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The Anxiety of Metamorphosis: A Study of Walt
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THE ANXIETY OF METAMORPHOSIS: A STUDY OF WALT WHITMAN'S
SONG OF MYSELF, HART CRANE'S THE BRIDGE, AND
WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS'S PATERSON

By
Young Min Hyun

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

THE ANXIETY OF METAMORPHOSIS: A STUDY OF WALT WHITMAN'S SONG OF MYSELF, HART CRANE'S THE BRIDGE, AND WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS'S PATERSON

By

Young Min Hyun

This study attempts to show the centrality of the Christ figure both as an epic hero and as a visionary poet in Whitman's Song of Myself, Crane's The Bridge, and Williams's Pateron in the belief that the concept of Christ as the New Man and as the authentic visionary poet has been one of the most distinctive aspects of the American literary imagination. It also seeks to explore their differences, similarities, and their dynamic interrelationships.

The hero of Whitman's epic poem experiences his spiritual metamorphosis through ordeals of consciousness and he finally attains visionary reality. This Whitmanian epic hero is centrally placed in the poetic vision of Crane and Williams, but these three poets are all different in their poetic techniques. Crane reached Whitman's poetic vision through his paradoxical exploitation of the poetic techniques of Eliot and of French symbolism; Williams turned to Whitman by rejecting his poetic form of free verse, insisting on the new poetic measure based on the theory of relativity. While Crane sees everything in terms of the spiritual, Williams physicalizes the spiritual in the way of confirming spirituality.

These three poets are all alike in personifying America itself both as the hero of their epic poems and as the bride

of the Word. In this way, they secularize a Christian symbolism of marriage between man and the Word as the union of physical and spiritual, profane and sacred, and whore and virgin. Reacting against the spirituality of the inveterate Puritan mind and its alienation from the American wilderness, these three epic poets see the metamorphic theme of classical epics from a radical Christian perspective heavily influenced by Neoplatonic exegesis of the Bible, and they transform the traditional epic quest of physical prowess into that of intellectual and spiritual power, not revoking the epic tradition but completing it.

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In memory of my grandmother

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Chapter I

Introduction

The early American Puritans were consciously preoccupied with the Bible and they were so thoroughly allegorical-minded that they interpreted everything as a symbol of a certain spiritual value. "In the Puritan world," Henry Bamford Parkes holds in The American Experience, "nothing was trivial or accidental, and every happening was to be interpreted in terms of the cosmic battle between God and the devil. All material events were signs and symbols of supernatural realities, and should be regarded as rewards for the righteous, as warnings to the wicked, or as omens and tokens of divine purposes" (72). For them, the New World was "a state of mind and not merely a place" and the civilizing process of the New World "was not merely a geographical expansion; it was also a psychological development by which Europeans were transformed into Americans" (7, 39). They envisioned their exodus out of England to America as their destiny or mission to build "a Citty vpon a Hill" in the New World, as John Winthrop expressed it in his sermon entitled "A Modell of Christian Charity" to the emigrants aboard the Arbella in 1630 (295).

This Puritan vision of the New World became a "legacy" of American literary imagination which "translated geography into Christiano-graphy"; the descendents of the Puritans "enshrined their forebears in scriptural tropes and types, re-cognized them as giants of a golden age, like Virgil's legendary Trojans entering upon the future site of Rome" (Bercovitch, "Puritan Vision" 34, 39). Cotton Mather, for example, describes the Puritan vision of the New World in his Magnalia Christi Americana (1702); he likens the mission of the American Puritans both to the Israelites' journey out of fallen Egypt into the Promised Land of Canaan and to Aeneas'

journey to Rome through the description of the "'exemplary heroes' . . . not only as Christians but as seafarers and conquerors of hostile pagan tribes" (Bercovitch, American Jeremiad 87). Christ himself is the hero of Mather's Magnalia, who does "the wonderful displays of His infinite Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and Faithfulness, wherewith His Divine Providence hath irradiated an Indian Wilderness" (1: 25). The great acts of Christ, indicated in the title, "elevate the pristine New England venture to its highest epic and mythical proportions" (Bercovitch, American Jeremiad 87).

This Puritan vision of the New World also became in later American writers "variously a symbolic battleground, an ideal to which they could aspire because it could never be realized in fact, and an alternative cultural authority through which they could denounce (or even renounce) the United States" (Bercovitch, "Puritan Vision" 43). Seventeenth century American poetry generates such epic poems as Michael Wigglesworth's The Day of Doom (1662), and Edward Johnson's Wonder-working Providence of Sion's Saviour in New-England (1654). Of these, Johnson's Wonder-working Providence is the most concrete expression of the two modes of Puritan consciousness: a justification of the Puritans' emigration and a celebration of their founding of "Christ's Kingdom." This is an epic of Puritan consciousness, written in prose and verse, celebrating the Puritans' mission to the New World, fulfilling Providence's guidance "to re-build the most glorious Edifice of Mount Sion in a Wildernesse" (52): "[New England] is the place where the Lord will create a new Heaven, and a new Earth in, new Churches, and a new Common-wealth together" (25). In Wonder-working Providence Johnson uses a rhetoric of war, with Christ as King and the Puritans as the soldiers of Christ, in order to give the sense of a great adventure associated with the traditional epic: "Christ the glorious King of his Churches, raises an Army out of our English Nation, for freeing his people from their long servitude under usurping Prelacy; and . . .

creates a New England" (23).

The eighteenth century, with the dawn of the essentially optimistic spirit of the Age of Reason, also sees the transformation of this American epic impulse in such works as Philip Freneau's The Rising Glory of America (1772), Timothy Dwight's The Conquest of Canaan (1785), and Joel Barlow's The Columbiad (1807). Freneau's The Rising Glory of America, a collaboration with Hugh Henry Brackenridge, evokes the American epic potential and anticipates Barlow's The Columbiad, the first really distinctively American epic. Freneau sings: "'Tis but the morning of the world with us / And science yet but sheds her orient rays. / I see the age, the happy age, roll on / Bright with the splendours of her mid-day beams, / I see a Homer and a Milton rise / In all the pomp and majesty of song . . . / A second Pope . . . may yet / Awake the muse . . . / And bid new forests bloom . . . / Shall yet remurmur to the magic sound / Of song heroic, when in future days / Some noble Hamlden rises into fame" (78-79). Barlow, in fact, might be seen as fulfilling Freneau's dream. Barlow deliberately revised his The Vision of Columbus (1787) and renamed this poem The Columbiad (1807) to make it comparable to Homer's Iliad and Virgil's Aeneid. The Columbiad, however, is intended to be different from these traditional epics in both "the poetical object" which is "the fictitious design of the action" and the moral object" which is "the real design of the poem" (377-378).

The poetical or fictitious object for Homer, Barlow insists, "is to kindle, nourish, sustain and allay the anger of Achilles" (378) and for Virgil it is to make "the settlement of [Aeneas] in Italy" (380); the moral or real object for Homer and Virgil is to inculcate the "false notions of honor and erroneous systems of policy" (848). According to Barlow, the epics of Homer and Virgil "implanted in the minds of men . . . the pernicious doctrine of the holiness" of war (389), which "led astray the moral sense of man" (847). On the other hand, The Columbiad attempted to

direct the minds of men to "the necessary aliment of future and permanent meliorations in the condition of human nature" (389). The poetical or fictitious design of The Columbiad "is to sooth [sic] and satisfy the desponding mind of Columbus; to show him that his labors, tho ill rewarded by his cotemporaries [sic], had not been performed in vain; that he had opened the way to the most extensive career of civilization and public happiness; and that he would one day be recognised as the author of the greatest benefits to the human race" (381-382). The moral or real object of the poem is "to celebrate the useful arts of agriculture and navigation; to build the immortal fame of his heroes and occupy his whole hierarchy of gods, on actions that contribute to the real advancement of society, instead of striking away every foundation on which society ought to be established or can be greatly advanced" (848).

The Columbiad evolved into a visionary poem describing the whole history of mankind from the time of God's creation of the universe to the time of man's complete conquest of the world, which is, as John Griffith sees, "symbolized in a great Assembly of Mankind resting on American soil and American principles" (238). The vision of this American epic is the vision shown to Columbus in jail by Hesper, a symbol of light or human intelligence; Columbus himself symbolizes the light which dispels the darkness of human ignorance by his discovery of America, the New World. The heroic figure of Columbus is progressively developed as a collective hero, a strong man of vision who is representative of such figures as Manco Capac, Martin Luther, Copernicus, Galileo, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon, Hume, Jefferson, Hancock, John Adams, and George Washington. Each of these religious men, philosophers, scientists, and political leaders symbolizes "Man the Enlightened," for each of them has "the ability to reason clearly, and a position in history which sets him over against superstition and oppression" (Griffith 239). From this perspective, we can see Columbus's mission to the

unknown world as the "errand into the wilderness" of human ignorance to build the "city upon a hill," the city of light for all mankind. Thus, Columbus, the hero of this epic poem, is a New Man, a man of vision, or a liberating god who frees man from the land of his ignorance and leads him to the land of the knowledge of truth. In fact, The Columbiad is a poem which expresses man's anxiety of spiritual metamorphosis, the movement from alienation and estrangement to the achievement of unity and reality.

Even though most critics say that The Columbiad is a failure, it paved the way for the appearance of the modern epics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, especially in its transformation of epic energy into intellectual power rather than physical prowess. The nineteenth century sees epics like Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Hiawatha (1855), Herman Melville's Clarel (1876), and Walt Whitman's Song of Myself (1855). And in the twentieth century there are many long poems which participate in various ways in this American epic impulse, such as T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land (1922) and The Four Quartets (1943), Ezra Pound's The Cantos (1970), Hart Crane's The Bridge (1930), William Carlos Williams's Paterson (1958), Charles Olson's Maximus Poems (1953-1975), Allen Ginsberg's Howl (1956) and The Fall of America (1973), and John Berryman's The Dream Songs (1969). The Puritan epics of the seventeenth century remain close to the classical epic mode, glorifying physical strength in describing the epic hero as a triumphant Christ, the warrior who destroys the grip of sin by his heroic death in the battle with human depravity and by his resurrection builds the eternal city of New Jerusalem for his followers. The vision in these epics is spiritual: these epics, abandoning the merely earthly, aspire to reach the realm of the heavenly kingdom, as in Johnson's Wonder-working Providence. On the other hand, the epics of the eighteenth century, with their more intellectual and visionary emphasis, show Christ not as a leader who establishes eternal life but as a man of

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vision--even as a visionary poet able to see the secret of the world--transformed into a new being who through his vision exemplifies the process of intellectual metamorphosis. The vision of reality in them is earthly and the figure of Columbus in Barlow's The Columbiad is entirely typical of their protagonists.

Of the modern American epics, Whitman's Song of Myself, Crane's The Bridge, and Williams's Paterson, which are the major concern of this study, find ways of combining the two epic traditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and developing them. Whitman's Song of Myself, which is treated in chapter 2, is a visionary epic; it explores the perpetual metamorphosis of the hero who moves from the prophetic annunciation of "myself" toward national experience, and ultimately toward a cosmic realm of spirituality. This process of the hero's transformation is surely the legacy of the Puritan imagination, but it does not offer so much an alienated vision of reality as a unitive vision of the physical and the spiritual, a harmony of the body and the soul, the profane and the sacred. Chapter 3 discusses Hart Crane's The Bridge, an epic which was written in the tradition of Whitman's vision of America in Song of Myself. America for Crane is the amalgam of the past and the present, the West and the East, the material and the spiritual. The Bridge describes the Brooklyn Bridge as a symbol of America which embodies American aspiration to build a spiritual bridge between man and God. The bridge in the poem emerges as a symbol of Christ, the Incarnation of the Word who restores man's broken relationship to God. Chapter 4 deals with Williams's Paterson, in which Williams describes the struggle of Paterson, the hero of the poem, in his constant search for a redemptive language. Such a language will redeem both sexual failure and estrangement from the earth in all its physical thinginess, a redemption signified in Paterson's quest for the "Beautiful thing." It is a quest for a transformed sexuality, perception, and language which

Williams undertakes.

Each of the heroes of Song of Myself, The Bridge, and Paterson is both a New Man, or an epic hero, and a man of vision, or a visionary poet. This New Man is cast in the image of a Christ figure, based on readings of the New Testament where Christ is seen as the prototypical new man, epic hero, and visionary poet. Reacting against the spirituality of the inveterate Puritan mind and its alienation from the American wilderness, these epics transform the epic quest. This study attempts to show the centrality of the Christ figure both as an epic hero and as a visionary poet in these modern epics and seeks to explore their differences, similarities, and their dynamic interrelationships.

To clarify my position that the Christ figure is the center of the American literary imagination from the beginning of this tradition of American poetry to the present, we will need to trace certain aspects of the American literary imagination to its root in an allegorical hermeneutic tradition of great antiquity. The allegorization of the Bible began very early; one might even argue that it began in the time of Christ and perhaps even with Christ himself. The time Christ lived in was the very flowering of Neoplatonic Judaism with its mixture of Judaic religion and Greek philosophy. Neoplatonic Judaism had as one of the most important sources the work of the Alexandrian School, from around 310 B. C. until the destruction of the Alexandrian library in 640 A. D. The Alexandrian exegetes developed their interpretations on the work of Homer and other classical writers. Later this allegorical hermeneutic was turned on the Judeo-Christian Bible by such prominent Jewish Biblical exegetes as Philo Judaeus, who opened the way to the allegorical interpretation of the Bible in an attempt to reconcile Judaic religion and Neoplatonic philosophy. Just as the Neoplatonists interpreted Homeric myths as allegory because the literal meanings of the myths were no longer

reasonably acceptable to them, so Philo of Alexandria saw the Scriptures in this new perspective. Philo regarded some persons and events in the Scriptures as the symbols of a certain spiritual value. As Robert M. Grant holds, "In his mind many of the insights of Judaism, properly understood, do not differ from the highest insights of Greek philosophy" (53). This mode of thinking enabled Philo to solve the vexing problem of "the apparent anthropomorphism of God" in the Scriptures (54).

This intellectual environment and "the bi- or probably tri-lingual nature of first-century Palestine" are crucial factors which shaped Christ's attitude toward the Scriptures (Longenecker 64). Christ "normally spoke in Aramaic but could also use Greek and Mishnaic Hebrew to some extent," Richard N. Longenecker argues, and "at times engaged himself in textual selection among the various Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek versions then current, and some of the Septuagintal features in the text-forms attributed to him actually arise from him" (65-66). Christ's interpretation of the Scriptures is mainly allegorical. Christ often warned his followers against narrow Pharisaic literalism which forgets the spirit of the Scriptures or their inner meanings (Mathew 5: 20; 23: 23). This Judaic tendency of literalism may have directed Christ to adopt exclusively the parabolic discourse in teaching his followers: "In all this teaching to the crowds Jesus spoke in parables; indeed he never spoke to them except in parables" (Mathew 13: 34). As to the question of the reason for his use of parables in teaching, Christ answers that "'To you it has been granted to know the secrets of the kingdom of Heaven, but not to them'" (Mathew 13: 11).

Luke 4: 16-30 illustrates how easily Christ's parabolic discourse employed its own symbolic interpretation of the Scriptures. Here Christ is described as interpreting his own coming as the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Scriptures. The writer of this Gospel says that Christ, after reading Isaiah 61: 1-2, "rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the

attendant, and sat down; and all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him" and then he "began to address them: 'Today,' he said, 'in your hearing this text has come true'" (4: 20-21). The Gospel of John specifies this attitude of Christ toward the Scriptures: "You study the scriptures diligently, supposing that in having them you have eternal life; their testimony points to me, yet you refuse to come to me to receive that life. . . . If you believed [Moses] you would believe me, for it was of me that he wrote" (5: 39-46). Both Christ's view of his coming as the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Old Testament and his parabolic discourse are regarded by many people as more authoritative than the scribes' literalism: "The people were amazed at his teaching, for, unlike the scribes, he taught with a note of authority" (Mark 1: 22). Christ's Scriptural view is not a rejection of the literal facts of the Scriptural narratives, but a re-interpretation of them in terms of their spiritual, or symbolic contexts. Christ set the tradition of symbolic interpretation of the Scriptures. Most of the writers of the New Testament and later Christian interpreters of the Bible followed his example in their writings.

The New Testament writers interpret the Jewish Scriptures in terms of Christology, seeing Christ as a Moses figure, for example. They developed the typological interpretation of the Scriptures, "regard[ing] the events described in the Old Testament as prefigurations of events in the life of Jesus and of his Church" (Grant and Tracy 37). This trend of Biblical interpretation of the first century of the Christian era led Irenaeus to see the Old Testament and the New as one unified book whose central message is "the coming of the Son of God as man . . . a treasure, hidden in the field but revealed by the cross of Christ" (qtd. in Grant and Tracy 49). The Biblical exegetes of the Alexandrian School such as Clement and Origen are quite similar to Irenaeus in their views of the Bible, that "all scripture speaks in a mysterious language of symbols" (Grant and Tracy 55). Not

only did they argue that the Old Testament is the prefiguration of the New, but also they extended their argument to their reading of Greek writings, where Clement especially finds the prefiguration of the Gospel.

This typological and allegorical interpretation of the Bible was severely criticized by such literal-minded or historically oriented interpreters of the Antiochene School as Theodore of Mopsuestia, John Chrysostom, and Jerome and later by Thomas Aquinas. However, this tradition of allegorical or typological interpretations of the Bible was powerfully legitimated in later Western Christianity by such orthodox theologians as Augustine and by his major influence on Christian tradition. Augustine, who was steeped in Neoplatonic philosophy, admitted in his City of God, on the one hand, that the Biblical story is "a faithful record of historical fact" but suggested the "figurative" reading of the Bible when its literal meaning is difficult to accept (qtd. in Rogers and Mckim 32). In spite of the strong presence of the Aristotelian modes of thinking and of historical interpretations of such medieval Scholastic interpreters as Andrew of St. Victor and Thomas Aquinas, the tradition of allegorical or symbolic interpretations of the Bible enjoyed its vitality in the hands of Anselm of Canterbury and William of Ockham during the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages, the events and the figures in the Old Testament were regarded primarily as the prefigurations of those in the New Testament, especially foretelling the coming of Christ. It should be noted that, as Grant says, even "Aquinas does not reject the allegorical interpretation, and in a way both Alexandria and Antioch can claim him as their heir" (88). This typological interpretation of the Bible in terms of the Christological prefiguration was inherited by the sixteenth century Puritans, who found the prefiguration of the contemporary events or their own personal experiences in the Bible. John Milton, for example, saw the blind Samson as the prefiguration of his blindness and wrote Samson

Agonistes.

The hermeneutical principles of the Middle Ages and the sixteenth century were finally handed down to the American Puritans, in whose minds, according to Charles Feidelson, "the symbolizing process was constantly at work" (78). The Puritan hermeneutic was later transmitted into secular American culture through Ralph Waldo Emerson and other transcendentalists. In Symbolism and American Literature, Feidelson discusses "an American tradition" of the symbol-making minds from such early Puritan settlers as William Bradford, John Winthrop, and Thomas Shepard through such eighteenth century theologians as Jonathan Edwards to such nineteenth century transcendentalists as Emerson (77-118). "The unfolding drama" of the everyday life for the Puritan settlers "was at once human and divine; physical life was simultaneously spiritual. Every passage of life, enmeshed in the vast context of God's plan, possessed a delegated meaning" (79). Even though they believed that the Biblical truth was "not aesthetic but propositional," the American Puritans "gingerly preserved" the medieval tradition of the Biblical interpretation "as the science of 'typology,' a system of correspondences between the Old Testament and the New" and made "an effort to carry typology one step further, from the New Testament into the New world" (88-89). Their legacy to American writing was "a conflict between the symbolic mode of perception, of which our very language is a record, and a world of sheer abstractions certified as 'real'" (90). The eighteenth century saw the rehabilitation of "the old typology in a new context" in Jonathan Edwards, who saw the Biblical language as "not propositional at all, but a functional rhetoric" and argued that "nature as well as the Bible is radically figurative" (100). Edwards, Feidelson holds, "brought to the sense-world of empiricism a symbolist tradition that Emerson was to rediscover after empiricism had worked itself out" (101). In the nineteenth century, such American transcendentalists as Emerson, "spiced with the

local religious tradition and with Platonic, Neo-Platonic, oriental, and Swedenborgian ideas," developed Cartesian philosophy "in the direction of symbolism" in terms of the dialectic of Kantian idealism and Lockean empiricism (105, 116). In this way Emerson identifies "poetry with symbolism, symbolism with a mode of perception, and symbolic perception with the vision, first, of symbolic structure in the real world and, second, of a symbolic relationship between nature and mind" (120).

Let us look then at the representation of Christ himself in the Bible from a perspective of secularized or literary symbolism, for the symbolical representation of Christ is going to become most important in that Christian context which has influenced the development of the American epic. The Biblical Christ claimed to be the Messiah; in allegorical hermeneutics this role has often been transformed into that of the visionary poet who tries to restore man's alienated relation to God through redeemed language or as the epic hero who delivers man from the old world of sin to the new world of salvation. Christ is a visionary poet-hero who creates "a new heaven and a new earth" and makes "all things new" (Revelation 21: 1, 5). The re-creation of "a new heaven and a new earth" or the making of "all things new" signifies not the re-creation of the universe itself but the restoration of our fallen, dull vision into the fresh vision of the first creation, for the fall of Adam signifies the loss of his vision.

Genesis describes God revealing himself as the Word, whose speaking creates the universe in the sensual form. All creation in this first revelation of the Word seems to be in harmony with the Word. Man talks with every living creature, being able to call its name; he also talks with God without any restriction. This is a naked world where, as Milton writes in Paradise Lost, "all mist from thence / Purge and disperse, that I may see and tell / Of things invisible to mortal sight" (3: 53-55). It is particularly noticeable that

the creation story in Genesis emphasizes God's seeing: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Genesis 1: 31). In the first creation, everything for God was good to see, pure to see, and clear to see. Significantly, Genesis describes God as a light-giving God, whose first creation is light. In Psalm 19, the presence of God in the universe is described primarily through the image of splendid light across the universe. And this concept of God as light is also central to New Testament theology. In 1 John 1: 5-7, the author of the epistle argues that "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to be sharing in his life while we go on living in darkness, our words and our lives are a lie. But if we live in the light as he himself is in the light, then we share a common life, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

The narrative of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, according to Mircea Eliade's "two modalities of [human] experience--sacred and, profane" (14), is a marvelous illustration of man's sense of space between the profane world of man and the sacred world of God. The story of building the Tower of Babel is an astonishing metaphor for man's desperate struggle to reach the sacred world which is separated from their profane world, a metaphor for the struggle to bridge the sacred and the profane. Adam's expulsion from the sacred world is his alienation from light, which is described ironically as an awakening of his eyes to the two realms of the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. Adam's choice of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge signifies his alienation from the Tree of Life, perpetuating his vision of reality as the invisible world of God and the visible world of man, or the sacred world of Life and the profane world of Death. It signifies the Fall of man, his blindness, or sin. His alienation from God is dramatized in the depiction of his being cast out of the Garden of Eden, which symbolizes, in turn, his descent into the darkness of ignorance or blindness.

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This dichotomized vision of man desacralizes human consciousness, codifying the word of God, the Law, in the two tablets of stone: "When he had finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, the Lord gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, stone tablets written with the finger of God" (Exodus 31: 18). This codification of the divine Law is the second revelation of the Word, signifying man's separation from God. The sense of distance or separation of man from God is noted in the dramatic scenes of Moses' encounter with God on Horeb and of the Israelites' confrontation with God at Mount Sinai. The Israelites, who take their stand at the foot of the mountain, are forbidden to approach God, who comes down upon the top of the mountain covered with smoke and orders Moses to "let neither priests nor people force their way up to the Lord, for fear that he may break out against them" (Exodus 19: 24). They fear even to hear the word of God: "' . . . do not let God speak to us or we shall die'" (Exodus 20: 19). The word of God is mystified as "a peal of thunder," so that they cannot apprehend it and are terrified (Exodus 19: 18-19). Even the face of God is concealed from them, even from Moses who can communicate with Him: "My face you cannot see, for no mortal may see me and live" (Exodus 33: 20). Their alienation from God is also suggested in their ignorance of the name of God. Even after the name is revealed to them as "Lord" by God himself (Exodus 34: 5), it is still mystified and is not called freely (Exodus 20: 7). Anyone who utters His Name is stoned to death (Leviticus 24: 16). In short, man's vision comes to be completely veiled by this codification of the Word, which distances man from God and man from man as well. Furthermore, even the tablets of stone cannot be touched by common Israelites, and they are contained in the Ark of God (1 Chronicles 13). God disappears from His creation in the second stage of His revelation.

Therefore, Paul argues in Romans 3: 20 that "no human being can be justified in the sight of God by keeping the

law: law brings only the consciousness of sin." He is convinced that "nothing is impure in itself; only, if anyone considers something impure, then for him it is impure" (Romans 14: 14). "Everything is pure in itself," Paul argues repeatedly (Romans 14: 20). Paul's argument is that man's conscious act of distinction between good and bad or pure and impure is his sin or spiritual blindness. Titus is also in agreement with Paul's view in that man's consciousness is the barometer of his blindness: "To the pure all things are pure; but nothing is pure to tainted disbelievers, tainted both in reason and in conscience" (Titus 1: 15). The blindness of man's consciousness is dramatically described in Acts, where Peter is presented as confronting God in a vision when he was hungry:

[Peter] saw creatures of every kind, four-footed beasts, reptiles, and birds. There came a voice which said to him, 'Get up, Peter, kill and eat.' But Peter answered, 'No, Lord! I have never eaten anything profane or unclean.' The voice came again, a second time: 'It is not for you to call profane what God counts clean.' This happened three times, and then the thing was taken up into heaven. (10: 12-16)

Also, the author of Ephesians says that because men's "minds are clouded, they are alienated from the life that is in God, because ignorance prevails among them and their hearts have grown hard as stone. Dead to all feeling, they have abandoned themselves to vice, and there is no indecency that they do not practise. But that is not how you learned Christ" (4: 18-20).

In 1 Corinthians 13: 12, Paul sees our fallen state as the loss of our clear sight and compares the distorted reflection in the polished bronze or silver mirrors produced in ancient Corinth to our dim, distorted vision and compares our "puzzling reflections" with the face-to-face vision of divine knowledge which will do away with our present distorted human way of knowing: "At present we see only

puzzling reflections in a mirror, but one day we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me." The power to see is metaphorically the ability to know. Thus, the event of the Incarnation of Christ signifies the restoration of man's lost vision of God who is light. Isaiah clearly states that to see is to be saved: "From every corner of the earth / turn to me and be saved" (45: 22), describing the coming Messiah as "a great light" which "has dawned" on "those who lived in a land as dark as death," "a light for peoples, / a lamp for nations, / to open eyes that are blind, / to bring captives out of prison, / out of the dungeon where they lie in darkness" (9: 2; 42: 6-7). This Messiah is identified with Christ in the Gospel of Luke by Christ himself (4: 16-21).

In the New Testament Christ is depicted as participating in human experience at the critical time of the complete division of the sacred and the profane worlds in human consciousness (Mark 1: 15). Christ comes to human history as the Word and the Light to the profane world, as the visionary poet who restores man's original perception which will consecrate the profane world. The Gospel of John describes Christ as proclaiming himself as the Incarnation of God: "I am what I am" (8: 24). Christ is the Word that created all things: "He was with God at the beginning, and through him all things came to be; without him no created thing came into being. In him was life, and that life was the light of mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never mastered it" (John 1: 2-5). Thus, Clement of Alexandria proclaims: "Receive the Christ; receive power to see; receive thy light" (241). The man who receives Christ is the child of light. Christian theology developed the Incarnation of Christ into a metaphor of God's entrance into the universe, the third revelation of the Word: "So the Word became flesh; he made his home among us" (1: 14).

Christ reveals himself as the Light itself both by the symbolic miracle of the opening of the eyes of a man who was

born blind and by declaring that "I have come into the world as light, so that no one who has faith in me should remain in darkness" (John 12: 46); and that "While I am in the world I am the light of the world" (John 9: 5). The central metaphor of the New Testament is the proclamation of the dawning of the new era, the era of new creation of man's vision with the birth of Christ: "The people that lived in darkness / have seen a great light; / light has dawned on those who lived in the land of death's dark shadow" (Matthew 4: 16). In this way, the words of Christ become metaphorically the vision to the truth of the universe. Space and time for Christ are no longer divided into the sacred and the profane, for he demolishes man's feeling of space and time between the sacred and the profane, encouraging his followers: "There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly father's goodness knows no bounds" (Matthew 5: 48).

The writer of Ephesians declares to the sleeper who is deeply entrenched in the consciousness of sin, the darkness of his own ignorance: "Awake, sleeper, / rise from the dead, / and Christ will shine upon you" (5: 14). Christ himself is the Light who awakens the sleeper in the bed of consciousness of sin and he is the Word, the voice of the spirit who enlightens the ignorance of man. Human consciousness is restored into its original state in Christ, in whom, as Whitman sings in Song of Myself, "Speech is the twin of my vision" (LG 55). The mission of Christ is then the religious act to arrest the space and time of the profane in the moment of the permanent "here and now" of the sacred, making the profane the sacred in space and time.

The Word of the third revelation is metaphorically a Man, whose speech is itself a living being like a person. Therefore, it is the language of "hearing" and "seeing." God's "speaking" is objectified in the "visible" Word: The Word "gives life. This life was made visible" (1 John 1: 1-2). The Christians assimilated the Greek philosophical concept of the Logos with its attendant metaphors of "seeing"

to the Hebraic reverence for the Word and its rhetoric of "hearing." Walter J. Ong provides a relevant explanation about this aspect in The Presence of the Word: "It has been a commonplace that the ancient Hebrews and the ancient Greeks differed in the value they set on the auditory. The Hebrews tended to think of understanding as a kind of hearing, whereas the Greeks thought of it more as a kind of seeing, although far less exclusively as seeing than post-Cartesian Western man generally has tended to do" (3).

The Greek foundations of the Christian preoccupation with the Logos, the potentially visible Word, go back at least to Heraclitus's metaphorical speculations on the divine principle inhabiting all things. The Heraclitean concept of the Logos was transmuted by the Stoics into that rational power which linked human reason with the very constitutive principle of reality. In the Hellenistic Judaism of Philo of Alexandria one can see this abstract concept becoming personalized, and it is this concept of the Logos as a Person, which is the immediate antecedent to the Christian incarnation of God in Christ, the very Word made "visible." The first call of Christ's disciples described in the Gospel of John is significant in this respect. To the two seekers who ask him where he is staying, Christ gives a simple answer: "Come and see" (John 1: 39). And the two seekers become his first disciples. Since Christ is the Word itself, He does not need to be explained. It is enough for his followers just to "come and see" him, for the Word himself is "here and now" revealed in the visible form. In the Gospel of Luke, Christ himself clearly claims that his coming is also the coming of the kingdom of God: "You cannot tell by observation when the kingdom of God comes. You cannot say, 'Look, here it is,' or 'There it is!' For the kingdom of God is among you!" (Luke 17: 20-21; 11: 20; John 1: 26). God is no longer present far beyond the reach of creation, but with it here and now, for Christ "among them" is the presence of the Kingdom of God here and now. The action or speech of

Christ is the action or speech of reality itself. The Gospel of John crystallizes this point by describing Christ as identifying himself with God: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. Then how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (John 14: 9-10).

Now man is free to call the name of the Word, and, through invoking His name, he can restore his broken relationship to God: "Anything you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name I will do it" (John 14: 13-14). "So far," Christ says to his disciples, "you have asked nothing in my name. Ask and you will receive, that your joy may be complete" (John 16: 24). The Word is light, which does not allow darkness and death in reality: "In him was life, and that life was the light of mankind" (John 1: 4). He is the voice of life: "In very truth I tell you, the time is coming, indeed it is already here, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God, and those who hear shall come to life" (John 5: 25). Christ is "a spring of water within him, welling up and bringing eternal life" (John 4: 14), "the bread of life" (John 6: 48), the victory over death (John 11: 25). There is no darkness and death in the Word. There is only light and life in Him. There is no longer a dualistic vision of reality in this third revelation of the Word. Everything in Him is redeemed to become a new being which is complete, divine, and holy, just like the Word Himself.

The death of Christ is, then, symbolic of the burial of our old perception or mind: "when we were baptized into union with Christ Jesus we were baptized into his death" (Romans 6: 3), for baptism is "a ritual of dying to live anew" (Alter and Kermode, 409). Thus, "as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, so also we might set out on a new life" (Romans 6: 4). Christ makes "all things new" (Revelation 21: 5), making us "renewed in mind and spirit, and put on the new nature created in God's likeness"

(Ephesians 4: 23-24). By his death, Clement says, Christ "has made clear the mind [of man] that lay buried in darkness, and sharpened the 'light-bearing eyes' of the soul" (241). Therefore, "For anyone united to Christ, there is a new creation: the old order has gone; a new order has already begun" (2 Corinthians 5: 17), for he is "released from the law, to serve God in a new way, the way of the spirit in contrast to the old way of a written code" (Romans 7: 6-7). Having "died to the law and set free" "through the body of Christ" (Romans 7: 4), man has "discarded the old human nature" and has "put on the new nature which is constantly being renewed in the image of [his] Creator and brought to know God" (Colossians 3: 9-10). This new man is no longer the child of darkness but the child of light, as Clement says, "the true man" who has "pass[ed] from ignorance to knowledge . . . from godlessness to God" (203): "For 'the image of God' is His Word . . . and an image of the Word is the true man" (215). The child of light is a whole man whose mind is not divided, for "the whole Christ, so to speak, is not divided; there is neither barbarian nor Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, but a new man transformed by the Holy Spirit of God" (239; Galatians 3: 28). This new man is a man of vision, who is set free from the old bondage of ignorance and returns to the new life.

For a radically Christian perspective such as that seen developing in Clement, Christ's interpretation of the Law is not the dualistic vision of reality as separated into the realms of God and man but the monistic vision of reality as united in one realm of love. The love of God and the love of man are one inseparable love: "God is love; he who dwells in love is dwelling in God, and God in him. . . . In love there is no room for fear; indeed perfect love banishes fear. . . . We love because he loved us first. But if someone says, 'I love God,' while at the same time hating his fellow-Christian, he is a liar. If he does not love a fellow-Christian whom he has seen, he is incapable of loving

God whom he has not seen. We have this command from Christ: whoever loves God must love his fellow-Christian too" (1 John 4: 16-21). The codified Word is liberated and completed in Christ, the Incarnation of Love (Mathew 5: 17; Romans 10: 4, 13: 8; Galatians 3: 24; John 3: 16). The Word of the third revelation is no longer an agent of fear.

One of the fundamental differences between Hebraic and Christian views of reality lies in the two different metaphors of reality imagined as the Tree in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament dichotomizes reality into the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. The New Testament, however, sees reality as one. The Tree of Knowledge, on the one hand, becomes the Tree of Death on which Christ was crucified. On the other hand, it becomes the Tree of Life which redeems the Fall of man by the death of Christ on it. For Christians the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge become one Tree in the Incarnation of the Word. The Bible is then an epic which tells a progressive narrative from man's alienation from God to his union with God by Christ's redemption, a metaphor of man's descent into the darkness of ignorance or blindness to his ascent into the light of knowledge or vision of truth by dwelling in the light of Christ. In this sense, Christ is not only a visionary poet who enlightens the darkness of man's mind, but also an epic hero who leads man to the New Heaven.

In The Literary Guide to the Bible, Robert Alter places the two stories of Abraham in Genesis 12: 1, and of Ruth in Ruth 2: 11, into an allegorical parallelism, where they become the founding father and the founding mother, respectively, of the new vision by the "returning" to the new life:

What is the point of the allusion? It sets Ruth up as a founding mother, in symmetrical correspondence to Abraham the founding father. . . . we are reminded that her "going" from Moab is, paradoxically, a

"returning" to a land she has never before seen, a return because it is now by choice her land. Thus, taking up the destiny of the covenanted people, for Ruth as for Abraham, means putting behind one the filiations of geography and biology, replacing the old natural bonds with new contractual ones, as Abraham does with God, having left his father's house, and as Ruth does with the clan of Elimelech and the land of Judea. The patriarchal text, trumpeting the departure from father and birthplace, announces a new relation to God and history; the text in Ruth, with a less theological and ultimately more political frame of reference, adopts the language of the earlier writer to define its own allied but somewhat different meanings: the tale of the foreign woman who becomes staunchest of kin through her acts of love and loyalty. (14)

This theme of "returning" to the new land or the Land of Promise in the Old Testament is central to the early Christian's typological view in the New Testament. For such early Christians as Tertullian and Augustine, Erich Auerbach argues in his classic essay "Figura," "the Old Testament, both as a whole and in its most important details, is a concrete historical prefiguration of the Gospel" (44). This "figural interpretation changed the Old Testament from a book of laws and a history of the people of Israel into a series of figures of Christ and the Redemption" (52). This interpretation of the Old Testament "as a prefiguration of Christ," Auerbach continues, gave Europeans "a basic conception of history . . . which for almost a thousand years remained the only accepted view of history" (53). In the work of Philo and Origen, this typological interpretation expanded to include a morally allegorical interpretation, which sees "the various events of the Bible as phases in the development of the soul and its relation to the intelligible world" (55).

This allegorical interpretation establishes Christ as an epic hero of the journey of spiritual life and all epic heroes as potentially assimilable to Christ. This allegorical interpretation in turn further developed into a highly developed symbolic or mythical interpretation, such as that employed much later by Vico, in which "the thing represented must always be something very important and holy for those concerned, something affecting their whole life and thinking" (56). For example, the Israelites' crossing of the Red Sea into the Promised Land is the symbol of the Christian baptism into the new life of eternity, into the New Jerusalem. Christians must be new men who are newly born, freed from the old nature of sinfulness in order to enter the New Jerusalem of eternal life. This symbolic interpretation once again leads us back to the figural interpretation of Christ, a New Man, a Second Adam, as a representative figure; that is to say, the life of Christ in the Gospels is a prefiguration of the struggle of all Christians.

