

Hart Crane's Tunnel from The Waste Land

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AT the conclusion of Hart Crane's *The Bridge* the poet ecstatically affirms the moment of transfixing revelation which his protagonist has relentlessly sought throughout the poem: "the orphic strings,/Side-real phalanxes, leap and converge:—One Song, one Bridge of Fire! It is Cathay."¹ In this section, "Atlantis," the bridge itself metamorphoses into an astonishing array of visual and musical harmony. The section which precedes "Atlantis" in *The Bridge*, however, "The Tunnel," is related to the poem's conclusion as necessary prelude: the absorption by the protagonist into the dark night, the stark confrontation with "Death, aloft" (*The Bridge*, p. 68). Only through the descent into the moral and psychological inferno can the sunken city beneath the sea symbolically rise in its resplendence. It is hardly surprising that the last two sections which make up *The Bridge* recall similar poetic declarations by Crane's contemporary, T. S. Eliot. "Atlantis" anticipates the "complete consort dancing together"² in the mystical intuition of *Four Quartets*, a poem Crane was never to see. "The Tunnel," however, looks back to an earlier work, *The Waste Land*, a poem which precedes *The Bridge* (1930) by eight years and which Crane knew well through "innumerable readings."³

During the summer of 1926 while residing at the Isle of Pines in Cuba, Crane vigorously resumed the writing of his "epic of the modern consciousness" (*Letters*, p. 308) on which he had been laboring intermittently and with increasing distraction and frustration since he had begun

it more than three years earlier. Now, in one month of unconstrained creativity Crane found himself suddenly piecing together section after section of the poem, and, although it was not to be completed for another three and a half years, he began sending out the finished parts to the magazines. "The Tunnel" was one of the sections written at the Isle of Pines, and Crane selected the English quarterly edited by T. S. Eliot, *The Criterion*, as the magazine for its submission. To the poet's delight Eliot accepted the poem and it appeared in November, 1927.⁴ Shortly before its publication, Crane wrote to his patron Otto Kahn: "I have been especially gratified by the reception accorded me by *The Criterion*, whose director, Mr. T. S. Eliot, is representative of the most exacting literary standards of our times" (*Letters*, p. 308).

The choice of Eliot's publication was perhaps not an arbitrary one on Crane's part. Indeed, it seems likely that he was conscious of the Eliotic overtones of the poem and expected Eliot to perceive the same. Subsequent critical commentaries likewise have repeatedly discerned the background of Eliot in "The Tunnel." None, however, has demonstrated the connection except to acknowledge it generally or to point out isolated instances of similar images.⁵ There are, however, numerous evidences of linkings between the two poems — especially in the larger structural pattern wherein characters within the poem share identities with other characters, frequently through ironic associations. In addition, the poems disclose remarkable similarities in imagery, in the use of fragmented conversations, and in prosodic variations. Many of these qualities in "The Tunnel" almost certainly owe their origin to Eliot's poem; some, however, were qualities which other poets besides Eliot, especially Pound and Williams, had likewise assimilated. Crane's debt to Eliot must therefore be acknowledged as both direct and indirect.

Crane's familiarity with Eliot's verse was profound, and his various comments upon its quality and influence in the

