


# The Architecture of Address

*The Monument and Public Speech in  
American Poetry*

 Jake Adam York

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# THE ARCHITECTURE OF ADDRESS

The Monument and Public Speech in American Poetry

*Jake Adam York*

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*Dedicated to the spirit of Ezra Cornell*



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## Preface

*The Architecture of Address* holds that poets who want to achieve political or cultural effect have appropriated the architecture of real public spaces in order to amplify their poems. These poets seem merely to describe or to respond to these spaces. But in their descriptions, these poets alter the conceptual architecture of these public sites, altering their meaning and significance. They rededicate public monuments to the work of solidifying communal knowledge or alter the knowledge such monuments coordinate. And they do so in such a way that, for their readers, the actual spaces themselves seem to communicate the poem, amplifying it beyond its immediate literary context and enabling it to act in the public sphere, like a monument.

Walt Whitman, Hart Crane, and Robert Lowell make the most significant contributions to the establishment of a monumental poetic, a poetic that translates standard tropes of early nineteenth-century dedicatory oratory into an argumentative repertoire deployable in a number of genres and contexts. Whitman's models are Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, and the host of early republican orators; their epideictic vocabulary becomes Whitman's in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." Crane, responding to Whitman, extends the work of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" in *The Bridge*, moving the poetic away from its oratorical root and toward an independent life in poetry. Lowell, without responding to or drawing from Crane or Whitman but by responding directly to the public architecture of the Boston Common, replicates and finally establishes these practices as a poetic mode that promises to be used more widely.

*The Architecture of Address* is, then, a work of poetic history and an exercise in genre analysis, but I hope it will be viewed foremost as a work of poetics.

The desire to write this book was, at first, a selfish desire to describe a kind of poem I wanted to write. This study was merely a means to an end in poetry. But, as a doctoral student at Cornell University, and later as an Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado at Denver, the poems I took as models and the possible connections between them became important in themselves, independent of my creative work. As I submit this to my publisher I hope, more than anything else, that I have produced the kind of work I want my students to read, a work that takes the articulation of a poem's means as a very real and important part of the pleasure a poem may give.

## Acknowledgments

I want to thank Ed Folsom and the staff of the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* for taking an interest in and seeing to publication my article, “‘When Time and Place Avail’: Whitman’s Written Orator Reconsidered” (Volume 19, Number 2, Fall 2001) in which I treat Whitman’s relationship to nineteenth-century American oratory in a slightly different context. *The Architecture of Address* does not reprint any of the material from that article, though the inquiries overlap. I would nevertheless like to acknowledge the journal’s support of my work. I want also to thank Anthony Enns and the staff of the 2000 Culture, Craft, Critique conference at the University of Iowa where this work received its first public hearing, and the several anonymous reviewers who have commented on my work in various contexts.

I want to thank, as well, the understanding yet demanding members of my doctoral examination committee, indispensable interlocutors all—Debra Fried, Robert Morgan, and Roger Gilbert. Special thanks to Roger Gilbert who maintained his interest in this work and provided a fine model for scholarly endeavor long after I left his official care and supervision.

Thanks are also due to the English Department of the University of Colorado at Denver and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to which it belongs for granting me a course release in order to prepare this manuscript for press.

And endless thanks to my wife for indulging me.



## Chapter One

# Getting in the Way: The Architecture of Address

For poetry makes nothing happen: it survives  
In the valley of its making where executives  
Would never want to tamper; it flows on south  
From ranches of isolation and the busy griefs,  
Raw towns that we believe and die in; it  
survives, A way of happening, a mouth.<sup>1</sup>

We who maintain a belief in the power of poetry continue to struggle against the implications of Auden's famous statement: "poetry makes nothing happen." As Michael Thurston observes, in the introduction to his *Making Something Happen*, "the line has come to summarize a set of institutional assumptions about poetry as a special kind of discourse, removed from the world of action and consequence and thus prevented from acting, prevented from having consequences."<sup>2</sup> Poetry is, in Auden's formulation, sequestered: "it survives/In the valley of its making..." and "flows on south/From ranches of isolation..." It is allowed only, as Thurston observes, to effect in "indirect and mediated ways."<sup>3</sup>

At least, Thurston argues, that is the conventional wisdom. Of course, Auden was not the first to observe or suffer from these "institutional assumptions." Each of the poets Thurston examines in *Making Something Happen* established his or her career well before Auden's poem was published in 1939, and each struggled against the notion that poetry was unable to engage history or social injustice well before Auden's proclamation.<sup>4</sup> And, of course, the generation of poets Thurston examines is not the first American generation to struggle with the notion that "poetry makes nothing happen." Nearly a century earlier Emerson had complained about the irrelevance of American Poetry, and Whitman fought, as Thurston's poets did, to create a socially relevant and politically effective poetry.

But the bluntness of Auden's admission seems new or at least newly powerful. And the ubiquity with which Auden is quoted on this matter suggests that Auden articulates this problem either more clearly or more forcefully than anyone before him. Auden did not create this problem, nor was he the only poet to notice it, and yet, in contemporary discussions of poetry's struggles to be relevant, Auden's poem is cited as often as any. In "Can Poetry Matter?" arguably one of the most important essays about poetry written in the last quarter-century, Dana Gioia's observations of poetry's contemporary irrelevance can hardly echo Auden more strongly without quoting him:

American poetry now belongs to a subculture. No longer part of the mainstream of artistic and intellectual life, it has become the specialized occupation of a relatively small and isolated group. Little of the frenetic

activity it generates ever reaches outside that closed group. As a class poets are not without cultural status. Like priests in a town of agnostics, they still command a certain residual prestige. But as individual artists they are almost invisible.<sup>5</sup>

The most compelling testimony to the uncommon power of Auden's formulation, however, comes not from the evidence of Auden's continuing relevance, but in the fact that, in at least one very prominent case a poet, who had every reason not to worry about his relevance, turned in mid-career to establish a new political efficacy in a way that exactly inverts Auden's imagination of poetry that makes nothing happen. Robert Lowell—blessed by one of the most distinguished American pedigrees, son of a family that just barely missed the Mayflower, beneficiary of every privilege of high class, and, early in his poetic career, the darling of the establishment giants Allen Tate, Yvor Winters, John Crowe Ransom, and Randall Jarrell—could clearly have enjoyed a long career in the admiration of such luminaries and of his parents' social class. Yet, in *Life Studies* (1959) and *For the Union Dead* (1964), Lowell consciously turns from his early, formal style in an attempt to become both a more interestingly contemporary poet and a more relevantly political one as well. Though Ginsberg's popularity provided some impetus for Lowell's change by making him feel that "his early poems 'now seemed like prehistoric monsters dragged down into the bog and death by their ponderous armor,'" the method of Lowell's true breakthrough, in "For the Union Dead," is suggested by Auden.<sup>6</sup> If, for Auden, poetry's ineffectiveness is registered by its sequestration in "the valley of its making," one might hypothesize that a poem could make something happen by escaping this valley and, as it were, get in the way, which is just what "For the Union Dead" does.

Thurston's poets share the idea. Their poetry "tries to make something happen" by "refus[ing] to remain aloof."<sup>7</sup> By recognizing the social milieu outside the poem, these poets engage their worlds and move beyond the confines of the writing table. Lowell, too, seeks to engage the social world—first with new candor in *Life Studies*, and then, in "For the Union Dead," by inhabiting the public space of the Boston Common and attempting to haunt the Common with his poem. Over the course of the poem, Lowell both describes the physical space of the Common and also engages the social, ideological, historical, and (therefore) functional meanings of that space. But his position is not neutral. He subtly alters the relationships of these meanings so they will communicate his own sense of Boston's social crisis, then masks this argument (however lightly) in seemingly neutral physical space he can describe with something approaching reportorial detachment, and finally fusing these meanings into the seemingly innocuous physical dimension of the space. In other words, Lowell uses the space of the Common to transmit his argument, and insofar as the argument will inhere in the Common, to put it in the way as much as the Common is, for the Bostonian, always in the way.

To put it another way, Lowell, first turns the Common into a reading, and then turns his reading into space—an imagined space, to be sure, but one associated into the Common, so that it becomes difficult to think of one without the other. As Henri Lefebvre puts it in his *Production of Space*:

When codes worked up from literary texts are applied to spaces—to urban spaces, say—we remain...on the purely descriptive level. Any attempt to use such codes as a means of deciphering social space must surely reduce that space itself to the status of a *message*, and the inhabiting of it to the status of a *reading*.<sup>8</sup>

As Lowell describes the Common, he translates it into the “codes” of a “literary text,” and, at least for a time, “reduces that space” to “a message” that can be read, turning “the inhabiting of it” into “a reading.” As we read, we enter the Common Lowell constructs through language, and gradually come to inhabit his reading, as if it were a space. But this is only part of the sleight by which Lowell puts his poem in the way. As he translates the space into text, Lowell can also translate his text, or argument, into space. Lowell can associate his own codes with those the space supplies—he can interlace his codes with those that pre-exist his poem—and alter the conceptual or representational dimension of the Common (that is to say the “common knowledge” about it) so that, for those who have read or heard the poem and subsequently find themselves on the Common, the space re-communicates the poet’s argument, making it nearly as difficult to avoid as the space itself.

Thurston’s poets “refuse to remain aloof.” Lowell wants to approach his audience through the Common in a way that, however indirect, is potentially more public and more powerful. While Thurston’s poets engage the world around them in dialogue, Lowell works to change its very environment, actively manipulating space at the level of its intelligible meanings.

### “FOR THE UNION DEAD”

Lowell is *the* giant of mid-Twentieth-Century American poetry. As Thurston puts it in his article “Robert Lowell’s Monumental Vision,” “Lowell’s own monumental status in postwar American poetry confers upon him the same emblematic and representative function the monument confers upon its figure.”<sup>9</sup> Lowell was not, however, always so visible. His first full-length volume, *Lord Weary’s Castle*, received extremely positive reviews and won the Pulitzer Prize. But his second, *The Mills of the Kavanaughs*, did not, and even Lowell soon worried that he would become irrelevant. In 1957, after seeing Allen Ginsberg performing on the West Coast, Lowell described his “his early poems” as dinosaurs doomed to extinction by their own size and complexity.<sup>10</sup> He abandoned his early, highly formal style to produce, *Life Studies*, widely considered his breakthrough.<sup>11</sup> Still, it wasn’t until Lowell had completed, performed, and published the poem “For the Union Dead” that he became a public figure, completely independent of the old guard that nourished him early. And it’s what Lowell does to the Boston Common in that poem—how he manipulates the intersection of the physical and representational dimensions of the space—that transforms him into a public poet, capable of making things happen, politically. While *Life Studies* began Lowell’s move toward new audiences, drawing along with rave reviews the commission from the Boston Arts Festival organizers under which Lowell produced “For the Union Dead,” Lowell’s transformation into a true public intellectual follows from the recitation of the poem on



the Boston Common, from the several encores and “thunderous applause” Lowell received.<sup>12</sup>

Under the title “Colonel Shaw and the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup>,” the poem went immediately into paperback reprints of *Life Studies* and appeared under its present title in *The Atlantic Monthly* in November of 1960.<sup>13</sup> The following year, Lowell was in attendance at President Kennedy’s inauguration and, a year later, in May 1962, was a guest at a White House dinner for French Minister of Culture Andre Malraux. According to Ian Hamilton, “Lowell... was fairly high on the list of those ‘artists and intellectuals’ whom the White House was anxious to flatter and impress.”<sup>14</sup> Lowell had become highly visible—a fact never missed in the reviews of the 1964 volume *For the Union Dead*. Irwin Ehrenpreis wrote, just before publication: “one can prophesy that his next book will establish his name as that normally thought of for ‘the’ American poet.”<sup>15</sup> An unsigned review of *For the Union Dead*, appearing in *Newsweek* in October 1964, noted that the book was already “an important literary event” with a remarkable “advanced sale of 1,500 copies in just two days.”<sup>16</sup> At the same time, Richard Poirer wrote: “Robert Lowell is, by something like a critical consensus, the greatest American poet of the mid-century, probably the greatest poet now writing in English.”<sup>17</sup> And Thomas Parkinson observed, in *Salmagundi*, that Lowell had “written a genuinely popular book—people who wouldn’t otherwise read poetry read it.”<sup>18</sup>

Such successes highlighted Lowell’s public visibility. In 1965, Lowell was again invited to the White House for an arts festival, this time by President Johnson. Though Lowell initially accepted the invitation, he later declined in a public letter, explaining:

every serious artist knows that he cannot enjoy public celebration without making subtle public commitments. After a weeks wondering, I have decided that I am conscience-bound to refuse your courteous invitation....

Although I am very enthusiastic about your domestic legislation and intentions, I nevertheless can only follow our present foreign policy with the greatest dismay and distrust.... I feel I am serving you and our country best by not taking part in the White House Festival of the Arts.<sup>19</sup>

Lowell had refused a President’s request before, in 1943 when, citing his “personal responsibility,” Lowell refused the draft in an open letter to Franklin Roosevelt.<sup>20</sup> But in 1943, Lowell was briefly jailed, registered as a CO, and transferred to a work prison in Connecticut. His pedigree may have made his refusal very visible, but it did not equate to political power.<sup>21</sup> But by 1965, Lowell had clearly come to believe he could act on behalf of the nation, and not simply according to his sense of “personal responsibility,” and he rose to the forefront of domestic resistance to the Vietnam War. In August, he addressed a crowd of student war protesters in Washington, D.C.; in November read at an anti-war benefit; and, just a few years later, in 1967, he would narrowly escape arrest at a draft-card burning.<sup>22</sup> He enjoyed his role as a public intellectual, and this role seems to have unfolded only following the composition and publication of “For the Union Dead.” Perhaps this is wishful reading. Perhaps a single poem cannot spur a poet’s rise to prominence. But if a poem can, “For the Union Dead” is that poem. Here, Lowell seems to have found a way to put the poem in the public’s eye, to do as much as any poem can

to draw the public's attention. Lowell haunts the Boston Common with his poem, altering the conceptual or ideological dimension by adding his poem to it. Through a series of analogical and metonymic movements, Lowell fuses the present-day Common with its own past, the South Boston Aquarium, "a thousand small town New England greens," and "the ditch" in South Carolina where Robert Gould Shaw and many other members of the famed Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> were buried. He thus re-imagines the Common as a grave that should confront Boston with the death at its very heart. If the poem changes the way anyone looks at the Common, the Common ever records and recalls the imagination of Lowell's poem; its arguments inhere in the space. The effect is to make the poem as unavoidable and as centrally important as the Common is to the city of Boston; insofar as Lowell is successful in insinuating his poem into the Common, he becomes the heart of Boston, a very important man.

Lowell's reconstitution of the Common begins as he fuses the South Boston Aquarium into his vision of the Common. The speaker's memory of the now-defunct aquarium opens onto the present:

The old South Boston Aquarium stands  
 in a Sahara of snow now. Its broken windows are boarded.  
 The bronze weathervane cod has lost half its scales.  
 The airy tanks are dry.

Once my nose crawled like a snail on the glass;  
 my hand tingled  
 to burst the bubbles  
 drifting from the noses of the cowed, compliant fish.  
 My hand draws back.... (1-9)<sup>23</sup>

Lowell conjures the memory, to activate within the contemporary vision some sense of the site's former life, to tie its past to its present. The hand appeared first in the memory, in the past tense, and was associated with the living aquarium, where it "tingled." When it "draws back" in the present tense, it draws the vibrant aquarium into the present. The aquarium is also drawn into the present by the mutually metamorphic exchange in the second stanza, where the speaker's nose turns to a mollusk, "a snail," and the fish suddenly have very human "noses." When the speaker returns to the present, he carries something of the aquarium with him if not in him. As long as he can conjure a past and fuse it into the present, Lowell alters the contemporary sense of the present scene, by making knowledge of history part of our functional understanding of the site at hand.

So Lowell will alter our sense of the Common by fusing its past and Boston's into its present aspect. In the third and fourth stanzas, Lowell recalls himself "pressed against the new barbed and galvanized//fence on the Boston Common" (12-13) an act that echoes his pushing against the aquarium's glass. Glass and fence are equated by the repetition of his physical address, and the Common's transformation into an aquarium—a transformation in which it comes to contain the part of local history the Aquarium represents—begins. Behind the fence, the heavy equipment consists of "dinosaur

steamshovels,” which—as they work downward “to gouge their underworld garage,” ever closer to the water as they “crop...up tons of mush”—replace “the dark downward and vegetating kingdom/of the fish and reptile” (14, 18, 17, 10–11). Of course, as Lowell strives to transform the Common into the aquarium and so save a piece of Boston history, he also revives the memory of the garage, dug into the Common and completed not long before the June 1960 Boston Arts Festival. As with the description of the aquarium, his recollection of the construction draws it into the present tense:

A girdle of orange, Puritan-pumpkin colored girders  
braces the tingling Statehouse,

shaking over the excavations, as it faces Colonel Shaw  
and his bell-cheeked Negro infantry  
on St. Gaudens’ shaking Civil War relief,  
propped by a plank splint against the garages earthquake. (19–24)

The “splint” implies a break or wound, and from this wound the history of Shaw’s Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> Colored Regiment flows into the Common. Lowell recalls that “Two months after marching through Boston,/half the regiment was dead” and remembers as well that “at the dedication,/William James could almost hear the bronze Negroes breathe” (25–28). And thus he renews a sense of the Common’s history as well as a sense of its contemporary involvements with the garage and the Aquarium.

Lowell then returns to describe the Shaw Memorial in a way that not only fuses the Common’s history into its present but also cements the aquarium within it. “Their monument,” Lowell writes, “sticks like a fishbone/in the city’s throat” (29–30). As the lines turn the monument into a “fishbone,” it transforms the men it represents into fish, extending a creepy associative chain. Only two objects in the poem are bronze—the weathervane cod and the “bronze Negroes” on the relief. The cod, as it sits atop the South Boston Aquarium, represents both the life that has vanished from the tanks below and the decay of that life; it is itself decayed, having “lost half its scales,” and yet it resists the decay long enough to function as a monitor. Just so, the “bronze Negroes” on the relief represent the life that has vanished from the Common, the men whom the poem imagines alive “marching through Boston,” two months before their death. If this similarity weren’t enough to force a disturbingly dehumanizing comparison of the men of the 54<sup>th</sup> to the Aquarium’s fish, the description of the soldiers as the “bell-cheeked Negro infantry” (22) amplifies this metamorphosis as the “bell-cheek[s]” evoke the fish-expelled bubbles which, like the breath of the men, are gone. Beyond reminding us that the black soldiers are gone, and beyond the initially disturbing dehumanization of them, this comparison suggests that these men were, like the Aquarium’s fish, simply on display for the pleasure of Boston, which did not have to witness their deaths. And insofar as the men are compared specifically to the cod, the fish upon which much of Massachusetts’ economy was built prior to the Twentieth Century, Lowell seems to suggest that these men were not simply exhibits but commodities to be traded and consumed; the economy is a moral one in which Boston pretends to export under the

brand Abolition a more humane view of “the Negro.” The deaths of the 54<sup>th</sup>’s soldiers, however, would seem to destabilize arguments about this economy’s efficacy. If Abolition is about a more humane view of “the Negro,” why does it send these men to horrible deaths? As the comparison of the bronze soldiers to the half-smoothed cod begins to evoke the soldiers’ dead bodies, even as the cod evokes the deaths of the now-missing fish, Lowell brings home the horror of their demise, as if to force the city to reckon with the price of its own righteousness. The description of the monument as a “fishbone” that “sticks” “in the city’s throat”—in the present tense—suggests, even more horribly, that the city tries not so much to reckon its moral economy but to digest it; Lowell comes to indicate the presence of the wound.

Of course, as part of the relief, Shaw himself is also bronze and is also connected to the cod in ways that further dehumanize the soldiers. Lowell’s characterization of Shaw as “lean/as a compass-needle” (31–32) and the claim that Shaw “cannot bend his back” (40) make the colonel a directional device like the weathervane cod: in each case the bronze subject is moved by a power beyond its control to hold a direction. Furthermore, the attribution of animalistic qualities to the bronze Shaw—his “angry *wren*like vigilance,/a *greyhound*’s gentle tautness” (33–34)—perforate his humanity and invite the further comparison to the cod. And here the disturbing dehumanization of the soldiers is compounded. In the comparison of bronze figures to the cod, Shaw dominates, for, as the cod sits above the Aquarium, on the memorial Shaw sits above and in front of his soldiers on his mounted steed, obscuring some of them (it is called the *Shaw* Memorial, however much Lowell’s “their” strives to reorient the remembrance). So if Shaw occupies the position of cod, then the soldiers become the absent, and presumably dead, fish. So Lowell coaxes the memorial, in his re-imagined Common-Aquarium, to repeat the erasure of the Massachusetts’ 54<sup>th</sup>, again invoking their deaths.

Vital to the poem’s work is the shift into the present tense in these stanzas. In turning to the present, Lowell must ostensibly be turning from the history to the “monument,” which he can describe in the present. But by the time Lowell concludes, declaring that “when he leads his black soldiers to death,/he cannot bend his back,” it is hard to tell which is primary, Lowell’s description of the relief or his recollection of the historical moment depicted by the relief. In the ambiguity, Lowell invites a relocation of the original march to his present Common (as he relocated the garage excavations into the present in fifth stanza) even as he describes the relief. And this relocation—predicated on the structural identity of the historical present, which Lowell could aptly use in describing the event the relief remembers, and the simple present, used to describe the relief in Lowell’s present moment—enables the poem’s important architectural work.

By relocating the march into the present-day Common, Lowell actually transforms the Shaw Memorial and the Common into the poem’s real “monument.” As John Gillis reminds, the monument is that which “concentrat[es] time in space.”<sup>24</sup> And here the concentration is performed by the entire spatial complex of the memorial *and* the Common imagined as aquarium. More importantly, it is the space that turns this space into “*their* monument,” that turns from the memorial’s focus on Shaw to a more inclusive and successful remembrance. Kirk Savage tells us that, in Civil War memorials, “the figure of the common soldier...is always erect and unwounded—an image of bodily continuity that seeks to displace or overcome the memory of bodies violated and destroyed.”<sup>25</sup> But on the St. Gaudens relief, only Shaw is perfectly “erect and

unwounded”; his mounted figure actually disrupts any view of the common soldiers of the 54<sup>th</sup> and therefore displaces any bodily continuity that might belie their death. Only the Common itself, the Boston ground where they last marched whole and living, can evoke their unwounded bodies. Only the Common can make their monument—not the seriously foreshortened relief that faces *away* from the Common.

Even before the poem moves to its most serious memorial work—exhuming the dead soldiers and re-interring them in the Common—the radical method of Lowell’s poem is clear. Lowell attempts to get in the way not so much by speaking about something that matters as by engaging something that matter, something that is already physically in the way, the Common itself. Lowell’s work is still argumentative work, as any work on monument must be. But as the physical Common is already a spatial translation of values, it gives Lowell (or any other poet, for that matter) a means by which to translate his (or her) own arguments into space. Of course, as with almost any monument, the meaning of the space is shaped by the dedication, which one must hear to receive the full import of the monument’s architecture. But for those who have read it, Lowell’s poem has an uncommon power. The poem, as Peter Davidson recently observed, still “sticks like a fishbone/in the city’s throat.”<sup>26</sup> It is in the way, seemingly as unpassable as the Common itself, which becomes a translation of the poem that translated it.

Lowell turns from the relief to complete his work by drawing the graves of the 54<sup>th</sup> from South Carolina into the Common. Lowell begins this metamorphosis by analogizing the Common to the “thousand small town New England greens” (41), then shifting his attention to the ever-adjacent “graveyards of the Grand Army of the Republic” (44), forcing the comparison between the Common and these spaces. As on the Common, inhuman figures memorialize the dead. The “stone statues of the abstract Union Soldier/grow slimmer and younger each year” (45–46), becoming “wasp-waisted” (47). Like Shaw, in the postures of commemoration, they become removed from their humanity.

Perhaps this is why Lowell reminds us:  
 Shaw’s father wanted no monument  
 except the ditch  
 where his son’s body was thrown  
 and lost with his “niggers.” (49–52)

Lowell seems to follow Shaw’s father in his distrust of the monumental figure, which receives its most obvious expression as Lowell declares “The ditch is nearer” (53). Given the dehumanizing portraiture of the relief and the “abstract Union soldier,” the ditch (wherever it is) seems a more fitting monument, nearer to what Shaw deserves inasmuch as the ditch does not distort his figure and nearer to the truth of the 54<sup>th</sup>’s faith. The elder Shaw and Lowell seem ill at ease with the deceptive consolation of the figural memorial that presents “an image of bodily continuity...to displace or overcome the memory of bodies violated and destroyed, even though,” as Kirk Savage writes, “such violence to the body is the defining premise of warfare.”<sup>27</sup> Lowell, in any case, advocates a figure that will force Boston to confront the fact of their deaths, a ditch that will repeat the grave

rather than a figure that repeats the healthy body. The Common's "underworld garage" provides the ditch that enables Lowell to refigure the space as a mass grave, a memorial to the deaths of the 54<sup>th</sup>, rather than to their lives—perhaps granting Shaw's father's wish.

As Lowell turns to examine the Mosler Safe ad, he both continues to argue the dishonesty of monumental representations and begins to articulate the dangers inherent in the absence of memorials. "There are no statues for the last war here" (54), Lowell observes. Instead, on Boylston Street:

a commercial photograph  
shows Hiroshima boiling  
  
over a Mosler Safe, the "Rock of Ages"  
that survived the blast. (55–58)

In the absence of "statues," the ad emerges to perform the work of monument. It presents "an image of bodily continuity that seeks to displace or overcome the memory of bodies violated and destroyed," though here the body that is presented whole is not a human body.<sup>28</sup> But instead of displacing the erasure of Hiroshima's citizens with a compensatory vision of their prior health, the ad repeats their erasure in the figure of the "boiling" firestorm—frustrating both the false consolations of bodily reconstruction and the potentially more horrible but more honest and necessary remembrance of their deaths. The ad cleanly repeats the memorial performance, but perverts it, answering the erasure of the dead not with their imaginative reconstitution but rather with a testament to the deathless commercial product. The ad even perverts religion for commercial gain, turning the Christian phrase "Rock of Ages" into a slogan. Any attempt to find a personal, spiritual, or sublime compensation in the photograph will be frustrated by the ad's celebration of material superiority.<sup>29</sup>

Like the figural monument, the ad dishonors the dead by erasing their suffering and their deaths and enabling a vision of continuity that benefits the survivors rather than compensates the dead. So one might read this passage as an argument against all monuments, something consonant with the declaration that "Space is nearer" (58). Perhaps Lowell means to suggest that nothingness would seem to be better.<sup>30</sup> But as Lowell "crouch[es] to [his] television set" to see "the drained faces of Negro school-children rise like balloons," he seems to argue against the erasure of monuments as well (59–60). The children seem trapped in the television—even as the soldiers of the 54<sup>th</sup> seem trapped in the relief, like "the cowed, compliant fish" in the aquarium. Thurston argues that we should not link the children with the fish, even if the description of their faces rising like balloons "resembles bubbles rising from the dark and vegetative kingdom of the old aquarium." Thurston holds rather that "the 'Negro school-children' and the 'bell-cheeked Negro infantry' possess what even Shaw, who seems 'to suffocate,' does not: breath."<sup>31</sup> But the children—under the water implied by the similarity of Lowell's crouching here to his initial press against the aquarium glass—rise not like "breath," but rather like exhalation, which is what rises "from the noses of the cowed, compliant fish." If Shaw seems to suffocate, neither the soldiers nor the school-children breathe easily: all of them seem to hold the breath they have—"Henry James could

*almost* hear the bronze Negroes breathe” (emphasis added), and the school-children’s faces are “drained.” Breath has been evacuated from the poem as the one thing that could make a difference in the lives of these children—a sense of history—has been evacuated from the Common.

A sense of the sacrifices and the struggles of the 54<sup>th</sup>’s soldiers might help these children. The soldiers of the 54<sup>th</sup>, though segregated from the rest of the army, helped prove the worth of African-American soldiers and thereby opened the door for subsequent racial integration in the military.<sup>32</sup> If their example was not eclipsed, as their bodies are by Shaw’s on the memorial relief, these children (either those being bussed to integrate the public schools in Arkansas in 1959 or the college students who protested for integration nationwide in 1960) might not have to fight so hard for integration.<sup>33</sup> But these children, and the world in which they struggle, seem cut off from the example of the 54<sup>th</sup> even as the ditch and the space (of the thirteenth and fourteenth stanzas) separate the “Negro” that describes them from the one that describes the soldiers in the seventh stanza.

The same ditch and the same space separate the adjective “Negro” from its much more charged relative, “niggers,” which appears just two stanzas earlier. While this seems like a step in the right direction, it may prove the greatest obstacle, as the space between the two words may be the measure of a cultural amnesia that abets the survival of racism and perpetuates the struggle for equality. Lowell dramatizes this cycle as he introduces the slur then erases it. Steven Gould Axelrod has argued that the epithet is derived from the speech of Fort Wagner’s commanding officer,<sup>34</sup> and Helen Vendler proposes a different provenance, claiming that it was Charles Russell Lowell, Shaw’s brother-in-law and one of Robert Lowell’s ancestors.<sup>35</sup> Regardless of its historical origin, in the poem the word seems to come from the same mouth that expresses a desire for “no monument/but the ditch,” that of Shaw’s father. As the elder Shaw was a life-long Abolitionist, the relocation of the slur perforates the common sense of the Abolitionist as a perfectly moral non-racist activist and closes the gap between Civil War Boston and Civil War South Carolina, suggesting that Boston was never as virtuous as it pretends and that its pretense had actually hidden and ensured the perpetuation of the racism these children fight. But the hatred, most audible in the slur, is seemingly erased as the poem crosses the ditch and the space and returns to “Negro.”

Ideally, the ditch and the space, which evoke the mass grave of 54<sup>th</sup>, would inscribe their deaths into the Common and reconnect Boston to both their struggle and their example. But even this space is displaced—by the garage—not only further distancing Boston from its history but perverting the Common’s ghosts in newly disturbing ways. In poem’s imaginary space, position and configuration motivate all meaning; congruence allows Lowell to reposition the aquarium and the ditch and link the relief’s soldiers to the cod. Once again, in the poem’s final vision, position both enables and encodes the poem’s argument: once the Common harbors machines where it has once harbored only history, only public life, then the history and the public life may become machines as well. This is precisely what happens to both the men of the 54<sup>th</sup> and the school-children. In their relief, the soldiers have already been unsettled by the construction, “propped by a plank splint against the garage’s earthquake.” Lowell’s reimagination of the Common as grave resettles them. But, in the end, these men, once compared to the aquarium’s fish, disappear as “giant finned cars nose forward like fish” (70). Lowell tells us “The

Aquarium is gone” (69) and we understand that, as “Parking spaces luxuriate like civic/sandpiles in the heart of Boston” (17–18), they displace history. The metal cars are now closer to the city’s heart than its bronze soldiers; they now rise from the grave the poem has imagined for their bodies. As disturbing as this displacement is, even more disturbing is the implicit equivalence of the cars with the soldiers. As the cars cannot be heroized, the comparison forces the metaphoric transformation back on the soldiers, who now seem mere machines whose time has gone, who can be replaced by other machines, better suited to contemporary needs. The soldiers, who (the poem’s epigraph reminds us) gave all they had in the service of their country, become servants instead of the benefactors of service, and their contributions come to be seen as expected, granted rather than given. They lose their humanity and become, like the cars of the poem’s conclusion, the agents of a “savage servility” (72). So, far from living in memory as a pioneering example of the contributions of free blacks, the men of the 54<sup>th</sup> are enslaved and driven to ensure the health of Boston’s moral economy. In the end, they are exhausted, they are the exhaust, the rising exhalation.

So too are the children used up. As long as Boston pretends that the troubles are elsewhere—to be seen on television instead of on the Common—it can rest assured that its work is done.<sup>36</sup> But, Lowell seems to suggest, to rest easy and not to continue to be disturbed by the price of history is to erase the struggle and exhaust the strugglers, only reinforcing the problem that is supposed to be solved. So, as the men of the 54<sup>th</sup> are replaced by the cars, their struggle is erased only to be repeated by the school-children on the television—suffering in a struggle for the greater good. Lowell’s warning turns out to be eerily prescient: fourteen years later, Boston finds itself boiling in racial conflict as Irish-Americans in South Boston attack a bus of black school-children who are being transported to integrate the schools. Boston forgets its history, and history repeats itself. This is the point of Lowell’s gloss on the poem in a 1964 letter to the *Village Voice*. Lowell describes his motives for writing “For the Union Dead”: “I lament the loss of the old Abolitionist spirit; the terrible injustice, in the past and in the present, of the American treatment of the Negro is of the greatest urgency to me as a man and as a writer.”<sup>37</sup> By raising the issue of injustice after bemoaning the loss “of the old Abolitionist spirit,” Lowell suggests this loss may be a contributing cause of the injustice.

So, while monumental representation distorts the history it should represent, the erasure of monuments and memorials threatens to break all ties with history and is, therefore, no less detrimental to the long-term health of the polity. Something like a monument must re-inscribe this history or at least mark the absence of monument in a way that will force a reckoning of history. Something must stand in the way of both the distorted recollection and complete amnesia. The Boston Arts Festival commission gives Lowell an opportunity to stand himself in the way, but only for a day, regardless of his success.<sup>38</sup> The poem must be made, like a monument, to stand in the Common, to “stick like a fishbone/in the city’s throat.”

## GETTING INSIDE

The poem comes to haunt the Common by creating what Henri Lefebvre, in his *Production of Space*, calls a “representational space.” For Lefebvre, human civilization



replaces “absolute” or “natural” space with “abstract” space that subdivides into “social spaces” as people use them. Lefebvre identifies three kinds of social space: (1) ‘lived’ or ‘used’ spaces defined largely by their physical use or practice; (2) the ‘mental,’ ‘conceived’ or ‘ordered’ spaces such as the conceptualized spaces of philosophers; and (3) “representational spaces” which are both conceptual and lived. Lefebvre explains “representational space” thus:

*Representational space:* space as directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users,’ but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who *describe* and aspire to do no more than describe. This is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs.<sup>39</sup>

By Lefebvre’s definitions, the Common is always a social space, and insofar as Lowell is concerned with its use—either as a public ground, an assembly area, or a parking garage—a ‘lived’ or ‘used’ space. Insofar as Lowell’s recitation of the poem is a public address, Lowell’s recitation enforces the space’s public character by using it as a public space. But as Lowell describes social space of the Common, connecting it with the South Boston Aquarium, the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup>’s grave, the safe, and the world viewed via the television, Lowell creates in the poem a representational space—a “system” of “symbols and signs” that are, ostensibly, “non-verbal,” though they are presented verbally, that may “overlay...physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” and envelop the “‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” who “live” in this space.

Because the Common is already a representational space before the poem addresses it, Lowell can do more than overlay his system on the Common: he can actually insinuate his representations into the Common. Since the Common is already not only a lived space but also a conceptual one (the name Common draws attention to the most important element of this conception), Lowell’s re-conceived system will not appear as a graft or annex. Rather, any conceptual argument Lowell presents will be allocated to the poem’s conceptual dimension alongside common knowledge. And, insofar as Lowell’s representational order can destabilize the arguments encoded in the Common’s traditional significance, Lowell’s imagination of the Common can stand in for the traditional order, dominate the conceptual dimension of the Common, and become the Common’s significance, even if only temporarily.

This operation relies on one of the fundamental assumptions of monumental architecture—that space will translate rhetoric into a form larger and more durable than a single human life. Monumental architecture assumes that spatial forms can encode and communicate the values of its builders, values that are settled in public debate over the design. In the end, the design will displace the deliberation of its production with a whole, atemporal form that should both image consensus and promote the same in later generations. As Kirk Savage explains, the monument is “supposed to remain a fixed point, stabilizing both the physical and the cognitive landscape” and, at times, shaping

each till each person's mental map of the world is congruent with the order of the physical landscape.<sup>40</sup> The monument should produce in subsequent generations the consensus that guided its erection and ensure that time does not alter communal values. But while the translation of value into architecture is a key element in the ploy to resist time, the displacement of the human articulators with the architectural ones actually renders the monument susceptible to change. The assumption that the monument will produce a perfect symmetry between the late experience of the monument and the original design argument is supposed to constrict potential readings of the monument. Any reading that cannot account for the order is flawed, and the order should support only one reading. But, then, any reading that perfectly accounts for the spatial order of the monument can appear to reflect the intention embedded in the design. A reconception posing as a reading can effectively implicate itself into the monument's conceptual dimension.

Lowell offers a reconception of the Common that is seemingly produced by a reading of its contemporary order. Since it does not revisit the Common's establishment and translate out of the space its initial defining representations, Lowell's poem does not seem to fight the common knowledge or the history of the Common and does not, then, appear as a revision of the Common. As long as the poem seems simply to read the space, to articulate the position of its elements and their relationships, then the poem seems to respond to the space, not redefine it. Thus, the poem encourages us to feel that the space itself, not the poet, produces the argument. The argument, then, must lie within the space, in its conception. Argument is translated into space, and space is left to communicate argument.

This gives the poem the uncommon staying power to which Peter Davison testifies when he writes, "Four decades later it still 'sticks like a fishbone/in the city's throat.'"<sup>41</sup> The poem does more than offer "a point for idealization as a means by which readers can textually live and reaffirm their tentative and awkward sense of the moments significance" or "a space for... contemplation..., for the training and the testing of human responses."<sup>42</sup> The space the poem offers is the very real space of the Common, reshaped by Lowell's use. In the end, the poem is as unavoidable as the Common, only to be ignored by choice. It becomes a kind of monument.

*The Architecture of Address* seeks to describe the means by which several poems, including "For the Union Dead," strive to become monuments and the history of this poetic desire in America. The second chapter, focusing on "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," attempts to identify a source for Whitman's own monumental vision in the dedicatory rhetoric of Daniel Webster and Edward Everett and to examine concepts of nineteenth century architecture that support Whitman's imagination of the ferry as a space in which citizens can be coordinated through their bodies. The third chapter explains how Hart Crane, in *The Bridge*, attempts to succeed Whitman's vision of the ferry, to transform the Brooklyn Bridge into a monument that will both coordinate citizens with reference to an organizing architecture and integrate seemingly discrete episodes of American history into a continuous vision that will articulate citizens with one another and with the whole nation. The fourth chapter brings Lowell together with Whitman and Crane to examine the relationship between the three poets and their poems. Ultimately, the fourth chapter argues that the strongest relationship between the three poems lies in their common orientation to public spaces and the rhetoric those spaces exemplify. Each poem,

regardless of its relationship with a predecessor, adopts the rhetoric of the space in order to publish itself to the community. The pattern—the monumental rhetoric—repeated in these poems suggests a mode, an inherited internal repertoire, though the similarities these poems share record not a common inheritance but rather the parallel evolution of a new poetic mode. The fifth chapter suggests the future of this mode by examining its deployment in the work of three contemporary poets.

I should note that, in the following chapters, I will be using the term “monument” in a somewhat restricted sense. I do not mean “monument” to be synonymous with “memorial” or with “statue,” though in popular parlance these terms are often convertible. We see in Michael North’s *The Final Sculpture* these terms being converted into one another with great frequency. Just so, in Michael Thurston’s article “Robert Lowell’s Monumental Vision,” we see Thurston treating the statue of Stuyvesant in “Inauguration Day: January 1953” or the statue in “Christmas Eve Under Hooker’s Statue” as monuments. These are monuments, if we treat that word etymologically, erections meant to remind and warn. But the monument I indicate in the title is not any public erection.

The monument in this study is always a space, an interior, organized by one or more architectural (and perhaps statuary, perhaps sculptural) forms. Even the interior form is situational—as in the case of the Washington Monument, the most important interior is that formed between the body of a viewer and the apex of the obelisk, a right triangle in which the viewer is contained in a posture of admiration—it is no less real. The spatial interior is absolutely vital to the work of monument. The spatial interior, in part, models the more important conceptual interior of the monument, the ideas or values for which the monument stands and which it seeks to communicate. But most importantly the spatial interior, as it may contain persons, may contain their bodies, models the ideological containment each monument seeks to perform. It is this interiority, more than anything else, the poems I examine seek to appropriate.

These poems, as they work to become contained within the monument’s space—to get in the way—seek to appropriate these interiors so they may contain readers as monuments contain their viewers. These poems seek to become unavoidable as monument by developing interiors both geometric and conceptual. They get in the way, and they seek to contain us, by adopting the way of monument, the architecture of address.

## Chapter Two

### The Street or Ferry-boat or Public Assembly: Whitman and the Making of Monument

Years before Auden would write of poetry's ineffectiveness, Emerson famously complained that the poets of the early American republic would "shrink from celebrating" life, that he and his contemporaries did not "with sufficient plainness, or sufficient profoundness, address [them]selves to life...."<sup>1</sup> As Lowell would respond to Auden, Whitman responded to Emerson's complaint, though more directly and more voluminously. The first poem of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (the poem later to be known as "Song of Myself"), begins by rejoicing: "I celebrate myself."<sup>2</sup> Far from shrinking from celebration, Whitman makes it his first move. The thousands of lines that follow show that Whitman's fight against the sequestration of poetry from life involves a transformation of style as well as of sentiment. Everything about the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, from the engraved portrait instead of the authors name, to the lengthy preface, to the poems themselves—the [number] untitled poems written in no recognizable metrical form and resembling more the Bible or MacPherson's hoax Ossian than anything known as "poetry" in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century (on either side of the Atlantic)—was a deliberate breach of literary decorum. Some readers refused to recognize it as poetry, which was probably just what Whitman wanted, so his work would be judged by new standards. Whitman had begun to remove his work from the vales of timid wit Emerson found all about him just eleven years earlier.

But it's the second edition, appearing a year later in 1856, that offers the poem I want to discuss here, the poem that most directly gets in the way of its readers and becomes absolutely unavoidable in ways that will become important to Lowell and others—the "Sun-Down Poem" later titled "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."

"Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is remarkable among the poems of the first two editions as it is situated in a particular place. Unlike the eventual "Song of Myself," with its numerous shifts of scene, or poems like "Song of the Answerer" which occur in absolute, unparticular places, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" has a definite and specific setting—on *Brooklyn Ferry* on the East River<sup>3</sup>—to which it repeatedly turns its attentions both to actuate and to punctuate a rather complicated address.<sup>4</sup> The pattern is established in the opening lines:

Flood-tide below me! I see you face to face!  
Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also  
face to face.  
Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how  
curious vou

are to me!  
 On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning  
 home,  
 are more curious to me than you suppose,  
 And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more  
 to me, and  
 more in my meditations, than you might suppose. (1–5)

Whitman will, occasionally, enter more philosophical considerations, as he does in the poem's second section, but these are always occasioned by the sight of the crossers in this very specific location, to which such considerations always return.

"Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is always focused on a very specific locale, as is Lowell's poem. And Whitman's poem, like Lowell's after it, uses the location as a means to address. Where Lowell addresses his fellow contemporary Bostonians and the Americans about them, Whitman addresses his fellow ferry-riders (his fellow Brooklynites and Manhattanites) and their descendants. But in Whitman's poem, this address is explicit, whereas in Lowell's poem it remains implicit. In the opening lines of Whitman's poem, the scenic description seems to occasion, rather than accomplish, the address, whereas in Lowell's poem, the scenic description does all the address so Lowell never has to address his audience directly.

Given this difference, it may seem that, whatever the historical relation to Lowell's poem, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" shares a deeper kinship with the instances of the type M.H.Abrams describes in his essay "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric."<sup>5</sup> Abrams actually lists "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" as an American exemplar of the genre which includes what Abrams calls "the greatest Romantic achievements,"<sup>6</sup> among them Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight" and Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey." Abrams defines the "greater Romantic lyric" thus:

Some of the poems are called odes, while the others approach the ode in having lyric magnitude and a serious subject, feelingfully meditated. They present a determinate speaker in a particularized, and usually a localized, outdoor setting, whom we overhear as he carries on, in a fluent vernacular which rises easily to a more formal speech, a sustained colloquy, sometimes with himself or with the outer scene, but more frequently with a silent human auditor, present or absent. The speaker begins with a description of the landscape; an aspect or change of aspect in the landscape evokes a varied but integral process of memory, thought, anticipation, and feeling which remains closely interwoven with the outer scene. In the course of this meditation the lyric speaker achieves an insight, faces up to a tragic loss, comes to a moral decision, or resolves and emotional problem. Often the poem rounds upon itself to end where it began, at the outer scene, but with an altered mood and deepened understanding which is the result of the intervening meditation.<sup>7</sup>

Whitman's poem does follow this pattern to some extent, as James Dougherty has argued at great length in his *Walt Whitman and the Citizen's Eye*.<sup>8</sup> Even a casual reader will note that, though Whitman's poem does not begin precisely with "a description of the landscape," the apostrophic addresses to the river and the clouds and the sun that open the poem evoke, as they invoke, the outer scene. The repeated compounding description of this outer scene cycles in a meditative fashion, as the speaker returns to certain elements, such as the sea gulls. And the poem closes with a mood different from that in which it was begun, an almost mystical chorus that is more than the multiplication of the speaker's single voice, a change that may seem the result of meditative insights that occupy the poem's central sections. The reading of the poem as a transcendental vision, advanced by critics such as James Gargano and Paul Orlov<sup>9</sup>, encourages such a view by casting the poem's action in a mental state; Richard Pascal has even called the poem "a kind of dramatic meditation,"<sup>10</sup> following, perhaps, Whitman's own announcement of his "meditations" in fifth line of the poem. Finally, the poem has a distinct vector of address, and the person or persons on the receiving end are silent, as in the poems of Abrams's genre.

But the casual reader may also note a number of obvious differences. Though the scene of Whitman's poems is out of doors, it is not away from them. The settings for most of Abrams's exemplars are markedly rural; by contrast, that of Whitman's poem, though it involves natural elements such as the estuary and the sky and the sea gulls, is bounded by the cityscapes of Manhattan and Brooklyn: it is urban. This is not to reduce the Romantic poems to 'nature' poetry and to remove them from the human: I heed Abrams's caveat: "Romantic writers, though nature poets, were humanists above all, for they dealt with the nonhuman only insofar as it is the occasion for the activity which defines man: thought, the process of intellection."<sup>11</sup> Rather, it is to emphasize the essentially urban and essentially social nature of Whitman's poesis. Whereas Wordsworth makes for the countryside and the picturesque sight of the ruined abbey to find a calm in which to observe his mind working, Whitman engages his intellect in the midst of those with whom he would share his work, those with whom he shares "the streets of Manhattan island," "the street or ferry-boat or public assembly" (57, 81).

Which brings us to another distinguishing feature of Whitman's poem, the width of its vector of address, its publicity. The Romantic poems Abrams uses to define his genre are often soliloquies, but are occasionally addressed to another person, usually a single auditor, often one close to the poet, such as the sister Wordsworth addresses in "Tintern Abbey." And the reception of the meditation is not an integral part of the poem's communicative loop, for the addressee, whether it be the self, a piece of paper, or a sister or friend, serves primarily as a recorder of the meditation which, Abrams notes, is, in these instances of the greater Romantic lyric, the "*raison d'être* of the poem."<sup>12</sup> Wordsworth ends "Tintern Abbey" by remarking to his "dear Friend" that once he is dead she shall not forget what he has shown her there:

Nor wilt thou then forget,  
That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape. were to me

More dear, both for themselves, and for thy sake.<sup>13</sup>

Her function in the poem is as a rememberer. In contrast, the communicative loop is the primary trope in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” And the loop is not a simple one, which conceives of only one addressee. Whitman directs his apostrophes to the single reader (“you”) and to all readers in all times and all places (“men and women of a generation or ever so many generations hence” (21)), actual and possible, to what Elias Canetti would call an “open crowd.”

James Dougherty, after pushing Abrams’s comparison as far as it will go, recognizes this difference as well when he writes:

...this poem does not end just with “meanings...brought to [the scene] by the private mind which perceives it,” as Abrams said of the British poems. As E.Fred Carlisle said, Whitman does not reduce the persons and things he sees to simple projections of his own subjectivity, but “insists on their own independent, other reality,” a reality discovered through his dialogic relation with them. In the cityscape there is a “scheme” through which meaning might again be made public. So the identification of a literary model is not enough to account for this poem.<sup>14</sup>

He recognizes both the civic quality of the scene and the expansive publicity of its mode of address that distinguish the poem from Abrams’s exemplars.

Dougherty’s analysis and Abrams’s proposal are certainly apt: as Whitman’s Preface to the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* does strongly echo Wordsworth’s own preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, with its proto-democratic interest in the commonest man, blazes a trail for Whitman’s democratic project, it’s not unimaginable that Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” could have provided Whitman with an adaptable pattern. But, as Dougherty argues, a comparative analysis of this kind tends to emphasize the distinguishing features of Whitman’s poem and so helps us get at its essential character.<sup>15</sup>

In the following, I hope to show that the essential character of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” is a distinctly American one that bears certainly resemblances to Abrams’s greater Romantic lyric but is ultimately founded on traditions other than those of the loco-descriptive and topographical poetry Abrams cites as forebears of the greater Romantic lyric. I hope to show that Whitman works from more local models.

The American model from which Whitman takes the most is a genre with which Whitman, as an American, as a Brooklynite and as a journalist, would have been familiar, a genre that would have offered Whitman a structural model similar to that Abrams describes as the greater Romantic lyric, namely the commemorative and dedicatory addresses of early nineteenth-century America. Like Abrams’s exemplars, the commemorative speeches of Edward Everett and of Daniel Webster move from a description of the local scene to a vivid recounting of events which took place there, at times dwelling on them in an almost meditative fashion, events which are registered in the landscape, which is then re-observed in the concluding portions of the addresses with a changed aspect, with a knowledge of the events that mark the landscape and make the particular scene a site of interest. These addresses may even share roots with Abram’s

exemplars, in eighteenth century topographical or loco-descriptive poetry, in pastoral elegy, or in classical epideixis. But, unlike the topographical poetry and the greater Romantic lyric Abrams describes these early republican addresses are explicitly directed to the public; so, they model Whitman's poem exactly, from its attention to landscape to its wide vector of address.

But while epideictic republican oratory provides the structural model for "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," it is not Whitman's only source. One will quickly note that one of the major differences between Whitman's poem and the oratorical models I will identify is that orations belong to special occasions, while Whitman's poem seems occasioned by one of the most recurring and quotidian of activities: the evening commute. In the latter parts of this chapter, I argue that the tenets of architectural organicism, which reached something of a peak in America during the years Whitman was first developing *Leaves of Grass*, enable Whitman to treat space as occasion and translate some of the spatial arguments of epideictic oratory into everyday life. In particular, I will examine how the movement toward measurements based on the human body, in the effort to create environments that respond to the needs of the body, imagine environments that make the human body implicit everywhere—in doorways, windows, hand-rails, and benches. Such a system not only enables Whitman to imagine those who cross with him and those who will cross in the future, it allows him to write his signature in the built environment and invite his current and future readers to see him even if he's not right there. The built environment can become the sign of the audience and of the orator.

Ultimately, I will argue the spatial implication Whitman undertakes in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" both amplifies Whitman's direct address to his future readers and enables the more implicit addresses I will, in subsequent chapters, identify in Lowell's "For the Union Dead" and Hart Crane's *The Bridge*—poems that extend the mode of spatial address Whitman creates in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."

## I. WHITMAN AND THE ORATORY OF EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA

A good deal of Whitman criticism discusses the importance of oratory to a consideration of his poetry. Perhaps the earliest serious consideration is F.O. Matthiessen's examination, in *American Renaissance*, of oratory as one of Whitman's primary metaphors for the poem, a consideration in which Matthiessen draws darkly the lines between Whitman and Emerson, whom he proposes as the archetype for Whitman's idea of the orator.<sup>16</sup> C. Carroll Hollis has identified other possible sources for Whitman's ideas of oratory, including the English orator Martin Farquhar Tupper, or the rhetoric texts of Charles Murray Nairne, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Henry Day, and Thomas Sheridan, from which Whitman had copied passages into his notes.<sup>17</sup> But, as Hollis argues, these models tell us more about Whitman's oratorical ambitions—his plans, for instance, to write "barrels of lectures" upon his return from New Orleans in the late 1840s—than about the oratorical character of his works. More recent criticism, including that of Tenny Nathanson and of Roger Gilbert, has challenged Whitman's oratorical mythology with Derridean analyses.<sup>18</sup> But of all the pages of Whitman criticism dedicated to the topic of oratory, there are relatively few which attempt to understand Whitman's interest within



the context of the larger oratorical culture of the early nineteenth century, a culture in which Emerson himself was deeply immersed.

This is what I undertake in this section, heeding Whitman's caveats to his critics that "No one can know Leaves of Grass who judges it piecemeal,"<sup>19</sup> or that "In estimating my volumes, the world's current times and deeds, their spirit, must first be profoundly estimated"<sup>20</sup>—caveats renewed by David Reynolds in his recent cultural biography *Walt Whitman's America*.<sup>21</sup> I believe a proper understanding of this oratorical culture and some of its innovations will provide a context in which we may better understand why the idea of the orator was so important to Whitman and understand how he employed his tropes of presence in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry."

### *The Commemorative Tradition in Early Nineteenth-Century America*

Before Emerson had written his first essays, before he had delivered any of his addresses, there was an established oratorical culture in the United States, a culture into which Emerson graduated and into which, perhaps, Whitman hoped to develop when he dreamed of becoming a lecturer. The early stars of this culture were Daniel Webster, whose reputation survives even today, and Edward Everett, an equally important orator and one of Emerson's professors at Harvard. As statesmen, both Webster and Everett employed their oratorical skills in legislative and judicial matters, but it was in their ceremonial or epideictic rhetoric that they had the most direct contact with the American people.<sup>22</sup>

Both Webster and Everett spoke at commemorative ceremonies that marked the anniversaries of important events in the brief American history, such as the signing of the Declaration of Independence on the Fourth of July or the Battle of Lexington and Concord on 19 April or the Battle of Bunker Hill on 17 June. These ceremonies became more common throughout the 1820s when, as John Bodnar explains, the primary memories the Revolutionary War were fading. These celebrations were instituted in attempts to reconnect Americans to their past, to the defining moments of the national struggle. According to Bodnar, it was during this period that the Fourth of July became a nationally observed holiday.<sup>23</sup>

These ceremonies developed and followed a common liturgy that served both to reconnect its participants with the glory days of the Revolution and to forge or strengthen national group identity and cultural consensus in the process. This liturgy included processions or parades, prayers and hymns, speeches and orations, and, at times, dedications of physical monuments or their initial cornerstones. Each of these elements helped advance the compound purpose in some way, but the oration was especially effective in verbalizing or articulating these purposes and advancing them by addressing and shaping the understanding of the persons in attendance.

We know that Whitman was familiar with this kind of ceremony. He recounts one of them at least four times: the celebration, in Brooklyn, of the Fourth of July in 1825, at which General Lafayette was present. In the early pages of *Specimen Days*, Whitman includes a footnote that briefly recounts the events of that celebration, in words attributed to John Burroughs.<sup>24</sup> But Whitman had himself recounted the event in two of his "Brooklyniana" columns, printed in the *Brooklyn Standard* in the early 1860s.<sup>25</sup> And before that, Whitman had written of it in the *Brooklyn Daily Times* in 1857.<sup>26</sup> These

accounts differ slightly from one another and seem, compared to one another, fragmentary, but this is nothing strange considering Whitman was only six years old when he witnessed these events. Still his repeated return to considerations of the events suggests the depth of the impression they made on him.

