‘head’ has a more anatomical sense. This sense could be kept by ‘fronte’. Also for the sake of musicality, ‘draw’ became ‘marca’. The next verse, “Your eyes already in the slant of drifting foam,” could be rendered almost literally as “Teus olhos já no aclive da espuma que deriva.” There was, I must admit, a change of sound pattern. The original verse was a romantic alexandrine, with its four-syllable measures providing a slow cadence in the rhythm of the lover parting. My version has the structure of the classical alexandrine (even if it counts 13 syllables) with a strong caesura in the sixth verse, marking a more abrupt splitting between the two lovers, but a wavy rhythm is enabled by the alliteration of ‘acl*iv*e’ in the middle of the verse and ‘der*iv*a’ in its end. Likewise, in the penultimate verse, ‘hálito’ was a softer and more ethereal word than ‘respiração’. The last verse has lost ‘the long way’ to maintain its very important rhythm.

Voyages VI

Beyond any doubt, the sixth poem of the series was the most challenging to translate. Various factors account for this. First of all, the form is stricter than that of any other poem. Second, its vocabulary is also rarer, not only in its content, but in its use; the word 'trough', for example, present in the second stanza, is an uncommon noun, which is used, moreover, as a verb, a use that is not registered in any dictionary. A third factor is the shift from the iambic pentameter to iambic tetrameter; in addition to being shorter, Crane's verses accumulate an incredible amount of meanings, presenting relatively few articles and connectives and convoluting the order of words in order for these various meanings to fit into the eight syllables. This metric regularity was impossible to maintain, as I have pointed out in the theoretical preamble, but there are some variations in the metrics which allow greater freedom. And finally, there are the rhymes; the place of rhymes in poetry translation is discussable. In "Voyages VI," as the analysis of the poem has shown, the rhymes play a very important role, since they provide a phonetic counterpart to the solidity of the icy landscapes. In Portuguese, they could not be discarded, but the exact same scheme could not be maintained. The rhymic scheme is ABCB (except for the first stanza, which is ABAB), which is one of the commonest in English; in the Portuguese translation, I allowed myself to alternately use the ABCB and the ABCA schemes. In addition, in many cases I had to use assonances instead of rhymes.

The first stanza was translated in alexandrines, except for the last verse, a decasyllable. The convoluted syntax of the second verse was maintained, with the possessive element of the second verse, 'swimmers' (in Portuguese, 'dos que nadam') preceding the thing possessed (the 'lost morning eyes'). I am not acquainted with an exact Portuguese correlative for the word 'churning'; in the verse "And ocean rivers, churning, shift," it refers to a violent ongoing movement of the river, in which waters mingle, producing foam and sprays. The phrase 'em convulsão' applied in this verse could suggest the same idea. In the fourth verse, I left aside the comparative element of 'stranger skies', translating it simply to 'céus estranhos' and the 'borders' were rendered as 'litorais', conveying the same sense of delimitations and ensuring the rhyme.

The second stanza was more complex. Here the rhyme had to be replaced by an assonance. The adverb ‘steadily’ (referred to the rivers) includes the ideas of constancy and firmness; ‘pertinazes’ could convey the same ideas, here changed into an adjective. The idea of translating the verb ‘secretes’ into its cognate ‘secreta’ did not seem interesting at first due to the ambiguity of ‘secreta’. However, this ambiguity is somehow suggested, even if in a slighter manner, in the original, then it was maintained. The paradox ‘beating leagues of monotone’ with continuity divided into measures received its Portuguese version as “Suas léguas pulsando monotônicas.” The third and the fourth verses presented an incredible challenge. In addition to the difficulties sketched above, the word ‘trough’ conveys an extremely precise idea of two masses of waters forming a vessel for the sun, here seen as a ship. Fortunately, the rare verb ‘abaular’ conveys this idea, the adjective ‘many’ was left aside, the plural ‘águas’ conveying in itself the idea of quantity. In these two verses I had to use an enjambment, passing the adjective ‘rubra’, referring to ‘quilha’ (which is situated in the third line) to the fourth line. The elements ‘cape’ and ‘wet stone’ were here coordinated, suggesting a less narrow relation between them, but creating the assonance ‘secreta’ and ‘pedra’.

