THE UNEASY BALANCE: A STUDY OF POLARITY IN THE WORK OF STEPHEN CRANE

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ABSTRACT

THE UNEASY BALANCE: A STUDY OF POLARITY

IN THE WORK OF STEPHEN CRANE

By

Ellen Raisanen Brown

This study attempts to demonstrate that Stephen Crane's most effective short fiction is the offspring of the critical tension between two impulses: one demanding responsibility to truth, grows from Crane's respect for experience and trust of factual details; the other asserting freedom in art, rises from his affirmation of individual vision and belief in the value of imagination. Certainly, this tension is one of the problems of any artist, for he must compromise between imaginative and real worlds, but for Crane this conflict remained unresolved. His most successful short fiction evolves as a direct result of his inability to decide one way or the other. The result, then, is an uneasy balance between these two kinds of energies. The bifurcation in Crane's thinking expands along these lines, so that his work is the product of the balance between observation and inspiration, between fact and vision, and, sometimes, even between manner and matter.

The fiction included in this study is intended as a representative selection of Crane's most effective writing, including Maggie, The Monster, "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," and Whilomville Stories. Using these selections this study asserts that Crane did not belong to any "school," but rather that he wrote in response to the catalytic

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tension within him. As a young man he wished to see life from an idealistic perspective, a perspective which emphasized freedom of expression and imagination, rebellion and adventure, idealism and honor. At the same time, however, another side of him demanded fidelity to practical truths and stressed the primacy of experience. The balance between these forces of imagination and freedom, practicality and control, led Crane to experiment in both his personal life and in his fiction. The results of this dynamic tension are evident in the conduct of his personal life in his rebellious attitudes toward society and its standards, in his romantic pose, in his over-protection of women, in short--in his over-all conduct of life. In terms of his art, this critical tension caused him to experiment with fiction that was a combination of realistic and imaginative themes, techniques, and perspectives. This tension gave rise to his dominant irony (his negative affirmation) and comic exaggeration, his unique methods of condensed characterization and setting, and, finally, to the very stuff of his fiction, his themes.

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By

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INTRODUCTION

Critics already have noted that the work of Stephen Crane exhibits characteristics which defy traditional literary classification. Those who attempt to discuss Crane's work within rigid definitions of realism or naturalism have difficulty in explaining his ambivalence in The Black Riders, his sentimentality in the plot of Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, his overpoweringly connotative language using opposite sets of colors in "The Monster," or his strange epilogue to "The Blue Hotel." But too often, critics note these and other disturbing qualities merely in passing, or conveniently label them as demonstrating Crane's inconsistency or artistic ineptitude.[1] Crane's "inconsistency" should be examined in greater detail than has thus far been attempted, precisely because his work is a product of diverse and often conflicting attitudes and combinations of techniques.

The purpose of this study is to define and explore these conflicts and techniques which shape his best stories, like "The Open Boat," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," and The Monster, giving them the unique "Cranesque" qualities which cause them to be termed modern. The

[1]Important exceptions are: Eric Solomon, Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), especially pp. 6, 268; Donald Pizer, Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth Century American Literature (Carbondale, 1966), pp. 11-13, 18-32, and 121-131, and "Romantic Individualism in Garland, Norris, and Crane," Amer. Quarterly, X (Winter, 1958), 463-475; Neville Denny, "Imagination and Experience in Stephen Crane," English Studies in Africa, IX (March, 1966), 28-42; and Max Westbrook, "Stephen Crane and the Personal Universal," Modern Fiction Studies, VIII (Winter, 1962-63), 351-360.

qualities peculiar to Crane spring from two impulses within him. On one hand, he is concerned with the reality of his story. He perpetually asks, "Is it true?" His regard for truth leads him to attempt to copy life as it is, to write about soldiers, prostitutes, the lost and the wasted. In this way, Crane allies himself with Garland and Howells in trying to record objectively what he sees and to reveal human life through the "truthful treatment of material."[2] This same impulse leads Crane to locate as the basis for his art in experience. In concerning himself with concrete reality, Crane accepts his responsibility to truth and acknowledges the supremacy of experience and reason in art.

A second impulse, however, draws Crane in the opposite direction, for he also declares the freedom of his spirit in art. Crane's impulse toward freedom is illustrated by his emphasis on the subjectivity of the artist and the validity of his feeling. Thomas Beer writes in his biography of Crane,

> He could stand through nights in a blizzard of late March to write "Men in the Storm" or sleep in a Bowery shelter to get at the truth of "An Experiment in Misery" but the emotions of a boy in battle he must find for himself, in himself, and the birth of the book was travail incomprehensible to men who have never hunted in themselves passions and the flood of acts to which they are alien.[3]

Philosophically, then, Crane differs from rigid realists in his affirmation of not only individual perception and emotional response, but also individual vision, the ability of an artist to create a unique imaginative experience distinct from the attempt to reproduce physical reality.[4]

[2]William Dean Howells, Criticism and Fiction (New York, 1891), p. 73.

[3]Stephen Crane (New York, 1923), pp. 98-99.

[4]Warner Berthoff in The Ferment of Realism (New York, 1965), p. 231, suggests the same idea when he writes: "He is at his best, a visionary writer . . . and his authority is a visionary authority. It

His concern with personal and artistic freedom, both in conception and execution of a work of art, emerges from his concern with ideas, as well as with facts, and from his exercise of imagination.

The tension in Crane's work, then, derives from the uneasy balance between his impulse to record life realistically, even in its dingiest details, and his opposing impulse to create, to go beyond the boundaries which realism demanded of him. He wishes to record the squalor of the Bowery, the horror of war, and the hypocrisy of society, but working against this is his desire to make the reader "see." The unearthly world of "The Blue Hotel" and the battleground of the tenement spring from this stress. Crane, in attempting to resolve this conflict in his art, shaped stories that are, in one sense, "real," but which are, in another sense, imaginative and non-concretely referential. They are a blend of the control of realism, with its camera-eye for detail on the one hand, and on the other the freedom of imaginative impulse, with its need to create.

This study attempts to demonstrate that Crane's most effective short fiction is the offspring of the critical tension between these two impulses: one demanding the responsibility to truth, grows from Crane's respect for experience and trust of factual details; the other asserting freedom in art, rises from his affirmation of individual vision and belief in the value of imagination. As Daniel Hoffman puts it, "The tensions in his best work are always produced by the discrepancy between

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is visionary in a peculiar way, however, in that the images it presents refer to nothing equally authoritative beyond themselves, no clear pattern of understanding, no really coherent structure of imaginative experience."

a man's ideals and the poor fumbling acts of which he is capable."[5] Certainly, this tension is one of the problems of any artist, for he must compromise between imaginative and real worlds, but for Stephen Crane this conflict remained unresolved. His most successful short fiction evolves as a direct result of his inability to decide one way or the other. The result, then, is an uneasy balance between these two kinds of energies. The bifurcation in Crane's thinking expands along these lines, so that his work is the product of the uneasy balance between observation and inspiration, between fact and vision, and, sometimes, even between manner and matter. Crane's manipulation of point of view[6] and the devices of his impressionism are manifestations of his artistic exploration of these dual impulses. Crane's irony results from the tension among (1) his fundamental idealism, (2) his clarity of vision, and (3) his practical observation of life. Finally, Crane's peculiar techniques of setting and character develop from his attempts to integrate these divergent impulses in his art.

* * *

The fiction included in this study is intended as a representative (although limited) selection of Crane's most effective writing, including Maggie, The Monster, "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," and Whilomville Stories. The Red Badge of Courage is omitted from concentrated analysis (although it is used several times for illustration and

[5] The Poetry of Stephen Crane (New York, 1957), p. 181.