This event was, in many ways, a standard public celebration. According to Whitman, the day's events began with a procession marking Lafayette's progress from the landing of the Fulton Ferry, on which Lafayette crossed from Manhattan, to the site of the erection of the Apprentice's Library. Lafayette was met at the landing by "All the principle officers of Brooklyn, ... with Joshua Sands, the President of the [Library's] Board of Trustees." From there Lafayette rode in a coach "through the lines of children and the crowd that was gathered on the walks,"<sup>27</sup> among which Whitman notes there were "quite a number of 'old Revolutionaries.'"<sup>28</sup> After Lafayette cleared the lines of people, "the children, officers, citizens, etc., formed behind in procession, and followed him up to the corner of Henry and Cranberry streets, where the operation of laying the corner stone, was to be performed."<sup>29</sup>

A similar, though more formal, procession was a part of the ceremonies for the laying of the cornerstone to the Bunker Hill Monument in Boston on 17 June 1825 (only weeks prior to the Brooklyn event), at which Lafayette had also been present. Daniel Webster had given the oration at the occasion, the details of which are provided by Edwin P. Whipple in his edition of *The Great Speeches and Orations of Daniel Webster*.<sup>30</sup> Whipple quotes, in part, from Richard Frothingham, Jr.'s *History of the Siege of Boston*:

"At about ten o'clock a procession moved from the State House towards Bunker Hill. The military, in their fine uniforms, formed the van. About two hundred veterans of the Revolution, of whom forty were survivors of the battle, rode in barouches next to the escort. These venerable men, the relics of a past generation, with emaciated frames, tottering limbs, and trembling voices, constituted a touching spectacle. Some wore, as honorable decorations, their old fighting equipments, and some bore the scars of still more honorable wounds. Glistening eyes constituted their answer to the enthusiastic cheers of the grateful multitudes who lined their pathway and cheered their progress. To this patriot band succeeded the Bunker Hill Monument Association. Then the Masonic fraternity, in their splendid regalia, thousands in number. Then Lafayette, continually welcomed by tokens of love and gratitude, and the invited guests. Then a long array of societies, with their various badges and banners. It was a splendid procession, and of such length that the front nearly reached Charles-town Bridge ere the rear had left Boston Common. It proceeded to Breed's Hill, where the Grand Master of the Freemasons, the President of the Monument Association, and General Lafayette performed the ceremony of laying the corner-stone, in the presence of a vast concourse of people."

The procession then moved to a spacious amphitheatre on the northern declivity of the hill, when the...address was delivered by Mr. Webster....<sup>31</sup>

Just as the Brooklyn ceremonies would include a number of “old Revolutionaries” as Whitman called them, the Bunker Hill procession included a number of Revolutionary War veterans, almost two hundred, paramount among them General Lafayette, who would also be a part of the Brooklyn ceremonies. In the Bunker Hill procession were also local officials—the Grand Master of the Freemasons and the President of the Monument Association who correspond to the President of the Librarys Board of Trustees in Brooklyn. Both the past and the present had their representatives, the leaders of old and the leaders of the day, in step with one another, in a formation that figured the plan of the whole ceremony, a union of past with present.

The procession was, then, a standard feature of these ceremonies. Eighteen years later, in 1843, at a ceremony celebrating the completion of the Bunker Hill Monument, the scene was much the same. Whipple, again quotes Frothingham: “A large volunteer force from various parts of the country had assembled for the occasion, and formed a brilliant escort to an immense procession, as it moved from Boston to the battle-ground on the hill.”<sup>32</sup> At the ceremony were the President of the United States and his Cabinet, Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State, and one hundred and eight surviving veterans of the Revolutionary War, some veterans of the battle of Bunker Hill. Though neither Frothingham nor Whipple say explicitly whether these persons were a part of the procession, it is likely they were, for Frothingham makes a distinction between the escort made of the “volunteer force,” and the “immense procession,” the members of which are not named. Perhaps, as Frothingham’s account of this event follows on his account of the previous event, it would have been understood that the President, his Cabinet, and Webster, who had all been invited, as well as the Revolutionary veterans were part of the procession, just as the veterans, Lafayette, and “the invited guests” were in 1825.

Similar processions were a part of ceremonies at Danvers, Massachusetts, on 19 April 1835, at which was laid the cornerstone for a monument to the young men of Danvers who had fallen in the battle at Lexington and Concord. They were also part of the ceremonies at Danbury, Connecticut, on 27 April 1854, where the cornerstone to a monument to General David Wooster was laid,<sup>33</sup> and at Worcester, Massachusetts, on 19 April 1861 where a monument to Colonel Timothy Bigelow was dedicated,<sup>34</sup> and again at Washington, D.C., on 21 February 1885, when the Washington Monument was dedicated.<sup>35</sup> The records of these ceremonies are among the most complete records we have of such events. Our records are fragmentary of other ceremonies, such as that held at Plymouth, Massachusetts on 22 December 1820, at which Daniel Webster delivered the oration, or that held at Plymouth on 22 December 1824, at which Edward Everett delivered the oration, or that held at Concord, Massachusetts on 4 July 1837, at which Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Concord Hymn” was sung. In these cases, we cannot determine whether or not a procession was part of the exercises. But the extant evidence suggests that processions were often a part of the commemorative liturgy.

Whitman notes in one account of the Brooklyn festivities of 4 July 1825 that the procession involved no organized military display, no “spangles, epaulettes, policemen, [or] brass bands,”<sup>36</sup> but makes the point that “what was wanting” in these was made up for “in quality and in solemnity” of the “sentiment of the occasion.”<sup>37</sup> This is not to say, as David Reynolds suggests, that the events of the day were spontaneous.<sup>38</sup> There was, to be sure, considerably more informality in the 1825 celebration than in those of the 1850s and 1860s to which Whitman compares it in his *Standard* accounts. But this informality

lay in the execution of particular parts of the ceremony, and not in the overall character of the event. Whitman writes of the proceedings at the site of the library building: “as the children arrived, there was a little delay in getting them into safe and eligible places.”<sup>39</sup> Perhaps some of the informality Whitman remembers was due in part to an uncertainty about when Lafayette would arrive in Brooklyn or whether or not he would in fact come; Whitman suggests this latter uncertainty when he writes: “Some distinguished person . . . would visit New York, and then it would go hard with us if we did not get him over to Brooklyn.”<sup>40</sup> Despite these variables, the Brooklyn celebration of the Fourth of July 1825 was a planned event as was, according to Whitman, every Fourth of July celebration in the Brooklyn of his youth: “This was always an affair to be carefully seen to and planned deliberately.”<sup>41</sup> Deliberation is apparent in a number of facets of the celebration, including the coordination required to have the city officials at the ferry landing ready to greet Lafayette and to deploy the aged veterans at the landing and along the parade route.<sup>42</sup> Deliberation is further apparent in the planning required to have ready “an old-fashioned yellow coach,”<sup>43</sup> which may have served as a sign of Lafayette’s origin in that time the ceremony worked to recapture. What Whitman emphasizes in noting the lack of organized military display is, as Reynolds rightly recognizes, the “genuine show of emotion,”<sup>44</sup> emotion that seems to Whitman to be covered over by what he calls the “ostentation or clap-trap” of public ceremonies of the 1860s.<sup>45</sup> Still, the procession, or parade, however minimal, is an organized form of group motion, so what Whitman complains of in latter occasions is not so much the basic form, but the ornamentation of it.<sup>46</sup>

The deliberateness in this procession and in others is the deliberateness of signification. The procession was a liturgical form that helped connect both those participating in it and those viewing it to the Revolutionary times these ceremonies sought to reactivate. The procession, like the parade, is a ceremonial form of troop movement. To a viewer, the organized march, with its regimented movements, must have suggested the movement of military companies. Even the procession Whitman describes is suggestive of military movement; there the general, Lafayette, led the body of citizens, including a number of Revolutionary War veterans, to the site of the other commemorative activities. The accounts of other processions, such as those at Bunker Hill, focus on the Revolutionary War veterans, suggesting their importance as visual elements in the recreation of the military spectacle. The involvement of state, local, and federal officials in later processions represents a more desperate effort to get at the past: with the military leaders and veterans of old gone, the organizers still place the popular leaders in the position of military ones, making the procession a civic equivalent to military display.

Like processions, prayers and hymns were also regular features in these ceremonies. In fact, they may have been more regular features than the procession. Prayers are often listed among the proceedings of these ceremonies, but texts of prayers are scarce.<sup>47</sup> Despite the lack of texts or transcriptions, we know prayers were said at a number of ceremonies, including: the ceremony in which the cornerstone was laid for a monument to the seven young men of Danvers, Massachusetts, who fell in the battle of Lexington, which took place on 19 April 1835<sup>48</sup>; that at Concord on the Fourth of July 1837<sup>49</sup>; that at the laying of the cornerstone for the Boston Public Library on 17 September 1855<sup>50</sup>; that at Danbury, Connecticut, on 27 April 1854, at which the cornerstone was laid for a

monument to General David Wooster<sup>51</sup>; that at the dedication of a monument to Timothy Bigelow in Worcester, Massachusetts on 19 April 1861<sup>52</sup>; that at Doylestown, Pennsylvania on 5 December 1861, at which the Hatborough Monument, commemorating the Battle of the Crooked Billet, was inaugurated<sup>53</sup>; and that at Gettysburg on 19 November 1863 at which Lincoln's famous address was delivered.<sup>54</sup>

Hymns were sung at Danvers in 1835, at Concord in 1837, at Danbury, Connecticut in 1854, at the laying of the cornerstone of the Boston Public Library in 1855, at Worcester, Massachusetts in 1861, and at Gettysburg in 1863. These hymns were usually familiar tunes with words composed especially for the occasion. And the prime example is Emerson's "Concord Hymn," composed at the request of the Concord Battle Monument Committee and sung to the tune of the Old Hundredth at the ceremonies on the Fourth of July 1837. At that occasion, the words were read before they were sung by a local choir, a presentation perhaps necessary for understanding, but one, which also suggests the viability of the words apart from the music, of the words as a poem. This viability is confirmed by the publication of the lyrics of the "Concord Hymn" in various papers following the event.<sup>55</sup> Thus Emerson's "Hymn" fulfilled a double duty, as a song and as a poem; in other ceremonies, such as the one at Danvers in 1835, an ode accompanied the hymn, or replaced the hymn entirely, as at the Centennial Ceremonies at Concord in 1875.

Prayers and hymns probably did not do much to help Americans recapture the glory of the past, but they were important to the strengthening of cultural consensus and group identity that was the object of the reactivation of the past. The prayers and hymns drew on the Christian heritage New Englanders shared, activating perhaps the strongest point of cultural consensus and grafting the communal configurations embedded in those religious forms into the secular liturgy of the public celebration. The hymns, whether performed by a local choir or sung by all persons on hand, would have provided either a strong image or experience of community as they displayed or required the coordination of multiple voices. These elements promoted the coordinated exercise of shared knowledge and participation in forms with which every citizen would already have been familiar. The processions, which have a military character to them, may also have followed a religious model, that of the initial procession common in Roman and Anglo-Catholic liturgies and in the Methodist and Presbyterian liturgies descended from the Catholic models. For that matter, the entire liturgical form of these public ceremonies may be based on these Christian liturgical models which include an opening procession, some prayer and hymns, followed by a central oration, the sermon. If New Englanders recognized this congruence between the secular liturgy and religious ones, the power of the secular celebrations to bind Americans together may have been greatly strengthened. Prayers, hymns, and other liturgical elements with a religious quality, did more, though, than encourage consensus; they also appealed to a supernatural authority for the ultimate sanction and validation. This, of course, would have furthered the project of creating and maintaining cultural consensus insofar as these acts seek to have these activities of public coordination ordained with extra-worldly authority.

Though Whitman's accounts of the Brooklyn ceremonies of 1825 do not include any mention of hymns or prayers, Whitman would surely have been familiar with this facet of these ceremonies. As Emerson's "Concord Hymn" became the song read 'round the world, it carried the report of the ceremonies at Concord. In the earliest newspaper

account of the ceremony—the one that appeared in the *Yeoman Gazette*, a local paper, on 8 July 1837, the earliest report listed by Rusk,<sup>56</sup> and the one that may have been the model for later reports in Boston and New York papers—the main feature is the full text of Emerson's "Concord Hymn." There is a brief enumeration of the ceremony's elements and some general remarks on Congressman Samuel Hoar's remarks and on the monument itself, but nothing approaching the detail of the "Hymn" text, which, the writer writes, "speaks for itself." If this was the main source of information for later reports of the Fourth of July exercises, then it is no wonder that this hymn became the most famous part of this event.

Whitman was certainly familiar with the various oratorical features of the typical public celebration. In his recounting of the Fourth of July 1825 ceremonies in Brooklyn, Whitman recalls "much speechifying," perhaps the occasional remarks common to such ceremonies, often given by local or state officials or congressional representatives. For example, at the ceremonies at Danbury, Connecticut, in April 1854, the governor briefly spoke,<sup>57</sup> and at Worcester, Massachusetts, in April 1861, both the mayor of Worcester and Ex-governor Lincoln gave brief addresses. Perhaps in remembering "much speechifying" Whitman recalls such brief remarks by the "principle persons and officers of Brooklyn" he places in the welcoming committee.<sup>58</sup>

But remarks by officials were often decidedly minor features of these public ceremonies, so in remembering "much speechifying" Whitman may also recall an oration, the most important and most typical element of the public celebrations of the 1820s and 1830s. Whitman recalls: "the 'oration' was something talked of both beforehand and long afterward. Great were the jealousies and heartburnings among the young lawyers over the preference and selection to this important post."<sup>59</sup> Garry Wills reminds us that at Gettysburg in November 1863 Everett's oration was the main event, at the time anyway. As Wills puts it: "Though we call Lincoln's text the Gettysburg Address, that title clearly belongs to Everett. Lincoln's contribution, labeled 'remarks,' was intended to make the dedication formal (somewhat like ribbon-cutting at modern 'openings')." <sup>60</sup> This order of magnitude is reflected in newspaper reports of the Gettysburg ceremony, in which Everett's oration had a line of its own, while Lincoln's remarks shared one with the impromptu statements of Seward and others.<sup>61</sup> The centrality and importance of the oration is further indicated by the fact that one could advance one's career through such oratory. Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, Henry Clay, Robert Winthrop and George William Curtis all enjoyed great careers as public servants due in part to their skills as orators. In Everett's case, his entire public career (as Massachusetts congressman, state governor, United States Secretary of State, and President of Harvard) was centered on his oratory.<sup>62</sup>

The centrality of the oration is confirmed by the fact that a surviving oration is the only evidence of many early commemorations. From the fiftieth anniversary of the first battle of the Revolutionary War at Concord on 19 April 1825, we have Everett's oration, but no program. The same is true for the ceremonies at Bunker Hill in July of 1825; what knowledge we do have of the events of the day other than Webster's oration come from editorial commentary and not from any primary source, though we do have a text of Webster's remarks. A pamphlet publishing Daniel Putnam King's "Address Commemorative of Seven Young Men of Danvers," delivered on 19 April 1835, includes details of the day's ceremonial exercises almost as an afterthought; of the thirty-two

pages of the pamphlet, twenty-six are dedicated to the text of the address, the remaining six to the texts of odes and hymns also heard that day.<sup>63</sup> And from the ceremonies at Tarrytown, New York, on 7 October 1853, celebrating the completion of a monument “to the captors of Major André,” we have only the text of the oration pronounced by Henry J. Raymond.<sup>64</sup>

The texts of these orations have survived for a number of reasons, all directly connected to their ceremonial centrality. First of all, these orations were commonly published after their delivery, sometimes appearing in part or in whole in newspapers, and often printed and distributed as pamphlets. Garry Wills, in his account of the November 1863 ceremonies at Gettysburg, notes that Everett “had neatly placed his thick text on a little table before him—and then ostentatiously refused to look at it”<sup>65</sup>—a text he probably provided to a publisher or member of the press shortly after his delivery. For some persons, these published texts must have constituted the main experience of such ceremonies, and this may have been part of the motivation to publish them. Since these orations articulated verbally what the non-verbal architecture of monuments and secular liturgy were meant to convey, they were the best substitutes for the direct experience of these ceremonies. If Whitman was familiar with the 1825 addresses of Webster or Everett, it would have been through later reading of one of the pamphlets in which the addresses were published. The materialization of these speeches and the circulation of their material manifestations gave them a greater chance of survival; in printed form they were not so much at the mercy of the frailties of a few human memories. But the textual survival of many orations was further ensured by the fame of their authors. Edward Everett’s fame perpetuated a readership for his orations which he continually collected and republished in large volumes; the first volume of his *Orations and Speeches on Various Occasions* was published in 1858 by the Boston Stationers’ Company, and by the time of death he had brought out two more volumes, to which his son added a fourth after his death.<sup>66</sup> Daniel Webster’s orations have been preserved not only in surviving pamphlets, but also in large collected editions of his speeches and papers, all the more important because of his contributions as a statesperson.

But for all these extrinsic reasons, there are a number of reasons for preservation intrinsic to the orations. For one, these orations could be quite entertaining. Garry Wills notes that they were received as forms of entertainment. The crowds at occasions such as that at Gettysburg in 1863 came with the expectation that they would hear a two-hour long oration which, Wills explains, had “the length and pacing of a modern rock concert,” and a structure not unlike a “modern ‘docudrama.’”<sup>67</sup> The lengthy accounts of famous battles that comprise major portions of Everett’s addresses are still captivating; they are filled with elements popular in our own current cinema: blood, guns, and derring-do. A skillfully related account was surely very satisfying to citizens of towns without regular theatre, well before the cinema was invented. Whitman’s initial *Standard* account of the Brooklyn celebration of the Fourth of July 1825 encourages this understanding.

Whitman considers the event in a reminiscence of the entertainments available to him as a Brooklyn youth, noting that a permanent theatre was not erected in Brooklyn until 1828, three years after the ceremony Lafayette had made memorable<sup>68</sup>; before that, Whitman writes, there were only the occasional circuses and church “revivals” and the celebrations of which the Fourth of July celebration was often the most memorable.

Whitman remembers the celebration as a major entertainment, suggesting something more than the elements he specifically enumerates—the parade and the remarks of the local officials—perhaps the oration Whitman identifies as the generator of “the jealousies and heartburnings among the young lawyers.”<sup>69</sup>

It is difficult, given the manifest pattern of public celebration in the 1820s and the following decades, to imagine even a celebration as early as 1825 having a procession, a dedication, and “speechifying” without an oration, not so much because of the importance of the oration as a communal entertainment, but rather because such orations were indispensable articulations or formulations of cultural or communal value—they explained the reasons for the occasions. While processions and parades constituted formal echoes to the regimented movements of troops, the addresses of Everett, Webster, and others directly addressed the memories of their auditors, quickening or reviving those of persons who had lived through the revolution, at times modifying them, and creating, through the vividly detailed description of decisive events, a sense of memory in those who had never known the war. The descriptions in these orations were detailed to give the accounts a sense of immediacy, and orators often utilized a historical or literary present to reinforce this sense, performing (in J.L.Austin’s sense) the past events as they described them. They made the past seem present. These orations provided the formulas, the imaginative devices, by which the culture connected or reconnected itself with the lives and deeds of the Revolutionary progenitors, by which it came to share more directly in its heritage, and thereby maintain its identity. It is in these addresses that the dual purpose of these ceremonies, to connect its participants to the glory days of the Revolution and to strengthen national group identity, was most fully achieved. And in their successes, they preserved themselves; these orations achieved and maintained their centrality in the American national consciousness by inhering in the same forms of understanding they inaugurated and perpetuated.

For all these reasons, Whitman would have had ample opportunity to become familiar with these works. They were a part of the America in which he lived. Whitman may have experienced such orations directly, perhaps even as early as the 1825 Fourth of July celebration. Whatever he heard that day, Whitman, like any other American, would have later become familiar with the famous orations, such as Edward Everett’s 1825 address at Concord or Daniel Webster’s 1825 address at Bunker Hill, which were widely circulated. According to Edwin Whipple, by the time Webster returned to Bunker Hill in 1843 to speak again, the language of his 1825 oration had become “household words.”<sup>70</sup> From such orations, whether heard or written, Whitman could have taken the powerful rhetorical use of anamnesis—the activation, through invocation, of the past—achieved through enargia, or vividness of description, to forge cultural consensus in his own work, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.”

A look at Whitman’s potential models will be instructive.

### *Everett’s 1825 Oration at Concord*

Though notable for correcting popular misconceptions of the Paul Revere ride, Everett’s 1825 Concord Oration becomes one of the most famous and important orations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century because of its success in representing the Battle of Lexington and Concord, in bringing its events vividly before the minds of his audience.<sup>71</sup> Everett’s goal is to



reconnect his audience with the crucial defining moment of the American struggle for sovereignty, to make the definitive expression of nationhood available to them and, thereby, to strengthen national group identity and cultural consensus.

The drive to anamnesis is easily seen in the opening movements of Everett's oration. The address will be largely concerned with narrating the events of the Battle of Lexington and Concord and its prelude, but the opening paragraphs work to collapse the years between the Revolution and 1825 in an effort to make the battle present in effect if not in fact. In a seemingly mechanical approach to the narrower concerns of the address, Everett begins by remarking on the relative newness and the unparalleled growth of the young Republic that, he says, make the subject of America a most interesting one. But these moves are precisely calculated to be broad. He will subsequently reformulate these large concerns as consequences of the single event that he intends to commemorate:

when we dwell upon the day itself, every thing else seems lost in the comparison. Had our forefathers failed, on that day of trial, which we now celebrate...then the Revolution had been at an end, or rather never had been begun....<sup>72</sup>

Everett makes his present day in 1825 a consequence of the Battle, tying the economic and historic values of the development of the United States, detailed in the opening paragraphs to elicit the pride of his audience, to the success of the Battle of Lexington and Concord. Everett thereby compounds the value of the Battle. He further increases its value by casting the Battle as the moment in which the American national culture is solidified: "Had our forefathers failed, on that day of trial...the heart of this great people, then beating and almost bursting forth for freedom, would have been struck cold and dead, and, for aught we can now reason, forever."<sup>73</sup> So national culture, which is made visible in events such as the celebration at Concord on the date of the oration, is made to depend from this date and the events thereof. The entire history of the United States is effectively condensed to, as it is logically subordinated to, the date in question, and the present is brought within the bright penumbra of the past.

This initial argument is a first step in reactivating the moment of the Revolution's moment, a moment identified as that in which the culture's character is defined.

The rest of the address will work to amplify this claim and render it more palpable, even unavoidable.

Everett continues by turning to answer "those, who object to such a celebration as this, as tending to keep up a hostile sentiment toward England."<sup>74</sup> Such objectors still maintained a sense of their cultural connections with England.<sup>75</sup> Everett is careful to answer these objections so as not to inflame the passions behind them. He distinguishes between England and the English ministerial party, which he blames for "project[ing] the measures that resulted in our Revolution."<sup>76</sup> Thus Everett allows his hypothetical objectors to maintain their sense of cultural connection without turning their allegiance from America or from the events of the Revolution and without undermining the sense of the Revolution's necessity. But once Everett has seemed to share these values by refusing to combat them, he proceeds to shift cultural priorities from the larger cultural commonwealth to the local growth, to re-root culture in America. It is a wonderful occultatio:

Did faithful history compel us to cast on all England united the reproach of those measures, which drove our fathers to arms; and were it, in consequence, the unavoidable effect of these celebrations to revive the feelings of revolutionary times in the bosoms of the aged; to kindle those feelings anew, in the susceptible hearts of the young; it would still be our duty, on every becoming occasion, in the strongest colors, and in the boldest lines we can command, to retrace the picture of the times that tried men's souls. We owe it to our fathers, we owe it to our children.<sup>77</sup>

By bracketing the grounds of combat with hypotheticals, Everett argues the contrary case in terms his auditors almost have to agree with, couching the duty with the more local roots and branches of the blood tree. Everett himself defends these local charges, refighting the battle as he “commands” “lines” of language, participating in the turning of values. Everett continues:

A pacific and friendly feeling towards England is the duty of this nation; but it is not only our duty, it is not our first duty. America owes an earlier and a higher duty to the great and good men, who caused her to be a nation; who, at an expense of treasure, a contempt of peril, a prodigality of blood—as pure and noble as ever flowed,—of which we can now hardly conceive, vindicated to this continent a place among the nations of the earth.<sup>78</sup>

You can have your Britain, but not before America. Everett contraindicates the duality, but makes the choice clear should the question of allegiance be answerable only in either/or terms. Everett shifts cultural priorities. Everett's localization is completed by the raising of the spectres of the dead, the finding of their blood and hearing of their voices in the soil: “Above all, their blood calls to us from the soil which we tread.” And he places the land in the blood of his auditors: “it beats in our veins.”<sup>79</sup> He locates America within each of the Americans before him.

This internalization decreases the distance between the moment of his speaking and the moment of the battle he seeks to recapture. It also increases the personal stake of each of his auditors in the nation's cohesion by giving them a share and charge of a share of the nation's defining moment. In this, Everett enfranchises his auditors. Alexis de Tocqueville describes this formula for success as he speaks of the “public spirit” of Americans in his *Democracy in America*:

...there is [a] species of attachment to country which...is perhaps less generous and less ardent [than those found in Europe], but it is more fruitful and more lasting: it springs from knowledge; it is nurtured by the laws; it grows by the exercise of civil rights; and, in the end, it is confounded with the personal interests of the citizen.<sup>80</sup>

Everett is trying to confound his present with the Revolutionary times and to confound the public spirit with the success of that war.

In answer to the call of the ancestral blood he instills in his auditors, Everett returns to “those all-important days,”<sup>81</sup> rehearsing only briefly precipitating events such as the stamp act and the Boston Massacre, before coming to the opening events of the battle, the first movement of British troops in Boston. As he comes to tell of the first orders given to the British troops and the famous lighting of the lanterns in the steeple of the North Church, Everett switches into the historical present: “At length the momentous hour arrives, as big with consequences to man, as any that ever struck in his history. The darkness of night is still to shroud the rash and fatal measures, with which the liberty of America is hastened on...,”<sup>82</sup> Thus Everett belies the mediation of years, makes the events seem immediate, unfolds them before his audience with a suspending patience that must have created in them an immense anticipation congruent with that their forebears felt on that night. Everett attempts, as he says, to “revive the feelings of revolutionary times in the bosoms of the aged; kindle those feelings anew, in the susceptible hearts of the young”<sup>83</sup> as he narrates with great detail the progress both of Paul Revere, on his warning ride, and of the British troops moving from the Boston Common to Concord. Again, Everett moves into the present tense when the alarm is rung in Lexington: “the bell rings, alarm guns are fired, the drum beats to arms.” And again:

The British troops rush furiously on; their commanders, with mingled threats and execrations, bid the Americans lay down their arms and disperse, and their own troops to fire. A moment’s delay, as of compunction, follows. The order with vehement imprecations is repeated, and they fire. No one falls, and the band of self-devoted heroes, most of whom had never seen such a body of troops before, stand firm in the front of an army, outnumbering them ten to one.<sup>84</sup>

In shifting into the historical present, which is, in English, identical in form (and, therefore, easily confused) with the simple present, Everett attempts to make these events, with all their terror and excitement, present to his audience, to help them live or re-live those events. This tactic is an argumentative one, calculated to answer the objectors he spoke of in early paragraphs and to quell any casualness or doubts others may have had.

This is never clearer than in the paragraph that follows this last cited instance of present tense, wherein Everett couches his argument in the narrative thus:

The heavy and quick repeated volleys told them [Hancock and Adams], that needed no exposition,—which proclaimed that Great Britain had renounced that strong invisible tie which bound the descendants of England to the land of their fathers, and had appealed to the right of the strongest.<sup>85</sup>

Where before Everett had limited his claims to the English ministerial party, here he attaches the action to the whole of Great Britain, as present in its agents, the armed battalions. This point made, Everett continues with his narrative, detailing the destruction of property (surely an emotional subject) effected by the British troops in their advance

from Lexington to Concord, and then focusing again on the action at the North Bridge and the “general action” which followed.

The fighting from the North Bridge to the siege of the royal army in Boston are given in summary, which suggests that Everett’s main goal was to put his auditors in the moments of quickening, to make them feel the initial spark, the animus of the Revolutionary conflict and the first moment of American success. He does not dwell long on any moment of bloodshed, of carnage, moments that might incite more horror than excitement, or muddy his argument. It is the moment of cohesion of the American spirit that he’s after, the moment of breaking from Britain in spirit. Bloodshed is the medium, but not the message. Everett makes his goal clear in a paragraph following immediately on his narrative, in which he defines the valuable aspects of the events:

It was one of those great days...when the people rise and act for themselves.... It was the people, in their first capacity, as citizens and as freemen, starting from their beds at midnight, from their firesides, and from their fields, to take their own cause into their own hands. Such a spectacle is the height of the moral sublime; when the want of every thing is fully made up by the spirit of the cause; and the soul within stands in place of discipline, organization, resources.... [I]n the efforts of the people,—of the people struggling for their rights, moving not in organized, disciplined masses, but in their spontaneous action, man for man, and heart for heart,—there is something glorious.... [I]n the strength and spirit of the cause alone they act, they contend, they bleed. In this, they conquer.<sup>86</sup>

Having defined this spirit, the force of American culture, Everett takes this great awakening one step further, calling it to action in the time of this speaking. He says:

much remains to be done, to make the work of revolution complete. Many portions of our social and political system yet need,—so to say,—to be revolutionized; that is, to be revised, and made entirely comfortable to the interests and wishes of the great mass. It is time, in short, to act upon the maxim in which the wisdom of all ages is wrapped up,—THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE IS THE VOICE OF GOD.<sup>87</sup>

This is a call to arms, the arms of the mind, an exhortation to the people to continue the revolution. Thus the great glories of the war for independence are carried over into the present.

Thus Everett achieves what I have called anamnesis, the making present of the past, the activation of past events. As Frauke Berndt notes in “Aristotle: Toward A Poetics of Memory,” Aristotle used the term in his treatise *On Memory and Recollection* to denote the active faculty of memory, the willful recall or “literal repetition” of the past in the mind.<sup>88</sup> The term has been taken up in recent years by Christian theologians, particularly catholic liturgists, in whose parlance it denotes the portion of the catholic mass preceding the Holy Communion, when the story of the Last Supper of Christ is retold to connect the present celebration with the original one; this anamnesis culminates in an epiclesis, an

invocation of the Holy Spirit, a request that the Spirit come down and animate the gifts of bread and wine and consecrate the communion feast.<sup>89</sup> Like the religious anamnesis of the catholic mass, Everett's retelling of the events at Concord and Lexington on 19 April 1775 is meant both to reconnect by genealogy his present moment with the remembered moment and to invite the spirit of that earlier event into the present moment. Just as the Christian communion is meant to participate in and continue the Last Supper of Christ, so the secular commemoration at Concord over which Everett presides is meant to participate in the initial act of revolution and nationhood undertaken on the same site years before and to continue the work of the Revolution begun there. It is in this sense that Everett's rhetoric may be termed anamnestic.

### *Anamnesis and Monument*

Anamnesis is, as Everett recognizes, the work of monument. Everett concludes: "We have founded this day a monument to their [the foreparents'] memory." He further argues that "the institutions they founded, shall remain, one common, eternal monument to their memory"<sup>90</sup>—that continuation of the work of revolution is a form of monument. It is not simply memory or remembrance, not merely commemoration. The recollection of the past event is a deliberate action, intended to call the spirit of those first occasions into the present which then constitutes a continuation, an eternalization, of the earlier moment. The monument marks the site at which this is possible, at which that has happened, and at which it continues to happen. And the habitation of the past inside the present gives the monument its interior, its conceptual dimension.

Though the occasion of Everett's address at Concord on 19 April 1825 did not involve the erection or dedication of a physical monument, Everett sounded there some of the key notes that were repeated in erection and dedication ceremonies throughout the century. In the address given by Daniel Putnam King at Danvers, Massachusetts on 19 April 1835, we find first an expression of the speaker's desire and his understanding of his auditors' desire, to see the events of the past with their own eyes:

Would that we could roll back the long years...that we might behold the living, moving, speaking reality. Would that we could hold high converse with the spirits of the valiant dead, then might we catch something of inspiration and patriotism from the communion.<sup>91</sup>

And then, we find King employing the same grammatical sleights we saw at work in Everett's address, the shift into the historical present:

The minutemen from this neighborhood started on their hasty march over the fences and across the fields. I see them now. No painted standard waves over them: no martial music is necessary to animate their spirits or to make them forgetful of the horrors of war. There they go in their simple attire....<sup>92</sup>

The tense shift answers the expressed desire, and the events represented are made to seem as if they are present. The speaker works to reduce the mediating distance between

himself and his audience and that between them and their common past. Following Everett and King, George William Curtis, in his oration at the Centennial Celebration of the Concord Fight, dedicated the larger part of his address to a narrative of the battle, a narrative which he enters authorized by the understanding he claims to have gained in the Civil War.

Now, if never before, we understand the Revolution. Now we know the secret of those old hearts and homes. We can measure the sacrifice, the courage, the devotion; for we have seen them all.<sup>93</sup>

Like Everett, Curtis is eager to demonstrate his own present circumstances as real extensions of the Revolution:

At the end of a century we can see the work of this day as our fathers could not; we can see that then the final moment began of a process long and unconsciously preparing, which was to intrust liberty to new forms and institutions that seemed full of happy promise for mankind.<sup>94</sup>

In every case, the goal of the speech is to achieve the moment of anamnesis, to connect the present to the past, and thereby to make the past inhere in the present. The speeches concentrate time into the moment, make the turning of the year turn back to the original event, the year one of the calendar of memory. This accords with the work of the physical monument, which is to stand on all the other days of the year and, in the words of John Gillis, “concentrat[e] time in space.”<sup>95</sup>

We find this idea expressed in different language in a number of texts. In the preface to the pamphlet detailing the ceremonies at the dedication of the Bigelow Monument at Worcester, Massachusetts, 19 April 1861, we find this philosophy of stone:

The sculptured stone, which tells of the valor of the sires, is an empty honor, considered in reference to themselves. They have passed beyond the reach of human applause. Posthumous ovations avail them not. The value, the significance, is with their children. To them, indeed, monuments are silent monitors richly eloquent in the teachings of a bygone age.<sup>96</sup>

This follows from Webster’s comments at Bunker Hill in 1843: “it stands, a memorial of the last, and a monitor to the present, and all succeeding generations.”<sup>97</sup> The monument brings the lessons of the past into the present, makes the past available to the present. This, again, is anamnesis. We find a similar sentiment expressed in the prayer given by the Reverend Henderson Sutter at the dedication of the Washington National Monument on 21 February 1885. There, Sutter says:

And for the generations to come, yet unborn, may this Monument which we dedicate to-day to the memory of George Washington stand as a witness for those virtues and that patriotism which, lived, shall secure for them Liberty and Union forever.<sup>98</sup>

In other words, the monument perpetuates by indicating those values exercised in the past; it brings into the present and projects into the future those past values in the moment it indicates them. It makes what was past present in another time. Thus the monument is a kind of reliquary.

### *Webster's 1825 Address at Bunker Hill*

To understand Webster's contributions, we must understand the differences between Webster and his contemporaries, especially Everett.

Webster's name survives as the giant of 19<sup>th</sup>-century oratory in America, but Everett was at least as popular as Webster, largely because of his ability to make the past present made him extremely popular. Garry Wills writes that Everett's skill and popularity made him "the inevitable choice" for the coordinator of the Gettysburg exercises. Wills explains:

he had augmented the fame of Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill by his oratory at those revolutionary sites. Simply to have him speak at Gettysburg would add this field to the sacred roll of names from the founders' battles.<sup>99</sup>

Everett could perform the necessary attachments. But Everett's popularity was founded, too, on the perception that he was the most demotic of all the American orators. Perry Miller explains that Emerson and the Transcendentalists

were persuaded not only by such forensic giants as Webster and Clay, but more particularly by Everett, who was one of their own kind. Here at last was a New England scholar who appeared the master of all Europe could offer, who in *native terms* made articulate, in a style that could compete with Burke and Pitt and Sheridan, everything that America held precious.<sup>100</sup>

Compared to Webster's addresses, those of Everett are somewhat simpler in form, lighter on argument (which is to say, less forensic), and, in diction and syntax, more demotic. Garry Wills notes that "in forming the ideal of modern democratic speech that gave us Emerson, Everett helped create the very conditions that brought forth Lincoln's demotic oratory."<sup>101</sup> Compared with Lincoln's style, Everett may seem classicist, but though the surfaces of Everett's speeches are ornate, they are much simpler, argumentatively, than Webster's.

This will become apparent in a comparison of Everett's oration at Concord in 1825 with Webster's speech at Bunker Hill the same year. In this address, Webster, too, pursues anamnesis, but for Webster anamnesis is primarily a local strategy, not the governing idea. Whereas in his 1825 address at Concord, Everett employs anamnesis almost to the exclusion of other strategies, promoting, through narrative, what becomes an experiential argument, Webster takes a characteristically more forensic approach, prosecuting a basically intellectual argument in which are imbedded anamnestic moments.

The forensic character of Webster's oratory is apparent in the opening paragraphs of the 1825 Bunker Hill address. Here Webster undertakes a narrative, but, as is typical in Webster's oratory, he never gives himself entirely over to storytelling. Instead, the narrative is subordinated to the larger argument, employed in the service of announcing the subject of his address and of registering the value of the address. Webster begins by acknowledging the most immediate attractions of the place and the date, noting that on Bunker Hill he and his listeners "are among the sepulchres of [their] fathers."<sup>102</sup> Since they are regarding the past, "it is natural," Webster argues, "that [they] should be moved by the contemplation of occurrences which [had] guided [their] destiny before many of [them] were born."<sup>103</sup> So, Webster turns, briefly, to a vignette of Columbus approaching the America, offering a single sentence in the way of story:

It is more impossible for us, therefore, than for others, to contemplate with unaffected minds that interesting, I may say, that most touching and pathetic scene, when the great Discoverer of America stood on the deck of his shattered bark, the shades of night falling on the sea, yet no man sleeping, tossed on the billows of an unknown ocean, yet the stronger billows of alternate hope and despair tossing his own troubled thoughts; extending forward his harassed frame, straining westward his anxious and eager eyes, till Heaven at last granted him a moment of rapture and ecstasy, in blessing his vision with the sight of the unknown world.<sup>104</sup>

The sentence demonstrates Webster's skill. With a few clearly presented details, he manages to bring the scene before the eyes so vividly it is easy to forget that it comes in the midst of a forensic argument, even if the vividness of the scene is in part a product of its contrast with the forensic background of the rest of the address. We may forget the sentence's beginning, which contains the clear signatures of discursive argument, as Webster immerses us deeper and deeper in imaginative plenitude. But the descriptive passage is brief, offered as an illustration of "occurrences which have guided the [American] destiny," in which Webster also includes the original colony at Plymouth before moving on the American Revolution, the primary subject of his address. Webster never lingers long, for he has an argument to prosecute.

Still, as Webster's argumentative deliberateness subordinates these episodes, it encourages speed in reading and produces a compacting or concentrating effect akin to the temporal combination in Everett's anamnestic narrative. The moment of discovery dramatized in the passage quoted above, as well as that of the founding of the Plymouth colony, are firsts, like that of the American Revolution: the first sighting of the land, the first permanent settlement in New England, and the first democratic revolution of modern times. In turning quickly from one initial moment to the next, attending to one while the memory of the previous one is still fresh, Webster displays the similitude and congruence of these moments, encouraging his listeners and readers not only to see the American Revolution as extensions of these previous moments, but to also see these moments repeated, re-made, in the events of the Revolution.

As he works this congruence, Webster compounds the value of his subject, the moment of the American Revolution, to which then accrues the audience's interest in those earlier moments as well. Webster's goal is clear, when he declares: "our object is,



by this edifice to show our own deep sense of the *value* and importance of the achievement of our ancestors.”<sup>105</sup> He further refines his characterization of the day’s operations, in arguments reminiscent of those Everett advanced in his April address: “Let it not be supposed that our object is to perpetuate national hostility, or even to cherish a military spirit. It is higher, nobler, purer. We consecrate our work to the spirit of national independence....”<sup>106</sup> The day’s operations are valuative, and Webster is, in this last passage, clearest about the fact that the value he means to accrue to the “edifice” is cultural value: the edifice will be valuable insofar as it commemorates or houses the values which, exercised, brought about the nation—which now includes the spirit of independence that animated the Revolutionary conflicts, that motivated the *Mayflower* pilgrims, that pushed Columbus to the edge of vision. Webster makes this even more explicit several paragraphs later when, forgoing a lengthy summary narrative such as Everett offers, Webster presents the crux of the event with his characteristic economy and perspicacity: “The 17<sup>th</sup> of June saw the four New England colonies, standing here, side by side, to triumph or fall together; and there was with them from that moment to the end of the war, what I hope will remain with them forever, one cause, one country, one heart.”<sup>107</sup> Webster focuses quickly on the moment of the formation of the national spirit and, thereby, of the nation itself. The value of the event, and of the remembrance of the event, lies in its involvement with the national identity and the stability of the nation, something in which all of his listeners would have been invested.

The brevity of this last instance is worth noting. As with the earlier brief narrative of Columbus’s discovery of the America, this last moment of historical compaction comprises only once sentence. The condensation here is more palpable as a result, as the width of historical vision is narrowed to a single moment on a single hill, a moment that is made to culminate all time before and initiate all time after. But the brevity of the instance also further illustrates the basically forensic nature of Webster’s oratory, to which these narratives or evocations of the past are subordinated.

This subordination is clear even in the oration’s most striking instance of anamnesis, that involved in Webster’s direct address of General Lafayette. “Sir,” Webster begins:

we are assembled to commemorate the establishment of great public principles of liberty, and to do honor to the distinguished dead. The occasion is too severe for eulogy to the living. But, sir, your interesting relation to this country, the peculiar circumstances which surround you and surround us, call on me to express the happiness which we derive from your presence and aid in this solemn commemoration.<sup>108</sup>

The turn to Lafayette is made in the course of Webster’s explanation of his choice of subject and the method of his procedure. It is nearly incidental and certainly occasional. Webster’s main focus is to be on the dead, but the presence—or the gravity of Lafayette’s presence—draws Webster’s vision away from his subject. But in this seemingly accidental turn, Webster’s forensic skills are ever at work, and what appears to be a delay or detour becomes the main route to the declared subject: Lafayette provides Webster with a bridge between the living and the dead. To Lafayette, Webster says:

You now behold the field, the renown of which reached you in the heart of France, and caused a thrill in your ardent bosom. You see the lines of little redoubt thrown up by the incredible diligence of Prescott; defended, to the last extremity, by his lion-hearted valor; and within which the corner stone of our monument has now taken its position.<sup>109</sup>

Here Webster deftly confuses the different temporal frames in order to make the past seem present. He begins in the shared present, then transports a past event into the present, via verb tense, namely the historical (or literary) present; one element of the past event, the landscape, is already present to Webster and his auditors, and this makes the transport easier: it is already half-done. In the end, Webster returns entirely to the shared present, but it seems different. Webster has infused the past into the present, so that when he indicates the corner-stone of the monument that has been laid just prior to his speaking, he is inviting his listeners to see the stone within the lines of battle, to see it on the field of battle. This move is necessary to the success of the monument, whose monitory function will be underwritten by this vision of the corner-stone as a witness to the events commemorated. Following this, Webster repeats his temporal confusion. He addresses Lafayette again, fusing the past into the present: “You see where Warren fell, and where Parker, Gardner, McCleary, Moore, and other patriots fell with him.” And then he moves at last back into the shared present:

Those who survived that day, and whose lives have been prolonged to the present hour are now around you. Some of them you have known in the trying scenes of war. Behold! they now stretch forth their feeble arms to embrace you. Behold! they raise their trembling voices to invoke the blessing of God on you, and yours, forever.<sup>110</sup>

Webster’s shuttling back and forth between times confuses, weaves them together. Webster asks his audience to see Lafayette seeing the characters of the past events present on the field, then turns quickly to the movements and voices of the veterans present at the ceremony, while the imagination of Lafayette’s vision is still fresh, so that they may see the past come alive in the figures of those veterans present, in Lafayette’s figure especially.

The rest of Webster’s address is decidedly forensic, but even in the complexities of his argument, Webster promotes a subtle and protracted anamnestic activation of the past. In the argument he makes to identify the character of the connection of his present time with that of the Revolution, Webster names aspects of the present world as results, direct extensions of the Revolution. “The leading reflection, to which this occasion seems to invite us, respects the great changes which have happened in the fifty years since the battle of Bunker Hill was fought.”<sup>111</sup> Webster speaks of “a community of opinions and knowledge amongst men, in different nations,” improvements resulting from the “commerce of ideas,” such as improvements in food and clothing and general quality of life, in “machinery and manufactures,” and, most important, in “civil government.” He argues that “The great wheel of political revolution [that] began to move in America”<sup>112</sup> continued to move onto other continents, as he speaks of the French Revolution and the revolutions of Latin America, and of the effects of democratic thinking on monarchical

nations; as Webster formulates it: “public opinion has attained also an influence over governments, which do not admit the popular principle into their organization.”<sup>113</sup> The argumentative conclusion is that the entire Western world of Webster’s time was the product of the American Revolution. This is a nearly total anamnesis, but for that, very subtle: Webster makes the past palpable in every aspect of his contemporary world, so the signs of the past are not visible by being distinguished from the signs of the present: they are instead identical. The spirit of the Revolution is the spirit of the times.

This activation enables Webster to do something surprising, to mark the center of the world at Bunker Hill. Webster declares that “The Principle of Free Government adheres to the American soil. It is bedded in it; immovable as mountains.” Because of this “The last hopes of mankind...rest with us.”<sup>114</sup> This makes Bunker Hill both the center of the world and its envelope: the attention of the world is to be focused on America, since its hopes rest there, but insofar as the world’s hopes have been entrusted to America, it lies itself in the hands of Americans. This is to effect a spatial consolidation akin to the temporal combinations produced before. Webster is not only concentrating time in space, but concentrating space in time, the compound temporal juncture of contemporary and Revolutionary America, which is, in turn, concentrated in space by the monument. In this compound concentration there is a fair amount of work toward the formation of a group identity. In putting the world on the shoulders and in the hands of his fellow Americans, Webster gives them a defining duty, an orienting task the whole world (supposedly) obliges them to continue, similar to the call to action Everett makes near the conclusion of his Concord address.

### *Whitman’s Inheritance*

From Everett and Webster, Whitman inherits both the drive to anamnesis—the collapse of two times into one—and the means by which to accomplish it, namely the repeated deployment of vivid detail that will bring past scenes to life before the eyes of an audience (also known as *enargia*<sup>115</sup>), the shifting of verb tense to confuse past and present, and even the use of a stable, physical scene as a frame for temporal combination.

As I will demonstrate directly, Whitman puts all these techniques to work in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” I want to argue, at the outset, that Whitman undertakes his anamnesis to achieve an end identical to those of Webster and Everett. Whitman, like the great orators before him, hopes to produce “foundational fiction,” a performative description of the nation that act directly on the nation’s sense of itself, on its citizen’s understanding of the collective identity.<sup>116</sup> Garry Wills notes that it was Everett’s overriding hope, in all his oratorical work, “to create a historical memory in the American public” (49), “to create a tradition that would inspire as well as inform” (51)—that is, to instill a public or national spirit in his listeners, by means of his accounts. Ronald Reid is even more explicit in his claim: “For Everett, an important way to rebuild the nation’s declining consensus [in the 1850s] was to remind audiences of the ‘glorious past’ that they all shared.... [His] ceremonial oratory...helped him maintain the nation’s sense of community...”<sup>117</sup> Betsy Erkkila practically repeats Reid’s description of Everett’s motives when she writes of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry: “in its overarching concern with the problem of disintegration and union, the poem is also a response to the fact of fracture in self and world at a time when...the American Union itself was dissolving.”<sup>118</sup> Whitman will, like Everett and using

the means Everett used, undertake a temporal combination in order to strengthen, if not altogether re-effect, a Union based on shared cultural experience.

Whitman will strive for temporal combination and immediation through the deployment of vivid detail in description as well as through conjugational sleight, all undertaken in the production of a communal fiction, and the definition of the space of communal combination in the institution of a stable physical marker or monument. Like Webster and Everett before him, Whitman will involve in his poem a communicative loop, dramatized to produce a sense of immediacy most often associated with the circuit of live spoken exchange. But Whitman will also innovate to maximize the advantages of the written medium, to maximize the levels of presence in the poem and to encourage the interaction of these levels. At the center of these efforts is the ferry, the stable central space from which Whitman may coordinate the interaction of discrete presences—an object which, like the monument Webster speaks of, marks the center point of the coordinating exercises and the ground common to all.

### *Intensity*

Whitman's manipulation of verb tenses to effect a combination of different temporal frames is clearest and, of all Whitman's adopted practices, most like Webster's and Everett's conjugational trick shooting. The speaker begins, apostrophizing the elements in his present tense: "Flood tide below me! I see you face to face!/ Clouds of the west—sun there half an hour high—I see you also face to face" (1–2). The tense, however, is insignificant until the speaker abandons his contemporaries to address *future* auditors:

Crowds of men and women attired in the usual costumes, how  
curious you  
are to me!  
On the ferry-boats the hundreds and hundreds that cross, returning  
home,  
are more curious to me than you suppose,  
And you that shall cross from shore to shore years hence are more  
to me, and  
more in my meditations, than you might suppose. (3–5)

Now tense helps position the poem's primary actors and measures the temporal rift between them the poem will work to close. The fifth line hints at the eventual solution, as the speaker in his own present imagines the future audience in an existential present—"you...*are* more to me"—giving us a glimpse of the immediacy the poem will seek.

This centrality of the rift and of the poem's drive to cross it become apparent in the second section. Here, the future crossers become the primary subjects of the poem, displacing the speaker's contemporaries entirely. Because he already has a framework for immediate relation with his contemporaries, they need no reaching. Whitman's speaker reaches toward the future, imaginining, as he contemplates the sights of the ferry-crossing, "The others that are to follow me, the ties between me and them,/The certainty

of others, the life, love, sight, hearing of others” (11–12). This imagination deepens as Whitman begins to construct a particular experience for them:

Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to  
 shore,  
 Others will watch the run of the flood-tide,  
 Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the  
 heights of  
     Brooklyn to the south and east,  
 Others will see the islands large and small;  
 Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an  
 hour  
     high,  
 A hundred years hence, or ever so many hundred years hence,  
 others will see  
     them,  
 Will enjoy the summer sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the  
 falling  
     back to sea of the ebb-tide. (13–19)

Richard Pascal has suggested that the speaker’s repetition of the word “others” indicates “the speaker’s preoccupation with, and underlying anxiety about, his own future absence from the scene.”<sup>119</sup> Perhaps Whitman worries that the continuous life he imagines for these others will replace his own. But the means by which Whitman constructs his vision suggests that their lives are extensions, and amplifications, of his own. The speaker apparently extrapolates the experiences and apprehensions of his latter-day auditors from his own primary and immediate experience and apprehension of the ferry ride. The vividness of visual detail results from the speaker’s removal of immediate visual apprehension from his own eye and mind and subsequent position of this apprehension within the minds and eyes of his auditors. The vividness of this scene seems to push his imagination to the verge of realization, in a manner similar to that in which Webster’s offerings of detail encourage the surrender and transport of his auditors.

Perhaps, as Orlov suggests, the repetition of “others,” and the constant reminder that what he imagines “will” occur, are mantras that protect the speaker from dissolving before the specter of his eventual disappearance, ways that he protects himself from disappearing into the vividness of his own imagination of the future. But if this is the case Whitman’s speaker has changed his mind by the third section, where he gives himself over entirely to imagining his future auditors and constructing a presence before them.

The speaker begins by declaring his presence to his future auditors: “It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not, / I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence” (20–21). Perhaps we are to interpret the declared presence as metaphysical, like that of funereal or elegiac consolation—a declaration of

immortality.<sup>120</sup> But these statements seem to indicate more, something more substantial or more abiding—a real mutual presence. This sense is established by the second of these sentences, which performs or instates what it may only seem to describe.<sup>121</sup> Whitman's poem, unlike either Webster's or Everett's address, has no occasion, so everything the poem indicates is created, is instated, by the poem's own declarations. So, as the speaker declares his state of being in his speaking present, he also declares his auditor's state of being and declares himself a part of that state. In doing this, the speaker yokes the two states, the two presents, his being and his auditor's being into a single state. Further, he realizes, by moving into the present tense, the auditor's state which, to this point, has been hypothetical, future. Thus the speaker institutes a (brief) temporal immediacy, closing the gap between himself and his future auditors, by shifting tenses as Everett and Webster had—an immediacy registered in the performative.<sup>122</sup>

This realization of the auditors, begun in these first few lines, is continued in the rest of this section's first stanza. Here, the experiences of these auditors, previously imagined in the future tense, are related in the present. Instead of saying to himself that "Others *will* watch the run of the flood-tide," the speaker here says to his future audience, "Just as you *feel* when you *look* on the river and sky, so I *felt*" (22, *emphasis added*). The speaker repeats this pattern throughout the stanza: just as you *x*, so I *xed*. Thus, he establishes a second present complementary to the first. The auditors are being addressed in the present of their actions, as indicated by the present verbs. The speaker's antecedence, established in the earlier sections, is marked by past-tense verbs. This establishment offsets, by backing away from, the strangeness of the section's initial two lines, in which the speaker's present and the auditors' present are nearly fused.

But what may appear to be a simple complementary exchange of one view of the temporal relationship for another is in fact another step in the gradual fusion of the separate presents. Though the speaker refers to his own experiences in the past tense, the speaker's introduction of the details of his auditors' reception situation actually contains both their present, in which these details are cast, and his own speaking present. The speaking present we hear in his declaration, "I am with you," remains in the descriptions that follow the formula of "Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky" (21, 22). There resides in these declarations an illocutionary force that contributes to what Gilbert terms the poem's "insist[ence] on a total coincidence of utterance and occasion"<sup>123</sup>; because there is no occasion as there was for Webster and Everett, the poem produces its own occasion, utterance is always occasion, meaning the speaker is always present as the producer of the poem's utterance and occasion however much he may repeat these past-tense verbs. This presence is then combined with the visual presence the speaker gives to his listeners' situation, and the two presents congrue and commingle though they do not yet fuse.

The campaign for temporal fusion is significantly furthered in the following stanza. Previously, the speaker imagined the future scene with reference to his own, instituting the formula that expresses the parallelism of the speaker's and his auditors' experiences: "Just as any of you is one of a living crowd, I was one of a crowd" (23)—Just as you *x*, I *xed*. Now the formula is shortened and includes only the speaker's reports of his past experiences: "I too many and many a time cross'd the river of old" (27). Gilbert argues that the litany of past verbs and expressions of pastness that follows is part of Whitman's meditation on the future realization of his own pastness.<sup>124</sup> I find, to the contrary, that the

spate of past tense verbs expresses a degree of accomplishment of the temporal combination begun quietly in the previous stanza.

There, the speaker linked, in every line, present and past tenses of the same verb; the instantiation of one involved the instantiation of the other: "Just as you feel..., so I felt,/Just as any of you is..., I was.../Just as you are refreshed..., I was refresh'd" (22–24). Then, in the second stanza, when the speaker turns exclusively to past tense formulations, the verbs imply the auditors' present imagined in the previous stanza; "I too many and many times cross'd the river of old" (27) implies, "just as you cross the river." This yoking of tenses together, the stitching of times into relation with one another, represents a step toward the total fusion of the speaker's present and the auditors' present. If there is any anxiety here about the loss of presence, it is about a loss of presence to the scene in the imagination, a loss to himself.