In the third stanza, the noun ‘enseada’ was added to stress the concavity of the Phoenix’s breast functioning as a harbor, since the word ‘seio’ alone seemed too mild to convey this image. The sense of pressing in the third verse was strengthened by the alliterations in ‘pr’ (preto, proa, premem). In the fourth verse, ‘blinded’ was translated literally, while ‘derelict’ received the phrase ‘solto ao léu’, guaranteeing the rhyme with ‘céu’ in the first line. An assonance between ‘fênix’ and ‘premem’ could also be derived.

My first idea was to translate ‘afire’ into ‘aceso’, but this term would be less precise and weaker. The idea of fire and of a flaming state should be maintained, then the phrase ‘em chamas’ was used. ‘Rear’, in the second verse, is used as a transitive verb meaning ‘bring back’, having the ‘splintered garland’ of the fourth verse as direct object. The verb ‘retornem’ would not convey this idea; therefore I chose ‘restituam’. The last verse had its syntax inverted to guarantee a triple assonance (‘vagas’/‘monarcas’/‘lascas’).

In the fourth stanza, ‘sumiu’ may seem an odd translation for ‘crept away’. The reason for it is evident in the rhyme with ‘abril’. However, the phrasal verb ‘crept away’

suggests something that is slowly disappearing; the idea of disappearance is ensured in 'sumiu'; by adding the predicative 'lento', I could ensure the idea of slowness, preserving the image. In the third verse, I chose 'velame' to translate 'sail', first to avoid any ambiguity between the two senses of the word 'vela', as it would not be welcome; in addition, the internal assonance 'oscilante' and 'velame' gave the verse a special sonority. As mentioned in the analysis, the verb 'flung' echoes from "Voyages III," where it is used in the verse "Upon the steep floor flung from dawn to dawn." In my version, it was translated as 'Sobre o íngreme chão ejeto de aurora a aurora'. I used the same word here to assure this echo, and the Portuguese version became "Ejeto ao mais interno dia de abril."

I was very fortunate to find that the adjective 'petalado' exists in Portuguese, allowing a literate translation of that very felicitous 'petalled' in English, and 'ledo' seemed a sufficient translation for 'blithe', maintaining the idea and the relative rarity of the word, as well as providing the verse with an agile rhythm. I thought of translating 'lounged' in the second verse as 'indolente', but 'reclinada' seemed a better solution since it is more accurately describes the physical position of the goddess, especially in the contrast with her movement of rising. In the last verse, a possibility for translating 'unsearchable' would be a neologism, 'improcurável', but the Portuguese language counts with the word 'inescrutável', which conveys the same idea of 'impossible to be investigated' and provides an assonance with 'petalado' in the first stanza.

The name 'Belle Isle' was maintained. The word 'pacto' had the same meaning and strength of 'covenant', the same idea of sacred agreement. The verb 'descortinar' is a very precise translation, in spite of the grammatical change from an adjective into a verb, to 'unfolded' since it is referring to 'Belle Isle' as a floating stage. It was very difficult to find a suitable translation for the last verse that could also guarantee a rhyme or assonance. 'White echo of the oar' is extremely precise in its materiality, three words referring to sound, color and an object. I changed the 'echo' for the verb 'retinir' which has, among its meanings, the idea of 'echoing'. Here the grammar had to be changed also. In the original, 'echo' as a noun, receives the prosopopoeic adjective 'white'; in Portuguese the echo became an action and, accordingly, the adjective 'branco' functions as a predicative to the oar in its action of echoing.