[6] For parallel comments see, James B. Colvert, "Structures and Theme in Stephen Crane's Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies, V (Autumn, 1959), 199-208.

amplification) because it seems important (1) to stress the diversity of Crane's talents by examining some of his other works, (2) to break from the traditional view (which tends to elicit stereotypic reactions from readers conditioned by the mass of criticism devoted to The Red Badge) of Crane as primarily a "war novelist." This study attempts to demonstrate that Crane had the ability to use other forms equally well. Most of what is said about Crane's work also applies to The Red Badge, but hopefully because of the emphasis on his other works, the reader will consider Crane as a diversified artist and not merely (to use Cady's sobriquet) the "marvellous boy" who wrote The Red Badge of Courage.

The following pages of this study are divided into four chapters and a brief summary-conclusion. The first chapter explores the fundamental bifurcation in Crane's thought, the tension between his conflicting impulses about freedom and control, imagination and reason. It includes Crane's working code and illustrates how the division in his thought affected not only the conduct of his personal life, but the creation of his art as well.

The second chapter illustrates how this basic tension gave birth to and nourished Crane's dominant irony, influencing both his selection of subject matter and his ironic and comic techniques. The second section of this chapter examines Crane's ironic techniques, by contrasting his first novel, Maggie with the later and more mature The Monster, showing the relationship and development of Crane's comic and ironic techniques of manipulation of point of view, juxtaposition of scenes, and exaggeration.

Characters and setting are the major focuses of Chapter III which is developed with specific details from a typical Crane story,

"The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky." This chapter moves from an examination of the differences between Crane's journalistic writing and his art, to contrasts between his techniques and those of three other authors. Chapter III concludes with a specific analysis of setting and character in "The Bride," showing similarities in technique with other Crane stories, and suggesting that the reasons for Crane's individualized techniques spring from the bifurcation in his thought and from his desire to create a new experimental fiction, transcending the boundaries of realism.

Chapter IV examines The Whilomville Stories as a microcosm of the rest of Crane's fiction, suggesting that they, in spite of their flaws, reveal that the dominant tension in Crane's thinking continued to exert influence on the subject matter and techniques of his fiction, as well as on his themes--even to the end of his life. These stories provide essential insights into his earlier work, showing that Crane continued to ask fundamental questions and to experiment.

Chapter V provides a summary and conclusion.

CHAPTER I

This section is divided into two parts. The first deals with some of the comments which Crane made about the art of fiction as he observed it in others, and about his own theory of art. These are included to highlight his conflicting ideas about fiction. The first part concludes with Crane's literary theory, a list of comments extracted from his letters. The second part explores Crane's concept of freedom from two perspectives: (1) how he handles freedom in his personal life; that is, his romantic pose and his reactions to it, and (2) how he develops freedom in his art through the manipulation of point of view and by use of the techniques of impressionism.

I

A convenient and important place to begin a study of polarity in the work of Stephen Crane occurs in his now famous letter to Lily Brandon Monroe where he writes,

> You know, when I left you, I renounced the clever school in literature. It seemed to me that there must be something more in life than to sit and cudgel one's brains for clever and witty expedients. So I developed all alone a little creed of art which I thought was a good one. Later I discovered that my creed was identical with the one of Howells and Garland and in this way I became involved in the beautiful war between those who say that art is man's substitute for nature and we are most successful in art when we approach the nearest to nature and truth, and those who say--well, I don't know what they say. They don't they can't say much but they fight villianously to keep Garland and I /sic/ out of the big magazines. Howells, of course, is too powerful for them.
>
> If I had kept to my clever Rudyard-Kipling /sic/ style, the

road might have been shorter but, ah, it wouldn't be the true road.[1]

Some critics have gone only as far as this letter, offering it as the fundamental document in the history of Crane's personal attitudes toward his craft, and assuming that, like Garland and Howells, Crane was a realist. Certainly, one cannot but agree that Crane left very little evidence of his thinking about art, or that this letter to Mrs. Monroe is important, but additional possibilities exist in the Crane canon which seem, at least in part, to show a bifurcation of attitudes in his work. This letter is only a beginning.

Crane's remarks to Lily Brandon Monroe do help to reveal a tension in his attitude toward art. Obviously, he does not approve of Kipling's "clever school," for the syrupy romanticism in Kipling's work was exactly that against which Crane was to react throughout his life. As Linson says in My Stephen Crane, "He had no use for the old school of romance novelists."[2] Thomas Beer records another incident which illustrates Crane's attitude toward Kipling at another time:

> Mr. Clarke brought him round by saying, "It's hard luck that you and Mr. Kipling began to write at the same time."
>
> "Yes. I'm just a dry twig on the edge of the bonfire," said Crane.
>
> Chance had erected him as a slim, inscrutable statue before the running opal and fierce light of a talent then shimmering so changefully in the lettered air. It was just his luck.[3]

There is more than mere professional disagreement in all of these comments. Crane seems to view Kipling and his work from his usual ironic pose, a pose warmed this time by a breath of personal offense.

[1] Stephen Crane: Letters, eds. R. W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes (New York, 1960), No. 34, pp. 31-32. Hereafter references to Crane's letters will be to this edition.

[2] (Syracuse, 1958), p. 31. [3] p. 233.

As Beer puts it in his informal way, "It was just his luck."

Stephen Crane's objection to Kipling and the other romance novelists focused on their sentimentality and contrived plots (that is, their "insincerity"),[4] as well as on the excessive length of so many of their works, and on their overtreatment of material. Crane's training on New York newspapers taught him the value of precision and brevity.

Similarly, Crane objected to many of the works of "realistic" authors. The sparse comments he made about these writers and their works are important, for they reveal that he had no strict allegiance to any "school," but rather judged each work individually. His remarks about Twain, for example, reveal that the qualities he disliked in the romantics were often the same as those he attacked in the realist Mark Twain's work. As Beer records, Crane objected vociferously to the ending of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, "Didn't the genius know any better? A baby could have improved the end of Huckleberry Finn!"[5]

Typically, however, Crane liked Life on the Mississippi. Twain's story of the education of a river pilot appealed to the Crane who admired the man who did his work well, the professional. In this book, the professional is both author and character.[6] Life on the Mississippi offered few questions to Crane because, obviously Twain's concrete detail made the reader "see." Crane's perpetual question, "Is

[4]Letter to John N. Hilliard, No. 137, pp. 108-110.

> "The one thing that deeply pleases me in my literary life—brief and inglorious as it is—is the fact that men of sense believe me to be sincere."

See also Beer, p. 231, for Crane's comments on Stevenson's insincerity.

[5]Beer, p. 113. [6]Linson, p. 31, and Beer, p. 105.

it true?" was, in regard to this book, unnecessary.[7] The story of river life was also sincere and concise,[8] qualities which Crane did not find in all of Twain's works.

A good summary of Crane's attitudes toward the work of not only Mark Twain, but also several other contemporary authors occurs in a letter probably written to Thomas Hutchinson in 1899.

> I am not carnivorous about living writers. I have not read any of the books that you ask me to criticize except that of Mr. Howells, and it has disappointed me. My tastes? I do not know of any living author whose works I have wholly read. I like what I know of Anatole France, Henry James, George Moore, and several others. I deeply admire some short stories by Mr. Bierce, Mr. Kipling, and Mr. White. Mr. Hardy, since you especially inquire about his work, impresses me as a gigantic writer who 'overtreats' his subjects. I do not care for the long novels of Mr. Clemens, for the same reason. Four hundred pages of humour is a little bit too much for me. My judgment in the case is not worth a burning straw, but I give it as portentously as if kingdoms toppled while awaiting it under anxious skies.[9]

At other times, Crane declared that War and Peace was "tiresome," and that Anna Karenina was "too long."[10] Of Zola, he said, "Zola is a sincere writer but--is he much good? He hangs one thing to another and his story goes along but I find him pretty tiresome."[11]

The biographies of Crane and collections of his letters are peppered with such often contradictory remarks.[12] In order to highlight

[7]John Berryman, Stephen Crane (New York, 1950), p. 247.

[8]Crane wrote to Hilliard that he had "endeavored to express myself in the simplest and most concise way. If I failed the fault is not mine." No. 216, p. 158.

[9]Letters, No. 320A, pp. 250-251. See also Berryman, pp. 248-249.