Though the stanza ultimately ceases to register these fusions, the images presented in these lines produce an experience of coincidence that furthers the poem's combinations. Each of lines 27–38 begins with the past tense verb that evokes the formula established in the previous section, but beginning with line 39, the past tense verbs disappear and give way to ambiguously progressive tenses. The speaker is telling that he "Saw the white sails of schooners and sloops, saw the ships at anchor" (38), again with the implication that he recognizes those who receive his address are seeing or have seen these things when they hear or read his words. But at this point, he indulges in the visual details solely. We understand that he is continuing his catalogue of things seen:

The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,  
 The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender  
 serpentine  
     pennants,  
 The large and small steamers in motion, the pilots in their pilot-  
 houses,  
 The white wake left by the passage, the quick tremulous whirl of  
 wheels,  
 The flags of all nations, the falling of them at sunset,  
 The scallop-edged waves in the twilight, the ladled cups, the  
 frolicsome crests  
     and glistening,  
 The stretch afar growing dimmer and dimmer, the gray walls of the  
 granite  
     storehouses by the docks,  
 On the river the shadowy group, the big steam-tug, closely flank'd  
 on each  
     side by the barges, the hay-boat, the belated lighter,  
 On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys  
 burning high

and glaringly into the night,  
 Casting their flicker of black contrasted with wild red and yellow  
 light over  
 the tops of the houses, and down into the clefts of streets. (39–  
 48)

The speaker descends into the details of his deepening imagination of the scene and gives over to pure detail, gives up the business of marking ownership of the experience of these details—a surrender that leaves these details available for the auditor. If we remember the beginning of this sentence, we may keep in mind that these are the items of the report of what the speaker “saw.” But the conscientious deployment of a past tense verb at the head of each of the first eleven lines of this stanza has taught us to depend on the speaker for the identification of the time signature. So when he transmits this catalogue, deviating from that pattern, we are left without reminders of the pastness of these details; we have instead only temporally ambiguous progressives and we cannot know to whom these details are present. In the beginning of this catalogue, we may remind ourselves that the information we are receiving is grammatically subordinate, but the sheer weight and constant internal differentiation of this information takes over the space in our grammatical memory reserved for the suspension of the subordinate clause. What we are left with is not so much a sense of what the speaker saw, but with instead a scene vivid in our own imaginations.

This, I think, is exactly what Whitman wants for us, his readers, what the speaker wants for his auditors, for in forgetting the grammatical and temporal frames around this catalogue, we may indulge in an experience of this scene, sinking into the detail that occupies our minds, unreminded of the otherness of the scene. This may be what happens in every case of skillful deployment of vivid detail—of *enargia*. Certainly, this passage is reminiscent of those passages from Webster’s 1825 address discussed above. Both are fine examples of transport. But whereas Webster and Everett, since they stood squarely in the same time their auditors stood, could only put before the eyes of their audience what they wished they saw, what they wanted to be present to, in Whitman’s poem, the speaker has made his auditors present to the scene which is present before him.

Here we may discern at work the double-active structure Whitman has been constructing, a structure that leaves a great deal to the discretion of the auditor or reader. In the addresses of Webster and Everett, the speaker is out to activate something that all agree is past, something that is past to both the speaker and the auditor, a task that places a greater burden of evocation on the speaker; the orator’s success depends greatly from his ability to produce a sensible apprehension of that which is to be activated. In Whitman’s poem, the case is much different, for the speaker has to activate something that is ostensibly already present to his target audience but which hasn’t happened yet, namely the experience of riding the ferry on which they are supposed to be.

In beginning the fourth section, the speaker backs away again, again marking his experiences as past experiences: “These and all else *were* to me the same as they are to you, *I loved* well those cities” (49–50, *emphasis added*). In doing this, the speaker confirms his auditors and readers in the sense of perceptive immediacy encouraged by the



gradual absenting of his presence in the concluding catalogue of the previous section: “These and all else were to me the same as they *are* to you” (49, *emphasis added*). The speaker uses the audience’s now-confirmed sense of immediacy to strengthen their understanding and recognition of the relationship he proposes between them. He invokes “others who look back on me because I look’d forward to them” (52), an identification that makes his addressees into his image of them. This identification follows a long line of performative descriptions in which what appear as statements of fact actually create the scenes they seem to represent, a line that establishes a processing pattern, the rules of a game we play with the author. When he purveys this description of his auditors “who look back on me,” as readers we are apt either to assent, as we have assented to the imaginative reality of the scenes presented in the previous sections, or to look at ourselves or to attempt to locate the speaker to assay the veracity of this report, which we make true as we try to evaluate it. This is another moment in which the speaker’s uttering present is brought into direct relation with the audience’s receiving present, a repositioning confirmed by the following and final line of this section. In an aside, the speaker declares: “The time will come, though I stop here to-day and to-night” (53). The early lines of the stanza had used past tense verbs to mark the speaker’s position, markers which gradually disappeared, finally falling away altogether as the uttering present re-emphasized in the penultimate line becomes compounded with the speaker’s active present in “I stop here to-day and to-night.”

This compounding sets the stage for another of the speaker’s explicit addresses to his auditors and readers, one that reprises his earlier declaration “I am with you” (20). Here, at the beginning of the fifth section, the speaker asks: “What is it then between us?/What is the count of the scores or hundreds of years between us?” (54–55). Here again the speaker’s uttering present and the audience’s receiving present coincide, joined in the moment of the communicative loop, a combination augmented as the speaker’s question proposes a physical proximity. The phrasing of the question is ambiguous, and, I think, purposefully so. One reading has the speaker asking about the nature of that which separates him from his audience, as if they existed in the same time but were divided by a wall or other barrier, or as if they were somehow present to one another yet separated by time. The other reading has the speaker questioning the nature of the bond between himself and his auditors, the connecting force they share. These readings contain one another in this ambiguous phrasing, even though the second question clearly proceeds from the first reading of the first question. There, we see the speaker, having identified the nature of the separating distance, trying to ascertain its value. But this action has a certain ambivalence about it as well: as the speaker seems to come to a precise accounting of the distance, he also disavows the absoluteness and the reality of this temporal situation, questioning its worth altogether. The multivalent reading is confirmed by the opening gesture of the following stanza. The speaker declares, “Whatever it is, it avails not—distance avails not, and place avails not” (56), echoing his declarations at the beginning of the third section, “It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not” (20). In both cases, the speaker eschews the separating force of any distance, spatial or temporal, in an attempt to draw the speaker and his audience closer in time, which means they meet in the space they have occupied in separate times and spatial identity becomes the basis of the bond between them. The detailed catalogues of previous sections have worked to establish the centrality of the common space, to make it available in this way, in a move

similar to Webster's description of Bunker Hill in his address to Lafayette: "You now behold the field, the renown of which reached you in the heart of France...."<sup>125</sup> The common element of the landscape or place is key to the success of the temporal combinations in both Whitman's poem and in the early commemorative addresses.

This gesture is repeated in section seven, underwritten by the catalogues of the fifth and sixth sections that, like the catalogue in section three, establish a common ground of experience. There are in these catalogues a few significant slips that advance the campaign of temporal combination, such as that in section six where the speaker, who has been referring to himself and his experiences in the past tenses, declares "I am he who knew what it was to be evil" (70). This is significant not only because the speaker refers to himself in the present tense, but because the particular parallel case encourages a revision of the previous past-tense relations. The speaker advances his argument thus: "Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil, / I am he who knew what it was to be evil" (69–70). The auditor's knowledge is said to be present ("you...*know*"), as is the auditor's state of being ("what it *is* to be"); this is in keeping with the time structure of the catalogue relations. When the speaker comes to indicate himself, he characterizes his knowledge as past knowledge ("who *knew*"). This may indicate a change of being, supported by the past formation "was." But it could as easily indicate that the speaker, present in the moment of his speaking and perhaps in the moment of reception, refers to states which are no more but which he remembers. The past-tense verbs may not mark the speaker's existential pastness as much as they register a posture of reminiscence.

This is a fleeting suggestion, I think, but an effective one nevertheless, insinuating the speaker's presence that is asserted in the opening lines of the following section with the announcement:

Closer yet I approach you,  
 What thought you have of me now, I had as much of you—I laid my  
 stores  
 in advance,  
 I consider'd long and seriously of you before you were born. (86–  
 88)

"Approach" is the exact word. It perfectly characterizes the verbal campaign of the poem to this point: a careful opposition of temporal frames which are made to collapse into or penetrate one another by what look to be either subtleties of language or unintentional and insignificant slips or changes. In each of his announcements, the speaker has grown bolder. He has backed away from this face-to-face meeting, in order to avoid the possibility that his audience might see approach as confrontation. But in this case, he does not back down. His declaration of mental preparedness for the impending meeting encourages a re-reading of his past-tense catalogues as reminisces of one still living rather than the voice from beyond the grave that was implied by the situations established in the early sections. The "thought...of you" and the consideration of "you" are specific acts with definite and demonstrable terminal points, unlike the habitual acts of walking the streets or seeing the sunset, which when related with the use of a past tense verb,

rather than with the common imperfect constructions, imply the cessation of habitude and being. These specific thoughts and considerations will have ended and may be recalled by one still alive. So, the speaker further insinuates his present being.

The following three questions enforce this suggestion of the speaker's presence, expressing it more and more boldly. The speaker asks:

Who was to know what should come home to me?

Who knows but I am enjoying this?

Who knows, for all the distance, but I am as good as looking at you  
now, for

all you cannot see me? (89–91)

In the first instance, the question does not so much ask for information as indicate a state of affairs. The placement of the subjunctive construction within the envelope of the past tense indicates that the action suspended by the subjunctive verb form has come to pass: something has “come home” to the speaker, which is to say that something has approached him even as he has been approaching his auditors, to say that his auditors have approached him as he has approached them. This second vector of approach is activated by this rhetorical question, as it has been by the speaker's other direct addresses to his auditors—addresses in which the speaker has been troping the communicative loop. The asking of a question, even a rhetorical question, ostensibly involves a request for an answer, even if it is merely an acknowledgment that a question has been asked, that information has been conveyed, and even if, as in the case of the rhetorical question, the request for information is not the ultimate purpose of the question. The rhetorical question highlights the communicative loop in which information passes from a speaker to a receiver and through which other information may pass again. The model for this loop is the one enacted in face-to-face speech, a loop that is completed and closed almost instantaneously. The speaker plays this loop, opposing his uttering present with the auditors' receiving present and drawing them into immediate relation within this nearly instantaneous loop. So this first question does not, as Kerry Larson notes, “so much convey a meaning as tell us that a meaning has been conveyed”<sup>126</sup>; it effects what it treats as a background condition for the question. To put it another way, the question effects a state of affairs in order to imply a cause other than the actual cause, to draw attention away from the speaker's performative declaration. Larson's analysis begins to get at this point, that in this poem, the speaker effects desired states of affairs by convincing his auditors (which is to say us as well) that these states of affairs have already been instituted. The speaker's second question is again a rhetorical question, the function of which is to sneak into our understanding another expression of the speaker's presence: “Who knows but I *am* enjoying this?” And the speaker's presence is brought to bear on that of his auditors who are addressed in the present tense as well: “Who *knows* but I am enjoying this?” This is a state of affairs reinstated in the last of these questions. Here, both the speaker, in his uttering present, and the audience in its receiving present are brought to bear on one another; in fact, the audience is made active, tricked into looking for the speaker: “Who knows, for all the distance, but I *am* as good as looking at you

now, for all you cannot *see me*?” This accomplishment by fiat may seem to violate the cooperative principle I identified in the earlier sections, but here the burden is of demonstrating that these kinds of relations are possible, a step necessary before cooperation may be considered. The speaker’s powerful institution of them displays this possibility, which auditors may choose to confirm or ignore.

Though the speaker takes the lead, exercising vocal force to posit his presence with the auditors and advance the temporal combination of the poem, the verbal weight given to the first and second persons is as equal as it ever is in Whitman’s poetry:

Closer yet *I* approach *you*,  
 What thought *you* have of *me* now, *I* had as much of *you*—*I* laid my  
 stores in  
     advance,  
*I* consider’d long and seriously of *you* before *you* were born.  
*Who* knows what should come home to *me*?  
*Who* knows but *I* am enjoying this?  
*Who* knows, for all the distance, but *I* am as good as looking at *you*  
 now, for  
     all *you* cannot see *me*? (86–91)

Here references to the first and second persons are nearly in balance, at a ratio of 9:10. Compare this with the ratio of 5:2 in the opening lines of “Song of Myself,” a poem that, as much as it indicates the role of the other, is clearly focused on the self:

*I* celebrate *myself*, and sing *myself*,  
 And what *I* assume *you* shall assume,  
 For every atom belonging to *me* as good belongs to *you*.<sup>127</sup>

In this comparison, Whitman’s is clearly more concerned with an evenness of treatment in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” Even as these lines from “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” illustrate an equity in verbal representation, they propose, or perhaps merely register, an allegiance of the first and second persons. Like a coin flipping over and over in space, one side and then the other visible, the pronouns proceed from one another—I then you, you then I, I then you—even when the *yous* are hidden by the demonstrative pronouns of the rhetorical question. This is nearly the culmination of personal association, representing a definite advance over the bonding performed in the sixth section, where the association is repeated in avowals of equivalence: “It is not upon *you* alone the dark patches fall,/The dark threw its patches down upon *me* also”; “Nor is it *you* alone who know what it is to be evil,/I am he who knew what it was to be evil” (65–66, 69–70). Important there are the variant phrasings “not upon you alone” and “Nor...you alone” in which the aloneness, the singleness of the second person is denied. In this seventh section, the two persons are clearly yoked.

These rhetorical questions clear the way for the eighth section, in which the mutual presence the speaker has been building is acknowledged outright. This acknowledgment begins with one last indication of the speaker's presence, a return to the harbor scene, which is detailed in the speaker's present: "Ah, what can ever be more stately and admirable to me than mast-hemm'd Manhattan?" (92). This statement modifies the state of affairs established in the third section, in which the speaker talked of the Manhattan of ships in the past tense. Firmly positioned in the present which has, for the most part, been reserved for his auditors, the speaker makes his boldest expression of communicative presence, an expression in which he imagines touching and speaking to his auditors. He asks, "What gods can exceed these that clasp me by the hand, and with voices I love call me promptly and loudly by my nighest name as I approach?" (95). Thus he indicates the immediacy he has worked to establish. He continues, "What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks in my face?" (96), revising the earlier investigation of the division in section five, which now disappears in favor of a bond; thus the secondary reading of his question "What is it then between us?" (54) is activated and made primary. The speaker continues his inquisition of the tie, asking "What is more subtle than this.../Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?" (96–97). This is the most explicit characterization of the communicative loop, a circuit in which meaning is poured out of one person and into another, and the most explicit avowal of im-mediacy or fusion.

As I have noted, the illocutionary force of these announcements has been instrumental in this fusion by activating the immediacy of the loop of spoken communication. As Mark Bauerlein puts it, in his analysis of illocutionary modes in "Song of Myself": "Whitman resorts to an illocutionary mode...because it joins the speaker of the language, the referent of the language, and the receiver of the language in a...fervent, reverberating, 'bar-baric yawp.'"<sup>128</sup> Bauerlein, however, denies Whitman the success of this campaign of presence by returning to rehearse some of Austin's felicity conditions for illocutionary acts. Bauerlein explains of "Song of Myself":

The necessary representationality of illocution in literature, with the consequent loss of force, added to the other attenuations I have mentioned—the absence of a real 'I,' a present, sincere 'utterance-origin'; the absence of a specified, appropriate audience to complete the act; and the absence of a proximate, circumscribed referent understood by both parties—forfeits the qualification of any literature as illocutionary. The separations and distances of written discourse, the mediations inherent in the writing and reading processes, tend to rob language of its immediate power, oracular or otherwise. What Whitman wanted most he could not have.<sup>129</sup>

Bauerlein makes a good point, based on his assessment that Whitman's use of illocutionary modes is motivated by a belief in the deadness of the letter and "his belief in the possibility of an oral presence in writing."<sup>130</sup> Certainly, the barbaric yawp that nearly concludes "Song of Myself" is the ultimate vocal signature—an onomatopoeic insertion that has value primarily as non-signify-ing sound. Certainly, Whitman does harbor a hope for presence in writing, but I would submit that this hope is not essentially oral, but only

figured orally because the circuit of oral communication is one immediately recognizable, and that this is never more apparent than here in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.”

The double-present structure of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” which distinguishes Whitman’s temporal combination from the practices of Webster and Everett, is built on a concept of the book, a concept that identifies two horizons of presence—that of the writer at the time of writing, and that of the reader at the moment of reading—that are brought into contact in the moment of reading, when the circuit of communication is completed. The book itself *is* a medium, but this mediation does not, as Bauerlein, following Austin, seems to think, make the completion of this circuit impossible or remove the possibility for illocutionary force from the printed language. Though representation always involves mediation, mediation and representation are not the same.

Of course printed language declaring two persons married will be without performative force if the reader is not one of the persons the language affects directly. But if the reader is directly affected by the printed language, if the reader constitutes the receiving end of a communicative loop (in whole or in part)—if the reading constitutes the first closure of a communicative loop—the printed language may still have illocutionary force. Examples of printed language that retains illocutionary force would include letters announcing the rejection of a piece of writing submitted for publication or letters offering the recipient a job.<sup>131</sup> Even if someone else, a typist for example, has read the document, the recipient’s reading is no less primary, for he or she closes a different loop than that closed by the typist. This is the case with the language of the commemorative speeches of Everett and Webster. Though their printed forms do constitute a repetition of their first delivery, since the information these orations present acts on the understanding and identity of its receivers, any one who had not heard the oral delivery of a particular oration or been informed of its import would still feel in reading it the force of the language insofar as it modified that person’s understanding of an event, an object, or him-or herself, as an individual or as a member of a group. This explains the force these addresses may have on us if we have never read them. We may understand from a course in American history how important American successes at the Battle of Concord and Lexington and at the Battle of Bunker Hill were to the ultimate American victory in the Revolutionary War, but Everett’s and Webster’s orations encourage new estimations of the events that may convince us that they have even greater importance to both the outcome of the war and to the character of our national culture today. More important, inasmuch as the arguments of these addresses act on our understanding of the nation and of ourselves as part of the nation, these addresses still have an illocutionary force—a force Whitman may have felt as a reader of these orations. These addresses must have worked this way on many people, as the printed forms of these addresses surely constituted the primary experience of them for many people. As representations of the commemorative event, they must have been unable to re-create the event, but as statements of value and appeals to the national consciousness, they must still have been effective. Without this effectivity, these addresses would probably not have become, as Whipple writes of Webster’s 1825 address at Bunker Hill, “household words.” This effectiveness is assumed in Perry Miller’s assessment that Everett’s success lay in the fact that he “in native terms made articulate...everything that America held precious”<sup>132</sup>—which is to say that Everett’s success lay in part with his success in helping

Americans hold better what they already held, namely their identity, their identifying values.

Whitman, like Everett and Webster, writes directly to his readers' sense of themselves and their identity as part of a larger social formation. Whitman's claims directly affect their receivers' formulations of these social matrices. So, if a reader comes to "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" for the first time, it may still have illocutionary force. If a reader comes to "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" again, without ever having understood it, and "gets" it at last, then the poem may still have illocutionary force. Here the book constitutes a delay mechanism that enables the temporal extension of presence. It may mediate physically or temporally between the writer and the reader, but it transmits the force of the writers utterance and, thereby, his or her presence as well. In this way, the book is really no different from the language that is required in any illocutionary utterance; there is always a sign.

Whitman explicitly indicates the book in the image of hand-holding put forth in this eighth section. Here Whitman indicates, as he does in slightly later poems such as "Whoever You Are Holding Me Now In Hand" and "So Long!"<sup>133</sup>, that the reader, as he or she holds the book in hand, is holding the writer's hand—that is, his hand-writing, the work of his hand. So, what Whitman imagines here is the reader holding and reading out of the book Whitman's avowals of presence; thus, the speaker (writer) is made proximate to the listener (reader) in the book, the referent of the descriptive passages is made proximate to the listener (reader) at the time of hearing (reading) as it is to the speaker (writer) at the time of speaking (writing), and the listener (reader) is able to complete the act of description, and all the felicity conditions of illocutionary utterance are fulfilled.

The mutual intellectual proximity of speaker, listener, and referent, is again established in the final section in both the long string of performatives and in the poem's final chorus. The first stanza of this last section is filled with imperative commands to the elements of the harbor, elements that necessarily cannot respond and conform to these commands. The river does not assent to flow on, it merely does. It is not, I think, Whitman's desire here to actually control these elements, but to use them to confirm the presence of his statement. It is not the speaker's aim to develop a set of cause and effect relations that demonstrate his metaphysical and illocutionary powers. Instead, these imperative statements confirm his presence, synchronizing his speech with the scene. As he speaks to the river, it does what he asks it to do. Here again, Whitman dramatizes the communicative loop in order to posit immediacy. As Roger Gilbert notes, "the imperative or command functions most effectively in a speech situation, in which speaker and addressee are simultaneously present."<sup>134</sup> By engaging the imperative, the speaker institutes this speech situation, imbuing this scene, the scene of meeting, with the desired immediacy. That the speaker commands objects to do what they will regardless of what he says is a kind of staging of the speaker's power; he undertakes these imperatives ensured of their positive outcome, which will confirm his power as a speech-actor and, more important, verify the sense of immediacy he's really after here. This immediacy receives its final expression in the last seven lines of the poem, in which "I" and "you" give way to a "we," the single, collective pronoun indicating identity, the ultimate proximity, complete coincidence, total simultaneity.

These final lines constitute a chorus that, like the hymn common in the commemorative ceremonies of the early nineteenth century, expresses, in its coordination

of voice and consciousness, a consensus. This coordination of consciousness, is not, however, established solely on the ground of mutual presence that is painstakingly established through the course of the poem. It is based as well on an experiential consensus, a ground of common experiences and perceptions that place the participants on a level platform.

Whitman works earlier in the poem to establish a level ground, particularly in the poem's major catalogues, in sections 3 and 6. As I have noted above, the speaker institutes, in the first stanza of section 3, a verbal formula that draws the speaker's past and the auditors' present into relation with one another, by associating the past and the present tenses so that one implies the other. This formula also expresses the parallelism and identity of the speaker's and the auditors' separate experiences. This formula establishes a common ground of experiences and perceptions that form the basis for a similarity of mind, an experiential consensus. Ostensibly, it reminds the auditors of, or indicates, the experiences and apprehensions involved in the ferry ride, something the speaker and the auditors share. But the vivid descriptions involved in these ostensive indications may bring these scenes before the mind's eyes of persons who have never before experienced the ferry ride (e.g., we present readers), giving them a virtual experience of the ride and a basis on which they can understand and participate in the poem's drama.

In this, Whitman follows the precedent set by Webster and Everett who were, because their subject events were past to all, necessarily appealing to and encouraging the imaginative vision of those who heard or read their words. But it may seem that in the attempt to instill experiences or formula-tions of experiences that are parallel to the speaker's own Whitman is positing readers and auditors more than actually addressing them.<sup>135</sup> But the double-active structure of the poem contraindicates such ego-imperialism. In its involvement of two sets of presence, the poem approximates more closely a democratic political situation in which discrete entities negotiate relations with one another. One of these presences does take the lead, but at every point it seems to count on the active presence of the other, at times backing away to allow this other presence to come forward as in the final lines of section 3, in which markers of perceptive ownership fade, allowing both the auditor-reader and the speaker-writer to be present to, and in, the details of the experience indicated there.

Even the lengthy catalogue of section 6, which with its interiorization supports basically psychological readings of the poem<sup>136</sup>, contributes to the establishment of the common ground of experiences by removing boundaries of shame and sin that keep an individual from social communion. Admissions such as "The best I had done seem'd to me blank and suspicious" strongly contrast the confidence of the speaker's earlier declarations, "It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not,/I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence" (67, 20–21). The expression of doubt in section six particularly may seem to break the central motion of the poem. There is here an interior movement:

I am he who knew what it was to be evil,  
I too knitted the old knot of contrariety,  
Blabb'd. blush'd. resented. lied. stole. grudg'd.



Had guile, anger, lust, hot wishes I dared not speak,  
 Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, cowardly, malignant,  
 The wolf, the snake, the hog, not wanting in me,  
 The cheating look, the frivolous word, the adulterous wish, not  
 wanting,  
 Refusals, hates, postponements, meanness, laziness, none of these  
 wanting.  
 ... (70–77)

Here, the speaker is focused on his own character more exclusively than anywhere else in the poem. His catalogue of characteristics is introduced with the typically inclusive “I too” which still implies the applicability of these characteristics to the others he imagines. But these characteristics detail self-indulgent behaviors that reflect various degrees of disregard, or lack of regard, for others—vanity, greed, cowardice, malignancy. This lack of regard is registered in the speaker’s analogizing of himself to animals, “The wolf, the snake, the hog,” emblems of slyness and sloth, qualities he has already identified. These analogies suggest his removal from the sphere of human association and thereby indicate, however indirectly, a shift toward the interior, psychological sphere to which Erkkila and Gilbert attend.<sup>137</sup>

But, as Roger Gilbert argues, this display of anxieties “permit[s] him to exorcise them.”<sup>138</sup> The final eight lines of the section register a return to the social sphere and thereby indicate the exorcism of these isolating doubts. The speaker continues the characterizing litany begun earlier in the section with a formation that recalls directly the “I too” of line 71. “I too,” he begins again, “Was one with the rest” (71, 78). The speaker’s indication of “the rest” and his avowal again of with-ness marks the return to the social sphere. The speaker insists:

[I] Was call’d by my nighest name by clear loud voices of young  
 men as they  
     saw me approaching or passing,  
 Felt their arms on my neck as I stood, or the negligent leaning of  
 their flesh  
     against me as I sat,  
 Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly, yet  
 never told  
     them a word,  
 Lived the same life with the rest, the same old laughing, gnawing,  
 sleeping,  
 Play’d the part that still looks back on the actor or actress,  
 The same old role. the role that is what we make it. as great as we

like,  
Or as small as we like it, or both great and small. (79–85)

The calling of his name, the touches advertent and inadvertent, the sharing of space with others—all of these mark semi-public, semi-private moments of interaction with others. So the section dramatizes both introversion and extraversion, the turning in and the returning out, in order to remove another of the most persistent barriers to total personal and political equality, the “dark patches”—doubt and what might be called sin. Whitman here addresses a Judeo-Christian idea of sin as that which separates the committer from God and from the human community, but without positing an overarching deity. The speaker admits to various removals, in order, it seems, to contraindicate the force of separation usually attributed there. As his declaration that he “Saw many [he] loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly, yet never told them a word” shows, there is a connection that abides even in separations, and separations are possible even within the most abiding connections.

The project of removing the barrier force of “sin” is even more aggressively pursued in the earliest version of this poem, where Whitman included among his admissions, one of masturbation. In the 1856 version of “Sun-Down Poem,” the speaker declares he “Was wayward, vain, greedy, shallow, sly, a solitary committer, a coward, a malignant person.”<sup>139</sup> It seems Whitman had set his hurdles high, that he was attempting to vault the most strongly held conceptions of sin. In this, Whitman is continuing the campaign begun in the 1855 Leaves, particularly clearly in portions of “Song of Myself” such as this one:

This is the meal pleasantly set...this is the meat and drink for  
natural  
hunger,  
It is for the wicked just the same as the righteous.... I make  
appointments  
with all,  
I will not have a single person slighted or left away,  
The keptwoman and sponger and thief are hereby invited.... the  
heavy  
lipped slave is invited.... the venerealee is invited,  
There shall be no difference between them and the rest.<sup>140</sup>

Just as Whitman invites the slave and the venerealee, two characters with little cultural capital, to his meal in the early “Song of Myself,” in “Sun-Down Poem,” he is opening the gate to the onanist as well, another vilified figure. In the 1856 version, the solitude of masturbation is offset by the gentle friendly, loving and non-sexual touches which mark a path from singleness to ensemble and thus advance the goal of the section and the poem as a whole.

Of course, the sharpness of this cartography is lost when, in the 1860 edition (where “Sun-Down Poem” becomes “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry”), Whitman removes this phrase, “a solitary committer.” The removal of this phrase may, however, indicate further Whitman’s desire to effect a national and cultural consensus. He may have felt that his urge for inclusion could never fully overcome the force of taboo associated with masturbation. He may have decided that it was, for all the negative moral evaluation of onanism, weakening evidence rather than strengthening evidence. Or Whitman may have removed it to remove any sexual suggestion from the neck-hugging and negligent touching that is more important to the sections movement from solitude to society—a movement whose completion was even more imperative in 1860, on the eve of the Civil War, as political and sectional tensions were heightening. Without this phrase the sections argument is perhaps not as sharply cast, but the excision indicates Whitman’s desire for the poem have as wide and immediate an impact as possible, for it not to suffer from its examples and undo itself.

The removal of the barriers of sin and shame in this section further enables the experiential consensus Whitman builds in this poem, for it means that those actions which may seem essentially un-social are also shared and that there is a shared ground somewhere between total publicity and total privacy, that even in self-removal, there remains a connection to the collective. But the work of this section does more than simply enable the local project of the experiential consensus; it also enables a more total equality that is the necessary basis for the political consensus, the conscientious consensus that is the poem’s ultimate goal if not the goal of Whitman’s entire body of work. By removing the stigma of shame from lying, from feeling lust, from anger or guile, Whitman makes it impossible for one person to subjugate another morally, for one person to be removed from the social life of the community on the basis of a single act. In fact, Whitman argues, we have all done these ignoble things, but that, too, provides part of the basis for our equality, for our same-ness.

This turn toward the establishment of equality is an important turn in the poem. It connects the project of the poem with the projects of earlier poems, as I have noted. But, more immediately important, it makes even more sense of Whitman’s campaign of temporal combination. The flight from death Roger Gilbert reads in the poem may constitute the exteriorization of an interior drama, of a real personal terror of Whitman’s. But it also figures ultimately Whitman’s drive for the establishment of total equality by perforating, if not removing, the final barrier to indefinite advancement, death—a barrier which not only hinders the Enlightenment ideal of indefinite advancement encoded in Jeffersonian democracy but also produces a temporal hierarchy that endangers democracy’s base condition of equality.

Gilbert’s reading does a fine job of establishing psychological dimensions in the poem and of reading in the poem’s format “the marks of a genuine poetic crisis,” of interpreting the poem as an example of what Harold Bloom calls a “crisis poem.”<sup>141</sup> He makes a strong case for the poem as a “confrontation with the knowledge of...death,” with reference to Whitman’s other confrontations with death, particularly those in “Song of Myself.”<sup>142</sup> Death is certainly one of the greatest threats with which humans may be confronted and, for that reason, a serious subject. And Whitman is clearly out to avoid death in many of his major poetic works. But for Whitman death is not simply a psychological or existential terror; it is also a threat to successful democratic polity, or

perhaps merely a way of figuring the most serious threats to that polity. For Whitman the democrat, Death constitutes the most serious challenge to the total equality that is the base condition for successful and true democracy. It challenges equality in two ways. First, it threatens and ultimately removes or negates the personal presence that is the source of political power in the democratic system. And second, it constitutes the ultimate barrier that institutes a temporal hierarchy anathema to the radical equality Whitman works hard to image; it is one of the doors from which he wants to unscrew the locks, which he wants to remove from its jambs.<sup>143</sup> If Whitman can remove the temporal hierarchy enforced by death, he can remove the last barrier to true democratic equality.

Whitman can address this temporal hierarchy in several ways. He can attempt to circumvent death altogether, projecting his presence into the future where his escape will be indicated to the degree he can convince a reader he persists, an attempt registered in statements like "Closer yet I approach you" (86). He can also wreck the simple linearity of time (on which temporal hierarchy must be based) by emphasizing annual and diurnal cycles, focusing on repetitions that create circularity resistant to hierarchy. He may also work to produce a sense that separate times collapse into one another along their lines of congruence. And, lastly, he can destroy temporal hierarchy by reimagining time in space, flattening time out in ways that make all times simultaneously available to one another.<sup>144</sup>

The ferry is a particularly suitable site for these projects. The regularity of its movement across the river, from his earliest memories (as is apparent from his *Standard* accounts of the July 1825 celebration) to the years of his full maturity and beyond, must have convinced Whitman that the ferry was a permanent part of the Manhattan cityscape, that it would be present to his imagined auditors as it was present to him. In fact, Whitman's confidence in the permanence and regularity of the ferry seems to occasion his initial imagination. As a regular and enduring element of the harbor, it would have provided Whitman with the link he needed to make his temporal combination work, a fairly stable element that would be present to his readers at the time of reception just as it was to him at the time of transmission. In this, the ferry provides Whitman what the geography of Concord and Lexington and of Bunker Hill provide Everett and Webster in their commemorative addresses, something present still, an element that endures from (for Whitman, in) the time they seek to capture. But for Whitman, the ferry is even more fertile ground than the battlefields are for Everett and Webster, for the ferry is the main experience, is at the center of the detailed scenes and apprehensions that provide the basis for the experiential consensus built throughout the poem, the points in the gradual coincidence of mind. Its regularity provided Whitman and his auditors something Webster and Everett could not have hoped for, a practical repetition of the initial event.

This is the difference between Whitman's initial circuit of communication and Webster and Everett's initial circuit of communication. But in its endurance into the future, in its centrality to the communication to future auditors or readers, the ferry occupies the position the monument does in later addresses, particularly in Webster's 1843 address at Bunker Hill. There Webster declares that the monument "stands, a memorial of the last, and a monitor to the present, and all succeeding generations."<sup>145</sup> The monument serves to remind the future generations of both the martial event remembered by the monument and of the act of remembrance the monument solidifies, the act of valuation performed there. This idea of the monument is less dynamic than that Webster himself put forward in his earlier address, delivered at the laying of the corner-stone in

1825. There Webster argues the power the monument has over time, the power it has to bring one time into contact with another. In his address to Lafayette, Webster asks Lafayette to see the field “within which the corner stone of our monument has now taken its position”<sup>146</sup>, in a manner that places the first stone of the monument on the field in the midst of the battle, that makes it a survivor from and witness to the battle remembered by it. Webster proposes for the monument the feature John Gillis formulates, in *Commemorations*, as the monument’s ability to “concentrate time in space”<sup>147</sup>—to bring one time in contact with another at a point in space. This, of course, is precisely what the ferry enables Whitman to do. Like the monument, it is the enduring point in space in which separating temporal distances are condensed and at which separate points in time come into contact with one another.

Whitman’s ferry has, though, a particular advantage over the stone monument with which Webster was concerned at Bunker Hill, namely its mobility. The power of the masonry monument lies in its stability in the midst of seasonal change and future development, a stability that maintains a space for the past time in the present, a stability that suggests a timeless or time-immune endurance. This idea of timelessness is, for some, contraindicated by the passage of time that is immediately apparent, in the growth of moss on stone, in the coloration of stone, in the growth of grass or plants about it, or in the seasonal changes around the monument, the understanding of time instituted by each one of our own movements. The monuments stability is something in which we cannot participate. The ferry, however, has a dynamism built into it. It does move, and so admits the temporal passage, particularly the annual and diurnal cycles. It does not, then, contradict our normal senses of time. Furthermore, the passage of the ferry across the river, against the flow of the river, emblemizes the monumental action of the ferry. Just as in its regular course the ferry cuts across the flow of the river, escapes its push, the ferry also cuts across the flow of time, escapes the push of linear progression. The poem tells us how to read it. And as a monument, Whitman’s use of the ferry is particularly convincing because instead of being an act of temporal imperialism, where we in our own time descend upon the past and make it what we want, here the past, in the voice of the speaker, is approaching us in our time as well, proposing a collaborative effort. This monument then is the center of a consensual confluence of individuals into a larger cultural body. And it includes its own set of participatory elements, its own secular rituals—boarding the ferry, leaning on the rail—that highlight the necessarily participatory element of this cultural concentration, the consensuality of this construction.

## II. WHITMAN AND NINETEENTH CENTURY ARCHITECTURE

As the characterization of the ferry as a monument may imply, the architecture of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” is spatial as much as it is temporal. Though the success of Everett’s and Webster’s orations are measured, in part, against their ability to bring one time into contact with another, this temporal combination cannot occur without reference to the scene, the stable framework that contains both times. Just so, Whitman’s temporal marriage is effected, largely, by the implied stability of the harbor. The coordinated combination of citizens into one equal body, one citizenry whose members are equal regardless of point of (temporal) origin (an emblematic leveling that may be extended to

situations of financial and racial divergence), depends greatly on the particularity of the scene, of the features particular to this ferry.

This is something greatly ignored by those readings that emphasize in the poem a drive to transcendence. Paul Orlov, for example, is right on point when he explains that “the poet begins convincing his readers that ‘it avails not, time not place,’ by showing that material separations and the differences of personal situations dissolve—when exposed to the element of shared moments of seeing and being.” Orlov, however, fails to treat the particularity of the scene in which these shared moments are evoked when he finds that “the differences of personal situations dissolve...into a transcendental state of spiritual unity and common human identity.”<sup>148</sup> There is a spiritual unity and a common identity which both transcend the material and temporal barriers the poem takes on. But the identity is not secured because of basically universal “human” similarities; it is constructed through particular instances of sharing, instances that promote a very specific and specifiable moment of combination. The ferry and the scenes seen from it, the entire space of the harbor and of the ferry crossing it, provide the eternal conditions for the union dramatized in the poem. This is something Richard Pascal ignores in his reading of the poem that, like Orlov’s, moves ever away from the outer scene into an interior space. Pascal argues that the speaker’s declaration that “distance avails not, and place avails not” constitute a “dismissal of time and space” that leaves only an “inner reality” as the locus of connection between speaker and auditors.<sup>149</sup> While this reading may move forward to consider the particular power we as latter-day, post-ferry readers may still feel, it ignores what is most basic in the poem, the particularity of the ferry ride and its centrality to the coordination of consciousness which is the poem’s main goal.

Of all the critics to comment on “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” James Dougherty goes the furthest toward embracing the harbor scene in all its particularity when he argues, in *Walt Whitman and the Citizen’s Eye*, “In the cityscape, there is a ‘scheme’ through which meaning might again be made public.”<sup>150</sup> In the matrix of the city and the ferry moving in the matrix, there is an emblem for the complex coordination at work here, a scheme that supports the project of equalization and combination I have identified thus far in this poem. This scheme, the spatial order of this urban scene, complements the explicit work of the speaker’s direct addresses, which work on time. The spatial order works by implication to advance the same project—to connect every one with every other, regardless of their temporal position, and to connect each one with the whole, in one place at any time.

### *Architectural organicism and anthrometry.*

The keys that will open the sense of this scheme are the tenets of architectural organicism. Organicism is, perhaps, the most important architectural development of the nineteenth century; it affected all the human disciplines as it drew from and contributed to biology, evolution, sculpture, and literature, in addition to architecture. Organicism insisted that form follow function, that the exterior appearance of any thing should be determined by its internal disposition and working. The arguments extended the observations of early evolutionary biology into arguments about buildings: as the shape of a giraffe reflects its specialization as an herbivore, so should a home reflect its special function as a dwelling. As the shape of the human body reflects the disposition of the

vital organs and their relations to one another, the shape of a building should do the same. Ultimately, these arguments led architects to decide that, since buildings are created for humans, the human body should be the key and founding element in any architectural design.

In pursuit of design adapted to the human body, organic architecture turns to anthropometrics, measurement based on the average human body. The size and scale of the average human body will then provide the base measures from which all other measures of a building's design are derived.

More important to the relational scheme in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," the anthropometric system also means that buildings not only better accommodate the humans who use them, but that they *indicate* those persons as well. Every structure designed with an anthropometric system indicates the human form in the sizes of its doors and windows, its staircases and rooms. As buildings conform to their uses, as streets and ferries conform to their uses, they suggest in their height and width and the number and size of the doors and windows the numbers of persons who use them and the sizes of horse carts. And this means that for the individual within the city, the architectural forms express his or her physical relation not only to those structures and spaces but as well to those with whom he or she shares the space: doors provide a scale marker of the human form and enable the measurement of the heights of buildings, the widths of rooms, with reference to that form; the architectural matrix of the city expresses physically the proportional relationship between individuals and between the individual and the collective.

Was Whitman using such a system? The aesthetic of the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* is practically built on organicism. In his Preface to that edition, Whitman writes:

The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems show the free growth of metrical laws and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs or roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form.<sup>151</sup>

Here, Whitman's recourse to vegetable metaphors indicates his organic thinking. He repeats the most basic organicist tenet, that outward form result from interior disposition, when he argues that the outward appearance of poems, the aspects of their "rhyme and uniformity," will be the product of some deeper, internal principle, some fundamental law of structure and growth, as flowers result from the healthy plant. Whitman seems to declare that the attempt to work within received forms will necessarily involve error and cramping. Whitman wants instead the budding "unerringly and loosely" of poetic fruits and "perfume," the ultimate measure of success as something that cannot be deliberately produced without first producing the flowers, which cannot be produced except by a healthy plant, a righteous organism. The obeisance to received forms, he argues, is a doomed religion, as wrong-headed as any attempt to produce perfumes without starting with flowers. Always there is recourse to a more basic and fundamental internal principle, from which the laws of growth will proceed. As in architectural organicism, the outward form begins with the internal principle.

Further into his preface, Whitman writes that "to speak in literature with the perfect rectitude and insouciance of the movements of animals and the unimpeachableness of the

sentiment of trees in the woods and grass by the roadside is the flawless triumph of art.”<sup>152</sup> Again, the turn to the natural image—this time animal as well as vegetable—expresses Whitman’s organicism. Here the key words are “insouciance” and “unimpeachableness” which both suggest an internal principle so deep and controlling that it cannot be questioned or criticized, a principle so fundamental it is more like being than signification. Human sentiment and human movement, in contrast to those of the animals, are neither unimpeachable nor often insouciant, but significant and therefore susceptible to analysis and criticism. Whitman finds in the movements of animals and the sentiment of trees, something more fundamental, almost more whole, but at least more wholly interior.

All this, of course, is to prepare readers for the shock of the poems that follow, which demonstrate a freedom from, if not the free growth of, metrical laws, poems that further indicate the precursor Whitman has in mind in his formulations of organic principle, namely Emerson. It is a commonplace to note that Whitman’s poetic forms answer Emerson’s demand for a turn away from received literary form to the production of an indigenous American poetry. Emerson calls: “it is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem—a thought so passionate and alive, that, like the spirit of a plant or an animal, it has an architecture all its own, and adorns nature with a new thing.”<sup>153</sup> In this line from “The Poet” Emerson emphasizes the “argument” or “thought” that, fundamentally internal “like the spirit of a plant or an animal,” produces the outward form, the “metres.” Whitman responds by elevating the internal principle that produces the flowers and fruits of rhyme and uniformity. Emerson’s conception of a poem’s thought as its spirit is answered, echoed by Whitman’s valuation of the animal and vegetable forms that are “insouciant and unimpeachable.” In Emerson, one finds a precedent for both Whitman’s basic concept of organic form and his imagination of it, in vegetable and animal metaphors.

But in Emerson, we also find the important sign that Emerson and Whitman respond to architectural—and not strictly literary—organicism. Emerson notes his sources when he indicates the “architecture” that lies at the center of these natural or organic forms. In tracing the roots of literary organicism, one might turn to Coleridge before looking elsewhere, but by 1844, when Emerson published “The Poet” and made his famous call for a new poetry, architectural organicism was raging. Architectural writings on organic forms were much more extensive, more prevalent, and more influential than Coleridge’s writings. By 1844, the issues of architectural organicism had been so widely argued that Carl Schnasse, a German architect, declared in his book *Über das Organische in der Baukunst* (On the Organic in Architecture) that the word “organic” “was the favourite term of the age.”<sup>154</sup>

Architectural conceptions of organicism probably had their start in the work of Leone Battista Alberti, in his *De re aedificatoria*, published in 1452, though it is arguable that Alberti merely made explicit what was implicit in the theory of the Roman architect Vitruvius. In *De re aedificatoria*, Alberti analogizes the edifice with the human body in order to explain his design goals:

...as the Members of the Body are correspondent to each other, so it is fit that one Part should answer to another in a Building.... Let your Building



be therefore such, that it may not want any Members which it has not, and those which it has, may not in any Respect deserve to be condemned.<sup>155</sup>

Vitruvius had placed the human form at the center of his architectural theory by deriving basic measures as well as the geometric forms of the circle and the square from the human body (a feat daVinci has made famous in his own famous drawing of the male form) and by using the proportions of human bodies as bases for architectural proportions, particularly in explaining the different orders of Grecian columns.<sup>156</sup> Alberti does none of this. But Alberti echoes Vitruvius's declaration that "without symmetry and proportion no temple can have a rational design, unless, that is, there is a precise relationship between its parts, as in the case of a well-built human body."<sup>157</sup> As Emerson and Whitman many centuries later, Alberti promotes an idea of the built form as governed by a fundamental conception, based on the eventual purposes of the edifice. In declaring that one's building should "not want any Members which it has not," Alberti is, in part, positing the most basic functionalist principle, that a building should serve the purposes of its users (though he is likely also talking about symmetry and other purely visual characteristics as well). But his foremost argument is that a building should possess its own principle of being and design, that it should explain itself and not disappoint any of the expectations it institutes, that it should not in what it does have "in any Respect deserve to be condemned." Alberti's idea is that the building should express itself and present itself as a whole, as a total form, that its design should justify itself by leaving nothing to the imagination, but answering to the apprehension of the building in every way. This is the most basic organic conception, one strongly echoed by Emerson's analogy of animal and vegetable forms to poetic principle.

Alberti's treatise is many years distant from Emerson's declarations in "The Poet." But it is also somewhat contemporary. *De re aedificatoria* was translated into English in 1726 by James Leoni (from whose translation Krufft takes the passage cited above). By then the subject of architectural functionalism had already been broached in English by Francis Bacon, who declared, in his *Essays* (1597), that in the designing of houses, "use [should] be preferred before uniformity, except where both may be had."<sup>158</sup> But following Leoni's translation of Alberti, the discussion takes off among English writers. William Hogarth promoted a functionalist architecture in his *Analysis of Beauty* (1753), as Krufft explains, by "subordinating the aesthetic categories [e.g., symmetry] to the functional principle."<sup>159</sup> And shortly afterward, Isaac Ware declared, in his *Complete Body of Architecture* (1756), that "The art of building cannot be more grand than it is useful; nor its dignity a greater praise than its convenience."<sup>160</sup>

At the same time, on the continent, a number of European architects were advancing similar ideas. According to Krufft, Carlo Lodoli (1690–1761), whose ideas come down to us primarily in the writings of later architects, Francesco Algarotti and Andrea Memmo, argued that "everything that does not have a specific function in a building... must be regarded as a non-integral component and excluded from architecture. Ornament must, accordingly, disappear. Everything besides function is affectation... or falsity."<sup>161</sup> Somewhat later, the same concerns appear expressed in the work of French architects such as Louis-Ambroise Dubut, Charles Percier and Pierre-Francois-Leonard Fontaine. In his *Architecture civile*, published in 1803, Dubut subordinated all categories of architectural planning to the consideration of "utilité," asking "Is there anything more

pleasurable than a house in which our needs are perfectly satisfied?"<sup>162</sup> In addition to this functionalist conception of architecture, Dubut expresses his organicism when he argues that "the exterior of a building...depended not on considerations of 'decor' or 'caractere' but on the arrangement of the plan"<sup>163</sup>; here is a postulation of an interior principle that foreruns similar expressions of organic principle by Emerson and Whitman.

In America, these ideas received their expressions as well. Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Thomas Jefferson's collaborator in the formation of American Federal Architecture, argued a functionalist basis for architecture in his correspondence with Jefferson; speaking of the possibilities of a classical model for American edifices, Latrobe insisted "It is not the *ornament*, it is the *use* I want" (in Andrews 77). The debate had moved to the territory in which Emerson would initiate his own investigations. And if he did not hear these arguments in the American cultural wind, Emerson may have been introduced to the terms of the argument in the work of Schopenhauer, so important in other ways to Emerson. In *The World as Will and Representation* (1819, 1844), Schopenhauer advanced a functionalist argument for the primacy of structural questions in architecture.<sup>164</sup>

The discussion of architectural functionalism and organicism was so wide-ranging it seems nearly inevitable that a widely-read person would have some familiarity with the terms of the debate,

Coleridge may be cited as a possible non-architectural source for organic concepts. His statements of an organic conception of literature in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) and his *Lecture on Shakespeare* (1819) would have been available to Emerson, either directly or through the friend he shared with Coleridge, the painter Washington Allston.<sup>165</sup> It seems most discussions of literary organicism take Coleridge's remarks as a point of origin. But Coleridge's statements of organic principles nowhere make mention of architecture, while Emerson's formulations are deeply architectural. In what may be his earliest statement of organic principle, Emerson wrote in his journal, in an entry dated 8 July 1831:

No man can write well who thinks there is any choice of words for him. The laws of composition are as strict as those of sculpture & architecture. There is always one line that ought to be drawn or one proportion that should be kept & every other line or proportion is wrong & so far wrong as it deviates from this.<sup>166</sup>

Emerson's belief in "laws of composition" may seem out of keeping with insistence on local rather than universal law we may read in the passages from Whitman quoted above. But the declaration of the necessity of the relations of the elements in a particular composition is perfectly resonant with functionalist-organicist doctrine. Significant here, though, is Emerson's understanding of architecture as a design system comparable to that at work in literary production.

We may see in his 1841 *Dial* essay "Thoughts on Art" made clearer Emerson's organic principles and the centrality of architecture to his imagination of it. There he writes:

Arising out of eternal reason, one and perfect, whatever is beautiful rests on the foundation of the necessary. Nothing is arbitrary, nothing is insulated in beauty. It depends forever on the necessary and the useful. The plumage of the bird, the mimic plumage of the insect, has a reason for its rich colors in the constitution of the animal. Fitness is so inseparable an accompaniment of beauty that it has been taken for it. The most perfect form to answer an end is so far beautiful. In the mind of the artist, could we enter there, we should see the sufficient reason for the last flourish and tendril of his work, just as every tint and spine in the seashell pre-exists in the secreting organs of the fish. We feel, in seeing a noble building, which rhymes well, as we do in hearing a perfect song, that it is spiritually organic, that is, had a necessity in nature for being, was one of the possible forms in the Divine mind, and is now only discovered and executed by the artist, not arbitrarily composed by him.<sup>167</sup>

Again, Emerson initially postulates an eternal principle seemingly out of keeping with the vigorous locality of the organic conception. But it becomes clear that the organic principle Emerson ascribes to the production of the seashell by the fish and to the production of art by the artist is a localized version of the semi-Platonic conception of the universe Emerson gives voice to in "The Over-Soul" and "The Poet." The emphasis is on an internal principle, something not arbitrary, in Whitman's word, "unimpeachable." The conjunction of the organic concept and the functional concept is clear as well. Again, the centrality of architectural formations in this line of thinking is clear, as is the strength of the connection between architecture and writing. When Emerson speaks of a building rhyming, the comparison between architectural work and literary work is again made. It is just possible that Emerson, with some inkling of organic thinking extended the principles to include architecture without having had any exposure to the organic discussions of his time. His journals show that he was reading architectural history and thinking through the implications of Vitruvius's principles.<sup>168</sup> But the formations of Emerson's ideas are so completely resonant with contemporaneous writings on architecture that it seems Emerson must have been familiar with the debates of his day.

Whitman, of course, takes after Emerson in a number of ways. It is, as I have noted above, a critical commonplace to trace Whitman's formal revolution back to Emerson's dictum that "it is not metres, but a metre-making argument, that makes a poem." Certainly Emerson's recourse to animal and vegetable imagery in his writing on art provide a precedent Whitman later follows in making his own statements in the preface to the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*. But in places Whitman shows himself to have read beyond Emerson's works. While Whitman's Ideas of organic form are consonant with Emerson's and, thereby, with the originally architectural complex of organic and functionalist notions, his diction in other passages suggests particular verbal debts to contemporary aesthetic debates the terms of which we do not find in Emerson's essays.

Ezra Greenspan suggests a connection with Horatio Greenough. But Greenspan isn't the first scholar to point to Greenough, one of the clearer voices in the American debates about architectural organicism, as a potential source for Whitman's or Emerson's thinking.

Greenough published his famous essay “American Architecture” in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review*—promulgating a functionalist-organicist aesthetic that has become an important touchstone for twentieth-century architects—just one year before Emerson’s “The Poet” appeared. By then, Emerson had probably known Greenough for a decade. Both were in Florence in 1833, where Charles Metzger and Hanno-Walter Kruft argue they met for the first time. Metzger and Kruft also argue that this meeting marked the beginning of Greenough’s influence on Emerson’s organicist thinking. Don Gifford, however, refutes this supposition citing a letter from Emerson to Greenough dated 7 January 1852 in which Emerson declares that he has not read Greenough’s “American Architecture,” but recognizes the similarity of their thinking on matters of architectural form.<sup>169</sup> F.O. Matthiessen’s treatment of Greenough, in the portion of *American Renaissance* dedicated to Emerson, recognizes the similarity between the two men’s conceptions as well, but for Matthiessen, Greenough is an emblematic figure, rather than an originary one. Greenough helps introduce and ground organic concepts from architectural thought germane to his consideration of Emerson. But Matthiessen argues no relationship between the men. Greenough stands not as a genealogical ancestor or as a brother: he is a man representative of the trends in architectural thinking that were coming to a focus in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Whitman’s connection to Greenough is just as circumstantial. In the early 1840s Whitman began publishing stories in *Democratic Review*, the same magazine that published Greenough’s “American Architecture” in 1843. As Greenspan writes, Whitman agreed with the magazine’s “political and cultural nationalism,” the terms of which alone might have generated an imagination of indigenous American architecture as an organic form. But, Greenspan notes, “Whitman’s name regularly appeared beside those of Hawthorne, Longfellow, Bryant, Whittier, and Lowell in belles lettres; Greenough on architecture....”<sup>170</sup> But in fact, though Whitman was, following the publication of “Death in the School-Room” in August 1841, a regular contributor to the *Democratic Review*, his work did not appear in the same number as Greenough’s seminal essay. As Thomas Brasher’s notes for the volume of *The Early Poems and the Fiction* in the Collected Writings series show, Whitman was nearly a monthly regular in 1841 and 1842, but slacked off afterward.<sup>171</sup> Still, the brief period of regular contribution suggests a strong interest in the *Review* that may well have continued after he ceased to be a regular contributor, in which case Greenough’s essay would have been available to him in 1843.

But, beyond what the biographies suggest, Whitman’s writing, unlike Emerson’s, suggests a direct debt to Greenough. In his rejections of ornament in his 1855 Preface to *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman’s language seems to owe something to Greenough’s formulations. There, Whitman declares “The fluency of ornaments of the finest poems or music or orations or recitations are not independent but dependent.”<sup>172</sup> And in this Whitman repeats the terms used by Horatio Greenough in his own discussion of ornament in an essay entitled “Relative and Independent Beauty” published in 1852, three years before Whitman wrote his preface. Here, Whitman’s use of the paired terms “independent” and “dependent” parallels and very nearly repeats Greenough’s use of “relative” and “independent.” Whitman’s usage may indicate a general notion of architectural concepts, which were, as is evident in their transportation into literary parlance, achieving a currency outside of architectural circles. Here even the use of the

term “ornament” marks an exposure to architectural writing, as it is a term typically reserved for the discussion of architecture rather than painting or any of the other arts. Though Greenough speaks of ornament as well, the term is not peculiar to him. Whitman’s use of these terms is merely a first correspondence that is confirmed by further parallels between Whitman’s statements in the 1855 preface and Greenough’s 1852 essay.

Whitman offers in his 1855 preface the following expansion of his earlier declaration of the necessary dependence of ornament:

These American states strong and healthy and accomplished shall receive no pleasure from violations of natural models and must not permit them. In paintings or mouldings or carvings in mineral or wood, or in the illustrations of books or newspapers, or in any comic or tragic prints, or in the patterns of woven stuffs or any things to beautify rooms or furniture or costumes, or to put upon cornices or monuments or on the prows or sterns of ships, or to put anywhere before the human eye indoors or out, that which distorts honest shapes or which creates unearthly beings or places or contingencies is a nuisance and revolt. Of the human form especially it is so great it must never be made ridiculous. Of ornaments to a work nothing outre can be allowed...but those ornaments can be allowed that conform to the perfect facts of the open air and that flow out of nature of the work and come irrepressibly from it and are necessary to the completion of the work. Most works are beautiful without ornament....<sup>173</sup>

Here again is Whitman’s doctrine of the necessary dependence of ornaments, which is shown here in direct relation to the organic concept of the primary internal principle of structure and development. But here the formulations themselves echo those of Greenough in “Relative and Independent Beauty” Whereas Whitman declares that ornaments are “violations of natural models,” Greenough argues that “the first downward step” in the development of an object is “the introduction of the first inorganic, nonfunctional element.”<sup>174</sup> From this side of Darwin, both Whitman’s and Greenough’s verbalizations seem to contain echoes of an idea of devolution, that the affixing of ornaments represents a devolution, a falling away from a successful natural development.

