

The Echoes of the Bell: Romantic Continuity from Melville and Hart Crane to Tennessee Williams

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"Are your fingers long enough to play
Old keys that are but echoes:
Is the silence strong enough
To carry back the music to its source
And back to you again
As though to her?"

Hart Crane, "My Grandmother's
Love Letters"

Hart Crane: The Bridge between Melville and Tennessee Williams

Criticism has come to acknowledge the influence of the life and poetry of Hart Crane on Tennessee Williams.¹ It is quite possible, then, that Williams sensed the influence that Herman Melville in his turn had on Crane. There are some critics who have discussed Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer* in relation to Melville's "The Encantadas" and *Moby-Dick*.² However, it is likely that the worlds of Williams and Melville are bridged by the presence of Crane. Gilbert Debusscher was the first to articulate "the relationship of Williams to Melville, a relationship that might possibly involve a third presence."³ Williams wrote in one of his letters (dated March 25, 1946): "Funny, I was reminded of that work [Melville's *Billy Budd*] recently while reading over Crane's 'Cutty Sark.'"⁴ And Debusscher has called attention to *Steps Must Be Gentle*, Williams' one-act play whose title is a quotation from Crane's "My Grandmother's Love Letters." Indeed, this is a play *about* Crane the poet, and, what is more, Crane's "At Melville's Tomb" is discussed by the poet's mother at one point in the play.⁵

This paper, then, attempts to elucidate one way in which Williams suc-

ceeds Crane, who, in his turn, inherits a certain literary standpoint from Melville. In spite of the difference in literary genres, the work of these three writers exhibits a remarkable continuity. In what follows, I shall focus on three works specifically: Melville's "The Bell-Tower," Crane's "The Broken Tower," and Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*. With Crane's poem as a pivotal text, I shall reverse the chronological order and start with discussion of *Streetcar*. That is because the later work seems to provide us with an insight into the earlier work, enabling us to "carry back the music to its source," as Crane puts it. In so doing, I wish to highlight the problem of gender — the problem of how these three male writers respond to the feminine in their own works.

A Streetcar Named Desire / "The Broken Tower"

The reader of Williams' *Streetcar* is reminded of the crucial presence of Crane by the play's epigraph, the fifth stanza of "The Broken Tower." Critics all agree that the epigraph aptly recapitulates the theme of the play — "the broken world" of Blanche DuBois and, by extension, of the playwright himself. Thus Esther Merle Jackson has entitled her excellent study of Williams *The Broken World of Tennessee Williams*.⁶ Crane's poem, however, is something more than a mere example that shows "brokenness." A closer reading of "The Broken Tower" reveals rather deeper and more significant connections between the poem as a whole and Williams' play than has been suggested by these critics. There are also important, perhaps unnoticed, echoes of Crane's voice in *Streetcar*.

The play-text opens with Williams' stage directions which describe the setting of the play. What is remarkable here is the emphasis put on the image of white architecture. The houses in this neighborhood are "*mostly white frame, weathered grey*"; the building on the stage has "*[f]aded white stairs*";

*The sky that shows around the dim white building is a peculiarly tender blue, almost turquoise, which invests the scene with a kind of lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay.*⁷

The recurrent image of rather soiled whiteness may serve as a prelude to the

advent of Blanche (White). However, when the apartment where she comes to stay is referred to as the “white building,” it is hard not to recall the title of Hart Crane’s first book: *White Buildings*. From this collection of poems Williams has often cited the poet’s words for his own plays’ titles and epigraphs.⁸ Williams here covertly declares that *Streetcar* is going to be a play deeply inspired by the Cranean lyricism. Among many lyrics in *White Buildings*, “Voyages,” one of the central works in the collection, merits special emphasis. In a fugitive moment of epiphany in “Voyages II,” Crane juxtaposes apparently discordant things: “sleep, death, desire, / Close round one instant in one floating flower.”⁹ Blanche’s discussion of the key concept of *Streetcar* — desire as opposed to death — is thus pertinent here:

BLANCHE: The opposite is desire. So do you wonder? How could you possibly wonder! Not far from Belle Reve, before we had lost Belle Reve, was a camp where they trained young soldiers. On Saturday nights they would go in town to get drunk —

MEXICAN WOMAN [*softly*]: *Corones* . . .

