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Ligatures of Time and Space:

1920s New York as a Construction Site for Modernist “American” Narrative Poetry

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**Ligatures of Time and Space:
1920s New York as a Construction Site for Modernist “American” Narrative Poetry**

by

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Dissertation

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This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents

Agněžka Šulák n. Chytková

Pavel Šulák

Marcella Malek n. Slíva

Edward T. Malek II

And to my mother, Judith Sulak n. Malek

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This dissertation examines spatial-temporal aspects of modernist, self-consciously “American” narrative poetry set in 1920s New York. Because many cultural considerations and languages get left out of popular theories of modernism, I fashion an alternative characterization using Mikhail Bakhtin’s theory of the chronotope to account for modernist poetry written in minor languages, such as Yiddish, Black dialect, and Spanish. Five poems—Hart Crane’s *The Bridge* (1929), Moyshe-Leyb Halpern’s *In Nyu-York* (1919), Langston Hughes’ *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927) and Federico Garcia Lorca’s *Poeta en Nueva York* (completed in 1929, published in 1936)—exploit the lack of a normative sense of time and a wholeness of place that characterizes modernist literary depictions of the city to establish a position in which to write with authority. Distinguishing between poetry as a “form” and poetry as a “social force” allows me to apply a theory that had been developed for prose narrative in order to discuss the chronotopic significance of such purely poetic features as rhyme, meter, and rhythm.

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Chapter 1 At Home in Homelessness

This dissertation examines representations of discontinuous time and abstract space in modernist, self-consciously "American," narrative poetry set in 1920s New York City. Five texts— Hart Crane's *The Bridge* (1929), Moyshe-Leyb Halpern's *In Nyu-York* (1919), Langston Hughes' *The Weary Blues* (1924) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1926) and Federico Garcia Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York* (completed in 1929, published in 1936) will exemplify my argument that the lack of both a normative sense of time and a wholeness of place sets the stage for what I wish to identify as a distinctive chronotope, or literary time/space, for 1920s New York and the modernism it reflects.

Although accounts of modernism are both disparate and often at odds, they tend to converge around a preoccupation with time. Nearly all descriptions share, to some extent, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane's overarching claim that twentieth-century modernism represents one of those "overwhelming dislocations, those cataclysmic upheavals of culture, those fundamental convulsions of the creative human spirit that seem to topple even the most solid and substantial of our beliefs and assumptions, leave great areas of the past in ruins...question an entire civilization or culture, and stimulate frenzied rebuilding."¹ Consequently, modernism brings about "a Great Divide between past and present, art before and art now" (21). Whether this upheaval is celebrated or mourned, its driving force might be described as an obsession with time, and the certainty that time has somehow changed substantively and experientially from what it once was.² My study

¹ Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, "The Name and Nature of Modernism," *Modernism. A Guide to European Literature 1890-1930*, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (1976; London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1991) 19.

² The idea that time is somehow different now than it once was is not really a twentieth-century novelty. One finds it, for example, in Wilde ("The Decay of Lying"), in Carlyle ("The Sign of the Times") and Romantic writers generally, and even much earlier, for example, during the fall of the Holy Roman Empire (See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past*

pushes off Bradbury and Macfarlane's temporal metaphor of a modernist "Great Divide between past and present" by resituating it in terms of spatial dislocations, specifically immigrant experience, along with turn-of-the-century technological innovations that change the way people perceive both space and time. I look especially at the physical erasure of history from the landscape of New York (the grid system, recreational areas filled with transplanted flora) and its replacement with reconstructions of pasts that never existed (in the form of anachronistic architecture) for concrete examples of the modernist displacements I seek to explicate. In the following chapters, I consider how city dwellers, both native and foreign born, represent these characteristics of modernist metropolis life.

The most novel feature of such literary representations of 1920s New York is the depiction of various temporalities, rather than a unitary frame of time, and a subsequent self-consciously manufactured sense of spatial continuity. The concomitant ability of the poem's figural narrators to weave disparate temporalities into a livable present will determine their ability to make a home in America.

I find it particularly helpful to talk about the new style of writing that emerges in 1920s New York in terms of genre, as defined by the Russian thinker Mikhail Bakhtin in his 1937-8 essay "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," for this will clarify what I mean by the adjective "modernist." As Bakhtin's translators, Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, point out, "a genre is neither a collection of devices nor a particular way of combining linguistic elements;" rather, it is "a specific way of visualizing a given part of reality."³ Taking inspiration from Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, Bakhtin realized that the context for actions and events is shaped primarily by the kind of space and time that operate within them. Thus, literary genres are distinguished predominantly

(Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985) 21-38). However, for better or for worse, obsession with the nature of time itself has come to be seen as an indispensable feature of modernism.
³ Gary Saul Morson & Caryl Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin. Creation of a Prosaics (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990) 275.

according to the ways they configure the shape and depicted experience of time. In other words, depicted time and space unite in very distinct and particular ways in different literary genres, corresponding, more or less, to specific historical periods which mirror their lived, phenomenal counterparts. Morson and Emerson summarize the relationship between literary genre and historical reality in the following manner: “Literary genres do not simply ‘transcribe’ into artistic form discoveries made elsewhere; they themselves make discoveries” (366). Michael Holquist describes the relationship between artistic depictions of time and space and lived experience as “two different registers of dialogue that can be conceived only in dialogue. They are both forms of representation; therefore they are different aspects of the same imperative to mediate that defines all human experience.”⁴

To this literary intersection of time and space (what Einstein—whom Bakhtin cites—called “the space-time continuum” in his famous 1920 papers on the special and general theories of relativity) Bakhtin gives the name chronotope: “In the literary artistic chronotope, spatial and temporal indicators are fused into one carefully thought-out, concrete whole. Time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history.”⁵ This metaphor suggests the extent to which the literary and the physical are interdependent—the experienced relationship of time and space becomes visible to us in a literary work because it becomes incarnate in the hero through his actions. In this way, the literary work can show what Bakhtin calls the “emergence of the world” alongside the “emergence of the hero.”

Bestowing his signature on the modernist preoccupation with time, Bakhtin sees chronotopes as “the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events of the novel.

⁴ Michael Holquist, *Dialogism. Bakhtin and his world* (London: Routledge, 1990) 111.

⁵ M. M. Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1981) 84.

The chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative” (DI 250). Subsequently, he relates his focus on the chronotope to the framing question of genre: “The chronotope in literature has an intrinsic *generic* significance. It can even be said that it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time”(DI 85). Each new chronotope emerges in a new and distinct genre, and it is the depiction of time and space in a literary work that determines the possibilities of plot and hero type (DI 84-5). The manner in which an individual interacts with the world is determined by the operative configuration of time and space in that world.

Though each genre offers a different “image of a person,” and “suggests a different concept of history, society, and other categories essential to an understanding of culture,” as Morson and Emerson put it (DP 370), Bakhtin believes that the novel is the only evolving literary form. It is the only form that has not yet “hardened” in such a way as to prevent its evolving with the changing world. Consequently, the novel, or prose fiction in general, is best suited for the assimilation of “real historical time and space.” Therefore, it is not surprising that in the flurry of work on Bakhtin generated by the English translation in 1981 of “Forms of Time and the Chronotope” (1937-8) in *The Dialogic Imagination*, together with “The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism” (composed 1936-38, translated in 1986),⁶ Bakhtin’s formulations about time-space as a tool for applied literary analysis were confined almost entirely to prose fiction—though, in a few instances, scholars have engaged the term in painting and drama.⁷

⁶ The *Bildungsroman* essay can be found in M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caaryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas Press). The chronotope is discussed here on pages 46-50 , and in “From Notes Made In 1970-71,” 132-158 of the same volume.

⁷ Janice Best, "The chronotope and the generation of meaning in novels and paintings," *Criticism* 36.2 (Spring 1994): 291-316; Martin Gaughan, "Bakhtin and the Visual Arts,"

One reason, perhaps, that the chronotope has not often been deployed for the study of poetry—I have found only two instances of it—may be Bakhtin's distinctive use of the term "novel" in relation to the commonly understood sense of the word in formalist, structuralist, or Anglo-American critical practice.⁸ In his 1937-8 essay, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," the word "novel" at times denotes "prose fiction," and at others, "evolving" narrative literature, which is to say, literature that is "responsive to the changing world." Michael Holquist, who introduced the English translations of the essays included in *The Dialogic Imagination*, believes that "'novel' is the name Bakhtin gives to whatever force is at work within a given literary system to reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that system" and that novelization will not permit "generic monologue."⁹ This is consistent with Bakhtin's multi-leveled sense of novelistic discourse as genre, condition for dialogue, and linguistic "force" throughout his career.¹⁰ Given, however, the fact that many of his examples of chronotope are derived from poetry, rather than strictly prose works, it seems reasonable to propose that Bakhtin has opened the possibility for reading poetry—at least narrative poetry—through a chronotopic lens. And since, in his "concluding remarks," he adds that "every literary image is chronotopic," an argument could be made for reading various kinds of poetry in much the same manner as one reads prose fiction (DI 251).

It is Bakhtin's earlier, 1934-5 essay, "Discourse in the Novel," however, which maintains a separation between poetry and the novel, based, not on the chronotope, but on

Art History 19.44 (Dec. 1996); Laurin Porter, "Bakhtin's Chronotope: Time and Space in 'A Touch of the Poet' and 'More Stately Mansions,'" *Modern Drama* 34.3 (September 1991): 369-382.

⁸ For example, Alexandra N. Leontieva has employed Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope to read the poetry of W.H. Auden in "The Chronotope of W.H. Auden's Poetry: A Bakhtinian Approach," M.A. thesis, U Bergen, Norway, 1992.

⁹ Michael Holquist, "Introduction," *Dialogic Imagination*, xxxi.

¹⁰ See Graham Pechey, "Not the Novel: Bakhtin, poetry, truth, God," *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory*, ed. Ken Hirshkop and David Shepherd (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1989) 66.

the openness of each genre to the “heteroglossia of the world” from which a literary text is born. Loosely defined, “heteroglossia” is the collection of different social speech types, or rhetorical modes, operative in any given culture (DI 261-3). It is the general recognition that every utterance is contextualized by a unique set of social and historical conditions, and it “insures the primacy of context over text” (DI 428). Heteroglossia is predicated upon what Bakhtin calls “dialogism,” the condition in which any word, discourse, language, or culture, is understood as relative and de-privileged. In contradistinction to the novel, then, discourse in “the majority of poetic genres,” or in “poetry narrowly defined,” reflects “the unity of the language system and the unity (and uniqueness) of the poet’s individuality as reflected in his language and speech, which is directly realized in this unity” (264). In other words, what distinguishes poetry from novelistic prose is the lack of heteroglossia—the monologism—of the former. If one takes Bakhtin’s statements at face value, as when he claims that if the poet were to use language with anything less than an “unmediated power to assign meaning,” and in any way that was not a “pure and direct expression of his own intention,” the poet would be writing prose, it would seem the linchpin for him is intentionality. This allows him to say that a poet only pretends to represent other points of view:

The poet is a poet insofar as he accepts the idea of a unitary and singular language and a unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance... To achieve this, the poet strips the word of others’ intentions, he uses only such words and forms (and only in such a way) that they lose their link with concrete intentional levels of language and their connection with specific contexts (DI 296-7).

The purpose of the discourse essay is to “overcome the divorce between an abstract ‘formal’ approach and an equally abstract ‘ideological’ approach” in the study of verbal art by treating form and content in discourse as one (DI 259). Bakhtin hoped to invigorate the study of prose narrative, and, at the same time, to bridge the gap between literary formalism and social or political philosophy. This is in line with the emphasis accorded to “different

social activities and representations of those activities” (CP 367) for the chronotope. By “form,” Bakhtin means speech types, or genres, and the artistic arrangement of a diversity of individual voices in various literary modes that he prefers to call “form-shaping ideologies.” Explicitly excluded from “form” is the literary image, or trope: “no matter how one understands the interrelationship of meanings in a poetic symbol (a trope), this interrelationship is never of the dialogic sort” (DI 327). However, Bakhtin seems to have modified his position by the time he wrote the concluding remarks of the chronotope essay, in which he states that the relationships among chronotopes are necessarily dialogic, for here “every literary image is chronotopic” (DI 251).

Rhythm, by which Bakhtin here seems to mean “meter,” is also excluded from “form and content.” Elsewhere, as in his “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” he uses the term to connote psychological “closure in the present moment.”¹¹ Morson and Emerson note that by “rhythm” “Bakhtin means not just metric pulse, which is in fact a consequence of what he has in mind: projected expectation of patterning...rhythm expresses closure in the present moment...successful imposition of rhythm overcomes the open and risk-laden future and makes that future in effect already past and consummated” (CP 193). In this case, metrical pulse is one of the consequences of rhythm, in the broader sense. Bakhtin can then make the case that rhythm is simply the hermeneutic seal on the monologic voice of the poet:

Rhythm, by creating an unmediated involvement between every aspect of the accentual system of the whole...destroys in embryo those social worlds of speech and of persons that are potentially embedded in the word... Rhythm serves to strengthen and concentrate even further the unity and hermetic quality of the surface of poetic style, and of the unitary

¹¹ A good summary of this meaning of rhythm can be found in Morson and Emerson, 193. Here they note, “By ‘rhythm’ Bakhtin means not just metric pulse, which is in fact a consequence of what he has in mind: projected expectation of patterning...rhythm expresses closure in the present moment...successful imposition of rhythm overcomes the open and risk-laden future and makes that future in effect already past and consummated.”

language that this style posits (DI 298).

However, Bakhtin immediately qualifies his position by showcasing a poetic symbol in Pushkin's poem *Evgenij Onegin* as an example of a symbol that has been "translated onto the plane of prose and becomes a double-voiced word" (329). The poem's narrative structure apparently overrides its highly patterned meter and rhyme: Bakhtin calls it a "narrative in verse."

Bakhtin's statements about poetry are sometimes so preemptive and essentializing (and often contradicted by his own practice) that one is moved to take them in the spirit of polemic, as Michael Eskin has suggested, and to believe with Eskin that, by "poetry narrowly defined," Bakhtin really means a very specific kind of poetry, which he never exactly names, rather than poetry in general, which he draws upon extensively in developing a theory of dialogism.¹² The only example of "poetry narrowly defined" that Bakhtin specifically names—in a footnote—is poetry that, failing to find its materials in the living speech of the world, creates its own special language: impressionism, acmeism, dadaism, surrealism, and the like (DI, 277). This kind of poetry, almost exclusively lyrical, is what Bakhtin would call "non-dialogic." Graham Pechey provides a more thorough discussion of the evolution of Bakhtin's work on poetry, from his functional definition in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* to a generic perspective in "Discourse in the Novel" in his own discussion of lyric anomalies in Blake (64-5). Even here, though, as Morson and Emerson point out, "In the light of prosaics, poetics itself appears inadequate even for its own object, poetry" (CP 20). They add, "Bakhtin never did fully work out its implications for lyric poetry. He indicates that once we start thinking in these terms, we will discern features of lyric poems previously overlooked, and that even those features that have been analyzed will be understood quite differently. The development of his ideas in this direction remains to

¹² Michael Eskin, "Bakhtin on Poetry," *Poetics Today* 21:2 (summer 2000) 379-391.

be done” (CP 20). Although I will treat the poems I have selected for this study as narrative poetry, I am taking up Morson and Emerson’s challenge to examine certain of their lyric features, such as rhythm, trope, and metaphor, in light of Bakhtin’s work on the chronotope.

In general, there have been four types of critical responses to Bakhtin’s statements about poetry. First, there have been efforts to demonstrate the “prosaic” nature of poetry by showing how poetry, in opening itself up to the living languages around it, and, in response to the changing world, acts like a novel, a “force...at work within a given literary system to reveal the limits, the artificial constraints of that system.”¹³ Roy Harvey Pearce, for example, has attempted to make a case even for the “novelization” of the epic.¹⁴ Some of the same poems identified by Pearce have been described by Patrick Murphy as the “verse novel,” which he subtitles “a modern American poetic genre.”¹⁵

A second, and perhaps most popular, response focuses on the essentially dialogical nature of poetry, without attempting to identify new genres or reinterpret older ones.¹⁶

¹³ Michael Holquist, “Introduction,” The Dialogic Imagination xxxi.

¹⁴ Although Pearce does not use the term “novelization,” he links the creation of a “truly national culture and national literature” in colonial America with the epic form, and he includes Crane’s The Bridge as one of the four most important poems of this genre. Pearce says they “are meant to be poems not of a new order, but rather of a new ordering.” Roy Harvey Pearce, The Continuity of American Poetry (Princeton: Princeton UP) 1961, 60-61. See also Michael André Bernstein, The Tale of the Tribe. Ezra Pound and the Modern Verse Epic (Princeton: Princeton UP) 1980.

¹⁵ According to Murphy, the long narrative poem eschews “stylized and elevated literary language,” which sealed classical poetry “from living *parole*,” in favor of “the rhythms and diction of daily speech.” All this allows the kind of narrative possibilities found in novels, by reinforcing “multiple viewpoints, none of which gain unassailed hegemony or absolute authority.” In the end, he, along with Charles Hartman, whom he cites, ask “why not take poetry or verse as one end, and prose as the other, of a continuous spectrum?” Patrick D. Murphy, “The Verse Novel: A Modern American Poetic Genre,” College English 51. 1 (January 1989): 57-72.

¹⁶ Keith Booker, “A War Between the Mind and Sky’: Bakhtin and Poetry, Stevens and Politics,” Wallace Stevens Journal 14.1 (Spring 1990): 71-85; Paul Miller, “Sappho 31 and Catullus 51: The Dialogism of Lyric,” Arethusa 26.2 (Spring 1993): 183 +; D. Richter, “Dialogism and Poetry,” Studies in the Literary Imagination 23 (Spring 1990): 9-27; Lucjan

A third response, similar to the second one, focuses on Bakhtin's terminology, indicating that it is not enough to accept Bakhtin's polemical statements at face value. Rather, we can use his critical tools to supercede his own work in the realm of poetry. Most notably, Donald Wesling gestures towards what he calls the "social moorings of poetry" by showing poetry's dialogic resistance to closure.¹⁷ He also exploits the features of poetry that Bakhtin claim most limit poetry's ability to engage in the heteroglossia of the world. For example, he demonstrates that the rhythm of a poem can contradict meter and poetic line, and that all three can embody outside voices. Here he differentiates between intonation and meter, much as Bakhtin does in his reading of Pushkin's lyric at the end of his early essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,"¹⁸ but unlike Bakhtin, Wesling does not believe poetic meter necessarily acts as a seal on the unitary voice of the poet. Rather, in his reading of Marina Tsvetaeva's poem "Wires," he shows that line breaks and dashes enhance the non-authorial voices by indicating where the narrator's voice breaks off, when it hesitates and stutters (105-111). Henri Meschonnic points out that Bakhtin's use of rhythm in poetry is misleading, since novels, and, in fact, all speech, have special rhythms. If it is highlighted in poetic meter, rhythm is conveniently ignored in novels, which only pretend not to have the kind of closure to which poetic meter draws attention.¹⁹ Michael Eskin, on the other hand, following Ken Hirschkop, has noted that poetry sometimes only pretends to speak monologically, and thus, the metrical seal on psychological closure is also

Suchanek, "Dialogue, the Other's Word, and the Poetic Text," Issues in Slavic Literary and Cultural Theory, Karl Eimermacher, Karl, et. al.. (Bochum, Germany: Universitätsverlag, 1989): 451-461.

¹⁷ Donald Wesling, Bakhtin and the Social Moorings of Poetry (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2003) 97.

¹⁸ M. M. Bakhtin, "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity," Art and Answerability. Early Philosophical Essays by M. M. Bakhtin, ed. Michael Holquist & Vadim Liapunov, trans. Vadim Liapunov (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1990) 216-7.

¹⁹ "There is no novel rhythm or poem rhythm. Every work has a rhythm." Henri Meschonnic, Critique du Rythme. anthropologie historique du langage (Paris: Verdier, 1982) 456. (translation mine).

fraudulent.²⁰

Finally, Paul de Man and Michael Eskin point out fundamental contradictions between Bakhtin's own form and content, creating the potential for more radical readings of poetry. De Man considers that "it is possible to think of dialogism as a still formal method by which to conquer or to sublimate formalism itself," pointing out that dialogism is "still a descriptive and metalinguistic term that says something about language rather than about the world."²¹ Consequently, de Man observes that "the opposition between trope as object-directed and dialogism as social-oriented discourse sets up a binary opposition between object and society that is itself tropological in the worst possible sense, namely as a reification" (111). That is, Bakhtin's decision about what is object-directed and what is social-directed may be somewhat arbitrary, especially when we remember that it is the supposed intention of the poet to speak monologically that distinguishes poetry from prose. What de Man does not say, though he paves the way for its being said, is that, if the poet did not choose to speak in the unitary voice of the "poetic genre narrowly defined," one could conceive of a way in which poetic tropes might be dialogic. Indeed, Bakhtin himself speaks of a particular poetic symbol in Pushkin's long poem *Eugene Onegin* as a genuine example of dialogic discourse. In doing so, he overlooks the hermetic seal of the poem's intense rhythmic patterns to focus on the narrative (DI 329).

As I stated earlier, Michael Eskin, noting Bakhtin's dialogical reading of *Eugene Onegin*, and his comment that "a radical prosiacization of lyric poetry occurs" in the twentieth century, claims that Bakhtin's apparent denigration of poetry as a medium for dialogism is largely polemical (383-4). It is an invective against symbolists' claim that "it

²⁰ Ken Hirschkop, "Dialogism as a Challenge to Literary Criticism," Discontinuous Discourses in Modern Russian Literature, ed. C. Kelly, M. Makin, and D. Shepherd, 19-35 (New York: St. Martin's, 1989). Cited from Eskin, 382-3.

²¹ Paul de Man, "Dialogue and Dialogism," Rethinking Bakhtin. Extensions and Challenges, ed. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson (Chicago: Northwestern UP, 1989) 108.

is poetry's duty to remember and complete 'its primordial tasks,' namely, to mediate 'between the world of divine essences and human beings' by means of the 'language of the gods' in the face of 'the crowd, which demands an earthly language from the Poet'" (384). To underscore the idea that we should not read Bakhtin's polemical statements about poetry monologically, Eskin proceeds to read *Eugene Onegin* as "one of the most monologic and authoritative poetic utterances" because it only "creates the impression of fundamental dialogicity and polyphony;" meanwhile, the author exercises his control over the text by way of "consistently implemented isometric prosodic arrangement" which rhythmically subdues and homogenizes the text's presumed polyphony (386). After this neat reversal, Eskin suggests that the interplay between "utmost dialogicity and polyphony and utmost monologicity" in poetry transforms poetry's apparent weakness—the fact that it is "the mode of speech which emphatically enacts the poet's, that is, first and foremost, a person's, non-alibi in existence"—into "the exemplary mode of speech in Bakhtin's writings" (388). Consequently, poetry has the potential for a greater critique of the "official" loci of power than the novel, which typically does not contain the interplay between dialogicity and monologicity (the voices in the novel are written "as if in quotation marks," says Bakhtin).

Eskin's penultimate claim, that the poem has the ability to create "mutual understanding" through a "communal language," is the stated goal of Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, although Crane's technique may have been too sophisticated to create such a communal language. It is also the explicit goal of Langston Hughes' two volumes, expressed in the wish to "sing America" (that is, to create a song that would include African-American voices).

Employing tools crafted specifically for pre-twentieth century narrative prose in the study of modernist narrative poetry means that I will need to modify these tools at times, to extend their use at others, and to abandon them when they are no longer useful. The absence of a single dominant concept of time-space in 1920s New York, and the poems that describe

it, calls for modification of Bakhtin's idea of chronotope. Bakhtin already accounts for the presence of multiple chronotopes within one work of literature, but it is usual for "one of these chronotopes to envelope or dominate the others" even though they "may be interwoven with, replace or oppose one another, contradict one another or find themselves in ever more complex interrelationships" (DI 252). The purpose of the non-dominant chronotope (which he calls the "intervallic chronotope") is dialogical, in that it relativizes the dominant by indicating that "each chronotope is one of many possible chronotopes." The interaction is "not just a combination but 'radically changes' the character of each chronotope," according to Morson and Emerson (CP 404). When this happens, it is called "hybridization" (DI 127). In such instances, both chronotopes "take on metaphoric significance and enter into completely new relations with the real world" (ibid). In Crane and Hughes, the "dominant" chronotope never emerges; though it is implied, it lies outside the narrative.

I will extend the use of relevant Bakhtinian terms and concepts to poetic form to examine what Wesling calls the "social moorings" of poetic form—the cultural, social and literary traditions incarnate in form and the rhythms of the world embodied in literary rhythms and meter. Of particular interest to me is how different poetic, musical, and prose genres are mixed, together with various kinds of utterances, in a single poem. In keeping with Bakhtin's greater project as expressed in "Discourse in the Novel"—that of overcoming "the divorce between an abstract 'formal' approach and an equally abstract 'ideological' approach" in the study of verbal art—I approach poetic form, not as something that transcends time and place, but as an instrument that listens to and remembers time and space. For example, Moyshe-Leyb Halpern's form is chronotopic because he intentionally writes in regular meter and rhyme to "remember" the *shtetl* in New York when his colleagues had abandoned regular meter and rhyme for short and choppy lines that were more expressive of contemporary urban life. Outside of the first section, *In Nyu-*

York, the poem is a veritable survey of the history of Yiddish prosody, intentionally paralleling the narrative, which is a virtual journey through the major sites and times of Jewish history. The question that becomes relevant here is why Halpern's poetic style remained reminiscent of the past while in New York but Lorca's clearly changed? Langston's Hughes's jazz and blues forms are chronotopic when they mimetically aid in the description of Harlem's daily toil and nightly cabaret. Hughes also uses form to remember Africa. In the absence of language and certain genealogies, all that remains to connect the speakers to their place of origin is rhythm (the "tombomb beat of drums"). Federico Garcia Lorca's form can be considered chronotopic because he says it is: once in New York, he discards the rhythms of "cante jondo," which he had used exclusively in Spain, to embrace what he considered "American rhythms." These include both the Whitmanesque long line of free verse and the short, choppy "urban" line.

It is difficult to make a case either for or against the chronotopicity of Hart Crane's form. Because Crane was deeply aware of Walt Whitman's "democratic," freely cadenced long lines, and what Paul Fussell calls William Carlos Williams's use of that line as an "informal instrument for registering the rhythms of actual American speech," it is hard to say why Crane chose to write in rhyme and meter when he was not invoking other poets through rhythm.²² Harvey Gross and Robert McDowell uncharitably attribute Crane's meter to his lack of skill in imitating T.S. Eliot's relaxed blank verse.²³ Crane was obviously invoking the epic, written in iambic pentameter in its early English incarnation.²⁴ This would have been in keeping with Crane's project, to create "the myth of America." It would have also been appropriate for the original purpose of the iambic meter, which was

²² Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter & Poetic Form*, revised edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979) 72.

²³ Harvey Gross & Robert McDowell, *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996) 233.

²⁴ T.V.F. Brogan, "Iambic," *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993) 548.

both laudatory and invective in Greek and early English (Brogan 548). Other sections of the poem seem to be an attempt at formal mimesis—the jazz rhythms of the drunken sailor’s speech and of the hobos’ train ride, which is interrupted by the language of passing billboard signs.

Since the Chronotope essay follows the work on dialogue from the late 1920s and early 1930s, it is fitting to consider that the significance of speech and language depends, not just to whom and how, but also on where and when language happens. Thus, I will depart from Bakhtin’s focus on voice, which allows him to stay within the bounds of major writers in major languages, and turn to considerations of language, specifically, the “minor” and/or displaced languages of Hughes, Halpern and Lorca. As I demonstrate below, in the national push to homogenize language in America after the first World War, the decision to write “American” poetry in languages other than standard English (or an avant-garde variant thereof) becomes a way of resisting the “linguistic norms” through which a nation historically incorporated “barbarians and lower social strata into a unitary language of culture and truth” and canonized “ideological systems” (DI 271-2).²⁵

Interestingly, given his own historical position within literary modernism’s moment, Bakhtin never described any chronotope that developed or emerged after the nineteenth century. Though his 1937-8 essay, “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel,” reviews the development of the novel in each “cultural upheaval” or “great divide”—to use Bradbury and McFarlane’s terms—in the West, Bakhtin stopped short of the cleft between past and present that defines his own authorial moment from the 1920s through the 70s. He analyses few specimens of twentieth-century literature. This study will address such lacunae by extending Bakhtin’s treatment of the chronotope to twentieth-

²⁵ For a summary of the history of the interdependence between the state and poetic genres, see Samuel Kinser’s review article, “Chronotopes and Catastrophes: The Cultural History of Mikhail Bakhtin,” *The Journal of Modern History*, 56.2 (June 1984) 302.

century narrative poetry, as spatially and temporally confined to 1920s New York City.²⁶

The new sense of time and temporality that characterizes modern American narrative poetry is reflected in narrative structure and plot, but we quickly encounter difficulties if we attempt to generalize about style or poetic sensibility. Obviously, the poems with which I am concerned share certain formalistic and stylistic characteristics and certain techniques, such as replacing metaphor with metonym. But their chief similarity lies in their plots, which emphasize the multiple temporalities and abstract space of modernist New York. In Crane, Halpern, Hughes, and Lorca, we see this space as an arena of clashing worlds and epochs: the present moment against eternity, the Polish *shtetl*'s seasonal rhythms shredded in the factories, and the drums of Africa pounding the tempo of commerce.

At first glance, these texts may seem unlikely representatives of modern American literature. Although the authors describe their poems as distinctly “American” and view themselves as participating in an American literary tradition, only two of the four are American citizens.²⁷ Two write in their mother tongues, Yiddish and Spanish. One is an African American, who cannot vote and is subject to other forms of social discrimination,

²⁶ In extending Bakhtin's theory of the chronotope to post-nineteenth century literature, I have benefited from the work of others who have seen similar value in reading early twentieth century literature through the lens of the chronotope. These include Bart Keunen, whose essay, “The Plurality of Chronotopes in the Modernist City Novel: The Case of *Manhattan Transfer*” [*English Studies*, 5 (2001): 420-436.] places what Keunen calls the “hyperrealist chronotope” in dialogue with three other post-romantic chronotopes that Bakhtin identified. See also the studies of narrative and lyric poetry of Auden and Stevens by Alexandra N. Leontieva and Keith Booker, cited above.

²⁷ Hart Crane wrote to Otto H. Khan, his financial sponsor for the poem, on Sept 12, 1927: “What I am really handling, you see, is the Myth of America.” *O My Land, My Friends. The Selected Letters of Hart Crane* ed., Langdon Hammer and Brom Weber, intro, Langdon Hammer (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows) 1997. Benjamin Harshav notes in his introduction to the anthology *American Yiddish Poetry*, Halpern and his colleagues thought of their work as “American poetry written in Yiddish.” Langston Hughes declares that “I, too, Sing America,” in the poem by that title, and Garcia Lorca said that his *Poet in New York* was written in “American rhythms,” and that it consisted of “typically American poems” in an August 8, 1929 letter to his family.

and two are homosexual.²⁸ Perhaps the marginal status of the poets, more than the quality or worthiness of the work in question, has kept all of the poetry above, except Crane's *The Bridge*, out of the canons of American modernism. However, when one considers that modernist time and space is characterized by contradiction, chaos, and clash, these poets are remarkably fitting representatives of that literary and cultural phenomenon.

As Chana Kronfeld argues in *On the Margins of Modernity*: "Only if we construct the major through the minor, not—as current wisdom has it—the minor through the major, can we begin to discern the regionalism, contextual diversity, and interdependence of even the most highly canonical forms of modernism."²⁹ What Kronfeld means by marginal is the concept that guides my choice of poets: those writers who position themselves in an "enabling, liminal position between cultural and linguistic categories" (17). It is worth considering that Bakhtin's predilection for "major" writers, such as Dostoevsky, Dickens, Rabelais, and Goethe, and his consultation of exclusively major languages (Russian, English, French, German) in outlining the genealogy of the novel in the Chronotope essay, is strange, given the fact that, in doing so, he is using a method he has elsewhere called "monologic," that is by excluding potentially competing voices (or languages) from the discussion, he is participating in the creation of an "officially recognized literary language,"

²⁸ Langston Hughes's sexual orientation, of which there is much popular speculation, appears not to matter in his poetry. Sexual orientation does play a role in Lorca's depictions of New York, and in Crane's. Elena Gascon Vera makes the extreme claim that, for Lorca, "becoming a woman," is a special way of portraying the narrator in an enhanced position of marginality, as women, children, animals, the marginal, the insane, are "a minority, and united they must oppose the representation of Western man, capitalist and fascist as represented by the majority." Elena Gascon Vera, "Stories of Madness: The Feminine in *Poet in New York*," *Lorca's Legacy. Essays on Lorca's Life, Poetry and Theatre*, ed. Manuel Duran and Fransesca Colecchia (New York: Peter Lang, 1991): 180-1.

²⁹ Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernity. Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Berkeley: UCP, 1996) 5.

quite literally.³⁰ Bakhtin might have considered both minor literature and modernism, given his concern with literary works that “enable the tradition to do what had never been done before,” which is what minor literature accomplishes by “grafting a radically modern idiom” onto an overlooked tradition, (16). (This grafting is what both Bakhtin and Deleuze and Guattari call “hybridization,” though Bakhtin limits the term to smaller-scale facets of textual heterogeneity). For this reason, it is important to examine the attempts by writers living in America but writing in languages that the majority of Americans would not understand, or writing from culturally subsidiary positions, to bridge the gap between cultures and traditions.

Crane, Halpern, Lorca, and Hughes are among the few poets who have written book-length collections about New York in the 1920s,³¹ which, at the tail end of the greatest influx of immigrants to the US, was composed of 30% foreign-born inhabitants³²—the largest percentage of immigrants in the country.³³ At the same time, the Harlem Renaissance produced a flowering of African American art, and Greenwich Village provided a haven for other emerging literary figures. The poets in this collection, though ethnically, racially, and sexually “non-normative,” make up a fair sampling of the city’s population.

The privileging of the margins is a fundamental characteristic of modernism, but in most discussions, “the margins” is only a metaphor for works that actively rebel against

³⁰ This is a paraphrase of Kinser’s discussion of Bakhtin’s assessment of the birth of national languages. See “Chronotopes and Catastrophes: The Cultural History of Mikhail Bakhtin.” *The Journal of Modern History* 56.2 (June 1984) 302.

³¹ Another, overlooked book-length collection is Lola Ridge’s *Ghetto*, 1918. Ridge was an Irish immigrant living in the Lower East Side tenement.

³² Selma Berrol, sets the figure for Manhattan at 17% foreign born or had at least one foreign-born parent. *The Empire City. New York and Its People, 1624-1996* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 1997) 84. Her figures very low compared to other sources dating from the 1910s. The figures in the text reflect my examination of the 1920 census.

³³ To put these immigration figures into context, according to Gary Gerstle, from 1880 to 1920, during the era of so-called new immigrants, or the second wave of European immigration, twenty-three million people came into a society that in 1900 numbered only 76 million. “Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Americans,” *The Journal of American History* 84. 2 (Sep., 1997): 525.

social, cultural, or literary norms, even as they are ensconced in the very society against which they are rebelling. This metaphor of the margins is, at times, so strong as to discount, on the basis of style or sensibility, those who truly write from positions excluded from social consideration. Houston Baker disassociates the Harlem Renaissance from the international modernist movement defined as Anglo-American-Irish literature that deliberately alienates its audience and turns from regional and social concerns to embrace “art for art’s sake,” while wallowing in hopelessness and pessimism.³⁴ What Baker calls international modernist poetry is exactly what Bakhtin calls “poetry in the narrow sense”: poetry that must invent its own language because it cannot find materials in the speech of the world, and that shrinks from human chaos and contradiction. Baker further notes, as Bakhtin does, that what is usually called “modernist” poetry is often aligned with the status quo against which it supposedly rebels. Thus Baker aligns international modernism with the social and political instruments that keep people oppressed on the grounds of race and class.