But what is more striking is that both Whitman’s and Greenough’s discussions of the necessary dependence of ornament lead to the veneration of the human form. In this discussion of ornament, Whitman declares that “the human form...is so great it must never be made ridiculous,” introducing his concept of the divinity and sublimity of the human form, a concept amplified, of course, by his declarations in the poem that would later become “Song of Myself,” “Divine am I inside and out”<sup>175</sup> and his veneration of the human body throughout the poem. For Whitman, it is clear, the human body is a sufficient and total form without need of ornament. In fact, it may be the perfect image for the unornamented form. Greenough, too, relies heavily on the human form to advance his argument for the rejection of ornament. In “Relative and Independent Beauty,” by slow degrees Greenough approaches an imagination of the unadorned human body. He begins his essay with a Whitmanesque combination of the body and the soul:

Persons whose light I have sought have been worried and fretted at the form, the body of my utterance. Since this soul, if soul it be, took the form of this body, I have received it as it came.<sup>176</sup>

This declaration has a strong consonance with Whitman's later statement: "I have said that soul is not more than the body,/And I have said that the body is not more than the soul."<sup>177</sup> Greenough's belief in the identity of body and soul leads him to another declaration that expresses the principle behind Whitman's own formal revolution: "I have seen that there is in the body and the dress an indication of the quantum and quality of the mind, and therefore doth it seem honest that I seek no other dress than mine own."<sup>178</sup> Here again is an insistence of a local formation, an outward expression of internal fundamentals. Greenough concedes to his objectors:

I know full well that, without dress and ornament, there are places whence one is expelled. I am too proud to seek admittance in disguise. I had rather remain in the street than get in by virtue of a borrowed coat.<sup>179</sup>

But here Greenough is still expressing his idea of appropriateness, of total ownership of outward form. It is several pages later that Greenough follows this course of thought to the image of the unadorned human form when he declares: "If I be told that such a system as mine would produce nakedness, I accept the omen."<sup>180</sup> This culminates in another Whitmanesque statement: "The assertion that the human body is other than a fit exponent and symbol of the human being is a falsehood, I believe."<sup>181</sup> This statement directly pre-figures Whitman's remarks about the greatness of the human form in the 1855 preface, particularly the remark that "the human form is so great...it must never be made ridiculous." Greenough is never here as bold as Whitman, who declares "I...go bathe and admire myself," that in his admiration he finds "Not an inch nor a particle of an inch is vile."<sup>182</sup> Greenough's veneration of the human form receives its most explicit formulations in his essay "Structure and Organization" in which a number of the ideas in "Relative and Independent Beauty" are rehearsed and compounded. In "Structure and Organization," Greenough calls "the human frame, the most beautiful organization of earth" and asks "Where is the ornament of this frame?" Then Greenough formulates his argument in terms that insist most clearly on the unadorned human form. "The savage," he writes, "who envies or admires the special attributes of beasts maims unconsciously his own perfection to assume their tints, their feathers, or their claws; we turn from him with horror, and gaze with joy on the naked Apollo."<sup>183</sup> Whitman may be more aggressive in his promotion of the unadorned human form, but Greenough is clear enough.

The works of Whitman and Greenough approximate one another in a number of other areas, but this insistence on the sufficiency of the human form is the most important. In Greenough, it is an expression of a long tradition of architectural thinking in which the human body is the central form, a tradition that goes back to Vitruvius. Vitruvius advocated a module system of design, whereby plans did not stipulate absolute measures for determining the exact dimensions of a building's elements, but rather established a system of proportional relations between the parts and between the parts and the whole; one part was to be measured against another, and actual values were calculated once the

size of one part had been established. Vitruvius apparently used the base diameter of a column as his module. And he based his module on the human body, taking as the diameter of the base the height of an average human body and then calculating the height of the column by using the proportion of width to height in the human body used for the base diameter. The column constituted a formal echo of the human form, an enlargement of it. And if the base of the column—the height of an average human form—is used as the module for the determination of the building's other values, then the whole building constitutes an enlargement of the human form, a matrix that is harmonized with the human body which contains the key to understanding the system of spatial relationships and proportional values.

This anthropometric concept, in which the built environment is a matrix that enlarges as it accommodates the human form, is the concept that, for Whitman, makes the city a "scheme" in which human relations are made clear and meaning is "made public."<sup>184</sup> It would be difficult, however, to determine where Whitman got this particular idea as such a notion is imbedded in any organic conception of architectural design and organization, a deeply associated partner of organicism, in the way that functionalism seems to be inseparable from organicism.

I have already shown how, for Greenough, an insistence on organicism leads to the veneration of the human form. It also leads directly to functionalism in Greenough's writings. This is particularly clear in his essay "Structure and Organization" in which he writes about biological adaptation as a form of the adaptation of form to function, an idea that foreruns Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) by at least seven years. Greenough writes:

If I find the length of the vertebrae of the neck in grazing quadrupeds increased, so as to bring the incisors to the grass; if I find the vertebrae shortened in beasts of prey, in order to enable the brute to bear away his victims; if I find the wading birds on stilts, the strictly aquatic birds with paddles; if, In pushing still further the investigation, I find color arrayed either for disguise or aggression, I feel justified in taking the ground that organization is the primal law of structure, and I suppose it, even where my imperfect light cannot trace it, unless embellishment can be demonstrated.<sup>185</sup>

The declaration that "organization is the primal law of structure" is organicist; here again is the insistence on an internal law. And here the use of biological examples, examples of adaptation to situation, to food supply, implies what Greenough later makes explicit, that these changes help the animal perform its various functions. Greenough writes:

I have dwelt a moment on these examples of expression and of beauty that I may draw from them a principle in art, a principle which, if it has been often illustrated by brilliant results, we constantly see neglected, overlooked, forgotten—a principle which I hope the examples I have given have prepared you to accept unhesitatingly. It is this: in art, as in nature, the soul, the purpose of a work will never fail to be proclaimed in that work in proportion to the subordination of the parts to the whole, of

the whole to the function. If you will trace the ship through its various stages of improvement, from the dugout canoe and the old galley to the latest type of sloop-of-war, you will remark that every advance in performance has been an advance in expression, in grace, in beauty, or grandeur, according to the functions of the craft.<sup>186</sup>

In Greenough, organicism leads to, or is contiguous with, functionalism. In architecture, of course, the function is the purpose it serves for those who use it. And in its functionalism, the building must indicate its users even as it answers their needs. As Greenough himself writes in “American Architecture”:

The most convenient size and arrangement of the rooms that are to constitute the building being fixed, the access of the light, of the air that must be wanted, being provided for, we have the skeleton of our building. Nay, we have all excepting the dress.<sup>187</sup>

The use forms the skeleton, and the dress, of course, conforms to the skeleton. The outside expresses the internal configuration. As Greenough writes in “Relative and Independent Beauty”: “I have seen that there is in the body and the dress an indication of the quantum and quality of the mind.”<sup>188</sup> A building expresses its uses and thereby expresses its user whose form, that part of the user the building most directly accommodates, constitutes a sort of module for the building’s proportions, a base measure.

This unavoidable combination of organicism and functionalism with an architectural anthropometric becomes clearer as the combination becomes, increasingly, the foundation of modern architecture, from the 1850s to the height of modern architecture in the 1950s and 1960s. The strength and inevitability of this combination is expressed perfectly in the work of the French architect Le Corbusier. The culmination of Le Corbusier’s work is the formation of a modulator, a system of measurement that reconciles the very unanthropometric metric system with the proportions of the human body.<sup>189</sup> The line may be drawn directly and darkly between Greenough’s work and times and the work of Le Corbusier. From Greenough’s idea that the outward form expresses the inward organization, it is only a short step to the total coincidence and identity of structure and exterior that is a hallmark of modernist architecture. And the centrality of the human need to the design process leads to a conception of the house as a prosthetic extension of the human body, as a tool. As Le Corbusier writes again and again in *Vers Une Architecture* (1923), “The house is a machine for living in.”<sup>190</sup> Greenough foreruns Le Corbusier even in this formulation, writing in “American Architecture” of houses and other buildings used by humans: “They may be called machines.”<sup>191</sup> In fact, Le Corbusier’s formulation rests on a method similar to that by which Greenough supports his declaration. Greenough compares houses to animals and to ships above all. Le Corbusier compares houses to airplanes, cars, and, as well, ships.

As ubiquitous as such thought was, however, Whitman may still have had a direct debt for his anthropometric scheme. Ezra Greenspan’s account of Whitman’s life in the early 1850s suggests another source of familiarity with the body as a basic measure. Greenspan notes that in 1852, Whitman “began devoting his working time primarily to house



building,” in the course of which he conceived of “a possible ‘Poem of Architecture? The Carpenter’s and Mason’s Poem.’” Greenspan notes the effects on his conception of his poetry: “When once launched as a poet...he would never cease referring to his writing in architectonic terms.”<sup>192</sup> Perhaps in framing up doors and windows, Whitman would have had the occasion to note how closely they are related to the average human form. In fact, during this time, in which “The notebooks he was beginning to carry around with him and fill with his thoughts and observations were now carrying references...to the working professions,” Whitman may have begun to imagine his divine average in a new way.<sup>193</sup>

In “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” the average is everywhere in the harbor scene—in the ferry and its parts, in the buildings of the cityscapes on either side of the river, in the ships docked on either bank. Everywhere, the manmade elements in the scene provide a scheme for the coordination of the one and the other and for the coordination of the one and the many, a scheme built on and ever indicative of the average human form. I argued in the chapters first part that the poems coordination of the first and second persons is founded in part on shared experience that forms a basis for equality and, thereby, for consensus. But that was only half the poem’s effort. The other half lies in the faithful rendering of the built environment with its capacity to show the congruence of humans through their physical average and to suggest the collective as but an enlargement of the individual. Through the built environment, the poem makes sensible a spatial identity of one person with another, a spatial identity that, like the identity of location on which Webster and Everett predicate their imaginative activations of the past, enables the temporal and personal combinations in ways necessary to the success of the poem’s consensus-building effort.

As the harbor scene is described, common detail by common detail, a spatial matrix is created, a regular and dependable scheme of spatial relations. At the center of this scheme is the body of the experiencing individual—the reader as well as the speaker—where shared experience entails common location. In the opening lines of the third section, Whitman predicates his proximity (“It avails not, time nor place—distance avails not” (20)) on shared experience: “Just as you feel when you look on the river and sky, so I felt” (22). This shared feeling, it soon becomes clear, is a product of a common location. Whitman avers: “Just as you stand and lean on the rail, yet hurry with the swift current, I stood yet was hurried,/Just as you look on the numberless masts of ships and the thick-stemm’d pipes of steamboats, I look’d” (25–26). The spatial matrix that will complete the ultimate coordination of Whitman’s persons is just beginning to coalesce, but already we can see some of the most important features of this architecture. Whitman’s addressee (or addressees) are not only both on the ferry, leaning on the rail, which means they’re deckside, they’ve also both been on the ferry long enough for it to gather its speed and to gain enough distance from the shore that the vast number of ships is visible. Each observation specifies this location further as if to provide details sufficient to confirm the sense that the *same* experience is shared. And yet, the matrix the poem describes is not so specific that it could not describe the experience of anyone on the ferry. The poem never specifies where exactly on the deck of the ferry one may be standing. Anyone on the ferry could occupy the framework Whitman describes.

The spatial matrix grows wonderfully in the second stanza of this third section and carefully turns the eyes of all potential ferry riders to the city, whose architectural matrix will ultimately enable the coordination the poem attempts. The first dozen lines of this

stanza, while ostensibly providing the terms of the speaker's reminiscence, produce the details that develop the matrix by specifying the ferry's location again and again. The seagulls first occupy his attention. Initially he calls them "Twelfth-month sea-gulls" (28), suggesting a December scene, but only four lines later, after his observation of the seagulls' wheeling turns his attention to the river, he recalls having seen "the reflection of the summer sky in the water" (31). The speaker confuses the times of year, suggesting that this ferry ride is a composite ride, defined by its spatial, rather than by its temporal characteristics. Again, when the speaker observes "how the glistening yellow lit up parts of their [the sea-gulls'] bodies and left the rest in strong shadow" (29), the observation suggests sunrise as easily as sunset, though ultimately it's unclear which time of day the poem prefers. True, the poem was originally called "Sun-Down Poem," in which case the sunset was preferred, but under its current title, assigned in the 1860 edition, the time of day is unclear, and two times are again compressed into one and the ferry becomes defined by space rather than by time.<sup>194</sup> So, again, any rider could occupy this space.

The seagulls are important, however, not only because their ubiquity allows Whitman to compress the different temporal situations in which one might ride the ferry, but also because they turn the speaker's, and hopefully the reader's, attention toward the shore. At first, the speaker is looking up, watching the gulls "high in the air," but as he follows their flight southward and downward, his sight is turned toward the water, occasioning his view of "the haze on the hills southward and south-westward" and toward "the lower bay to notice the vessels arriving" (27, 34). The vessels, as they head to the dock, turn the speaker's attention toward the docks, where he sees:

The sailors at work in the rigging or out astride the spars,  
 The round masts, the swinging motion of the hulls, the slender  
 serpentine  
 pennants,  
 The large and small steamers in motion.... (39–41)

And finally, this turn toward the ships occasions the observation of "the gray walls of the granite storehouses by the docks," and "On the neighboring shore the fires from the foundry chimneys burning high and glaringly into the night" (45, 47).

Now the city can be seen: "the tops of houses, and...the clefts of streets" (48). And in the following section, our speaker can declare "I loved well those cities," indicating them explicitly for the first time. The buildings, as much as the ferry railing or the angles of observation, will effect the coordination of the persons in Whitman's poem: there the shapes of windows and doors, the proportions of buildings, even the width of the streets—dimensions determined by the proportions of average human bodies and by the actions of such bodies in these spaces—will enable the speaker to see himself in relation to the whole, to see himself, his body, as the key to the system of proportions. As he recalls walking "among crowds of people" on "the streets of Manhattan," he will declare "I knew I was of my body, and what I should be I knew I should be of my body" (60, 58, 64). Everywhere the city speaks to the body in a language only the body can translate.

And so for the reader. For the body that translates the city is not Whitman's body, not the speaker's body, but the *average* human body. The single human body is the base integer of the city's proportional scheme, so anyone, any body might make the scheme intelligible and gain access to the meanings—the argument of equivalence and harmony—the city's scheme encodes. The reader, therefore, may occupy the center of the spatial matrix of the city just as easily as Whitman's speaker.

The long catalogue of the third section works to ensure the reader will occupy this position. This catalogue, as it leads the poem's attention to the shore and to the city and details the matrix of the river, also enables the reader to occupy the speaker's position exactly. As I have observed before, the second stanza of the poem's third section gradually moves away from the speaker, extending itself, through observation, further and further from the grammatical "I." This subject appears only once in the stanza, in the first line, to be implied by verbs in the following eleven lines. But once the verbs disappear, all that remains is observation. This catalogue of scenic details that ever indicate a position on the ferry; this is really the only location that would allow for such views. But this position is, at best, very lightly occupied. The speaker seems content to allow the details, rather than his subjectivity, to envelop the reader, and thus the reader comes to occupy the seeing position, comes to occupy the center of the spatial matrix this section describes.

And once the reader's perceptions occupy this position, the arrival of the reader's body is inevitable. Since the observations that locate the reader in this matrix are the products of the speaker's physical occupation of a space on the ferry, these observations ever record and indicate that position and the body that occupied it: these are the observations of an adult human *on* the ferry. Once the reader adopts these visions, the matrix implies the body, even insists on it for its order. As the poem lures the reader into an imaginative possession of the speaker's vision here in the third section, it begins to reify its imagination of the reader: by arranging a space for the body and establishing a vision that only a body will make sensible, the poem implies the reader's body. And such implication performs the arrival of the reader's body by acting as if this arrival has already occurred. Once the reader's body is present, the reader, like Whitman, may be identified through his or her body and subsequently, may be approached by the speaker.

Certainly, the speaker's effort to approach his future readers is advanced significantly by this section. In the following section, the speaker re-emerges in a present tense—"I stop here to-day and to-night" (53)—that will enable him to speak directly to his future audience in the fifth section: "What is it then between us?" (54). The shift of tenses here is only prelude to the declarations of the seventh and eighth sections where the speaker comes into immediate proximity with the audience, warning first "Closer yet I approach you," the speaker's present tense joining the reader's, and finally, "What they study could not teach—what the preaching could not accomplish is accomplish'd, is it not?" (86, 100). Though the sixth section offers a catalogue as well, the poem never, until the approach is accomplished, requires a catalogue as extensive as the one found in the third section, suggesting that the matrix it institutes is key to coordinating speaker and audience and making their mutual presence possible.

Of course, the poem's plan to integrate readers, mentally and physically, into its scheme is predicated on the stability of the harbor scene and of the ferry course. The matrix must remain intact if it is to be a coordinating engine, as the urging commands of

the poems final section make clear. Even if this catalogue constitutes a staging of the speaker's vocal power, this section more basically expresses the speaker's dependence on, and wish for the continuance of, the basic spatial stability of the harbor scene that he has chosen as the site of his drama of collective identification. This is made most clear by the final line of this stanza in which the speaker says, "Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting" (125). The speaker directs a drama in which each "part...still looks back on the actor or actress,/The same old role" (83–84, 110–111). The harbor is the stage or set—a set that advances the drama only insofar as it is *set*, or stable. And so the poem must declare to the harbor, "You furnish your parts toward eternity" (131). The stability of the elements of the harbor scene in space implies a stability in time, an endurance that encourages an imagination of them in their places a hundred or hundreds of years afterward. And this vision of temporal stability underwrites the feeling of a basic temporal identity that is expressed in the poem's various temporal combinations. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" as in the addresses of Webster and Everett, the stability of the landscape enables the transport of anamnesis or temporal combination. It makes a timeless state like "eternity" conceivable. And it means that regardless of the passage of time any human might stand where the speaker stands in his speaking and feel what the speaker feels, that the auditor, the re-enactor, may achieve some identity with the speaker across the temporal boundaries.

Clearly, the imagination of spatial equality and congruence further enable the equations attempted in the poem's efforts to collapse temporal distance. But the spatial arguments may ultimately be the poem's fundamental basis—for they enable more than the simple single equalities that are the poems first steps. The anthropometric scheme of the city's matrix not only enables the connection of one to another, but also makes possible the connection of the one to the many. Not only can the poem's imagined architecture help each receiver feel the presence of the architect, it can make the social order palpable, understandable, and meaningful to all by showing each his or her place in the collective.

Just as the harbor scene as described in the poem has a single human form, that of the speaker, at its center, it has in its overall matrix a number of elements that indicate other persons—multiple others. The ferry platform, for example, in its size indicates the numbers of persons who will use it; it would not need to be so big for only one passenger. Furthermore, the buildings on either shore, whose windows, doors, and total heights are calculated on factors of the human form, indicate the numbers of persons who use and will use them, as do the streets between the buildings. And for a single observer, the realization of the presence of numbers means, necessarily, the presence of others, so the speaker's mantra may simply register his engagement with the scene. The cityscape contains numerous architectural and other made forms that constitute extensions and multiplications of the human form, forms that not only indicate the numerous others that share the spaces but also provide legends of the relationship between the one and the many, between the individual and the collective. In the visually perceptible relationship between the size of a door, which is based on the average human size, and the rest of a structure, there is a proportion that also expresses the relationship between a single body and the total number of bodies that may use the structure. And in the proportional relation between a single doorway and the entire urban matrix, there is a legend for the relation between the one and the entire urban population.

In this poem, the entire city is a machine for relating the one to the many, a machine that is always working, a machine that is effective in all its elements. So it is not accidental that the speaker equates “the street [and] the ferry-boat [and] the public assembly” (81). The spatial matrix of each provides a similar legend, and the matrices are ever active. When the speaker says he “Saw many I loved in the street or ferry-boat or public assembly, yet never told them a word” (81), he expresses the constancy of this relational matrix; in these public places, in these structures, the one is ever related to the many and to each one of the many, which means that the speaker does not need to speak to acknowledge a commonness or to acknowledge an acknowledgment. Commonness is simultaneously communicated. So in this matrix, the unacknowledging self we see at work in the seventh section is, like the self of Whitman’s “Song of Myself” both public and private. This is a self that is “Both in and out of the game.”<sup>195</sup>

This is the nature of the democratic self in Whitman’s formulations, and the public space makes this increasingly unavoidable. The public space in fact expresses the inevitability of the public relation of self to other and others, because it is, like the democratic polity itself, based always on the one, the single human integer constituted by every one present within it. Each person within the public space is a base or center of the space, just as each citizen is a base and center of the democratic polity, which as a whole is simply an aggregation of individual centers, a multiplication of individuals.<sup>196</sup> Thus this imagination of the public space and the democratic collective is perfectly in keeping with Whitman’s colossal and divine humanity that make the individual the base integer of all considerations. The public space is understandable as an amplification of the individual, just as the body politic is understandable as an amplification of the one, a whole which is larger than the one, but to which the one has a perfectly proportional relationship.

The base of this spatial matrix, like the base of Whitman’s divine humanity, is not himself, but a human average, what Whitman calls the “divine average.” This concept does not make much sense to us now, as our century’s increasing emphasis on the individual has meant that excellence rather than average is what is to be desired. But for Whitman, the average is the base democratic state. His conception of it is complex, mating our own ideas of individual excellence and self-improvability with the essential and undeniable political equality of each person, regardless of his or her degree of actualization. The divinity of the average lies in the possibility that each individual may realize his or her full potential, to grow into his or her role in the democratic polity; in a sense each citizen contains his or her own greatest self. But, as I have suggested, the belief in personal greatness does not mean that Whitman would deny an individual his or her place if he or she could not actualize his or her potential; rather, the individual still has the same standing in the democratic state. In this, Whitman’s vision of the polity is an interesting mix of Jeffersonian and Jacksonian principles—Jeffersonian in its insistence on self-improvement and the fundamental role of education in the advancement of the American polity, and Jacksonian in its refusal of punitive stratification. It means that in all cases, equality and excellence are encouraged, that all are admitted and are shown the possibility of achieving the best of themselves. Whitman’s democracy is “the meal equally set.”<sup>197</sup>

Just so, the spatial matrix of the city, of the built environment is available to all. All hold the key to understanding it. Every one may become a center of it. As August Choisy

and Le Corbusier after him would make explicit in the years following Whitman's poem, doors express an average human height.<sup>198</sup> The heights of ceilings express an average human height. The seats on the ferry express an average human width and an average length of leg. Insofar as all architecture is made to be seen, it is calculated from the point of view of the average human eye; as Le Corbusier writes: "Man looks at the creation of architecture with his eyes, which are 5 feet 6 inches from the ground."<sup>199</sup> And insofar as all architecture is made to accommodate the body in one way or another, it is calculated to accommodate a rectangle between 5 and 7 feet tall, almost three feet wide, almost two feet thick. The center of the spatial matrix is equally available to all persons, as it is calculated on an average human height.

There is then in the built environment a scheme that expresses and helps reinsituate the radical personal equality that is for Whitman the base condition of democracy. And there is, further, in the city, a scheme for the relation of the one to the many, of the individual to the mass, a scheme in which, as James Dougherty suggests, meaning may be made public.<sup>200</sup> So in his choice of the ferry and the harbor, Whitman stands in an arena that helps him advance the dual purpose apparent in the illocutionary plan, a one-to-one equation of speaker and auditor and a group coordination of speaker and all auditors, real and potential.

The success of the poem's effort to coordinate speaker and reader is registered again and again in the critical responses to the poem. E.Fred Carlisle describes the poem's "communication," and Richard Pascal's explains the poem's effect as "communication-communion," recognizing the poem's drive to an intellectual and spiritual coincidence of writer and reader.<sup>201</sup> In his *Critical Guide to Leaves of Grass*, James E. Miller, Jr., argues for a more physical coincidence when he notes that the most persistent reaction to the poem is the feeling that the speaker is looking over the reader's shoulder.<sup>202</sup> Roger Gilbert writes that "we feel that in saying 'I approach you,' Whitman in fact *does* approach."<sup>203</sup> For a good number of critics, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is remarkably successful in prosecuting its approach.

But how can the poem's city promote this sense? How can the poem's city condense time in space and eliminate all temporal boundaries? Especially now? The Manhattan-Brooklyn ferries were effectively replaced in 1883 with the opening of the Brooklyn Bridge, and since then it has been impossible for any reader to exactly replicate the experience the poem describes. And even if, in the rare occasions since the bridge's opening ferries have operated along this old course, one were to take one's *Leaves of Grass* across the river, the skylines have changed so much that the scene, while still informed by the proportionality underwriting Whitman's vision, is remarkably different. If the city is to undergird the poem's arguments for coordination, even instate them, how can it achieve these ends?

If we believe Arthur Geffen, the displacement of the ferry on which this poem is founded is a real problem even Whitman refused to confront. Though the incomplete Brooklyn Bridge appears, briefly, in two of Whitman's poems Whitman never names the bridge, never recognizes it once complete, though Whitman would live for almost another decade after it opened.<sup>204</sup> Geffen argues that "For Whitman to admit the existence of the completed Brooklyn Bridge, he had to recognize the obsolescence of the ferry boat world he treasured." According to Geffen, this would mean, too, acknowledging the obsolescence of the vision of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," which, more than any other of

his poems, relied “on the relative stability over the years the objects of common experience presented.”<sup>205</sup>

It is, however, possible that the city of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” is never affected by any change in the Manhattan cityscape, regardless of Whitman’s pleas for stability in the poem’s final section. As the poem performs the arrival of the reader’s body into the poem, as the poem performs the arrival of the speaker into the reader’s present, the poem may perform the city as well.

The poem may perform the city, for the aspect of the city most important to the poem’s drive to combine writer and reader is created by and embedded in the poem itself—namely, the conceptual space, the very idea of the city that ties its citizens together. As we read the poem, we construct the scene the poem describes. Since this scene is past to all of us, all we have of Whitman’s East River is the scene he constructs from his memories, a scene reconstructed in our own imaginations. And it is here, in the city in the imagination, that occur the speaker’s apprehension of the city that indicates his own body, each reader’s occupation of the scene reconstructed using his or her sense of the scale of his or her own body, the subsequent equivalence of speaker and reader, and the furthermore subsequent imagination of the city’s crowds into which each reader is integrated. It is here, in the city in the imagination, a virtual but no less spatial space, that temporal distance collapses and the writer may approach the reader, with a very palpable success.

As Robert Lowell after him, Whitman may be seen as modifying an actual space by re-shaping the conceptual dimension that gives the space its meaning determines its use. But since the actual space no longer exists as it did when Whitman wrote, all that remains is the conceptual dimension that, as the ferry rail implies the vertical position of a human hand, ever implies the physical space it once inhabited. As the long catalogue of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” ever implies the body of a person who could observe the sections elements, so the conceptual space ever implies the physical space it once inhabited, and in so implying allows us to reconstruct its elements. The conceptual space remains intact, ready to reassert itself whenever a congruent space—whether physical or virtual—appears.

Aliki Barnstone’s recent poem “With Walt Whitman on the Staten Island Ferry” provides a fine example of a situation in which the conceptual dimension of the space imagined in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” reasserts itself in a new, but very compatible environment. Here, Whitman continues to inhabit New York ferries, even if there is no longer any “Brooklyn Ferry.”<sup>206</sup> The Staten Island Ferry is probably the most well-known and well-traveled of New York’s operative ferries, so if Whitman is going to occupy a contemporary ferry, this is the one, and in Barnstone’s poem his occupation is developed extensively. Barnstone’s epigraph—“What is more subtle than this which ties me to man or woman [sic] that looks in my face?/Which fuses me into you know, and pours my meaning into you?”<sup>207</sup>—adapted from lines 96–97 of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” explicitly identifies this poem and the imaginative occupation of the ferry it imagines as successors and continuers of Whitman’s poem. As Whitman imagined the Brooklyn Ferry as a site for union and congress, so Barnstone imagines the Staten Island Ferry, though her definitions of “union” and “congress” are as sexual as they may be political. Barnstone’s speaker “sat at ease with Walt on the ferry” and “guided his hand under [her] skirt.” And the congress progresses, until “Walt and I knelt a bed of

newspapers,/moaning the holy names, shuddering with the ferry engine"<sup>208</sup>. Of course, the power is not only Whitman's, but Barnstone's as well. Whitman's power is the persistent conceptual space—Whitman on a ferry, orchestrating his approach, pouring his meaning (perhaps other things as well) into his audience. Barnstone resituates this conceptual space in the physical space of the Staten Island Ferry, thereby altering its conceptual dimension: now it ever contains at least a part of the conceptual dimension Whitman ascribed to the Brooklyn ferry. Here, the re-emergence of the conceptual dimension of Brooklyn ferry has a spur, but the ease with which it is relocated, its ability to inhere within the physical space of the State Island Ferry, simply proves the persistence of the conceptual dimension of Whitman's ferry.

### *The Ferry as Monument*

And this is the hallmark of monument—a conceptual space so strong it can dominate and even outlast physical space. As Webster argued in his 1825 Bunker Hill address, the physical form of the monument is important only insofar as it directs observers to the meaning of the space, articulated by the orator. For Webster, a monument is a space whose interior is argument, is meaning. Whitman's ferry is just such a space—a space now defined by its meaning, which can organize physical space so it collapses and contains time and even survive the rearrangement of physical space without alteration.

As the architecture of Whitman's ferry is exactly what Webster envisioned for the monument at Bunker Hill, so its successes answer all Webster's hopes as well. Speaking in 1825, Webster directs the attention of his audience to the past, to the dead, and works to collapse the distance between the past and the present by re-imagining the past in present tense, asks his audience to understand the value of their present as dependent in part on the values and successes of the past, and then inserts each of these arguments into the masonry just begun, so the completed obelisk will serve to remind future visitors of the witness borne that day and to impress into the more durable medium of their hearts the arguments advanced on Bunker Hill. So Whitman, seeming to speak from the past, attracts his audience's attention, asking them to consider their forebears, then manipulates the structural identity of several English tenses to stage an approach, collapsing past and present into one continuous present dilated by the combination, and finally prays for the stability of the scene, as if to suggest that the physical space the poem imagines is somehow responsible for this combination. The formula could not follow Webster's more exactly.

Whitman could hardly have found (or inadvertently replicated) a more appropriate formula. Whitman wrote in response to a cultural crisis nearly equivalent to that Webster and Everett responded to. Everett and Webster sought to engage and concretize the public imagination of key events in American history at a moment when cultural consensus seemed to be dissolving, first in the 1820s, when Americans felt, as John Bodnar argues, that the past was slipping away from them, when Americans felt a cultural entropy, and into the 1840s and 1850s when, as Ronald Reid demonstrates, American politics were becoming increasingly factionalist as the conflicts over slavery deepened. Webster and Everett sought to reintroduce original energies into the slowing system. Whitman composes and publishes "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" in this increasingly factional and fractional world of the 1850s, in which the debates over the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850



and the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 revealed the deep disagreements between Americans which threatened to bring secession and civil war, a time of conflict in contrast to which appears Whitman's careful imagination of equality, allegiance, and corporate identity, and imagination likely designed and deployed to combat the growing sense of fracture with a contrary sense of mutual belonging and support. This is an interpretation supported by Betsy Erkkila's remarks on the poem in *Walt Whitman the Political Poet*. Though Erkkila maintains that a fit of depression provided Whitman with the poem's germ, she finds the product resonating on larger cultural frequencies. She writes:

in its overarching concern with the problem of disintegration and union, the poem is also a response to the fact of fracture in self and world at a time when traditional social structures were collapsing under the pressure of the new market economy, when Whitman was experiencing the anomie of being cast off by a seemingly alien and unresponsive world, and when the American Union itself was dissolving.<sup>209</sup>

Certainly, as Erkkila argues, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" "marks a turn in Whitman's work away from an emphasis on personal power and toward an increasing focus on the problem of social union."<sup>210</sup> In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," the attention to the individual I, which marked the poems of the first edition, is complemented by what Ezra Greenspan calls "a sliding continuum between the self and the world."<sup>211</sup>

Despite this turn, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" apparently did not prevent or otherwise mitigate the Civil War. The second edition, in which "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" debuted as "Sun-Down Poem," did move Thoreau to declare Whitman "a great fellow" and to single out "Sun-Down Poem" for particular praise. Thoreau's general assessment is mixed, but in his comments he could almost be describing the peculiar effect "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" has on some readers. Thoreau writes:

To be sure I sometimes feel a little imposed on. By his heartiness & broad generalities he puts me into a liberal frame of mind prepared to see wonders—as it were sets me upon a hill in the midst of a plain—stirs me well up, and then—throws in a thousand of brick.<sup>212</sup>

If the "thousand of brick" were but to come in the form of buildings, of the city, then the imposition could be the imposition of the civic order "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" imagines, and the plain could be the great expanse of the East River between the two cities.

Perhaps all the poem needed, however, was a little more time and more readers: the circulation of the 1856 edition was not very substantial. But a hundred years or more gives Whitman readers who turn Thoreau's feeling of being "a little imposed on" into the feeling that Whitman is behind him, that "Whitman in fact *does* approach," and transforms Thoreau's idea of the hill or plain into the idea of the schematic city.<sup>213</sup> Perhaps the disappearance of the ferry and the gradual transformations of Manhattan and Brooklyn into modern cities allow the poem's conceptual space to work on its modern readers without the interference of other conceptions of this arena.

In any case, it's clear that the poem, if it makes nothing else happen, makes even readers as sophisticated as Miller, Gilbert, Dougherty, and Barnstone feel that Whitman approaches us through this poem. Whether its repetition of the monument-building rhetoric of Everett and Webster is deliberate or accidental, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" does make something happen by acting on the imagination and, through the imagination, on the understanding. "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" changes our minds.

This outward effectiveness distinguishes Whitman's poem, and poems that follow from it, from the Romantic poems to which Abrams yokes it and from the private mode described by Mill. James Dougherty, arguing the poems relation to Abrams's greater Romantic lyric, notes that Whitman's poem deviates from the Romantic examples in its "confident return to experience."<sup>214</sup> But this only indicates the difference partially, for this return to experience is not only Whitman's return to an experience of "the outer scene," but rather a turn through the poem's imagined city to the world of others, the selves, and the self, outside the self, to the world of the readers who feel this approach.

In fact, poems like "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" are in many ways more effective than the cultural practice of commemoration and monumental marking that lie behind them, for, unlike the monument, they are portable and, therefore, available to a much larger audience than are the actual monuments. In recent years, the importance of this aspect has become apparent with respect to our most famous physical monuments: there are three-quarter-sized versions of both the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Korean War Memorial that are set up in different cities along a tour that makes these available to ever-larger portions of the national population. Furthermore, the poem, unlike the monument, is basically replicable: it is not made of a single set of stones that wear and must be repaired, that might indicate failures of endurance and imperviousness. And the poem is capable of internalization, whole: it may be memorized. The internalization of a national spirit is the goal of almost every monument, but the physical configurations of most monuments mean that there is always a portion that is incapable of being internalized. The poem, on the other hand, is totally consumable; its memorials may be memorized and perpetuated, and every human who can understand language has the skills needed to participate in its work.



## Chapter Three

### Crossing Over Brooklyn Ferry: *The Bridge* as Monument

Whitman's discovery, that one could forge a sense of consensus by manipulating the conceptual dimension of an actual and unavoidable space and thereby amplify a poem's importance, would not be confirmed for more than seventy years, until Hart Crane published *The Bridge* in 1929. In Crane's imagination, the Brooklyn Bridge is the actual, publicly known and largely unavoidable space that Crane animates with his hopes for a strong national spirit founded on American history.

Of course, Crane is not the only Modernist to employ recognizable public structures. Pound, most notably, built *Cantos* VII–XI on Sigismundo Malatesta and his church-turned-sepulcher, the Tempio Malatestiano, using the palimpsestic architecture of the Tempio as a model for his poem's own bricolage in the decade Crane was writing *The Bridge*. And just two years before *The Bridge* was published, William Carlos Williams began writing *Paterson*, interested in the identity of a city and a man, "one man—like a city."<sup>1</sup> But neither Pound nor Williams give us what Crane supplies, namely a detailed imagination of a physical space that will both nurture and be shaped by the conceptual space the poem creates. In his Malatesta Cantos, Pound seldom dwells directly on or in the Tempio, so its spatial characteristics remain undeveloped. Pound's interests target its historical qualities; the Tempio has a conceptual dimension, which is necessary to understanding it as a representational space, but the Tempio only ever has the spatial depth of a relief, so it never becomes fully realized in the poem's imagination. By the same turn, in Williams's imagination, *Paterson* has an interior, though it's never clear what contains it, so the poem's city, or its man, can never be fully realized as a social space.

Crane's poem, on the other hand, conscientiously adopts and studiously preserves the specific social space of the Brooklyn Bridge. The Brooklyn Bridge dominates the poem as it receives the poem's opening gestures. Crane invites us to see the bridge stretching "across the harbor, silver-paced," to see "Some motion ever unspent in [its] stride," to see its "parapets" and "choiring strings," its beaded path and its shadow and its vault over the river.<sup>2</sup> He names it, so there can be no mistake, but, in the 1920s, no other bridge could incite such images. And there can be no mistake what the opening lines of "Atlantis," the final section of *The Bridge*, describe:

Through the bound cable strands, the arching path  
Upward, veering with light, the flight of strings,—  
Taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate  
The whisnered rush. telenathv of wires.

Up the index of night, granite and steel—  
 Transparent meshes—fleckless the gleaming staves—  
 Sibylline voices flicker, waveringly stream  
 As though a god were issue of the strings...(1–8)<sup>3</sup>

Or what figure supplies to the closing stanza “the orphic strings,” what bridge becomes Crane’s “Bridge of Fire!” (91, 93). The poem begins from the Brooklyn Bridge and ends with the Brooklyn Bridge. It recalls the Brooklyn Bridge even in its very heart, when, in “Cutty Sark,” our narrator “started walking home across the Bridge” (58).<sup>4</sup> The Brooklyn Bridge is the clearly recognizable and fully imagined space that can contain in its interior the conceptual architecture Crane constructs elsewhere in the poem.

Even as Crane begins to situate the Brooklyn Bridge in his poem, he slyly indicates his debt to Whitman, naming the source for his poem’s method, when he recalls: “Under thy shadow by the piers I waited” (37). Though ostensibly addressing the bridge, Crane may as well be talking to Whitman. As Arthur Geffen has observed, the Brooklyn Bridge was built in the course of Whitman’s Fulton Ferry.<sup>5</sup> So, if Crane waits by the piers under the bridge, he waits where the ferry would have docked many years before. In this position, surely occupied by Whitman before, Crane picks up where Whitman left off: as Whitman’s final words directed the ferry to maintain its course and the river to maintain the parts that furnish “the soul,” Crane’s first words direct the bridge not only to remain but to “lend a myth to God” and so nourish the contemporary soul as it sweeps “unto us lowliest” just like Whitman’s ferry (44, 43).

“Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” is the model that fits Crane better than any of his contemporaries because Crane, more than any of his fellows, feels a cultural crisis akin to that Whitman felt. Of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” Betsy Erkkila writes:

in its overarching concern with the problem of disintegration and union,  
 the poem is also a response to the fact of fracture in self and world at a  
 time when...the American Union itself was dissolving.<sup>6</sup>

Tough civil war and the dissolution of political union was certainly not the cause for Crane’s crisis, he nevertheless felt that the health of the nation was in serious trouble. Crane found the diagnosis in the writings of Van Wyck Brooks and Waldo Frank. Brooks had written, “I think we are driven to the conclusion that our life is, on all its levels, in a state of arrested development, that it has lost, if indeed it has ever possessed, the principle of growth.”<sup>7</sup> Frank was, perhaps, more blunt, writing: “America is a joyless land.”<sup>8</sup> The crisis was more general, cultural, than political. And, for Crane, the first prophet of doom was Eliot, whose “pessimism” Crane would battle for years.<sup>9</sup> In Crane’s view Eliot had achieved the “perfection of death.”<sup>10</sup> Crane could only complain, declaring *The Waste Land* “good, of course, but so damned dead”—and damnable insofar as “Eliot ignores certain spiritual events and possibilities as real and powerful now as, say in the time of Blake.”<sup>11</sup> Crane wanted a turn from Eliot, whom, he declared in 1923, he took “as a point of departure toward an almost complete reversal of direction,” a “more positive, or...ecstatic” direction, a “resurrection.”<sup>12</sup> He wrote three years later:

Is the last statement sentimentally made by Eliot,

“This is the way the world ends,  
This is the way the world ends,—  
Not with a bang but a whimper.”

is this acceptable or not as the poetic determinism of our age? I, of course, can say no, to myself, and believe it.<sup>13</sup>

Eliot marked the crisis. Crane wanted to respond.

In the conclusion to *Our America*, Waldo Frank prescribed the course Crane would follow as he answered Eliot. Frank wrote:

The crisis finds us to-day, innerly depleted. We are clever. We are literate. We are materially advanced. But, facing the mandate of our hour, the recreation of a world, we are more backward than the Magyar or the Slav, because we lack that spiritual substance which creates Faith and which moves mountains.

This then is our task. Whitman foresaw it and sang of it and warned us. We must go through a period of static suffering, of inner cultivation. We must break our impotent habit of constant issuance into petty deed. We must begin to generate within ourselves the energy which is love of life. For that energy, to whatever form the mind consign it, is religious. Its act is creation. And in a dying world, creation is revolution.<sup>14</sup>

Crane read *Our America* as it was published, in 1919, and he would turn to its vision when his own crisis grew keen several years later.<sup>15</sup> In response to Eliot, Crane would make his revolution through creation. He would write a poem that would “go through a period of static suffering, of inner cultivation” and break through into “the energy which is love of life,” which “is religious.” Crane believed the only way to break through to this energy was to create what he called “a mystical synthesis of ‘America.’” He knew what had to be done:

History and fact, location, etc. all have to be transfigured into abstract form that would almost function independently of subject matter. The initial impulses of ‘our people’ will have to be gathered up toward the climax of the bridge, symbol of our constructive future, our unique identity, in which is included also our scientific hopes and achievements for the future.<sup>16</sup>

Crane would, following Frank’s prescription, turn to Whitman. As Whitman before him, Crane would answer cultural crisis by forging consensus. Following Whitman’s work in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” Crane would forge consensus by creating in the bridge and

the “climax of the bridge” a space that would focus the “impulses of ‘our people’” and construct “our unique identity,” that would cast consensus and weld it fast.

Crane, I submit, is largely successful in achieving his ends, though this success is not easily seen—not because of the (considerable, yes, formidable, yes) difficulties presented by Crane’s style, but rather because of the difficulties produced by seventy years of pessimistic and improperly founded criticism. As Sherman Paul has noted, “The problem with Crane, of course, is not only one of entering his world but of working through the criticism that surrounds it.”<sup>17</sup> When Paul speaks, he knows, as more recent criticism, such as that of David Clark and Warner Berthoff, has shown, most of the body of Crane criticism is eaten up with the cancers introduced by the first and overwhelmingly negative assessments of *The Bridge* by Yvor Winters and Allen Tate.<sup>18</sup> So we cannot cross *The Bridge* on the path the criticism has detailed or hope to enter by the criticism the space that Crane hoped would focus the American impulse. We must instead enter the poem to see Crane’s treatment of the exploratory spirit, from the material conquests that discovered and settled America to the spiritual journeys that, he seems to believe, will save it—a treatment made intelligible through the figure of the Brooklyn Bridge.

...*The Architecture of The Bridge*...

The Brooklyn Bridge is a perfect emblem for the integration of the material and the spiritual adventure Crane seeks throughout *The Bridge*, for the Brooklyn Bridge is itself designed to balance and integrate contrary forces. Alan Trachtenberg tells us that the bridge’s architecture is founded on the engineer John Augustus Roebling’s understanding that “A force at rest is at rest because it is balanced by some other force or by its own reaction.” Trachtenberg further explains, quoting Roebling:

The microcosmic unity of opposing forces in the suspension bridge was therefore a reflection of the macrocosmic harmony of “well-balanced motion.” Just as one part of the structure communicated its force to another part, creating “the wonderful action and harmony of the whole,” all phenomena in nature were “interwoven and interlocked.”<sup>19</sup>

In the Brooklyn Bridge we see that the weight of the platform and all that moves upon it is drawn up by the stays to the top cables, which then communicate the total weight of the span and the cables themselves to the pylons, thus re-channeling gravity’s attraction on the whole bridge into the two central columns. As if a grand and complicated arch, the bridge uses gravity’s pull to supply the very force that binds the bridge together; one might even say that the bridge is perpetually falling into its own stability.

It’s hard to say what of Roebling’s Crane read, though his interest in Roebling is clear enough: while writing *The Bridge*, Crane lived in the apartment from which Washington Roebling, the engineer’s son, supervised the completion of the Brooklyn Bridge’s construction; Crane would also later propose to write a biography of Washington Roebling after completing *The Bridge*.<sup>20</sup> Even more convincing, however, than his interest in the Roeblings must be Crane’s description of the Brooklyn Bridge that seems deliberately to echo Roebling’s theories:

And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced  
 As though the sun took step of thee, yet left  
 Some motion ever unspent in thy stride,—  
 Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!

(“To Brooklyn Bridge,” lines 13–16)

Crane sees the bridge both in motion and in stasis, in stasis because in motion and, somehow, in its stasis become the model for all motion, even that of the sun. If Crane shares Frank’s assessment that Americans are “innerly depleted” because of generations of outer-directed exploration without a balancing “inner cultivation,” then the Brooklyn Bridge is the perfect emblem of the balanced life: it stretches to connect and yet is able to translate the strain of its conquest of distance into the very force that will bind it together internally. Crane will work, in the body of *The Bridge*, to demonstrate the curriculum of American history that suggests how continuous movement might be translated into inner strength.

Here, in the poem’s opening, Crane’s hope is that the bridge, or that the balance it exemplifies, will “condense eternity” (35), will bring all the stretching together to form a significant interior for America just as the bridge’s condensation of force stabilizes its own interior. In reaching for a form that coordinates motions into physical and temporal stasis, Crane seems to reach back to Whitman, to the conceptual core of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” in a gesture ultimately more significant even than Crane’s waiting in Whitman’s old ferry slip. In Whitman’s poem, the regularity of the ferry’s movements, within the stable framework of the cities between which it moves, is the basis for a spiritual communion and, thereby, a cultural union. So, in *The Bridge*, Crane seems to hope that a demonstration of the regularity and basic identity of temporally distinct motions might create a point of stability at which different times may be condensed to nourish a cultural union. In “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” such temporal combination precipitates a confluence of persons and personal consciousnesses and an organization of persons and consciousnesses into a culture. Crane seems to hope for the same in *The Bridge*.<sup>21</sup>

But such coordination and condensation takes a great deal of time and effort. Though we may glimpse some of the elements being secured along the way, Crane’s vision requires the entire length of *The Bridge* to come to any sort of recognizable completion, which is why so many critics have given up on any notion of the poem’s unity and have instead focused on the elements that are consistently more visible, such as the struggle of the poem’s visionary figures to maintain their faith in the face of adversity. But, as I shall demonstrate, such concern is a natural though subordinate adjunct to the poem’s attempt to imagine internal stability in the midst of outward motion.

...*Pylon & Platform: From “Ave Maria” to “Cape Hatteras”*...

In “Ave Maria,” the first numbered section, we find Columbus returning from his first voyage of discovery.<sup>22</sup> Columbus “invokes the presence of two faithful partisans of his quest” (Crane’s gloss, page 47), Luis de San Angel and Juan Perez, and prays to them for safe passage home; they had made his passage to the New World possible in the first



place, Luis de San Angel having helped Columbus overcome material boundaries in “rein[ing] [his] suit/ Into the Queens great heart that doubtful day” (lines 3–4), and Perez having helped Columbus overcome spiritual boundaries with his “counsel [which] fear/And greed adjourned” (7–8). Here the diction, though ostensibly recalling Columbus’s difficulties prior to embarking on his voyage, indicates also the precariousness of Columbus at the time of the poem’s speaking, a time in which doubt and fear are renewed. Columbus has found Cathay, but he realizes that the discovery won’t be complete until he returns with the news to the Spanish court and the European world: “Yet lost, all, let this keel one instant yield!” (16). This is the doubt of the visionary. Columbus’s fear leads him to recall the difficulties of his life as a visionary in Genoa: “I thought of...this truth, now proved,/That made me exile in her streets, stood me/More absolute than ever” (17–19). Again, Crane’s Columbus feels he is being tested: “...here between two worlds, another, harsh,//This third, of water, tests the word” (32–33). And his difficulties are not simply those of the ocean:

lo, here  
 Bewilderment and mutiny heap whelming  
 Laughter, and shadow cuts sleep from the heart  
 Almost as though the Moor’s flung scimitar  
 Found more than flesh to fathom in its fall. (33–37)

To this point, the section says much more about the situation of the visionary than it does in connecting Columbus’s situation with that of Crane’s present or that of any other time. It is then easy to see how critics such as Richard Sugg, L.S.Dembo, or Thomas Voegler are tempted to conclude that the poem’s real theme is the theme of vision, as if this were the poem’s key note or dominant tone.<sup>23</sup> It is perhaps the first clearly audible one. But Crane is, even in the midst of this, building the second strand he needs to make bridge cable.

Columbus’s invocation of Luis San Angel and Juan Perez gives way to a more traditional prayer, “Te Deum” (72), whom this Columbus finds imaged in the ocean: “O Thou who sleepest on Thyself, apart/Like ocean athwart lanes of death and birth” (57–58).<sup>24</sup> In this prayer to his God Crane’s Columbus introduces the second strand, as he continues his consideration of the qualities of his vision:

Who grindest oar, and arguing the mast  
 Subscribest holocaust of ships, O Thou  
 Within whose primal scan consummately  
 The glistening seignories of Ganges swim;—  
 Who sendest greeting by the corposant,  
 And Teneriffe’s garnet—flamed it in a cloud,  
 Urging through night our passage to the Chan;—  
 Te Deum laudamus, for thy teeming span! (65–72)

The last word—"span"—is a key to the argument of *The Bridge*. Here "span" refers most immediately to the vastness of this God, a quality implied by Its ubiquity and the wideness of Its vision, and also to the vastness of the world, the span of the globe. The description of the wideness of this God's vision, that it sees Columbus in his prayer and also the lords of India in the same glance or scan, answers to Columbus's own epiphany described a few stanzas earlier. Looking at the waves, Columbus sees his own "eyes/Starved wide on blackened tides, accrete—enclose/This turning rondure whole" (41–43). His trip into the wilderness has offered him something of the vision of God. But "span" also suggests the bridge Columbus builds in his journey, a path into a new world. The poem begins to describe Columbus as a Moses, leading his people into a promised land. When Columbus speaks of "the corposant,/ And Teneriffe's garnet—flamed...in a cloud" (69–70), the poem evokes the pillar of fire that guided Moses and the Israelites out of Egypt.<sup>25</sup>

It is here that Crane begins the conflation of ship and bridge that will be prosecuted throughout the poem in order to build the idea of the bridge that is the poem's central idea. The categorical bridge is built slowly, section at a time, and is most visible, as a connective experience, in "The River" and "Indiana" parts of "Powhatan's Daughter," and then again in "Cutty Sark" and "Cape Hatteras," only to disappear till "The Tunnel" and the concluding section, "Atlantis." As in "Ave Maria," the vision of the bridge is, in the first half of the poem, intertwined with sections that speak more directly to the conditions or difficulties of maintaining the vision, "The Harbor Dawn," "Van Winkle," "The Dance," and "Cutty Sark." These sections, regarding the quality and conditions of the vision, are, generally, more self-contained and self-sustaining than the sections regarding the content of the vision. The idea of the bridge is detailed across a number of sections and is never completely visible in any one of them, only in the span of sections. The ease with which a reader can apprehend Crane's arguments about having a vision may, then, make those arguments and the vision itself seem to take precedence over the content of the vision. But, though this is almost the case in "Ave Maria," Crane is there clearest in his combination of his two strands: the vision is necessarily antecedent to the questions of vision: it is the possession of a vision and some understanding of its value that necessitate questions of process, of faith. The content, the vision itself, has a causal primacy and an ultimate primacy, for without a content-vision the process questions that arise throughout the poem have little immediate or lasting value. They are engaged as part of the process of interpreting the vision's content.

This is an understanding we have to carry with us as we read the rest of the poem, for Crane is never again as explicit as he is "Ave Maria." We very much need to remember the work of "Ave Maria" when we come to "The Harbor Dawn"; otherwise we may miss the importance of this section to the overall plan. If we come to "The Harbor Dawn" seeking confirmation of early suggestions through repetition, we will be disappointed. This initial part of the "Powhatan's Daughter" section confirms these earlier suggestions only by building on them. The central images of fog and sleep and the sounds that penetrate them, while suggestive in their own right, are not fully significant unless considered in relation to the ideas presented in "Ave Maria." The previous sections emphasis on vision and its concern with vision's failure set the ground for the fog imagery of "The Harbor Dawn," which is emblematic of a partial loss of vision, a blurring.<sup>26</sup> A cause is proposed, sleep, but this is also suggestive of a loss, a loss of vigor.

The sleep could be temporary, but again it could be a dominating force; according to the speaker, if the “fog-insulated noises” “take your sleep away sometimes/They give it back again” (3, 10–11). This, I think, is Crane’s image of contemporary America, given in answer to Eliot’s vision of decay in *The Waste Land*.

As noted, Crane imagined *The Bridge* as an answer to *The Waste Land* and even *The Hollow Men*. A standing Brooklyn Bridge exactly inverts Eliot’s London Bridge “falling down falling down falling down.”<sup>27</sup> But more important than the image of a standing bridge is the progress such a span makes possible. Whereas Eliot’s bridge was a pathway into the kingdom of the dead, Crane’s bridge becomes a pathway into a more vigorous life. Where Eliot imagines a crowd of the dead walking over London Bridge, “each man fixed his eyes before his feet” (65), Crane imagines the sleeper who may yet wake and see clearly, the sleeper who has yet to cross a bridge. In the course of “The Harbor Dawn,” the obscuring fog clears somewhat, giving way to visions of the sun, of “cold gulls” and “a star,” visions that suggest in their progressive clarity and depth of field the growth of vision, or the possibility of such growth (35–37). This is the first segment of Crane’s positive vision for America. But it begins with images of failure as if to concede to Eliot (and perhaps also to Frank and Brooks) that in their time their America, perhaps their world, was in a bad way, lacking a unifying vision of itself.

“Van Winkle,” the second part of the “Powhatan’s Daughter” section, again takes the sleeper as its contemporary American, a person with imperfect vision.<sup>28</sup> Here the sleeper is up and on the move, early in the day, when in years past he would have been on his way to school. The recognition of this temporal coincidence occasions memories of old subjects: Pizarro, Cortes, Captain Smith, “And Rip Van Winkle bowing by the way,—/‘Is this Sleepy Hollow, friend—?’” (12–13). Rip Van Winkle is of course the perfect figure for the sleeper we saw waking in “The Harbor Dawn.” But Van Winkle is not this character’s foil; he is Van Winkle. His reminisces, of the snakes in the cinder-pile in his parents’ back yard and of his mother’s return from church one Sunday, are forms of dwelling in the past, and this character dwells in that past so completely, the narrator must give him a gentle nudge in concluding:

Keep hold of that nickel for car-change, Rip—  
Have you got your “*Times*”—?  
And hurry along, Van Winkle—it’s getting late! (46–48)

But to call this one “Van Winkle” is not to condemn him altogether. In Irving’s story Van Winkle woke finally from his sleep (and to a happier life), and this Van Winkle may yet wake as well. The song-verses that punctuate the section warn that the woken Van Winkle will not fit in, will retreat from the present world even as it surrounds him:

*And Rip forgot the office hours,  
and he forgot the pay;  
Van Winkle sweeps a tenement  
way down on Avenue A, —(14–17)*

But, as in “The Harbor Dawn,” this section closes with images that suggest the possibility of emergence: Van Winkle moving toward the subway, with his newspaper. The final line must, I think, be read against the last call scene from part II of *The Waste Land*. There, as a woman tells of her abortion (in Eliot’s poem an image of barrenness and failed fruition), a pub keeper declares last call: “HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME” (141). In Crane’s poem, the admonitory “hurry” recalls Eliot’s line, but contains some hope, for time has not yet expired: it is only late, and Van Winkle may yet have his “*Tmes*.” The final allowance confirms two earlier images suggestive of some hope for a future. There is, in the center of the section, a story of resurrection, wherein the garter snakes stoned under the cinder-pile return, like fire from ashes: “It flashed back at your thrust, as clean as fire” (28). And then the bookending image of the “Macadam” which “Leaps from Far Rockaway to Golden Gate,” wherein the very local appearance of the pavement, compared with New England slang to “the tunny’s belt,” is suggestive of the expanse of America, of other horizons, such as the western one beyond which the star in “The Harbor Dawn” disappears (1–2, 44–45).