BLANCHE: — and on the way back they would stagger on to my lawn and call — “Blanche! Blanche!” — The deaf old lady remaining suspected nothing. But sometimes I slipped outside to answer their calls Later the paddy-wagon would gather them up like daisies . . . the long way home . . . (206)

Ironically, Blanche is not correct when she defines desire as the opposite of death. Rather, the drunken soldiers’ sleepiness, their imminent fate of death, and their sexual desire “[c]lose round one instant” here. The last phrase of the above-cited lines (“the long way home”) seems a clear enough echo of the last line of “Voyages V”: ‘Draw in your head and sleep the long way home.’¹⁰ As the speaker of Crane’s poem wistfully invites his lover to join him in sleep one last time, so Blanche has a fleeting moment of pleasure, thereby surrendering herself to an Eros that is no longer distinguishable from Thanatos.

These instances seem to endorse the possibility that the influence of Crane on Williams has wider implications in our reading of *Streetcar* than has gener-

ally been supposed. The playwright's choice of "The Broken Tower" as the play's epigraph, then, was in no way a casual act. Fortunately, Williams has left a clue to his interpretation of the poem. In a brief essay written for his recorded reading of Crane's poems,¹¹ Williams explains how "Crane had lived and worked with . . . fearful intensity" and how "his nerves were exhausted." Then he goes on to cite in italics a key line from "The Broken Tower":

*The bells, I say, the bells
Break down their tower.*

What is significant here is the way in which Williams directs his attention to the crucial metaphor of the poem: "By the bells breaking down their tower, Crane undoubtedly meant the romantic and lyric intensity of his vocation." When we turn to *Streetcar*, we note that the "fearful" but "romantic" intensity Williams speaks of can be applied to the character of Blanche. Furthermore, the image of a bell is ironically connected with the heroine's destiny in the play. A delicate hint of this connection is given at the end of scene 2, where the stage directions say that we hear "BLANCHE's *desperate laughter ringing out*" (142). An explicit reference to a bell can be found in scene 7; as she sings a happy and romantic popular song ("It's Only a Paper Moon") in the bathroom, "BLANCHE's *voice is lifted again, serenely as a bell*" (191). The link between Blanche and bell imagery is established in an obviously symbolic way in the final scene when the heroine, hearing the cathedral bells chime, says almost to herself: "Those cathedral bells — they're the only clean thing in the Quarter" (219). While the bells are heard, she goes on to relate her impossible longing for romantic death at sea:

I will die — with my hand in the hand of some nice-looking ship's doctor, a very young one with a small blond moustache and a big silver watch. 'Poor lady,' they'll say, 'the quinine did her no good. That unwashed grape has transported her soul to heaven.' [*The cathedral chimes are heard.*] And I'll be buried at sea sewn up in a clean white sack and dropped overboard — at noon — in the blaze of summer — and into

an ocean as blue as [*chimes again*] my first lover's eyes! (220)

Reminiscent of Crane who buried himself in the sea (and also of Billy Budd's last moment), the passage above is a fitting expression of Williams' concern with the theme of romantic self-destruction expressed in "The Broken Tower." Blanche's breakdown is due in large part to her desperate efforts to stand for a romanticism whose emblem is the bell.

There is no doubt that the bell, associated with the heroine in this way, becomes a feminine emblem. Blanche's fight is fought, one might say, against the masculine sensibilities clearly represented by Stanley. This impression is reinforced by the fact that the sound of the word "bell" calls to mind another word which is French in its origin. In fact, Blanche, at least in her youth, was a Southern *belle*. It is at this point that I turn my attention to the unforgettable name of the plantation where Blanche was brought up — Belle Reve. As Leonard Quirino points out, it is a "grammatically incorrect name (feminine adjective modifying masculine noun)." ¹² This mistake, however, does not seem to have resulted from Williams' carelessness. On the contrary, it is a conscious strategy on the part of the playwright, for life at Belle Reve means to Blanche a life shared with her young poet-husband about whom there was "something different," "a softness and tenderness which wasn't like a man's" (182). In other words, Belle Reve is an ideal place where the Dream that is predominantly masculine in America can be Frenchified and feminized. Such a fusion of masculinity and femininity conceived as "Beautiful Dream," however, is not allowed to last for long. Platonic or androgynous poise is shattered by the suicide of Blanche's husband, which leaves the heroine fatally broken. The loss of Belle Reve therefore drives Blanche into a world where human beings are divided into two irreconcilable sexes.

