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"The Silken Skilled Transmemberment of Song": Shelley, Romantic Visionary Quest, and the Poetry of Hart Crane

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Taking seriously the critical estimations of Harold Bloom and Michael O'Neill that Hart Crane is the true American inheritor of Shelley's poetic legacy, my article explores the theme of Romantic visionary quest in Crane's poetry. I argue that this peculiarly Shelleyan motif of visionary quest in Crane's "Repose of Rivers", "Praise for an Urn", "Voyages", "The Harbour Dawn", and "Atlantis" acts as a prism through which to view Crane's imaginative entanglements with the poetry of Wordsworth, Byron, and Keats.

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There is no question of the enduring presence of Percy Bysshe Shelley's poetic legacy in American literary culture and letters from the early nineteenth century to the present (Powers 1964, 156–172; Sandy 2021a, 20–32). For Harold Bloom, Hart Crane is no less than the "Shelley of his age" (Bloom 2020, 546). Crane's estimation of Shelley is drawn both directly from his own reading and indirectly refracted through the diffusing and prismatic thought and poetics of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and Emily Dickinson. Embodying the creative process, in "Voyages III", as the art of "The silken skilled transmemberment of song" (Crane 1986, 36, l. 18), Crane demands that his own poetic artistry, and that of his American forebears, amplifies, rather than stifles, past Romantic voices.

In Cranean terms, an imaginative "transmemberment" of Shelleyan influence requires, simultaneously, a deepened appreciation of the diffuse elements of Shelley's poetic vision and the ability to transform and illuminate those of the original through a new, enigmatic, poetic vision of Crane's own. This is, perhaps, in no large part because Crane's ambition, shared with T.S. Eliot, as Bloom reminds us, is to make "the lyric mode perform the work of epic" when, in fact, the "transformation of lyric into epic was a Romantic *praxis* long before it was Modernist" (Crane 1986, xviii). According to Bloom, then, Crane is "a Pilgrim of the Absolute" and "a Shelleyan myth-maker hymning an Alien God" (Crane 1986, xvi), whereas, for Michael O'Neill, "Crane and Shelley co-exist like intersecting force-fields" (O'Neill 2012, 68). There is a measurable critical debt owed to Bloom and O'Neill, who have successfully championed, with differing yet astute emphases, Crane as a Romantic inheritor. For my part, focusing on the motif of visionary quest, I suggest that Shelley acts as a vital conductor for those Romantic forces of influence that often operate invisibly, but palpably, between Crane and the poetry of Wordsworth, Byron, and Keats.

"An Instant in the Wind": Shelley and Crane

These elusive forces of influence are tangible between Crane and Shelley when, in even Crane's late poem, "The Broken Tower", the poetic quest enters "the broken world / To trace the visionary company of love, its voice / An instant in the wind" (Crane 1986, 160, ll. 17–19). Hopeful assertions give sway to doubtful possibilities, a pure harmonising quest dissipates into an uncertain tragedy of despair, whereby "crystal Word / in wounds pledged once to hope, —cleft to despair?" (160, ll. 23–24). Tragic as these uncertain questions are, they eventually allow the close of Crane's "The Broken Tower" to usher in, with a shift from external ruin to internal restoration, a more positive building of "within, a tower that is not stone" and bound to "The matrix of the heart" (161, ll. 33, 37). Here Crane offers one of his most enigmatically condensed re-imaginings of a favourite "Shelleyan injunction" (O'Neill 2012, 68; Lewis 1967, 230). An injunction centred on hope, love, and despair that is vital to cosmic change (whether positive or negative) in Shelley's lyrical drama, *Prometheus Unbound*, which enjoins us "To love, and bear; to hope, till Hope creates / From its own wreck the thing it contemplates" (Shelley 2003, 313, 4. ll. 573–574). Hope's realisations, for Shelley and Crane, are fragile, fleeting, and demand an inevitable taking stock of what has been lost. Bloom detects the reckoning of "the full cost of Crane's confirmation both as a poet and homoerotic quester" (Crane 1986, xxiv) not in the imaginative terminus of "The Broken Tower", but in Crane's earlier poem of origins and loss, "Repose of Rivers".