decade preceding the publication of *The Bridge* disclose an ambivalence that includes both generous praise and mounting disdain. As early as November, 1919, Crane wrote to Gorham Munson that Eliot was among the few poets who were his "steady companions" (*Letters*, p. 24). "More and more am I turning toward Pound and Eliot and the minor Elizabethans for values" (*Letters*, p. 28), he reiterated a month later. Echoes from "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" are discernible as early as Crane's 1917 lyric, "Fear," and as late as the concluding lines of "The Wine Menagerie" in 1926. Early in 1920, he described to Munson the excitement of witnessing a prizefight in Cleveland and his desire to recapture the experience in verse, "an extreme freshness that has nothing to do with the traditional 'dew-on-the-grass' variety." He pointed to Eliot as one who "does it often" (*Letters*, p. 34), hinting that he had one of the Sweeney-poems in mind. The first evidence both of Crane's sense of Eliot's burgeoning reputation and his own uneasiness with it occurred near the end of 1920 in another letter to Munson where he comments on the "Leda" poems of Aldous Huxley. Crane saw the poems in "the line of Eliot and Sitwell," and added, "Eliot's influence threatens to predominate the new English" (*Letters*, p. 44). Nonetheless, in scattered comments over the next two years, Crane continued to heap his approbation: Eliot remains one of his "favorites" (*Letters*, p. 66), one of "The people I am closest to in English" (*Letters*, p. 86), and to Allen Tate he acknowledges that he has been led to the poetry of Laforgue through Eliot (*Letters*, p. 88). Two poems published in 1921 give marked evidence of Eliot's influence. "Porphyro in Akron" juxtaposes a sordid and commercial-minded urban life against the defeated Keatsian protagonist, himself a remnant of the perishing ideal. The debt of "Chaplinesque" to "Preludes" is one Crane himself declared: "I have made that 'infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing' of Eliot's into the symbol of the kitten" (*Letters*, p. 66).

Crane's most elaborate commentary on Eliot is outlined in a long and, unfortunately, incomplete letter⁶ to Allen Tate on June 12, 1922, a few months before the first publication of *The Waste Land*. Again, there is both praise ("I haven't discovered a weak spot yet in his armour.") and recommendation ("You will profit by reading him again and again. I must have read "Prufrock" twenty-five times and things like the "Preludes" more often. His work will lead you back to some of the Elizabethans and point out the best in them. And there is Henry James, Laforgue, Blake and a dozen others in his work."). But for the first time, Crane reveals an awareness of disparities between his own direction as a poet and that of Eliot. In part, he seems to resent, perhaps with some jealousy,⁷ Tate's praise of Eliot: ". . . you will recover from the shock. No one ever says the last word." Crane allows that he has resisted "a fearful temptation to imitate [Eliot]" and can himself go "*through* him toward a *different goal*." Eliot's negativism is at odds with the direction sought by Crane in his own work. "I, for instance, would like to leave a few of his 'negations' behind me, risk the realm of the obvious more, in quest of new sensations, *humeurs*" (*Letters*, p. 90).

Five months after Crane's letter to Tate, *The Waste Land* was published in Eliot's *The Criterion* in October and in America in *The Dial* in November. Crane saw it at once and the suspicions he had entertained in the earlier letter were now reinforced. To Munson on November 20, Crane asked, "What do you think of Eliot's *The Waste-land*? I was rather disappointed. It was good, of course, but so damned dead. Neither does it, in my opinion, add anything important to Eliot's achievement" (*Letters*, p. 105).⁸ A few weeks later Crane declared his own dissociation from Eliot's thematic pessimism ("I take Eliot as a point of departure toward an almost complete reverse of direction."), even though he admitted that technically he could derive much from the expatriate American: "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*, pp. 114-15). The distinction here is crucial. Hereafter Crane remonstrated at every opportunity about the bleakness of Eliot's poetry: ". . . since Eliot and others have announced that happiness and beauty dwell only in memory . . . I cry for a positive attitude" (*Letters*, p. 117). Eliot's experimentation ("erudition and technique") remained for him, however, a valuable store on which he could draw and which he clearly distinguished from Eliot's distastefully somber moral perspective.⁹

Though he yearned to capture it in his verse, Crane discovered the difficulty in maintaining the note of buoyant optimism he had originally planned for *The Bridge*. He sensed that in the experience of his own personal life, as well as that of American society at large in the 1920's, such optimism could not remain unqualified. One of the consequences of this realization was Crane's inability to go on writing the poem. In the often-cited letter to Waldo Frank in June, 1926, shortly after his arrival at the Isle of Pines where he was to write "The Tunnel" and other parts of the poem, he complained of this impasse: "I am only evading a recognition and playing Don Quixote in an immorally conscious way The bridge as a symbol today has no significance beyond an economical approach to shorter hours, quicker lunches, behaviorism and tooth-picks" (*Letters*, p. 261). It is the same "absolute impasse" which he had found in Eliot and described to Tate four years earlier.¹⁰ Perhaps with partial recognition of the similarity Crane went on in the same letter to Frank: "Eliot and others of that kidney have whimpered fastidiously" (*Letters*, p. 261).

