The Presence of Hart Crane in Samuel R. Delany’s *Atlantis: Model 1924*

Laura Michiels

**ABSTRACT**

Approximately thirty-five years after he first read Hart Crane’s work, African American science fiction writer Samuel R. Delany wrote a story in which he described a fictitious encounter between his father and the poet, entitled *Atlantis: Model 1924*. The following article offers a detailed study of Crane’s presence in Delany’s novella. I argue that Delany seeks to mimic Crane’s intention to present “a synthesis of America” in his collection of poems titled *The Bridge* (1930), a sequence that attempted to bridge between a wide variety of cultures and historical periods (qtd. in Edelman 179). Delany adds to his predecessor’s audacious venture: he supplements it with fragments of African American history and develops a chain of literary connections revolving around Hart Crane. The first part of my paper explores the bridges between African American and white American culture that are established in the narrative. In the second and final part, I explore how Delany incorporates his predecessor’s source material and poems, as well as other tributes to Crane, into his novella. As its title indicates, *Atlantis: Model 1924* evinces its creator’s views on questions of (poetic) origins and originality.

When Samuel R. Delany read “The Harbor Dawn” by Hart Crane at the age of sixteen, its “lines […] sent chills racing over [him] and, a moment later, struck [him] across the bridge of [his] nose with a pain sharp enough to make [his] eyes water” (“Atlantis Rose” 197). At that point, the poem was “as articulate to an urban […] [homosexual] boy as any Gay Rights flier or Act-Up poster today” (201). Approximately thirty-five years later, Delany would incorporate Crane’s poem, in a slightly adjusted form, into his 1995 novella *Atlantis: Model 1924*.¹

Scholarship devoted to *Atlantis: Model 1924* has been primarily concerned with tracing the biography of its creator’s father and the story of race relations in 1920s New York. Yet I will argue that the entire text revolves more around Crane’s life and especially his work. Bearing in mind Ross Posnock’s emphasis on Delany’s technique of “collage and fragmentation” in his autobiographical writings (261), I will demonstrate that in *Atlantis: Model 1924* Delany presents his readers with a collage comprised of themes and quotes from Crane’s work as well

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¹ Delany is best-known for his science fiction writing. In 1975 he published the novel *Dhalgren*, which became a massive commercial success despite breaking with the conventions of the science fiction genre (cf. Tucker 57). Other famous works include the sword-and-sorcery cycle *Return to Nevèryon* (1979-1987), a series that consists of ten stories, and the novel *Neveryóna*, all of which detail the life of a former slave named Gorgik. *Atlantis: Model 1924* is part of a collection of three stories, *Atlantis: Three Tales*. While the novella is not an example of science fiction or fantasy, it shares its predecessors’ interest in race, memory, and language.
as references to the poet’s source material and legacy. Furthermore, by constantly building compositional bridges between the narrative’s concern with racial issues and the personal history of the Delanys on the one hand, and Crane’s life and work on the other, the author also mimics the poet’s most important intent. Indeed, Crane’s *The Bridge* not only aspired to offer “a synthesis of America” (Crane qtd. in Edelman 179), it also sought to establish connections between “times, cultures and people” (Fisher 278). Crane’s ambitious design led him to introduce a motley cast of characters—the Genovese explorer in “Ave Maria,” the washerwoman in “The Tunnel,” and the Native Americans in “The Dance”—all hailing from different ethnic backgrounds and related to various events in American history. Delany, for his part, appears primarily out to ‘build bridges’ between African American and white American culture, the former represented by Sam and his family and the latter by the figure of Crane. Moreover, the poet’s original outline included a section called “Calgary Express” which would “take […] in the whole racial history of the Negro in America” (Crane qtd. in Delany, “Atlantis Rose” 222). Crane subsequently forsook the idea, deciding that the story was not his to tell (224). As an African American writer, Delany seems to take on this project of including part of his people’s history in his text, thus contributing to Crane’s earlier “synthesis of America.” By focusing on Crane’s presence in Delany’s story, I argue that *Atlantis: Model 1924* should be viewed as a statement about (poetic) origins and originality. It is certainly not a coincidence that Delany’s novella took its epigraph—“Distinctly praise the years…”—from Crane’s “For the Marriage of Helen and Faustus.” “Helen and Faustus” was not only written during the period in which *Atlantis*’s protagonist allegedly encounters the poem’s creator, Crane’s poem also proves highly relevant in that it “narrate[s] a quest for poetic origins that is necessarily a quest for poetic originality” (Edelman 97). The ‘narrative’ of *The Bridge* “is always the narrative of Crane’s own quest for originality” (183), as Lee Edelman has argued. As a modernist writer, Crane was engaged in a careful process of deliberate forgetting to free himself from the hampering presence of his poetic forefathers (50). Delany’s postmodern aesthetics, conversely, allowed him to establish more obvious connections between his own text and its various predecessors.

While some critical attention has been paid to *Atlantis: Model 1924*, none of it deals at length with the significance of the modernist poet within the novella. Various scholars have commented on the story’s concern with memory, but none have actually tied this to the work of the figure whom the protagonist meets on the Brooklyn Bridge toward the end of the text. In his *A Sense of Wonder: Samuel R. Delany, Race, Identity, and Difference*, Jeffrey Allen Tucker, for example, ties *Atlantis*’s memory-theme to both Sigmund Freud and Ferdinand de Saussure (202, 204). He fails, however, to identify its most blatant source: Hart Crane, who had already—at the age of nineteen—devoted a poem to the subject titled “Forgetfulness” and never ceased to consider the topic throughout his entire oeuvre. Dorothea Löbbermann mentions that *Atlantis* frequently quotes from *The Bridge* but does not indicate which particular poems Delany uses nor explores how he adjusts and transforms them to fit the framework of his tale (56n). Posnock’s *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* sheds some
light on the issue of origins and originality in Delany’s text, but the passage on the importance of these related topics in *Atlantis* does not take into account the African American author’s ubiquitous references to the poet’s source material and legacy.

To fill in the gaps indicated above, I will highlight the various aspects of Crane’s presence in Delany’s novella through a close reading of *Atlantis: Model 1924*. Although Crane’s poetry, in all its intricacies, will play the most important role here, details taken from the poet’s life and scholarly discourse on his oeuvre also surface on various occasions. The discussion that follows roughly consists of two parts, with the concept of the bridge underlying both sections. The first part analyses connections between African American and white American culture; the latter traces links between the past, the story’s present, and the future, primarily by means of Crane’s sources, his own poetry, and his legacy. Given the interconnected nature of various themes in *Atlantis*, some of the elements discussed in one part could have been included just as easily in the other. Hence, the section on white and African American culture, for example, examines a number of quotes from Crane’s work because Delany adjusted them to the story’s black American framework.

