A CATEGORIZATION OF FORM FOR STEPHEN CRANE'S POETRY

THESIS

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This thesis presents four categories of form basic to all of Stephen Crane's poetry: antiphons, apologues, emblems, and testaments. A survey of previous shortcomings in the critical acceptance of Crane as a poet leads into reasons why the categorization of form here helps to alleviate some of those problems. The body of the thesis consists of four chapters, one for each basic form. Each form is defined and explained, exemplary poems in each category are explicated, and specifics are given as to what makes one poem better than the next. The thesis ends with an elevation of Crane's worth as a poet and a confirmation of the merits of this new categorization of form.

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INTRODUCTION

Stephen Crane's poetic career spanned a period of only six years. The poems in The Black Riders and Other Lines, published in 1895, were mostly written in 1894. His other major collection, War Is Kind, published in 1899, contains many poems that date back to 1895. He also wrote many uncollected poems between 1894 and 1899, before his death on June 5, 1900 (Bassan 177-78). All together, Stephen Crane has 135 poems extant today. This limited number of poems means that they may be beneficially cross-sectioned and analyzed.

Stephen Crane's poetry can be placed in the following categories: antiphons, apologues, emblems, and testaments. Each successive category gains in the complexity of the poetry. This does not mean that some antiphons are not better than some apologues. However, the apologue is the next step up in terms of complexity of poetic style from its preceding category of antiphons. It is a simple to complex hierarchy, as a one-to-one correspondence poem is a simpler form of poetry than a metaphoric poem with several meanings, or the metaphoric poem than a complex, emblematic poem with allusive characteristics.

This categorizing by forms does not necessarily indicate the merit of specific poems. There are both good and bad emblems, and a bad emblem poem is definitely not better than a good antiphon. The more complex forms, however, reveal a more extensive scope, due in part to being longer than the less complex forms. The complete poems may be studied through the use of this categorization. Then, too, one may better grasp the meaning of an individual poem by studying the shared characteristics of the superset of which it is a part. It is an essentially objective system. Poems fit into categories because they display specific and dominant characteristics of that particular category. This is not a ranking order, but a full comprehension of the complex poems may depend on beginning with the simple.

There is an affinity between each successive category and among the successive groups of categories. All of the poems are extensions of the antiphon, and the testament is a combination of all of its preceding categories.

This categorization of form will help produce a study of Stephen Crane's poetry that other critics have failed to manage; for the major critics of Crane's poetry, even those who did his works no disservice, have not gone far enough in recognizing the high quality of poems that the man produced.

Thomas Beer's Stephen Crane: A Study in American Letters (1923) is a now archaic account of Crane's poetry. It reads like an encyclopedia attempting general definitions. R. W. Stallman, in his famous Stephen Crane: An Omnibus (1952), proves to be a good arranger of historical and journalistic fact. However, he dwells on dates, facts, and times, sacrificing the interesting, inductive side of Crane's poetry. Daniel Hoffman's The Poetry of Stephen Crane (1958) is very good. It is both sensitive and solid. Even Hoffman, however, seems to be skeptical about Crane's worth as a poet. Edwin Cady's Stephen Crane (1962) is a work in which the author seems afraid to say anything new. Stephen Crane (1962) by John Berryman, although psychologically probing, is cautious about Crane's poems. Thomas Gullason, in Stephen Crane's Career: Perspectives and Evaluations (1972), is sporadic, giving new and interesting biographical and bibliographical information, but not analyzing the works well. These best-known critics of Crane's poetry have produced unsatisfactory results.

One of the major detours critics have taken in the study of Crane's poetry has come in their vain attempts to prove or disprove that the works are really poems. Crane's poetry is clearly different from that of the majority of critically accepted twentieth-century poets, but he still wrote poems, some of considerable merit.

Shortly after the publication of The Black Riders and Other Lines, the poems were derided as "ludicrous" (Tribune 24). Later, John Berryman said that Crane's poems "look rather [more] like impressions of fatal relation than poems" (270), and again that "There is no evidence in the poetry or outside it that he ever experimented in verse. Instinct told him to throw over metrical form; visions were in his head and he wrote them down" (274). Daniel Hoffman said, "It is evident that Crane develops distinctive methods of poetic structure, as well as several styles of diction" (255). Elsewhere Hoffman stated, "Yet compared to what the better poets were writing when he wrote, Crane's wry lines are indeed amazing in their deliberate avoidance of all known ways of making what the English-speaking world of letters agreed to recognize as poetry" (21).

There is clearly no way to prove that Crane's poetic structures are poetry. Plato contested that the poet "is an imitator" (242) of Nature. Since then, poetry has undergone definition and redefinition from Poe's "rhythmical creation of beauty" (894) to John Cage's "a concentration of words that is not boring to those interested in a concentration of words."[1]

Crane's poems readily fit into some definitions, and just as readily do not fit into others. With the categorization of form, each category of poem may be viewed on

its own merits or demerits of form. Surely each more complex category must be viewed as a different kind of poetry than its preceding one.

The claims against Crane's poetry as a whole lose much of their credibility when the poetic works are broken down into separate categories. An emblem is a distinct form of poetry from an antiphon, apologue, or testament, and the fact that the emblem poems have a definite rhythm and some meter may prejudice some critics for or against this specific form. Each group deserves to be viewed and studied from a mutually exclusive stance; for then the line between what is and what fails to be poetry may be more fairly drawn to each critic's differing view of what "poetry" should be.

It is difficult to list criteria by which one poem may exceed another in merit, as merit itself is based on personal taste and mood. Then, too, claims that either a personal or a detached stance in a poem makes one poem better than another are inaccurate, for the quality of the stance surely depends on its relationship to the rest of the poem. There are, however, some basic attributes of poetry that are not so very subjective. For example, one may generalize that irony is most often a virtue in poetry, and that sentimentality is most often not a virtue. Other attributes which are usually virtues in poems are symbolism,

ambiguity (although this can, at times, be overdone), metaphor, implication, variety of meaning, and multi-representational images. It is easy to see that a longer poem will be able to accommodate more virtues than a shorter one. But poetic worth is not a mathematical formula; more does not necessarily mean better. A short poem with one meaning may still be a better poem than a long and multi-representational one.

Complexity of form is often a virtue in Stephen Crane's poetry, as it allows for subtleties of meaning. Crane, however, wanted the complexity to shift to the mind of the reader. An uncomplicated three-line antiphon that leaves the reader with a new perspective was a success to Crane, and that is why he wrote so many short works. One review of The Black Riders and Other Lines stated, "While Whitman dilutes mercilessly, Crane condenses almost as formidably" (Nation 296). Stephen Crane wanted to limit the amount of language but never the thought behind it. He wanted the words of his poetry to open, but not restrict, the queries of the mind itself.

Form and content cannot be wholly separated. Still, the major derogatory critical emphasis on Crane's poetry revolves around form. And content is often unjustly included in these criticisms. Form should be attacked or

defended as form. For this purpose also this categorization of form is needed.

A totally inductive or totally deductive study would produce one more critical failure to grasp the essence of Crane's poetry as a whole. As Northrop Frye, in his search for pure criticism, attests:

> We may next proceed inductively from structural analysis, associating the data we collect and trying to see larger patterns in them. Or we may proceed deductively, with the consequences that follow from postulating the unity of criticism. It is clear, of course, that neither procedure will work indefinitely without correction from the other. Pure induction will get us lost in haphazard guessing; pure deduction will lead to inflexible and oversimplified pigeon-holing (10).

The categorization of form here uses a deductive base as a springboard for inductive analysis.

Crane defines ideas by minimizing words and maximizing impact. Through these few words, he defines his philosophies of life by explanation, story, and impression. For example, apologue number 96 is a miniature definition of naturalism:

> A man said to the universe:
> "Sir, I exist!"
> "However," replied the universe,
> "The fact has not created in me
> A sense of obligation."

Crane's goal, however, was not to expound philosophies; he wished to write impressions of life--life as he saw and felt it, with all of its ambiguities. He never desired

that A plus B equal C, as he explains in lines from apologue number 97:

> "I intended to see good white lands
> And bad black lands--
> But the scene is grey."