[10]Letters, p. 158, footnote, and R. W. Stallman, ed. Stephen Crane, An Omnibus (New York, 1952), p. 181.

[11]Beer, p. 148. See also Berryman, p. 66.

[12]Linson, p. 29. Linson takes an opposite view when he writes: "No opinion is unalterable as granite, and his changed frequently, but in his attitude toward his work he never swerved."

these contradictions, it is necessary to summarize Crane's literary criteria before going into further exploration. (1) He felt that his literary "code" was parallel to that of Hamlin Garland and William Dean Howells; that is, "the truthful treatment of material."[13] (2) His work emphasized "sincerity."[14] (3) He tried to avoid any overt moral. ("I try to give to readers a slice out of life; and if there is any moral or lesson in it, I do not try to point it out.")[15] (4) His writing should be clear and concise (as well as "unmistakable").[16] (5) Art, he affirmed, should be the expression of feeling,[17] "an effort born of despair under the spur of a great need."[18] (6) Related to this idea of feeling is Crane's idea that he worked on a poetic "spout" which he could turn on or off at will.[19] And, finally, (7) good writing was not self-conscious, but smooth and unaffected.[20]

Analysis of this "code," indicative of his thinking over a span

[13] Letters, to Lily Brandon Monroe, No. 34, pp. 31-32; and William Dean Howells' comments from Criticism and Fiction, p. 73.

[14] Letters, to Hilliard, No. 137, p. 108.

[15] Letters, to Hilliard, No. 216, p. 158.

[16] Letters, to Clarence Peaslee, No. 62, p. 52.

[17] Linson, p. 37. "I wonder that some of these fellows don't tell how they felt in those scraps! They spout eternally of what they did, but they are as emotionless as rocks!" See also Berryman, p. 66.

[18] Letters, to an editor of Leslie's Weekly, No. 111, pp. 78-79. In the same letter Crane writes, "I decided that the nearer a writer gets to life the greater he becomes as an artist, and most of my prose writings have been toward the goal partially described by that misunderstood and abused word, realism." See also Philip Rahv, "The Cult of Experience in American Writing," Image and Idea (Norfolk, Conn., 1949), p. 21.

[19] Letters, to Hamlin Garland, No. 39, p. 36.

[20] Linson, p. 31. "He [Crane] argued that self-conscious work was bad as art."

of about four years, reveals Crane's dual impulses. Firmly he declares that his "little creed" is parallel to that of Garland and Howells. Thus, he feels the responsibility of fidelity to truth, but he differs with Howells on the morality of that truth. Howells writes in Criticism and Fiction, "Though it is not the business of art to preach morality, still I think, that resting on a divine and spiritual principle, like the idea of the beautiful it is perforce moral."[21] Howells becomes even more explicit when he says,

> When realism becomes false to itself, when it heaps up facts merely, and maps life instead of picturing it, realism will perish too /as romanticism did/. Every true realist instinctively knows this, and it is perhaps the reason why he is careful of every fact, and feels himself bound to express or to indicate its meaning at the risk of over-moralizing.[22]

Therefore, even though Crane allies himself in his "little creed" (which was, indeed, formulated before his friendship with either Garland or Howells) he is not, to use Howells' term, a "true realist." Crane is concerned with the reality of his art and with the sincerity of his art, but he does not, in spite of his own moral view, wish to preach.[23]

Perhaps the most interesting element in his theory is his emphasis on feeling. Unlike most of the realists, Crane attempts to create art which is the product of feeling produced "under the spur of great need." He not only records facts objectively, but also feels the burden of individual expression.[24] Thus, in his work, Crane moves in two directions: he observes and records, but he also emphasizes individual

[21] p. 60. [22] p. 15.

[23] Walter J. Meserve, "Truth, Morality, and Swedenborg in Howells' Theory of Realism," NEQ, XXVII (June, 1954), 252-257, writes of Howells' "slice of life" that, "His slices of life were all very carefully trimmed of unsightly crusts, cut clear of imperfections, and served as daintily as to an afternoon luncheon of the Ladies' Aid."

[24] See also Berryman, p. 55.

feeling, the assertion of freedom in his art.

II

Generally, freedom means the ability to do what one wishes. For Crane the idea of freedom carried with it the additional elements of expression and experience. His thinking is characterized by a tension between his belief in the necessity of individual choice and personal vision, and his acceptance of the practical nature of living and the value of experience. He felt the responsibility to exercise his independence as evidence of his freedom. His dislike of conventionalities, his irresponsibility in financial matters, his over-protection of women, his rebellion against the rules of society, and his romantic pose, all serve to indicate his boyish temperament, and, more importantly, his mature urge to express, exercise, and extend his freedom, his ability to govern his own actions.

The other direction of this impulse is revealed also in Crane's personal life. His desire to see, to feel, to touch reality led him into bars, brothels, and soup kitchens. "Crane made his body a testing ground for all sensations of living and for this most un-literary habit he paid, in the useful language of melodrama, the price."[25] Crane wished to taste all of life, to experience, and, then to write about what he felt. Thus, within Crane his inner impulse toward freedom pushed him toward outward expression, the application and extension of that freedom, which often took the form of rebellion; simultaneously, however, the other impulse drew him to internalize his practical experience and to record truthfully as he perceived and felt it. This was

[25]Beer, p. 195.

his freedom--his personal vision. Hence, Crane's concept of freedom involved both externalization of inner feelings, the muscular extension of Self (the tendency to push outward testing himself physically and emotionally), and internalization of his perception of outer reality, his personal vision.

1. Personal freedom

Comments about Stephen Crane's personal life for a number of years formed the bulk of what was written about him. During his lifetime newspaper articles and magazine stories concerning him popped up at the first hint of excitement or gossip, and usually Crane was involved in some sort of scandal.[26] Perhaps too much space already has been devoted to the examination of the details of Crane's life to merit additional attention in this paper, but it is important to note that in his private life he found it necessary to assert his independence of spirit in various ways. His residence at the Art Students' League Building is a good example. As Beer, Berryman, and Cady have acknowledged, Stephen Crane did not have to exist in poverty, at least until his "marriage" to Cora. His brothers certainly could have aided him, as could any one of a number of friends, but because of his independent, freedom-seeking personality, Crane would rather be "on his uppers," as he wrote to a friend, than be "kept."[27]

His curious relationships with various women also testify to

[26]See R. W. Stallman and E. R. Hagemann, eds., The New York City Sketches of Stephen Crane and Related Pieces (New York, 1961), pp. 217-261, and Edwin Cady, Stephen Crane (New Haven, 1962), p. 50, as well as Beer, pp. 132-135.

[27]Letters, to Willis Brooks Hawkins, No. 99, p. 71; and another to Hawkins, No. 121, p. 84. These are typical. See also Berryman, p. 65.

his somewhat adolescently rebellious attitudes. His involvement with Dora Clark, a lady of dubious reputation, is typical. Stallman and Hagemann in The New York City Sketches of Stephen Crane and Related Pieces have gathered most of the significant contemporary writings about this.[28] Apparently, Crane, after interviewing Dora for a series of reports he was doing about the Tenderloin District of New York City, saw the woman being arrested. His sense of innocence outraged, despite the fact that he was already a well-known author, he chose to jeopardize his name in order to make sure that Dora Clark received fair treatment in what he felt was a case of false arrest. Crane could not allow a lady in distress to go unaided, but almost certainly in this case, Crane's gallantry was misplaced; after all, Dora's reputation did indicate that if this arrest were unjust, other incidents justified at least a presumption of suspicion. In reality, the innocence Crane protected was only momentary, if actual; but Stephen Crane with his romantic awareness of a gentleman's honor was almost always ready to come to a lady's aid, or stand outside a lady's window until very late hoping to catch a worshipful glimpse of her.[29]

Crane's marriage to Cora Howarth further illustrates his generally romantic attitude toward women and his independence.[30] The common

[28]pp. 217-261. See also Olov Fryckstedt, ed., Stephen Crane: Uncollected Writings (Uppsala, 1963).