This dream of the west, however briefly suggested in “Van Winkle,” is the image of hope and progress that links the section with the central argument of *The Bridge*. West, in *The Bridge*, is the direction of exploration, the first effort in any bridging. “Ave Maria” first gives us the west as the direction of exploration, as we see Columbus returning east to define a western path. The following sections amplify the notion, particularly “The River.”<sup>29</sup>

“The River” turns to detail the capacity of the train and of the telegraph to push America into the west and “Bind town to town and dream to ticking dream” (27). Actually, Crane conflates the train and the telegraph in the first several stanzas. First, Crane’s images combine sound and motion: “...and whistling down the tracks/a headlight rushing with the sound” (10–11). Then, these images which focus on the train give way to a tele- graphic communication:

...while an Express makes time like  
 SCIENCE—COMMERCE and the HOLYGHOST  
 RADIO ROARS IN EVERY HOME WE HAVE THE  
 NORTHPOLE  
 WALLSTREET AND VIRGINBIRTH WITHOUT STONES OR  
 WIRES OR EVEN RUNning books...(12–17)

The speed of the train is itself suggestive of the speed of the telegraph. And the fleeting and serial visions of billboards from the train that comprise the section’s first stanza give the train passenger a telegraphic experience of language: terse, quick. The train, the telegraph, the whole westward movement, from Columbus, run together as they have been driven by the same force: commerce. So we see commerce and exploration intertwined as a milestone of earthly exploration, the successful expedition to the North Pole, is associated with Wall Street in the same passage. Perhaps this idea is behind even the cryptic lines in “Van Winkle”: “Listen! the miles a hurdy-gurdy grinds—/ Down gold arpeggios mile on mile unwinds” (3–4): if commercial interests drive the westward

movement, creating new technologies in search of new materials or new markets, then the organ grinder is a primitive commercial interest, moving down the road in search of new customers and thereby extending both the road and the commercial realm.

Crane calls this westward movement of people in and on machines "The River," a flow that follows pioneering. He writes:

Down, down—born pioneers in time's despite,  
Grimed tributaries to an ancient flow—  
They win no frontier by their wayward plight,  
But drift in stillness, as from Jordan's brow. (113–116)

Which is to say that contemporary westerers follow and reenact the movements of the pioneers, even though they "win no frontier"; they simply follow. Here, I think Crane has in mind primarily American "cowboys" and pioneers of the Lewis and Clark variety, but this westward movement is also suggestive of Columbus's own journey which won a frontier and initiated a human flow of its own—which was, perhaps, the primal source for this westrunning river. This connection will be made fast in "Indiana" and "Cape Hatteras," but the final lines of "The River" deliver the essential setup. Where Crane has introduced the river as an image for human movement, the poem turns to treat it literally. Just as Crane builds the bridge between Columbus's voyage and Brooklyn Bridge through skillful use of diction in "Ave Maria," here the poet's terms weld the tenor and vehicle together. When the poet speaks of the "Damp tonnage and alluvial march of days" (125) the river is still a metaphorical vehicle, though the diction evokes this river more and more clearly with each line, inviting the vehicular river to be realized. In the stanza beginning at line 133, the turn has been made, though it is difficult to point to a point of hinging; the "freighted floors" (133) are clearly steamboats. The final stanzas deal exclusively with the Mississippi River itself. Crane has so conflated train and river he can move from one to another without announcement. The welding points recommend themselves, the steamboat being a sort of train on water, the water being an unharnessed source of steam: the river performs, in one direction, what the train and steamboat can perform in any direction human desires may indicate. So, once the train central to this section crosses the river at Cairo where the reading rider is invited to see the Ohio merge with the Mississippi, a merging that occasions the talk of human tributaries and human rivers, the train gives way to the river, almost as if the narrator's focalizing consciousness has disembarked from the train and taken passage on a boat or raft into an earlier era.

This conflation of train and river makes possible the soldering of Columbus to the westward movement driven by commerce and American manifest destiny. For the river flows, in the end of this section, into the ocean, that span Columbus crossed, completing a circle of exploratory forms. This is a circle made tighter in "Indiana," where the son of a gold prospector takes to sea, the continent having been crossed, its mysteries seemingly plumbed; the sea, over which Europeans came to the continent, is again the frontier, as the frontiers of the land are no more.<sup>30</sup> The sea then gives way to the air in "Cape Hatteras."<sup>31</sup> That section begins at sea, with seafarers returning "home to [their] own/Hearths" (13–14), approaching America by way of the Cape, the sight of which occasions a consideration of the conquest of the air, begun there by "the Wright

windwrestlers” (84), “from Kill Devils Hills at Kitty Hawk” (82). As the epigraph of “Cape Hatteras,” from Whitman’s “Passage to India” announces the close of terrestrial frontiers—“The seas all crossed/ weathered the capes, the voyage done”—the air is then the new frontier, offering “marathons new-set between the stars” (87), the conquest of which makes space travel imaginable: “The soul, by naphtha fledged into new reaches /Already knows the closer grasp of Mars,—/New latitudes” (88–90). Thus Crane draws a compressed upward spiral of exploratory motion, moving from ocean conquest during Columbus’s time, to land conquest, via steamboat and train and telegraph, to sea conquest once more which, closing the surface of the globe, gives way to the conquest of the air and, possibly, to outer space.

Crane begins in this spiral to effect the condensation of eternity he calls for in the poem. Here Crane’s present day and the future he foresees are connected to the yesteryears of steamboats and clipper ships to form in the poem one continuous motion in which past, present, and future are part of one continuous event. The connections between what would otherwise be considered discrete motions are imagistic connections, made by overlapping congruent aspects of separate images and fusing them at the points of contact to form one continuous metamorphic form. In “Ave Maria” Columbus admits his fears and doubts, grasping in the dark of night, moored by Sargasso weeds, praying for a sign to lead his ship home; we find the central figure of “The Harbor Dawn” in a similar haze, waiting for a clear sign, which comes at the section’s end. Where we see a waking sleeper in “The Harbor Dawn,” so we find another in “Van Winkle.” Where we see in the end of “Van Winkle” our awoken sleeper preparing to get on the train, to go to work like a businessman, we begin “The River” onboard a train, surrounded by business slogans and the telegraphic reports of the stock-market culture. Where in “The River” we move quickly through the American country headed for the ocean, we trade, near the end, this quickness for that of the river and move toward another ocean. Where we leave the land and enter the ocean at the end of “The River,” we see Larry in “Indiana” preparing to do the same. Where we ended “The River” and “Indiana” (and “Cutty Sark” for that matter) at sea, we begin “Cape Hatteras” at sea. And, as we have seen the characters and consciousnesses of *The Bridge* trade one frontier for another, we witness in the return from sea in “Cape Hatteras” a set of similar exchanges of sea for land, land for air, air for space, and, in the end, space for soul. There is, in the first half of *The Bridge*, a nearly constant outward motion, and I think Crane is careful to overlap the scenes to connect them into one constant motion.

It is just this sort of continuation, which may be perceived before it is understood, that underlies Waldo Frank’s summary of the poem in his “An Introduction to Hart Crane.” Frank writes:

The structural pattern of “The Bridge” is superb: a man moves of a morning from Brooklyn to Manhattan, returns at midnight, each stage of his course adumbrating by the mystic law of continuity into American figures with cosmic overtones...<sup>32</sup>

This, I think, is a bit over-simple. What Frank labels adumbrations are, I think, more solid, more serious and real complications, beneath which lie the same continuity Frank argues in this precis, a continuity in the temporal span that is so strong that the actions

narrated in *The Bridge* seem to occur as if they were events in the life of a single person. It is rather the case that in the poem the event is single, the event of exploration, and that those involved in it are drawn together, almost fused. Thus, the poem repeats the consolidation Daniel Webster attributed to the Battle of Bunker Hill in his memorial address in 1825. Crane manages a consolidation of historical events that suggests an abiding American character. But he does it not so much by eliminating the years intervening between the present and the time of glory, but by fusing the glorious events into a single, continuous event, removing the barriers of time

...*The Language of Fusion*...

Though this is only part of Crane's condensing argument, this temporal welding demonstrates the differences between the architecture of Crane's temporal compression and that of Whitman's. Whitman's condensation is predicated on a strict parallelism. Whitman dedicates a good portion of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" to detailing the correspondences between his own experience on the ferry and that of the latter-day rider. These experiences are identical, differing only in temporal location. Once this temporal parallel is drawn, it works like all of Whitman's other parallels, to suggest an essential equality that negates the boundaries of difference by extending beyond them. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" this means that the temporal divisions collapse and the equality suggested by the parallel experiences is made more palpable, as Whitman and his future readers come "face to face." Even if only in imagination, the temporal evening is an expression of this equality. Crane, however much he follows Whitman, is not content with parallels; they do not suit his temperament. Crane's temporal condensation is built on extensions or continuations rather than repetitions. Whitman assumed the form of the connective experience, the ferry, would remain the same. Crane, however, came into his powers in a world in which that ferry so important to Whitman had been replaced. If Crane is to effect a temporal condensation similar to that Whitman achieves, he has to find a way to account for the formal changes of the connective experience. Instead of denying the changes or ignoring the particularities of each form, Crane coordinates these changes, incorporates them into a single form in which these metamorphoses are aspects of internal definition and growth. The different forms of exploratory motion are stages of growth of the spirit of exploration. Whereas Whitman has to combine elements whose origins remain disparate, Crane combines seemingly disparate elements by fusing them at both ends, at both origin and terminus.

As Whitman's comparative parallelism is expressed in grammatical parallelism, Crane's desire for fusion is demonstrated in his linguistic and metaphoric fusions, which mark not only his difference from Whitman, but his turn from Eliot's disjunctions as well. Though M. Bernadetta Quinn links Crane and Eliot as practitioners of "Protean Techniques" in her *Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry*, Crane and Eliot shift to different ends—Eliot to advance a vision of damage and disconnection, Crane a vision of growth and continuity—and so shifts the language of each.<sup>33</sup>

Eliot's ethos is clear in lines such as 111–138 of *The Waste Land*. These lines present an extensive report of a broken conversation that opens with a single voice, within the language of which are already indications of the decay that permeates the poem.

"My nerves are bad to-night. Yes. bad. Stav with me.

“Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.  
 “What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?  
 I never know what you are thinking. Think.” (111–114)

Decay is apparent both in the most basic verbal patterns and in the speech situations each sentence implies. In each line, each sentence constitutes a decayed version of the one that precedes it. “My nerves are bad to-night” decays into “Yes, bad”; four words decay to two, and the repetition of the one word, “bad,” benchmarks the measurement. In the following line, a different word is repeated, “Speak.” It, too, benchmarks the measurement of decay. But here the dissolution is not measurable merely in numbers of words, length of sentence, but in the increasingly visible failure of exchange. The first sentence in this line is a request or imperative: “Speak to me.” Thus it maintains the verbal posture initiated in the final sentence of the previous line: “Stay with me.” The imperative both harbors some confidence in its power to ensure its institution and in the intimacy of the speaker and the receiver. But this appears ineffective as it is followed by a question: “Why do you never speak?” The speaker has relinquished his or her desire for action and will now settle for information instead. The shift evidences both the speaker’s gradual easing of demands and the decay of his or her hope for fulfillment as well as the reticence of the object of address. Finally, the question decays into the single word, “Speak.” The single word is grammatically ambiguous. Alone it suggests an imperative, but since the repetition indicates the failure of the imperative mode, it stands alone, the marker of an unfulfilled desire, no longer a command but a single word. Thus communicative language gives way only to the physical substance of the language, the signifier without a signified. This pattern more strongly shapes the following two lines: “What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?/I never know what you are thinking. Think.” Here the decay is even more severe. The question falls under its own weight, moving further and further from a request for information to the most basic marker of interrogation. This is followed by a statement of fact: “I never know what you are thinking.” This marks the relinquishment of the speaker’s desire for information about the other and a retreat into the self, about which he or she makes this assertion. The line ends in the repeated word, alone, having been emptied of signification, and it is only itself, just as the speaker remains only him- or herself, unconnected to the one he or she interrogates.

Eliot provides the responses of the addressee, but without quotation marks, which suggests that the addressee responds, but not out loud. Thus the addressee remains even further in the self than the interlocutor and is an even more extreme example of the solipsistic retreat dramatized before. The addressee’s repetition of the word “think” in his silent response indicates that this speaker is paying attention to the first, hearing, even though he or she does not complete the circuit. The bleakness of the addressee’s visions and thoughts further dramatize the barrenness in this failed exchange: “I think we are in rats” alley/Where the dead men lost their bones” (115–116). Not only are they in the alley, but in an alley of vermin and fragments, not an alley of dead men, but of bones the dead men lost. The number of removals is amazing.

This pattern continues, the one speaker asking a question or making a statement that warrants a response, the other responding to him- or herself only. But the severity of



these speakers' vacuity becomes more and more acute. Not only does the second speaker fail to respond verbally, he cannot choose his own words: his mind is flooded with other forms, other patterns, Shakespeare and burlesque song, forms that, arising in response, indicate that even were this speaker to respond out loud, he or she would offer really no response at all. But even in these failed exchanges, these two manage to repeat one another in ways that suggest both the failure of the strategies of ignorance that are operative and the paucity of verbal and intellectual resource. It almost seems that the conversation is real in the one exchange that is filled with repetition, give and take of communication:

“What is that noise?”

The wind under the door.

“What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?”

Nothing again nothing.

“Do

“You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember

“Nothing?” (117–123)

In these exchanges, the audible speaker keeps repeating words used by the inaudible one, to the point that it does seem these two are conversing. But once the second speaker launches his Shakespearean quote, it is clear that his is not being heard. The first speaker asks: ““Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?”” What follows reads as a continuance of the first speaker's questions in the statements of the second speaker and suggests a fusion of grammatical material, a transformation of one sentence into another: “...nothing in your head.../But/...that Shakespearean Rag” (126–128). These hints of continuity may indicate that these two speakers are in fact parts of the same person, whose interior monologue is even severely disjointed. But, more to the point, these hints make the discontinuities all the more apparent, more palpable. The rest of the “Game of Chess” section concerns itself with a tale of abortion, misuse of gifts, and deception, all of which add to the sense of barrenness, the waste of the *Waste Land* that Eliot is building, a barrenness ultimately figures as ruins, architectural fragments.

The opening lines of “The River” section of *The Bridge* display similar continuities and discontinuities on the verbal level, a similar metamorphic syntax. But in Crane, this syntax suggests a fundamental continuity or connectedness that expresses the unity and strength of his architectural imagination.

On the surface of things, these first nine lines seem disjointed:

Stick your patent name on a signboard  
 brother—all over—going west—young man  
 Tintex—Japalac—Certain-teed Overalls ads  
 and lands sakes! under the new playbill ripped

in the guaranteed corner—see Bert Williams what?  
 Minstrels when you steal a chicken just  
 save me the wing for if it isn't  
 Erie it ain't for miles around a  
 Mazda—and the telegraphic night coming on...(1-9)

But basic continuities begin to be suggested in the second line where “going west” gives on to “young man,” apparently discrete instances of language that together echo Greely’s famous apothegm, “Go west, young man,” the form that unifies them in the hearer’s ear. These sounds of these lines are strongly coordinated as well, further indicating an organizing ear. The word “west” seems to generate its echo in “Tintex,” just as “patent” produces “Japalac” and “ads,” and “Certain-teed” introduces its model in “guaranteed,” “Overalls” a fine reversal of “all over.” The language, though denotatively jumbled, is deeply coordinated and continuous, of the same register and purpose. The final four and a half lines of this stanza display the greatest degree of connectedness and continuity, as the syntax of one element flows seamlessly into the next. The playbill introduces Bert Williams, a well-known minstrel, whose presentation conjures the following language, perhaps a single sample, but perhaps a fused one. In the phrase “Minstrels when you steal a chicken/save me the wing,” there are strong echoes of the denigrating portraits of the American Minstrel Show tradition, but the sloganistic “x when you y a chicken/save me the wing” seems to come from elsewhere, perhaps (and here I am guided by both the trademark language of the early lines and by the knowledge that Crane worked as an advertising copywriter for a time) from an ad reading “When you buy a chicken, save the wing for me.” The slogan altered by the introduction of the minstrels, but the language finds strong purchase in the Minstrel tradition; the coordination is nearly perfect. This fused language is soldered into another strange combination: “for if it isn't/ Erie it ain't for miles around a/Mazda....” The Mazda is, as Jack C.Wolf has shown, a lightbulb, whose name is taken, appropriately, from the Zoroastrian god of light. What Erie (Pennsylvania?) has to do with this I do not know (perhaps where Mazda lightbulbs were manufactured). But the language of comparison, of location, of identification, is clearly the language of advertising. It nicely advances the suggestion that the culture has proceeded with the growth of the economy, sponsored by commercial interests.<sup>34</sup> In the fused syntax, Crane expresses the coordination of commercial and exploratory efforts, a continuity of effort and intention even when the surfaces do not seem to indicate it.

One might describe this fusion as a metaphorical operation, an extension of the “logic of metaphor” John Irwin describes in Crane’s writing. Irwin explains:

Characteristically, in Crane’s verse the metaphoric relationship ‘A is B’ takes by ellipsis the form of a complex word or phrase ‘AB,’ and this complex word or phrase becomes in turn part of the metaphoric relationship ‘C is AB,’ and so on, with mounting complexity.<sup>35</sup>

Here Irwin describes with greater detail what Allen Tate called Crane’s “fused metaphor,” and what R.P.Blackmur described as follows:

...Crane employed an extreme mode of free association, that operation among words where it is the product rather than the addition that counts. There was, for example, no logical or emotional connection between thresholds and anatomies until Crane verbally juxtaposed them. ...Yet, so associated, they modify and act upon each other mutually and produce a fresh meaning of which the parts cannot be segregated. Some latent, unsuspected part of the cumulus of meaning in each word excited, so to speak, and affected a corresponding part in the others. It is the juxtaposition which is the agent of selection...[S]o far as the poem is concerned, the words themselves contain and do not merely indicate the feelings which compose the meaning; the poet's job was to put the words together like bricks in a wall.... Here there is nothing for the words to take the place of; they are their own life, and have an organic continuity, not with the poet's mind nor with the experience they represent, but with themselves.... The separate meanings of the words fairly rush at each other; the right ones join and those irrelevant to the juncture are for the moment—the whole time of the poem—lost in limbo...<sup>36</sup>

“Juxtaposition” is Blackmur’s rough equivalent to Tate’s “fusion,” a term that describes what Irwin describes. “Juxtaposition” is not the best word, though, since what we have is not so much a placing next to as a fusion or laying on top of. The fusion is between the “corresponding parts” Blackmur identified. This is what Crane called the “logic of metaphor” in his brief essay “General Aims and Theories.”<sup>37</sup> This logic or metaphorical principle is at work also in *The Bridge*, though the fusion is of sections, narrative elements, and not simply words. So, as Irwin has written: “The structure of a typical Crane metaphor is a microcosm of the structure of a typical Crane poem, and both are in turn embodiments of his concept of the poetic act”—that is, an act of fusion.<sup>38</sup>

This fusion is, I think, the basis for Crane’s claim, in the essay “Modern Poetry,” that poetry was “an architectural art.”<sup>39</sup> What I think Crane means in this quip is that part of the art in poetry is the fashioning something new out of the pieces of available materials. In his identification, Crane is leaning heavily on the second morpheme of the word, emphasizing the tectonic aspect of writing—its concern with parts

*...Articulating the Weld...*

This fusion is made clear locally in the exchange of boat for train in “The River” and again, perhaps more clearly, in “Cutty Sark,” the section in which Crane most indicates his debt to Whitman’s own combinatorial vision. The vision of the clipper-ship race that concludes the section flummoxes a number of critics, but is just another fusion. Both the narrator and the sailor are stopped on their ways home, The narrator is on his way from Manhattan to Brooklyn, as we discover late in the segment. And the sailor is simply killing time between voyages on the sea which, he reveals, are his home state: “No—I can’t live on land—!” (39); the sea is so much the sailor’s home he sees it even when he’s not on it, indicating a “spiracle” from his seat at the bar (37). The two are brought together by a song, but as soon as the record-machine stops, they part and go their separate ways to their separate homes. The narrator starts “walking home across the Bridge” (58). And this is where the two are fused, through Whitman. As I noted earlier,

the location, in the proem, of the speaker under the bridge placed him near the slip of Whitman's beloved ferry, the extent of deliberate approach to the Whitman of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry." In crossing the bridge, however, the speaker of "Cutty Sark" manages a similar proximity, repeating the course of the ferry across the East River, removed from the site of Whitman's crossing only by the height of the bridge. Crane is making the same crossing, by a different method. The sailor, however, is making a different crossing by a method similar to that by which Whitman made his: the sailor is returning home by boat, by being on the boat. The regatta which closes out "Cutty Sark"—a formalization of sailors' efforts to return home more quickly—is a combined image in which both the narrator and the sailor return to their homes, linked to each other through Whitman's example to which they each are linked differently. This fusion is solidified when the narrator returns home, in a different sense, in the beginning of "Cape Hatteras," as a mariner. This fusion of narrator and mariner, and the collation and confusion of their modes of travel, is the basic constructive principle in the architecture of *The Bridge*.<sup>40</sup>

This fusion is not without its complications. But these complications advance the argument. The poems structural complications amplify the complexities of its thought. The conjunction of "The River," "Indiana," and "Cutty Sark" and the movement on to "Cape Hatteras" make this clearest.

"The River" begins the argumentative complication by indicating that, even as the legacy of exploration in America is fed by commercial interests, it is just as clear that commercial agencies do not provide everything. The hoboes who are left on the track, watching the tail-lights of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited converge in the distance, "still hungry" (21), image the lack. Later, Crane is more aggressively indicative, calling them "Blind fists of nothing, humpty-dumpty clods" (62). They embody a contradiction: these hoboes have an intimate knowledge of physical America, made possible by the train, which has enabled a quicker movement from place to place and made America easier to know, but these hoboes have nothing to show for this knowledge except a vast emptiness—"eyes like fjords" (66), deep vision with a narrow scope. They wander, hungry. And in furtherance of this contradiction, they keep moving, like the "road-gang" in "The River," to avoid a recognition of loss:

And afterwards, who had a colt's eyes—one said,  
 "Jesus! Oh I remember watermelon days!" And sped  
 High in a cloud of merriment, recalled  
 "—And when my Aunt Sally Simpson smiled," he drawled—  
 "It was almost Louisiana, long ago."  
 "There's no place like Booneville though, Buddy,"  
 One said, excising a last burr from his vest,  
 "—For early troutng." Then peering in the can,  
 "—But I kept on the tracks." Possessed, resigned,  
 He trod the fire down pensively and grinned,  
 Spreading dry shingles of a beard.... (41–51)

The constant motion in exploration is self-removal, a continual outer-directedness through which men and women avoid a recognition of their own inner, spiritual or psychological, needs. The story of “Indiana,” in which the seafarer’s mother makes much of the connection she felt between herself and the native woman on the Trail of Tears, buttresses the notion of exploration as a kind of removal. Larry simply follows in the path his mother and father took, a self-removal from economic opportunity to economic opportunity, little different, Crane seems to say, from the forced removal of native Americans from their tribal lands in the name of commercial interest. There is a common dispossession of the soul as well as of the land. Even the strange fusion that concludes “Cutty Sark” dramatizes this self-dispossession. The mariner is an older version of Larry, who has been running for so long he can do nothing but run; he can’t live on land any more; his home is in the outward motion. And the narrator, whom we see heading home across the bridge, is thrown off course in the midst of his own motion, out into the seas in a pantomime of the return, the cutter race. He returns, metamorphosed into a mariner, only at the beginning of the next section. In a search for new prosperity, these American figures find only their own poverty.

Crane has rearticulated what Waldo Frank wrote in *Our America*, the notion that “we poured ourselves unendingly, pioneering and exploiting” only to enter a “crisis” that left Americans “innerly depleted.” Frank prescribes the cure as “a period of static suffering, of inner cultivation” such as that Whitman wrote about in “Passage to India.”<sup>41</sup> And Crane expands on Frank’s suggestion, turning to Whitman in “Cape Hatteras” in search of that spiritual substance lacking in the American people. And in so turning, Crane, like Frank, suggests that such a search can only be undertaken after spiritual poverty has been identified and measured. Crane narrates depletion in order to approach regrowth, comes to addition through subtraction, finds the right path by taking the wrong one, and the poem embodies every convolution.

... *Cape Hatteras and Beyond*...

In “Cape Hatteras,” Crane praises Whitman for his “syllables of faith” (47), careful to help his readers appreciate the value he finds in Whitman’s words. The world from which Crane makes his apostrophic invocation is one in which, for all their technological innovations, men and women yet feel empty and small, unfulfilled. The conquest of space that winds through the previous sections brings them to this realization:

Space, instantaneous,  
 Flickers a moment, consumes us in its smile:  
 A flash over the horizon—shifting gears—  
 And we have laughter, or more sudden tears.  
 Dream cancels dream in this new realm of fact  
 From which we wake into the dream of act;  
 Seeing himself an atom in a shroud—  
 Man hears himself an engine in a cloud! (39–46)

There is no emotional balance to be had in the conquest of distances; one might cry as well as laugh. The outward motions of men and women are, in the end, mutually cancelling. They produce a frustration that reveals the spiritual poverty of which Frank wrote. Human sees itself “an atom in a shroud,” a small kernel in a large and obscuring husk. Furthermore, the world humans have created in their conquest of space reduces their horizons. “The nasal whine of power whips a new universe” (63): the exhaust of factories cover the sky with a blackness like outer space, in which new stars appear, and humankind is surrounded with a new panorama which abets the fantasy of spatial conquest. But theirs is a “blind ecstasy” (78) that comes crashing with the war-plane near the middle of the poem.

Crane turns to Whitman, who was able to maintain his faith and vision amidst the very challenges to which Crane fears he will succumb. Crane praises Whitman because he can maintain his perspicacity, keep his eyes “bright with myth” (62), in a nearly barren world “of stocks,.../[and]... hills where second timber strays/Back over Connecticut farms, abandoned pastures” (59–61). “But who has held the heights more sure than thou?” (158), Crane asks. Whitman, Crane says, “dost wield the rebound seed” (161), because he has “seen/And passed that Barrier that none escapes” (209–210)—death. To Crane, Whitman bears back the needed spiritual nourishment, the “*Panis Angelicus!*” (198 and following), bread of the angels, angelic bread, bread from heaven—his self. This is “something green,/ Beyond all sesames of science” which “bind[s] us” (211–212, 213) and makes the journeys of exploration again possible:

And now, as launched in abysmal cupolas of space,  
Toward endless terminals, Easters of speeding light—  
Vast engines outward veering with seraphic grace  
On clarion cylinders pass out of sight  
To course that span of consciousness thou’st named  
The Open Road—thy vision is reclaimed!  
What heritage thou’st signalled to our hands! (216–222)

The frontier has been redefined as an internal or spiritual frontier.

It may seem strange, given Whitman’s own emphasis on organic forms, and his rejection of rhyme and meter, that in invoking Whitman Crane should write in rhymed iambic pentameter.<sup>42</sup> As Eliot, Pound, and Williams most especially, continued the move away from traditional formal verse, Crane’s forms must have seemed *récherché*. But Crane depends on this sense, for while rhymed and metered verse may not be the most “natural” form for modern expression, it remains available as part of the sponsoring and nourishing past, and Crane brings it into the poem and employs it in order to maintain that past as an active presence in his poem: he performs a stylistic anamnesis to match his argumentative combinations. *The Bridge* becomes an anthology of styles and rhythms which demonstrates the width of his cultural vision.

This anthologization also indicates further Crane’s debt to Whitman. It is from Whitman that Crane takes the plan of combination, from Whitman’s “Passage to India.” This is the idea Whitman brings back from the dead, the *Panis Angelicus!* Crane signals

the debt in his epigraph from “Passage to India,” the poem in which Whitman came to the fork in the metaphysical road at which Crane finds himself. In his poem, Whitman provides a summary of human exploration similar to Crane’s. Whitman comes, as Crane will, through this summary to the end of physical space, an end that necessitates the plumbing of inner space. The opening of the Suez Canal—which creates a passage to India and occasions the reconsideration of major events of what Crane would call bridging, such as Columbus’s voyage of discovery and the completion of the transcontinental railroad—also brings Whitman to a further imagination of the frontiers. The passage is not simply to India:

Passage indeed O soul to primal thought,  
 Not lands and seas alone, thy own clear freshness,  
 The young maturity of brood and bloom,  
 To realms of budding bibles.  
 O soul, repressless, I with thee and thou with me,  
 Thy circumnavigation of the world begin,  
 Of man, the voyage of his mind’s return,  
 To reasons early paradise,  
 Back, back to wisdom’s birth, to innocent intuitions,  
 Again with fair creation.<sup>43</sup>

The lines that form the epigraph for “Cape Hatteras” come from Whitman’s further consideration of the spiritual voyage that proceeds from earlier exploratory efforts. This voyage is for Whitman not simply an inner searching; it proceeds outward to a reckoning with God. And it is from this reckoning that Whitman returns to Crane in “Cape Hatteras,” offering, as Columbus offered on his return to Spain, a path to the New World, a new frontier, a new West.

This inward turn is suggested in “The Dance” section of “Powhatan’s Daughter,” a section exceedingly difficult to interpret, in large part because of the changeableness of the voice.<sup>44</sup> The voice seems to shift a number of times without clear indications, the only clues being changes in the narrative foci. It seems this section attempts to narrate simultaneously both the journey of the contemporary narrator and the original journey the narrator’s repeats, that of Maquokeeta, the native “Medicine-man” (59). Here, then, is another example of the poem’s fusions. But here the confusion is so complete that it is impossible at times to separate one strand from another. Maquokeeta’s journey emerges in bits and pieces. He, Pocahontas’s lover, leaves the village in search of wood and of her: he sees her hair, showing where she runs, and he follows. But he loses her trail and searches widely, moving up into the Appalachians. Once Maquokeeta “gain[s] the ledge” (33), he sees a storm which grows and approaches, occasioning a vision in which another voice addresses Maquokeeta, perhaps the voice of the narrator or perhaps the voice of a god whose “padded foot/Within” the cloud (42–43) recalls the “sounding heel” of “Elohim,” i.e., God, which Columbus hears in “Ave Maria” (80). The vision of the storm may image Maquokeeta’s capture by those who live in the “Grey tepees” he sees on the

“blue knolls ahead” (39), for Maquokeeta is later burned at the stake (65), the outcome of which is the complete spiritualization of the “Medicine-man.” The strange interloping voice addresses Maquokeeta as “snake that lives before,/That casts his pelt, and lives beyond!” (57–58), suggesting that Maquokeeta’s burning is a transformative, but not terminal, moment. The later image of the lizard turning into the snake buttresses this suggestion:

O, like the lizard in the furious noon,  
 That drops his legs and colors in the sun,  
 —And laughs, pure serpent, Time itself, and moon  
 Of his own fate, I saw thy change begun! (73–76)

This is to say that Maquokeeta, who has covered ground on foot, loses his feet and his ability to cover ground. The late characterization of Maquokeeta as “Thewed of the levin, thunder-shod and lean” (81), registers his transformation into a spiritual being, who exists in all of space at once and moves only through time. Perhaps the snake image is meant to suggest this, its absence of feet perhaps an indication of a removal from the spatial realm. We see Maquokeeta gazing through “infinite seasons” and, at last, finding his bride, Pocahontas, who is the American land. He achieves his marriage with her not by pursuing and tracking her down, fixing her in space, but by assuming a largeness equal to her own, in this case a spiritual largeness.

Thus “The Dance” narrates the explorational modulation Crane proposes more clearly in “Cape Hatteras”—but in a context so abbreviated and so removed from the primary contexts of *The Bridge’s* other sections (particularly that quasi-contemporary context delineated in the poem and in “The Harbor Dawn,” “Van Winkle,” and “The River”) it is not immediately evocative, neither the narrative nor its significance immediately clear. On these grounds critics declare “The Dance” a failure. But though the section has troubled a good number of the minds who have dedicated time and energy to the understanding of *The Bridge*, it remains possible that the section is not meant to come into immediate focus, but is rather to be clarified by the arguments of “Cape Hatteras” in which the eagle and the serpent reappear, the serpent first as dinosaur (1 and following), the eagle as itself (37), and then eagle and snake combined in the winged dragon (92ff). The significance of Maquokeeta’s transformation to a consideration of the westward urge is not acknowledged anywhere else in *The Bridge* before the final part of “Cape Hatteras,” where it appears as the metamorphosis into the serpent and then into smoke imagines the wedding of earth and sky and suggests the future of human exploration, thus making sense of earlier sections. In solidifying the image of the exploratory spiral, “Cape Hatteras” clarifies, in part by leaning on Whitman, the functions of the “Indiana” section of “Powhatan’s Daughter,” and of “Cutty Sark.” So it also retroactively clarifies the significance of “The Dance” as well. Such retroactive clarification is common in the poem. The connections made in “The River” contextualize backward the dramatization of Columbus’s return in “Ave Maria” and give it a wider significance. The structure of *The Bridge* is, in part, reverberative, non-linear.

These reverberations have a purpose: they contribute to the temporal condensation Crane attempts here. As sections bear on one another, they occupy the same moment in



the understanding, so elements with different temporal signatures are made contemporary in the reader's mind, and the differences between these signatures is condensed if not altogether abrogated.<sup>45</sup> This reverberation, whereby "Cape Hatteras" bears retroactively on "The Dance," has a particular purpose, and its achievement comments on the temporal condensation in which it participates. The reactivation of "The Dance" by the argument re-deployed in "Cape Hatteras" manufactures a realization that what is now so clearly the necessary course of action was foreseen before and ignored in the surface rush which, in "The River," drove the westward expansion through the Ozarks without any recognition of "The old gods of the rain...wrapped in pools" under the mountains (82–83); thus, the connection identifies a failure of vision Crane undertakes to rectify in "Cape Hatteras," a connection all the more powerful for its having been missed the first time around. But this is only part of Crane's game. Even as the reverberative connection comments on the contemporary poverty, it marks a remedy: the connection to the past that allows us a recognition of our errors (a lesson that may sharpen our vision) also makes available the spiritual resources of the past, which we may use to rectify our spiritual poverty—resources which include the sharpness of Maquokeeta's vision and transformative ability, Van Winkle's strange persistence, and Columbus's inertia, all of which are forwarded to nourish our hungers.

... *Complications...*

So "Cape Hatteras" activates the suggestions of "The Dance" and strengthens them and draws together the entirety of the poem to that point. The following three sections compound this coordination and follow up on the suggestions of "Cape Hatteras." Some critics have dismissed these sections as a kind of falling off.<sup>46</sup> But while there's no disputing a change of mood and a modulation of technique, and while there's no arguing the real difficulties these sections present, they do in fact extend the poem's argument in important and intelligible ways.

The "Three Songs" help construct the axis along which "The Dance" and "Cape Hatteras" are connected, an axis apart from which the section may not be intelligible. Whereas "The Dance" and "Cape Hatteras" follow physical exploration to its terminal point in order to reveal the metaphysical or spiritual vistas that remain unfathomed beyond and, in part, to enter into those new territories, they still preserve an aspect of pursuit: in "The Dance," Maquokeeta's pursuit of Pocahontas leads him into the spiritual realm; and in "Cape Hatteras," the material conquests of the globe lead into that great beyond, which, it is proposed, will also harbor gain. The "Three Songs" examine the emblematic objects of these pursuits. The multiple sections of "Powhatan's Daughter" imaged the physical extent of America as Pocahontas. So "Three Songs" engage three perspectives on the female emblem and follow them to their terminal points as well.

The section's epigraph helps us focus on these examinations. The line, "The one Sestos, the other Abydos hight," taken from Marlowe's "Hero and Leander," evokes Leander's nightly crossing of the Hellespont to visit his lover, an act consonant with Maquokeeta's pursuit of his own lover: Leander and Maquokeeta both die in their pursuits.<sup>47</sup> The epigraph looks back to "The Dance" and "Cape Hatteras" as it indicates another situation in which physical and urgent spatial conquest creates a bridge to a metaphysical or spiritual realm. The fact that Leander crosses a body of water conjures further connections with other sea crossings in *The Bridge*, especially that of Columbus,

in which a bridge to a spiritual realm begins to be suggested. More simply, the return to the aquatic medium connects this section with the sea voyages in “Indiana” and “Cutty Sark” and “Cape Hatteras.” But the primary and overriding connection is to “The Dance,” to Maquokeeta’s journey to his lover’s side. The “Three Songs” show us three female figures, three female emblems, and three modes of relation to those figures, each of which ends in frustration.

This much is clear in “Southern Cross” in which it is nearly impossible to identify the “nameless Woman of the South” (1). The sexual imagery of the constellation lifting the “girdles” of the night (Crane’s figure for the aurora australis), revealing a southern crotch, encourages us to imagine a woman, one he calls by three names: “Eve! Magdalene!/or Mary, you?” (9–10). But Crane’s subsequent address to “simian Venus” (12) suggests something less than human, especially as she seems unresponsive to any call (11). Perhaps this woman is a primal female, “simian” in her biologic form and lack of complicating society. Crane calls her “Eve” (12), indicating primacy. Crane shows her “Unwedded, stumbling gardenless to grieve/Windswept guitars on lonely decks forever” (13–14), continually experiencing her loss, a perpetual seafarer, deck bum—in a state of arrested development (perhaps connoted by “simian”). The following image of a boat’s wake confirms this. The speaker sees it as “trailed derision” (18). “Derision” may speak to the sonic quality of the water’s folding together behind a ship like laughter. But the folding, in which the indication of covered ground or, in this case, water, disappears, derides, undoes the motion. “Eyes crumble at its kiss” (19), which is to say that the vision promoted by previous sections of the poem is undone as the indications of past accomplishments, on which the vision is calibrated, are lost or undone. Crane equivocates when he declares: “Slid on that backward vision/ The mind is churned to spittle, whispering hell” (20–21). The speaker’s visual perception of the scene is backward insofar as he would have to be at the rear of the ship in order to focus on the wake. But as this visual image is an indication or emblem of evanescence of motion, the vision of progress constructed throughout the poem to this point is undone, unravelled. The mind is churned, like the sea in the ship’s propellers, to froth or “spittle,” and is left, like the water, a “whispering hell” of laughter or derision. To want, to follow this woman who, it seems, lives within her grief over some lost love or comfort, is to receive no satisfaction, to go nowhere. The poem closes with several other images of failure. First, “The embers of the Cross” (22), which suggest the death of the stars. Second, an image of this Eve as a ghost, as docile, as an insubstantial “wraith” who cannot answer to this speaker’s needs. In the penultimate stanza, the woman, addressed as before in the second person, seems to be the ship. Crane’s speaker says that “the water combed you” (27), suggesting the water moving alongside the ship and meshing behind like a pair of combs. “You crept out simmering” (28): this seems descriptive of a steamboat. In any case, this speaker is not getting anywhere. And she may be only a fantasy. She is the “wraith of [his] unloved seed” (31), which may identify her as a masturbatory object for the speaker. His journey of love fails insofar as his seed fails to find a fertile harbor. Finally, we see the Cross buckle and drop below the horizon, fall apart and out of sight, and we hear the speaker address this female figure again: “Light drowned the lithic trillions of your spawn” (33). This last statement is among the more enigmatic lines in all of *The Bridge*, difficult to interpret with any surety without knowing more about the woman’s identity. Still, the failure expressed in other images is clear here: if spawn, whether live offspring or merely

eggs, are “drowned” they must be dead. The characterization of these spawn as “lithic” further articulates a fundamental lifelessness. Here “spawn” may very well denote eggs only, the perfect partner to the speaker’s wasted sperm, closing of the section with one image of a failure of bridging evocative of the failure in Leander’s tragic death.

“National Winter Garden” presents a complementary image of waste, signaled by the title. Here again the female figure is nameless, but she is clearer: a burlesque dancer, a stripper. The smoke-filled club reprises the fog of “The Harbor Dawn,” and the burlesque show encourages a narrowing of vision that recalls the earlier failures. Here: “Outspoken buttocks in pink beads/Invite the necessary cloudy clinch/Of bandy eyes” (1–3). Not only is this vision “cloudy,” it is narrowing all the time, focusing in on the dancer to the point where “The world’s one flagrant, sweating cinch” (4). Furthermore, the vision is not only narrow, it is false or broken. The addressed spectator focuses his attention on one dancer, yet he “Always...wait[s] for someone else though” (7)—so his attention is only partly focused. Here, not even lust is pure; both the dance and the feeling are burlesques, “cheapest echo[es]” (12), like the music. Even the woman under the dance is something less than human. She too is emotionless, “Least tearful and least glad” (15). “A caught slide shows her sandstone grey between” (16): not even her flesh appears real: she’s statuesque. Crane tells us that “Her eyes exist in swivellings of her teats” (17), by which we are to understand that she is almost soulless, that she can address her viewers only through those parts to which they attend. Eyes, especially in “Cutty Sark” and “Cape Hatteras,” are not only the seat of vision, but the tools of address. This dancer has neither power. Her jewelry, the silly snake rings made of fake turquoise, are the final confirming details. Everything about this woman is fake, a burlesque of a woman. “Yet, to the empty trapeze of [her] flesh,/...each comes back to die alone” (25–26). Each comes to be united with the object of his lust, to practice or act out his lust and his faith in his lust, but dies—orgasms and ceases to be as he has been defined by the lust-quest—alone, without actually coming into contact with her. So “National Winter Garden” takes up the masturbatory theme begun in “Southern Cross.” This is a regressive quest, in which the lusting spectator reverts to an infant state to be delivered from his lust by this same “Magdalene” (26).

“Virginia” presents a similar failure of connection, though here the female figure is not the primal Eve or the vulgar Magdalene, but the virginal Mary, a woman for whom the speaker continually waits. She is, in fact, constituted by the speaker’s supposed patience, a patience he imagines in her as well. She fends off the advances of her boss by “smiling” him “away ”—with an innocent coyness the speaker imagines to indicate her lack of sexual character. She protects herself so that this speaker may have her outside of work: “Saturday Mary, mine!” (8). The prospect of an eventual union with Mary excites the speaker to a pathetic reverdie of Manhattan, which indicates the burlesque aspect of this emotional orientation, an aspect confirmed by the fairy-tale tone in the speaker’s addressing her as a Rapunzel: “Let down your golden hair!” (16). She is ever cloistered in a “way-up nickel-dime tower” (23). We never see her and the speaker united physically or otherwise. She is, essentially, a woman of his imagination, a figure toward whom he orients his being and movements. But this orientation, like that of the spectator to the burlesque dancer and of the ship passenger to his nameless woman, prevents any movement of quest, brings growing exploration to an end.

The love-quest then is a burlesque of the exploration that may nourish the spirit. These three sections are grouped under a title—"Three Songs"—that is meant to indicate the burlesque quality of the situations they dramatize. In each, the questing lover fails, as Leander did, and drowns in the medium of his exploration. He confuses his medium with his goal, taking the medium as the goal. So, these love-quests are basically equivalent to jumping into a stormy ocean.

What is required, then, to rectify the spiritual poverty diagnosed in "Cape Hatteras" is a more solitary and internal journey, which begins to be defined in "Quaker Hill," in part, as in "Three Songs," against other failures of vision.

"Quaker Hill" begins with a description of grazing cows which allow Crane to make some interesting claims.<sup>48</sup> The first is the matter about perspective: "Perspective never withers from their eyes" (1): which is to say that they have no perspective—perspective being a withering with distance—but also that they never lose perspective, that their vision is constant. The vision of the cows is seen as an evening agent, something that mixes the skies of March and August (3), though this may only indicate colorblindness. We are told that they "see no other thing/Than grass and snow, and their own inner being" (4–5), that their field of vision is shallow. But in this shallowness, these cows have an inner-directed focus by which they see "their own Inner being/ Through the rich halo that they do not trouble/Even to cast upon the seasons fleeting/Though they should thin and die on last year's stubble" (5–8), which is to say that they maintain their vision, not squandering energy worrying about food or survival. They "are awkward, ponderous and uncoy" (9) as well, which is to say that they do not spend energy in a grace of movement.

Crane may seem bathetic in his description of the cows, but one does not have to read an endorsement of bovine spirituality into this description in order for the cattle to provide a useful contrast to the humans described in the following stanza. Unlike the cows, who are "uncoy," the humans, who are masters of technology, cunning, deceit, "press the cider mill" and drink its product, a kind of sacrament of human exchange, "Shifting reprisals" and "boast/ Much of [their] store of faith in other men" (13–15). These humans, pledging, place their faith in other men to hold them in the bonds of friendship and keep so little for themselves. They "would...stalk down the merriest ghost" (16), would go after even the dead to ensure that they were unhappy. The comparison begun in these first sixteen lines recalls the argument Frank made in *Our America* that through the continuation of frontier culture America has continued to be outer-directed and innerly impoverished.

This poverty is further dramatized by the less directed comparison between the contemporary figures on Quaker Hill and the Quakers who built Old Mizzentop and the Meeting House, the two structures mentioned in this section. Like the cows of the first stanza, the Quakers had a strong and definite vision, a spiritual fulfillment that made material comforts less important. Just as the cows seem emblems of confidence in their inability to worry over the availability of food, the Quakers, in their strictly functional buildings, indicate their other source of nourishment. But the Quakers are gone from this scene; their buildings are either abandoned or used for completely different purposes. The hostelry is abandoned, presumably, because it is too "stoic" to serve as a hotel. Instead, the old Meeting House, the center of Quaker worship, a kind of church, is the hotel for weekenders, who play golf and dance—activities which, by comparison, seem to indicate

a lack of fulfillment elsewhere, since these were activities in which the spiritually-fulfilled Quakers did not indulge. In Crane's assessment, the contemporary weekenders are dead within. They are all exterior, just as the antique table, which is being hollowed out by the woodlouse. And, like the table, they must eventually collapse on their own hollowness.

Crane's speaker finds in the past some answer to this hollowness. He turns to the dead, his "kinsmen and patriarch race" (48), but realizes that he "must ask slain Iroquois to guide/Me farther than scalped Yankees knew to go"(51-52). He turns to them for some knowledge that might fill the spiritual void apparent in the contemporary scene. What exactly this speaker finds in the Iroquois that might answer to the paucity is not clear. But there is something. And in this, the speaker repeats the suggestion made in "The Dance," that the native tribes held knowledge we now need, that if we could return to "the tribal morn" (60), we could recapture something, an inner peace or spiritual harmony, one in which material conquest and material apparatus would not then be so important. The contemporary dilemma is solved, in part, by returning to grasp the spiritual heritage to be had from the native tribes and the Quakers and from the old explorers. It is had by following our own paths back into the past, by descending into the depths of history and taking it back in, just as the worm descends into the soil, ingesting and digesting, or (in Crane's terminology) constringing, it as it descends.

So, must we from the hawk's far stemming view,  
 Must we descend as worm's eye to construe  
 Our love of all we touch, and take it to the Gate  
 As humbly as a guest who knows himself too late,  
 His news already told? Yes, while the heart is wrung,  
 Arise—yes, take this sheaf of dust upon your tongue!  
 In one last angelus lift throbbing throat—  
 Listen, transmuting silence with that stilly note  
 Of pain that Emily, that Isadora knew!  
 While high from dim elm-chancels hung with dew,  
 That triple-noted clause of moonlight—  
 Yes, whip-poor-will, unhusks the heart of fright,  
 Breaks us and saves, yes, breaks the heart, yet yields  
 That patience that is armour and that shields  
 Love from despair—when love foresees the end—  
 Leaf after autumnal leaf  
     break off,  
     descend—  
     descend—(57-75)

Crane deliberately employs the language of the Christian communion in encouraging the taking of "this sheaf of dust upon your tongue" (62): we must, Crane argues, take our past

into ourselves, commune with it, and let it constitute us, as it is a supportive heritage. In this, the argument of “Quaker Hill” extends that begun in “Cape Hatteras” where the vision of Whitman as “*Panis Angelicus*” introduces the ingestive theme in inviting us to “consume” Whitman. We must, then, sing our prayers as Columbus’s men did, “In one last angelus lift throbbing throat” (“Ave Maria,” 63) to change our poverty into our prosperity. Crane’s invokes Emily Dickinson and Isadora Duncan, the two artists who provide the epigraphs for this section, as forerunners in the necessary inner-founding of visionary faith. The phrase from Duncan—“I see only the idea. But no ideals have ever been fully successful on this earth”—is an indication that our hopes are answered only in ourselves, in our visions, and are often not to be proven in the material world; it is a statement of faith. The Dickinson poem from which lines are taken (“The Gentian weaves her fringes”) contains a similar statement of faith, though it is not evident in the chosen lines.<sup>49</sup> That poem details a scene of natural religion, a system of nourishing belief that is maintained without the administrative hierarchy of human institution. It is spontaneous and in harmony with the creation. In Crane’s hands, the poem’s import is transmuted slightly, its choice of a non-orthodox religion invoked as a statement of individuality, to buttress the argument that in order for the spirit to spring forth, there must be a descent, into the past and into the self. In this descent, Crane borrows from Duncan and Dickinson “That patience...that shields/Love from despair” (70–71). He strives to take the ideal into himself and hold it there, as Dickinson does by being self-ordained self-minister, and as Duncan claims to do in imagining her dances.

This descent is imaged in “The Tunnel,” the penultimate section of *The Bridge*.<sup>50</sup> The title suggests subterranean descent in which the train is a worm, descending through the earth, and continuing the argument established in “Quaker Hill.” While the necessity of this descent is posited in “Quaker Hill,” the ultimate positivity of this downward journey begins to be established in this section. The epigraph is from a Blake poem entitled “Morning,” so it posits light at the end of “The Tunnel,” argues that there is a new “Western path” to be found by undertaking a test of the self, by going through the “Gates of Wrath.” These gates take the place of those mentioned in “Quaker Hill” (59). They are the doors through which exploration continues.

...*Descending to Ascend: “The Tunnel”*...

“The Tunnel” provides, in its opening stanzas, a brief résumé of the poem’s total argument as far as it has been detailed. The poem’s first image is of the city’s crowds, which, we are told, the exploring figure will search:

Performances, assortments, résumés—  
 Up Times Square to Columbus Circle lights  
 Channel the congresses, nightly sessions,  
 Refractions of the thousand theatres, faces—  
 Mysterious kitchens.... You shall search them all. (1-5)

“You shall search them all”—just as the explorers of previous sections have searched the seas, the city, the North American continent, the past. The explorer figure will search

them all so often, his searching will eventually become habitual, though it will remain just as empty. And then the searching will seem worthless, and the searcher will turn to basic comforts:

Someday by heart you'll learn each famous sight  
 And watch the curtain lift in hell's despite;  
 You'll find the garden in the third act dead,  
 Finger your knees—and wish yourself in bed,  
 With tabloid crime-sheets perched in easy sight. (6-10)

For the most part, this is ground Crane has covered in previous sections. The only new element here is the hint of resignation in the wish to return to bed, where we found our contemporary figure in “The Harbor Dawn”—and a wish for that oblivion in the imagination of the formulaic tabloids. This tiredness is again registered in the following stanzas in the subject's “scuttle yawn” (22) that dictates the taking of the subway, which is the apparatus of descent. The subway itself is said to “yawn...the quickest promise home” (23). Thus Crane gives the subway a mouth, aiding its identification with the worm introduced in “Quaker Hill.” So, this section begins to answer the demands made in the previous one.

In the following stanzas, Crane addresses most directly the visions of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. There is already an audible Eliotic signature in the offset stanzas, something in the simple iambic rhythm and the near-repetition of some Eliotic phrases that evokes “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.” Crane's “Then let you reach your hat/and go./As usual, let you—also/ walking down—exclaim...” (11–14) is a clear echo of Eliot's “Let us go then, you and I...” The fragments of conversation Crane's central figure overhears in the subway echo those in *The Waste Land*, particularly those in “A Game of Chess.” And, as far as we can read out of them, Crane's fragments seem to point to similar dissolutions.

The conversation fragments reported in lines 39–45 seem to represent the basic points of a formulaic conversation, a reunion between people who haven't seen one another for some time. There is the exchange of addresses, for which the pencil (39) is necessary, one man telling another where he now lives, “at Floral Park/Flatbush” (40–41), either telling when he moved or telling about an upcoming party “on the Fourth of July” (41), a description of the new place “like a pigeons muddy dream—potatoes/to dig in the field” (42–43), some talk about the social life “travelin the town” (43), or perhaps work as a subway conductor, “night after night—the Culver line” (44), and some news about daughters, “the/girls all shaping up” (44–45). This is followed by Crane's editorial:

Our tongues recant like beaten weather vanes.  
 This answer lives like verdigris, like hair  
 Beyond extinction, surcease of bone;  
 And repetition freezes—(46–49)

I think by “recant,” Crane does not mean (or does not only mean) “repudiate,” but “repeat,” “re-sing,” which is to say that the conversation just overheard is formulaic, information that says nothing really, though it does register the recent weather, the changes of address, the growth of children. The reply to such prattle is excrement, a simple sheen of filth, like verdigris, or like hair, which grows even after the body dies: this conversation is undertaken without mind. It is a repetition of the kind that locks the mind. Crane here reports a conversation that evinces the breakdown of communication and human connection Eliot himself dramatized in the pub-closing scene of “A Game of Chess.” This idea is confirmed in the next speech fragment, presented in lines 50–56. Whatever larger conversation this is a portion of, it is difficult to determine. But even in its ambiguity, there is a clear moment of disjunction at its heart, in the failed exchange: “IS THIS/FOURTEENTH? its half past six she said” (51–52). Someone asks which street the subway has come to, and someone else replies as if the first person had asked after the time. Here again is a failure of communication, of connection. Both examples show persons concentrating on letter surfaces without any regard or recourse to the spirit of the communication: there is no spirit in either case. It seems, then, that Crane is instantiating his own argument against the spiritual impoverishment of his America, and in the process, showing the breakdown to which extraversion eventually leads, the crumbling of empty shells in upon their interior emptiness.

It is fitting, then, for Crane to turn to Poe in his efforts to envision this emptiness, just as he turned to Whitman in envisioning the future and the success of the spiritual quest—for Poe is the ancestral imaginer of this void. Crane prepared the way for this invocation as far back as “Cape Hatteras” where he imagines his America as a city in the sea:

...time clears

Our lenses, lifts a focus, resurrects

A periscope to glimpse what joys or pains

Our eyes can share of answer—then deflects

Us, shunting to a labyrinth submersed

Where each sees only his dim past reversed...(26–31)

The ride on the subway in “The Tunnel” recalls this by taking the city under the river. The exchanges—“For Gravesend Manor change at Chambers Street” (83)—participate in this grim assessment, as they map the subway into the grave, or the city where “Death has reared himself a throne.” Crane sees Poe’s prophecies come true, in an America that is resonant with Eliot’s *Waste Land*. Crane’s speaker watches the escalator lift shoes (85–87)—not men and women, but parts of men and women—and notes “each eye attending its shoe” (87), an image reminiscent of Eliot’s description of “each man fix[ing] his eyes before his feet” (65). Poe’s appearance is a signature on the vision. But his specter is not mere remembrance. The contemporary speaker who has surfaced throughout *The Bridge* turns to him as he did to Whitman, suggesting that Poe’s appearance is as much the result of invocation as of evocation. There is good reason to turn to Poe. If his visions were realized, then his prescience has been validated. He might hold answers to the problem.