This is similar to the romantic view of an ambiguous universe that Hawthorne and Melville so skillfully captured, yet realized could not be defined. Crane, too, maintains that the ambiguities of life themselves are meaningful.

Crane's works simply state. In fact, their magnitude is often derived from understatement or statement and lack of explanation. It is a poetry of absolutes, "a man," "God," "I." They appear simple, deceptively short and concise. They hurt. And that is another part of the meaning--the hurt. The poems leave questions with the reader, profound feelings or lack of feelings, that induce thought and with it pain. As John Berryman says of number 56, "For a moment you don't hear it, then you do, with a little fear, as if a man had put his face suddenly near your face; and that's all" (272). This passage is an accurate explanation of the feeling produced by some of Crane's poems, in this case an apologue. They are as beautifully painful as the painted sky after the sunset of the last day.

The text chosen, The Poems of Stephen Crane: A Critical Edition, Second Printing--Revised, by Joseph Katz, is both scholarly and complete. It contains accurate printings

of every known Crane poem (Katz viii). Poems in this thesis are referred to by the numbers used in Katz's text.[2] Appendix A contains a listing, by number and category type, of each extant Crane poem. Appendix B is a numbered list of each group of poems that are contained in its respective category--antiphons, apologues, emblems, and testaments. There are thirty-one antiphons, sixty-nine apologues, twenty-eight emblems, and seven testaments. Each category will be discussed, good poems and weak ones, and the reasons why one poem is better than another.

NOTES

[1]Qtd. in lecture at North Texas State University, fall 1983, by Dr. Richard Sale, ENGL 442, Poetry.

[2]Because the poems are numbered consecutively, they will be referred to by poem number and not by page.

CHAPTER I

ANTIPHONS

Antiphons are the base of the categorization. All other categories are offshoots of these simple poems. Antiphon is a Greek word meaning a sung response (Morris 58). An antiphon is a succinct statement, but like its Greek ancestor, the antiphon leaves the feeling that the poem has an antecedent or postscript. Antiphons are characterized by brevity, concise diction, and an end to the thought, though often not the impression that the thought leaves.

There are five subdivisions of the antiphon: explanation, definition, question, discussion, and contrast. A listing of the poems in each subdivision is included in Appendix C.

Explanation antiphons are the first category. These poems are simple statements, but they often contain intrinsic semantic anomalies. In fact, Crane frequently cloaks perplexing views in simple statements, as in number 4, an explanation antiphon:

> Yes, I have a thousand tongues,
> And nine and ninety-nine lie.
> Though I strive to use the one,
> It will make no melody at my will,
> But is dead in my mouth.

The formula for an explanation antiphon is "A is," period. But there is implication even in these simple poems.

Number 4 begins with "Yes." This implies that something, perhaps another speaker, has sparked the discussion. Thus, the reader is forced to infer an antecedent, which makes the meaning of the poem more ambiguous.

Tongue is a word that brings to mind a variety of images. First there is the completely human flesh image, then there is the speech that is produced by the flesh, and then the language of which speech is a part. One of the qualities of Crane's short antiphons is their capacity for such extension.

The lines "Yes, I have a thousand tongues" and "Though I strive to use the one" exhibit a definite off-rhyme and a regular trochaic tetrameter which set up a trippingly easy sound that is stopped in line four and is destroyed in the two anapests of the next line "But is dead in my mouth." The language of the poem is ornate in phrases like "a thousand tongues" and "nine and ninety-nine." This flowery speech is diametrically opposed to the poem's final line. In this last line, the meter and embellished language of the rest of the poems are abruptly cut off. This is a major Crane style--build up to destroy for impact. In the case of this poem, the impact is mainly brought about by metrics affecting message. For, when the regular

meter and florid language stop, one is left with the feeling that it has ended too soon, because of the fact that these language unities had just begun. And this longing for more than what is given is, in large part, the message of the poem. For the one tongue that might speak truth can never be willed by the speaker to make sound at all. Truth does not lie in what humans will but in something more of a mystical, transcendental, or imaginative nature.

Number 125 is another explanation antiphon:

A row of thick pillars
Consciously bracing for the weight
Of a vanished roof
The bronze light of sunset strikes through them,
And over a floor made for slow rites.
There is no sound of singing
But, aloft, a great and terrible bird
Is watching a cur, beaten and cut
That crawls to the cool shadows of the pillars
To die.

This poem is ominous. It is definitely an antiphon, in that it is a scene, not a story, not a totality. There is a setting for action, but the only real actions are a circling and a crawling to die.

Explanation antiphon number 125 is structured to deny momentum. It simply states. Spacing is important, as the physical poem rises and falls three times. Lines one and two rise to the fall of the short line three. The next two lines are followed by the fall of line six. And the following three lines build dramatically to the final blunt fall of line ten. This last line qualifies the

entire rest of the poem. It is naked in its terse anti-sentiment.

In antiphon number 125, everything is set up to be something that it cannot be. The "thick pillars" brace for a weight that is not borne. In the structure that was made for "slow rites," there is "no sound of singing." Crane consciously brings the reader to the edge of an explanation that does not exist. This feeling is described in Gestalt psychology as the law of closure:

> According to this law, a task becomes a task, or a problem becomes a problem in which we are involved, only when it represents to our minds an incomplete thought picture. The gap in knowledge or the missing parts of a visual form tend to disturb our equilibrium. This incompleteness arouses an inner need for perception completion, or closure, that demands reduction before a satisfying end-state can be regained. Tension, or what may be called intrinsic motivation, is the prompter moving the learner from what is viewed as an incomplete form toward that which is more nearly complete (Strom 487).

In number 125, as in the majority of Crane's antiphons, the reader is not allowed closure. This lack of closure leaves one with a disquieting sense of incompleteness. And that is precisely the message that Crane desired. His poems are imitations of a real and disturbing Nature that is not in a state of equilibrium.

A second type of antiphon is the definition antiphon, "A is A." There are eight of these in Crane's work, more than any other type of antiphon. Poem number 16 is a definition antiphon of a simple allegorical nature:

Charity, thou art a lie,
A toy of women,
A pleasure of certain men.
In the presence of justice,
Lo, the walls of the temple
Are visible
Through thy form of sudden shadows.

Another allegorical definition antiphon is number 45:

Tradition, thou art for suckling children,
Thou art the enlivening milk for babes;
But no meat is in thee.
Then--
But, alas we all are babes.

The major difference between the two poems is that number 45 contains a moral ending that shifts the poem from the allegory to an explanation. Number 16 is a better poem because it leaves more questions as to what the definition has left out. For example, "Charity," the poem states, "is a lie," but the poem does not tell whether there is a truth, or what it is.

Number 85 is an example of a non-allegorical simple definition poem:

You tell me this is God?
I tell you this is a printed list,
A burning candle and an ass.

The ambiguous "this," the religious anti-sentiment, and the stark images of the poem make it good. It is a monologue that, through the definition form, denounces the expected awe and sanctity of religious definition.

A third type of antiphon is the question antiphon, "What does A = ?" In this category, Crane sets forth a

query or a doubt. This form, then, leads toward an inference as to an answer or answers. The method varies. Number 117 is a riddle, number 66 an if/then query, and number 7 a question ending with a demand for an answer.

Number 66 is a simple and a good question antiphon:

> If I should cast off this tattered coat,
> And go free into the mighty sky;
> If I should find nothing there
> But a vast blue,
> Echoless, ignorant,--
> What then?

The spacing and momentum of this poem are crucial to its message. It funnels downward; it gets caught in its own "echoless" ending. The question it asks is a question often asked by poets but rarely so boldly and bluntly. The momentum of the poem leads from the desirable freedom from the physical body, to an expanse of freedom that is horrifying. The poem has no answer, implied or otherwise. It simply ends.

The punctuation enhances the meaning. The dash leaves the infinity of the situation open, and the question mark shuts the discussion as terrifyingly unanswerable. Nothing can come next.

The poem begins with the hearty assurance of a freedom, a casting off. But the funnel technique of the poem squeezes the speaker to only one conclusion, "Echoless, ignorant,--."

