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## Hart Crane and William James: The Psychology of Mysticism

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In the end, we must judge the success of Hart Crane's verse in Jamesian terms; we must judge the failure of his life in Freudian terms. Before going into our Jamesian analysis, we might admit a few Freudian insights by way of a context. Topping the list, the struggle for sexual identity no doubt loomed foremost in Crane's final, fatal torments, a struggle that had Crane on one day paying lavish tribute to Peggy Cowley for rescuing him from homosexuality—"I am very happy because I have discovered I am not a homosexual"—while on another day he might revert to his old ways categorically: "She thinks she can reform me, does she? I'll show her! Why, God damn her, I'd rather sleep with a man any day than with her!"<sup>1</sup> That struggle in turn clearly stems back to his unhappy relationship with his parents, both of whom seemed to typify the classic homosexual's background. Of the elder Cranes, the cold and aloof father was trouble enough for the estranged poet, who at times felt wholly abandoned: "CA's silence can mean only one thing to me now—an absolute denial and confession of complete indifference—if not enmity."<sup>2</sup> The possessive and domineering mother, however, was much the greater burden—a woman capable even after her son's tragic suicide of rendering the following remarkable analysis:

All my life I have devoted myself to his interests and ambitions, have sacrificed anything to help him. . . . Hart's disintegration began when he let go of me—and he went straight to Hell, from then on. . . . His life was wholly selfish—consequently destructive to his career and happiness. If he had done as he should, showed me consideration and respect, I am sure he would be alive today. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Compounding these sources of pain was that ultimate despair of any artist, the sense of failing creativity. Just a few weeks before his immolation, he wrote in humiliation—his publisher's advance money by now completely dissipated—"Of the 'Epic' [a poem about the

<sup>1</sup> John Unterecker, *Voyager: A Life of Hart Crane* (New York, 1969), pp. 739, 736.

<sup>2</sup> Unterecker, p. 353.

<sup>3</sup> Unterecker quoting a letter of Grace Crane, p. 756.  
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Spanish conquest he had gone to Mexico to write]—I haven't yet written a line."<sup>4</sup> And crowning it all, by 1932 the country of Crane's prophetic vision seemed darkening into a Spenglerian decline contradicting not only his mystic utterances in *The Bridge*, but his fundamental feeling that "any true expression must rest on faith in something": "With all the world going to hell—what can one gather together with any confidence these days anyway?"<sup>5</sup>

It all adds up to a profound case of what William James—in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*—called the Sick Soul condition, a state wherefrom a man whose life has lost its meaning must become "born again" or "converted" in order to be happy. Indeed, Allen Tate, in his Crane obituary, felt that something like a Jamesian Second Birth had been Crane's only hope for survival: "Suicide was the sole act of will left to him short of a profound alteration of character."<sup>6</sup> Such an alteration, unhappily, was not to be forthcoming, yet—in fairness to Crane's life and art—it seems better to let Professor James rather than Freud have the main say. As a rational atheist, Freud dismissed both art and religion as "illusions," and hence enemies of his "science," whereas James, with his unbiased curiosity toward all psychic phenomena, has much to say about the central feature of Crane's poetic vision, his mysticism. And Crane in his turn drew solid satisfaction from his readings in James's *Varieties* for its "corroboration of several experiences in consciousness that I have had."<sup>7</sup>

Although Crane left these "corroborations" unspecified, we may identify two elements in James's study as holding special relevance to Crane's life as an artist. These would be James's validation of the mystic's resort to psychedelic stimuli, and his clarification of several phases of mystic consciousness. Concerning the origin of the "higher mystical nights," James thought it most reasonable "to ascribe them to inroads from the subconscious life," thereby making a milestone of sorts towards Jung's conclusion that "the unconscious is the only accessible source of religious experience."<sup>8</sup> In some of his cases, James noted that mystic perception occurred without the mediation of

<sup>4</sup> Unterecker, p. 741.

<sup>5</sup> These two quotations are cited from Philip Horton's *Hart Crane* (New York, 1937), p. 131, and from Unterecker, p. 741.

<sup>6</sup> Allen Tate, *Collected Essays* (Denver, 1959), p. 228.

<sup>7</sup> The Horton biography affirms that Crane discovered James's *Varieties* by virtue of the lengthy excerpts quoted from it in Ouspensky's *Tertium Organum* (Horton, p. 144).

