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Melvin E. Lyon

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Hart Crane's  
"The Broken Tower"

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HART CRANE'S  
"THE BROKEN TOWER"**

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## *The Centrality of Hart Crane's "The Broken Tower"*

NO ONE HAS NOTED the extent to which Hart Crane's "The Broken Tower" not only contains many of his major ideas and elements of expression but also gives them culminating expression.<sup>1</sup> Marius Bewley says of the poem that "the statement it makes is more central to Crane's life and his view of poetry than that of any other title in *The Collected Poems*,"<sup>2</sup> but he does not develop the point. Herbert Leibowitz examines some of the recurrent images and clusters of images in Crane's work<sup>3</sup> but sees in them no development and hence no climax. To me it seems that the recurrence of imagery in Crane's work is accompanied by a recurrence of the rational implications of the images<sup>4</sup> and by sporadic movements toward climactic forms. Such forms vary from those which simply sum up a maximum of the multiple (and often antithetical) meanings for an element of expression to those which are the climax of an irregular chronological development. It seems to me that "The Broken Tower" contains more of these climactic forms than any other of Crane's works and thus that it, more than any other of his poems, sums up what he had written earlier and prophesies directions his later work might have taken had he lived longer.

In trying to demonstrate this assertion, I intend, first, to explicate the poem in detail. Next, I will try to show how each of the four principal elements of expression in the poem—the tower (and bells) God, Christ, and the lady—are used in the rest of Crane's work and the extent to which they find characteristic expression in "The Broken Tower." Finally, I intend, by comparing the relationship in "The Broken Tower" between three of these elements of expression with similar relationships in a key group of other works, to show that there is implied in Crane's work as a whole a pattern of psycho-sexual development which also reaches its climax in "The Broken Tower."

# I

Any attempt to relate "The Broken Tower" to Crane's other work must rest upon a reading of the poem. Hence it is necessary to begin discussion with such a reading. "The Broken Tower" is concerned with all three of what Crane considered the three chief values of human life: union with the divine, human love, and poetic creation,<sup>5</sup> though—as always in his work—poetry and human love are viewed as aspects of union with the divine and hence as subordinate to it. The speaker in the poem bemoans the incoherence of his creative and emotional life, which he attributes in part to the disappearance of Christianity's efficacy as a bridge between man and the divine. That fact forces the speaker to undergo on a more basic level than men do in a traditional world the archetypal pattern of human life when it is lived most profoundly, dedicated to the achievement of primary values. The pattern is that of the Sacrifice, who must die in order to live and who is mythologized in the poem as Christ and embodied in the person of the speaker.

The speaker begins by saying that the rope used to ring the bells which "gather . . . God at dawn" (i.e. bring both God and His worshippers into the church for morning Mass) sends away ("dispatches") the speaker as though the bells signified the end of day instead of the beginning (and hence are mourning rather than morning bells). His sense of alienation from the church suggests that for him the Church's period of existence (its day) is finished ("spent") and hence that he must make his way alone, literally, across the lawn of the cathedral, figuratively, across the spiritual area which is supposed to be the province of the Church. He views that journey as a hard one and describes it in Christian terms as a journey from damnation to salvation. His feet are "chill" because, literally, he is wandering across a lawn in the early morning when it is still cold and covered with dew, figuratively because any movement away from hellfire (perhaps literally a night's carousing) feels cool.

The speaker asks the reader, rhetorically, if he has not heard and seen the bells ("that corps / Of shadows") in the tower, which, literally, are still so much in darkness that they seem only shadows to the eye and, figuratively, are—as spiritual messengers of God—insubstantial, like shadows (though they can be personified as hav-



ing "shoulders"). The speaker asks if the reader has not heard and seen these bells launch their music (in "antiphonal" sounds, separate, yet harmonious), literally, before the stars have disappeared in the dawn, figuratively, before the worshippers have entered the "hive" of the church (and thereby been fused with God, as the stars' light was fused with the sun's). The sun catches and hives, as it were, the light of the stars, smaller expressions of its own seemingly greater light, as the church catches and hives the divinity of human beings, smaller expressions of the ultimate divinity of God.

In stanza three the speaker says that the spiritual life and power of the church, and the unified expression of the Absolute which it once embodied, have ended.<sup>6</sup> The church is like a bell-tower from which the bells have torn loose. Spiritual life and power still exist and are still being sent forth to man (the bells still "swing"), but the speaker does not know where such life and power may be received. He does know, however, that they are present in his own poems, which are expressions of personal and painful communication ("Their tongues *engrave*") with the absolute—spiritual experience gained not transcendently but through physical engagement in life ("membrane through marrow"). The speaker, now identified as a poet, speaks of his poems as "long-scattered" (again invoking the imagery of dispersal) and as "broken intervals," suggesting the intermittency of his inspiration, the musical quality of the poems,<sup>7</sup> and the fact that they are not part of one large composition reflecting a unified view of life (exemplified here by the cathedral) but "broken intervals," which have, since their writing, been scattered abroad from his heart (*their* hive). Abruptly, he notes that the writing of his poems has been involuntary—that he is the "sexton slave" of his anarchic inspiration (the "bells").

He calls his poems "oval" because he imagines them to have the form of the oval-shaped tongue-end of the bells which inspired them. Thus he invokes the traditional association of the circle and the sphere with perfection and deity and, more specifically, the idea of a union between man and God. "Encyclicals" reinforces this circular symbolism by meaning as well as derivation.<sup>8</sup> As encyclicals, messages from the Absolute, the speaker's poems should bridge the seeming barrier ("*impasse*") between man and God which men confront as they travel their narrow ways ("canyons") from birth to death. But the poems have failed to break through the barrier; they have simply piled up against it ("banked voices slain"). Changing the figure, the speaker views his poems as like the tower at the be-

ginning of the poem. He compares them to "pagodas" as well as "campaniles," implying that eastern as well as western religions have collapsed. Like these fallen towers, his poems were intended to connect man and god, but, like the music of those other towers after they have ceased to be efficacious, his music has succeeded in evoking only echoes from the barrier. These echoes have bounced back to earth where, figuratively, they lie piled up in terraced heaps.

Just as his poems, even though inspired, entered a world broken into pieces by the church's loss of efficacy and failed to reestablish there the circle of union (or love) between man and God, so he himself entered this broken world, not only to delineate ("trace") this spiritual path in his poetry but also to follow ("trace") it in his own human relationships. But this form of love has proved almost as elusive as the relationship between man and God he sought through his poetry. He has found himself forced to make sudden, desperate choices out of the seeming chaos of existence ("the wind"), which have lasted only a moment and whose significance he does not claim to know. In love, as in poetry, he has achieved only a "long-scattered score / Of broken intervals."

Nonetheless, he has continued to write. But now he wonders if his "word" was allied ("cognate") with the divine "Word," in accord with ("scored / Of": cf. l. 11) the Absolute, symbolized as the sun ("monarch of the air") and personified as a judging ("tribunal") "monarch" whose "thigh" turns ("embronzes") the earth an autumnal yellow-brown. In astrology the thigh is connected with Sagittarius, the Zodiacal sign which rules the year from November 22 to December 21, the last third of autumn. Sagittarius means "the Archer"; in that role, the Absolute also darts ("strikes") His own essential ("crystal") Self, like the Archer's arrows, into the "wounds" which life has caused men, where He becomes Incarnate as the Sacrifice (the "Word") or as poetry (also the "Word"). When Christianity was alive, the pain of these fruitful wounds was alleviated for the narrator (and all men) by the hope of a healing communication with the Absolute (the star's desire to be hived in the sun's ray); the collapse of Christianity (implicitly, the monarch's "thigh" also brings autumn to all human creations) has destroyed the hopeful tension which held these wounds together; they have split ("cleft") asunder and the narrator (and all men) are overcome by despair (comparable to the bells' tearing loose from the tower and producing dissonance instead of harmony).

Even the highest reaches of the awareness which instinct ("blood")—with its tendency to inundate human beings ("encroach-

ments")—gives the speaker cannot tell him whether the Absolute has inspired his poetry. He wonders, doubtfully, if instinct can come close enough to the divine even to ask the question validly, much less receive an answer. Abruptly, then, he wonders (at this nadir of the poem's emotional movement) if the present stirring of imaginative power he feels has been evoked not by the divine but by a woman's human sweetness.

Through the beating of this woman's pulse, to which his, figuratively, beats in harmony<sup>9</sup> like a second bell, the speaker "hear[s]" (figuratively again) an "angelus," a morning ringing of church bells (the speaker's night has turned to day) to announce the Incarnation and urge the worshipper to pray to Mary, who made it possible. That is, the love between himself and the lady has healed his inner tensions and conflict, so that now what his chest contains ("what I hold")—i.e., his heart, the source of love and poetry—is "healed" of its wounds, "original," in the sense of being reborn, and "pure," because it is free from resentments and hostilities and hence innocent again.