"More Steady Sound": Shelley, Wordsworth, and Crane

In its choice of diction, temporal shifts, and seamless merging of the poet's voice with the river's own, Crane's "Repose of Rivers" evokes and evades William Wordsworth's weighing of loss against recompense in "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" and "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" (O'Neill 2012, 60–63). Crane's lyric also cantillates and checks the Orphic sublimity that freights, for Bloom, the vatic voice of Whitman's elegy, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" (Crane 1986, xxiv). In Crane's "Repose of Rivers", the autobiographical trajectory of the river's monologue begins with a faded, yet decisive, moment in the past marked by when "The willows carried a steady sound / A sarabande the wind mowed on the mead" and, eventually, translates this dim recollection into the present "now" to attest "I heard wind flaking sapphire, like this summer / And willows could not hold more steady sound" (16, ll. 1–2, 22–23).

The final return to the "more steady sound" of the willows and their "wind flaking sapphire" ushers in an unsteadiness and Orphic destructiveness (O'Neill 2012, 62–63) that the charmed, multivalent, symbols of Crane's "Repose of Rivers" seemingly protect against. The talismanic "now" of Crane's poem comes at a high personal, spiritual, and imaginative cost that is measured in terms of exchange: "How much I would have bartered! The black gorge / And all the singular nestings in the hills / Where beavers learn stitch and tooth" (Crane 1986, 16, ll. 12–14). The extreme costs at stake are reckoned by those precious primordial moments that the speaker so highly treasures and the reluctance to complete the trade.

The poem's effectiveness is dependent on the imaginative ability of Crane's individual speaker to transform the hazy past into the sharp present of "this summer" (desirable and distinctive for its revelatory and destructive "wind flaking sapphire"). Shelley's stanzas of "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" track a semi-autobiographical account of its speaker, whose oscillating mind both asserts and doubts the presence of an "unseen Power" within nature's universe. Finally, the speaker's mind retreats into a self-consciously imagined "solemn and serene" landscape, where "there is harmony / In autumn, and lustre in its sky / Which through the summer is not heard or seen" (Shelley 2003, 116–117, ll. 1; 73–76). Without any reassurances of a revelatory Wordsworthian nature, Shelley seizes upon such an unresponsive vacancy as an imaginative opportunity to create an autumnal "harmony" from the absence of that which is "not heard or seen in summer". Similarly, Crane's symbolically distilled, solitary, seasonal vision, in "Repose of Rivers" affords and destroys revelatory possibilities through its insistence on the immediate presence of "this summer" and its "wind flaking sapphire". Crane's imagery embodies, and teases out the paradoxes, that attend the harmony of Shelley's "solemn and serene" autumnal scene, which claims to wrest hope from the jaws of spiritual and imaginative vacancy and despondency.

Through these internally and immediately realised landscapes, both Crane and Shelley strain against Wordsworth's poetics of loss and consolation. As Crane's "Repose of Rivers" traces out the circling and encircling structures of Wordsworth's spots of time, it condenses Wordsworth's narration into "symbolic illumination" and interrogates Wordsworth's own internalised consolatory "seasonal calm weather" that connects "Our Souls" to "that immortal sea / Which brought us hither'" (O'Neill 2012, 63; Wordsworth 2000, 301, ll. 164–166). The pressure Crane's final lines exert on Wordsworth's fiction making of "seasonal calm weather" reveal an imaginative foothold

in Shelley's "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" which, modulating between hope and despair through its own spiralling patterns of thought, questions Wordsworth's unwavering faith in nature's restorative powers.

"Human Mind's Imaginings": Shelley, Keats, and Crane

Holding out for vacancy as both negation and potential, Shelley expresses these doubts and hopes through the closing question of "Mont Blanc". A Shelleyan question which, simultaneously, interrogates Wordsworth's imaginative faith in nature and presses Shelley's own imagination up against its own limits:

> And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea.
> If to the human mind's imaginings
> Silence and solitude were vacancy? (Shelley 2003, 124, ll. 142–144)

Nature, for Crane, like Shelley before him, is a creative and destructive force. For Shelley and Crane, the imagination can be both a salve and a barb. Symbolised by the retreat of memory and momentary haven afforded by Crane's soothing "slow sound / A sarabande the wind" before acknowledging, in "That seething, steady leveling of the marshes" (Crane 1986, 16, ll. 1–2), a foreshadowing of the creative-destructive capacity of that "wind flaking sapphire" that closes "Repose of Rivers". It is a strikingly Shelleyan formulation of Orphic destruction and prophetic rejuvenation (O'Neill 2012, 68) one which, in "Ode to the West Wind", is attuned to the dual power of the wind as "Destroyer and Preserver" with its potential ability to "Drive my dead thoughts over the universe / Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!" (Shelley 2003, 412, l. 14; 414, ll. 64–65).