<sup>8</sup> These two quotations are from William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), p. 327, and from Carl Gustav Jung's *The Undiscovered Self* (New York: Mentor Books, 1959), p. 110. Since I quote James's book so widely throughout this essay, I shall hereafter incorporate page references to it within my main text.

psychedelic agents. James Russell Lowell, for one example, enjoyed the following unsolicited revelation of God, as cited in James's chapter on "The Reality of the Unseen": ". . . last Friday evening . . . I was at Mary's, and happening to say something of the presence of spirits, . . . the whole system rose up before me. . . . I never before so clearly felt the Spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me full of God . . ." (p. 67). Another example, closer to Crane's experience, is provided by Lord Tennyson's reminiscence of a mystic trance wherein the poet's "individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being . . . the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life" (p. 295).

Unlike Lowell's and Tennyson's spontaneous visions, Crane's were heavily reliant on psychedelic agents. As attested by the poet's own words, we might classify five mind-expanders in particular as having outstanding potency and importance, each of them leading to that "consciousness of illumination" that James identified as "the essential mark of the 'mystical' state" (p. 313):

GAS: "At times, dear Gorham, I feel an enormous power in me—that seems almost supernatural. . . . Did I tell you of that thrilling experience this last winter in the dentist's chair when under the influence of ether and amnesia my mind spiralled to a kind of seventh heaven of consciousness and . . . a voice kept saying to me—'You have the higher consciousness—you have the higher consciousness.' . . . 0 Gorham, I have known moments in eternity."<sup>9</sup>

LIQUOR: "[My] subconscious [comes] out through gates that only alcohol has the power to open."<sup>10</sup> "If I could afford wine every evening, I might do more. . . . However, today I have made a good start on the first part of 'Faustus and Helen.'"<sup>11</sup>

MUSIC: "Modern music almost drives me crazy! . . . My

hair [has] stood on end at its revelations."<sup>12</sup>

LOVE: "I have seen the Word made Flesh. I mean nothing less, . . . where a purity of joy was reached that included tears. . . . And I have [had] . . . the ecstasy of walking hand in hand across the most beautiful bridge in the world, the

<sup>9</sup> Horton, p. 126.

<sup>10</sup> Unterecker, p. 187.

<sup>11</sup> Horton, pp. 126-7.

<sup>12</sup> Horton, p. 146.

cables enclosing us and pulling us upward in such a dance as I have never walked and can never walk with another."<sup>13</sup>

5. THE SEA: "I think the sea has thrown itself upon me and been answered, at least in part, and I believe I am a little changed . . . changed and transubstantiated. . . . And my eyes have been kissed with a speech that is beyond words entirely."<sup>14</sup>

In assessing the validity of Hart Crane's poetry, it is significant for us that Professor James's book endorses each one of these psychedelic agents as perfectly legitimate and efficacious in inducing mystical consciousness. James's endorsement of these pathways to mystic awareness is precise and absolute. Concerning gas, he observed that "Nitrous oxide and ether . . . stimulate the mystical consciousness in an extraordinary degree. Depth beyond depth of truth seems revealed to the inhaler," and he further went on to report that:

Some years ago I myself made some observations on this aspect of nitrous oxide intoxication. . . . One conclusion was forced upon my mind at that time, and my impression of its truth has ever since remained unshaken. It is that our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. . . . No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded, (p. 298)

A likely example of the "corroboration of several experiences in consciousness I have had"—to quote Crane's letter about James's *Varieties*—would be the testimony of the English poet J. A. Symonds while under chloroform: "After the choking and stifling had passed away . . . , I thought that I was near death; when, suddenly, my soul became aware of God, who was manifestly dealing with me, handling me, so to speak, in an intense personal present reality. I felt him streaming in like light upon me. . . . I cannot describe the ecstasy I felt" (pp. 300-1).

About alcohol, James drew much the same conclusions: "The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says no; drunkenness expands, unites,

<sup>13</sup> Horton, p. 167; Unterecker, p. 355.