Baker attributes the change of character and the world that, according to Virginia Woolf, took place “on or about December 1910”—and the ensuing Western European panic about the fall of civilization—to the anxiety of the oppressors who witnessed the oppressed liberate themselves in the ensuing chaos (3-4). He observes: “What really seems under threat are not towers of civilization but rather an assumed supremacy of boorishly racist, indisputably sexist, and unbelievably wealthy Anglo-Saxon males. One means of shoring up one’s self under perceived threats of ‘democratization’ and a ‘rising tide’ of color is to resort to elitism—to adopt a style that refuses to represent any *thing* other than the stylist’s refusal to represent” (4-5). Reading Baker through Bakhtin, one could say that, because of its prosaic nature, Harlem Renaissance poetry is better able to

³⁴ Houston A. Baker, Jr., Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987): 6.

represent the modern world than international modernist poetry is, because Harlem Renaissance poetry actually depicts the modern world through the living speech of the world. In large part, this living speech enacts what Bakhtin calls “double voicing” and what W.E.B. DuBois calls “double consciousness,” and it is what causes the “panic of the oppressors” upon which Baker remarks by questioning the legitimacy of a privileged world view.³⁵

Irving Howe makes a similar claim about the modernist style in Yiddish — Yiddish modernism alone, of all the great modernisms, does not scorn the quotidian, and remains grounded in its audience—a stance Chana Kronfeld accepts, though she never explicitly makes Yiddish modernism an exception.³⁶ Here, too, Bakhtinian concepts have been used by theorists to describe the dialogically rich position of Jewish literature within the margins of American culture.³⁷

Terry Eagleton also provides a culturally sensitive explanation for the different forms modernism will take, and what these forms mean. He notes,

Modernism is...a highly traditional crisis of tradition; and if it worked particularly well in colonial conditions like Ireland, as postmodernism works well in post-colonial conditions today, it was partly because tradition there was itself fragmentary, ruptured, discontinuous. An appeal to tradition in England is conservative, whereas in Irish culture it's quite often revolutionary ...³⁸

I am not suggesting that 1920s America was characterized by the sort of colonial conditions that Eagleton mentions. But since America was a fairly young country with an

³⁵ Dorothy J. Hale notes that a number of African Americanists, most notably Michael Awkward and Henry Louise Gates, Jr., have glossed Du Bois by way of Bakhtin. Dorothy J. Hale, “Bakhtin in African American Literary Theory,” *ELH* 61.2 (1994) 445-471.

³⁶ Irving Howe, *The Idea of the Modern in Literature & the Arts* (New York: Horizon Press, 1967) 25.

³⁷ See Derek Parker, “Unfinalized Moments in Jewish American Narrative,” *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 22.3 (2004) 1-11 and David Roskies, “Major Trends in Yiddish Parody,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 94.1 (winter 2004) 109-122.

³⁸ Terry Eagleton, “Contradictions of Modernism,” *Modernity Modernism Postmodernism*, ed., Manuel Barbeito (Universidade de Santiago de Compostela: 2000) [Cursos e congresos da universidade de Santiago de Compostela . 12] 41.

extremely heterogeneous population, it is misleading to imagine that writers like T.S. Eliot and F. Scott Fitzgerald, who mourn the loss of a unified cultural hegemony and classic tradition, are representative of American modernism.

Contributing to the problem of defining a culturally sensitive modernism is the question of language, especially when we consider the American poetry written in multi-lingual New York. Respected studies of modernism, of which Hugh Kenner's 1984 "The Making of the Modernist Canon" is fairly representative, even claim that international modernism belongs exclusively to works written in English.³⁹ Deleuze and Guattari extend the languages of modernism to include German and French, the "major languages" in which "minor literature" can be written.⁴⁰ But scholars who work with non-white, non-Western or non-Anglo/Irish literature have recently questioned this assumption. Obviously, reliance on the Anglo-American/Irish lens, and the "major language" lens omits some of the most radical versions of international modernism, such as the Italian and the Russian, and it ignores distinct cultural and racial pockets in which modernism takes alternative forms. Chana Kronfeld's *On the Margins of Modernity* is based on the idea that modernism is a culturally sensitive label that expresses itself differently in different languages and cultures, regardless of the language in which the modernist work is written.

But New York is not simply multi-lingual; it is also Mongrel. Rather than merely shocking Victorian America into confronting outdated classist assumptions and sexual mores (which Ann Douglas claims to have been the project of American modernism), modernism viewed from the margins proves a supremely rich medium for the exchange of ideas about what it means to be "in America" or "American," and what America should

³⁹ Hugh Kenner, "The Making of the Modernist Canon," *Canons*, ed. Robert Von Hallberg (Chicago: U of Chicago Press) 367-375.

⁴⁰ Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Trans. Dana Plan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).

be.⁴¹ Vera M. Kutzinski's 1987 study of William Carlos Williams, Jay Wright and Nicolas Guillen describes how the 1920s allowed for a rethinking and reshaping of the literary tradition and national identity in the United States.⁴² Kutzinski, borrowing from William Carlos Williams, distinguishes between "New World" and "American" literature. While the latter was founded on the myth of American innocence, the former recognizes the "violent loss of original unity that lies at the root of all New World cultures" (6). What led Eliot to see America as a wasteland was his viewing this "loss of original unity" as a process of "cultural dissolution" (7). Accepting this loss allows for a literature that "implies a comparative as well as a cross-cultural perspective" and that "depends on the differences of its constituents, rather than relying on their similarity" (11). This construction of American identity formation emphasizes cultural interpenetration rather than assimilation.

Though I eschew her label of "New World Writing," since the poets collected here call their own writing "American," Kutzinski's distinction is helpful in that it clarifies two distinct projects in American modernism, driven by two views of American history. The first, which Kutzinski associates with "American" literature, views modernism as a sharp break with a unified history of progress and civilization, in which American history is a branch of the history of Western Civilization, under the auspices of Europe. The second, associated with "New World" writing, is the project of the margins, which describes modernism as a continuation of the history of conquest and multi-ethnic, multi-cultural interpenetration that began before Columbus set foot in the Americas. Such a position does

⁴¹Douglas does address the multiplicity of races and ethnicities that inhabited modern New York, as well as the cultural interpenetration that occurred in the city's arts and entertainment sectors. However, her focus is very much on "the center;" for example, she is more concerned with Anglo-America's reaction to waves of immigration in the early part of the twentieth century than she is with the immigrants' literary responses to their new environs. She provides a thorough discussion of African American art and entertainment, but here, too, her focus is on how this art affected the mainstream literary and entertainment world. Terrible Honesty. Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995).

⁴² Vera M. Kutzinski, Against the American Grain. Myth and History in William Carlos Williams, Jay Wright, and Nicolas Guillen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1987).

not discount the Anglo-American literary tradition; it merely refuses to privilege it, because it rediscovers, recovers, and recognizes the literary contributions of a variety of earlier, non-Anglo sources.

What is lost with original unity, however, corresponds to the loss of normative temporal locatedness in what René Wellek calls the “modern concept of time.”⁴³ Here, time is “modeled not on the metric chronology of the calendar and physical science, but on an interpenetration of the causal order in experience and memory.” The lack of a normative sense of time in modern America is only amplified when “an interpenetration of the causal order in experience and memory” includes clashing understandings of causal order, or radically different experiences and memories of causal order. While the classic example of such disjunction in literary American modernism might be found in the fiction of William Faulkner, Moyshe-Leyb, the multi-faceted narrator of Halpern’s poem, has experienced Western civilization in the form of pogroms that obliterated pockets of Jewish culture and population and drove him from his home, and through the *Haskalah* movement, which punctured the insular Jewish world by introducing secularism into a religiously oriented community (radically changing the communal perception of time and space in the process). Likewise, Langston Hughes’s narrators will, by virtue of their having been forcibly parted from their history and culture through slavery, experience the aforementioned interpenetration in a manner very different from that of Hart Crane.

In his 1970 book *Exiles and Émigrés*, Terry Eagleton notes that modernist British literature was written entirely by Irish and American expatriates and one Pole, and that this

⁴³ René Wellek, “The Concept of Evolution in Literary History,” *Concepts of Criticism*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols (1962 New Haven: Yale UP, 1967) 51. Compare, however, Joseph Frank’s important corrective to the temporalist bias, “Spatial Form in Modern Literature,” in *Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment*, ed. Mark Schorer, Josephine Miles, Gordon McKenzie (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1958) 379-92, and *The Idea of Spatial Form* (Rutgers University Press).

should “tell us something” about the state of English culture and society at the time.⁴⁴

What it tells us is that the modernist feeling of upheaval and chaos, of unprecedented newness, is the everyday experience of the immigrant. It has most successfully been described in literature by those who actually live in the spaces between their adopted lands and the lands they have left or lost. In his essay, “Contradictions of Modernism,” Eagleton also observes,

Modernism proper is old enough to remember a time when there was still truth, reality, foundations, a coherent subject, the possibility of freedom and justice, and is still haunted by a nostalgia for this alluring world, not least in the way the modernist work of art still strives for unity, turning around an absent centre or glimpsing a dim foundation which disappears as soon as you look at it straight (35).

In the chronotope of 1920s New York, however, the nostalgia extends in two directions at once: towards fictional pasts (whose memory or experience cannot link to the present), and the not-yet-constructed future. The past and the future are strictly products of the present—they are the manufactured continuity of time and space. Yet the present moment is not a bridge between the past and the future, but rather, a bridge across various versions of the present, and we notice the way the poems resist the “melting pot” form of Americanization. The chronotope of 1920s New York, then, is one in which the temporal and spatial dimensions are characterized by manufactured or projected continuity, bridging great abysses (the Atlantic ocean, lost generations of ancestors, the color line).

The abyss or empty space is bridged by sheer motion, consisting of various tempos (traffic, above, over, and underground; labor, music, or dancing) and is stylistically expressed through metonym and a heightened emphasis on rhythm. Michael Bienert describes the relationship to time and space in the modern metropolis (his example is Potsdamer Platz) like this: “The tempo is the primary symbol of the city: a placeless, exploding symbol that manifests itself as a spatial form in the ‘spaceless’ Potsdamer

⁴⁴ Terry Eagleton, *Exiles and Émigrés*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1970): 9.

Platz.”⁴⁵ The chronotope of 1920s New York, though, is not avant-garde or hyperrealist, as is the Potsdamer Platz Bienert describes; what makes New York’s spatial form “spaceless” is the lack of a single tempo. The absolute speed that Bienert describes, by contrast, implies a unitary pulse or cadence. It is the multiplicity of tempi themselves that bridge the spaceless abyss of the city.

The narrative of this chronotope is an attempt to twist together the disparate forms of tempo into something resembling the cables of Brooklyn Bridge. This is a task that cannot be completed in the present: process, rather than product, is emphasized in the poem. The hero of this chronotope is at once passive and active—the hero is at the mercy of great, historical forces beyond individual control—but it is the very severity of these forces that have empowered the hero to act. By forcibly removing the link between past and present (pogroms, slavery, exile), these forces have given the hero a task: to construct a version of what has been lost that can propel the present moment into the future. The hero’s building material, in fact, is tempo—he or she must assert an individual tempo against the forces of standardization, then find a way to entwine that individual tempo with other tempos, as in the cables of a bridge. Though this task is never accomplished, it still must be attempted: an effort I am ascribing to each of the four poetic enterprises analyzed in the following chapters.

Each literary genre assimilates certain isolated aspects of real historical and time and space. As Bakhtin notes: ““Out of the actual chronotopes of our world (which serve as the source of representation) emerge the reflected and *created* chronotopes of the world represented in the work”(DI 253). As Michael Holquist explains, there is no "direct" "realistic" reflection of the experienced world in literature. But if there were no connection

⁴⁵ Michael Bienert, Die eingebildete Metropole. Berlin im Feuilleton der Weimarer Republik (Stuttgart, 1992): 66. Cited from Keunen, 432.

at all, the literary text would be meaningless.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Morson and Emerson note that, "New genres reflect changes in real social life. Those changes lead to new views of experience and to different genres of speech, social behavior, and literature."⁴⁷ Accordingly, my discussions of Crane, Halpern, Hughes, and Lorca highlight some of the general characteristics of modern time and space as they occur in 1920s New York, and the technological and social forces that brought them into being, insofar as they illuminate the poems themselves.

If we look for a moment at the American 1920s, we can make two observations. First, we notice a movement toward standardized, uniform time, and second, we notice a multiplicity of temporalities that erupt in the wake of standardization. Stephen Kern called the introduction of standard time at the end of the nineteenth century, "the most momentous development in the history of uniform, public time since the invention of the mechanical clock in the fourteenth century."⁴⁸ Standard time reduced the number of time zones in the United States from over 200 before 1870 to 80 in 1870, to five in 1883. In 1884 Greenwich was established as the zero meridian, setting the groundwork for the eventual worldwide adoption of standard time (Kern 12-12). The Canadian engineer Sanford Fleming's 1886 observations about the advantages of uniform time point out its very abstract nature. Uniform time "subjects the whole surface of the globe to the observation of civilized communities and *leaves no interval of time between widely separated places proportionate to their distances apart*" (italics mine).⁴⁹ Later, with Henry Ford and Frederick Taylor, standard time becomes impressed upon the human subject, as factory workers are trained to

⁴⁶ Michael Holquist, Dialogism. Bakhtin and His World (London: Routledge, 1990): 11.

⁴⁷ Gary Saul Morson & Carl Emerson, Mikhail Bakhtin. Creation of a Prosaics (Stanford UP, 1990): 277.

⁴⁸ Stephen Kern, The Culture of Time and Space 1880-1918 (1983 Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2001): 11.

⁴⁹ Cited from Kern, 11.

move, eat, and speak in standard time—together, as a group.

When time becomes visible in the conveyor belt over which Charlie Chaplin is bent, regulating, restricting and determining the assembly-line workers' movements in the 1936 film *Modern Times*, the scene aptly describes a popular contemporary perception of "modern time" in New York, that is, a move toward standardization. Modern time's most distinguishing characteristics, its self-consciously man-made construction, which allows it to be bought and sold, its division into increasingly small increments—hours, minutes, and seconds—which assume increasingly regulatory power, are made evident in the pace of the conveyor belt. The belt successfully competes with the tempo in which the human workers are accustomed to move. An argument can last only the length of the conveyor belt, if one is inclined to pepper an argument with gesticulations, in which case, one had better learn to formulate quick arguments, or be interrupted when it is time to lower the hands and tighten a bolt. An itchy nose can be scratched in the temporal interstices marked by bolts, one preceding the other, along the conveyor belt.

The conveyor belt illustrates a further important characteristic of modern time: since the worker never sees the finished product of labor--Chaplin must repeat the same minute task ad infinitum--units of time are torn from a greater context; they are detachable and discrete; they do not add up. This creates the sensation of an eternal now, which erases the relevance of the past and the reality of the future.

Though time is the subject of the film's title, the nature of modern space is also apparent: different places are divided according to different functions, all in the service of production. The factory owner sits in his office, viewing the motions of the workers on monitors, shouting commands, corrections, and demands for increased speed (rate of production) through a speaker system. His is the place from which one can view the entire factory, and, though we are not shown it in the film, it is the place from which one can view the product in all its stages of assembly, including its final stage. One can also view and

control all the cogs, wheels and engines, both human and mechanical. The owner's place is sealed off from the others, and no one can enter it or share his perspective without his express permission. Underneath the building, the stoker stands next to the furnace, ready at any minute to muscle a lever up or down, increasing or decreasing the speed at which the conveyor belts move. And the workers have their room, as well, in which they are joined to one another by conveyor belts, their positions on which allow them neither to approach nor retreat from a fellow worker. Attempts to approach his neighbor, with whom he is angry, and in whose face he would like to shake a fist, leave Chaplin's character scrambling back to his former position, now (literally) behind in his work, which is shown graphically when his body, as a consequence, backs up against the body of his neighbor, hindering his neighbor's movements. Workers' commerce with the stoker and the factory owner is only indirect, through the medium of the conveyor belt.

And outside the factory are streets, which act as conveyor belts, joining factories to docks, businesses to other businesses and clients, houses to houses. People meet on the street on the way to or from somewhere else. There are parks with their illusions of vast expanses, rest, and uninhibited physical activity, cafes and movie houses, clubs and bars. There are houses with their kitchens, bedrooms and parlors; hotels and skyscrapers, with their elevators, staircases and hallways. Each place has its own designated activity; each place is linked through a system of transportation. And everything is regulated by production or consumption.

That the borders of Chaplin's factory time-space unit are marked by the factory whistle and by the factory doors, which separate the factory from the street, is illustrated in the scene in which we have left the temporarily mad Chaplin. Here the worker-hero flies out the factory door, wrench in hand, moving his body in rapid, jerky, mechanical movements appropriate to the rhythm of the conveyor belt. Still regulated by a tempo that restricts his array of available responses to the world, Chaplin displaces the behavior of the factory onto

the street by attempting to tighten the jacket and dress buttons of the passing pedestrians. Although Chaplin has changed his physical location, from the factory to the street, the factory whistle has not yet blown to indicate it is time for him to change his behavior and to enter a new space. Mass confusion ensues, as the assaulted pedestrians and police react with fear and indignation to Chaplin's attempts at treating them like inanimate objects, or like products of an enormous factory.

If we turn now to the very different (though related) context of Moyshe-Leyb Halpern's 1919 poem "Our Earth," which describes New York as the construction of a bored giant who hacked the city from stone and filled it with people torn from their families and their homes across the ocean, we find a more explicit comparison between human factory machinery and products of consumption. Here, "he" refers to the giant who created the factory of New York, and "them" refers to the immigrants that fill the city:

And day by day and day by day
he devours their flesh from dawn till evening,
nights he scatters all their bones through out the
houses two by two.
And with a whip he braided for himself from tongues of fire,
he forces them (like wheels of an enormous machine
that spin to the rhythm of driven steam)
to prepare for him new food.⁵⁰

What Chaplin's character implies, and Halpern's poem explicitly states, is that, although individual places are separated and regulated by their individual incarnations of man-made time, all places, in the end, belong to the city, even the most intimate and domestic.

Halpern's poem also explicitly demonstrates how all human activity, including procreation, is owned by the factory-monster of the city. The food that the inhabitants are forced to provide for the giant is human offspring. The sentiments and perceptions in

⁵⁰ [Un tog noch tog un tog noch tog / frest er zeyer fleysh fun fri biz avent, / un beynocht zervorft er zeyer beyner / in di heyzer porlech-veyz. / Und mit a beytsh vos er hot zich fun feyer oysgeflochten, / zvingt er zey (vi reder in a riziger mashin, / vos drehen sich tsum makt fun damf getriben.) Translation mine. Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, *In Nyu-York* (New York: Farlag Winke, 1919): 39-40.

Halpern's poem reflect, not only the harsh and demanding hours a worker was expected to put in each week, but also the invasive presence of the factory in the personal lives of the workers. For example, Henry Ford, as a part of his "Five-dollar-a-day" program, established a Sociology Department "to remake the lives of their immigrant workers and win them over to thrift, efficiency, and company loyalty."⁵¹ Obviously, thrift and efficiency were deemed "American" qualities, since the Department hired caseworkers to investigate each potential worker's home life and work record.

But the city itself has no single normative or intrinsic sense of time; one must be taught to move at a certain pace. If we use the factory as a metaphor for the city, we can see that different kinds of temporal order are imposed upon each space so rigidly that the space will tolerate no spontaneous inappropriate expressions, which is why a couple of police officers promptly appear and escort the wrench-wielding Chaplin from the street, and why the factory-owner watches Chaplin and the other workers through monitors, and why Halpern's giant uses a whip. That inhabitants must be *taught* how to move in a city is further evidence that modern time is strange and new, if not downright unnatural.

Learning to move in and live according to standard time was linked with learning to be an American citizen, at least as American industry understood it. The practice of teaching civics and language classes focused both on shedding "foreignness" and on acquiring "American cleanliness and efficiency," and it was widespread in the first two decades of the twentieth century. In 1912, Weber Works, which took over the YMCA's English and civics training classes in factories all across the nation, developed a series of lessons that taught workers practical English they would need in the workplace. The contents of lesson one demonstrate the seminal importance of the regulatory function of time:

⁵¹ James R. Barrett, "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930," *The Journal of American History* 79. 3 [Discovering America: A Special Issue] (Dec., 1992), 996-1020, 1003.

I hear the whistle. I must hurry.
I hear the five minute whistle.
It is time to go into the shop.
I take my check from the gate board and hang it on the department board.
I change my clothes and get ready to work.
The starting whistle blows.
I eat my lunch.
It is forbidden to eat until then.
The whistle blows at five minutes of starting time.
I get ready to go to work.
I work until the whistle blows to quit.
I leave my place nice and clean.
I put all my clothes in my locker.
I go home.⁵²

Presumably, once the worker learns English, (and the proper vocabulary to negotiate the time-space associated with the language--the factory), he is well on his way to becoming a good American citizen. A graphic illustration of this concept is the graduation ceremony for the Ford English School, a mandatory language and civics program for the company's immigrant workers:

All the men descend from a boat scene representing the vessel on which they came over; down the gangway representing the distance from the port at which they landed to the school, into a pot 15 feet in diameter and 7 1/2 feet high, which represents the Ford English School. Six teachers, three on either side, stir the pot with ten foot ladles representing nine months of teaching in the school. Into the pot 52 nationalities with their foreign clothes and baggage go and out of the pot after vigorous stirring by the teachers comes one nationality, viz, American.⁵³

⁵² Cited from Gerd Korman, "Education at the Factory Gates," Industrial and Labor Relations Review 18. 3 (Apr., 1965): 396-419. Lesson two, dealing with the Employee Benefit Association, teaches the new worker that, should he become ill or hurt, he should report first to the timekeeper and then to the doctor. Likewise, if he becomes ill at home, he should send word at once to the timekeeper or the foreman. There is no mention of a doctor until after a discussion of payment, and only then, it comes up in the context of leaving the city: "While you are sick do not leave the city without first seeing the doctor and telling him about it" (402). Of course, it should be noted that teaching English to immigrant workers was deemed necessary for the safety of the factory. Before English classes were instituted, Ford had to post safety warnings in forty-two different languages.

⁵³ This particular scene took place at the athletic field at the Ford Motor Company's Model T assembly plant in Highland Park, Michigan, on the Fourth of July during World

As a symbol of “one nationality,” the workers emerge from the pot dressed in identical suits and carrying a miniature American flag. What is apparent in this strange rebirthing scene is the strict attention paid to time and space: the plank lengths have become symbolic, as has the number of months (nine, of course) it takes to become “Americanized.”⁵⁴ The gestation period of the immigrant American, which occurs inside the factory, collapses human procreation and industrial production in a manner similar to that noted by Halpern in “Our Earth,” in which the foreman is supposed to make sure that “not one drop” of semen “be spilled in vain,” for such spillage would deny the giant “food in the morning.” In the poem, the sexual act itself occurs with the partners “spinning to the rhythm of driven steam.”

In addition to invading the privacy of the bedroom with a stopwatch, Americanization Ford-style also invaded the privacy of the human soul in order to control the worker’s marking of time. Teaching his workers “American ways, the English language, and the right way to live” extended, in Ford’s mind, to making sure employees celebrated holidays on the correct calendar day. He once fired nine hundred workers at one time for missing work to celebrate Orthodox Christmas, which is calculated according to the

War I. Clinton C. Dewitt, “Industrial Teachers,” U.S. Bureau of Education, Proceedings, Americanization Conference, 1919 (Washington, 1919), 119. Cited from Barrett, 996. Ford’s was the most dramatic and famous of civics and language classes. In New York, and other cities, similar programs were conducted under the auspices of the YMCA, initiated in 1907 and directed by Peter Roberts, in conjunction with various industries. After the YMCA ordered its language teachers to stop proselytizing (a practice which alienated many non-Protestant immigrant workers), Roberts established programs in major factories, including the Ford factory. It was standard practice that teachers would visit the worker’s homes, inspecting them for cleanliness and providing them with a “healthy American influence” (Korman 399-400).

⁵⁴ That the nine months of study is strictly figurative for the purposes of the graduation ceremony is evident in the fact that the language lessons actually lasted from six to seven months.

Julian, not the Gregorian calendar, and fell thirteen days after December 25.⁵⁵

Thus, the factories become models of a particular feature of American democracy at the time, for, if properly educated, an individual would learn to think of himself as a worker and as an American citizen first, and a human being second.⁵⁶ Indeed, by 1919, at least eight hundred industrial plants in the United States, especially in large, urban areas, were sponsoring their own classes or working together with the YMCA and other agencies to train workers in language and civics.⁵⁷

The factory works in unison with recreational areas such as Central Park, which was designed about 60 years before *Modern Times*, to enforce a sense of standardization, albeit one calibrated according to social and economic class. Olmsted designed Central Park to ensure that even those excluded from "virtuous" labor—or those whose factory incomes precluded their accumulating capital—could still participate in the edifying consumption of nature. Nature would serve as a model of harmony, encouraging less desirable (or uninitiated foreign) elements of society to disregard economic and social differences and to aspire to the behavior displayed by the "better" classes, model citizens who shared this space with them. The contemplative consumption of nature would allow them, theoretically,

⁵⁵ W. M. Roberts, "Promotion of Education in Industry," U.S. Bureau of Education, *Proceedings, Americanization Conference*, 145; Stephen Meyer, "Adapting the Immigrant to the Line." and Stephen Meyer, *The Five Dollar Day: Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1908-1921* (Albany, 1980), 151& 156. Cited from James R. Barrett, 1003.

⁵⁶ Stephen A. Germic, *American Green. Class, Crisis, and the Deployment of Nature in Central Park, Yosemite, and Yellowstone* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2001): 17.

⁵⁷ More often than not, the immigrant worker had access to resources and education in his own ethnic community. Also, unions often did more to educate the worker in basic American "civics" and democracy than factories did, since they stressed values with which Old World workers were more familiar and comfortable, such as worker solidarity and wellbeing. But I do wish to stress that the factory often assumed responsibility for "Americanizing" the worker it hired.

Until women gained suffrage, their education—and there were many programs for women, including those conducted in conjunction with the YWCA—was largely focused on correct methods of mothering and on raising "American" children. See Barrett 1012-12.

to feel themselves part of the city and the nation.⁵⁸ Seminal for the pedagogical efficaciousness of the Park is an illusion of infinite space that would, as Stephen Germic puts it, maintain and elaborate "a classic American rhetoric of infinitude and exceptionalism" (17). Of course, as architect Rem Koolhaas points out from a much more contemporary perspective, the nature of Central Park is "a series of manipulations and transformations performed on the nature 'saved' by its designers. Its lakes are artificial, its trees (trans)planted, its accidents engineered, all its incidents supported by an invisible infrastructure that controls their assembly...Central Park is a synthetic Arcadian Carpet."⁵⁹ This, too, is an important aspect of the park, as it shows the unnaturalness, the constructedness of everything, even nature.

By its very nature and location, Central Park was inaccessible to much of the working class, who lived too far away to take advantage of it. Nevertheless, even small patches of grass outside tenement buildings were regulated by the city. The reform park was introduced when State Legislature passed the Small Parks Act in 1887.⁶⁰ Reform parks, built largely in crowded neighborhoods and near tenement houses, were more practical and less ambitious than pleasure parks, like Central Park, stressing as they did physical exercise, supervision, and organization, and minimizing the significance of fine art and nature

⁵⁸ As Olmsted put it, "A Park is a work of art, designed to produce certain effects upon the mind of men. There should be nothing in it, absolutely nothing--not a foot of surface nor a spear of grass--which does not represent study, design, a sagacious consideration and application of known laws of cause and effect with reference to that end" (Cited from Germic 36). The nature of the laws of cause and effect that Olmsted wishes to make the subject of contemplation are evident in his mission statement: "all wealth is the result of labor, and every man's individual wealth is, on the whole, increased by the labor of every other in the community...but as there cannot be the slightest exercise of skill of any kind, without the expenditure of force, it follows that, without recuperation and recreation of force, the power of each individual to labor wisely and honestly is soon lost" (cited from Grimic, 31).

⁵⁹ Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978): 18.

⁶⁰ New York City, Department of Parks and Recreation, 2000-3.

<http://www.nycgovparks.org/index.php>

appreciation.⁶¹ Promoters hoped the parks would “assimilate immigrants, reduce nervousness, and fight delinquency” (Cranz 86-88). The manner in which park organizers divided the day into units, each of which was meant to serve a specific portion of the population in a particular way, is striking. Programs were offered to school-aged children before and after class (play areas were segregated according to sex), mothers, who arrived with toddlers in late morning, and working men, who took their lunch in the parks. Working, unmarried males and females visited the parks after dinner (Cranz 86-88).

Halpern’s “Our Garden” underscores the idea that subjecting nature to industrial regulation is unnatural. In the depiction of a startled, transplanted tree and a bird who has forgotten how to raise its young, we see how, cut off from its own rhythm, nature fails to take on any other. The figure of the watchman can be understood as the regulating force that disrupts the biological patterns of the humans:

What a watchman, alas, alack,
with a stick for a dog's back,
wakes the people on the lawn,
wakes them up and drives them on.
What a watchman, what a watchman,
who grabs the collar or the arm
of someone who has done no harm.⁶²

Like the giant of “Our Earth,” the watchman uses a weapon—here a stick—to “drive” the worker, now at his or her leisure. As Chaplin implies in the film *Modern Times*, there is not a great deal of difference between the factory, the street and recreational areas, in terms of regulatory tempo. Everywhere, time seems unnatural.

It may seem paradoxical that the standardization of time emphasizes the diversity of time. But then, it becomes clear that standard time does not replace other kinds of time: the sun still rises and sets. People still sleep at night, wake up in the morning, are born, grow

⁶¹ Galen Cranz, “Women in Urban Parks,” *Signs* 5. 3 [Supplement. Women and the American City] (Spring, 1980) 79.

⁶² Halpern 2-3. Translation mine.

old and die. Standard time simply introduces yet another kind of time into the human experience.

In New York, the multiplicity of temporalities is magnified because of the population density and concentration of industry, something discernable even before the 20s. Already in 1845 the former mayor Hone said New York was "fluctuation, and never-ceasing change." And that "'Overturn, overturn, overturn!' is the maxim of New York...The very bones of our ancestors are not permitted to lie quiet a quarter of a century, and one generation of men seem studious to remove all relics of those who precede them."⁶³ In 1904 Henry James observed "the multitudinous sky-scrapers standing up to the view, from the water, like extravagant pins in a cushion already overplanted," and "the new landmarks crushing the old quite as violent children stamp on snails and caterpillars."⁶⁴ Since sky-scrapers are likened to pins in a pincushion, mere implements for the holding together of what has been cut apart, this image allows one to see time embodied (or disembodied) in space. But old landmarks, likened to snails and caterpillars, perhaps natural and native, are not motionless either; they only move more slowly than the "violent children." In 1931 James Truslow Adams notes of New York, "By rail, boat, automobile, or plane we are as restless as a swarm of gnats in a summer sunbeam. 'We don't know where we're going but we're on our way,' is the cry of all. Even the babies get their rest by traveling at forty miles an hour swung in cradles in Ford cars."⁶⁵ Adams believes that constant change in environment is self-perpetuating, and that, without it, the fabric of American civilization would collapse. Furthermore, the acceleration of change must constantly increase, to keep

⁶³ Cited from Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, Gotham. A History of New York City to 1898 (New York: Oxford UP, 1999):694-5.

⁶⁴ Cited from Susan Edmiston and Linda D. Cirino, Literary New York. A History and Guide (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1976):29-30.

⁶⁵ James Truslow Adams, The Tempo of Modern Life (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, Inc. Publishers, 1931): 43. For a similar discussion of the effects of the modernist metropolis on mental life see Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," The Sociology of Georg Simmel, trans. Kurt Wolff (New York: Free Press, 1950) 409-424.

up with economic demands. This trend ensures that the human consciousness never catches up to change, and never completely adjusts. The result is a strange dislocation—a perpetual homelessness. In human terms, the effect is, as Adams says, “the difficulty or impossibility of acquiring habits.” The immigrant experience is simulated over and over again for everyone.

The sense that time had somehow got out of hand was such a common theme in social, cultural, and literary accounts of the 1920s that it seems, regardless of its cause, chaos was a common lived experience.⁶⁶ Bruce Catton calls the twenties “an empty place between two eras, with old familiar certainties and hopes drifting off like mist and new ones not yet formulated.”⁶⁷ Other accounts are concerned with dispelling the myth that there was something aberrant about time, or people’s sense of time, in the American 1920s.⁶⁸ But even the need to expel a myth reifies it. Arthur Mizener says of “the ‘Lost Generation,’” “If they were lost, they were lost as explorers are, not as the damned are,”⁶⁹ and Archibald MacLeish added, “it was not the Lost Generation which was lost: It was the world out of which that generation came.”⁷⁰

If standardization was an attempt to combat the chaos of temporalities in the city, the price of standardization was divorcing time from any organic relationship to space. The best example of the divorce of time and organic space is, without question, the grid structure, which was introduced into the city in the late eighteenth century. From our own historical

⁶⁶ The titles of the accounts themselves underscore this point. Among them are Roderick Nash The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930; Laurence Greene The Era of Wonderful Nonsense; Henry Morton Robinson, Fantastic Interim; Lloyd Morris Postscript to Yesterday; Burton Rascoe We Were Interrupted; Paul Sann The Lawless Decade (a pictorial history). These titles were brought to my attention by Truslow Adams’s book.

⁶⁷ American Heritage magazine’s special edition, “The Twenties” (August 1965).

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Stevenson claims, in her Babbitts and Bohemians: The American 1920s, that the 1920s has been misrepresented as an “accidental pause in history.”

⁶⁹ Robert Spiller, A Time of Harvest: American Literature, 1910-1960 (New York, 1962).

⁷⁰ Saturday Review 1966.

vantage point, architect Rem Koolhaas notes,

The Grid is, above all, a conceptual speculation. In spite of its apparent neutrality, it implies an intellectual program for the island: in its indifference to topography, to what exists, it claims the superiority of mental construction over reality. Through the plotting of its streets and blocks it announces that the subjugation, if not obliteration, of nature is its true ambition” (Koolhaas 15).

In flattening out or demolishing geography, which carries the imprint of geological time in its hills and mountains, its lakes and bogs, the grid divorces space (or place) from history, replacing natural history with the sort of regulatory time described above.

When architect Frederic Thompson and his colleague Elmer Dundy opened Luna Park on Coney Island, they also removed space from a recognizable geographical environment. To enter the park, the masses had to pass through an entrance called "Trip to the Moon," an experience that gave the passenger the impression he or she was really leaving the earth, much in the way that the grid freed the city from dependence on the particularity of earth's topography. Upon entering the park: "the ship is soon 100 feet in the air. A wonderful, widespread panorama of the surrounding sea, Manhattan and Long Island seems to be receding as the ship mounts upward...Houses recede from view until the earth fades from sight, while the moon grows larger and larger."⁷¹

The use of electricity to create two different cities, the day city and the night city, removed the attendee from dependence on earth cycles of day and night. Instead of using electricity merely to light up the night, so as to get twice as much patronage for the park, Thompson actually altered the appearance of the night city, creating the illusion of towers where none existed in the daytime. With this slight of hand, Thomspon created a situation in which, "the city *itself* is to be lived in shifts; the electric city, phantom offspring of the

⁷¹ cited from Koolhaas, 32-33.

'real' city" (Koolhaas 35).⁷²

Koolhaas names Manhattan, in the early days of the grid, "a ghost town of the future." As grid space becomes abstract, it also becomes a blank slate onto which anything can be built. Architects and poets alike filled the spaces with elements of disparate places. For example, Mumford observes,

So much of the detail of a building is established by factory standards and patterns that even the patron himself has precious little scope for giving vent to his impulses in the design or execution of the work... In fact, the only opportunity for expressing his taste and personality is in choosing the mode in which the house is to be built: he must find his requirements in Italy, Colonial America, France, Tudor England, or Spain--woe to him if he wants to find them in twentieth-century America! Thus the machine process has created a standardized conception of style: of itself it can no more invent a new style than a mummy can beget children (184-5).⁷³

Like immigrants who come to New York from disparate places, the architecture of the city drew upon imported styles and decorative motifs that were torn from their original context and combined in new ways. Mumford phrases the situation in terms of style, but the challenge he raises in the last sentence of the cited text applies to more than style. In the context of the time and space depicted in the five poems that make up this study, the question becomes one of combining disjointed spaces in such a way as to create a livable present.