[29]Letters, to Helen Trent, No. 9, p. 10.

> "Your window was lighted all last night but they said you were not in. I stood and looked at your window until a policeman came and made me go away. But I came back and looked until my head was just a sponge of lights. Please do not treat me like this. Nothing else counts but that."

[30]For a full discussion of the Stephen-Cora relationship see Lillian Gilkes's Cora Crane: A Biography of Mrs. Stephen Crane (Bloomington, 1960).

law wife of one of the most famous American authors had, in her premarriage years, been the proprietress of an establishment called "The Hotel De Dream," which was, Lillian Gilkes records, the "smartest of nighttime spots the city afforded."[31] Berryman in his Stephen Crane has made a good deal of Crane's need to rescue women of Cora's kind, and it seems that he has gone too far with his Freudian interpretation, particularly as he applies "A Special Type of Choice of Object Made by Men" to Crane's art; but undeniably Berryman's work supports the idea that Crane did view women as persons needing "rescue" and protection.[32] Even the most lowly streetwalker would, perhaps, "find space in heaven."[33] Crane went out of his way to find such ladies. Society's rules and judgments were a challenge to his proud, free spirit.

Crane's response to his job as a reporter also contributes to the evidence suggesting that Crane wished to create a romantic pose. He wanted others to regard him as a hero. While one might consider the dispatches he wrote to be dutifully realistic, the reports others gave of his conduct in Greece and Cuba suggest something entirely different.[34]

[31]Gilkes, p. 26.

[32]As Edwin Cady has aptly put it, "It [Berryman's method] explicates not the literature but the critic's notion of Freudian ideas.", p. 172. For Berryman's defense see the Preface to the Meridian Edition, pp. xi-xii.

[33]Letters, to Hamlin Garland, No. 17, p. 14. Inscriptions on various copies of Maggie are similar to the one Crane wrote for Hamlin Garland:

> "If one proves that theory [that environment is a tremendous thing] one makes room in Heaven for all sorts of souls (notably an occasional street girl) who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people."

[34]Cady affirms that Crane's lack of success may be attributed, in part, to his inability to get along with the other reporters, pp. 32-33.

The famous incident connected with his stay in Cuba during the Spanish American War is illustrative. Supposedly, Crane stood up in the trenches calmly smoking a cigarette while bullets whizzed around him. Not until one of the observers (Richard Harding Davis) called to him that he was "not impressed" did Crane slink red-facedly back to safety.[35] Several versions of this anecdote exist, but in each of them, Crane stands steely-eyed, facing the enemy's fire.[36] The mere fact that Crane was in Cuba at all (he was rejected when he attempted to join the Navy because of his physical condition), when he had a wife to support, demonstrates what Cady calls the "attractions of the 'strenuous life'" for Crane,[37] but Cady notes, "Experience, however, always restored the balance his irony demanded." That balance between realism and free spirited "muscular neo-romanticism," related to the Teddy Roosevelt-Frederic Remington image of the "muscular, buoyant, college-bred elite," is the key to the personality of Crane.[38] As Lillian Gilkes puts it,

> Every human being has known moments of wavering, but there were prolonged stretches in the life of Stephen Crane when he seemed not to know his own mind. But no creature so ridden by conflicting drives, toward respectability and away from it, toward the love of one woman and away from the ties and responsibilities love engenders, exchewing domesticity and in love with the roving career of war correspondent, to the sacrifice ultimately of both health and talent, can ever be seen all of a piece. Hence the dilemma of so many discouraged and frustrated biographers, for the penetration of Crane's dualism must certainly begin any satisfying exegesis.[39]

This uncertain balance of reason and imagination, of responsibility and freedom, of wanting to be respectable and yet "free" led him to create

[35] Berryman, p. 223. [36] Cady, pp. 62-64; Beer, p. 190.

[37] Cady, p. 84. [38] Cady, pp. 82-85.

[39] Gilkes, p. 104.

his dual pose of the gallant young hero and the alcoholic-opium eater. He preferred to seem withdrawn and mysterious, secretive but heroic, ready at a moment's notice to spring into action.[40]

By protesting overtly in his personal life, Crane asserted his independence and claimed his freedom (his urge toward self expression) in defiance of society's rules, and sometimes at the cost of good sense.[41] He played the part of romantic hero, braving dangers, ruining his health, leading a mysterious private life, and rescuing damsels in distress. Ladies of easy virtue were, in his romantic eyes, soiled doves. In his personal life, he would live as he wished; at Brede Place with rushes strewn on the floor, his favorite dog Sponge by his side, acting the part of what Sanford Bennet called "Baron Brede."[42]

2. Artistic freedom

In his writing, Crane's manipulation of point of view and his impressionistic techniques are the results of a dynamic tension between reason and imagination, between his impulse to record life accurately and his counter impulse to create. The fact that Crane nowhere published (or for that matter, even wrote) an organized presentation of his literary theory as did Howells in Criticism and Fiction, Garland in Crumbling Idols, or James in The Art of the Novel, suggests that the

[40]Beer, pp. 132-133.

[41]As George W. Johnson puts it Crane was caught between his "patrician-plebeian" stances. "Stephen Crane's Metaphor of Decorum," PMLA, LXXVIII (June, 1963), 250-256. "Crane, self-conscious and self-deprecatory, tried to be both the isolated Bohemian and 'Baron Brede.'"

[42]Beer, p. 210. Ford Madox Ford gives a somewhat less cheerful view of the estate in his Portraits from Life (Boston, 1937), p. 27: "I used to go and watch him at work and I formed a very disagreeable impression of Brede. It seemed to be full of evil influences, to be very damp, and to be hopelessly remote."

"little creed" he mentions to Mrs. Monroe was flexible and open-ended, "free"; that Crane went by the "feel" of his art; and that the theory he developed was spontaneous enough to defy codification.[43] Because Crane left so few critical remarks about his work, even informally, and no real criticism, conclusions about his theory of art must, unfortunately, remain speculative. And, further, the whole matter of Crane's theory of art is complicated by his early death. Perhaps had he lived longer, he would have collected his thoughts and organized his creed. Perhaps not. As it stands, the comments Crane did make must then form the only background for further exploration.

Crane's literary theory can be summarized briefly. He felt that his "little creed" was very much like that of Garland and Howells, but unlike Howells, Crane tried to avoid any overt moral in giving readers his slices of life. He valued clarity and precision and tried not to "overtreat" material. He had a poetic spout which could be turned on or off at will, and affirming that art should be the product of feeling, he wrote that it should be "an effort born of despair under the spur of a great need." Finally, good art should not be self-conscious.

Using these principles as guides, a good place to begin exploring Crane's handling of the impulse toward freedom in his work lies in Crane's question, "Is it true?" Significantly, Crane said that he was tired of asking "Is it true?" while he was writing his last novel The O'Ruddy, later finished by Robert Barr with the aid of Crane's notes.[44]

[43]Solomon declares, "As a parodist, Crane did not need the kind of fully developed philosophy with which some recent interpreters have sought to supply him.", p. 11. See also Berryman, p. 72.

[44]Berryman, p. 247.

(The O'Ruddy is the most obviously imaginative of his works. It is imaginative in that Crane did not base it in fact, but allowed the story to ramble in romantic fashion--in effect, to write itself. In this novel Crane was playing with romantic ideas, allowing his imagination to expand unchecked for once by his practical "realistic" sense.)[45] It is logical to assume that Crane also asked this question of himself when he was writing his earlier works. Characteristically, Crane does not say, "Does it copy life?" or "Is it an accurate reproduction?" These are questions a "narrow" realist,[46] primarily interested in recording, would pose. Crane was irate, Linson writes in his Stephen Crane, when he read accounts of the Civil War. "Why don't they write what they feel?" he spouted.[47] The realist, on the other hand, interested in facts, is seldom interested in feelings. As Bernard Duffey writes in Chicago Renaissance,

> Realism, thus, offered itself to its earlier American adherents not so much as a literary technique proper but as a substitute for technique. It succeeded in making the writer's primary burden one of presenting a subject faithfully and then asking that he be judged in terms of his fidelity to subject. It had little concern for his skill beyond that of presentation. It talked little of imagination and not at all of stylistic achievement.[48]

Stephen Crane was caught between two impulses, "Is it true?" the impulse to test and to prove, and, the other impulse to feel and to "see," and, more importantly, to make the reader "SEE" in an imaginative sense. The famous Preface which his friend Joseph Conrad wrote to

[45]Solomon sees The O'Ruddy as an "extended burlesque of the romantic novel.", p. 13. See also Cady, pp. 150-151.