Within days after the letter to Frank, Crane resumed the writing of his poem, and one of the means which made that possible was the discovery that the affirmations of the poem could only be made by the direct confrontation with the waste land of American society which surrounded him. "The Tunnel" is germane to the structure and out-

come of the poem for its presentation of this "hades in the brain" (*The Bridge*, p. 67).

After the publication of *The Bridge*, the poem was reviewed favorably by Herbert Weinstock who also congratulated Crane personally by letter. In his response to Weinstock, Crane defended the unity of his poem by comparing it directly with *The Waste Land*. The remarks reveal Crane's lingering admiration, almost in spite of himself, of Eliot's poem. More importantly, they draw a direct comparison between the two poems: "It is pertinent to suggest, I think, that with more time and familiarity with *The Bridge* you will come to envisage it more as one poem with a clearer and more integrated unity and development than was at first evident. At least if my own experience in reading and rereading Eliot's *Wasteland* has any relation to the circumstances this *may* be found to be the case. It took me nearly five years, with innumerable readings to convince myself of the essential unity of that poem. And *The Bridge* is at least as complicated in its structure and inferences as *The Wasteland* — perhaps more so" (*Letters*, p. 350). Before the publication of *The Bridge*, Crane had written to Waldo Frank that he had also compiled notes to the poem: "A reaction to Eliot's *Waste Land* notes put them in my head" (*Letters*, p. 271). Crane, of course, did not include the notes when the poem was published. A few days later he wrote again to Frank to say that "*The Bridge* is already longer than *The Wasteland*, — and it's only about half done" (*Letters*, p. 272).¹¹

"The Tunnel" is the single section of *The Bridge* that appears most indebted to the Eliot influence. This is not to say that the poem glosses what Eliot had already done or that it relies upon the Eliot-model to sustain its own aesthetic identity and vitality. Nonetheless, when Crane in his 1926 letter to Frank confessed that the spirit of optimism out of which the poem had been begun was now dashed by his own disenchantment with American life, he proceeded to write "The Tunnel" as a partial reckoning

with that disappointment. Inevitably, the poem Crane had studied since 1922 lingered in the background of his own creative exercise.

While on the surface various clusters of images may appear to constitute the principal linkings between the two works, a more fundamental likeness is discernible. The use of a network of allusions and symbols makes up the fundamental structures of both "The Tunnel" and *The Waste Land*. Characters in both poems appear and reappear in modified guises, making up a larger shared identity within which ironic comparisons and contrasts emerge. As Cleanth Brooks has said of the 1922 poem, "The poet works in terms of surface parallelisms which in reality make ironical contrasts, and in terms of surface contrasts which in reality constitute parallelisms."¹² The figure of the "drowned Phoenician sailor," for example, from the tarot deck merges later in the poem with "Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead" and with Mr. Eugenides, "the Smyrna merchant." The drowned merchant in his several characterizations participates in the identity of the drowned god of the ancient fertility and vegetation rites, as well as the crucified Christ who appears "hooded" on the evening of His resurrection in "What the Thunder Said." The "parallelisms" are clearly informed by "ironical contrasts": although the drowned gods of *The Golden Bough* are like the drowned merchant of "Death by Water," the cultic figures of ancient religious ceremonies are sharply distinct from Phlebas whose life was fixed upon "the profit and loss." The operation of these various allusions in the poem compels the reader to be ever on guard. Any assertion is always subject to an ironic qualification or reversal with the appearance of additional images within the given pattern.

While this method of allusive cross-references is not as dense in "The Tunnel," Crane's poem nonetheless demonstrates a fundamentally similar system. At the time of his writing "The Tunnel," the poet called attention to this aspect of his work. To Waldo Frank, Crane explained

that "the notes and stitches" which make up the poem originate in his personal experience "swinging on the strap at late midnights going home." He then added: "Are you noticing how throughout the poem motives and situations recur — under modifications of environment, etc?" (*Letters*, p. 275).