Number 7 is another question antiphon:

> Mystic shadow, bending near me,
> Who art thou?
> Whence come ye?
> And--tell me--is it fair
> Or is the truth bitter as eaten fire?
> Tell me!
> Fear not that I should quaver,
> For I dare--I dare.
> Then, tell me!

This poem is a strong question, bold. But the answer is never given, as the form is a question and not a discussion. This fact gives the poem an added chill; for the speaker cannot be allowed any answer, no matter how emphatic he becomes. The repetition of "tell me" intensifies the one-sidedness of the confrontation. The speaker feels that he should fear, that he "should quaver."

Crane characterizes his speaker well in these few lines. The speaker's apparent forcefulness is repeated three times in the phrase "tell me," and twice in the phrase "I dare." Still, both phrases are punctuated the first time they appear by being set off with a dash--a pause, a thought, a shudder.

The poem builds in intensity. It begins softly, questioning, and builds to an impatient command. The end of the first line uses phonemic nasals, [m], [n], and [ŋ], to lead into the poem gently. Line five, in contrast, utilizes the blunt phonemic stops of the repeated [t] sound as a more intense pushing sound. Near the poem's end, Crane

has enunciated the poem's intensity with the physical inclusion of exclamation points at the ends of both line six and line nine.

The form of a question antiphon implies that the poem will have ambiguous possibilities for mental extension. However, this question form also tends to include poems of limited scope and depth. Number 7 is a good example of both.

The discussion antiphon, "Is A really A?," is a discussion with or a reaction to something or someone. Number 107 is a discussion with an implied second-person party:

> Tell me why, behind thee,
> I see always the shadow of another lover?
> Is it real
> Or is this the thrice-damned memory of a better
> happiness?
> Plague on him if he be dead
> Plague on him if he be alive
> A swinish numbskull
> To intrude his shade
> Always between me and my peace

The impression of this poem, however, is of one person arguing with himself over his own varying views.

This poem is sentimentalized and personal. The repetition in lines five and six is reminiscent of a childish oath from a nursery story. Most of the poem is a mere name-calling. It is much too bitterly personal to accurately convey any extended irony or multi-representational meaning. The message is one of the feelings in a paranoid love, and

these feelings are accurately touched on in the less harsh first two lines and in the sad image of the last line. However, the feeling is lost in the body of the poem to a bitter attempt at jealous degradation. Number 107 is a weak poem.

Number 105, another discussion antiphon, is a reaction to someone powerful, yet unaware:

> Ah, God, the way your little finger moved
> As you thrust a bare arm backward
> And made play with your hair
> And a comb a silly gilt comb
> Ah; God--that I should suffer
> Because of the way a little finger moved.

The poem is not a sharp criticism; it is more a meditation. It is written as to a child who has disappointed and hurt the speaker, but who is not expected to understand. The poem has a sexual tone. "Ah, God" may be read as an interjection to a lover or as a direct address to God.

The first word in each of the first five lines has a similar open vowel sound, intensifying the third-person stance and meditative feeling of the poem. The repetition is striking. Line one and line six give a symmetry to the piece. So too does the repeated "Ah, God" at the beginning and the end.

This is a very sonorous poem for a Crane antiphon. The rhythm begins with a definite iambic beat in line one. Beginning in line two, the beat is then minimized as word sounds are given priority. There are distinct alliteration

and assonance in the phrase "bare arm backward," and a symmetry of sound in "comb a silly gilt comb." The clear iambic tempo returns in line five to bring the poem full circle. Crane rarely desired a poem to run full circle. Here, however, the fluidity of sound intensifies the irony of the message--personal suffering is caused by merely playing with hair.

The last antiphon type is the contrast antiphon. Contrast antiphons make a deliberate shift between the two distinct parts of each poem. There are two perspectives of some sort viewed in each contrast antiphon. Number 38 is an antiphon of this type:

> The ocean said to me once:
> "Look!
> Yonder on the shore
> Is a woman, weeping.
> I have watched her.
> Go you and tell her this,--
> Her lover I have laid
> In cool green hall.
> There is wealth of golden sand
> And pillars coral red;
> Two white fish stand guard at his bier.
>
> "Tell her this
> And more,--
> That the king of the seas
> Weeps too, old, helpless man.
> The bustling fates
> Heap his hands with corpses
> Until he stands like a child
> With surplus of toys."

The main significance of the first-person narrator is as relayer of the information of the rest of the poem; for

the only speaker in number 38 is a personification, the ocean.

The whole first half of the poem is sad. Contrary to Crane's many blunt, naturalistic passages, here the personified ocean really cares and is disturbed, almost protective of the woman.

The command form of phrases such as "Look!" and "Go you" conveys a feeling of mortal expendability. The ocean is clearly superior to the humans.

Colors carry symbolic meanings in the first half of this poem. The background of "cool green" gives the poem a dreamlike aura. "Golden sand" is a symbol of wealth and prosperity, a bit ironic after death, but perhaps comforting to the woman. The pillars are red, symbolic of the blood that is the foundation of mortal life. And the guards are "white," symbolizing the innocence of the Nature that has assumed the death.

In the first stanza, end-sounds are repeated in lines one and six; in lines three, five, and eleven; and in lines seven, nine, and ten. The result is a distinct symmetry, not a flow, but a regulated and proportioned stanza. In the second stanza, the alliteration of the [s] sound comes very near to off-rhyme. It gives a soothing feeling to the piece, without sacrificing the funereal sense of propriety set up in stanza one.

In the second stanza, the poem shifts--the contrast. The "king of the seas / Weeps too, old, helpless man." This, at first, appears to be a strangely sentimental view for the often ruthlessly blunt Crane. However, this view is just as disturbing and perhaps as realistic. For the ocean, the poem states, has no desire for so many deaths. The "king of the seas," whom men want to blame as a potent and vengeful force, merely "stands like a child / With surplus of toys." This poem then is still the bluntly realistic Crane. Men are toys--a terrifying analogy, and nothing has control of "the bustling fates."

The contrast in antiphon number 38 is one of point of view. The reader views a bereaved woman, an image easy to feel for. Then comes the contrast. The "king of the seas" is an old man, another vulnerable image, and he too is "helpless" and "weeping."

Number 78, also a contrast antiphon, is a good poem:

> To the maiden
> The sea was blue meadow
> Alive with little froth-people
> Singing.
>
> To the sailor, wrecked
> The sea was dead grey walls
> Superlative in vacancy
> Upon which nevertheless at fateful time
> Was written
> The grim hatred of nature.

This poem bounces along in the first stanza, much like a haiku about spring. Then, in the second stanza, comes the

contrast. This poem, unlike number 38, shifts in both point of view and in tempo. The word wrecked, set off with a comma, stops the bounce of the poem. It throws off the parallelism between the two stanzas and sets the mood of the contrastive change.

Stanza one is pure spring. Every image is light and alive. And the sounds are as light and airy as the words themselves. The second stanza is heavy. It is the inverse of stanza one. The following images are switched: "maiden" for "sailor, wrecked," "blue meadow" for "dead grey walls," "alive with little froth-people" for "superlative in vacancy," and "singing" for "written / The grim hatred." And the inverseness extends beyond just the images. The second stanza is no song of any sort. It is leaden. Contrast antiphon number 78 is good because of its effective contrasts in feeling, mood, and tempo.

Stephen Crane's antiphons are a mixture of good and bad poems. Yet, here in the simplest category, the reader is initiated into many of the Crane styles and messages that are repeated throughout his poetry. And, within this basic foreground alone, the power and poetic expertise of the man are remarkably clear. Some of Crane's major goals--to spark an idea, to pose a question, and to leave a thought burning--are embodied in the antiphon.

CHAPTER II

APOLOGUES

The second category of poems is the apologues, poems that relate a dramatic series of events in story form. An apologue, as defined in the Encyclopedia Britannica, is "a short fable or allegorical story, meant to serve as a pleasant vehicle for some moral doctrine or to convey some useful lesson. . . . It is generally dramatic" (118). Stephen Crane wrote more apologues than any other type of poem. Both a story and a lesson are included in each of these poems.

