HART CRANE

AT MELVILLE’S TOMB

Often beneath the wave, wide from this ledge
The dice of drowned men’s bones he saw bequeath
An embassy. Their numbers as he watched,
Beat on the dusty shore and were obscured.
And wrecks passed without sound of bells,
The calyx of death’s bounty giving back
A scattered chapter, livid hieroglyph,
The portent wound in corridors of shells.
Then in the circuit calm of one vast coil,
Its lashings charmed and malice reconciled,
Frosted eyes there were that lifted altars;
And silent answers crept across the stars.
Compass, quadrant and sextant contrive
No farther tides... High in the azure steeps
Monody shall not wake the mariner.
This fabulous shadow only the sea keeps.