<sup>14</sup> Unterecker, p. 356.

and says yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the *Yes* function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth. . . . The drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness . . ." (p. 297). Crane admitted in "The Wine Menagerie" that mere booze was often his path to the higher vision, with the result that when "wine redeems the sight" he might be able to glimpse "New thresholds, new anatomies!" or feel "August meadows somewhere clasp his brow"; unlike James, with his narrower experience of these matters, Crane also renders the sad terminus of the alcoholic revelation, the charm of those August meadows lapsing back into ordinary reality ("the treason of the snow") and thence—even worse—into delirium tremens, with Holofernes' and Baptist John's severed heads floating by.

In addition to gas, alcohol, and other drugs, James attributed the "sense of deeper significance" to such natural agencies as "effects of light on land and sea, odors and musical sounds" (p. 294), this latter agent being especially potent psychedelically: "not conceptual speech, but music rather, is the element through which we are best spoken to by mystical truth. . . . Music gives us ontological messages which non-musical criticism is unable to contradict" (pp. 322-323.) Impressive testimony supports James on this point, including Schopenhauer's definition of music as the only art that looks *directly* into the cosmic Will, Whitman's perception of "the puzzle of puzzles,/And that we call Being" in his catalogue on music in Section 26 of *Song of Myself*, and T.S. Eliot's response to "music heard so deeply/That it is not heard at all, but you are the music/While the music lasts" in *Four Quartets*. Crane's best known tribute to what music can do is the jazz party on the roof in "For

the Marriage of Helen and Faustus"—"O I have known metallic paradises" (the horns playing) "Above the deft catastrophes of drums"—but better yet was music in combination with another psychedelic agent, which taken in tandem might liberate not only Crane's mystic but also his creative consciousness. Malcolm Cowley's reminiscence of the artist at work, after some serious drinking at a party, points up these complementary stimulations: "... a little later he disappeared . . . we would hear a new hubbub through the walls of his room—the phonograph playing a Cuban rumba, the typewriter clacking simultaneously; then . . . the typewriter [would] stop while Hart changed the record, . . . perhaps to Ravel's *Bolero*."<sup>15</sup>

Above all, any sights or sounds connected with the sea could fix Crane's vision upon what James called "the vivified face of the world, as it may appear to converts after their waking" (p. 361). Thus the breaking surf on a calm day creates thunder and lightning for Crane's

<sup>15</sup> Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return* (New York, 1951), p. 228.  
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heightened senses at the outset of *Voyages*: "The sun beats lightning on the waves./The waves fold thunder on the sand." And "Repose of Rivers" describes Crane's first such mystic moment, with the delta seascape totally absorbing the poet into its sights and sounds amid a Wordsworthian hush of willows, an epiphany so intense that he "would have bartered" his Ohio childhood's best memories for it. When his love affairs were going well, the sea additionally served as the only serviceable symbol of his passion's magnitude; thus, his love for Emil Oppfer attains oceanic boundlessness in *Voyages HI*, which deems the ocean currents of smaller magnitude than the "stream of love advancing now/ . . . , singing, . . . /Through clay aflow immortally to you." But these heights of joy could be overmatched by the depths of anguish that followed upon the loved one's infidelity or departure, as we see in *Voyages*, and then the sea proved to be Crane's ultimate and truest soul-mate, the visible, audible, and palpable symbol not only of his rimless passions but of the Absolute towards which he yearned like a lover.

Whatever its genesis, the mystic consciousness that is produced anaesthetically always involves "a monistic insight," in James's phraseology (p. 299), a passage "as from a smallness into a vastness" and into "reconciling, unifying states" (p. 319). A typical instance of such monistic absorption in the *Varieties* is that of a German woman, Malwida von Meysenburg, who, after years of being unable to pray, was suddenly smitten at seaside much like Crane in "Repose of Rivers": "I was impelled to kneel down, this time before the illimitable ocean, symbol of the Infinite. I felt that I prayed as I had never prayed before, and knew now what prayer really is: to return from the solitude of individuation into the consciousness of unity with all that is . . . Earth, heaven, and sea resounded as in one vast world-encircling harmony" (p. 304). Crane's experience of some such monistic insight is evident in his declaration that "the true idea of God is the only thing that can give happiness—and that is the identification of yourself with *all of life*" (emphasis Crane's).<sup>16</sup> In saying this, Crane bears out Professor James's conclusion in his "Postscript" to the *Varieties* that through religious experience "we can experience union with *something* larger than ourselves and in that union find our greatest peace" (p. 395). As to what that *something* is, James further concludes that "All that the facts require is that the power should be both other and larger than our conscious selves" (p. 396). When such a connection to something "other and larger than our conscious selves" reaches the extent of Crane's "identification of yourself with *all of life*," we are witness to the phenomenon that James calls "cosmic consciousness," a state of mind repeatedly evidenced in the documents

<sup>16</sup> Horton, p. 84.