If Blanche's emblem is a bell, Stanley, her opponent, as his name clearly suggests, is emblemized by stone. In her memorable speech in scene 4, Blanche attacks Stanley by defining him as a "survivor of the Stone Age" (163). The opposition between these two emblems — the tension between the refined, feminine bell and the sturdy, masculine stone — is a central schema that leads us back to Crane and further back to Melville. The possible germ of the Stanley/stone image is in Crane's "The Broken Tower." Here are the

last two stanzas of the poem:

And [my chest] builds, within, a tower that is not stone
 (Not stone can jacket heaven) — but slip
 Of pebbles, — visible wings of silence sown
 In azure circles, widening as they dip

The matrix of the heart, lift down the eye
 That shrines the quiet lake and swells a tower . . .
 The commodious, tall decorum of that sky
 Unseals her earth, and lifts love in its shower.¹³

Lee Edelman's insight helps us to see that in these lines the poet reconstructs the tower "as a more fragile 'slip of pebbles,' feminizing it through the connotation of the 'slip' as a female undergarment in opposition to the earlier 'jacket' of stone."¹⁴ Perhaps Williams subtly echoes in *Streetcar* this contrast between the feminine "slip" and the masculine "jacket." We note that the characters' clothes, throughout the play, have symbolic implications. For one thing, it is no accident that Blanche is dressed in white, while the poker players wear the shirts of primary colors. Clothes are especially important in regard to Blanche, who declares: "clothes are my passion!" (136). One thing that is noticeable about her appearance is that she is not always properly dressed. Even in the presence of men, Blanche provocatively shows up in dishabille. Coming out of the bathroom in a satin robe, she says to Stanley: "Excuse me while I slip on my pretty new dress!" (135); while the men are playing cards, she "*takes off the blouse and stands in her pink silk brassière and white skirt in the light through the portières*" (146). But the feminine, flimsy image evoked by Blanche's lingerie is met with an antagonistic image later in the play. When Blanche meets the strange doctor at the door, she quickly slips back into the flat only to be seized by the matron, "*a peculiarly sinister figure in her severe dress*" (223). As Blanche slips to her knees, the matron, who lacks "*all the softer properties of womanhood*" (223), utters the ominous word: "Jacket, Doctor?" (225). "Jacket" here is symbolic of a prison-like asylum with its masculine harshness and severity. The bell as

a romantic emblem is reduced in this scene to a “*fire-bell*” (223) that is the matron’s bold and toneless voice, which threateningly reverberates as if through “*a canyon of rocks*” (223) — a merciless world of “stone.” To borrow her own phrase, we may say that Blanche is crushed by “the rock of the world” (205).

Williams’ special interest in the final stanzas of “The Broken Tower” is assured by a passage in *Steps Must Be Gentle*, a play written in the same year as *Streetcar* (1947).¹⁵ Toward the end of this play, Crane’s mother alludes to the penultimate stanza of the poem in question, speaking imploringly to her son:

I have made it my dedication, my vocation, to protect your name, your legend, against the filthy scandals that you’d seemed determined to demolish them with. Despite my age, my illness, I have carried the stones to build your tower again.¹⁶

Though the poet in “The Broken Tower” attempts to build “a tower that is not stone,” Crane’s mother has “carried the stones” for the tower. The poet’s mother, according to Williams’ dramatization, willfully misreads her son’s text, wishing him to build a stone-tower with virile dignity. But the poet, failing to play the role expected of him, moves with Oedipal impulse into the “matrix” of the heart (Hart). Now the eye (I) keeps within itself at once “the quiet lake” of femaleness and “a tower” of maleness. This eye, as Marius Bewley writes, is “both the eye of the poet and the eye of heaven.”¹⁷ Thus the “sky” has the “eye” in it both phonetically and contextually. Interestingly enough, the usually masculine sky is feminized here: the “sky / Unseals *her* earth” (my *italics*). However, the poem ends with a masculine, orgasmic “shower” or, more precisely perhaps, a geyser, which shoots out from the unsealed earth. At this point we may recall another reference by Williams to Crane:

“Life!” the gob exclaimed to Crane,
 “Oh, life’s a geyser!”
 Oui, d’accord —

from the rectum of the earth.¹⁸

Williams seems to be hinting at "The Broken Tower" here, being fully aware of Crane's desire to celebrate both male and female sexualities. The lines belong to a poem by Williams that is titled, not surprisingly, "Androgyne, Mon Amour."