"The Tunnel" opens with the lines: "Performances, assortments, résumés —/ Up Times Square to Columbus Circle . . . (*The Bridge*, p. 65). The reference to Columbus Circle not only situates the reader in Manhattan, but it recalls to him the figure of Columbus who speaks in "Ave Maria," an earlier section of *The Bridge*. In that poem, the voyager speaks of the great promise his recent discoveries portend: "I bring you back Cathay!" (*The Bridge*, p. 5). Columbus Circle in the 1920's, however, is an ironic contrast to Columbus' Cathay of 1493. Later, one of the passengers encountered on the subway is the "Wop washerwoman" who is returning home from her chores as a cleaning woman in the city. The poet addresses her longingly: "O Genoese, do you bring mother eyes and hands/Back home to children and to golden hair?" (*The Bridge*, pp. 68-69). The reference to Genoa again conjures up the earlier description of Columbus in "Ave Maria": "I thought of Genoa . . ." (*The Bridge*, p. 5). The "Wop washerwoman," instead of contrasting with the earlier voyager, however, here becomes a reinforcement of the Columbus-as-regenerator motif. She is projected as the solicitous mother who offers an outpouring of love clearly different from the love earlier described in "The Tunnel" as "a burnt match skating in a urinal" (*The Bridge*, p. 67). Like *The Waste Land*, the system discloses a pattern of comparisons and contrasts. Columbus Circle is the world of "hell's despite" (*The Bridge*, p. 65), an ironic contradiction of Columbus' dream for America; the Genoese washerwoman, however, reinforces that dream through the poet's vision of her own self-sacrifice and motherly compassion. Consequently, Crane's method is also one of "surface parallelisms which in reality make

ironical contrasts" and "surface contrasts which in reality constitute parallelisms."

"The Tunnel" in its own right is a poem that incorporates allusions frequently — from the epigraph made up of lines from Blake's "Morning" to another echo of Blake's "Milton" to the character of Poe and references to "The City in the Sea" and "The Raven."

Isolated phrases and lines in "The Tunnel" echo similar passages in *The Waste Land*. The description of the passengers ascending from the bowels of the underground transit:

The intent escalator lifts a serenade
Stilly
Of shoes, umbrellas, each eye attending its shoe. . . .
(*The Bridge*, p. 68)

recalls the movement of the crowd over London Bridge¹³ in "The Burial of the Dead":

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
(*Collected Poems*, p. 55)

The London Bridge section with its Dante allusions is echoed in another passage. Eliot's lines read:

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many,
(*Collected Poems*, p. 55)

Crane's own evocation of the specter of death in the presence of masses of people, while it also alludes to Poe's "The City in the Sea," is not dissimilar. The masses-in-motion are here removed from the bridge to the subway:

And Death, aloft, — gigantically down
Probing through you — toward me, O evermore!
(*The Bridge*, p. 68)

The drowning of Phlebas the Phoenician in Part IV of *The Waste Land* occurs as "A current under sea/Picked his bones in whispers" (*Collected Poems*, p. 65), while Crane's passengers speak like "surcease of the bone" (*The Bridge*, p. 67). The "oily tympanum of waters" (*The Bridge*, p. 69) which coats the East River at the end of

Crane's subway odyssey recalls Eliot's imagery in "The Fire Sermon": "The river sweats/Oil and tar" (*Collected Poems*, p. 63).

"The Tunnel" concludes with a broken, prayer-like apostrophe which repeats an earlier line in the poem:

Kiss of our agony Thou gatherest,
O Hand of Fire
gatherest —

(*The Bridge*, p. 70)

Eliot's conclusion to "The Fire Sermon" is similar:

Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

Both passages here deploy formally elevated religious vocatives ("Thou pluckest" corresponding to "Thou gatherest"; "O Lord" corresponding to "O Hand of Fire"); a suspended verbal conclusion ("burning" and "gatherest"); as well as the related fire imagery.