[46]This term is borrowed from Neville Denny's "Imagination and Experience in Stephen Crane," p. 29.

[47]The tenses have been altered to fit context. For an accurate quotation see footnote no. 17, p. 11.

[48](East Lansing, 1954), p. 91.

The Nigger of the Narcissus is almost as applicable to Crane's work as it is to Conrad's:

> It is evident that he who, rightly or wrongly, holds the conviction expressed above /to reveal the substance of truth by making the reader see/ cannot be faithful to any one of the temporary formulas of his craft. The enduring part of them--the truth which each only imperfectly veils--should abide with him as the most precious of his possessions, but they all: Realism, Romanticism, Naturalism, even the unofficial sentimentalism...all these gods must, after a short period of fellowship, abandon him--even on the very threshold of the temple--to the stammerings of his conscience and his work.[49]

Unlike the realists, Crane had no formula, and unlike the naturalists, he did not seek to illustrate the laws of force. As Howells is said to have exclaimed, here was a writer who had "sprung into life fully armed." In his fiction, his artistic freedom--his creative impulse--was governed only by the abiding question "Is it true?", not just the "truthful presentation of material," but the truthful presentation of individual feeling, his personal vision. He, like Conrad, wanted to make the reader "see."[50]

In the presentation of "truth," Crane felt the constraints of subjectivity. To assume that one could write objectively, and, therefore, realistically, was for Crane an impossibility. If one chose to write about something, he must already be interested in it. Beer records Crane's comment about the criticism of Henry James,

> "What, though, does the man mean by disinterested contemplation? It won't wash. If you care enough about a thing to study it, you are interested and have stopped being disinterested. That's so, is it not? Well, Q.E.D. It clamours in my skull that there is no such thing as disinterested contemplation except that empty as a

[49] Preface to The Nigger of the Narcissus in Three Great Tales, Vintage (New York, n.d.).

[50] As Fred Lewis Pattee writes, "His /Crane's/ one desire, it would seem, was to make the reader see as he saw." The New American Literature (New York, 1930), p. 70.

> beerpail look that a babe turns on you and shrivels you to grass with.[51]

Crane reasoned his approach must then be subjective. With only the loose guidelines of "truth," "sincerity," and "subjectivity" to follow, Crane's artistic vision was certainly one which allowed the author maximum individuality and freedom of creativity.[52] He said nothing of form and very little of style, the quality for which he is most often praised today. Another major criterion of his creed was his belief in "personal honesty." He wrote to John Hilliard:

> I understand that a man is born into the world with his own pair of eyes, and he is not at all responsible for his vision--he is merely responsible for his quality of personal honesty. To keep close to this personal honesty is my supreme ambition.[53]

A man, then, is not responsible for what he sees, but for his honesty in seeing, his freedom to think and feel about what he sees. The men writing about the Civil War were not responsible for the war, but they were responsible for reporting honestly how they felt about it. As Edwin Cady writes about the ending of The Red Badge of Courage,

> By letting the readers see what Fleming sees, Crane will let them decide what to think of him.[54]

Thus, the double edged irony which is a dominant part of Crane's writing emerges, cutting internally in the direction of the author's personal honesty, his freedom of spirit, in recording his "truth," what he sees (feels), and slashing in the other direction of a character's response to his perception. The reader must walk the knife-sharp edge

[51] Beer, p. 139; Berryman, p. 103.

[52] Interestingly enough Linson in My Stephen Crane makes a good deal of Crane's "intuition." "Usually it takes some time for a youth to find this /truth to life as the only test of art/ out, but Stevie knew it by intuition,...", p. 30.

[53] Letters, No. 137, p. 108. [54] pp. 141-142.

between these two fields of vision in order to appreciate the texture of Crane's work.

This knife-sharp edge made Crane a poor reporter and a conscious, sometimes even self-conscious, artist. Almost any sample of his writing contains examples of his manipulation of perspective and his subjective use of metaphor, two artistic devices he uses to express his creative (free) internalization of experience. Although he uses concrete details in his attempt to give the reader a "slice of life," he also responds to the creative impulse within him and develops his vision of personal honesty. A passage from The Monster is an excellent example. Henry Johnson is trying to make his escape from the burning Trescott House,

> All manner of odours assailed during this flight. They seemed to be alive with envy, hatred, and malice. At the entrance to the laboratory he confronted a strange spectacle. The room was like a garden in the region where might be burning flowers. Flames of violet, crimson, green blue, orange, and purple were blooming everywhere. There was one blaze that was precisely the hue of a delicate coral. In another place was a mass that lay merely in phosphorescent inaction like a pile of emeralds. But all these marvels were to be seen dimly through clouds of heaving, turning, deadly smoke.[55]

Crane's newspaper articles reveal three things: the same sensitivity in observation, his selectivity in the use of metaphor, and his manipulation of perspective. The following is from "The Tenderloin As it Really Is," which appeared in the New York Journal, October 25, 1896:

> The waiters grabbed the fighters quickly. Maconnigle went through the door some three feet ahead of his hat, which came after him with a battered crown and a torn brim. A waiter with whom Johnnie had had a discussion over the change had instantly seized this opportunity to assert himself. He grappled Johnnie from the rear and flung him to the floor, and the tall, healthy person from behind the bar, rushing forward, kicked him in the head. Johnnie didn't say his prayers. He only wriggled and tried to shield his

[55]The Work of Stephen Crane, ed. Wilson Follett (New York, 1925-27), III, p. 45. Further references are to this edition.

> head with his arms, because every time that monstrous foot struck it made red lightning flash in his eyes.[56]

In both selections, Crane uses startling color, for which he is justly famous, but in the first passage he surpasses himself, using a living metaphor to create the devouring flames in the doctor's laboratory; it is the Garden of Eden morbidly inverted and set in hard, gemlike terms. Typically, the imagery is shocking. This is no ordinary fire, but a fire which will destroy a man's body and soul, and which will silhouette the hypocrisy of a whole town.

The author's highly connotative language forces the reader to feel the horror of the licking flames. Tactile sensation is evoked unexpectedly in opposite terms, cool violets, greens, and blues--terribly pure colors--and a sweetly feminine "delicate coral," all of this seen "dimly through clouds of heaving, turning, deadly smoke." The juxtaposition of colors here shows Crane's ambivalence in his creation of the scene; he is horrified and fascinated.[57]

The sheer panic of the fire episode grows as a result of Crane's ostensibly detached point of view. The reader's perspective is split, really, for this is the scene as Henry sees it, but not as Henry would describe it. The reader sees what Crane feels. An implied objective third person stops the action to set the scene dramatically for Henry's frantic attempt to escape his fate. Crane manages to intensify the feeling of the situation by using these unusual sense impressions. At the beginning of the paragraph, the odors of the fire are personified, almost suggesting a medieval church window, a strange yoking of

[56]Stallman and Hagemann, p. 164.

[57]Solomon documents Crane's fascination with fire in his chapter "The Village Virus," especially pp. 188-189.

referents that yields a mixture of emotions in the reader. The sights of the flaming room are described also in terms of tactile sensations: those of sight, both color and depth, and, more conventionally, in terms of touch, which is further extended in the last sentence where the smoke becomes a deadly massive thing. The most significant sound appears in the next paragraph where, "He /Henry/ cried out again in the negro wail that had in it the sadness of the swamps." Crane's irony is strong here in the suggestion of the wetness of the swamps as concomitant with the fire itself. Thus, this is not merely a fire, but an imaginative rendering of a fire. The reality of this piece is emotional and free, not reasonable and objectively controlled; closer to a painting than a photograph, it illustrates Crane's free creative impulse.