Crane's speaker does find something of an answer in Poe's example. He questions the specter:

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? (79–82)

And his question, his apostrophe, suggests a confidence in the answer. Jonathan Culler has described apostrophe as a way of willing a state of affairs; if so Crane's apostrophe to Poe would not be a question per se, but rather an act to draw attention to his knowledge of the answer.<sup>51</sup> Crane finds in Poe's death an example of stalwart maintenance of faith—maintenance in the event that likely precipitated his death, a round of political torture to which Poe would not accede—and an image the maintenance of faith despite the bleakness of the visions recorded in stories and in poems.

But does Crane find anything more than faith and the realization of a bleak vision of human civilization as thrall to Death? Though he does not make it immediately explicit, Crane does, I think, find in his encounter with Poe the answer to the problem of spiritual nourishment he has posed throughout the second half of *The Bridge*.<sup>52</sup> It is to be found in the circle of connections that is closed in the penultimate scene of this section. The most local connection is that made between Poe and the "Wop washerwoman" (101) whom Crane's narrator finds in the car with him. Once Crane's consciousness lights on her, this washerwoman occupies the narrative position Poe had previously occupied: he addresses her, apostrophically, questioning her about her strength of vision:

After the corridors are swept, the cuspidors—  
 The gaunt sky-barracks cleanly now, and bare,  
 O Genoese, do you bring mother eyes and hands  
 Back home to children and to golden hair? (102–105)

That is: can she maintain her ability to love as she engages in the menial and perhaps degrading tasks of cleaning up people's spit, after she has been in the kind of gutter Poe himself supposedly died in? Crane's epithet, "Genoese" performs the second connection, an identification of the woman with Columbus. This has troubled some critics, who take this to be a depreciation of the Columbus figure, a low point on the downward spiral of the poem's failure. But in many ways the washerwoman is exactly the same figure as Columbus. Just as Columbus prepared the way for others to come into the New World, so this woman prepares a place of rest for those who will come from work, or for those who will come to work. She is the preparer. Sure, she shows the toll of this hard work, but so does Columbus in the poem's opening section. So Poe is connected, through the figure of the washerwoman, to Columbus. Poe is already implicitly connected to Whitman, whom Crane also addresses on the same questions of vision and the spirit and who is also already connected to Columbus. The figure of the washerwoman also draws this

connection tight: the description of city buildings as “sky-barracks” images the washerwoman as a kind of nurse, which connects her with Whitman, whom Crane remembered as a wound-dresser (“Cape Hatteras” 177–181). So there is a circle of connections by which Columbus, Poe, and Whitman are made equivalent—a circle whose arcs also include the hand imagery that concludes “Ave Maria,” “Cape Hatteras,” and “The Tunnel,” imagery that turns all three figures into latter-day Moses-figures. The implicit argument is that Poe and Whitman are pioneers after the example of Columbus, though spiritual pioneers rather than spatial pioneers.

They discover to us the spirit itself. The question has been: How does one begin to feed the spirit? And it seems that Crane does not answer it, for he does not propose or indicate an object that is obtained, some manna, alluded to in “Cape Hatteras.” But, in fact, the very recognition of spiritual poverty is the first provision, for it defines a journey in which the muscles of faith are strengthened, in which the vision becomes easier to hold by being held or had more often. The descent into the self is the first motion in the resolution of the spiritual crisis. The subway’s journey under the river is, then, the perfect emblem for this self-investigation, since ascent and recovery have their inception at the same point at which the subway reaches its nadir. The ultimate extension of descent is also the point at which resurrection begins to be defined. Crane further expresses this idea in an imagistic dialogue with Poe. As I’ve noted, the train is very early in the section associated with the worm introduced at the conclusion of “Quaker Hill.” The later attribution of “antennae” (110) to the train reinforce this identification, making the subway a Conqueror Worm to which Crane can ascribe a positive purpose, inverting Poe’s “Tragedy of Man” and conscripting Poe into his position.

In plotting this reversal, Crane borrows from Whitman as much as from Poe. The whole downward and inward turn in these sections after “Cape Hatteras,” undertaken in pursuit of the ultimately positive goal, echoes Whitman’s attention to the “dark patches” in section six of “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” While some scholars have read this turn as revelatory of Whitman’s deep anxieties, I think, as I have argued in Chapter Two, the turn to issues of separation is a deliberate strategy on Whitman’s part, calculated to enable the final chorus, to lay bare the secrets that divide and thereby to unlock the doors, to unscrew them from their jambs.<sup>53</sup>

But this is not the only borrowing apparent here. The proposal of the spiritual frontier that comes to its completion here is, of course, extensive of the ideas implicit in Crane’s dramatization of Columbus’s voyage. By indicating the discovery of the soul as the nourishment of the soul, Crane argues for a fulfillment or repose in the constant exploration or motion. In Columbus’s case, and all the cases of physical exploration narrated in *The Bridge*, the journey indicates, as long as it continues, the continuance of the horizon, the promise of new land and the possible answers to material needs, the proving of which, the actual fulfillment of need, depends on the repetition or exercise of the journey, its repetition in the opposite direction that makes its further repetition possible. Repetition, constant motion, is the answering act and substance. And the repetition, like all repetitions as long as they continue, though it is a repetition of motion, achieves a stillness in its regularity. This idea of repose in motion, of a stability with the power to connect and condense very much like the power an object in space has to condense and connect, is the primary basis for the connective vision Whitman expresses in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.” Crane signals his debt to Whitman in this matter by

concluding the section again on the riverside, waiting as if for a ferry to arrive, as he began *The Bridge* in the poem.

...*Atlantis Rising*...

"Atlantis" completes *The Bridge* by compounding the motifs of ascent "The Tunnel" initiates. The physical bridge re-appears as its main cables provide the opening image of "the arching path/Upward, veering with light, the flight of strings" (1–2). The bridge becomes the harp that holds the "Sibylline voices" that "flicker" "Up the index of night" (7, 5). The bridge seems to provide the framework for a song of ascent: "New octaves trestle the twin monoliths" "obliquely up bright carrier bars" (18, 17), and "the eyes, like seagulls strung with rime—/Slit and propelled by glistening fins of light—/Pick biting way up towering looms" (25–27). In the fifth stanza, these voices describe "Some trillion whispering hammers glimmer[ing] Tyre" "up planet-sequined heights" (34, 33), and in the sixth, the "Bridge, lifting to cycloramic crest/Of deepest day" (43–44); in the ninth stanza, the "intrinsic Myth" is "iridescently upborne/ Through the bright drench and fabric of our veins" (65, 67–68), and in the tenth, "Deity's young name/...ascends" (79–80). This final section fills with a chorus that continually voices upward movement, following the subways final upward arc well beyond its physical extent, and making ascent the primary figure of this final section—a figure compressed into mythic "Atlantis."

While some critics have expressed bewilderment at or disappointment in Crane's choice of Atlantis as a trope, it seems hardly avoidable. Given the fact that Columbus died believing still he'd found Cathay, or China, but had in fact found a continent between Cathay and Old World Europe, Atlantis is a natural choice, being the mythic identity of a land between the European continent and the Asian one. Furthermore, the idea of Atlantis eventually rising from the ocean as strangely and suddenly as it had sunken, is one that has persisted for millennia, so to image a society on the rise, Atlantis would be one obvious choice. Furthermore, the figure of Atlantis allows Crane to take his City in the Sea, described first in "Cape Hatteras" and reactivated with the appearance of Poe's ghost in "The Tunnel," and lift it from the ocean, to remove it from Death's domain. So, Atlantis is a figure of resurrection, one that continues the implications made by the Lazarus image in the concluding stanzas of "The Tunnel." Finally, as Atlantis was known in some legends as the city of bridges, there is already a central place for the bridge in the risen city. Of course, Crane's Atlantic vision builds the city around the bridge itself, as if the architecture of the suspension bridge would be the perfect civic architecture, one that subverts the constant downward pull of gravity to hold the city together, even raise it higher.

In its ascent, "Atlantis" effects the condensation of the entire poem and of the historical span that provides Crane's visionary with a spiritual provision, in the emblem of the bridge, on which Atlantis is founded. In the opening lines of this section, the bridge condenses space and time by providing "one arc synoptic of all tides below" to which the tides' "labyrinthine mouths of history/Pour...reply" (11–12). The bridge then appears as the archetypal or categorical ship, the ideal held by "all ships at sea" that combine "in one vibrant breath made cry" to move the tides and winds to their purpose; as the seas reply to the bridge's "arc synoptic" the bridge is confirmed as the master of wind and water, the ultimate ship that includes all others. The bridge is then both the "palladium helm of

stars" (24) upon which we see Jason, of Argonaut fame, harnessing winds, and Columbus's ship, evoked when the bridge, under Jason's wind-strapping, sings the "Psalm of Cathay." When Crane describes the bridge under Jason's captaining as "translating time/Into what multitudinous Verb the suns/And synergy of waters ever fuse" (44–46), he seems to describe the very process by which all time between Jason and Crane's American time is entirely collapsed: time is translated into a single, ever-unfolding tense created by all days ("the suns") and all corners of the globe ("synergy of waters").

To punctuate this condensation of time, this passage, in which Jason's appearance tunes the bridge to sing the "Psalm of Cathay," evoking Columbus, draws to close an associative circle whose arcs are disclosed throughout the poem. In other words, these central stanzas of "Atlantis" condense the poem's concepts as well as its times. The epigraph for "Ave Maria," taken from Seneca's "Medea," introduces both the idea of new lands beyond the seas, such as America, and Jason as well. In most editions of *The Bridge*, Crane's quote from Seneca mentions Tiphys<sup>54</sup>, Jason's navigator, as the one who will discover the way to new lands; Jason would then be the sailor who steers the ship there and, therefore, an image of Columbus, who physically discovers it. When Jason's ship-bridge sings the "Psalm of Cathay," we know that Jason simply stands in for Columbus in "Atlantis" even as Columbus stands in for Jason in "Ave Maria." The convertibility of the characters makes them equivalent, even as the conversion of ship to bridge, bridge to ship fuses them together. Crane thus brings to climax the fusion of ship and bridge that began in "Ave Maria" when Columbus speaks of the ocean's span—or perhaps even earlier, in the proem, where the substitution of bridge for ferry is part of the atmosphere of associations—and continued in "The River," when the train on its crossing the river presumably by means of a bridge becomes a raft or riverboat floating down the Mississippi, and in "Cutty Sark," when the narrator's delay on the walk across the bridge gives way to his vision of clipper ships. "Atlantis" draws all these imaginations together and condenses them into each other, so that the section's seventh stanza begins as if on a ship ("Sheened harbor lanterns backward fled the keel") but ends on the bridge where "The vernal strophe chimes from deathless strings" and elicits Crane's praise: "O Thou steeled Cognizance" (50, 56–57).

"Atlantis" is replete with figures for this type of condensation. When Crane speaks of "Taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate/The whispered rush" (3–4), he imagines the bridge as a loom (Crane later identifies the bridge's sections as "looms" (27)), with a shuttle of moonlight—a loom that combines the poem's separate strands into a single fabric. Crane's loom is working not with strands of fiber, but of music: it is said to "syncopate/The whispered rush." This sensory fusion represents yet another condensation, like the fusion of the seas by the bridge's "arc synoptic." Perhaps the most explicit description of the section's fusion comes in the sixth stanza, where he describes the bridge's song as the "multitudinous Verb the suns/And synergy of waters ever fuse" (45–46), a fused song which in the following stanza "devoutly binds" "yoking wave/To kneeling wave" (55, 54–55), strengthening the poem's spatial condensation. The sections bonding images climax in the "lariat" of the eighth stanza, which is said to "encincture.../In single chrysalis the many twain" (59–60), completing one of the clearest expressions of Crane's connective vision. The bridge, finally, emerges as an engine of combination and facilitator of transformation, precipitates the metamorphosis of the

many into the one. So Crane's bridge solves one of the central problems of American culture and polity, answering Everett, Webster, Frank, Brooks, and Whitman.

As the bridge-loom in the fourth stanza further "press[es]" "Tomorrows into yesteryear—and link[s]/What cipher-script of time no traveller reads" (27, 29–30), resulting in a state of contemporaneity that seems "beyond time" (89), we see the signs of the spiritual growth Crane seems to have sought. When Crane speaks of the bridge leading "Sight, sound and flesh...from time's realm" (63), his language strongly suggests a kind of heavenly assumption. But the poem doesn't so much escape from time by withdrawing from it as by coming to contain it all at once. Thus the "Atlantis" raised in the poem's final section may be seen as a timeless heaven whose citizens constantly engage in spiritual expression. This final section is shot through with the language of Christian religion, suggesting a ubiquity of the spiritual offices: the bridge seems to issue the "Choir" that will sing the "Psalm of Cathay" and "like an organ...sound of doom" till we see the bridge as "Deity's glittering Pledge" whose "cantic" creates a new sense of "beatitude" even as it sings "Deity's young name" to the heavens (44, 47, 62, 73, 74, 75, 79). As the bridge condenses all voyages, all times, and all places, it nourishes the traveler's soul and becomes the church of its new religion.

*...The Final Figure and The Life of Monument...*

Thus Crane concludes the condensation he signalled in the proem: he asked the bridge to "condense eternity," and it has. He asked the bridge to "descend/And of the curviship lend a myth to god," and it has, by condensing all time, all space, eternity. This condensation is the fundamental and overriding characteristic of *The Bridge*. According to Thomas Yingling, this "synthe-sis of past, present, and future, allows Crane...to circumvent the damaging notion that the 'past...so overwhelms the present' as to call into question any 'future destiny.'"<sup>55</sup> Crane's America has a future within the bridge, its culture hope for growth as well as perpetuity.

Insofar as this new hope, this new future is founded in the bridge and the temporal and spatial compression its architecture make possible, then Crane has created a monument. Crane's bridge has all the spatial characteristics of a monument; it is, by John Gillis's definition of a monument as an object that concentrates time in space, most certainly a monument.<sup>56</sup> The Brooklyn Bridge, introduced in the proem, provides Crane with the visual elements that enable such concentration, so the argument extended throughout the poem and condensed in this final section is not only associated with the bridge, it is associated *into* the bridge which becomes a sort of reliquary, containing time. And Crane's bridge has all the purpose of a monument. For with Webster and Everett and Whitman the purpose of the monument is to force or coordinate a reckoning of history and its meaning that would solidify or shape the nation, and insofar as Crane's bridge is a monument that not only condenses time and space but argues some unity for the American culture, the bridge is a monument after the fashion of Webster's and Whitman's. The process by which the meaning of the monument is created is nearly identical to that we observe in the orations of Everett and Webster: like them, Crane takes us back to early events, initial events, and rehearses them, making them present in some cases, and redefining them, emphasizing certain portions to enable connections that will figure in his final statement of value. As with the addresses of Everett and Webster, the rehearsal is not simply a restatement of fact. It is a deliberated narrative argument which

reforms the essential character of the culture to which the narrative is addressed by redefining the core of the past that effects the present. The success of this narrative argument depends in large part upon the auditor's following the reconstruction, making the same connections the speaker makes, codifying them in memory, which takes the final shape insinuated by the narrative, a whole. In short, an auditor creates the shape of monument in his or her self.

Insofar as *The Bridge* becomes a monument in these terms, using a single public space to effect a temporal condensation and transmit arguments of value that will catalyze the health of the national culture, Crane answers Eliot directly. Like *The Bridge* after it, *The Waste Land* relies for its power on the ability of a reader to create the shape of the poem's imagination in his or her self. But where Everett and Webster, and Crane after them, return to historical events in order to bind them into a statement of value, Eliot returns to texts, to the artifacts of Western culture, not binding them, but posing the linguistic textures of his fragments against one another in order to suggest the dissolution he argues. So while *The Waste Land* employs an argumentative strategy similar to those in Everett and Webster, a recasting of the past, it does so for the opposite effect, to demonstrate the dissolution of culture rather than to effect its consolidation.

Perhaps Crane arrives at his strategy in response to Eliot's and then accidentally replicates the patterns established by Everett and Webster by negating Eliot's negative. But the evidence internal to *The Bridge* continually indicates Crane's familiarity with and debt to Whitman's own poem of monument, "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," a poem in which the same strategy is employed; so as Crane "rewrites" "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," as Thomas Yingling puts it, he learns Webster and Everett indirectly from Whitman. Crane learns the lesson so well, it is almost uncanny, without any evidence to suggest that Crane had read Everett, to return to Everett's "Oration Pronounced at Cambridge, Before the Society of Phi Beta Kappa, August 26, 1824," and read the following paragraph, in which Everett describes his hopes for America in terms that almost exactly prefigures the arguments of *The Bridge*:

In that high romance, if romance it be, in which the great minds of antiquity sketched the fortunes of the ages to come, they pictured themselves a favored region beyond the ocean; a land of equal laws and happy men. The primitive poets beheld it in the islands of the blest; the Doric bards fancied it in the Hyperborean regions; the sage of the academy placed it in the lost Atlantis; and even the sterner spirit of Seneca could discern a fairer abode of humanity, in distant regions then unknown. We look back upon these uninspired productions, and almost recoil from the obligation they imply. By us must these fair visions be realized, by us must be fulfilled these high visions, which burst in trying hours upon the longing hearts of the champions of truth. There are no more continents or worlds to be revealed; Atlantis hath risen from the ocean, the farthest Thule is reached, there are no more retreats beyond the sea, no more discoveries, no more hopes.<sup>57</sup>

For Everett, as for Crane later, America is Atlantis, risen from the sea to signal the end of earthly exploration and the beginning of an era of "intellectual exertion" that will fulfill

all the hopes of all previous generations and thereby condense all history into a prelude for the United States.

Crane learned the lesson quite well. And following Everett, Webster, and Whitman in the American tradition of monumental rhetoric, compresses time in the space of the bridge, which becomes his monument, a discrete object and space that will both contain and advertise the structure of praise Crane arranges for America. Ideally, the single form protects the argument from any attack to its single points in order to prolong its viability. The only way to make such an argument disappear is not to attack it on its points but to attack its largest structures and claims. In the case of *The Bridge*, however, the conversion of the argument into the monumental figure seems to have made an understanding of the argument difficult in the short term, even as it has prolonged its longevity. The poem does contain all the information one needs in order to understand Crane's argument, all it needs to propose the bridge as monument, information which must be uncovered and organized through careful and extended close reading—information which, once uncovered, can make the argument of this monument successful. If the basic constructions and constructions of the poems may be followed, then the final figuration is very powerful by virtue of its compression; it is a conceptual jet engine, gaining force by compressing molecules and organizing their release in a direction of choice. But the poem has waited for another generation to benefit from its technology.

*The Bridge's* compression has been greatly successful despite the misunderstandings that have marked the criticism of the poem. Thomas Yingling has noted that "Crane's work is almost universally deemed short-sighted, failed, or unreadable, and yet he remains a canonical presence."<sup>58</sup> *The Bridge* is, I contend, the major factor in Crane's continuing strength of presence. As David Clark has shown, in the introductory essay to his edition, *Critical Essays on Hart Crane*, as has Warner Berthoff in his *Hart Crane: A Re-Introduction*, initially negative assessments of *The Bridge* by Yvor Winters, Allen Tate, and R.P.Blackmur set the tone for critical evaluations and made positive appreciation of the poem difficult for some time; even the later and basically positive assessments of *The Bridge* by R.W.B.Lewis and Thomas Voegler are haunted by the carps of Winters, Tate, and Blackmur.<sup>59</sup> And yet, after nearly forty years of misreading, Crane's poem has remained a strong presence in the literary imaginations of readers of American poetry, so much so that in the past fifteen years we have seen an increasingly positive re-assessment of Crane's work that has, as Warner Berthoff notes, "mostly taken as given this premise of his work's uncommon importance."<sup>60</sup> Berthoff's *Hart Crane: A Re-Introduction* (1989), Marc Simon's new edition of *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane* (1986, 1989, 1993) Paul Mariani's recent biography, *The Broken Tower* (1999), and Clive Fisher's *Hart Crane: A Life* (2002), each substantially free from the pitfalls of early Crane criticism, measure its persistence.

As these recent responses prove, Crane's poetry has remained in the American literary consciousness just as the Brooklyn Bridge has remained in the American imagination as a symbol of New York and, as New York has been a symbol of America itself. And I want to claim here that *The Bridge*, of all Crane's poems, has remained in the American consciousness precisely because of the Brooklyn Bridge. Though *The Bridge* challenges certain notions of history to encourage a view of the continuity of American history, *The Bridge* never challenges the physical characteristics of the Brooklyn Bridge. Instead, the poem uses those most recognizable elements—the cables, the carrier bars, the monolithic

pylons—as the visible boundaries for the conceptual space the poem constructs by collapsing Jason and Columbus and Poe and Whitman and the whole history and future of American exploration. So the poem's conceptual space is perfectly congruent with the actual, physical space of the Brooklyn Bridge. This congruence enables the persistence of the poems conceptual dimension to be entrusted, in part, to the bridge so that this most notable, most striking, and most unavoidable of bridges makes the poem's argument unavoidable as well. Insofar as Crane's poem identifies itself with the bridge, it becomes a part of the bridge, and the bridge forever indicates the poem and forever returns readers to Crane's poem, making new reckonings, new anatomies of *The Bridge* inevitable.

Like Whitman, and like Webster and Everett before him, Crane understood the importance of defining a conceptual or representative space, a set of ideas that may overlay or inhere within the figural bridge, a set of ideas the structure may express. And he understood the importance of connecting this conceptual space with a public space or structure like the Brooklyn Bridge, an unavoidable structure that continues to be important because of its use, because of its historical value as a work of engineering and a work of architecture, because of its symbolic function as a sign of America's pre-eminent city, the most public of our cities. In his monument, Crane has provided us with a structure important and useful, a site at which to pose, in which to repose, the questions of our culture and the work of answering them—and in that, an aid to the dynamic processes that make the stability possible. Like the reminder of the dynamic processes that make the stability possible. Like Whitman's ferry, Crane's bridge is not only the public and unavoidable site of the performance of culture, it is also the shape of the conceptual space that is established in our minds when we read it.

As we recreate the bridge within each time we read Crane's poem, we confound the space with our own sense of identity, within our imaginary Americas by which we orient ourselves. It is then the space we all share, the space we all know within each other, the space in which we can share within each other, the place within our brothers and sisters which we may occupy. It is our new heart, our new spirit, the repose in which we can motion. Like Webster's Bunker Hill, Crane's Bridge is the site at which America becomes possible once more. And like Webster's monument, Crane's Bridge is the monument that not only remembers, but marks the memory that all should share, indicating itself to future generations, drawing new readers in with its gravity, holding them there, making the nation again within them. And so, it is the site at which we remember the past and at which we make the future, the center of time, year one in the calendar of memory and of identity, the chamber of our congress, the monument within and around which the nation is made again.





## Chapter Four

### In Common: Lowell, Whitman, Crane, and the Makings of a Mode

Introducing “For the Union Dead” on the Boston Common in June 1960, Lowell is reported to have said, “We have emerged from the monumental age.”<sup>1</sup> Combined with the poem’s preference for the horrible truth of the lives and deaths of the men of the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> over the idealized presentation of their wholeness in the St. Gaudens relief, Lowell’s introduction encourages numerous readers to view “For the Union Dead” as a decidedly anti-monumental poem. Alan Williamson describes the poems “dislike of monumentals” and its “fear that abstract images will too effectively distance unpleasant realities.”<sup>2</sup> Michael North finds in the poem a pattern common in Lowell’s poetry wherein “some ideal image is confronted with the realities of a sinful world,” that may indicate the “public” to be equivalent to “the false, the meretricious, the propagandistic.”<sup>3</sup> Paul Breslin argues that the Mosler safe becomes the poem’s central monument, so Lowell can expose the blatantly ideological premises of all monuments.<sup>4</sup>

But if Lowell’s poem is critical of the monuments it assays, it does not eschew monuments altogether. Rather, as it uses a monumental architecture to reconceive the Common, it seems to embrace the monument. As Lowell goes beyond recounting the history of the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> and attempts to reactivate or re-present this history in the contemporary Common, Lowell performs the most basic operation of monument, the concentration of time in space fundamental to John R. Gillis’s account of the monument.<sup>5</sup> This concentration is essential to the poem’s success as an “Abolitionist poem,” to its capacity to confront Boston with the history that will perforate its self-congratulatory self-image: there can be no confrontation without the proximity produced by this spatio-temporal concentration.<sup>6</sup> Lowell exploits the notion that, as Kirk Savage puts it, the monument is “supposed to remain a fixed point, stabilizing both the physical and the cognitive landscape”: as Lowell avoids first-person commentary in favor of a largely visual tour of the Common, he appears merely to describe the physical landscape, although his descriptions reorganize the Common’s monumental representations and thereby rewrite the physical landscape in order to transfer this change to the cognitive landscape.<sup>7</sup> Far from emerging “from the monumental age,” “For the Union Dead” adopts the rhetoric of monument visible in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” and *The Bridge* in ways that suggest a kinship that is important not only for Lowell’s poetic work but for a history of American Poetry as well.

#### WALKING WITH WHITMAN AND CRANE

Even before the spatial plan of Lowell’s poem becomes clear, his efforts to concentrate time are manifest in his manipulation of verb tenses, specifically the choreography of

several modes of the present. Describing the St. Gaudens relief, Lowell uses the simple present: it exists in his own time. The Statehouse “*faces* Colonel Shaw/and his bell-cheeked Negro infantry/on St. Gaudens’ shaking Civil War relief” (21-23, emphasis added).<sup>8</sup> But as he reads the monument, Lowell turns to the literary present, trading on our sense that a representation freezes time. Shaw “*has* an angry wren-like vigilance” (33). “He *is* out of bounds now” (37). The shift is simple, but even as it registers Shaw’s stasis in the ever-present moment of the relief, it encourages a sense of Shaw’s arrival in the writer’s (or the reader’s) present. This arrival is helped in part by Lowell’s turn from explicit indication of the bronze figure—“Its Colonel”—to an ambiguous use of the personal pronoun, “he,” that can refer both to the figural and to the historical Shaw. Lowell’s “he” acknowledges, in part, the moment of Shaw’s life the relief preserves and, more strikingly, gradually remembers Shaw the man until the literary present comes to seem more and more like the existential present, until the statements seem like categorical statements that apply to the man as well as to his figure. In the end, Shaw is an actor, as present to the Common’s drama as anyone:

Colonel Shaw  
is riding on his bubble,  
he waits  
for the blessed break.

Managing tense to condense time, Lowell follows Whitman. In “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” there are two presents: the present of Whitman’s writing and the present of the reader’s reading. These two presents are gradually welded as the visible identity of the present tense verbs given to both the writer’s and the reader’s moments becomes more apparent. Whitman begins in his writing present—“I see you face to face” (2)—and seems to retreat when the future reader’s experience is rendered in the present—“Just as you feel when you look on river and sky, so I felt” (22).<sup>9</sup> But soon these two presents merge, overcoming temporal separation as Whitman reclaims his present—“Closer yet I approach you” (86)—and declares an ultimate proximity: “What is more subtle than this which ties me to the woman or man that looks into my face?/Which fuses me into you now, and pours my meaning into you?” (96–97).

Crane also manipulates tense in order to draw the past into the present, though the ubiquity of the present tense—almost every section or sub-section of *The Bridge* is rendered in the present—seems more of a stylistic or narrative choice than an argumentative one. When the present tense belongs to the narrator—as in “The Harbor Dawn,” “The River,” “Quaker Hill,” and “The Tunnel”—it seems merely to register the speaker’s interest in his readers; the scenes these sections detail are mostly contemporary, so there seems no trick in the tense. Elsewhere, however, Crane renders in the present something that is clearly past, as in “Ave Maria,” where Christopher Columbus speaks on his first return from the New World, in the present tense, in dramatic monologue. Here the sense that the entire section is a quotation accounts for any potential violation of contemporaneity. The glosses further contain Columbus’s present as they indicate a consciousness outside the poem. Their synoptic qualities, as well as their situation on the margins, suggest they are editorial and, whatever their present, subsequent in some

important way to the matter rendered in the poetic lines, which separates the present tense of the poetic lines from the present tense of the glosses, again parenthesizing the monologue's tense and removing any violation of the poem's or the reader's sense of contemporaneity. Nevertheless, Columbus's present is necessary to the sense of the eternal present constructed in "Atlantis": however we may understand this particular use of the present in "Ave Maria," the use of *a* present tense encourages us to view the section's matter as still active when we see it considered again in "Cape Hatteras" and "Atlantis." In "The Dance," we find Crane shifting tenses as deftly as Whitman or Lowell. Here, the narratorial consciousness, which begins in the present and looks back on Maquokeeta and pocahontas, shortly gives way to a present tense narration seemingly focalized by Maquokeeta. These points of view trade places several times till Maquokeeta, transformed into a thunder-god, appears to the narrator, like Pocahontas, as an eternal ever-present principle, gazing "through...infinite seasons" (82) on his "bride immortal in the maize" (84). Here the management of verbs suggests Maquokeeta's and Pocahontas's transformation and re-situates them in every present tense, drawing the past into the ever-present Crane seeks to create in *The Bridge*.

Of course, Lowell's efforts to draw the past into the present and concentrate time in space do not rely on tense management alone. Like Crane, Lowell also employs an imagistic fusion to complete his re-presentation. The first of his poem's fusions relocates the Aquarium into the Common as the speaker's pressing "against the new barbed and galvanized//fence on the Boston Common" repeats exactly the remembered pressing to the Aquarium where his "nose crawled like a snail on the glass" (12–13, 5). And, as they dig "their underworld garage," the "dinosaur steamshovels" echo "the dark downward and vegetating kingdom/of the fish and reptile" (16, 14, 10–11). This fusion is later registered when we see Shaw "riding on his bubble" and the "giant finned cars nose forward like fish," having each occupied the Aquarium-Common (62, 66). The more startling fusion also makes use of the garage excavation to re-open the South Carolina grave of the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> on the Common: with the excavation still open in the poem, the poem's turn from "the ditch" where Shaw's body "wash thrown/and lost" to "The ditch" that "is nearer," namely the garage, transforms this construction into an open grave from which Shaw can rise "on his bubble" even as the cars slide from the broken Aquarium of the Common. The opening of the grave is, as I argued in the first chapter, the poem's most important work. As it answers the frozen moment in which the men of the 54<sup>th</sup> march through Boston (remembered by the relief) with a moment that remembers their deaths, this relocation confronts Boston and its self-congratulatory self-representation by suggesting that a supposedly progressive initiative—the formation of the first regiment composed entirely of (excepting their white officer) black enlistees (rather than draftees)—did not only not decrease the suffering of African-Americans but for a time actually increased the collective store. And as the grave is brought into the Common, the Common's store of history, the amount of time that is concentrated in its space is increased.

Crane's fusions, like Lowell's afterward, also work to concentrate time. In "The River" Crane fuses the railroad and the river, so the poem's progress stealthily disembarks from the train for a riverboat or skiff. Crane implores us to "lean from the window, if the train slows down," (101) and look down on the river where, shortly, we find the poem's focal consciousness, floating on "Damp tonnage and alluvial march" and

“Over DeSoto’s bones” (125, 133). Thus the contemporary train—the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited—and the 19<sup>th</sup> century boat are blended, their frame compressed in such a way that the poem can even look back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century bones of DeSoto. As I noted in the previous chapter, such fusions are necessary to build the sense of the historical continuity of human exploration on which Crane will predicate his “myth of America” as a nation stabilized in its constant motion.

In “For the Union Dead,” the space, the order of its arrangement, is key to enabling the fusions that concentrate time. The garage excavation allows Lowell to approach the Common from the south (perhaps as if coming from the South Boston Aquarium), look through the fence, across the ditch, and see the St. Gaudens’ relief “propped by a plank splint against the garage’s earthquake,” faced by “the tingling Statehouse” (24, 20). And this vision, of the relief and Statehouse through the fence, enables Lowell’s transformation of the Common into a vast aquarium: he presses to the fence as to the aquarium glass, therefore what he sees within will be metaphorized to what he saw in the aquarium, and Shaw can ride “on his bubble” and the garage’s cars can “nose forward like fish” in the poem’s conclusion (62, 66).

Lowell’s reliance on the spatial order of the Common is more implicit than Whitman’s, which is made explicit by his final prayer to the elements of the harbor to remain—“Keep your places, objects than which none else is more lasting” (125). For Whitman, the stability creates an eternal present: “You furnish your parts toward eternity,/Great or small we furnish your parts toward the soul” (131–132). Of course, these elements don’t abide, as the Brooklyn Bridge puts Whitman’s Brooklyn Ferry out of business. But their stability is instrumental to the poem’s imaginative coordination of self and other: the spatial order, and not just the place, enables the poem’s most important fusions. Though Lowell is not interested in such eternities (he seems interested rather in some sort of change), Whitman’s reliance on a stable scene seems exactly to prefigure Lowell’s reliance on the space of the Common in order to institute a common political vision.

*The Bridge* as well relies on a space—the Brooklyn Bridge’s—to unify its argument. The bridge’s distinctive double rise lies behind the poem’s drive to rise in “Cape Hatteras” and then fall all the way through “The Tunnel” only to rise again by the river—even as the figure of the bridge, appearing in the proem and the concluding and central sections, runs like a girder through the sequence, aligning the sections to be compressed. But, perhaps most important to Crane’s drive to create a “myth of America,” is the generative role the bridge’s features have in “Atlantis,” seeming to produce the music that suggests “a god were issue of the strings,” to give us “Diety’s name/Kinetic of white choiring wings,” and, finally, to “bleed infinity” from its “orphic strings” (8, 79–80, 91–92). In the proem, Crane asked the bridge to “lend a myth to God” out of its “curveship” (44); in “Atlantis,” the bridge becomes “Answerer of all” (85), its language providing structure for this myth.

Like Whitman’s and Crane’s poems, Lowell’s finds itself on an actual, familiar space in order to reify in the real world of its readers the cognitive landscape it has constructed—just, as Kirk Savage explains, any monument coordinates cognitive and physical landscapes.<sup>10</sup> As Lowell fuses the Aquarium and the grave into the Common, and as he turns to the “thousand small town New England greens” and draws them by comparison into the Common, he explicitly coordinates disparate locales into a single

cognitive landscape anchored to a specific physical site, the Boston Common. Thus the poem models the work it seeks to effect, the more important coordination of his readers' own cognitive landscapes in the shared physical space of the Common. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," Whitman doesn't have as much work as Lowell, but his efforts are clearly dedicated to coordinating the individual cognitive landscapes his readers harbor into one unified, publicly-shared conception anchored in the real, physical space of the harbor. If his readers and fellow citizens know the shared landscape enables a shared mind then, perhaps, the sense of union will extend beyond the practicalities of everyday life and into something more spiritual and ultimately more sustaining. Crane, too, seeks to coordinate cognitive landscapes in the physical world, though his operation is more complex. Much of *The Bridge* is concerned with coordinating elements of both real and cognitive American landscapes into a system that will enable Crane's "synthesis of America"; only once this is completed does the physical landscapes the poem recognizes—most importantly the Brooklyn Bridge—serve to coordinate in the minds of readers the cognitive landscape the poem proposes.<sup>11</sup> But in each poem the public space is transformed to do the work of monument—to concentrate time in space and to coordinate the cognitive spaces of individuals into a common system that aligns citizens on a mental level as well as on a physical level.

We see most clearly in Lowell's poems that public space is particularly conducive to monumental arguments that concentrate space in time and seek to reify a cognitive landscape in the physical world because public space already reifies a cognitive landscape. Public space provides a real model, and perhaps even a tool, for such arguments. Public space is, in Henri Lefebvre's taxonomy, a "representational" space, both "lived and conceptual," an order, a "coherent system of signs" that "overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects."<sup>12</sup> Thus, a public space is already understood as a meaningful space, and any statement to its meaning will seem simply to participate in the normal life of the space, as long as such a statement recognizes the particular order of the physical space. Lowell's poem exploits the bivalent nature of the Common: it modifies its conceptual dimension as it interprets its spatial arrangement and, insofar as it confines itself to observational statements and avoids editorializing, never seems to violate the space or engineer a completely new space. Lowell's job is easier than Crane's or Whitman's, for the Common's conceptual dimension is clearest, indicated in part by its name: it is publicly owned, held in common. The overtly public nature of the Common means that, at worst, the arguments of Lowell's poem merely participate in the public life of the Common, while at best they seem already a part of the Common, encoded in its spatial system: as system and significance are already convertible in the life of the Common, Lowell's conversion of significance into spatial system is not only unsurprising, it is easy.

The spaces Whitman and Crane address are not so explicitly bivalent, but their efforts nevertheless provide a precedent for Lowell's work. In "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" Whitman works through his painstaking descriptions of the ferry ride to a space of shared experience that can provide comfort, as in the sixth section, where he counsels: "It is not upon you alone the dark patches fall,/The dark threw its patches down upon me also" (65–66). While Lowell's arguments may seem more clearly political, the implications of Whitman's argument for the public life are just as serious. The catalogue of common visual experiences Whitman builds from the ferry leads not simply to a

recognition of our common transportational experiences but, furthermore and more importantly, to a recognition that we share almost all our experiences, including those that seem most atomizing, like shame, lust, or hate. Whitman comforts, “Nor is it you alone who know what it is to be evil, / I am he who knew what it was to be evil” (69–70). And in articulating this in the context of the ferry-ride, Whitman transforms the ferry from a practical transport into a site for the articulation of our basic human relations and thus realizes within the physical confines of the ferry a conceptual dimension that will preserve Whitman’s arguments. Because the ferry is dedicated to the work of transport its passengers have time for such contemplative work and enables them to be receptive to Whitman’s institution.

The Brooklyn Bridge does not assist Crane in quite the way the Common assists Lowell. Nevertheless, the bridge is much more like the common than Whitman’s ferry in its bivalent nature as a work of engineering and as a work of art—or, to put it another way, as fact and symbol—gives it a complexity akin to that of Lowell’s Common: it is already a practical structure and a meaningful space. The symbolic qualities may seem less visible at times, as when the bridge is merely a crossing for a car, but they are, as Alan Trachtenberg assures us, always there, especially in Crane’s portrayal. According to Trachtenberg, Crane “completed the passage of Brooklyn Bridge from fact to symbol.” And to this degree Crane was successful in developing the conceptual interior of the structure, making it capable of containing and sustaining the poem’s arguments. Trachtenberg holds that Crane “eliminated the bridge’s function” and argues that Crane “refused to—or could not—acknowledge the social reality of his symbol, its concrete relations to its culture,” suggesting that Crane goes too far. The “Cutty Sark” section of *The Bridge* would seem to contradict Trachtenberg, however, as there the bridge appears in its physical reality, as a specific span across a specific river, even if it does not recall the bridge’s own complicated history.<sup>13</sup> Crane’s most difficult work was to enforce the conceptual interior of a structure that would not become an official national monument for another thirty years, and in this work he succeeded, succeeding Whitman and forerunning Lowell.

The public space is furthermore desirable because even as its matrix stabilizes a poem’s imaginations in the architectural fabric of a city and provides a structure that will communicate argument to the experiencing citizens, the public space draws toward the poem as the public’s investment in the actual space appropriated by the poem. We can see that Lowell’s imaginative occupation of the Common managed to activate this sense of public investment on at least the occasion of its recitation, when the poem seemed to grab the city’s attention. William Doolittle reported in *The Boston Globe* that “As the poet read, even the steady blast of car horns on Boylston Street seemed to hush, and his words could be heard clearly all over the Public Garden. Cops, spring-dressed girls, and bearded youths walking on the street stopped to listen.”<sup>14</sup> Doolittle’s headline claimed “Poet on the Common Hushes Roar of the City.” Nora Taylor, writing in the *Christian Science Monitor*, characterized the poem as “a song of the city.”<sup>15</sup>

Alexis de Tocqueville explained in *Democracy in America* that in the United States public spirit is a result of national welfare being “confounded with the personal interests of the citizen” (I, 242). If this is true, then any statement that addresses national welfare also addresses the welfare of each individual citizen. As these poems address the spaces that articulate a sense of national identity and seek to gauge national welfare, they also

address individual citizens. So Whitman attends an actual physical space rather than an archetypal space like his open road or his city street. This is a particular ferry, the Brooklyn Ferry, meant to activate a particular sense of public investment and encourage the poem's readers to see the relationship between this ferry and the street and the "public assembly"<sup>16</sup> Following Whitman, Crane can reasonably expect the bridge to appeal to his readers' investment in national welfare and become the symbol of America's of "our constructive future."<sup>17</sup>

As recent debates over the World War II Memorial proposed for the National Mall—as well as the long process of selecting a design for the Ground Zero redevelopment in New York City—have shown the confusion of personal interest with national welfare is a strong factor, perhaps the strongest, in the life of public spaces. In each case, every party is well aware that architectural design will communicate value, which is why the arguments over the architecture, arrangement, and placement of elements are so heated. And, as the life of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington has shown, such heat doesn't quickly dissipate after the design-and-argument phase of a monument's construction is over. Rather, concern over design seems to become translated into an almost proprietary sense of ownership of the space. A poem that appropriates a public space may not be able to capture every reader's sense of investment, but if such a poem can engage a few citizens, their sense of ownership can motivate them to take the poem's claims seriously, so they can see whether they should embrace them or defend against them.

Clearly, the strength of this effect will exist in direct proportion to the stability of the space and its importance to communal life. In Whitman's imagination, the importance of the ferry is clear: it is what Ray Oldenberg calls a "third place," a liminal zone between work (the second place) and home (the first place) in which the interests of the citizen and the community can be coordinated.<sup>18</sup> Any of Whitman's potential readers might have felt this way when the poem was first written and published. But technological advance erases the ferry, undoes its stability, and thereby eliminates the sense of communal investment a reader could have had in the years between 1856, when "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" was first published as "Sun-Down Poem," and 1883, when the Brooklyn Bridge was opened, rendering the Brooklyn-Manhattan ferry lines unnecessary. Crane's desire to turn the Brooklyn Bridge into an emblem for his poem attempts to secure a stable arena that will amplify the poem's importance, but the complexity of the poem, the width of its constructive attention, may for some readers overwhelm the figure of the bridge, in which case the important sense of communal investment cannot quickly be transferred to the poem. Over the last several decades, this sense has gradually accrued to the poem and has fueled a critical rehabilitation of Crane, but it could not happen fast enough to keep Winters' and Tate's dismissive reviews from slowing The Bridge's rise to importance.<sup>19</sup> Lowell is much more successful than either Whitman or Crane at drawing the public's attention, likely in part because the Common's history as a public space is longer than either that of Whitman's ferry or Crane's bridge and because of the Common's spatial stability and coherence. In each case, the reporter imagines the city at large taking note, exercising its sense of ownership and self-interest.

Perhaps involvement of public ownership in public spaces makes the poetic appropriation of public spaces irresistible to the poet seeking to respond to his or her sense of public crisis. Whitman, Crane, and Lowell each attempt the poem of monument



as a response to crisis. Whitman, as Betsy Erkkila explains, writes “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” in response to his sense that the Union was dissolving: Whitman means his vision of the communal soul to answer the sense of national “fracture,” as Erkkila puts it.<sup>20</sup> Crane undertook *The Bridge* in response to the alarm raised by Waldo Frank in *Our America*, his declaration that America was “innerly depleted,” and in response to Van Wyck Brooks’s note that America was “in a state of arrested development, that it has lost, if indeed it has ever possessed, the principle of growth.”<sup>21</sup> The poem was to be Crane’s “synthesis,” his own “myth of America,” that would provide an internal strength that would in turn promote development and growth and answer the “poetry of negation” Crane lamented in Eliot.<sup>22</sup>

Lowell’s sense of crisis is articulated both in his *Village Voice* interview, in which he laments the “loss of the old Abolitionist spirit” and explains “For the Union Dead” as an attempt to re-ignite it, and by his then-wife Elizabeth Hardwick’s 1959 essay “Boston: A Lost Ideal,” in which she explains: “Boston—wrinkled, spindly-legged, depleted of nearly all her spiritual and cutaneous oils, provincial, self-esteeming—has gone on spending and spending her inflated bills of pure reputation, decade after decade. Now, one supposes it is all over at last.” “For the Union Dead” will pick up this argument against cultural inflation, presenting Boston with a more complete account of cost. When Lowell writes that “their monument/sticks like a fishbone in the city’s throat,” he may as well be declaring, as Hardwick did, that the city is exhausted under “the weight of the Boston legend, the tedium of its largely fraudulent posture of traditionalism.” Hardwick declared that Boston’s was “a culture that hasn’t been alive for a long time.”<sup>23</sup> Lowell names it, the union dead.

## INHERITANCE AND RESEMBLANCE

Lowell, as I have noted, was much more successful with the poem of monument than either Whitman or Crane. While “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” was one of the standout poems of the second edition of *Leaves of Grass*, catching the attention of Thoreau among others, the circulation of the second edition was not significant enough to achieve Whitman’s aims, and the third edition hadn’t even a year before the Civil War broke to do its work. The outbreak of war meant that, if “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” was intended to produce a vision of union to counter the disintegration of war, it could never be fully successful. *The Bridge*, as well, hadn’t long to do its work: Yvor Winters and Allen Tate published negative reviews within months of its publication, making serious consideration difficult for some time to come.<sup>24</sup> Two years later, Crane killed himself.

By contrast, Lowell’s poem was an immense success, both in the short and long terms. William Doolittle reported in the *Boston Globe* that Lowell’s recitation hushed the city. Paul Mariani writes that Lowell delivered his poem “to thunderous applause, the echoes of which Bishop told him she’d heard as far away as Brazil.”<sup>25</sup> It was so successful that it was included as “Colonel Shaw and the Massachusets 54<sup>th</sup>” in paperback reprintings of *Life Studies* between 1960 and the appearance of *For the Union Dead* in 1964.<sup>26</sup> It was also published in *The Atlantic Monthly* under its current title, so it was one of Lowell’s most widely circulated poems and became a key element in Lowell’s subsequent rise to literary super-stardom. Irwin Ehrenpreis wrote in “The Age of Lowell,” just prior to the

publication of *For the Union Dead*: “From a glance at Lowell’s most recent work, coming out in periodicals, one can prophecy that his next book will establish his name as that normally thought of for ‘the’ American poet.”<sup>27</sup> An unsigned review of *For the Union Dead* appearing in *Newsweek* 12 October 1964 provides more concrete measures of Lowell’s success: “...his new book, *For the Union Dead*, is an important literary event, and his publishers are understandably ‘astonished’ by an advance sale of 1,500 copies in just two days.”<sup>28</sup> Richard Poirer wrote in his review of the book for *Book Week* in October 1964 that “Robert Lowell is, by something like a critical consensus, the greatest American poet of the mid-century, probably the greatest poet now writing in English.”<sup>29</sup> And Thomas Parkinson noted in his *Salmagundi* review, “he has written a genuinely popular book—people who wouldn’t otherwise read poetry read it.”<sup>30</sup> Lowell was reaching the public.<sup>31</sup>

The signs of Lowell’s success were cultural as well as literary. Less than a year after reciting his poem on the Common, Lowell was in attendance at President Kennedy’s inauguration, and in May of 1962, Lowell was a guest at a White House dinner for French Minister of Culture André Malraux. According to Hamilton “Lowell...was fairly high on the list of those ‘artists and intellectuals’ whom the White House was anxious to flatter and impress.”<sup>32</sup> Beginning in June of 1962, Lowell toured South America for the Congress of Cultural Freedom, as a kind of cultural ambassador. In 1965, Lowell was again invited to the White House, this time by President Johnson who wanted to put on a Festival of the Arts. Though Lowell initially accepted, he soon changed his mind, declining the invitation in a public letter much like that he wrote to President Roosevelt in 1943. There he explained: “Although I am very enthusiastic about most of your domestic legislation and intentions, I nevertheless can only follow our present foreign policy with the greatest dismay and distrust.”<sup>33</sup> In August, Lowell addressed a crowd of student war protestors in Washington, D.C., and in November, he read at an anti-war benefit. A year later, in September 1967, according to Hamilton, “Lowell was one of three hundred and twenty signatories to a statement pledging ‘to raise funds to aid youths who resist the draft and the Vietnam War.’”<sup>34</sup> And with Noam Chomsky he participated in a draft-card burning at which Normal Mailer was arrested. Lowell quickly became a public figure and enjoyed a rich public life following the recitation and the subsequent book publication of “For the Union Dead.”

Lowell’s successes might seem inevitable, given his pedigree. His mother’s family was a *Mayflower* family. His father’s family was a second family. This marriage of bloodlines made Lowell’s immediate family a kind of state family. This helps explain why, though Lowell had done little to recommend himself as a poet or person of other note, his refusal to enter the draft in 1943 was reported by all the major newspapers, often as front-page news; as Hamilton writes, the *New York Times* carried the matter in a front-page story, the Bowling Green *Sentinel* reported it under the headline “Member of Famed Family Balks at Military Service” and the Providence *Journal* wrote “Lowell Scion Refuses to Fight.”<sup>35</sup> In these reports it is clear that Lowell’s pedigree accounts for the interest: his family’s fame, not his own, brought notice. Anything Lowell did was automatically public in some way because the Lowell family was American royalty. As Elizabeth Bishop later put it to Lowell:

I feel I could write in as much detail about my uncle Artie, say,—but what would be the significance? Nothing at all.... Whereas all you have to do is to put down the names! And the fact that it seems significant, illustrative, American etc. gives you, I think, the confidence you display about tackling any idea of theme, seriously, in both writing and conversation. In some ways you are the luckiest poet I know!<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps, as Bishop puts it, the public role was part of Lowell's inheritance.

But Lowell had been writing about his family—and about public history—since his beginnings as a poet, advertising his family's stature, but without the same effect. Lowell's great early poems, "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" and "At the Indian Killer's Grave," both engage his family history: "The Quaker Graveyard" is dedicated to Warren Winslow, Lowell's cousin who drowned at sea, while "At the Indian Killer's Grave" visits the headstone "Of John and Mary Winslow," maternal ancestors. Lowell advertises his pedigree throughout *Lord Weary's Castle* (1946), and not just in these poems: "In Memory of Arthur Winslow" and "Mary Winslow" elegeize members of his mother's family, and "Rebellion" provides a personal if brief account of the poet's confrontation of his father. But while the poems of *Lord Weary's Castle* mark Lowell's arrival as a poet, they do not situate Lowell in America's heart. Lowell won the Pulitzer Prize for his debut volume, but his fame was kept primarily by fellow poets. So a narrative of an American state family is clearly not enough to launch one into the public eye.

We could gather the same proof from *Life Studies*. Of Lowell's books, *Life Studies* is the one most occupied with his family history, both in the well-known lyrics, like "Commander Lowell" (about Lowell's father) or "Sailing Home from Rapallo" (concerning his mother's death), and in the prose memoir "91 Revere Street." It did not, like *Lord Weary's Castle*, win the Pulitzer (though it drew both the 1959 National Book Award and the Guinness Poetry Award). It was widely read and well-received and likely brought the commission of "For the Union Dead" for the 1960 Boston Arts Festival. But it is after this later poem is written, recited, and published that Lowell's achievement becomes a matter of public record, extending into national politics. The poems of *Life Studies* detail Lowell's occupation with history through his family. "For the Union Dead" brings that occupation to a wider audience. Still, "For the Union Dead" is concerned with family: Lowell was related to Colonel Shaw through marriage, and his great uncle, James Russell Lowell had previously elegeized Shaw in "Memoriae Positum, R.G.Shaw" (1871). But in "For the Union Dead," Lowell's attention to Shaw is not attention to a kinsman but rather attention to a public figure. The poem avoids personal touches as if to preserve this sense of Shaw's publicity, making the poem's matter available to those who don't know Lowell's genealogy.

This makes "For the Union Dead" a fine complement to the poems of *Life Studies*, at the end of which it quickly found a home under its original title, following the Boston Arts Festival. But as much as "For the Union Dead" complements the personal and family lyrics of *Life Studies*, the poem demands its own space, so it becomes the title poem of Lowell's subsequent collection, a book that drew more positive reviews and more popular attention than any of Lowell's previous books, as a glance through Jonathan Price's *Critics on Robert Lowell* or through Thomas Parkinson's *Robert Lowell*:

*A Collection of Critical Essays* will show. Pedigree, while it may make Lowell quite visible, and while it may assist his rise to a position in which he can become a candidate for a Boston Arts Festival commission, cannot alone recommend Lowell to the national consciousness. Pedigree is potential energy Lowell must activate to become the poet of his age. Lowell must, to accede to cultural authority, harness and shape the public's attention to itself as well as its attention to him. He has to hush the city so it will listen to his "song of the city." Only thus can he become an adjunct to the public consciousness. If familial pedigree guarantees little, literary pedigree would still be important. It would make more sense, in some ways, for "For the Union Dead" to resemble his James Russell Lowell's "Memoriae Positum: R.G.Shaw." Family relationship might nominate "Memoriae Positum" as an appropriate model both because James Russell Lowell was Robert Lowell's great uncle and because "Memoriae Positum" is concerned, as "For the Union Dead," with Robert Gould Shaw, commander of the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup>, a relation of both Lowells. Furthermore, James Russell Lowell's explanation of his hope for the poem—"I wanted the poem a little *monumental*"—would recommend it as a text with something to say about the memorial and monumental turns with which "For the Union Dead" is concerned and which it seeks to appropriate. But "For the Union Dead" and "Memoriae Positum" have almost nothing in common besides their common interest in Shaw and the blood relation of the authors. "Memoriae Positum," however it strives to become "monumental" makes none of the moves Whitman, Crane, or Lowell make: there is hardly a recognizable, actual space in the poem. Though it begins "Beneath the trees" (1) a somewhat common setting for a funeral poem, this vague and archetypal landscape is quickly converted into a symbolic one in which all that is physical becomes abstracted.<sup>37</sup> Though "the autumnal breeze" at first makes "the dry leaves to sigh for gladness gone," reminding a reader of the arboreal setting, these trees and their leaves and even the wind quickly give way to symbolic forces as "Time's grim feet rustl[e]" through the withered grave/Of many a spreading realm and strong-stemmed race": arbor becomes "realm," wind becomes "time," as the poem pushes toward abstraction (4–5, 8–9). Later, the poem proves again its preference for the abstract landscape over the actual one as it describes the death of Shaw; after depicting Shaw's charge "On the red rampart's slippery swell," the poem turns to consider his ascent of the much less real "battalious steeps of praise" (52, 59). Over and over again, James Russell Lowell situates his memorial in an abstract, conceptual landscape that actually effaces any physical space. This is perhaps appropriate in some way, since Shaw was buried in a common grave in South Carolina, where Shaw's mourners cannot visit: as there is no grave, perhaps the poem should register its absence with an absence of scene. In any case, "Memoriae Positum" provides no model whatsoever, no precedent, save in its concern with Shaw, for Robert Lowell's "For the Union Dead," which is by contrast much more scenic, much more concerned with space and with situating the conceptual schema in a real, physical landscape.