All of these motifs are gathered up into such a romantic text as Emerson's "The Poet." The nature and the function of the Emersonian poet are similar to those of Christ in the Bible. The poets are "the highest minds of the world," Emerson says, the minds of insight who are capable of seeing and expressing the beauty in nature (3). The poet's "insight, which expresses itself by what is called Imagination, is a very high sort of seeing, which does not come by study, but by the intellect being where and what it sees" (15). The poet is "the man of Beauty" who is "the creator of the universe" (4, 5). The poet is "the sayer, the namer," the Christ figure who "stands among partial men for the complete man . . . who sees and handles that others dream of, traverses the whole scale of experience, and is representative of man, in virtue of being the largest power to receive and to impart" (5, 4-5). The function of the poet is also that of Christ who is a savior or a "liberating god," for the poet "has yielded us a new thought" (18-19).

The poet "unlocks our chains and admits us to a new scene" (19). He is an epic hero who delivers us out of the prison of blindness, the shackles of ignorance, as Christ has been sent as an epic hero "to announce good news to the poor, / to proclaim release for prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind; / to let the broken victims go free, / to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour'" (Luke 4: 18-19). Emerson's identification of the poet with the Christ figure who is "the sayer, the namer, and represents beauty" is parallel to the Genesis story of Adam, an antetype of Christ, as a namer. Just as the first act of creation of God is utterance, so the first act of creation of man is the naming of animals. The act of naming is the act of creation. The writing of the poet, then, is the second creation of Christ, the second Adam, a visionary poet who makes "all things new" (Revelation 21: 5). "The condition of true naming, on the poet's part," Emerson says, "is his resigning himself to the divine aura which breathes through forms, and accompanying that" (15).

Emerson's aesthetical interpretation of the Christ figure as the poet belongs in "a metaphysical tradition that, from Augustine to Hegel, interpreted the Trinity as the most profound of all the mysteries of being" (Pelikan 5). "[T]he Universe," Emerson contends in "The Poet," "has three children, born at one time, which reappear, under different names, in every system of thought" (5). Then, Emerson offers his own classification of the triad of "the Knower, the Doer and the Sayer," each of which corresponds respectively to the scientific triad of "cause, operation, and effect"; to the Greek philosophical triad of "truth," "good," and "beauty"; to the poetical triad of "Jove, Pluto, and Neptune"; and to the theological triad of "the Father, the Spirit, and the Son" (5). In his Jesus through the Centuries, Pelikan develops the Emersonian analogy between the Greek philosophical triad of beauty, truth, and good and the Christian triad of Christ "as the Way, the Truth, and the Life," arguing that "This formula from the Gospel of John

became the motif for a striking image of Jesus in the Archiepiscopal Chapel at Ravenna: 'EGO SUM VIA VERITAS ET VITA,' which "summarized Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and at the same time it epitomized Christ as the Beautiful, the True, and the Good" (7).

"As Jesus was the Poet of the Spirit," Pelikan writes of Emerson's poetic appropriation of the Trinity, "so now the poet was to be the Second Person of the Trinity, through whom the Beauty that was the creator of the universe would shine through, manifesting its essential unity with Truth and Goodness" (200). In this respect, Emerson's concept of the poet as the Christ figure is a secular version of the Christian concept of Christ as the Word in the Gospel of John: Christ was "the Word" through whom "all things came to be. . . . No one has ever seen God; God's only son, he who is nearest to the Father's heart, has made him known" (1: 1-18).

From the beginning of the American poetic tradition to the twentieth century, this concept of Christ as the New Man and as the authentic visionary poet has been one of the most distinctive aspects of the American literary imagination. It is variably and persuasively present in those modern American epics--Whitman's Song of Myself, Crane's The Bridge, and Williams's Paterson--which are to be detailed separately in the following chapters.

Chapter II

Walt Whitman's Song of Myself

A. "Finally shall come the poet worthy that name"

The American imagination, which has been symbolically oriented from the beginning, has been fixated on the image of the new man in the New World. In the chapter entitled "What Is an American?" of Letters from an American Farmer, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur writes: "Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. . . . The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions" (70). This American idea of the new man takes on a new metamorphosis in Whitman's concept of the new man as Christ. Behind this synthesis there lie such previous versions as Winthrop's symbolical articulation of America as "the place where the Lord will create a new Heaven and a new Earth," in Edward Johnson's terms (25), and Emerson's principle of "the infinitude of a private man" (Journals 342). The common element of these concepts of the new man is that the new man is an epic hero who has been involved in the spiritual battle in the process of creating an American civilization.

This concept of the new man as an epic hero runs through Whitman's Leaves of Grass, which was intended to be "The Epos of a Life" (Workshop 174). In an introduction intended for American editions, Whitman says that the poem was meant not only to be comparable to Homer's epic poems but also to be an "entirely modern" epic, an epic which would be congenial with the realities of the New Age and the New World (Workshop 136). In "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" Whitman writes: "Without stopping to qualify the averment, the Old

World has had the poems of myths, fictions, feudalism, conquest, caste, dynastic wars, and splendid exceptional characters and affairs, which have been great; but the New World needs the poems of realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equality, which shall be greater" (Prose Works 721). Despite this definition, however, Whitman believes that the common goal of all epic poems, whether of the Old World or the New, is to suggest the "heroic and spiritual evolution" of "a large, sane, perfect Human Being" or "a great Person" who is eternally the New Man (Prose Works 721; Workshop 136).

Just as Christ embodies the trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, so the new man of the New World for Whitman should comprise the trinity of Democracy, Love, and Religion. American Democracy, Whitman asserts, should "be fibred, vitalized, by regular contact with out-door light and air and growths, farm-scenes, animals, fields, trees, birds, sun-warmth and free skies" and "the whole politics, sanity, religion and art of the New World" must be founded on this principle of nature (Prose Works 294-295). Whitman may not be the first to formulate this idea of natural democracy, but he inaugurates the idea for American literature. The American mind from the beginning has been imbued with this idea of natural democracy by its confrontation with the wild, vast natural surroundings of the New World. As Parkes observes in The American Experience, "Coming to a country where there was no elaborate social organization, and where the individual must constantly do battle with the forces of nature, the American came to see life not as an attempt to realize an ideal order, but as a struggle between the human will and the environment" (9). Consequently, American society "was based on the natural man rather than on man as molded by social rituals and restraints. . . . The genius of American life lay in its unprecedented capacity to release for constructive purposes the energies and abilities of

common men and women" (10-11).

Steeped in this tradition of the American imagination, Whitman thought of democracy as "the unshakable order of the universe forever" (Prose Works 381). Whitman maintains that democracy consists of two qualities: "individualism" and "adhesiveness or love" (Prose Works 381). First, democracy is founded on "the idea of the sovereignty, license, sacredness of the individual" (Workshop 171), the principle of equality of each individual being. The "life-blood of democracy" is "the idea of the pride and dignity of the common people" (Prose Works 388). The whole universe has its meaning only when it is "in reference to a human personality and for identity and needful exercise" (Workshop 167). "But the mass, or lump character . . . is to be ever carefully weigh'd, borne in mind, and provided for. Only from it, and from its proper regulation and potency, comes the other, comes the chance of individualism. The two are contradictory, but our task is to reconcile them" (Prose Works 373). Individualism can be meaningful only when it has the unifying power of "adhesiveness or love" which "fuses and combines the whole" (Workshop 169). The opening lines of the poem, "One's-Self I Sing," clearly reveal Whitman's concept of democracy: "One's-Self I sing, a simple separate person, / Yet utter the word Democratic, the word En-Masse" (LG 1). Thus, democracy becomes whole when it comprises both "a simple separate person" and "En-Masse." It is to be noted that Whitman's democracy is "not confined to politics" but "extended to all departments of civilization & humanity, & include especially the moral, esthetic, & philosophic departments" and Whitman says that "If indeed the various parts of Leaves of Grass demanded a single word to sum up & characterize them, it would seem to be the word Democracy that was wanted" (Workshop 152). Edward Dowden is quite right in his consideration of Whitman as "the poet of democracy":

The principle of equality upon which the democratic form of society is founded, obviously opposes itself to the exclusive spirit of the aristocratical polity. The essential thing which gives one the freedom of the world is not to be born a man of this or that rank, or class, caste, but simply to be born a man. The literature of an aristocratic period is distinguished by its aim at selectness, and the number of things it proscribes; we should expect the literature of a democracy to be remarkable for its comprehensiveness, its acceptance of the persons of all men, its multiform sympathies. The difference between the President and the Broadway mason or hodman is inconsiderable--an accident of office; what is common to both is the inexpressibly important thing, their inalienable humanity. . . . [The] temper of the democracy accepted by the understanding heart, favour[s] only such prides as are founded on nature--that is, on the possession, acquired or inherited, of personal qualities, personal powers, and virtues, and attainments. . . . Walt Whitman in these particulars is what he claims to be, a representative democrat in art. (Dowden 106-107)

Whitman's concept of "En-Masse" leads us to his notion of Love as "a kelson of the creation" (LG 33) which "can bind, and ever seeks to bind, all nations, all men, of however various and distant lands, into a brotherhood, a family . . . making the races comrades, and fraternizing all" (Prose Works 381). Love is a creator who makes a man "a great composite democratic individual, male or female" (Prose Works 463). Love changes his vision of the whole universe and man can identify everything with himself in the belief that all beings--a natural being, a human being, and the Supreme Being--are closely interrelated with each other and become an inseparable one and that every being everywhere is equally

good ("Clear and sweet is my soul, and clear and sweet is all that is not my soul. . . . / Welcome is every organ and attribute of me, and of any man hearty and clean, / Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest") (LG 31) and divine ("I hear and behold God in every object, yet understand God not in the least / I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then") (LG 86).

Whitman's idea of love as a binding power is expressed in terms of sexual symbolism throughout his poetry. Section 5 of Song of Myself is a metaphor of the binding power of love presented in terms of the sexual union of the body and the soul. For Whitman love is a wonder which enables the body to become one with the soul: the mystical contact of the physical with the spiritual, the seen with the unseen. In sexual union with the soul the body mysteriously reaches dramatic understanding of the whole mystery of the universe. And in this sexual union of body and soul in this fifth section the very democratic poet, Walt Whitman himself, is born as "the spirit of God" "parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart" (LG 33).

Whitman declares that "at the core of democracy, finally, is the religious element" (Prose Works 381). Democracy and Love, Whitman insists, "are to be vitalized by religion, (sole worthiest elevator of man or State,) breathing into the proud, material tissues, the breath of life" (Prose Works 381). The individual, who has only these two qualities of Democracy and Love, is not a whole or representative man without his sense of Religion, for the idea of Religion "swallows up and purifies all other ideas and things--and gives endless meaning and destiny to a man and condenses in him all things" (Workshop 171). Whitman's attitude towards religion, as Furness says in Walt Whitman's Workshop, seems to have been formed by "a careful investigation of all known

systems of religious thought or philosophy" (194). And Whitman reached the conclusion that "any one religion is just as good as another" in that it realizes "the divine of man" (Workshop 44). However, the Bible had a permanent influence on Whitman's religiosity. Whitman writes in "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads" that he "went over so thoroughly the Old and New Testaments" (Prose Works 722) and in his own introduction to the London edition of Leaves of Grass he describes himself as "the most thoroughly religious being" whose "interior & foundation quality" is "Hebraic, Biblical, mystic" (Workshop 153-154). In "American National Literature" Whitman claims the superiority of the Bible above all other religious writings: "The books of the Bible stand for the final superiority of devout emotions over the rest, and of religious adoration, and ultimate absolute justice, more powerful than haughtiest Kings or millionaires or majorities" (Prose Works 664).

Furthermore, Whitman identifies religion with poetry: "In its highest aspect, and striking its grandest average, essential Poetry expresses and goes along with essential Religion" (Prose Works 707). And Whitman regards "the Bible as a poetic entity," as the "epic display" of the "finest blending of individuality with universality": "Nowhere else the abnegation of self towering in such quaint sublimity; nowhere else the simplest human emotions conquering the gods of heaven, and fate itself" (Prose Works 548, 546, 547). The Bible is "thick-studded with human emotions, successions of fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, of our own antecedents, inseparable from that background of us, on which, phantasmal as it is, all that we are to-day inevitably depends--our ancestry, our past" (Prose Works 548). Whitman has an unfaltering belief in the "divine and primal poetic structure" of the Bible which "No true bard will ever contravene," for the collected narratives of the Bible are "the fountain heads of song" (Prose Works 549, 548, 549).

This belief led Whitman to sing "Of life immense in passion, pulse, and power, / Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine, / The Modern Man I sing" (LG 1).

It is the singer of this "Modern Man" who is the hero of Whitman's poetry, and the hero's own life is characteristic of Democracy ("immense in passion, pulse, and power"), of Love ("Cheerful"), and of Religion ("freest action form'd under the laws divine"). In his 1855 Preface to Leaves of Grass, Whitman asserts that "The known universe has one complete lover, and that is the greatest poet" (Prose Works 441). The poet as "one complete lover" of the universe is the new man in whom the true God is typified, and who becomes the hero of his own poetry; he creates and celebrates the new beginning, singing "the poems of the morning" (Prose Works 722). The poet is then "the true son of God" by whom "Trinitas divine [of Democracy, Love, and Religion] shall be gloriously accomplish'd and compacted" and "The whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth, shall be completely justified" (LG 415).

Whitman's concept of the poet as "the true son of God" inaugurates his poetic vision of America and proclaims the coming of the new age to readjust "the whole theory and nature of Poetry" with the dawn of "the American Democracy" (Prose Works 719, 416). In his 1855 Preface to Leaves of Grass Whitman contends that "The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem," an epic of "a new earth and a new man" (Prose Works 434, 390). Whitman's poetic vision goes beyond America, enfolding all nations and all humanity. Whitman sees "the peculiar glory" of the United States "not in their geographical or even republican greatness, nor wealth or products, nor military or naval power, nor special, eminent Names in any department . . . but more and more in a vaster, saner, more splendid COMRADESHIP, typifying the People everywhere, uniting closer and closer not only The American States, but all Nations, and all Humanity" (Workshop

163). "I would inaugurate from America, for this purpose, new formulas, international poems. . . . While my pieces, then, were put forth and sounded especially for my own country, and addressed to democratic needs, I cannot evade the conviction that the substances and subtle ties behind them, and which they celebrate . . . belong equally to all countries. And ambition to waken with them, and in their key, the latest echoes of every land, I here avow" (Workshop 164). For Whitman "the crowning growth of the United States is to be spiritual and heroic" (Prose Works 729).

Whitman's poetic vision of America contributed to the formulation of his concept of "an epic of Democracy," which is "a new Poetry" whose "altitude . . . has always been religion--and always will be" (Prose Works 458, 416, 417). "The culmination and fruit of literary artistic expression, and its final fields of pleasure for the human soul, are in metaphysics, including the mysteries of the spiritual world, the soul itself, and the question of the immortal continuation of our identity" (Prose Works 417). In Democratic Vistas Whitman insists:

America demands a poetry that is bold, modern, and all-surrounding and kosmical, as she is herself. It must in no respect ignore science or the modern, but inspire itself with science and the modern. It must bend its vision toward the future, more than the past. Like America, it must extricate itself from even the greatest models of the past, and, while courteous to them, must have entire faith in itself, and the products of its own democratic spirit only. Like her, it must place in the van, and hold up at all hazards, the banner of the divine pride of man in himself, (the radical foundation of the new religion.)

(Prose Works 412)

Regarding "the words America and democracy as convertible terms" (Prose Works 363), Whitman believes that "a new

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Literature, perhaps a new Metaphysics, certainly a new Poetry, are to be, in my opinion, the only sure and worthy supports and expressions of the American Democracy" (Prose Works 416). In an essay "American National Literature," Whitman differentiates the poetry of the Old World from that of the New World: "The poems of Asia and Europe are rooted in the long past" and "celebrate man and his intellections and relativenesses as they have been," but "America, in as high a strain as ever, is to sing them all as they are and are to be" (Prose Works 668), for America, being "the custodian of the future of humanity," is the "inheritor of the past" (Prose Works 513). America itself is "essentially the greatest poem" (Prose Works 434) which embodies "the old hereditaments, legends, poems, theologies, and even customs" as well as "our New-World circumstances and stages of development" (Prose Works 667).

"In the domain of literature loftily considered," Whitman says in "An Old Man's Rejoinder," ". . . 'the kingdom of the Father pass'd; the kingdom of the Son is passing; the kingdom of the Spirit begins'" (Prose Works 655). Here Whitman suggests that his poetry is that of "the kingdom of the Spirit" which might be seen as the fulfillment of generations of radical Christian exegesis, as typified in Joachim of Flora's prophecy that "the Old Testament [is] a book of the Father, the New Testament a book of the Son, and the future age, not yet arrived, the age of the Holy Spirit" (qtd. in Grant and Tracy 87). In Song of Myself, Whitman tries to write such a poem of "the kingdom of the Spirit," a gospel of the Holy Spirit for a new Christian age. Whitman was consciously absorbed in a version of the idea of trinity; it underlies his poetic theory; and the trinitarian schema has been figured in various ways by Whitman critics. Whitman's "consciousness," Allen writes, is composed of "a trinity of self, fancy, and soul, which is to say, biological organism, creative faculty, and metaphysical essence" (Whitman as Man

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5). For Floyd Stovall, Whitman's trinitarian inclination is realized in a poetry that "is consequently a trilogy, showing how freedom may be secured for the body through democracy, for the heart through love, and for the soul through religion" (xxv). Hence Song of Myself is a song of a new Man who embodies the trinity of Democracy, Love, and Religion, the major enterprise of a poetry which Whitman regarded as "the Great Construction of the New Bible" (qtd. in Miller, Whitman's "Song of Myself" 190), "as [his] definitive carte visite to the coming generations of the New World" (Prose Works 712).

Whitman believed in the spiritual growth of each religion which "means exactly the state of development of the people": "I say to you that all forms of religion, without excepting one, any age, any land, are but mediums, temporary yet necessary, fitted to the lower mass-ranges of perception of the race . . . and that the developed soul passes through one or all of them, to the clear homogeneous atmosphere above them" (Workshop 44). This belief, as Allen contends, stimulated "Whitman's desire to found a new religion for the modern age" (Walt Whitman as Man 67). "The new theologies" of a new religion are centered on "the divine pride of man in himself" (Workshop 43, 127). Whitman maintains in "Notes for Lectures on Religion" that they "bring forward man--There is nothing in the universe any more divine than man. All gathers to the worship of man. . . . Why has it been taught that there is only one Supreme?--I say there are and must be myriads of Supremes. I say that that is blasphemous petty and infidel which denies any immortal soul to be eligible to advance onward to be as supreme as any--I say that all goes on to be eligible to become one of the Supremes" (Workshop 43). This is the gospel of the poet of a radical religious democracy which believes in "the common average man" as a divine being (Workshop 43)

Unlike the epic poems of the Old World, Leaves of Grass

aims to offer a "different relative attitude towards God, towards the objective universe, and still more . . . the quite changed attitude of the ego, the one chanting or talking, towards himself and towards his fellow-humanity" (Prose Works 715). Song of Myself, especially, is "The Epos of a Life" (Workshop 174), a gospel of "a Person" whose poetic model is Christ the true son of God and the true poet. Just as Christ was God's emissary of "living Good-will" to all the nations and the whole race, so Walt Whitman declared that he himself was a poetic emissary commissioned "with only Poet's right, as general simple friend of Man" (Workshop 164). The hero of Song of Myself is then a visionary poet himself whose "Speech is the twin of my vision" (LG 55), transforming our whole perception of the universe by washing "the gum from your eyes" (LG 84), like Christ healing the blind man. He is the word and the light and becomes "the way, the truth, and the life." The greatest poet, Whitman says in his 1855 Preface to Leaves of Grass, "is a seer--he is individual--he is complete in himself" in whom "the curious mystery of the eyesight" is incarnated (Prose Works 438). "The metaphor of the eyesight," Miller remarks in his book Walt Whitman, "suggests that the poet, in his role as prophet, sees into the spiritual heart of things for the rest of mankind. The poet, endowed with a transcendent sight, serves as humanity's eyes of the spirit" (66). The poet "sees eternity in men and women, he does not see men and women as dreams or dots" (LG 348). This poet-hero of Song of Myself declares that "You must habit yourself to the dazzle of the light and of every moment of your life" (LG 84). Song of Myself is the epic of the Incarnation of the Word as Light to transform man's vision of the world, so that the prophecy in Passage to India is fulfilled: "Finally shall come the poet worthy that name" (LG 415).

B. "Speech is the twin of my vision"

In "Notes for Lectures on Religion" Whitman mentions that the underlying lesson of his poetry is the principle of nature, the principle "of continual development, of arriving at any one result or degree only to start on further results and degrees," and continues that "Invisibly, inaudibly, after their sorts, all the forces of the Universe, the air, every drop of water, every grain of sand, are pulsating, processing" (Workshop 53). In Song of Myself and "Starting from Paumanok" Whitman declares himself to be "the poet of the Body" and "the poet of the Soul," the poet of the woman and the poet of the man, or the poet of materials and the poet of the spirit (LG 48), regarding "all the things of the universe" as "perfect miracles" which reveal the ultimate spiritual reality (LG 23). The statement in "Notes for Lectures on Religion" suggests that Whitman's poetic idea of metamorphosis was influenced by the Darwinian scientific theory of evolution, Heraclitean and Hegelian philosophy of flux, and Romantic-transcendentalist organic theory (Allen, Whitman Handbook 161-260; Smuts 60-65; Crawley 12-27; Reed 147-155). It is easy to see how a version of spiritual metamorphosis, with strong Christian tendencies, would flourish in this context as seen in the statement in Song of Myself and "Starting from Paumanok." The influences of the concept of evolution on Whitman have been widely discussed, but such an idea of spiritual metamorphosis in Whitman's poetry has not received sufficient attention, even though a generalized "Christ symbolism" in his poetry is discussed by such critics as Thomas Edward Crawley and F. DeWolfe Miller.

In The Structure of Leaves of Grass, Crawley argues that "The Christ-symbol . . . has a unifying effect reaching far beyond the fact that it is the most fully developed and frequently recurring symbol in Leaves of Grass" (78), but even in his later discussion of Leaves of Grass the insight

is not developed much beyond this stage. Crawley thinks of Song of Myself as "preparatory to the gospel of Leaves of Grass in much the same way that the prophecies of the Old Testament are preparatory and essential to our full understanding of the Christ who actually lives and proves himself among the peoples and events of his age" (91). This is a good enough insight, but he ends his structural analysis of Song of Myself simply with the list of the numerous allusions to Christ in the poem. In his essay "The Partitive Studies of 'Song of Myself,'" F. DeWolfe Miller, insisting that "Similarities between Whitman and the Bible serve throughout as a background or the structure" of Song of Myself (12), mentions briefly "the messianic content and the Christian influence" on the structure of Song of Myself (12), but most of his essay is devoted to the examination of other critics' arguments on the structure of Song of Myself (11-17). My study intends to explore the democratic-Christian bases of Song of Myself, the unifying center of Leaves of Grass, in much more detail.

Whitman's use of the Christ figure as the hero in his poetry was deeply influenced not only by an immersion in the Bible which is the equal of any early American Puritan, but also in those Greek literary and philosophical writings which led the Alexandrian Biblical exegetes to interpret the Bible in terms of spiritual symbolism. This version of spiritual allegorizing has found literary expression in the American imagination from its beginnings. Everywhere in Whitman's poetry as well as in his prose, we can find the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy (Allen, Whitman Handbook 161-181). In Democratic Vistas, Whitman remarks that the value of the seen, material world reflects that of the unseen, spiritual world, which is always the barometer of the physical world: "[T]he personality of mortal life is most important with reference to the immortal, the unknown, the spiritual, the only permanently real, which as the ocean waits for and

receives the rivers, waits for us each and all" (Prose Works 403). In Song of Myself, he regards even the smallest thing as the marvelous revelation of divine reality and sees the grass, for example, as "the handkerchief of the Lord," or as "a uniform hieroglyphic" (LG 33, 34). Under the influence of the Bible and Neoplatonic philosophy, Whitman regarded everything in terms of spiritual symbolism. He had the desire to sacralize space and time, to use Mircea Eliade's terms, "the desire to live in a pure and holy cosmos, as it was in the beginning, when it came fresh from the Creator's hands" (65) and to live "in the time of origin" (105), the desire for a spiritual journey to "a new birth" or "access to spirituality [which] was adopted and valorized by Alexandrian Judaism and by Christianity" (200-201).

As the coming of Christ signified a new awakening of human consciousness (Mark 1: 15), so for Whitman, the rise of American democracy and the growth of modern engineering and technology in the nineteenth century signals man's shaking off his old cultural tradition and inaugurates the dawning of a New World and the birth of a New Man. It is this consciousness that prompted Whitman "solely to drop in the earth the germs of a greater religion," to "strike up for a New World" the song of the New Man who is "held to the heavens and all the spiritual world" (LG 21, 16, 21). This New Man begins his song, "Starting from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born, / Well-begotten, and rais'd by a perfect mother" (LG 15); he embodies "The greatness of Love and Democracy, and the greatness of Religion" (LG 21). The hero of "Starting from Paumanok" declares that "I too . . . inaugurate a religion, I descend into the arena," feeling that "I am destin'd to utter the loudest cries there, the winner's pealing shouts" (LG 20). "Starting from Paumanok" insists that "the whole earth and all the stars in the sky are for religion's sake. / . . . Nor character nor life worthy the name without religion, / Nor land nor man or woman

without religion" (LG 20). His "poems of materials," as he holds, ". . . are to be the most spiritual poems," so that his "poems of my body and of mortality" are "the poems of my soul and of immortality" (LG 18).

Since Song of Myself traces the gradual progress of the hero's spiritual metamorphosis, which is similar to the spiritual transformation of Christ from his birth to his ascension, my discussion of the poem accordingly emphasizes the spiritual metamorphosis of the hero and its structural development. "The progression in the poem," as Ann Clearly asserts, "moves from a natural, exterior sun to a poetic and interiorized source of light" (96) and from the ordinary voices of nature and of men and women to the words of spiritualized language. Just as Christ "advanced in wisdom" as he grew up (Luke 2: 52), so the hero of Song of Myself grows as a visionary poet. In other words, the structure of Song of Myself is the progressive movement of the hero's recognition of his speech as the twin of his vision.

Sections 1-6 are the prelude to the hero's quest for a condition in which "speech is the twin of my vision." Just as the New Testament begins with the annunciation of the birth of Christ, Section 1 proclaims the advent of the "I" who will be the word and the light. This section introduces the hero as the word whose "tongue" will "speak at every hazard, / Nature without check with original energy," "Hoping to cease not till death" (LG 29). That his first act is to observe "a spear of summer grass" is very significant, for the grass will later be identified with the word, the hero of the poem. Therefore, his observing of the grass signifies the first act in his search for his identity, an identity of the "I" (the physical "I" or the body) and the "you" (the spiritual "I" or the soul), an identity of subject and object. The opening line of this poem, as Albert Gelpi observes, "established the connection with and distinction from all previous epics," confirming that this poem is a

"transcendent and new" epic, an epic of "not the swordblade of Aeneas but 'a spear of summer grass,'" an epic that "would take as its theme the drama of identity and would have to be 'indirect' to tap the unconscious sources of identity" (169-170). In this earliest stage of the hero Whitman creates the image of the hero as a quester, a traveller who always desires to move, to loaf, or to wander.

Section 2 informs us that the breathing of the hero is "the fragrance" of "Nature without check with original energy," which will replace the intoxicating "distillation" of "perfumes" of "houses and rooms" (LG 29), the perfumes of "the schools, religions, philosophies, literature . . . the swathing, suffocating folds and mental wrappings derived from civilization" (Bucke 161). It should be noted that here are introduced the two worlds of the inside (houses and rooms) and the outside (the wood and the bank), which contribute to the development of the metamorphic theme of Song of Myself. The hero expresses his desire to be released from the confinement of the inside world and to "contact," or "possess the good of the earth and sun": "I am mad for it to be in contact with me" (LG 29-30). This anxiety to "contact" the outside world, Denis Donoghue says, is "Whitman's ideal human image. It will blur the distinction between man and God, thus setting up yet another equation, the largest in intention," an equation between man and God; "This divinity flows and sanctifies, by contact, everything it sees, hears, touches, or smells; it is Whitman's version of the laying on of hands" (33). And the song of the hero will be "The sound of the belch'd words of my voice" which will be "loos'd to the eddies of the wind" (LG 30), "rising from bed and meeting the sun" (LG 30). This cosmic vision leads to the contention that the hero is the possessor of "the origin of all poems," the secret of the universe (LG 30). It echoes the image of Christ as the Word through whom "the good of the earth and sun" was possessed, originated, or created out of

chaos or darkness in the beginning, the Word who liberated man from "the eyes of the dead" and "the spectres in the books," the tyrannies of the Law, the symbol of symbols of "the origin of all poems" (LG 30). He embraces the whole world in "a reaching around of arms" (LG 30), like Christ in the New Testament who "longed to gather your children, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings" (Matthew 23: 37; Luke 13: 34).

In Section 3 the power of speech of the hero is balanced by the power of his vision as the light, for hero's "eyes" are granted the power to "cipher" the secret of eternal truth by God, "the hugging and loving bed-fellow [who] sleeps at my side through the night, and withdraws at the peep of the day with stealthy tread" (LG 31-32). God is no longer a transcendent being, but incarnates himself as a "loving bed-fellow," the Word who impregnates the hero with the bread of life ("Leaving me baskets cover'd with white towels swelling the house with their plenty" (LG 31)). The hero is impregnated with the power of vision which will open his eyes or heal his blindness and lead to his realization that "the unseen is proved by the seen," a new knowledge of "the perfect fitness and equanimity of things" (LG 31). For him, "Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest" (LG 31). With this knowledge, he is satisfied and comes nearer to "see, dance, laugh, sing" as a visionary poet (LG 31). He is ready to "go bathe and admire myself," to possess timelessness in time, and to live in a perpetual "now": "Urge and urge and urge, / Always the procreant urge of the world" (LG 31). For him, there is only a perpetual evolution or transformation, for this "procreant urge" of the hero, as Robert D. Faner says, "conveys the slow, deep, eternal desires which make 'endings' impossible" (190). For him, there is no beginning and no ending in the universe: "I do not talk of the beginning or the end" (LG 30).

In Section 4 the hero appears to be the Word and the Light. He, as the Word, looking "Backward . . . in my own days where I sweated through fog with linguists and contenders," is convinced that "I have no mockings or arguments" anymore and declares that "I witness and wait" (LG 32). As the Light, he views such human experiences as sickness, poverty, joys, sorrows, and battles, but he is shown to be not yet mature because he cannot identify himself with such people as the trippers and the askers who are all involved in these human sufferings and agonies: "These come to me days and nights and go from me again, / But they are not the Me myself" (LG 32). He stands "Apart from the pulling and hauling" of humanity (LG 32). Like Christ who witnessed human sufferings and waited for thirty years, he also needs time and for now he is witnessing and waiting for the time to do his mission.

Even though the impregnating power of sexuality is implied in Section 3, Section 5 elaborates "the procreant urge" as the power which enables the hero to reach the insight that "the unseen is proved by the seen, / Till that becomes unseen and receives proof in its turn" (LG 31). The sexual union of the soul and the body is Whitman's identification of the spiritual and the physical, or what James E. Miller says "the enobling of the physical through the spiritual" (Whitman's "Song of Myself" 137). It is a metaphor of the birth of the visionary poet, who will identify the body with the soul, as Edwin Haviland Miller has put it, seeing the scene of this union as "the pictorial form of a cross" (Walt Whitman's Poetry 22). Miller writes:

It is understandable why Whitman, perhaps unknowingly, chose to dramatize the scene in terms of a crucifixion. For at least in one sense the old Whitman dies and a new one is born: the conventional, prosaic Walter Whitman is succeeded by the [poetic] Walt Whitman announced in the first edition of Leaves

of Grass. The crucifixion also suggests the death of the ancient dualism (body and soul) and the resurrection of a single whole being. The body is reborn without the Judaeo-Christian mortification of the flesh: the soul accepts the entire body . . . for all organs of the body are equally important and all sensations are equally good. . . . Whitman resurrects the body, or, to put it another way, makes the soul sensual once again, as it was in the beginning of the child's life before society imposed conscience and "thou-shalt-nots." (Walt Whitman's Poetry 22-23)

This birth metaphor is to recapitulate the Incarnation of the Word in secular terms. As Galway Kinnell points out, "Whitman climbs down the Platonic ladder. The direction is . . . a motion from the conventionally highest downward toward union with the most ordinary and the least, the conventionally lowest, the common things of the world" (224). After his sexual union with the the soul, the hero (the body) admits that "Swiftly arose and spread around me the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth" (LG 33). The hero, however, has not yet reached the full vision which enables him to articulate his own speech: "Not words, not music or rhyme I want, not custom or lecture, not even the best"; he may enjoy only "the hum" which is appropriate to the ear of a child: "Only the lull I like, the hum of your valved voice" (LG 33). The spiritual awakening of the hero signals his start on a journey toward his spiritual growth.

The newly-born child in Section 5 seeks to find his identity in Section 6, asking, "What is the grass?" (LG 33). After several attempts to "guess" the articulate meaning of "the seen," the grass, the hero is able to "perceive after all so many uttering tongues" in grass and to "translate" the grass as the words, as "the flag of my disposition," "the handkerchief of the Lord," or "a uniform hieroglyphic" (LG 34). George Y. Trail's perceptive observation of "the grass

as a metaphor for the tongue" is relevant here (122). Connecting the fifth line of Section 1 of Song of Myself ("I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass") with the lines 119-120 of Section 6 of the poem ("O I perceive after all so many uttering tongues, / and I perceive they do not come from the roof of mouths for nothing"), Trail interprets the grass as "the lingual penetration" (124) of the soul who "parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart" (LG 33). Trail's interpretation of the grass as the tongue suggests that the grass symbolizes the power of the speech of the hero which penetrates the body, the heart of the hearers and the "spear" of the grass corresponds to "the parallel tongue as the epic weapon of the poet/hero" (124). The grass is finally identified with the hero, who perceives himself after the manner of Christ the Word, whose speech penetrates the heart of man, transforming his blindness into a clear vision which finds everything divine like "a uniform hieroglyphic."

In Section 6, the hero, "observing a spear of summer grass," longs for a never-ending journey toward its spiritual renewal: "I wish I could translate the hints about the dead young men and women, / And the hints about old men and mothers, and the offspring taken soon out of their laps" (LG 34). He finds his identity in the ever-growing grass, as he reiterates in the final section of Song of Myself that "I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love, / If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles" (LG 89):

The smallest sprout [of the grass] shows there is
really no death,
And if ever there was it led forward life, and does
not wait at the end to arrest it,
And ceas'd the moment life appear'd.

All goes onward and outward, nothing collapses,

And to die is different from what any one supposed, and luckier. (34-35)

The grass is a symbol of this mysterious perpetual becoming, the sorts of life for which Whitman reaches. Even after his departure, his words will live on like the ever-returning grass, like Christ's words sown into the world for those who can hear.

Sections 7-13 are dominated by the light image and the hero's awakening. In Section 7, by "pass[ing] death with the dying and birth with the new-wash'd babe," the hero's eyes begin to open, seeing everything as "good" (LG 35). He begins to feel that he is part of the others and declares that he is "not contain'd between my hat and boots" (LG 35). Now his sympathy with the others "cannot be shaken away" (LG 35). The hero's act of seeing continues in Section 8 where the panorama of the human life cycle, from birth to love to suffering to death, is presented. By looking at the newly-born child who "sleeps in its cradle," by viewing "the youngster and the red-faced girl turn aside up the bushy hill," and by witnessing "the corpse with its dabbled hair" sprawling "on the bloody floor of the bedroom" (LG 35-36), the hero recognizes that he is the poet who captures the true meaning of the words, voices, cries, and howls that he hears. He listens to "What living and buried speech is always vibrating here, what howls restrain'd by decorum" (LG 36), for in his mission "I mind [all human experiences of birth, love, suffering, and death] or the show or resonance of them--I come and I depart" (LG 36).

The urban scene of Section 8 is juxtaposed with the rural scenes of Section 9, in which light plays upon the closed "big doors of the country barn" and keeps it open (LG 36). "The clear light plays on the brown gray and green intertinged" (LG 36). Section 10 emphasizes the open-air life of the hero. The hero enjoys hunting "in the wilds and mountains," living in the sea, and seeing "the marriage of

the trapper in the open air in the far west, the bride was a red girl" (LG 37). The marriage of the trapper and a red girl is the hero's vision of harmony among the races, which leads him to understand "perfectly well" the meanings of the "revolving eyes" of the "runaway slave" who is "bruise'd", "limpsy," and "weak" (LG 37-38). Like Christ, the hero becomes a comforter for the suffering.

The closed life of a lady confined in her own house in Section 11 presents a striking contrast to the open air in Section 10. The image of her sexual desire is increasingly heightened by the tension between the inside world and the outside, where "twenty-eight young men" play. The young men are "bath[ing] by the shore" but the lady is confined in "the fine house by the rise of the bank" (LG 38). The young men are "all so friendly" but she is "all so lonesome" (LG 38). The young men are naked but she is "richly drest" (LG 38). The young men are free of their consciousness, "Dancing and laughing along the beach" (LG 38). Even though "the unseen hand" of a woman who is a stranger to them "pass'd over their bodies," "tremblingly from their temples and ribs," "They do not think whom they souse with spray" (LG 39). On the other hand, the lady is imprisoned in her own consciousness. Even though she "splash[es] in the water there, yet stay[s] stock still in your room" (LG 38).