Crane's poetry often returns to these lines and reimagines for itself Shelley's insistence in his ode's closing invocation that the wind is an agent able to "Scatter my dead thoughts, as from an unextinguished hearth / Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!" (Shelley 2003, ll. 67-8). Frequently, Shelley's hopeful desire for ongoing process and imaginative transformation translates into Crane's end-stop, negative, imaginative maxims (O'Neill 2012, 69).[1] Two of these most striking instances conclude poems by Crane that might, in subtle ways, be construed as more Keatsian in tenor. Rooted in a specific instance of loss, Crane's elegiac "In Praise for an Urn" calls, quietly, into question its own verbal and imaginative achievement in terms that offer a hushed version (ironic in the light of Crane's title) of Keats's rejection of his own word sculpture in "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (Scott 1994). The self- proclaimed unworthiness of Crane's "well-meant idioms" captures an air of Shelley's instruction, after a feigned inspirational collapse of his entreaty to Emily, for his failed "Weak verses, go, kneel at your Sovereign's feet" (Shelley 2003, 528, l. 592). Crane's choice of words, in "Praise for an Urn" are recognisably Shelleyan, even if they reverse the original meaning of "Ode to the West Wind": "Scatter these well-meant idioms / Into the smoky spring that fills / The suburbs, where they will be lost. They are no trophies of the sun" (Crane 1986, 8, ll. 21–24; Lewis 1967, 127).

Crane's reversal of Shelley's hoped-for revival of words and thoughts is sealed by the final assertion, in "Praise for an Urn", that "they are no trophies of the sun". This image is recast in an even more bleakly condensed reformulation of Shelley at the close

[1] O'Neill also notes Crane's more positive re-imagining of Shelley's imagery from "Ode to the West Wind" in "Recitative", O'Neill 2012, 68-69.

of Crane's "North Labrador", where "there is only the shifting of moments / That journey toward no Spring— / No birth, no death, no time, nor sun / In answer" (Crane 1986, 1, 9–12). Crane's "North of Labrador" circumscribes the terrain's geographic desolation and visionary potential, as it "Flings itself silently / Into eternity" and exists in a splendid, though "Darkly Bright", isolation with "no memories" (15, ll. 3–4; ll. 8). Crane recalls the successive, ever shifting, fluxing light and dark, fixed and fluid revelations of Shelley's *The Triumph of Life* that are analogous to the instance:

> [...] the first wave had more than half erased
> The track of deer in desert Labrador
> Whilst the fierce wolf from which they fled amazed
> 'Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore
> Until the second bursts— (Shelley 2003, 617, ll. 406–10)

These lines from Rousseau's account of his own visionary quest end in the birth of a tragic awareness and replay, with less confidence, Shelley's more positive assertion about how the revelatory imagination operates, in *A Defence of Poetry*:

> As it were the interpenetration of a diviner nature through our own, but its footsteps are like those over the sea, which the coming calm erases, and whose traces remain only as on the wrinkled sand which paves it. (Shelley 2003, 697)

Crane's own "shifting of moments" capture both Shelley's less-hopeful successive of vision, in *The Triumph of Life*, and faith in endless natural processes at the end of "Ode to the West Wind", only to militate against such Shelleyan imaginative optimism. Crane's close of "In Praise of an Urn" rejects any prospect of regeneration, succession, temporality, or progression, through a decisively, yet more darkly realised, Keatsian inflected image of "That journey without no Spring" which, in its negation of purpose, tempers Shelley's original image by recalling Keats's description, in *The Fall of Hyperion*, of the Goddess of Memory, Moneta, whose visage, perpetually, works "a constant change [...] deathwards progressing / To no death" (Keats 1979, 484, I, ll. 259–260). This Keatsian image reminds us of the epithet of "still" (372, 1. 1), which captures the unchanged, eternal, stoic object of Keats's funereal urn. Such a stillness is charted by the existential terrain of "To Autumn", characterised by perpetual, but never fulfilled, process (Sandy 2022, 261). Both Crane and Shelley feel the allure of imaginative vision and poetic expression, as much as they fear the tragic outcome of visionary quest and linguistic confinement (O'Neill 2012, 70). Crane's ability to refract Keats's imagery through Shelley's own ensures that we feel these Shelleyan poetic concerns even more keenly on our pulses. We are made more acutely aware, for instance, of the implied tragedy of Shelley's contradictory sense of Emily's ever-shifting presence as a "motion which may change but cannot die" (Shelley 2003, 516, l. 114) through an imaginative interchange with Keats's depiction of Moneta's tragic countenance.