James analyzes in his chapter on "Mysticism." As one who could see "All hours clapped dense into a single stride" ("Recitative"), who worshipped the sea for the "Infinite consanguinity it bears" (*Voyages HI*), and who devoted his imagination to making a bridge from "us lowliest . . . to God" ("To Brooklyn Bridge" in *The Bridge*), Hart Crane obviously falls under James's definition of the mystic as one who sees the world's "various forms . . . absorbed into the One" (p. 299). "This overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement," James went on to say, calling it "the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences in clime or creed," the same in "Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism . . ." (p. 321).

In joining the poet to "*all of life*," Crane's mysticism displays all four of the characteristics that James identified as typical of the phenomenon—ineffability (a trait that renders some of Crane's verse unintelligible), poetic quality, transiency, and passivity. Of these, the trait of passivity seems most significant in Crane's case, enabling him to feel—in James's words—"as if his own will were in abeyance, and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power" (p. 293). Crane's best moments in poetry, those immensely passionate compressions of vision and feeling, resulted from the poet's seizure by some such superior power: by "the

imaged Word" in *Voyages*, the "Hand of Fire" in *The Bridge*, the "volcano [that] burst" in "Emblems of Conduct." "Possessions"—Crane's master poem on the creative impulse—shows the poet waiting like Ben Franklin in the storm, hoping to attract the divine lightning to his "key, ready to hand," his passivity attested by his "sifting/Through a thousand nights . . . for bolts that linger/Hidden" and the transiency of the experience attested by his hope to "Accumulate such moments to an hour." Later in the poem Crane compares himself to Moses on Sinai, again encompassed to the horizon by a fierce storm and waiting for the deific lightning to strike the "stone" he carries—Crane's verse, like Moses' tablets, being "writ by the finger of God.":

The pure possession, the inclusive cloud  
Whose heart is fire shall come,—the white wind rase  
All but bright stones wherein our smiling plays.

In the light of the Jamesian system, two somewhat contradictory aspects of mysticism stand out in this poem. First, Crane's description of his poetry as "bright" and "smiling" in the last line above sustains James's contention that "the mystic range of consciousness . . . is on the whole . . . optimistic, or at least the opposite of pessimistic" (emphasis his, p. 323). Given his sense of mission, Crane was normally

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unable to write a line except in affirmation, so much so that in a letter to Waldo Frank he worried about his readings in Spengler and Eliot possibly aborting *The Bridge*, then in composition.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, "Possessions" illustrates most vividly mysticism's greatest peril, the possible annihilation of the ego—a natural enough concomitant of cosmic consciousness. In this connection, the "stone" in stanza one becomes transmuted via Crane's "logic of metaphor"<sup>18</sup> into a sacrificial altar, the poet himself becoming immolated on the altar's horns ("Tossed on these horns, who bleeding dies") following his "One moment in sacrifice (the direst)" under the sky-bolt. Crane himself said that "A poem like 'Possessions' really cannot be technically explained,"<sup>19</sup> but I think a few analogies from James's book can be illuminating. In the *Varieties*, three accounts of "possessions" in particular—all couched in terms similar to Crane's imagery of fire and electricity—display an interesting pattern with respect to the risk of annihilation. The mildest of these experiences, happily devoid of an-nihilative overtones, occurred when that which Crane called "the inclusive cloud/Whose heart is fire" fell upon Walt Whitman's Canadian friend, Dr. R.M. Bucke:

All at once, without warning of any kind, I found myself wrapped in a flame-colored cloud. For an instant I thought of fire, an immense conflagration somewhere close by in that great city; the next, I knew that the fire was within myself. Directly afterward there came upon me a sense of exultation, of immense joyousness accompanied or immediately followed by an intellectual illumination impossible to describe. Among other things, . . . I saw that the universe is . . . a living Presence. . . ." (pp. 306-7)

Another who felt the "Hand of Fire"—but with markedly more danger of annihilation—was Charles G. Finney, the nineteenth century evangelist whose baptism in the Holy Spirit assumed a nearly unbearable intensity:

As I turned and was about to take a seat by the fire, I received a mighty baptism in the Holy Ghost. Without any expectation of it, without ever having the thought in my mind that there was any such thing for me, . . . the Holy Spirit descended upon me in a manner that seemed to go through

<sup>17</sup> *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane*, ed. Brom

Weber (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), pp. 231-2.