"The Broken Tower" / "The Bell-Tower"

As I have tried to show in the previous section, the basic design of "The Broken Tower" can be viewed as a male artist's acceptance of his inner female sexuality. This, I believe, is in a sense also Crane's response to Melville, one of the greatest precursors of the poet. In particular, "The Bell-Tower," Melville's short story, seems to provide a subtext for Crane in "The Broken Tower." The relation between the story and the poem has been mentioned by Harold Bloom, who calls Crane "a superb interpreter of Melville."¹⁹ In fact, a mere comparison between the following two sentences shows they have concerns in common: Crane says, "The bells, I say, the bells break down their tower," while Melville declares at the end of his story that "the bell was too heavy for the tower."²⁰ Though Crane, unlike Melville, turns tragedy into triumph by rebuilding a tower at the end, the poem's title remains "The Broken Tower" after all. Both artists are fatally drawn to the image of a bell which inescapably involves some form of destruction. The echoes of the bell in (Williams and) Crane can be traced back to Melville's seemingly equivocal story. The opening stanza of Crane's poem presents the agony of public pressure on the poet.

The bell-rope that gathers God at dawn
 Dispatches me as though I dropped down the knell
 Of a spent day — to wander the cathedral lawn
 From pit to crucifix, feet chill on steps from hell.

The tortured gap between private and public self manifests itself in the double meaning of the word "dispatch" in the second line. The poet is "put to

death,” being obliged, against his true personality, to play a public role as the one who is “sent off” as divine messenger. In spite of his imperfect ability to meet the demands of the faithful, the poet walking in the hellish “pit” must now climb to a sanctified “crucifix.” This situation is comparable with that of Bannadonna, the protagonist of “The Bell-Tower”; for Melville’s story, too, concerns, as one critic notes, “the enormous difference between Bannadonna as he really is and as the world sees him”²¹ Since he is one of those beings of whom few things are ascertainable, Bannadonna is in many ways misunderstood by the public. Without grasping the true nature of Bannadonna, the popular view defines him as a heroic mechanic who represents the republic’s patriarchal authority. That is why, at the end of the story, they hold a “stately funeral” (212) for Bannadonna. Crane’s passage “I dropped down the knell” reminds us of what happens at this funeral: Bannadonna’s bell, when it is about to ring a knell for its caster, literally drops down from the tower to the ground far below, because the “powerful peasant” who has “the bell-rope in charge” has “swayed down upon the rope with one concentrate jerk” (212).

It is important to emphasize the fact that the “most robust man of the country around” (212) has been chosen for the bell-ringer. This episode seems to suggest the way in which society regards the bell as a symbol of sovereignty and mightiness. Bannadonna’s bell, however, cannot respond to the masculine pull of the “powerful peasant.” We should remember that the bell is “strangely feeble” (212) because it is flawed by the blood of a man who has turned coward and been killed in the process of casting. Far from indicative of masculine power, the bell shows “the timidity of the ill-starred workman” (212). Moreover, the bell reveals “beauty in its shyest grace” (201), as it is “adorned with girls and garlands” (202, 206). But the general public remain ignorant of the female figures on the bell that attest to Bannadonna’s delicate artistry. The following lines from Crane’s poem should be read, I believe, with such a situation in mind.

Have you not heard, have you not seen that corps
Of shadows in the tower, whose shoulders sway
Antiphonal carillons launched before

The stars are caught and hived in the sun's ray?

The bells, I say, the bells break down their tower;
And swing I know not where. Their tongues engrave
Membrane through marrow, my long-scattered score
Of broken intervals . . . And I, their sexton slave!