Agreeing with my translation, in “Voyages IV,” of ‘the incarnate word’ as ‘o verbo feito carne’, here ‘the imaged word’ became ‘o verbo feito imagem’. “Salsos silentes ancorados em seu lume” is, in my opinion, precise enough to translate “Hushed willows anchored in its glow.” I could not forge a neologism to translate ‘unbetrayable’, but the existing Portuguese adjective ‘iniludível’ has the same idea of something that cannot be deceived. My choice of translating ‘can know’ into ‘resume’ may be controversial. The rhyme ‘lume/resume’ appeared to me as very euphonic and, therefore, desirable. On a semantic level, when the poet says that no farewell can know the accent of the imaged word, it suggests that this accent cannot be contained in any parting, that its vestige has a durability that goes beyond the end of any human relationship or even of any human endeavor. It is, indeed, the ‘indestructibility’ that Crane had found in his personal life. The idea conveyed by ‘resumir’ is stronger than that conveyed by ‘can know’, but it has the same sense of ‘containing’. In Brazilian poetry, it has been superbly used in this sense by the poet Cruz & Souza in the verse “Requiém do sol que a dor da luz resume.” All these reasons made me decide that this translation was possible and should be used.

The resources enumerated by Raffel and Pereira were most of them used. A poem is a linguistic complex of feeling sensation and thought inextricably associated to its language. Translating a poem from one language to another requires transposing linguistic values, mainly phonetic and rhythmic, but also syntactic and semantic ones and encountering a correlative complex in other language. Thus, more than in other types of translation, there will never be a correct and unquestionable translation, but I believe a translation can be called felicitous if it can convey most of the message to the reader in the new language and, of course, encourage other translations of the same text or the same author.

CONCLUSION

The study of an individual author, instead of that of a literary period or movement, is significant insofar as the works of this particular author are able to articulate elements and ideas that include other authors and, above all, set into discussion some of the various strains that compose his literary tradition. Referring to the famous binomial that names Eliot's most discussed piece of literary criticism, "Tradition and Individual Talent," there is the tendency to classify Hart Crane as an individual more than traditional poet to the point of some critics having greatly or totally denied the effective presence of any tradition in Crane's work and having seen in it the sheer manifestation of an individual subjectivity not sifted and processed by any kind of reflection and dialogue with other authors. Hopefully, the pages just read in this work are able to dissipate this idea and show how consciously Hart Crane was dialoguing with the English language tradition in poetry.

In the conclusion to his study, Lee Edelman points out that reading Crane shows us how very aware he was that the principle of originality is first and foremost subversiveness. However, the same critic also indicates that Crane would probably like to see critical discussions about his poetry actually becoming discussions about the past and the future of American poetry itself. These two claims seem somewhat contradictory at first, but this impression is corrected as soon as we try to associate them under the light of what has been discussed about Crane. The place of subversiveness in Crane's poetry is undeniable, as visible in his syntactical and symbolical innovations and violations and his frequent combination of vulgar words, neologisms and archaisms. Nevertheless, his is not an iconoclastic subversiveness, as strange as it may seem. In fact, iconoclasm seems not to have a place in Crane's literary works and aesthetic reflections as his desire of countering the ideas of his poetic father T. S. Eliot may misguide us into believing. Far from being a simple rebellion against an established literary authority, his subversion of Eliot's traditionalistic views was grounded on deep and solid spiritual beliefs. His was a poetics of affirmation, not negation.