<sup>18</sup> Crane discusses his "logic of metaphor" in "General Aims and Theories" and

"A Letter to Harriet Monroe," *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters* etc., pp. 221,

235.<sup>19</sup> "General Aims and Theories," *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters* etc., p.

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me, body and soul. I could feel the impression, like a wave of electricity, going through me and through me. Indeed, it seemed to come in waves and waves of liquid love. . . . These waves came over me, and over me, and over me, one after the other, until I recollect I cried out, "I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me." I said, "Lord, I cannot bear any more. . . ." (p. 204)

Our final analogue, involving a woman under ether for surgery, describes the divine presence in imagery remarkably parallel to that of Crane's outcry to the "Hand of Fire" in *The Bridge*—"Eloihim, still I hear thy sounding heel" ("Ave Maria"):

A great Being or Power was traveling through the sky, his foot was on a kind of lightning as a wheel is on a rail, it was his pathway. The lightning was made entirely of the spirits of innumerable people close to one another, and I was one of them. He moved in a straight line, and each part of the streak or flash came into its short conscious existence only that he might travel. I seemed to be directly under the foot of God. . . . I was the means of his achieving and revealing something, I know not what or

to whom . . . " (pp. 301-302)

Passages like these from James's *Varieties* can clarify and validate the most crucial aspect of Crane's mysticism in poetry, his hope for "conquest of consciousness" through promulgating "certain spiritual illuminations, shining with a morality essentialized from experience directly, and not from previous precepts or preconceptions."<sup>20</sup> Such passages further clarify the sense of spiritual risk and sacrifice inherent in so much of Crane's work; the moth bending toward "the still/ Imploring flame" in "Legend"; the "One moment in sacrifice (the direst)" in "Possessions"; the submission to the heel of Elohim in *The Bridge*; and the "Kiss of our agony" offered to the gathering "Hand of Fire" in "The Tunnel."

It is curious how Crane's tone calms when his absorption into the All occurs in the context of water rather than fire. Once past the warning note of *Voyages I*, "The bottom of the sea is cruel," we find the actual absorption in and annihilation by the sea to yield a wholly desirable state, a union with the Absolute devoutly to be wished (*Voyages III*):

Light wrestling there incessantly with light,  
Star kissing star through wave on wave  
unto Your body rocking!

<sup>20</sup> "General Aims and Theories," *The Complete Poems* etc., pp. 221-2.  
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and where death, if shed,  
Presumes no carnage, but this single change,—  
Upon the steep floor flung from dawn to dawn  
The silken skilled transmemberment of  
song . . .

We may never know whether some such siren's song as this lured Crane to his final leap overboard, or whether he was impelled by the darker forces—as previously noted—gathering behind him, his alcoholism, his sense of failing talent, and his inability to sustain the heterosexual life style that his elopement with Peggy Cowley (Malcolm Cowley's first wife) implied. Here, in any case, James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* ceases to apply, the relevant analogues being found rather in the mood captured by other artists: Walt Whitman "Lost in the loving floating ocean of thee,/ Laved in the flood of thy bliss O death" in "Lilacs"; Faulkner's suicide "in the caverns and grottoes of the sea tumbling peacefully" in *The Sound and the Fury*; Robert Penn Warren's drowning victim "Tumbling and turning, hushed in the end,/ With hair afloat in waters that gently bend" in *Kentucky Mountain Farm* (III); and T.S. Eliot's Phlebas the Phoenician finding in his death by water a serenity ("A current under sea/ Picked his bones in whispers. . . .") similar to that of Crane's undersea figure, though in other respects Crane took Eliot and his *Waste Land* as a point of departure towards an almost complete reversal of direction.<sup>21</sup>