Crane is keenly conscious of "that corps / Of shadows in the tower" — the bells as the hidden, ominous *core* of the tower. The poet's language is derived necessarily from the bells' inner "tongues" which "engrave / Membrane through marrow," but the bells are inexorably incompatible with their tower. Crane's argument here, one might say, serves as a perfect commentary on the sexual conflict that is implicit in Melville's Bell-Tower. In contrast with the feminine nature of Bannadonna's bell, his tower is undoubtedly masculine. Its phallic implication is obvious when the "ever-ascending" tower is likened to a "torch" or "rocket" (197); when the protagonist, "mounting" the top of the tower, stands "erect, alone, with folded arms" (198). And it is precisely this manliness that society favors; for the popular response is also described in terms of aggressive masculinity: "amid the firing of the ordnance," Bannadonna receives "the people's combustions of applause" that come to him "like the cannon booms" (198).

If we recall the fact that Bannadonna's tower is a "stone pine" which he has made "[s]tone by stone" (197), the opposition between the bell and stone that we have already seen also holds true in Melville's story. This dual design seems more deep-rooted in Melville's imagination than it first appears. Such a design can also be found in *Pierre* where we may safely say that the central tension of the novel stems from the relation between Isabel (who has, true to her strange musicality, gone by the name of "Bell") and Pierre (whose name means "stone"). And whatever the novel's subtitle — "The Ambiguities" — means, it surely involves sexual ambiguities: "I am called woman," says Isabel, "and thou, man, Pierre; but there is neither man or woman about it. Why should I not speak out to thee? There is no sex in our immaculateness."²² Defying sexual differentiation, Isabel drives Pierre and herself into mutual destruction. The "bell" and the "stone," if they are found together,

cannot go hand in hand under social pressure. It is in this connection that Melville observes that “self-reciprocally efficient hermaphrodites” are “but a fable.”²³

In considering the contrast between the bell and the tower, it is interesting to note that Melville’s work is always obsessed by the image of a circle as opposed to line.²⁴ In “The Bell-Tower,” Bannadonna’s tower stands tall and straight in its linear ascent, while the protagonist’s bell is peculiarly characterized by its circularity. One remarkable feature of his bell is “its rotary motion” (198). “Round and round the bell,” moreover, the female figures dance “in a choral ring” (201). This image brings us back to Crane’s poem, where the *ring* of a bell is graphically conceived as oval.

Oval encyclicals in canyons heaping
The impasse high with choir. Banked voices slain!
Pagodas, campaniles with reveilles outleaping —
O terraced echoes prostrate on the plain!

An oval, clearly visualized by the capital letter “O,” might be called a distorted circle. Since the bells are crushed to the ground, their sound cannot properly be spread out in circles. (It is not until the poem nears its end that the “azure circles” and the circle of the “eye” assert themselves.) The bells’ “voices” and “echoes” are personified here — and they are female rather than male, for Echo, we may remember, is originally a nymph.²⁵ And “the plain” on which these echoes lie prostrate is suggestive of “the plain” where Melville sets the scene of his story — “the plain” on which Bannadonna’s tower, along with its bell, is finally broken down: “The stone-pine, with all its bower of songsters, lay overthrown upon the plain” (212). Hence the fifth stanza of Crane’s poem, which, incidentally, provides the epigraph to Williams’ *Streetcar*:

And so it was I entered the broken world
To trace the visionary company of love, its voice
An instant in the wind (I know not whither hurled)
But not for long to hold each desperate choice.

By now it seems apparent that “the broken world” is a world where the feminine (bell) and the masculine (stone-tower) cannot exist as a single entity. The bell-tower set up as an emblem of androgyny, then, cannot help bringing destruction upon itself. That is because Crane, or Melville, for that matter, is painfully aware of the feminine in himself, which he knows society expects him to suppress, but which he cannot fully control. The poet wanders blindly to “trace the visionary company of love,” his own broken vision of androgyny, but in vain.