The powerful sexual desire of Section 11 is of course not merely physical; nothing in Whitman ever is. It has powerful spiritual significance, this yearning for openness and metamorphosis. In Section 12, it is connected with an image of the dynamic strength of the butcher-boy "at the stall in the market" and the blacksmiths "with grimed and hairy chests" (LG 39). Their energies are powerful enough to crack down the strong wall or the window of "the fine house" of the lady, the prison of human sexuality and human consciousness and to release her from her prison to the open-air world. In Section 13 the image of the light is dominant; the light

penetrates the clothes of the body, the imprisoned human consciousness. The negro driver "tosses the slouch of his hat away from his forehead, / The sun falls on his crispy hair and mustache, falls on the black of his polish'd and perfect limbs" (LG 39-40). The light of the eyes of the oxen "that rattle the yoke and chain or halt in the leafy shade" seems to the hero to tell "more than all the print I have read in my life" (LG 40). The look and colors of the world are transforming him: "the look of the bay mare shames silliness out of me" (LG 40).

In Section 14 the hero is summoned into the sounds and words of nature which are awakening him to his identity as the Word. The wild gander, who "leads his flock through the cool night," cries "Ya-honk" (LG 40). "[L]istening close" to the gander's cry, the hero imagines that the "purpose" of the cry "sounds . . . down to me like an invitation" (LG 40). He finds "the same old law" in the sounds of "the grunting sow" and of the "half-spread wings" of the turkey-hen (LG 41). Awakened by the sounds of nature, he is more and more "enamour'd of growing out-doors, / Of men that live among cattle or taste of the ocean or woods, / Of the builders and steerers of ships and the wielders of axes and mauls, and the drivers of horses" and he can "eat and sleep with them week in and week out" (LG 41). And he realizes that "What is commonest, cheapest, nearest, easiest, is Me" (LG 41).

The introduction of the image of the bird flying in Section 14 leads the hero not to ask "the sky to come down to my good will," but to scatter "it freely forever" and to observe in Section 15 the outside world, the whole range of American experiences from coarse frontier life to the refined world of musicians and artists, from the insane world of the "confirm'd" lunatic at the asylum to the sane world of "The President holding a cabinet council," from the secular world of the prostitutes to the pious world of the deacons (LG 41-44). These worldly scenes "tend inward to me," the hero

says, "and I tend outward to them" (LG 44). All of these worlds are equally identified with the hero: "And such as it is to be of these more or less I am" (LG 44). "The lengthy catalogue," Edwin Haviland Miller observes, "ends in a quiet, delicate coda, as city and country, living and dead, aged and young, husbands and wives, and the I merge, diversity momentarily giving way to harmonious union" (Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself" 81). Here we can find the beginning of the dynamic interaction between inside and outside which enables the hero to "weave the song of myself" (LG 44).

Section 16 reiterates the theme of the identification of the hero with the others catalogued in Section 15: "Of every hue and caste am I, of every rank and religion, / A farmer, mechanic, artist, gentleman, sailor, quaker, / Prisoner, fancy-man, rowdy, lawyer, physician, priest" (LG 45). The hero grows; everything is so divinely ordained and nothing is without its purpose. Everything is in its own place as he is in his place: "The moth and fish-eggs are in their place, / The bright suns I see and the dark suns I cannot see are in their place, / The palpable is in its place and the impalpable is in its place" (LG 45).

In Section 17 the hero insists that this idea is rooted in "the thoughts of all men in all ages and lands" (LG 45). As James E. Miller argues in his essay "'Song of Myself' as Inverted Mystical Experience," Whitman "inverted" the traditional religious concept of man as a sinner who is isolated or separated from the mystical source of life and attempted to reinterpret the human position in the universe in an effort to "purge this false sense," a false vision of man (Whitman's "Song of Myself" 140-141). In Song of Myself the hero's vision is purified; it grows as the grass itself grows in a continual metamorphic analogue for that experience Whitman identifies as Christlike, the growth toward divinity in all men. The grass is ubiquitous; it "grows wherever the land is and the water is" (LG 45). The "common air," the

breathing of the grass, "bathes the globe" (LG 45).

Likewise, the song of the hero is to be sounded "wherever the land is and the water is."

Section 18 begins with the sounds of the cornets and the drums, the sounds of the battlefields, which will be sounded again in Sections 34-36. These sounds, together with the accompanying catalogues of Sections 15-16, 24, 31, 33, 41, and 47, insist on the poetry's epic ambition. These marches are played not "for accepted victors only," but "for conquer'd and slain persons" also (LG 46): for both the slaughtered Texans as in Section 34 and the victors, living and dead, in Sections 35-36 whom he regards as "equal to the greatest heroes known" (LG 46).

Section 19 defines "some intricate purpose" of Song of Myself in terms of the "yearning" for the word and the light (LG 46). The song of the hero is "the meal equally set" for "the natural hunger" of "the wicked just the same as the righteous," for the natural desire of man for the words and light (LG 46). Here for the first time Whitman explicitly connects with the hero such words or phrases as "the touch of my lips to yours," "the murmur of yearning," "twittering," and "the daylight" to signify his nature and function in the poem as the word and the light (LG 46-47). The hero asks in the later part of this section: "Does the daylight astonish? does the early redstart twittering through the woods?" (LG 47), but, in spite of the listeners' astonishment, he realizes his role as he announces that "I will tell you" (LG 47) as he identifies his messianic role with the minute utterances of nature.

In Section 20 the hero seeks to identify himself and asks: "What is a man anyhow? what am I? what are you" (LG 47)? He finds himself as a representative man, identifying with any man: "All I mark as my own you shall offset it with your own" (LG 47). He proceeds to identify with the creative Word itself: "In all people I see myself, none more and not

one a barley-corn less / . . . To me the converging objects of the universe perpetually flow, / All are written to me" (LG 47). Since he is the Word, this poetry is identified with the timeless: "I know I am deathless . . . / I exist as I am"; he knows "the amplitude of time" (LG 48).

In Section 21 the hero defines his function as an interpreter who can "translate into a new tongue" the secret (LG 48), true meanings of the universe in terms of "a hierogamy of heaven and earth," to use Eliade's terms (165). Here the heaven is personified as the male, the Soul, the hero of the poem and at once described as the "bare-bosom'd . . . magnetic nourishing night" of "south winds," which are symbolic of the spirit (LG 49); the earth, as the female, the Body. The soul of heaven visits the body of the earth, the "voluptuous cool-breath'd . . . rich apple-blossom'd" earth waiting with her "Far-swooping elbow'd" arms stretched and, "[half-holding]" her, nourishes her with his "unspeakable passionate love" (LG 49). In his "Notes for Lectures on Religion" Whitman expresses the same idea, seeing "the Soul of the Universe" as "the Male and genital master" who is "the impregnating and animating spirit" and the body or "Physical matter" as "Female and Mother" who "waits barren and bloomless, the jets of life from the masculine vigor" (Workshop 49). Initiated by this sexual union, the hero of the poem is now able to "translate into a new language" the "pleasures of heaven" (the poems of the Soul) and "the pains of hell" (the poems of the Body) which have puzzled him so far (LG 48). Whitman also invests the hero with the bisexual attributes: "I am the poet of the woman the same as the man" (LG 48). This bisexual attribute, Ernest Lee Tuveson asserts, signifies that the hero is "the counterpart of the divine being" (213).

From the beginning section up to Section 21, land-related imagery is prevalent, but from Section 22 water-related imagery becomes dominant. In Section 22 the hero of the poem

"resign[s]" himself to the "crooked inviting fingers" of the sea beach (LG 49). The hero, being naked, runs to the sea to "have a turn together," and cries in an irresistible voice: "Cushion me soft, rock me in billowy drowse, / Dash me with amorous wet, I can repay you" (LG 49). Here the hero's immersion "in billowy drowse" of the sea signifies his disintegration into the primordial mode of existence, "a temporary reincorporation into the indistinct, followed by a new creation, a new life, or a 'new man,'" just as, "According to Justin, Christ, a new Noah, emerged victorious from the waters to become the head of another race" (Eliade 131, 133-134).

In Section 23, after this quasi-baptismal re-entry into the primordial state, the hero proclaims himself an "Endless unfold[er] of words of ages" (LG 51). His word is "a word of the modern, the word En-Masse. / A word of the faith that never balks" (LG 51). His words are such offsprings of "Time" that they have the material body of "Reality," which no one dare question (LG 51). Through this material body the hero enters into "an area of my dwelling," the world of naming things (LG 51). "The physical fact," John T. Irwin argues, "is not the dwelling place because for Whitman the physical is the path to the metaphysical ('path' not in the sense that the metaphysical is located elsewhere, but in the sense that the metaphysical is a radically different way of experiencing the physical)" (22).

Section 24 is very significant in that the hero of the poem finally recognizes his identity as a visionary poet. The meaning of the celebrated birth of "I" in the first line of Section 1, which has been a baffling mystery both to the hero himself and the reader of the poem, is suddenly clarified in Section 24 by the sudden revelation of the name of the hero. Just as Christ was officially christened by God "my beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11), so the hero is christened by the author of the poem "Walt Whitman, a kosmos,

of Manhattan the son" (LG 52). "Like Odysseus crowing his name to the blinded Cyclops," Paul Zweig notes, "Whitman's singer has made a name for himself" (257). The hero's revealing of his own name, like Adam's act of the naming of the animals in Genesis, is the act to possess the secret of the universe, to possess the sacred (spiritual reality) in the profane (sensual world). "Names," Whitman says in An American Primer, "are a test of the esthetic and of spirituality" (34). And Whitman, believing in the mysterious power implied in the name, says in reference to the name of Christ that "Names are magic":

Out of Christ are divine words--out of this savior.
Some words are fresh-smelling, like lilies, roses, to
the soul, blooming without failure.--The name of
Christ--all words that have arisen from the life and
death of Christ, the divine son, who went about
speaking perfect words, no patois--whose life was
perfect,--the touch of whose hands and feet was
miracles--who was crucified--his flesh laid in a
shroud, in the grave. (Primer 18-19).

By revealing his name, the hero of the poem is consecrated and realizes that "Divine am I inside and out, and I make holy whatever I touch or am touch'd from, / The scent of these arm-pits aroma finer than prayer, / This head more than churches, bibles, and all the creeds" (LG 53). Just as Christ is a "perfect" man because he is the embodiment of the "flesh" and the "holy," so the hero of the poem, transcending "churches, bibles, and all the creeds," becomes a complete man, a poet of "the Body" and "the Soul" (LG 53, 48). And just as Christ, after being baptized, was convinced of his identity as the Word whose mission was to proclaim the Gospel of God, so the hero of the poem, after being baptized (Section 22), is convinced of his identity as a Word, who should "speak the pass-word primeval" and "give the sign of democracy" (LG 52). The hero feels that "the afflatus" or

"the current and index" is "surging and surging" through him:

Through me many long dumb voices,
 Voices of the interminable generations of prisoners
 and slaves,
 Voices of the diseases'd and despairing and of thieves
 and dwarfs,
 Voices of cycles of preparation and accretion,
 And of the threads that connect the stars, and of
 wombs and of the father-stuff,
 And of the rights of them the others are down upon,
 Of the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised,
 Fog in the air, beetles rolling balls of dung.

Through me forbidden voices,
 Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove
 the veil,
 Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.

(LG 52-53)

The "many long dumb voices," which have been "the deform'd, trivial, flat, foolish, despised, / Fog in the air," are animated like "beetles rolling balls of dung" (LG 52), "roll[ing] the great ball of the Sun across the heavens" as in the Egyptian myth (Mabbott 43); the "forbidden voices" are unveiled. All these voices are converged into him to be "clarified and transfigur'd" into a fresh meaning. The "locks" are unscrewed from the doors and the doors themselves are unscrewed from their jambs (LG 52). All the barriers to communication between all beings are unscrewed; the secret meaning of "the threads that connect the stars" and connect "wombs" with "the father-stuff" is to be clearly revealed like "a miracle."

The voices converging into the hero's mind are presented in sexual imagery in the open air, in such images as "Trickling sap of maple," "Vapors," "sweaty brooks and dews," "Winds whose soft-tickling genitals," and the light of the

"Sun so generous," and like (LG 53). The poet feels impelled to be "A morning-glory" at the windows of all mankind: "To behold the day-break!" (LG 54). This is paralleled by sexual imagery: "Something I cannot see puts upward libidinous prongs, / Seas of bright juice suffuse heaven" (LG 54). The hero of the poem fully realizes that he is a visionary poet.

In Section 25, the light of the sun becomes the power of visionary expression. "All life to him," Malcolm Cowley writes in the introduction to his edition Walt Whitman's Leaves of Grass: The first (1855) Edition, "is such a miracle of beauty that the sunrise would kill him if he could not find expression for it--'If I could not now and always send sunrise out of me'" (Miller, Whitman's "Song of Myself" 184). The hero's voice soars high to "ascend dazzling and tremendous as the sun": "My voice goes after what my eyes cannot reach, / With the twirl of my tongue I encompass worlds and volumes of worlds" (LG 54-55). Finally, it finds the light of the sun: "We found our own O my soul in the calm and cool of the day-break" (LG 54). In the long run, for Whitman "Speech is the twin of my vision" (LG 55) as it was for Christ. Thus the hero ejaculates in "prophetical screams": "Walt you contain enough, why don't you let it out then?" (LG 55). However, this is the critical moment for the hero, for if he fails to overcome the temptation of his pride with a correlative prudence he will never be a visionary poet: "Come now I will not be tantalized, you conceive too much of articulation, / Do you not know O speech how the buds beneath you are folded? / Waiting in gloom, protected by frost" (LG 55). Just as Christ overcame the temptation of Satan, the Incarnate Pride, so the hero, with "the hush of my lips," is triumphant enough to "wholly confound the skeptic" (LG 55), the personified Satan who "comes and carries off the word which has been sown" in the minds of people (Mark 4:15).

Section 26 continues this metaphor of temptation and describes the trial period of the hero's final preparation. The hero appears not to be a voice but to be a listener to the voice. There are two kinds of voices here: natural and artistic. The hero resigns himself to silence and only to listening to the voices of the human world of joy and agony, the sounds of the natural world of birds and plants, and to cosmic sounds: "Now I will do nothing but listen, / To accrue what I hear into this song, to let sounds contribute toward it" (LG 55). All these voices and sounds constitute the characteristics of "'heart-music'" that Whitman thought of at first as "'something original and beautiful in the way of American musical execution'" (Cavitch 21-22). Later the hero finds himself "Steep'd amid honey'd morphine" (LG 56) of what Whitman calls "the divine art of music" (qtd. in Faner 43), after he listens to the sounds of such musical instruments as "violoncello" and "the key'd cornet," the chorus of an opera performed by "A tenor large and fresh" and "the train'd soprano," and in the orchestral ensemble of a symphony (LG 56). Being "cut by [the] bitter and angry hail" of the opera, the hero feels "mad-sweet pangs through my belly and breast" (LG 56) and his "windpipe throttled in fakes of death" (LG 56). "At length," the hero cries, "let up again to feel the puzzle of puzzles, / And that we call Being" (LG 56). The hero is now the poet of "Being," who is to "get in touch with humanity . . . [and] retire to the very deepest sources of life--back, back, till there is no farther point to retire to" (Camden Conversations 135). For Whitman, as Rober D. Faner says in his Walt Whitman and Opera, music "had come to be the key capable of unlocking the deepest secrets of man and the universe, the force powerful enough to transform a man into a poet" (42-43).

Sections 27-29 can be read as a sort of parallel to the three temptations of Christ: the artistic question in Section 27, the sensual question in Section 28, and the question

about poetic policy in Section 29. Section 27 begins with an artistic temptation, alluding to the poetic or other form: "To be in any form, what is that? / (Round and round we go, all of us, and ever come back thither,) / If nothing lay more develop'd the quahaug in its callous shell were enough" (LG 57). The poem, the hero answers, is not "the quahaug in its callous shell," a simple form, but it is a refined, artistic form like opera music which is to "seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me" and it is to "touch my person" (LG 57). In Section 28 the hero is asked whether the "touch" of the word has been "quivering me to a new identity": "Is this then a touch?" (LG 57). The hero "went myself first to the headland, my own hands carried me there" (LG 58), as Christ was carried to the desert by the imperative of the Spirit. "Deluding my confusion with the calm of the sunlight and pasture-fields," the "prurient provokers" of the senses "bribed to swap off with touch and go and graze at the edges of me" (LG 57). The hero cries in a bitter agony:

The sentries [of the senses] desert every other part
of me,
They have left me helpless to a red marauder,
They all come to the headland to witness and assist
against me.

.
You villain touch! What are you doing? my breath is
tight in its throat

Unclench your floodgates, you are too much for me.

(LG 57-58)

The agony in Section 28 leads to Section 29, in which the hero wrestles with the implications of such visionary poetry. The hero is tempted with the offer of "Rich showering rain, and recompense richer afterward" (LG 58). This section suggests that poetry is no simple natural outpourings of heart like "rich showering rain"; expression is more vital, like "Sprouts [which] take and accumulate, stand by the curb

prolific and vital" or like the "[l]andscapes" which are "projected masculine, full-sized and golden" (LG 58). Sections 27-29 test the hero's resolve, the determination to see the messianic burden of his poetry through to its conclusion.

Surviving the three temptations, the hero reaches his vision that "All truths wait in all things" (LG 58). The thing is "a compend of compends [which] is the meat of a man or woman" and that "The insignificant is as big to me as any" (LG 59, 58). This vision of the bodily world, the hero is convinced, can never be convinced by "Logic and sermons," but it is verified and sanctified by the "omnific" vision which is achieved by the complete union of the body with the soul (LG 58, 59). This bodily world is specifically envisioned in Sections 31-33. The hero's visionary journey evolves from the lowest world of minerals, insects, and vegetables in Section 31 to the world of animals in Section 32 to the whole world of human beings in Section 33. Section 31 offers "a sort of microscopic vision" of the lowest world, to use Malcolm Cowley's terms (Miller, Whitman's 'Song of Myself' 184), the vision of such seemingly insignificant objects as "a leaf of grass," "the pismire," "a grain of sand," "the egg of the wren," "a mouse," "gneiss," "coal," "moss," "grains," "esculent roots," and the like. Each object in this world is "miracle" and "equally perfect" enough to "adorn the parlors of heaven" because it is "the journey-work of the stars" and "a chef-d'oeuvre for the highest" (LG 59). In Section 32 the hero envisions the "placid and self-contain'd" world of animals as the "tokens" of himself:

They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their
sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God,
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the
mania of owning things,

Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived
 thousands of years ago,
 No one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth.

(LG 60)

In the later part of Section 32 he images himself as a
 "flexibly moving" stallion which is powerful, dynamic, and
 beautiful and transcends it: "Even as I stand or sit passing
 faster than you" (LG 61).

His visionary power leads to the sweeping long catalogues
 in Section 33. These catalogues encompass the whole universe:
 "I am afoot with my vision" (LG 61). The visionary journey
 includes all "Space and Time" (LG 61). He is Space itself:
 "I skirt sierras, my palms cover continents" (LG 61). He
 travels from "the city's quadrangular houses" through the
 whole continent of America, the whole globe, the entire
 universe, "crossing savannas, trailing in forests," sailing
 from "the arctic sea," speeding through the cosmic realm of
 "heaven and the stars" (LG 61-65). He is Time itself: "I am
 the clock myself" (LG 67). His time moves from day to night,
 from spring to winter, from past to present to future. He
 walks "the old hills of Judaea with the beautiful gentle God
 by my side" (LG 64); he enters both "some vast and ruin'd
 city" of old and "all the living cities of the globe" at the
 same time (LG 65). He is a man and a woman: "I am a free
 companion" (LG 65-66). He is the bridegroom and the bride at
 once. He is the body and the soul: "I help myself to
 material and immaterial" (LG 65). In short, he is a
 complete man who, "tak[ing] part," is able to "see and hear
 the whole," and all things become "holy" by the touch of his
 palms which "cover continents" (LG 67, 53, 61).

After finishing his visionary journey, the hero suddenly
 draws our attention to the field of human sufferings: "We are
 approaching some great battle-field in which we are soon to
 be engaged" (LG 65). The whole vision converges to create a
 single image of man's solitary battle as the sufferings of

"the silent old-faced infants and the lifted sick, and the sharp-lipp'd unshaved men"; the agonies of "the hounded slave" whose "gore dribs, thinn'd with the ooze of my skin," of the "mother of old, condemn'd for a witch, burnt with dry wood, her children gazing on" (LG 66). The vision of human sufferings leads the hero to his realization of his identity with all humanity: "I am the man, I suffer'd, I was there"; "I am the hounded slave"; "I myself become the wounded person"; "I am the mash'd fireman with breast-bone broken" (LG 66-67). In the poem "A Sight in Camp in the Daybreak Gray and Dim," Whitman sees "the face of the Christ himself" in the face of a wounded soldier dying in the hospital tent in camp (LG 307). Whitman's imagination in this poem implies that every human being, regardless of his status, is to be regarded as having his own eternal value because he is also the image of God. In this regard, the hero of Song of Myself, by participating in human sufferings and agonies of all times and places, is not "outside both space and time," as James E. Miller argues in his interpretation of this section (Whitman's "Song of Myself" 146), but in time and space as Christ was. In other words, he transcends or possesses space and time in the moment of "here and now," freeing humanity from its suffering. He is everything (time and place; a man and a woman; the material and the immaterial): "All this I swallow, it tastes good, I like it well, it becomes mine" (LG 66). Now everything is clarified and transparent for him:

Space and Time! now I see it is true, what I guess'd
at,
What I guess'd when I loaf'd on the grass,
What I guess'd while I lay alone in my bed,
And again as I walk'd the beach under the paling stars
of the morning. (LG 61)

The image of suffering in Section 33 serves as the prelude to Sections 34-36 in which two battles, one on the

land (Section 34) and the other in the sea (Sections 35-36), provide Song of Myself with the sense of epic struggle. Section 34 tells "the tale of the murder in cold blood" on the land between Mexicans and Texans (LG 68), which echoes Homer's Iliad in the scene of "the burning of the bodies" of the slaughtered Texan heroes, adding an epic dimension to the poem (LG 69). The story of defeat on the land in broad day in Section 34 is balanced in Section 35 by the story of victory in the sea in the dark night. The victory of the American BonHomme Richard over the British Serapis at the sea battle in Section 35 is ruefully colored by the sinking of the American battleship and the aftermath of the battle in Section 36. The two events of this sea battle in Sections 35-36, however, are very significant. The first event is a symbolic victory in the American struggle with the British Empire. The second event, the submerging of the American battleship in Section 36, is symbolic of America's burial of her old burden and the birth into "a new identity." These two events are poetically employed by Whitman as a symbol of the hero's liberation and death, from all his misgivings and terrors. Therefore, the movement of the hero's imaginative experiences from the land to the sea is comparable to his spiritual journey toward his new birth. Sections 35-36 also emphasize the image of the newly-born hero as the word ("his voice is neither high nor low") and the light ("His eyes give more light to us than our battle-lanterns") (LG 70). The hero is the word and light which guides mankind in the midst of ordeals in the world, in the darkness and leads to spiritual victory, to a bright world of new life.

Section 37 continues the theme of the inwardness of the hero. The hero is "In at the conquer'd doors": "Embody all presences outlaw'd or suffering, / See myself in prison shaped like another man, / And feel the dull unintermitted pain" (LG 71). Human sufferings and agonies are no longer regarded as not-the-Me-myself but as the-Me-myself. He does

not stand "Apart from the pulling and hauling" of human struggles (LG 32). He is no longer "Both in and out of the game" but now is "in" the game (LG 32). He is ubiquitous: he is at the Alamo where the massacre "commenced about five o'clock and was over by eight" (LG 68); he is at the sea where the battle is waged "by the light of the moon and stars" (LG 69); he is "let out in the morning and barr'd at night" (LG 71). He is not "out of time and space" but fully "in time and space." He decides to be humiliated like a beggar ("I project my hat, sit shame-faced, and beg") (LG 72).

This movement culminates in Section 38 in which the hero is crucified and resurrected. In this "climactic" section, as Thomas Edward Crawley observes, the hero "identifies himself and all men with the crucified Christ" (64). Section 38 is comparable to Christ's Passion on Golgotha, his crucifixion and resurrection. In the first stanza of this section, the hero is tempted to abandon his mission, discovering himself "on the verge of a usual mistake": "Enough! enough! enough! / Somehow I have been stunn'd. Stand back!" (LG 72). The phrase "the verge of a usual mistake" echoes the crisis of Christ's Passion. He accepts the cup of death, uniting men and their language. In the second stanza, he is crucified, hearing the mocking, corrupted words. The "corpses" of the words are revived into a new life and the "gashes" of the words are healed by the "supreme power" of his "crucifixion and bloody crowning" (LG 72). All words become "the blossoms" (LG 72). The crucifixion of the hero does not mean that he is "out of time, out of space" (Miller, Whitman's "Song of Myself" 148), but indicates that he is "in time and in space" because he rises from death. His resurrection signifies his repossession of time and space in the moment of the here and now: "Continue your annotations [of the words], continue your questionings [about them]" to keep them from their

corruptions, to keep the freshness of their meanings (LG 72) which provides "an undemonstrable nourishment that exhilarates the soul" (Whitman, Primer 34). This is the outcome of Whitman's belief that "All words are spiritual--nothing is more spiritual than words" (Primer 1).

In Section 39 the hero is resurrected; his words themselves, which "are wafted with the odor of his body or breath," emanate from "the tips of his figures," and "fly out of the glance of his eyes" (LG 73). His words are "simple, cast in the common language and the homely figure which all can understand" (Miller, Whitman's "Song of Myself" 149). He is the master of the words, the Incarnate Word which everybody desires to "accept," to "touch," to "speak to," and to "stay with" (LG 73).

Section 40 confirms the hero as the Light itself, for his light is more powerful than the sunshine, the created light: "You [the sunshine] light surfaces only, I force surfaces and depths also" (LG 73). This section also confirms the hero as the Word: "Behold, I do not give lectures or a little charity, / When I give I give myself" (LG 73). His breathing raises the dying man "with resistless will"; he can "dilate" the despair "with tremendous breath" (LG 74). Just as Christ invited those "who are weary and whose load is heavy" and gave them "rest" (Matthew 11: 28), so the hero of the poem invites the sufferers to "hang your whole weight upon me" (LG 74). The hero finally destroys the space between the inside and the outside: "Every room of the house do I fill with an arm'd force" (LG 74). There is now no space between the sacred and the profane. The profane is possessed in the sacred by the power of his words: "I have embraced you, and henceforth possess you to myself, / And when you rise in the morning you will find what I tell you is so" (LG 74), and the possession is sexual as well as linguistic: ". . . I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics" on "women fit for conception" to have "bigger and nimbler babes" (LG

74). The hero is not a passive sufferer, but an aggressive male lover.

The messianic image of the hero is more developed in Section 41 into the image of the creator, who, "Accepting the rough deific sketches to fill out better in myself," bestows "them freely on each man and woman I see" (LG 75). The hero is "waiting my time to be one of the supremes," assuming that he is "becoming already a creator, / Putting myself here and now to the ambush'd womb of the shadows" (LG 76). He does not accept any particular traditional belief, "Outbidding at the start the old cautious hucksters" (LG 75). Like Christ, he is the beginning of Time: "I heard what was said of the universe, / Heard it and heard it of several thousand years" (LG 75). Rather, he takes "the exact dimensions" of Jehovah, Kronos, Zeus, Hercules, Osiris, Isis, Belus, Brahma, Buddha, Manito, Allah, Odin, Mexitli, and others. He draws the names of gods the world over into his heterodox Christian syncretism: "I take all the old forms and faiths and remake them in confirmity with the modern spirit, not rejecting a single item or the earlier programs" (Camden Conversations 164). He enunciates a new religion which absorbs all prior experience and faces the democratic future.

In Section 42 the hero encounters the petty and greedy aspects of democratic citizenry, "dimes on the eyes" and "tickets" which "feed the greed of the belly" rather than "the feast" of life (LG 77), and such images as the "little plentiful manikins skipping around in collars and tail'd coats" (LG 77). But he declares:

I am aware who they are, (they are positively not
worms or fleas,)
I acknowledge the duplicates of myself, the weakest
and shallowest is deathless with me,
What I do and say the same waits for them,
Every thought that flounders in me the same flounders
in them. (LG 77)

This awareness leads the hero to sing his song. His religion, "this song of mine", he declares, is "Not words of routine" (LG 77). It is not the worship of the images but the worship of the human "reason," "love," and "life." It is "abruptly to question" the image itself formulated by "Sermons, creeds, theology" and "to leap beyond" it and "yet nearer bring" it to its substance, to the reason, love, and life of its owner:

This printed and bound book--but the printer and the
printing-office boy?

The well-taken photographs--but your wife or friend
close and solid in your arms?

The black ship mail'd with iron, her mighty guns in
her turrets--but the pluck of the captain and
engineers?

In the houses the dishes and fare and furniture--but
the host and hostess, and the look out of their
eyes?

The sky up there--yet here or next door, or across the
way?

The saints and sages in history--you yourself?
Sermons, creeds, theology--but the fathomless
human brain,

And what is reason? and what is love? and what is
life? (LG 77-78)

"My faith," the hero says in Section 43, "is the greatest of faiths and the least of faiths, / Enclosing worship ancient and modern and all between ancient and modern" (LG 78). His religion is for all ages, including the future: "I shall come again upon the earth after five thousand years" (LG 78). His religion is not "the sea of torment, doubt, despair and unbelief" but the sea of peace even with the "bloody flukes of doubters and sullen mopers" because it embraces anybody and "any thing in the earth, or down in the oldest graves of the earth" and "any thing in the myriads of

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spheres," excluding nothing: "Each who passes is consider'd, each who stops is consider'd, not a single one can it fail" (LG 79-80).

Sections 44-45, as James E. Miller points out, are the sections that envision the hero of the poem as "Time" and "Space" (Whitman's "Song of Myself" 151). Section 44 begins with the dramatic declaration of his desire to reveal himself: "It is time to explain myself . . . / The clock indicates the moment" (LG 80). He reveals himself as the eternal Time who has been mounting "the stairs" of time from "Afar down . . . the huge first Nothing" and is "still" mounting its steps (LG 81). He is the time of the past ("an acme of things accomplish'd") and the time of the future ("an encloser of things to be") (LG 80). He is the Time of the eternal now. In Section 45 the hero is envisioned as "Space." He is the Space of the whole universe spreading "wider and wider" and "expanding, always expanding, / Outward and outward and forever outward" (LG 82). Since he is "limitless time" and "limitless space," "the best of time and space" which "was never measured and never will be measured," he is able to meet "on perfect terms, / The Great Camerado, the lover true for whom I pine" to see (LG 82-83). The hero is now lifted to the level of God, the possessor of Time and Space.

In Section 46 the hero invites everybody of every city and every nation to "a perpetual journey" not to "a dinner-table, library, exchange," but to "a knoll," the world where there is "no chair, no church, no philosophy" (LG 83), a New World preserved for those from whose eyes "the gum" has been washed (LG 84). Anyone who is able to see this new land must become habituated "to the dazzle of the light and of every moment of your life" (LG 84). This is the land for those who have renewed themselves in the clothes of a new vision: ". . . as soon as you sleep and renew yourself in sweet clothes, I kiss you with a good-by kiss and open the

gate for your egress hence" (LG 84). This is the land for those who have been through their own spiritual metamorphosis: "Long have you timidly waded holding a plank by the shore, / Now I will you to be a bold swimmer, / To jump off in the midst of the sea, rise again, nod to me, shout, and laughingly dash with your hair" (LG 84). The hero is not a superior leader but a Christlike friendly companion: "If you tire, give me both burdens, rest the chuff of your hand on my hip" (LG 83).

In Section 47 the hero becomes a teacher whose tongue "begins to be loosen'd" and "act as the tongue of you," itching "at your ears till you understand [his words]" (LG 85). He swears that he "will never again mention love or death inside a house," insisting that "No shutter'd room or school can commune with me" (LG 85). He swears that he will "translate" himself "only to him or her who privately stays with me in the open air" (LG 85). The words of "roughs and little children" are better than those of the "shutter'd room or school" (LG 85). His words sound sweet to "the farm-boy ploughing in the field"; they sail "in vessels," march in the battle fields, whistle in the hunting grounds, will be heard in the jolt of the driving wagons, and captivate the minds of the mothers and of the wives. And all of the people in the open air, the hero hopes, "would resume what I have told them" (LG 86).

In Section 48 the hero is now not "becoming" the Word, but has "become" Him and teaches "mankind" to open their eyes before the mystery of the universe: "Let your soul stand cool and composed before a million universes" (LG 86). And he continues to teach not to be "curious about God" (LG 86), for God can be seen everywhere at each moment (LG 86). He says: "I hear and behold God in every object. . . . / I see something of God each hour of the twenty-four, and each moment then" (LG 86). He sees God "in the faces of men and women" and in his own face as well; he finds "letters from

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God dropt in the street, and every one is sign'd by God's name" (LG 87). Without this perception, no one can be in sympathy with other beings as well as his own being, in order to enter the mystery of the universe. "And whoever walks a furlong without sympathy," he continues, "walks to his own funeral drest in his shroud" (LG 86). And the final goal of the hero is to teach "any man or woman" that none "can be more wonderful" than himself or herself: ". . . nothing, not God, is greater to one than one's self is" (LG 86). As C. Carroll Hollis points out, "we all waste too much time and spiritual energy searching for God, for something beyond life, instead of participating and enjoying life itself, where God is revealed in everything we experience, low as well as high, common as well as rare, vulgar as well as refined" (16). Central to the hero's message is an insistence on the identity of the body and the soul, the physical "I" and the spiritual "I," matter and spirit, subject and object, the profane and the sacred, man and woman, and man and God.

Whitman has been singing the song of the body and the soul so far, but in Section 49 he suddenly brings in the idea of trinity of Death, the Corpse, and Life. Death is "the outlet . . . the relief and escape" to eternity (LG 87); it is the door to spirituality and the hero is not alarmed by it. The Corpse is "good manure" which "smell[s] the white roses sweet-scented and growing" and "reach[es] to the leafy lips" and "to the polish'd breasts of melons" (LG 87); it is the fertilizer of life and he is not offended by it. Life is the "stars of heaven," the "grass of graves," and the "suns"; it is "the leavings of many deaths" (LG 87). Thus, this trinity signifies the "perpetual transfers and promotions" of each one from Death to the Corpse to Life and back again to Death to the Corpse to Life (LG 87).

Whitman begins Section 50 with an enigmatic statement: "There is that in me--I do not know what it is--but I know it

is in me" (LG 88). What is it then? It is not the body and it is not the soul, for both of them have been sung. The relationship of the body and the soul are specifically defined in Section 48 : "I have said that the soul is not more than the body, / I have said that the body is not more than the soul" (LG 86). What is the third one then? In Section 50 the hero deliberately avoids mentioning its name: "I do not know it-- it is without name--it is a word unsaid" (LG 88). However, he says that "To it the creation is the friend whose embracing awakes me. / . . . it is form, union, plan--it is eternal life--it is Happiness" (LG 88). It is "that invisible spiritual results [which], just as real and definite as the visible, eventuate all concrete life and all material, through Time" (Prose Works 729). This introduction of the concept of the spirit completes Whitman's poetic idea of trinity of Democracy, Love, and Religion, which is derived from the Christian trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. In the universe of Whitman, there is no beginning and no ending and there is only an endless metamorphosis of beings from Life to the Corpse to Death and back again, from the body to the soul to the spirit and back again.

Section 51 prepares us to see the hero off because he mentions that he is approaching the final stage of his drama "to fill my next fold of the future": "I have fill'd [the past and present], emptied them" (LG 88). Once again the hero identifies himself with eternity, with the past, the present, and the future. The hero is "a solitary singer," who, leaving for somewhere, asks his listeners whether there is any one to take a journey to eternity with him: "I stay only a minute longer. . . . / Who wishes to walk with me? / Will you speak before I am gone? will you prove already too late?" (LG 88-89). He continues to ask: "Do I contradict myself?"; so are you confused?; are you not sure?; but it is because "I am large, I contain multitudes" (LG 88). In this voice there is an irresistibly lonesome pathos which is

ringing out from the heart's core.

In Section 52 the hero, holding "the last scud of day," sounds a "barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world" to capture the heart of the human mind, to wash "the gum" from the eyes of all mankind (LG 89). He departs "as air," as the spirit, shaking his "white locks at the runaway sun," effusing his "flesh in eddies," and drifting "it in lacy jags" (LG 89). Therefore, his words, transformed into the "white locks at the runaway sun," into the "flesh in eddies" and "in lacy jags," and into the "grass" in the dirt, can be seen everywhere at any time:

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I
love,
If you want me again look for me under your
boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you. (LG 89)

Section 52 is the final confirmation that the hero is forever present in the world in words, in the leaves of his speech or poetry bequeathed to the world by himself. This is symbolized as the grass which grows everywhere, confirming that "Speech is the twin of my vision."