One might also expect to find some kinship between "For the Union Dead" and William Vaughn Moody's "An Ode in Time of Hesitation," the first American poem to write of the St. Gaudens relief on the Boston Common. Certainly, "For the Union Dead" has more in common with this public, politically motivated ode than with "Memoriae Positum." But in the end, "For the Union Dead" has more in common with "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and *The Bridge*, for while Moody's poem is concerned with the relief, it

is not so much concerned with its architectural features or its situation on the Common as it is concerned with the import of the depiction. Moody begins “Before the solemn bronze Saint Gaudens made/To thrill the heedless passers heart with awe” (1–2), evoking the relief very clearly.<sup>38</sup> Moody stays with relief much longer than James Russell Lowell stays in any landscape—till the poem’s sixteenth line. But, like James Russell Lowell, Moody’s interest lies not with a stable, meditative attention to a single scene. The wind, appearing in the twenty-third line does not bring the world in to Moody; it provides him with a means of blowing out of the Common, for a grand tour of the North American continent that occupies the better part of the following sixty lines. Moody returns to the relief, declaring Shaw the republic’s “witness,” “her perfect son” (92). But again, his purpose is not to return to this landscape, for just as quickly as his mind flew the Common in the poem’s second section, Moody turns in the sixth to South Carolina, to a re-imagination of the charge on Fort Wagner. It appears, even though Moody will reference the relief one more time (in lines 140–143), the real purpose of the relief is to allow Moody, from his station in Boston, to consecrate the beaches of the world with American blood—starting with the beach in South Carolina, then turning to the beaches of Cuba and the Philippines implicated in the Spanish-American War, which provides the occasion for the poem—for nothing of the relief, nothing of Shaw, nothing of Boston itself appear in the poem’s final eighty lines. Much like James Russell Lowell’s poem, Moody’s poem uses a landscape as a trigger, a point of departure for the abstract realms of thought. We see something of a coordination of conceptual landscapes as Moody argues that America’s battles have all been in defense of liberty, as it considers South Carolina, Cuba, and the Philippines together, but Moody, unlike Lowell or Crane and Whitman, does not seek to anchor this coordination in a specific locale. And to the degree that Moody’s comparison of recent American wars compresses time, it does not seek to actually confuse these events into a single everlasting present such as we find in Whitman’s or Crane’s imaginations and even in Robert Lowell’s somewhat uneasy imagination of the Common.

If Moody’s poem might be proposed as a poetic progenitor to “For the Union Dead,” so might John Berryman’s “Boston Common.” In fact, given the close personal relationship between Robert Lowell and Berryman, “Boston Common” might make a better candidate than either of Moody’s or James Russell Lowell’s poem. However, though we find in Berryman a more extensive attention to the relief and to the Common than we find in Moody’s poem or James Russell Lowell’s poem, we still do not have in “Boston Common” a poem that is as concerned with space as is “For the Union Dead.” The subtitle of Berryman’s poem, “A Meditation upon The Hero,” indicates the poem’s focus, its matter: it is not the relief as sculpture or as an element in a public space with which the poem is concerned; it is instead the figure of the hero, found in Shaw, and considered in relation to “the casual man,” the homeless man who sleeps below the relief in this poem. The question the poem asks is not a question about the society that holds the Common, but about the capacity of each man in the society. Berryman wonders:

...may be this man  
Before he came here, or he comes to die,  
Blazing with force or fortitude

Superb of civil soul may stand or may  
 After young Shaw within that crucible have stood.<sup>39</sup>

Despite the vision of the Common falling “Famous and dark, away” or the “marble frame” of the relief, Berryman’s poem is just as prone to fly into the abstract space of consideration, in which he hopes to find some answer to his question, as are James Russell Lowell and William Vaughn Moody (11–12). In none of these poems is the poet’s attention focused as firmly on the space as in “For the Union Dead.”

Allen Tate’s “Ode to the Confederate Dead,” which provides a model for Lowell’s title, might make the best candidate for a model, not only because Lowell’s title directly answers Tate’s but also because Tate was one of Lowell’s early supporters and teachers.<sup>40</sup> The way Tate’s poem treats space is closer to the method Lowell uses in “For the Union Dead” than the methods in J.R. Lowell’s, Moody’s, or Berryman’s poem. The action of “Ode to the Confederate Dead” is largely confined to a cemetery. Tate’s narrator occasionally turns his attention to sites outside the cemetery walls—as when it considers “Shiloh, Antietam, Malvern Hill, Bull Run” (48)—but it always returns to the cemetery.<sup>41</sup> And the point of Tate’s poem, much like that of Lowell’s, is to confine everything, including the consciousness of the speaker, to the grave space of the cemetery. The solipsistic image of the “jaguar leap[ing]/For his own image in a jungle pool” (82–83) is Tate’s figure for the Confederate mourner, whose action kills him, kills her. The “Sentinel of the grave who counts us all” (92) unites all whom the poem imagines, explicitly or implicitly, in the great death of the political Confederacy, creating a second confederacy of the dead. Lowell adopts this very turn in his poem, seeking to situate his readers in the grave Common, to bury them all in its wound, to create a union of the dead as a way of imagining the utter vacuity of a union based on enslavement of one sort or another.

But Tate’s poem, unlike Lowell’s or Crane’s or Whitman’s, locates its work in an archetypal cemetery, an abstract cemetery, not a specific, real, public space, and this difference of situation equates to a difference of effect. Tate’s archetypal approach could make his poem more universally applicable: perhaps it could happen in any cemetery, in any town. But the archetypal approach could just as easily lead the poem’s efforts into an abstract space similar to the nowhere we find in “*Memoriae Positum*.” Tate, I believe, understands this; I believe Tate chooses the abstract cemetery for a purpose, to create a sense of a private suffering that is supposed to be everywhere but may as well be nowhere, in some space seceded from the rest of the world. This, Tate seems to say, is the condition of the Southern mourner for the old Lost Cause. Many of his other poems—such as “Aeneas at Washington”—show Tate not only capable of capturing a specific landscape, but also mindful of the positive effects of such renderings. In his “Ode to the Confederate Dead,” Tate has vacated specific landscapes for a distinct purpose. Just so, Lowell occupies a very specific landscape (and, by comparison, in an almost aggressive fashion) for a particular purpose: so his poem will find its specific community and will force them to reckon with their common history in a very public way.

Not only does “For the Union Dead” follow, in its treatment of space, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” and *The Bridge* much more closely than any of these poems of Lowell’s more immediate literary ancestry, it follows Whitman’s and Crane’s models more closely

than the models of any of his own early poems. “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket” and “At the Indian Killer’s Grave,” both from *Lord Weary’s Castle*, make fine ancestors for “For the Union Dead” as each situates its speaker in a graveyard, a physical memory site like the Common, in order to comment upon the culture at large. One might turn, as Michael Thurston does in his article “Robert Lowell’s Monumental Vision,” to discuss those early poems that involve statuary, such as “Christmas Eve Under Hooker’s Statue” from *Lord Weary’s Castle* or “Inauguration Day, 1953” from *Life Studies*. But while these statues are “monuments” in a conventional sense, they do not—at least not in the imaginations these poems present—perform the work of monument. Neither of these poems details enough space either to concentrate time or to coordinate a cognitive landscape with a physical one; in each case the landscape about the statue is erased by snow, placing the statues in an almost abstract realm, divorced from the social world about them, except in the associative consciousness of the poet. The statues and tombs with which these poems are concerned do evoke a history with which each poem struggles. But each of these poems seems to use the statue as a prompt or an occasion, and not as a device or form, for concentrating time in space or coordinating disparate landscapes: each of these poems makes its point fairly clearly. By contrast, “The Quaker Graveyard” and “At the Indian Killer’s Grave” seek to inhabit spaces; though the method is ultimately different from that we find in “For the Union Dead,” the impulse is the same.

“The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket,” like “For the Union Dead,” begins not in the poem’s central space. It opens at sea, “off Madaket,” where the body of Warren Winslow, Lowell’s cousin, was recovered and buried (1).<sup>42</sup> We arrive at the graveyard only in the conclusion of the poem’s second section. The progress of the poem suggests Lowell’s attempt to lay his cousin to rest on land, among the graves of other sailors who died in wars at sea, most notably the Quakers who famously plied the Nantucket whale trade. But Lowell turns to the Quaker graveyard not simply because it is a resting place for sailors. More importantly the site helps Lowell revisit Melville’s damnation of the Quaker hypocrisy, opposed to bloodshed except in the whale trade. Lowell seeks to extend the terms of Melville’s argument to further the criticism of United States policy first articulated in his letter to President Roosevelt. He asks his drowned cousin, “can you hear/The Pequod’s sea wings, beating landward” (30–31), to suggest that the ship from which his cousin was lost, like the Pequod, was asea for vengeance, and that his cousin’s death was largely pointless, part of the cost of a maniacal campaign, as pointless as the loss of the Pequod’s crew for the sake of Ahab’s satisfaction. This graveyard, like the Common in “For the Union Dead,” is not simply a spatial arrangement: its peculiar use has given it a particular meaning. Lowell is most interested in this meaning, much more so than in the appearance or arrangement of the graveyard. The site is, like the Common, bivalent, both architectural and conceptual. But, as Lowell must read out the history that produces the graveyard in order to produce the terms by which he will prosecute his argument with United States war policy, he turns quickly from visual details to the history that surrounds the site.

Perhaps this interest in the site’s history, or in the argument this history will enable, motivates the poem’s wandering from the graveyard in its fifth and sixth sections, into an abstract of whaling and the spiritual conflict therein, and, in a spiritual aside, to the shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk, England. The poem returns in its final section to

the Quaker graveyard, but it seems uninterested in re-establishing the graveyard scene, preferring instead to drift again out to sea, as if to round out the poem's career. In a few moments, the speaker re-orient himself by "the cenotaph" and, near the end, locates himself "Here in Nantucket" (128, 139). But much of the poem's concluding section is concerned with elements contiguous to the graveyard but not clearly a part of it, turning, for example, to speak to the ocean itself: "Atlantic: you are fouled with the blue sailors,/Sea-monsters, upward angel, downward fish" (133–134). The poem returns to "Nantucket" but immediately turns its attention outward, considering the "blue-lung'd combers" who "lumbered to the kill" in the ocean above which "The Lord survives the rainbow of His will" (142–143). Though the poem's title announces a preoccupation with a particular space, in "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" Lowell seems much more interested in the history *around the* site than in the history *within* the site or on the site itself. Here, Lowell uses space as a prompt rather than as a form for his argument.

"At the Indian Killer's Grave" is more tightly focused on its title space than "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket." This poem occupies the graveyard of King's Chapel, an Anglican church in Boston, turning occasionally down to note the subway or looking out toward the Common and the Statehouse, but always from a position within the graveyard.<sup>43</sup> Compared to "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket," "At the Indian Killer's Grave" is much more conscious of the specific character of its site, referring every few lines to some other element of the graveyard—headstone, a railing, a mausoleum. "At the Indian Killer's Grave" is just as interested in history, but it accesses this history through a more intimate dialogue with the scene. In the arrangement of the graveyard, the dark stones, the subway underneath, and the view of the Statehouse now controlled by "strangers," Lowell finds history's judgment on his ancestors, John and Mary Winslow: their graves are rattled, all they worked for is given to others, and they will have to stand the ultimate judgment (to "face Jehovah's buffets and his ends") in the battle of Armageddon at Jehoshaphat for what they—through their progeny—did to the Wampanoags in King Philip's War. Lowell even hears King Philip declare "The Judgment is at hand" and explain that their "election," the favor of God they had assumed, now "Flutters and claws in the dead hand of time" (47, 53, 56). The poem is no macabre exercise in moral superiority. Lowell attempts, it seems, to assay the worth of the culture that has descended from the Winslows and the other colonists victorious in King Philip's war. He even assays the worth of the progenitor:

I ponder on the railing at this park:  
 Who was the man who sowed the dragon's teeth,  
 That fabulous or fancied patriarch  
 Who sowed so ill for his descent, beneath  
 King's Chapel in this underworld and dark? (72–77)

Lowell implicates himself in speaking of Winslow's "descent"—suggesting both Winslow's damnation to hell and Lowell's own dark inheritance. And this turn ultimately gives the poem a personal feeling that keeps the poem's implications from turning out to



Boston at large. Lowell's considerations are gated and fenced in the graveyard where his ancestors lie.

As a poem that maintains a faithful attention to a particular space in order to argue with the history that makes that space significant, the history this space witnesses and evokes, "At the Indian Killer's Grave" resembles "For the Union Dead" much more than "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket" or "Memoriae Positum: R.G.Shaw" or "An Ode in Time of Hesitation" or "Boston Common" or "Ode to the Confederate Dead." Like "For the Union Dead," it seeks to unsettle commonplace notions about the space, here tracing the shadow of the ultimate judgment on graves. But unlike "For the Union Dead," and unlike either "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" or *The Bridge*, this poem dwells in a space that is, if not exactly private, not public either. This space does not provide any mechanism by which the judgment the poem visits on the dead may be communicated out into the city or the polity, transforming the private consideration into a public matter.

Here, as in "The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket," Lowell is experimenting with the amplifying capacities of a space, but here he relies on history more than on space to amplify the poem's matter. The real turn of "For the Union Dead," like the turns of Whitman's and Crane's poems, will be a new reliance on the space—on its arrangement, its situation, and its practical, historical, and cultural significance—to communicate argument, to get in the way. In these early poems from *Lord Weary's Castle*, Lowell is already inching toward the great revelation that will make "For the Union Dead" his most powerful work, but he hasn't yet had the enabling revelation.

### IN KIND: MODE AND EVOLUTION

It would seem that, since Lowell's breakthrough resembles the work of Whitman and of Crane, Lowell would have drawn his method from theirs. But given the resemblance between "For the Union Dead" and "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" and *The Bridge*, there is absolutely nothing to suggest that Lowell follows either Crane or Whitman directly. Crane explicitly indicates his debt to Whitman, both in the direct prayer of "Cape Hatteras" and in the sly allusions of "To Brooklyn Bridge." Lowell, on the other hand, repeats the work of Crane and of Whitman, but makes no show of debt. Lowell was an admirer of Crane, as would be clear at least from his "Words for Hart Crane," which appears in the *Life Studies* section devoted to Lowell's literary heroes, including George Santayana and Ford Maddox Ford. Lowell stated his admiration for Crane several times, most notably in his 1961 interview with Frederick Seidel, where he declares: "I think Crane is the great poet of that generation."<sup>44</sup> Paul Mariani expands this account, noting that Crane was one of Lowell's "early masters," to whom he pays homage when, teaching in the Salzburg Seminar for American Civilization in 1952, he gave "an off-the-cuff lecture on Hart Crane to an audience of students from a dozen countries, ...quoting from a half a dozen of Crane's poems, while making...unexpected and brilliant observations," an event that shows the continuing importance of Crane in Lowell's literary memory.<sup>45</sup>

Still, Lowell offers few indications of particular debts; unlike Crane's careful indications and invocations of Whitman's Brooklyn Ferry in *The Bridge*, Lowell nowhere alludes to particular Crane works. One might fruitfully compare Lowell's construction of a common grave in "For the Union Dead" with Crane's own collective burial in "Quaker

Hill.” Just as Crane sees in the New England week-enders “death’s stare in slow survey/From four horizons that no one relates” (27–28), so Lowell finds his fellow Bostonians “the Union Dead”—a hollowness he figures in various bubble imagery reminiscent of Crane’s hollowed-out table and vacant hostelry. But if Lowell’s conversion of Common into grave seems to have more in common with Crane’s conversion of Quaker Hill into a necropolis than it does with Tate’s “Ode to the Confederate Dead,” there is nothing to suggest that Lowell consciously extends or responds to Crane’s work. Just as there is nothing to suggest that Lowell responds directly to Whitman.

The only thing that suggests any kinship between “For the Union Dead” and “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” and *The Bridge* is the fact that all three poems occupy a recognizable public space by describing and reconstituting the space in imagination before reshaping the meaning of the space by re-arranging its conceptual architecture. All three poems seem to subordinate their readings of the space to their descriptions of it, as if the architectural forms of the space were the poem’s primary textual forms, and thus encourage readers to see the poem as contained by the space. All three poems deliberately occupy and restructure public spaces in order to get in the way, to become unavoidable. And yet, though each poet seems to perform these operations deliberately, though each poem clearly seeks to capitalize on the potential power of the public space, only one—Crane—consciously extends the work of his predecessor. Whitman, though perhaps extending the greater Romantic lyrics of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats, exceeded the scope of his models when he situated his meditation in an American public space. And Lowell, apparently independent of Whitman and Crane, has in the great poem of his career, repeated their work.

Is it possible that Lowell’s poem, despite its almost perfect resemblance to Whitman’s and Crane’s in its treatment and use of space, derives its curriculum from other sources? Could Lowell, like Whitman, have drawn the method of his argument not from another poem, but from a cultural source? And, if so, does a parallel evolution reduce the significance of the similarity between these poems and render any relation between them purely accidental?

Whitman, as I argued in the second chapter, seems to adapt his treatment of the ferry from the liturgy of monumental dedication so prevalent in early nineteenth-century America it could not have been avoided. The sense of common movement so important to Whitman’s vision in “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” could be derived from the procession so common to dedicatory ceremonies, but much more important are the methods for dedicating the space. As Webster does, Whitman describes the space to be dedicated, at first in purely visual terms. Whitman, like Webster, then in terms that recall and even reactivate the history that has transpired in the space. Unlike Webster, Whitman is situating his historical recovery in his future, in his readers’ present, but the logical moves are the same: Whitman renders the past in a historical present that allows history to be recovered to the present and welded with it. In the end, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” seeks to accomplish, and accomplishes, all the things Webster sought to accomplish in his 1825 dedicatory speech: it seeks to concentrate time in space, to claim a set of architectural forms that will visually delineate the concentrating space, to dedicate this concentrating space to the coordination of citizens’ cognitive landscapes with reference to a stable point in the physical landscape they share and thereby to promote and

strengthen a sense of communal experience and communal interest. As Webster dedicates a monument undertaken to combat the gradual decay of public memory of the Revolution in the 1820s, in response to a real crisis of national identity, Whitman undertakes to create his monument in response to the crisis of union that would result in the Civil War.

Lowell, unlike Whitman, grew up in an America where the liturgy of the monumental dedication was no longer special: it was still practiced, but it was nothing to note, so there are no accounts of Lowell having a life-changing experience at a dedicatory ceremony. Still, Lowell would have known some of the products of the dedicatory culture of the nineteenth century. The Beacon Hill neighborhood of his youth was less than two miles from the Bunker Hill Memorial, and less than a half-mile from the Common and the Statehouse that show up in “At the Indian Killer’s Grave,” nearly fifteen years before Lowell writes “For the Union Dead.” His early poems show Lowell to have a keen sense of the bivalence of dedicated space, the combination of architecture and argument Webster instituted in his dedications, the combination Whitman strove to instate in his ferry. In “The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket” or “Christmas Eve Under Hooker’s Statue” for example, Lowell situates his speaker in a space whose arguments will enable the poem’s arguments even if the poem never directly engages the spatial system. Lowell is, on some level, aware of the nature of dedicated space that will provide the method for “For the Union Dead,” even if he is not yet fully harnessing that nature.

The dedicated spaces of Boston—not the orations of Webster, not the poems of Whitman and Crane—instruct Lowell. Though in the poems of *Lord Weary’s Castle* Lowell does not engage sites in spatial terms as Whitman and Crane embraced the physical arrangements of the spaces they sought to dominate, Lowell knows all he needs to know in order to harness the spatial architecture of the Common to his purpose in “For the Union Dead.” Lowell’s opportunity to read at the 1960 Boston Arts Festival may have recommended the Common to his attention more than ever before. His knowledge that he would be able to speak while physically in the space may have spurred him to reconsider the relationship between argument and space, may have driven him to embrace and wield the relationship encoded in the Common itself. It is possible that the Common itself suggests the method that makes the poem work as much as anything else, just as it is possible that in Whitman’s case, the ferry suggests the course of argument, even if the dedicatory liturgies provide the tropes.

Lowell and Whitman, independent of one another, work to assemble a new literary mode. In *Kinds of Literature*, Alistair Fowler explains that a genre often combines “formal” and “substantive” features, noting Austin Warren’s counsel that “generic grouping should be based ‘upon both outer form (specific metre or structure) and...upon inner form (attitude, tone purpose—more crudely, subject and audience).’”<sup>46</sup> A mode, as opposed to a genre or a subgenre, according to Fowler “is a selection or abstraction from kind. It has few if any external rules, but evokes a historical kind through samples of its internal repertoire.”<sup>47</sup> This is to say that a mode has few (and perhaps no) externally, historically enforced formal features; it is defined not by what it looks like but by what it does, by its *internal* repertoire. Whitman and Lowell draw into their poems—which belong to different subgenres, Whitman’s perhaps a late example of the greater Romantic lyric, Lowell’s a kind of funerary ode—the repertoire of monumental dedication visible in the epideictic oratory of Daniel Webster or evidenced by the structure of the cultural meaning of a dedicated space like the Boston Common. In Fowler’s terms, Whitman and

Lowell “draw on [an] extraliterary genre”—the monumental dedication—to assemble the repertoire of this mode. Since they draw on the same “extraliterary genre” for their argumentative and imaginative repertoire, the resulting poems are much the same in terms of their approaches to space.

Lowell does not have to draw on Whitman in order to accomplish the same thing, though the nearly exact repetition of Whitman’s work in Lowell’s poem encourages us to imagine these poems as poems of the same kind. To crib Fowler again, the similarity of repertoire “evokes a historical kind”—even, I would add, if the historical kind does not exist, even if the mode is not, per se, a “selection or abstraction from kind,” but rather the implied categorical form of the internal repertoire. This repertoire could be imported into any poetic subgenre, deployed in a mutant greater Romantic lyric like “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” a modernist “epic” like *The Bridge*, or a funerary ode like “For the Union Dead”—in which cases the internal repertoire seems to suggest a deeper, generic kinship between poems that are clearly of different kinds. And while no poet is required to respond to or draw from any other poet’s work in order to assemble the same argumentative and imaginative repertoire for his monumental poem, the more often this repertoire is deployed (whether in response to a predecessor’s poem or as the result of independent development), the more real the implied type or kind seems. In these cases, modes may not be “selections or abstractions from kind” but rather gestures towards a new kind or toward some categorical imagination of these poems’ similarities.

### THE MODAL REPERTOIRE

Such a kind would include the following elements of the monumental mode’s internal repertoire:

*The monumental poem must not merely reference or indicate a space; it must describe this space.* The poem has to reconstruct the space in its own imagination, and thereby in the reader’s imagination, so it can be imaginatively occupied. To put it another way, the poem has to become conscious of the space in three dimensions so the reader will become conscious of the space and will begin to reconstruct it in imagination. So Whitman imagines the ferry in the long catalogue of his poem’s third section, piecing together all the elements of the space as it would be experienced by his readers. Crane details not only the Brooklyn Bridge itself—in the proem, in “Cutty Sark,” and finally in “Atlantis”—he describes the various North American locales he means to fuse into the bridge to produce a more expansive sense of the bridge’s space. Lowell painstakingly imagines the Common in a particular moment, the garage excavation gaping in the Common, the St. Gaudens relief propped up, and Lowell pressed against the fence so as to evoke his experience of the vanished aquarium. In each case, we are invited to view and inhabit the author’s imagination of a space and to imagine ourselves in this space, surrounded by it.

*The space described must be actual and capable of public occupation.* This is to say, this space must not only be capable of being occupied by large numbers of people, but must also appeal to a sense of public, civic ownership. A beach, for example, or a field could accommodate a large number of people, but there is nothing about a beach or a field that necessarily appeals to a democratic sense of civic ownership. Perhaps the beach

at Kitty Hawk could evoke this sense, if it occasions a remembrance of the Wright Brothers' flight and our recognition that our lives depend from that history in some important way. Still, there is little, visually, about the beach at Kitty Hawk that will announce the significance of the place to the person who simply views a photograph. A photograph of a city square, on the other hand, immediately suggests someone's civic investment, because the order of the architecture announces the effort required to institute it and suggests an articulation of value concomitant with the articulation of material and space.

*The poem must, in its description, concentrate time in this public space.* This is to say, it must perform an articulation of time—whether this time enters as history or personal memory or something of both—that will also be an articulation of value (a compounding of importance) that will highlight and complement the articulation of space. This is, perhaps, one of the ways the poet makes this re-imagined space seem especially deserving of a reader's attention. Whitman, of course, imagines the ferry as a space that is always imbued with history, if only the history of his experiences on the ferry. Crane concentrates into the space of the Brooklyn Bridge over four hundred years of exploratory history, recommending the bridge as a site for the contemplation of the singular efforts that made America. Lowell, much more like Whitman, draws on the local history of the space, recalling its use over a much smaller period of time, but to the same effect: like Whitman and Crane, Lowell seeks to make the past present and convert the physical space into a framework for the preservation of an enormous historical moment.

Public spaces seem to conduce this condensation, probably because they already condense time in space as they record in their forms and their persistence the history of their making. And as this history is often public history, the poet's appropriation of an actual public space brings public history into the poem, facilitating the poet's efforts to concentrate time in space in a way that will be meaningful for readers. We see this most clearly in "For the Union Dead," wherein the Common itself seems to recall the civic history with which the poem struggles. In *The Bridge*, we do not see the history of the Brooklyn Bridge, certainly nothing of its construction and very little of its daily use, except insofar as Crane treats American history as the construction of the bridge: Crane tropes the concentrative powers of the monumental site in order to condense his historical episodes into a history of the bridge. Whitman, though not harnessing a publicly-owned civic-oriented site, does engage a site where cycle and repetition enable temporal condensation and allow him to treat the ferry as a kind of monument: like Crane after him, Whitman seems to trope the condensing powers of a stable site in order to declare a monument in the ferry.

*The poem must use this public space to coordinate the cognitive landscapes of its readers.* As these poems concentrate times, they articulate what may seem like very different spaces, the spaces of then with the spaces of now. But more importantly, as these poems provide the visual detail by which the space is to be known, however familiar, in the course of the poem, they encourage an identical imagination of the space in the minds of all readers, thus converting individual experiences into something more communal. These poems encourage symmetry of knowledge and experience in the minds of all readers to be reinforced by the physical and more temporally resistant details of the actual space. In some cases—as in *The Bridge* and "For the Union Dead"—the poem can even coordinate congruent experiences of disparate spaces, combining those experiences

into the experience or ken of the poem's central space, thus declaring the physical space a kind of axis.

Again, an actual public space enables this best, since readers are likely to encounter such a space on a repeated basis and be reminded by the space of the poem's coordinative work: in other words, the public space will become, for the reader, a reminder of the poem's arguments, and the physical space will recall (and possibly amplify) the poem's conception, coordinating the cognitive landscapes of all readers with reference to both the actual public space and the poem itself.

*The poem must—as it describes the public space, concentrates time in space, and coordinates individual cognitive landscapes—alter the conceptual dimension of this public space.* The description of the space, which will be selective rather than exhaustive, the concentration of time in space, which will also be selective rather than exhaustive, and the coordination of individual cognitive landscapes will all argue for a certain view and use of the space the poem appropriates. The poem's imagination of the space will propose new uses for, and new interpretations of, this space, or it will slightly alter the typical view of this space by emphasizing certain aspects and neglecting others.

Again, the actual public space is most easily addressed in this manner, because it already contains a conceptual dimension, which most persons will be aware of even if ignorant of its content. The actual public space of a monument is already not just the physical arrangement of architectural forms, but also, in Henri Lefebvre's terminology, a representational space, a system of signs or meanings that "overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects."<sup>48</sup> The poet need not create a conceptual dimension for the public space; the poet needs only to alter it. As the language of a public space is architectural, volumetric and spatial rather than discursive, and because the architectural language always needs to be translated into the discursive in order to participate in public debate, the poet can pose his or her reformulations as acts of reading or translation. And as long as the "translation" does not fail to account for every term in the architectural system or directly antagonize a widely accepted value, the reformulation will seem like a translation, a reading readers have no reason to distrust.

The poem that performs this repertoire will itself become a kind of monument. As each poet describes a space in which to concentrate time, he dedicates that space to the temporal work of monument. But as each poet redefines the conceptual dimension of the (ostensibly) actual space, the poem becomes dedicated to this redefinition and itself becomes a conceptual space in which re-evaluation occurs—approximating and nearly becoming the conceptual dimension of the actual physical spaces, part and parcel of them. Perhaps this is why we find two features of an external repertoire that confirm the function of this monumental mode.

In the cases of Whitman, Crane, and Lowell, *the monumental mode is deployed in response to a sense of cultural crisis*. Each poet seems to believe that the crisis can be answered, resolved, or furthered fruitfully as the poem's imagined space coordinates the cognitive landscapes of those who participate in the crisis. Whitman, as Betsy Erkkila argues, believed that "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry"—and the 1856 and 1860 editions of *Leaves of Grass* in which it first appeared—would engage the crisis of union and provide the means by which re-integration could occur.<sup>49</sup> Crane believed that the figure of the bridge would integrate the disparate energies of America and answer and combat, with a new integration, Eliot's vision of cultural decay. Lowell seemed to believe that "For the

Union Dead” could confront Boston with the fact of its hypocritical stance toward the men of the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> and its betrayal of its own Abolitionist history with facts seemingly unrecognized, or at least unadvertised, for nearly a century; his “song of the city,” though critical, seems to harbor a hope that things could change even as it strives to change the architecture of the Common.

*And each poet believes the monumental poem will be a significant work.* As Betsy Erkkila argues, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” in its first appearance as “Sun-Down Poem” in the 1856 *Leaves of Grass* marks the beginning of Whitman’s turn to face the problem of social union more directly. As Erkkila puts it, Whitman seeks to assert “social unity through democratic interaction” and to propose his “well-join’d scheme” as a scheme for integrative experience that might ultimately save the union, published in a volume that, from the Emerson blurb embossed on the spine to the proposed embodiment of the thirty-two United States in the volume’s thirty two poems made very overt gestures toward the American public at large. Crane hoped *The Bridge* would finally articulate the myth of America. Even when he was doubtful that the poem would be a successful articulation, he still felt it would be “a huge failure,” one of magnificent proportions.<sup>50</sup> Lowell, whatever he felt during the composition of the poem, describes “For the Union Dead” as a poem with great cultural power and importance when he calls it an “Abolitionist poem.”

We may note some differences in the way each poet performs this repertoire or see some differences in the effects of their various approaches. Lowell, for example, reconfigures the space by grafting others into it, just as Crane collapses congruent spaces into one another. But unlike Crane, Lowell uses local materials, grafting into the Common proximate spaces, not locales as far flung as Teneriffe and Indiana. Lowell’s geographic focus is more like Whitman’s, which may explain why Lowell’s poem has a severer power on the imagination than Crane’s. But if such differences may indicate the special felicities of certain approaches, they do nothing to compromise the similarities, the model kinships, between these poems. In fact, the differences may throw the modal features of these poems into greater relief, actually highlighting the similarities.

Just so, Lowell’s apparent independence from Whitman and Crane actually strengthens this mode and makes a potentially more important and powerful tool. As Lowell constructed the mode on his own, drawing from the same cultural fount to which Whitman bent, the mode is more seriously an application of dedicatory rhetoric and architecture in each case rather than a generic response of one poet to another poet. The mode actually seems to encode an engagement with the poet’s culture through space, but, most important for the poem, encourages a poet to respond directly to the space itself. Thus, the independent repetition of this mode in “For the Union Dead” suggests that this repertoire is not a set of codes that prosecute a conversation between poets but rather a development of a civic vocabulary of public memory and monumental architecture and a strong addition to the poetic language of American poets, capable of wide application.

Perhaps this mode’s tendency toward individual interaction with a space rather than toward generic continuity will be seen as a kind of anti-monumentalism, if one views the genre as a kind of poetic monument, a concentration of discrete temporal practices in the abstract figure of the type or kind. But insofar as the monumental mode’s insistence on attention to space over attention to generic continuity allows the physical space re-located in the poem’s imagination to become paramount, even more important than the poem’s

visible structure, the mode actually enables a new kind of monumentalism in literature, something more apt to engage culture, to get in the way and make poetry matter.





## Chapter Five

# In Lowell's Wake, In Lowell's Way: The Monumental Mode in the Late Twentieth Century

In his 1991 essay "Can Poetry Matter?" Dana Gioia declared: "American poetry now belongs to a subculture." Gioia explained that American poetry was "confined" to a "large professional class" that was "based mostly in universities." He lamented the fact that "the energy of American poetry, which was once directed outward, is not increasingly focused inward."<sup>1</sup> He closed his essay by challenging those interested in securing poetry's place in a vital public life: "It is time to experiment, time to leave the well-ordered but stuffy classroom, time to restore a vulgar vitality to poetry and unleash the energy now trapped in the subculture."<sup>2</sup> Gioia's tone, and the substance of his challenge, echoes two of Emerson's famous declarations. In "The American Scholar," Emerson complained: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe. The spirit of the American freeman is already suspected to be timid, imitative, tame."<sup>3</sup> In "The Poet," Emerson expanded his complaint: "We do not, with sufficient plainness, or sufficient profoundness, address ourselves to life, nor dare we chaunt our own times and social circumstance. If we filled the day with bravery, we should not shrink from celebrating it."<sup>4</sup> Emerson, as Gioia will later, complains that the creative energies of America have been stunted, turned inward, sequestered from the real life about them. Though their specific prescriptions differ greatly, both demand that poetry not be sequestered but rather engage the world about it.

The monumental poem I have tried to describe—the poem that works like a monument, that proposes a monument outside itself even as it makes a monument of itself—does just this: it seeks to engage the world about it. More specifically, it seeks to inhabit the world, adapting itself to and insinuating itself within the architectural forms of the city, and through the architecture of the city to engage its citizens. If the monumental poem is not as successful as an actual physical monument in becoming unavoidable, its energy is clearly directed outward, toward the citizenry, in an attempt to shatter the cocoon of privacy that surrounds the lyric, the overheard-ness ascribed to it since John Stuart Mill made his famous pronouncement.<sup>5</sup> The monumental poem, if it never becomes as material as a physical monument, is at least directed toward the public. It means to be heard. It tries to get in the way. It tries, as it engages civic architecture, as it tries to haunt it, to answer the challenge implicit in Auden's lament and Gioia's question. Even if it may never make anything happen, the monumental poem tries, at least, to escape from "the valley of its making" and the "ranches of isolation" to stand in a public space where it can make some claim on the attention of the public. It tries to make poetry matter as it tries to translate itself into matter.

But who, since Lowell, has written such a poem? In the forty years since Lowell's heyday, no American poet has achieved the same renown. In the forty years since "For the Union Dead" was composed, no American poem has captured the consciousness of a city or of the nation in quite the same way. But must that mean that the monumental poem, with so short a life already, is dead?

I think not. Despite the absence of an heir as successful as Lowell, a number of contemporary poets have proffered poems that exemplify the mode and suggest a future for it yet. Among American poets, Joy Harjo, and Mark Doty employ this poetic mode, though not on a national scale. Instead, each occupies and redefines a public space as way of speaking first and foremost to his or her immediate community of identity; these poems may address the nation at large in an indirect fashion, but the larger address is not, it seems, among these poems' ambitions. In Seamus Heaney—however Irish, a poet who has responded to American poets as much as Irish ones—we may observe a poet using the monumental mode on a national, even trans-national level. In the bog poems of *Wintering Out* and *North*, Heaney imaginatively occupies a common (almost archetypal) feature of the Irish landscape in order to speak to the Irish culture in its two nations. Each of these poets demonstrates, the power of this mode and by employing it increases the chances that it will continue as one of our contemporary poetic resources.

### SEAMUS HEANEY'S BOGS

Like the poems of Whitman, Crane, and Lowell's, Heaney's poems draw from the landscape the vocabulary that enables him to address several of his Irish culture's most difficult foundational fictions. The bogs contain and communicate his arguments to his Irish readers (as well as to others) in the ways that the monumental public spaces of Whitman's, Crane's, and Lowell's American cities contain and communicate their arguments to the American public. Heaney's work, like that of Whitman, Crane, and Lowell, addresses the present situation of his culture, examines the culture's deep, supportive past, and sets his arguments in these spaces so they will remind his readers of his poems' work.

The bogs enter Heaney's work in *Door Into the Dark* (1969) in the closing poem "Bogland," where the bogs appear as a defining feature of the Irish landscape, both because of their ubiquity and their capacity to preserve. Heaney declares: "Our unfenced country/Is bog that keeps crusting/ Between the sights of the sun." Ireland itself is a bog that hardens at night, softens in the day. The import of the characterization lies not in the ground's altering character but rather in what the cycles permit—an almost uncanny and perfect preservation of the island's past: "Butter sunk under/More than a hundred years/Was recovered salty and white." It is to this past that Ireland's best must turn, Heaney exhorts in the poems penultimate stanza: "Our pioneers keep striking/Inwards and downwards."<sup>6</sup> Though the volume's title refers to another, this is the dark with which Heaney's poetry quickly becomes concerned, this is the dark into which Heaney finds doors in every bog.

In *Wintering Out* (1972), the bogs become as ubiquitous in Heaney's poetry as they are in the Irish landscape. The volume's second poem, "Bog Oak," announces both the primacy and the preservative nature of the bog as it suggests that there are no oak groves

nearby, only the bogs that can preserve wood such as the piece this poem considers. But "The Tollund Man" is the more important as it introduces the swamp-burials that are central to the archaeological vision that will occupy almost all of *North* (1975) and then recur throughout Heaney's career. The bodies, from tribal sacrifices and sunk in bogs in Jutland and in Ireland, were preserved by the tannic acid in the bogwater. The bodies provide Heaney with temporally distant means of imagining the sectarian murders of his own contemporary Ireland, even if the bog-bodies upon which he focuses his attention do not always lie in Ireland. "The Tollund Man" refers to a body discovered in Denmark, and in this poem, Heaney refers to several bog-burials discussed by P.V.Glob in a book entitled *The Bog People*, originally in Danish, but translated into English in 1969.<sup>7</sup> Heaney recognizes the similarities between the topography of Denmark and that of Ireland, and that he can convert these human relics of Iron Age Jutland into figures that help him image the Irish troubles. In Ireland, Heaney writes:

Some day I will go to Aarhus  
To see his peat-brown head,  
The mild pods of his eye-lids,  
His pointed skin cap.<sup>8</sup>

The body of the Tollund Man and the other bog-burials, found in "Grauballe, Nebelgard," are housed together in a museum in Aarhus, Denmark, where Heaney imagines he will go and "stand a long time." But Heaney is already talking about Ireland through these Danish spaces, when he suggests: "I could risk blasphemy,/Consecrate the cauldron bog/Our holy ground...." By calling this ground, however hypothetically, "*Our* holy ground," Heaney suggests a deep kinship between his Irish home and the Denmark, a kinship all but bruted in the poem's final stanza. There Heaney writes:

Out there in Jutland  
In the old man-killing parishes  
I will feel lost,  
Unhappy and at home.

Heaney notes that he will be lost "Not knowing their tongue," but the terrible manner of the man's death should enable him to read their unhappiness. But it is the feeling of being at home where, we are to understand, he also feels lost and unhappy, that closes Heaney's comparison of Iron Age Denmark with contemporary Ireland. The use of the word "parishes" then becomes clear: it designates plots of land, but it is a term of Christian government, anachronistic when applied to Iron Age Denmark, and much more appropriate in any case to Ireland, in whose parishes "man-killing" has become more common in the years in which Heaney writes this poem.<sup>9</sup>

This is just a beginning for Heaney. "The Tollund Man" opens to Heaney a way of talking about the Irish troubles that he will develop in the poems of *North*, where he finds two ways of bringing these bog-burials to bear more directly on Ireland. First, he

connects contemporary Ireland to the Iron Age north, Scandinavia, through the Viking invaders of Ireland whose tombs and artifacts have been uncovered in Ireland by archaeologists: the northern lands are Ireland's past, which means that the Tollund Man and Grauballe Man are Irish forbears. Second, Heaney writes about Irish bog-burials, using the bogs of Ireland in place of Jutland's; Heaney connects Ireland with Denmark by means of a geographical similarity. Taken as a sequence, these poems show Heaney concentrating time in the space of the bogs—which is easy enough since the bogs do most of the concentrating for him—and coordinating disparate locales so they nearly collapse into one another when the cognitive landscapes these poems present are coordinated and located in any of the Irish bogs. In the sequence, Heaney is doing the work of monument.

The Viking north is brought south quickly in the volume's fourth poem, "Belderg," where the poet visits a man whose house is surrounded by millstones recovered from a bog. The archaeological image is re-established:

When he stripped off blanket bog  
The soft-piled centuries

Fell open like a glib:  
There were the first plough-marks,  
The stone-age fields, the tomb  
Corbelled, turfed and chambered,  
Floored with dry turf-coomb.

A landscape fossilized....<sup>10</sup>

The past has already been excavated when Belderg derives the name of Heaney's home, Mossbawn, from a Norse root, a revelation that grinds Heaney, breaks him down and vouchsafes a vision of "A world-tree of balanced stones," a Yggdrasil, the foundation of the universe. But this world-tree is made of "Querns piled like vertebrae": the world it supports is Heaney's, and in this vision he sees "The marrow crushed to grounds," reworked as he sees his ancestry anew. The force of the Norse querns is described in "Funeral Rites" in which Heaney considers the aftermath "of each neighborly murder"—the sectarian violence that echoes the Viking life. Recognizing the cultural lineage, Heaney announces the need "for ceremony,/customary rhythms" to answer the customary rhythms of killing.<sup>11</sup> He imagines comfort in the ancient Norse burial customs, the erection of megalithic barrows, such as that in which the mythic Gunnar Hammundarson, whose first name echoes the temporally local form of violence, rests.<sup>12</sup> In "North," Heaney divines the voices of dead Vikings such as those found buried "in the solid/ belly of stone ships" that suggest the megalithic tombs from "Funeral Rites," Vikings uncovered in Dublin, who warn him to stay away from the tribal cycle of violence.<sup>13</sup> Heaney traces the violence of the Irish back again to the Vikings in "Viking Dublin: Trial Pieces," in which archaeological finds suggest a system of retributive justice consonant with that at work in violent Ireland. The parallels are so strong that Heaney becomes

"Hamlet the Dane," "smeller of rot//in the state, infused//with its poisons." He finds the Vikings like the Irish "neighborly, scoretaking/killers" who left the skulls of their victims, of the punished, under Dublin to be found.<sup>14</sup>

Heaney moves from this direct concern with Vikings to the Ireland he has imagined through them, performing his own archaeologies. His "Digging Skeleton" uncovers more bones than the Viking ones and, finally, opens up the ancient Irish bogs, which contain their own artifact-record, unfolded in a bog sequence including "Come to the Bower," "Bog Queen," "The Grauballe Man," "Punishment," "Strange Fruit," and "Kinship." In "Come to the Bower," Heaney performs his own archaeology in an unlocated bog:

I unwrap skins and see  
The pot of the skull,  
The damp tuck of each curl

Reddish as a fox's brush,  
A mark of a gorget in the flesh  
Of her throat.<sup>15</sup>

The red hair, while also common in Denmark, is one of the physical markers of the Irish, so Heaney either means us to understand that this is an Irish bogburial or that this is a Danish bog-person whom we are meant to confuse with an Irish person. In "Bog Queen," Heaney translates the voice of a woman like that he finds in "Come to the Bower," though this time a decidedly Danish or Scandinavian woman who "knew winter cold/like the nuzzle of fjords." It is with this figure that Heaney begins to imagine in greater detail the circumstances of these bodies' interment: the "Bog Queen," like "The Grauballe Man" has a slashed throat, has been punished rather than sacrificed. The "Bog Queen" tells that she had been betrayed by the wife of her husband's peer, suggesting that she may have been sacrificed or killed as a form of divorce, perhaps accused of adultery.<sup>16</sup>

"Punishment" draws to a close this sequence of imagining these burials as the results of tribal justice. There, Heaney describes another bog-burial, finally addressing her:

her shaved head  
like a stubble of black corn,  
her blindfold a soiled bandage,  
her noose a ring,

to store  
the memories of love.  
Little adulteress,  
before they punished you

you were flaxen-haired....<sup>17</sup>

Heaney uses this figure to speak about the savagery of Ireland's own structure of tribal justice, but not without implicating himself, perhaps a tactic calculated to soften the critique. "My poor scapegoat," he says, "I almost love you /but would have cast, I know,/the stones of silence." He sees through the figure of this woman, her punishers, among whom he imagines himself:

I who have stood dumb  
 when your betraying sisters,  
 cauled in tar,  
 wept by the railings,  
  
 who would connive  
 in civilized outrage  
 yet understand the exact  
 and tribal, intimate revenge.<sup>18</sup>

This is to say that Heaney sees some complicity in the system of tribal punishment in Ireland in his own silence on the subject—until now. The strongest indictment is perhaps the fact that he understands this system of justice by which the woman he imagines in this poem was put to her death. This is again the theme of "Kinship," where Heaney draws all these connections tight, imagining himself as an archaeologist in a bog, opening peat down to a buried female, preserved in the bog like the Tollund Man and the Grauballe Man, a discovery that leads him to apostrophize the Roman historian Tacitus, who wrote of the Irish centuries earlier. Heaney asks him to "Come back to this/'island of the ocean'":

Read the inhumed faces

of casualty and victim;  
 report of fairly,  
 how we slaughter  
 for the common good  
  
 and shave the heads  
 of the notorious....<sup>19</sup>

But while Heaney's self-implication helps direct his commentary home, the most startling turn in these poems is the gradual transformation of the bogs—those perennial features of the Irish landscape he praises in "Bogland," in which he recalls his grandfather cutting

turf in "Digging"—into national graves, a transformation that is completed here in "Kinship." Heaney begins "Kinship" by declaring his relation "to the strangled victim" predicated "by hieroglyphic/peat on a spreadfield." The land itself records and preserves this bloodline. It records the kinship so well, it becomes the dead as heaney recounts one visit. "I found a turf-spade," he recalls:

As I raised it  
 the soft lips of the growth  
 muttered and split,  
 a tawny rut

opening at my feet  
 like a shed skin....<sup>20</sup>

The bog, preserver of skins, has become a skin itself. When you cut turf from the bog, you cut kin, incise the dead, and come face to face with them. The bog is now a tomb, and the bog is not a specific bog, but a categorical one: Heaney has re-imagined all bogs as tombs, and now asks his readers to view them as such, to find their connection to Ireland's violent Norse heritage in these ubiquitous bogs. The kinship with which the poem is concerned then becomes not only Heaney's kinship with the sunken victims, but Ireland's kinship with them, its Norse past, and, most importantly, with itself: Ireland's internal violence is in question.

Over the course of a dozen or so poems, Heaney has described a somewhat public (and surely virtually unavoidable) space and gradually transformed it by interrogating its elements. He has altered the meaning, and therefore the character, of this space. He has transformed this space into an arena in which questions of nation and culture may be posed: this space is now rich not only with historical implication but with complex relationships that may affect the political and cultural health of Ireland. Thus, the bog does for Heaney what the public sites of the ferry, the bridge, and the Common have done for Whitman, Crane, and Lowell: they provide cultural centers at which foundational mythologies can be addressed, so the polity can be considered. Interestingly, Heaney—like Whitman, Crane, and Lowell—occupies the bogs and performs his monumental work in a time of crisis. Though the Irish crisis continued long after Heaney wrote his bog poems, they clearly respond to the atomizing violence of the Irish civil war in the 1970s, even as "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" responds to the impending dissolution of the American union, *The Bridge* responds to the particulating modernism of Eliot and Pound, as "For the Union Dead" responds to the hypocrisies of Boston. Thus Heaney not only embraces the internal repertoire of the monumental mode, he suggests that the mode is most useful, or most desirable, as a response to a cultural crisis.



### JOY HARJO'S "NEW ORLEANS"

Joy Harjo's poem "New Orleans," published in *She Had Some Horses* (1983), exemplifies the monumental mode nearly exactly as it inhabits a public space, Jackson Square in New Orleans, in order to recall and reactivate its past and, in the altered space, consider the health of the nation that surrounds the space.<sup>21</sup> In this case, the nation is nations—the United States of America and the Creek Nation.

She begins this poem in New Orleans, looking "for evidence/of other Creeks, for remnants of voices," looking for her people or what might be left there. The town is monumental in that for Harjo there is the possibility that there she might see "tobacco brown bones...wandering/down Conti Street, Royale, or Decatur." This idea is compounded when she introduces into the poem "a shop with ivory and knives":

The man behind the  
counter has no idea that he is inside  
magic stones. He should find out before  
they destroy him. These things  
have a memory....

The poem approximates a lapidary text by focusing on the messages that supposedly inhere in the stone and in the place. The place sharpens the poet's own recollection: the recognition that "These things/have a memory" occasions the remark that "I have a memory." This is a memory assisted by the place which, like a monument, contains time and ideas. So Harjo not only hears the stones' memory: she hears the river's as well:

There are voices buried in the Mississippi  
mud. There are ancestors and future children  
buried beneath the currents stirred up by  
pleasure boats going up and down.  
There are stories here made of memory.

What she remembers primarily is DeSoto, mad with a lust for gold, a figure she looks for throughout New Orleans "To know in another way/that my memory is alive." In the end she declares: "I know I have seen DeSoto,/having a drink on Bourbon Street,/mad and crazy...."

This is more than a memory poem, though. The figure of DeSoto is not simply some specter: it is a figure for European America with which, as a Native American, Harjo still struggles. So the recall she has in this place is a cultural recall: the town is the site at which the present and the past open into each other, as the river opens into the ocean just below the town. Harjo's DeSoto "yearned /for something his heart wasn't big enough/to

handle," what he thought was gold. In fact, it was the goodness of the Creek culture. According to Harjo: "The Creeks lived in earth towns,/not gold,/spun children, not gold." For DeSoto, of course, this was something of a disappointment:

That's not what DeSoto thought he wanted to see  
The Creeks knew it, and drowned him in  
the Mississippi River  
So he wouldn't have to drown himself.

What Harjo has come to New Orleans to see is whether DeSoto has learned the lesson: "he must have got away, somehow." Finally, Harjo finds him "dancing with a woman as gold/as the river bottom." European America has begun to accept the true gold of the Creek people, though still, they may covet that gold rather than truly value it. Here in New Orleans, Harjo also finds "shops that sell black mammy dolls/holding white babies," a discovery that suggests she sees in the encounter of whites and natives not only an unrewarded nurturing on the part of the Native Americans, but a commoditized fetishization of the non-white figure, a kind of Romance that is "mad and crazy," something destined for the same ends as DeSoto's quest for gold.

In Harjo's poem, the mode I delineated in Whitman, Crane, and Lowell seems alive in a number of important ways, and it indicates some of the conditions for the production of a poem of this mode—not so much a true cultural centrality as the belief of one's own importance in the larger nation. A confidence of voice, a confidence in one's own power and calling seems to be essential. What is special about Walter Whitman the person, the young man, that would have led him to the position of national poet, poet of democracy, other than his own desire to be so? So it is with Harjo.

### MARK DOTY'S MARGINAL CITY

We can find another, much more local example of this mode in Mark Doty's "Homo Will Not Inherit," from *Atlantis* (1995).<sup>22</sup> Here we find Doty delineating a space, carving out of an abstract city a space for the exercise and celebration of his sexuality. Doty engages the monumental mode both as he delimits this space and, more to the point, as he constructs its meaning, its purpose as a celebratory space.

The first fifteen lines describe a strip "between the roil/of bathhouse steam" and "the ruin/of the Cinema Patee," this "zone//of blackfronted bars and bookstores/where there's nothing to read/but longing's repetitive texts" (1–2, 8–9, 12–15). This street scene is, perhaps, more abstract than Lowell's *Common*, than Harjo's *New Orleans*, than Heaney's *bogs*. Doty explains this abstraction, declaring the scene a "shadow-zone," "the secret city," always a little more abstracted and marginal than the "public city" (29, 35, 34). However archetypal, however, this is still a real space, a street bounded by those darkfronted stores, closed cinemas, "the dreaming shops turned in on themselves," "the bodegas and offices lined up, impenetrable" (25, 27). This is a still a real space, bounded both by the city's forms and by time: this "secret city" emerges "at twilight,/permission's

descending hour” (32–33). This is still a space whose boundaries, whose “borders...//...are chartered//by the police,” who “some nights,...redefine them” (29–32). These are “the margins” of “downtown after hours/when there’s nothing left to buy” (22–24).

Here, in these margins, that Doty finds a flier:  
 someone’s posted a xeroxed headshot  
 of Jesus: permed, blonde, blurred at the edges

as though photographed through a greasy lens,  
 and inked beside him, in marker strokes:

HOMO WILL NOT INHERIT. *Repent & be saved.* (17–21)

The flier encroaches on the space, attempting to transform it into a site of damnation. But Doty will not accept this righteousness. In answer, he will celebrate “the margins/which have always been mine” (22–23). He will define this space, will fix its meaning. “I’ll tell you what I’ll inherit,” he says (22). Doty will celebrate this civic margin until it is a heaven, peopled with angels and gods, all divine, where everyone can become holy:

...I have been an angel

for minutes at a time, and I have for hours  
 believed—without judgement, without condemnation—  
 that in each body, however obscured or recast,

is the divine body—common, habitable.... (45–49)

“I’ll tell you//what I’ll inherit,” Doty continues later—“not your pallid temple//but a real palace,” where “the spirit’s transactions//are enacted now” (63–65, 89–90). This palace, in the poem’s close, becomes a city: “This failing city’s//radiant as any we’ll ever know” (91–92). “This city’s inescapable,//gorgeous, and on fire” (99–100). It is Doty’s “kingdom,” his heaven on earth.

Thus, this marginal space becomes central, becomes total. A part of the city becomes not only the city at large, but the eternal kingdom. It is now expansive. And it is now not only a space in which a spiritual and carnal sexuality can be exercised and celebrated; it is now as well a space in which this celebration is total, where it is political in the root sense of the word: this celebration makes a city, makes a polis, makes a community. the poem is undertaken, in large part, to celebrate this space to the benefit of those who inhabit it. But the poem also seeks, as it talks back to the evangelist, to expand the sense of the city beyond whatever it is in the evangelist’s mind to this glorious marginal space. Doty’s choice to situate this vision in a relatively archetypal space, although probably visually accurate, makes this sort of expansive argument inevitable: the poem seems to

say, as it elides the difference between the single street of the poem's opening and the city at large, that this could happen anywhere, that it is happening everywhere. This space appropriates the city's forms, just as Doty appropriates the evangelist's stance to perform his celebration, his epistle. This space, however dislocated and marginal, is the monumental space in which Doty's sexual and spiritual communion consumes everything, and it transforms the city around it, installs "the secret city" inside the "public city," so that it would be difficult to look, after reading this poem, at any city without thinking about this secret dimension.

And it's this operation, the transformation of the city's space from within, by re-imagining the constitution of the space's internal structure and the meanings of its elements, that makes Doty's poem a monumental poem. It seeks to make the city, the public city with the secret city at its heart, a space for the celebration of his sexuality, and in its transformative efforts, it transforms itself into a city, a space, a monument. Like Harjo, Heaney, Lowell, Crane, and Whitman, Doty undertakes this architectural work to respond to a crisis, the crossing of the conservative Christian message into the secret city, the marginal space that's at the center of Doty's celebration.

### GETTING IN THE WAY

Both Harjo's and Doty's poems, and even Heaney's sequence, seem to follow the repertoire of the monumental poem exactly. Each poem describes a public space, however marginal, concentrates time in that space, and re-argues the meaning of that space in a seeming attempt to convince its readers of something, to coordinate the cognitive images of each reader with those the poem presents. Each poet responds to a sense of crisis, following Whitman, Crane, and Lowell exactly.

There is, though, no evidence to suggest that any of these poets felt that the monumental poem was going to secure his or her fame or to suggest that whatever degree of fame or notoriety any of these poets has achieved resulted from the monumental poem. Neither Heaney nor Harjo nor Doty became famous for a single poem or even, I would venture, for a group of poems. Poetic fame, by and large, seems now to rest on a career rather than on the excellence of any one poem. But the poems I have discussed by Heaney, Harjo, and Doty are all, in the careers of their authors, important, major poems, if not for the response they elicited then because they signal a growth in the capacities and ambitions of their authors. Since their internal repertoire is roughly the same as that of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," *The Bridge*, and "For the Union Dead," it seems that fame like Lowell's is not necessarily a proof of this poetic mode. Lowell had uncommon luck. Lowell, unlike Crane, had no detractors respectable enough to deter readers' interest in his poetry. Lowell's career, unlike Whitman's, was not to be interrupted by a civil war, and the circulation of his poetry was not to be limited to the extent of his own financial resources.