A guilty conscience about being feminine as a man is perhaps less poignant in Crane’s poem than in Melville’s story. If Bannadonna’s tower embodies the ego in the Freudian sense, his bell may be an externalization of the id, which, in this case, implies the protagonist’s own repressed female elements. However, the super-ego, or Bannadonna’s conscience, does not permit him to present his bell as a feminine, romantic emblem of grace and beauty. Bannadonna connects his bell with the clock-work, which serves a practical purpose and therefore justifies him. Melville’s introduction of the figure of Haman commands special attention in this context. Haman is the automaton in the belfry, secretly created by Bannadonna. Apparently the automaton is made for striking the bell to announce the hour. It is also called Talus, but we should not forget that Bannadonna himself names it Haman. Since many circumstances in the story contribute toward the impression that Haman may be something more than a mere robot, it is often pointed out with good reason that the name Haman connotes “half-man.”²⁶ Bannadonna designs his creature to be a faithful, half-human “vassal” (202). Furthermore, Bannadonna makes it clear that Haman’s function is to “sever that loved clasp” (202) of the female figures who, hand in hand, dance around the bell. Haman, then, is an agent of the male, who literally strikes, or attacks, Bannadonna’s feminine emblem. Creating a kind of male duplicate, Bannadonna tries to go beyond his own bell.

Ironically, though, Haman turns out to be “half-man” in the sense that it is not clearly on the side of the male. It is noteworthy that Bannadonna at first refers to Haman as “him,” and then corrects himself by calling his creature “it” (202). The shift from “him” to “it” not only reflects the opposition between living man and inanimate things, but also predicts, as a dra-

matic irony, the ambiguity of Haman's gender (the shift from the masculine to the neuter). In fact, the automaton's ultimate role in the story is that of "Jael over nailed Sisera in the tent" (206) — the vengeful woman in the Old Testament. It would be appropriate here to cite "a Private MS" that Melville has attached to the story: "*Like negroes, these powers own man sullenly; mindful of their higher master; while serving, plot revenge*" (195).

Bannadonna's entire design reveals his desire to *ban a donna* — to dispense with woman.²⁷ In other words, Bannadonna, at least on an unconscious level, wishes to be self-sufficient — both male and female himself. However, his conscious self tries to dispense not only with real woman but also with the feminine in himself. In creating Haman, Bannadonna even attempts, as a man, to preempt the female role in creation. Such a god-like scheme might have had some appeal to Crane, who asks himself:

My word I poured. But was it cognate, scored
Of that tribunal monarch of the air
Whose thigh embronzes earth, strikes crystal Word
In wounds pledged once to hope, — cleft to despair?

It is true that the poet's "word" does aspire toward the condition of the "crystal Word" of God; but he is rather ambivalent toward man's lofty attempt to transcend mortal limitations, for he is not blind to the tragic end such an attempt inevitably brings about. With the following stanzas as a turning point, then, Crane's poem turns from the Word to the Flesh, swerving from the path that Melville's story has taken.

The steep encroachments of my blood left me
No answer (could blood hold such a lofty tower
As flings the question true?) — or is it she
Whose sweet mortality stirs latent power? —

And through whose pulse I hear, counting the strokes
My veins recall and add, revived and sure
The angelus of wars my chest evokes:
What I hold healed, original now, and pure . . .

Here, suddenly, the mysterious “she / Whose sweet mortality stirs latent power” appears. Bewley rightly suggests that “she is a gracious evocation from the very center of Crane’s own being,” for “Crane counts the beats of her pulse, but it is important to observe that the throbbing is in his own veins.”²⁸ Crane thus exhibits a striking contrast to Melville, whose male hero clings to his bloodless creature and denies the mortal blood which is “the bell’s main weakness” (213). Crane’s personal triumph (which is, by the same token, his tragedy on a social level) lies in his acceptance of a blood which contains male and female elements. Freed from his preoccupation with the public self, the poet now faces his internal concern. Crane concludes the poem, as we have seen in the earlier section, by turning his attention to the “matrix of the heart” and celebrating his natural sexuality with the sanction of the sky and the earth.

We may draw a tentative conclusion that Melville inevitably represses the feminine, while Crane chooses to accept it; and that Williams makes his heroine a tragic loser and paradoxically elevates the feminine over the masculine. In any case, however, the trio of American writers show their common interest in the problem of gender. For all differences of their stance toward the matter, they are all inescapably fascinated with the beauty and burden the bell, which becomes the highest emblem of romanticism — a romanticism necessarily sprung, so they claim, from their own feminine sensibilities. In one crucial aspect, then, these three men assert a definite tradition in the broader context of American literature.