C. "Now I wash the gum from your eyes"

Song of Myself seems to be the song of the beginning and end or the past and the future but it is even more truly the song of the present or "now," for the whole life cycle of the hero implies not so much the beginning and the end of his

life as the perpetual "now" of his life. Even after his departure we can find him "somewhere"; he encourages us to keep searching him because he is "somewhere" waiting for us after his departure. There is no beginning and no ending in life, for both the past and the future "curiously conjoint in the present time" of life; "there is the meaning to us of all that has ever come of races and days, or ever will come" (LG 241). For Whitman there is always only the eternal "now":

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. (LG 30)

In Song of Myself Whitman employs a journey motif as a metaphor for spiritual metamorphosis. Whitman views "the universe itself as a road, as many roads, as roads for traveling souls" and human life as "a perpetual journey" "along the grand roads of the universe . . . toward the best--toward something great" (LG 157, 83, 157). The metaphor of the road, as Paul Zweig says, is for Whitman "already the connective thread of his vision, turning the world into a panorama for the traveling mind. The road becomes a figure of change, growth, and learning" (242). Whitman interweaves a sexual motif with a journey motif as a metaphor for a spiritual metamorphosis in the belief in "the sacredness of sex," as Allen contends: "Even the erotic poems are explained by this journey motif, for the very thought of the 'countless germs waiting the due conjunction, the arousing touch'--in other words, waiting for the 'arousing touch' to start them upon their lap of the journey--this thought is sufficient to convince Whitman of the sacredness of sex" (Whitman as Man 67). Quoting Floyd Stovall's observation of Whitman's belief that sex is "the most spiritual part of man's nature, the physical counterpart of the divine creative mind, and an integral part of the soul,"

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Crawley interprets Whitman's idea of sexuality as a symbol of "a transcending of all fixed forms in our most natural, exalted act of pure reality" (100). These two motifs then serve as a symbol of the process of life or of the awakening of vision which signifies a new birth.

Just as "Openness to the world enables religious man to know himself in knowing the world" (Eliade 167), so Whitman's description of sexual union in the open world signifies his way to know himself and the world, or the way to his spirituality, to a new birth. On the other hand, for Whitman the human experience of indoors usually signifies death or the separation from the world of life: "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" (LG 36). The "Houses and rooms are full of perfumes, the shelves are crowded with perfumes" and are symbolic of the origins of "Creeds and schools" which force man to "take things at second or third hand," to "look through the eyes of the dead," or to "feed on the spectres in books" (LG 29, 30). Thus, Whitman writes in Section 47:

If you would understand me go to the heights or
water-shore,
The nearest gnat is an explanation, and a drop or
motion of waves a key,
The maul, the oar, the hand-saw, second my words.

No shutter'd room or school can commune with me,
But roughs and little children better than they.

(LG 85)

For Whitman, to deny the inside world of human experiences is the first step towards spiritual rebirth, toward "the origin of all poems," which is "the good of the earth and sun," the "play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag" (LG 30). The newly-born hero of Song of Myself cannot be imprisoned in the room "full of perfumes," whose

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"distillation would intoxicate" him and longs for "Nature without check with original energy" (LG 29) because "It is for my mouth forever, I am in love with it, / I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked, / I am mad for it to be in contact with me" (LG 29).

"In the earliest times," Mircea Eliade says, the landscape of the mountain and water was considered "the perfect place," "a privileged space, a closed, sanctified world, where the youths and girls met periodically to participate in the mysteries of life and cosmic fecundity" (153-154). Likewise, the outdoor world of the human experience in Song of Myself signifies the creative world of life, so that Song of Myself usually describes the sexual act as happening in natural environments such as the field, the water, the hillsides. The mystical union between the soul and the body in Section 5 of Song of Myself is described as a sexual act "on the grass" in the field on "such a transparent summer morning" (LG 33). In Section 8 the love scene of the young man and the Indian girl is seen "from the [hill] top," for they "turn aside up the bushy hill" (LG 35). In Section 11 Whitman also places the scene of sexual act in open space. The sexual, though imaginary, union between the twenty eight young men who are bathing and a lady who "hides handsome and richly drest aft the blinds of the window" is a happening not in the lady's secret room of "the fine house" but in the water where "The young men float on their backs, their white bellies bulge to the sun" (LG 38-39). In Section 21 Whitman describes sexual union in the imagery of cosmic sexuality; the sexual union is not between a man and a woman but between the cosmic figures, or between "he that walks with the tender and growing night" and "the earth and sea half-held by the night" (LG 49). Section 22 presents the hero's sexuality as union with the sea, which signifies the ritual of his spiritual regeneration.

Through such triumphant scenes of sexuality the vision of

the hero of Song of Myself is purified and he suddenly reaches the knowledge of the secret of eternal truth. In Section 3 of the poem, spiritual awakening is vividly expressed in terms of sexuality which fills the body with a secret gift of fruit left by "the hugging and loving bed-fellow," God (LG 31). This mysterious fruit in the basket symbolizes the "absolute reality," a miracle "conferring immortality, omniscience, and limitless power, a fruit that can change men into gods" (Eliade 149). Even the smallest insects and plants are considered part of his divine brothers and sisters. The "grass" is regarded as "the handkerchief of the Lord, / A scented gift and remembrancer designedly dropt, / Bearing the owner's name someway in the corners, that we may see and remark" (LG 33). And "Knowing the perfect fitness and equanimity of things," Whitman refuses the notion of distinction of good and bad, which has always vexed human consciousness: "Showing the best and dividing it from the worst age vexes age . . . / Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile, and none shall be less familiar than the rest" (LG 31).

In Song of Myself, whenever the hero signifies the word, there appear such nouns as speech, voice, song, word, music; such verbs as sing, listen, hear, cry: the words that join the human and natural worlds, which are in turn related to the sexual motif which symbolizes the metamorphosis of the bodily world into spirituality. Similarly, images of light and color are usually associated with the journey motif. The sound-light images and the journey-sexual motifs dynamically interact with each other. They anticipate Whitman's "Trinity," where the visionary poet is a complete man who embodies the trinity of Democracy, Love, and Religion and who is a man of Platonic "Happiness." The hero of Song of Myself is a visionary poet, who is at once a poet of the body and of the soul.

Thus, the hero of Song of Myself, a new man, is not

Whitman himself, but anyone from whose eyes the gum is washed (LG 84), just as Christ says to Nicodemus who visits him by night that anyone who is born again by spirit is a new man who sees the kingdom of God. Gay Wilson Allen contends that Whitman shared the nineteenth century Romantic concept of man, "the Divinity innate or immanent in humanity," with Goethe, Heine, Emerson, and others (Whitman as Man 7). He evokes Heine's definition of Romantic philosophy, where "God, therefore, is the real hero of world history, the latter is His perpetual thought, His perpetual act, His word, His deed, and of all humanity, one may rightly say! It is the incarnation of God!" (qtd. in Whitman as Man 34-35). It is sure, whether Whitman's concept of the hero as a new man is from the Bible or from philosophers, that in Song of Myself Whitman symbolizes the divinity of man in the figure of Christ who is "the real hero of world history."

This new man for Whitman is the visionary poet, master of Word and Light. Song of Myself is an epic of man's aspiration to become the Whitmanian "new Man." Whitman's new gospel in Song of Myself is then the song of the mystery of life, of the constant evolution of all beings. The heroic struggles of the hero of Song of Myself to "wash the gum from your eyes" is comparable to those of Christ who declared himself to "have come into the world as light" (John 12:46), struggled to open the blind eyes of mankind, and was crucified for that effort because of the blindness of man. This epic struggle was Whitman's conscious preoccupation, founded on his own reading of the Bible and its philosophical interpreters, captivated by the central figure of a heroic poet-Christ, and expanded in Song of Myself.

Chapter III

Hart Crane's The Bridge

A. "Cruelly with love thy parable of man"

Hart Crane's The Bridge was inspired by the Brooklyn Bridge, which was created by John A. Roebling, a German immigrant civil engineer and student of Hegelian philosophy. The Brooklyn Bridge, according to Alan Trachtenberg, is Roebling's expression of the Hegelian idea of "actuality," the idea of "the unity of essence and existence, of the inner world of life and the outer world of its appearance" (68). Roebling asserts that "our mind is one with the Great Universal Mind" and that "spiritualising nature is the aim and end of creation" (qtd. in Trachtenberg 60, 61). The philosophical argument of Roebling's engineering proclaimed life to be a spiritual journey toward harmony with the infinite Mind: "the great stream of life is rolling along . . . toward the great Ocean of Universality" (qtd. in Trachtenberg 62).

Such attitudes reinforced Crane's own beliefs, his tendency to "search into the heart of things for spiritual meanings" (Weber 39). Crane was raised in a Christian Scientist family and Christian Science's "exaggerated idealism continued to exercise a strong influence over him for many years to come" (Weber 8). At first, Crane deviated from the doctrine of Christian Science, but later returned to it, as he wrote in a letter to his mother: "I have a revived confidence in humanity lately, and things are going to come very beautifully for me--and not after so very long, I think. The great thing is to Live and NOT Hate. (Christian Science, in part, I think; and a very important doctrine of belief. Perhaps the most important)" (180). According to Brom Weber, the Bible and Christian Science were

Crane's major "spiritual resources" for his development as a poet: "In December 1916, Hart Crane arrived in New York City determined to be a poet and bearing in his baggage such spiritual resources as the Bible and Mary Baker Eddy's Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" (3). In The Shared Vision of Waldo Frank and Hart Crane, Robert L. Perry says that Christian Science, along with Platonic philosophy, was "instrumental in laying the foundation for the metaphysical poetry of Crane's maturity" (20).

Christian Scientists seem to see everything in terms of spiritual value; they belong in the major tradition of radically spiritualized allegorical interpreters of the Scriptures. According to Mary Baker Eddy's Science and Health, the authorized textbook of Christian Science, they regard the Bible as "the chart of life" (24) and the "central fact of the Bible" as "the superiority of spiritual over physical power" (131). Since God, the creator of the universe, is "incorporeal, divine, supreme, infinite Mind, Spirit, Soul, Principle, Life, Truth, Love" (465), creation is "the infinite image or idea emanating from this Mind" (256-257). Thus, the universe is not material but spiritual because "Mind creates His own likeness in ideas, and the substance of an idea is very far from being the supposed substance of non-intelligent matter. Hence the Father Mind is not the father of matter" (257). In other words, "The universe reflects God. . . . [And] that infinite space is peopled with God's ideas, reflecting Him in countless spiritual forms" (502-503). Man in reality is also a spiritual being, "the true image of God," "the idea of God, not formed materially but spiritually" (259, 200). In sum, "man and the universe are evolved from Spirit, and so are spiritual" (69). "All things are created spiritually" (256) and "The true theory of the universe, including man, is not in material history but in spiritual development" (547).

Eddy argues that the human material consciousness expresses a false concept of reality, which results in sin,

sickness, and death which are unreal because they "belong not to the Science of being," but "presuppose the absence of Truth, Life, or Love," the omnipresent or the true reality (207). Thus, the scriptural description in Genesis of mortal man's fall from Grace is allegorical, rather than factual; man's alienation is what Paul Tillich says "the symbol of the Fall of Man, which points to the tragic estrangement of man and his world from their true being" (qtd. in John and Canham, Christian Science 50). The Incarnation of Christ is the expression of the human and divine coincidence. Christ Jesus, Eddy writes, "threw upon mortals the truer reflection of God and lifted their lives higher than their poor thought-models would allow,--thoughts which presented man as fallen, sick, sinning, and dying. The Christlike understanding of scientific being and divine healing includes a perfect Principle and idea,--perfect God and perfect man,--as the basis of thought and demonstration" (259). Christ is symbolic of a new man who is spiritually reborn. Christian Science is the faith in and the understanding of God as revealed through Christ, a perfect man, who is "the true idea of God" (54). In other words, Christ for Christian Scientists is a man of vision to enlighten man's eyes and ears to remove his ignorance or blindness which has alienated man from God; he is the Light and the Word who destroys man's "incarnate error," his belief in sin, sickness, and death, delivers him from his blindness, leads to "the reality of man's existence," and as a result heals and restores his physical body and saves him (583; 13).

Roebeling's Hegelianism and Crane's somewhat amorphous Christian Science were easily joined to formulate his poetic vision of the Bridge as a Christ figure. Crane argued that poetry must "absorb the machine, i.e., acclimatize it as naturally and casually as trees, cattle, galleons, castles and all other human associations of the past" (CP 261-262). And he insisted that "The function of poetry in a Machine Age is identical to its function in any other age; and its

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capacities for presenting the most complete synthesis of human values remain essentially immune from any of the so-called inroads of science" (CP 261). According to Robert L. Perry, Crane learned from Gorham Munson and Waldo Frank how to "'bring the Machine into the scope of the human spirit'" (36; Munson 24). In Waldo Frank: A Study, Munson asserts that "we are in the childhood of a new age, we are, by the chronological accident of our birth, chosen to create the simple forms, the folk-tales and folk-music, the preliminary art that our descendants may utilize in the vast struggle to put positive and glowing spiritual content into Machinery" (25). Waldo Frank, Perry says, "developed some ideas as to how the machine might be adapted to the human spirit," as a result of his reading of Gorham Munson's contention in Waldo Frank: A Study (37). Crane's letter to Munson on February 18, 1923 testifies to Munson's and Frank's influences on The Bridge, which was intended to be "an epic of the modern consciousness" (CP 252):

Very roughly, it [The Bridge] concerns a mystical synthesis of 'America.' History and fact, location, etc., all have to be transfigured into abstract form that would almost function independently of its subject matter. The initial impulses of 'our people' will have to be gathered up toward the climax of the bridge, symbol of our constructive future, our unique identity, in which is included also our scientific hopes and achievements of the future. . . . And I am even more grateful for your very rich suggestions best stated in your Frank Study on the treatment of mechanical manifestations of today as subject for lyrical, dramatic, and even epic poetry.

(Letters 124-125)

Like Frank, who regarded Walt Whitman as "the one guiding light in the American cultural chaos" (Perry 10), it is in Whitman that Crane found his "guiding light." In his essay "Modern Poetry," Crane argues that Whitman is the "most

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typical and valid" American poet who "was able to coordinate those forces [of science and machinery] . . . fusing them into a universal vision which takes on additional significance as time goes on" (CP 263). Crane's vision is similar to Whitman's "Passage to India," which was inspired by the opening of the Suez Canal, the completion of the Union Pacific Railroad, and the laying of the trans-Atlantic Cable. In Start with the Sun, Bernice Slote, insisting that "Both Whitman and Crane were writing the Myth of America" (138), interprets Whitman's "Passage to India" and Crane's The Bridge as the poems of "not material conquest but spiritual exploration" (139). "In Whitman's 'Passage to India,'" Slote argues, "the mystical center of the cosmos is seen as 'Light of the light, shedding forth universes.' The climax to The Bridge is a vision of 'Thee, O Love,' the 'whitest Flower' whose 'petals spend the suns about us.' Movement to such an end is a journey of the soul" (140).

The Brooklyn Bridge has stimulated the imagination of artists since it was completed in 1883. In the first decade of the twentieth century, impressionists like William Louis Sontag and Childe Hassam and realistic artists of the Ashcan School such as Robert Henri and Stuart Davis, tried to create the powerful image of the Bridge as "the apotheosis of America's westward march," a symbol of American destiny (Great East River Bridge 155). However, it was the cubist paintings of "dynamic fragmentation, overlapping transparencies, and compressed space" that captivated Crane (Great East River Bridge 157). Among these, it was probably Joseph Stella's paintings of the Bridge which most influenced Crane. Brom Weber, noting "a striking analogy" between Stella's paintings and Crane's The Bridge, argued that both Stella and Crane "found a suitable symbol to embody the essence of America in the Brooklyn Bridge . . . and both were imbued with religious emotion and awe before the bridge" (319). Irma B. Jaffe argued that "Stella's soaring Bridge did play an inspirational role in the genesis of Crane's

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poem" (104), contending that "religion is identified with science and machinery, which, for Crane and for Stella, had to be absorbed into contemporary art as naturally as the human figure and landscape had served the imagery of the humanist tradition, and the two works thus express contemporary awareness in a context of timeless and universal experience" (105). Even though he perceived a distinctive feature in their artistic expressions, Jaffe concluded that "each found in the bridge 'the shrine containing all the efforts of the New Civilization of Ameica--the eloquent meeting point of all the forces arising in a superb assertion of their powers'" (107).

Even before the Bridge was completed, John Gast imagined it as a symbol of "American Progress (Manifest Destiny)" in his 1872 painting. It is true that Stella's paintings inspired Crane's poetic vision, as Crane himself wrote to Stella, but Gast's visionary work, American Progress (Manifest Destiny), lends resonance to Crane's vision of America, his poetic vision of the Bridge which transforms the wilderness of the continent into civilization. For Crane, the Bridge became the image of the poet and his work, and in Gast's painting there had been a perfect visual metaphor of such metamorphosis from the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge. Gast's painting describes the westward movement of "American Progress" guided by the angelic figure with the telegraph book in her hand and the star on her forehead. It is a parable of America, a parable of its metamorphosis from wilderness to civilization, personifying the bridge as the guiding figure. Like Gast's painting, Crane's The Bridge renders a parable of "something green, / Beyond all sesames of science" (CP 94). While Gast's painting is a parable of America, Crane's The Bridge is a "parable of man" (CP 51), a metaphor of "man's aspiration toward the divine: the Gothic arch," symbolized in the harp and the altar (Trachtenberg 81). The hero of The Bridge has "a peculiar type of perception, capable of apprehending some

absolute and timeless concept of the imagination with astounding clarity and conviction" (CP 263). He "dost search / Cruelly with love thy parable of man--" (CP 51).

B. "O harp and altar, of the fury fused"

The Bridge is the culmination of Crane's poetic theory that the poem must be constructed "on the organic principle of a 'logic of metaphor,'" which advocates "the implicit emotional dynamics" of the "metaphorical inter-relationships" between "the materials used" and the poetic terms "selected less for their logical (literal) significance than for their associational meanings" (CP 221). These "dynamics" of "a logic of metaphor," Crane himself admits, "often result . . . in certain initial difficulties in understanding my poems" (CP 221). But they are for Crane "the only means possible for expressing certain concepts in any forceful or direct way whatever," the conception of America as the possessor of "yet undefined spiritual quantities, perhaps a new hierarchy of faith not to be developed so completely elsewhere" (CP 221, 219). This conception of America is Crane's poetic vision to capture "absolute beauty," to make "a stab at a truth" by "using our 'real' world somewhat as a spring-board" (CP 221, 220). This "absolutist" poetry, Crane holds, is firmly rooted in the metaphysical and symbolist traditions of "at least a dozen poets such as Donne, Blake, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, etc." (CP 220), which became the modernist tradition in American poetry.

The principles of the English metaphysical and French symbolist poets, as T. S. Eliot says in his essay "The Metaphysical poets," have "the same essential quality of transmuting ideas into sensations, of transforming an observation into a state of mind," the "telescoping of images and multiplied associations" (249, 243), a synaesthetic presentation of their poetic vision of reality as seen in Baudelairean "correspondences": "Like drawn-out

echoes that from afar unite / In a unity mysterious and profound, / As boundless as the night and as the light, / The scents, and colors and sounds all correspond" (Peschel 95). This synaesthetic mode of poetic vision, according to Leo Spitzer, "is indeed only another manifestation of World Harmony," a legacy of "the Ancient and Christian tradition of World Harmony (3: 359, 364).

Some critics have discussed Crane's synaesthesia in The Bridge (Leibowitz 135-143), placing Crane in the long tradition reaching back through Eliot and French symbolism to Renaissance mysticism and early Christian allegorisis. However, their discussions of Crane's synaesthesia fail to clarify Crane's metaphor of the Bridge as the harp and the altar, complicated by the Christian metaphor of Christ as the Light and the Word, which permeates Christian Science. In this reading of Crane's The Bridge, therefore, I am deliberately placing him in a tradition of Christian allegorisis. The Bridge can be and has been read successfully in other ways, but I am arguing here that this context illuminates his complex metaphorical system of The Bridge that other approaches slight, revealing the coherent structural pattern of the poem which has drawn unfavorable critical responses from the very beginning of its appearance.

"To Brooklyn Bridge"

This first section establishes the two images of the Bridge as the harp, or the word, and as the altar, or the light, which, with the metaphorical image of the visionary hero of the poem, form the major symbolic motifs of The Bridge. The Bridge is represented as the altar, the light by which the "night" of man's ignorance is "lifted": "we have seen night lifted in thine arms . . . / Only in darkness is thy shadow clear" (CP 46). The altar is linked with the "smoking pyres" of sacrifice in the sections of "The Dance" and "Atlantis." The Bridge is the Light itself, an emblematic extension of Whitman's appropriation of Christian

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imagery for his Democratic vision.

The Bridge is also described as the harp, the word or the sound of "choiring strings" (CP 46). The cables or harps of the Bridge "breathe the North Atlantic still," and vibrating "reprieve and pardon" like "the prophet's pledge, / Prayer of pariah, and the lover's cry,--" (CP 45-46). When "noon leaks" down Wall Street, "from girder into street," a bedlamite, "Out of some subway scuttle, cell or loft . . . speeds to thy parapets, / Tilting there momentarily, shrill shirt ballooning" (CP 45). In this critical moment only "A jest falls from the speechless caravan" which carries multitudes (CP 45). But the suicide implicates the dumbness and blindness of those multitudes who are summoned by the tensile beauty of the Bridge from their sleep. The "choiring strings" of the Bridge become the "swift / Unfractioned idiom, immaculate sigh of stars" and "condense eternity" (CP 46). The Bridge is the visible emblem of the Word in the New World.

Significantly, the opening section begins with the celebration of the coming of light to the human world. The image of the Bridge as the light and the word is symbolized in the seagull whose "wings [in the dawn] shall dip and pivot him, / Shedding white rings of tumult, building high / Over the chained bay waters Liberty--" (CP 45). The seagull symbolizes both the bringer of the light to the darkness and the messenger of the word for those who sleep in ignorance or darkness. This seagull reminds us of an angelic figure in Gast's painting, American Progress (Manifest Destiny). Crane originally imagined the Bridge as the "bird" (Weber 440); this bird becomes "the Great White Bird" in "Ave Maria," Columbus who has served as the bridge between the Old World and the New, the Christ figure who came to the world as the Word and the Light. This vision of the seagull is contrasted with the "chained" vision of the "multitudes" who are hastening to see "cinemas, panoramic sleights" or bending "toward some flashing scene / Never disclosed" (CP 45). The

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"inviolable curve" of the seagull's wings "forsake[s] our eyes
 / As apparitional as sails that cross / Some page of figures
 to be filed away; / --Till elevators drop us from our day--"
 (CP 45):

Some motion ever unspent in thy stride,--
 Implicitly thy freedom staying thee! (CP 45)

The Bridge, stretched out through the early light, compresses the restless energy which is compressed at the poem's beginning. This is then transformed into another synaesthetic image of the Bridge as a prophetic threshold, the very "threshold of the prophet's pledge" (CP 46). The Bridge for Crane functions as a radical Christian emblem, a bridge between God and man, eternity and time, heaven and earth, death and life: "And obscure as that heaven of the Jews, / Thy guerdon . . . Accolade thou dost bestow / Of anonymity time cannot raise: / Vibrant reprieve and pardon thou dost show" (CP 46). Thus, the hero of the poem is standing "Under [the] shadow [of the Bridge] by the piers," waiting for the Word and the Light which "lend a myth to God":

O Sleepless as the river under thee,
 Vaulting the sea, the prairies' dreaming sod,
 Unto us lowliest sometime sweep, descend
 And of the curviship lend a myth to God. (CP 46).

There is one final visual transformation of the main image of this first section as the bridge takes on the aspects of the ships that move all around it. The Bridge, too, is a kind of ship which will ultimately carry the hero of the poem to the vision of Atlantis in the final section of the poem. In later sections the metaphor of the Bridge as a ship is successively transformed into images of "a woman," "a world," and so on. In a letter to Waldo Frank on January 18, 1926, Crane wrote: "The bridge in becoming a ship, a world, a woman, a tremendous harp (as it does finally) seems to really have a career. I have attempted to induce the same feelings of elation, etc.--like being carried forward and

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upward simultaneously--both in imagery, rhythm and repetition, that one experiences in walking across my beloved Brooklyn Bridge" (Letters 232).

I "Ave Maria"

The image of the Bridge as the ship in "To Brooklyn Bridge" is actualized as the ship of Columbus in "Ave Maria." In this section the hero becomes Columbus who brings "back Cathay" to the "two faithful partisans of his quest" (CP 48, 49), a quester who "dost search / Cruelly with love thy parable of man," a poet of the word and the light who brings the "incognizable Word / Of Eden" to the world and enlightens them (CP 51). The hero's vision is tested in "Ave Maria" in the figure of Columbus who is returning to bring the word of Cathay to Spain which "no perjured breath / Of clown nor sage can riddle or gainsay;--" (CP 48).

Crane pictures the coming of Columbus and his crew to Cathay as the descent of "The Great White Birds," the white gods for the American natives (CP 48). Crane's description of Columbus fits well enough into the traditions of America's grandiose visions of bringing light into dark continents with Columbus as the foremost light bearer. Thus, Crane's Columbus is thoroughly in the traditions of American mythologizing as in Joel Barlow's epic The Columbiad, in which the coming of Cortez to America is depicted as the descent of the sun god for the American natives. For Crane, Columbus here returns to the world of night and darkness, while the Cathay he has discovered is the world of light, the world of "morning": "It is morning there--" (CP 48). The word Columbus brings to the old world is the light of the "White Birds" which is able to restore man's vision of night into his vision of day. "Hearing the surf near--," Columbus says, "I, wonder-breathing, kept the watch,--saw / The first palm chevron the first lighted hill" (CP 48). Columbus thus symbolizes the bridge between the "two worlds" of dark and light (CP 50).

On his return voyage from Cathay, Columbus is left to the mercy of the "Invisible valves of the sea" (CP 48). The sea itself symbolizes the borderland of "death and birth," in which Columbus is engulfed and reborn. He must survive the test of the "Invisible valves of the sea," which Helge Normann Nilsen interprets as a metaphor of "a huge soldier or warrior, dressed in the mail of an armor that moves and gleams as he stirs" (43):

Here waves climb into dusk on gleaming mail;
Invisible valves of the sea,--locks, tendons
Crested and creeping, troughing corridors
That fall back yawning to another plunge.
Slowly the sun's red caravel drops light
Once more behind us. . . . It is morning there--
O where our Indian emperies lie revealed,
Yet lost, all, let this keel one instant yield!

(CP 48)

In this turmoil, Columbus captures a glimpse of the "sun's red caravel" which "drops light / Once more behind us" and thinks that "it is morning there" in Cathay. This glimpse of light prompts Columbus to think of Genoa where he was an "exile in her streets" and of the "first palm chevron the first lighted hill" of Cathay (CP 48). However, realizing that only one of the three ships which he carried on his first expedition to the New World survived, Columbus suddenly fears that even this ship will fail: "And later hurricanes may claim more pawn. . . . / For here between two worlds, another, harsh, / This third, of water, tests the word" (CP 50). Secondly, Columbus must survive the test of the "Bewilderment and mutiny" of his crew, which "cuts sleep from the heart / Almost as though the Moor's flung scimitar / Found more than flesh to fathom in its fall" (CP 50).

Even "under tempest-lash and surfeitings," Columbus is able to hear the "incognizable Word" who is "all the eddying breath" between "death and birth" and "dost search / Cruelly with love thy parable of man,--" (CP 50, 51): "Some inmost

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sob, half-heard, dissuades the abyss, / Merges the wind in measure to the waves" (CP 50). The Word, flaming "in a cloud," urges "through night [of ignorance] our passage to the Chan," the land of the "morning" of knowledge (CP 51). The "eyes" of Columbus receive light from the Word, the "Hand of Fire" and are able to see the roundness of the earth, "This turning rondure whole, this crescent ring" of the earth in the fulness of vision:

Series on series, infinite,--till eyes
Starved wide on blackened tides, accrete--enclose
This turning rondure whole, this crescent ring
Sun-cusped and zoned with modulated fire
Like pearls that whisper through the Doge's hands
(CP 50)

Cathay, the New World which is won after Columbus's epic struggle is "a land cleared of long war," where "Some Angelus environs the cordage tree; / Dark waters onward shake the dark prow free" (CP 50). It is the land where we can hear the "sounding heel" of "Elohim" within "whose primal scan consummately / The glistening seignories of Ganges swim;-- / Who sendest greeting by the corporant" (CP 51). It is the land of the "far / Hushed gleaming fields and pendant seething wheat / Of knowledge" (CP 51). Thus, the mission of Columbus symbolizes the bridge between the world of the material and the world of the spirit as well as the bridge between the Old World and the New World. As Brewster Ghiselin says in his essay "Bridge into the Sea," "The voyage of Columbus, a journey yielding knowledge of a new world, is made to stand in The Bridge as type or pattern of a search undertaken by Crane's protagonist, a search for the full meaning of the master image of the poem, the symbolic Bridge" (45). Crane read widely Columbus's Journal in 1926, and there cannot be much doubt that he uses Columbus in the way Ghiselin indicates.

These two metaphors of war in "Ave Maria" prepare us to see Columbus's epic struggle as reaching "one shore beyond

desire" (CP 51). Columbus is tested in his battle against the sea, the third world between the old and new worlds: "This third, of water, tests the word" (CP 50). In his struggle Columbus invokes Mary for a safe return from his perilous voyage: "O Madre Maria, still / One ship of these thou grantest safe returning; / Assure us through thy mantle's ageless blue!" (CP 48). Cathay for Columbus eventually signifies "an attitude of spirit, rather than material conquest throughout, of course" (Crane, Letters 232). "The theme of 'Cathay' (its riches, etc.)," as Crane wrote in a letter to Otto H. Kahn, "ultimately is transmuted into a symbol of consciousness, knowledge, spiritual unity. A rather religious motivation, albeit not Presbyterian" (Letters 241). Identified with Columbus, the hero of the poem is destined to prophesy the dawning of a new age as referred in the Senecan epigraph to this section: "A time will come in distant years when Ocean will loosen the bonds of things and the whole earth's surface will be open to view, and Tiphys will discover new worlds; and Thule will no longer be the outer edge of the world" (CP 47).

II "Powhatan's Daughter"

In a letter to Otto H. Kahn, Crane wrote that Part II of The Bridge, "Powhatan's Daughter," presents Powhatan's daughter or Pocahontas as "the mythological nature-symbol" of "the physical body of the continent, or the soil" of America, in order to create "the Myth of America" (Letters 305). "The five sub-sections of Part II," Crane continued, "are mainly concerned with a gradual exploration of this 'body' whose first possessor was the Indian" and assimilate "this experience, a more organic panorama, showing the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present" (305); the "architectural method" of his poetry adopts "the Sistine Chapel as an analogy" (306, 305).

While "Ave Maria" is the preparation for the birth of the hero, "The Harbor Dawn" is "the sowing of the seed" of the

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word and the light (Crane, Letters 306). In "The Harbor Dawn" the hero jumps "right across the four intervening centuries--into the harbor of 20th-century Manhattan," becoming the twentieth century American (Crane, Letters 305). By the light of the dawn, the "window-eyes" of towering buildings begin "aglitter" and the seagulls are released from their sleep, flying "aloft" over "Manhattan waters":

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

(CP 56)

The images of the "bright window-eyes" and the "released" sun signify the awakening of the hero of the poem as the light, which will in turn awaken the sleeping American continent, the body of Pocahontas who is waiting for the informing "seed."

Meanwhile, "Insistently through sleep" is flooded "a tide of voices" from the "Gongs in white surplices, beshrouded wails, / Far strum of fog horns" to the "throbbing" of "winch engines" to "a drunken stevedore's howl and thud" for "400 years and more . . . [to] the soundless shore of sleep," to the ears of Pocahontas (CP 54-55). When "Soft sleeves of sound / Attend the darkling harbor, the pillowed bay" (54), the "tongue," the word of the hero, informs his "seed" of the light into his woman whose "flesh our feet have moved upon" and thereby the "eyes" of his woman also "drink the dawn" (CP 56, 57, 56):

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

While myriad snowy hands are clustering at the panes--
your hands within my hands are deeds:
my tongue upon your throat--singing

arms close; eyes wide, undoubtful
dark

drink the dawn--

a forest shudders in your hair! (CP 54-56)

The informed body of Pocahontas is vibrating like a shuddering forest. "The love-motif (in italics) carries along a symbolism of the life and ages of man (here the sowing of the seed)" (Crane, Letters 306). "The Harbor Dawn" ends with the anticipation of the new order signified by the hero's impregnation of Pocahontas and the light beckoning him into the west:

The fog leans one last moment on the sill.

Under the mistletoe of dreams, a star--

As though to join us at some distant hill--

Turns in the waking west and goes to sleep. (CP 56)

In "Van Winkle" the hero grows old in his identification with "Van Winkle." Awakened from his sleep in the harbor by the light of the dawn, Van Winkle is also greeted by the harbor sounds. Leaving his room with the harbor sounds, he finds space "filled with the music of a hand organ and fresh sunlight" (Crane, Letters 306). As soon as he comes out of the room with the harbor sound and light, the hero walks to the subway. Since he possesses the whole space of the American continent from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific in the action of one leap, the sense of space is completely demolished: "Macadam, gun-grey as the tunny's belt, / Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate" (CP 58). Sounds free this mythological space: "Listen! the miles a hurdy-gurdy grinds-- / Down gold arpeggios mile on mile unwinds" (CP 58). The hurdy-gurdy sound reminds the hero of the paper monoplanes of his childhood, which soar over continental scales of possession.

Walking to the subway, the hero reminisces "of childhood, also the 'childhood' of the continental conquest, viz., the conquistadores, Priscilla, Capt. John Smith, etc." (Crane, Letters 306). This "symbolism of the life and ages of man,"

Crane says, ". . . is further developed in each of the subsequent sections of 'Powhatan's Daughter,' though it is never particularly stressed. In 2 ('Van Winkle') it is Childhood; in 3 it is Youth; in 4, Manhood; in 5 it is Age" (Letters 306). Crane identifies the hero with Rip Van Winkle, a man living in both past and present. The sound of the grind-organ arouses a memory of the past: "the whip" of his father and "the Sabbatical, unconscious smile" of his mother. As familial time is made analogous to continental history, the hero, as Rip Van Winkle, rides the subway of poetic myth back into the past and across the continent: "And hurry along, Van Winkle--it's getting late!" (CP 61).

The subway the hero has taken "is simply a figurative, psychological 'vehicle' for transporting the reader to the Middle West" in "The River" (Crane, Letters 306), a vehicle for the hero's journey back to the past of America. The sweeping vision of the hero on the 20th Century Limited Express to the West is "the cultural confusion of the present--a great conglomeration of noises analogous to the strident impression of a fast express rushing by" (Crane, Letters 306). What the hero sees is not the words of "the HOLYGHOST" but the commercial advertisements:

Stick your patent name on a signboard
brother--all over--going west--young man
Tintex--Japalac--Certain-teed Overalls ads
and lands sakes! (CP 62)

And the modern technology of "Thomas / a Ediford" replaces the religious spirit of Thomas a Becket (Baker 53; Nilsen 65-66): ". . . the telegraphic night coming on Thomas / a Ediford--and whistling down the tracks / a headlight rushing with the sound" (CP 62). The radio news of Richard E. Byrd's exploration of the Arctic is the gospel for the American people: ". . . the HOLYGHOST / RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE NORTHPOLE" (CP 62). "The Trinity--Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost--Crane translates into a commercial trilogy of SCIENCE as father, its offspring COMMERCE (TECHNOLOGY, as the

direct offspring of SCIENCE, makes a neater trinity, which Crane may have avoided), and the HOLYGHOST" (Baker 54). And the commercial news of Wall Street replaces the gospel of the Virgin birth. The hero can find "no more sermons" or words in "STONES OR / WIRES OR EVEN RUNning brooks connecting ears" (CP 62). In short, science (the radio news) and commerce (the commercial news) become for Americans the "connecting words" of the Spirit. Through the windows of the train "whistling down the tracks," the hero hears the "flashing roar / breathtaking" which confuses the true meaning of life (CP 62).

The "three men" left after the train has left, three tramps who are "the left-overs of the pioneers" (Crane, Letters 306), are "still hungry on the tracks, ploddingly / watching the tail lights wizen and converge, slip- / ping gimleted and neatly out of sight" (CP 62). They are symbolic of the hero's journey which ironically traces the wanderings of these three vagrants. They are "psychological vehicles" which carry the reader not only into "the primal world of the Indian, which emerges with a full orchestra in the succeeding dance" but also "across the country and back to the Mississippi . . . a great River of Time" (Crane, Letters 306, 307, 303). The wandering of these three tramps signifies the awakening of the hero's pastoral vision of the Continent, Crane's own vision of "an outdoor world of streams and open country and forests, a world that would always be with him and that, in one way or another, he would attempt to return to for the rest of his life" (Unterecker 21). The tramps are "blind baggage," or "wifeless or runaway / Hobo-trekkers that forever search / An empire wilderness of freight and rails" (CP 64), but they are symbols of the eternal seekers of spiritual reality. They are identified with the rail-squatters the young hero used to see behind his "father's cannery works" (CP 64); each of them is associated with the young hero of the poem: "Each seemed a child, like me, on a loose perch, / Holding to childhood like some

termless play" (CP 66).

The second part of this section is filled with sounds which are meant to evoke the groaning of Pocahontas, who has been raped or ruined by "the iron dealt cleavage" or the "axe and powder horn," which are the symbolic tools of American civilization (CP 66). The hero hears trains wailing into the American continent and identifies the wailing of trains with the crying of "papooses" and the screaming of "redskin dynasties": "Trains sounding the long blizzards out--I heard / Wail into distances I knew were hers. / Papooses crying on the wind's long mane / Screamed redskin dynasties" (CP 66). This second part is full of fragments of folk song: "Strange bird-wit, like the elemental gist / Of unwalled winds they offer, singing low / My Old Kentucky Home and Casey Jones, / Some Sunny Day" (CP 64). Hearing all these sounds or songs, the tramps "go ruminating through / Ohio, Indiana . . . / To Cheyenne tagging . . . Maybe Kalamazoo," seeing "The last bear, shot drinking in the Dakotas" (CP 64).