Besides stirring "latent" imaginative "power," the lady's human sweetness also "builds . . . within" the speaker a new tower of connection, one not made of stone (as the church tower was).<sup>10</sup> The speaker now says that man can never bring about union with God by means of a stone tower. But neither is this new tower built upon instinct ("blood"); it is a tower created in him by the lady's "sweet[ness]" and by their love, which is physical *and* spiritual (love is simultaneously a natural response to "sweet mortality" and a "visionary company"). Such a tower is not a structure of piled stones but like a slipping of pebbles into a blue lake. "Pebbles" seem to be epiphanies of the love the speaker feels (cf., the "bright stones" of love, contrasted with "this fixed stone of lust," in "Possessions"). Paralleling "slip / Of pebbles," "visible wings of silence" suggests that the lake is also the sky and that both are metaphors for the highest reaches of man's spirit, those heights at which he can make contact with the divine (can "jacket heaven"). This new tower is like the silent circles which move outward from the point where the pebbles enter the lake ("sown" suggests planting seeds that will grow and bear harvest); its growing height is their enlarging circumference, encompassing more and more of the speaker's total being in a new integration on the highest, most spiritual level of his being. Thus the pebbles are like the bells in the broken tower, the source of power and therefore the center of the tower. Like them, they are the source of a subtle integrating influence (there

imaged as sound, here as circles in water). Here, however, they are not tearing loose from a tower but creating one around themselves.

The speaker traces the integrating influence of these circles as the lower arc of one touches the heart, the source of natural human love (the "matrix" of the gem, not the gem itself) and turns it upward. At the same time, the higher arc of another circle touches the eye of vision—focused upon the pure absolute—and turns it downward to perceive and sanctify the speaker's personal spiritual heights ("shrines the quiet lake" or sky) and thereby assist from above, as it were, the building of that tower which human love began. The largeness, elevation, and harmony of spirit thus achieved by the speaker through the creation of the new tower with which he identifies himself ("decorum" suggests that these qualities are in accord with the nature of ultimate reality) now influence the lady—at once spiritually and sexually—as the light and rain of the outer sky ("shower") affect the earth. They reach to the center of her being and draw her love to him and to his spiritual heights as light and rain lift the green and growing things of the earth to the sky. By speaking of "that sky" and "her earth" the speaker assimilates both the human love of the man and the woman, and the spiritual heights which that love has achieved, to basic natural phenomena and thus, through metaphor, suggests the union of man and nature—and also, to some extent, the realization in human, natural, and spiritual terms of that circle of union which binds nature, man, and God into one.

## II

Of the principal elements of expression in "The Broken Tower," the tower gives the poem its title. There are two towers in the poem: the stone tower at the beginning, which is breaking down, and the psychological tower at the end, which is being built. In Crane's poetry as a whole the image<sup>11</sup> has two sets of antithetical meanings closely related to these two towers: on the one hand, the tower is associated with time and eternity; on the other, with separation and union. In the final sentence of the essay, "General Aims and Theories" (1925), when Crane says, "Language has built towers and bridges, but itself is inevitably as fluid as always,"<sup>12</sup> he suggests that an intrinsic tendency in language causes particular literary works of art to crystallize out of its permanently fluid reality. Such crystallizations pay for their solidity of form by being more bound in time than language itself is. In the poem "The Return" (1926-1927), when the speaker says that "the sea raised up a campanile"—a breaker, a tower of water—he suggests, similarly, that the sea is a permanently fluid reality which creates particular time-bound towers out of itself. Here, however, the tower soon collapses back into the sea. This fact, together with its being called a "campanile"—a bell-tower which tells the time—identifies this tower as a symbol not only of time but specifically of mutability. Later in the poem the speaker identifies himself with the wave, thereby suggesting that the sea symbolizes the flux of Nature, out of which the towers of individual human lives emerge and to which they inevitably return. In both passages, the tower suggests the mutable time-bound crystallizing out of a more permanent fluid reality.

By implication, this process of crystallization is also one of separation. Such separation, and the means of overcoming it, are suggested in "Recitative" (1923), when (in stanzas five and following) the speaker says to his auditor: let a gulf be placed between us and we be raised to the tops of steel towers (skyscrapers) which permit us no communication. Even then, when we have reached ultimate separation (the speaker continues), you can leave your tower; a bridge exists between us if only you desire enough to use it. This bridge the speaker compares, by implication, to the union created by ringing bells: when the bells are in harmony, their separate sounds fuse into one music, as if time were transformed into eter-

nity. So, the speaker implies, may he and his interlocutor, though physically separate, realize a spiritual union. Here, as in "The Return," time and bells are connected with the tower image. But now, though the tower still stands for separation, the bells are viewed as capable, through their music, of transforming time into eternity and therefore of serving as an image of love's power to transcend separation and bring about union.

More frequently Crane suggests such union by relating the tower to something in nature and thereby invoking the interconnectedness of natural things.<sup>13</sup> He does this most often by using the tree as a tower image. Indeed, the tree is his most frequently used tower image<sup>14</sup>—even though it is explicitly associated with a tower only once, in "Royal Palm" (1926), where the palm is called a "*tower of whispered light*" [*italics mine*]. Like the other tower images in Crane's work, the tree suggests mutability. But unlike most others, it suggests also that the tower's crystallization out of its natural source, the earth, is stimulated and directed by an external force, here that of the sun, toward which the growth of the tree is directed. The most extreme instance of the sun's playing this role also appears in "Royal Palm," where the palm is called "the sun's most gracious anchorite" and is said to climb up to the sun, "as by communings, year on year / Uneaten of the earth or aught earth holds . . . / Forever fruitless . . . / . . . launched above / Mortality." In thus associating the sun with immortality and making the palm's relationship to it that of an "anchorite," Crane suggests that the sun symbolizes divinity. The speaker in the poem says that the relationship of the palm to that sun is so intense that the tree transcends the earth, *and* time, and finds immortality not indirectly, through its fruitfulness (like other things in nature), but directly, by becoming one with the divine while still in nature.

This desire to transcend the material world is a strong and recurrent strain in Crane's work. It is accompanied, and opposed, however, by an even more pervasive—and ultimately stronger—tendency to believe that earthly union with the divine is best achieved by man through union with the deity as immanent rather than transcendent.<sup>15</sup> This tendency is implied in "Pastorale" (1921) when Crane describes "that ritual of sun and leaves / The sun drew out," which "ends in this latter muffled / Bronze and brass." As in "Royal Palm" so here the sun determines the growth of the tree; their relationship is again described by a religious term ("ritual"). But now the tree remains related to the earth as well as being related to the sun. Here, then, the tree-tower image becomes a symbol of union

rather than of separation: the tree is a bridge as well as a tower. And towers and bridges are no longer antithetical.<sup>16</sup>

Both of these conceptions appear in another aspect of the image: the tendency for a human being to be closely associated or even identified with a tree.<sup>17</sup> In "Garden Abstract" (1920), for example, the heroine "comes to dream herself" a tree. In "The Mermen" (1927), the association is more subtle. Christ's cross is implicitly related to the tree by means of the epigraph (from "King Lear"): "And if / Thy banished trunk be found in our dominions—" In the poem the "mermen" are modern men, who are said to live under the sea because their lives are controlled by the flux of nature (symbolized—as in "The Return"—by the sea) rather than by some discipline inspired by God or created by man. Such a discipline is a kind of tower or tree (as the epigraph suggests), which raises men, if only momentarily, above nature and closer to the divine. The greatest such tower-tree has been the Cross (the "trunk" of the epigraph); it alone among such disciplines has, the speaker says, "flown the wave"—succeeded in truly raising men above nature. Now, however, it too has lost that power, and men are again at the mercy of the flux. Yet some men still cherish what remains of the life which the Cross, as a unifying tower-tree, created. These remains consist partly of "moidores of spent grace": still precious remnants of that power to redeem, now exhausted ("spent"), which Christ achieved by spending himself in love. ("Moidores" are gold coins; "gold" usually connotes love in Crane's work.<sup>18</sup> The circularity of the coins and their function in relation to the cross—that of communicating its redemptive power to man—suggest that the moidores and the Cross parallel the bells and skyscraper of "Recitative.") The Cross itself also remains as a discipline, though not a viable one. Upon it there stands even now the imprint of the face of Christ, glowing faintly ("agleam") with the grace which His association with God (the sun) gave Him. Again, a human being (here, Jesus) is identified with a tree. And again, as in "Royal Palm," a transcendent ideal is praised, but with the difference that here the ideal is not so extreme: the Cross, unlike the palm, is both fruitful and subject to mortality.