### I. Bridging White and African American Culture

The process of bridging at work throughout *Atlantis: Model 1924* comes to the fore when looking at the twinned epigraphs Delany uses to head each of the story’s five chapters. While the first quotation is generally related to Crane’s oeuvre, the second one, with the exception of chapter b, ties in with the novella’s examination of the African American heritage in general. All but one of the citations succeeding those linked to Crane belong to Robert Hayden’s “Middle Passage,” a “collage of accounts of the slave ships that transported men and women from Africa into slavery in the New World” (Wallace and Kalstone 2663). Hayden’s concern with black American history prefigures Lewy’s speech on origins at the end of Delany’s novella, in which the character deplores the fact that “[t]hey didn’t keep records” (*Atlantis* 115) of the slaves’ original names and African home countries. Whereas the novella’s section on Delany’s father seems primarily concerned with tracing cultural/ethnic origins and the African American legacy, the story’s concern with Crane focuses on poetic origins. Thus, the topic of origins—albeit of a divergent nature—connects the text’s two most important components.

At the beginning of the first chapter, both epigraphs introduce the theme of the voyage. However, the journey described in “Middle Passage” is a forced one that obliged people to leave behind their native land and resulted in a loss of freedom at the least and unspeakable cruelty at the worst. In Crane’s work, by contrast, traveling overseas usually bears more positive connotations. In both “Ave Maria” and “Cutty Sark,” *The Bridge* associates the voyage with discoveries and enrichment: the “pearls” in “Ave Maria” (l. 45) and “sweet opium and tea”

[2] All line number references to Crane’s poetry are taken from *The Complete Poems of Hart Crane*. 
in “Cutty Sark” (l. 64) offer two examples. Delany’s text opens with a quotation from Michel Foucault’s *Madness and Civilization*, which can be tied indirectly to Crane’s writing. The citation in question introduces the “fool’s boat” (Foucault qtd. in *Atlantis* 3), associated with Christopher Columbus by Surrealists such as André Breton, whose early work had an impact on Crane’s (Giles 150). Unsurprisingly, “Ave Maria,” Crane’s account of the Genovese explorer’s best-known voyage is cited not much later, since “the dark prow of [Sam’s] trip” (*Atlantis* 11) is reminiscent of the “dark prow” (l. 56) described by the poem’s speaker. Furthermore, the magic shop that fascinates the protagonist is called “Cathay” (44), which is a historical name for northern China, and Crane’s Columbus—like the actual historic figure—mistakenly claims to his benefactors that he will “bring [them] back Cathay” (“Ave Maria” l. 8). In Tucker’s opinion, *Atlantis* “is an example of […] the African American migration narrative”; this is no doubt so, but even if Sam’s journey can be placed within the framework of the so-called “Great Migration” (208) at the beginning of the twentieth century, the description of his trip to New York is explicitly couched in Cranean terms. “Ave Maria,” in keeping with its position in *The Bridge*, is the first poem to shine through the account of the protagonist’s expedition. When the narrator subsequently refers to Sam as “The Navigator” (*Atlantis* 12), he seems to mimic the speaker of “Cape Hatteras,” who talks about “the Great Navigator” (l. 56). Moreover, the narrator’s observation that “people plunged in echo by” (*Atlantis* 12), while the central character is edging his way to the subway through the urban throng, echoes *White Buildings’s* opening poem “Legend,” where “realities” rather than people “plunge in silence by” (l. 2). The fact that Delany altered Crane’s “silence” to “echo” can hardly be deemed coincidental. Indeed, *Atlantis* continuously engages in a process of deliberately echoing the poet’s oeuvre. The novella compares the city’s crowd to an ocean, when the central character and his brother have to wrestle through “waves of men and women” (12). On a more speculative level, one could argue that this sounds like an echo of the first letter Crane ever wrote to his father Clarence Arthur from New York, in which Crane claimed to be astonished by the “sea of humanity” he was confronted with in the metropolis (qtd. in Giles 88). Finally, even though Sam can be tied to the numerous African Americans who traveled north at that time, he is also, regardless of his skin color, a country boy moving to the big city, just as Crane left rural Ohio in favor of New York at the age of seventeen. Both the poet and the character supposedly leave the country for reasons of education that are in Crane’s case subsequently discarded, or continuously postponed, as happens with Sam (Fisher 38, 43; *Atlantis* 105). The theme of the journey—“a key subject in much twentieth-century African American literature” (Tucker 208)—ties the novella’s exploration of black American culture to Crane’s poetic work.

Sam’s trip is phrased along the lines of Crane’s work, and the citations taken from Crane’s oeuvre are adjusted to the story’s African American context, as well. When Sam, for instance, meets a group of young female residents from the Manhattan Hospital for the Insane, he is struck by the appearance of one of the girls whom he “imagined [to be] some displaced tribal princess; stepped from an ancient African sect” (*Atlantis* 33). In the column juxtaposed with this section,
Delany includes citations from William Strachey’s *The Historie of Travaile into Virginia Britannia*, which Crane used as an epigraph to the “Powhatan’s Daughter” section of *The Bridge*. “The Dance,” the penultimate poem of that section, also introduces a tribal princess, though of Native American rather than African descent. Looking at the scarred but beautiful girl, Sam observes “[t]ides of black and brown made a torrent down her skull” (33). Crane’s speaker draws on similar elements when discussing Pocahontas’s “brown lap” (l. 15) and “the black pool from the heart’s hot root” (l. 44). Whereas in *Atlantis* the black orphan’s hair is likened to a flood, in the poem it is the princess herself who “is the torrent” (l. 91). However, Delany’s orphan is anything but the vigorous, fertile young woman described by Crane’s speaker. The connection to “The Dance” is strengthened when Sam observes that the hands of the clock at the post office are “arrow-tipped” (*Atlantis* 35), which is suggestive of the Native Americans’ stereotypical weapon the speaker in the poem is unable to “pick […] from [his] side” (l. 66).