Fragments of conversation, disjunctive and divorced from context, are reported in both poems, and to similar ends: to provide glimpses into the moral character of the speakers who are representative of the larger society. Crane's use of this technique was almost certainly drawn from his reading of *The Waste Land*, as well as earlier Eliot poems, though, again, conscious imitation is not necessarily at work:

"What

"what do you want? getting weak on the links?
fandaddle daddy don't ask for change

(*The Bridge*, p. 67)

The frenetic tone of the broken questions and distracted responses corresponds to the anxious interrogatives uttered between the man and woman in "A Game of Chess":

'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
'I never know what you are thinking. Think.'
I think we are in rat's alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

(*Collected Poems*, p. 57)

The device of a speaker quoting himself in earlier conversation with other parties is common to both poems; one

also notes the similarity in the nervous repetition of words combined with a tone of righteous self-justification. Crane records a speaker:

"But I want service in this office SERVICE
I said — after
the show she cried a little afterwards but — "
(*The Bridge*, p. 67)

and Eliot with the cockney accents of "A Game of Chess":

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said —
I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME
(*Collected Poems*, p. 58)

Both "The Tunnel" and *The Waste Land* adhere to a basic five-stress line, though with frequent variations of hexameters, tetrameters, or even an occasional abandonment of quantitative meter in favor of an irregular accentual measure. As narratives incorporating a variety of speaking voices, both poems resist the use of many lines in succession which carry fixed metrical repetitions.

As Harvey Gross has pointed out, *The Waste Land* oscillates between the hortatory and formal lines of blank verse and the more conversational idiom of a line of four strong stresses.¹⁴ Rhetorical questions from both poems, for example, evoke both pity and regret in passages which are distinguished musically by decelerated and long-vowel-ed blank verse:

And when they dragged your retching flesh,
Your trembling hands that night through Baltimore —
That last night on the ballot rounds, did you
Shaking, did you deny the ticket, Poe?
(*The Bridge*, p. 68)

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats.
(*Collected Poems*, p. 53)

An accentual pattern of basically four stresses per line characterizes the more colloquial passages of both poems — often with the use of caesuras:

"whát do you wánt? getting weák on the links?
fándaddle dáddy don't ásk for chángé — IS THIS
FOURTEENTH? it's hálf past six she sáid
(*The Bridge*, p. 67)

Mr. Eugénides, the Smýrna méchant
 Unsháven, with a pócket full of cúrrants
 C.i.f. Lóndon: dócuments at sight,
 Asked me in demótic Frénch. . . .

(*Collected Poems*, p. 61)

The juxtaposition of rhythmic passages markedly divergent from preceding and succeeding passages is another practice common to both poems. The description of the entry of the passengers at the subway and their movement through the turntable in "The Tunnel" occurs to the rhythm of the five-stress line. The pattern is broken, however, in the verse paragraph which follows it by the thin, elongated stanza of clipped dimeters and trimeters:

And so
 of cities you bespeak
 subways, rivered under streets
 and rivers In the car
 the overtone of motion
 underground, the monotone
 of motion is the sound
 of other faces, also underground —

(*The Bridge*, p. 66)

Sherman Paul cites these lines as "cadences vaguely Eliotic."¹⁵ It is not only the cadences, however, but their location between surrounding passages of sharp prosodic contrast that points to the model of *The Waste Land*. The description in pentameter of Magnus Martyr in "The Fire Sermon" beside which "fishmen lounge at noon" is starkly broken by the verse paragraph which follows it in a pattern not unlike Crane's:

The river sweats
 Oil and tar
 The barges drift
 With the turning tide
 Red sails
 Wide
 To leeward, swing on the heavy spar.

(*Collected Poems*, p. 63)

A comparison of "The Tunnel" and *The Waste Land* indicates noticeable likenesses in images, allusions and meter. In some cases the similarities do not seem to result from the deliberate imitation of Eliot's model. At the same

time, Crane's close familiarity with *The Waste Land* does not permit one to dismiss the influence of that poem on the process of Crane's composition — however indirect or subconscious the linkings may be.