Crane's apologues are not limited to Aesopian epigrammatism. The lesson in a Crane apologue, unlike the moral in an Aesopian fable, often amplifies the story without necessarily facilitating the meaning of the piece. For Stephen Crane does not use the lesson to elicit closure. As depicted in the antiphons, whenever Crane states, the reader's impulse is to question. This tendency is also displayed in the apologues, where the moral sometimes leaves out more than it answers. In a good apologue, the lesson is used as a vehicle for a contrastive shift in metrics, mood, or message.

Crane's moral is a term that should not be confused with the morals of classic fabulists like Aesop or Jean de La Fontaine. For, unlike the classic moral, Crane's moral is not just a restatement of purpose or message. Crane wanted his short poems to leave questions, not to answer them. Crane's morals are like dramatic antiphonal statements or restatements included at the ends of parable-like stories.

Number 3 is an apologue from The Black Riders and Other Lines:

> In the desert
> I saw a creature, naked, bestial,
> Who, squatting upon the ground,
> Held his heart in his hands,
> And ate of it.
> I said: "Is it good, friend?"
> "It is bitter--bitter," he answered;
> "But I like it
> Because it is bitter,
> And because it is my heart."

This poem is a good example of the beneficial effect that the inclusion of a moral can have on the meaning of an apologue. The last three lines of the poem comprise the moral, the lesson. The poem could have ended three lines earlier and still have been a full story. However, the message of the poem is dramatically changed by the included moral. The poem's impact is derived from the blunt force of the central image it develops and from its sourness. The repetition of the words "bitter" and "heart" elucidates this sourness, and the contemplative nature of the

"creature"'s final reply is disturbingly human. This poem is not at all inhibited by its moral; in fact, the meaning of the poem could not have been fully reached without this last three-line restatement.

Number 18 is another Crane apologue.

> In Heaven,
> Some little blades of grass
> Stood before God.
> "What did you do?"
> Then all save one of the little blades
> Began eagerly to relate
> The merits of their lives.
> This one stayed a small way behind,
> Ashamed.
> Presently, God said:
> "And what did you do?"
> The little blade answered: "Oh, my Lord,
> Memory is bitter to me,
> For, if I did good deeds,
> I know not of them."
> Then God, in all His splendor,
> Arose from His throne.
> "Oh, best little blade of grass!" He said.

"In Heaven" sets the scene. Next comes an easily followed chronology of events. And the poem ends with the final and judgmental words of God. It is a simple narrative, with a lesson that smoothly follows the story-line.

"Blades of grass" are the personified judged ones of God. Crane develops this image to such an extent that the reader finds a purity in the humility of the "best little blade of grass." Like the word man, grass is a word that may be used as either a plural or a singular noun. The word blade gives the poem an uneasy edge, which is good. But the poem ends smoothly. In this apologue, Crane

allows a moment of religious hope, as God singles out the merits of one unpretentious "blade of grass." The message of the poem is a little too expected and bland in its over-dramatization. The moral ends both the story and the message of the story.

In Crane's better apologues, the moral may complete the individual story, but not the message of the story. Number 22 is one such apologue:

> Once I saw mountains angry,
> And ranged in battle-front.
> Against them stood a little man;
> Aye, he was no bigger than my finger.
> I laughed, and spoke to one near me:
> "Will he prevail?"
> "Surely," replied this other;
> "His grandfathers beat them many times."
> Then did I see much virtue in grandfathers,--
> At least, for the little man
> Who stood against the mountains.

"Mountains angry" is a frightening image whose fright is intensified in the next line, which states that the mountains are "ranged in battle-front." The perspective of the speaker is shown in line four, as the man against the mountains is "no bigger than my finger." But Crane is more than explaining perspective; he is also relating significance. A tiny man stands "against" giant mountains. He does not stand near or in front of or on; he is "against" them. And this fight image is further developed in the reply of the stranger who states, "His grandfathers beat them many times." There is a definite struggle, a war.

As in apologue number 3, the last three lines of the poem comprise the moral. The first of these, "Then did I see much virtue in grandfathers,--" is a beautiful concession to the worth of life. But the poem does not end there. The dash puts the reader on the brink of a drop back to the repetition of the struggle portions of the poem. "At least" takes the shine off the beautiful concession, and the repetition of "little man" renews the scare. The word "stood" in the last line is unexpectedly chilling. For the poem's moral gives the "little man" a hope against large odds. But the action is past tense. The man never stands; he "stood," and the virtue is in "grandfathers," not in the present struggle of a single man.

Poem number 42 is an example of an apologue whose moral leaves the poem's ending open:

> I walked in a desert.
> And I cried:
> "Ah, God, take me from this place!"
> A voice said: "It is no desert."
> I cried: "Well, but--
> The sand, the heat, the vacant horizon."
> A voice said, "It is no desert."

In this poem, Crane develops a first-person narrator in an emotional discourse with a voice that may be that of God. The narrator addresses God, but it is never stated whether the voice that answers is or is not God's.

The narrator sets the wasteland scene in the first line. The voice then proceeds to negate that which seems a fact to the narrator, saying "It is no desert."

The most disturbing part of this poem is the moral. After the narrator has described the desolate scene, the God-voice sets the repeated moral, "It is no desert." There is no explanation, and all objections have been overruled. The dissenting argument that is never solved and the lack of explanation make this a good apologue, for its ambiguity leaves open questions.

Number 62 is an apologue whose moral destroys the flow of both metrics and message:

> There was a man who lived a life of fire.
> Even upon the fabric of time,
> Where purple becomes orange
> And orange purple,
> This life glowed,
> A dire stain, indelible;
> Yet when he was dead,
> He saw that he had not lived.

Apologue number 62 builds up a phonic and metrical flow. The first line is iambic pentameter. In the phrase "lived a life of fire," lived flows phonically into life with their common labio-dental fricatives, [v] and [f], and their common [l] sound. And life flows into fire with their common long i sound, before and after a common f sound. The connecting words a and of give the phrase its iambic bounce. They are also used as both alliterative and sound transition agents.

The diction is good in this poem. Dire and indelible in line six are powerful feeling words that synonyms could not match. The sound of the words is also very important.

The first two-thirds of the poem is made up of short, terse, explanatory words that lead up to the strength of the longer word indelible in line six.

The power of the life that is portrayed is impressively set forth in active images and moving colors. Colors are washed in and out of the poem as "upon the fabric of time." The life-stain of the man who "lived a life of fire" is red. Red is the strong primary color of which both purple and orange are composed. And the red is "indelible"--it does not change or fade.

Still, like many contrast antiphons, this poem builds up to be broken. The final two-line moral breaks it. There is no attempt to ease into transition. It is blunt--"Yet when he was dead / He saw that he had not lived." The man whose life transcended time, whose color was primary, more than dies; his life is negated. The life that was a "stain" is not even allowed to have been. The words of this last two-line moral kill the flow of metrics and sound. The rest of the poem shifts and glows, like embers, in and out of itself. The moral just lies there, more than dead. The impact of the moral and the strength of the images in number 62 make it a good poem.

Apologue number 67 is a good poem mainly because of its moral:

> God lay dead in Heaven;
> Angels sang the hymn of the end;
> Purple winds went moaning,

Their wings drip-dripping
With blood
That fell upon the earth.
It, groaning thing,
Turned black and sank.
Then from the far caverns
Of dead sins
Came monsters, livid with desire.
They fought;
Wrangled over the world,
A morsel.
But of all sadness this was sad,--
A woman's arms tried to shield
The head of a sleeping man
From the jaws of the final beast.

It is a poem of intense images, comparable to those in the biblical Revelation. However, the beauty of this poem lies in its helpless sadness. Although the moral needs the intense images of the rest of the poem in order to evoke its full pathos, the moral itself, the last four lines, encompasses this sadness without the emphasis on the surrealism of the rest of the poem.

This poem depicts Crane's view of love as an impotent force. Yet here love holds a beauty in its vulnerability and in its ephemeral qualities. The line "But of all sadness this was sad,--" is both sad and beautiful. For, the fact that even an impotent and soon vanquished love retains a sadness is a concession to human love. The beauty of the moral makes this a good apologue.