The identification of a human being with a tree reaches its ultimate expression at the end of "The Dance" (1926). There the speaker tells Maquokeeta, "Now is the strong prayer folded in thine arms, / The serpent with the eagle in the boughs." The Indian is a tree within whose boughs time and space are united. Such a union can take place only in Eternity: hence Maquokeeta has become

part of Eternity. Eternity (the sky, the home of the sun) is a tree, in whose boughs time and space are united. Although it is not made explicit, this tree would seem to be as cut off from the earth as the palm in "Royal Palm." However, when the speaker asks Maquokeeta in the previous stanza, "And are her [Pocahontas'] perfect brows to thine?" he suggests that, unlike the palm, Maquokeeta continues to have an influence on the earth and therefore a connection with it. Here too, then, the tower-tree is a bridge, a symbol of union between man and God, time and eternity.

This is the ultimate development of the tower image. At least part of its psychological origin is suggested by considering together two other poems, an early version of "Garden Abstract" (1920) and "The Mango Tree" (1926). The first is quoted by Brom Weber:

The apple on its bough  
Is my desire,—  
Shining suspension,  
Mimic of the sun.

The bough has caught my breath up,  
And its leaves  
Pulse with their possession  
As they mock it.  
I am a prisoner of the tree  
And its green fingers.

Like scimitars  
The green leaves shine.  
Like serpent tongues they twine  
Around the bough,  
Around the fruit.

Weber says of the poem that it "is an early statement of one of Crane's major themes, the power and ecstasy of desire; the symbolism is obviously sexual in nature. Probably Crane became somewhat uncomfortable at the homosexual implications of the poem; in any case, its phallic symbolism had been called to his attention by a friend who read it. The final version of 'Garden Abstract' . . . had been radically revised."<sup>19</sup>

Again, a human being, this time the speaker, is associated closely with a tree. Here the association is not a completely happy one: the speaker feels like a prisoner. Here, too, the tree (unlike that in "Royal Palm") is fruitful. Indeed, the primary object of the speaker's desire is its fruit—in this instance, an apple. By means of



the apple the tree is associated with the sun, here, as often in Crane's work ("Royal Palm" is another example), a symbol for the divine. When the speaker says that the apple is a "mimic of the sun," he seems to suggest that the apple is an imitation of the divine and hence that man's desire for it is an imitation, an inferior expression—even a parody—of man's desire for God. The association of the apple and the sun is based partly on the circular or spherical shape (or apparent shape) of each, the circle and sphere being an even more pervasive symbol in Crane for the divine than is the sun.<sup>20</sup> The association is also based upon the traditional identification of the apple as the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge which Adam and Eve ate at the Fall. The forbidden nature of that fruit seems echoed here in the speaker's projection of his desire onto the leaves of the tree, which are said to be "serpent tongues" which "twine / . . . / Around the fruit." "Serpent" makes the Edenic allusion definite, and suggests that the speaker's desire is, by Judaeo-Christian standards, an evil one.

This tree is the opposite of the "Royal Palm": as the palm was cut off from the earth, so this tree is apparently cut off from the sun and offers a substitute for it which, by implication, is opposed to the divinity symbolized by the sun. Six years later similar symbolism appears in connection with a specific tree in "The Mango Tree." In a letter written at the time he was composing the poem, Crane says, "I'm convinced that the Mango tree was the original Eden apple tree."<sup>21</sup> In the poem the speaker calls the tree a "sun-heap," its fruit, "ripe apple-lanterns," its limbs, "golden boughs." The first image suggests that the tree is an expression of the sun and therefore of the divine; the second, that the fruit of the tree also contains light ("recondite lightnings") and therefore divinity. (This fruit, therefore, parallels the "moidores" of "The Mermen," both in its symbolic shape and color and in its function, and is also related to the bells of "Recitative.") The "golden boughs" image (probably Virgilian) emphasizes the connection of the tree with divinity by its use of "gold," which suggests sunlight, but it is also Crane's familiar symbol for love. Thus love would seem to be the essence of divinity and that light which is contained in the fruit of the tree and communicated by it.

The association of the speaker's love with the Fall in the early version of "Garden Abstract" has here (through the passage in Crane's letter and the allusion to our "great Great-grandmother" Eve in the poem) becomes an association of *all* human love with the Fall. Now, however, that love, although originally forbidden, is

not evil but divine, the means whereby all men can enjoy a measure of divinity. The Fall was therefore fortunate ("like Christmas"). Moreover, when the speaker says that these "ripe apple-lanterns gush history, recondite lightnings, / irised," he suggests that the divine love which men gained illegal access to by means of the Fall is the source and stimulus for history, appearing as a force both powerful and destructive ("lightnings"), but directed ultimately by the aim of reconciling man with God and perhaps with himself ("irised," suggesting the rainbow God gave man after the Flood as a pledge of peace). Since the Fall, therefore, love, though it has been the means whereby God has punished men, has been more important as the means whereby He has brought them closer to Himself. At the end of the poem the speaker begins to address all men as they go with baskets to gather love but then abruptly turns to his companion and urges her to come with him and do as the others are doing.<sup>22</sup>

Most of these meanings for the tower appear in some way in "The Broken Tower." The title seems to refer to the first tower in the poem, which both external<sup>23</sup> and internal evidence makes clear is literally a cathedral. Figuratively, it represents the whole Christian vision of life and hence Christianity's attempt to bridge the gap between God and man, as the speaker suggests later when he says that "not stone can jacket heaven." A stone tower is separate from the earth; it is also incapable of reaching (and encompassing) the sun. The first line of the poem suggests that this bridge is still viable for many people, but the rest of the stanza makes it clear that it is not so for the speaker. Stanza three suggests that in general this tower has ceased to be viable; stanza four hints that it is but one of many human bridges to the divine which have failed. As a bridge the tower is a symbol of union, but as one of many such bridges it isolates its adherents from those of other bridges and thus is a symbol of separation. Similarly, as a place where God is gathered (stanza one, line one) it symbolizes eternity, but as a "broken tower," a tower whose viability is ended, it is subject to mutability like the sea towers in "The Return" or the Cross in "The Mermen." The "broken tower" thus begins as a symbol of union and eternity but proves in the course of the poem to be primarily an expression of separation and mutability.

The bells are also familiar. Like the coins in "The Mermen" and the fruit in "Garden Abstract" and "The Mango Tree," they are the means whereby the force expressed in the tower (or tree) is made immediately accessible to man. That force in "The Mango

Tree" is divine. But here a particular expression ("tower") of that force has ceased to be viable, and the bells, instead of creating harmony in multiplicity and thereby symbolizing eternity (as they do in "Recitative") have broken free from their tower and swing unordered and uncontrolled in wild dissonance. The speaker has lost all sense of identification with the tower of Christianity. But he is still the "slave," though now unwillingly, of the bells of divine inspiration, subject to the agony which their anarchy produces. His poems are only "broken intervals" in the "broken world" of the "broken tower."

But there is a second tower in the poem, not so important as the broken tower (note the title) but promising to be more important in the future. Initially it is significant primarily for the speaker and the lady. It is a new kind of tower, psychological and spiritual rather than external and material, whose primary function is to unite a man and woman. Yet when the speaker contrasts it with the broken tower by saying that "not stone can jacket heaven," his implication is that perhaps this second tower *can* "jacket heaven," can build a bridge between man and God which will be more adequate than stone towers because it transcends the earth not by separating itself from it but by identifying with it. Critics have noted the phallic implications of this new tower in the phrases "swells a tower" and "lifts love in its shower,"<sup>24</sup> implications which relate it to the phallicism of the early version of "Garden Abstract." Again, the speaker identifies with the tree-tower image. Now, however, he does so not as a prisoner nor as a person desiring the tree, but as the tree desiring something outside itself. In addition, there is now no connotation of the evil or forbidden in the imagery connected with love. This tower, therefore, has the opposite movement from the broken tower. At first it seems to be a purely personal tower in time, but by the end of the poem it has become associated with union and with eternity. As in the early version of "Garden Abstract" this association is symbolized by the circle, in this case by the speaker's characterization of the new tower as being like "visible wings of silence sown / In azure circles." The straight line of the tower thus proves to be part of an arc of the circle which comprehends the bridge and symbolizes Crane's fundamental sense of reality as a cosmos.

As a symbol of time lost in eternity, and of man become a part of God after death, the culminating expression of the tower image is the "tree" of eternity at the end of "The Dance" in *The Bridge*. But in its central emphasis upon time becoming eternity and man

becoming one with God *in life*, the image reaches its culmination in "The Broken Tower." In both cases the tower-tree is neither a physical tree nor made of metal or stone; it is a psychological-spiritual tower.

At the heart of Crane's cosmos is a deity, mentioned twice in "The Broken Tower," once as "God," once as "that tribunal monarch of the air." In both cases the deity is personified and masculinized. Mention of the "cathedral" in line three suggests that "God" is the Judaeo-Christian deity. The problem is whether the "tribunal monarch" is the same deity. It does not seem to be. The first four stanzas of the poem concern the disintegration of the faith represented by the cathedral; stanza four implies that all religious faiths are subject to such disintegration: the conclusion would seem to be that "God" is only one conception of a deity that is greater than this and all other particular conceptions of himself.