At first, experiments in the manufactured continuity of space began with late –nineteenth-century Coney Island amusement parks, which, according to Koolhaas, served as architectural laboratories for Manhattan. Senator William H. Reynolds's brainchild, Dreamland, the world's largest amusement park under "one fireproof roof," and "the first time in the History of Coney Island Amusement that an effort has been made to provide a

⁷² See also A. Roger Elkirch, At Day's Close: Night in Times Past (New York: Norton, 2005)

⁷³ Lewis Mumford, Sticks and Stones. A Study of American Architecture and Civilization (New York: W.W. Norton, 1924) 184-5.

place of Amusement that appeals to all classes," introduced the technique of stacking incongruous historical references into one space in the late 1880s.⁷⁴ Starting with the underwater entrance that gave the impression that the entire park was a sort of Atlantis, recreations of synthetic history were layered upon one another in a single space. Among the building's layers were Lilliputia, the Fall of Pompei, the Incubator Building (in which real human premature and at-risk babies were kept, since hospitals at the time did not have the resources to care for them), the End of the World, a circus, the Creation of the World, Flight over Manhattan (a daily occurrence in a hot air balloon that existed simultaneously with an hourly simulated flight over Manhattan), Canals of Venice, Coasting through Switzerland, and the Japanese Teahouse.⁷⁵

What prevented this spectacular mixing of amusement with life-sustaining technology—and the mixing of reconstructed pasts—from becoming a mere museum of technology was the way interaction with the popcorn and peanut vendors, who “inhabited” the park, forced the audience to acknowledge the artificiality of what they were seeing by questioning their concepts of reality. This group of boys, each dressed as Mephistopheles, moved among the crowd “spewing nonsense”: “meaningless, enigmatic jokes and slogans that will sow uncertainty in the crowds throughout the day” (Koolhaus 40). Their “nonsense” has a more constructive literary corollary in Crane’s “logic of the metaphor” and Lorca’s “*hecho poético*,” in which the speaker or narrator relinquishes control over the meaning of the image, phrase, or utterance, and deliberately calls upon the reader to provide his or her own associations to contribute to the construction of meaning. Lorca and Crane imply that the complexity of the world warrants multiple, unfinalizable perspectives in order to represent it properly in literature. The removal of a solid floor of meaning that the poet is

⁷⁴ The History of Coney Island (New York: Burroughs, 1904): 10. cited from Koolhaus 38.

⁷⁵ cited from Koolhaus 38-40.

traditionally expected to provide is—instead of an end in itself, as it is for the popcorn vendors—a necessary means to an end. Its end is to allow a possibility for the reader to enter into the creation of meaning, and hence, into the creation of the poem, in a world in which absolute meaning was already lost before the poet began. Meaning and reality are recuperated by acknowledging the artificiality of common experience (because the poet is an immigrant, an outsider, a non-native speaker, a person whose experience of time and space is different from that of the reader). It provides a bridge, like the Brooklyn Bridge, or like Hughes's cabaret, so that two non-commonalities can touch, co-mingle, and create a new entity: the poem.

The amusement park, which introduced multiplicities of time into a single space, was, of course, meant to serve only one carefully regulated segment of New York life—leisure time. But the architecture of the amusement parks was part of a bridge that extended to the architecture of non-recreational city life as well: to skyscrapers, for example. Richmond Shreve described skyscrapers as materials from all over the United States and the world that “must come together and fit together with accuracy of measurement and precision of time.”⁷⁶ According to Koolhaas, the structure was born in installments between 1900 and 1910. Citing a cartoon that appeared in 1909 (*Life*, Oct. 1909), in which a steel structure supports 84 horizontal planes, all the size of the original plot, Koolhaas notes, “the disconnectedness of the aerial plots seemingly conflicts with the *fact* that, together, they add up to a single building.” In terms of urbanism, “this indeterminacy means that a particular site can no longer be matched with any single predetermined purpose. From now on each metropolitan lot accommodates—in theory at least—an unforeseeable and unstable combination of simultaneous activities” (70). Imagine each of these 84 levels housing a structure that was torn from a different community in time (or the same community, in

⁷⁶ Cited from Douglas 437.

different points in time), and you have a good metaphor for the city of Manhattan.

Speed and traffic have the further effect of obliterating habitual paths of motion and thought, freeing the consciousness from its traditional chronological patterns. In 1916 Filippo Tommaso Marinetti focused his imagination on electricity, automobiles, planes, and all that obliterated the pre-given, earth-hugging road or path. In his dream of destroying the concept of place in the service of infinite space, an activity that he viewed as prerequisite to realizing infinite human potential, he declared:

Man began by despising the isochronal, cadenced rhythm, identical with the rhythm of his own stride, of the great rivers. Man envied the rhythm of torrents, like that of a horse's gallop...Tortuous paths, roads that follow the indolence of streams and wind along the spines and uneven bellies of mountains, these are the laws of the earth. Never straight lines; always arabesques and zigzags. Speed finally gives to human life one of the characteristics of divinity: *the straight line*.⁷⁷

Marinetti's "straight line," in contradistinction to an earth-bound road or trail, effects two changes in human relations, and in spatial-temporal relations: it makes the real places on earth irrelevant or abstract, and it makes travel a highly individualistic concept. That is, the straight line, which moves at a metaphorical speed of light between one abstract point and another, is not wide enough or material enough to carry more than one traveler at a time. The real protagonists of the future for Marinetti are not human beings, but machines, technology and speed. Nor are humans the real protagonists of Manhattan. Manhattan is their undoing; here they become motes that "swirl around in the dust of skyscrapers." The city is not, aesthetically speaking, built for the land-bound.

Because Marinetti imagined that planes and cars would be the most fitting travelers for the straight line, he also advocated "forthcoming destruction of houses and cities, to make way for great meeting places for cars and planes." But the physical destruction of

⁷⁷ "The New Religion-Morality of Speed," *L'Italia Futurista* May 11, 1916.

cities themselves was not necessary to create a meeting place for cars and planes. Sky scrapers erase themselves, as Mumford observes: "the great towers on the tip of the island sometimes look like the fairy stalagmites of an opened grotto...But...For the millions who fill the pavements and shuttle back and forth in tubes, the skyscraper as a tall, cloudward building does not exist" (174). This leaves Mumford to conclude, "In short, it is an architecture, not for men, but for angels and aviators!" (174). Hart Crane reaches this conclusion as well, for he depicts subways burrowing through the earth, and trains and power lines crisscrossing the surface of the continent, and, in the climax of "Cape Hatteras," airplanes combating space.

Yet, the human protagonists of the poems must live among this inhumane architecture and its novel speed. In a world in which, to quote Mumford, "the dream that is dying and the dream that is coming to birth do not stand in sequence, but mingle as do the images in a dissolving view," the movement of time through the edifices and streets of Manhattan reconfigures itself, in the human consciousness and the human technologies that house it. The poems in this study depict the emerging world of New York in the 1920s along with the emergence of the protagonists in this world.

In chapter two, I examine Hart Crane's composite chronotope in the poem *The Bridge* (1929), which allows for two simultaneous perspectives of time and space—that of the culmination of Western history (the perspective "synoptic of all tides below") and that which, in comparison to what the Russian philosopher P.D. Ouspensky calls "completed time," is only one of several "labyrinthine mouths of history." The poem's liberal borrowing of compositional techniques from painting and music invite a comparison between the architecture of the poem and Joseph Stella's 1920-1922 painting of the same title, from the polyptych, *New York Interpreted*. Stella's painting provides a visual for how the two chronotopic perspectives fit together.

Just as the painting's cross hatching reproduces an image of the Bridge across the city's architecture—some of which had not yet been constructed at the time of the painting's completion—drawing everything together into what Stella calls “the convergence of worlds,” the poem's metonyms connect the historical moments of American history through a proliferation of Bridge figures. Crane depicts a history of America, “through the lens of the present,” borrowing liberally from William Carlos Williams's *In the American Grain*, in which the Brooklyn Bridge is always already present in the arc of Columbus's sails, the wings of sea gulls which appear at various moments in the poem, and in the smiles of a pioneer woman and an Indian squaw, for example. On the other hand, like the two calm blue semi-circles that depict eternity in Stella's painting, there is there is a larger concept of time in Crane's poem that most people do not perceive in their lived experience, which the Russian philosopher P. D. Ouspensky, a contemporary of Mikhail Bakhtin, calls “the completeness of time.” This perspective radically challenges that of the present moment.

While Crane's intent to create the “mythical synthesis of America” may open him up to Bakhtin's critique that poetry sets itself up as the “language of the gods,” Crane's “logic of the metaphor” causes authorial intent to give way to the reader's intuition in the construction of meaning in the poem.

In Chapter three I begin to examine the chronotope of 1920s New York in terms of non-standard-English language poems whose narrators are positioned, both socially and linguistically on the “margins,” (Kronfeld), or as “outside” voices (Bakhtin). Accordingly, in this chapter, I introduce two new concepts—outsiderness and irony, both seminal for maintaining an open field of interaction among the various perspectives the poems collected in this study represent—while examining Halpern's use of them in his prosody and authorial/narrative positioning throughout the Yiddish-language poem *In Nyu-York* (1919). Using the conceit of the cinematic close-up as the modernistic analogue to Bakhtin's

“intervallic chronotope,” I view each of the various narrative positions as a moment of intense concentration that constantly interrupts and re-evaluate the other perspectives. As a correlate to Crane’s chronotopic perspective of “the labyrinthine mouths of history,” Halpern’s parody accords America an undistinguished position in the history of the world. In Halpern, America can be made fun of, and can be subordinated into a place no more or no less important than any other place in the poem.

In chapter four I expand upon Halpern’s concept of 1920s New York/America as a locus of competing temporal-spatial constructs that must apprehend one another in order to co-exist by considering those depicted in Langston Hughes’s *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927) and Federico Garcia Lorca’s *Poeta en Nueva York* (written in 1929). Given Lorca’s diagnosis of New York’s social and cultural crisis as a disrespect for and a misunderstanding of the rhythms of the earth which are overturned by what Johan K. Walsh calls the “kinetic ubiquity of money,”⁷⁸ the inhabitants of Harlem are described in terms of the inventions of Wall Street. Like Halpern’s characters, their dislocation from a “natural” environment makes their attempts to master the inventions of “civilized” society look foolish. Lorca’s humor, coupled with his polemically essentializing characterizations of the city’s inhabitants, undercuts the dominance of Wall Street. Conforming to Lorca’s map of the city, Hughes, describes the segregated populations, establishing narrative authority in the language and formal poetic genres sanctioned by each.

Ultimately, Hughes positions himself off Lorca’s polarized diagram of the city, denying others the power to name and order his world. This move allows Hughes to become what Houston Baker calls a “translator of the nontraditional,” which is the role of the “placeless.” “Translating,” in the sense of moving or carrying somebody or something

⁷⁸ “The Social and Sexual Geography of *Poeta En Nueva York*.” *“Cuando Yo Me Muera...” Essays in Memory of Federico Garcia Lorca*, ed. Brian C. Morris (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988) 110.

from one place to another, describes the task of Hughes's narrators, who, in carrying meaning and traditions from one context to another, create what Joel Dinerstein calls a "functional culture for industrial society."

The blues idiom in Langston Hughes's *The Weary Blues* (1926) works in much the same way folk rhythms do in Halpern to open a common dialogical space between Harlem and Wall Street. By describing universal experiences in expressions emerging from their own particular experiences, narrators of the blues and of jazz-infused poetry availed themselves to techniques such as "signifying," or "double-voicing," which operate in a manner analogous to Halpern's parody by speaking two realities at once, laying claim to both. Likewise, rhythms that link the singer/poets to the forgotten land of their origins (a mythical Africa) while integrating the machines and technologies around them (in New York) actually enhance the "diversities of heteroglot speech"⁷⁹ when we depart from traditional Hughes scholarship, which tends to read the collections as individual lyrics, and we, instead, read them as segments of a narrative.

In this dissertation I have sought a way in which we can honor the integrity of individual literary traditions that come from specific cultures without excluding them from the American literary stage. Indeed, I wanted to demonstrate that modernist American literature is best described in terms of the various kinds of temporal and spatial dislocations experienced by the immigrant, the foreigner, and the marginalized. This project has called for a redefinition of modernism and a re-evaluation of poetry's ability to portray what Bakhtin calls the "emergence of the world" along with the "emergence of the hero." Taken as a whole, each of these chapters illuminates and illustrates a certain aspect of the "emergence of the world" of 1920s New York, by highlighting the chronotopic capacities

⁷⁹ I am referencing Morson and Emerson's gloss (CP 322) on Bakhtin's claim that, in poetry, "rhythm serves to strengthen and concentrate even further the unity and hermetic quality of the surface of poetic style, and of the unitary language that this style posits" (DN 298). When the language itself is double voiced, there is no unitary language to seal.

of narrative poetry.

Chapter 2 New York as the Ghost Town of the Future Hart Crane's *The Bridge*

Seen for the first time, as a weird metallic Apparition under a metallic sky, out of proportion with the winged lightness of its arch, traced for the conjunction of WORLDS, supported by the massive dark towers dominating the surrounding tumult of the surging skyscrapers with their gothic majesty sealed in the purity of their arches, the cables, like divine messages from above, transmitted to the vibrating coils, cutting and dividing into innumerable musical spaces the nude immensity of the sky, it impressed me as the shrine containing all the efforts of the new civilization of AMERICA...the eloquent meeting point of all the forces arising in a superb assertion of powers, in APOTHEOSIS...

Many nights I stood on the bridge--and in the middle alone--lost--a defenseless prey to the surrounding swarming darkness--crushed by the mountainous black impenetrability of the skyscrapers--here and there lights resembling suspended falls of astral bodies or fantastic splendors of remote rites--shaken by the underground tumult of the trains in perpetual motion, like the blood in the arteries--at times, ringing as alarm in a tempest, the shrill sulphurous voice of the trolley wires--now and then strange moanings of appeal from tugboats, guessed at more than seen, through the infernal recesses below--I felt deeply moved, as if on the threshold of a new religion or in the presence of a new DIVINITY.

Josef Stella, "Brooklyn Bridge, A Page of My Life"

*And through that cordage, threading with its call
One arc synoptic of all tides below--
Their labyrinthine mouths of history
Pouring reply as though all ships at sea
Complighted in one vibrant breath made cry,--
"Make thy love sure--to weave whose song we ply!"
--From black embankments, moveless soundings hailed,
So seven oceans answer from their dream.*

Hart Crane, from "Atlantis,"

This chapter introduces a recurring image of 1920s America with which all of the poems in the following chapters must engage. At the same time, it takes on a poem that most challenges my claim that modernist American narrative poetry is both dialogical and that it contains multiple chronotopic perspectives. In attempting to create a “mythical synthesis of America,” Crane opens himself up to Bakhtin’s charge that poetry is deaf to the heteroglossia of the world. Thus, it is my task here to show how such innovations as Crane’s “logic of the metaphor” and his composite chronotope create an image of 1920s America that is grounded in historical time and space, but capable of constant revision.

Hart Crane had hoped to use Josef Stella's image of the Brooklyn Bridge, from the 1920-22 series *New York Interpreted*, as the frontispiece to his 1929 poem, *The Bridge*.¹ Although the reproduction costs of the painting necessitated its replacement by a Walker Evans photograph, Crane believed that Josef Stella had more closely shared his vision of the Bridge. Indeed, colleagues sometimes speculated that the prohibitive reproduction costs had proved fortunate for Crane, as the similarities in style and technique between the poem and the painting would have detracted from the power of the poem.²

The most striking feature of the painting is the physically impossible perspective of the viewer, who seems to be floating midway between the boardwalk and the top of the tower. A second, related feature is pointed out by Stella in the epigraph; the painting depicts an actual convergence of worlds: that of the past, the Gothic arches of the Bridge, and that of the future, the skyscrapers in the upper right-hand panel that did not yet exist at the time of

¹ Hart Crane, Letter to Joseph Stella, *O My Land, My Friends! The Selected Letters of Hart Crane*, ed. Langdon Hammer and Brom Weber (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1977) 395.

² Both Jaffe and George Knox have written on the similarity of Crane and Stella's techniques. Knox attributes this similarity to the influence of the social and historical milieu, while Jaffe plays detective, trying to determine how and to what extent Crane could have been exposed to Stella in the course of his writing. George Knox, "Crane and Stella: Conjunctions of Painterly and Poetic Worlds." *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 12:4 (Winter, 1971) 680-707. Irma Jaffe, "Joseph Stella and Hart Crane. The Brooklyn Bridge." *American Art Journal* 1 (Fall 1969) 98-107.

the painting. The crosshatching in the painting also suggests conquest: vertical cables radiate from the Bridge and echo in the skyscrapers; diagonal cables to the lower right, thick and fine, join all the components of the Manhattan scene to the Bridge, until they become part of the bridge themselves.

The third, almost unnoticeable, feature is the contrast of the painting's present moment with a sense of timelessness. The ovals in the predella, filled with bright blares of color, suggest the headlights of moving cars below the boardwalk. However, the movement is so constant that Crane calls it "stasis in motion," comparing it to the "the eternity in a second" that characterizes Stieglitz's photos of clouds.³ In contrast to the constant motion we see in the predella, the upper center of the painting contains a round of clean, blue sky, broken by the intersection of the Gothic arches into two semicircles. The two semi-circles are untouched, but framed, by the Bridge. The stillness, then, remains apart from the movement of the painting, but its presence makes it possible for us to view the motion as motion.

These three features mirror Crane's version of time-space in 1920s New York. The first, the super-human perspective of the painting, appears in Crane's poem as the possibility of viewing action from two different chronotopic perspectives at once. In a maneuver analogous to Bakhtin's "hybridization," in which two familiar chronotopes are combined in a way that "radically changes their character; both of them take on metaphoric significance and enter into completely new relationship with the real world," Crane provides a dual perspective, one that is both "synoptic" and fragmented at once (DI 165),⁴ which I

³ "The eerie speed of the shutter is more adequate than the human eye to remember, catching even the transition of the mist-mote into the cloud, the thought that is jetted from the eye to leave it instantly forever. Speed is at the bottom of it all--the hundredth of a second caught so precisely that the motion is continued from the picture infinitely: the moment made eternal." Hart Crane, *O My Land, My Friends* 149.

⁴ This differs from the collage technique, to which it is, nonetheless, related. The collage method, which figures often in modernist literature, provides a barrage of perspectives, which may or may not be the embodiment of distinct voices. However, the compound

will call the composite chronotope. The dual perspectives of the poem are in a constant dialogue that energizes and informs all of the narrative action in the poem.

Just as the painting's cross hatching reproduces an image of the Bridge across the city's architecture, drawing everything together into what Stella calls "the convergence of worlds," Crane depicts the history of America through the lens of the present. Here, the present is "synoptic of all tides below." The poem's metonyms connect the historical moments of American history through a proliferation of Bridge figures, so that the Brooklyn Bridge is always already present—in the arc of Columbus's sails, in the wings of sea gulls which appear at various moments in the poem, and in the smiles of a pioneer woman and an Indian squaw, for example. On the other hand, like the two calm blue semi-circles that depict eternity in Stella's painting, there is there is a larger concept of time in Crane's poem that most people do not perceive in their lived experience, which the Russian philosopher P. D. Ouspensky, a contemporary of Mikhail Bakhtin, calls "the completeness of time."⁵

The use of the arc throughout the poem as the symbol for the Bridge comes from Ouspensky, whom Crane read throughout the 1920s: "In reality, the *circle of life* is only the section of *something*, and that *something* undoubtedly exists before birth, e.g., before the appearance of the circle in our space, and continues to exist after death, i.e., after the disappearance of the circle from the field of our vision" (105). Thus, the arc (only part of a full circle) of the Brooklyn Bridge is the shape in which "time takes on flesh" and "becomes visible" in Crane's 1920s New York. Ouspensky's version of the circle of life is similar to ancient versions of cyclical time, in that it drains the action of the present

chronotope provides two distinct temporal and spatial configurations in dialogic relationship continuously throughout the entire poem.

⁵ Unlike Bakhtin and Einstein, Ouspensky believed that time and space was one, and that what we call space is all that we can sensually perceive at any given moment, and what we call time is that which lies beyond the realm of our sensual perception. P. D. Ouspensky, *Tertium Organum*, trans. Nicholas Bessaraboff and Claude Bragdon (New York: Vintage Books, 1920).

moment of enduring significance. However, it is unlike those versions in that it is based on scientific principles instead of religious eschatology—thus, it does not concern itself with such questions as the end of the world and the end of time, but rather, with the transcendent ability of the human consciousness.

The historical circumstances which gave rise to what Bakhtin calls “chronotopic hybridization”(in Cervantes’ 1605 novel *Don Quixote*) are, in some ways, analogous to Crane’s. *Don Quixote* features two chronotopes straddling an ideological divide: the “‘alien, miraculous world’ chronotope of chivalric romances” and the “‘high road winding through one’s native land’ chronotope that is typical of the picaresque novel”(DI 165). *Don Quixote*, like other Renaissance forms of the novel, “violated that other-wordly vertical axis along which the categories of a spatial and temporal world had been distributed and had given value to its living content,” in order to restore the spatial and temporal “material wholeness of the world on a new, more profound and more complex level of development” (DI 166). Cervantes wrote in a world “in which simultaneously America was being discovered, a sea route to India was being opened up, new fields in natural science and mathematics were being established. And the way was prepared for an utterly new way of seeing and of portraying time in the novel” (DI 166).

The clash between eternity and secular history upon which America was founded—Crane’s poem begins with Columbus’s voyage to the New World, framed in the conflict of commercial interests (secular) and spiritual conquest (saving souls for eternity)—is rehearsed in *The Bridge* in the clash between secular *atemporality* (instead of eternity), and the historical moment. Crane’s synoptic arc lies on the other side of historicity—completeness of time is, of course, a thoroughly secular concept, but it is no less otherworldly than the earlier Christian concepts of eternity that the Renaissance, the Reformation, and literature such as *Don Quixote* worked to overthrow.

The completeness of time is in constant dialogue with its chronotopic component,

the poem's present moment. Looking through the lens of the present moment redefines history: through parody and satire, as we see in the vaudeville and burlesque tropes of "The Dance" through which the story of Pocohantas is told, and through the commercial language of Columbus's discovery of America in "Ave Maria." The poem also showcases the rhetoric of the builders of the Bridge and of the city council members present at the Bridge's opening ceremonies who proclaim the Bridge the final link in a system of paths and roads connecting the world. Here, the Bridge provides an opportunity to review the history of world exploration and discovery, positing May 24, 1883 as the culminating moment of all voyages and New York as their final destination, symbolically and physically. This idea is the literary analogue to Stella's crosshatching, which draws the past and the future into a union with the Bridge. Thus, I refer to the two perspectives of the poem as "synoptic of all tides below" and one of the several "labyrinthine mouths of history." I will discuss both of these aspects more fully below, in relationship to the narrative, generic, and dialogic significance of their interaction.

Insofar as the chronotope is the "form –shaping ideology" of a genre, the dual perspectives of *The Bridge* enact what Michael Eskin calls the "existential clashes between homogenizing and oppositional discourses" in the poem's very construction (Eskin 389). On the one hand, Crane's claim to have been writing "the myth of America," would indicate a homogenizing intention, even if by "America" he may have meant Williams's and Kutzinski's more inclusive "New World"—a speculation that is supported by Crane's extensive use of Williams's *In the American Grain* as source material. On the other hand, in his March 17, 1926 letter to Gorham Munson, Crane makes clear that the poem is not pedagogical or prescriptive. He is not attempting to speak as a representative of a "higher consciousness" or as a messenger from the gods:

The tragic quandary (or agony) of the modern world derives
from the paradoxes that an inadequate system of rationality

forces on the living consciousness. I am not opposing any new synthesis of reasonable laws which might provide a consistent philosophical and moral program for our epoch. Neither, on the other hand, am I attempting through poetry to delineate any such system (*OMLMF* 233).

His proclaimed “objective” stance opens up the possibility that he is only pretending to speak monologically and that the poem, in fact, includes “oppositional” dialogue. This possibility is substantiated by the many instances of parody and irony, and the great number of phrases, the syntax, and styles stolen or borrowed from poet colleagues that represent a variety of philosophies and poetic agendas.

Yet the dialogue I am suggesting that is foundational to the poem has its very real and specific limits. The first is that Crane’s two perspectives exclude a variety of voices. In chapter one, I described modernism in a way that privileges the margins and the immigrant, the outcast, and those excluded from the dominant society. Crane is not writing from the margins in the same way that Halpern, Hughes or Lorca are. His immigrants (the Genoese washer woman, for example), Native Americans, hoboes, landless sailors, women, and other marginalized people are highly stylized symbols and caricatures, and often rhetorical addressees.

Secondly, the lens of the present is that of economic and commercial forces—advertising, music and literature. Furthermore, the poem is inhabited by an astonishing number of dead bodies whose speech is obviously controlled by the poet, for example, the suicide of "To the Brooklyn Bridge" jumps off the bridge; the hoboes’ bones are buried beneath train tracks in "The River;" Maquokeeta is burned at the stake; Pocahontas's arms sprout corn in "The Dance;" bodies swell the Mississippi, the "River of Time" in "The River" section. In fact, all of the human characters in the poem are bridge-figures; the real hero of the poem, the only one who grows or develops in any way, is not human—it is the Brooklyn Bridge.

Nevertheless, Stella's commentary on the completeness of a work of art resonates with the central conflict of the poem, which can be framed as an open-ended dialogue:

When we think that our epoch, like every other epoch is nothing else but a point in the immensity of time, we have to laugh [at] those standards that people considered eternal. The masterpiece--a Phrase of the infinite speech running through the centuries can't be the final word it is supposed to be. You cannot consider a phrase no matter how perfect it is, complete and final when the whole sentence is not finished."⁶

To that end, *The Bridge* references various literary genres of past epochs: the epic, most notably in the battle scene rendered in hexameter in which the biplane challenges the sky in "Cape Hatteras;" the travelogue in "Ave Maria," for which Crane drew indirectly on Christopher Columbus's diary, apparently via William Carlos Williams's *In the American Grain*. "Indiana" is written in the form of a personal letter; "the River" and "Cutty Sark" are set to a jazz rhythm interrupted by billboard advertisements and juke-box music, respectively. "Harbor Dawn" is a love lyric, as is the little italicized poem that appears intermittently on the right facing page from "Ave Maria" to "Indiana." "The Dance" is reminiscent of the dream- visionary. In borrowing elements of these genres, Crane constructs a poem in the same way that the architects and city planners constructed New York at the time: by recycling elements of the past and recombining them in order to "make it new," as Ezra Pound had commanded. Each of the genres to which Crane alludes contains, in Bakhtin's words, "a congealed old world view." As Emerson and Morson put it, this way "a genre remembers past experience. That is, genres contain a vast storehouse of experiential wisdom of which we are often unaware, but which can be partially reconstructed under the pressure of new experiences" (MB, 290-291). These congealed worldviews, with their particular configurations of time and space, of which

⁶ "On Painting," Joseph Stella. Cited from Knox, 696.

images and genres are short-hand expressions, are also in dialogue with the dominant composite chronotope of *The Bridge*. Bakhtin calls these “intervallic” chronotopes because they occur in intervals that “interrupt and shed light on the chronotope of the main narrative” (CP 404). In addition to providing subplots (as in the *The Bridge*’s story of Rip Van Winkle, or the italicized love lyric on the right-hand facing page of the first four sections), they highlight “the possibility of viewing action from two different chronotopic perspectives” and “the fact that each chronotope is one of many possible chronotopes” (CP 404).

2.

The earliest dismissals of *The Bridge* were a consequence of mislabeling by such colleagues as Allen Tate or Yves Winters, who mistook the genre of the poem: Crane was a romanticist with an "out of date vision," or he was a "visionary poet in a world devoid of visions."⁷ When he wasn't accused of Romantic tendencies by colleagues who were certainly not so innocent of them themselves, he faced charges of trying and/or failing to write an epic poem. Most famous is Allen Tate's charge and subsequent explication for the failure of an epic in the modern world: "the modern world lacked the vital system of shared beliefs, the common cultural vocabulary, that Milton and Dante had drawn on in their major

⁷ These criticisms are shared by early detractors such as Frank and Blackmur. All four of their early reviews of *The Bridge* can be found in *Hart Crane. A Collection of Critical Essays*. ed. Alan Trachtenberg (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1982).

Even later scholars, such as Lewis or Sherman Paul, who praises the poem, see Crane as visionary. Their reading, though, weakens Crane's portrayal of the present moment. For example, Lewis states, "'Vision' is the key word and the key element in *The Bridge*, the poem's beginning and its end...But if the modern artist needed such vision, and in very large measure, it was because the world in which he wrote so abysmally lacked it" (231). Lewis's entire analysis and commentary refers to the poem as Crane's or "the poet's vision." To his credit, Lewis qualifies his definition of vision, noting that "vision of totality" is a better term than "absolute vision."

Others refrain from labeling the poem as visionary, but still believe its plot an imagined journey into the self, a quest for self-understanding. See especially Giles.

poems. There was nothing spiritually sustaining about American capitalism...the fact that Crane believed otherwise was either a delusion on his part or a willful assertion, a wager he was sure to lose" (*Letters*, 220). Bart Keunen accounts for some of the confusion of these early readers, "If a text for instance pictures a peasant community, a rural setting and actions referring to different generations, the reader is forced to think in terms of the idyllic-provincial chronotope. He will call the text 'a family novel' and will tend to anticipate semantic topics typical of that kind of novel."⁸ Thus, these critics most likely focused on one generic aspect of Crane's multi-generic work, thereby mislabeling the whole according to one of the parts.

Crane both exploits and perverts the relationship between genre and worldview. In placing a generic reference anachronistically, Crane perverts the template that readers associate with the genre. For example, the epic reference occurs in *The Bridge's* incarnation in modern time in "Cape Hattaras," which may be the cause of the dismay the poem provoked in readers, and of the readers' consequent dismissal of the poem. It may explain why *The Bridge* was accused of failing at a genre Crane never intended for it.

To be fair, Crane had, more than once, compared his writing of *The Bridge* to Virgil's writing of the *Aeneid*, but this comparison was almost always in reference to the length of time it was taking him to complete *The Bridge*.⁹ Crane himself regarded the poem, not as an epic, but as new kind of poem based on its narrative ambitions. As he wrote to Yvor Winters on Nov. 15, 1926:

Perhaps any modern equivalent of the old epic form should be called by some other name, for certainly, as I see it, the old definition cannot cover the kind of poem I am trying to write except on certain fundamental points...The old narrative form,

⁸ Bart Keunen, "Bakhtin, Genre Formation, and the Cognitive Turn: Chronotopes as Memory Schemata," *CLCWEB: CComparative Literature and Culture: A WWWEB Journal* (June 2000) <http://clcwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb00-2/keunen00.html>

⁹ See Crane's Sept. 12, 1928 letter to Otto Kahn,

then--with its concomitant species of rhetoric, is obviously unequal to the task. It may well be that the link-by-link cumulative effect of the ancients cannot have an equivalent in any modern epic form. However, there are certain basically mythical factors in our Western world which literally cry for embodiment. Oddly, as I see it, they cannot be presented completely (any one of them) in isolated order, but in order to appear in their true, luminous reality must be presented in chronological and organic order, out of which you get a kind of bridge, the quest of which bridge is--nothing less ambitious than the annihilation of time and space, the prime myth of the modern world (OMLMF 428).

A second explanation for the designation of "failure" or "glorious failure," also based on the inability to appreciate the poem's dialogic qualities, is indisputable: Crane is difficult to read. It has long been established that certain high modernists are "difficult;" their poetry or fiction willfully resists interpretation, drawing attention to itself as language and breaking language open to new kinds of meaning.¹⁰ But Crane's difficulty has, until quite recently, been regarded as an impediment to his purpose rather than a medium, trope, or technique. At the same time, the perplexing techniques of the notoriously difficult poets of the high modernist period (Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, for example), have achieved a readership more willing to engage difficulty, to accept it as a trope. Crane's exclusion from this group may be because he claimed not to have been difficult deliberately. He made several efforts to "explain" his work. Unfortunately, his suicide contributed to the early reception of his poetry, as critics, friends, and readers saw the act as an admission of failure--a failure of vision, or, alternatively, the failure of Crane's preparedness for such a project as *The Bridge*.¹¹ Nevertheless, later scholarship, such as Paul Giles's detailed examination of Crane's use of pun, affirms the purposes of Crane's complex and

¹⁰ An excellent treatment of this subject is Andrew Osborn's dissertation, Admit Impediment: The Use of Difficulty in Twentieth-Century American Poetry, University of Texas at Austin, 2001.

¹¹ Virtually every pre-1960 critic or scholar brings up Crane's suicide when discussing *The Bridge*. Brom Weber's treatment, though less condescending than most, still participates in that trend. See his biography of Crane; also, Trachtenberg's collection of critical essays.

multifaceted language.¹²

Crane's work is difficult, not only because of the rare and arcane vocabulary and neologisms, but also, and most tellingly, because Crane's narrative technique failed to provide the 1930's reader a programmatic way of reading the poem. Yet, the poem depended on the collaboration of the reader. It placed the reader in a position of co-creator. Despite frequent citations of Crane's "logic of the metaphor," most criticism since 1967 still persists in "interpreting" and "reinterpreting," "introducing" and "reintroducing" *The Bridge*, as if some magic key will unlock the meaning of the poem, as if the reader were not called upon to construct the poem in tandem with the author.¹³ Other critics, such as Richard Sugg, ignore the reader altogether, positing that the poem's subject is "the act of the creative imagination, that initiates, capsulizes and crowns the poet's growth."¹⁴ The audience's ability to accept Crane's technique depends solely on whether the audience has an active or a passive imagination (21).

In October 1926, Harriet Monroe, editor of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, published Crane's defense of his poem "At Melville's Tomb" against claims of its obscurity. This defense has come to be known as Crane's "logic of the metaphor." In explaining his method (which remained the same in his subsequent poems, including *The Bridge*), Crane highlights the role and importance of the reader as co-creator of the poem:

...Its paradox [the argument over the dynamics of metaphor], of course, is that its apparent illogic operates so logically in conjunction with its context in the poem as to establish its claim to another logic, quite independent of the original definition of the word or phrase or image thus employed. It implies (this inflection of language) a previous or prepared receptivity to its stimulus on the part of the reader. The reader's sensibility simply responds by identifying this

¹² Paul Giles. *Hart Crane: The Contexts of 'The Bridge'*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

¹³ Obvious among them are Samuel Hazo's *Hart Crane. An Introduction and Interpretation* and Warner Berthoff's *Hart Crane. A Re-Introduction*.

¹⁴ Richard P. Sugg, Hart Crane's *The Bridge*. A Description of its Life (University of Alabama Press, 1976) 11.

inflection of experience with some event in his own history of perceptions--or rejects it altogether...If one can't count on some basis in the reader now and then, I don't see how the poet has any chance to get beyond the simplest conceptions of emotion and thought, of sensation and lyrical sequence. If the poet is to be held completely to the already evolved and exploited sequences of imagery and logic--what field of added consciousness and increased perceptions (the actual province of poetry, if not lullabies) can be expected when one has to relatively return to the alphabet every breath or so? In the minds of people who have sensitively read, seen, and experienced a great deal, isn't there a terminology something like short-hand as compared to usual description and dialectics, which the artist ought to be right in trusting as a reasonable connective agent toward fresh concepts, more inclusive evaluations?¹⁵

Thus, he invests the reader with a power similar to that of an author, to discard (to edit) what does not resonate, to enhance what does with personal associations. The poem needs readers to supply the syntactical links, to fill in grammatical gaps. In essence, Crane's argument extends beyond claiming the reader is a co-creator. The reader is asked to become a cable in the Bridge as well, though not necessarily through belief in a particular symbolism in the Brooklyn Bridge (although Crane does stress that his poem is to give a new, unifying myth to America).