Number 82 would be a better poem without its moral:

"I have heard the sunset song of the birches
A white melody in the silence
I have seen a quarrel of the pines.
At nightfall
The little grasses have rushed by me

With the wind men.
These things have I lived," quoth the maniac,
"Possessing only eyes and ears.
But, you--
You don green spectacles before you look at roses."

Ths first six lines are good poetry. They are a dream-like description of real-life images. They personify nature with an interplay of sensual images. The song of the birches is "A white melody in the silence," the pines "quarrel," and the "little grasses" rush by "With the wind men." These lines use a first-person narrator to set the scene. This narrator's point of view is questioned by the reader when it is related that the narrator is a "maniac." However, the beauty of the images attests to the narrator's sensual sanity.

The first six lines flow like an evening song. The next two lines make up an explanation that ambiguously defines both sanity and life. These two lines have little detrimental effect on the pure poetry of the first lines. These two lines take the poem from its song-like dream-state to the story line of a dramatic apologue.

It is the last two lines, the moral, that damage this poem. In the moral, the poem over-defines--it makes a wry and overstated comment that the previous two lines had already gently touched off in the reader's mind. It is a bombardment of purpose, and it mars the beauty of the piece.

Poem number 102 has a double moral:

The trees in the garden rained flowers.
Children ran there joyously.
They gathered the flowers
Each to himself.
Now there were some
Who gathered great heaps--
--Having opportunity and skill--
Until, behold, only chance blossoms
Remained for the feeble.
Then a spindling tutor
Ran importantly to the father, crying:
"Pray, come hither!
See this unjust thing in your garden!"
But when the father had surveyed,
He admonished the tutor:
"Not so, small sage!
This thing is just.
For, look you,
Are not they who possess the flowers
Stronger, bolder, shrewder
Than they who have none?
Why should the strong--
--The beautiful strong--
Why should they not have the flowers?"

Upon reflection, the tutor bowed to the ground.
"My Lord," he said,
"The stars are displaced
By this towering wisdom."

This poem reads like an Aesopian fable. It is neither sonorous nor rhythmic. It is terse like a news clip.

The message of the poem is also terse. Crane tells the reader twice that "This thing is just," that the powerful should have the most flowers. Yet, it is against the reader's ingrained humanistic sense of propriety. The poem's first moral, the father's explanation to the tutor's question, is just, although it negates any compassion or sympathy. The last moral, the reflective decision of the tutor, makes the message of the poem one step harsher, as

even the innocent child finds the stilted justice in the words of the father.

Wisdom and justice prevail, but the end is puzzlingly unfair. Crane, in this poem, allows the beauty of justice to get translated into a bestial survival of the fittest.

But the poem is methodically precise, like a syllogism, and the end logically follows. There are no questions left unanswered within the poem. It is "just." It is so straightforward that the reader gets tangled into thoughts beyond the words of the poem. For the poem is explained and ended, but the reader is humanly forced to challenge the message. And this was one of Crane's major goals in an apologue--to pull the reader toward an open-ended goal. Often, a satisfying ending is never reached. To many of Crane's apologues there is no answer; to some, the answer merely opens up more questions. Number 102 is a good apologue in that it leaves unsettling questions with the reader to the effectively ironic situation of "the garden."

Number 17 is an impersonal apologue, told from a limited third-person point of view. Like a dramatic apologue version of a contrast antiphon, it depicts contrasting circumstances and leads to an ambiguous moral:

> There were many who went in huddled procession,
> They knew not whither;
> But, at any rate, success or calamity
> Would attend all in equality.
>
> There was one who sought a new road.
> He went into direful thickets,

And ultimately he died thus, alone;
But they said he had courage.

The moral is the priority in this poem. "Ultimately he died thus, alone;" is stated in line seven, but it is no end. The emphasis of the entire poem falls on the eighth and last line, the moral. And it is important that this line does not state that the "one" had courage. It only states that "they," the drifting many, "said he had courage." This leaves the message of the poem ambiguous and disturbing, qualities of a good apologue. The effective irony of situation and ambiguous moral of number 17 make it a good poem.

Apologues are moral story poems. Crane wrote more apologues than any other form of poem. The short, story-like form of an apologue was a good medium for Crane's imitations of a distorted and ambiguous universe. In this category, Crane's desire for his poetry to deny concrete answers, for the reader to be forced to think beyond the words of the poems, is apparent. An effective moral is the prime relayer of these feelings. The inclusion of a moral is also a vehicle for irony, contrast, impact, and ambiguity.

CHAPTER III

EMBLEMS

Emblems are Crane's poems in which the ultimate goals are sensual flow, mood, and impression. Like the works of the French impressionist painters, the way the senses concur about the object is the art. Emblems have an essential meaning beyond the physical words and definitions contained in the poems. Unlike antiphons, emblems include necessary rhythms and repetitions to convey mood, and with it meaning. Unlike apologues, emblems do not have a chronology or plot basic to the form. Emblems include sensual images in currents of flow, rhythmical and metrical patterns, but not in necessary story lines.

The emblem category of poems approaches Poe's definition of poetry as a "rhythmical creation of beauty" (894). Words flow for sensual beauty in a Crane emblem, and a fundamental part of the message of the poem lies in that beauty.

Because of their nature, emblems were a natural outlet for Crane's ideas and feelings of love. Twelve of his twenty-eight emblem poems are written about love.

The love emblems follow a chronological pattern in content. The early poems depict an innocence, a heart-love

with the often accompanying symbolic color of white. The poems in Crane's middle career depict a violent, sexual love--love as doom and death, with their attributive darkness. The poems written toward the end of Crane's poetic career take the love attitude back partway to an acceptance of a physical love and a partial acceptance of an emotional one. Appendix D is a chronological list of emblems that are love poems.

Emblem, as defined in the Encyclopedia Britannica, is "a word applied in Greek and Latin to a raised or inlaid ornament on vases, etc., or to mosaic or tesselated work. In English it is confined to a symbolic representation of some object, particularly to a badge or heraldic device" (386).

Emblems rely on patterns of sound and image to allow a song-like melody and poetic regularity that are distinct from the previous categories of Crane's poems. The emblems are balanced with measured, though often varied, cadences.

Crane's emblems contain strong repeating lines, words, or images that symbolize a major thrust in message and flow. These repeating parts I call "bells"; for they are always sound-oriented, and, like the different sounds of a bell, they may be used to symbolize feelings as diverse as a funeral toll or a Christmas tinkling. The bells in an

emblem are symbolic and make a major statement in the poem.

Number 75 is one example of an emblem:

Rumbling, buzzing, turning, whirling Wheels,
Dizzy Wheels!
Wheels!

It is a rotating poem that describes its subject, wheels, through onomatopoeia and a circling repetition of sound and image. However, Crane's entire poem expands just these few techniques, sacrificing the irony and implication that such organized sound and repetition could have as parts of a more fully developed poem.

Like all emblems, number 75 is a poem with a sound and feeling flow. And, too, a reader may symbolically stretch the meaning of the poem to an overall organicism of life. Still, the poem lacks extension of ambiguity, implication, or irony. It is bland. It does not develop.

Emblem number 114 is a song-like poem with varying tempos:

Chant you loud of punishments,
Of the twisting of the heart's poor strings
Of the crash of the lightning's fierce revenge.

Then sing I of the supple-souled men
And the strong strong gods
That shall meet in times hereafter
And the amaze of the gods
At the strength of the men.
--The strong, strong gods--
--And the supple-souled men.

This poem is an emblem that is comparable to an effective contrast antiphon. The first stanza pounds like a

thunderstorm, and the second stanza soothes like a spring shower. It is a psalm, a song of praise, not of Crane's ambiguous gods, but of men.

Number 126 is an emblem poem with effective implications:

> Oh, a rare old wine ye brewed for me
> Flagons of despair
> A deep, deep drink of this wine of life
> Flagons of despair.
>
> Dream of riot and blood and screams
> The rolling white eyes of dying men
> The terrible heedless courage of babes.