On the personal level, James's *Varieties* presents no parallels to these intimations of watery annihilation, but on the scale of human history at large, we may draw out from James and Crane one last correlation. One of Crane's most moving passages in poetry occurs at the end of the section of *The Bridge* called "The River," where the Mississippi's absorption into the ocean depths symbolizes the flow of time and history finding its terminus in eternity:

. . . Ahead  
No embrace opens but the stinging sea  
The River lifts itself from its long bed,  
Poised wholly on its dream, a mustard glow  
Tortured with history, its one will—flow!  
—The Passion spreads in wide tongues, choked and slow,  
Meeting the Gulf, hosannas silently below.

Here, in appropriately religious language, Crane attests his purpose as a mystic poet, one whose "monistic insight" (in James's phrase) suffices to unify otherwise contradictory realities—life and death, time and eternity—into a final sacramental whole. Concerning such monistic

<sup>21</sup> From a letter to Allen Tate, cited in Horton, p. 122.  
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insights, James observed that "the keynote . . . is invariably a reconciliation. It is as if the opposites of the world, whose contradictoriness and conflict make all our difficulties and troubles, were melted into unity" (p. 298). Other revelations of unity stud Crane's poems, and none more inspired than those in "Atlantis," which, although the final section of *The Bridge*, was written at the outset of composition when the poet's creative force was most intense. Here Crane speaks of the divine Cognizance "Within whose lariat sweep encinctured sing/In single chrysalis the many twain," and whose "multitudinous Verb" might link "tomorrows into yesteryear."

In images like these we may see the ultimate—and mystical—significance of Crane's statement that "the bridge is a symbol of all such poetry as I am interested in writing."<sup>22</sup> To the extent that he succeeds in bridging the span between the finite self and ultimate reality, Crane may lead his readers into the "reconciling, unifying states" James spoke of (p. 319), thereby enabling them to "still love

the world," as Crane put it in "Chaplinesque"—just as the poet of *The Waste Land* was enabled by his conversion to say, "I rejoice that things are as they are" in *Ash-Wednesday* (1), and Robert Penn Warren was able to apprehend "a mystic osmosis of being" that merges "the ugly with the beautiful, the slayer with the slain . . . [until] the world which once provoked . . . fear and disgust may now be totally loved."<sup>23</sup> Such are the fruits of the monistic insight for Crane and others.

To conclude, then, our study shows that with respect to many important features of Crane's poems—their relation to psychedelic stimuli, their fire and water imagery, their mood of mingled fear and welcome towards annihilation of the ego, and above all, their striving to express monistic insight—William James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* is an important and neglected source of understanding. Concerning Crane's tragic end as well as his poems, James provides further vindication, if we may apply what he says about conversions and backslidings with equal logic to the flights and crash landings of mysticism:

One word, before I close this lecture, on the question of the transiency of permanence of these abrupt conversions. Some of you, I feel sure, knowing that numerous backslidings and

<sup>22</sup>"A Letter to Waldo Frank," *The Complete Poems* etc., p. 232.

<sup>23</sup>Mr. Warren has elaborated his "Osmosis of Being" concept most largely in his essay, "Knowledge and the Image of Man," *The Sewanee Review*, 63 (Winter, 1955), 182-192. The idea also appears throughout his fiction and poetry of recent decades, as for example in *Flood* (1964), which speaks of "a mystic osmosis of being" in the voice of Blanding Cotshill (New York: Signet Books, 1965), p. 353.

relapses take place, . . . dismiss it [the whole experience] with a pitying smile as so much "hysterics." Psychologically, as well as religiously, this is shallow. It misses the point of serious interest, which is . . . [that] it reveals new flights and reaches of ideality while it lasts. . . . That it [conversion] should for even a short time show a human being what the highwater mark of his spiritual capacity is, this is what constitutes its importance. . . . (p. 205)

Concerning other writers with mystic propensities, we might reasonably surmise similar conclusions; and as regards the literary audience, we will leave it to William James himself to draw forth the largest extension of his meaning:

. . . lyric poetry and music are alive and significant only in proportion as they fetch these vague vistas of a life continuous with our own. . . . We are alive or dead to the eternal inner message of the arts according as we have kept or lost this mystic susceptibility, (p. 295)