The opposition between black and white is a recurring trope in *Atlantis*, and the text’s preoccupation with blackness is obviously tied to the racial issues Delany tackles. Whiteness, in itself, forms another bridge between African American history and Crane. Its prominence invokes the racial division of America’s population as can be seen at the very beginning of the story when Sam makes an observation about the white cars and the Jim Crow car where he sits. As the title of Crane’s first collection—*White Buildings*—indicates, white is an important symbol in the poet’s work. In Edelman’s opinion, its importance to a poem like “For the Marriage of Helen and Faustus,” for instance, harks back to both Herman Melville and Percy Bysshe Shelley. Whereas in Melville’s work whiteness is “the all-color and the absence of color,” Shelley associated it with eternity (Edelman 94). In any case, the color is ubiquitous in the poem with which Delany’s novella shares a title. There, the speaker observes “[w]hite tempest nets” (“Atlantis” l. 22), “white escarpments” (l. 69) and “white choiring wings” (l. 80), addresses the bridge as “whitest flower” (l. 84) and discusses its “white, pervasive Paradigm” (l. 48).

And yet the novella also complicates this apparently clear-cut distinction between black and white. The protagonist himself provides the best example in that he is so fair-skinned that people repeatedly see him as Caucasian. The Crane-character starts his conversation with Sam with a remark about the latter’s racial identity, which the poet finds difficult to pin down: “‘Excuse me,’ someone said behind [Sam]. ‘But you’re Negro, aren’t you? […] I’d bet a lot of people meet you and think you’re white’” (*Atlantis* 74-75). In spite of the fact that passing for white might offer occasional advantages—Delany’s own experiences in similar situations are described in *The Motion of Light in Water*—Sam nevertheless desires “to be the same clear and earth-dark hue as Lewy and his own father” (64; cf. Tucker 189). To be mistaken for a white person is a conventional trope in African American literature’s passing narratives. But *Atlantis* also includes instances of the less common situation in which a white person is erroneously perceived as black. The “light-eyed men” who prominently feature in the adventure stories with which Sam is enamoured, for example, have lived outdoors for such a long time that they are now “burnt […] black as Arabs or mixed-blooded Negroes” (43). Moreover, in one of the third chapter’s parallel columns, Delany incorpo-
rates “excerpts from letters (either actual or fictive) from Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps regarding their 1949 anthology The Poetry of the Negro” (Posnock 291). Hughes and Bontemps decide to support the Latin American author Frank Lima, since they can “let him pass for colored, if he wishes.” They also have problems establishing the racial identity of the writer Mason Jordan Mason. Even though Mason “writes in Negro” (Atlantis 64), the editors correctly assumed he was not of African American descent. The poetry published under the pseudonym Mason Jordan Mason was actually written by a white author named Judson Crews (Nielsen 42).

One of the novella’s most important connections between its preoccupation with Crane and its concern with race is formed by Jean Toomer—another fair-skinned African American author. As a friend of the character Clarice and look-alike of the protagonist, Toomer is first introduced in the conversations amongst the members of the Delany family (Atlantis 30). When Sam subsequently meets the fictionalized version of Crane on the Brooklyn Bridge, the Crane character notices Sam’s resemblance to Toomer, with whom the poet was on friendly terms (Atlantis 76; Fisher 184). Toomer’s Cane was an important contribution to the 1920s-1930s Harlem Renaissance and the author’s quest for his people’s heritage has led Posnock to christen him the “extravagant inventor of origins” (292). Toomer also bears a likeness to the character Lewy, who displays a similar interest in his cultural/ethnic origins (Posnock 292). Moreover, “the theme of returning to, or finding, or even inventing, one’s roots is typical of much modernist art” (Holland and Baym 2120) and can therefore also be tied to Crane’s work. The poet-character repeatedly quotes from Toomer’s “Sound Poems”: “Mon sa me el kirimoor” (Delany, Atlantis 92) comes from “Sound Poem” (I) while “Vor cosma saga” and “Vor shalmer raga” (94) both occur in “Sound Poem” (II) (Toomer 16). Toomer’s use of non-existing words comprised of sounds from different languages—French, Spanish, Latin, Japanese, and English among others—could again be connected to Lewy’s above-mentioned speech (Jones and Latimer xiii). Like Toomer, Lewy invented a new language to write in his journal, which consists of two columns, “one barely comprehensible, the other complete nonsense” (Atlantis 8). Throughout the novella, Sam and his two friends from Raleigh are continuously engaged in deciphering strange languages, a theme which is afterwards picked up by the Crane-character.

Clarice, the girlfriend of Sam’s older brother Hubert, takes a vivid interest in both Jean Toomer and the African American actor Paul Robeson. The latter also connects Crane to Sam and his relatives (Atlantis 37). Robeson became especially significant to the story of racial relations during this period through his leading part in Eugene O’Neill’s 1924 All God’s Chillun Got Wings, which presented a black “intellectual married to a white woman and destroyed by a self-hatred engendered by American racism” (Bigsby 375). The play’s concern with miscegenation and the fact that a black actor was cast for its central part infuriated both white segregationists and African American citizens worried about the portrayal of their people (Boyle and Bunie 118). Sam is not outraged when he first sees a picture in which the “white actress Mary Blair knelt on the ground beside a seated, twenty-six year old Negro actor, Paul Robeson, kissing his hand!” but
rather stunned “because you just didn’t see pictures like that” (Atlantis 36). Indeed, the production itself seems not to have that serious an impact on Sam, since he is unable to recall whether he saw the actor in All God’s Chillun or in the 1924 staging of The Emperor Jones (58). Significantly, Sam does remember Robeson’s appearance in a 1944 performance of Othello at the Metropolitan Opera House (58). To some extent, the black actor’s rise from the more experimental Province-town Playhouse to mainstream Broadway (a theatre district popularly referred to as the Great White Way), evidences the shift in racial relations that took place from the 1920s to the 1940s.

Crane first met Robeson and his wife in May 1924 and was impressed by the performer’s “fine mind and nature” (Crane qtd. in Fisher 226). Unlike Atlantis’s central character, Crane witnessed the production of O’Neill’s controversial play and was apprehensive about “some kind of mobbing or terrors” which he planned to counter with his “cane for cudgeling the unruly” (Crane qtd. in Boyle and Bunie 126). All God’s Chillun not only included one of Crane’s friends as its leading actor, but the playwright, Eugene O’Neill, was an artist to whom the poet was closely connected. O’Neill frequently invited Crane to his home in Connecticut and played a vital part in the decision of Boni and Liveright to accept White Buildings for publication (Combs 52). In Delany’s novella, the tie between Crane, O’Neill, and Robeson, on the one hand, and between the poet and the black family, on the other, is raised in an elliptical manner when Crane’s fictitious counterpart claims that “[i]n Atlantis, you can strut between Jim Harris [the name of Robeson’s character in All God’s Chillun] and the emperor every day” (Delany, Atlantis 94; cf. Boyle and Bunie 126).