Here, as in Crane's other poems, this deity is to be found primarily above, in the air or the sky. He is the "tribunal monarch of the air." Similar associations appear in "The Air Plant" (1927) and "The Hurricane" (1927). In the former, the air plant is said to be "pulmonary to the wind" and to "shed" only "the air's thin talk." The speaker also calls it "Angelic Dynamo! Ventriloquist of the Blue!" The capitalization of "Blue," together with the adjective "Angelic," suggests that the speaker is using "air" and "wind" as metaphors for deity.<sup>25</sup> (The plant itself seems to be a metaphor for the inspired poet or prophet.) The identification of "Blue" with "air" and "wind" suggests that this deity is also to be associated with the sky. In "The Broken Tower," too, He seems to be associated with the sky (l. 39) and ultimately with the wind (l. 19) as part of the air (l. 22).

Yet He is not identified with these elements; He is their "monarch." When the speaker says that this monarch's "thigh embronzes earth," he seems to mean that the personified deity's "thigh" turns the earth to bronze, the color of autumn. The "tribunal monarch of the air" thus seems to be the sun. This is another example of that association between the sun and divinity already noted in "Royal Palm," "Garden Abstract," and "The Mango Tree." Even more explicit than the examples already cited are those in "Cape Hatteras," where Crane uses the convention of capitalizing the deity's name to associate Him with the sun when the speaker calls the airplanes a "Sunward Escadrille," and in "The Cloud Juggler," where the speaker implicitly identifies the apostrophized "Cloud Juggler" as the deity<sup>26</sup> in addressing Him as "O Sun."

In "The Broken Tower" the image of the sun serves to link the "God" of the first stanza with the "tribunal monarch." When, at the end of stanza two, the speaker says, "The stars are caught and hived in the sun's ray," he seems to be recalling that gathering of worshippers into the church which he partly implies in line one when he says that "the bell-rope . . . gathers God at dawn." Thus the sun symbolizes both God and ultimate Deity and thereby suggests that, though the two are not the same, they cannot be completely dissociated either.

Indeed, though Crane often uses terms like "Word" or "Name" to refer to his deity,<sup>27</sup> he also frequently uses the Judaeo-Christian name, as in "The Hurricane," where he addresses the hurricane as "Lord God." In this poem the traditional term is particularly appropriate because the hurricane is characterized as having the qualities of force and violence often associated with the Judaeo-Christian God,<sup>28</sup> especially in the Old Testament. Yet Crane usually attributes such qualities to the deity. In the "Ave Maria" (1926) section of "The Bridge," for example, in what is Crane's best and fullest account of his sense of the nature of deity and His relationship to man, Columbus apostrophizes the Judaeo-Christian God as searching "Cruelly with love thy parable of man" and calls Him "Inquisitor" and "Hand of Fire." The same purgative conception of deity appears in the non-Christian remainder of the poem: God loves man but manifests that love by making man suffer in order to test his faith and dedication.<sup>29</sup> In "The Broken Tower" the implied sternness and austerity of the "tribunal monarch" are Hebraic in quality. Yet in this case neither the expression of divinity as "God" nor its association with the sky and the sun reach their culminating expression in this poem. In the case of these elements the situation is just the opposite of that of the tower. "God" perhaps reaches its culminating expression in "The Hurricane," where the Judaeo-Christian name is translated into naturist terms in becoming the immanent spiritual force which animates the hurricane. In "The Broken Tower," "God" is still the Judaeo-Christian tradition's limited and outworn conception of divinity. In the case of the sky, and especially the sun, the speaker's concern with the lady is represented as a turning aside from "that tribunal monarch," who the speaker feels has forsaken him. Union with the lady involves a lifting "down" of "the eye" of vision<sup>30</sup> from the sun in the sky to the inner heaven of the speaker's own spirit and the lady. Yet even as he turns aside from deity, the speaker implies that He is still his ultimate goal by suggesting that through the experience of human

love he will reach an elevation of spirit which will enable him at last to encompass and unite with "that tribunal monarch." The turning aside is only for the moment. Moreover the imagery for expressing this final goal apparently also remains the same, for the speaker's final account of the rapport between the lady and himself is expressed in the imagery of earth and sky.

God as a purgative "Hand of Fire" appears in "The Broken Tower" initially only by implication, in the speaker's identification with Christ in the first stanza, when he says that "the bell-rope . . . / Dispatches me . . . / . . . to wander the cathedral lawn / From pit to crucifix." If a "crucifix" is life's goal, then suffering must be the essence of life. Later in the poem the speaker views God as the ultimate source of his suffering; he says that the divine inspiration figured by the bells' tongues "engrave" his poems into his flesh, "membrane through marrow." This idea of the pervasiveness and importance of suffering appears throughout Crane's work. His primary theme is that to gain the highest values, artistic creation (e.g. "Legend"), human love ("Possessions"), and mystical union ("Atlantis"), man must embrace life and the suffering it inevitably involves.<sup>31</sup> Frequently, as in "The Broken Tower," this theme is expressed by some form of allusion to Christ, who for Crane is essentially the crucified one. In this role He has two aspects. As the historical Christ of traditional Christianity, He seems to Crane to be dead as an important force in modern life. Yet, although in "The Mermen" (the only poem in which Crane is concerned solely with Christ) the speaker asserts that Christianity's viability is at an end, he adds that he himself still prefers the Cross to both "the idols of Futurity" and the scientific "engines" and exotic religions ("Buddhas") of the present. In other poems this affection for Christ finds renewed viability in the conception of Him as an exemplification of the paradoxical principle that man must die in order to live and hence as an expression of the recurrent Sacrifice figure of religion.<sup>32</sup> The supreme relevance of Christ to human life in this second aspect of his role as the crucified one appears in "The Bridge." There, though Christ appears as the historical Jesus in "Ave Maria," in the poem as a whole He is subordinate to Maquokeeta, the Indian image of the Sacrifice figure, who undergoes death by fire in "The Dance," is translated to the evening star, and there continues, through his sacrificial blood, to have redemptive efficacy (he "bleeds infinity" in "Atlantis").

Before considering other poems in which Christ is alluded to, it is necessary to examine one striking and important prose passage

in Crane's work where Christ does not appear as the crucified one. In a letter written in 1924 concerning the love relationship which was the basis for the "Voyages" sequence, Crane wrote, ". . . It will take many letters to let you know what I mean (for myself, at least) when I say that I have seen the Word made Flesh. I mean nothing less, and I know now that there is such a thing as indestructibility. In the deepest sense, where flesh became transformed through intensity of response to counter-response, where sex was beaten out, where a purity of joy was reached that included tears . . . . I think the sea has thrown itself upon me and been answered, at least in part, and I believe I am a little changed—not essentially, but changed and transubstantiated as anyone is who has asked a question and been answered."<sup>33</sup>

In this letter "the Word made Flesh" and "transubstantiated" are terms from traditional Christianity used to express Crane's heterodox conception of Christ as an image of the divinity potential in every man. In the case of Crane and his lover, Crane asserts that their love has been strong enough to make explicit in their flesh this Word implicit in all flesh: the lover (or the lovers) has become Christ. (This idea that Christ is to be realized through and in the flesh is characteristic of Crane. Usually, however, Christ is the image not only of love but also of the suffering which love involves.) The dualistic implications here suggest Crane's early Platonism, and, behind that, the Christian Science he had been taught as a boy by his mother. Christian Science asserts that, ultimately, only spiritual experience has either value or validity, and hence that pantheism is wholly false.<sup>34</sup> By 1919 Crane had rejected Christian Science because of this "total denial of the animal and organic world"<sup>35</sup> and was asserting that "the true idea of God" ("the only thing that can give happiness") must be found in "the identification of yourself with *all of life*" and the acceptance of "*everything . . . as it comes.*"<sup>36</sup> After this time these attitudes dominate his work. Dualism and anti-physicality continue to appear, but on the whole he moves toward a pantheistic monism in which the divine is found not only through but in the flesh. This tendency has been noted in connection with his usual use of the tree as a symbol of connection as well as separation. It appears also in his treatment of God, Christ, and the lady. Such acceptance of experience necessarily involved an acceptance of suffering, an attitude that also ran counter to the Christianity of his boyhood. The only kind of suffering which Christian Science acknowledges to have value is that involved in turning away from belief in matter to

belief that spirit alone is real,<sup>37</sup> and even that suffering is ultimately illusion. The "scientific explanation" of Christ's atonement, Mary Baker Eddy says, "is, that suffering is an error of sinful sense which Truth destroys." Hence, though Jesus, the man, suffered—because of other men's sins—"the eternal Christ, his [Jesus'] spiritual selfhood, never suffered."<sup>38</sup> By contrast, Crane wrote his mother in 1923 that "suffering is a real purification, and the worst thing I have always had to say against Christian Science is that it wilfully avoided suffering, without a certain measure of which any true happiness cannot be fully realized."<sup>39</sup>

This attitude is reflected in the images for love which appear in Crane's work. Love is associated with a fire that burns (e.g., "Hand of Fire," used to characterize God's love) or, more specifically alluding to Christ, with wounds and flowing blood. ("Smoke" often suggests what remains when love has passed: so Crane writes in "Atlantis" [1926] of "smoking pyres of love and death.") Both kinds of images appear in "Legend" and "Possessions," a fact which suggests that, although Christ is not mentioned directly in either poem, He is implicitly present in both.<sup>40</sup> In poems in which He is clearly present, "The Mermen," "Lachrymae Christi," "The Bridge," and "The Broken Tower," the same kind of images are used, and He appears primarily as the crucified one. In "The Bridge," as has already been mentioned, He is portrayed as one expression of the Sacrifice figure principally manifested in the Indian Maquokeeta, who, translated to the evening star, is said still to "bleed . . . infinity." When the speaker adds that this blood "ensanguine[s]" the cables of the bridge, he suggests that, for those who undergo the suffering ("pyres of love and death") that a life devoted to love involves, the bridge is an efficacious means of connecting man and deity.