The understanding of the subversive character in Crane's poetry can be helped if we take into consideration the remarks of one critical study briefly cited in the Chapter Two of this paper. As we remember, R. P. Blackmur hinted that the problematic character of Crane's poetry lied not in the choice of his masters, but in the dimensions

of each of them he decided to adopt and in their articulation. Blackmur exemplified his claim by saying that Crane wrote within the disrupted sensibility of Baudelaire in the torrential style of Whitman, combining chaos of perception with chaos in expression. We may or may not agree with Blackmur whether Crane's literary choices were indeed mistaken or not, but his observations point out to one of the key to Crane's originality and alleged subversiveness: it lies not on a rupture with tradition, something Crane never advocated for, but in a reordering, according to a personal experience and view, of the elements he found in an already disrupted tradition. Tate's reproaches on Crane bears some similarity with Blackmur's when he accuses Crane of misinterpreting Eliot's pessimism. It can be finally said that Edelman was right when he suggested that the greatest strength of Crane's poetry lies exactly on what his early evaluators saw as his weakness: his insistence to reevaluate and reorganize his tradition in a fiercely individual manner, which was, notwithstanding, coherent, thoughtful and responsible.

Based on what was discussed about Crane, where, could we say, does the originality of his reading of tradition lie? We have already seen that Eliot postulated as indispensable a reading of tradition within a historical sense, which included "the timeless and the temporal and the timeless and temporal together" (ELIOT, 1975, p. 39). This historical sense was probably what Tate had in mind when he said that Crane read the great poets, but never acquired an objective mastery of any literature, or even of the history of his country" (TATE, 1999, p. 311). The historical sense Eliot is advocating for, and whose lack in Crane's education Tate is pointing to, can be understood as a *linear* sense of tradition, of tradition read and evaluated according to its temporal organization and with the precise weight and importance each of its elements acquired throughout literary history. Crane evaluated tradition according to the importance he himself gave to different elements in tradition. He read the Elizabethans and incorporated their ornate rhetoric and refined syntax. He read Eliot as a master of erudition and poetic composition, but not as an intellectual and spiritual guide. To the depersonalization and aesthetic ideality of Baudelaire and the French Symbolists he added a fraction of subjectivism he had gathered in English Romanticism.

As for the particularly American character of Crane's vision and work, as we have seen, came from the rebellious optimism of Emerson, Whitman and the Transcendentalist school of thought. Even these most anti-traditional thinkers were read by Crane in an unconventional manner. Crane rejected their program of wholesale break

with the past as much as he rejected Eliot's utter abiding to tradition. Crane was in agreement with Emerson that truth lies more within the sensitive and emotional core of each person's subjectivity than in established precepts found in compendia and institutions, but it was clear to him that the great literature of the past actually enclosed the advancements made by other spirits into these mysterious realms of individual consciousness and should be counted on by the poet who wants to leave something to his fellow men.

Yvor Winters, in the foreword to his *In Defense of Reason* (2011), said that if all poets would "emulate Hart Crane, the result would be disastrous to literature and to civilization" (p. 12), conceding that, as problematic as his poetry was, it had some great qualities. Winters's evaluation surely encloses a great deal of truth, but the recent developments in literary criticism and theory pointed here, which are notwithstanding a reflection of developments in civilization as a whole, seem to indicate that the qualities of Crane's poetry, within time, are outweighing its failures, contrarily to what Winters thought. The diversified readings this work has received, the different authors who had been influenced by it, and the amount of healthy scholarly discussions raised by it seem to be enough evidence that Hart Crane has a high rank in modern poetry and that he seems to have become more relevant and contemporary as times went by than he was during his life. Hart Crane's lesson is perhaps one of responsible freedom, he teaches us that, although the present cannot dispose of the past, it is not subjected to it; his somewhat romantic belief in the power of subjectivity shows us that human individuality has a fraction of freedom to swerve from the past and find within oneself and within one's present a grain of the spiritual grandness we find in literary and philosophic achievements of the past.

All of these beliefs are developed in his brief poetic work with undeniable beauty and originality. With Crane's ever growing prestige and evaluation in his native land, it seems the proper time for us in Brazil to familiarize ourselves with his works and his lessons. This analysis of his early lyrical work and translation of one of his most important works aims exactly to bring this oeuvre and the ideas and discussions it carries with it into our literary scenery. Far from being definitive, it aims to be a beginning and if others carry on this discussion and further translations of his work will be stimulated by it, its goal will have been achieved.

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