This call for the reader's collaboration is different than the creation of a "new language" among certain poets, such as the dadaists, symbolists and futurist poets, who have received Bakhtin's censure. Bakhtin accuses them of failing to find in the existing spoken and literary languages of the world materials from which to create poems that would express a certain direct meaning. That is, the language that is directed to a specific object is inadequate. But in Crane's case, the logic of the metaphor means that language is not object-based but social. His purpose is not to create an object-based dialogue, but an experiential dialogue. Therefore, Crane relinquishes the traditional control over meaning

¹⁵ Originally published in 29.2 of *Poetry*, 1926. Cited from *O My Land, My Friends*, 279-281

that Bakhtin says is central to poetry:

In the poetic image narrowly conceived (in the image-as-trope) all activity—the dynamics of the image-as-word—is completely exhausted by the play between the word (with all its aspects) and the object (in all its aspects). The word plunges into the inexhaustible wealth and contradictory multiplicity of the object itself, with its “virginal,” still “unuttered” nature; therefore it presumes nothing beyond the borders of its own context ... The word forgets that its object has its own history of contradictory acts of verbal recognition, as well as that heteroglossia that is always present in such acts of recognition” (DI, 278).

Instead, readers are called upon to contribute in such a way as to create various narratives. This technique taps into the spirit of individualism that is part of the myth of America. While Crane’s goal is not one of creating “a communal language” that Eskin claims is the unique potential of poetry, rather than the novel, it does allow, at least in theory, for a communal set of myths on which people can find individual interpretations and meanings.

In acknowledging that the reader brings an entire “history of perceptions” to the text that may differ from the author’s, Crane recognizes the creative role of the reader, and he specifically allowed for it in his construction of the poem. The efficacy of the poem in the world, as well as its success on the page, depends on the active participation of the reader. Contemporaneous reader responses show that readers were not accustomed to the role of co-creator at the time of the poem’s printing. As Richard Sugg notes in his study, *Hart Crane’s The Bridge*, “*The Bridge* wasn’t a failure,” but rather, Crane’s America was.

3.

The first perspective of *The Bridge*’s composite chronotope is that of the present moment as the summation of all of history. For John A. Roebling, designer of the Bridge and former student of Hegel, America was the “land of the future, where, in the ages that lie

before us, the burden of the World's History shall reveal itself " now that the landmass of Europe had been developed and its countries had been populated to their full capacities (PH 86).

The rhetoric surrounding Brooklyn Bridge's physical creation, which echoes in Crane's poem, fits into the *zeitgeist* of a general preoccupation with the linking of the globe—a process which Columbus's voyage to America was thought to have begun, and the completion of the Bridge was to have ended. Writing in the 1990s, the German historian Reinhart Koselleck ascribes to Columbus's voyage the fundamental groundwork for the possibility of world communication:

with the discovery of America, and thereby the discovery of the globality of the earth, the Christian Gospel finally achieved *usque ad terminus terrae*. The annexation of space and temporal fulfillment could now converge, in the same manner in which Columbus thought of his voyage as a way of accelerating the promised end of the world. The challenge turned out surprisingly different, consisting instead in the need to integrate within experience a number of alien peoples not foreseen by the account of the Creation...In Kant's words, it is the 'global form' of the earth upon which men 'are not able to infinitely disperse themselves, but must eventually tolerate one another' (188).

Walt Whitman, as early as the 1870s, saw Columbus's voyage as the necessary first physical step towards the goal of spiritual harmony and peace in his poem "Passage to India," which Crane references in *The Bridge*. Whitman implies that the opening of the Suez Canal (1869), the laying of the transatlantic undersea cable (1866), and the joining of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific railroads at Utah to produce the nation's first transcontinental railway (1869) spiritually complete Columbus's voyage. Columbus, the "Genoese," had dreamed of "tying the Eastern to the Western sea."

According to Allen Trachtenberg, Roebling saw the Bridge as completing Columbus's spiritual and physical goal:

Although he did not make the idea explicit, it was apparent that after the Union Pacific Railroad, Brooklyn Bridge would be the final link, the virtual completion of Columbus's efforts to find a passage to India. Joining Long Island to the mainland, it would be the threshold of an east-west system of highways (76).

Certainly, when Roebling proposed the Brooklyn Bridge, it was to be the greatest suspension bridge in the world, uniting civilizations, histories, and continents:

As the great flow of civilization has ever been from East to West, with the same certainty will the greatest commercial emporium be located on this continent, which links the East to the West, and whose mission it is in the history of mankind to blend the most ancient civilization with the most modern. The old and new are to meet on this continent, and this will be effected through the means of commerce.¹⁶

In Crane's poem, too, the Brooklyn Bridge is the final incarnation of Columbus's ship, symbolically completing Columbus's voyage by linking the worlds of the poem (both spatially and temporally):

So to thine Everpresence, beyond time,
Like spears ensanguined of one tolling star
That bleeds infinity—the orphic strings,
Sidereal phalanxes, leap and converge:
—One Song, one Bridge of Fire! Is it Cathay,
Now pity steeps the grass and rainbows ring
The serpent with the eagle in the leaves . . . ?
Whispers antiphonal in azure swing.
("Atlantis")

An image of the completed Brooklyn Bridge begins and ends the poem, circumscribing the

¹⁶ Roebling, cited from Trachtenberg (*Brooklyn Bridge*, 76).

narrative in the present moment. The poem opens with the section "To Brooklyn Bridge" and closes with "Atlantis," for the Bridge has changed into a complete world by the end. "To Brooklyn Bridge" begins, not with an immediate image of the Bridge, but with the image of a seagull's wings "Shedding white rings of tumult" that "forsake our eyes" with "inviolable curve," as "apparitional as sails that cross / Some page of figures to be filed away." The bird serves as the Bridge's envoy, appearing again (as the color white, or as rings, arms, smiles, and so on) in every section of the poem. As do ships; the final line of the poem, in which the Bridge's "curveship" will "lend a myth to God," reinforces the connection between curves and ships as metonyms for the Bridge. Thus, all the action of the poem is circumscribed by the present moment.

Thus, Crane's use of the metonym functions like Stella's crosshatching, allowing the Bridge (the symbol for the 1920s) to be present throughout the entire poem. As Crane wrote to his friend Waldo Frank on Jan 18, 1926, "The bridge in becoming a ship, a world, a woman, a tremendous harp (as it does finally) seems to really have a career!" (OMLMF 226-7). The bridge is most commonly referred to by its shape, which is an arc. The arc becomes the sails of Columbus's ship in "Ave Maria," and sea gull wings in "To Brooklyn Bridge," the smile of the pioneer and squaw women in "Indiana," and a harp (which creates celestial music) in "Atlantis." The harp image works especially well because it refers to the "choiring strings" of the Bridge's cables, allowing power lines, radio waves and train tracks ("The River"), power lines ("Cape Hatteras"), and traffic lights ("Atlantis") to act as metonyms for the harp/bridge as well. These incarnations of the bridge represent particular moments in history: Columbus's voyage, the Native American period, various revolutionary voyages and discoveries, and finally, the completion of the Bridge.

The poem's characters, too, act as bridge figures. The first is Christopher

Columbus, speaking from "here between two worlds, another, harsh, / This third, of water," positioning himself in the water between two landmasses the Bridge will later connect. The mother of "Indiana" also serves as "the word" that bridges two worlds, but the worlds are human and temporal, rather than spatial: that of the "Indian squaw" and the white pioneers (signaling the end of one era and the beginning of "civilization"), and the worlds of the husband (who traversed the body of the continent) and son, Larry (who became a sailor and traversed the world on sea). The mother's description of her land voyage west, "too late, too early, howsoever--" reinforces the idea that she lives in an unsettled, unsettling world between the Bridge's ideological construction (the word of Columbus) and its physical completion. Pocahontas's body is the bridge between the native people of the continent and the white people of New York. In his Sept. 12, 1927 letter to Otto H. Kahn, Crane is quite explicit: "Powhatan's daughter, or Pocahontas, is the mythological nature-symbol chosen to represent the physical body of the continent, or the soil" (345). In "The River" section the physical body of the continent becomes the road across which the hoboes travel: "They lurk across her, knowing her yonder breast / Snow-silvered, sumac-stained or smoky blue--"

In keeping with the perspective of the poem's contemporary moment, the only developing figure in the poem is the Brooklyn Bridge. Since all the other figures are symbols and metonyms for the Bridge, it follows that all speech belongs to the Bridge itself. Indeed, one of the most powerful images of the Bridge is that of an "accolade," a brace or a line used in music to join two or more staves carrying simultaneous instrumental or voice parts. Thus, all speech and silence belongs to the Bridge's "unfractured idiom." The poem's many idioms (colloquial dialects, detergent and toothpaste ads, lofty prayers to the *Madre Maria* and eloquent petitions to Walt Whitman) and sounds (voices of the living and the dead, wordless sighs and half-heard sobs, mechanical noises clothed in fog,

juke boxes, hurdy-gurdies) are transmitted by radio waves, railroad ties (which sing; also, the train-riding hoboes sing, as do the road gangs they meet), by the cipher of the biplanes, the river, the sea, and also by the speech of the poem's characters.

Even actions are turned into speech or sounds: the "bedlamite" that "speeds to thy parapets" to leap into time and eternity wears a ballooning shirt that is "shrill." In response the "caravan" below (the spectators) is speechless, but it lets fall a "jest" or gesture.¹⁷ Responding to the act of annihilation, with a speechless action, has turned into speech (a "jest"). The footprints left by God become swirling chords that sound: "The orbic wake of thy once whirling feet, / Elohim, still I hear thy sounding heel!" The narrator's tongue on the throat of his beloved is "singing." The choiring cables reach from the Ganges to the East River, from Eden to Kitty hawk, from the subway tunnels below the earth to the morning star, transforming all speed and movement into sound, all sound into a "multitudinous Verb."¹⁸

At first glance we might say that Hart Crane *is* guilty of the charge Bakhtin lays against the poet: that the "unity of the language system and the unity (and uniqueness) of the poet's individuality as reflected in his language and speech, which is directly realized in this unity, are indispensable prerequisites of poetic style" (DI 264), that in the image of the Brooklyn Bridge "the dynamics of the image-as-word—is completely exhausted by the play between the word (with all its aspects) and the object (in all its aspects)" (DI 278). "The language of the poet is *his* language, he is utterly immersed in it, inseparable from it, he makes use of each form, each word, each expression according to its unmediated power to assign meaning (as it were, 'without quotation marks'), that is, as a pure and direct

¹⁷ Signifying a crowd with the word "caravan" inscribes the group into the movement of peoples across a land.

¹⁸ A similar pattern occurs when you trace the use of "sight" "eyes" and "vision." Also, words clustering around the concept of sleep and wakefulness seem to parallel those clustering around sight and blindness.

expression of his own intention” (DI 285), that “The language of the poetic genre is a unitary and singular Ptolemaic world outside of which nothing else exists and nothing else is needed” (286), that “In poetry, even discourse about doubts must be cast in a discourse that cannot be doubted” (286), that *The Bridge* is written in “poetic language,” a “language of the gods,” a “priestly language of poetry” and so forth (DI 287).

There is one narrative perspective that speaks through the mouths of the dead and of inanimate objects in the manner of an energetic ventriloquist. There are few living character in the entire poem, and even they are portrayed as only half alive: the hobo, lost on a run-away train that leads to another century seem, at the end, to be drowning in the river of time. The Genoese washer woman is about to descend into the “Hades” of the subway, and the drunken sailor’s eyes look as if they had already drowned and been buried at sea.

There is much evidence that the language of the poem is meant to be some divine speech, unspeakable in human language, that is able to “lend a myth to God;” it is the “incognizable Word/ Of Eden and the enchained Sepulchre.” After the Bridge was completed, its creation inspired comparisons with that of The Almighty. Councilman Abram S. Hewitt said, at the opening ceremonies, May 24, 1883,

When we turn to the graceful structure at whose portal we stand, and when the airy outline of its curves of beauty, pendent between massive towers suggestive of art alone, is contrasted with the over-reaching vault of heaven above and the ever-moving flood of waters beneath, we are irresistibly moved to exclaim, 'What hath *man* wrought!'...But the Bridge is more than an embodiment of the scientific knowledge of physical laws. It is equally a monument to the moral qualities of the human soul. It could never have been built by mere knowledge alone [italics in original].¹⁹

This phrase, among others surrounding the creation of the Brooklyn Bridge, is echoed in the poem, embraced by a pair of parentheses, little arches themselves: "(How could mere toil align thy choiring strings!)"

¹⁹ Steinman, 413.

Although Crane's apparent monologism is appropriate for the creation of "myth of America" "in our time," one could also make the case that Crane is "only pretending" to speak monologically, as Eskin points out poets sometimes do. Crane sometimes expressed doubts about the worthiness of the project, not because the poem itself was flawed, but because the present was not worthy of its past:

Emotionally I should like to write the bridge; intellectually judged the whole theme and project seems more and more absurd. A fear of personal impotence in this matter wouldn't affect me half so much as the convictions that arise from other sources...I had what I thought were authentic materials that would have been a pleasurable-agony of wrestling, eventuating not in perfection--at least being worthy of the most supreme efforts I could muster. These 'materials' were valid to me to the extent that I presumed them to be (articulate or not) at least organic and active factors in the experience and perceptions of our common race, time and belief. The very idea of a bridge, of course, is a form peculiarly dependant on such emotional convictions. It is an act of faith besides being a communication. The symbols of reality necessary to articulate the span--may not exist where you expected them, however. By which I mean that however great their subjective significance to me is concerned...but I am only evading a recognition and playing Don Quixote in an immorally conscious way. The form of my poem rises out of a past that so overwhelms the present with its worth and vision that I'm at a loss to explain my delusion that there exist any real links between that past and future worthy of it. The 'destiny' is long since completed, perhaps the little last section of my poem is a hangover echo of it--but it hangs suspended somewhere in ether like an Absalom by his hair. The bridge as a symbol today has no significance beyond an economical approach to shorter hours, quicker lunches, behaviorism and toothpicks (Letter to To Waldo Frank, Isle of Pines, Cuba, June 20, 1926, OMLMF 258-9).

However, instead of suppressing this doubt for the purposes of presenting a seamless monologue, Crane works subversively, allowing the commercialism of the present to speak for itself in its own voice. Thus, he "reveals the limits" of his own construction of the

myth of America, and of the present moment “as inadequate, imposed, or arbitrary” (DI xxix). He does this through genres that Bakhtin has called “lower poetic,” and therefore, capable of limited types of heteroglossia—irony and parody (DI 287).

Normally, readers have no trouble deciding for themselves that the women of "Virginia" and "Winter Garden" are burlesque doubles for the Virgin Mary or the virginal body of Pocahontas. Critics frequently see these displacements as rhetorical statements about the fallen nature of humanity in the modernist period, thereby giving credence to or accepting the idea that Crane wrote "Ave Maria" and "The Dance" as sentimental harkenings back to a time of purity and goodness. Comparing the punning techniques of "The Dance" to those of John Brougham's 1855 burlesque *Po-Ca-Hon-Tas; or, The Gentle Savage*, Giles makes a convincing argument that Crane's poem, rather than accepting or promoting a sentimental view of America's native past, "punningly refurbishes Pocahontas as a capitalist production of the 1920s" (58). Drawing on his work, I will show how Crane employs elements from the burlesque in both "The Dance" and "Ave Maria," which allows him to portray, at once, a mythical world through the sentimental lens of his time, and to draw attention to his lens.

Noting that comic Indian songs were very fashionable at the time, Giles produces a page of Crane's own titles, meant for "a comic opera about Indians":

Pipe down, Pocohontas (name of a comedy)
I'd like to Warm Your Wampum
Who Pokes your Hontas when I'm Gone
Wig Wagging in a Wigwam ("for two")
Who put the tea in Tepee
Tea in a Tepee

An Esquimaux Opera

I'm Happy in your happy Hunting Ground
Tommy-Hawk Tommy
I've got those Gichigume Blues (dance and song)

Naughty Nikomis (theme-song)
A Piece of your Peacepipe (waltz)
Katzenjammer-Saskatchewan (clog-dance)
Siskiyou-Sue (character-villain)
Sitting Bull Blues
Rain-in-the-face Rag (hit song)
Who Peaks your Pike while I Poke²⁰

One should further keep in mind that Crane chose the name "Maquokeeta" for his chieftain, not for any particular symbolic reason, but because of a New York taxi cab driver. As he wrote to Yvor Winters on January 19, 1927: "It's a minor matter, but I'm anxious to know if there is an Indian philology or symbolism concerned in the name 'Maquokeeta.' I chose the name at random, merely from the hearsay of a NY taxi driver who was obviously of Indian extraction (and a splendid fire-drinker by the way) who said that his Indian name was 'Maquokeeta.'" He added on March 27: "I think that the Indian chieftain's name is all the better for not being particularly definite--especially as Pocahontas had a thousand Indian lovers for the one white marriage license to the English planter. I shall continue to depend on taxi drivers for all matters of folklore."

Taking Brougham's technique of punning as an example of what is possible, Giles locates and decodes puns throughout "The Dance" to show that, "Crane was concerned to rework the Indian legend in terms of the clichés of his own era; and while Crane's purpose--unlike Brougham's--was not straightforwardly comic, the burlesque element within 'The Dance' is crucial to its meaning." He finds the same punning and burlesque tendency in "Ave Maria," and several other sections, noting, "Crane's poem conjures up the sentimental emotions inherent in myth while at the same time ironizing those sentiments" (65).

"The Dance" section of *The Bridge* has often proved troubling for readers, for

²⁰ Lohf, *Literary Manuscripts of Hart Crane*, cited from Giles, 60.

whom the visionary effects (there is even smoke and fire) seem to tax modern credulity. The saccharine sentimentality, at times, seems out of sync with a modern sensibility. But what fills the air with smoke, what rumbles in the clouds above Maquoqueeta's back (turbines), is not the world of the past, but that of the present: commerce, capital, and grandiose pretensions of infinite possibility. Crane was always very clear that he was presenting the past in terms of the present, and not the other way around. As he wrote to Otto Kahn of September 12, 1927:

It seemed altogether ineffective, from the poetic standpoint, to approach this material from the purely chronological historic angle--beginning with, say the landing of *The Mayflower*, continuing with a resume of the Revolution through the conquest of the West, etc. One can get that viewpoint in any history primer. What I am after is an assimilation of this experience, a more organic panorama, showing the continuous and living evidence of the past in the inmost vital substance of the present.

Giles believes the line "Lie to us--dance us back that tribal morn!" is an explicit admittance that "the images we are presented with there are fraudulently manufactured." Perhaps at times over eager, Giles finds evidence for Crane's commentary on the self-consciously commercial interest the 1920s took in the Pocahontus myth in the lines

There was a bed of leaves, and broken play;
There was a veil upon you, Pocahontas, bridge--
O Princess whose brown lap was virgin May;
And bridal flanks and eyes hid tawny pride.

He reads "a veil" as a pun on "avail," which means "profit; return; proceeds." And he points out that "taw," in the word "tawny" is American slang for "enough money to finance an enterprise." He further notes in the lines, "Now lie incorrigibly what years between..." that "year" is slang for "a banknote; a dollar," as is the "eagle" that appears in

Te Deum laudamus

O Thou Hand of Fire

4.

Scholars such as Sister M. Bernetta Quinn and L.S. Dembo, who read *The Bridge* as a predominantly personal vision in the romantic literary style, or as a predominantly psychological drama, tend to view “The Tunnel” as a “descent of consciousness leading to another self-encounter” (R.W. B. Lewis) affirm the monologism of the poem while accounting for the remarkably distinct spatial and temporal dimensions of this section. Although Giles believes that “despite his ardent vows to combat what he regarded as the pessimism of Eliot and his followers...taken in isolation, the poem [“The Tunnel”] serves as an affirmation of Eliot’s pessimism, but *the Bridge* as a whole is an affirmation of experience that differs from the outlook of Eliot” (143), he assumes that every word or point of view must be that of the poet. If the poem is pessimistic in places and optimistic in others, the logic goes, then it is because the poet wavers through the course of the poem. Another alternative would be to read these shifts in mood, formal style, vocabulary and syntax, and spatial and temporal dimensions as shifts in chronotopic perspective. Though it becomes more obvious in “Cape Hattaras,” which I will discuss below, I will argue that here the chronotopic perspective of the 1920s as the culminating moment of history is thrown into relief by the emergence of the perspective of what Ouspensky calls “completed time,” or the full circle of which the present moment is only an incomplete arc.

Crane’s contemporary moment is not insignificant, either to the poem as a whole or to the character and world of the Brooklyn Bridge. Indeed, the Bridge itself takes

shape in it, is built of it. As Giles has persuasively demonstrated, even the most idealistic characteristics of the Bridge as a symbol of transcendence are firmly grounded in, and never escape from, the capitalistic underpinnings that bring it into being.²² However, Crane is also willing to demonstrate the limits of the contemporary moment, and to undermine its dominance in the poem and, correspondingly, America's place in history and in the world. The recognition that the Brooklyn Bridge, though a masterpiece of the late nineteenth century, is, in the end, only a "phrase in an incomplete sentence," is achieved through the second component of the composite chronotope. This component is the perspective of 1920s New York as one of many "labyrinthine mouths of history." It is most evident in "Cutty Sark," "The Tunnel" and "Cape Hatteras" sections of the poem, in which time is no longer an endless choring string that connects utterances throughout history, but is, instead, a fragmented moment. Space is no longer the fluid abstract body in which Columbus's voyage can be completed by the building of the Suez Canal, the underwater transatlantic cable, the union of the railroads, and the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge. Instead, it too is fragmented and confining.

If the sailor in "Cutty Sark" is the son from "Indiana," he has left the land, presumably, because his parents have already depleted his frontiers by traveling to California, the edge of the continent. His inability to tell time seems to be the result of his confrontation with the Arctic, which, based on a close reading of the word "white," Lewis, among others, believes to be a version of the Bridge, or, at least, of infinity. It is probably safe to call it the ultimate frontier, whatever else it is.

I'm not much good at time any more keep
weakeyed watches sometimes snooze--
...A whaler once--
I ought to keep time and get over it--I'm a
Democrat--I know what time it is--No

²² See Giles's chapter "Capitalism," pp. 29-42.

I don't want to know what time it is--that
damned white Arctic killed my time..."

Thus, the sailor is unfit for human company and unfit for life on land; he is out of sync with the world, unable to board the ship on time, unable even to cross the street (a "wharf truck nearly ran him down" once he left the bar). This section of the poem suggests that confrontation with "completed time" destroys the sailor's ability to belong to a particular rhythmic and spatially circumscribed world.

The spatial and temporal dimensions of this chronotopic perspective are most fragmented and confined in "The Tunnel," which depicts a subway ride, and "Cape Hatteras."²³ In the former, the expanding, flowing sense of time and space throughout the rest of the poem no longer spirals out from the Brooklyn Bridge; instead, it is confined in the geometric figures of the streets overhead, such as "Times Square." The voyage of Columbus becomes closed as well, at "Columbus Circle."

Performances, assortments, résumés--
Up Times Square to Columbus Circle lights
Channel the congresses, nightly sessions,
Refractions of the thousand theatres, faces—
Mysterious kitchens. . . You shall search them all.

Syntactically, the complete (if unwieldy) sentences of the rest of the poem, as well as their long meters, are here fragmented.

Nearly the entire section is either rendered in the style of Eliot, who, for Crane, is the most eloquent spokesperson of the period, even if he was an extreme representative of despair and pessimism, or it paraphrases William Carlos Williams and Edgar Alan Poe (instead of Walt Whitman, the clear influence throughout most of the rest of the poem). Crane's opinion of T.S. Eliot's poetic project completely warrants his parody of *The*

²³ R. W. B. Lewis, *The Poetry of Hart Crane. A Critical Study* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1967); Sister M. Bernetta Quinn, *The Metamorphic Tradition in Modern Poetry* (New Brunswick, 1955); L.S. Dembo, *Hart Crane's Sanskrit Charge: A Study of *The Bridge** (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1960)

Love Song of T. Alfred Prufrock, The Wasteland, and The Hollow Men in “The Tunnel,” for Eliot’s diagnosis of his contemporary moment as one of fragmentation and incoherence is based on an idealization of the culturally unified period of European history under the Holy Roman Empire.²⁴ In fact, operational at this point in history were temporal “concepts in which real time is devalued and dissolved in extratemporal categories” (DI 206), since history was conceived as the Creation of the World, the Fall from Grace, the First Expulsion, Redemption, the Second Exile, the Final Judgment (DI 205-6). As I pointed out earlier, Ouspensky’s “completed time” also results in the devaluation of real time and space, though for secular reasons.

In a letter to Gorham Munson, Crane expresses both admiration for and caution towards Eliot:

There is no one writing in English who can command so much respect, to my mind, as Eliot. However, I take Eliot as a point of departure toward an almost complete reverse of direction. His pessimism is amply justified, in his own case. But I would apply as much of his erudition and technique as I can absorb and assemble toward a more positive...goal...After this perfection of death—nothing is possible in motion but a resurrection of some kind.²⁵

Harvey Gross and Robert McDowell’s criticism of Crane’s attempt to mimic Eliot’s prosody in “Cape Hatteras” suggests that the pessimism and fragmentation of “Cape Hatteras” and “The Tunnel” is not the poet’s own personal point of view:

As long as Crane used, or tried to use, Eliot’s rhythms, he was expressing feelings inimical to his own temperament. He could not adapt Eliot’s loosened metric to what he had to say. His view of the world did not include Eliot’s particular horror and despair...his true poetic métier was the apostrophe, the classic form of lyric celebration. His best works are set pieces: ‘Proem: To Brookln Bridge,’ the

²⁴ See Eliot’s essays “Religion and Literature,” and “Dante.”

²⁵ Letter to Gorham Munson, January 5, 1923.

‘Voyages,’ and the magnificent conclusion to ‘The River.’²⁶

Despite the very real esteem in which Crane held Eliot’s style, it is difficult to imagine lines like “You shall search them all” or

Then let you reach your hat
And go,
As usual, let you—also
Walking down—exclaim
To twelve upward leaving
A subscription praise
For what time slays

or

“What do you want? getting weak on the links?
Fundaddle daddy don’t ask for change—IS THIS
FOURTEENTH? it’s half past six she said—if

as earnest attempts to mimic a master of prosody. Of course, Eliot’s was not the only voice to appear in these sections. William Carlos Williams’s voice also appears in the unusual little line

if
you don’t like my gate why did you
swing on it, why *didja*
swing on it
anyhow—

In addition, Crane expressed delight that Williams’s treatment of Poe in *In the American Grain* was so close, psychologically, to his own in “The Tunnel”²⁷:

And why do I often meet your visage here,
Your eyes like agate lanterns—on and on
Below the toothpaste and the dandruff ads?
—And did their riding eyes right through your side,
And did their eyes like unwashed platters ride?
And Death, aloft,—gigantically down
Probing through you—toward me, O evermore!

²⁶ Harvey Gross and Robert McDowell, *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry*, second edition (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1996) 233.

²⁷ Letter to Yvor Winters, Patterson, NY April 29, 1927. OMLMF 289-90.

And when they dragged your retching flesh,
Your trembling hands that night through Baltimore—
That last night on the ballot rounds, did you
Shaking, did you deny the ticket, Poe?

Thus, while Eliot's perspective (or at least a parody of it) is plentiful here, it is not the only other voice. There is no reason to believe that any of these voices are the poet's own unitary voice or perspective.

In the absence of a full, organic context, the contents of modern life are presented as fragmentary refractions, momentary glimpses. Everything is able and fit to be summarized in "tabloid crime-sheets" one reads in bed. The isolation of the individual is evident in the narrator's striving to "Be minimum, then, to swim the hiving swarms" of those exiting the subway, as he attempts to enter. The harmonious multiplicity of sound and motion is also minimized to a single movement and sound:

And so
of cities you bespeak
subways, rivered under streets
and rivers. . . In the car
the overtone of motion
underground, the monotone
of motion is the sound
of other faces, also underground--²⁸

The smiling secretary of "Virginia," obviously borrowed from Eliot's "The Fire Sermon," who has previously kept her boss at a distance with cordiality has now fallen victim to the mechanical functioning of the office, which has taken over personal relationships. Even the boss's sexual demands have been phrased in consumer and business terms:

"But I want service in this office SERVICE
I said--after
the show she cried a little afterwards but--"

²⁸ Compare the line and rhythm to the description of the river in Eliot's "The Fire Sermon" from *The Wasteland*.

Surrounding this fragmentation is the acoustic image of the Bridge above and the water, over which the Bridge arcs, highlighting the dissonance of the scene:

--A sound of waters bending astride the sky
Unceasing with some Word that will not die . . . !

The description of modernist time in "Cape Hatteras," though of broader scope, is not less a circumscribed, restrictive place. Here time and space move together to form tempo that restricts human movement as in the Charlie Chaplin scene or in Halpern's "Unzer Erd":

The nasal whine of power whips a new universe . . .
Where spouting pillars spoor the evening sky,
Under the looming stacks of the gigantic power house
Stars prick the eyes with sharp ammoniac proverbs,
New verities, new inklings in the velvet hummed
Of dynamos, where hearing's leash is strummed. . .
Power's script,--wound, bobbin-bound, refined--
Is stropped to the slap of belts on booming spools, spurred
Into the bulging bouillon, harnessed jelly of the stars.
Towards what? The forked crash of split thunder parts
Our hearing momentwise, but fast in whirling armatures,
As bright as frogs' eyes giggling in the girth
Of steely gizzards--axle-bound, confined
In coiled precision, bunched in mutual glee
The bearings glint,--O murmurless and shined
In oilrinsed circles of blind ecstasy!

Unpacking this excerpt in order to compare recurring images to their original appearance, from the perspective of the present moment as a culmination of history, we see that, from the perspective of completed time, the technological apex of the era is really quite small and circumscribed. Power's script, in contradistinction to the "script" that has previously flowed throughout the poem in sounds, both audible and inaudible—music, singing,

speech, words, and voices, both animate and inanimate—is "wound, bobbin-bound." It is not going anywhere. Instead of expanding out into the universe, it is "stropped to the slap of belts on booming spools." The question—"Towards what?"—a rhetorical one, is meant to highlight the difference between circumscribed power, and power that extends throughout the greater universe. The reader notes the difference between a spool and a bridge--both of which release string (or cable) and "lines." But in the case of the Bridge, the lines are not wound--they extend, joining all they touch, but never returning. The spool, on the other hand, does not extend itself. It winds around and around the same core. Likewise, the word "still" (which denotes endurance) has become "momentwise;" the "arms" of the "Harbor Dawn" section are here "armatures;" giggling frogs eyes are giggling inside of gizzards, having been consumed. The axel-dance of "The Dance" section has become an axel, which constricts movement and harnesses force. The rainbows, which have always served as envoys of the bridge, have been reduced to "oilrinsed circles," and the murmurous arms of lovers become "murmurless bearings."

The plot of "Cape Hattaras" is a battle between the biplane and the sky (or between the present moment and completed time). The former, having been conceived as a whine and pulse in a cloud over "The Dance" section, had been growing and gathering strength and nourishment throughout subsequent sections of the poem, expanding its girth across the continent, displacing settlers and wanderers alike, and spreading its wires, roads, and tunnels through the body of America. The tragic flaw of the biplanes is that, like Milton's Lucifer, they have believed themselves to be greater than they are.²⁹

The battle scene is the only rebellion in the poem against the persuasion of infinity. The biplanes, flown by the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, are introduced by the narrator-announcer praising their skill and heroic deeds: "What ciphers

²⁹ For an alternative reading, see Giles, who views this section as a critique of the first World War, 36-42.

historical time. Rather, it merely deprives any historical perspective of its naiveté, as Bakhtin put it.

5.

I have described the composite chronotope of *The Bridge* with regard to the dual perspective of Stella's painting, and his painterly techniques, and I have employed metaphors of construction borrowing from the physical aspects of Brooklyn Bridge. But there is one more angle with which I would like to sum up, because it is applicable, not only to *The Bridge*, but also to Moyshe-Leyb Halpern's poem *In Nyu-York*, a chronicle of a Yiddish-speaking immigrant experience in the city, which I discuss in the next chapter. In the second full sentence of "To Brooklyn Bridge," Crane has already hinted at one very good way of reading the entire poem. It is only a suggestion, prefaced with "I think...":

I think of cinemas, panoramic sleights
With multitudes bent toward some flashing scene
Never disclosed, but hastened to again,
Foretold to other eyes on the same screen;

And Thee, across the harbor, silver-paced
As though the sun took step of thee, yet left
Some motion ever unspent in thy stride,—
Implicitly thy freedom staying thee!

What Crane has given us throughout the entire poem is what he has promised here, a shift between "some flashing scene" and the "unspent motion of the sun" that is the Brooklyn Bridge. What Stella has described as the "phrase in an unfinished sentence" is comparable to that "never disclosed" scene, only a part of an entire movie—a close up, if you will.

"There are several characteristics of the close-up as contrasted with the rest of the pictures in the film" the social historian Adams tells us in his essay, "Wanted: Perspective." "For

one thing, there is discontinuity, the interrupting of the story while we dwell on a minor aspect of the whole. There is also an absence of all background, the setting vanishing completely, making the immediate act which we witness unrelated. There is also excessive concentration and exaggeration.”³⁰

What is for Crane a “discontinuity” or an “absence of all background, the setting vanishing completely,” which occurs when the self-importance of the 1920s is contrasted with completed time, is intensified in the immigrant experience, in which the physical setting of a lived life truly and physically vanishes. The “excessive concentration and exaggeration” is easy to mock, as Crane does in “Cape Hatteras,” and Halpern does throughout the first section of his long poem. However, it is no less real a presence in and characteristic of the modernist chronotope, for all its embarrassing sentimental weight. Perhaps this, as much as anything, is what helps define modernist poetry as “nostalgic” for a past that may never have existed in Halpern, or for a substitute for the past in the promise of completed time in some distant future for Crane. It is the contrast between the two, though, which creates the multiple chronotopic perspectives that characterize the poems I have collected here and in the following chapters.

³⁰ The Tempo of Modern Life, 325.

Chapter 3

Moyshe-Leyb Halpern's *In Nyu-York*

Now I will examine the chronotope of 1920s New York in terms of non-standard-English language poems whose narrators are positioned at least linguistically, if not socially (though they are that, too), on the “margins” (Kronfeld) or as “outsiders”(Bakhtin). Accordingly this chapter introduces the concept of outsideness—necessary in maintaining an open field of interaction among the various perspectives the poems collected in this study represent. Specifically, I will examine how Halpern’s authorial/narrative positioning of himself as an outsider through his use of prosody, allows him, through parody, to open up a neutral, dialogic space in which disparate cultures can apprehend and come to terms with one another. Although *In Nyu-York* contains many colliding worldviews, I will focus on those representing aspects of the Polish *shtetl*, New York’s Lower East Side, and New York in general.

In 1908, at the age of twenty-three, Moyshe-Leyb Halpern arrived in New York from Zlochev, Galicia, an ethnically Polish region under the political stewardship of the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1795 to 1918, after which time Poland regained its national sovereignty. Soon after he arrived, Halpern began writing and publishing poems, some of which were revised, reordered, and included among the ninety-five titles that make up the long, narrative poem, *In Nyu-York* (published 1919). The poem itself is broken into five parts, "Our Garden," "In Der Fremd," "Blond and Blue," "Evening," and "A Night." Each section is written from a different physical perspective: New York, the Atlantic Ocean, Poland, and a strange dream world that travels the course of Jewish history and mythology,

which Chana Kronfeld calls “a mythopoetic middle east.”¹ Each perspective carries within it a clash of worldviews, each with its own version of history and temporality: New York versus an idealized Polish *shtetl*, the Jewish world versus the Gentile world of Poland, and the *Haskalah* versus the traditional religious community. The whole process is occasioned by the narrator's entrance into “the Golden Land.” In this chapter, I will only consider the first two sections of the poem, “Unzer Gorten” [Our Garden” and “In Der Fremd” [In a Foreign Land], since my concern here is Halpern’s depiction of the time-space of New York.

To employ the metaphor from Crane with which I ended the last chapter, that of the movie close-up—characterized by discontinuity, the interrupting of the story while we dwell on a minor aspect of the whole—we could say that the structure of *In Nyu-York* is analogous to a compilation of close-ups. The significance of each close-up, and its relation to the greater narrative, as well as its relation to the other close-ups depends on how one reads the poem. Different readings offer varying degrees of dialogic (and, consequently, chronotopic) richness.