They are blind to tragedy, to the last bear, to the last Indian, all wiped out by the westward movement of "Caboose-like" white men, who "Bind town to town and dream to ticking dream" with the "wires that span the mountain stream. / Keen instruments, strung to a vast precision" (CP 64). "I'm trying in this part of the poem," Crane wrote in a letter to Mrs. T. W. Simpson, "to chart the pioneer experience of our forefathers--and to tell the story backwards, as it were, on the 'backs' of hobos. . . . You'll find your name in it. I kind of wanted you in this section of the book. . . . For you are my idea of the salt of all pioneers, and our little talks about New Orleans, etc., led me to think of you with the smile of Louisiana" (Letters 303). Even the "Dead echoes" of trains and hobos prepare the hero to possess the serpent/river of time and the eagle of space, which are symbolic of Pocahontas (Nilsen 71): "--Dead echoes! But I knew her body there, / Time like a sepent down her shoulder, dark, / And space, and an eaglet's wing, laid

on her hair" (CP 66).

As the Pullman train journeys "From tunnel into field," the travelers "lean from the window" of the train, touching "hands with some ancient clown" (CP 68), to the accompaniment of certain inbred American songs--Steamboat Bill, Deep River, and others, as they follow the Mississippi River down through the heart of the mythological content and toward the Gulf, the gulf with which Crane was always intoxicated. The hero is lost in a dream of personal and national ancestry moving down to the sea where "The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow, / Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below" (CP 69). They drift "Over De Soto's bones" (CP 69), adding another ancestral discoverer to the inaugurating presence of Columbus with which the poem began and their deaths anticipate symbolic death and resurrection of the hero.

The hero's vision captures the true Pocahontas in "The Dance," which is Crane's effort to "[possess] the Indian and his world as a cultural factor" of the American past not only through the description of "the conflict between the two races in this dance" but also through the identification of the hero with both the Indian and his world (Crane, Letters 307). "The Dance" begins with the birth of Pocahontas, who is "the mythological nature-symbol chosen to represent the physical body of the [American] continent, or soil. She here takes on much the same role as the traditional Hertha of ancient Teutonic mythology" (Crane, Letters 305). The creation of the American continent is described as the sexual union between Pocahontas and Maquokeeta. Pocahontas was "squired . . . down the sky" by Maquokeeta, a sky god, and became the "swift red flesh," an earth-goddess who "ran the neighing canyons all the spring" (CP 70). Pocahontas became Maquokeeta's bride, whose "brown lap was virgin May" waiting "in the autumn drouth" for her lover (CP 70). Maquokeeta, as a sky god or a rain god, "streamed the mesa sands" and fertilized her (CP 70). In sexual ecstasy Pocahontas "spouted arms; she rose with maize--to die" (CP 70).

The image of sexual union between Pocahontas and Maquoqueeta is a metaphor for a cosmic marriage of heaven and earth, a ritual dance signifying "the conflict between the two races in this dance" (Crane, Letters 307): Maquoqueeta's "blood" remembers "its first invasion of her secrecy, its first encounters with her kin" and "his shade . . . haunts the lakes and hills" (CP 71). By the "burnished hands" of the white men who invaded "the red flesh" of Pocahontas or the American continent, the sexual union of Pocahontas and Maquoqueeta became "broken play" and their "Mythical brows" were "Disturbed and destined, into denser green" and "Now lie incorrigibly what years between . . ." (CP 70). Thereby, Pocahontas became "the glacier woman" (CP 70) and Maquoqueeta, "a winter king" (CP 70) who "finally, after being assumed into the elements of nature . . . persists only as a kind of 'eye' in the sky, or as a star that hangs between day and night--'the twilight's dim perpetual throne'" (Crane, Letters 307).

This cosmic vision of "the pure mythical and smoky soil" of the American continent or Pocahontas prompts the hero to journey "back in time to the pure savage world," to "unlatch the door to the pure Indian world" (Crane, Letters 307, 303). The hero's journey starts at the twilight, continues through the night, and ends at dawn, so that his journey back to the past is metaphorically the journey to the dawn of the American continent. Reaching his "Manhood" (Crane, Letters 306), the hero is identified with Maquoqueeta, who is united with his bride, Pocahontas. His leaving of "the village for dogwood" (CP 70) signifies his search for his bride, his "passion" to be united with his bride, which is presented in sexual imagery, the imagery of the cosmic dance of Pocahontas and Maquoqueeta in rhythm of the approaching storm with the sound of the thunder of the "the padded foot / Within" a growing "thunder-bud" cloud blanketing the skies (CP 72).

Crane describes the primitive, unspoiled natural body of the American continent as the figure of Pocahontas, "a

glacier woman," the veiled bride waiting for her lover on "a bed of leaves" who restores their "broken play" (CP 70). In his journey, the hero sees Pocahontas's "hair's keen crescent running," learns "to catch the trout's moon whisper," and watches "that fleet young crescent die,-- / And one star, swinging, take its place, alone, / Cupped in the larches of the mountain pass-- / Until, immortally, it bled into the dawn" (CP 70-72). He reaches the very source of the river, the "Appalachian Spring" (CP 72), encountering the "Steep, inaccessible smile [of Pocahontas] that eastward bends / And northward reaches in that violet wedge / Of Adirondacks" (CP 72). And finally he finds himself "within some boding shade:-- / Grey tepees tufting the blue knolls ahead, / Smoke swirling through the yellow chestnut glade . . ." (CP 72). At this moment, the imagination of the hero captures the vision of the cosmic dance of Pocahontas and Maquokeeta, which is presented as a battle of an epic scale: "Spears and assemblies: black drums thrusting on-- / O yelling battlements,--I, too, was liege / To rainbows currying each pulsant bone: / Surpassed the circumstance, danced out the siege!" (CP 73). The "cyclone" of Maquokeeta "threshes in the turbine crest" of Pocahontas, "Swooping in eagle feathers down your back" (CP 72). Pocahontas "grieves" in sexual ecstasy: "A birch kneels. All her whistling fingers fly. / The oak grove circles in a crash of leaves" (CP 73). The thunder, the "twangs / Of lightning," purifies "the black pool" of Pocahontas, dancing "back the tribal morn" (CP 73, 72, 73) as Crane, in a frenzy of synaesthetic evocation, seeks to summon a sense of primitive energy and primal unity into the visionary heart of the poem's quest. This is, of course, an attempt to conjure the Goddess, the presiding deities of the American continent, to purify the hero's vision and enable him to continue the epic search.

The next section, "Indiana," summarizes "the period of conquest" of the West through the monologue of a pioneer woman, who succeeds to "the nature-symbolism of Pocahontas"

(Crane, Letters 307). In "The Dance" the hero's vision has been purged through the thunder or the Word and the lightning or the Light and he becomes "one star" which "bled into the dawn," the "eye" which can "read her [Pocahontas] in a mother's farewell gaze" (CP 77). Naturally enough, the symbolism of the "eye" is dominant in "Indiana," where the "morning glory" of the American continent described in "The Dance," "climbing the morning long / Over the lintel on its wiry vine, / Closes before the dusk, furls in its song" (CP 76).

Sound and light are the central images of this section. The "bison thunder" is harmonized with the "first cry" of the newly-born baby, which fulfills the "dreams" of the pioneer mother: "And bison thunder rends my dreams no more / As once my womb was torn, my boy, when you / Yielded your first cry at the prairie's door" (CP 76). When Larry, the boy with the "eyes" of "engaging blue," was born, the universe sang in praise of the Word, sang the "golden syllables" of "His gleaming name":

The pebbles sang, the firecat slunk away
And glistening through the sluggard freshets came
In golden syllables loosed from the clay
His gleaming name. (CP 76)

However, the pioneers, as "Prodigal," "Waved Seminary Hill a gay good-bye" in search for "God lavish there in Colorado," "A dream called Eldorado," mistaking the "God" of gold for the God of the Word (CP 76, 78). The God of gold has never yielded the "gilded promise" to them but only "barren tears" (CP 78): the pioneer woman, having buried his husband "far / Back on the gold trail," returns to Indiana and Larry, her boy, drops "the scythe to grasp the oar" (CP 76).

While the pioneer woman is blind to the meaning of "those eyes' engaging blue" of Larry, the squaw's "violet" eyes capture the "blue" eyes of Larry who is cradled on his mother's back on "the long trail back," is "Lit with love," and shines "like twin stars" (CP 79, 78). Her vision

"suddenly" becomes the revelation to Larry's mother, who realizes that Larry's "eyes" are "where the stubborn years gleam and atone,-- / Where gold is true" (CP 79). As this section closes, her son becomes a sailor going off on his own quest, and anticipating the voices and visions of the derelict sailor in the following section.

III "Cutty Sark"

While "Indiana" deals with the period of the conquest of the land, "Cutty Sark" describes "a phantasy on the period of the whalers and clipper ships," the period of the conquest of the sea which fulfilled Columbus's dream in "Ave Maria" (Crane, Letters 307). Both "Indiana" and "Cutty Sark" show how much the American imagination has been preoccupied with the conquest of space. In his study of Melville, Charles Olson puts in this way:

I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom cave to now. I spell it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy.

It is geography at bottom, a hell of wide land from the beginning. That made the first American story (Parkman's): exploration.

Something else than a stretch of earth--seas on both sides, no barriers to contain as restless a thing as Western man was becoming in Columbus' day. That made Melville's story (part of it). (11)

For Melville this large-without-mercy space, Olson argues, is not the space from which to escape, but the space to challenge and to possess. Ahab "had all space concentrated into the form of a whale called Moby-Dick" and "assailed it as Columbus an ocean, LaSalle a continent, the Donner Party their winter Pass" (12). Like Melville's Ahab, the hero of "Cutty Sark" is a spiritual quester in the figure of the derelict sailor who has attempted to possess space.

The hero's quest is also to possess time. Thus, this

section "starts in the present and 'progresses backward'" (Crane, Letters 307). The sailor has returned from the sea where he sailed "on time" (CP 82). Though he "ought to keep time and get over it," now he does not even "want to know what time is" because "that / damned white Arctic killed my time . . ." (CP 82). He wears "a nervous shark tooth" on his neck. The story of his spiritual quest, told in a South Street bar, as Lewis points out (322), echoes not only the tragic quest of Melville's Ahab in Moby Dick in the "Murmurs of Leviathan he spoke" but also Edgar Allan Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym and the other narratives of sea quests woven through New England experience.

In a letter to Otto H. Kahn, Crane wrote of "Cutty Sark": "Two 'voices'--that of the world of Time, and that of the world of Eternity--are interwoven in the action. The Atlantis theme (that of Eternity) is the transmuted voice of the nickel-slot pianola, and this voice alternates with that of the derelict sailor and the description of the action. . . . Music still haunts [the] names [of the clipper ships] long after the wind has left their sails" (Crane, Letters 307-308). The voice of the sailor is paradoxical. His voice seems to represent the voice of lost time, the voice of failure to "get over" time (CP 82). He has sailed on board the "S. S. Ala--Antwerp," the ship of time, but he seems to have failed to possess time, for "that / damned white Arctic killed my time" (CP 82). However, the sound of "the nickel-in-the slot piano" reverberates the voice of Eternity which he has brought from his voyage (CP 82). The "nickel" image once again appears as the "coin" in "The Tunnel," as the toll paid in the Underworld which permits the hero of the poem to cross the river of death to the land of Happiness or Atlantis.

These two voices are balanced with the two visions of the derelict sailor. The sailor's eyes are "pressed through green grass / --green glasses, or bar lights made them / so-- / shine-- / GREEN-- / eyes--" (CP 82). The term "grass" is

corrected as "glass" by Marc Simon in his 1986 edition of Crane's poems, The Poems of Hart Crane, but Brom Weber's reading is preferred here, for the term "grass" represents the image of the "land," the land where "life's a geyser--beautiful" but the hero "can't live on" anymore (CP 83) and connects the entire section with a visionary evolution of Atlantis mythology. The sailor's shining "green eyes" ironically reflect the hero's visionary quest, and the names of the ships on which his version of the quest was pursued are redolent of the world's mythologies: the Thermopylae, the Leander, and the Atlantis Rose. He also finds the dreams of the pioneers: "I saw the frontiers gleaming of his mind; / or are there frontiers--running sands sometimes / running sands--somewhere--sands running . . . / Or they may start some white machine that sings" (CP 83). Through the voice and the vision of the sailor, the hero of the poem listens to the derelict sailor and attends the call of the bar's tiny pianola (in a passage reminiscent of The Waste Land). He turns out of the bar toward the Bridge, trailing fragments of mythological dreams: "I started walking home across the Bridge" (CP 84).

The second part of this section describes the hero's vision of the "airy regatta of phantom clipper ships seen from the Brooklyn Bridge on the way home" after parting with the sailor (Crane, Letters 307). This is the vision of the clipper dreams, the transfiguring vision of Columbus's dream of Cathay. The cataloguing of the ship names brings epic scope into this vision at the point where, as Samuel Hazo suggests, the entire "Cutty Sark" section functions as a transition between the world of time in the first half of The Bridge and the world of eternity in the second half: "The first half of The Bridge is concerned with the poet's quest in the physical and historical world; it begins with the voyage of Columbus and concludes with the spent wanderlust of a drunken sailor. The second half of The Bridge . . . is more concerned with the relation of the world of time to the

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The epigraph from Whitman's "Passage to India" reminds us that "The seas all crossed, / weathered the capes, the voyage done . . ." (CP 87). Crane conceived of "Cape Hatteras" as "a kind of ode to Walt Whitman," consciously allying himself to "the positive and universal tendencies implicit in nearly all his best work" (Letters 308, 354). Even at the stage of his conception of The Bridge, he was thrilled at "its symbolical possibilities" which are "directly connected with Whitman" (Letters 128). Crane's relation to Whitmanian romanticism is clearly present in "Cape Hatteras." The hero "return[s] home to our own / Hearths," to the "Years of the Modern," the twentieth century present (CP 88, 94), after his journey into the past. He returns home with his vision cleansed by his experiences in the world of time: ". . . time clears / Our lenses, lifts a focus, resurrects / A periscope to glimpse what joys or pain / Our eyes can share or answer" (CP 88). The image of prehistory, of vast reaction of time, driven by elemental energy, opens this section:

While rises in the west the coastwise range,
 slowly the hushed land--
Combustion at the astral core--the dorsal change
Of energy--convulsive shift of sand . . . (CP 88)

The hero's vision insists on the peculiarly American nature of its undertaking, its energy, and its recapitulation and appropriation of the past where "we, who round the capes, the promontories / Where strange tongues vary messages of surf / Below grey citadels, repeating to the stars / The

ancient names," establish "that deep wonderment" of the "red, eternal flesh of Pocahontas" which is "surcharged / With sweetness below derricks, chimneys, tunnels" and "Is veined by all that time has really pledged us . . ." (CP 88). After his journey, the hero "return[s] home to our own / Hearths," to this "native clay" of Pocahontas "to eat an apple" (CP 88). The metaphor of eating an apple not only reinforces the image of the American continent as the new Eden but also alludes to Adam's attempt to capture the "star-glistered salver of infinity" by eating an apple (CP 89). Just as Adam's attempt was so illusory that "Adam and Adam's answer in the forest / Left Hesperus mirrored in the lucid pool," so the hero's attempt to "subjugate" time and space is illusory because they can be "subjugated never" before he, discarding the "songs of gypsies" or the "strange tongues" which "vary messages of surf / Below grey citadels," reads Walt Whitman whose songs are the vision of the word and the light (CP 89, 88).

The hero returns home to read Walt Whitman, who is his spiritual and poetic guide throughout The Bridge. Whitman's poetry is for the hero the "syllables of faith," which serve him as "Panis Angelicus," the bread of angels, the words of Christ which are the "Easters of speeding light" (CP 89, 95). According to R. W. B. Lewis, "Cape Hatteras" is "so nourished and permeated" by Whitman's poetry (ten poems counted) that Crane can be "very nearly identified" with Whitman (328). Crane, Lewis argues, "is embracing Whitman in much the same way the 'Younger [Brother],' the human soul, melted in fondness into the arms of the Elder Brother, God, in 'Passage to India'" (328-329). The hero's reading of Whitman's poetry thus awakens him to become "the true son of God, the poet" by whom "Trinitas divine shall be gloriously accomplish'd and compacted" and who "shall come singing his songs" of the "absolute" fusion of "Nature and Man," God and man, the spirit and the body (Whitman, Leaves of Grass 415, 416). Like Whitman, the hero of "Cape Hatteras" is led to

"the theme that's statured in the cliff" of the Paumanok beach (CP 89). With Whitman, he "walk[s] the beach / Near Paumanok . . . and hear[s] the wraith / Through surf, its bird note there a long time falling" and finally is awakened with "Sea eyes . . . bright with myth!" (CP 89). Like Whitman whose "eyes, like the Great Navigator's without ship, / Gleam from the great stones of each prison crypt / Of canyoned traffic," the hero's "eyes" should "[confront] the Exchange, / Surviving in a world of stocks" (CP 89). Through Whitman, the hero is able to capture space, see "an atom in a shroud," and hear "an engine in a cloud!" (CP 89). He "wake[s] into the dream of act" from "this new realm of fact" (CP 89).

The hero is tested by the sounds of the power house, the "Power's script" whose "forked crash of split thunder parts / Our hearing momentwise" (CP 90). The "velvet hummed / Of dynamos" strums his "hearing's leash" and is led to "a new universe," a world of "New verities, new inklings" created or "whipped" by the "nasal whine of power" (CP 90). And then his "eyes" are pricked by the light of the "stars," the "glint" of the bearings which are "As bright as frogs' eyes, giggling in the girth / Of steely gizzards" (CP 90). He can now "[harness] jelly of the stars" and is awakened into a reality "new-set between the stars" (CP 90). He can read the "New latitudes" of space, the "frosty sagas," the "gleaming cantos of unvanquished space," the epic poems of the new universe which are scribbled on his eyes by stars (CP 90).

This leads to an apocalyptic vision of the "prophetic script," which is parodied in the tragic vision of destruction caused by the "sinewy silver biplane" of the Wright Brothers (CP 90): "New latitudes, unknotting, soon give place / To what fierce schedules, rife of doom apace!" (CP 90). "Like Icarus," Hazo writes, "modern man's tragic flaw is that he has let himself become the victim of his own inventiveness" (102-103). The hero envisions the sky as the "War's fiery kennel," the ground of aerial warfare (CP 91).

The "bright circumferences, heights" are "threshed,"
 "chiselled," "baited," and "marauded" (CP 91). This aerial
 combat signifies the epic battle of the modern age, the age
 of space: "While Iliads glimmer through eyes raised in pride
 / Hell's belt springs wider into heaven's plumed side" (CP
 91). This vision of the battle in space becomes a metaphor
 of the epic struggle of the hero who desires to capture the
 Word, "a Sanskrit charge / To conjugate infinity's dim
 marge--/ Anew . . . !" (CP 92). The hero's desire to "ride /
 The blue's cloud-templed districts unto ether," to get "into
 new reaches" of the divine reality intoxicates him in the
 "alcohol of space" (CP 91, 90, 92). His "eyes" are
 "bicarbonated white by [the] speed" of the wings of the plane
 which "receive / The benediction of the shell's deep, sure
 reprieve" and

Lift agonized quittance, tilting from the invisible
 brink

Now eagle-bright, now

quarry-hid, twist-

-ing, sink with

Enormous repercussive list-

-ings down

Giddily spiralled

gauntlets, upturned, unlooping

In guerrilla sleights, trapped in combustian gyr-

Ing, dance the curdled depth

down whizzing

Zodiacs, dashed

(now nearing fast the Cape!)

down gravitation's

vortex into crashed

. . . . dispersion . . . into mashed and shapeless

debris. . . .

By Hatteras bunched the beached heap of high bravery!

(CP 92-93)

Crashing into "gravitation's vortex," the hero is reborn,

a poet like Whitman who "Has beat a song" which leads man beyond "Glacial sierras and the flight of ravens, / . . . past condor zones, through zenith havens / Past where the albatross has offered up / His last wing-pulse" (CP 93). He associates himself with Whitman's "pure impulse inbred / To answer deepest soundings! O, upward from the dead," Whitman's vision of "vast eternity" which "has held the heights" beyond the stars (CP 93). Like the flight of the albatross, his vision "is shivered back to earth," to the sufferings of humanity. Whitman is reclaimed in the hero, who loves the "competent loam, the probable grass," wields "the rebound seed," and brings "tally, and a pact, new bound / Of living brotherhood!" (CP 93). He, too, becomes a "Mourner," a wound-dresser who has "kept of wounds" in the "Ghoul-mound of man's perversity," and transforms the bloody battles of "fraternal massacre" into the "thunder's eloquence through green arcades" which "Set[s] trumpets breathing in each clump and grass tuft--'til / Gold autumn, captured, crowned the trembling hill!" (CP 93, 94).

He claims magic power "Beyond all sesames of science" to create "something green" out of "the loam / Of prairies," the "mashed and shapeless debris," to transform the physical into the spiritual (CP 94, 93). He sees beyond "the physical body" of America and explores "the spiritual body" of America. Whitman is "Our Meistersinger" who is able to "set breath in steel," to "[fling] the span on even wing / Of that great Bridge, our Myth, whereof I sing!" (CP 94). The hero is further identified with "Vedic Caesar" who kneels to the "greensward" (CP 95), the "'green word,' the living word, the organic 'Multitudinous Verb' . . . of the poem itself" (Sugg 82). Thus he is able to "bind us throbbing with one voice, / New integers of Roman, Viking, Celt--" (CP 95). He becomes "Panis Angelicus" of "Easters of speeding light," the bread of an Angel, the poet of the Word and the Light, the Bridge which "shimmeringly stands / Above the Cape's ghoul-mound" as "the rainbow's arch," the wound-dresser between God and man

and as "a pact, new bound / Of living brotherhood" between man and man (CP 95, 93). The hero is fully absorbed into Whitman's "true son of God, the poet" who "shall come singing his songs" of the union of spiritual and physical, sacred and profane, God and man (LG 415-416):

My hand

in yours,

Walt Whitman--

so-- (CP 95)

V "Three Songs"

There have been two distinctively opposite arguments about the position of "Three Songs" between "Cape Hatteras" and "Quaker Hill" in the structural pattern of The Bridge. In his essay "The Significance of The Bridge, by Hart Crane or What Are We to Think of Professor X?" Yvor Winters argues that its present position is unjustifiable: "The poems obviously have no place in this latter half of the sequence, and they would probably fit but little better into the first half" (137). Weber follows Winters's opinion, insisting that these three poems "increase the logical disintegration of The Bridge" (367). R. W. B. Lewis asserts: "If 'Three Songs' were removed from The Bridge, the reader would observe a smooth and logical development from the end of 'Cape Hatteras' to the beginning of 'Quaker Hill'" (338). Hyatt H. Waggoner holds that these three songs "seem unrelated to the main theme, or at least not clear in their function within the whole poem" (American Poets 505). Because of "the insertion of the 'Three songs' section, Jeffrey Walker insists, 'Crane's American epic ode . . . becomes dramatically untenable, at least for his modernist reader. The text breaks up, taking on the look of a series of lyrical gestures, a set of reflections within a static, preplanned arrangement" (143-144).

On the contrary, John R. Willingham argues that the three poems in the section "Three Songs" are "organically sound,"

arguing that the device of "Three Songs" is "an analogy to that of a symphony" employed by Waldo Frank in his novels and by Walt Whitman in his poetry, both of whom offer "a double validity for Crane's purposes in The Bridge" (69). L. S. Dembo defends the position of "Three Songs," maintaining that "the poems are considered in their exact context--specifically, as part of the latter half of the sequence--much of their obscurity is dispelled and their apparent disjointedness justified" (107-108). Samuel Hazo insists that the "Three Songs" section "is organically related to the symbol of the bridge as a woman" (105). Nilsen argues that the "Three Songs" section is placed logically because in the second part the hero returns to the starting point of his journey in the first part of The Bridge (118). I agree with these opinions, and it is on this premise--that the "Three Songs" section represents a renewal to the conditions of the poem's opening and a renewal of Crane's relationship to Whitman after the experiences of the first half --that my argument proceeds.

In the beginning of the first poem of this section, "Southern Cross," the hero yearns for his love, a desire that is quickly mythologized into an Edenic scene where the "nameless Woman of the South" becomes radically transformed into Eve, Magdalene, and Mary, the sensual and the spiritual as Mother of all things (CP 98). The image of Eve in "Southern Cross" becomes a "simian Venus," a woman of sensuality who "takes night / And lifts her girdles from her, one by one--" (CP 98). This fallen image of Eve signifies that her sensuality is separated from her spirituality and coalesces with that of Medusa, whose hair was transformed into serpents, immemorial feminine images of temptation and desire.

The "long wake of phosphor" is viewed as the "vaporous scars," the bleeding light of Eve which "falls vainly on the wave" on the "iridescent / Furrow of all our travel" (CP 98). This reinforces the image of Eve as a "simian Venus," for

whom the hero should bleed and receive "trailed derision" like Christ who bled for man's "scars" and was derided. Here is evoked the vision of the agonized crucifixion of Christ, whose "Eyes crumble[d]" at the "kiss" of man's "scars" and "Incite[d] a yell" from the crowd: "Slid on that backward vision / The mind is churned to spittle, whispering hell" (CP 98). The hero's sexual desire is conflated with the agonies of Christ in a garish crucifixion scene:

I wanted you . . . The embers of the Cross
Climbed by aslant and huddling aromatically.
It is blood to remember; it is fire
To stammer back . . . It is

God--your namelessness. And the wash-- (CP 98)

This fallen Eve and the progeny of her desire are caught in the light of this strange scene where "Light drowned the lithic trillions of your spawn" (CP 99). The hero strains to realize a version of redemption in this nightmarish southern re-enactment, but it remains profoundly ambiguous.

The Eve in "Southern Cross" becomes Magdalene in the second poem, "National Winter Garden." This Magdalene is a dancer, a strip-teaser at National Winter Garden, a New York vaudeville theater. The very title, Lewis says, "tells us that we and the entire national scene and culture are again envisaged as buried in the depths of winter; while the Garden of Eden from which Eve was ejected ('stumbling gardenless to grieve')--the American dream and promise, so to say--has become a scene of cheapest vulgarity" (343). The body of Magdalene is naked with her "Outspoken buttocks in pink beads / . . . No extra mufflings here: / The world's one flagrant, sweating cinch" (CP 100). Her dancing is sensual enough to provoke the audience into sexual desire. Her "Outspoken buttocks in pink beads / Invite the necessary cloudy clinch / Of bandy eyes"; her "legs waken salads in the brain"; "Her eyes exist in swivellings of her teats, / Pearls whip her hips, a drench of whirling strands" (CP 100). She is a harlot who "pick[s] your blonde out neatly through the smoke"

and "Always . . . wait[s] for someone else though, always--" (CP 100). The image of the snake dance once again connects Magdalene with Eve in the previous poem. She is a woman of promiscuity like Eve who has spawned "the lithic trillions" of her offsprings in "Southern Cross" (CP 99).

Magdalene's burlesque dance is a parody of Maquokeeta's ritual dance in "The Dance," distorting the natural images of light and sound into vulgar artificiality. In "National Winter Garden" we can hear "a tom-tom scrimmage with a somewhere violin" instead of the thunder and see the "fireworks" instead of the lightning (CP 100). Every sound is muffled and every light is shrouded in "smoke" (CP 100). We can "always and last" hear "Some cheapest echo" of the thunder (CP 100). And at "the lewd trounce of a final muted beat! / We flee her spasm through a fleshless door" (CP 100). The eyes of the audience watching Magdalene's dance are the "bandy eyes," suggesting the loss of the eyesight, the power to see through (CP 100). The image of Magdalene is not that of the woman of the "white snow," but that of the woman of red and blue, the harlot of vulgar color who is "Sprayed first with ruby, then with emerald sheen--" (CP 100). Magdalene has lost her smile and is "Least tearful and least glad," suggesting that her facial expression takes on the color of "sandstone grey" (CP 100). But amidst the lust and sensuality of the scene there is the constraint awareness that Mary Magdalene has always stood for redeemed sensuality in the Christian tradition, and in the poem's conclusion Crane's Magdalene, "the burlesque of our lust--and faith, / Lug[s] us back lifeward--bone by infant bone" (CP 101). There is here at least the possibility of redemption.

As Lewis points out, "Southern Cross" evokes "the autumnal atmosphere" (347), the image of the fallen Eve, Venus which "falls vainly on the wave" from "the slowly smoldering fire / Of lower heavens" (CP 98). "National Winter Garden" is dominated by the image of the winter, the image of barrenness and emptiness, along with the suggestion

of the title itself. In "Virginia" the spring season returns, and with it the figure of Mary appears. The "rain" falls and the barren land is transformed into the "green" world, the virgin land "Where green figs gleam / By oyster shells" and into the garden where flowers bloom and "Pigeons by the million" play and sing on the "nickel-dime" towers, the modern skyscrapers (CP 102). Everything is reborn "in the noon of May," at Easter time (CP 102). The hero of "Virginia" envisions everything spiritually. "The office skyscraper," as Nilsen observes, "is becoming transformed into the bell-tower of a cathedral, 'popcorn bells' functioning as 'Carillon.'" Such a tower and the music of its bells are symbols of poetry as insight into the essence of spiritual love" (128).

The Medusa-like hair of Eve in "The Southern Cross" turns into the "golden" hair of the "blue-eyed" Mary in "Virginia" (CP 102). Mary in this section is not corrupted, but innocent, and she "Keep[s] smiling the boss away" (CP 102). She is "blue-eyed," with "golden" hair and a "claret scarf" who is waiting for her Saturday date. This virgin Mary lets down her hair "from the high wheat tower" in order for the hero, her lover, to climb up to her. The "blue-eyed" Mary of the "golden" hair "with the claret scarf" works in "the high wheat tower" and seems to have gathered various images of feminine desirability, innocence, and remoteness into herself. She illuminates the grime of lower Manhattan where "Crap-shooting gangs in Bleecker reign" and other images of a fallen world remind one of what redemption is for (CP 102).

VI "Quaker Hill"

The "Three Songs" section anticipates the following three sections, "Quaker Hill," "The Tunnel," and "Atlantis" in various ways. One can point to the seasonal symbolism, as Lewis does (338-373). The autumnal season in "Southern Cross" evokes the autumnal atmosphere of "Quaker Hill"; the winter in "National Winter Garden" is similar to the coldness

of "The Tunnel," and the spring in "Virginia" mirrors the green Paradisal image of "Atlantis." As Nilsen argues, we might also see "the curve of the imagination from the middle to the nether world and up again toward the higher regions": "'Southern Cross' corresponds to the quotidian, middle level of 'Quaker Hill,' 'National Winter Garden' foreshadows the descent into the underworld of 'The Tunnel,' and the higher aspirations of 'Virginia' reach full orchestration in the massive chorus of 'Atlantis'" (119).

Whether this structural pattern is seen in terms of the seasonal symbolism or the curve of Crane's poetic imagination, "Quaker Hill" is a logical development from "Three Songs." "Quaker Hill" describes America which has lost its dream of "the Promised Land" (CP 105), in terms which evoke some of Melville's sense of a Quaker faith gone badly wrong, where the "trembl[ing] at the word of the Lord" has dwindled into mere silence (Trueblood 7). According to Trueblood, the popular images of Quakers as "an exceedingly mild and harmless people, largely given to silence, totally unaggressive" are "erroneous at almost every point" (1). The early Quaker Movement, Trueblood continues, "was marked by an amazing vitality," for the early Quakers were ingrained in the military metaphors of the New Testament and these metaphors were "so congenial to [them] in general that they tended to refer to their entire struggle as the 'Lamb's War'" (1, 5). However, "Quaker Hill" sees the death of this vitality: "I have seen death's stare in slow survey / From four horizons that no one relates . . ." (CP 104). The "old Meeting House" has been abandoned, turned into "old Mizzentop, palatial white / Hostelry" and "Now the New Avalon Hotel" where the "volcanoes" of radio music "roar / A welcome to highsteppers that no mouse / Who saw the Friends there ever heard before" (CP 104, 105).

As Lewis points out (350), the death of the American dream is presented in the image of contemporary Quakers who have forgotten their mission as soldiers of Christ. "The

Light which strives to reach every man," Trueblood explains, "is not some vague general light, but the present continuation of the Light which shone in Jesus as He called men by the Sea of Galilee. Here the Logos Doctrine served admirably, so that the prologue to the Fourth Gospel became more precious to Quakers than almost any other single passage of the Bible" (70). Metaphorically, every man is identified with "'The Inner Light,'" or "'The Light of Christ Within'" (69). But there is little light in "Quaker Hill." There are, rather, images of blindness and cacophony. The Quakers are likened to the cows whose eyes "see no other thing / Than grass and snow, and their own inner being / Through the rich halo that they do not trouble / Even to cast upon the seasons fleeting / Though they should thin and die on last year's stubble" (CP 104). They are "awkward, ponderous, and uncoy," even though they "with pledges taste the bright annoy / Of friendship's acid wine" and boast of their "store of faith in other men / Who would . . . stalk down the merriest ghost" (CP 104). This is matched by the decayed images of the windows and panes of "old Mizzentop, palatial white / Hostelry" (CP 104). The "windows" of Mizzentop are "staring out toward former / Faces" and its "loose panes crown the hill and gleam / At sunset with a silent, cobwebbed patience . . . / See them, like eyes that still uphold some dream / Through mapled vistas, cancelled reservations!" (CP 104). There is no Word or power here; only decaying restaurants, hotels, and other trappings of tourism. At the New Avalon Hotel, formally the Meeting House, one encounters only loud music and "the Promised Land," not for "the Friends" but for "the persuasive surburban land agent" or "the woodlouse," who "mortgages the ancient deal / Table" and "eats the seal, / The spinster polish of antiquity . . ." (CP 105). This Promised Land is no longer the New Avalon of "faith in other men" but the land of the "resigned factions of the dead": "Where are my kinsmen and the patriach race?" (CP 104, 105).

Through this vision, the hero descends "from the hawk's

far stemming view, / . . . as worm's eye to construe / Our love of all we touch, and take it to the Gate" (CP 105), the Gate of the Hell to tell "His news . . . transmuting silence with that stilly note / Of pain" of Emily Dickinson (CP 106), a poet who saw eternity in death, and of Isadora Duncan, an artist who struggled to capture the vision of the ideal: "I see only the ideal. But no ideals have ever been fully successful on this earth" (CP 103). The whip-poor-will sings just before dawn the "triple-noted clause of moonlight" which "unhusks the heart of fright" and

Breaks us and saves, yes, breaks the heart, yet yields
That patience that is armour and that shields
Love from despair--when love forseees the end--
Leaf after autumnal leaf

break off,

descend--

descend--

(CP 106)

VII "The Tunnel"

The hero's descent into the Underworld in "Quaker Hill" is "literally and symbolically" enacted in "The Tunnel" (Dembo, 121; Lewis, 354). It is, as Lewis points out, not only "a traditional epic phase, corresponding to the visit to the underworld in the eleventh book of The Odyssey, the sixth book of the Aeneid, and the Inferno" (354), but is also associated with the descent of Christ, his harrowing of Hell. The hero's descent is hesitant: ". . . can't you quite make up your mind to ride?" (CP 108). He prepares to descend, via the Manhattan subway, into hell where he expects to find "the garden in the third act dead" (CP 108). He has to ride the subway to travel "Up Times Square to Columbus Circle," leaving behind all "Performances, assortments, résumés" of the drama of the American dream, ultimately the human drama itself (CP 108). This journey through the city and through the American dream and nightmare is partly a reference to the

epic tradition, partially a re-enactment of Whitman, partly a re-capitulation of the structure of The Bridge itself.

The hero's hallucinatory re-capitulation of the descent into hell begins by pressing "the coin / Into the slot" for the fare to ride the subway (CP 109), which is associated, on the one hand, with the coin paid to Charon for his ferrying of the spirit of the dead across the Styx and, on the other hand, with the thirty silver pieces of coin paid for the betrayal of Christ. This world is haunted by "tabloid crime-sheets" and "the toothpaste and the dandruff ads" (CP 108, 110). The words he hears have lost their creative power, simply "recant[ing] like beaten weather vanes," like the "tunnels that re-wind themselves" like the "phonographs of hades" (CP 109, 110).

In the subway we encounter one of the most extraordinary hallucinatory visions in Crane's poetry, as the dismembered visage of Edgar Allan Poe as a sort of mad Adonis haunts the subway and daunts the hero's vision. In a letter to Waldo Frank, Crane wrote that he found William Carlos Williams's In the American Grain "so intimate to my theme" of "The Tunnel," because Williams "puts Poe and his 'character' in the same position as I had symbolized for him in 'The Tunnel' section" (Letters 277-278). In the chapter entitled "Edgar Allan Poe" of In the American Grain, Williams insists that Poe is "a new De Soto," an explorer of "the conception of the New World as a woman" (220). Poe is "a light in the morass--which must appear eerie, even to himself, by force of terrific contrast, an isolation that would naturally lead to drunkenness and death, logically and simply--by despair, as the very final evidence of a too fine seriousness and devotion" (222). He is a poet "first and last to clear the GROUND," a poet in whom "American literature is anchored, in him alone, on solid ground" (216, 226). He is a poet in whose hands "words [become] figures; an old language truly, but one from which he carried over only the most elemental qualities to his new purpose; which was, to find a way to tell his soul" (221).

"His greatness is in that he turned his back and faced inland, to originality, with the identical gesture of a Boone. And for that reason he is unrecognized. Americans have never recognized themselves. . . . Thus Poe must suffer by his originality" (226). Poe is for Crane the poet of light whose "eyes" shine "like agate lanterns" (CP 110), the visionary poet "To Find the Western path / Right thro' the Gates of Wrath" (CP 107). Poe is "the crucified Christ" (Lewis, 360) or "the crucified poet" (Nilsen, 151) and his struggle to "deny the ticket" echoes Christ's Passion to resist his last temptation because it signifies, as most critics hold, the test of Poe's poetic integrity as a visionary poet (Dembo, 123; Lewis, 361; Messerlie, 212).