But if Lowell's successors have not had his luck, if they have not had the same impact, their poems nevertheless signal the health of a contemporary loco-descriptive genre with the capacity to amplify an important message into a form of public address. The internal repertoire remains the same, and the monumental poem still represents an important expansion of the resources of poetry. It is a means by which a poet, acknowledging not

just the linguistic but also the social fabric that binds poets and readers, may incorporate social mechanisms into his or her poetry as a way of addressing readers directly, as way of asking to be heard rather than overheard. It is a means by which a poet can announce the importance of a poem or its vision and recommend it to the attention of other readers. It is a means by which a poem can supply its readers with the means to recommend the poem to the attention of other readers. It represents one kind of political regeneration in poetry after the psychologically inward turn of the Romantics.

Even in poems that do not conscientiously instantiate this mode, there is a sense that this mode makes possible certain kinds of poetic work. In *Garbage*, A.R. Ammons considers the great poem's qualifications and decides on something like the monumental mode: the great poem has got to get in the way. Ammons registers first a sense of failure. The voice in his head asks him:

Boy!, are you writing that great poem  
the world's waiting for: don't you know you

have an unaccomplished mission unaccomplished;  
someone somewhere may be at this very moment

dying for the lack of what W.C. Williams says  
you could (or somebody could) be giving: yeah?<sup>23</sup>

Ammons understands that his failure to write "that great poem/the world's waiting for" contributes to a situation in which "values thought lost (but only scrambled into/disengagement) lie around demolished//and centerless...." The poem, the imagined argument seems to assume, can re-integrate these values, can give them a center. But it's not until the poem's second section that Ammons imagines the method by which a poem could provide a center and an arrangement for the important values that are "thought lost." Here, he declares:

garbage has to be the poem of our time because  
garbage is spiritual, believable enough

to get our attention, getting in the way, piling  
up, stinking, turning brooks brownish and

creamy white: what else deflects us from the  
errors of our illusionary ways....<sup>24</sup>

Garbage can, in Ammons's poem, bring us back to reality, draw us back from "illusionary ways," precisely because it is real enough "believable enough//to get our attention," to get "in the way." Ammons seems to believe, in a much more explicit

manner, that getting in the way is the key to achieving a political effect—in a poem or in any other arena. Even if Ammons seems ultimately uninterested in getting in the way, even if this vision of “mounds of disposal” rising “down by I-95 in//Florida” does not dominate the rest of this long poem, it becomes the index of the public poem from which Ammons turns in favor of a more personally and autobiographical meditation.

Can poetry matter? It is true that “poetry makes nothing happen”? None of these poets seems to think so, and all of them seem to understand that one of the ways to make something happen is, quite simply, to get in the way. These poets understand that an effective poem must concentrate the attentions of its readers and reassert itself in the increasingly busy static of information that bombards us daily, and they understand that the city, the very physical fabric of the city, and specifically the monument, one of the clearest and most seriously reinforced signals in the city's fabric, provides the means, or at least the mode, for a poem that insists on our attention. They understand that the effective poem, like the monument, has to warn us and remind us, above all else, not to forget.

# Notes

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. W.H.Auden, "In Memory of W.B.Yeats," in *Collected Poems* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 247–249: lines 36–41.
2. Michael Thurston, *Making Something Happen: American Political Poetry Between the World Wars* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 6.
3. *Ibid.*, 8.
4. Thurston discusses Edwin Rolfe, Langston Hughes, Ezra Pound, and Muriel Rukeyser. According to Thurston, Rolfe was publishing poems as early as 1928. Hughes, of course, published his first volume, *The Weary Blues*, in 1926. Pound's career began in the first decade of the twentieth century. And Rukeyser published her first book, *Theory of Flight*, in 1935, and her second, *The Book of the Dead*, in 1937. Auden's poem didn't appear until 1939, at which point each of these writers was well into his or her career.
5. Dana Gioia, "Can Poetry Matter?" in *Can Poetry Matter? Essays on Poetry and American Culture* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 1992) 1–24:1. This essay originally appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* 267, no. 5 (May 1991), 94–106. The Graywolf edition replicates this text.
6. Paul Mariani, *Lost Puritan: A Life of Robert Lowell* (New York: Norton, 1994), 251.
7. Thurston, *Making Something Happen*, 8.
8. Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space* (Donald Nicholson-Smith, translator; Blackwell, 1991), 7.
9. Michael Thurston, "Robert Lowell's Monumental Vision: History, Form, and the Cultural Work of Postwar American Lyric," in *American Literary History* 12, no. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2000), 79–112:80.
10. Mariani, *Lost Puritan*, 251.
11. Richard Tillinghast, *Robert Lowell's Life and Work; Damaged Grandeur* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 57: "Life Studies remains his highest achievement."
12. Mariani, *Lost Puritan*, 283.
13. Meredith L.McGill, "Enlistment and Refusal: The Task of Public Poetry," in *Field Work: Sites in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Marjorie Garber, et al (New York: Routledge, 1996), 144–149:144: "... 'For the Union Dead' was titled 'Colonel Shaw and the Massachusetts 54th' in its first incarnation—an occasional poem delivered to thunderous applause at the Boston Fine Arts Festival in June 1960. The poem was then tipped into the paperback edition of *Life Studies* as the last poem in that series, and published on its own under its current title in *The Atlantic Magazine*, before it took its more familiar place as the final poem in the eponymous volume *For the Union Dead*." See also *The Atlantic Monthly* 206, no. 5 (November 1960), 54.
14. Ian Hamilton, *Robert Lowell: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1982), 298.
15. Irwin Ehrenpreis, "The Age of Lowell," in *Robert Lowell: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Thomas Parkinson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 74–98:95.
16. "In Bounds" in *Robert Lowell: Interviews and Memoirs*, ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 91–93:91. Such figures would, even today, indicate a rare and remarkable success for a book of poems.

17. Richard Poirer, "For the Union Dead," in *Critics on Robert Lowell*, edited by Jonathan Price (Coral Gables, Florida: 1972), 92–96:92.
18. Thomas Parkinson, "For the Union Dead," in *Robert Lowell: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Coral Gables, Florida: 1972), 144.
19. Robert Lowell, "To President Lyndon Johnson" in *Collected Prose* (New York: Noonday/Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1987), 370–371:371.
20. *Ibid.*, 368.
21. According to Paul Mariani, Lowell's arraignment made the front page of *The New York Times* (107–108). According to Ian Hamilton, the story appeared in the Bowling Green *Sentinel* under the headline "Member of Famed Family Balks at Military Service" (91). See Hamilton, 91 and following, for more.
22. Hamilton, *Robert Lowell* 298.
23. Robert Lowell, *Collected Poems*, edited by Frank Bidart and David Gewanter (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 376–378. Subsequent references to the poem will provide line numbers only.
24. John R. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship" in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, edited by John R. Gillis (Princeton University Press, 1994), 3–24:14.
25. Kirk Savage, "The Politics of Memory: Black Emancipation and the Civil War Monument," in *Commemorations*, edited by John R. Gillis (Princeton University Press, 1994), 131.
26. Atlantic Unbound, "Soundings," dated April 11, 2001. Recently accessed January 28, 2003. <http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/poetry/soundings/lowell.htm>
27. Savage, "The Politics of Memory," 131.
28. *Ibid.*, 131.
29. I echo Thurston: "A safe haven for money, the Mosler advertised... epitomizes the commercial concerns who benefit from war and the signal lack of concern that allows consumers to buy into the slogans celebration." "Robert Lowell's Monumental Vision," (99).
30. Mark Rudman, *Robert Lowell: An Introduction to the Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 132.

Alan Williamson and other critics amplify this position. See particularly Williamson's discussion in *Pity the Monsters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

31. Thurston, "Robert Lowell's Monumental Vision," 101.
32. The Massachusetts 54th was the first regiment comprised of free black soldiers and the first to name black officers.
33. I find it difficult to accept Thurston's reading of the "schoolchildren" as the "four freshmen from a historically black college in Greensboro, North Carolina, [who] began their sit-in at the local Woolworth's lunch counter, garnering wide media attention and sparking not only public debate over segregation but also similar demonstrations" (97), for I find it difficult to read "college freshmen" into the word "school-children." Rather, I think the "drained" "school-children" are likely those in Arkansas who were bussed to integrate the primary and secondary schools there. Unlike the Greensboro protesters, these children were not fighting so much of their own accord as they were being used to wage a war, not unlike the men of the 54th.
34. Steven Gould Axelrod, *Robert Lowell: Life and Art* (Princeton University Press, 1978), 154, 268–269n. Gould finds this quoted in one of Lowell's sources, Thomas Wentworth Higginson's "Colored Troops Under Fire," which appeared in *Century Magazine* in June 1897.
35. See Helen Vendler, "Reading a Poem" in *Field Work*, edited by Marjorie Garber, et al (New York: Routledge, 1996), 130.



36. We might recall Elizabeth Hardwick's criticism of Boston in her December 1959 essay, "Boston: A Lost Ideal." Hardwick, then Lowell's spouse, wrote:

With Boston and its mysteriously enduring reputation, 'the reverberation is longer than the thunderclap,' as Emerson observed about the tenacious fame of certain artists. Boston—wrinkled, spindly-legged, depleted of nearly all her spiritual and cutaneous oils, provincial, self-esteeming—has gone on spending and spending her inflated bills of pure reputation, decade after decade. Now, one supposes it is all over at last.

Elizabeth Hardwick, "Boston: A Lost Ideal," in *A View of My Own* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1962), 145.

Hardwick turned out to be largely right as the Boston Common garage project that supplied Lowell with his images and became the object of his hatred turned out to be a hugely expensive project that was later found to cover extreme political graft.

37. Quoted Hamilton, *Robert Lowell*, 281.

38. That Lowell's delivery was a great success cannot be doubted. The measures abound. William Doolittle's *Boston Globe* article, "Poet on the Common Hushes Road of the City," claims that "As the poet read, even the steady blast of car horns on Boylston Street seemed to hush.... Cops, spring-dressed girls, and bearded youths walking on the street stopped to listen" (quoted in *Robert Lowell: A Reference Guide*, edited by Stephen Gould Axelrod and Helen Deese (Boston: G.K.Hall, 1982), 51–52.) While on the Common, Lowell seemed to capture the interest, not of the spectators only but of the city as a whole. Nora Taylor, writing for the *Christian Science Monitor*, seems to express the sentiments Doolittle sees enacted, characterizing the poem as "a song of the city" (*Robert Lowell: A Reference Guide*, 57). Writing Lowell later in the month, Elizabeth Bishop says she could hear the echoes of the "thunderous applause" even in Brazil (see Mariani, *Lost Puritan*, 280).

39. Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 39.

The 'descriptors' I have supplied here are, with the exception of the term "representational space," not exactly those supplied by Donald Nicholson-Smith in his translation. Nicholson-Smith's translation provides the following three categories or kinds of space: "spatial practice," "representations of space" and "representational spaces." The similarity of the phrases "representations of spaces" and "representational spaces" is, I believe, unnecessarily confusing, in ways not borne out by the definitions of these kinds. A more parallel construction might be useful, as, perhaps, "spaces that are utilized," "spaces that are represented," and "spaces that represent."

40. Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 4.

41. Atlantic Unbound, "Soundings," dated April 11, 2001. Recently accessed January 28, 2003. <http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/poetry/soundings/lowell.htm>

42. Thurston, "Robert Lowell's Monumental Vision," 103.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Volume III: *Essays: Second Series*, edited by Joseph Slater, Alfred R. Ferguson, and Jean Ferguson Carr (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap/ Harvard University Press, 1983), 1–24:21.
2. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum of the Printed Poems, Volume I: 1855–1856*, edited by Sculley Bradley, Harold W. Blodgett, Arthur Golden, and William White (New York University Press: 1980), 1n.
3. There was, as many critics have pointed out, no *Brooklyn Ferry*—that is, no ferry was named "Brooklyn Ferry." The "Fulton Ferry" was the well-known ferry that made the course Whitman describes in this poem, but Whitman's descriptions particularize it under its geographical name.
4. Quotations from "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" are made with reference to *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Readers Edition*, ed. Harold W. Blodgett and Scully Bradley (New York University Press: 1965), 159–165. Subsequent references provide the line numbers in parentheses.
5. M.H. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," in *The Correspondent Breeze* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 76–108.
6. *Ibid.*, 76.
7. *Ibid.*, 76–77.
8. James Dougherty, *Walt Whitman and the Citizens Eye* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 143–154.
9. James Gargano, "Technique in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry': The Everlasting Moment," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, no. 62 (1963): 262–269.

Paul Orlov, "On Time and Form in Whitman's 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,'" *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 1, no. 2 (1984): 12–21.

10. Richard Pascal, "What Is It Then Between Us?: 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' as Dramatic Meditation," in *1980: 'Leaves of Grass' at 125: Eight Essays*, ed. William White, 59–70 (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1980): 60.
11. Abrams, "Structure and Style in the Greater Romantic Lyric," 77.
12. *Ibid.*
13. William Wordsworth, "Lines Written A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," in *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones (New York: Routledge, 1991), 113–118: lines 156–160.
14. Dougherty, *Walt Whitman and the Citizen's Eye*. 154.
15. *Ibid.*, 143.
16. F.O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), 549 and following.
17. C. Carroll Hollis, *Language and Style in Leaves of Grass* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983). Hollis discusses Tupper in Chapter 2, p.. For Hollis's discussion of what Whitman copied into notebooks, see pages 15–16 and following.
18. Tenney Nathanson, *Whitman's Presence: Body, Voice and Writing in "Leaves of Grass"* (New York: New York University Press, 1992).

Roger Gilbert, "From Anxiety to Power: Grammar and Crisis in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 42, no. 3(1987):339–361.

19. Traubel, Horace. *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1906), Volume II, 116.
20. Walt Whitman, "Preface, 1876, to the Centennial Edition of *Leaves of Grass*," in *Prose Works, Volume II: Collect and Other Prose*, ed. Floyd Stovall (New York: New York University Press, 1964), 473.
21. David Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1995), xi: "'No one can know *Leaves of Grass*,' he declared, 'who judges it piecemeal.'"
22. I will, throughout this book, refer to "forensic," "legislative," and "epideictic" rhetoric or oratory. These are standard terms, used to designate the three recognized types of rhetoric. Richard Lanham explains the divisions in his *Handlist of Rhetorical Terms* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991) as he gives their synonyms: the legislative is known also as the deliberative; the forensic is known also as the judicial; and the epideictic may also be called "panegyric," "ceremonial," or "commemorative" (164). Of Lanham's alternatives, I have adopted the terms that are most compatible with the usage of other sources, including Perry Miller, Garry Wills, and Ronald Reid, below.
23. John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 8.

John R. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship" in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, edited by John R. Gillis (Princeton University Press, 1994), 3–24:8.

24. Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days in Prose Works, Volume I*, ed. by Floyd Stovall (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 13.
25. These pieces are collected in Henry M. Christman, *Walt Whitman's New York* (New York: Macmillan, 1963).
26. Justin Kaplan, *Walt Whitman: A Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), 65.
27. Christman, *Walt Whitman's New York*, 122.
28. *Ibid.*, 64.
29. *Ibid.*, 122–123.
30. Daniel Webster, *The Great Speeches and Orations of Daniel Webster*, ed. Edwin P. Whipple (Boston: Little, Brown, 1891).
31. *Ibid.*, 123–124.
32. *Ibid.*, 136.
33. "Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Connecticut, Called for the Purpose of Laying the Chief Stone of the Monument to General David Wooster, at Danbury, April 27, 1854," *Pamphlets in American History* (microfilm) RW 103.
34. Delano Goddard, "Ceremonies at the Dedication of the Bigelow Monument, Worcester, Massachusetts, April 19, 1861," *Pamphlets in American History* RW 347.
35. *Dedication of the Washington Monument, 21 February 1885* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1885).
36. Christman, *Walt Whitman's New York*, 64.
37. *Ibid.*, 64.
38. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America*, 34: "There was no mass-produced fanfare, no fireworks or cannons, only a genuine show of emotion from the people who lined the streets, giving the celebration spontaneity and honesty."
39. Christman, *Walt Whitman's New York*, 123.

40. *Ibid.*, 63.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, 122 and following.
43. *Ibid.*, 122.
44. Reynolds, *Walt Whitman's America*, 34.
45. Christman, *Walt Whitman's New York*, 64.
46. Complaint against ornament is perfectly in keeping with Whitman's early poetics. Whitman makes his case against ornament in his Preface to the 1855 *Leaves of Grass*, declaring that "Most works are beautiful without ornament" (*Collected Prose Works*, 450–451), and that, if ornaments are to be had, they must be "not independent, but dependent" (*Collected Prose Works*, 440). See the further discussion of Whitman's ideas of ornament below, in "Walt Whitman and Nineteenth Century Architecture."
47. See, for example, "Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Connecticut, Called for the Purpose of Laying the Chief Stone of the Monument to General David Wooster, at Danbury, April 27, 1854," (*Pamphlets in American History* RW 103). There are two prayers listed in the program for this event, both without any elaborating text, omissions striking in contrast to the detailed listing of members of the procession, texts of several minor addresses, and the texts of various poems said of sung at the ceremony.
48. The absence of texts may indicate a fundamentally Puritan Christianity which placed a higher value on the extemporaneous prayer than on the prepared one; if so a text would have been available only through transcription from memory or simultaneous transcription, the former of which would be valueless insofar as the occasion which produced it had passed, the latter of which would be proscribed by the solemnity of the event. The account of the *Dedication of the Washington National Monument*, 21 February 1885, does, by contrast, contain a detailed transcription of the prayer offered by the Reverend Henderson Sutter (9–11). Sutter's denominational affiliation is not given, but the form of the prayer obviously owes a great deal to the formulaic prayers that were and are still a part of Episcopal, Anglican, and Roman Catholic masses (sometimes called "The Prayers of the People"), traditions in which prayers were more commonly delivered from prepared texts rather than given extemporaneously.
49. Daniel King, *An Address Commemorative of Seven Young Men of Danvers* (Salem, Massachusetts: W. & S.B. Lives: 1935). Collected in *Pamphlets in American History* (RW 47).
50. Ralph Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 274.
51. Robert C. Winthrop, *Addresses and Speeches on Various Occasions* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1867), Volume 2:213.
52. "Proceedings of the M.W. Grand Lodge of Connecticut, Called for the Purpose of Laying the Chief Stone of the Monument to General David Wooster, at Danbury, April 27, 1854," (*Pamphlets in American History* RW 103).
53. Goddard, "Ceremonies at the Dedication of the Bigelow Monument, Worcester, Massachusetts, April 19, 1861," *Pamphlets in American History* RW 347.
54. Jacob Belville, *Address at the Inauguration of the Hatborough Monument, Commemorating the Battle of the Brooked Billet Delivered at Loller Academy, December 5, 1861* (Doylestown, Pennsylvania: Monument Association, 1862). Collected in *Pamphlets in American History* (RW 237).
55. Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster: 1992), 34–35.
56. Rusk, *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 273–274.
57. Rusk's account of the event relies heavily on this, the seemingly most primary source. A copy of the report was provided to me by the Concord Free Public Library.

58. "Proceedings of the M.W.Grand Lodge of Connecticut, Called for the Purpose of Laying the Chief Stone of the Monument to General David Wooster, at Danbury, April 27, 1854," (*Pamphlets in American History* RW 103).
59. Christman, *Walt Whitman's New York*, 122.
60. *Ibid.*, 63.
61. Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 35.
62. *Ibid.*, 35.
63. *Ibid.*, 44.
64. King, *An Address Commemorative of Seven Young Men of Danvers*.
65. Raymond, *An Oration Pronounced Before the Young Men of Westchester County, On the Completion of a Monument, Erected by Them to the Captors of Major Andre at Tarrytown, Oct. 7, 1853*. Publisher not given. Collected in *Pamphlets in American History* (RW 381).
66. The notable exception to this rule is that of the ceremonies at Concord on the Fourth of July 1837, for which we have the text of Emerson's "Concord Hymn." In contrast to its fame, Congressman Hoar's remarks are forever lost or disregarded. The ceremonies at Gettysburg in November 1863 also provide an interesting case in point, since Lincoln's remarks, a minor portion of the event, have far overshadowed Everett's hours-long address, even though Everett's address survives.
67. Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 33.
68. For more on this see Ronald Reid's "Edward Everett and Neoclassical Oratory in Genteel America," in *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Transformations in the Theory and Practice of Rhetoric*, ed. Gregory Clark, and S.Michael Halloran (Carbondale : Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 36 and following.
69. Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 23–24;34.
70. Christman, *Walt Whitman's New York*, 61.
71. *Ibid.*, 122.
72. Webster, *Great Speeches*, 136.
73. Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 49.
74. Edward Everett, *Speeches and Orations on Various Occasions* (Boston: American Stationer's Company, 1836), 67.
75. *Ibid.*, 67.
76. *Ibid.*, 67.
77. This is to say, the shared linguistic, legal, religious, and artistic traditions, as well as the very real genetic connection. A model expression is Washington Allston's poem "America to Great Britain," which ends with a recognition of the bonds of blood: "Yet still from either beach/The voice of blood shall reach,/More audible than speech,/'We are One.'" *American Poetry: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Hollander (New York: Library of America, 1993) Volume I, 58.
78. Everett, *Speeches and Orations*, 67.
79. *Ibid.*, 67–68.
80. *Ibid.*, 68.
81. *Ibid.*, 69.
82. Alexis DeTocqueville, *Democracy in America*, (New York: Vintage, 1990) Volume I, 242.
83. Everett, *Speeches and Orations*, 70.
84. *Ibid.*, 73.
85. *Ibid.*, 68.
86. *Ibid.*, 78–79.
87. *Ibid.*, 79.
88. *Ibid.*, 85–86.
89. *Ibid.*, 88.
90. Frauke Berndt, "Aristotle: Towards a Poetics of Memory," in *The Politics of Memory*, ed. Thomas Wagenbauer (Tubingen, Germany: Stauffenberg, 1998), 27, 25–27.

91. Dennis Smolarski, S.J., *Liturgical Liturgy: From Anamnesis to Worship* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990), 10–16, 59.
92. Everett, *Speeches and Orations*, 91.
93. King, *An Address Commemorative of Seven Young Men of Danvers*.
94. *Ibid.*
95. George William Curtis, *Orations and Addresses*, ed. Charles Eliot Norton (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1894), Volume III, 89.
96. *Ibid.*, 111–112.
97. Gillis, “Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship,” 14.
98. Goddard, *Ceremonies at the Dedication of the Bigelow Monument, Worcester, Massachusetts, April 19, 1861*, publisher not given. Collected in *Pamphlets in American History* (RW 347).
99. Webster, *Great Speeches and Orations* of Daniel Webster, 138.
100. *Dedication of the Washington Monument*, 11.
101. Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 24.
102. Perry Miller, *The Transcendentalists* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1950), 19. Quoted in Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 47, emphasis added.
103. Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 47.
104. Webster, *Great Speeches and Orations*, 124.
105. *Ibid.*
106. *Ibid.*, 124.
107. *Ibid.*, 125.
108. *Ibid.*
109. *Ibid.*, 129.
110. *Ibid.*, 130.
111. *Ibid.*
112. *Ibid.*
113. *Ibid.*, 131.
114. *Ibid.*, 132.
115. *Ibid.*, 133.
116. *Ibid.*, 134.
117. Aristotle, Quintillian, and other ancient rhetoricians, discuss *enargia*, or vividness in description. In his *Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, Richard Lanham defines *enargia* as “visually powerful, vivid description which recreates something, as several theorists say, ‘before your very eyes’” (64)—exactly what we find in Everett’s lengthy narratives or Webster’s amazingly brief and evocative vignettes.
118. I take the term “foundational fiction” from Doris Sommer who discusses it in “Irresistible Romance: The Foundational Fictions of Latin America” in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (New York: Routledge, 1990): 71–98. See also Homi Bhabha, Introduction to *Nation and Narration*, 5.
119. Reid, “Edward Everett,” 33.
120. Erkkila, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford, 1988), p. 143.
121. Pascal, “What Is It Then Between Us,” 63.
122. Gilbert, “Anxiety and Crisis in ‘Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,’” 339.
123. Though I will indicate particular debts in the following text, I want here to indicate my general debts in discussing illocutionary or performative language—of speech acts, as they are also called. I am drawing, of course, on the work of J.L. Austin and John Searle and those critics who have contributed to discussions of speech acts, such as Robert Ohman and Mary Louise Pratt. I am particularly indebted to those critics of Whitman whose work has also included discussions of performative language, C. Carroll Hollis, Mark Bauerlein, Roger Gilbert, and Tenney Nathanson.

124. As Mark Bauerlein and Roger Gilbert explain separately, performative or illocutionary language presupposes a mutual presence, a mutual presence indicated and enacted by the use of the illocutionary statement here. Gilbert 358. Mark Bauerlein, "The Written Orator of 'Song of Myself': A Recent Trend in Whitman Criticism," *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 3, no. 3 (1986), 1–14:9, 10.
125. Gilbert, "Anxiety and Crisis," 344.
126. *Ibid.*, 346.
127. Webster, *Great Speeches*, 64.
128. Kerry Larson, *Walt Whitman's Drama of Consensus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 11.
129. Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*, in *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, ed. Harold W. Blodgett, 28–89, (New York: New York University Press, 1965): lines 1–3, emphasis added.
130. Bauerlein, "The Written Orator," 10.
131. *Ibid.*, 12.
132. *Ibid.*, 7.
133. Sweepstakes announcements are parodies of this sort of language. The "Congratulations" of these things calculatedly approximates the speech-act force of a conferral of winnings, in order to excite their readers, which is why these offerings are so pernicious.
134. Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, 19.
135. Both poems were introduced in the third, or 1860, edition, the edition in which "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" takes its present title.
136. Gilbert, "Anxiety and Crisis," 358.
137. Quentin Anderson's reading of "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" in *The Imperial Self* and Tenny Nathanson's Andersonian critiques in *Whitman's Presence* seem, generally, to assume that the readers or crossers the poem addresses are imagined, performed or created, instead of imaged. See, for example, Nathanson's discussion of the performative dimension in "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" (6–7).
138. Here I have in mind a number of readings. Roger Gilbert's contention that "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" is a crisis poem in which "form is determined by psychic need" (342), falls somewhat into this category, as does Betsy Erkkila's theory that the germ for the poem was a fit of depression (141). But we have a more fundamentally psychological reading in Richard Pascal's "'What Is It Then Between Us?': 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' as Dramatic Meditation," in which Pascal returns repeatedly to an "inner reality" (66), "an inner and truer reality" (68), that bespeak his concern with "meditation," the poem as an internal drama; one of his final assessments is that "'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry' seems to reveal more about the man in his capacity for self-deception than he himself could possibly have been aware of" (69).
139. See Erkkila, *Walt Whitman the Political Poet*, 144–145; Gilbert, "Anxiety and Crisis."
140. Gilbert, "Anxiety and Crisis," 353.
141. Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: A Textual Variorum*, Volume I, 221. This is the line that will become line 74 of the poem.
142. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (1855 edition) in *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, ed. Michael Moon (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002), 676: lines 372–376.
143. Roger Gilbert, "Anxiety and Crisis," 340, 339.
144. *Ibid.*, 339.
145. Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass: A Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, 52: lines 501–502.
146. Whitman famously imagines time in space in the second section of "Starting from Paumanok," when his "audience interminable" is figured as a marching column in which those who succeed him, temporally, turn their faces "sideways or backwards towards" him. *Leaves of Grass: A Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, 16–17: lines 29–36.

147. Webster, *Great Speeches*, 138.
148. *Ibid.*, 130.
149. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: History of a Relationship," 14.
150. Orlov, "On Time and Form in Whitman's 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,'" 15.
151. *Ibid.*, 65, 66, 68.
152. Dougherty, *Walt Whitman and the Citizens Eye*, 154.
153. Whitman, "Preface, 1855," 440.
154. *Ibid.*, 444.
155. Emerson, "The Poet," in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Volume III: 6.
156. Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory From Vitruvius to the Present*, trans. Ronald Taylor, Elsie Callander, and Antony Wood (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994), 303.
157. Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory*, 44.
158. Discussed in Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory*, 21–29.
159. *Ibid.*, 27.
160. *Ibid.*, 230.
161. *Ibid.*, 250.
162. *Ibid.*, 245.
163. *Ibid.*, 198.
164. *Ibid.*, 272.
165. *Ibid.*, 272–273.
166. *Ibid.*, 302–303.
167. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, Bollingen Edition, ed. James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton University Press: 1983), Volume II: 12, 83.
168. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Volume III, 1826–1832*, edited by William H. Gilman and Alfred R. Ferguson (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1963), 270–271.
169. Don Gifford, ed., *The Literature of Architecture* (New York: Dutton, 1966), 106–107.
170. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Volume IV, 1832–1834*, edited by Alfred R. Ferguson (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1964), 40, 60, 337, and 368.
171. Gifford, *The Literature of Architecture*, 125.
172. Ezra Greenspan, *Walt Whitman and the American Reader* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 47.
173. Walt Whitman, *The Early Poems and the Fiction*, ed. Thomas Brasher (New York: New York University Press, 1963). Brasher's notes show that in addition to "Death in the School-Room" Whitman published in the *Democratic Review* again in November 1841 ("Wild Frank's Return"), December 1841 ("Bervance: or, Father and Son"), March 1842 ("The Last of the Sacred Army"), May 1842 ("The Last Loyalist"), July 1842 ("A Legend of Life and Love"), September 1842 ("The Angel of Tears"), and again in July-August 1845 ("One Wicked Impulse!"). This information appears in the headnotes Brasher provides for these stories; it is also provided in Appendix A, 335 and following.
174. Walt Whitman, "Preface, 1855" in *Collected Prose Works, Volume II*, 440.
175. *Ibid.*, 450–451
176. Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function: Remarks on Art by Horatio Greenough*, ed. Harold A. Small (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1947), 75.
177. Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, 53: line 524.
178. Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function*, 69.
179. Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," in *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, 86: lines 1269–1270.
180. Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function*, 70.



181. *Ibid.*, 71.
182. *Ibid.*, 75. In this, Greenough, answers objectors like Carl Schnasse who had written eight years earlier that an organic conception of architecture would lead one to “become more and more rigorous in one’s rejection of ornamentation” (see Hanno-Walter Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory*, 303–304).
183. Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function*, 75.
184. Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself,” in *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader’s Edition*, 31: lines 56, 58.
185. Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function*, 120–121.
184. James Dougherty, *Walt Whitman and the Citizen’s Eye*, 154.
186. Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function*, 118.
187. *Ibid.*, 121.
188. *Ibid.*, 62.
189. *Ibid.*, 70.
190. On this, see Kruft, *A History of Architectural Theory*, 395–402, and plate 187 for a diagram of Le Corbusier’s system.
191. Le Corbusier, *Toward a New Architecture*, trans. Frederick Etchells (New York: Dover, 1986), 4.
192. Horatio Greenough, *Form and Function*, 65.
193. Ezra Greenspan, *Walt Whitman and the American Reader*, 68–69.
194. *Ibid.*, 69.
195. Betsy Erkkila suggests that the ambiguity as to the time of day in the 1860 version of the poem was deliberate, expressing both Whitman’s pessimism about the ability of the nation to avoid war and his hope that it would.
196. Whitman, “Song of Myself,” in *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader’s Edition*, 32: lines 79.
197. This is the most basic premise of American democracy, the maximization of the functions of the declaration that “all men are created equal” and that “We the people” have the power to constitute—the functions of equality and popular sovereignty. This is, of course, Whitman’s basic democratic premise, expressed in the conjunction of his declarations, “The President is there in the White House for you, it is not you who are here for him” (“A Song for Occupations”), and “For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you” (“Song of Myself”). This premise is expressed anew in recent democratic writings such as Jurgen Habermas’s “Struggles for Recognition in the Democratic Constitutional State,” in which the author argues that both equality and political power are based on the individual’s ability to author his or her own rights in an act that modifies other authorings of rights.
198. Whitman, “Song of Myself,” in *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader’s Edition*, 46: line 372.
199. See Kruft, *A History of Architectural History*, 287; Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, 5.
200. Le Corbusier, *Toward a New Architecture*, 5.
201. Dougherty, *Walt Whitman and the Citizens Eye*, 154.
202. E.Fred Carlisle, *The Uncertain Self: Whitman’s Drama of Identity* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1966), 59; Richard Pascal, “What Is It Then Between Us,” 60.
203. James E. Miller, Jr., *A Critical Guide to “Leaves of Grass”* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 80.
204. Gilbert, “Anxiety and Crisis,” 355.
205. “Song of the Exposition” line 163. Name the other poem, looking at the Geffen article.
206. Geffen, Arthur. “Silence and Denial: Walt Whitman and the Brooklyn Bridge” in *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, 1, No. 4 (1984), 1–11:7–8.

207. Of course there never was a “Brooklyn Ferry” proper. Whitman’s ferry was modeled on the well-traveled Fulton Ferry. Whitman may have changed the name to give the poem greater civic significance.
208. Barnstone, Aliko, “With Walt Whitman on the Staten Island Ferry” in *New Letters* 66, No. 1 (2000), 26–27.
209. Barnstone’s epigraph reverses the order of several words. Whitman’s poem asks “What is more subtle than this which ties me to *the woman or man* that looks in my face?” See *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader’s Edition*, p. 164: lines 96–97.
210. Barnstone, “With Walt Whitman,” lines 1, 7, 19–20.
211. Erkkila, *Walt Whitman the Political Poet*, 143.
212. *Ibid.*, 143.
213. Ezra Greenspan, *Walt Whitman and the American Reader*, 169.
214. Henry David Thoreau, Letter to H.G.O.Blake, in *Leaves of Grass and Other Writings*, ed. Michael Moon (New York: W.W.Norton, 2002), 801–802:802.
215. James E.Miller, Jr. *A Critical Guide to “Leaves of Grass,”* 80.
216. Dougherty, *Walt Whitman and the Citizens Eye*, 154.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, Revised Edition prepared by Christopher MacGowan (New York: New Directions, 1992), 7. See also the Preface to Book I, page 4: “rolling up out of chaos./a nine months’ wonder, the city,/ the man, an identity....”
2. Hart Crane, *The Bridge*, in *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*, edited by Marc Simon (New York: Liveright, 1986), 41–109. “To Brooklyn Bridge,” 43–44: lines 13, 15, 18, 30, 35, 37, and 42. Subsequent references to this section of *The Bridge* will be made parenthetically, by line number only, according to the enumeration in Marc Simon’s edition. As Simon numbers the lines of each of *The Bridges* sections separately from the poem as a whole, I will note the page numbers for each of the poem’s fifteen sections as appropriate.
3. “Atlantis,” in *The Bridge*, 105–108.
4. “Cutty Sark,” in *The Bridge*, 71–74.
5. Arthur Geffen, “Silence and Denial: Walt Whitman and the Brooklyn Bridge,” in *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review* 1, No. 4 (1984), 1–11.
6. Betsy Erkkila, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 143.
7. Van Wyck Brooks, “Toward a National Culture,” in *Van Wyck Brooks: The Early Years*, ed. Claire Sprague (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 180–192:183.
8. Waldo Frank, *Our America* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 175.
9. Letter from Hart Crane to Gorham Munson, 5 January 1923, in *O My Land, My Friends: The Selected Letters of Hart Crane*, ed. Langdon Hammer and Brom Webber (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows Press, 1997), 117. Here Crane writes of Eliot’s “pessimism.”
10. *Ibid.*, 118.
11. Letter from Hart Crane to Gorham Munson, 20 November 1922, in *O My Land, My Friends*, 108.
12. Letter from Hart Crane to Gorham Munson, 5 January 1923, in *O My Land, My Friends*, 117.
13. *Ibid.*, 117–118.
14. Letter from Hart Crane to Gorham Munson, 5 March 1926, in *O My Land, My Friends*, 230–231.
15. Frank, *Our America*, 231–232.
16. We know Crane read the book because he refers directly to it in a letter to Gorham Munson dated 13 December 1919, in *O My Land, My Friends*, 28.

17. Letter from Hart Crane to Gorham Munson, 18 February 1923, in *O My Land, My Friends*, 131.
18. Sherman Paul, *Hart's Bridge* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972), vii.
19. Warner Berthoff discusses, in *Hart Crane: A Re-Introduction* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), "presuppositions" that "have regularly worked to distract appreciation" (84). David Clark's introduction to the *Critical Essays on Hart Crane*, also discusses the difficulties the critical response to the poem has presented to contemporary readers of *The Bridge*. In Clark's collection, Stanley Coffman struggles against "the failure of Hart Crane's *The Bridge*," complaining that "the finality of the usual criticism of the poem tends to obscure" what is good in the poem (in Clark 133).
20. Alan Trachtenberg, *Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 70.
21. Clive Fisher, *Hart Crane: A Life* (New Haven: Yale, 2002), 221, 337.
22. The connection between these two poems is made by several critics, though usually without much specific comparison. Richard Sugg is one of the more forthcoming critics in his extensive claim that Crane's bridge "recalls Whitman's use of the boat in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry.'" Richard Sugg, *Hart Crane's "The Bridge": A Description of Its Life*, *Studies in the Humanities*, number 20 (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1976), 82.
23. Robert K. Martin provides the most extensive account of the connections between Crane's poem and Whitman's in his discussion of *The Bridge* in *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1979, 1998) 150.
24. "Ave Maria," in *The Bridge*, 45–50.
25. Richard Sugg, *Hart Crane's "The Bridge"*, 3: "My own belief is that *The Bridge* is about the poetic act rather than the action of the poet as a person in the world, about the life of the imagination trying to realize its 'dream of act' by giving form, and thereby meaning, to itself."
26. L.S. Dembo, *Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge: A Study of The Bridge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), viii: "It is the view of a man trying to come to terms with himself and his world"; "it presents a characteristically romantic experience, and it is on that basis that it must be evaluated."
27. Thomas Voegler, "A New View of Hart Crane's Bridge," in *Modern Critical Views: Hart Crane*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 69–70: "The poem is a search or quest for a mythic vision, rather than the fixed, symbolic expression of a vision firmly held in the poet's mind."
28. Some critics, such as Jack C. Wolf (*Hart Crane's Harp of Evil: A Study of Orphism in "The Bridge"* [Troy, New York: Whitston Publishing Company, 1986]), have argued that this constitutes a prayer to some sea deity, noting that it is the ocean that sleeps upon itself, but I think this is erroneous. Though the ocean is composed of water upon water, at bottom it sleeps upon the earth itself. The idea of something sleeping on itself is much more compatible with Christian and Hebraic ideas of God, as a being apart, proceeding from nothing but itself and therefore resting on nothing, sleeping, if at all, only on itself, and, as a being apart, apart our world and time or, in Crane's language, "Like ocean athwart lanes of death and birth...."
29. Exodus 13:17–22.
30. "The Harbor Dawn," in *The Bridge*, 53–54.
31. T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, in *The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909–1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1952), 37–55: line 427. Subsequent citations are referenced parenthetically, by line number.
32. "Van Winkle," in *The Bridge*, 55–56.
33. "The River," in *The Bridge*, 57–61.
34. "Indiana," in *The Bridge*, 66–68.
35. "Cape Hatteras," in *The Bridge*, 75–84.

36. Waldo Frank, "An Introduction to Hart Crane," in *Critical Essays on Hart Crane* edited by David Clark (Boston: G.K.Hall, 1982), 131.
37. M.Bernadetta Quinn, *The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1955), 130.
38. It is perhaps interesting to note here that *The Bridge* itself had a commercial sponsor in Otto Khan, who frequently gave Crane money to write during his work on *The Bridge*.
39. John Irwin, "Hart Crane's 'Logic of Metaphor'" in *Critical Essays on Hart Crane* edited by David Clark (Boston: G.K.Hall, 1982), 209.
40. Allen Tate, "Hart Crane: 1932-1937," in *Critical Essays on Hart Crane* edited by David Clark (Boston: G.K.Hall, 1982), 225.
41. R.P.Blackmur, "New Thresholds, New Anatomies: Notes on a Text of Hart Crane," in *Modern Critical Views: Hart Crane*, edited by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1986), 17-30:24-25.
42. It is interesting, perhaps, to note that this ground had been covered, before Blackmur's treatment, in what appears to be a more accurate and sympathetic assessment of Crane's practice, F.Cudworth Flint's "Metaphor in Contemporary Poetry," cited by David Clark in the introduction to his *Critical Essays on Hart Crane*. According to Clark, Flint argues that Crane "uses 'multiple reference' in which 'The metaphor consists in an identification between an object or idea and two or more other objects or ideas, each of these identifications having, however,...but a single ground or basis'" (Clark 11-12).
43. On this point, see also R.W.B.Lewis's comments on Crane's metaphorical usage in "Crane's Visionary Lyric: The Way to The Bridge" in *Critical Essays on Hart Crane*, ed. David Clark, particularly pages 85 and following. See also Mary Jean Butts's "Art as Affirmation: A Study of Hart Crane's 'Atlantis'" in *Critical Essays on Hart Crane*, ed. David Clark, particularly pages 173 and following.
44. Irwin, "Hart Crane's Logic of Metaphor," 209.
45. Hart Crane, "Modern Poetry," in *The Collected Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane*, edited by Brom Weber (Garden City, New Jersey: Anchor/Doubleday, 1966), 260.
46. This is a point supported by the observations Oscar Cargill made in *Intellectual America: Ideas on the March* (1941). Though Cargill did not think that Crane had succeeded in his poem (the general critical consensus at the time), he did concede that "His use of symbols...points the way toward a more complete exploitation of our tradition.... His attempt to give us a myth lays the foundation for future correctives" (in Clark 16). Cargill's point seems to be that while Crane did not deal with all the elements in the American historical tradition available to him, the principles evident in the work he did perform make possible the constructions which will answer Crane's own wishes at a later date. Thus Cargill notes the constructive aspect of Crane's work.
47. Frank, *Our America*, 231-232.
48. In his "Modern Poetry," Crane signals his interest in "influential traditions of English prosody" because they "form points of departure, at least, for any indigenous rhythms and forms which may emerge" (263). The traditional prosodic devices found in *The Bridge*, then, serve not only to embody the temporal compression in which the poem is interested but provide a benchmark for the more "indigenous rhythms" of, say, "The Tunnel."
49. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, ed. Harold W.Blodgett and Scully Bradley (New York University Press: 1965), 418: lines 165-174.
50. "The Dance," in *The Bridge*, 62-65.
51. Thus, Crane effects a simultaneity Frank miscalled "the mystic law of continuity" (in Clark, *Critical Essays on Hart Crane*, 131): what Frank takes as a pre-existing law, Crane works to create, and the success of his efforts may be registered in Frank's perception of the achievement as a law.

52. I see John Willingham's "Three Songs" of Hart Crane's *The Bridge: A Reconsideration* (1955: reprinted in *The Merrill Studies in The Bridge* [Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1970]). As Willingham notes, "Brom Weber has called the lyrics [of "Three Songs"] 'unnecessary' and as complained that they 'further increase the logical disintegration of *The Bridge*.' ... Howard Moss presumably includes this fifth section in his dismissal of the entire poem" (67). Willingham's article answers the objections: "To suggest that the three lyrics are inorganically or inappropriately placed with reference to 'Cape Hatteras' and 'Quaker Hill' is simply to misread *The Bridge* and to obscure Crane's intention and achievement" (73).
53. See also Weber, *Hart Crane: A Biographical and Critical Study* (New York: Bodley Press, 1948) 367, 370.
54. "Three Songs," in *The Bridge*, 85–90, in three sections, "Southern Cross" (87–88), "National Winter Garden" (89), and "Virginia" (90). Epigraph appears on page 85.
55. "Quaker Hill" in *The Bridge*, 91–94.
56. The two epigraphs are found on page 91.
57. "The Tunnel" in *The Bridge*, 95–101.
58. Jonathan Culler, "Apostrophe," in *The Pursuit of Signs* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 135–154.
59. But it is not expressed discursively and is, then, easily missed. Rather, the answer is expressed implicitly, in the complex of images and character relations that complete the poem—in a presentational complex that makes it easy to miss. The proposal is, then, relatively invisible, lost in the expanse of the poem as a whole. And without it in view, *The Bridge* does in fact seem to be a meditation on the situation of the visionary, as Sugg and Voegler have contended. But there is here a specific proposal.
60. For discussions of Whitman's anxiety, see: Roger Gilbert, "From Anxiety to Power: Grammar and Crisis in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,'" *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 42, no. 3 (1987), 339–361; and James Gargano, "Technique in 'Crossing Brooklyn Ferry': The Everlasting Moment," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 62 (1963), 262–269.
61. In the Brom Weber edition of *The Complete Poems and Selected Prose* and in the Liveright edition of *The Bridge*, the Seneca passage indicates Tiphys, Jason's navigator. In the Simon edition, however, the passage indicates Tethys, a sea goddess. Simon claims that the indication of Tiphys is erroneous, based on Crane's use of a faulty source (see Simon's notes, 234). Tethys is consistent with various translations of Seneca's *Medea*, including Frederick Ahl's (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986) and C.D.N. Costa's (Oxford University Press, 1973). There is, however, a possibility that Crane may have thought the passage to indicate Tiphys. In the Oxford Latin edition of the *Tragoediae* of L. Annaei Senecae (ed. Zwierlein [Oxford/Clarendon, 1986]), the textual notes on the poem suggest that, of two source texts, one indicates Tethys, the sea goddess, and one Tiphys, Jason's navigator. R.W.B. Lewis adopts the Tiphys reading in his study *Hart Crane* (1967), and Richard Ellmann and Robert O'clair reproduce the reading in a footnote to "Ave Maria" in their *Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* (1988, page 614). The Tiphys reading does fit nicely into the overall scheme of *The Bridge*. And Simon's correction remains in doubt insofar as his justification does not fully explain the replacement. Though Tethys may be correct in our readings of Seneca's *Medea*, Crane may have thought otherwise, or planned on the valence the 'incorrect' reading adds.
62. Thomas Yingling, *Hart Crane and The Homosexual Text* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 193.
63. John R. Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship" in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* edited by John R. Gillis (Princeton University Press, 1994), 3–24:14.
64. Everett, *Orations and Speeches*, 37–38.
65. Yingling, *Hart Crane and the Homosexual Text*, 8.

66. For more on this see R.B.Lewis, *The Poetry of Hart Crane: A Critical Study* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967) and Thomas Voegler, "A New View of Hart Crane's Bridge."
67. Berthoff, *Hart Crane: A Re-Introduction*, ix.

#### NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. Mark Rudman, *Robert Lowell: An Introduction to the Poetry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 132. Quoted in Michael Thurston, "Robert Lowell's Monumental Vision: History, Form, and the Cultural Work of Postwar American Lyric," in *American Literary History* 12, No. 1 & 2 (Spring/Summer 2000), 79–112:97.
2. Alan Williamson, *Pity the Monsters: The Political Vision of Robert Lowell* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 107.
3. Michael North, *The Final Sculpture: Public Monuments and Modern Poets* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 239, 18.
4. Paul Breslin, *The Psycho-Political Muse: American Poetry Since the Fifties* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987), 72.
5. John R.Gillis, "Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship" in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R.Gillis (Princeton University Press, 1994) 3–24:14.
6. This in a letter to, and published in, *The Village Voice*, November 19, 1964, quoted by Ian Hamilton in his biography of Lowell. Hamilton writes: "'For the Union Dead' is, to be sure, an 'abolitionist poem,' and Lowell was later to say that in it 'I lament the loss of the old Abolitionist spirit: the terrible injustice, in the past and in the present, of the American treatment of the Negro is of the greatest urgency to me as a man and as a writer.'" Ian Hamilton, *Robert Lowell: A Life* (New York: Vintage, 1981), 281.
7. Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 4.
8. Quotations from "For the Union Dead" are made with reference to the text in *Collected Poems*, ed. Frank Bidart and David Gewanter (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux: New York, 2003), 376–378. Subsequent references provide the line numbers in parentheses.
9. Quotations from "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry" are made with reference to *Leaves of Grass: Comprehensive Reader's Edition*, ed. Harold W.Blodgett and Scully Bradley (New York University Press: 1965), 159–165. Subsequent references provide the line numbers in parentheses.
10. Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*, 4.
11. Letter from Hart Crane to Gorham Munson, 18 February 1923 in *O My Land, My Friends: The Selected Letters of Hart Crane*, ed. Langdon Hammer and Brom Webber (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows Press, 1997), 131.
12. Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*, trans Donald Nicholson-Smith (Blackwell, 1991), 39.
13. Alan Trachtenberg, *Brooklyn Bridge: Fact and Symbol* (University of Chicago Press, 1979), 167.
14. See *Robert Lowell: A Reference Guide*, ed. Stephen Gould Axelrod and Helen Deese (Boston: G.K.Hall, 1982), 51–52. This is, I believe, a synopsis of the report and not the report itself.
15. *Ibid.*, 57.
16. This is true even if Whitman's ferry was probably the Fulton Ferry. The change of name does not so much abstract the ferry as make it easier for nonresidents to identify.
17. Letter from Hart Crane to Gorham Munson, 18 February 1923 in *O My Land, My Friends*, 131.

18. Ray Oldenberg, *The Great Good Place* (New York: Paragon, 1989).
19. See Clark's introduction to his edition of *Critical Essays on Hart Crane*, pages 9–20, and Warner Berthoff's *Hart Crane: A Re-Introduction*, pages 84ff. Clark notes that the early reviews of *The Bridge* "pre-judge" and unjustly dismiss Crane's work, damaging it so that it must be rehabilitated. Clark argues that "critical evaluation had preceded, rather than followed upon, mastery of *The Bridge*" (16).
20. Betsy Erkkila, *Whitman the Political Poet* (New York: Oxford, 1988), 143.
21. Van Wyck Brooks, "Toward a National Culture," in *Van Wyck Brooks: The Early Years*, ed. by Claire Sprague (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993:180–192), 183; Frank, *Our America*. 231–232.
22. See Letter to Munson, 18 February 1923 in *O My Land, My Friends*, 131, for Crane's discussion of *The Bridge* as a "mystical synthesis of America." See too Crane's letters to Gorham Munson, especially one dated 5 January 1923, in *O My Land, My Friends*, 117 and following.
23. Elizabeth Hardwick, "Boston: A Lost Ideal," in *A View of My Own* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1962), 158–159.
24. See Clark's introduction to his edition of *Critical Essays on Hart Crane*, pages 9 and following, and Warner Berthoff's *Hart Crane: A Re-Introduction*, pages 84 and following.
25. Mariani, *Lost Puritan*, 283.
26. Irwin Ehrenpreis discusses this briefly in "The Growth of a Poet," in *Critics on Robert Lowell*, ed. by Jonathan Price (Coral Gables, Florida: 1972), 15–36:31.
27. Irwin Ehrenpreis, "The Age of Lowell," in *Robert Lowell: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Thomas Parkinson (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 95.
28. "In Bounds," in *Robert Lowell: Interviews and Memoirs*, ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 91.
29. Richard Poirer, "For the Union Dead," in *Critics on Robert Lowell*, ed. Jonathan Price (Coral Gables, Florida: 1972), 92–96:92.
30. Thomas Parkinson, "For the Union Dead," in *Robert Lowell: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Coral Gables, Florida: 1972), 144.
31. The general consensus now contradicts these contemporary assessments. As Richard Tillinghast writes: "With the exception of the title poem, *For the Union Dead* is an 'unpopular' book in the same ways that *Life Studies* is 'popular.' The title poem...is justly celebrated.... But one searches the published criticism in vain for competent treatments of other poems in this volume" (59). This at least is the academic assessment. Stephen Yenser offered a comprehensive and insightful reading of the volume in *Circle to Circle* (1975) and Steven Gould Axelrod did the same in *Robert Lowell: Life and Art* (1978), but these are lone efforts in a field of criticism that is populated with titles like *The Autobiographical Myth of Robert Lowell* and *Robert Lowell's Language of the Self*. Certainly, the poems of *Life Studies* are more important than those of *For the Union Dead*, since they advance Lowell's poetic revolution and inaugurate the so-called "Confessional" school of which Plath, Sexton, and others are exponents. A poet himself, Tillinghast no doubt feels the value of these poems underwriters his own poetics. But we do well to remember, when we read such assessments, that the popularity about which Poirer, Parkinson, and other reviewers write is not simply popularity among the literati, but among the general public. It is harder now to judge the general popularity of Lowell's various volumes; since he is dead, the only people who speak of him anymore are poets and scholars.
32. See for example Steven Gould Axelrod's commentary on *For the Union Dead* in his book *Robert Lowell: Life and Art* (1978), a commentary cited by Tillinghast: "For the Union Dead exposes Lowell's emotional sterility following the conflicts of *Lord Weary's Castle* and the harrowing confessions of *Life Studies*" (137, in Tillinghast 59).
33. Hamilton, *Robert Lowell: A Life*, 298.
34. Lowell, *Collected Prose*, 371.

35. Hamilton, *Robert Lowell*, 363.
36. *Ibid.*, 90.
37. *Ibid.*, 233.
38. James Russell Lowell, "Memoriae Positum: R.G.Shaw," in *The Poetical Works of James Russell Lowell*, Cambridge Edition, ed. Marjorie R.Kaufman (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 337–338. Subsequent citations reference line numbers parenthetically.
39. William Vaughn Moody, "An Ode in Time of Hesitation," in *The Poems and Plays of William Vaughn Moody* (New York: AMS Press, 1969), 15–25. Subsequent citations reference line numbers parenthetically.
40. "Boston Common" in John Berryman, *Collected Poems: 1937–1971*, ed. Charles Thornbury (New York: Noonday, 1989), 41–46: lines 28–32.
41. Lowell completed *Land of Unlikeness* while staying with Tate.
42. Allen Tate, "Ode for the Confederate Dead" in *Collected Poems: 1919–1976* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 20–23.
43. Lowell, *Collected Poems*, 14–18.
44. Quotations from *Collected Poems*, 56–58. I rely on Bidart and Gewanter's note for the identification of Kings Chapel on pages 1021–1022 of *Collected Poems*.
45. Lowell, *Collected Prose*, 261.
46. Mariani, *Lost Puritan*, 21, 214.
47. Alistair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), 55.
48. *Ibid.*, 56.
49. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 39.
50. Erkkila, *Walt Whitman the Political Poet*, 143.
51. Hart Crane, Letter to Charlotte and Richard Rychtarik, 2 March 1926, in *O My Land, My Friends*, 228.

### NOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

1. Dana Gioia, "Can Poetry Matter?" in *Can Poetry Matter? Essays on Poetry and American Culture* (Saint Paul, Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 1992), 1–24: 1.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 24.
3. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The American Scholar," in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Volume I: *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*, ed. Alfred R. Ferguson (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), 49–70:69.
4. Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Poet," in *The Collected Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, Volume III: *Essays: Second Series*, edited by Joseph Slater, Alfred R. Ferguson, and Jean Ferguson Carr (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap/ Harvard University Press, 1983) 1–24:21.
5. John Stuart Mill, "Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties," in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. John M. Robson and Jack Stillinger (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 343–365:348: "we should say that eloquence is *heard*, poetry is *overhead*...."
6. Seamus Heaney *Poems 1965–1975* (New York: Noonday, 1980), 85–86.
7. Helen Vendler, *Seamus Heaney* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 39.
8. Seamus Heaney, *Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966–1996* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 62.
9. *Ibid.*
10. Heaney, *Poems*, 168.
11. Seamus Heaney, *North* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1975), 16.
12. Vendler, *Seamus Heaney*, 53.



13. Heaney, *North*, 19.
14. *Ibid.*, 23.
15. *Ibid.*, 31.
16. *Ibid.*, 33.
17. *Ibid.*, 37–38.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, 45.
20. Heaney, *Poems*, 197.
21. Joy Harjo, “New Orleans” in *She Had Some Horses* (New York: Thunders Mouth Press, 1983), 42–44.
22. Mark Doty, *Atlantis* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 76–79. Subsequent references to the poem are made parenthetically.
23. A.R. Ammons, *Garbage* (Norton: New York, 1993), 13.
24. *Ibid.*, 18.

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