For example, in “Structuring the World View in Halpern's *In New York*,” Seth Wolitz perceives an “overarching unity based on a linear temporal flow” on three levels: natural time in the cycle of a 24-hour period (or a day in the life of a foreigner), “the life of a *Poète Maudit* from childhood to death” and the “general epic repetition of the ejection from the Garden of Eden into the exile of Israel.”² The levels unite in “the form of an epic journey, which is consciously divided into five sections like a neo-classical tragedy which observes the unities of time, place, and action” (63). In this construction, the close-ups belong to three simultaneous, linear narratives, featuring three different perspectives of the

¹ Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1996) 168.

² Seth L. Wolitz, “Structuring the World View in Halpern's *In New York*,” *Modern Jewish Studies Annual-Yiddish*, 3.1 (Fall 1977) 62-3.

same person. Both Kathryn Hellerstein and Kronfeld challenge Wolitz's argument for linear time, positing instead simultaneity, which Hellerstein believes is characteristic of the "episodic narrative" of the poem. "For Halpern," she claims "time, narrative, and hope do not follow linear trajectories. They circle back on themselves in an endless, cyclical continuum. The voice of one modern man repeats the story of the external, restless anxiety of the Jewish people in exile."³ Thus, Hellerstein sees the poem as a cycle of disillusionment with the redeeming movements of the time: the messianic movement, the Zionist movement, socialism, and immigration to "the Golden Land" (540). Whereas Wolitz distinguishes levels of time according to unit (day, individual life, life of the Jewish people), Hellerstein recognizes one type of circular, or cyclical, time that is manifest on three different levels, as the individual story and the story of a people speak to and through one another, over and over again. This reading, despite Hellerstein's stress on simultaneity, suggests a preoccupation with eschatology—whether religious or secular—that indicates a "sameness" of time. In this scheme, each close-up would feature various individuals at different points in a single, communal story.

Kronfeld questions the significance of the conclusions Wolitz draws about the organization of time in the poem: "Instead you have a mixed-up simultaneity on all three levels, and a melange of voices and masks and a fragmented iterability of all points of view."⁴ Kronfeld's reading offers the richest chronotopic variance, because she recognizes that the simultaneity of time has something to do with the fact the speaker is split between his New York bedroom and a "mythopoetic middle east" (168), and that each kind of space contains within it a distinct kind of time. I would quibble that the New York scenes are not

³ Kathryn Ann Hellerstein, "Moyshe Leyb Halpern's 'In New York': A Modern Yiddish Verse Narrative." diss. Stanford U, 1980. These insights about the historical and social movements have proved helpful in reading the poem in its context. All of these movements, as they are depicted in the poem, have certainly failed, but I am struck by the absence of any initial "illusion" through which the speaker, in encountering a reality, is disappointed.

⁴ Chana Kronfeld. *On the Margins of Modernity*, 167.

limited to a bedroom, and I would add two more spatial positions from among which the narrator is split: Poland (both an idealized Poland and a denigrated Poland), and the Atlantic Ocean (the unnamed beloved, which appears as the addressee of a series of love poems in section three, is often seen as an allegory for Poland). In this structure, the narrative action consists only of close-ups, united by the simultaneous moment, not by character, theme, kind of time operative in a particular space, or point of view.

In Kronfeld's reading of the poem, each narrative scene is more or less self-contained, as all that joins them is the simultaneity of the moment in which they occur. Because of their spatial placement and the perception of time operative in that space, each represents a different worldview. As I pointed out in the first chapter, this technique is not a singular occurrence in modernist poetry, but is fairly representative. For example, the work of Marianne Moore, T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Langston Hughes, Jean Toomer, and others, depends upon multiple voices and points of view, not as objects or foils, but often in lieu of a dominant narrator or narrative intention in the same manner as, say, a novel by William Faulkner. But in Halpern's case, the technique carries special significance because the spatial and temporal dislocations are caused by the narrator's physical displacement from his home and language; therefore, his position as a foreigner or outsider in his adopted society is both real and rhetorical. Moyshe-Leyb, the narrator, as we shall see further on, makes maximum use of his physical and psychological outsider status to create a multifaceted character capable of devastating irony, parody, and sincerity.

The outsider status of the poem's narrator(s) is the modernist analogue to Bakhtin's rogue/clown/fool character, who inhabits the intervallic chronotope (which has a modernist analogue in the cinematic close-up). The intervallic chronotope of the rogue is a discrete time-space that "interrupts and casts light upon the chronotope of the main narrative" (CP 404). Emerson and Morson note that most of the time, the intervallic chronotope is one of theatricality, "of a kind of play separated from but related to the life in which it is an

interval” (CP 404). Unlike the pre-modernist narratives in which Bakhtin discerns this chronotope (*Don Quixote*, *Tristram Shandy*) it is very difficult to ascertain which chronotope is the dominant one, that is, which one is the dominant relationship among all of the variations of time-space units. However it is in *Vanity Fair*, published 1847-8, that Bakhtin finds a “particularly lucid” example of the intervallic chronotope (DI 166), and tellingly, this work is subtitled “A Novel Without a Hero.” Whether the subtitle is meant to indicate an unfortunate lack of personal attributes that one would expect of a hero, or a multiplicity of competing perspectives, the effect is largely the same: the lack of a reliable narrative perspective. In Halpern’s poem, it is possible to see the time-space of *In Nyu-York* as consisting solely of intervals.

The significance of the intervallic chronotope is that it introduces a greater level of complexity and “multi-layeredness” into the narrative in the transformation of its inhabitants, the rogue, clown or fool, who introduce what Bakhtin calls “prosaic allegorization,” a version of which David Roskies breaks down into three categories of parody, “Sanctioned Parody,” “Militant Parody,” and “Sanctified Parody.”⁵ Whereas, for Roskies, who is working with the texts of Sholem Aleichem, Peretz and Isaac Bashevis Singer that were set in the “Old World,” parody opened up “a space that now exists only in the imagination” (122), Halpern, in whose work there is a fluid movement between worlds, uses parody to work for “self-emancipation” in New York. As a correlate to Crane’s chronotopic perspective of “the labyrinthine mouths of history,” Halpern’s parody establishes America firmly in an undistinguished position in the history of the world. In Halpern, America can provide heartbreak and disappointment, can be made fun of,

⁵ David G. Roskies, “Major Trends in Yiddish Parody,” *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 94.1 (Winter 2004) 112. Roskies does not associate his parody with Bakhtin’s prosaic allegorization, but they are analogous for reasons I will explain later in this chapter. Bakhtin indicates that this concept is in need of further study, as the metamorphoses of the rogue, clown and fool are so numerous, individualized, and subtle that no one descriptive category can do justice to them.

and can be subordinated into a place no more or no less important than any other place in the poem.

The dialogic potential of parody goes hand in hand with Bakhtin's beliefs about "outsiderness," the term for a person "*located outside* the object of his or her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture" in his 1970 "Response to a Question from the *Novyi mir* Editorial Staff:"⁶

In the realm of culture, outsiderness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of *another* culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly (but not maximally fully, because there will be cultures that see and understand even more). A meaning only reveals its depths once it has encountered and come into contact with another, foreign meaning: they engage in a kind of dialogue, which surmounts the closedness and one-sidedness of these particular meanings, these cultures. We raise new questions for a foreign culture, ones that it did not raise itself; we seek answers to our own questions in it; and the foreign culture responds to use by revealing to us its new aspects and new semantic depths...Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched (SG 7).

This essay, written over forty years after the Chronotope essay, is a response to the request to evaluate the current state of literary scholarship; thus, it concerns the chronotope of the reader, rather than the narrative chronotopes. Because of what Erdinast-Vulcan calls Bakhtin's consistent "strategy of slippage from the semiotic into the somatic realm, the interchangeability of 'hero-author' and 'self-other,'" first noticeable in the 1920-23 essay "Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,"⁷ it is usually possible to transfer principles of dialogism between the realm of "real life" and the realm of literature. She calls it "the

⁶ Mikhail Bakhtin "Response to a Question from the *Novyi mir* Editorial Staff," *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays* (1986) trans. Vern W. McGee, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas P, 1996) 7.

⁷ Daphna Erdinast-Vulcan, "Borderlines and Contraband: Bakhtin and the Question of the Subject," *Poetics Today* 18.2 (Summer, 1997) 251.

pervasive interchangeability of ‘hero-author’ and ‘self-other’; the smooth transition from the realm of art (the construct, the artifice, that which is made up) to the realm of immediate human reality” (255). In making a similar leap between these categories, Barbara Pittman has noticed the correspondence between Bakhtin’s observations about outsideness in cultural/literary studies and in his work on genre and chronotope, specifically pairing what Bakhtin seems to be describing as an “ideal reader,” who is also an ideal student of culture, with the figure of the trickster in the picaresque novel.⁸ But here I will only paint broad strokes.

The figures of the rogue, clown and fool are so powerful because they approach all the worlds in narrative literature as outsiders. In pretending not to understand, they are able to engage in what Bakhtin later (and in a different context) calls “creative understanding:”

In the struggle against conventions, and against the inadequacy of all available life-slots to fit an authentic human being, these masks [of the rogue, clown and fool] take on an extraordinary significance. They grant the right *not* to understand, the right to confuse, to tease, to hyperbolize life; the right to parody others while talking, the right not to be taken literally, not ‘to be oneself’; the right to live a life in the chronotope of theatrical space, the right to act life as a comedy and to treat others as actors, the right to rip off masks, the right to rage at others with a primeval (almost culturic) rage—and finally, the right to betray to the public a personal life, down to its most private and prurient little secrets (DI 163).

After these figures are introduced as major protagonists, as they are in Halpern’s poem, they take on the point of view of the author (DI 163), which, as Erdinast-Vulcan reminds us, is not a biological figure, but a “principle of seeing,” (259). One notes immediately the slippage between author and narrator in this poem: the protagonist is often called “Moyshe-Leyb” and is spoken about in the third person. However, Halpern’s poem transforms the role of the “rogue/clown/fool” yet again, as these figures are not simply outsiders in one particular

⁸ Barbara L. Pittman, “Cross-Cultural Reading and Generic Transformations: The Chronotope of the Road in Erdrich’s *Love Medicine*,” *American Literature* 67.4 (Dec., 1995) 777-792.

context. The reason for the lack of a dominant perspective in the entire poem is precisely that the protagonists are never at home in any context

Halpern embraces all the rights for his protagonists that Bakhtin grants the rogue/clown/fool figure by establishing narrative outsidership in every context. In this chapter, I develop only two examples. I will show how Halpern positions his protagonist as an outsider in New York, thereby describing the time-space of New York negatively (by what it is not) through formalistic strategies, such as meter and rhyme. I will draw on my own translations, which were created specifically to highlight Halpern's prosody. Next, I will show how the protagonist (this time as the first-person narrator), positions himself as an outsider in the *shtetl* through simple declamation. Here I will use Kathryn Hellerstein's translations, which showcase the living speech of the community. From his liminal position, Halpern moves to "Yiddishize" the time-space of New York, not by transplanting a lost world of the past, but by using the dialogic potentiality of the intervallic chronotope to re-invigorate all the various chronotopes of the poem.

2.

In the first section of the poem, "Unzer Gorten," Halpern uses rhyme and meter to position the narrator as an outsider, a foreigner, as someone who refuses to align himself with, in this case, a capitalistic, industrial agenda that is both dehumanizing and futile to resist. His de-territorialized poetic style is unexpected, in comparison to that of his contemporaries, the *inzhikhists*, who came out with a metric manifesto the year Halpern published *In Nyu-York*, and to that of Garcia Lorca, writing ten years after the book was published. Whereas Lorca uses what he calls "American rhythms" to position himself as an insider (though he is only posing, of course, as his impatience with the English language and the "barbarism" of

America make plain), Halpern's meter and style allows him to pose as an outsider, corresponding to his mask of studied naiveté and innocence.

Benamin Hrushovski [Harshav], in his study of Yiddish free-verse poetry, notes that, "Rhythm is so organic an expression of a man's whole conception of life... Only a revolution in the whole poetic and human perception of the world produces changes in the obstinately conservative forms of poetic structure."⁹ This statement provides an alternative opinion to Bakhtin's perception of poetic rhythms:

Rhythm, by creating an unmediated involvement between every aspect of the accentual system of the whole...destroys in embryo those social worlds of speech and of persons that are potentially embedded in the word...Rhythm serves to strengthen and concentrate even further the unity and hermetic quality of the surface of poetic style, and of the unitary language that this style posits (DI 298).

Harshav posits an inherent connection between the form of a poem and the physical arrangement of the world from which that poem comes. He implies that poetic forms are influenced by a society's perception of the temporal and spatial world in which the poem is born and which it seeks to describe. The Yiddish-American poets Jacob Glatstein,¹⁰ A. Leyeles, and N. Minkov, who signed the 1919 *Inzikhist* manifesto which opened *In Zikh: A Collection of Introspective Poems* elaborate on the connection between poetic rhythm and the world in the context of New York. In the manifesto, the authors make the case that poetry written in twentieth-century New York is most authentic when it is written in free verse, since regular meter was born of a lifestyle that has passed away:

In general, we think that regular meter, the rhythm of frequently repeated beats, adapted itself perhaps to an

⁹ Benjamin Hrushovski, "Free Rhythms in Modern Yiddish Poetry," *The Field of Yiddish* vol. 3, (1954): 219-266.

¹⁰ Like those of many Yiddish poets, this name is spelled in a variety of ways. To be consistent, one would normally spell the name "Jankev Glatshiteyn" or "Jacob Glatstein." Benjamin Harshav, from whom I take Glatstein's texts, spells the name "Jacob Glatshiteyn."

earlier kind of life before the rise of the big city with its machines, its turmoil, and its accelerated, irregular tempo. That life was quiet and flowed tranquilly—in regular rhythm, in fact—in beats repeated in short, frequent intervals. Just as contemporary life created new clothing, new dwellings, new color combinations, and new sound combinations, so one needs to create a new art and new and different rhythms. We believe that free verse is best suited for the creation of such new rhythms.¹¹

About rhyme they noted: “It often sounds forced or leads us on like a delusive, fleeting light.” Rhyme was best avoided in such cases, though it was permitted “Whenever a poet does feel the call of a wandering troubadour to recite his poems for a more primitive audience.”¹²

The *Inzikhist* group, which published its first manifesto the same year that Halpern published *In Nyu-York*, introduces free rhythms into Yiddish poetry and sheds the “poetic language” and exquisite rhyme and meter of *Di Yunge*, with whom Moyshe-Leyb Halpern is loosely affiliated. Much of the poetry published by the *Inzikhist* in the early years still contains regular rhymes, though the meter is free verse. Jacob Glatstein’s poem “1919” is a good example of an *Inzikhist* poem. It was published in his collection of poetry, *Jacob Glatshteyn* (1921), which was also the first book of Yiddish poetry written entirely in free verse.¹³

1919

Lately, there’s no trace left
Of Yankl, son of Yitskhok,
But for a tiny round dot
That rolls crazily through the streets
With hooked-on, clumsy limbs.

¹¹ Cited from Benjamin and Barbara Harshav, 778. Hrushovski [Harshav] characterizes “big city tempo” by “Short, choppy sentences. No articles, no auxiliary verbs,” as in A. Leyeles’ “In sobvey, II” [In the Subway], “Free Rhythms” 247.

¹² Benjamin and Barbara Harshav, 778

¹³ Benjamin and Barbara Harshav, *American Yiddish Poetry. A Bilingual Anthology* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1986) 204.

The lord-above surrounded
The whole world with heaven-blue
And there is no escape.
Everywhere “Extras!” fall from above
And squash my watery head.
And someone’s long tongue
Has stained my glasses for good with a smear of red,
And red, red, red.
You see:
One of these days something will explode in my head,
Ignite there with a dull crash
And leave behind a heap of dirty ashes.
And I,
The tiny dot,
Will spin in ether for eternities,
Wrapped in red veils.¹⁴

A typical *Inzikhist* poem, “1919” centers on the subjective experience of the narrative I; even in the erasure of identity, the poem is egocentric. In Halpern’s poetry, on the other hand, the narrator is often a collective “we;” often the poem is other-centered. When the poem describes the experience of the author/narrator, the protagonist is described in the third-person.

Halpern uses at least three strategies to demonstrate that the temporal and spatial world that creates the poem is distinct from the temporal and spatial world the poem seeks to describe (New York). First, he resists rhyme and meter to portray the chaos of New York. Second, he creates an explicit comparison between *shtetl* life and New York life by depicting parallel scenes that are linked through rhyme and rendered in the same meter. He implicitly aligns himself with *shtetl* life by imitating the narrative actions of the *shtetl* in New York. Third, he creates an implicit comparison between *shtetl* life and New York life by rendering New World scenes in Old World rhyme and meter, showing the insufficiency of old patterns of time in a new life.

¹⁴ Harshav *Anthology* 209. Translated by Harshav & Harshav.

Halpern does employ the jagged lines, free meter, and lack of rhyme that the *Inzikhist* advocate, but only once, in the poem “Our Earth.” This poem seems to be written in direct response to the conditions which, Irving Howe explains, were typical for any group entering turn-of-the-century America from a pre-industrial culture. Like the *Inzikhists*, Howe equates the *shtetl* of the Old World with a disregard for industrial patterns of time. In New York, he notes, life must orient itself with regard to the clock instead of the eternal and unchanging:

The *shtetl* had been wretched enough, and every impulse to romanticize it must be resisted. But at least it was a thoroughly known place where one’s ancestors lay buried, it did not loom up to terrifying heights before one’s eyes, it required no special knowledge of machines in shops or of trolleys, and it seldom had much to do with the rigors of the clock. The *shtetl* encouraged that indifference to time which a true religious existence demands and a life of pauperdom enables.¹⁵

Furthermore, Ruth Rubin's collection of folksongs, *Voices of the People*, contains numerous examples of how even poverty is expressed in terms of cyclical time, as the inability to buy chicken or fish for the Sabbath, or new shoes for Passover.¹⁶

When Halpern arrived in New York, he would have encountered a multitude of temporalities and velocities, none of which would have been able to provide a standard by which society could move together as a community. Of course, native-born Americans and other naturalized citizens also found the various tempos and velocities they encountered in New York of the 1910s and 1920s overwhelming and strange. Part of the response, if understood only from the perspective of capitalistic production, was an attempt to standardize and control time, as I described in chapter one. In this way, time would be

¹⁵ Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976) 116. See also Heschel, 68-69.

¹⁶ Ruth Rubins, *Voices of a People. The Story of Yiddish Folksong* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979). See especially 79-86, 279-306.

perceived in relation to man-made concepts, such as the clock which, though loosely based on cycles of day and night, is ultimately an instrument through which earth is conquered and dominated.

The poem “Unzer Erd” [Our Earth], which is Halpern’s creation story of New York City, departs from the meters and rhymes that Halpern’s contemporaries associate with the Old World in order to depict the inhumane conditions that result when people are forced to obey what Howe calls “the rigors of the clock,” in the service of an alienating capitalism. The poem depicts the city as a factory whose sole purpose is to provide fresh meat with which to feed the giant who created it. Its title reverberates in “di erd” [the earth] of Poland that God had given the wandering Jews of Europe in the poem “In Der Fremd,” which I excerpt below. As if in keeping with the idea of a new earth, Halpern gives the poem a new form. “Unzer Erd” is the only poem in “Unzer Gorten” devoid of rhyme. Jagged meter—the result of switching from one length to another throughout the poem—replaces the constant meter we will see below.

The decision to forgo rhyme is highlighted by the beginning of the poem, “s’iz amol a riz a vilder,” a typical opening for a fairy tale, which follows three lines of an aborted opening attempting to create a metaphor of “our lives” through the paving stones of the night street. Clearly, the speaker struggles with how to begin the immense task of describing the creation of New York, and he draws attention to the fact that it is a struggle with incomplete thoughts that end in dashes.

Our own earth is—paving stones.
And our lives are?
See the night there—see the streets— — —
Once there was a wild giant ¹⁷

The last line in the above excerpt is a typical introduction for a fairy tale or fable (in Yiddish, “s’iz amol”). Here, if anywhere, we would expect rhyme. The lack of it, then, in a fable

¹⁷ Halpern 39-40.

about the creation of New York, is as jarring as the presence of rhyme had been to Halpern's contemporaries in Halpern's other poems.¹⁸ The closest we get to a full rhyme is "getribn/mashin," which relates the fact that couples are driven by steam to produce children for the giant to devour each morning. These lines suggest that even forced physical union still yearns for intimacy because the near rhyme here emphasizes the lack of full rhyme we see elsewhere.

In this poem, New York is hacked out of stone cliffs by a giant, provoked by the roar of the sea, who fills the city with people he tore from their lands and families:

And day by day and day by day
he devours their flesh from dawn till evening,
and by night he scatters all their bones
in the houses two by two.
And with a whip he braided for himself from tongues of fire,
he forces them (like wheels of a gigantic machine
that spin to the cadence of driven steam)
to prepare for him fresh food each morning.
And you, with glasses on your nose
and the forehead of an accounting artist,
stand in the middle of the night,
like a foreman in a factory
with pencil and paper.
And like a blind man counts the money he's begged--
count over, one by one, the children that are made
in this cliff city.
And mind that, of the semen, not one drop
shall be spilled in vain ,
while the giant swings his fiery whip
and forces a million people of the world dragged together
(like wheels of a gigantic machine
that spin to the cadence of driven steam)
to prepare for him fresh food each morning.

The meter of the poem is usually trochaic or iambic, but the length is ragged, especially in the original Yiddish, giving the impression of breathlessness. Many of the lines are long, often in hexameter. Lines in which "he forces them (like wheels of a gigantic

¹⁸ Halpern's poetry typically confounded his readers, who expected the rhyme and meter, along with the chatty tone, to convey a comprehensible narrative, and who expressed their disappointment in an edition of the daily *Freiheit*, devoted exclusively to Halpern. See Ruth Wisse, *A Little Love in Big Manhattan* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1988) 126-8.

machine)” with “a whip he braided for himself from tongues of fire” are heptameter. God’s command to our first parents, that they be fruitful and multiply, is reconfigured into the longest lines of the poem and transformed by the giant into the command that the people procreate so that the giant can eat their offspring as food. The most intimate human activity is forced into a pace that is too great to be compatible with human biology and physiology. Even to speak the line in a normal breath phrase, one must hurry through it.

The poem’s changing, formal meters switch to a conversational free verse when the speaker addresses the bespectacled “you” directly, implicating the reader in the work of the giant. The metric switches correspond to different types of discourse as well, giving multiple perspectives on a single problem. In this case, the reader is asked to make sure the workers are not wasting sperm, and that the children, the products of the city-dwellers, are all accounted for. In giving the reader the dubious honor of being a person of leisure, somehow exempt from the depicted life of toil by virtue of the fact he or she has time to read, the speaker points out that even leisure activity can be used in the service of the giant.

In a correlating poem, one with rhyme and meter, Halpern demonstrates that the city is a place where one moves but does not live, because each individual moment has no enduring consequence. The first stanzas of the poem “Zog Ikh Tzu Mir” [I Say to Myself], illustrate the chaos of meaningless tempos:

--Why stand at the window like that?
You could go on out to the street.

--The street is for peddlers and them
who measure their money in time;
the street is for swift trains that fly
like bird, hither, yon, through the sky;
the street is for children and cats
who spring just like fish caught in nets;

the street is for drunkards also,
who tremble as gray as the smoke
and give away all of their days
to muddle themselves on their ways...¹⁹

Chronotopically speaking, the street (space) and movement (time) are both abstract and discontinuous. The street is not really a place; like time, it is merely a means of exchanging one object for another. All the street's elements behave in unnatural ways as they conspire to hold the street inhabitants in thrall: Trains are likened to birds who "fly" "hither and yon," instead of moving along a regular trajectory on earth. The children and cats, living creatures of the earth, are compared to fish, creatures of the sea, when they are trapped in a net. Movement does not reflect the advancement of time across a particular space: the creatures on the street may move about frantically, but they do not go anywhere.

The speaker, as well as the other speechless individuals in this poem, as a consequence of the particular time-space from which they emerge, exemplifies certain traits of, what Irving Howe calls, the modern hero. Most notable of them is the hero's inability to act.²⁰ There are many reasons why the hero cannot act, but foremost among them, in Halpern's work, is the inability of time to connect in such a way as to allow a complete action or motion. For example, the individuals depicted in the above poem act only as middlemen through which time flows like the goods that represent time—drink and money. Both money and drink are unsubstantial and ephemeral (both simply mediums of further exchange). The speaker can act only by accepting or refusing fate; he is, for the most part, passive. Though here he refuses to engage in pointless motion, the speaker is no more at peace than the creatures of the street, as he cannot decide to go out or stay inside. What prevents the narrator from acting is not the poverty of his choices, but the fact that, as a man who is neither here nor there, he cannot act or choose. Later in

¹⁹ Halpern 13.

²⁰ For a complete list, see Irving Howe, ed. & intro., The Idea of the Modern in Literature & the Arts (New York: Horizon Press, 1967) 35-37.

the poem the narrator even likens himself to a dead man who is not dead—an animated corpse.

Regular meter and rhymes, as they are often used in the first section, “Unzer Gorten,” reflect the quiet and tranquilly flowing life of a lost, ideal community. I often call this community “the *shtetl*,” since, as Benjamin Harshav observes, the *shtetl* “was not the real background of all Yiddish speakers...but it was their proverbial, mythological ‘space,’ a collective locus of a network of social and ideological relationships wrought in the phraseology of Yiddish folklore and literature.”²¹ In the absence of a land proper, the *shtetl* served as “a collective imaginary space [that] was supported by a peculiar Jewish geography” (Harshav 147). In this community, movements are calibrated to the natural landscape. Activities are directed by the daily movement of light, the monthly phases of the moon, and the yearly change of seasons, and are divided and shared among the individual inhabitants according to age, gender, position in the family and in the religious and secular community. Yet, joined with the narrative arc, which shuffles chronology, and Halpern’s own colloquial and vulgar language, which plant the poem firmly in the filthy streets of the city, rhyme and meter do more to describe the technological and capitalistic jungle of New York than the free rhythms the *Inzikhist* developed for this express purpose.

In the poem “Tsvishen koymenroykhn” [Among Chimney Smoke], which compares life in New York to life in the *shtetl*, we see the leisure activities of a boy in the *shtetl* have meaning, purpose, and integrity; but the attempt to pursue harmony with the speaker’s natural surroundings on the Lower East Side leads only to frustration or ridiculous scenarios. In performing inappropriate actions, then, the narrator shows his

²¹ Benjamin Harshav, “The Semiotics of Yiddish Communication,” What is Jewish Literature? Ed. Hana Wirth Neshet (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1994) 147.

foreignness. The comparison between the *shtetl* boy and the city boy is implied in parallel construction and in rhyme, which links the boy and the speaker:

When the village boy awakens,
He hears birds' glad singing,
I hear milk cans, wheels on axles,
That alarm clock ringing.

Village boy, through fields, runs after
butterflies all day;
I am stationed on the terrace
driving cats away.²²

The boy wakes up to birdsong, the speaker wakes to an alarm clock; and that is the difference between New York and the *shtetl* in a nutshell. The boy moves in harmony with the meter of the poem, which is the meter of daily life in the *shtetl*, but when the speaker attempts to move in harmony with the meter of the poem, performing the tasks that the meter dictates, he seems out of place. There are no butterflies in this New York scene, so the speaker chases cats, since he must engage with the fauna somehow. But it is ridiculous to perform the same activities in New York that one did in the *shtetl*, which, it is implied, the meters of the poem compel the speaker to do.

In Halpern's *shtetl*, work and song—content and meter—are modeled after nature, as in the following lines from the poem “Azoy iz unz bashert” [Such is Our Fate]:

Little fisher boys are singing like the sea so free,
little healthy blacksmith boys are singing like the fire.

When the community has moved to America, the members still attempt to fit their movements to the landscape, but this landscape is unsuitable for song:

We, like ruins standing in the city's desolate places
sing like emptiness that spills and flows there when it rains.²³

²² Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, *In Nyu-York* (New York: Farlag Vinkel, 1919) 10. All translations mine. I have used the standard YIVO transliteration, but in Halpern's 1919 text, the Yiddish is heavily influenced by German orthography. Later posthumous editions of *In Nyu-York* are edited to be more in keeping with YIVO standards.

²³ Halpern, 16.

The root of the problem becomes more obvious as the poem progresses. Employing the timeless trope of mother earth, Halpern demonstrates that there is nothing maternal or natural about the world in which the Yiddish-speaking immigrant finds himself by comparing children playing in a garden of the past (or native children playing in a native garden in the present) with the immigrant community in New York.

Children playing in the garden--they all sing together.
In their song resides the love and care of a good mother.
We it seems were—none of us—of a mother born.
On the way misfortune, singing, dropped us off, forlorn.
We just have unlucky songs, for-no-good-reason singing.

Here, the mother's love is synonymous with intimacy with the natural world, and it is explicitly involved in the ability to sing (rhyme in a metered way, in tune with the environment) for some "good reason."

The mythical beginnings of Halpern's meter (good-reason-singing) can be traced to Jewish settlement in Poland. According to Abraham Joshua Heschel, the name Poland is "allegedly derived from the two Hebrew words *Po-lin* ('here abide'), which was inscribed on a note descended from heaven and found by the refugees from Germany on their eastward journey at the time of the Black Death and the attendant massacres of Jews."²⁴ The names of unfortunate Jews, and their prayers, were said to be inscribed on the leaves of trees, which linked the generations. The settling of the land gave birth to a particular kind of song, which, in Halpern's rendition, is characterized by regular rhythms rolling through long lines (iambic heptameter and hexameter).

That the song, and its attendant rhythm, is "fated" or "granted" (*bashert*) along with the physical environment (the "land" or *erd*), is emphasized through near-rhyme in the poem "In Der Fremd, VII" from the second section of *In Nyu-York*. On the other hand,

²⁴ Abraham Joshua Heschel, "'The Eastern European Era in Jewish Exile,'" Voices from the Yiddish. Essays, Memories, Diaries. Ed. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan Press, 1960) 70.

bashert—the same word that I have translated as “fate,” in the poem above—indicates that the speaker’s homelessness is also fated or predetermined because he has left the *erd* that God *bashert* and has gone to New York. The entire poem is rendered in a somewhat regular rhyme scheme, which I have not been able to reproduce in English, since I wanted to preserve the meter. Instead of full rhymes, I have employed consonant and vowel rhymes. In the original, the ninth line (which ends in the word “books” in English) is not paired with any other through rhyme.

.....We truly loved this bit of land
the land that God, to us the homeless in our wandering, did grant.
And there was not a single door across whose threshold a child
of ours had set his foot on which God’s name was not inscribed.
No poor man was ever missing from the tables of the rich, day in, day out.
And God-blessed peace reigned in the street, reigned in every house.
And children had amused themselves with their fathers’ long beards.
Many noble youths sat through the night and day, deeply absorbed
in thought and always singing over the old prayer books...
..And as flowers bloom in the fields in spring, and on the tree the leaf,
so generation after generation blossomed, tranquil, sanguine, and the
centuries extended like a golden chain.²⁵

In “Such is Our Fate,” what is fated [*bashert*] in New York is not the land, but the homelessness. The attendant meter, which was given with the land of Poland, is a reminder of what has been lost. What is lost, according to “In Der Fremd VII,” is an uninterrupted flow of life in generations, in which the continuation of the generations is matched by the seasons and their accompanying cycles of life. Heschel describes this experience as living in “vertical time”: “one lived ...with the great men of the past not only in narrating tales about them, but also in feeling and dream...Jews studied the Talmud, and saw Abaye and Raba before their eyes. Elijah the Prophet attended their circumcision ceremonies, their *sukkas* were visited by the Holy Guests. History never ceases, in such vertical life.”²⁶ Here

²⁵ Halpern 83.

²⁶ Abraham Joshua Heschel, “The Eastern European Era in Jewish Exile,” Voices from the Yiddish. Essays, Memories, Diaries. Ed. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1960) 67-86.

the regular rhythm of the poem, like the regular rhythm of the seasons and generations, is simply the pace of this cosmic and earthly interpenetration. In New York, the regular meter of Halpern's poem becomes one temporality among many, except that it is a defunct temporality.

In both poems a version of the phrase “on the way” appears in connection with “fate”: *zingendik hot dos shlimazel unz in veg farloyren* in New York, and *di erd, vos Got hot unz, di heymloze, in vander-veg bashert* in Poland. In the first, “bad luck” is personified as a singer who caused “us” to get lost on the way. In the second God gives a home to those who are wandering on their way. In the second, the wandering is given a form (meter and rhyme) that endows song and motion with meaning; in the first, the meaning is removed from the song and its accompanying movement (meter and rhyme). Halpern understood that the old poetic form does not make sense in the new world. For what is also lost in New York is a sense of solidarity or unity of language. Before, people spoke the language of the landscape—in Heschel's legend, people spoke the language of the trees, and could read names in their leaves. The landscape served as a medium of communication between people and God. In the poem below, which relates the beginning (or the continuation, after a respite in Poland) of homelessness, we see how disharmony is manifest in dumbness, as the elders of the community are struck speechless with grief by the advent of the *haskalah*, and family members become “foreign” to one another. Foreignness evokes, among other things, the loss of a common language. But Halpern intentionally used poetic form to evaluate, by comparison with Old-World community, the world of New York, in which there is nothing to anchor time: no mother's love, no natural cycles, and no God (vertical time).

The second section of *In Nyu-York* (“In Der Fremd”) is set in the Atlantic Ocean, presumably on the way to America from Poland. But the narrator is aware of both the present and the past; as if the section were narrated from a point outside of time. Thus, the

narrator's description of the *shtetl* oscillates between fond nostalgia, when compared to America, and repulsion for a stifling world of hypocrisy and decay, as in the poem "Leyb-Bear." "In Der Fremd VII" is the turning point, at which the homelessness of the exiled Jew is blamed on the *haskalah*, the adherents of the Jewish enlightenment movement (the "new light" in the poem below), which abandoned the concept of sacred, simultaneous time (or "vertical time") for one of secular, linear time. Emphasizing as it did the importance of keeping up with the times through the study of secular subjects, the adoption of the languages and customs of the countries in which Jews lived, the *haskalah* movement consequently upset the hierarchy and structure of formerly insular communities where it took hold.

But these quiet times turned out to be too good for us, —
 The blind wheel spun itself around, and then it came to pass
 that a restlessness awakened, and, like an ominous wind,
 completely overturned that life, from the aged to the infant,
 in every land, and throughout the entire world. And in a desolate night
 that same restlessness also came to our own street —
 a quarrel, a vicious quarrel began between the young and old.
 And each became foreign to the other, foreign and cold.
 Suddenly over them loomed disaster from a vicious court,
 the verdict was, in every house — they suddenly started
 to speak and sing of a new light, like they babble when fever-demented.
 Even the daughters...the fathers saw in this a harsh punishment.
 "A harsh punishment from God" — thought each elder, dumb with misery.
 And overnight young mothers turned old and gray.
 A hard, impenetrable cloud crept across our street
 at that same time; it was a generation's-old hate.
 Soon it was said that from somewhere
 a band of robbers had plundered here and there.
 Since we had no sickle, no hammer, no sword,
 a dreadful fear drove us from our homeland, our earth.
 And as the wind in autumn tears through the stubble in the field,
 so the fear appeared, and scattered us to the corners of the world.
 And like a black chain, stretching out year's-long, a series
 of giant and stark ships brought us across the ocean to here.²⁷

²⁷ My translation has approximated Halpern's rhymed couplets with consonant and vowel rhymes. Halpern's meter is much looser here than that of "Unzer Gorten;" it has the cadence of spoken language, and the lines are of similar length — about fifteen or sixteen syllables each. My translation does not reflect the uniform line length; it aims to capture the most accurate meaning of each word, and a trace of the rhyming couplet.