The hero plunges into his journey through the Underworld where everything is involved in the vortex of the surreal: the gyring glass doors, the gargling black windows, the revolving newspapers, and so on. The "rounding" train through the re-winding tunnels with "a scream" of "galvothermic" thunder is envisioned as the "demented" Daemon "Whose hideous laughter is a bellows mirth / --Or the muffled slaughter of a day in birth--" (CP 111). This Daemon subway train takes a "Wop washerwoman" home, to "Mysterious kitchens," the home of the "mother eyes and hands" (CP 111, 108, 111). This "Genoese" is, as Lewis points out, "a faint reminder of Columbus and hence of the divine mother," a visionary voyager who brought home the word of the New World (362; Butterfield, 204). The hero's subway journey brings him to the world "where streets / Burst suddenly in rain" (CP 110-111) and where he can hear "--A sound of waters bending astride the sky / Unceasing with some Word that will not die . . . !" (CP 112).

At the end of his subway journey the hero emerges from the hellish tunnel and stands "by the River that is East--" (CP 112). "Here at the waters' edge," the hero encounters a tugboat staving up the River (CP 112). He listens to the "echoes" of "one galvanic blare" of the ship and sees the

guiding "lights" of the "coasting" tugboat: "I counted the echoes assembling, one after one, / Searching, thumbing the midnight on the piers. / Lights, coasting, left the oily tympanum of waters" (CP 112). In his journey from Times Square to Columbus Circle, the hero is symbolically transformed into Poe, into Columbus. He is a "wop washerwoman" who sweeps the "corridors" and the "cuspidors" of the Underworld, a messiah who cleanses the "interborough fissures of [man's] mind" (CP, 110). He is, to use Walt Whitman's phrase in his poem "Passage to India," "the true son of God, the poet" who completely justifies "the whole earth, this cold, impassive, voiceless earth" (Leaves of Grass 415; Lewis, 365).

VIII "Atlantis"

In a letter to Waldo Frank, Crane wrote that "Atlantis" is the last section of The Bridge, but it was "oddly enough emergent first" of all sections of the poem, adding that "It is symphonic in including the convergence of all the strands separately detailed in antecedent sections of the poem--Columbus, conquests of water, land, etc., Pokahantus, subways, offices, etc., etc." (Letters 232). In a letter to Otto H. Kahn, Crane insisted that there is "a logic" to the fact that "that final section of the poem has been the first to be completed," for "it is the mystic consummation toward which all the other sections of the poem converge" (Letters 240). One may conclude that it was Crane's intent to see the form of this section as "symphonic," that its theme is "the mystic consummation" of everything explored in the preceding sections.

Crane's conception of "Atlantis," as Crane himself and many critics point out, was formed by his reading of Plato's accounts of Atlantis as the lost ideal community in The Timaeus and Critias, Lewis Spence's theory of Atlantis as the synthetical society of the West and East in Atlantis in America, and Ignatius Donnelly's vision of Atlantis as the

Garden of Eden in Atlantis: The Antediluvian World. Even though each of these views is presented in a somewhat different perspective, the traditional Atlantis myths, in one version or another, work powerfully in Crane's poem.

"Atlantis" is Crane's song of "a new cultural synthesis of values in terms of our America" (Letters 223). In Our America Waldo Frank envisions America as "a mystic Word" (10) and this mystic conception of America as the Word or Atlantis is reiterated in his The Re-discovery of America: "America, from its historic outset, has had the mystic tradition: a tradition, that is, which rose from consciousness of the whole of man and of God; which linked the land with all lands and all men; which identified the self of our land with the destiny of human kind" (212-213). This is John Winthrop's theological vision of America as "the place where the Lord will create a new Heaven and a new Earth," St. John de Crèvecoeur's social vision of America as the land where "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men," and Whitman's poetic vision of America as the new earth of a new man.

This concluding section returns to the Bridge in the first section of the poem. "Atlantis" is the hero's prayer to the Bridge for its revelation; it is his faith in the Bridge as the harp and the altar, Christ as the Word and the Light. The Bridge, which is sustained by the "bound cable strands" and enlightened by the "Taut miles of shuttling moonlight," is itself the "Transparent meshes--fleckless the gleaming staves-- / Sibylline voices [which] flicker, waveringly stream / As though a god were issue of the strings . . ." (CP 114). It is a harp, "One arc synoptic of all tides below," whose "labyrinthine mouths of history" pour its "reply as though all ships at sea / Complighted in one vibrant breath made cry,-- / 'Make thy love sure--to weave whose song we ply!'" (CP 114).

In "Atlantis" the complex synaesthetic image of the Bridge gathers light, sound, and form into itself. The

Bridge is the "Tall Vision-of-the Voyage," the Light which "lift[s] night to cycloramic crest / Of deepest day" (CP 115). It is the "Choir" which "translat[es] time / Into what multitudinous Verb the suns / And synergy of waters ever fuse, recast / In myriad syllables,--Psalm of Cathay" (CP 115), the Word to whose call "seven oceans answer from their dream" (CP 114). The Bridge is the Incarnation of Christ as the Word and the Light, who is what Crane calls the "identification of [himself] with all of life" (Letters 140). It is the answerer of "all tides" (CP 114), all aspects of history, for he is the possessor of time and space. It is the pardoner of "this history" (CP 116).

The hero is now purified by the word and the light of the Bridge and becomes identified with the Bridge, which can

press

Sidelong with flight of blade on tendon blade

--Tomorrows into yesteryear-- and link

What cipher-script of time no traveller reads

But who, through smoking pyres of love and death,

Searches the timeless laugh of mythic spears. (CP 115)

The "smoking pyres of love and death" evoke the images of dead Greek heroes. Mythic and epical time are rapidly compressed as Crane summons into his own Atlantis a final, synaesthetic condensation of the Bridge's visionary possibility. The Bridge is the "stepped Cognizance" of both the "stitch and stallion glow" of stars and the "sound of doom," which leads the "sight, sound and flesh" of man "from time's realm / As love strikes clear direction for the helm" (CP 116). It is "an organ" of celestial music (CP 116): "The vernal strophe chimes from deathless strings!" (CP 115). In this sense, the Platonic epigraph to this section is appropriate to Crane's poetic vision of the Bridge as "Music," which is "the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system" (CP 113).

The Bridge is "Everpresence, beyond time" (CP 117). The hero travels "up the crystal-flooded aisle" toward the "loft

of vision, palladium helm of stars" (CP 114), to all history from the beginning or the "cry" of the ancient cities of Tyre and Troy to the present of their "silence": ". . . up planet-sequined heights / Some trillion whispering hammers glimmer Tyre: / Serenely, sharply up the long anvil cry / Of inchling aeons silence rivets Troy" (CP 115). He is identified with the Bridge itself "lifting night to cycloramic crest / Of deepest day," the "Choir, translating time / Into what multitudinous Verb . . . / In myriad syllables,--Psalm of Cathay!" (CP 115). Now the "eyes" of the hero begin to "stammer through the pangs of dust and steel" (CP 115).

The Bridge becomes the "Swift peal of secular light, intrinsic Myth / Whose fell unshadow is death's utter wound,--" (CP 116). It is "Deity's young name," the "Paradigm" of "Love" which pardons "this history" of America, justifying it (CP 115, 116). Thus, the song of the Bridge is "Deity's glittering Pledge" which consecrates the serpent of time and the eagle of space, the "rainbows" of God's Covenant to man: "Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring / The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . . ?" (CP 116, 117). The Bridge is the very emblem of visionary America, a synthesis of time and space, pardoning, redeeming, and consecrating all history in its spiritual body.

C. "One Song, one Bridge of Fire"

Hart Crane is a visionary poet, but he himself acknowledged that his poetic vision "has nothing to do with factual prediction or with futurity," but with "a peculiar type of perception, capable of apprehending some absolute and timeless concept of the imagination with astounding clarity and conviction" (CP 263). Crane insisted that he "never consciously approached any subject in a religious mood," but that his "Messianic predisposition" motivated The Bridge, which is structured by "the essential religious motive"

(Letters 350). In a letter to Waldo Frank, Crane confessed his experience of exultation when he walked across the Brooklyn Bridge: "I have seen the Word made Flesh. . . . 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" (Letters 181).

The mystic conception of America, Crane says, was plain in "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," in which he attempted to build "a bridge between so-called classic experience and many divergent realities of our seething, confused cosmos of today, which has no formulated mythology yet for classic poetic reference or for religious exploitation" (CP 217). But it "figure[s] even larger in The Bridge," which Crane intended as "the complete renunciation symbolized in The Wasteland" (Letters 125, 127). In the early stage of his poetic career, Crane was "more influenced by Eliot than any other modern" and time after time, even in The Bridge, Crane is constantly aware of Eliot's poem, but he was "disappointed" at the pessimism of The Waste Land (Crane, Letters 114, 105). And Crane went "through him toward a different goal" (Crane, Letters 90). In a letter to Gorham Munson, Crane admired Eliot's poetic "erudition and technique" on the one hand, but, on the other hand, proclaimed his "departure" from Eliot's "negative" attitude, and moved toward "a more positive" vision: "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 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 sceptical age) ecstatic goal" (Letters 114-115). He moved toward Whitman and away from the early infatuation with Eliot. He wrote in a letter to Gorham Munson: "The more I think about my Bridge poem the more thrilling its symbolical

possibilities become, and since my reading of you and Frank . . . I begin to feel myself directly connected with Whitman" (Letters 128). The Bridge is Crane's Whitmanian "affirmation of experience, and to that extent is 'positive' rather than 'negative' in the sense that The Waste Land is negative" (Letters 351). Whitman is for Crane the "most typical and valid expression of the American psychosis"; he is "Our Meistersinger" who "set breath in steel" and who "on the boldest heel / Stood up and flung the span on even wing / Of that great Bridge, our Myth, whereof I sing!" (CP 263, 94).

Of course, it is not Eliot and Whitman alone who fed Crane's idiosyncratic Christian vision. He found "the true idea of God" in the characters of Alyosha and Father Zossima in Feodor Dostoyevsky's The Brothers Karamazov, who regard man as "the semblance of Divine Love," "perceive the divine mystery in things," and "love the whole world with an all-embracing love" (354-355). Indeed, Crane believed that in the beautiful young Alyosha and in Father Zossima Dostoevsky "represent[s] the nearest type to the 'return of Christ'" (Letters 50). However, as Karl Shapiro says in his Essay on Rime, it is Whitman's Song of Myself that became "the naked seed" of Crane's The Bridge: "But who / Except Hart Crane has tasted the pure manna / Of Song of Myself, the naked seed of rime?" (30). Crane's quest in The Bridge, as he wrote in a letter to Charlotte Rychtarik, was to search for "the true idea of God," which is for Crane "the only thing that can give happiness,--that is the identification of yourself with all of life" (Letters 140).

Ultimately, The Bridge has "A rather religious motivation, albeit not Presbyterian" (Crane, Letters 241). As I argued earlier, Christian Science provided Crane with the concept of being, the concept of man as not "material" but "spiritual" (Eddy 468). This influence led him in The Bridge to envision America as what Waldo Frank calls "a mystic Word" (Our America 10). The Bridge is "a dynamic and eloquent document" of America which "is transmuted into a

symbol of consciousness, knowledge, spiritual unity"; it is "an epic of the modern consciousness" which is comparable to Virgil's The Aeneid: "I feel justified in comparing the historic and cultural scope of The Bridge to this great work. It is at least a symphony with an epic theme, and a work of considerable profundity and inspiration" (Crane, Letters 241, 308, 309). In this poem all phases of American history are "transfigured into abstract form" of an epic poem, in which the "initial impulses" of American people are "gathered up toward the climax of the bridge" (Crane, Letters 124). In other words, The Bridge is "One Song, one Bridge of Fire" (CP 117), which, as Crane wrote to Otto H. Kahn, aims to "enunciate a new cultural synthesis of values in terms of our America," adopting the Bridge as "the symbol of consciousness spanning time and space" (Letters 223, 241).

Chapter IV

William Carlos Williams's Paterson

A. "Say it! No ideas but in things"

Twentieth century literature, Robert Langbaum says in The Poetry of Experience, expresses "the desire to overcome subjectivity and achieve objectivity" (30). This desire is handed down from the romantic tradition, which aims to "heal the breach" between object and subject and between the ideal and the real (29). Romanticism "conceives of the ideal as existing only in conjunction with the real and the real as existing only in conjunction with the ideal. The two are brought into conjunction only in the act of perception when the higher or imaginative rationality brings the ideal to the real by penetrating and possessing the external world as a way of knowing both itself and the external world" (24). Romanticism moves "toward objectivity, toward a new principle of connection with society and nature through the imposition of values on the external world" (28). Langbaum concludes that romanticism is "a single developing tradition" of "the poetry of the last one hundred and seventy-five years or so" (31).

Against Langbaum's view of romanticism as a modern tradition is set J. Hillis Miller's argument that the "new art" of twentieth century poetry departs from the romantic tradition "toward a poetry of reality," which "reaches full development in the poetry of William Carlos Williams" (1). According to Miller, many romantic writers dichotomize their vision of the world into "subjective and objective realms" and also into "two realms, heaven and earth, supernatural and natural, the 'real' world and the derived world" (1). In the poetry of Victorian writers like Tennyson, Arnold, and

Hopkins, the romantic dualism of subject and object is still found, but God has "withdrawn beyond the physical world" (2). The "disappearance of God" in Victorian poetry becomes "the death of God" in twentieth century poetry (2). Abandoning the world beyond, the realm of heaven and God, or the supernatural world, the poetry of the twentieth century returns to the here and now, the world of reality, or nature. The death of God in twentieth century poetry also signals the disappearance of a distinction between the realm of subject and object, mind and universe, self and the world. And the poetry of the twentieth century enters "a new region of copresence" of the mind and the object (9).

This new realm of "copresence," Miller argues, is the realm of Williams's poetry, "a space both subjective and objective, a region of copresence in which anywhere is everywhere, and all times are one time" (288). This poetry of copresence marks the end of the romantic tradition and "the rejection of an even older tradition, Christian and Platonic" as well (291). In the realm of Williams's poetry "there is no searching for the traces of a vanished deity, no frantic attempt to find a new mediator between heaven and earth" (291). The absence of the idea of God and the disappearance of a distinction between mind and universe, between subject and object, in Williams's poetry points to his poetic belief of "no ideas but in things," his belief in the poetry of reality, the poetry of the here and now. "Here is everywhere for Williams," Miller says, "and there is no other world to go to. . . . Words, things, people, and God vanish as separate entities and everything becomes a unit" (291).

Miller's argument, making of Williams "a poet of reality," Carl Rapp says, has been "truly seminal" and "remains, on the whole, the most stimulating conception of Williams yet to appear" (4). Rapp, however, in his own book,

William Carlos Williams and Romantic Idealism, attempts to re-situate Williams in the romantic tradition. Since most critics like Miller, including Richard Macksey, James Breslin, and Joseph N. Riddel, think of "The Wanderer" as "Williams' departure" from the traditions of romanticism and idealism, Rapp also takes up the poem "as an appropriate starting point" of his argument to rebut their critical tendency (6). Aligning Williams with "two major nineteenth-century traditions: romanticism and idealism," Rapp argues that Williams's poetry is the expression of "Christian theology and Platonic idealism" (6).

Miller sees the hero's plunge into the Passaic River in "The Wanderer" as symbolic of the surrender of "the ego" or of the abandonment of the "dramas of the interchange of subject and object, self and world," which "puts [Williams] beyond romanticism" (287). Rapp, however, interprets it as "a merger in that poem between subject and object . . . a unity or a harmony established between Williams [the hero] and his world," because the mind of the hero "becomes the single, transcendent point of unity--the logos, the center, the coherence" where he "has drawn all things to himself" (18). "The Wanderer" is not the poem of "an abandonment of the ego" but that of "an affirmation of it" (19). "Indeed," Rapp says, "on the evidence of this first major poem it might well be said that, instead of abandoning idealism, Williams actually embraces it" (18). At this point, Rapp points out "a paradox" of the affirmation of the phenomenal world as a part of his ego and the negation of it as something "transcended or used in such a way that it points beyond itself" (20). "This paradox wherein the phenomenal world is both affirmed and negated," Rapp continues, "is inherent not only in Williams' work but in romantic poetry generally" (20). This paradox is then his idealism, his belief "in the existence of something like a universal spirit or a universal

mind in which all finite minds necessarily participate" (24), even though he is not "a Christian or a Platonist in the usual sense" (6).

This paradox, Rapp says, takes Williams "from a consideration of his own transcendence of phenomena to a consideration of Transcendence itself conceived of as a single, ineffable spiritual power" (24). Williams's poetry "embodies a spiritual drama wherein the mind comes to an understanding of itself by using the phenomenal world of appearances as a means of achieving self-awareness," conforming not only to Coleridgean romanticism, "the typically romantic oscillation between egotism and empathy" but also to Hegelian idealism, the view of artistic works as "sensuous manifestations of the Absolute" (25, 26). The three Hegelian stages of the development of art (the "symbolic," the "classical," and the "romantic" stages), Rapp maintains, are recapitulated in Williams's poetry. Rapp concludes that Williams's poetry has reached "the last and highest phase of art, the romantic" stage of the spiritual transcendence over the physical world, even though he has experienced the "symbolic" phase of the desire to harmonize himself with the world and "classical" phase of the aspiration toward perfect form (28-30).

In this discussion of Williams I align myself against Miller and with Rapp. Let me then also begin with a consideration of "The Wanderer" to clarify my position toward Williams's poetic theory. "The Wanderer," Williams says, "is actually a reconstruction from memory of my early Keatsian Endymion imitation that I destroyed, burned in a furnace!" (I Wanted 25-26). This Keatsian period is the period of the formation of his poetic sensibility, a period in which he read intensively in Shakespeare, Milton's early poems like "L'Allegro" and "Lycidas," Coleridge's The Ancient Mariner, Whitman's Leaves of Grass, Longinus's On the Sublime,

Palgrave's Golden Treasury, Plato's Symposium, Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, and Darwin's Descent of Man. This Keatsian period is a parallel to his early religious sensibility, a time of reading the Bible and attending church services (I Wanted 3). Even though he insisted that he was not a "religious" man but "rather a sanctimonious young man" (I Wanted 2-3), Williams's poetic sensibility is profoundly associated with the fundamentally Christian basis of his earliest life.

Seen in this light, "The Wanderer" itself is a poem of Christian heroism. The hero appears at the beginning of the poem as the wanderer, the quester, the seeker of a radicalized relationship to the world: "How shall I be a mirror to this modernity?" (Collected Poems 108). The hero of "The Wanderer" is impelled by the Goddess figure, who is Williams's grandmother who wanted "to make [him] as her own" in life (I Wanted 26). Williams idealizes her as a Goddess of poetry who desires to possess the hero of the poem as her poetic "son" (Collected Poems 117), identifying her with his "poetic unconscious" (Interviews 76). This poem, Williams says, is "the story of growing up" (I Wanted 26), the story of the hero's spiritual metamorphosis from "a disappointed, a defeated person" into a visionary poet "with a perfect knowledge of the world" through the help of a Goddess, who is "the personification of poetry" (Interviews 76).

Paralleling both Christ's baptism in the Jordan River and Whitman's mystical journey, the hero of "The Wanderer," "crossing the ferry / With the great towers of Manhattan" before him, encounters a Goddess of wisdom "In whom age in age is united," a Goddess of "the beauty of all the world," a Goddess of poetry who is "recreating the whole world" (Collected Poems 108, 109). He prays to the Goddess for "power to catch something of this day's / Air and sun into your service!" (Collected Poems 110). Leading him then to

the Passaic River, the Goddess "bent forward and knelt by the river, / The Passaic, that filthy river. . . . / Raising the water then in the cupped palm / . . . bathed our brows wailing and laughing" (Collected Poems 115). The Goddess, as "the spirit of the river" (Interviews 76), enters his heart "Into the crystal beginning of its days," tortures itself within him, and finally becomes him (Collected Poems 116). The hero sees his old self "departing / Forever," and his new self "Being borne off under the water" (Collected Poems 116). Then, the hero's baptism by the spirit of the river signifies his "new marriage" to the Goddess of poetry herself, or the new birth of his new self endowed with the poetic imagination (Collected Poems 111). His encounter with the Goddess becomes a new beginning of his life, "the first day of wonders" (Collected Poems 109). His new marriage to the poetic imagination urges him to "the new wandering" (Collected Poems 117), making him a visionary poet on the eternal journey, a quester of "the beauty of all the world" (Collected Poems 109).

Williams's poetic theory of "no ideas but in things" is, I believe, a secularized version of the Christian concept of the Word, which is pictured particularly as the hero of Paterson, the epic poem to be discussed in this chapter. In his essay "In Praise of Marriage: Kenneth Rexroth's The Phoenix and the Tortoise," Williams wrote that "I know nothing of mysticism, Christian or other--but I am passionately addicted to the cult of poetry and I do not like to see the two mixed" (Something to Say 132). However, Christian theology is indeed assimilated into his "cult of poetry," as I will show later. It is true that Williams is not a mystic or a Christian in an ordinary sense, but as Rapp points out, "he was still impelled to acknowledge the ultimate source of his own creative power in language unmistakably associated with religious mysticism" (24).

Williams, as his wife says, "accepted" religion (I Wanted 105) and his religious mind was inherited from his mother who was a spiritualist, participating in founding the Unitarian Church in Rutherford (Williams, Autobiography 14-17; Mariani, William Carlos Williams 5-14). In this church, Mariani says, Williams was introduced to "a well-developed, self-reliant intellectual perspective toward matters spiritual," the tradition which shaped Emersonian transcendentalism (William Carlos Williams 12). This Emersonian transcendentalism became "the bedrock of his beliefs for the rest of his life, to rise fully to the surface again in his last years" (William Carlos Williams 47).

In The Autobiography, originally published in 1951, Williams says that "Christ was divine by the spirit that was in him and not by miraculous birth" (22). Christ is for Williams the bodily expression of the spirit, or what he calls in secular terms "the embodiment of knowledge." He is not a symbol of God but the Incarnation of God himself, a divine man, "a FULL--not an amputated, cut to horrible configurations of historical establishments--MAN," in whom the body and the mind becomes one (Mariani, William Carlos Williams 460). Christ himself is for Williams a poet: "Look at the parables of Jesus--he didn't talk much of God, but he used simple examples--sheer poems" (Interviews 65). He is the very embodiment of Williams's poetic theory, "Say it! No ideas but in things" (P 9).

To clarify my position toward Williams's poetic theory, let me look more closely at Williams from the perspective of that Christian hermeneutic I have explained earlier. There are three phases or stages of revelation of the Word according to this version of Christian interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures and the Gospel experience. The first revelation of the Word is God's speaking: God speaks and creation comes into being. In this stage of revelation, God

is revealed specially in the image of man, Adam. The second revelation of the Word is the decree of the Word in the form of the written word, the Law. The third revelation of the Word is the Incarnation of the Word in the human form, Christ, the son of Man, which is the Christian version of Natural Supernaturalism in the figure of Christ. Each of these three stages suggests the varying degree of man's struggle to possess the reality of all beings, his realization of the relationship to God, the ultimate reality. It is perhaps relevant to the naming of each of these three stages of revelation of the Word to use the Hegelian aesthetic terms of the three phases of the configuration of the Idea into aesthetic form: the "symbolic," the "classical," and the "romantic" stages of the development of art.

The first stage of revelation of the Word is the "symbolic" stage of the Word because the Word is inadequately embodied in sensual form as seen in Adam's disobedience to the Word. It can be called, in Williams's terms, the phase of man's "silence" in the face of "wonder" (Embodiment of Knowledge 108). In this stage, "the essence is sight in the broad sense, to include hearing, but the reality he would express is silence. . . . Thus we live and eat merely to go about in the face of wonder in the fullest glory of our senses only differing from infants in a breadth of accomplishment and expression. . . . What is the moon to him? It is a light, a sign. He doesn't even know it is round. To him it is an unconscious symbol which he used for praise . . . until perversion sets in through ignorance" (Embodiment of Knowledge 180-181). The second stage of revelation of the Word is the "classical" phase of art, in which the Word is completely codified in the formal pattern of writing. In this stage, as Rapp says of Williams's experience of this stage, "expression may be simply a matter of mechanics, a

matter of verbal engineering" (29). The Word of this stage lost its generating power of the thing and was codified as the written word which functions as, according to Williams's essay "For a New Magazine" in Blues, "a mechanism" (qtd. in Rapp, 29). This "written" Word is "the symbol of symbols, twice removed from vitality--on a string like dried apples or Swedish bread" (Williams, Embodiment of Knowledge 181). The Word of the "written" or "classical" stage becomes the source not of wonder but of fear or terror. God becomes not a Being for "wonder" but an idol to be feared.

The third stage of revelation of the Word is the "romantic" stage of the Word, a new vision of reality, the reality not of a codification of the spirit into the material but of a complete harmony between its materiality and spirituality. It is then what Thomas Carlyle calls "Natural Supernaturalism" (qtd. in Abrams 68): The supernatural is naturalized or possessed in the humanized form of the Word. Just as God is in Christ and Christ in God: "I am in the Father and the Father in me" (John 14: 10), so Christ is in man and man in Christ: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells in me and I in him" (John 6: 56). Christ is a complete Being who is divine and holy, demolishing the sense of space and time between man and God, between subject and object, between mind and universe, entering "his own" world of the here and now (John 1: 11). The coming of Christ "defamiliarizes" the distorted, "familiarized," or "habitualized" perception of man and is meant "to make one feel things, to make stone stony"; it is strikingly similar to that "ostraneniye," the "defamiliarization," which Russian formalism sought to isolate as the peculiar marker of literary discourse (Lemon and Reis, Russian Formalist Criticism 3-24).

This Christian concept of the Word is secularized in Williams's poetic theory, which aims to present the thing

itself in poetic form organized by a measure which is inherent in words. "Heaven seems frankly impossible," for Heaven is possessed in the Word of the here and now (Selected Essays 147): for Williams no transcendental heaven beyond the stone's defamiliarized stoniness, the earth's earthiness, is possible or necessary. As Christ was resigned to existence, so Williams was resigned to search for the redeeming language: "The past above, the future below / and the present pouring down: the roar, / the roar of the present, a speech-- / is, of necessity, my sole concern" (P 144). Williams calls his resignation "a sort of nameless religious experience" which provided him with the "inner security": "It is something which occurred once when I was about twenty, a sudden resignation to existence, a despair--if you wish to call it that, but a despair which made everything a unit and at the same time a part of myself. . . . Things have no names for me and places have no significance. As a reward for this anonymity I feel as much a part of things as trees and stones. . . . I have no particular hope save to repair, to rescue, to complete" (Selected Letters 147). This religious experience is Williams's secularized version of Christian Incarnation: "Everything exists from the beginning. I existed in the beginning. . . . I shall make myself into a word. One big word. One big union. . . . I begin small and make myself into a big splurging word: I take life and make it into one big blurb" (Imaginations 158-160). It is then natural that, "In [Williams's] work," as Miller argues to a different purpose in Poets of Reality, "there is no searching for the traces of a vanished deity, no frantic attempt to find a new mediator between heaven and earth" (291).

Williams believed that the corruption of language signifies man's inability to perceive things through language, for "we smell, hear and see with words and words alone, and . . . with a new language we smell, hear and see

afresh" (Selected Essays 266). "Words," Williams says, "are the keys that unlock the mind" (Selected Essays 282); "The poet alone in this world holds the key to their final rescue" (Thirlwall 254); and the poet's goal is to "find beauty . . . locked in the mind" (P 3) and rescue it with the "keys" of "new" words. In this belief, Williams's poet is very like his version of Christ, who "didn't talk much of God, but . . . used simple examples--sheer poems" (Interviews 65). Both redeem the world by making the alienated word fresh. Williams believed that "Knowledge started with the 'word,' it might do far worse than to go back to the beginning--with the addition of the cleansing of the 'word,' which is the work poets have in hand" (Embodiment of Knowledge 6). His devotion to a search for new poetic language reaches almost a religious dimension. Language, he writes in Selected Essays, is "the hope of man," but it is "enslaved, forced, raped, made a whore by the idea venders," for example, philosophers (96).

Just as the Word of the third revelation in His Thinginess is the source of life and light of all things, so every word in its thinginess, Williams believed, has its own intrinsic value associated with nothing because it is "the secret spring of all our lives" (Autobiography 359). Thus, Williams tried to strip the words in his poetry naked to their substance and destroy "a constant barrier between the reader and his consciousness of immediate contact with the world", insisting that "nearly all writing, up to the present, if not all art, has been especially designed to keep up the barrier between sense and the vaporous fringe which distracts the attention from its agonized approaches to the moment" (Collected Poems 177, 178). "To refine, to clarify, to intensify that eternal moment in which we alone live," Williams holds, is to redeem the world (Collected Poems 178).

Williams's practice of medicine led him to be convinced

that "The only world that exists is the world of the senses," which is the "world of the artist" (Selected Essays 196), providing him with the "very food and drink, the very thing which made it possible for [him] to write" (Autobiography 357). It gave him "a wonderful opportunity actually to witness the words being born," to capture "a moment of insight . . . a glimpse, an intimation of all that which the daily print misses or deliberately hides" when "the inarticulate patient struggles to lay himself bare for you, or with nothing more than a boil on his back is so caught off balance that he reveals some secret twist of a whole community's pathetic way of thought" (Autobiography 361, 359). The inarticulate word of the patient is the thinginess of the word. It is the incarnation of its meaning and of the patient himself as well, for there is no distance or separation between his word and its meaning and between him and his word. This naked speech is intrinsically poetic because it embodies "the underground stream" which has its own intrinsic form governed by the emotion expressed by the speaker (Autobiography 359), like "a small (or large) machine made of words" in which "there can be no part, as in any other machine, that is redundant" (Selected Essays 256).

The "poet's business," Williams says, is "Not to talk in vague categories but to write particularly, as a physician works, upon a patient, upon the thing before him, in the particular to discover the universal" (Autobiography 391). His poetic vision of locality is supported by John Dewey's aesthetic view that "The local is the only universal, upon that all art builds" (qtd. in Autobiography 391). This conviction of Williams led him to his life-long search for the "living speech" of reality which he raises to the universal, more specifically the search for "the American idiom," as distinct from English speech, which reflects the actual American life of the here and now (I Wanted 65). This

contact of Williams with a sensual reality finds expression in the whole range of his poetry. Through his intense poetic imagination, his poem becomes "a field of action" (Selected Essays 281) where the five senses play their predominant role to create the new world of the imagination. In addition to the five senses, we can find in Williams's poetry, as Miller says in Poets of Reality, the "sexual sense" which "can be defined as an attempt to bring into existence, with silly words, an erotic space inhabited by a woman of the imagination. His works, taken all together, make a poem which is a woman" (327). "Somehow," Williams says, "poetry and the female sex were allied in my mind. The beauty of girls seemed the same to me as the beauty of a poem" (I Wanted 14). The sexual sense for Williams is the summing up of the five senses and, as he said in a letter to Ruth Jackson, the love of all humanity as well: "A pointed love of our fellow men and women, particularly women, must occupy us while we work to clarify our minds about what we have to do" (Thirlwall 285). Since Williams, as Thirlwall holds, imagined the woman, "virgin or whore," as "the central fact of existence" (297), his sexual sense, his loving care of women, could be easily assimilated into his more overt later religious sensibility. Thirlwall writes that this sensibility, being under his atheistic mask, was "triumphantly asserted in a religious but nonconformist spirit of 'Deep Religious Faith,'" a poem in The Desert Music (285). "Immobilized physically," Thirlwall insists, Williams "became active spiritually" (285). Even before "Deep Religious Faith" was published in The Desert Music in 1954, however, The Pink Church was published in 1949 as "a Christian poem, very definitely," in which "My conception of Christ as a socialistic figure," Williams says, "related to a generous feeling toward the poor, also confused many" (I Wanted 76). Williams's use of the unicorn tapestries in

Book V of Paterson, Thirlwall argues, "reflects again his abiding interest in love . . . but it also reflects his revived interest in religion" (289).

Just as the sexual metaphor is central to the Incarnation of the Word, so it is closest to the meaning of Williams's poem. Williams's epic poem, Paterson, is a secularized version of this Christian metaphor of the Word as the bridegroom. In Paterson Williams describes the rigorous quest of Paterson as a constant effort to search for a new language which will redeem him and, by being redeemed, Paterson becomes a visionary poet like Christ, the redeeming Word. Paterson is the culmination of his poetic theory of "no ideas but in things." Like the Word, Paterson is "an image large enough to embody the whole knowable world" (Williams, Autobiography 391).

B. "Rigor of beauty is the quest"

Since the very beginning of his poetic career, Williams had been always anxious to become an American unlike his parents who had decidedly remained Europeans to the last. Williams envied some poets like T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound who "ran / and could run off / toward the peripheries-- / to other centers, direct-- / for clarity . . . / loveliness and / authority in the world--," but he was interested not "in the finished product" of European culture but "in the bloody loam" of American locality and remained in America, "Sniffing the trees" and digging "a musty bone" like a "lame" dog (P 36, 37, 3). He believed that the poet should be rooted in the local like the tree and the bone because he "is limited to the range of his contact with the objective world," which is "the essential quality in literature" (Selected Essays 33, 32).

Williams's love affair with American locality found

poetic expression in Paterson, an epic poem which celebrates "the local material . . . to have no connection with the European world, but to be purely American" (Thirlwall 307). In Paterson, Paterson, a typical American city, is pictured as "a really heroic figure as all epic poems are," "the grand image of the man whom [he] wanted to celebrate as Paterson," "an image which concerns all men, and yet a noble image" (Thirlwall 307, 308). Paterson is aimed to be "a reply to Greek and Latin with the bare hands," an American epic which deals with "particulars" or the local, making them "general, rolling / up the sum [of them] . . . since we know nothing, pure / and simple, beyond / our own complexities" (P 2, 3). In Paterson, Williams "deliberately selected Paterson as [his] reality," the locality of American reality, because he believed that "Paterson has a definite history associated with the beginnings of the United States" (Thirlwall 263). Paterson is then "a celebration" of "a local pride," "a confession" of Williams's poetic belief in "no ideas but in things" (P 2).

Paterson, as the "Author's Note" to the poem reads, was originally designed "in four parts--that a man in himself is a city, beginning, seeking, achieving and concluding his life in ways which the various aspects of a city may embody--if imaginatively conceived--any city, all the details of which may be made to voice his most intimate convictions." However, Williams took "the world of Paterson into a new dimension . . . to give it imaginative validity." And Paterson "grow[s] and change[s] not with the inevitability of a preconceived form, but with the unstructured, unpredictable freedom of a developing sensibility" of the poet (Conarroe 18). Thus, Paterson becomes a metaphor of its hero's spiritual metamorphosis from a sleeping giant to a visionary poet, whose words are "the keys that unlock the mind" of men (Williams, Selected Essays 282). Book One of the poem

delineates the birth of Paterson, which is also a kind of waking. As Williams says in "Author's Note," it introduces "the elemental character of the place," the essential quality of Paterson as the epic hero. Book Two explores the trial of the heroic quality of Paterson on the Garret Mountain Park which is "feminine to the city" (P 43). This trial is very similar to the Passion of Christ on Gethsemane. Book Three depicts the symbolic death of Paterson, his descent into Hell, and his purification. Book Four describes the resurrection of Paterson as the emergence of a visionary poet with the power to redeem the world. Book Five presents the vision of salvation in the poetic world, the hunting of the unicorn.

Book One: "The Delineaments of the Giants"

In the beginning of the first section of Book One, Paterson is illustrated as a sleeping giant, the Word of the second revelation who is "Eternally asleep" in the codified form of stone: "Butterflies settle on his stone ear" (P 6). The last section of Book One suggests Paterson's waking up to the search for "beauty" which "is locked in the mind past all remonstrance" (P 3) as a redeeming language. The birth of Paterson is "a nine month's wonder, the city / the man, an identity--it can't be / otherwise--an / interpenetration, both ways" (P 3). The "overt religious reference" in Paterson is essential to the understanding of the poem because the full name of the hero, "Noah Faitoute Paterson" (P 15), suggests his religious experience (Doyle 96). "Noah" suggests both "the Biblical Noah's capacity to survive the Flood" and "Noah Webster's mastery of the American idiom" (Peterson 19; Matthews 258). Paterson, as Noah, is then identified with the father of a new race in the new world after the Flood and with the father of a new language of the New World. He is the flood of words. Paterson, as

"Faitoute," is the father of all beings (Peterson 19; Matthews 258), the creator, the poet, the redeemer of beauty. "Paterson" sums the two terms of "Pater" and "Son" or Father and Son (Thirlwall 267; Matthews 259), which are the puns on the two terms of "Peter" and "Sun." Paterson, as Pater-son, is then associated with the rock of the light, the light of salvation. Paterson is the "temple / upon the rock" (P 23), "the myth / that holds up the rock, / that holds up the water" (P 39). Since Paterson is also identified with the spelling "Patterson," he is a person who "patters on" (Thirlwall 275). Paterson is "the chatterer, father of all / speech" (P 39), "the father of sound" (Doyle 89). The whole name of "Noah Faitoute Paterson," then, suggests that Paterson is a Full Man, a Christ, the Word who is the light as the rock and the word as the water of the sound: "Paterson lies in the valley [of the rock] under the Passaic Falls / its spent waters forming the outline of his back" (P 6).