The poem concerning Christ most closely related to "The Broken Tower" is one written earlier than either "The Mermen" or "The Bridge," "Lachrymae Christi" (1924).<sup>41</sup> Here both fire and blood are used explicitly and extensively in connection with Christ. "Thy Nazarene and tinder eyes" suggests how easily Christ's eyes, like tinder, break into the flame of love; "Thine eyes / And their undimming lattices of flame" suggests how constantly love flames forth from His eyes to revive the world and recover spring. When the speaker asks Christ to "lean long from sable, slender boughs, / Unstanced and luminous" (like Maquokeeta on his tree-star of eternity), the image of fire as love ("luminous") merges with the imagery of blood as sacrificial love ("unstanced"). At the end of the poem, the speaker bids Christ "Lift up in lilac-emerald breath



the grail / Of earth again— / Thy face / From charred and riven stakes, O / Dionysus, Thy / Unmangled target smile." It is Christ who brings back the green world of spring. This world—this grail of earth—is His own face, revived once again, as it is every year, from the annual sacrificial death He undergoes in autumn. Moreover, though each year that face is mangled by the changing seasons, each spring it is reborn, "unmangled" and perfect, its beauty ("smile") once again subject to (the "target" for) those forces of destruction which annually bring about its death. Here this face is not only that of Christ, but also of Dionysius, another god of death and resurrection. The death is one by fire as well as crucifixion (or some related means). The suggestion is that Christ is but one version of the Sacrifice,<sup>42</sup> just as "God" is but one expression of the "Word." Here, moreover, the archetype itself is viewed in Frazerian terms as a personification of the cycle of the seasons: the realm of the spirit (the sacrifice) is viewed in terms of immanence rather than transcendence.

In "The Broken Tower" the dead historical Christ of "The Mermen" is present, by implication, in the image of the broken tower. Central to the poem, however, is not this Christ but the ever-living Sacrifice of "The Bridge" and especially "Lachrymae Christi." In "The Bridge" the speaker again and again undergoes the sacrificial death required to find life, but Christ is never explicitly mentioned and is only once alluded to. In "The Broken Tower," though Christ is not explicitly mentioned either, several clear allusions serve to make him central to the poem. In the first stanza the speaker views his own life as a sacrificial movement "from pit to crucifix": he sees himself as Christ or Christlike. This obvious allusion establishes a basic connection between this poem and "Lachrymae Christi."

But there are also important differences between the two poems. In "The Broken Tower" no Sacrifice figure other than Christ appears. The speaker in describing his suffering uses the imagery of "wounds" but not that of fire; he refers to the healing he undergoes through the lady's influence as an "angelus," a specifically Christian term. But the principal difference is that in "Lachrymae Christi" Christ is Narcissus and loves the growing green vegetation of the earth as His own image; in "The Broken Tower" He loves it as a woman. This transformation of the "grail" of earth of "Lachrymae Christi" into a female figure means that the Christ figure here is a radical departure from the Biblical Christ. In "Lachrymae Christi" Christ is associated with Dionysius and with nature; in "The

Broken Tower" He is the only Sacrifice figure, but he is still associated with nature and now consummates sexual love with a woman.<sup>43</sup> Thus, though "The Broken Tower" emphasizes Christ more than "Lachrymae Christi" (or "The Bridge"), it is a Christ who has become wholly assimilated to a naturist interpretation of the Sacrifice.

Thus the use of Christ in Crane's work reaches its culminating expression in "The Broken Tower." It is not so clear, however, that the Sacrifice figure does so. The dominant tendency of the figure is toward abstract expression or toward some naturalistic embodiment, such as Maquokeeta. But neither of these is wholly adequate to the role the figure plays in Crane's poetry. The former is difficult to identify with a human being; the latter is too much a purely personal creation by the poet to have both the individualized and mythic quality that Pocahontas, for example, has. Perhaps these are the reasons why, in "The Broken Tower," the figure of Christ appears but is universalized by having its individualizing qualities deemphasized. The name Christ is never mentioned, and the three allusions to Him (though two are quite specific) are infrequent enough so that other relevant elements, especially the association with the lady and the connection with the sky, partially generalize as well as "naturize" the particular image. Perhaps there could not have been a better way than this of presenting the Sacrifice as a human being. Certainly Crane's figure is more credible than D. H. Lawrence's comparable figure in *The Man Who Died*.

One final aspect of the poem relevant to Christ should be noted. It has already been mentioned that Christ and the Sacrifice are central in Crane's poetry because they embody his most pervasive theme, that to gain life one must lose it, especially in the service of love.<sup>44</sup> This theme also provides at least part of the pattern of movement in many of Crane's major poems: "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," "Voyages," "The Bridge," and "The Broken Tower." Geometrically, it may be represented roughly as a falling and rising horizontal curve or semicircle (∪). In "The Broken Tower," though the speaker views his life in the first stanza as a movement "from pit to crucifix," the movement of the poem as a whole is approximately that of the curve just described: figuratively, the speaker gradually moves downward toward greater suffering, the nadir being reached when he says that his Christlike wounds,<sup>45</sup> "pledged once to hope," have been "cleft to despair." Then, in the following stanza the movement abruptly turns upward at the mention of the lady "whose sweet mortality stirs latent

power." The rest of the poem completes that upward movement.

The lady is the fourth principal element in "The Broken Tower." Viewed in terms of the biographical context of the poem, she was an actual person.<sup>46</sup> In terms of Crane's poetry, however, she is part of an important pattern involving woman images. This pattern involves Crane's three most ambitious poems (besides "The Broken Tower"), "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen," "Voyages," and "The Bridge," and two minor works, "The Bather" and "The Return." In "The Bathers" (1917), one of the three earliest poems included in the *Collected Poems*, the speaker, after presenting an imagistic picture of "two ivory women by a milky sea," denies "that Venus shot through foam to light" and asserts that instead "she came in such still water [as the two women are standing by], and so nursed / In Silence, beauty blessed and beauty cursed." Venus is identified with beauty, associated here with quiet and silence rather than violence, and said to be both a blessing and a curse. In "Faustus and Helen" (1923) a Platonic conception of "abstract" beauty<sup>47</sup> is also embodied in a figure from classical myth, this time not Venus but Helen, a more human figure, though still with strong elemental associations. Here she is associated not with the sea but the air—"the hiatus / That winks above" "the body of the world";<sup>48</sup> and instead of resting in the silence of an imaged vision she is incarnated in a twentieth-century girl for whom the poet, "Faustus," feels love and desire. Calling her, in part two, the "siren" of the jazz music on a roof-garden, he urges, "Let us take her on the incandescent wax," suggesting that we of the twentieth century should first accept this jazz-age flapper as our embodiment of love and beauty and then consummate our love for her<sup>49</sup> (the "marriage" referred to in the title). In Part III, the speaker tests this marriage by juxtaposing it against war's destructive ugliness and death.<sup>50</sup> The antithesis decreases when he reminds us in stanza five that the Trojan War and the Fall of Troy were occasioned by Helen. Having thus shown that beauty and the love it inspires "curse" (as the speaker in "The Bathers" said), he shows how they "bless" even more by making destruction bearable and giving men an incentive to continue living. Praising those who sing of the life they spend for love (those who "share with us . . . / The substance . . . spent beyond repair / For golden, or the shadow of gold hair"), he asks us to praise the world of time where men must suffer in striving for that absolute beauty and love which, in that world, can be achieved fully only in the imagination.