Although “vertical time,” is not, by definition, dependent on place at all, in Halpern’s poem, place and time do, in fact, form an inseparable unit. When the concept of secular time replaces that of sacred, Poland—that homeland in exile—is replaced with homelessness, the state of being eternally out of place. As Joseph Landis notes, “Once the timeless traditional world of the *shtetl* is shattered, time and place, modernity and geography are thrust upon the Jewish experience and the Jewish consciousness.”²⁸

In “In Der Fremd VII” the *Haskalah* movement has an uneasy correspondence to the waves of anti-Semitism it had tried to stem. The poem places the spread of the movement and the pogroms side by side, as occurring concurrently, not sequentially—the “ominous cloud” of “restlessness” and the “babbling” of a “new light” occur “at the same time” as the “cloud” that was the “generation’s-old hate” [“hatred of the Jews,” in Hellerstein’s translation]. And yet, the very movement undermines the meaning of the pogroms, the idea of the Jews as a chosen people, whose selection by God would involve them in an endless struggle against the manifestation of evil in the world. Time, then, breaks down into history, as the “golden chain” of generations becomes a “black chain” “years long” of ships that disperse the peoples.

In the excerpt above, detailing the breakdown of the community, formal meter is replaced with free verse; the rhyming couplets (“chaining” one line to the next) remain.

David Roskies might call the intersection of vertical and horizontal time described above as “the fault lines of Jewish modernity,” which brought into being what he calls “Sanctified Parody.”²⁹ I will describe it, as Roskies does, in evolutionary terms. It builds

²⁸ Joseph C. Landis, “Yiddish Dreams in America,” Handbook of American-Jewish Literature. An Analytical Guide to Topics, Themes, and Sources, ed. Lewis Fried (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988) 157.

²⁹ David Roskies, “Major Trends in Yiddish Parody,” The Jewish Quarterly Review 94.1 (Winter 2004) 111-112.

upon two earlier kinds of parody, “Sanctioned Parody,” and “Militant Parody.” The first was “public, communal, carnivalesque, and above all, performative” (114); it is found in the *Purim Shpil* [Purim play] and the wedding songs of the *badkhin* [a sort of comic master of ceremonies at weddings], as well as among school children, especially those who studied in *heder* [school]. Its function seems to have been to assure the cohesion of the community, since “the sanction to parody...derived from the same sources that were being targeted: the covenantal community and its text-based religion...By not being inviolable the system of *yiddishkayt* remained viable” (114). “Militant Parody,” on the other hand, arrived on the Yiddish scene during the battles between the *Hasidim*, the Jews portrayed in Halpern’s “In Der Fremd VII” and the *Haskalah*, or the proponents of Enlightenment and secularization. Subsequently, it “presupposed open disagreement, the appropriation of the utterance of another *as* another for one’s own purposes,” says Roskies, quoting Bakhtin (115). With the failure of Yiddish parody to follow the expected trajectory of becoming a means of “defamiliarization, of undermining the old hegemony,” and so forth (117), due to decay from within and attack from without, “Sanctified Parody” came into use. Its aim was not defamiliarization, but refamiliarization (118). It is a way to “compensate the radical diminution of Jewish space by cracking open all of Jewish time” (118-9). Halpern uses this strategy of “cracking open all of Jewish time” throughout sections IV and V of the poem, but in the first two sections of *In Nyu-York*, his parody opens up a neutral, dialogic space in which two disparate cultures can apprehend and come to terms with one another.³⁰

Halpern’s implicit comparison between *shtetl* life and New York life by imposing regular rhyme and meter on the cityscape, without referring directly to a lost home, yields the richest

³⁰ See Wollitz, Kronfeld and Hellerstein, cited above, and A. Tabachnik, "Tradition and Revolt in Yiddish Poetry" Trans. Cynthia Ozick in *Voices from the Yiddish. Essays, Memoirs, Diaries*. Ed. Irving Howe and Eliezer Greenberg (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1972) 289-299, and David Roskies, "The Apocalyptic Theme in Yiddish Narrative Poetry," *Working Papers in Yiddish and East European Jewish Studies*, May 1977 (New York: Max Weinreich Center for Advanced Jewish Studies of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research).

opportunities for parody in the “Unzer Gorten” section, and thus, the best examples of how two intervallic chronotopes can enrich one another. But this strategy works best if we cheat a little and skip forward to the second section of the poem, where we see that the lost community for which the narrator is nostalgic and homesick is, at the same time, revolting to him, and, for all practical purposes, defunct.

Here, for example, is an excerpt from “Leyb-Bear”:

Birds tremble in their nests before a storm;
So Leyb-Bear trembles, his face aged and worn;
When he calls to mind the folks back home
Their faces seem to him like cracked, dried lime,
They live in huts with frosty, mildewed walls,
And talk with shriveled lips and skinny hands,
And, burdened with some curse, they traipse around
Throughout the town, their eyes bent to the ground...³¹

The "folks back home," described in terms of building materials that have outlived their purpose, live in buildings that have also fallen into a state of disrepair. Thus, though everything is eerily harmonious, the rhythm is deadly. Time no longer seems to be tarrying in the eternal spring of golden generations which blossom like flowers. Rather, the community has entered its winter phase, as the frosty walls of the huts betray.

Corresponding to the ailment of the living creatures and their decaying abodes is the desecration of the sacred, depicted below. The men who stand as if they are praying seem to be urinating, which means, conversely, that when they are praying, they will appear to be urinating. The golden chain that holds everything together has become onerous; "day in and day out," implies a tedium and unpleasantness. Prayer is an "endless bray," as if the supplicants were beasts of burden.

...to see more clearly, take a board and draw
An old *shul* opposite a synagogue;
Between, a gutter and the unclean place
Where men stand at the wall as if praying.

³¹ Translated by Kathryn Hellerstein, here and elsewhere (1982, 60-65).

And paint yourself in, a boy at a window,
And think that day-in, day-out, this is God's world.
And listen to the endless bray of prayer
And just long for this life when you are not there...

Unfortunately, the beautiful life remembered in "In Der Fremd VII," only exists outside of time and space; in memory, or in exile. The real memory of the real place deprives the narrator of the idyllic, timeless home that was, in reality, never his:

...A cripple finds strange our delight in dance,
The night finds strange the morning's radiance;
As much as Leyb-Bear ruminates, he finds
In his young years, no joy, no peace of mind.
His memories are empty as the bed
After the corpse that lay there has been buried.
A home is a home; Ley-Bear remains Leyb-Bear,--
But his homesickness is often too much to bear.

In the poems below, very rarely does the narrator present himself, or his characters, as other than a rogue or clown—indeed, the appellations *takhshit* (literally, “jewel,” but normally used sarcastically, to describe a rascally child), and *lumpe* (“scoundrel”) designate the main character and narrator, respectively in the following two poems, and strange behaviors, such as crowing in the middle of the street or chasing cats, characterize other figures, occur in other poems. It is as the figure of the rogue/clown/fool, and in conjunction with parody that Halpern’s narrators use rhyme and meter to create an implicit comparison between *shtetl* life and New York life by rendering New World scenes in Old World rhyme and meter.

In this, he is further departing from strategies such as those proposed by the *Inzikhists*, who, in moving from regular rhyme and meter to free verse in an attempt to capture the “modernity” of New York’s tempos, were aware they were breaking with tradition, not just in the literary sense, but also in a real sense of being in the world. In breaking with tradition, they were not breaking with Jewish identity, however. They were perhaps more radical than that: they were establishing Yiddish writing as world writing, orienting themselves away from a traditional past and toward the chaotic present. As Jacob

Glatstein puts it,

[Inzikhists] have no tradition. Our roots perhaps barely touch the roots of previous Yiddish poetry. It is, however, false to assume that our tradition is non-Jewish poetry. Surely, we are similar to the new trends and movements that can be found among poets of other languages. Certainly, there is more direct relation between an Introspectivist and a German Expressionist or English Vorticists than between us and most Yiddish poets of the previous periods...But this direct relation is *all of Modernism*, the whole *difference* of contemporary poetry, of contemporary art in general [italics in original].³²

Halpern, however, does not yet make the same leap from the past to the present that the *Inzikhists* attempted; a discontinuity between the past and the present means that Halpern “can’t get here from there” so to speak. In order to live in time, one must be able to experience a continuity with the past, and with all of history. But the focus on the present in New York is at the expense of the past. That is why Halpern strives for a dialogue between the past and the present.

We have seen earlier that Halpern often uses rhyme to depict a union among objects, as in “Azoy iz unz bashert,” in which the young working boys are paired with the elements with which they work, and the transplanted city dwellers sing like ruined, abandoned buildings left out in the rain. In “Tsvishen Koymenroykhen,” rhymes link the environment with activity as well. We’ve also noted that Halpern’s colleagues, the *Inzikhists*, believed rhyme, though it leads one on “like a delusive, fleeting light,” was appropriate “whenever a poet does feel the call of a wandering troubadour to recite his poems for a more primitive audience.” Halpern’s most rhymed poem of all, “Der Gasnpoyker” [The Street Drummer], employs rhyme to portray the main character’s abandonment of community as he embraces the kind of pointless motion depicted above. If the speaker is reciting his poem to a “more primitive” audience, it is in order to say good-bye. Thirteen of the sixteen lines of each stanza are fully rhymed in couplets and triplets: aabbccdeefgghhh. At the same

³² "Reflections," *In Zikh*, March 1923. Cited from Harshav, 1986, 794.

time, the speaker's insistence on drawing attention to himself—he literally goes out with a bang, or a “boom,” as the case may be—perhaps is more indicative of his having been abandoned by a community.

The rationale for taking off in this march-like song through the streets with cymbal and drum is given in the first four lines:

Glad and free the songbird sings,
trembling on their thrones sit kings;
trembling's not the thing,
so like the free songbird, I sing.³³

But the drummer is not a bird. He is a man who, if not invested with the authority of a king, still bears a responsibility to the society in which he lives, even if it fills him with anxiety and trembling. Thus, the poem is a process of breaking free from society:

I dance wanton, I dance blind,
into streets and out of streets.
If I'm sick and old and gray,
what's it to you--ha-ha-ha!

In the course of the poem, the drummer begs for money, humiliates himself, gets ridiculed and harassed by children, and wanders further and further away from everyone. In the end, he eschews the most basic components of community: wife, child, and human society.³⁴

That is how I've scratched my way
scratched my way and bit my way
banged my head, as through a wall,
down roads, through land, and over all—
with my bones--
crushing stone!

³³ Halpern 33-35.

³⁴ David Blaustein, a Jewish community worker on the East Side, noted that the immigrants' struggle for existence in the first few years was more difficult than it had been in their native lands, precisely because, in their native lands, they were a collective, but in New York, they were forced to think of themselves as individuals. Cited from Howe, 1976, 77.

Crush through stone and stay alone!
Dog and hobo, rogue and wind,
unrestrained in foreign land!
I don't have a coat or blouse,
I have no wife or child or house.
I'll drum the drum to make it burst
crash the cymbals in the dance,
spin round and round—
kshhh, kshhh boom-boom-boom.
kshhh, kshhh boom!

The meter in this poem acts differently than it has acted previously, since the protagonist is using it in an act of rebellion. Here the meter turns the drummer into what he is rebelling against, a mechanized, inhuman cog. The element of parody is that this carnivalesque rebellious performance of the drummer only fuels and rejuvenates the system of capitalism and modernism that breaks him away from the community in the first place.

Halpern does not particularly pity individual characters who fail to find context for their lives in New York, as the poem “Gingeli,” demonstrates. Here, the author turns himself into an object of ridicule—the protagonist is named “Moyshe-Leyb,” and he seems to be carrying the idea of a secularized *Purim shpil* too far in his attempt to transform New York into the landscape that would fit to the rhyme and meter of the poem. Consequently, the main character will probably, eventually, freeze to death as he wanders, lost in his dreams, accompanied by a chorus of stray animals and a watchman. The chorus is a particularly Slavic addition to Yiddish-language poetry,³⁵ cementing the relationship between meter and Eastern Europe:

O, Gingeli, my bleeding heart,
who is the youth that dreams in snow
and drags his wooden feet so slow

³⁵ See Uriel Weinreich, “On the Cultural History of Yiddish Rime,” *Essays on Jewish Life and Thought*, Ed. Joseph L. Blau *et al.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) 423-442; Ruth Rubins, *Voices of a People. The Story of Yiddish Folksong* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), and Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish* (Berkeley: U of C Press, 1990).

in mid-street in the night?

It is the rascal Moyshe-Leyb,
who'll freeze one snowy morning
fantasizing of the spring
and flowers softly blooming;
And when he's lying in the snow
and when he ceases moving—
He'll dream of fields of corn through which
he leisurely is strolling.

Dreams the rascal Moyshe-Leyb,
sings the watchman, tri-li-li,
replies the vagabond, hachoo,
says the puppy, bow-wow-wow,
says the kitty, meow.³⁶

Not only does the rascal Moyshe-Leyb confuse his physical location—believing himself to be in the fields at home, or seated on the chimney bench, or hallucinating that he is a king—he also, fatally, confuses night and day, and spring and winter. New York is not the Old World, and a failure to adjust to its spatial-temporal dimensions, no matter how distasteful they are, will be fatal.

For largely the same reasons that Halpern makes fun of himself, he also makes fun of the only non-Jewish protagonist in the collection, the aristocrat Pan Jablowsky, in the poem by the same title. Jablowsky is also exiled from his home, but through his own fault. It is likely that he is one of the Poles who participated in pogroms against the Jews, since he shows himself to be anti-Semitic in dealing with the “little Yid” who comes to collect taxes (and in the fact that this memory was one that gave him pleasure in his misery in New York) Now, not only does he work in a café that is owned by a Jew, but his tale is told in Yiddish, and his words are translated into Yiddish by the author, as are in his memories. Pan Jablowsky is a formerly wealthy Polish aristocrat who now lives on a rubbish heap in the kitchen in which he sweeps, washes dishes, and collects the garbage. Yet, he holds the broom as if it were a hunting rifle; he hallucinates that the cat rubbing up against his knee is

³⁶ Halpern 45.

a beautiful young girl; he imagines the roar of the street is the sound of the Vistula. As a consequence, the man becomes so filthy—“you’d think that God made him from dirt,” the narrator coyly observes (53). Even so, there is a trace of pity for the man who, “forced to leave his homeland” when he was already “advanced in years,” finds that his life has split in half.

One way in which Halpern’s parody and clownishness works to provide a space for the narrator to live in the new world is that it allows him to realize that he has never had a home anywhere else, and that New York is the closest thing he has to one. Thus, the narrator’s outside position allows him to view certain aspects of the city as pitiful transplants and immigrants as well, thereby familiarizing them, and opening up a way of relating to them. As I have pointed out in chapter one, the production-oriented tempos of New York work in unison with recreational areas, so that even nature, once the standard for a certain conception of time, now is incorporated into a capitalistic system. What the architect Rem Koolhaas notes of Central Park sums up city planners’ attitudes toward nature in all of New York—that it is “a series of manipulations and transformations performed on the nature ‘saved’ by its designers. Its lakes are artificial, its trees (trans)planted, its accidents engineered, all its incidents supported by an invisible infrastructure that controls their assembly.”³⁷ As Irving Howe notes, this real-world attempt at conquering nature is present in modernist writing, too, in the fact that, in modernist writing “nature is transformed from an organic setting into a summoned or remembered *idea*. Nature ceases to be natural.”³⁸

In the poem “Unzer Gortn,” Halpern composes the landscape of the park in the meter of a *folkslid*, which, as I pointed out, evokes a world of cyclical time and rural life. Instead of taking a lesson in harmony from nature, Halpern is critical of the specimens in

³⁷ Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978) 18.

³⁸ “Idea of the Modern” 30.

the park, because they do not act as they are supposed to act, but in the end, he pities them. Halpern depicts a startled, transplanted tree and a bird who has forgotten how to raise its young. Playfully, and perhaps sadly, he depicts the regulation of the city parks through the figure of the watchman.

Our Garden

What a garden, where the tree
barely holds his seven leaves,
and he asks himself and ponders,
who set me in this place of wonders?
What a garden, what a garden,
where, with a looking glass
one can see a little grass.
Is this our garden, then,
as it is in morning sun?
Of course it's our garden. What then, not our garden?

What a watchman, alas, alack,
with a stick for a dog's back,
wakes the people on the lawn,
wakes them up and drives them on.
What a watchman, what a watchman,
who grabs the collar or the arm
of someone who has done no harm.
Is this our watchman, then,
just as he is in the morning sun?
Of course it's our watchman. What then, not our watchman?

What a bird, who forgets
her little children in the nest,
doesn't bring them any food,
sings with them no morning croon.
What a bird, what a bird,
doesn't bother to get up,
doesn't try to fly off.
Is it our bird, then,
just as she is in the morning sun?
Of course it's our bird. What then, not our bird?³⁹

If nature had earlier acted, in unison with God's laws, to provide the rhythms to which people calibrated their movements and song, now human behavior has attempted to

³⁹ Halpern 7-8. Kathryn Hellerstein's popular translation has been reproduced twice, in the Harshav *Anthology* (1986) and in *In New York. A Selection* (1982). Her gracious and insightful suggestions have been of great use to me in my own translations.

impose an unnatural standard upon nature. Consequently, no one acts correctly, not the tree, not the bird, and certainly not the watchman. But the narrator sympathizes with the fact that the very landscape looks as if has been transplanted from elsewhere. In breaking out of regular meter to the conversational, “of course it’s our garden. What else then, not our garden?” he may even be asserting to the community that the garden, the tree, and the bird, are actually “one of us.” And the watchman is, too, though he regulates behavior in the park according to rules that seem indecent and inhumane to the speaker. In the end, like the bird and the tree, the narrator is in a foreign place, and he acts, as they do, in strange, unnatural ways.

Chapter 4

Langston Hughes's *The Weary Blues* and Federico García Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York*

In this chapter I will expand upon the concept of 1920s New York/America as a locus of competing chronotopic perspectives by considering those depicted by Hughes and Federico García Lorca. Assuming, with Jay Ladin, that chronotopes cannot be discussed in isolation as self-contained units, I have been working toward as full a set of comparisons as possible.¹ Ladin's project is to create a taxonomy that begins to resolve the "many crucial questions regarding the definition and function of chronotopes" that Bakhtin—because of his broad historical focus that rests almost exclusively on genre-defining and historically significant chronotopes—leaves unanswered. While he means "local chronotopes," not "genre-producing chronotopes," in the sentence above, he implies that the latter, an example of which I have begun to delineate as the chronotope of 1920s New York, emerge when there are enough instances of the same kinds of narratively significant temporal and spatial indicators in local chronotopes to "provoke the comparisons necessary for the chronotope to be legible" (220).

Before launching into the final chapter, let us review briefly the ways in which the previous collections narratively configure the given time/space of 1920s New York in which they were written. In Hart Crane, we have seen how the poem's present moment insinuates itself into the past, reconfiguring history as if everything that had previously occurred had been a preamble, or had had the deliberate agenda of creating the Brooklyn Bridge, so that the Brooklyn Bridge is the culmination of all of history up to that point. Crane's poem both narrates time and space and yields a literary image of their union—the transient bridge,

¹ Jay Ladin, "Fleshing Out the Chronotope," *Critical Essays on Mikhail Bakhtin*, Ed. Caryl Emerson (New York: G.K. Hall & Co., 1999) 221.

[TA0]This makes sense to me but I do not remember you making such comparisons in the previous chapters, which seemed almost free standing. This opening clarifies things for me quite a lot, and I wonder if it shouldn't go in the introduction?

connecting both disparate spaces and disparate historical periods. Even though, in Crane's narrative, the chronotopic perspective of the present moment is not allowed to remain "naïve," it is compared only to a utopian time-space. Compared to "completed time," the chronotopic perspective of the poem's present moment is shown to be incomplete: one of many "labyrinthine mouths of history." Crane's text allows me to set the stage for those of Halpern, Hughes and Lorca, since, chronotopically speaking Crane's depiction of 1920s America (symbolized in the Bridge) is then compared against distinctly non-utopian depictions of the same time and space in narratives of becoming, or becoming recognized as, American.

In Halpern, we saw the same emphasis on the temporal aspect of the chronotope, in which the narrative task is to calibrate the personal rhythms of the speakers expatriated from Eastern Europe, to those ordained by the city of New York. The speakers's personal rhythms, which are those of the Old World *shtetl*, characterized (but also ironically) by a harmonious relationship with natural cycles of time, are depicted as being at odds with the rhythms of production and consumption. As in Crane, time of the poem's present moment in New York is a kind of commodity (it is "exchanged for money" in the poem "I say to myself"), which bears out Bakhtin's memorable formulation that the chronotope is a means by which what is abstract "takes on flesh," gets "blood in its veins," or, in short, gets achieves materiality; its rhythms are those of capitalism, which, as we see in "Our Earth," are inimical to those (once again ironically) associated with the "naturally human." The outsider status of Halpern's narrators assumes the perspective of the rogue, allowing them to undermine the dominance of the centripetal rhythms of 1920s New York (capitalism) through parody.

Here I would emphasize a point I made only obliquely in the last three chapters. When Bakhtin asked himself in the concluding remarks of the "Chronotope" essay,

“What is the significance of all these chronotopes?” His answer was, “What is most obvious is their meaning for *narrative*,” “It can be said without qualification that to them belongs the meaning that shapes narrative,” and “the chronotope is the place where the knots of narrative are tied and untied” (DI 250). Very simply stated, this means that where and when an event takes place will determine what that event means. More to the point, as Halpern has illustrated, some acts or events are not appropriate at certain times, in certain places, and other acts or events, as Hughes will illustrate, are simply impossible. On a more complex level, it means that the way that a narrative sequence unfolds, when compared to a second (normative) sequence, makes the “gaps and other discontinuities” significant. Not because of the distinction between raw material of the normative sequence and the artistic reshaping of the finished product, but because they are two different worlds that combine to produce “the fullness of the work in all its wholeness and indivisibility” (DI 255)²

As I pointed out in chapter one, the narrative of the non-literary chronotope of 1920s New York might be something like this: immigrant/migrant comes to America, learns to “tell time” by learning English, becomes a productive citizen by working in a factory, and by visiting Central Park learns the art of consumption and harmonious behavior. In such a world, the “image of man” is that of a producer or consumer of goods.³ Each literary chronotope of New York will conform to or “deform” the normative story line I suggested above, but each one will engage it. Hart Crane gives credence to it by making all of history seem as if it were the lead-up to the present, even as his chronotopic perspective of completed time undermines that credence. Halpern parodies the story line with characters

² Bakhtin draws on Russian formalist structures here, in which a *fabula*, an imaginary, casually, spatially, and temporally continuous or coherent version of a story” is the normative space-time over against which an artistically structured narrative, or *suzhet*, unfolds. The *fabula* is often supplied by the reader, but it can also be contained in the chronotope of the *suzhet*. See Ladin, 220; Morson and Emerson, 431; DI 255.

³ The implied criticisms of Halpern and Lorca, as well as the puns on capital in Crane do tend to warrant the rather material aspect of this narrative.

who refuse to “understand” how it works, and thus, remain outsiders.⁴

This chapter, in which we will examine Langston Hughes’s *Weary Blues* and Federico García Lorca’s *Poeta en Nueva York*, emphasizes the spatial dimensions of Harlem, a hitherto overlooked segment of 1920s New York. Like Halpern, both Lorca and Hughes position themselves authorially as outsiders. Lorca, a citizen of Spain (Andalusia) spent a total of eight months in the United States in 1929 (seven in New York), and though he was enrolled in language courses at Columbia University, he never mastered the English language, nor did he attempt to do so. His authorial position is reflected in his narrator, who is not merely one of many characters in the poem, but, rather, is the ordering principle of the time-space he depicts. Hughes is an African American born in the Mid-West and relocated in Harlem, whose racial identity marginalizes him by default. Hughes's personae are outsiders because they refuse the racial categories by which the city is divided into black Harlem and white America. Whereas for Lorca, a chronotopic analysis reveals that Harlem and Wall Street are irredeemably separate, for Hughes we see how space must be reconfigured in order for American blacks and whites to be able to speak a “common language,” which, as Michael Eskin pointed out, from a Bakhtinian perspective, means that, whatever their differences, they will share the same temporal and spatial indicators.

Two points should be kept in mind. First, real-world 1920s New York is the background for the literary depictions of the city, and as such, represents its own distinctive

⁴ In reading the poems collected here narratively, I am not claiming a particular genre (in the traditional sense) for the poems. I am using the term as Bakhtin does, or as someone like T. V. F. Brogan does in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. Here “Narrative Poetry” is defined as verse that gives “a presentation of a sequence of events or facts...whose disposition in time implies causal connection and point.” Brogan emphasizes that “a history of narrative poetry has to be plural, and rooted in local intention, not framed as a problem of genre.” He adds, “Where genre (or any typical concept) is involved, history must be concerned with shared intentions, not necessarily with shared forms or the terminological correctness” (814-5). Thus, I am making such features as lyricism subsidiary to narrative features.

historical time/space--its own internally variegated chronotope. Second, the texts by Lorca and Hughes, like those of Crane and Halpern previously, refract those temporal-spatial coordinates, according to their own literary predilections. As Michael Holquist has noted, "In poetics, no less than in physics, time/space categories are relative in so far as they can be known only by contrast with at least one other set of coordinates that can serve as a system of reference" (Dialogism, 145). A similar point is made by Jay Ladin in his essay, "Fleshing out the Chronotope," where he emphasizes fact that a chronotope can be called as such only in relation to its analog or counterpart—"chronotopes become 'visible' by comparison with other kinds of space-time. And this, of course, implies that the concept of an individual 'literary artistic' chronotope is in some sense a contradiction in terms, since a chronotope can exist only in relation to another chronotope" (219). The salient issue for this chapter is that in juxtaposing Hughes and Lorca, as I do in this chapter, I am teasing out the nuances of the "outside" position we saw in Halpern, but in terms of space, instead of time. In the previous two chapters, the narrators themselves provided at least two distinct temporal indicators, which made internal comparisons possible. Lorca and Hughes also each provide at least two distinct spatial indicators, but I will take advantage of the fact they are both writing about the same racially divided segment of New York by juxtaposing their two distinct literary configurations of it.

Both Hughes and Lorca describe Harlem in the aftermath of the "Great Migration," in which an estimated one million African Americans left the South and moved to cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore, Washington D. C. and New York, swelling the black population by twenty per cent between 1910 and 1930. Indeed, this migration (along with an ill-planned real estate project of which Philip A. Payton Jr. took advantage by founding the Afro-American Realty Company) created the conditions necessary for the

Harlem Renaissance.⁵ The physical and cultural growth of the area was such that already between 1925 and 1935 its writers had produced at least twenty-six novels, ten volumes of poetry, five Broadway plays, and “a flood of short stories and essays.”⁶ Hughes’s *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927) are two of these ten volumes of poetry.

In New York and elsewhere, Jim Crow laws of the South gave way to the unofficial social and economic practices that prompted Lorca, in his *Poeta en Nueva York*, to schematize New York City as two worldviews shaped by two different temporal-spatial narrative structures: a furtive Harlem (the literary image of which is, by turns, natural, folksy, or carnivalesque, as in the cabaret) exploited by a self-destructive Wall Street (mechanical, cold, capitalist). In Lorca, we see a wise-but-childlike Harlem that “occasionally makes a theatre of itself,” in order to pacify and entertain a white population⁷ largely unaware of the precocious wisdom of the African American people. Lorca’s descriptions of Harlem provide a parodic image of Du Bois’s “double-consciousness,”:

After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two

⁵ Until 1910 or so, Harlem had been described as “a traditionally minded British, German, Jewish, and Irish community that prided itself on its special combination of small-town pastoral atmosphere, leisurely European-provincial ways, and big-city cultural facilities.” Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty. Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995) 309-10.

⁶ Cited from Douglas, 84. The data was collected by David Levering Lewis for the years between 1925 and 1935.

⁷ Federico Garcia Lorca, “Lecture: A Poet in New York,” Trans. Christopher Maurer, *Poet in New York. A bilingual edition*, ed. Christopher Maurer (New York: Noonday Press, 1998) 187-8, 190.

souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.⁸

In this oft-quoted passage from his 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois links double-consciousness with a privileged perspective of wholeness in "Criteria of Negro Art" (1926): "We who are dark can see America in a way that white Americans can not." White Americans are liable "to confuse their power with their rights and deserts, to mistake superior status for superior soul or character." In his 1933 autobiography, *Along This Way*, James Weldon Johnson, too, notes that black people in America had survived by "learning the white man" they dealt with. However, Johnson configures the racial divide in such a way as to make himself the measure of white people: "Negroes tend to evaluate whites solely on the grounds of how they treat black people," he notes, pressing on, "A white man...usually IS how he treats the black man."⁹

After exploring Lorca's racial map of the city, which, I argue, is representative of a certain literary and social conception of the city's structure, I would like to explore the dialogue of multiple chronotopic perspectives in Hughes's poetry, reading this dialogue as a pre-emptive argument for recognition, on the basis that the author/narrator understands and masters the literary/social forms of each perspective, that he finds each insufficient to describe his own reality. Furthermore a new (his own) chronotopic perspective should be allowed to join those that determine the narrative of the City/America. Their task will be to configure a new space within the racially segregated city, which is neither black nor white, but (or, "therefore") "American." This is the kind of move about which Eskin concludes is "*the dialogically and sociopolitically exemplary mode of discourse in Bakhtin's writings*" (379) because it accomplishes two tasks at once. It "facilitates the creation of

⁸ W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) (New York: Signet, 1969) 45.

⁹ James Weldon Johnson, *Along This Way: the autobiography of James Weldon Johnson* (New York: Viking Press, 1933).

mutual understanding and, concomitantly, the subversion of sociopolitical, potentially repressive, authority” (389) (e.g. the repression of African American expression). Such a reading of Hughes’s work is also in line with Houston Baker’s discussion of the Harlem Renaissance, about he declared, “*Art*, thus, came to be defined as precisely *not* for art’s sake.”¹⁰

Harlem and Wall Street

Dinísio Cañas, in his essay “The Poet and the City: Lorca in New York,” argues persuasively that “the antagonism between Wall Street and Harlem is fundamental to the dynamics of *Poet in New York*. These places are symbolical of the most productive encounter of two cultures, the Western and the African.”¹¹ But Lorca’s polarized New York divides Harlem from Wall Street in terms that could only be expressed as destructive, if not, as we shall see later, cannibalistic. As Lorca put it in his lecture, “A Poet in New York,” which premiered in Madrid in March 1932,

The two elements the traveler first captures in the big city are extrahuman architecture and furious rhythm. Geometry and anguish. At first glance, the rhythm may be confused with gaiety, but when you look more closely at the mechanism of social life and the painful slavery of both men and machines, you see that it is nothing but a kind of typical, empty anguish that makes even crime and gangs forgivable means of escape.¹²

Viewing the chronotopic dimensions of Lorca’s literary images of New York, we can say

¹⁰ Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Afro-American Poetics. Revisions of Harlem and the Black Aesthetic* (Madison: U of Wisconsin Press, 1988) 13.

¹¹ “The Poet and the City: Lorca in New York.” *Lorca's Legacy. Essays on Lorca's Life, Poetry and Theatre*. Ed. Manuel Duran and Fransesca Colecchia. New York: Peter Lang, 1991, 164-5.

¹² Federico Garcia Lorca, “Lecture: A Poet in New York,” Trans. Christopher Maurer, *Poet in New York. A bilingual edition*, ed. Christopher Maurer (New York: Noonday Press, 1998) 187-8.

that Wall Street suffers from its disrespect for the rhythms of the earth (that lies buried beneath the street grid and the skyscrapers), which it overturns by what Johan K. Walsh calls the "kinetic ubiquity of money."¹³ Space is limited to the destructive reach of humans: the city ends at the sea, which is so littered that one can "suffocate" under its lunch wrappers; the sky ends in sky scrapers, and it "assassinates" the speaker who has gone for a walk in "Cut Down by the Sky." Time has the cadence of a work shift at a slaughterhouse. When the inhabitants of Harlem are described in terms of the inventions of Wall Street, their dislocation from their "natural" environment makes their attempts to master the inventions of "civilized" society look foolish, like Halpern's characters in the Lower East Side who read the wrong cues into the city's rhythms. Lorca's humor, coupled with his polemically essentializing characterizations of the city's inhabitants, satirically undercuts the dominance of Wall Street.

In Wall Street, the limits of androcentricism have been reached and then surpassed. By means of technologies and their attendant global webs of power, bodily appetites have gone out of control; the limiting function of nature that had previously kept all in check has been obliterated. Whereas the protuberances and apertures in the medieval grotesque body in Bakhtin's analysis of Rabelais are passageways that ingest and communicate with the world (DI 167-206), in the modernist (and post-Whitman) Lorca they become a means of devouring and destroying, not communicating with, the world. The most blatant examples of insatiable appetite are set, not on Wall Street, but on Coney Island and Battery Park, and they are in stark contrast with the spiritualized body in Crane and the every-day bodies of Halpern.

For example, "Landscape of a Vomiting Multitude," subtitled "Dusk at Coney

¹³ "The Social and Sexual Geography of Poeta En Nueva York." *"Cuando Yo Me Muera..." Essays in Memory of Federico Garcia Lorca.* Ed. Brian C. Morris. Lanham: University Press of America, 1988, 110.

Island,” introduces an enormously fat woman whose appetite is so great nothing can survive it. Her cosmic gluttony extends past the physical world, into the abstract: the “fantasies of the last centuries’ feasts” as well as into the elements.

The fat lady came first,
tearing out roots and moistening drumskins.
The fat lady
who turns dying octopuses inside out.
The fat lady, the moon’s antagonist,
was running through the streets and deserted buildings
and leaving tiny skulls of pigeons in the corners
and stirring up the furies of the last centuries’ feasts
and summoning the demon of bread through the sky’s clean-swept
hills
and filtering a longing for light into subterranean tunnels.
The graveyards, yes, the graveyards
and the sorrow of the kitchens buried in sand,
the dead, pheasants and apples of another era,
pushing into our throat.¹⁴

In this poem, what deprives the world of its weight, heft, and value is not the transcendent, against which the here and now is fleeting and meaningless. Instead, it is the human body, which has grown too large for the world. Thus, the woman destroys even the roots that hold the earth together, and that are necessary for new growth. The kitchens are cemeteries. This death brings only destruction, not renewal, which traditionally follows death.

The fat lady is not eating for pleasure or to sustain the body. She is merely eating because she cannot help but eat. Later in the poem she turns into “the vomiting multitudes” that create a “jungle of vomit.” But this effluvia, the consequence of having eaten more than the body can enjoy or tolerate, is not the result of pleasurable

¹⁴ Translation Greg Simon and Steven F. White. Federico Garcia Lorca, Poet in New York. A bilingual edition, ed. Christopher Maurer (New York: Noonday Press, 1998) 49. See appendix B for the original language version of this and all subsequent poems.

overindulgence. It is

not the vomit of hussars on the breasts of their whores,
nor the vomit of a cat choking down a frog,
but the dead who scratch with clay hands
on flint gates where clouds and desserts decay (49).

The same sense of waste and lifelessness pervades the companion poem, “Landscape of a Pissing Multitude.” In Lorca’s depiction of the Anglo-American sections of New York, death is “nothing but rottenness;” the city is “truly dead without angels or ‘Resurrexit;’ death totally alien to the spirit, barbarous and primitive as the United States, a country which has never fought, and never will fight, for heaven” (193).

The obscenity of this kind of death is that its killing is pointless. The animals killed in “New York (Office and Denunciation)” do not fulfill any desire or bring any pleasure. They merely keep the machine alive. The precise list of names and quantities make physical and real the abstract idea of power and conquest:

Every day in New York, they slaughter
four million ducks,
five million hogs,
two thousand pigeons to accommodate the tastes of the dying,
one million cows,
one million lambs,
and two million roosters
that smash the skies to pieces.
It's better to sob while honing the blade
or kill dogs on the delirious hunts
than to resist at dawn
the endless milk trains,
the endless blood trains,
and the trains of roses, manacled
by the dealers in perfume.
The ducks and the pigeons,
and the hogs and the lambs
lay their drops of blood
under the multiplications,
and the terrified bellowing of the cows wrung dry
fills the valley with sorrow
where the Hudson gets drunk on oil.
I denounce everyone

who ignores the other half,
the half that can't be redeemed,
who lift their mountains of cement
where the hearts beat
inside forgotten animals
and where all of us will fall
in the last feast of pneumatic drills (135-7).