II. Bridging the Past, the Present, and the Future

Delany’s Atlantis thus offers a wide variety of connections between its black protagonist and the white poet who served as inspiration, even though these connections are complicated by the fact that their actual meeting fails because the two characters are not really able to communicate. Furthermore, the novella goes out of its way to construct bridges between the past, present, and even the future. With regard to the history of segregation, for instance, Sam is able to remember “a mysterious time […] that had ended just around his birth, when everyone went to the theater together; when people even went to school together” (52). During the period when the story takes place, segregationist practices were the order of the day. Even so, the distinction between black and white citizens is, once again, rather indeterminate, in that the poor Caucasian family observed by the protagonist in the course of his journey finds itself obliged to sit in the Jim Crow car, while the ascent of Paul Robeson hints at a better future for African Americans in the United States.

More importantly, Delany creates ties between various works of literature stemming from different periods, which are all, in one way or the other, related to Crane’s work. Atlantis frequently draws on Crane’s sources (representative of the past) and Delany’s own work (demonstrative of the story’s present in 1924).
Additionally, Delany includes a number of poets and critics who were influenced by or wrote tributes to *The Bridge*’s author, thus also taking into account the future beyond the story’s present. In doing so, Delany seems bent on expressing the impossibility of originality, as Crane’s sources take the novella back as far as twelfth century France. Furthermore, the story evinces that “[s]overeign ownership is disowned in the kingdom of culture” (Posnock 290).

**The Vision Reclaimed: Hart Crane’s Models and Sources**

The initial reference in *Atlantis* to an older literary text cannot be tied directly to Crane’s poetry. As Sam’s train draws closer to the city, the conductor, John Brown (who originally formed the crux of *The Bridge*’s abandoned “Calgary Express”) remarks to Sam that they have “just gone by the Hell Gate” (Delany, *Atlantis* 7; Delany, “Atlantis Rose” 219). Given the fictitious Crane’s elaborate discussion of the various circles of hell in which he may wind up, the conductor’s comment might be seen as the first allusion to Dante’s *Inferno* and thus creates a bridge between the story’s different parts. The poet-character quotes Dante’s text when he tells his dazzled interlocutor that in his mythic city “Raphèl mài amèèche zabì almi makes as lucid sense as mene, mene tekel upharsin or Mon sa me el kirimoor” (*Atlantis* 92). In the thirty-first canto of *The Inferno*, Dante and Virgil meet the giant Nimrod, who is supposedly responsible for the construction of the tower of Babel and utters the first phrase which *Atlantis*’s poet-character speaks (Alighieri 357n). As punishment for his “rebellious intelligence” (Upton 173), Nimrod was constrained to speaking only incoherent statements that would “sap […] the intelligence of whoever tries to understand” them (Upton 171). “Mon sa me el kirimoor” is an example of Jean Toomer’s self-invented language, and the second quote stems from the biblical Book of Daniel, in which the Hebrew sentence appears on the wall and can be interpreted by no one but Daniel. All three statements therefore are difficult or impossible to comprehend. In the city that the Crane-character envisions, however, misunderstanding will cease to exist. The poet can even “stand on the corner and howl [his] verses” without provoking puzzled reactions from passersbys because his is “the tongue they speak there” (*Atlantis* 92). In his 1924 essay “General Aims and Theories,” Crane posited that his so-called logic of metaphor “is the genetic basis of all speech” (221). This might explain why his fictitious counterpart is convinced that everyone will be able to understand his lines. Sam is nevertheless completely bewildered by the strange man’s ravings. His response, therefore, may be said to mimic the reaction of early Crane critics who were equally baffled.

Subsequently, the poet-character considers in which part of the *Inferno* he would most likely end up after his death. Likely candidates include various parts of the ninth circle, namely, “Caina, Ptolemea [and] Judecca” where traitors of family, guests and benefactors are sent (Raffa 131). While all three rings are war-

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3 The Crane-character’s apprehension about betraying his family can refer to both of the actual poet’s continuously quarrelling parents: although Crane generally tended to side with his
ranted by certain events in the poet’s life, he is nevertheless “afraid you’re more likely to find [him] running in circles on burning sand, under a slow fall of fire” (*Atlantis* 94), a reference to the third ring of the seventh circle, to which “those who violate nature, God’s offspring (sodomites […]” (*Raffa* 77) are transferred. The character worries about this because of his sexual orientation, widely condemned during the 1920s even by the homosexual poet himself who “disliked homosexuals and called them ‘fags’” (*Giles* 163). The final possibility prefigures the artist’s untimely death, as the “trees, where harpies peck the bleeding bark” (*Atlantis* 94) are located in the “horrid forest” in which those who commit suicide dwell (*Raffa* 77). Just as is the case with Sam’s anxiety about the drowned man during his conversation with the poet, the Crane-character’s concern with the second ring of the *Inferno*’s seventh circle clearly hints at Crane’s suicide by drowning (*Löbbermann* 65).