Paterson is the waters "filling / his ears with its sound" (P 17), "the thunder / of the waters filling his dreams" (P 6), "a speech or a voice" or "the poem" of Paterson (Williams, Autobiography 392), which is "the roar of the river / forever in our ears" (P 18), "the river of life" (Thirlwall 310). The waters of the Passaic Falls are harnessed as the hydroelectric power plant to light the City of Paterson, as "'Jersey Lightning' to the boys" (P 15). The description of Paterson as a man, "only one man--like a city" and his bride as his "Innumerable women, each like a flower" (P 7) also echoes the Christian metaphor of the Word as the only one Bridegroom of His Church, the body of his innumerable brides, men. It is, therefore, significant that Paterson is pictured as a dreaming Giant who is embracing his woman with "his / arm supporting her, by the Valley of the Rocks, asleep" (P 8), who should be awakened to be a redeeming language, a visionary poet to liberate beauty that

is "locked" in the mind.

Williams metaphorically describes the citizens of Paterson as "thoughts" of this dreaming Giant, Paterson, who are "sitting and standing" in the bus and "alight and scatter" (P 9). Since "the language / is divorced from their minds" (P 12), the citizens of Paterson "walk incommunicado" (P 9). Since "the language / fails them / They do not know the words / or have not / the courage to use them" (P 11). The tragedy of all the citizens of Paterson, as Doyle says, is "the fate of all men not redeemed by the Word" (96). In their ignorance, they do not know the presence of the Word among them, still craving "the miraculous" (P 10). They are metaphorically the dwarfs who mindlessly ruin the two wonders of Paterson, "the finest pearl of modern times" and a fish of "a huge bigness" (P 9, 10), which are the traditional Christian symbols of the Word. In Williams's historiography, these incidents also have to be seen as parables of the rigor of the American Puritans, who ruined the Word by the rigid practice of their religion, "by boiling open the shell" to recover the pearl, and like the boys who "pelted" the fish "with stones . . . until he was exhausted, whereupon some of them . . . waded into the water and clambered on the back of the huge fish, while another seized him by the throat and gills, and brought him ashore" (P 9, 11).

The parables of the destruction of the pearl and the fish are Williams's satire on the failure of the American Puritan imagination to possess the New World which is, for Williams as well as for Whitman and Crane, symbolic of the redeeming language. The dwarf is "a monster in human form" who "cannot support the enormous weight of his head" and "is constantly in a large cradle, with his head supported in pillows" (P 10). He is, as Paul Mariani says in William Carlos Williams: A Naked World, the image of Paterson as "the monstrous, hydrocephalic poet, a water-head obsessed with the

down-pouring of words and the dream of an impossible poem from which he would awaken only in death" (464; Nash 196). He is symbolic of the American Puritan, who "is peculiarly fond of the company of clergy-men, always inquiring for them among his visitors, and taking great pleasure in receiving religious instruction" (P 10). Paterson desires to possess a redeeming language, to comb the cascading waterfalls. However, Paterson's desire is ironically "a wonder" of his failure of possessing the Word, which is further caricatured as "a wonder" of the conception of Hamilton's vision of Paterson as the cradle of American industry, "a wonder" of the failure of the American imagination to harness the Passaic Falls, "a wonder" of the divorce of Paterson from a redeeming language.

Paterson's "divorce" from the Word is exemplified in the tragic deaths of Mrs. Sara Cumming and Sam Patch. Mrs. Cumming, charmed with "the sublime curiosities" of the roar of the Passaic Falls, falls from the rock and vanishes into "the indifferent gale: male" who fails to impregnate her (P 14, 20). She, who is symbolically "a first wife / and a first beauty" of Paterson (P 22), a minister of the Word, becomes a victim of "A false language pouring--a language (misunderstood) pouring (misinterpreted) without dignity, without minister, crashing upon a stone ear" (P 15). Sam Patch, a professional jumper who "toured the country diving from cliffs and masts, rocks and bridges" (P 15), deluded in his past marvelous performance of jumping, plunges into the falls of the Genesee River, but "instead of descending with a plummet-like fall his body wavered in the air . . . struck the water on his side and disappeared" with "The water pouring still / from the edge of the rocks, filling / his ears with its sound, hard to interpret" (P 17). Sam Patch is symbolic of those traditionalists who are blind to the Living Word of the eternal present among them. Sam Patch is also

the image of the American Puritan who was rigorous in religious observations but unable to recognize the language of the present. Sam Patch should not have been concerned with the "invisible" language of the past and the future with "no answer," but with the language of the present, the "visible" language of the here and now: "The past above, the future below / and the present pouring down: the roar, / the roar of the present, a speech-- . . . / The language cascades into the / invisible, beyond and above : the falls / of which it is the visible part--" (P 144-145).

Mrs. Cumming and Sam Patch are mere representatives of those "pure products of America" who in Williams always seem to "go crazy" (Collected Poems 217). They are "Jackson's Whites," the transplanted inhabitants of the Ramapos living between the wilderness and the city, the "two phases" of "wild and cultured life" (P 13, 12). They are the tragic flowers which "sink back into the loam / crying out" because "the tongue of the bee / misses them" (P 11). They "look at the torrent in / their minds / and it is foreign to them" (P 12). They "die also / incommunicado" because "The language is missing them" (P 11). They are alienated, divorced from the language of the Falls and entirely fail to understand the Falls as an outpouring of language and spirit.

In the second section of Book One, the vision of the "semi-naked" women becomes the challenge of Paterson's "waking" to the living world of the present, the language of the here and now. This challenge leads Paterson to declare, as stated in Book Three:

I am its slave,
its sleeper, bewildered--dazzled
by distance . . . I cannot stay here
to spend my life looking into the past:

the future's no answer. I must

find my meaning and lay it, white,
 beside the sliding water: myself--
 comb out the language--or succumb

--whatever the complexion. Let
 me out! (Well, go!) this rhetoric
 is real! (P 145)

However, for the moment, as the language is divorced from his mind, Paterson loses his "direction": "There is no direction. Whither? I / cannot say. I cannot say / more than how. The how (the howl) only / is at my disposal (proposal)" (P 18). And he becomes "colder than stone" just like

a bud forever green,
 tight-curved, upon the pavement, perfect
 in juice and substance but divorced, divorced
 from its fellows, fallen low-- (P 18)

As a result, he cannot "seize the moment" of a physical union in spite of the two Easter girls' earnest request: "I wish to be with you abed, we two / as if the bed were the bed of a stream / --I have much to say to you / . . . to pass beyond / the moment of meeting, while the currents float still in mid-air, to / fall-- / with you from the brink, before / the crash--" (P 24). Easter, symbolizing rebirth, is degraded into a time of divorce or death; the "Easter girls" become green buds fallen upon the pavement, the "sweet breath suppressed" because of the "stale" breath of Paterson, the breath of "the university" where "the / language stutters," divorced from the reality of the here and now (P 20, 22).

Paterson's encounter with the Easter girls, however, leads him to find the "direction" he should take. Paterson begins to feel that he is "frozen in / an ice cake" like the "silent, uncommunicative" bodies of Sam Patch and Mrs. Cumming and "to know, to / know clearly (as through clear ice) whence / I draw my breath or how to employ it /

clearly--if not well" (P 20, 21). He recalls his vision of the first wife of the African chief "on a log" who "begin[s] to know the mottled branch / that sings" (P 21). Paterson, realizing that "the ground has undergone / a subtle transformation, its identity altered," rejects the "erudite" language of the university which is not only part of this urban setting, but is expert in the disseminating of abstract languages and ideology: "Certainly I am not a robin nor erudite, / no Erasmus nor bird that returns to the same / ground year by year . . . certainly NOT the university" (P 19-22). Williams here suggests that the stale breath or language of the university is the "brother" of the "stinking breath" of the "temple upon / the rock" (P 23), which is a parody of the authentic Word, or the seed falling indifferently in the parable of Christ. So Paterson sings in a parable, as Conarroe points out: "Jesus' parable of the seeds thrown among the good and stony earth is transformed into 'the snow falling into the water, / part upon the rock . . .'" (84). At this point, toward the end of the second section, Paterson is urged "to submit to your own myths," the myths of the "warmth" of human love (P 28). He needs "more warmth," which will melt his cold heart, his sexual and literary impotence. He is also "an Ishmael," a poet in "affliction" (P 29), whose warmth fulfills his woman who seeks impregnation but receives only destruction (P 33).

While the second section puts emphasis on the aspect of Paterson as the light, the third section describes Paterson as the sound, or the word. "Music it for yourself," exclaims Paterson to himself (P 30). Paterson makes every effort to hear clearly the sound of the pouring waters metamorphosed into the falling snow, but he fails to do so. "He picked a hairpin from the floor / and stuck it in his ear, probing / around inside--" (P 30). He "heard the / faint filing sound" of the "melting snow / [which] dripped

from the cornice by his window," but since "of / earth his ears are full, there is no sound" (P 30-31). He doubts if he is one of "the knowledgeable idiots" whose minds are filled with the "fixed concepts" of the university (P 34, 32). And for the moment,

Moveless

he envies the men that ran
and could run off
toward the peripheries--
to other centers, direct--
for clarity (if
they found it)

loveliness and
authority in the world--

a sort of springtime
toward which their minds aspired
but which he saw,
within himself--ice bound (P 36)

However, Paterson "shifts his change" through "a large shock of an earthquake, accompanied with a remarkable rumbling noise" (P 39). Paterson becomes "the myth / that holds up the rock, / that holds up the water" (P 39). And his "Thought clambers up, / . . . upon the wet rocks" of the Falls and stands, "shrouded there, in that din, / Earth, the chatterer, father of all / speech" and "has its birth and death there" (P 39). Paterson is reborn; he is no longer one of "the knowledgeable idiots" of the university "who prepared the nets" but could not get "the most fish" (P 35). He belongs among "the hoodlums and men who leaped into the mud and water where the nets could not work" and "rescued from the mud and water the finest load of fish" (P 35), for he is interested not in "the finished product," but "in the bloody loam" (P 37) and he is interested in spirituality and

language adequate not for the cultured old world, but for the brash new world.

Book Two: "Sunday in the Park"

After shifting "his change" at the end of Book One, Paterson "drives / in his new car out to the suburbs" (P 38), to the Garret Mountain Park, shouting: "Outside / outside myself / there is a world" (P 43). In Book Two, he arrives at the Park which is "feminine to the city" (P 43); "after a hard climb he, / looks back (beautiful but expensive!) to / the pearl-grey towers! Re-turns / and starts, possessive, through the trees, / -- that love" (P 44). "The mountain quivers" (P 56), as he approaches her to instruct "his thoughts / (concretely)" upon her body (P 43). The whole universe participates in the voices of celebrating "the ceremonial of love" of Paterson and the Mountain (P 48): "Voices! / multiple and inarticulate . . . voices / clattering loudly to the sun, to / the clouds. Voices! / assaulting the air gaily from all sides. . . . / Sunday in the park, / . . . a hawk / soars! / --a trumpet sounds fitfully" (P 54-55). Paterson walks musing through the park, his thoughts and language echoed and parodied by the sounds of Sunday picnickers: "The picnickers laugh on the rocks celebrating / the varied Sunday of their loves with / its declining light--" (P 58). His walking becomes a sort of visionary journey on "the mind's wings" (P 48), a journey through what Robert Edward Brown calls "the poetic space" in which the three realms of things (Earth or World), thoughts (Self), and words (Language or Poetry) become one (175-192).

His "entire occupation" in the first section is attentiveness to the sounds and voices filling the Park (P 45). First of all, Paterson hears in imagination the voices of the Falls which are carried to the Park by the wind: "No sound of it here but the wind!" (P 45). The voices of the

Falls reverberate in the Park with the voices of the Sunday picnickers. His listening to these voices is his act of loving: "How do I love you? These! / (He hears! Voices . indeterminate! Sees them / moving, in groups, by twos and fours -- filtering / off by way of the many bypaths.)" (P 45). He recalls "a fatal day" when the performance of singing in the Park dissolves into one of Paterson's numerous journalistic accounts of an act of violence which transformed the Park's tranquility into a small riot (P 46).

This whole section is a constant process of transformation. A grasshopper takes flight at Paterson's feet; its "empurpled wings," flashing "a churring song," leads his imagination onward through the scene (P 47). "Before his feet, at each step, the flight / is renewed" and he "is led forward by their announcing wings," which become "the mind's wings" (P 48). Paterson is reminded of the red stone grasshopper "carved to be / endless flight" by "the mind's wings": "AND a grasshopper of red basalt, boot-long, / tumbles from the core of his mind, / a rubble-bank disintegrating beneath a / tropic downpour / Chapultepec! grasshopper hill!" (P 49, 47). This red stone grasshopper stands as the carved image of "Love that is a stone endlessly in flight, / so long as stone shall last bearing / the chisel's stroke . . . Love / combating sleep / the sleep / piecemeal" (P 49). More and more, "the imagination [of Paterson] soars, as a voice / beckons, a thundrous voice, endless /--as sleep: the voice / that has ineluctably called them-- / that unmoving roar!" (P 55):

So during the early afternoon, from place
to place he moves,
his voice mingling with other voices
--the voice in his voice
opening his old throat, blowing out his lips,
kindling his mind (more

than his mind will kindle)

--following the hikers. (P 56).

Walking in the Park, Paterson encounters a "young man" who "is sitting with his back to the rock among / some ferns playing a guitar" (P 57). No one except "Mary" listens to him and dances to the music he plays because "the old cultures intoxicates them" (P 57). The picnickers turn their backs on the music of the young man, simply "celebrating / the varied Sunday of their loves with / its declining light" (P 58), enacting a degraded ceremony of love. He encounters the inevitable weekend Evangelist, preaching or "shouting" in the Park (P 59). The Evangelist "adds his useless voice" to the helpless scene of love in the Park (P 60). In the next section, the Evangelist, who gives his name as Klaus Ehrens, shrieks his version of the Gospel. His harangue / sermon is woven through the narrative of the next section. The sermon is a parody of John the Baptist crying in the wilderness, as Williams's notes show (Sankey 94), preparing the way for the Messiah. All the voices Paterson has been absorbing in the Park are the sounds which block the vision of truth. The Word is dissolved into the sounds of the world, the schismatic churches of the urban diaspora.

Paterson continues to walk through the Park, this "female to the city," "instructing his thoughts" on her "body." This body, the beauty of the world which Paterson seeks to redeem through the crucifixion of his language and flesh, is everywhere the source and the goal in this section. He is "nailed / to a tree: Women," to "Make a song out of that [the blockage]: concretely" (P 63, 62), a song which "instructs his thoughts / (concretely)" (P 43) upon "those poor souls," his brides (P 62). This is Williams's poetic vision that "Men have given the direction to my life and women have always supplied the energy," the vision acquired from his

experience "as a medical student" who fell in love with "the corpse of a young negress, a 'high yaller,' lying stripped on the dissecting table before me" (Autobiography 55).

Paterson continues to hear the cracked Evangelist's sermon at the observation tower, which plays a role as a symbolic place where the vision of the "churches and factories" is given to Paterson, for the sermon is concerned half with Protestant piety and half with the economic gospel Williams had been hearing from Pound for years. Klaus Ehrens speaks of his own transformation in the New World, from a poor man in the Old Country to a rich man in the New World (P 66-67). Paterson was spiritually a poor man in this world, but he becomes a rich man by abandoning the riches of this world. Metaphorically, he was "a pretty small frog in a mighty big pool" (P 67). The sermon of the Evangelist is complicated by prose interludes tracing the history of Hamiltonian Yankeeism, by which America has been transformed from "a producer of precious metals, pelts and raw materials" into a manufacturer of goods (P 69). America has been deprived of its riches by "a private monopoly" of the Federal Reserve System, "a Legalized National Usury System" (P 73, 74). America becomes "the eagle" who has "made himself / small--to creep into the hinged egg / until therein he disappeared, all / but one leg upon which a claw opened / and closed wretchedly gripping / the air, and would not--for all / the effort of the struggle, remain / inside" (P 73).

Just as the sermon of John the Baptist was a cry in the Wilderness, so the sermon of the Evangelist becomes a voice "calling to the birds and trees" and "calling the winds," disappearing "into the empty blue" (P 64). "Few listen. / Or, in fact, pay the least / attention"; "nobody wants to listen" (P 65, 66). The sermon of the Evangelist becomes "the falls of his harangue" to "the paltry congregation" of an "orchestral dullness" with "iron smiles," which "hung

featureless / upon the ear" (P 70, 64, 62, 63, 70). Even though he, like John the Baptist, is not Christ himself, the "figure / from the clouds," the Evangelist is a forerunner of Christ, the Light, whose "prism'd brow" the "light fondles . . . as if inclined to form a halo--" (P 65, 64). The Evangelist's condemnation of the worldly riches becomes a half-serious half-ironic doxology to "our Blessed Lord who / died on the Cross for us that we may be saved" (P 73). To this is added Paterson's own provisional epiphany as the second section moves to its ending:

The world spreads
for me like a flower opening--and
will close for me as might a rose--

. . . In that I forget
myself perpetually--in your
composition and decomposition
I find my . . .

despair! (P 75)

In the third section, night falls. The voices or the sounds which have filled the Park have been replaced by the light of the moon; Paterson is led to an inward meditation. With "the plunging night," the moon arises and "The descent beckons [Paterson] / as the ascent beckoned" (P 80, 77). "Alone, watching the May moon above the / trees," Paterson is beckoned into memory, "a kind / of accomplishment / a sort of renewal / even / an initiation" (P 79, 77). His "descent" into memory is "a new awakening : / which is a reversal / of despair" (P 78). "With evening, love wakens / though its shadows / which are alive by reason / of the sun shining-- / grow sleepy now and drop away / from desire" (P 78). In meditation Paterson once again hears the sounds of the pouring water and, "missing the sense (though he tries) / untaught but listening, shakes with the intensity / of his

listening" (P 81). Realizing that "no poet has come" yet who is able to interpret the sounds of the falls, Paterson cries for the poet in despair: "Poet, poet! sing your song, quickly! or / not insects but pulpy weeds will blot out / your kind" (P 79, 83). This poet is a man of vision to sing "the poem, the most perfect rock and temple, the highest / falls," the poem of "the morning of a new age" (P 80).

In his meditation Paterson sees that "the language is worn out," "divorced / from the insistence of place-- / from knowledge, / from learning--the terms / foreign, conveying no immediacy, pouring down" (P 84, 83). The feminine other--variously symbolized by the women in the Park, the Park itself, and the hero's erotic muse--insists that she is entirely "lost among the words" (P 84). Throwing herself upon a bed, she cries bitterly with "a pitiful gesture": "You have abandoned me! . . . / Invent (if you can) discover or / nothing is clear" (P 84). This meditation takes Paterson to that point of crisis and extremity where he must either find radically new ways of pursuing his language and vision or abandon the quest entirely.

This crisis is further exemplified at the end of Book Two in a long letter of complaint from a young woman poet. Its narrative themes stand in ironic counterpart to the sexual, poetic, and imaginative themes which have been developing in the poem. The poetess, identified as "C," is equated by many critics with Marcia Nardi who was "a dark, wiry, diminutive, and bedraggled young woman landed at Williams' office door in the middle of a cold spring storm" with "her sick boy" (Mariani, William Carlos Williams 461; Theodora R. Graham, 164-193). She is also associated with "a beautiful young black maid" beating a rug who, observed by Williams from the window of his attic study in the summer of 1936, found her way into his early version of Paterson, "Paterson: Episode 17" (Mariani, William Carlos Williams 414). She is also

associated with Williams's "memories of Mable Watts, the seductive patient from his early days as a doctor, a woman who had had as much sexual success with white men as with black" (Mariani, William Carlos Williams 415). Each of these three female figures becomes for Williams a Kora in Book Three of Paterson, who is "drunk and bedraggled to release / the strictness of beauty / under a sky full of stars / Beautiful thing" (P 104). She, Mariani says, represents for Williams "the black plush, the New World beauty, the radiant stain that would illuminate the dirty white sheets of his Paterson" (William Carlos Williams 415).

Book Three: "The Library"

Book Three is dominated by sexual imagery and by Paterson's descent into hell, into "the library," and into marriage. The three catastrophes of the wind (in the first section), the fire (in the second section), and the flood (in the third section) which destroyed the City of Paterson in 1902 become vehicles of the metaphor for the marriage of Paterson and "the Beautiful thing." In the first section, Paterson is called to the library by the wind, the perfume of the locust blossoms, the smell of his bride whom he picks up when he descends from the Mountain. He complains to her that she smells "like a whore" and asks her: "TAKE OFF YOUR / CLOTHES! . . . You smell / like a whore. I ask you to bathe in my / opinions, the astonishing virtue of your / lost body (I said)" (P 105). In the second section, Paterson is "overcome" by the naked beauty of his bride lying on "the holy sheets" of the marriage bed, "lethargic . . . waiting for / the fire" (P 125). The fire of Paterson's sexual passion consumes his bride: "Beautiful thing / --intertwined with the fire" (P 120). The Beautiful thing is "deflowered, reflowered there by / the flame" (P 118). The third section depicts the aftermath of their sexual consummation in the

imagery of the flood, which covers Paterson the city with "fertile (?) mud," the mud of Paterson's sperm which fertilizes his bride (P 140).

Like Book Two, Book Three is an imaginative journey toward Paterson's past, toward his interior mind. It inevitably reminds us that Williams was an assiduous reader of Joyce, especially of Ulysses. "I may have been influenced," Williams writes, "by James Joyce who had made Dublin the hero of his book. I had been reading Ulysses" (I Wanted 72). "The action of the book," as James Guimond says, "takes place in his mind as he reads in a library" (189). The Park is closed at nine o'clock. Paterson descends from the Mountain and is led to the library by "A cool of books . . . a wind or ghost of a wind / in all books echoing the life" (P 95). He is immersed in books in the library. The book is identified with "the locust tree / in bloom" which the dog, the poet, barks at (P 95). The "perfume" of the tree "is itself a wind moving / to lead the mind [of Paterson] away / . . . back to his own / mind . / in which a falls unseen / tumbles and rights itself / and refalls--and does not cease, falling / and refalling with a roar, a reverberation / not of the falls but of its rumor / unabated . . . / --and still the roar in his mind is / unabated" (P 96-97). Led by the scent of locust blossoms, "the wind that has tripped us, pressed upon / us, prurient or upon the prurience of our fears," Paterson runs into the library which "has a smell of its own / of stagnation and death" (P 97, 100). He is oppressed by "a roar of books / from the wadded library . . . / until / his mind begins to drift," the cry of the Beautiful thing codified in the dead language of the books at the library and disseminated into fragments by the idea vendors (P 100).

His descent is to "comb out the language," the language of the Beautiful thing in the library, the world of words (P

145). In the library, Paterson reads the newspaper stories of three catastrophes of tornado, the fire, and the flood which destroyed Paterson. Paterson is shaken by a tornado in the first section and consumed by fire in the second section and cleansed by the flood in the third section. "[T]hese apocalyptic events are internalized as moments of violent emotional liberation in which Paterson's hard egotistical surface is profoundly shaken" (Breslin 189). Paterson himself becomes the library, the world of words where "Dead men's dreams, confined by these walls, risen, / seek an outlet and where "The spirit [of the words] languishes" (P 100). Like the library, Paterson smells of dead language, as Roy Harvey Pearce says, "academicism of all sorts which is at the root of modern man's troubles--the ultimate expression of his divorce from his world of that split between writing and living upon which Dr. Paterson's poetess-correspondent harps so neurotically. The poet hopes to find aid and comfort in the Library but instead finds only more evidence of language gone dead, killed off by those who use it" (123).

Williams likens the library to a hell, imagining Paterson's descent as "a descent into a / hell," as an earlier version shows (qtd. in Sankey 128). In the library, Paterson is immersed in the old files of newspapers and sets out on another imaginative journey into Hell. His descent is associated with the descent of Christ into Hell "For what we cannot accomplish, what / is denied to love" (P 79). Thus, the descent of Paterson is not only made up of the despairs caused by the degraded images of love in the Park, but also signifies "a new awakening" of Paterson to love: "Love without shadows stirs now / beginning to waken / as night / advances" (P 78). Paterson sits in the library and reads and insofar as Paterson functions as a transhistorical consciousness, his reading becomes a kind of phantasmogoria of the violence of American history. It recollects the

slaughter of Indians, the despoliation of the Wilderness. For the library is a kind of archive of death, full of the narratives of the dissemination of the word and the arrogance of its servants.

Paterson gradually begins to wake up from the nightmarish rigor of the Word, the descent to and through the New World, and realizes his identity: "Who am I? /--the voice!" (P 107). "A tornado approaches" then and "pours / over the roofs of Paterson, ripping, / twisting, tortuous" (P 111). "Searching among books; the mind elsewhere / looking down / Seeking" (P 112). In the second section, Paterson reads of the Paterson fire in newspaper files which doomed the city to destruction. "Whirling flames, leaping / from house to house, building to building / carried by the wind" consumed the whole city of Paterson (P 118). Reading of this fire in the library, Paterson is imaginatively "intertwined with the fire" (P 120) and is "deflowered, reflowered there by / the flame: a second flame, surpassing / heat" (P 118). He becomes "the flame's lover" (P 123).

The newspapers Paterson reads in the library, "consumed" by fire, are "scattered to the winds" (P 117). Consumed by fire, the library is "muffled and dead" and, in the silence of the library, Paterson hears "an inverted / bell resounding, a / white-hot man become / a book, the emptiness of / a cavern resounding" (P 122, 123). The sound of this "inverted bell" leads Paterson to the vision of "An old bottle" which, "mauled by the fire / gets a new glaze, the glass warped / to a new distinction, reclaiming the / undefined" (P 118). Paterson is burnt down to beauty, the "beauty of fire-blasted sand / that was glass, that was a bottle: unbottled," the bottle which is "mauled / by the flames, belly-bent with laughter: / yellow, green" (P 117). And he becomes a thing itself like

a leaf, a

pebble, an old man
out of a story by

Pushkin .

Ah!
rotten beams tum-
bling,

. an old bottle

mauled

(P 116)

This bottle is symbolic of the Beautiful thing, whose "vulgarity of beauty surpasses all their / perfections" (P 119). Her "beauty is / a defiance of authority" (P 119). The Beautiful thing is "waiting upon me, waiting for / the fire," the passion of love (P 125). She is the girl he picked up when he descended from the Mountain. At that time Paterson was blind to her beauty because he was not yet purified and thought that she was "a whore" (P 105). Now, he is awakened to the "rigor of beauty." He is "shaken" by her charming beauty and can "do nothing but admire / and lean to care for [her]," whose body is "stretched out negligently on the dirty sheet" in the damp basement (P 125). She is "a flame, / black plush, a dark flame" (P 128). "I," Paterson cries to her, "make a fool of myself, mourning the lack / of dedication / mourning its losses, / for you" (P 121). The image of the woman in the basement as a flame is associated with that of "Persephone / gone to hell . . . a docile queen," (P 125-126). Paterson desires to be transformed into a new being; he "pass[es] into the flame, becomes the flame-- / the flame taking over the person" (P 121).

The first prose passage of the second section describes the religious ceremony of Indians, breathing "acrid fumes" in a tepee (P 115). This fire ritual serves as a fine parable

of Paterson's "breathing the books in," the smells of books in the library (P 115). Just as the ritual is an "antagonistic" dream to "address the Spirit of Fire," so Paterson's reading of books is his "antagonistic" dream "to break / through the skull of custom / to a place hidden from / affection, women and offspring--an affection / for the burning" (P 115, 114, 115). Paterson's spiritual metamorphosis, then, signifies "a defiance of authority" like the Beautiful thing, a Kora, "Persephone / gone to hell" (P 119, 125). He becomes "a Niké," a winged goddess of victory who "shall live in his honor" (P 120).

Williams compares the fire destruction of the Paterson library with that of the Alexandrian library. Sappho's poems were among the lost manuscripts; they were "the flame's lover," who survived "old conflagrations"; they "were unwrapped, fragment by fragment, from / outer mummy cases of papier mâché inside / Egyptian sarcophagi" and remain "a defiance of authority" as the Beautiful thing to this day (P 123, 119). Paterson also survives the destructive fire and emerges with the fire of poetic imagination: "The person submerged / in wonder, the fire become the person" (P 122). Paterson is transformed into a flame to "BRIGHTen / the cor / ner / where you are! / --a flame, / black plush, a dark flame" (P 128).

In the beginning of the third section, Williams uses the destruction of the Paterson library by fire as the symbol of the destruction of "all libraries," the centers of "A chance word," rather than the concrete word of reality, which "may destroy the world" (P 129). The library is for him the symbol of the tomb of the Word, which is buried in footnotes upon footnotes and loses its original meaning, its thinginess: "Texts mount and complicate them-/ selves, lead to further texts and those / to synopses, digests and emendations" (P 130). The fire has turned the library into

"a sour stench of embers" (P 129). "Rain / falls and surfeits the river's upper reaches, / gathering slowly" (P 129). The rains fall; the flood rises; texts are dispersed in all directions; fragments of Pound's letters to Williams whirl through more official and local texts in a parody of The Waste Land, The Cantos, the modernist vortex itself.

Paterson himself is submerged

-- to the teeth, to the very eyes
 . uh, uh

FULL STOP

--and leave the world
 to darkness
 and to
 me

When the water has receded most things have lost their form. They lean in the direction the current went. Mud covers them

--fertile (?) mud. (P 140)

James Guimond interprets the flood which has covered Paterson as the three torrents, the torrents of "the irresponsible imagination," of "the irresponsible erudition," and of "ignorant materialism" (192). As "The stream / grows leaden within him," Paterson is completely buried under the torrents of "a pustular scum, a decay, a choking / lifelessness" (P 130, 140), the torrents of "texts . . . synopses, digests and emendations" (P 130). He is then identified with a dog "under water" which is carried "downstream / on the swift current" (P 131). "Pursued by the whirlpool-mouths, the dog / descends toward Acheron" (P 132). This dead dog is symbolic of the death of Paterson, who has been pursued by the codified Word with "digests and

emendations" (P 130). Paterson's death, then, symbolizes "a / peace that comes of destruction" (P 132). Paterson, as Noah, survives the flood of books; he, as Faitoute, overcomes all disasters of the tornado, the fire, and the flood; and he emerges as a new man, a visionary poet. Paterson realizes his mission as a visionary poet to "[rebrick] up" the words or to "comb out the language," as a redeeming language to save the Beautiful thing from her frustration that "Love is her sorrow" (P 143, 145, 141) or to prevent "a man's premature death" (Thirlwall 264). And he proclaims that "a speech-- / is, of necessity, my sole concern" (P 144). At the end of Book Three, Paterson decides to leave the hell of the library:

I cannot stay here
to spend my life looking into the past:

the future's not answer. I must
find my meaning and lay it, white,
beside the sliding water: myself--
comb out the language--or succumb

--whatever the complexion. Let
me out! (Well, go!) this rhetoric
is real! (P 145)

Book Four: "The Run to the Sea"

After harrowing the hell of the library, Paterson is purified and recovers from his impotence and is ready to meet his bride, the Beautiful thing. In Book Four, Paterson finally meets her in the figure of a young nurse, Phyllis. He becomes now a participant in the actuality of life, in the river of life, realizing, like Williams's wife, Flossie, that "we live on a river, that we are a river town" (Williams, Autobiography 391). Book Four describes a marriage of

Paterson and the Beautiful thing, which is suggested in its title, "The Run to the Sea." The mock idyllic scene of love in Book Four implies a lost vision of the pastoral America Williams has dreamed of creating or restoring through Paterson, or what Audrey T. Rodgers calls "a poignant nostalgia for an idyllic past when man and woman, nature and the creative imagination existed in perfect harmony" (95).

"Phyllis" is a standard pastoral name and one is not surprised to find her accompanied by "Corydon." The relationship between Corydon and Phyllis is "a sad picture" of the pastoral scene of love between a shepherd and a shepherdess, "a perverted but still recognizable 'happy' picture" of a Theocritan idyl (Williams, Selected Letters 305). Unlike Sappho, who wrote poems in the vernacular language of Lesbos rather than in a literary language, Corydon, a "cultured" girl, is a poetess who imitates bookish traditionalists like T. S. Eliot and W. B. Yeats (P 154, 167). Her "place is full of books--in all languages!" (P 152). The idyllic poem of love she reads to Phyllis echoes Eliot's Prufrock and The Waste Land: "Oh Paterson! Oh married man! / He is the city of cheap hotels and private / entrances . . ." (P 154). She invites Phyllis to a fishing trip to Anticosti, and, in case one misses such invitations to fecundity, her poem also echoes Yeats' "The Lake Isle of Innisfree": "Come with me to Anticosti, where the salmon / lie spawning in the sun in the shallow water" (P 167). Corydon, Williams says in a letter to Marianne Moore, "represents the 'great world' against the more or less primitive world of the provincial city" (Selected Letters 304). Mockingly, the idyllic love of Corydon and Phyllis is not achieved in the pastoral landscape but simply parodied in the environment full of the "houses placarded: / Unfit for human habitation" (P 164). And for them "love is begrimed, befouled" and their love affair gives us a vision of hell (P

164) rather than a vision of "Paradise" (P 167).

Against the cultivated world of Corydon, Paterson appears to contend with Corydon for the hand of Phyllis. He stands as a localist, a physician from Paterson. Their struggle symbolizes the battle between the poets of the old tradition, the dogs who "have run out-- / after the rabbits," and the poets of the new, the lame dogs "sniffing the trees" and digging "a musty bone" (P 3). It is, then, no wonder that Paterson is "Only one" whom Phyllis is "interested in / right now" (P 153). Phyllis has grown up in Ramapo where "a strangeness and a bold association of wild and cultured life grew up together" (P 12). She has been "limited in the primitive, provincial environment" of Ramapo (Williams, Selected Letters 305). She is a young girl trained at Paterson and working in "the Big City as a Professional Woman" (P 150). As Walter Scott Peterson holds, "her migration to the city seems emblematic of man's repudiation of the local. . . . In a specific sense the forces leading her to destruction are the same forces that Williams sees leading American poetry to destruction, but in a more general sense they are also the forces leading to the defeat of imagination and love" (186). She is symbolic of the Beautiful thing, "a defiance of authority," the "radiant gist that / resists the final crystallization" (P 119, 109).

Phyllis resists the sexual temptation of a Lesbian Corydon. Even though she tells Paterson that "I don't know why I can't give myself to you" (P 159), Phyllis is instrumental in reviving Paterson's potency by giving her fresh body and mind to him. Paterson strips Phyllis naked as she stands before him "quietly to be undressed" (P 155). Kissing and talking, he slowly and courteously explores her body with his hands. He is persistent, taking "her nipples gently in his lips," but she slightly resists: "No / I don't like it" (P 164). Paterson's gentle, courteous, and

persistent caressing and Phyllis's preservation of virginity as seen in her slight refusal show the freshness of their love affair. Finally, Phyllis becomes active in the affair, coming upon Paterson who lies "upon his back upon the couch"; she, "half dressed," straddles him and her "thighs are sore from riding" (P 169).

The second section is full of images of light, and associated with events like Madam Curie's discovery of radium and Columbus's discovery of the New World. Paterson is identified with various images of light. He is endowed with light by attending with his son a lecture on atomic fission in the Solarium, "a kind of temple of the sun--a shrine of Apollo, who is in many ways the presiding deity of the section" (Peterson 193; Doyle 130). As a counterpart to the enclosed image of the library which "has a smell of its own / of stagnation and death" in the first section of Book Three (P 100), the Solarium in this section is open to the source of life, the sun in which the patients in the hospital sun themselves for their healing. The hospital symbolizes the light itself, for "the glow through the glass roof / seem[s] ablaze, rivalling night's queen," the moon (P 171).

It is very significant that Paterson attends the lecture with his young son, for the lecture reminds him of the words of Norman Douglas, the author of South Wind, that "The best thing a / man can do for his son, when he is born, is to die" (P 171). The birth of his son means his death, just as the radium discovered by Madam Curie comes out of the ashes of the smashed Uranium. The birth of his son, signifying the birth of an idea, is the rebirth of Paterson out of his old self. Madam Curie becomes the symbol of Paterson's fulfilled woman. She is pregnant: "Curie, the man, gave up / his work to buttress her. / But she is pregnant" "with ponderous belly, full / of thought," who gives birth to "the radiant gist," the very language inherent in things and the

fact of life before us: "Love, the sledge that smashes the atom" (P 176-177). Madam Curie who discovered "the Gamma rays that cure the cancer" (P 182) is associated with a Virgin Mary who is pregnant with Christ. Her discovery of radium is then properly hailed as comparable to the news of the birth of Christ, the Redeemer:

Glory to God in the highest
and on earth, peace, goodwill to
men! (P 176)

Curie's discovery of radium becomes analogous to Columbus's discovery of the New world. Her attempt to untangle the radiant gist is an ideal of the poet who attempts to uncover "a rarest element . . . hidden in the very words which are going in at our ear and from which we must recover underlying meaning as realistically as we recover metal out of ore" (Williams, Autobiography 362). She is a radiant gist "splitting the atom of / bitterness," a visionary poet, who is "waiting for the sun to part the labia / of shabby clouds . . . playing the words / following a table which is the synthesis / of thought, a symbol that is to him, / sun up! a Mendelief, the elements laid / out by molecular weight, identity / predicted before found" (P 172, 179). Paterson here imagines the process of Madam Curie's discovery of radium as his own process of splitting the poetic foot, the atom of the poetic line, or by finding "the new way of measuring'" (Williams, Selected Letters 243). Paterson's struggle to find a new poetic measure is Williams's own effort to find a new poetic measure. "I," Williams wrote in a letter to Parker Tyler in 1946, "always think of Mendelejeff's table of atomic weights in this connection. . . . It may be that I am no genius in the use of the new measure I find inevitable; it may be that as a poet I have not had the genius to do the things I set up as essential if our verse is to blossom. I know, however, the innovation I

predict must come to be. Someone, some infant now, will have to find the way we miss" (Selected Letters 243).