This is a spatial analogue to the temporal image of the giant-creator of New York in Halpern's "Our Earth." In Halpern, humans were forced to procreate to the "rhythms of driven steam" in order to provide food for the giant in the morning. Natural human cycles were replaced by those of production. In Lorca, the reader is overwhelmed by the size and scope of slaughter and the culmination of the individual creature, which is multiplied to the thousands and millions. The animals that are killed to "accommodate the tastes of the dying" are instantly liquefied and carried away on the "endless trains" as blood; the cows "wrung dry" are trains of milk. The juxtaposition of the bellowing cows and the Hudson drunk on oil implies a comparison of the living creatures who are killed in order to feed a dying city, and the fuel that keeps the machine running.

Unlike Charlie Chaplin's worker in the film *Modern Times*, or the hapless people torn from their homes and tossed into the giant's factory in Halpern's "Our Earth," Lorca's "blonds" who work in Wall Street do not suffer. Perhaps it is Lorca's spatial emphasis that allows them to become images of the landscape of Wall Street itself. Like the murdered animals above, the people are described in multiples, as "herds." They do not resist, but rather, participate

There, as nowhere else, you feel a total absence of the spirit: herds of men who cannot count past three, herds more who cannot get past six, scorn for pure science and demoniacal respect for the present. And the terrible thing is that the crowd that fills this street believes that the world will always be the same, and that it is their duty to keep

that huge machine running, day and night, forever. (192).

For Lorca, then, there is no “image of man” apart from the architecture of the “huge machine” of Wall Street. All people are multiplied or else very large (the “fat lady”), unthinking and mechanical. They are so indistinguishable that Lorca uses the term “empty suits” three times to describe them.

The “other half” of the city and the poem is Harlem, which Lorca came to know in August, 1929, after he had been in the city only one month. Even though Lorca describes the inhabitants of Harlem in terms of the white population, we do get individualized images of people who are separated from the inhumanity of Wall Street because they “do not understand” it. So the spatial separation of the two parts of New York implies two different perspectives of the world. Since, for Lorca, Harlem is largely symbolic of the nature that is crushed beneath Wall Street, the inhabitants are portrayed as transplanted and bewildered, like Halpern’s characters in “Our Garden,” or the flora of Central Park, which is completely transplanted.

They are slaves of all the white man’s inventions and machines, perpetually afraid that someday they will forget how to light the gas stove or steer the automobile or fasten the starched collar, afraid of driving a fork through an eye. I mean that these inventions are not theirs. The blacks live on borrowed things, and the black fathers have to maintain strict discipline at home lest their women and children adore the gramophone record or eat the tires of automobiles (190).

I would emphasize two aspects of Lorca’s prose description here. First, one should note the ridiculous theatricality of the situation. Lorca exaggerates the very real sense that the “blacks” of Harlem are living according to someone else’s standards and are adjusting themselves to a world-view that, with its attendant “form-shaping ideologies” of time and space, is not theirs. This confusion of temporal and spatial indicators prompted

the great African American novelist Ralph Ellison, nearly forty years later, to call Harlem "the scene and symbol of the Negro's perpetual alienation in the land of his birth."¹⁵ Like Lorca, Ellison identifies the source of the "clash of cultural factors" that causes the Harlemites' "confusion" as the "impact between urban slum conditions and folk sensibilities" (302).

Lorca's description in "The King of Harlem," exaggerates the sense that New York's idea of "civilization" deprives the Negro of dignity—for dignity demands, first and foremost, appropriate *positioning* of oneself vis-à-vis the world of the beholder. Here is an excerpt from the poem:

Then, blacks, and only then
will you be able to frantically kiss bicycle wheels,
place pairs of microscopes in squirrel lairs,
and dance fearlessly at last while the bristling flowers
cut down our Moses in the bulrushes that border heaven.

In Lorca's prose passages, I pointed out that Lorca attributes the "inability to understand" the uses of everyday objects such as bicycle wheels, gas stoves and forks to the fact that the "blacks of Harlem" are physically displaced into a world that is not theirs. Their dislocation is parodically imaged in foolish or dangerous behavior, such as kissing bicycle wheels or driving a fork through the eye.

This idea of civilization as a disruptive force—because it removes one from one's proper place—is one to which Hughes also gives literary expression in the poem, in "Lament for Dark Peoples." The narrative voice is first person, and he "was" both a "red man," and a "black man," until the "white man" came. Then,

They drove me out of the forest.
They took me away from the jungles.

¹⁵ Ralph Ellison, "Harlem is Nowhere," *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1964) 302.

I lost my trees.
I lost my silver moons.

Now they've caged me
In the circus of civilization.
Now I herd with the many—
Caged in the circus of civilization.¹⁶

Obviously, the “jungle” and “forest” are only allegorical, and the potential of such language to serve the interests of the civilization the poem decries is duly noted by Hughes himself later on. However, Hughes published only two such poems in his first collection (nothing like them appears in *Fine Clothes to the Jew*). The title of the other, “Poem. For the portrait of an African boy after the manner of Gauguin” (102), hints that the black speaker is speaking in whiteface.

The other aspect of Lorca's Harlem is that any articulation of it will be incomplete because of the “*mistrust* that characterizes the race.” His prose description of Harlem features “Doors half closed, black-quartz children afraid of the rich people from Park Avenue, gramophones whose song is suddenly interrupted,” and so forth (190). The true Harlem is hidden and disguised.¹⁷

Likewise, “The King of Harlem” reveals the Harlemites in their various disguises serving the residents of white New York, but it is clear that the servants have a knowledge that is inaccessible to those they serve.

Through the all-knowing silence,
waiters, cooks, and those whose tongues lick clean
the wounds of millionaires
seek the king in the streets or on the sharp angles of saltpeter.

¹⁶ *The Weary Blues* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926) 100.

¹⁷ On the other hand, one could, with Ann Douglas, view “black Manhattan's obsession with ascribed, shoplifted, and stolen selves” as a manifestation of its “will to personate,” which, in her defense of Cullen's poetic style, Douglas argues is “very American” (344).

Here Lorca externalizes what DuBois characterizes as the internal struggle of two warring self-consciousnesses, by portraying two distinct but related images. One is of the Harlem that is measured by the wounds and the warped nature of the white population, the “Harlem, threatened by a mob of headless suits! (33).” The other is the violent Harlem whose anguished is released in “petty crimes.” This second Harlem is unknowable, like the cabaret singer Lorca describes in his lecture on the poem: “I stared into her eyes and, just for a second, felt her reserve, her remoteness, her inner certainty that she had nothing to do with that admiring audience of Americans and foreigners. All Harlem was like her” (191).

To see the King of Harlem as he is, Lorca implies, one would have to overthrow (violently, in this excerpt) those whose presence limits the reader’s perception (the “blond vendor” and the “little Jewish women”). That is the content of the passage below. But when we look at the language, we see that Lorca is achieving what Bakhtin calls “the destruction of the false picture of the world”—that of Wall Street, which has disrupted the cycles of nature and has spatially dislocated the residents of Harlem. There is a parallel between the way the “blacks” of Harlem are shown to be surrounded by objects that are foreign to them and inimical to their natures and the way Lorca suggestively links words that are normally kept apart, but are, through associative logic, somehow right. The images here are linked by their own logic, which any reader, perhaps, might reconstruct.

It’s necessary to cross the bridges
and reach the murmuring blacks
so the perfume of their lungs
can buffet our temples with its covering
of hot pineapple.

It’s necessary to kill the blond vendor of firewater
and every friend of apple and sand,
and it’s necessary to use the fists
against the little Jewish women who tremble, filled with bubbles,
so the king of Harlem sings with his multitude,
so crocodiles sleep in long rows

beneath the moon's asbestos,
and so no one doubts the infinite beauty
of feather dusters, graters, copper pans, and kitchen casseroles.

Ay, Harlem! Ay, Harlem! Ay, Harlem!
There is no anguish like that of your oppressed reds,
Or your blood shuddering with rage inside the dark eclipse,
Or your garnet violence, deaf and dumb in the penumbra,
Or your grand king a prisoner in the uniform of a doorman (25-27).

Commenting on Rabelais's syntax, Bakhtin observes, "It is necessary to destroy and rebuild the entire false picture of the world, to sunder the false hierarchical links between objects and ideas, to abolish the divisive ideational strata. It is necessary to liberate all these objects and permit them to enter into the free unions that are organic to them, no matter how monstrous these unions might seem from the point of view of ordinary, traditional associations" (DI 169). The purpose is to destroy the falsity of the dominant ideology, and its image of the world, by disturbing its logic.¹⁸ This syntactic-level destruction parallels the destruction of figures that inhabit Lorca's *Wall Street*, the "blond vendor of firewater," a quaint description a liquor merchant which recalls the trickery of the first whites's encounter with Native Americans, and the Jew, which presumably draws upon the paranoia about the stereotype of the rich, Jewish banker.¹⁹ There is a fine, but sure line between what Bakhtin calls Rabelais's "fantastic realism" (169) and the "private" nature of "poetic language" (symbolism, animism, etc.) that he disparages. The difference is that the latter expresses the private, internal world of the poet, for whom "the language of the world does not suffice" (DI 287-88). The former is an image of the spatial configuration of the world.

¹⁸ Other scholars have noted Lorca's use of what they call "the ambiguous symbol"—what Lorca himself calls the *hecho poetico*—in which the meaning of symbolic word clusters changes from context to context. Admittedly, these scholars are concerned with Lorca's personal obsessions, such as mortality and homosexual love, but they all note the disturbance of traditional modes of rationality. See R. Martínez Nadal, *El Público: Amor, teatro y caballos en la obra de Federico García Lorca* (Oxford: The Dolphin Book Co., 1970) 208; Richard L. Predmore, *Lorca's New York Poetry. Social injustice, dark love, lost faith* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1980) 12.

¹⁹ There is a fine line between what Bakhtin calls Rabelais's "fantastic realism" and

In this poem, it expresses the dislocation of Harlem.

The "X" of Crossing Roadbeds

Parallel to Lora's diagrammatic schema of the city, Hughes describes the segregated populations, establishing narrative authority in the language and formal poetic genres sanctioned by each. That is, Hughes establishes the legitimacy of his placeless voice by demonstrating an understanding and mastery of the various chronotopic perspectives around him. Hughes takes on even the most essentializing characteristics of the populations Lorca describes in *Poeta en Nueva York*. Here his task is collecting the alien voices around him to create a rich portrait of his world. If anything, he might be accused of being too unselective and discriminating, as reviews of his books by his contemporaries suggest.

For example, J. A. Rogers believed that *Fine Clothes to the Jew* was a sell-out, because it portrayed African Americans in a racist manner devoid of literary merit: "If this is poetry then verily Shakespeare, Keats, Poe, Dunbar, McKay, were Ainus or Australian Bushmen. But, of course, this book, like *The Weary Blues*, is designed for white readers, with their preconceived notions about Negroes." He sees Hughes's book as evidence of "the social degradation of the Negro" in America: "The rage over books like this and the vogue of the spirituals among white people is but a red herring drawn across the trail."²⁰ On the other hand, Alain Locke praises Hughes for including topics previously unheard and unseen in poetry: "there is scarcely a prosaic note or a spiritual sag in spite of the fact that

²⁰ J. A. Rogers "Review of *Fine Clothes to the Jew*. [Reprinted from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 February 1927, sec. 2, p. 4] *Critical Essays on Langston Hughes*. Edward J. Mullen. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1986. 47-48 .

never has cruder colloquialism or more sordid life been put into the substance of poetry" (53).²¹

Countee Cullen condemns Hughes's efforts for the same reasons the others praise them: "Never having been one to think all subjects and forms proper for poetic consideration, I regard these jazz poems as interlopers in the company of the truly beautiful poems in other sections of the book," he writes about *The Weary Blues* (37). Instead of providing "the quiet way of communing" and of seeking company among "that select and austere circle of high literary expression which we call poetry," they "move along with the frenzy and electric heat of a Methodist or Baptist revival meeting" (38). He also worries that the poems "tend to hurl this poet into the gaping pit that lies before all Negro writers, in the confines of which they become racial artists instead of artists pure and simple" (39).²²

Hughes interpreted Cullen's remark as a desire on Cullen's part to "be White," and his response is recorded in his 1926 essay "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain."²³ Whether or not Hughes was too reductive²⁴ in his response to Cullen's concern that the

²¹ Alain Locke. "Common Clay and Poetry" 53-55 [*Saturday Review of Literature* 3 (9 April 1927)] *Critical Essays on Langston Hughes*. Edward J. Mullen. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1986: 712.

²² Countee Cullen "Poet on Poet" (reprinted from *Opportunity* 4 (4 March 1926). *Critical Essays on Langston Hughes*. Edward J. Mullen. Boston: G. K. Hall & Co., 1986. 37-39.

²³ Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain," *The Nation*. 23 June 1926

²⁴ Ann Douglas links Cullen's response to a desire to overcome literary racial profiling: "Although he [Langston Hughes] was not alone in thinking of Cullen's attachment to white art as a form of docility, even sycophancy, a servile placation of the genteel custodians of good taste of both races, when Cullen said that Negro poets might have 'more to gain from the rich background of English and American poetry than from any rebellious atavistic yearnings towards an African heritage,' he was not flattering the literary establishment so much as he was insisting on his own status as an American and acknowledging the realities of American art, black or white, and of the Western literary tradition more generally" (340).

She notes that Cullen was the only important figure among the younger Harlem writers to turn down Van Vechten's offers of aid and patronage (343). And she views Cullen's project as similar to that of Du Bois: "Certainly Du Bois, like Cullen, assumed the black heritage to be white as well as black, and he pointed out on several occasions that only self-consciously racial considerations and readings could make full sense of much of white American literature" (343). Further on she states, "The New Negro put too much trust in the white establishment, then...because he knew what his white peers could not always

label of racial poet will hem him in, Hughes is unequivocal. It is poetry that needs to change, he implies, not people. In recognizing that "his own racial world" was "as interesting as any other world," he claims that there is no one single American world.

The contradictory reactions to Hughes's *Wear Blues*, and Hughes's own contradictions between the authorial positioning in this book and his public stance on the African American artist, are informative because they embody the same multiplicity of perspectives that are contained in the collection itself. In his book *Langston Hughes and the Blues* Steven C. Tracy recognizes the dialogic potential of Hughes's narrative technique which allows characters to speak from their own points of view without the artistic filter of a poetic narrator and without capitulating to an assimilating or centralizing middle class agenda: "Hughes was soundly criticized by middle-class blacks for his depictions of the 'lowlife' element, figures which were stripped of any exoticism and were presented from their own point of view rather than filtered thorough a poetic speaker."²⁵ Tracy astutely recognizes two "centralizing forces" at work in Hughes's world, racial assimilation and capitalism, which Hughes's narrative style combats: "By letting the "low-down folks" speak for themselves...he was rebelling against the middle-class outlook of the Negro movement and moving imperceptivity toward communism" (4).

In opposing both of these "centralizing forces," by allowing the characters he depicts "speak for themselves," Hughes is acting as what Houston Baker calls a "translator of the nontraditional," which is the role of the "placeless." In contrast, "fixity is a function of power," and "those who maintain place, who decide what takes place and dictate what has taken place, are power brokers of the traditional."²⁶ "Translating," in the

admit: that, light-skinned or all-Negro, black Americans had a white heritage as well as a black one" (344).

²⁵ Steven C. Tracy, *Langston Hughes and the Blues* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 2001) 4.

²⁶ Houston Baker, *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature. A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1984) 202.

sense of moving or carrying somebody or something from one place to another, is a good way to describe the task of Hughes's narrators, who, in carrying meaning and traditions from one context to another, create what Joel Dinerstein calls a "functional culture for industrial society."²⁷

Yet, in so far as the chronotope is a way of grounding actions and dialogue in time and space, one must be "placed" in order to be "voiced." For, as I hope to demonstrate, the narrative problem of placelessness is that it is also voiceless. When he is placeless, there is no language available for the narrator *except* language in quotation marks—language that originates in and embodies worlds that are foreign to the narrator, but which he must accommodate. Hughes's task, then, moves him beyond the "double-voicing" of the Negro (which enacts Du Bois's "double consciousness") in a white world to a position in which he can speak in a single voice without quotation marks, and without conforming to the impetus of "cultural centralization and linguistic standardization" which I described in the first chapter. This is the first step in achieving what Eskin, adapting Bakhtin, calls the poet's "nonalibi for being," which is the notion that each person, being always already situated in a singular place at a singular moment in time, is uniquely answerable for his or her actions before others.²⁸

Only after one has achieved a place can one overcome this place, this "fixity," so to speak and perform what Eskin calls the "exemplary mode of discursive enactment of existence." This mode is a "communal language" that in Eskin's words, "most palpably instantiates the existential clashes between homogenizing and oppositional discourses in its very constructing" (389). Thus, it has a profound potential to facilitate and enact

²⁷ Joel Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine*

[A0]So how is this dialogism?

²⁸ This definition is paraphrased from Eskin, 387 n. 18. See on "alibi and nonalibis for being," Emerson and Morson, 351-353; also Bakhtin's notes on the Dostojevsky book. M.M. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Trans. Vadim Liapunov. Ed. Vadim Liapunov and Michael Holquist (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1993) 40.

sociopolitical critique.³⁰ What follows is an attempt to identify the ways in which Hughes’s poetry invents what Daniel McGee calls “a poetic form that would be neither white nor simply a reversion to minstrel stereotypes.”³¹ Whereas McGee relates Hughes’s “early project” to an effort to “imagine jazz as a language that transcends not only the opposition of standard and dialect, but all linguistic differences” (a task, he argues, that Hughes has in common with T.S. Eliot, though McGee makes a much more convincing case for Eliot’s transcendence), I would align Hughes much more closely with the project Eskin and Pechey have sketched. Namely, in privileging, showcasing, and *depending upon* linguistic differences and the shifting contexts of meaning, Hughes does not so much “transcend” ethnic and classist oppositions as embody them. But, paradoxically, he accomplishes this by simultaneously stepping outside of the classist oppositions, which have no place for him, and by giving voice to them.

Lorca’s map of New York suggests that the African Americans of Harlem do not belong any more than the poor specimens of nature belonged in the park portrayed in Halpern’s “Our Garden.” Indeed, as they are portrayed by Lorca, there is no place for them in the “normative” narrative of New York I proposed above. As Leroi Jones observes in *Blues People*:

What is so often forgotten in any discussion of the Negro's 'place' in American society is the fact that it was only as a slave that he really had one. The post-slave society had no place for

²⁹ Pechey’s description of roughly the same principle – as exemplified in his discussion of William Blake’s renewal of the allegory and in his creation of poetic dialogism—is providing authorship which is “authoritative without being authoritarian” and which is propelled by a “persistence of the will to truth through a discourse that insistently frames and contextualises itself in a paradigm of poetry’s accommodation to modernity” (79).

[TA0]Why is this paragraph here? There is so much quotation that I can’t understand what YOU are trying to say. And there is no transition to get us to “the power to name”.

³¹ Daniel McGee, “DADA DA DA: Sounding the Jew in Modernism,” *ELH* 68.2 (Summer 2001) 501.

[TA0]Do you really mean “classicist”? or “classist”?

[TA0]WHAT? I thought the novel was supposedly polyphonic?

the black American, and if there were to be any area of the society where the Negro might have an integral function, that area would have to be one that he created for himself.³²

Hughes's *The Weary Blues*, published in 1926 (the first of sixteen collections of poems Hughes published in his lifetime), is an attempt to create, not simply an "integral function," for a placeless people, but also a place—an alternate configuration of space that will allow the speaker to enter the narrative of New York. It presents enough of a narrative for me to depart from traditional Hughes scholarship, which tends to read it as a collection of lyrics, and, instead, to examine the narrative arc of the book.

One way of envisioning the spatial placement of Hughes's narrator outside of classic oppositions is provided by Houston Baker in *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature*. Like Crane's Bridge, it is both a site of convergence and of transience. It carries its home with it:

To suggest a trope for the blues as a forceful matrix in cultural understanding is to summon an image of the black blues singer at the railway junction lustily transforming experiences of a durative (unceasingly oppressive) landscape into the energies of rhythmic song. The railway juncture is marked by transience. Its inhabitants are always travelers--a multifarious assembly in transit. The "X" of crossing roadbeds signals the multidirectionality of the juncture and is simply a single instance in a boundless network that redoubles and circles, making sidings and ladders, forms Y's and branches over the vastness of hundreds of thousands of American miles. Polymorphous and multidirectional, scene of arrivals and departures, place betwixt and between (ever entre les deux), the juncture is the way-station of the blues.³³

³² LeRoi Jones, *Blues People. Negro Music in White America* (New York: Morrow Quill Paperbacks, 1963) 55. See also Ernest Borneman, "The Roots of Jazz," in Nat Hentoff and Albert J. McCarthy, eds. *Jazz* (New York, Rinehart, 1959) p. 23-24; Christopher Small, 461-70.

³³ Houston Baker, Jr. *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature*, 7.

Like the image of the Brooklyn Bridge in Hart Crane, or Halpern's speaker crucified in America, Baker's "juncture," or "X," signals the coming together of distinct forms of time and space. In *The Bridge* it was the completion of Columbus's voyage, as well as the juncture between the modern moment and timelessness. Here is Halpern's cross, with which "In Der Fremd V" concludes:

It seems to me, that I myself, am hanging on a cross,
and on my head there lies a crown--a crown of thorns...
And there is blood, upon my hands and feet, and on the cross, too.
My tormentors have now begun to dance like whores...

And I am silent. I don't ask of God that he forgive them.
There's no spark of love for them, my heart is cold --- ---
The ancient "why"s already gone; it's long been dead in me.
My heart's already grown long tired of faith and God.³⁴

For Halpern the cross is also the signifier of homelessness. It follows a recounting of all the places in which the speaker has sojourned without ever feeling at home ^{(Poland, Germany,} the Atlantic Ocean, the place from which the speaker narrates his sense of alienation from the Irish immigrants traveling with him). Temporally it recalls the meeting of the "vertical time" of religious belief (Heschel), which transcends historical time and the horizontal time of history, as well as the juncture of all the speaker's previous journeys. Although the cross has specific religious connotations, it could also be viewed as universalizing the particular human condition in a world in which capitalism has become religion,³⁵ which is both a blessing and a curse for the speaker, for whom religious persecution has been

³⁴ In *Nyu-York*, 79. Translation mine.

[TA0]Where does this parenthesis close? A sense of alienation isn't a place. Rewrite sentence.

[TA0]Unclear writing. Rephrase.

³⁵ Halpern describes New York, the scene of the crucifixion, like this:

"The city of the free, New York, is now my home.

The city where each chiming bell's a sound no one pays heed to,
and there's no blood that must be shed to honor a god's name."

replaced with dehumanizing labor.³⁶

Hughes himself offers the cross as an image of condition of the African American in the poem entitled “Cross”:

My old man’s a white old man
And my old mother’s black.
If ever I cursed my white old man
I take my curses back.

If ever I cursed my black old mother
And wished she were in hell,
I’m sorry for that evil wish
And now I wish her well.

My old man died in a fine big house.
My ma died in a shack.
I wonder where I’m gonna die,
Being neither white nor black?
(*Weary Blues* 52).

Because he is “neither” instead of “both” white and black, he belongs neither in a “fine big house” nor in a “shack.” In fact, though both parents are situated quite firmly—their deaths (not to mention, their race) ensure they will experience no change in fortune—the speaker floats between them. That he does not wonder where he will live, but rather, where he will die, indicates his current unfixed position. Here, the cross refers to the union of black and white, rich and poor. Later this image, though unarticulated explicitly, will reoccur in the union of time and space.

This position (visualized as the “X”) which the narrators of both Halpern and

³⁶ Although, at first glance, one might be tempted to recall the chronotope of the encounter or the chronotope of the threshold, these chronotopes are not really analogues to the blues “x” or to the other images of juncture we have seen in Halpern and Crane. For one thing, the threshold and the encounter are “minor” (Bakhtin) or “local” (Ladin) chronotopes. But the juncture, signified by the Bridge, the cross, and the X, among many other images, is the dominant configuration of time and space in the chronotope of 1920s New York, so it operates on a different level. Furthermore, in both the threshold and the encounter “the temporal element predominates” (DI 243), whereas here, the spatial element is just as significant, if not more so. Finally, the threshold and encounter are usually indicative of moments of crisis and life changing experiences, instead of life conditions.

Hughes, and the Harlemites of Lorca share to some extent, is the position that Bakhtin, in his chronotope essay, privileges as accomplishing “one of the most basic tasks for the novel” which is “the laying-bare of any sort of conventionality, the exposure of all that is vulgar and falsely stereotyped in human relationships” (DI 162). In language deeply resonant with Baker’s, Ellison’s and Gates’s Bakhtin claims that the figures which inhabit it, the clown/fool and rogue, are masks and that they externalize, not their own being (which is, incidentally, is why Halpern was not an *Inzikhist*—an “expressionist” who described the world through his own subjectivity) but “reflected, alien being,” for “that is all they have” (160).³⁷ In the chronotope of 1920s, which is typified, first and foremost, by the lack of normative sense of temporality and by discontinuous space, as a consequence of the extremely heterogeneous population and the dehumanizing aspects of capitalism and infrastructure, these figures are transformed into major protagonists and are given real-life, not other-worldly, characteristics.

What is significant in the transformation of the role of the fool/clown and rogue “outsider” in 1920s New York is that it changes from one of strict opposition to one that taps into the general modernist trend of culturally sanctioned opposition.³⁸

Bakhtin’s observation that the figure of the clown and the fool (not the rogue) have an “otherworldliness about them” that does not allow them to enter real life is repeated in studies of the placeless protagonist in African American literature. Even in Gates’s brilliant

³⁷ Bakhtin’s chronotope of the clown/fool and rogue supplied “the need to have some substantive, ‘univented’ mask that would have the capacity both to fix the position of the author vis-à-vis the life he portrays (how and from what angle he, a participant in the novel, can see and expose all this private life) and to fix the author’s position vis-à-vis his readers, his public (for whom he is the vehicle for an ‘expose’ of life—as a judge, an investigator, a ‘chief of protocol,’ a politician, a preacher, a fool, etc.) (DI 160).

³⁸ This is a trend Ann Douglas substantiates by calling her study of 1920s Manhattan “Terrible Honesty”: “‘terrible honesty’” is “a reaction against ‘Pollyanna’ and ‘rose-colored spectacles’” (as in masks of normalcy) (27), which corresponds to her claim that “the moderns sought out ‘what cannot be born,’ ‘the horror of life’” and “facts”: “the harder the better” (33). Ann Douglas, *Terribly honest. Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995).

study of double-voicing in African American literature through the figures of the trickster, the signifying monkey, and the figure of Esu, among others, in which he creates a self-referential history (that is, one that exists in the context of African American literature, without consulting the Anglo-American literary tradition) the “outsider” position is socially-sanctioned in such a way as to allow the trickster to interfere with society, but not to enter it. This position, long associated with the figure of the blues singer, has been well documented.³⁹ And, insofar as it provides a respite from modern life for white and black audiences, or it works by “transposing space and creating a different relationship to time” (Hirsch 47), this position remains otherworldly.

What is not so well studied is the way that the double-voiced protagonist enters the real world in an invisible mask, that is, in a position that has not been socially sanctioned—in a position that is *not* the minstrel, the trickster, the blues singer, the clown or rogue, or any other immediately recognizable mask. This violation of socially sanctioned outsideness allows for what Eskin calls “nonalibi for being” in its truest sense.⁴⁰ As Morson and Emerson point out, in socially sanctioned outsideness often strengthens what it opposes by providing a “a safety valve” for releasing resentment (341). When Eskin calls the “exemplary mode of discursive enactment of existence” that which “facilitates the completion of mutual understanding and, concomitantly, the

³⁹ Compare this position to that of the blues singers in the Mississippi Delta and the “Sira hilaliyya” from southern Egypt described by Tom Lamont. “In both cases, the singers are...at the bottom of a vertically structured social order, illiterates denied a voice in societies where power is vested in literacy.” The singers see their “homelessness—their being on the road, on the move, and on the margins’—as somehow essential to their art” (Switzer, 27-28). Here, as in Gates, the outside status is socially sanctioned. Lamont finds that the singers in his study are held in “respectful disrespect.”

⁴⁰ The “truest sense” is a reversal of the manner in which Bakhtin celebrates it in the “Chronotope” essay. Then, Bakhtin considered “radical unfinalizability” of rootless ness a form of liberation. However, he later came to see it as an illegitimate alibi.” (Morson and Emerson, 352). Furthermore in Bakhtin’s final period, which comes after the essays collected in *Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin “stresses that...defiance is futile, much like the underground man’s effort to *show* his friends that he is *ignore* them (353).

subversion of sociopolitical, potentially repressive, authority” (389) (what Bakhtin has called the “creation of a common language”) he is, in essence, calling for precisely the move that Hughes makes in *The Weary Blues*. He steps *outside* of the socially sanctioned arena of outsideness—that of the “primitive” or the “blues singer” or the jazz poet—for the very purpose of social critique.

What I am suggesting, with the hope that I am not hijacking Hughes’s poetry for my own purpose⁴¹ or discounting the very real and important work of “raising consciousness” that Angela Davis claims as the essential work of the blues,⁴² is that “signifying” and blues “double-voicing” has limited dialogical value in that it does not create a fully “communal language,” but only an incomplete communal language, which the group against whom it is directed does not understand. In a sense, then, it reinforces segregation even while challenging it.⁴³ Of course, it is difficult to do otherwise: Hughes has pointed this out by taking great pains to illustrate society’s inability to recognize his existence in any but prefabricated categories. This does not allow anyone to sidestep the question of race; it does explore alternative options to the blues.

In what follows I will show a progression from Hughes’s outside position, starting with the kind of genealogy we saw in Crane, in which Hughes’s “neither black nor white” status is shown to be the original human condition. I will end with a discussion of

⁴¹ In fact, Hughes preferred his second book of poems, *Fine Clothes to the Jew*. It was a better book, he said, “because it was more impersonal, more about other people than myself, and because it made use of the Negro folk-song forms, and included poems about work and the problems of finding work, that are always so pressing with the Negro people” (*The Big Sea*, 263).

⁴² Angela Yvonne Davis, *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 196.

⁴³ Here I am not faulting poets or singers for lack of political action, as other have done. See Ron Karenga, “Black Art: Mute Matter Given Force and Function,” *Black Poets and Prophets*, ed. Woodie King and Earl Anthony (New York: New American Library, 1972) and LeRoi Jones, who famously put it in “Dutchman,” “If Bessie Smith had killed some white people she wouldn’t have needed that music,” “Dutchman,” *Dutchman and The Slave* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1964) 35.

Hughes's attempt to create what Bakhtin and Eskin call a "common language," that incorporates both the double-consciousness/double-voicing and also the chronotopic perspective of the oppositional worldview.

I've Known Rivers

In the essay "My America," Hughes affirms Jones's statement while making his own genealogical and historical claims to the country:

This is my land America. Naturally, I love it--it is home--and I am vitally concerned about its mores, its democracy, and its well-being...My ancestry goes back at least four generations on American soil--and through Indian blood, many centuries more. My background and training is purely American--the schools of Kansas, Ohio, and the East. I am old stock as opposed to recent immigrant blood.

Yet many Americans who cannot speak English--so recent is their arrival on our shores--may travel about the country at will securing food, hotel, and rail accommodations wherever they wish to purchase them. I may not. These Americans, once naturalized, may vote in Mississippi or Texas, if they live there. I may not. They may work at whatever job their skills command. But I may not. They may purchase tickets for concerts, theaters, lectures wherever they are sold throughout the United States. I may not. They may repeat the Oath of Allegiance with its ringing phrase of "liberty and justice for all," with a deep faith in its truth--as compared to the limitations and oppressions they have experienced in the Old World. I repeat the oath, too, but I know that the phrase about "liberty and justice" does not fully apply to me. I am an American--but I am a colored American (500).⁴⁴

Translating the social situation into a literary perspective, which is what Hughes does, as he moves fluidly between poetry and autobiography in the two collections, the problem becomes chronotopic. Hughes must establish a literary time-space from which to narrate his autobiographical claims to America. And this will be the transforming moment for

⁴⁴ "My America," The Langston Hughes Reader (New York: George Braziller, Inc. 1958) 500.

what Bakhtin calls the chronotope of the rogue, clown and fool.

If we read the *The Weary Blues* as a narrative of how the speaker moves from the line

I've been a slave

to the line

I, too, am America

we note that Hughes's multiple positioning is in keeping with his refusal to be defined by any racial category, even that of outsider. We see that Hughes's variety of poetic forms allows him to integrate the "diversities of heteroglot speech"⁴⁵ by showing his mastery in each category, which enables him to move from the "slave" to the hope of being the "brother" who eats in the "dining room." That way, when he ends with "I, too, am America," we can see that to be American is to be black on the speaker's own terms. This position, the juncture of the here and now, is Hughes's vision of the X Baker describes earlier.

Hughes does not particularly celebrate his outside status. He laments it because it is not chosen. His refusal to identify solely with one racial category is evident in the following excerpt. Here he cannot fit into fixed narrative space because there is no place in America or Africa for someone whose body contains the type of history his does. In this way, the figure of the "X" is rather like that of the signature of the illiterate, in that his position is illegible to white society.⁴⁶:

You see, unfortunately, I am not black. There are lots of

⁴⁵ I am referencing Morson and Emerson's gloss (CP 322) on Bakhtin's claim that, in poetry, "rhythm serves to strengthen and concentrate even further the unity and hermetic quality of the surface of poetic style, and of the unitary language that this style posits" (DN 298). When the language itself is double voiced, there is no unitary language to seal.

⁴⁶ Of course, my claim is complicated by Hughes's later response to Countee Cullen's desire to be a "poet" and not a "black poet" in "The Negro and the Racial Mountain." While Hughes's use of the word "black" changes, his purposes remain the same.

different kinds of blood in our family. But here in the United States, the word "Negro" is used to mean anyone who has *any* Negro blood at all in his veins. In Africa, the word is more pure. It means *all* Negro, therefore *black*.

I am brown. My father was a darker brown. My mother an olive-yellow. On my father's side, the white blood in his family came from a Jewish slave trader in Kentucky, Silas Cushenberry, of Clark County, who was his mother's father; and Sam Clay, a distiller of Scotch descent, living in Henry County, who was his father's father. So on my father's side both male great-grandparents were white, and Sam Clay was said to be a relative of the great statesman, Henry Clay, his contemporary.

On my mother's side, I had a paternal great-grandfather named Quarles--Captain Ralph Quarles--who was white and who lived in Louisa County, Virginia, before the Civil War, and who had several colored children by a colored housekeeper, who was his slave. The Quarles traced their ancestry back to Francis Quarles, famous Jacobean poet, who wrote *A Feast for Worms*.

On my maternal grandmother's side, there was French and Indian blood. My grandmother looked like an Indian--with very long black hair. She said she could lay claim to Indian land, but she never wanted the government (or anybody else) to give her anything. She said there had been a French trader who came down the St. Lawrence, then on foot to the Carolinas, and mated with her grandmother, who was a Cherokee--so that all her people were free. During slavery, she had free papers in North Carolina, and traveled about free, at will. Her name was Mary Sampson Patterson, and in Oberlin, Ohio, where she went to college, she married a free man named Sheridan Leary.⁴⁷

The first thing he does, faced with the limitations of an America defined the centralizing forces of capitalism and assimilation I described in chapter one, is, like Crane and Halpern, to reach back in history to the mythical beginnings of these centralizing forces, which will later enable him to propose an alternative outcome to the segregated world of New York that Lorca described. In the two genealogies below, Hughes takes on what Edward Hirsch calls "the essential work of the poet in society," which is to interpenetrate "the secular and the sacred" and to transfigure "our relationship to historical time."⁴⁸

The Weary Blues opens with "Proem," written in 1920, which pairs a specific,

⁴⁷ *The Big Sea, An Autobiography*, (1940) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963) 11.

⁴⁸ Edward Hirsch, "Reverberations of a Work Song," *The American Poetry Review* 28:2 (1999) 45.

historical instance of slavery and injustice from the distant, quasi-mythical past with an instance of slavery or degradation in the near-past or present, making each equivalent, and demonstrating how they speaker outside of history and outside of society. Thus, the poem depicts three instances in which the speaker's body is the locus of the intersection between horizontal (linear, historical) time and vertical (static, cyclical) time.