"Voyages" returns to "The Bathers" in presenting the sea and Venus. In "Voyages II" (1924) the sea itself has become a female image ("a wink") of Eternity. In what is said to be her major role in the universe, that of a pitiless judge ("The sceptred terror of whose sessions rends / As her demeanors motion well or ill"), this figure is wholly unlike Helen. The emphasis in the poem, however, is upon the fact that she spares from such severity "the pieties of lovers' hands." "Pieties" suggests that love is holy. When the speaker says of the sea that "her undinal vast belly moonward bends," he suggests that this female figure is also voluptuous—and hence that, in her, holiness and voluptuousness are one. In this respect she is like Helen in "Faustus and Helen," though, unlike Helen, she is a natural element<sup>51</sup> rather than a human embodiment of an abstraction. Another difference is that here the focus is not upon her as an object of love, as was the case with Helen, but upon her power to love, implied when the speaker says that she exempts lovers from her usual severity. When he adds that the consummation of human love "complete[s] the dark confessions her veins spell," he suggests that her love is the source and perhaps the cause of human love and, more important, that her love finds its ultimate expression in such consummation. These various aspects of strength and majesty, voluptuousness in herself and sympathy for those in whom she incites love, makes this female personification of the sea primarily a protective, maternal force. Later, in "The Return," this maternity becomes explicit when the speaker says "that breakers spouted, sheared / Back into bosom—me—her, into natal power."

This female personification of a natural element is very different from the feminized abstract ideal which appeared in "The Bathers" and "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen." At this point the elemental personification is much less fully human than the personification of the ideal was. The former, nonetheless, manifests clearly that tendency in Crane already noted to find increasingly the ideal immanent in nature rather than transcending it.

In "Voyages VI," the final poem of the "Voyages" sequence, a classical figure again appears. In this poem, love having failed, the speaker has become a "derelict" in the ocean streams, yet a derelict who remains essentially at one with those streams because, like them, he derives from god and moves toward Him as a goal. (God is symbolized here by the sky and especially by the sun, the source of resurrection [the fiery "harbor of the phoenix' breast"].) The speaker hopes that his oneness with the ocean's tides will lead

Venus,<sup>52</sup> the "loured goddess," to use for his good the power which god ("Creation") gave her, when she rose from the sea, to keep His promise ("covenant") that He would give man His love ("white echo") forever (—a promise comparable to that Biblical promise He gave after the Flood, when he assured man through the rainbow that He would never destroy him by water again). In the speaker's case, the destructive forces of nature *have* ended his earthly love (the oar), but god's and Venus's promise comes to him as a compensation for his loss.<sup>53</sup> Here Venus seems to function as the mediating agent of God's love for man.

The analysis thus far suggests a pattern in the most significant appearances of the woman figure in Crane's work: (1) an intangible "spiritual" reality is (2) associated with a natural element and (3) given a mythological and/or human embodiment in which either the natural element or its embodiment may be feminine or are talked about as if they were feminine. In "The Bridge" this pattern is fully realized. Bernice Slote calls the spiritual reality there the "life-force,"<sup>54</sup> a less Platonic, more immanent ideal than beauty in "Faustus and Helen," a more specific ideal than eternity in the "Voyages." In "The Bridge" this ideal is associated with the earth rather than the sea or the air and made more concrete than either Helen or the sea by being identified with the American earth and given the name Pocahontas. Like Helen, Pocahontas was human. She was also a known historical person before becoming a part of American national "mythology." She also resembles Crane's Helen and Venus in her voluptuousness, though hers is at once more intense and warmer than theirs. She differs from Helen in her strongly maternal quality, which brings her close to the voluptuous maternity of the sea in "Voyages II," with the crucial difference that, in the case of Pocahontas, both qualities are explicitly connected with fertility—the life-force—and specifically the fertility of the earth.

Here, as in "Voyages II," a close rapport between this elemental female and the poet-narrator accompanies his relationship with a human lover. In "Voyages," however, this rapport was portrayed as instinctive; in "The Bridge" it is depicted as the result of a great imaginative effort, which takes him back into the American-Indian past, where, by participating in the sacrificial death of Pocahontas' Indian lover, he eventually wins the right to claim her as his bride. After their imagined marriage, he returns to the present to seek a contemporary embodiment of Pocahontas as his living bride. In "Faustus and Helen" the speaker also finds a contemporary human

expression of Helen, but there he finds her with no great difficulty and easily induces her to consummate their relationship. Here in "The Bridge" the speaker has to undergo the pattern of experience suggested by the curve image through two failures before finding a satisfactory embodiment of the ideal.<sup>55</sup>

The first failure is an impossible attempt to find in a fallen world a love which will be more than human: "High, cool, / wide from the slowly smoldering fire / Of lower heavens." The speaker identifies the woman he desires as a "gardenless" Eve, but he also calls her a "simian Venus." In this second role she recalls the earlier appearance of Venus—and of Helen—as the representative of beauty as a spiritual ideal. In "The Bathers" and "Voyages VI" Venus represents this ideal as a goddess, not as a love-object for the speaker. In "Faustus and Helen," by contrast, Helen and her twentieth-century embodiment represent this ideal as objects of the speaker's love. In the context of the poem "Helen" is a more useful name to Crane than "Venus" would have been both because of the value of "Faustus" for his thematic purpose and because that purpose required that the twentieth-century embodiment of the ideal be human. Otherwise, Venus could just as well have appeared as the ideal, as Pocahontas does in "The Bridge." Here in the first of the "Three Songs" the appearance of Venus herself as the speaker's love-object suggests the folly of human beings trying to realize in time a love which is superhuman. The epithet "simian" as applied to Venus parallels "gardenless" as applied to Eve and suggests that, in this world, to aim at a love which transcends the human is to realize a love which falls below it, which is "simian" rather than human.

This alienation of Venus from the human is also suggested when the speaker says that she "crept out simmering, accomplished," from the sea. Here, as in "The Bathers" and "Voyages VI," Venus is associated with that element from which, according to classical mythology, she originally came. When this first woman is associated with the "Southern Cross" and, by implication, the higher rather than the "lower heavens" at the beginning of the poem, she is also being associated with the air, as Helen was in "Faustus and Helen." The element she is not associated with is the earth, the element of Pocahontas, the life force. The implication would seem to be that human love, like human life, must be of the earth. In this first song, therefore, the kind of love which appears in "Faustus" is rejected. Also rejected, however, is that rapport between man and the whole of reality (the sea) which is made the basis for human

love in "Voyages II." Here the only valid basis for human love is identification of man with the life force in nature (the earth).

The speaker's second failure involves not an ideal alien to humanity but one which is inadequate and partial. As the speaker associates the woman in the first poem with Pocahontas by saying, "Water rattled that stinging coil, your / Rehearsed hair," so here he does the same thing by mentioning the woman's "silly snake rings." This woman, however, is simply sensual. She represents the low point of the horizontal curve. Yet she does offer hope—she is an embodiment of the life force, though on a purely sensual level. As the title, "National Winter Garden," suggests, she is associated with winter but also with a garden, unlike the woman in the first song.<sup>56</sup>

The upward movement of the horizontal curve here represents a fusion of these extremes, sexuality given ideal value as human love. "Virginia" suggests such a relationship. The woman, or girl, here is neither "wraith" nor simply flesh but a loving human being associated by the speaker with the green and growing vegetation of the earth in Spring. In calling the skyscraper where she works a "high wheat tower" he recalls the maize growing in Spring which signified the annual return to youth of Pocahontas in "The Dance." Again, however, the relationship is unconsummated. The girl is placed in a tower, above and out of reach of the speaker. Moreover, calling the poem "Virginia" and addressing the girl as "Cathedral Mary" associates her with the Virgin Mary of "Ave Maria" as well as Pocahontas and thereby emphasizes her virginal character.<sup>57</sup> Here spirituality is still conceived in essentially Platonic terms, as transcending the flesh rather than immanent in it.

The speaker's failure in these "Three Songs" to realize fully his search for human love parallels his failure to achieve the major goal of "The Bridge," mystical union with the divine.<sup>58</sup> In both cases there is love and the hope for consummation but not actual union. The structural relationship which Bernice Slote has traced between the "Three Songs" and the last three sections of "The Bridge"<sup>59</sup> suggests that this parallel is central to the structure and meaning of the poem.