Delany’s motive for alluding to Dante seems, at first sight, rather obscure. In contrast to *The Waste Land* or *The Cantos* by Crane’s older colleagues T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, *The Bridge* did not draw extensively on Dante (*Edelman* 77; *Gelpi* 167, 174). Even in “The Tunnel,” the inferno “is not medieval, as Dante’s was, but urban and industrial, as Blake’s was” (*Gelpi* 416), a view reinforced by the poem’s epigraph. In Richard Palmer Blackmur’s opinion, the writer’s 1930 sequence would have been much more of a success if he had looked at his Italian predecessor (*Reed* 126). However, Delany’s inclusion of Dante gains significance when one bears in mind the novella’s preoccupation with tracing poetic origins. The Crane-character not only elaborately cites the *Inferno* but also draws on Dante’s sources. The fictitious writer’s remark “*Li jorz iert cler s e sanz grant vent*” (*Atlantis* 94) originates from the twelfth century *Chanson de Roland*, which served as an inspiration for the description of certain events in the subterranean realm of the *Inferno* (*Raffa* 126; *Adams* 15). The fact that Crane subsequently incites the black protagonist to “ask: ‘Maestro, di, che terra è questa?’”—a quote from the *Inferno*’s account of the ninth circle—shows that Crane is aware of the connection (*Atlantis* 94). Indeed, in this desolate part of hell, Dante’s fictional counterpart and his guide meet various political traitors, including Ganelon, who betrayed his stepson Roland—in Italian: Orlando—and his king (*Raffa* 126). The events leading up to the younger knight’s demise also lie at the heart of the medieval French song, as its title already indicates. *Atlantis*’s Crane explicitly refers to Ganelon when asking Sam whether he “think[s] [his] pop will be [his] Ganelon and finally pluck [him] from [his] santa gesta?” Orlando, next, is mentioned under a more modern guise when the poet states “this Orlando is to his dark tower come” (*Atlantis* 94), thus further developing the literary genealogy which started with the French text. “Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came” is one of the more famous poems by mother against his father, he eventually fell out with her, too (see e.g., *Fisher* 52, 58). Disloyalty vis-à-vis hosts would probably be better-suited to the artist’s life than treachery inflicted upon guests, since Crane was a notoriously impossible visitor, as indicated by the calamitous end to his friendship with the writer Katherine Anne Porter after his stay at her house in Mexico (*Fisher* 458). The poet also elaborately cheated his benefactor as his Guggenheim-sponsored stay in Mexico only gave rise to one poem, “The Broken Tower” (1932), due to the author’s drunken extravagancies.
Robert Browning. Although the text was partially inspired by Dante, Browning drew on Shakespeare’s *King Lear* as well. The poem’s title is a literal quotation from a passage in the play called “Edgar’s Song,” as John Woolford, Daniel Karlin, and Joseph Phelan point out in their notes to the poem (Browning 241). The Elizabethan rendition of the unfortunate ruler’s adventures, in turn, served as an epigraph to Crane’s “The Mermen” (1928), the second poem of the author’s Caribbean sequence *Key West: An Island Sheaf*. To sum up this dizzying spiral of allusions: this part of Delany’s novella shows how a twelfth century French romance found its way into an Italian medieval epic and then an English Elizabethan drama, which later inspired a British Victorian and an American modernist, who then, approximately seventy years later, became the central feature of an African American novella. Like *The Bridge*, the Crane-character’s monologue may be seen to build a series of bridges between a wide variety of cultures and epochs in Western literary history.

Delany’s interest in Crane’s source material does not stop there, however. Apart from William Strachey and the connections just mentioned, Delany includes numerous poets who served as a model to Crane and to whom the latter has been frequently compared. The fictionalized Crane himself mentions such figures as “Keats, Rimbaud” (*Atlantis* 86), the former of which, according to Allen Grossman, inspired Crane’s “forms and diction systems” (qtd. in Reed 26), while the latter’s work underlies the 1929 “The Mango Tree” (Reed 199). Furthermore, the epigraphs to the novella’s fourth and fifth chapters are taken from Percy Bysshe Shelley’s *Adonais* and Samuel Bernhard Greenberg’s “Serenade in Grey.” In Harold Bloom’s opinion, “Crane’s temperament resembled Shelley’s; the invocatory drive of *Adonais* is echoed in ‘Atlantis’” (xiii). Robert Lowell, in his poem “Words for Hart Crane,” even went so far as to christen *The Bridge’s* creator “the Shelley of [his] age” (27). Delany, as we will see, also introduced this poem into *Atlantis*. A significant absence might be Walt Whitman whom Crane’s speaker addresses in the poem “Cape Hatteras”: “Walt, tell me, Walt Whiteman, if infinity / Be still the same as when you walked the beach” (ll. 48-49).

Crane’s relationship to Jewish poet Samuel Greenberg explicitly raises the question of originality. Delany’s writer-character asserts that he is enamoured with the prematurely deceased author’s poem “Words” to such an extent that “[he]ll use it, make that one [his] – too.” When Sam, in response, disconcertedly wonders about the ethics of such borrowing, Crane replies that he will “link Sam’s words to words of [his own], engulf them, digest and transform them.” As a justification for this method Crane cites Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, a poem that “is nothing but words and phrases borrowed from other writers” (Delany, *Atlantis* 91), or what the real life counterpart of *Atlantis*’s character disapprovingly labelled the “poetics of ‘archeology’” (qtd. in Edelman 29). “Emblems of Conduct,” a poem Crane wrote between 1923 and 1924, and which was heavily indebted to Greenberg’s “Conduct,” demonstrates that Crane was indeed convinced he could create texts in the manner described by his fictional counterpart. Crane’s poem nevertheless gave rise to a fierce debate concerning plagiarism because he included “Emblems of Conduct” in his first sequence *White Buildings* without mentioning his sources (Fisher 207).
The years 1923-1924 witnessed not only the birth of Crane’s Greenberg-inspired poem; since Crane deemed *The Waste Land* “so damned dead” (qtd. in Edelman 29), he resolved to create a reply to the poem in which he would show that “poetry is an architectural art” rather than an archaeological one (qtd. in Edelman 28). This he did with his triadic “For the Marriage of Helen and Faustus,” ironically “the most Eliotic of Crane’s long poems” (Edelman 74). The poet’s “fusion of [his] time with the past” (Crane qtd. in Edelman 90)—Crane’s description of his intention for this piece—is seen frequently in *Atlantis*, beginning with the epigraph. Towards the end of his soliloquy, Sam’s conversation partner asserts that he is “at work on [his] hieros gamos,” i.e., a wedding between deities, “and giggling over what Dol Common said to Sir Epicure” (*Atlantis* 96). Both participants of the amusing dialogue are characters from Ben Jonson’s *The Alchemist*, the play from which “For the Marriage of Helen and Faustus” takes its epigraph. In Edelman’s assessment, the poem and the Renaissance comedy “are joined on a deeper level” because of their “serious concern with questions of textuality and interpretation” (78).

**Plunged in Echo: Mimicking Crane’s Oeuvre**

Delany repeatedly refers to Crane’s three-part text by means of citations. Sam’s initial exposure to New York’s subway system leads him to wonder: “Cities underground …? Cities in the air …?” (*Atlantis* 17). This invokes the third part of “For the Marriage of Helen and Faustus,” where Crane’s speaker more affirmatively remarks upon the “mounted, yielding cities of the air!” (III 1. 21). The same line appears once again when Sam muses on his view of “another city altogether—a city come apart from New York, drifting in fog, in air, in darkness, and wholly ephemeral: the idea of a city” (*Atlantis* 27). This passage not only imitates one of the lines in Crane’s text but also echoes its vision of the metropolis. Even though Tucker is convinced that Sam’s visualisation should be tied to “the semiotic mechanics of [his] psyche” (211), I would contend that the protagonist’s perspective is more closely linked to the double vision that typifies Crane’s view of New York (Buelens 250). “For the Marriage of Helen and Faustus” emulates the “mythological doubling” (Giles 123) which James Joyce imposed on Dublin in *Ulysses* (Lehan 231). Crane’s later collection, *The Bridge*, would also draw on Joyce’s novel, as both works “interweave[e] actuality with classical myth” (Giles 123). Delany’s *Atlantis*, in turn, establishes a connection between the two authors by mimicking the style Joyce uses in the famous last chapter of *Ulysses*. The description of Sam’s first encounter with Mr. Poonkin is devoid of punctuation (*Atlantis* 38-42), just like Molly Bloom’s monologue at the end of Joyce’s novel. Moreover, the duality of vision that ties the real-life Crane to his Irish contemporary resonates through the writer-character’s monologue, in which the fictitious poet also makes a distinction between the real-life metropolis and the “wonder-filled city” that has “[r]isen from the sea” (92).