I've been a slave:
Cæsar told me to keep his door-steps clean.
I brushed the boots of Washington.

I've been a worker:
Under my hand the pyramids arose.
I made mortar for the Woolworth Building...

I've been a victim:
The Belgians cut off my hands in the Congo.
They lynch me now in Texas.

In each instance, the speaker has no agency: he is only used as a tool in the hands of a historical figure or event: the Roman conquest of Northern Africa (and of the world), the Egyptian Pharaohs' creation of the pyramids, the founding of America as an independent country, and the expansion of African slavery into the world as a means of conquering and populating the Americas, the spread of capitalism and racism, once slavery has ended.

The middle stanza, "I've been a singer..." is the genealogy of the blues. It is inseparable, in this poem, from the narrator's servitude.

I am a Negro:
Black as the night is black,
Black like the depths of my Africa.

I've been a singer:
All the way from Africa to Georgia
I carried my sorrow songs.

I made ragtime.

Although it recalls Baker's notion of travel in the epic journey, its hero, unlike Bakhtin's, is carried like cargo, instead of traveling of his own volition.

In "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," also composed in 1920, Hughes introduces a new meaning into Africa, which will allow him to transform the black and white template that Lorca introduced. Like Halpern, part of Hughes's goal is to universalize a personal experience in order to clear a common ground for mutual apprehension that, in Hughes's case, lies off of Lorca's diagram.

I've known rivers:
I've known rivers ancient as the world and older than the
flow of human blood in human veins.

My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln
went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy
bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I've known rivers:
Ancient, dusky rivers.
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

George Hutchinson points out that "if the soul of the Negro in this poem goes back to the Euphrates, it goes back to a pre-'racial' dawn and a geography far from Africa that is identified with neither blackness nor whiteness."⁴⁹ Noting that, at the time of Hughes's writing, the area was considered a possible location of the Garden of Eden, Hutchinson claims that Hughes "avoids racial essentialism while nonetheless stressing the existential,

⁴⁹ George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 1995) 415.

racialized conditions of black and modern identity" (415).

In many ways this poem can be seen as a companion to "Proem," for the specific place names are sites historically associated with slavery. The Congo was the site of the Belgian slave trade; the Nile evokes pyramids, and the Mississippi lies in the heart of the Old South. Yet, the phrasing is obscure enough to ambiguate the speaker's relationship to these events. The claim that these two poems make is that the Negro speaker witnessed first hand the very forces and historical events that later created the Wall Street of Lorca's poem. Thus, the Harlemiter, it is implied, does not live among "borrowed things" at all because he himself constructed them.

I, Too, Sing America

One of Hughes's most underrated methods of making visible the temporal-spatial indicators of what Ladin calls "intrasubjective" (an individual character's perception) and "intersubjective" (a collective space-time that is actually or potentially shared by more than one character) chronotopes from which local chronotopes emerge (224) is his juxtaposition of competing voices (and their worldviews). Ladin identifies this category of chronotope as the means by which the character's consciousness is made visible (224). Hughes's juxtaposed images make incarnate the double-consciousness I have described above. The placelessness of Harlem is evident in the way that the singers and dancers are so unfixed that they are like blank slates upon which the viewers can project any image.

But it is the speaker who complicates the diagram I sketched from Lorca's view of New York. Though the speaker speaks from a Harlem cellar ("the underground"), he not

singing the blues, nor is he watching the blues singers and dancers. Rather, he is watching the white interloper watch the signifying blues singer. In his commentary and “translation” work, he is creating a common language.

The first of two pairings I examine “Young Singer” (28) and “Cabaret” (20) hinges on class distinctions inherent in aesthetic sensibility, most notable in the phrases “chansons vulgaires” and “vulgar dancers.” Here, the unidentified speakers betray their insider/outsider status in the centralizing forces of history described above in Hughes’s genealogies by their understanding of the language of both high and low culture. What I find significant is not simply the way separate worlds are delineated through vocabulary, but the way they reach toward one another in an attempt to understand, and where they pull away.

Young Singer

One who sings “chansons vulgaires”
In a Harlem cellar
Where the jay-band plays
From dark to dawn
Would not understand
Should you tell her
That she is like a nymph
For some wild faun (28).

First, the singer obviously does not have a background in Western Classical literature, so that she does not know what nymphs and fauns are, or their historical relevance. This may attest to her “pure” or “primitive” nature, but it would also assure that she would not be aware of the role she was playing or the time she is depicted as inhabiting. It is likely that she does not speak French, either (unless Hughes is drawing on his experience in Paris) and hence may not understand the aesthetic values by which her song is evaluated. Thus, she plays the role of the outsider who is, herself, lacking in self-

consciousness, as Du Bois describes consciousness. She exists only as others see her. The speaker, however, is privy to the cultural knowledge the singer lacks. He is aware that the observer (whom the speaker is observing) is likening her to what Houston Baker would call a “figure on a Grecian urn” as in his statement about fixity and power I noted above. Here I will give the conclusion of that passage:

"Those who maintain place, who decide what takes place and dictate what has taken place, are power brokers of the traditional. The 'placeless,' by contrast, are translators of the nontraditional. Rather than fixed in the order of cunning Grecian urns, their lineage is fluid, nomadic, transitional" (*Blues Ideology*, 202). Thus, the observer about whom the speaker indirectly addresses his remarks does not even understand the “placelessness” of the singer, because she is already fixed to him. He, after all, has the power to name and fix her in his world.

On the other hand, the speaker is also hip to the Harlem cellars, the “jay-bands” and the world of the singer. He is aware of his commodifying of the singer, taking her out of her native frames of reference, in creating a poem in which she is or is not a “nymph.” However, in not actually writing the particular poem in which she would be described as a nymph, but only raising the possibility of it, he demonstrates his mastery of both worlds, demonstrating what Baker would call the “mastery of form.”

The first speaker in “Cabaret,” (the one who poses the question), however, is on the verge of understanding.

Does a jazz-band ever sob?
They say a jazz-band's gay.
Yet as the vulgar dancers whirled
And the wan night wore away,
One said she heard the jazz-band sob
When the little dawn was grey.

Like the singer above, the speaker is female, which suggests a comparison between the two women. Obviously, this speaker is one of the white outsiders who have come in to hear black music. Of course a “gay” jazz band can “sob,” but only for the initiated. Thus, the speaker is very much like the innocent singer of “chanson vulgaires” in that she, too, is outside of her frame of reference. The dances are simply called “vulgar,” in English. Thus, the questioner is probably an innocent white woman, rendered, by the simplicity of her questioning, as a kind of civilized primitive, even as she views the dancers as “vulgar.”

In the next pairing, "To A Young Prostitute" and "To A Black Dancer In 'The Little Savoy,'" each image of consciousness is fleshed out in the figure of the female singer. The first the image of a young girl is rendered in an imagistic manner (characteristic of “high” modernist work), and then in a jazz sensibility, demonstrating the “mastery” of two more types of form. "To A Young Prostitute" is reminiscent of Pound's "In a Station of the Metro":

Her dark brown face
Is like a withered flower
On a broken stem.
Those kind come cheap in Harlem
So they say.

Pound's poem reads as follows: “The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough.” Pound dispenses with the "is like a," achieving an implied simile or metaphor, through parallel structure and a semi-colon. Hughes's syntax is more conversational, but it achieves the same effect, though in reverse. For Hughes, the flower is dark, not the stem or bough; and the flower is withered, the stem broken, as though the contemporary world has destroyed what nature so lovingly wrought. Thus, Hughes’s poem is Pound’s darker double.

This method, Imagism, is supposed to render an “image in a moment of time,” but

more importantly, it should show the subjectivity of the poet (the speaker, then, is capable of “self-consciousness;” he is not a mask to reveal the exteriority of others). The woman is, thus, portrayed as the object of the speaker’s subjectivity. She herself is objectified, but the speaker is not. However, the black female prostitute is apparently not a suitable subject for “art.” The last two lines of Hughes's poem provide a judgment of the woman, yanking her out of the world of art, and landing her firmly in a social world. The “so they say” further distances the speaker from the world he is describing, but it also softens the judgment, undercutting it. Because it is placed on a separate line, it may even be the voice of a second speaker.

On the facing page, “To A Black Dancer,” this woman, or a similar one, is painted in a more primitive environment, outside of the judgment of contemporary social mores, because she is situated in a Harlem cabaret, which, we have seen above, provides a “respite” from modern life.⁵⁰ Furthermore, she is described in a broken, ragged rhythm. Her willingness to provide sensual pleasure is positive because she is likened, not to a plucked flower, a symbol rife with sexual censor, but to popular intoxicants: wine, night, jazz, sleep, and joy:

Wine-maiden
Of the jazz-tuned night,
Lips
Sweet as purple dew,
Breasts
Like the pillows of all sweet dreams,

⁵⁰ Joel Dinerstein (15-17), drawing on Lewis Mumford's observations about the relationship between bodies and machines in *Technics and Civilization* claims, “The vogue for primitivism went hand in hand with the alienation from industrial imperatives...artists, and the 'mechanically disciplined urban masses' of the civilized world needed to counter the increasing rationalization of machine imperatives with a more emotional, expressive range of physiological activity; Americans found 'the machine, which acerbically denied the flesh, was offset by the flesh.' They found relief in sex, social dance, folk arts, sculpture, and 'the erotic music of the African negro tribes.” Mumford, *Technics and Civilization*, 359-63.

Who crushed
The grapes of joy
And dripped their juice
On you?

In both cases, the girl is objectified. In the one, she is presented through the lens of the European literary tradition, and in the second, she is presented as a sensual primitive. Even though the beat is jazzy, the language is more formal and stilted, more "poetic" than in "Cabaret." Despite the rhythm, that pulls the reader into the music, the description creates a distance, causing the girl to be viewed as a symbolic other, not as a flesh and blood woman with a voice.

It is not clear whether or not the speaker is being ironic. In pairing the two images of the woman, the narrator is aware that what is acceptable and praiseworthy in art is deemed "cheap" and trashy when it occurs in real life. In writing about his break with "godmother," the wealthy widow who had provided financial and emotional support to both him and Zora Neale Hurston, Hughes reveals his contradictory and complicated attitude about the kind of fixity that would allow him to present the image of the singer in a non-ironic manner:

She wanted me to be primitive and know and feel the intuitions of the primitive. But, unfortunately, I did not feel the rhythms of the primitive surging through me, and so I could not live and write as though I did. I was only an American Negro--who had loved the surface of Africa and the rhythms of Africa--but I was not Africa. I was Chicago and Kansas City and Broadway and Harlem. And I was not what she wanted me to be. So, in the end it all came back very near to the old impasse of white and Negro again, white and Negro--as do most relationships in America. (*The Big Sea*, 325)

Clearly, then, "To A Black Dancer" views the nightclub through a white lens: The whites and the dark browns can only meet on an escapist playground, not in real life. One must also consider that Hughes himself admits the residents of Harlem did not necessarily

care for the white bourgeois clients who liked to slum in Harlem:

Nor did ordinary Negroes like the growing influx of whites toward Harlem after sundown, flooding the little cabarets and bars where formerly only colored people laughed and sang, and where now the strangers were given the best ringside tables to sit and stare at the Negro customers--like amusing animals in a zoo.

The Negroes said: 'we can't go downtown and sit and stare at you in your clubs. You won't even let us in your clubs.' But they didn't say it out loud--for Negroes are practically never rude to white people. So thousands of whites came to Harlem night after night, thinking the Negroes loved to have them there, and firmly believing that all Harlemites left their houses at sundown to sing and dance in cabarets, because most of the whites saw nothing but the cabarets, not the houses. (*The Big Sea*, 225)

If it is a let down that “Epilogue,” the last poem in *The Weary Blues*, brings back Lorca’s polarized diagram of New York, in which the Harlemites are the servants and the whites are the consumers, and its speaker finds himself in it kitchen, it should be remembered that whenever black and whites are portrayed together in this narrative, their encounters are always centered around entertainment or work. The black servant or performer is always “underground” (in the cellar) or, if outdoors, then conducting repetitive labor. When the laborer is inside, he works in an elevator or a train (evoking the “transient juncture” once more).

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll sit at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,

"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed,--

I, too, am America.

Given the association we have drawn between the “darker brother” and night, Africa, slave labor, and cyclical employment that, in itself, is repetitious, but that drives lineal history, albeit under the leadership of a lighter-skinned brother, it would be consistent to point out that the kitchen is the place of endlessly repeated action. Every day dishes must be washed, fire lit, food prepared. Every day human beings waken to hunger, no matter how much they have eaten the day before. The kitchen is only the most obvious reminder of the fact that the world contains producers and consumers. Certainly, though, the darker brother’s position in the kitchen of this poem, of this country, is consistent with his position as slave who constructed the pyramids, as Washington’s boot shiner, and as a Georgia plantation slave, the cogs and wheels of machinery that repeat the same actions over and over.

Thus, Hughes expresses here the same observation that Ralph Ellison implies in his 1970 essay, that “without the Negro” there would be no America: “Despite his racial difference and social status, something indisputably American about Negroes not only raised doubts about the white man’s value system, but aroused the troubling suspicion that whatever else the true American is, he is also somehow black.”⁵¹ This observation is implied in Hughes’s “A Negro Speaks of Rivers.” But here Hughes’s narrator sings America because he *is* America—which is black as well as white.

⁵¹ Ralph Ellison, “What America Would be Like Without Blacks,” Time Magazine, April 6, 1970.

Conclusion

“Every entry into the sphere of meaning is accomplished only through the gates of the chronotope,” Bakhtin declared in “Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel” (258). This entering through the gates of meaning is a good metaphor for examining the poetry of Hart Crane, Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, Langston Hughes and Federico García Lorca, whose collections, first and foremost, are concerned with entering the narrative space of New York—the crucible of America—and negotiating a place within it. Though temporal and spatial indicators are inseparably fused, I have suggested that the problem for Halpern and Crane is predominantly temporal: how does one make sense of the present moment, and how does one move among the wildly disparate, inhuman rhythms of the city? For Hughes and Lorca, the problem has been predominantly spatial: how does one overcome the racial segregation that reaches through the physical configurations of space into the very consciousness of the individual, so that the individual consciousness, like the city itself, is divided into two? Since “the image of man is always chronotopic” (DI 85), achieving a “place” in New York in the 1920s determines who the characters will become.

My task, in focusing on New York, has been in line with a suggestion of Bakhtin himself, who concludes his essay with an admission that, in his examination of the chronotope, “it has been temporal relationships by and large that have been studied—and these in isolation from the spatial relationships indissolubly tied up with them” (258). New York is not just the physical setting of the poems collected here; as I have attempted to demonstrate, the city is inseparable from the meaning of the narrative. After considering the physical and sociological make-up of the city, I deemed it appropriate to include the works of non-native speakers of English, in addition to speakers of Standard American English and Black dialect. Not only are the poets representative of the writers who have been

excluded, for reasons of style or language, from the modernist cannon, but, as migrants, foreigners, and otherwise marginalized poets, their characters best describe the various kinds of temporal and spatial dislocations for which modernism is typically known, and for which the city is notorious.

My work has been guided by a principle similar to Jay Ladin's in his essay, "Fleshing Out the Chronotope": "it is only by making a full set of comparisons that we can truly "read" a literary chronotope" (220). Thus, in placing these four poets together, I have attempted to read a rich and full literary chronotope of 1920s New York. An even richer image of this particular chronotope would include the temporal and spatial configurations of women's poetry, which in the 1920s, would mean an examination of domestic space—such as "the kitchen," which, as I have shown in the previous chapter, is a powerful image of the juncture of different kinds of time.

Future work in this area might draw on a phenomena that Ladin has pointed out: historically, "one of the most common chronotopic paradoxes is the clash between a heroic chronotope and a domestic chronotope" (225), by which he means that these two classically "mutually contradictory" chronotopes engender radically different genres of writing. One way that classical literature has overcome the contradiction can be seen in the example of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus murders Penelope's suitors, thereby transforming the domestic space into a heroic space. As I have suggested in the examples of Halpern's city-giant ("Unzer Erd), Hughes's kitchen, Chaplin's confusing of factory and street space, and Ford's practices in which the home was invaded by the factory, 1920s New York is also characterized by a destruction of the traditional boundaries that separate the domestic from the public realms of action.

The poetry of Mina Loy (*Lunar Baedeker*, 1923), an English immigrant who came to New York via Paris and Florence, and Lola Ridge (*The Ghetto*, 1918),¹ a working-class

¹ Lola Ridge, *The Ghetto and Other Poems* (New York: B.W. Huebsch, 1918).

Irish immigrant whose poem is set in the Tenement building in which she lives on Hester Street, powerfully demonstrate the literary collapse between the exterior and the interior in New York. Both Loy and Ridge employ the same kinds of images of time and space as the four poets collected in this study, but their bridges and junctures are also visible in such objects as windows, staircases, and through such activities as a game of badminton and procreational sex.

Loy's involvement with the Italian Futurist movement heightens her awareness of the narrative importance of time and space, and most of her work revolves around the difference between the social and biological configurations of time between the sexes and the spaces they inhabit. Her demand that woman "Leave off looking to men to find out what you are **not**—seek within yourselves to find out what you **are**"² calls for a chronotopic shift: "FORGET that you live in houses, that you may live in yourself—"³ Her manifestoes are analogous to a call to tear the veil of Du Bois's "double-consciousness." Only after severing the sexually configured temporal and spatial relationships between men and women (which Loy delineates in great detail, showing all space, domestic or otherwise, to be as polarized as Lorca's diagram of New York) can individuals approach one another as individuals through a new kind of narrative, in which women's roles are not circumscribed by domestic space.

Ridge, for all her comparatively conventional punctuation and typography, collapses the boundaries of the domestic and the public by bringing the social into the home. "The Ghetto" is set within the confines of a tenement house, which serves as a model of New York in miniature. Here, each character is described by profession, ethnicity, and physical appearance, as well as by the way he or she "moves." For example, Ann "has the appeal of a folk-song / And her cheap clothes are always in rhythm" (8). The subsequent poems

² "**Feminist Manifesto**" (1914) cited from *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, 154.

³ "**Aphorisms on Futurism**" (1914) cited from *The Lost Lunar Baedeker*, 149.

describe the world outside of the tenement building in terms that draw parallels between the interior and exterior. For example, her “Brooklyn Bridge,” is the body of a “pythoness”: “I feel your coils tightening.../ And the world’s lessening breath” (87). Her collapsing of the domestic and the heroic is best seen in the “Labor” section of her collection, which include such poems as “The Song of Iron,” written in the style of an epic.

Finally, as I hope I have demonstrated, the literary chronotope of 1920s provides a very rich arena for the exploration of such socio-political/ethical dimensions of Bakhtin’s work as dialogism, which is not often studied in the context of the chronotope. For, in all of the poems collected here, the narrative plot is tightly bound up with the act of recognizing individuals and comprehending disparate worldviews. Thus, I have fore-grounded the task of constructing a mutual operative sense of time (one that did not derive from corporate capitalism) and breaking down barriers between segregated spaces so that characters could recognize themselves in one another without compromising their integrity or the integrity of those around them. Such a condition presents itself as a model for a truly “American” literature, one that would expand the range of poets collected here.

Appendix A

Translator's note and Transliterations

Traditional Yiddish poetry is tonic-syllabic, which means that the unstressed syllables are arranged and counted the same as stressed syllables. The means by which lines are scanned, so that syllables are deemed stressed or non-stressed varies greatly. Despite heaps of studies, mainly conducted in the 1950s and early 60s in English- and German-language poetry, and the forbidding linguistic terminology and method used in the studies, the method is not very scientific. But it is the only method we have. I am counting as stressed syllables stresses that would normally be stressed in individual words and spoken prose. In Yiddish, more often than not, stress falls on the first syllable, unless the first syllable is a prefix, such as /ge/, /ba/ . Some prefixes, however, receive the first syllable stress, such as /oys/ /oyf/ /on/. Also, in Yiddish, the final /n/, /l/ or /m/ is syllabic, even when not preceded by a vowel. Yiddish of Halpern's time was not standardized, and efforts by YIVO to standardize it after 1924 were met with varying degrees of success.

Despite the initial stress of Yiddish words, the iamb is not unusual in Yiddish folksong, though the trochee or anapest is more usual, and often the iamb or dactyl is mixed with other types of feet. What distinguishes Yiddish folksong from Yiddish free-verse (which is metric, though the meter is not regular, and there is no rhyme) is the consistent use of consistent meter, and consistent rhyming. Poetry is distinguished from song in that it strives for full rhyme, instead of consonance or assonance, which is preferable in song. The Yiddish folksong usually appears in quatrains, and here Halpern takes liberty with form, as many of his poems occur in a single stanza, or in stanzas of five, six, and more, lines. The refrain, which is borrowed from the Slavic folksong, is not an integral part of Yiddish

folksong, though it sometimes occurs. Halpern will use the refrain in such poems as "Gingeli," "Our Garden," and "Our Earth," among others, to evoke the fairy tale. The ballad is another common trope in Yiddish; as in English or German, it usually occurs in lines of alternating metric length, though the meter will remain constant.

Halpern, who first wrote and published in German, employs a Yiddish that is influenced by Germanic pronunciation and spelling. That is, he often uses the /h/ to make the preceding vowel long, and to separate two consecutive vowels into two syllables. He also employs an /e/ before the final /l/ or /n/, and he substitutes a /g/ for a /k/ in gerunds, such as in the word /zingendige/. These techniques sometimes change the pronunciation, and, consequently, the scanning, of certain words and meters. In my transliterations of Halpern's texts, therefore, I have chosen to deviate from the standard YIVO method where necessary, to remain faithful to Halpern's 1919 edition. The poem has reissued twice more, in 1948 in Poland and in 1954 in New York. In the 1954 edition, which Kathryn Hellerstein used in the only existent publication of Halpern's poem in English, Halpern's spelling and punctuation had been standardized according to the YIVO prescription.

All of the translations and transliterations in this study are my own, unless otherwise noted. Because I am most interested in prosody here, Halpern's use of rhythm, meter and rhyme, my translations are as faithful as possible to the sound of the poem. I have not attempted to "Americanize" the poem in any way, nor have I attempted to make it more accessible to a contemporary audience. At the same time, I have remained as faithful as possible to the meaning of the text. Any deviations from rhythm, rhyme or meaning are noted. To keep the flavor of the text, I have rendered words Halpern takes from Hebrew, German or Polish in their original language, with definitions below. Any English words are underlined. I wish to thank Kathryn Hellerstein and Jerald Frakes for correcting the errors in this text. Any existing errors are my own and/or are the result of transliterating Halpern's original orthography.

from Ztvishen Koymenroykhen

khapt zich uf fun shlof der dorfs-yung,
hert er feygel zingen,
her ikh milkn-kendlekh un reder
un dem zeyger klingen.

...Loyft aroys in feld der dorfs-yung,
zumer-feygel fangen,
treyb ikh alte ketz arunter
fun di ganik-shtangen.

from Azoy iz unz Bashert

Yunge fisher-yungen zingen, vi der yam der frayer.
Yung kovaliyes gezunte zingen vi dos feyer...

Mir, geglikhene tsu khorbun in a vuster gegend,
zingen vi di pustikayt dorten, ven es fleytst un regent.

Shpilen kinder zikh in gorten—zingen zey tsuzamen.
Lebt in dem gezang di libe fun a guter mamen.
Unz hot—dakht zikh oys—keyn mame keynmol nit geboyren.
Zingendig hot dos shlimazl unz in veg farloyren.
Zingen mir shlimazldige glat-azoy-gezangen.

from In Der Fremd VII

...Mir hoben emes lib gehat di erd,
di erd, vos Got hot unz, di heymloze, in vander-veg bashert.
Un keynmol hot Got's nomen nit oyf yene tiren oysgefelt,
oyf vemem shvel es hot a kind fun unz zayn fus aroyfgeshtelt.
Keyn oriman hot nit baym raykhens tish gefehlt tog-eyn, tog-oys.
Un got-gebenshter friden hot gehersht in gas, in yeden hoyz.
Un kinder hoben zikh geshpilt mit zeyre foters lange berd,
un iber alte sform zingendig, un shtendig tif farklert,
gezesen zenen tog vi nakht fil eydele un yunge layt...

...Un vi in frihling bliht di blum in feld un oyfn boym dos blat,
azoy hot ruhig, fridlikh oyfgebliht a dor un nokh a dor,
un vi a golden keyt getsoygen hoben zikh fil hundert yohr,
iz ober aza shtile tseyt far unz vayzt oys tsu shehn geven,
hot zikh a dreh geton dos blinde rod un demolt iz geshehn,
as oyfgehoyben hot an unruh zikh un, vi a beyzer vint,
hot zi arumgekhaft dos leben gants, fun zokn biz tzum kind,
in yeden land un oyf der gantser velt. Un in a vister nakht
hot zikh di zelbe unruh oykh tsu unz in gas arayngebrakht—
a krig, a beyze krig hot ongehoiben tsvishen yung un alt.
Un fremd iz eyner tsu dem anderen gevoren, fremd un kalt,
Glaykh iber zey volt umgeschvebt di beshoyre fun a beyz gerikht...
Di zihn iz yeden hoyz—zey hoben plutzling fun a naves likht
Gezungen un geredt, vi fiber-krankte reden fun'm shlof.
Di tekhter oykh...der foter hot gezehn in dem a beyze shtrof.
“A beyze shtrof fun Got”—hot yeder zokn shtum fun tsore getrakht.
Un alt un groy gevoren zenen yunge mames iber nakht.
Un in der zelber tsayt hot ongerukt oyf unzer gas
A shverer volken-val, der hot tsu unz, der doyrer-alter has.
Tsu heren hot zikh bald gebrakht fun ergetz-vu, az do un dort
Hot zikh a royber-hurde vild areyngevorfen in an ort.
Un vayl mir hoben nit gehat keyn serp, keyn hamer un keyn shverd,
Hot unz a vister shrek avekgeyorbt fun unzer heymats-erd.
Un vi in herbste tsemrobt der vind dem bleter-shtoyb in feld,
Azoy hot unz di shrek tsezeht, tsershpreyt in ale vinklen velt.
Un vi a shvartsen keyt, hot zikh a shrenge shifen groys un shver,
Getsoygen yoren-lang ariber dem ukinum do aher.....

from Gingeli

O, Gingeli, mayn blutig harts,
ver iz der yung vos troymt in shney
un shlept di fis vi kletser tsvey
inmiten gas bay nakht?

Dos iz der takhshit Moyshe Leyb,
vos vet amol derfrihren
beys er vet fun friling-tsvit
un blumen fantaziren;
un vet er ligen shoyn in shney
un zikh shoyn mer nit rihren,--
vet er in troym nokh demol oykh
in zangen-feld shpatsiren.

Troymt der takhshit Moyshe Leyb,
zingt der vekhter tri-li-li,
entfert der bosiak haptshi,
makht dos hintel hav-hav-hav
makht dos ketsel miaow.

from Zog Ikh Tzu Mir

--Tsi muztu baym fenster do shteyn?
Du kenst dokh in gas arayn geyn.

--Di gas iz far hendlekh un layt
Vos mestn mit gelt zeyer tsayt,
Di gas iz far banen vos flin
Vi feygl aher un ahin;
Di gos iz far kinder un kets
Vos shpringen vi fish in a nets;
Di gos iz far shikure oykh
Vos vaklen zikh groye vi roykh
Un gibn avek zeyre tog
Tsu plotern zikh afn veg

from Der Gasnpoyker

Zingt der faygl fray un fraylikh,
Tsitert af zayn tron der meylekh,
Tsitern iz nit keday,
Zing ikh vi der faygl, fray

Tants ikh hefker, tants ikh blind,
Gas arayn un gas aroys!—
Bin ikh krank un alt un gro
Vemen art es—ho-ho-ho!

Lakhn kinder lustig, munter,
Fal ikh nit bay zikh arunter,
Rirt zikh yungen! Flinker—hop!
Nokhamol a zets in kop.
Nokh a shpay!
Zay vi zay

Mit'n shprung geyt alts farbay
Ot-azoy zikh durkhgerisn
Durkhgerisn, durkhgebisn
Mitn kop vi durkh a vant,
Iber shteyg un veyg un land
Mit di tseyne—
Hak dem shteyn!
Hak dem shteyn un blayb aleyn!
Hunt un shleper, lump un vint.
Hefker, hefker durkh dem fremd!
Hob ikh nit ken rok, ken hemd,
Hob ikh nit ken vayb, ken kind.
Poyk ikh az di poyk zol platsn,
Un ikh dzshindzische in di tantsn,
Un ikh drey zikh rund-arum—
Dzshin, dzshin, bum-bum-bum.
Dzshin dzshin bum!

Unzer Gortn [Our Garden]

Aza gortn, vu der boym
Hot zikh zibn bletlekh koym,
Un es dakht zich, az er trakht:
Ver hot mikh aher gebrakht?
Aza gortn, aza gortn,
Vu mit a fargreser-gloz
Kon men zen abisl groz.
Zol dos unzer gortn zayn
Ot aza in morgnshayn?—
Avade unzer gortn. Vos den, nit unzer gortn?

Aza vekhter, vey un vind,
Mit a stekn vi far hint,
Vekt er uf in groz di layt
Un fartraybt zey ergets vayt,
Aza vekhter, aza vekhter,
Vos baym kolner nemt er on
Dem vos hot ken beyz geton.
Zol dos unzer vekhter zayn,
Ot aza in morgnshayn?—
Avade unzer vekhter. Vos den, nit unzer vekhter?

Aza foygl, vos fargest
Zayne kinderlekh in nest,
Zukht far zey ken esn nit,
Zingt mit zey ken morgnlid.
Aza foygl, aza foygl,
Vos er hoybt zikh gornisht uf
Un er pruft nit flin uf.
Zol dos unzer foygl zayn
Ot aza in morgnshayn?—
Avade unzer foygl. Vos den, nit unzer foygl?

Appendix B

Original language text of *Poeta en Nueva York* by Federico García Lorca

Paisaje de la multitud que vomita
(Anochecer de Coney Island)

La mujer gorda venía delante
arrancando las raíces y mojanda el pergamino de los tambores.
La mujer gorda,
que vuelve del revés los pulpos agonizantes.
La mujer gorda, enemiga de la luna,
corría por las calles y los pesos deshabitados
y dejaba por los rincones pequeñas calaveras de paloma
y levantaba las furias de los banquetes de los siglos últimos
y llamaba al demonio del pan por las colinas del cielo barrido
y filtraba un ansia de luz en las circulaciones subterráneas.
Son los cementerios. Lo sé. Son los cementerios
y el dolor de las cocinas enterradas bajo la arena.
Son los muertos, los faisanes y las manzanas de otra hora
los que nos empujan en la garganta.

Llegaban los rumores de la selva del vómito
con las mujeres vacías, con niños de cera calientes,
con áboles fermentados y camareros incansables
que sirven platos de sal bajo las arpas de la saliva.
Sin remedio, hijo mío. ¡Vomita! No hay remedio.
No es el vómito de los húsares sobre los pechos de la prostituta,
ni el vómito del gato que se tragó una rana por descuido.
Son los muertos que arañan con sus manos de tierra
las puertas de pedernal donde se pudren nublos y postres.

La mujer gorda venía delante
con las gentes de los barcos, de las tabernas y de los jardines.
El vómito agitaba delicadamente sus tambores entre algunas niñas de sangre
que pedían protección a la luna.
¡Ay de mí! ¡Ay de mí! ¡Ay de mí!
Esta mirada mía fue mía, pero ya no es mía.
Esta mirada que tiembla desnuda por el alcohol
y despide barcos increíbles
por las anémonas de los muelles.
Me defiende con esta Mirada
que mana de las ondas por donde el alba no se atreve.
Yo, poeta sin brazos, perdido
entre la multitud que vomita,
sin caballo efusivo que corte
los espes musgos de mis seines.
Pero la mujer gorda seguía delante

y la gente buscaba las farmacias
donde el amargo trópico se fija.
Sólo cuando izaron la bandera y llegaron los primeros canes
la ciudad entera se agolpó en las barandillas del embarcadero.

New York
(Oficina y denuncia)

A Fernanda Vela

Todos los días se matan en New York
cuatro millones de patos,
cinco millones de credos,
dos mil palomas para el gusto de los agonizantes,
un millón de vacas,
un millón de corderos
y dos millones de gallos,
que dejan los dielos hechos añicos.
Más vale sollozar afilando la navaja
o asesinar a los perros en las alucinantes cacerías,
que resistir en la madrugada
los interminables trenes de leche,
los interminables trenes de sangre
y los trenes de rosas maniatadas
por los comerciantes de perfumes.
Los patos y las palomas,
y los credos y los corderos
ponen sus goats de sangre
debajo de las multiplicaciones,
y los terribles alaridos de las vacas estrujadas
llenan de dolor el valle
donde el Hudson se emborracha con aceite.
Yo denuncio a toda la gente
que ignora la otra mitad,
la mitad irredimible
que levanta sus montes de cemento
donde laten los corazones
de los animalitos que se olvidan
y donde caeremos todos
un la última fiesta de los taladros.
Os escupo en la cara.
La otra mitad me escucha
devorando, orinando, volando en su pureza,
como los niños de las porterías
que llevan frágiles palitos
a los huecos donde se oxidan
las antenas de los insectos.
No es el infierno, es la calle.
No es la muerte. Es la tienda de frutas.
Hay un mundo de ríos quebrados y distancias inasibles
En la patita de ese gato quebrada por un automóvil,
y yo oigo el canto de la lombriz
en el corazón de muchas niñas.
Óxido, fermento, tierra estremecida.
Tierra tú mismo que nadas por los números de la oficina.
¿Qué voy a hacer, ordenar los paisajes?

¿Ordenar los amores que luego son fotografías?
Que luego son pedazos de madera y bocanadas de sangre.
No, no; yo denuncio.
Yo denuncio la conjura
de estas desiertas oficinas
que no radian las agonías,
que borran los programas de la selva,
y me ofrezco a ser comido por las vacas estrujadas
cuando sus gritos llenan el valle
donde el Hudson se emborracha con aceite.

El rey de Harlem

Con una cuchara
le arrancaba los ojos a los cocodrilos
y golpeaba el trasero de los monos.
Con una cuchara.

Fuego de siempre dormía en los pedernales
y los escarabajos borrachos de anís
olvidaban el musgo de las aldeas.

Aquel Viejo cubierto de setas
iba al sitio donde lloraban los negros
mientras crujía la cuchara del rey
y llegaban los tanques de agua podrida.

Las rosas huían por los filos
de las últimas curvas del aire
y en los montones de azafrán
los niños machacaban pequeñas ardillas
con un rubor de frenesí manchado.

Es preciso cruzar los puentes
y llegar al rumor negro
para que el perfume de pulmón
nos golpee las sienes con su vestido
de caliente piña.

Es preciso matar al rubio vendedor de aguardiente,
a todos los amigos de la manzana y de la arena;
y es necesario dar con los puños cerrados
a las pequeñas judías que tiemblan llenas de burbujas,
para que el rey de Harlem cante con su muchedumbre,
para que los cocodrilos duerman en largas filas
bajo el amianto de la luna,
y para que nadie dude la infinita belleza
de los plumeros, los ralladores, los cobres y las cacerolas de las cocinas.

¡Ay, Harlem! ¡Ay, Harlem! ¡Ay, Harlem!
No hay angustia comparable a tus rojos oprimidos,
a tu sangre estremecida dentro del eclipse oscuro,
a tu violencia granate, sordomuda en la penumbra,
a tu gran rey prisionero, con un traje de conserje.

* * *

Es por el silencio sapientísimo
cuando los camareros y los cocineros y los que limpian con la lengua
las heridas de los millonarios
buscan al rey por las calles o en los ángulos del salitre.

¡Ay, Harlem disfrazada!
¡Ay, Harlem, amenazada por un gentío de trajes sin cabeza!
Me llega tu rumor,
me llega tu rumor atravesando troncos y ascensores,
a través de laminas grises,
donde flotan tus automóviles cubiertos de dientes,
a través de laminas grises,
donde flotan tus automóviles cubiertos de dientes,
a través de los caballos muertos y los crimes diminutos,
a través de tu gran rey desesperado,
cuyas barbas llegan al mar.

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