In "The Broken Tower" the relationship between the speaker and "she / Whose sweet mortality stirs latent power" fulfills the hope and promise expressed in "Virginia." Here the speaker's search for human love ("I entered the broken world / To trace the visionary company of love") is consummated both physically and emotionally. In this respect "The Broken Tower" completes one of the two principal themes of "The Bridge" and therefore forms a

kind of pendant to it. Thematic fulfillment is reinforced by parallels in imagery. For one thing, the woman in "The Broken Tower" is explicitly associated not with the air-sky nor the sea but with the earth, like Pocahontas, the burlesque dancer, and Virginia. She is sexual, not with the rather desperate, though kindly, sensuality of "Faustus and Helen," nor with the spiritual exaltation of the "Voyages" letter, but with a warm, tender sexuality whose influence is a healing and restorative one, returning the speaker to humanity and stimulating in him the development of a fuller humanity. Thus she is closer to the human version of Pocahontas desired by the speaker in "The Bridge" than either the burlesque dancer or "Cathedral Mary." At the same time the continuity between the Virgin Mary and Pocahontas which appeared in "Virginia" is retained in calling the result of the lady's healing power an "angelus."<sup>60</sup> The "angelus" is a devotion in memory of the Annunciation, the announcement to Mary of the Incarnation of Christ. Here the "angelus" occurs at the upper end of the rising arc of the poem's horizontal curve, after the speaker—as Christ—has undergone his metaphorical sacrifice. It is a figurative incarnation not at birth but at resurrection, as it were. The speaker suggests that he has undergone rebirth through the love he shares with the lady and, therefore, that she is not only a lover, but also a sort of mother to him, and thus to be associated with Mary. At the end of the poem, however, she is associated more explicitly and emphatically with the earth. The implication is that the Virgin is but one expression of an archetype embodied more completely in the sexually fulfilled lady (and Pocahontas). The incarnation of the speaker is therefore the result of a union between an image and representative of the Sacrifice, and an image and representative of the life-giving earth, in a marriage more natural, more human, and more convincing than the marriage of Faustus and Helen. The incarnation itself is the fullest expression in Crane's work of his increasing tendency to believe that man best achieves earthly union with the divine through acceptance of all of life, and hence through union with the deity as immanent rather than transcendent.



### III

In these four analyses I have tried to show that each of four principal elements of expression in "The Broken Tower" is closely related to the use of the same element in other poems by Crane. In the case of the tower and the lady, the dominant tendency of these other uses culminates in "The Broken Tower." This is also true of Christ. It is not true of the Sacrifice figure, however, of which Christ is one expression, nor of God, the "tribunal monarch." Nevertheless, I believe I have shown that "The Broken Tower" does represent a crucial and, in the main, a culminating stage in the development of Crane's poetry.

That it represents this *and* something more is further illustrated when three of the poem's elements are considered together rather than separately. For this is not the first poem in which two or more of the elements (or analogues of the elements) are related. Moreover, there is, I believe, a pattern of development in these related elements which begins in the early version of "Garden Abstract" and the "Voyages" letter, continues in "Lachrymae Christi" and "The Bridge," and culminates, once again, in "The Broken Tower."

In the early version of "Garden Abstract," the speaker is the partly unwilling victim of desire for the "boughs" and "fruit" of a forbidden phallic tree. In the "Voyages" letter the ecstatic consummation of homosexual love makes Crane feel that he (and perhaps his lover) has become Christ, or Christ-like. In "Lachrymae Christi" the speaker ecstatically addresses the eternally crucified Christ on his tree in the heavens, but now the focus has shifted from the speaker's feelings to Christ's feelings and specifically to His love for the earth, whose Spring life (which the speaker calls the "grail" of earth) is His own face—or the image of His face. Here the lover and His love (the earth) are clearly both Christ. Both the speaker's feelings for Christ on the tree and Christ's feelings for his earthly image are sexually neutral.

The implicit femininity of the "grail of earth" becomes explicit in the final two poems involved in the pattern. In "The Bridge" the speaker partly identifies with the Sacrifice-figure Maquokeeta (implicitly related to the "Word" of the "enchained Sepulchre" in "Ave Maria") as the Sacrifice dies at the stake—*his* tree-tower. In one metaphor Maquokeeta becomes part of the Eternal tree in the

heavens, where he continues to love the annually renewed life force of the earth. Here, however, that force is not spoken of as a "grail" but personified as an explicitly feminine principle, Pocahontas. In this metaphor Maquokeeta exerts no actual influence upon Pocahontas. In the other metaphor, where he is identified with the evening star, he is not concerned specifically with Pocahontas, but with the comprehensive symbol of the bridge (between man and god). In relation to it, he is depicted as having an active influence upon the earth's life force, for it is through the continuing flow of his sacrificial blood that the bridge is able to perform its function of connecting man and god (in "Lachrymae Christi" it was Christ's tears which performed this function). Since Pocahontas is one expression of the bridge, Maquokeeta is therefore responsible for her annual renewal. This feminization of the earth's green life in Spring reaches its final expression in "The Broken Tower." Now, however, instead of being personified as an historical-mythological figure, the growing earth is identified with an actual woman. The Sacrifice also becomes a human being as the speaker identifies with Christ. He also identifies with a tower in the sky, though a tower which is not a tree but a psychological tower in a psychological sky. The love of this human Sacrifice for the woman who embodies the life of the earth, and his stimulation of love in her by means of a "shower" of love (instead of tears or blood) which lifts her life up to him in the awakening of Spring, is now a completely human form of a natural process.

What has happened in the course of these five works is that modifications in certain recurrent themes and elements of expression have traced a pattern of psychosexual development. Twice consummation has been achieved, homosexually in the "Voyages" letter, heterosexually in "The Broken Tower." Consummation in the former meant spiritual fulfillment by a Platonic destruction of the flesh and of the lovers' humanity; in the latter it is implicitly the prelude to simultaneous creative fulfillment of flesh and immanent spirit together in a completely realized humanity.

In "The Broken Tower," therefore, Crane realized for the second time in his poetry ("Voyages" III and IV being the first) the second of what he believed were the three chief human values: (1) union with the divine, (2) human love, and (3) poetic creation. The first—and primary—value, however, is never realized in his work. "The Broken Tower" represents a new departure in the search for that value—an attempt to achieve union not directly but through the elevation of spirit gained through human love. It also repre-

sents a renewed hope for its future realization. But that hope is a long way from even the promise of fulfillment. Crane's suicide, just two months after "The Broken Tower" was completed, ended, of course, the possibility of a work embodying such a union.

## Notes

1. The principal studies of "The Broken Tower" are still Henry Braun, "Hart Crane's *The Broken Tower*," *Boston University Studies in English*, 5 (Autumn, 1961), 167-177; Herbert Martey, "Hart Crane's 'The Broken Tower': A Study in Technique," *The University of Kansas City Review*, 28 (Spring, 1952), 199-205; and Marius Bewley, "Hart Crane's 'The Broken Tower,'" *Accent*, 19 (Spring, 1959), 75-85. Also useful are Samuel Hazo, *Hart Crane: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1963), pp. 129-132, and R. W. Butterfield, *The Broken Arc: A Study of Hart Crane* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969), pp. 240-242. For the biographical background of the poem see Hart Crane, *The Letters of Hart Crane, 1916-1932*, ed. Brom Weber (New York: Hermitage House, 1952), pp. 380-407; Philip Horton, *Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1937), pp. 289, 291-297; and John Unterecker, *Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969), pp. 721-723, 727-728, 737-738. Read too late for consideration was George Knox, "'Sight, Sound and Flesh': Synoptic View from Crane's Tower," *The Markham Review*, 3 (Oct., 1971), 1-10.

2. Bewley, p. 75.

3. Leibowitz, Herbert A., *Hart Crane: An Introduction to the Poetry* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 151-162.

4. I do not believe that Crane consciously manipulated his elements of expression with any regard to his previous use of them or with much regard to any rational meaning his poems might develop. I do believe that, nonetheless, his recurrent imagery has some regularity of rational "meaning"—that it shares in the obsessiveness of the imagery.

5. Cf. Bewley, p. 78; Martey, p. 201; Braun, p. 169.

6. Cf. Braun, p. 171: "By synesthesia 'carillons' stands both for bell and the sound of a bell . . . . The synesthesia makes it possible for the bell's themselves to be 'launched' over the countryside together with the noise they produce, breaking down the tower as they do so."

7. Cf. Martey, p. 202: "*Score* implies not only an account or reckoning, but also a musical score, and therefore sound; and the word *intervals* implies not only the space of time between any two points, but also the relation of two tones with regard to pitch, and again sound."

8. Cf. Braun, p. 172: "The ecclesiastical word used here ["encyclicals"] signifies messages of a general spiritual nature that emanate from a center."

9. Cf. Braun, p. 174: "Lines 29 and 30 allude to the fact that when you feel another's pulse in a certain manner you can perceive your own."

10. In stanza nine "builds" is part of the compound predicate, along with "stirs" in stanza seven, of "sweet mortality," whereas stanza eight is the second of two adjective clauses modifying "she": thus "she / Whose sweet mortality . . . . / And through whose pulse . . . ."

11. Leibowitz, pp. 154-156, and Unterecker, p. 22, also examine the recurrence of tower images in Crane's poetry.

12. Horton, p. 328.

13. Sometimes such associations are used for the opposite purpose: the speaker's comparison of the wave to a campanile in "The Return," for example, deemphasizes the interrelatedness of nature in order to stress the separateness of the wave from the ocean. This is Crane's pervasive practice when associating waves with towers. But when the speaker in "Virginia" (1926) calls the Woolworth building a "high wheat tower," he opens the possibility that the skyscraper, like the wheat, may, in separating itself from the earth, its natural source, be realizing more fully a relationship with another natural element, the sun.