"Earth, and Stars, and Sea": Shelley, Byron, and Crane

Crane's "Harbour Dawn", "Voyages", and "Atlantis" each orbit around, reimagine, and modulate, partly through Byron's erotic response to the ocean, Shelleyan images of celestial light, water, and dramatic endings present in *Epipsychidion* and *Adonais*. Crane's "Voyages" and Shelley's *Epipsychidion* share common ground, as O'Neill rightly observes, in their fascination with the interactions of love and the "possibility of lust [...] ecstasy and anguish, mundanity and vision", as well as sharing a rejoicing in the powers of poetic

language whilst being self-consciously alert to its "dangers" (O'Neill 2012, 70). These shared concerns are also evident in the imagined voyages of Shelley's late lyric, "Lines written in the Bay of Lerici", which helps to illuminate Crane's imaginative reckoning with paradisal havens.

In "Lines written in the Bay of Lerici", Shelley holds out imaginatively, against mounting despair, for the remote paradisal prospect of "some Elysian star" (Shelley 2003, 603, l. 42). The unfolding tragic celestial drama of this late lyric by Shelley recalls the cosmic drama set in motion by *Epipsychidion*. Abandoned by the "One"—symbolising here Jane Williams—who could rival the moon as "Bright wanderer' and 'fair coquette of Heaven", the forlorn speaker of "Lines written in the Bay of Lerici" is haunted by a series of visual and aural "echoes" (Shelley 2003, 602, ll. 20, 1) of the one's absented presence. In *Epipsychidion*, Shelley both allegorises Emilia Viviani as Emily and spiritualises her materiality by depicting "the brightness / Of her divinest presence [which] trembles through / Her limbs" to realise a coalescence of incorporeal spirit and physical embodiment. Anticipating the fled presence of the "One fair" as the "Bright wanderer" (Shelley 2003, ll. 6, 1), Emily's "divinest presence" is barely traceable "Amid the splendour winged-stars" and the profundity of her protean form "too deep / For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense" (Shelley 2003, 515, ll. 81, 89-90; Sandy 2021b, 214).

Habitually, bright dreams or visionary presences, for Shelley, quickly give way to the antithesis of an unsettling shade or shadow. Both operating within and reimaging the poetic imagery of *Alastor*, Shelley compares the initial encounter, in *Epipsychidion*, with the elusive, ever-changing, diffuse, and ever-present Emily as an alluring yet potentially treacherous "shadow of some golden dream" (Shelley 2003, 516, l. 116). As with the contradictory visionary "fleeting shade" (98, l. 206) of *Alastor*, Shelley's enticingly intense visionary female figures remain forever elusive and refuse to be adequately defined in language or fixed in the present (Sandy 2013, 276–277).

Similarly, then, it is only by an act of hopeful imaginative projection, in "Lines written in the Bay of Lerici", that Shelley's paradise of "some Elysian star" might be regained in a future time. Such a future return to the possibility of a prelapsarian bliss may promise to reunite Shelley's questing poet-speaker with the lost visionary female form, but whether the psychic and imaginative schism that her absence inflicts can be fully healed remains uncertain. The metaphorical voyage towards the improbable "Elysian star" both acts as a curative—for Shelley's mariner-like thoughts "sailed for drink to medicine"—and a stinging reminder of the "sweet and bitter pain" (Shelley 2003, 603, ll. 43–44) from which relief is sought.

Frequently, Crane's own visionary quests translate Shelley's twilit, "Elysian star", an emblem of physical and imaginative longing, into paeans to the dawn (and a single dissolving star), which trace out contours of desire and love, as well as estimate the cost of vision. In "The Dance", the intuitive grasp of the "trout's moon whisper" is lost to the passage of time, marked by "watching" the lunar "fleet young crescent die" and the emergent, equally "fleet", presence of "One star, swinging, take its place alone / [...] Until, immortally, it bled into the dawn" (Crane 1986, 62, ll. 21–27). And yet, in Crane's second successive evanescent image of the bleeding dissolution of the immortal star into the dawn, we feel more acutely the desired connection and unbreachable gulf between the eternity of celestial bodies and our own mortality.