In the second selection from the New York Journal, Crane, in spite of his reportorial stance, renders the situation subjectively and, hence, creatively.[58] The paragraph is packed with objective, "realistic," details, but the last few lines move it from a factual newspaper account to something closer to a literary hybrid. With "Because every time the monstrous foot struck it made red lightning flash in his eyes," the author forces the reader to feel as well as to read about Johnnie's piercing pain. It would have been impossible for Crane, under the circumstances, to let the description rest with "kicked him in the head." Both the author and the reader, for a moment at least, catch a glimpse inside Johnnie's mind and feel the "red lightning."

[58]Crane always had difficulty with this impulse in objective reporting. For another example see Berryman's version of Crane's coverage of The Junior Order of United American Mechanics parade which caused his brother Townley considerable trouble. Berryman, pp. 44-45.

The effectiveness of the piece depends, as it does in Crane's most powerful work, on the duality of perspective, on the inside-outside, subjective-objective, tension typified in both selections.

The total effect of the language in these segments is very much like what Pater describes in The Renaissance:

> Art, then is thus always striving to be independent of the mere intelligence, to become a matter of pure perception, to get rid of its responsibilities to its subject or material: the ideal example of poetry and painting being those in which the constituent elements of composition are so welded together, that the material or subject no longer strikes the intellect only, nor the form, the eye or the ear only, but form and matter, in their union or identity, present one single effect to the "imaginative reason...."[59]

In terms of these two very different passages from Crane's work, Pater's words are illuminating. In these selections, there is an appeal to the "imaginative reason," an expression of individual artistic freedom of spirit, created by the author's choice of words, both concrete (realistic) and abstract (imaginative), and his use of a combined objective-subjective point of view.

Closely connected with this method of presentation is Crane's imaginative effort to immerse the reader in the experience of the situation. Thus, the author again becomes caught between his responsibility to truth, and his assertion of freedom in art, his desire to make artistic use of materials in new ways. He wants to make a scene "real," but at the same time, he also wishes to suggest and to create. In comparing the work of Stephen Crane with that of any of the other authors usually called realists, this becomes clear. The work of William Dean Howells

[59] "The School of Giorgione," Victorian Poetry and Poetics, eds. Walter Houghton and Robert Stange (Boston, 1959), p. 764. See also R. W. Stallman, Stephen Crane (New York, 1968), pp. 482-483; where Stallman records the Critic's (1900) comment that, "Though brilliant and colorful, Mr. Crane's pages do not burn with anything approaching Pater's 'gemlike flame'; they /The Whilomville Stories/ are, after all, mere flashes in the pan."

provides an example example. In reading The Rise of Silas Lapham, one is acutely aware of the "reality" of Boston and Beacon Street; Silas, Persis, Pen, and Irene are real people. The sense of immediacy which pervades Howells' writing (and which sometimes dates it) is almost totally lacking in Crane's work, with the possible exception of parts of Maggie: A Girl of the Streets. Howells tells the reader about the elevators in new apartment buildings, about women's fashions, and about the architecture of houses and offices. In The Rise of Silas Lapham, the reader learns in detail about paint, not just paint, but Lapham's Persis Brand, the manifestation of Lapham's wealth and power. Howells' novel is, in the use of concrete detail, "real." In Crane's stories, however, time and place are vague, and for the most part, his detail is non-concretely referential. He is seldom interested in setting or local color. In his most effective fiction and poetry, time and place are almost cosmic. The sea in "The Open Boat" is merely the SEA. The following passages are typical:

> A night on the sea in an open boat is a long night. As darkness settled finally, the shine of the light, lifting from the sea in the south, changed to full gold. On the northern horizon a new light appeared, a small bluish gleam on the edge of the waters. These two lights were the furniture of the world. Otherwise there was nothing but waves.[60]

> A broad stretch of lowly coast lay before the eyes of the men. It was of low dunes topped with dark vegetation. The roar of the surf was plain, and sometimes they could see the white lip of a wave as it spun up the beach. A tiny house was blocked out black upon the sky. Southward, the slim light house lifted its little grey length.[61]

In these passages, Crane uses concrete detail--"gold," "bluish gleam," "white lip of a wave," and "tiny house." But in each case, he could have been even more specific had he been trying to copy life. Instead,

[60] XII, pp. 47-48. [61] p. 39.

he tried to suggest and create, to push beyond surface reality. Thus, Yellow Sky in "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" is merely a small "western" town. The chilly welcome of the blue hotel could be extended anywhere, while the children's games in Whilomville could be played as easily in any small town as in the real Port Jervis, New York. Even Maggie's home becomes Tenement on Rum Alley in a large city--tenement. The author's concern is with the imaginative totality of conception, and, within that, the character's perceptions and feelings. Where the characters are--setting--is catalytic, not focal.[62]

Except for the perceptive comments which Larzer Ziff has made in his recent book The American 1890's, few observers have noted this quality in Crane's writing with anything more than the generalization that the lack of immediacy in his stories is "impressionistic," a series of disconnected pictures against a hazy background.[63] It would seem more accurate to state that such "distance" is calculated to give the reader the dramatic totality of the situation--that feeling which

[62]For an opposite opinion see Solomon, p. 259, "Setting is always important in Crane's work...."

[63](New York, 1966), p. 191 Ziff writes:

> Here was no recruit to Howells' realism. The world projected by Crane has no topographical or temporal existence. To be sure, the tale opens in Rum Alley and never strays far from it, and Rum Alley is in the slums of New York. But the sense of Rum Alley's being a specific--even if symbolic--piece of total social structure, like, say, Dickens' Tom-All-Alone's, is missing. Instead we are plunged into selected details of urban squalor and human viciousness, unrelieved by specific addresses, commonplace activities, or basic communicative speech...The wilderness equivalent of the world of Maggie would be a landscape in which all mountains are towering, all streams are rushing, all birds are singing, and all flowers are blooming.

For further parallel comments see: Robert Falk, The Victorian Mode in American Fiction (East Lansing, 1965), p. 41; Daniel Hoffman, p. 184; Linson, p. 47; Pizer, p. 122; and Robert E. Spiller, Third Dimension (New York, 1965), p. 115.

is a combination of the character's awareness and personal honesty, and Crane's rendering of his own truth, the fidelity to his own artistic vision.

Therefore, although Crane regarded himself as a realist, the examination of the details of his personal life, his literary comments, his literary theory, his manipulation of point of view, and his impressionistic techniques, indicates a split in his thinking. Crane was caught between two views of himself and his world. Most often, his practical, reasonable view prevailed, leading him to attempt to copy life and to criticize those writers who dealt with possibility rather than probability. But often, the impulse toward freedom, manifesting itself both personally in his romantic pose and professionally in his art, took command of his work and pushed him beyond the rigid boundaries of realism. This freedom was itself divided, for it represented both his impulse toward rebellion, and his artistic rendering of his internalization of outer reality--the concrete, sense-perceived world. Crane's vacillation, then, between the desire to be objective and concrete in his art, and his impulse to be subjective and "free" forced him to develop his own, unique artistic vision and to create from it fiction in turn uniquely "Cranesque."

CHAPTER II

This section is divided into two parts. The first deals with the sources and qualities of Crane's dominant mode of irony. The second section examines Crane's irony by illustrating the differences in his techniques and perspectives between Maggie: A Girl of the Streets and his later and more mature work The Monster, showing the relationship and development of his comic and ironic manipulation of point of view, juxtaposition of scenes and settings, and his use of exaggeration.