This poem uses a Whitmanesque listing technique. However, Crane' list is much more volatile than most of Whitman's. In this poem the list fluctuates between descriptive images of life and death, for impact, irony, and implication.

Number 126 is a good emblem. It flashes intense images quickly like the subliminal flips of advertisements on a movie screen. The result is a feeling of unrest.

The poem describes a drunken state, not of mirth, but of the sublime contemplation that dying men fear to accept. The feeling of number 126 is like that of a hand that lightly brushes against one's leg, or the feeling of the thought of such an action.

The first stanza sets a dream-like mood for the poem. This first part is the kind of song that drunken men would sing. The timeless, yet removed, feeling of revelry is

heightened by the archaic diction of phrases like "flagon" and "ye brewed for me." Still, the drink is the "wine of life," and the entire jingle-like stanza retains a Bacchian humor.

Abruptly, emblem number 126 falls into stanza two. The dream is no longer fun. The "deep, deep drink" has become a dying, not even death. There are no dead images in the poem, only dying ones: "riot," "blood," "screams," "rolling white eyes," and the last terrifying image, "heedless courage of babes." Innocence itself is in a dying state, and the dream has become a nightmare.

Number 126 is a short, two-stanza poem, with many implications of the contrasting feelings and images it develops. The ambiguous phrase "the terrible heedless courage of babes," the impact of "riot of blood and screams," the effective irony of "wine of life," and the terribly vivid imagery of "The rolling white eyes of dying men," make this a good emblem.

Number 101 is impressionistic, like the splashes of light and color on a Monet painting:

> Each small gleam was a voice
> --A lantern voice--
> In little songs of carmine, violet, green, gold.
> A chorus of colors came over the water;
> The wondrous leaf shadow no longer wavered,
> No pines crooned on the hills
> The blue night was elsewhere a silence
> When the chorus of colors came over the water,
> Little songs of carmine, violet, green, gold.

Small glowing pebbles
Thrown on the dark plane of evening
Sing good ballads of God
And eternity, with soul's rest.
Little priests, little holy fathers
None can doubt the truth of your hymning
When the marvellous chorus comes over the water
Songs of carmine, violet, green, gold.

Emblem number 101 is an intensely sensual poem. Sound and texture, sight and tempo leap across this poem. The words of the poem exhibit a juxtaposition of sense images. Colors are heard; sounds are seen. This surrealistic juxtaposition takes the reader beyond the definitions of words in the poem, and brings him into a direct contact with the feelings of the poem.

The entire poem is in movement, like water. It ripples. It reflects. It is prismatic. It flows. The second stanza is like the ripples created by the "small glowing pebbles" being thrown on the water. The first line of this second stanza is a throw. The reader can hear the pebbles hit. Plink, plink, plink, plink; this is the tetrameter of line two in the second stanza. And the meaning follows in much the same way. "Good ballads of God" are an inner ripple of the larger concept "eternity with souls rest." Then, plink, "little priests," and plink, "little holy fathers," both fall into the widening circle of "the truth of your hymning." Then perspective is shattered like water when a wind suddenly sweeps all ripples away, as the bells come, in "songs of carmine, violet, green, gold."

This poem, like emblem number 126, creates a dream-like mood. Tetrameter gives it a regularity, not monotonous because the number of feet shift, but dreamlike. The repeated dactylic phrase, "chorus of colors came over the water" has a transitionary effect on the mood of the poem. It creates a background feeling of change, like that of a radio song that was a part of a dream but is still playing when the person wakes up. The effective impressions and feelings that the images im emblem number 101 elicit make it a good poem.

Emblems result from a major categorical shift in form in Crane's poetry. Some of the major distinctions of this emblem category may be viewed in a comparison between two love poems, one an apologue and one an emblem.

Number 61 is an apologue about a view of love:

I

There was a man and a woman
Who sinned.
Then did the man heap the punishment
All upon the head of her,
And went away gayly.

II

There was a man and a woman
Who sinned.
And the man stood with her,
As upon her head, so upon his,
Fell blow and blow,
And all people screaming: "Fool!"
He was a brave heart.

III

He was a brave heart.
Would you speak to him, friend?
Well, he is dead,
And there went your opportunity.
Let it be your grief
That he is dead
And your opportunity gone;
For, in that, you were a coward.

Apologue number 61 has a definite chronology and story-line. As in most apologues, sound and flow are not essential, as impact and irony take precedence over sensual feeling and mood. The poem also has a definite moral. In this instance, the moral is similar to that of the twisted justice of the moral given the tutor in apologue number 102. In number 61, however, no moral is set. Instead, several causal puzzles are raised, such as the ambiguous definitions of bravery and love.

There is repetition in apologue number 61 in the first two lines of stanzas one and two, and in the last line of stanza two and the first line of stanza three. However, unlike an emblem, the repeated lines are not constructed for rhythm and sound. The first repeated portion is "There was a man and a woman / Who sinned." It is factual. It is a dramatic statement, a part of a story. The next repetition is the line "He was a brave heart." This line is repeated for the emphasis of the irony of the situation it explains. But, contrary to the bells of an emblem, this line is terse, made to negate flow.

Number 81 is an emblem describing another view of love:

I explained the silvered passing of a ship at night,
The sweep of each sad lost wave
The dwindling boom of the steel thing's striving
The little cry of a man to a man
A shadow falling across the greyer night
And the sinking of the small star.

Then the waste, the far waste of waters
And the soft lashing of black waves
For long and in loneliness.

Remember, thou, O ship of love
Thou leavest a far waste of waters
And the soft lashing of black waves
For long and in loneliness.

Number 81 is a string of organized images. The organization in this poem, however, is not dramatic. It does have a chronology, as is apparent in "I explained," "Then," and "Remember." Still, unlike the narrative purpose of the chronology in an apologue, this sequential language is used as a transition for the moods and impressions that are the essence of an emblem.

This poem does not rise to any denouement or moral. It flows, in and out of sensual images. Even the last stanza is not like the ending of an apologue. It is a direct analogy of the same feelings expressed in the rest of the poem.

The repeated portions of number 81 are important to the poem's flow of sound and rhythm. The [l], [w], and [s] sounds in the repeated lines "far waste of waters," "the soft lashing of black waves," and "long and in loneliness"

give the poem a uniformity that is consistent with the contemplative, sad mood elicited by the images of the poem. The sound of the lines in emblem 81 creates the impression of wave upon wave, consistent but not precise.

The impression of human love in poem number 81 is as diminutive and suspended as the images it describes.

Emblems are Crane's poems of impression, dots of sound and color that come together to form first images, then moods, the transitory impressions contained in the work, and then feelings, the affective personal acceptance of those impressions. In the forms of antiphons and apologues, Crane uses logical explanation, progression, and story to reach the reader's feelings. In the emblems, Crane attempts to stir feelings in a more direct way.

CHAPTER IV

TESTAMENTS

Testaments are the most complex of Crane's poems. Each one contains some or all of the characteristics of the other categories and is more extensive in scope than the other forms. They have meaning in rhythm and impression like the emblems, tell a story like the apologues, and retain the force of the blunt statement and restatement of the antiphons.

Crane never wrote a bad testament. To be sure, some testaments are better than others, but this category is Crane's forte to which the other categories have been leading. Crane once said:

> I suppose I ought to be thankful to 'The Red Badge' but I am much fonder of my little book of poems, 'The Black Riders.' The reason, perhaps, is that it was a more ambitious effort. My aim was to comprehend in it the thoughts I have about life in general, while 'The Red Badge" is a mere episode in life, an amplification (Stallman and Gilkes 93-96).

Crane was quite proud of his first volume of poems, yet it contains no testaments. The reason, perhaps, is due to the fact that they do tackle "life in general," and one of the characteristics of a testament is its "amplification." The testaments, being more complex, are the result of a more opulent and penetrating voice.