There are major differences between the two poems. *The Waste Land*, besides being three times the length of "The Tunnel," functions according to a plan that makes it notably more complex in theme and symbol, in treatment of setting, and in temporal disjunctiveness. Its adherence to a substructure of various mythic levels is fundamentally different from "The Tunnel" which follows a simpler plan of clearer narrative sequence. It is true that in a general sense both poems incorporate a journey pattern: Crane's poem follows the geographical progression of the subway passage from Manhattan under the East River to Brooklyn — hence paralleling the arc of the bridge overhead. Eliot's poem loosely imitates the quest of the Grail Knight who traverses a waste land, encounters a fisher-king, visits the Chapel Perilous and encounters the Grail objects of the tarot deck. Eliot's journey, however, is far less cohesive and consistent than Crane's; the Grail Knight is much less clearly defined as protagonist than the narrator of "The Tunnel."¹⁶

The moral perspective of *The Waste Land* is more fundamentally didactic than Crane's. The earlier poem never permits the reader to forget the moral alternatives which are available as a means out of the circumstances of torpor and sterility. At the same time, Eliot's admonishments are heeded little if at all within the narration of the poem itself, and his vision does not lead to the transfixing apotheosis which is exhibited by Crane in "Atlantis" and other parts of *The Bridge*. The final Hindu blessing with which *The Waste Land* concludes is warranted in the poem only on the terms of the protagonist who asks "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" as he fishes "with the arid plain behind me" (*Collected Poems*, p. 69). Allen Tate has suggested that the pessimism of Eliot and Crane is fundamentally different. Eliot's, he suggests, is founded in

the "decay of the individual consciousness and its fixed relations to the world," while Crane's acknowledges a stubborn recalcitrance on the part of individual men toward embracing "a new kind of freedom that he [Crane] identified emotionally with the age of the machine."¹⁷ Though *The Bridge* is not ignorant of the breakdown between the individual and the culture, Tate is surely correct in suggesting that Crane's faith in the power of poetic vision is greater than Eliot's. Crane's transcendental optimism is rooted in the ideals of the American past; in the generative visions of Walt Whitman, William Blake, P. D. Ouspensky, and, more recently, Waldo Frank; in the mythic capaciousness of figures like Columbus and Pocahontas; and in Crane's own inveterate determination to achieve "a more positive or (if [I] must put it so in a sceptical age) ecstatic goal" (*Letters*, p. 115). Eliot had found little solace in resources such as these in his movement toward a Christian orthodoxy.

"The Tunnel" as one part of *The Bridge* does not share the visionary optimism one finds elsewhere in the poem. While Crane had pointed to the commercialism of American society in "The River" and "Quaker Hill," to its potential for massive destruction in "Cape Hatteras," to its tawdry abuse of sexual love in "National Winter Garden," and even to the despair revealed by the bedlamite, "shrill shirt ballooning," as he plunges to his suicidal death in "Proem," it is only in "The Tunnel" that he totally undisguises the sustained horrors of modern American society. The poem has larger overtones of Ulysses' descent into the underworld, Dante's passage through the inferno, or even the religious mystic's dark night of the soul. More than to any of these mythic precedents, however, Crane seems to have turned to *The Waste Land*. That poem was a source, however indirect, that proved valuable in the composition of the poem that he sent off upon completion to *The Criterion*. The force and power of "The Tunnel" is owing to Crane's own poetic originality; at no point does the reader discern servitude on his part to the model of

Eliot. But as Crane learned, Eliot's moral landscape could not be rejected out of hand. Only by assimilating fully that perspective could the poet proceed to justify the congeries of uplifting images with which he concluded the poem in "Atlantis." Finally, the relation of *The Waste Land* to "The Tunnel" establishes authoritatively one more instance of the range and versatility of Eliot's presence in the making of modern poetry.