I

So Stephen Crane, temperamentally incapable of writing about life from a single perspective, viewed it from the dual perspective and indirection of irony. Irony provided Crane with a means of affirming his positive idealistic vision while simultaneously recording the practical and sometimes painful reality he saw around him. His irony, then, was a buffer between idealism and practicality; it was his way of balancing these two opposing forces. Hence, one source of his irony was his free visionary thought, his desperate, almost defiant, wish to affirm positive values, for within him was always the desire to live fully and to see positively.[1] He wanted to believe in the virtue of

[1]Max Westbrook gives substantially the same argument. His term for Crane's positive vision is "affirmation." See "Stephen Crane and the Pattern of Affirmation," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XIV (December, 1959); 219-229.

women and in the innocence of children; he wished to adventure into the mysterious and wild parts of nature and to feel in harmony with them. Therefore, he found himself impulsively defending the honor of street girls and marrying the madam of a Florida brothel. He paused on his way down a street to observe the ragamuffins of the Bowery, and he enjoyed playing hour after hour with his nieces and nephews in Port Jervis. He journeyed to the romantic West seeking the legendary cowboy and his beloved pony; he sought the mystery of cool southern caves with Corwin Linson and was deeply moved by the blind mules he saw led up from the mines. He went filibustering aboard the Commodore, and experienced the excitement of guns, soldiers, and war in Cuba. Taking his bride to Brede Place to live in a castle, he accepted the role of "Baron Brede," giving budget-depleting parties and keeping horses and his favorite dog, Sponge. Above all, he wished to be a success and to believe in himself.

Running against this romantic current of emotion, innocence, youthful adventure, rebellion, and honor, however, was Crane's strain of modifying practicality. He wished to see not only positively, but clearly, realistically. He had too often been disappointed by the high expectations he set on life. Indeed, he would indulge in these romantic adventures, but he would also reluctantly apply a practical check to them. Seeking to protect himself from the harshness of life and the concomitant disillusionment he expected from it, he masked his emotional and nostalgic impulses with the veneer of cynicism which became his trademark. The portrait that emerges from his correspondence shows a young idealist, disillusioned almost from the beginning of his career. A letter written to Nellie Crouse "is indicative of his devastating ironical attitude towards everything which he believed to be

insincere."[2]

> I suppose you fail to see how this concerns you in anyway! And no wonder! But this girl who startled me out of my mountaineer sense, resembled you. I have never achieved the enjoyment of seeing you in a new spring gown but this girl became to me not an individual but a sort of symbol and I have always thought of you with gratitude for the peculiar thrill you gave me in the town of Puebla, Mexico.
>
> The lives of some people are one long apology. Mine was, once, but not now. I go through the world unexplained I suppose....[3]

These two paragraphs are interesting for a number of reasons. In the first place, they show Crane's high regard for Nellie Crouse, his youthful exuberance and enchantment with a young lady. Next they illustrate his patterns of association and romantic suggestion, his ability to see similarities in diverse situations. Finally, they are significant because in the first two sentences, Crane uses his familiar forms of detachment and exaggeration, two devices of irony found throughout his fiction. An even better example of his attitude comes in the paragraph preceding the one quoted above: "I do not suppose you will be overwhelmed with distinction when I tell you that your name is surrounded with much sentiment for me."[4] Such self-depreciating comments reveal Crane's instinct to insulate himself from the reality which he expected to be there. He did not wish to be hurt, and, thus, he assumed a distant, cynical pose.[5]

The tension between what Crane hoped to affirm and what he observed and feared, produced the irony pervading his private life and

[2]Letters, p. 85. (Editors' quotation.)

[3]Letters, No. 122, pp. 85-86. [4]Letters, No. 122, p. 86.

[5]See also Thomas A. Gullason, "The Letters of Stephen Crane: Additions and Corrections," American Literature, XXXXI (March, 1969), 104-106. "A hitherto unpublished letter to his brother Ted (Edmund B. Crane) clearly reveals special qualities of Stephen Crane's character not too often highlighted—his sensitivity and tenderness."

his work. Crane always had the high expectations of youth (what Ziff calls "outstripping the event")[6] but the disenchantment spawned in the Bowery and nurtured by the venom of his critics dulled his bright ideas of success and all but smothered his artistic sensibility. The impact of disillusion in his personal life, as well, also gave his art its characteristic ironic edge, its negative affirmation.[7]

Crane writes in a letter to Hilliard in 1897,

> Now that I have reached the goal, I suppose that I ought to be contented; but I am not. I was happier in the old days when I was always dreaming /Italics mine./ of the thing I have now attained. I am disappointed with success and I am tired of abuse.

And later in the same letter,

> For it has been proven to me fully and carefully by authority that all my books are stolen from the French. They stand me against walls with a teacup in my hand and tell me how I have stolen all my things from DeMaupassant, Zola, Loti and the bloke who wrote—I forget the book.[8]

Such creeping cynicism is evident even in a letter Crane wrote to an editor of Leslie's Weekly in 1895:

> But, personally, I was unhappy only at times during the period of my struggles. I was always looking forward to success. My first great disappointment was in the reception of "Maggie, a Girl of the Streets." I remember how I looked forward to its publication, and pictured the sensation I thought it would make. It fell flat. Nobody seemed to notice it or care for it.[9]

Most apparent in Crane's letters is his reaction not only to

[6]Larzer Ziff, "Outstripping the Event: Stephen Crane," The American 1890's (New York, 1966).

[7]As James B. Colvert puts it, "Crane's biography makes it clear that for all his cool skepticism and irony he was an imperfectly suppressed sentimentalist laboring under the spell of a naive heroic ideal." "Stephen Crane's Magic Mountain," an original essay in Stephen Crane: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Maurice Bassan (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1967), 95-105.

[8]Letters, No. 216, pp. 158-159.

[9]Letters, No. 111, pp. 78-79.

his personal disappointment, but to the squalor of life which he saw around him. He wished to be honest and sincere above all; he had seen tired old men in battered hats and no shoes standing in bread lines, and he had seen the pinched faces of starved children. His honesty forced him to view the post-war United States, in the dark transitional eighties and nineties, with an unprejudiced eye--even what he saw denied his youthful hope and vision.

As Edwin Cady has pointed out, Crane was the product of a generation which itself faced disillusionment:

> The result is the oft-told story of the "Victorian Dilemma." It is a tale of deflation, the reduction of idealism. "'Twas disillusion upon disillusion," said Robert Frost in "The White-Tailed Horned." "We were lost piecemeal to the animals, / Like people thrown out to delay the wolves." And among intellectual Americans this process hits its nadir in Crane's time (and largely among those who were his contemporaries like Frederic, Norris, Dreiser, Gertrude Stein, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Masters, and Frost). Most of the others lived to come to some sort of terms with that process which would strike perhaps its deepest notes in The Mysterious Stranger and The Education of Henry Adams. Crane could not.[10]

Such disillusionment, instead, forced Crane to attempt to maintain a balance between his idealistic hopes and the dark reality he found before him, to experiment, to try new ideas. He was compelled to detach himself from conventional literary views, which he thought to be insincere, from friends and family who were hypocritical, and to become a loner, an observer, a surgeon for the ills of society. Disenchantment with reality forced him to experiment in his search for the right artistic pattern, the balanced view, which would reconcile the warring impulses within him. He wrote sketches, newspaper articles, short stories, plays, novels, and two volumes of sunless poetry. Catalyzing all of these experiments were his anger and rebellion, the products of

[10]Stephen Crane, pp. 70-71.

the conflict of faith and futility. The common element in most was irony.