Notes

- 1 See Gilbert Debusscher, “‘Minting Their Separate Wills’: Tennessee Williams and Hart Crane,” rpt. in *Modern Critical Views: Tennessee Williams*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 1987) 113-30. Also, see Bloom’s introduction in *ibid.* 1-8.
- 2 See James R. Hurt, “*Suddenly Last Summer*: Williams and Melville,” *Modern Drama* 3 (1960): 396-400; Judith J. Thompson, *Tennessee Williams’ Plays: Memory, Myth, and Symbol* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987) 106-10.
- 3 Debusscher 126.
- 4 See *Tennessee Williams’ Letters to Donald Windham, 1940-1965*, ed. Donald Windham (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977) 184.
- 5 Crane’s mother alludes to the poem in question: “If those bones thrown and scattered on the ocean’s floor, like a gambler’s dice, as you said, have in them no blood of mine, then how could they have a heart in them whose central concern is with me?” *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams*, vol 2 (New York: New Direc-

- tions, 1981) 324.
- 6 Esther Merle Jackson, *The Broken World of Tennessee Williams* (Madison and Milwaukee: The Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1965).
 - 7 Tennessee Williams, *Sweet Bird of Youth, A Streetcar Named Desire, The Glass Menagerie* (New York: Penguin, 1984) 115. Page references to the play, hereafter cited parenthetically in the text, are to this edition.
 - 8 Williams' *Summer and Smoke* takes its title from Crane's "Emblems of Conduct"; *Steps Must Be Gentle*, as I mentioned in the text, from "My Grandmother's Love Letters." The epigraphs to Williams' *The Strangest Kind of Romance*, and *Sweet Bird of Youth* are taken, respectively, from Crane's "Chaplinesque" and "Legend."
 - 9 *The Poems of Hart Crane*, ed. Marc Simon (New York: Liveright, 1986) 35.
 - 10 *Ibid.* 38.
 - 11 For the following quotations, see the slipcover of the cassette tape: "Tennessee Williams Reads Hart Crane" (New York: Caedmon, 1966); or, see Debusscher 118.
 - 12 Leonard Quirino, "The Cards Indicate a Voyage on *A Streetcar Named Desire*," *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute*, ed. Jac Tharpe (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977) 82.
 - 13 *The Poems of Hart Crane* 160. From here on, I quote "The Broken Tower" from this edition.
 - 14 Lee Edelman, *Transmemberment of Song: Hart Crane's Anatomies of Rhetoric and Desire* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1987) 270.
 - 15 *Steps Must Be Gentle* was first published in 1980, but it was written much earlier. See Roger Boxill, *Modern Dramatist: Tennessee Williams* (London: Macmillan, 1987) 161.
 - 16 *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams* 325-36.
 - 17 Marius Bewley, "Hart Crane's Last Poem," rpt. in *Modern Critical Views: Hart Crane*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 1986) 40.
 - 18 Tennessee Williams, *Androgyne, Mon Amour* (New York: New Directions, 1977) 17.
 - 19 *Modern Critical Views: Herman Melville*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea, 1986) 4.
 - 20 Herman Melville, *Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Stories* (New York: Penguin, 1985) 213. Page references to "The Bell-Tower," hereafter cited parenthetically in the text, are to this edition.
 - 21 William B. Dillingham, *Melville's Short Fiction, 1853-1856* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1977) 226.
 - 22 Herman Melville, *Pierre, or The Ambiguities* (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern UP, 1971) 149.
 - 23 *Ibid.* 259.
 - 24 For Melville's imagery of circle and line, see John Seelye, *Melville: The Ironic Diagram* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1970).
 - 25 I am indebted here to Thomas E. Yingling, who calls attention to Echo's gender. See Yingling, *Hart Crane and the Homosexual Text: New Thresholds, New Anatomies* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990) 54-55.
 - 26 See Harold Beaver's notes on this name. (*Billy Budd, Sailor and Other Stories* 441.) Also, see Marvin Fisher, *Going Under: Melville's Short Fiction and the American 1850s* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1977) 99.
 - 27 Marvin Fisher seems to have this pun in mind when he says: "Bannadonna's name suggests that he dispenses with woman." Fisher 101.
 - 28 Bewley 38-39.