Since the dialogue between the two most important characters in Delany’s story takes place on the Brooklyn Bridge, it is not surprising that citations from
“Cutty Sark” and “Proem: To Brooklyn Bridge” can be found in that particular episode. Crane’s description of the old sailor’s ravings is placed “about midway in the poem” (Crane, qtd. in Giles 82) “thereby reflecting the sea’s ‘presence under the center of the bridge’” (Giles 82). Again, the fictionalized Crane quotes from the poet’s oeuvre. As a conclusion to his comments on the workers who died during the bridge’s construction, the Crane-character expresses his conviction that “all twenty of those dead workers are up and dancing there with savage sea-girls, living high and healthy in garden-city splendor, their drinking late into the dawn putting out Liberty’s light each morning” (Atlantic 92-93). The speaker of “Cutty Sark” likewise describes how the old sailor “lunged up Bowery way while the dawn / was putting the Statue of Liberty out—that / torch of hers you know—” (ll. 55-57). Crane pictured the boats to be found at the harbor as “skil- / ful savage sea-girls / that bloomed in the spring” (ll. 60-62; cf. Giles 71).

The Bridge’s opening poem makes its presence felt when Sam has already returned to Manhattan after abruptly leaving his interlocutor. During his walk on the Brooklyn Bridge, Sam observes a man in a small boat floating on the river. He subsequently literally runs into Hart Crane who walks away after they have apologized to each other. Sam then sees the boat again yet its passenger is nowhere to be found and he assumes the man has drowned. Crane returns and starts the conversation that takes up most of chapter d. Tired by the poet’s ramble, Sam runs from him and talks to a police officer about the supposed drowning he witnessed. The police officer does not take his account seriously because Sam did not actually see the man go into the water. While Sam is considering whether the police officer will actually file a report of his account, the narrator states: “Above, incomplete construction marked the day with girders and derrick, flown against the clouds in sight of the sound” (Atlantic 100). The presence of the “Proem,” whose speaker observes how “all afternoon, the cloud-flown derricks turn” is fitting (l. 23), since Sam is contemplating a man who may have ended his life by drowning himself. In The Bridge’s prelude, too, suicide is discussed when the speaker observes how a “bedlamite speeds to [the] parapets, / Tilting there momently, shrill shirt balloon-” (ll. 18-19).

Whereas Delany “engulf[s] [...] digest[s] and transform[s]” quite a few lines from Crane’s poems (Atlantic 91), he also, to some extent, imitates the poet’s writing technique and linguistic characteristics, as well as his imagery and subject matter. When Atlantic’s narrator, for instance, remarks upon “the clouds in sight of the sound” (100), he appears to echo “one of Crane’s distinctive transpositions of sight and sound” (Edelman 239). In “Atlantic” Crane included various lines in which optical and aural elements are blended. At the beginning of the poem for instance, the speaker discusses how “[s]ibylline voices flicker” (l. 7) and in the fifth stanza observes “[b]eams yelling Aeolus!” (l. 40). Even though the “fusing of the spheres of the different senses” (Wellek 333), or synaesthesia, is generally held to symbolize a craving for unity in the work of Romantics such as Percy Bysshe Shelley, in Edelman’s opinion “Atlantic” scatters rather than unifies its materials (240). The poet’s fictitious version once again utilizes this figure of speech when he synaesthetically combines sound and sight in his discussion of Washington Roebling, who is “spying through the glass at the stanchions he’d raised—twin gnomons swinging
The Presence of Hart Crane in Samuel R. Delany’s *Atlantis: Model 1924*

Their shadows around the face of the sound” (*Atlantis* 81), while at the same time mimicking *The Bridge*’s primary movement, namely “swinging” (cf. “The Tunnel” ll. 54, 55, 66). According to Paul Giles, Crane’s 1930 sequence swings between—or bridges—the past and the present, the private and the public, everyday life and its mythical opposite, etc., via the metaphor itself (7, 168).

Another way of bringing together otherwise opposing concepts is through the use of the oxymoron, “one of Hart Crane’s most notable stylistic features” (Giles 183). “*Atlantis*” proves a good example with its “harvests [revolving] in sweet torment” (l. 72). While Delany posits oppositions only to subsequently deconstruct them in a typically postmodern fashion, he, too, clearly likes bringing together generally contrasting notions by means of oxymorons. After Sam’s desire for tobacco has provoked a quarrel with his brother’s girlfriend causing her to go away abruptly, the “tensions of her leaving turned the sound into a kind of thunder that left the room whispering its silence” (*Atlantis* 55; emphasis mine). Similarly, following Hubert’s angry departure, the narrator relates how “[w]ithin the silence, which was almost a rumble, […] Sam tried to detect the instructions that would release him from his own paralysis” (56; emphases mine).

Even though bridging is an important theme in both *Atlantis: Model 1924* and *The Bridge*, it is also a formally unifying feature of both texts. While the repetition of certain elements is a strategy conventional enough to provide a sense of unification in literary works, Giles observes that it served an additional function in Crane’s sequence. In “Cape Hatteras,” for example, “the aeroplanes break into a joyous dance among the clouds in preparation for the ritual sacrifice of a pilot, as the Indians had danced before the martyrdom of Maquokeeta” (Butterfield qtd. in Giles 7) in “*The Dance*.” To Giles this means that “in philosophical terms Crane is delineating the conjunction of Indian past and scientific present, but in literary terms he is also delineating the conjunction of ‘The Dance’ and ‘Cape Hatteras’” (7). Likewise, the frequent recurrences in Delany’s novella not only serve to link its various fragmented parts, but are also related to its concern with memory. Thus, when Sam first beholds Brooklyn, “he remembered the white woman on the train—Scottish—who’d been so eager to talk … who lived in the heart of that part” (*Atlantis* 70). The protagonist’s observation connects the text’s third chapter to its first section, in that Sam comments on the woman’s attempts at conversation at the very beginning of the story (7). Moreover, this passage demonstrates the workings of memory: the sight of the borough in which the woman lives triggers the memory of its inhabitant, whom Sam had initially forgotten.