14. Leibowitz, p. 155, notes that trees are often tower images.

15. In his *Letters*, p. 40, Crane says that the theme of "Garden Abstract" is "pure pantheistic aestheticism."

16. Leibowitz, p. 155, says that the bridge in Crane's work "is another version of the tower."

17. Human beings are also associated with other towers in Crane's work: in "The Return," the speaker identifies with a campanile; in "Virginia," the girl is associated with a skyscraper. But such associations appear most often in connection with a tree.

18. Cf. Brom Weber, *Hart Crane: A Biographical and Critical Study* (New York: The Bodley Press, 1948), pp. 110-111.

19. The poem and the comment appear in *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

20. Leibowitz, pp. 159-160, examines Crane's arc and circle imagery, and on p. 109 examines the antithetical values symbolized by the sun. For curve and circle imagery in "The Bridge," see Stanley Coffman, "Symbolism in *The Bridge*," *PMLA*, 66 (March, 1951), 65-77, and especially Bernice Sloté, "Views of the Bridge," *Start With the Sun: Studies in Cosmic Poetry*, by James E. Miller, Jr., Karl Shapiro, and Bernice Sloté (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), pp. 144-155.

21. *Letters*, p. 255.

22. For a complete explication of "The Mango Tree," see Melvin E. Lyon, *The Explicator*, 25 (Feb., 1967), #48.

23. Horton, p. 292; *Letters*, pp. 381-383, 390-391.

24. Martey, p. 205.

25. Hazo, pp. 127-128.

26. Compare the reference to Him in "O Carib Isle" as "the blue's comedian host." Noted by Leibowitz, p. 251.

27. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

28. Vincent Quinn, *Hart Crane*, Twayne's United States Authors Series (New Haven: College and University Press, 1963), p. 35; R. W. Butterfield, p. 220.

29. The phrase, "Hand of Fire," reappears at the end of "The Tunnel" in a non-Christian context. Both there and in "Ave Maria" it suggests the recurrent association in Crane's work of God and fire. In "Ave Maria" this seems to be based upon an association of God and the sun. When the speaker there speaks of God's "steep savannahs, burning blue," he is paralleling the sky with

the ocean and suggesting that, in the case of both, the savannahs "burn . . . blue" because of the fiery heat generated by the sun.

30. See Horton, pp. 115-116.

31. Quinn, Chapter Two, esp. pp. 39-45, 51-52.

32. For more on Crane and Christ, see Horton, pp. 287 (but cf. p. 315), 253; *Letters*, pp. 141-142, 333, 350.

33. *Letters*, pp. 181-182.

34. Mary Baker Eddy, *Science and Health, with Key to the Scriptures* (Boston: Published by the trustees under the will of Mary Baker G. Eddy, 1934), p. 27: "He [Jesus] laid the axe of Science at the root of material knowledge, that it might be ready to cut down the false doctrine of pantheism,—that God, or Life, is in or of matter.

35. *Letters*, p. 16.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 140. See also Weber, pp. 6-9, 22-24.

37. Eddy, pp. 26, 39, 48, etc.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 38.

39. *Letters*, p. 164.

40. Re "Legend," cf. Hazo, p. 19.

41. My reading of this poem is heavily indebted to Martin S. Shockley, "Hart Crane's 'Lachrymae Christi,'" *University of Kansas City Review*, 16 (Autumn, 1949), pp. 31-36.

42. Cf. Leibowitz, p. 182. L. S. Dembo, *Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge: A Study of the Bridge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), pp. 80-81, notes the relationship between "Lachrymae Christi" and "The Dance," as does Butterfield, p. 168 n. 29. See also #45 below.

43. This change may well be related not only to Crane's association with Peggy Baird at this time (see note #46 below) but also to his having read D. H. Lawrence's *The Man Who Died* just two months before the date on his own copy of "The Broken Tower" (March 15, 1932). At the time, he commented in a letter that Lawrence's work "has more to tell me—at least in my present state of mind—than any book in the Bible." (*Letters*, p. 395.) See Unterecker, pp. 721, 722-723.

44. Cf. Dembo, pp. 12-19, esp. 15-17; 80-81.

45. Cf. Hazo, p. 130: "The Broken Tower" "perpetuates . . . the Dionysiac, Orphean, and Christ-like symbols that are common to poems like 'Lachrymae Christi' and 'The Dance.'"

46. Horton, pp. 292-293; Unterecker, pp. 715-716, 722; *Letters*, pp. 393, 394, 396-398, 403, 404.

47. *Letters*, pp. 120, 116. See also Horton, pp. 119-120; Weber, pp. 180, 182.

48. Leibowitz, p. 64; Maurice Kramer, "Six Voyages of a Derelict Seer," *The Sewanee Review*, 73 (Summer, 1965), p. 410.

49. *Letters*, pp. 121, 116. See also Weber, p. 182.

50. I would agree with Weber (pp. 180-183), Dembo (p. 14), Hazo (pp. 52-53), and Quinn (pp. 64-66) that the poem follows the pattern of the horizontal curve. But I think Joseph Frank ("Hart Crane: American Poet," *Sewanee Review*, 57 [Winter, 1949], pp. 155-156) better interprets the nature of the curve. It seems

to me that the Helen of Part I is primarily the evoked goddess, the ideal, even though embodied in a girl on a streetcar. The Helen of Part II is this girl known as a human being living in the twentieth century. The goddess quality is de-emphasized. The simply human quality dominates: sexual consummation involves a necessary descent from "the hawk's far stemming view." Yet the humor of Part II is a good-natured, kindly humor (not the condescension Hazo sees) which recognizes the discrepancy between the human and the ideal but also accepts it. Part III also ends with the recognition of this discrepancy—though now no longer expressed humorously—in the contrast (in the last four lines) between the world of imperfect action in time and that anticipation and approximation of eternity possible to the imagination.

51. M. L. Rosenthal, *The Modern Poets: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 179. The use of "undinal," suggesting the watersprite who became mortal by gaining a human husband, underscores this elemental quality; it also harmonizes both with the sea's sympathy with human lovers and with the completion the sea gains through their love.

52. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, *Understanding Poetry*, Third edition (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1960), p. 326; Kramer, p. 422. Or is the "lounge goddess" really Aurora? See Butterfield, p. 103, who cites (n. 23) Charles C. Walcutt's explication of the poem in *The Explicator*, 4 (May, 1946), #53. It seems to me that even if it be true, as Butterfield argues, that Aurora most readily fits the visual image of the "lounge goddess," Venus best accords with the meaning of the rest of the stanza—and the poem as a whole. If the goddess is Venus, "lounge" should probably be interpreted as suggesting "languorous" or "relaxed" (compare the account of Venus in "The Bathers" on p. 21 here).

53. His poetry—the "Belle Isle"—is that promise embodied. He calls it "the imaged Word" because it is essentially spiritual: the implication is that imaginative compensation in time is a promise of spiritual consummation in eternity. Cf. Kramer, p. 422.

54. Slote, p. 150.

55. My interpretation of these songs follows the interpretations in John R. Willingham, "'Three Songs' of Hart Crane's *The Bridge: A Reconsideration*," *AL*, 27 (March, 1955), pp. 62-68; Slote, pp. 154, 158-161; Quinn, pp. 94-97; Butterfield, pp. 190-196. However, Butterfield, p. 190, suggests that in the Pocahontas section of "The Bridge" the protagonist "has consummated a union with a female continental body, sustainer of natural life" and that in "Three Songs" he is pursuing "a female nourisher of *spiritual* life." It seems to me that the protagonist's imaginative death with Maquokeeta, which enables the former to consummate his relationship with Pocahontas, also enables him to identify with the spiritual apotheosis of Maquokeeta as the evening and morning star. What is occurring in "Three Songs" is that, having achieved this apotheosis in fancy in an imagined past, the speaker is trying to achieve it actually in the present.

56. Cf. Dembo, p. 112.

57. Slote, p. 161; Weber, p. 369; Frederick Hoffman, *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade*, Revised edition (New York: Collier Books, 1962), p. 271; Butterfield, p. 194.

58. Quinn, pp. 102-103.

59. Slote, pp. 154, 158-163.

60. See also Thomas A. Vogler, "A New View of Hart Crane's Bridge," *Sewanee Review*, 73 (Summer, 1965), pp. 385, 389. In Mexico Crane had found in the Virgin of Guadalupe a figure which "miraculously unites the teachings of the early Catholic missionaries with many survivals of the old Indian myths and pagan cults. She is a typical Mexican product, a strange blend of Christian and pagan strains," *Letters*, p. 391. In this pagan Virgin there is a fusion of the Virgin and the earth goddess comparable to Crane's own Pocahontas. See Unterecker, pp. 707-708.

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