A mortality that is bound to visionary yearning and love finds further expression through the more explicitly homoerotic desire of Crane's "The Harbour Dawn". Crane's

marginal commentary recalls, according to Bloom, the allegorical voyage of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1817 revised version of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (Crane 1986, xviii). Yet the gloss to Crane's final stanza offers two erotically charged questions, "*Who is the woman with us in the dawn? . . . whose is the flesh that our feet have moved upon?*" (original emphasis; 54), lend a sensuous tactility and shape to the feminised image of the dawn, which makes incarnate Shelley's elusive "shape all light" who acts, at first, "as if she were the Dawn" before "her feet" obliterate the "gazer's mind [. . .] like embers" (Shelley 2003, 616, ll. 386–387). The imagery of the final two stanzas of "The Harbour Dawn" presses hard towards the possibility of a visionary climax that revolves around a reimagining of Shelley's "some Elysian star" in "Lines Written in the Bay of Lerici". For his part Crane remains, in "The Harbour Dawn", attached to the reality of a Manhattan dawn with its distinctive "blond" light, clearing frost, and fogginess but, like the "darkling harbour" (Crane 1986, 53, l. 12; 54, l. 32) these constitutive elements of the real can be transformed, imaginatively seen through, so that:

> The fog leans one last moment on the sill.
> Under the mistletoe of dreams, a star—
> As though to join us at some distant hill—
> Turns in the waking west and goes to sleep. (54, ll. 36–39)

Like Shelley, Crane's stellar image hinges on longing and the possibility of fulfilment that might not be fully realised, as the 'star' beneath a "mistletoe of dreams" suggests that such dreams may remain merely dreams (O'Neill 2012, 69) just as the star itself fades "in the waking west". Yet Crane's metrical stress on "Turns" accentuates the star's agency (O'Neill 2012, 69) and its potential to embody and, perhaps, actualise the physical and visionary longing that finds hopeful expression in the "mistletoe of dreams". The "mistletoe" represents the promise of annual renewal, as well as a prospect of peace and harmony, and so, when fused with the recast emblem of the Shelleyan star, represents a desired fulfilment of visionary escape that imaginatively looks through, rather than away from, the contingencies and particulars of reality (O'Neill 2012, 69–70).

Crane comes closest to capturing this aspired to creative entanglement of actuality and vision in "Voyages III" where, once again invoking and remoulding Shelleyan emblems, there is an envisioning "Light wrestling there incessantly with light / Star kissing star through wave on wave unto / Your body rocking! // and where death, if shed / Presumes no carnage" (Crane 1986, 36, ll. 12–16). Crane's successful voyaging to this visionary haven is rooted in the permission of desire and love—"Permit me, voyage, love, into your hands . . ." (36, l. 19)—rifts on Shelley's entreaty to Emily in *Epipsychidion*.

Towards the close of *Epipsychidion*, Shelley envisages a temporally and elementally fragile paradisal "isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea" (Shelley 2003, 524, l. 456), to which the speaker entreats Emily to elope with him in the full knowledge that this promised haven "under Ionian skies" is as "Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise" (522, ll. 422–423). Shelley's imagery appreciates the tragic and blissful beauty of this "wreck of Paradise" along with the imaginative, as well as spiritual, possibilities that such a "Paradise" might afford even as it recognises the inevitable tragedy that would ensue from reclaiming such a utopian isle. Crane reverses the polarities of Shelleyan utopian vision and attests that, should his love "Permit me", the visionary haven to which he voyages is bereft of "carnage".

Refracted through "Shelleyan yearning" (O'Neill 2012, 69) and a Whitmanesque alignment of the sea with the birth of tragic poetic consciousness (Crane 1986, xxii-xxiii), the quest of Crane's sequence, "Voyages", translates Byron's tensely visceral relationship with the Mediterranean into a Caribbean clime of oceanic allure and dread in which "the bottom of the sea is cruel" (Crane 1986, 34, l. 16). Instinctively, Crane responds to the masculine power and cruelty of Byron's sea—which, in Canto III of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, had subjugated the self to a mere piece of flotsam and jetsam, nothing more than "as a weed / Flung from the rock" (Byron 2008, 104, 2. ll. 17–18)—to reimagine Byronic "pleasing fear" (Byron 2003, 4. l. 1653) as a "sceptred terror" (Crane 1986, 35, l. 8). Crane feels, Bloom observes, the "erotic merging" (Crane 1986, xxi) with, and allure of the sea's "vast undinal belly moonward bends" (Crane 1986, 35, l. 4). This is also an existential reckoning, for Crane, with the sea's cruelty, her "rimless floods" and "unfettered leewardings", which constitute a Byronic "pleasing fear", crystallised in Crane's realisation that the sea is "this great wink of eternity" (Crane 1986, 35, ll. 1-4).