NOTES

- ¹*The Bridge* (New York: Liveright, 1933), p. 76; hereafter cited in the text as *The Bridge*.
- ²T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, Inc., 1970), p. 208; hereafter cited in the text as *Collected Poems*.
- ³*The Letters of Hart Crane 1916-1932*, ed. Brom Weber (New York: Hermitage House, 1952), p. 350; hereafter cited in the text as *Letters*.
- ⁴Alterations in the text between the 1927 and 1930 versions are minor: two words are changed in addition to minor punctuational and typographical variations.
- ⁵Cleath Brooks, R. W. B. Lewis and Robert Penn Warren, for example, in their *American Literature, The Makers and the Making*, Vol. II, note that "'The Tunnel' section owes a great deal in its structure of presentation to Eliot's *The Waste Land*." (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), p. 2219. R. W. Butterfield sees "The Tunnel" as "an exciting variant of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, which in imagery, broken rhythms, and moral perspective, was its model." (*The Broken Arc: A Study of Hart Crane*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1969, p. 205.) In his *The Poetry of Hart Crane, A Critical Study*, R. W. B. Lewis points out what is perhaps the most obvious carryover from *The Waste Land*: Eliot's "And each man fixed his eyes before his feet" and Crane's "each eye attending its shoe." (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), p. 361. Sherman Paul in his *Hart's Bridge* recognizes in the protagonist of "The Tunnel" a characterization that is "Laforguean by way of 'Prufrock'"; he points out other general references to Eliot in the poem. (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1972), p. 265.
- ⁶In a private letter to me Tate corroborates Brom Weber: "I am afraid the missing part of the Crane letter is forever lost." March 22, 1973.
- ⁷If there is jealousy in Crane's expostulation it is perhaps accounted for in part by Tate's encouragement and praise of his own work. Eight months after these comments to Tate on Eliot's poetry, for example, Tate is reported to have acknowledged Crane as "the greatest contemporary American poet" (*Letters*, 118).
- ⁸It is noteworthy that Crane's initial disdain for the poem paralleled that of William Carlos Williams, another poet who

saw himself in the tradition of Walt Whitman: "Then out of the blue *The Dial* brought out *The Waste Land* and all our hilarity ended. It wiped out our world as if an atom bomb had been dropped upon it and our brave sallies into the unknown were turned to dust." (*The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams*, New York: New Directions, 1948, p. 174).

- ⁹To Louis Untermeyer Crane sent a manuscript copy of his "For the Marriage of Faustus and Helen" early in 1923. In the accompanying letter Crane spoke of his "genuine and deep admiration" for Eliot, but went on to declare that his own poem contained "an almost antithetical spiritual attitude to the pessimism of "The Waste Land," although the poem was well finished before "The Waste Land" appeared." (Richard Allan Davison, "Hart Crane, Louis Untermeyer, and T. S. Eliot: A New Crane Letter" *American Literature*, 44 (March, 1972), 145.)
- ¹⁰And, as Tate himself has noted in an essay on Crane, "Far from 'refuting' Eliot, his whole career is a vindication of Eliot's major premise that the integrity of the individual consciousness has broken down." ("Hart Crane," *Essays on Four Decades*, Chicago: The Swallow Press Inc., 1968, p. 321.) Writing of Crane's experiences in 1926, John Unterecker reaches a similar conclusion: "Part of his trouble, Crane felt, was a loss of faith in man; this he attributed to the 'disloyalty' of literary friends but he recognized also that the despair he had earlier assigned to Eliot could now be found in himself as well." (*Voyager, A Life of Hart Crane*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1969, p. 446.)
- ¹¹To Slater Brown, whom Crane wrote while in California in 1927, he reported that he had read Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, though Yvor Winters had described "her data and deductions as imaginative bunk" (*Letters*, p. 314).
- ¹²Cleanth Brooks, *Modern Poetry and the Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 167.
- ¹³Eliot's London Bridge itself belongs among the many other acknowledged sources for Crane's title and principal symbol of the poem.
- ¹⁴Harvey Gross, *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1964), p. 187.
- ¹⁵Sherman Paul, *Hart's Bridge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), p. 266.
- ¹⁶It should also be noted that the method of establishing patterns and symbols which constitute ironic comparisons and contrasts in *The Waste Land* is integral, not only to "The Tunnel," but to the whole of *The Bridge*. The essential unity of both larger poems depends upon the reader's familiarity with the allusions and symbols and his ability to link them up in order to establish thematic clusters within which lie the comparisons and contrasts. Eliot's influence on Crane here may be considerable, but it is an influence that is more pervasive in *The Bridge* than "The Tunnel" alone.
- ¹⁷Tate, p. 314.