Memory proves one of *Atlantis*’s more prominent topics, a subject which it once again has in common with Crane’s oeuvre. Although certain comments are highly evocative of the poet’s ideas as regards the process of recollection, others could be tied to Delany’s own work at large. For example, at the beginning of chapter c, the narrator claims that “it would be […] naive to think that all forgettings are random.” Memory is subjected to the “imagination’s intricate loom,” which is able to transform one fragment of the past “into the other with astonishing rapidity, strength into weakness, weakness into strength” (*Atlantis* 57). These remarks bear a distinct resemblance to Crane’s approach to memory in the sense that the poet arguably made use of a deliberate form of forgetting so as
to be unfettered by literary precedents (Edelman 54). Delany has fewer qualms about tracing his own debt to Crane and, indirectly, the poet’s predecessors. The topic of remembrance is, however, not constrained to _Atlantis: Model 1924_ and is therefore not exclusively linked to Crane. Since all texts in the collection _Atlantis: Three Tales_ are imbued with (auto)biographical traits—which adds a good deal of wit to Sam’s indignant contemplation that he “was not about to condone all this biography” (_Atlantis_ 86) when Crane tells him about Samuel Greenberg—every story appears to reflect on the relation between memory and literature. At the end of the compilation’s final text, _Citre et Trans_, the character Heidi articulates her wish that someday Sam immortalize through his writing the dog she had to murder before her journey to Germany (Delany, _Citre_ 212). As the account of the relationship between Sam’s German friend and her pet makes up an important part of the tale, Delany’s fictitious counterpart has clearly complied with his friend’s desire. Delany’s memoir, _The Motion of Light in Water_, touches upon the same connection between writing and memory, and even the author’s non-biographical writings seem to explore this relation to a certain extent. In “The Tale of Fog and Granite,” part one of the 1985 collection titled _Flight from Nevèrÿon_, the slave liberator Gorgik “explains that he uses writing to remember” (Tucker 105). In other words, although the tie between literature/writing and memory can be related specifically to Crane’s oeuvre within the context of the novella under discussion, it also proves an issue that continuously occupies Delany.

Posnock suggests that the “special achievement of _Atlantis: Model 1924_ is that Delany weaves modernism and its makers into a tapestry each of whose sides we touch: the historical moment […] and its underside, the quotidian texture of familial, daily, lived reality” (287). Weaving indeed plays an important part in Delany’s novella. And just as the act of bridging the private and the public is something the text has in common with _The Bridge_, _Atlantis_’s weaving-imagery, too, features in Crane’s collection. In “Cape Hatteras” the speaker mentions that “Power’s script,—wound, bobbin-bound, refined—/ Is stropped to the slap of belts on booming spools” (ll. 69-70). Weaving together various cultures, people, and epochs was obviously one of the more important aims Crane envisioned when devising _The Bridge_. By mimicking the sequence’s imagery, Delany professes a similar goal. Chapter c’s opening is significant in that the narrator recounts how the “intricate interpenetration of the senses, woven into that proto-historic textile—the tapestry of the day—sleep and forgetfulness unravel, as effectively as any Penelope, largely before the next day’s panel is begun” (_Atlantis_ 57). Since Ulysses’s wife—who we might recall, is commonly used to refer to Molly Bloom’s monologue—wove a shroud during her spouse’s absence in an attempt to ward off the requests of her new suitors, Penelope is firmly connected to this passage’s weaving imagery (Kruger 57). Moreover, the Crane-character himself also elaborately draws on his real-life counterpart’s imagery when he observes that “the only way to get [to Atlantis] is the bridge: the arched nave of this loom, the temple of this stranded warp, the pick of some epiphenomenal gull among them as it shuttles tower to tower, bobbin, spool, and spindle.” The fact that the narrator previously mentioned “woof” when rendering Sam’s thoughts—“‘Wow’ was at […] the towers before him, rather than at the words that wove from behind him
through the woof of towers ahead” (*Atlantis* 93)—could signify the characters’ mutual attempt at connecting as ‘warp and woof’ are idiomatically used together. What is more, the poet-character seems convinced that “the city grows, weaves, wavers from the bridge, boy—not the bridge from the city […] it wasn’t gray, girder-grinding, grim and grumpy New York that wove out from this mill” (93; emphasis mine). This observation by the fictional Crane not only harks back to the actual author’s weaving metaphors but is also concerned with one of the reversals which typify *The Bridge*. In his *Hart Crane: The Contexts of “The Bridge”* (1986), Giles devotes an entire chapter to the influence of P.D. Ouspensky and Alfred North Whitehead on Crane’s oeuvre. Both philosophers developed theories about relativity that prominently feature in the poet’s work (cf. Giles 23). As a result, Columbus, for example, remarks that the “jellied weeds […] drag the shore” (‘*Ave Maria*’ l. 52). The conventional point of view is that the shore drags the weeds and not the weeds the shore, which is what Columbus is claiming. However, the theory of relativity holds that actually both are perpetually in motion vis-à-vis each other. Of course, Columbus’s illusion that he is hauling in the shore can also be seen as a case of egomania (Giles 23). In Delany’s text, the city wavers from the bridge even if common sense would have us believe that the opposite is true.

Besides Crane’s imagery, Delany also echoes the language Crane uses in his work. Delany’s speaker makes use of the same architectural and nautical jargon characteristic of Crane’s sequences. The speaker of Crane’s “Proem” refers to the bridge’s “parapets” (l. 18), observes its “girder” (l. 21) and points out “cloud-flown derricks” (l. 23). In “*Ave Maria,*” Columbus watches “the sun’s red caravel” (l. 13), predicts that “you shall see / Isaiah counting famine on this lee” (ll. 49-50) and observes that “[s]ome Angelus environs the cordage tree” (l. 55). In Delany’s account of Sam’s life in New York, a similar tropology may be found. Here the narrator comments on “the swoop and curve of trolley tracks, the girders of the El” (*Atlantis* 61), when Sam is taking his first walk over the Brooklyn Bridge. The Crane-character, again, notes “the arched nave of this loom” (*Atlantis* 93), and the narrator studies how “a dinghy, with chipped gunwales of flat gray-green slid into sight” (67).