There are seven testaments. A full comparison of two of Crane's best testaments should depict the subtleties and possibilities of this culmination of Crane's forms:

Number 74

When a people reach the top of a hill
Then does God lean toward them,
Shortens tongues, lengthens arms.
A vision of their dead comes to the weak.
The moon shall not be too old
Before the new battalions rise
--Blue battalions--
The moon shall not be too old
When the children of change shall fall
Before the new battalions
--The blue battalions--

Mistakes and virtues will be trampled deep
A church and a thief shall fall together
A sword will come at the bidding of the eyeless,
The God-led, turning only to beckon.
Swinging a creed like a censer
At the lead of the new battalions
--Blue battalions--
March the tools of nature's impulse
Men born of wrong, men born of right
Men of the new battalions
--The blue battalions--

The clang of swords is Thy wisdom
The wounded make gestures like Thy Son's
The feet of mad horses is one part,
--Aye, another is the hand of a mother on the brow of a son.
Then swift as they charge through a shadow,
The men of the new battalions
--Blue battalions--
God lead them high. God lead them far
Lead them far, lead them high
These new battalions
--The blue battalions--

Number 76

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.
Because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky
And the affrighted steed ran on alone,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment,
Little souls who thirst for fight,
These men were born to drill and die.
The unexplained glory flies above them,
Great is the Battle-God, great, and his Kingdom--
A field where a thousand corpses lie.

Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.
Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches,
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Swift blazing flag of the regiment,
Eagle with crest of red and gold,
These men were born to drill and die.
Point for them the virtue of slaughter,
Make plain to them the excellence of killing
And a field where a thousand corpses lie.

Mother whose heart hung humble as a button
On the bright splendid shroud of your son,
Do not weep.
War is kind.

Stephen Crane, in his prosaic free-verse, creates two poems of strong images in number 76 and number 74. Both poems contain repetition and parallelism as key conveyers of the ironies of war. In number 76 Crane depicts a drama that is both personal and terrifying. Throughout number 74 Crane flashes images like those that cross a Nazi propaganda film. Both poems include stanzas that contrast in form, rhythm, and mood.

Intermittent splashes of color promote the poem's ironic message in number 76. The "yellow trenches" are a blatantly realistic contrast to the idealized "crest of red and gold."

In number 74, blue is the central color. By interspersing a few warm images among the overriding cold ones, Crane produces spasmodic chills. "God lean[ing] toward them" and "the hand of a mother on the brow of a son" are warmth images--a warmth that is trampled in the deep and recurring cold of "the blue battalions."

In number 76, Crane's message, as well as, at times, his form, is overstated. The all-too-apparent alliteration in the last stanza in "heart," "hurry," and "humble" and "splendid," "shroud," and "son" contrasts with the understated simile "as a button." This method gives force to the piece, often accentuating the understated portions in a kind of reverse psychology.

Sounds are of extreme importance in number 76. Crane's vowels are, in large part, responsible for the poetic continuity--the flowing of each syllable into the next. Alliteration is also carefully wound, within and without the consonance, throughout the work. Crane uses many vocal stops as meaning-conveyers. These stops give the work a pounding tempo, a marching beat.

Number 74 also marches. The repetition in this peom, of both tempo and phraseology, promotes the marching

feeling. This marching begins slowly and opens outward like a debouch, but the increase in tempo is not uniform. It clashes back and forth like the poem's disjunctive images. And, like the poem's ironic statement about war, the marching tempo does not come full circle; it simply ends in mid-stride.

The parallelism of number 76 extends beyond the boundaries of words and phrases that are grammatically similar. The "lover," the "father," and the "son" are parallels. These may be seen to be biblically symbolic: the Holy Ghost, the Father, and the Son. Then, too, the vulnerable characters are parallels. These are the ones who are asked to live with the irony: the "maiden," the "babe," and the "mother."

Number 74 is a prophetic story-picture. The biblical references are very clear: "The clang of swords is Thy Wisdom," "Swinging a creed like a censer," "The wounded make gestures like Thy Son's." God is the main character in this poem. He motivates, leads, and causes. How pathetic then becomes the line "The wounded make gestures like Thy Son's." All men, "Men born of wrong, men born of right," are participants in the irony of poem number 74. The universality of the characters, the images, and the feelings gives this poem a less personal stance than that in number 76. Whereas God is the main character in this poem, in

number 76 the main characters are the more tangible "father," "mother," and "son."

Crane's use of metaphor is pronounced throughout number 76. "Glory flies" and "souls . . . thirst," as a flag blazes and a god's "Kingdom" is a graveyard. That last image is an important one. The world Crane has created in this poem is ruled by a bloodthirsty god. "Battle-God" and "Kingdom" are capitalized, thus giving them more shine, even though it is a false and glittery one.

Number 74 is a prayer that invokes once again "the Battle-God." There is a different irony in this poem, although it too is brought about through terse images. Unlike the bloody background of number 76, this poem has a bloody foreground similar to that of the biblical Apocalypse. The irony is encompassed in the forceful war prayer, the "God-led" battalions, and the smugness of the participants who blast over and "trample deep" the vulnerable--"the weak," "the children," and "the wounded."

In poem number 76, images are brilliantly portrayed in the four death scenes. In the first stanza "your lover" comes to an impersonal death as he throws "wild hands toward the sky." That he is a "lover" makes it romantic. That he is "yours" makes it personal. In the rest of the scene, an uncaring world refutes the significance of any such "lover." Again, in the third stanza, the "your" is

repeated, this time in relation to a "father," another cherished image. This "father" is also lowered to a sub-human level as he tumbles through "yellow trenches" and ignobly dies. The war images are bright and crsip. Words used in relation to these images are often concise. False, tinsel images of war are superimposed on muddy, yellow images of life. In stanza five, the mother's son, in this poem's ultimate pathetic scene, lies dead beneath a shroud which is "bright" and "splendid"--the last humble realization is a tinsel dream. The fourth death is the slow, more painful, lifetime of dying that the living are subjected to, and the pain of the stab embodied in the repeated lines "Do not weep. War is kind."

In stanza four of number 76, Crane uses the Ciceronian question. Here, we, the butchers, are asked if we can "point for them the virtue of slaughter," if we can "make plain to them the excellence of killing." "Them" refers to the men who "were born to drill and die." The answer to these questions needs no utterance. And yet, the "kind"ness of war remains. In number 74 no question is ever asked.

Poems number 76 and number 74 have many similar images, but the differences in these images between the poems are important. Number 74 depicts horses that are "mad," out of control. In number 76, the horse is both solitary and "affrighted." This gentler image is a sadder and a more

personal one. Number 76 expounds other images that flashed by in number 74. For example, the mother in testament number 74 may be compared to "she" in number 76. She too is powerless, reaching out a hand to caress her son. This image appears to be a fleeting version of the pathetic final scene of number 76. The transitory nature of the images in number 74 is one of the major differences between the two poems. Images splash across number 74, whereas they wash into one another in number 76.

Testament number 74 utilizes understatement for dramatic contrast to its overall Apocalyptic overstatement. The first three lines should be recalled by the reader in the midst of the rest of the poem's forceful images. All of the vulnerable images are likewise accentuated by their unlikely placements. "The wounded make gestures like Thy Son's" and "Aye, another is the hand of a mother on the brow of a son" are gently tucked into a slashing of bloody images.

Where testament number 76 rends by caressing, number 74 rends by tearing. In number 74, the few times of sympathy contrast the overall rampage. In number 76, the overall effect is a soothing that enrages the reader.

Number 74 is a view of war which holds a sadness in its distance. It is cold. God leads men who, when wounded, "make gestures like Thy Son's." Number 76 is a very

personal view. Thus, the feelings it evokes are easily felt and shared. Number 74 rises, at times, to excellence. Testament number 76 maintains it.

Number 74 is a very good poem. However, it loses some of its overall feeling to Crane's use of stringing images one after the other, which elicits a prophetic impersonality. Number 76 is a meticulously acute and very personal account of realistic people and feelings. It is Crane's best poem.

In the two testaments, number 76 and number 74, Crane blends contrasting forms and images. His careful diction, parallelism, metaphor, and imagery are well-combined in these disconcerting views of a world which are perhaps all too familiar.

CONCLUSION

T. S. Eliot, in his critical treatise "Tradition and the Individual Talent," said:

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of aesthetic, not merely historical, criticism. . . . The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. . . . It is a judgment, a comparison, in which two things are measured by each other (qtd. in Kaplan 476-77).