The complex symbolic layering of Crane's poetic voyaging recasts, for Bloom, both an Eliotic and Yeatsian image of redemptive fire (Crane 1986, xviii-xix), derived, respectively, from *The Waste Land* and *Sailing to Byzantium*. Redemption is glimpsed on the horizon, as we are bound to time and subject to the "minstrel galleons of Carib fire / [which] Bequeath us to no earthly shore" until our arrival at the terminus of the "vortex of our grave" (35, ll. 23–24). Crane's angst about the "vortex of our grave" is a reason to resist the "earthly shore" until such a visionary moment that "The seal's wide spindrift gaze toward paradise" (35, ll. 23-25). This Cranean image reverses a Shelleyan fear, in *Adonais*, of voyaging out "far from the shore" into a desired postponement of an attachment to earthly contingencies until such a moment that we can snatch a glimpse of "paradise". Such a paradise is as precarious as the hoped-for, but never arrived at, paradisal "isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth, and Sea" of Shelley's *Epipsychidion*. Shelley's rejection of a counterfeit figure of Emily in the visionary quest of *Epipsychidion* also lends shape to another intense imaginative reckoning of the worth of vision in Crane's poetry. In *For the Marriage of Helen and Faustus*, Crane breaks through those falsified "metallic paradises" of the "grotesque divine" to a purer, if not perfected vision, of the "The siren of the springs of guilty song" that he commends us "to take on the incandescent wax" (Crane 1986, 29-30, 24, 29, 31-32). The image holds out for the promise of a revelatory whiteness, a reoccurring motif in Crane's poetry and, symbolic of aesthetic completion, is the holy grail and endpoint of his visionary quest. Whiteness, for Crane, in visionary moments, such as "And gradually white buildings answer day" or "Belle Isle, the white echo of the oar!" (ll. 25-26; 40, l. 28), privilege stasis over Shelleyan visionary process. In this sense, whiteness as Crane's final imaginative attainment is akin to, yet distinct from, the illuminating opacity of Shelley's "loftiest star of unascended heaven / Pinnacled dim in the intense inane" (Shelley 2003, 204, 3. iv, l. 204; O'Neill 2012, 69, Lewis 1967, 125–126). Shelley's image implies potential action, transformation, and ascent which, through its subtle negatively inflected "unascended heaven" (Webb 1983, 57), further urges the need for process and change rather than settling for an easy satisfaction with the dim stillness of the "loftiest star".

Byron's oceanic overtures linger only to shimmer into even more distinct Shelleyan tones in Crane's "Voyages" sequence. In "Voyages III", for instance, death is imagined as a reconfiguration of the "shape all light". Shelley's figure, from *The Triumph of Life*, who "with one hand did fling / Dew on the earth, as if she were the Dawn / Whose

invisible rain forever seemed to sing" (Shelley 2003, 615, ll. 352–354), in Crane's vision, is transmuted into one that "Upon the steep floor flung from dawn to dawn / The silken skilled transmemberment of song" (Crane 1986, 36, ll. 17–18). Crane's lines nonchalantly gesture towards the dismemberment, transformation, and "transvaluation" (O'Neill 2012, 70) of the poetic textures of his many Romantic forebears performed by the operations of his own poetry. Nowhere is this more evident than in the final stanza of "Voyages VI" that recall the sonic resonances of Byron's theatrical bowing out, with his repeated "farewell", at the close of *Childe Harold* Canto IV; "a word", as Byron writes, 'that must be, and hath been— / A sound which makes us linger" (Byron 2008, 201, 4. ll. 1866–1867). The conclusion to Crane's sequence performs an anti-valediction which, with an involved self-allusion to Crane's own "Repose of Rivers"—where "heard like wind flaking sapphire" the "willows could not more steady sound" asserts the permanence of the "imaged Word" capable of holding "Hushed willows in its glow / It is the unbetrayable reply / Whose accent no farewell can know" (Crane 1986 , 40, ll. 30–33).