*Sibylline Voices: Tracing Hart Crane’s Legacy*

We should note that even as Delany elaborately relies on Crane’s sources (past) and the poet’s own work (present), he also incorporates the work of various other authors who were inspired by Crane’s poetry (future). In one of chapter c’s parallel columns, the narrator points out that the first poetry collection by American author James Agee bore the title *Permit Me Voyage* (1934), which is a clear reference to Crane’s sequence of love poems, “Voyages” (cf. *Atlantis* 65-66). There, the speaker requests his addressee to “[p]ermit me voyage, love, into your hands” (III l. 19). More significantly, chapter c regularly alludes to American poet John Ashbery. The “distracted entity of mirage,” “the half-meant, half-perceived motions,” “fronds out of idle depths” (*Atlantis* 69), “your single and twin existence,” “waking in intact appreciation” (72) and “the way a waterfall drums at differ-
ent levels” (73) are all citations that originate from Ashbery’s poem “Clepsydra,” published in his 1966 sequence *Rivers and Mountains*. Ashbery is “the poet whose anomalous syntax most resembles Crane’s” (Reed 119). Additionally, he shared the older poet’s subject matter to some extent, in that “the promises of ‘poetry’ necessarily provide the very substance” of both their poems (Edelman 56). One possible reason for Delany’s choice to include “Clepsydra” in particular can be found in the conclusion to *Transmemberment of Song* (1987), in which Edelman explains that Ashbery’s poetry might very well be “an interpretation of Crane’s work as [Ashbery] catachrestically refigures the rhetorical gestures of rupture, reversal, and extension through which Crane’s poetry repeatedly undoes and re-makes itself.” Ashbery, moreover, makes use of a similar technique of forgetting in his poem “Soonest Mended” (Edelman 272).

The third chapter of *Atlantis* introduces three more references to Hart Crane’s legacy. First, in one of its parallel columns the novella presents a citation—“what did you see as you fell, what did you hear / as you sank?” (*Atlantis* 70)—which is taken from “Fish Food: An Obituary to Hart Crane,” a poem by John Wheelwright published in *Rock and Shell: Poems 1923-1933* and dedicated to Crane’s friend Malcolm Cowley. Second, the narrator touches upon the work of the British critic I. A. Richards when he claims that “Sentimentality and Inhibition are the Scylla and Charybdis of the criticism of this decade” (71), a paraphrase of an idea the scholar espoused in his influential *Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgment*. Crane was partially inspired by Richards’s early work, particularly his 1925 essay “A Background for Contemporary Poetry,” which prompted Crane to write “O Carib Isle!” (Brunner 100). Some of the writings that Richards produced after Crane’s death bore a distinct resemblance to the poet’s views, such as metaphor being “at the very centre of human modes of perception” (Giles 109). While this is an argument made by various critics, Delany may have included a reference to Richards’s work since Crane spun a similar theory about metaphors in his “General Aims and Theories.” Richards might be incorporated into the novella because Crane looked at his work for inspiration. Yet the fact that Richards is mentioned in chapter c—the chapter that introduces all other references to Crane’s legacy—suggests that a certain connection exists between Crane’s heritage and the British scholar. Finally, Delany closes the novella’s third chapter with a reference to Robert Lowell’s “Words for Hart Crane,” where he has his narrator repeat fragments of the poem’s seventh and eighth lines: “I, / *Catullus redivivus*” (Lowell 27).

**III. Conclusion**

I have attempted to demonstrate, through a comparative close reading, the substantive and multiple presence of Hart Crane in Samuel R. Delany’s novella *Atlantis: Model 1924*. Delany’s text operates along lines similar to the poet’s *The Bridge* in that it is primarily engaged in a process of literary bridging. The opening story in *Atlantis: Three Tales* seeks to build a bridge between various cultures, particularly that of the African American community associated with the pro-
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The protagonist and his family and white modernism embodied by Crane with connections established primarily through the figures of Paul Robeson and Jean Toomer. Furthermore, the novella introduces some of its black American concerns including the issue of migration from the South and segregation under a Cranean guise, while, conversely, several of the citations taken from Crane’s oeuvre are adjusted to fit in with the novella’s African American framework. Delany’s fictitious account of his father’s early years also builds a bridge between the private and the public, since it centers on Sam’s family life and on more public issues such as art and segregation. Finally, *Atlantis: Model 1924* links various epochs through its discussion of literary genealogy—an aspect of the text that is especially relevant to Delany’s treatment of originality. As its title indicates, *Atlantis: Model 1924* is to a large extent involved with tracing literary origins. Whereas Crane might not always have deemed his own work original, the pursuit of originality defines his poetic endeavors and led him to try and break away from the past or at least temporarily forget about it (cf. Edelman, e.g., 81, 105). Delany, by contrast, uninhibitedly establishes connections between his novella and its sources since he does not aim for originality or interprets it in a very different fashion. He is not afraid to mimic, quite blatantly at times, some of Crane’s themes, imagery, stylistic features, and linguistic idiosyncrasies.

On the whole, *Atlantis: Model 1924* proves a multi-layered, highly complex text that vacillates between (partially fictitious) biography, literary criticism, a portrait of the 1920s, and a tribute to Hart Crane. Various elements that recur in Delany’s non-fictional essay “Atlantis Rose … Some Notes on Hart Crane,” published one year later, had already surfaced in the novella so that it appears as though the two texts were written either in tandem or in close sequence. For instance, Delany’s conviction that Crane’s “Proem” was inspired by James Thomson’s *The City of Dreadful Night* first appeared in *Atlantis,* since the fictitious poet mentions “Atlantis, […] city of mirrors, City of Dreadful Night” (*Atlantis* 93-94; “Atlantis Rose” 237). The affinities between the author’s critical essay and fictional story are one way in which Delany embedded (his own) scholarly discourse on Crane into his novella. Furthermore, observations such as “the city grows, weaves, wavers from the bridge […] not the bridge from the city” (*Atlantis* 93) or “it would be […] naive to think that all forgettings are random” (57) create the impression that Delany has read and incorporated into his text the views of other Crane scholars. This impression is indeed confirmed by “Atlantis Rose,” where Delany explicitly discusses “Lee Edelman’s rhetorically rigorous *Transmemberment of Song* (1987) and Paul Giles’s paronomasially delirious *Contexts of The Bridge* (1986)” (“Atlantis Rose” 192). Given the textual presence of various authors who commemorated Crane by writing works encouraged by his achievement or dedicated to him, Delany seems not only to inscribe his text into the field of Crane criticism but...
but also to embed the novella in a tradition of literary tributes to Crane. *Atlantis: Model 1924* can thus be viewed as the (provisional) final element in an ongoing chain of literary connections that revolves around Harold Hart Crane and his accomplishments.

**Works Cited**