Eliot's idea of a sliding "simultaneous order" allows critics the power to nudge specific poets up or down a ranking order. Crane deserves to be elevated in this order. He is a better poet than he has been credited, and his poems have an intrinsic vitality that makes them still contemporary in theme and style, still perplexing, and still enjoyable.

Crane is not in the topmost ranks of poets like Emily Dickinson. Still, Crane, as a poet, is superior to many poets who have been granted equal or higher status than he. Hoffman states:

> Crane certainly pays the price idiosyncrasy exacts from isolation. Yet in his rebellion against the mechanical conventions of late nineteenth-century poetry he was closer to the main current of verse since his day then were such genteel contemporaries as Cabot Lodge . . . (17).

There are several reasons why Crane's poetry has not been critically accepted for the good poetry that it is. There is the fact that Crane was, as critics commonly attest, a good novelist and short story writer. His small repertoire of poems, as a result, has often been overshadowed by his prose. Then, too, there is the fact that Crane's poetry does not fit into traditional poetic definitions. In fact, he specifically tried to redefine what was to him the meticulous and limiting rules of classic poetry. As Eliot, in a further explanation of poetic tradition, states: "To conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art" (qtd. in Kaplan 477). Crane did not conform to traditional poetic values, yet the impact and feeling of his works were never sacrificed to his desire for originality. Also, there is the fact that Crane's poetic career was very short. He wrote poems for under a decade and had neither the time nor the desire to rework and rewrite to any extent. Crane's writing methods were distinct from those of most authors. He felt an epiphanal urge to write down the things in his head, and, like the sculptor with his rock, he left out everything that was not, to him, true art. Some of the blame also lies in previous critics' failures to categorize his poems. A consistent and effective categorization can

yield a fuller appreciation of the quality poetry that Crane wrote. William Dean Howells, in a letter to Crane about his poems, said: "I wish you had given them more form, for then things so striking would have found a public ready made for them; as it is they will have to make one" (Stallman and Gilkes 31). Howells was suggesting a then more readily acceptable form of Horatian imitation that, to Crane, was not true poetry. Form is paramount to Crane's poems, and, although his forms are eccentric, they are consistent. Every poem fits into one of the four categories, antiphons, apologues, emblems, or testaments. The basic formal changes throughout any given category are slight. Even from a chronological standpoint, the only significant and recurring change in basic composition is an elaboration on single images, which is more apparent in his late poems.

Crane's poems have been holistically lumped together as a basis for critical decisions as to poetic worth. Under a critical view of poetry such as Poe's "rhythmical creation of beauty," an antiphon would probably not be considered true poetry, nor would an apologue. However, emblems and the emblem-inclusive testaments certainly would be. Emblems and those poems with emblem tendencies have all the characteristics of this view of "real" poetry. Wordsworth's less metrically restrictive definition of "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling" and "moral purpose" (246) fits

the apologues and antiphons just as well as the more complex of Crane's poems. A view of Crane's poems as one holistic form, then, has been a problem in previous criticism.

Such critical shortcomings are alleviated when the poems are categorized into separate and distinct forms. When this is done, the poems may be viewed and judged as the mutually exclusive forms that they are. A sonnet is not an ode, and thus formal comparisons are not founded on the reasons why an ode fails to be a good sonnet. So, too, a testament is a different poem than an antiphon, an apologue than an emblem, and each category of poem can stand or fall on its own merits or demerits of form.

Stephen Crane was a good poet. His poetry is often credited as "merely representative and influential" (Hoffman 19), yet it deserves much more than this passive acceptance. For his is an active poetry--vehement and thought-provoking. Crane's small poems are sparks of life that exemplify existence as a whole. In his little poems, Crane asks questions that are far too big to answer fully and gives explanations that are far too simple to fully accept.

APPENDIX A

NUMBER AND CATEGORY LIST

The Black Riders and Other Lines

1. Emblem
2. Apologue
3. Apologue
4. Antiphon
5. Apologue
6. Apologue
7. Antiphon
8. Emblem
9. Apologue
10. Emblem
11. Apologue
12. Antiphon
13. Antiphon
14. Apologue
15. Apologue
16. Antiphon
17. Apologue
18. Apologue
19. Apologue
20. Apologue
21. Apologue
22. Apologue
23. Emblem
24. Apologue
25. Apologue
26. Apologue
27. Apologue
28. Apologue
29. Apologue
30. Antiphon
31. Apologue
32. Apologue
33. Apologue
34. Apologue
35. Apologue
36. Apologue
37. Emblem
38. Antiphon
39. Antiphon
40. Emblem
41. Apologue
42. Apologue
43. Emblem
44. Apologue
45. Antiphon
46. Emblem
47. Apologue
48. Apologue
49. Apologue
50. Antiphon
51. Apologue
52. Apologue
53. Emblem
54. Apologue
55. Apologue
56. Apologue
57. Antiphon
58. Apologue
59. Apologue
60. Apologue
61. Apologue
62. Apologue
63. Apologue
64. Apologue
65. Apologue
66. Antiphon
67. Apologue
68. Apologue

Uncollected Poems

69. Apologue
70. Apologue
71. Apologue
72. Apologue
73. Apologue
74. Testament
75. Emblem

War Is Kind

76. Testament
77. Testament
78. Antiphon
79. Antiphon
80. Apologue
81. Emblem
82. Apologue
83. Apologue
84. Apologue
85. Antiphon
86. Emblem
87. Antiphon
88. Apologue
89. Emblem
90. Apologue
91. Apologue
92. Antiphon
93. Testament
94. Emblem
95. Antiphon
96. Apologue
97. Apologue
98. Apologue
99. Apologue
100. Emblem
101. Emblem
102. Apologue
103. Emblem
104. Emblem
105. Antiphon
106. Emblem
107. Antiphon
108. Emblem
109. Apologue
110. Emblem
111. Apologue
112. Emblem

Posthumously Published Poems

113. Testament	119. Apologue	125. Antiphon	131. Emblem
114. Emblem	120. Apologue	126. Emblem	132. Antiphon
115. Antiphon	121. Antiphon	127. Testament	133. Antiphon
116. Antiphon	122. Emblem	128. Emblem	134. Antiphon
117. Antiphon	123. Emblem	129. Testament	135. Antiphon
118. Antiphon	124. Apologue	130. Antiphon	

Numbers and divisions refer to Joseph Katz's The Poems of Stephen Crane: A Critical Edition, Second Printing--Revised.

APPENDIX B

CATEGORY GROUPS AND TOTALS

Antiphons	Apologues		Emblems	Testaments
4	2	55	1	74
7	3	56	8	76
12	5	58	10	77
13	6	59	23	93
16	9	60	37	113
30	11	61	40	127
38	14	62	43	129
39	15	63	46	
45	17	64	53	Total: 7
50	18	65	75	
57	19	67	81	
66	20	68	86	
78	21	69	89	
79	22	70	94	
85	24	71	100	
87	25	72	101	
92	26	73	103	
95	27	80	104	
105	28	82	106	
107	29	83	108	
115	31	84	110	
116	32	88	112	
117	33	90	114	
118	34	91	122	
121	35	96	123	
125	36	97	126	
130	41	98	128	
132	42	99	131	
133	44	102		
134	47	109	Total: 28	
135	48	111		
	49	119		
Total: 31	51	120		
	52	124		
	54			
	Total: 69			

APPENDIX C

SUBDIVISIONS OF ANTIPHONS

Explanation--A is.

4, 13, 92, 116, 121, 125, 132, 133

Definition--A is A.

16, 45, 85, 87, 95, 115, 118, 135

Question--What does A = ?

7, 66, 117

Discussion--Is A really A?

12, 30, 50, 57, 79, 105, 107, 134

Contrast--A = A, and B = B.

38, 39, 78, 130

APPENDIX D

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF LOVE EMBLEMS

The Black Riders and Other Lines--published 1895

8, 10, 23, 40, 43, 46

War Is Kind--published 1899

81, 86, 94, 100, 103, 104, 106, 108, 110

Posthumously Published Poems--published after 1900

112, 123, 131

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