Crane knows, all too well, that self-allusion and theatrical finale are defining features of Shelley's climactic stanzas of *Adonais*. On the one hand, they exude a confidence in an existential voyaging out that has safely ensured Keats (transmuted into the mythical invention of Adonais) his apotheosis and an enticingly, perpetually, existence beyond time and space as a constant that "like a star / Beacons from the abode where the eternal are" (Shelly 2003, 545, ll. 494–495). On the other, such a voyaging out is undertaken with trepidation and genuine regret—"Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?"—for moving beyond the "web of being" which is comprised of "man and beast and earth and air and sea" (544, ll. 482–483). "I am", as Shelley's elegist attests, "borne, darkly, fearfully, afar", but such doubt gathers imaginative impetus and drive by reshaping Dante's image of a reluctant skiff into the "spirit's bark is driven", summoning (through self-allusion) the "breath" of "Ode to the West Wind", and reimagining, even more darkly, Keats's imagery of the "shore / of the wide world" from the sonnet, "When I Have Fears that I May Cease to Be' (Keats 1979, 226, l. 13; Shelly 2003, 545, stanza 55). Shelley's elegy ends with a blending of imaginative transformations and self-reflexive allusion that grounds the "abode where the eternal are" in an "extra-poetic reality" (O'Neill 2012, 72).

By contrast, the energetic and complex weavings of Crane's figural language of desire jettison any attachment to the referential in "Atlantis", the climactic sequence to the epic vision of *The Bridge* (Bloom 1969, 142–143; Bloom 2020, 547–558).[2] Resistant, as much of Crane's poetry is to paraphrase, the final stanza of "Atlantis" through its self-consciously shifting figures recognises the ever-shifting, fictive nature, of the visionary insights or truths that poetry and its own imaginings constructs:

> So to thine Everpresence, beyond time,
> Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star
> That bleeds infinity—the orphic strings
> Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge:
> —One Song, one Bridge of Fire! (Crane 1986, 107-108, ll. 89–93)

The celestial, infinite, and spiritual are melded with the mortal, temporal, and earthly, even as Crane's final question acknowledges them as belonging to separate

[2] Bloom insightful suggests that Crane also derives the poetic energy of "Atlantis" from Shelley's image making in "To a Skylark" (Bloom 2020, 553-556).

spheres that are perpetually entangled with one another. Here refashioned in the forge of Crane's imagination is a Shelleyan mosaic of the paradisal (or "eternal abode"), the beaconing star, and the invocation of the power of the wind. Crane's self-reflexive and heart-felt question—"Is it Cathay / Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring / The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . .? Whispers antiphonal in azure swing" (108, ll. 94–96)—derives from a Shelleyan self-conscious questioning mode that voiced its own misgivings (translated by Crane into "Whispers antiphonal") about the power of the imagination and the ideals sought through visionary poetic quests. There is also amidst Crane's myriad images and suggestive meanings other traces of rewrought Shelleyan imagery caught in the enwreathed, distinct, yet entangled forces of serpent and eagle that recall *Laon and Cythna* (O'Neill 2012, 79) and those "rainbow rings" which dazzle with the iridescent presence of the "shape all light" from *The Triumph of Life*.

Crane's poetic vision commits to a Shelleyan Romantic quest for the absolute, nature, and the sublime, as much as its Modernist sensibilities stretch the imaginative possibilities of these ideals that it continually calls into question. Such questioning may hint at those failures of Crane's over extended visionary Shelleyan quest, but it also amplifies those shortcomings, feigned falling offs, questions, self-doubts, and sceptical idealisms that form the weft of Shelley's vision quest poetry. The pattern of Shelley's poetic quest, for W. B. Yeats, traces out "a vision of a boat drifting down a broad river between high hills where there were caves and towers [. . .] following the light of one Star" in search of an ideal "secret life" (Yeats 1997, 351). Yeats rightly recognises that these concerns in Shelley's visionary quest poetry constellate around images of light, love, and precarious voyaging out; imagery which in its various recast forms return again and again to readers of Crane's poetry.

Invariably, Crane was drawn to these Shelleyan images of visionary aspiration and found in them a means to navigate and renegotiate Shelley's own imaginative claims and those of Wordsworth, Keats, and Byron. A Shelleyan crucible of the imagination with its powers of transformation and transmogrification was instructive to Crane's creation of a smelting pot of post-symbolist re-imaginings that transmute and transvalue Romantic emblems to see not with, but through, the visionary eye.

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