"Someone, some infant now," who is prophesied by Williams to use "the new measure," is the son of Paterson who has attended the lecture on atomic fission with Paterson, emerging as the young poet "A. G." who sent a letter to Paterson. Just as radium is the child of Madam Curie's scientific discovery, so the young poet, "A. G." (Allen Ginsberg), is the son of Paterson's poetic theory, who conceives "no ideas but in things," envisioning for himself "some kind of new speech": ". . . one actual citizen of your community has inherited your experience in his struggle to love and know his own world-city, through your work, which is an accomplishment you almost cannot have hoped to achieve" (P 174). In short, like Madam Curie, Paterson is transformed into a visionary poet, who is incarnated in the figure of the young poet "A. G.," who is a redeeming language, the Word in whom "no ideas but in things" are found.

In the final portions of this section, this redeeming language and poetry is ranged against the cult of "money" of modern society, which Williams sees as "crime / under the circumstances . . . the cancer, usury" to be cured, "joke / to be wiped out sooner or later at stroke / of pen" (P 182-183). The "Gamma rays" of credit "stalled / in money" should be let out to cure the cancer of society and establish "LOCAL control of local purchasing / power" (P 182, 183, 185). Williams associates money with Uranium, split to release its radiance: "Let out the fire, let the wind go! / Release the Gamma rays that cure the cancer" (P 182). While money is "the gold, in short, that Phideas stole," the "squalor of spreading slums," credit is "the Parthenon," the "splendor of renaissance cities," the "value created and received, / 'the radiant gist' against all that scants our lives" (P 184, 186, 184, 186).

For his "final somersault" (P 204), Paterson looks back on his childhood, the beginning of the City of Paterson. His meditation on the past of Paterson both as a man and a city is necessary for his emergence as a messiah to save the world. The stream of his memories is the river, the river of the serpent, "Knower / of tides, counter of hours, wanings and / waxings, enumerator of snowflakes, starrer / through thin ice" (P 193). This river runs to the sea, which is then "the nostalgic sea" (P 201). This nostalgic sea, Williams says, is "Not the actual ocean" but the metaphorical ocean (qtd. in Sankey 194-195), "the blood dark sea" of "the shark, that snaps / at his own trailing guts, makes a sunset / of the green water" (P 202, 200). Paterson is submerged in the sea of the bloody scenes of murders, narrated in the prose sections interspersed with the poetry sections: the bayoneted Jonathan "from motives of private revenge" (P 188); Fred Goodell's murder of his own baby daughter for the reason that "her crying annoyed him" (P 196); John Johnson's "inhuman butchery" of an aged couple just for "money" (P 199).

In the sea of blood, Paterson remembers an Edenic landscape of Paterson of the past. Paterson was "a place inhabited only / by straggling trappers and wandering Indians," a Garden of Eden which was "almost hid / by dense foliage" in "a deep-set valley between hills," surrounded by "a beautiful wilderness where mountain pink / and wood violet throve (P 193). This place was gradually transformed into a village where "Branching trees and ample gardens gave / the village streets a delightful charm and / the narrow old-fashioned brick walls added / a dignity to the shading trees" (P 195). Later, this beautiful village grew into a mill town, which was still attractive and primitive like the ancient Egypt: "In the town candle light / appears. No lighted streets. It is as dark / as Egypt" (P 195). In the

evening, "the town turned out to the circus" (P 197). The town used to "drink of the water of Dublin Spring," the "finest water" (P 198).

This Edenic vision of Paterson the city encourages Paterson the man to heroically resist the cries of the sea, like Odysseus who ordered his soldiers to "Put wax rather in your / ears against the hungry sea" (P 201). Realizing that "The sea is not our home" (P 201), Paterson emerges from the sea as the "Seed / of Venus," who returns "to / a girl standing upon a tilted shell, rose / pink" (P 202). His return to a girl signifies his recovery of his potency, which prompts him to remember girls of the past: "Margaret of the big breasts / and daring eyes," Lucille with "gold hair and blue eyes," the "loving Alma," "the cold Nancy, with small / firm breasts," and others (P 192). Paterson is awakened from his sleep in the sea of blood by the singing of the sea girls, which reminds him of "the water's steady roar, as of a distant / waterfall"; he picks "some beach plums from a low bush and / sample[s] one of them, spitting the seed out, / then head[s] inland, followed by the dog" (P 203). This seed will reforest the land of Paterson by the sprinkled blood of the murdered, creating a new world, a new poetic world by a new form, a new measure, and a new language. Therefore, Paterson the man, who is "headed inland," is identified with Paterson the city, the land of America (Williams, I Wanted 22), which is submerged in the sea of blood and emerges as a new world, the land of Walt Whitman: "In the end," Williams says in his Autobiography, "the man [Paterson] rises from the sea where the river appears to have lost its identity and accompanied by his faithful bitch, obviously a Chesapeake Bay retriever, turns inland toward Camden where Walt Whitman, much traduced, lived the latter years of his life and died" (392).

Paterson's heading for the land of Whitman is

significant, for Whitman is for Williams "an instrument" of a new poetic line and a new language or dialect, "breaking finally with English prosody" and "initiating a new measure" (Selected Letters 286-287, 332; Autobiography 392). And his rebirth from the sea of death, then, signifies the death of his old self and his resurrection: "The old man meets the young people and lives on" (Williams, I wanted 22). Paterson is transformed into the young poet "A. G.," a poet of the here and now who sings "the look of streets and people, events that have happened here and there" (P 195). Surviving the blood sea of the past memories, he becomes a poet of "no ideas but in things," a poet who finds his "virgin purpose, / the language" to be newly measured to save the world (P 187).

Book Five

The theme of resurrection is rooted in Williams's religious feeling that death is not the end of life. Williams once said that, "as you recollect, as you look back to find a meaning, nobody knows anything about death and whether it is an end. It possibly isn't an end. It's a possibility that there's something more to be said" (Thirlwall 281). The world where Paterson is headed is a metaphor for the redeemed land of the Word, the land of the embodiment of knowledge, the land of poetic imagination. In Book Five, significantly, "Paterson, from the air / above the low range of its hills / across the river / on a rock-ridge / has returned to the old scenes / to witness / What has happened" (P 209).

All the world hails the return of Paterson to the land. Paterson finds that the "old scenes" have changed and the new world is waiting for him. Spring has returned. Looking out the window, Paterson hears "the song of the fox sparrow / reawakening the world / of Paterson / --its rocks and streams / frail tho it is / from their long winter sleep / In March--

/ the rocks / the bare rocks / speak" (P 207). Casting off his old self, he finds himself transformed into a man of imagination like "an eagle / from its crag" (P 207), a visionary poet like the Word. He needs "Not prophecy! NOT prophecy! / but the thing itself!" (P 208). When "prophecy" is required, we fail to contact the world, just longing for the world beyond, the invisible world. His job is simply to "WALK in the world" (P 213). For Paterson there is no distinction between here and there: "Anywhere is everywhere" (P 235). There is no distinction between the sacred and the profane: "The whore and the virgin, an identity" (P 210).

Book Five of Paterson presents "A WORLD OF ART / THAT THROUGH THE YEARS HAS / SURVIVED" (P 209), the world which celebrates an identity of the whore and the virgin. In the first section, Lorca's The Love of Don Perlimplin and Soupault's The Last Nights of Paris center around the theme that "The moral / proclaimed by the whorehouse / could not be better proclaimed / by the virgin, a price on her head, / her maidenhead!" (P 208). In these books, the whore is seen as the virgin, the "bride eternal," the beauty "in the orchid stench, in the vulgar" and the hero advises the readers to "'Loose your love to flow' / while you are yet young / male and female" (P 215, 214, 216). In the second section, this eternal bride is associated with Sappho, who is for Williams the symbol of an ideal poet, the poet who sings an identity of the virgin and the whore in "a clear gentle tinkling voice . . . leading [the readers] to the rout of the vocables" (P 217-222).

In the world of art, even white and black become one: "To be with those guys made me know that any white man if he thought straight and studied hard, could sing and dance and play with the Negro" (P 221). Williams believes that the world of art can be best represented by "a satyric play," a satyric dance in which the "devout" and "ribald" are

exquisitely interplayed (P 221). Mary's dance in the Park in the first section of Book Two, for example, is also a satyric dance of Priapus. The vision of a satyric dance is the vision of poetry as "a complete little universe," the universe of a satyric dance of the virgin and the whore, the universe of not the abstract idea but the real thing. Thus, the poetic world should not be divorced from, but express "the whole life of the poet" which is not the "idea" but the "thing" itself (P 224). The poet is a satyr to "dance to a measure / contrapuntally, / Satyrically, the tragic foot" (P 239).

The third section is also dominated by the world of art: Brueghel's picture of a Nativity and Unicorn tapestries at the Cloisters. Brueghel's picture presents the "incredulous" scene that a Baby is "born to an old man / out of a girl and a pretty girl / at that" (P 227). In this Nativity picture, Williams images "the Virgin Mary" as the "glorious whore adored by the ages, rightly adored by the ages into perpetuity" (qtd. in Mariani, "Paterson 5" 118). Mary for Williams is, as Mariani says, an ideal woman, who "had maintained her secret, making out of it . . . a glorious fiction, serene and dignified" ("Paterson 5" 119), a fiction that "no woman is virtuous / who does not give herself to her lover / --forthwith" (P 229). The Unicorn tapestry is also "the living fiction" of an identity of the whore and the virgin, "both for sale / to the highest bidder! / and who bids higher / than a lover?" (P 234, 237-8). These works are what Jerome Mazzaro calls "the secularizing of the Incarnation" ("The Descent Once More" 297), identifying Paterson with a Baby and the Unicorn, "the locus / where two women [the virgin and the whore] meet" (P 110; Woodward, 159).

Williams dedicated Book Five to Toulouse-Lautrec, who, according to Williams, "was inclined to praise woman, even if

she was a whore" (Thirlwall 288). "It is my instinctive affection for these 'lost' girls," Williams writes in his Autobiography, "that is the best part of me--and them. I loved them all. Like Toulouse-Lautrec (who had the advantage of his deformity), I would gladly have lived in a brothel (of them) for the warmth (extra-curricular) and the comfort to be derived therefrom" (224). This idea of a woman is central to Paterson and to Williams's belief that "every married man carries in his head / the beloved and sacred image / of a virgin / whom he has whored" (P 234). Paterson is Williams's attempt to solve "a linguistic problem reflecting false 'ideas' instead of the real 'thing,'" or to "achieve his goal of redemption of the language by eliminating the moral and physical distinctions of virgin and whore through a recognition of their essential identity" (Ashton 195).

This false dichotomy of the virgin and the whore, Williams believed, is another of those false oppositions which have haunted American experience, making America a place of "the bloody loam," "the vilest swillhole of christiandom, the Passaic River" (P 37; In the American Grain 195). America for Williams is the "Beauty" which is "whored" by "the inhuman butchery" of the American Puritans, the idea vendors whose minds were divorced from the reality, forging their false ideas of the whore and the virgin, the sacred and the profane, the white and the red, the black and the white. In this sense, America for Williams is the second revelation of the Word which was codified in the rigid mind of the Puritans and which is to be liberated to become the Word of the third revelation, who redeems man's false vision of good and bad or virgin and whore. Paterson finally realizes that his quest is to find the "Beauty" which is codified or "locked in the mind past all remonstrance" and cries: "Rigor of beauty is the quest" (P 3).

C. "Love, the sledge that smashes the atom"

Williams writes in his Autobiography, "I am a loyal American citizen. I--I--I've spent my whole life, generally speaking, for my country, trying to serve it in every way I know how. I've even written a book about it" (317). The book Williams wrote as "a loyal American citizen" is In the American Grain, which aims "to get inside the heads of some of the American founders or 'heroes' . . . by examining their original records" (Autobiography 178). In the American Grain is "an inclusive definition" of "the American make-up" (Autobiography 236), which found its way to his magnum opus, Paterson. "Thus," Louis L. Martz rightly insists, "Paterson becomes the full realization of the moral vision, the literary theory, the aesthetic manifesto, set forth in the best of his earlier works, In the American Grain" and these two works "reinforce each other" ("The Unicorn in Paterson" 78, 87).

Paterson is, Martz says, "one expanded metaphor" of Williams's version of the American Grain (Poem of the Mind 138). The American Puritan, Williams holds in In the American Grain, is dwindled into "a shell for his own 'soul'" because of his fears of "the animate touch" with the New World, "into picturesque smallness: children, dwarfs, elves" (64, 177, 64). The Pilgrims of the Mayflower, "despoiled and having nothing" in the wilderness of the New World, "looked black at the world and damning its perfections praised a zero in themselves" (65). They kept themselves "mercifully blinded" to the world and "stressed the 'spirit,'" which "is an earthly pride which they, prideless, referred to heaven and the next world" (65). Because of their emphasis on "the spirit against the flesh," they became "a race incapable of flower" and "really lost in the world . . . morbidly seeking the flame,--that terrifying unknown image to which, like

savages, they too offered sacrifices of human flesh" at Salem (66, 67-68) to appease the anger of the Word. Their "tight-locked hearts" diminished God into a "God" who is "redolent of these mysteries" and came "to befoul the New World" (63, 64, 68). The "whole weight of the wild continent" contributed to "their condition of mind . . . forcing it to reproduce its own likeness, and no more" (68).

Williams lets Cotton Mather reveal this Puritan mind by filling a whole chapter of In the American Grain with some quotations from Mather's Magnalia. The Puritans are regarded by Cotton Mather as the Israelites of the New World, "a chosen Generation of Men" or "a People of God settled in those, which were once the Devil's Territories" (82, 83). Out of his spiritual pride, Mather distinguishes the Puritans from the Indians, regarding the Indians as the partisans of the Devil who was "very strangely Emulating what the Blessed God gave to Israel in the Wilderness" (101). For Mather, the Indians are the imitators of "the Affairs of the Church in the New [Testament]" like the "Devil" which "imitated what was in the Church of the Old Testament," (102). "The first thing they did, wherever they came, was to Erect a Tabernacle, for their false god; which they set always in the midst of their Camp, and they placed the Ark upon an Alter" (102).

Williams condemns Mather's Magnalia, "the flower" of Puritanism, as "a foul thing," suggesting that the Puritan, not the Indian, was the Devil emulating the Israelites, implanting "a doctrinaire religion, a form, that is to say, fixed--but small," which was "bred of brutality, inhumanity, cruel amputations . . . its rigid clarity, its inhuman clarity, its steel-like thrust from the heart of each isolate man straight into the tabernacle of Jehovah without embellishment or softening" (111, 116, 111). Being caught in "the baleful beauty of their religion" (113), the Puritans

ascended toward heaven, but failed to descend into earth. Committing "horrid atrocities in the name of their creed, the cost of emptiness," they "closed all the world out" (112). They were "giants" who had "their magnificent logic" but they were "dwarfs" who could not realize that it was "black deceit for them to condemn Indian sins, while they cut the ground from under the Indian's feet without acknowledging so much as his existence" (113-114). The God of the Puritans is also "dwarfed" or codified like the Word of the second revelation by "their magnificent logic" (113).

"If enamored of the gospel," Williams insists in In the American Grain, "the Puritans in a wild New World by that pure stare into the center of their souls excluded terrors each for himself, and so, in effect, blocked all ingress and all egress (in theory) to the tenderer humanities, the frailties in which beauty lives entangled, rendering their lives hard, unproductive of that openness which would have been to them as a flower to the stalk" (129). Williams associates this inhuman Puritan mind with Yankeeism, which bred the monsters such as George Washington and Benjamin Franklin "under the name of prudence" (143). The minds of these Yankees were "All out of the New World" (154), turning "totally dehumanized, like a Protestant heaven" (128). This Yankeeism found its typical proponent in Hamilton, who planned to harness the Passaic Falls to make Paterson "a great manufacturing center, a great Federal City, to supply the needs of the country" (P 69). Hamilton was "the Federalist champion" who strove "to harness the whole, young, aspiring genius to a treadmill," turning Paterson or America into "the land of the company" or "the vilest swillhole in christendom" (194, 195). Under his imagination, "Everything is Federalized and all laws become prohibitive in essence" (128). In short, Yankeeism is divorced from the local, the essence of reality, like American Puritanism; the

"Federalized" vision of Yankeeism is similar to the "dehumanized" vision of American Puritanism.

Against this "dead ash" of the Puritans, Martz argues, there was a contrasting vision, "a living flame" of early explorers such as Columbus, de Soto, Daniel Boon, Aaron Burr, Samuel Houston, and Rasles, which is presented in In the American Grain ("The Unicorn in Paterson" 78-87). Williams holds in In the American Grain that the "invisible" world of the Puritans is replaced by the "visible" world of these explorers, the world of luxurious beauty attractive "to touch, to hear, to see, to smell, to taste" (206). Columbus saw the New World as the newly created world, at whose beauty God was pleased: "Bright green trees, the whole land so green that it is a pleasure to look on it. Gardens of the most beautiful trees I ever saw" (26). All of the Indians for Columbus stood for new men as "naked as their mothers bore them . . . youths, well made with very handsome bodies and very good countenances" (25). They are symbolic of the union or marriage with the local, and identical with Williams's conception of the Beautiful thing, an identity of the virgin and the whore, an identity of the body and the spirit, for they are "themselves neither black nor white" and they are both "naked" and "painted" (25).

Like Columbus, Daniel Boone was also "wholly" possessed by the "beauty of a lavish, primitive embrace in savage, wild beast and forest" (136). Aaron Burr is for Williams a man of the "free spirit" who "threw the whole mass of religious dogma from him and declared himself a disbeliever" (201, 198). "He was immoral as a satyr," who found "the most refined, courteous, gracious creature" in an "unbeautiful" widow with "a scar on her face" and married her "in the teeth of the world" (205, 200). For Williams, he stands for a whole range of pioneer heroes who people Paterson, the pioneers who were men of "a poetic knowledge" who had "the

conception of the New world as a woman" and "took the descent once more, to the ground" to cultivate her; their descent is "a gesture of despair" to redeem her (213, 220, 213), like Christ, the Word of the third revelation.

Paterson is Williams's secularized version of the love of Christ for all humanity. It is, then, no wonder that Paterson revolves around sexual metaphor, a metaphor of divorce and marriage which ranges from the vision of the harmonious union of Paterson and the Garret Mountain, to the scene of their divorce and finally to the vision of their reunion. This vision of union redeems Paterson, who reaches "a poetic knowledge" of the co-presence of the whore and the virgin in existence. Williams borrows his fundamental marriage metaphor from the Bible. Especially, the Incarnation of Christ is a Christian metaphor of marriage between God and man, which demolishes the distinction between the world here and the world beyond, between the invisible world and the visible, between the virgin and the whore. Christ is for Williams the symbol of contact with the beauty of the local, serving as the model of his poetic theory of "no ideas but in things," the model of a new measure of love: "Love, the sledge that smashes the atom" (P 177).

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The Gospel of Matthew describes Christ as assuming the posture of Moses who decreed the divine Law to the Israelites on Sinai. Like Moses, Christ preaches his sermon to the crowds on a mountain, revealing his mission as the Messiah not to abolish the Law but to fulfill it: "'Do not suppose that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to complete. . . . I tell you, unless you show yourselves far better than the scribes and Pharisees, you can never enter the kingdom of Heaven'" (5: 17-20). His new interpretation of the Law becomes "a new commandment: love one another" (John 13: 34). His new commandment is radical enough to reverse the conception of "the love of God" into that of "the love of man," identifying the love of man with the love of God: "If he does not love a fellow-Christian whom he has seen, he is incapable of loving God whom he has not seen. . . . [and] whoever loves God must love his fellow-Christian too" (I John 4: 20-21). Christ's new commandment is not the annihilation, but the fulfillment of the Law. Christ is then a visionary who turns to "the world of the senses ('nature') . . . to find there the meanings [he needs] to live with and by," as Waggoner defines it (American Visionary Poetry 19). He naturalizes the supernatural, or humanizes the supernaturalized Law of Moses.

This radical posture of Christ as a reinterpreter of the Law is taken up by Walt Whitman, Hart Crane, and William Carlos Williams, who, utilizing a Christ figure both as the poet and as the hero of their epic poems, reinterpreted the traditional epics in that Christian context and wrote the epics of the radical Puritanism, or humanized Protestantism. Like Christ who initiated a radical Judaism, all of these three poets are displaced Puritans who denied the original

sin of man, finding "the Beautiful thing" in "the sinner," or recognizing the divinity of each man. Like Christ who inaugurated a "new religion," they are the visionary poets who wrote "the new Bible" of America, the American epics which sing of identity, an identity of the physical and the spiritual, the subject and the object, the profane and the sacred, the Jews and the Gentiles, the white and the red, the virgin and the whore, here and there, time and timeless.

This romanticism of these three poets partly lay in their antipathy toward academicism, or their lack of formal education. Gay Wilson Allen writes of Whitman: "Just as the whaling ship was Herman Melville's 'Yale and Harvard,' so was the newspaper office Walt Whitman's university" (New Walt Whitman Handbook 161). Whitman learned the world as a carpenter building houses, as a printer, or as a journalist. Crane worked at odd jobs, such as a factory worker. Of these three poets, even Williams, who was alone educated at the university, "had no instruction beyond high school literature" (I Wanted 14). And their romantic sensibility, to use Williams's terms, was "rooted in the locality" of the raw world rather than in the classroom of the educated world (Autobiography 174), and nourished by their direct contact with "the things" or the realities of the world through their jobs.

These three poets inherited their spirituality from their mothers: the mystic Quakerism of Whitman's mother, or the Christian Science of Crane's and Williams's mothers. In each case, their fathers were more naturalistic and practical. These poets were not sentimentalists, as some critics say, but genuine visionary poets who rigorously sought the essence of things. They found "beauty" in the naked world of "nature," the world of the poor, the battlefields of war, the obstetric ward of the hospital. Whitman sees Christ in the face of a dying soldier in the battlefield; Crane seeks an absolute beauty, "a stab at truth" in the human struggle;

Williams finds "the Beautiful thing" in a degraded black girl beating a rug.

In this sense, they are the Emersonian poets expounded in "The Poets" by whose use of "nature" "the distinctions which we make in events, and in affairs, of low and high, honest and base, disappear" and to whom "What would be base, or even obscene, to the obscene, becomes illustrious, spoken in a new connexion of thought"; they are the Emersonian "epic" poets who "sing of the gods, and their descent unto men," or the godliness of men; they are "thus liberating gods" who have awakened men to get "a new sense" to find "within their world, another world, or nest of worlds" (10, 11, 17). They fulfilled Emerson's prophecy, the prophecy of the coming of "the timely man, the new religion, the reconciler, whom all things await" (21). They "ejaculated as Logos, or Word" their songs, the songs of the New World in which "a new nobility is conferred in groves and pastures, and not in castles, or by the sword-blade, any longer" (23). Being the possessors, not the tenants, of the world, they are completely in harmony with the world, as Emerson says of the American epic poet in "The Poet": "Thou shalt have the whole land for thy park and manor, the sea for thy bath and navigation, without tax and without envy; the woods and the rivers thou shalt own; and thou shalt possess that wherein others are only tenants and boarders" (24).

Whitman's Song of Myself, Crane's The Bridge, and Williams's Paterson are not epics of the "castles" and "the sword-blade," but epics of "groves and pastures." Even though these three poets spent most of their lives working with the people in cities, they had all been captivated by the pastoral vision of the New World during all their lives. Whitman's contact with the natural world, especially his bathing experience "naked" in the sea, "was so acute that it would bring him repeated ecstasy and torment until the end of his life" (Allen, Solitary Singer 16). Crane would desire to

return to the world of his "principal experience" of his youth, "an outdoor world of streams and open country and forests, a world that would always be with him" (Unterecker 21). Williams would be "the dark beast" in the "enchanted woods," where, "away from home, away from school, among these tall grasses he was lord. And long before he ever thought of becoming a poet or a physician he dreamed of being a forester: a primitive Adam or one of those long-vanished Indian noble savages ranging far and wide in his own primeval world of second-stand woodland growth" (Mariani, William Carlos Williams 22). It is no wonder, then, that their epics center around the vision of Paradise: Song of Myself evolves around the world of "the grass"; The Bridge envisions the "vernal" country, where "pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring / The serpent with the eagle in the leaves" (CP 117); Paterson depicts the pastoral vision of the New World represented in Paterson.

These three epics are not "folk" epics, but "Christian" epics in the sense of Thomas A. Vogler's classification of the epic mode. Traditionally, epics are usually classified into something like the two modes which W. P. Ker calls "primitive" and "artificial" or "literary" epics, or which C. S. Lewis calls "primary" and "secondary" epics. However, Vogler divides the epic modes into the "folk" epics like those of Homer and Virgil, and the "Christian" epics like the modern epics of Dante and Milton. The folk epic hero, Vogler holds, is constantly exposed to the physical conflict and his heroic virtue is recognized by overcoming "the physical threat of the destruction or loss of tribal identity and secure[s] the future of the race through his own fruitful sexual union or the preservation of some other union," but the Christian epic hero is involved in the spiritual struggle and his spiritual quality is realized by his triumph over "the temptation of sin and the threat of damnation" (7). Discussing the epics of Blake, Wordsworth, Keats, and Hart

Crane in the context of the Christian epic tradition, Vogler asserts that these epics of the Christian mode are the "epics of consciousness," which describe "the history of a mind," the growth of the hero's mind, and lead to "an awakening and rebirth of man as well as the poet" (13, 12, 13).

Vogler's "Christian" epic mode obviously involves a radical reinterpretation of the classical epics from a Christian perspective. Early Christian apologists and later Christians who were influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy regarded Greek literature and philosophy as "a preparation for Christ," notably as in Clement of Alexandria's interpretation of Homer and Plato. In his Greek Myths and Christian Mystery, Hugo Rahner asserts that, "Guided by the genius of poetry, this blind singer [Homer] touched with trembling hands the primal forms of truth, and for us this makes him the forerunner of the Word that appeared to us clothed in the flesh of man" (284). Rahner, quoting Clement's interpretation of Odysseus's suffering on the mast in terms of Christ's suffering on the cross, maintains that Odysseus's mast is a symbol of Christ's cross which is the "sign of victory" and that Odysseus is "the perfect model" of Christ, the pilot of Christians (373, 379). Following Ambrose of Milan's argument, he adds that, if Odysseus "falls short of the perfect model," he is "the man in bonds who is the mythical prototype of the Christian who is a bondman unto freedom" (379). Christ on the cross is interpreted both as "'our Orpheus,'" a visionary poet "who brought home [to the land of light] his bride, mankind, out of the depths of dark Hades" and as "'our Odysseus,'" a visionary pilot or hero who brought his companions to the land of eternal life (383, 58, 383). This Christian interpretation also leads us to see Homer's Iliad as an epic poem of Christian heroism to save Helen imprisoned in Troy, the land of sin. This Christian reading of Homer can be applied to Virgil's Aeneid. Aeneas's departure from Troy is regarded on the model of Abraham's

journey from Ur of the Chaldees, the land of his father's house, to the unknown land, the land of milk and honey, and of Moses's leading of his people from Egypt toward the Promised Land of Canaan. Aeneas's journey to the Underworld is a symbolic death of a visionary poet who carries the sin of all humanity on his shoulder and achieves human salvation by his death. It is also a symbol of the hero's transformation as a true Christian and as a leader of his people to establish the eternal city of Rome, the land of eternal life.

This metamorphic theme of classical epics seen from a Christian perspective was typical of the writings of the early American Puritans, who made every effort to justify their pilgrimage to the American continent as their mission to plant the New Canaan, the New Eden. According to Vogler, the American epics discussed in the preceding chapters are also the epics of the mind or consciousness. Each of the heroes in Whitman's Song of Myself, Crane's The Bridge, and Williams's Paterson experiences his spiritual metamorphosis through ordeals of consciousness and finally becomes a man of vision. Whitman's epic Muse migrates "from Greece and Ionia" to "America" and "ended the strata of her former themes," the "themes of war," "the epics of Asia's, Europe's helmeted warriors" to sing "a better, fresher, busier sphere, a wide, untried domain" of "Practical, peaceful life, the people's life, the People themselves, / Lifted, illumin'd, bathed in peace--elate, secure in peace" (LG 196, 197, 196, 201). "Ideal Americanism," Whitman believed, "would take the Greek spirit and law, and democratize and scientize and (thence) truly Christianize them for the whole, the globe, all history, all ranks and lands, all facts, all good and bad" (Prose Works 660). Just as Christ destroyed the barriers between regulated Judaism (poetry ruled by rigid meter) and free-spirit gentiledom (free verse), so Whitman came "to essentially break down the barriers of form between prose and

poetry," inaugurating free verse, the poetry of "the greatest eloquence, or the truest power and passion" (Prose Works 519). Unlike the "old" epic poems of Asia and Europe which are "rooted in the long past. . . . celebrate man and his intellections and relativenesses as they have been," Whitman insists that the American epics should be "New Poetry" singing "them all as they are and are to be" (Prose Works 668).

In this belief, Whitman sings in Song of Myself a "new" epic singing "the average, strong, complete, sweet-blooded man or woman, the perfect longeve personality" and "To exalt the present and the real, / To teach the average man the glory of his daily walk and trade" (LG 202). Personifying America as a Person, Whitman "troop[s] up thy waters and thy lands; / . . . thy fields and farms, thy far-off woods and mountains" (LG 203). His epic sings the "Modern Man," not only "Of physiology from top to toe," but also "Of Life immense in passion, pulse, and power, / Cheerful, for freest action form'd under the laws divine" (LG 1). It is not the song "merely for products gross or lucre," but for "the soul in thee, electric, spiritual" (LG 205). In other words, Whitman's epic is concerned with "the thinginess of the things," not merely the physical but the spiritual domain of the hero. It is a song of the co-presence of the physical and the spiritual, the union of the body and the soul. It is a song of "an identical body and soul, a personality" (Prose Works 723). The hero of Song of Myself is awakened to the reality of existence, becoming a poet of the Body and the Soul (LG 48), affirming everything from heaven to earth. He is, as Allen says, "the interpreter of the purpose of cosmic creation, as Christ was the intermediary between God and his children"; if Milton's epic of Paradise Lost is to "justify the way of God to men," Whitman's Christian epic of Song of Myself is to justify the belief that "the physical world has fulfilled its divinely-intended purpose" (New Walt Whitman

Handbook 200, 205).

This Whitmanian epic spirit is inherited by Crane and Williams, whose poetic vision is opposed to both the traditions of American Puritanism and Eliot's negative modernism as embodied in The Waste Land which, according to Crane, "has dug the ground and buried hope as deep and direfully as it can ever be done" (Letters 115) and which, according to Williams, "wiped out our world as if an atom bomb had been dropped upon it" (Autobiography 174). Both Crane and Williams envied and admired Eliot's poetic skill (Crane, Letters 114-115; Williams, Autobiography 174), but they turned to Whitman as a guide to poetic vision. Whitman is centrally placed in Crane's The Bridge, playing a role as "Our Meistersinger" (CP 94), and is implicitly and explicitly alluded to in Williams's Paterson, where, as Williams says in his Autobiography, Paterson seeks his vision by journeying toward the land of Whitman from the sea of the blood (392). Crane and Williams reached Whitman by a different route, and their alignment with Whitman proves James E. Miller's belief in "Whitman's lodgement in the American poetic psyche" (American Quest x).

Crane wrote in a letter to Gorham Munson: "The more I think about my Bridge poem the more thrilling its symbolic possibilities become and . . . I begin to feel myself directly connected with Whitman" (Letters 128). Like Whitman's Song of Myself, Crane's The Bridge aims "to enunciate a new cultural synthesis of values in terms of our America" (Letters 223). Paradoxically, Crane's spiritualization of the physical is the way in which he confirms the physicality of things. While Crane reached Whitman's optimism through his paradoxical exploitation of Eliot's poetic technique, Williams turned to Whitman's poetic form. Williams, regarding Whitman's free verse of "the imitation of the sounds of the sea per se" as "a mistake," insists that "Whitman with his so-called free verse was

wrong: there can be no absolute freedom in verse. You must have a measure but a relatively expanded measure to exclude what has to be excluded and to include what has to be included. It is a technical point but a point of vast importance" (Selected Letters 135, 321). Williams believed that "Whitman, great as he was in his instinctive drive, was also the cause of our going astray" (Selected Essays 339). Williams's attitude toward free verse is well illustrated in the third section of Book Two of Paterson, where Williams describes Paterson as attentively listening to the falls to grasp its language. Paterson, "missing the sense (though he tries) / . . . shakes with the intensity / of his listening," for the language is "without style" or has "no syllable in the confused / uproar"--no form, no structure which will give the words their own significance and authority; he is "lodged / under its flow" without structural form (P 81).

Whitman was for Williams, however, "a key man to whom I keep returning" (Selected Essays 218), "an instrument" which led him "into the nature of the line by breaking finally with English prosody" (Selected Letters 286-287). Williams felt his responsibility to continue Whitman's "instinctive drive" to free poetry from its dead form, "the tyrannies of the past" (Selected Essays 339, 218), seeking to invent a new measure which keeps language alive, to build "a new construction upon the syllables" (Autobiography 392). Williams's poetic measure constructed "upon the syllables" is a measure positioned somewhere between free verse and the old fixed form of iambic meter, like the "relative positions" of the stars (P 50). It is "a relatively stable foot, not a rigid one" (Selected Essays 340), "an instinctive approximation of the principle of the relativistic or variable foot," which is theoretically supported by Einstein's theory of relativity (Selected Letters 335). After several years' experimentation with the concept of relative measure, Williams finally realized, as he says in I

Wanted to Write a Poem, that the relative measure with which he had experimented was the "variable" foot: "The foot not being fixed is only to be described as variable. If the foot itself is variable it allows order in so-called free verse. Thus the verse becomes not free at all but just simply variable, as all things in life properly are" (82). This variable foot, as Alan Ostrom tersely says, is a measure of "not freedom from measured form, but freedom for it" (106), a measure which has its position between freedom of free verse and regularity of iambic meter. The idea of the variable foot, Williams says in I Wanted to Write a Poem, is "my final conception of what my own poetry should be" (80). This concept of a relativistic measure gives birth to Williams's poetic theory of Objectivism, which sees the poem as "an object, an object that in itself formally presents its case and its meaning by the very form it assumes" (Autobiography 264-265).

In Williams's poetic theory, prose is much closer to verse than it is in traditional metrics: "I want to say that prose and verse are to me the same thing, that verse (as in Chaucer's tales) belongs with prose" (Selected Letters 263). Williams's juxtaposition of prose and verse is successfully featured in Paterson, where, as he wrote in a letter to Parker Tyler in 1948, "All the prose . . . has primarily the purpose of giving a metrical meaning to or of emphasizing a metrical continuity between all word use" (Selected Letters 263). The close relationship between prose and verse is for Williams the ordering principle of "our poems as well as our lives" (Selected Essays 340). It was Williams's intention to blur the distinction between the past and the present, between prose "fact" and poetic "fiction," between urban and rural, between objective and subjective, between the physical and the spiritual.

Williams's theory, as James E. Miller asserts, "convey[s] the sense of totality: all of life is included here . . . and

belongs here and cannot be excluded, the poetic and the anti-poetic, the rational and the irrational, the important and the trivial, the poetry and the prose of life" (American Quest 136). It is the secular version of the Word, the Word of the third revelation in whom the distinction of "Gentile and Jew" is "buried" (P 211), for the Word is "the Beautiful thing," the identity of the virgin and the whore, the incarnation of the spirit in the flesh, the embodiment of heaven and earth (P 213). The "heart of the explanation" in Paterson is Paterson's quest for "the Beautiful thing," whose "vulgarity of beauty surpasses all their / perfections" (P 123, 119). Unlike Crane's The Bridge, Williams's Paterson physicalizes or naturalizes the spiritual. While Crane sees everything in terms of the spiritual, Williams physicalizes the spiritual in the way of confirming the spirituality of the things.

Along with their employment of the Christ figure as a visionary poet and as an epic hero, these three epic poets are all alike in personifying America itself as the hero of their epic poems or as the Word. Just as Whitman, as Miller says, "resumes his own central and epic role" (American Quest 46), so Crane and Williams are figured both as the heroes in their epics and as visionary poets. They are also all alike in describing America as the bride of the Word and they sing the union of the Word and man in terms of sexual symbolism or what Williams calls in Paterson "the riddle of man and woman." Their sexual symbolism is derived from a Christian concept of marriage of man and the Word. The Bible deliberately employs a nuptial metaphor in explaining the relationship between man and God. It has been argued that the first chapter of Genesis describes God's creation of the universe in sexual imagery, the union of the spiritual and the material, with God's embrace as the wind sweeping over the surface of the formless abyss. In the Old Testament, the Israelites as a whole are sometimes described as the bride;

sometimes the City of Jerusalem itself is pictured as the bride, the harlot to be redeemed as the bride; sometimes a particular person or a prophet, for example, Jeremiah, is depicted as the lover to be raped by God. In the New Testament, Christianity sees reality as united in the one love of God and man, developing this sexual metaphor into the metaphor of marriage of Christ and man, or the Church itself. This Biblical symbolism of the marriage of God with the human believer became a standard feature of literary tradition. In the Divine Comedy, Dante's journey into Paradise is achieved only by the guidance of, or the union with, his lady Beatrice; John Donne renders in his poetry the union of man with God in terms of marriage.

As Jeremy Ingalls points out to reinforce his commentary on the epic tradition, this American epic vision of spiritual metamorphosis is a sort of answer to the question raised by the literal-minded Nicodemus to the symbolic discourse of Christ in the Gospel of John: "The epic question has always been and continues to be the question which, at the midpoint of urban world history, a certain Nicodemus articulated on that evening when he inquired: 'Can a human being be born again?' This was already the intrinsic question nearly two thousand years earlier, in Gilgamesh. It continues to be the motivating question in and beyond Blake's Jerusalem" (47). And in a similar way, these American epics are not the revoking of the epic tradition, but the completion of it.

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