Edwin Cady has put his finger on the pulse of Crane's irony when he writes in his chapter, "His Quality of Personal Honesty,"

> In the end, what one means by his irony is that, while Crane was sometimes a romantic, an adventurous boy, he was also a tough-minded realist with a tragic vision more Calvinistic, in its perceptions of the blasphemy as well as the necessity of man's conceit, than naturalistic. He guessed at an ultimate war with God. And he had a nearly Kierkegaardian sense of the ridiculousness of the situation. He could not finally take himself or man seriously in realistic, tragic, naturalistic, Calvinistic, nor, of course, neo-romantic perspectives.[11]

Crane wished to see the beauty in women and the rose in the sunsets of the West; but, simultaneously, he had a desperate need to see the reality which nullified his dreams. Thus, in many ways it is helpful to view Crane's peculiar irony as a double edged sword, a tool which permitted him to affirm his dreams and at the same time deny them. Crane's irony was a kind of tension, a negative affirmation, akin, as Cady notes, to "the heroic but painful condition of soul Keats diagnosed in Shakespeare as 'negative capability.'"[12] Sustaining most of what Crane wrote and most of what he thought was this quality of hopeful desperation. Mercilessly, he exposed cowardice in war, dissected the passivity of the Bowery, and anatomized the moral illness of the small town. Few of his stories are tempered with the optimism occasionally found in the works of Howells, Garland, or even Jack London or Theodore Dreiser. But most of the irony in Crane's writing flows from his hope for a better potential, from the fading dream of that which might have been, or should have been, from possibility. Thus, Crane's irony is rooted firmly in pragmatic optimism, in a belief for the

[11] p. 94. [12] p. 95.

potential of humanity and in a hope for a beneficent universe. Even in his darkest works, the reader has only to turn the irony and view it from another angle to catch a glimpse of the light darkened by Crane's disillusionment. Often this light is only a nostalgic hope, or a simple confirmation of the dignity of a man before he expires. Sometimes it is only the echoing laughter of the unknown voice in Crane's poetry; but hope remains in uneasy ironic balance with the terrible reality, a reality that Crane feared, but a reality that he felt must be encountered, recognized, and mastered in his quest for absolute sincerity. In that quest, irony was both vehicle and destination.

Consistent with the polarity in Crane's thinking, the irony dominant in most of his effective work functions on two planes, imaginative and technical. The first, imaginative, grows from his stream of disillusioned vision, his negative affirmation. This natural cast of mind forces Crane to examine situations, subjects, and characters which, by their very nature, lend themselves to irony. Examples abound in Maggie, "The Open Boat," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," The Monster, and even the late Whilomville Stories.

Crane's second kind of irony (technical) involves his use of certain skills. These ironic skills come from beyond the nature of the subjects themselves and entail Crane's conscious manipulation of point of view, his juxtaposition of scenes, and his techniques of exaggeration. They are the result of Crane's efforts to highlight and contrast conflicting ideas, attitudes, characters, and situations. These tools dilate the totality of Crane's irony which depends upon opposition, contrast, and indirection.

Simply, the differences between the two planes of irony in Crane's fiction are differences between matter and manner, between

meaning or concept and method, and although it is difficult to differentiate the two completely, it is important to realize that one is the product of the author's view of the world; the other is the product of his ability to recreate that view in his art.

II

1. Irony in Maggie: A Girl of the Streets

Crane's irony, his negative affirmation, demanded that his stories of war, the Bowery, and the small town be suspended in ambivalence. No black or white world existed for him; there was always the tension between appearance and reality, between freedom and control, between what should be and what was.

> Crane maintained an aesthetic perspective on all the elements that contribute to man's destiny; circumstance, instinct, ethical motivation, ratiocination, chance; he refused to guarantee the validity to any of them. This balance [Italics mine] between the deterministic and volitional views of life and between a sense of destiny and the haphazard workings of chance is,...the secret of Crane's mature art;...[13]

Crane tried to explore the possibility of faith in man and to deny it; to affirm a belief in human dignity and freedom of choice and, paradoxically, to recognize man's conceit and cowardice. He was interested in the concept of brotherhood as well as in the forces which alienate men from each other; he studied them in a universe which was uncertain, filled with chance, often bleak and warlike.

Crane's exploration of the human condition is most striking in his stories of violence like The Red Badge of Courage, "The Kicking Twelfth," and "The Open Boat," where under the pressure of personal

[13]Stanley Greenfield, "The Unmistakable Stephen Crane," PMLA, LXXIII (Dec., 1958), 562-572. Tenses have been altered to fit the context here.

danger and the necessity of immediate decisions his characters reveal inner strength and the ability to make moral choices; but even in his earliest attempts at fiction and in his stories about children and the city slums, he reveals the same sort of ironic inquiry. The code of dignity which Crane examines does not develop characters "bigger than life," but rather permits their growth as human beings. His protagonists are not without flaw; they run in battle; they make stupid mistakes; they swear and swagger; but they are human enough to try to live in the world. They do not run from life; they struggle, and in their struggle, they dignify all of mankind. Crane does admit the possibility of human worth, just as he admits the impossibility of measuring or rewarding it. Dignity lies in war, the struggle, of life, and each man must make his own decisions, but like Dr. Trescott, each man also has a responsibility to his fellow man. He must face the reality of the statement that "It is hard for a man to know what to do." As Stanley Greenfield says in "The Unmistakable Stephen Crane," "But man does have will, and he has the ability to reflect, and though these do not guarantee that he can effect his own destiny, they do enable him to become responsible to some degree for the honesty of his personal vision." In Crane's ambivalent universe, men must struggle to know one another and to respect each other's dignity.

Crane's frequent use of the contrast of appearance and reality underlines the fact that for him and for his characters there were no simple solutions, but there was freedom of choice, and, more significantly, a necessity of choice. In Rum Alley, the now famous street from Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, a fight was usually in progress, and it is to that street that many critics have gone to find evidence of Crane's naturalistic philosophy. For once then, it might be

illuminating to view Rum Alley and Maggie from Crane's ironic perspective. Certainly, naturalistic elements exist in this novel, but there are also others.

Nowhere in his work or in his letters does Crane declare that life is easy or free from conflict; life is war, full of tension, and those people who retreat from the arena of life he labels cowards ("Experiment in Misery"). Maggie, however sympathetically presented, is still a coward. The thematic irony in Maggie explodes in all directions. As perceptive critics have noted, Mrs. Johnson certainly gets her share of Crane's ironic shrapnel, as do Jimmie and Pete. And so does Maggie who refuses to make a choice to assert herself. It is inconsistent to judge Henry Fleming on his lack of vision and understanding (even though The Red Badge of Courage is later and undeniably more mature) and not submit Maggie to the same evaluation. Crane does not give the reader as much information about Maggie's patterns of thought as he does about Henry's, but then Maggie does not think very much. In his usual fashion, the author remains outside of Maggie's mind during most of the story; yet because of his detached point of view Crane makes the reader aware of the delusions from which she suffers.[14]

Maggie does not make choices; she does not struggle; and she suffers from the cowardice of the poor, which Crane called a "militant thing." He is sympathetic to her plight, as he is sympathetic to the

[14]James B. Colvert in "Structure and Theme in Stephen Crane's Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies, V (Autumn, 1959), 199-208, writes that: "The narrative design of Crane's best fiction is defined by the tension between two ironically divergent points of view: the narrowing and deluding point of view of the actors and the enlarging and ruthlessly revealing point of view of the observer narrator."

plight of men standing in the soup line, but implicitly, because Crane refused to preach, he indicates that passivity is not enough--Maggie has her good qualities, but blossoming in a mud puddle is not enough. Acceptance of the status quo is insufficient; to accept misery is militant cowardice.

Crane sees what is, the reality of the mud and filth of the slums, but at the same time he affirms what should be. He records dishonor and stupidity, but he emphasizes human sympathy and brotherhood--human dignity. There is a sort of implied nostalgia in his irony, a longing for what could have been and, perhaps, what should have been. Crane's Maggie, like many of his other works, is a photographic negative, developing the positive options of the characters by negative example.

Maggie, an essentially sentimental story, is reversed by Crane's objective point of view and snatched from maudlin emotionalism, but a quality of nostalgia does develop in the chapter dealing with the end of Maggie.[15] In her final scene she is presented as an innocent creature, in spite of her profession, looking for human communion, not just the offers of the street, but the communion of humanity. She, next to the Swede, is the most totally isolated character in Crane's fiction, for she dies cut off from her lover, from her family, and from society as a whole.

Maggie's moral potential forms the first level of irony in her story. Contrary to Crane's often quoted comment that "Environment is a

[15]For an opposite opinion, proposing that "Maggie becomes the sentimental flaw in the book; she becomes a traditional moral heroine rather than simply one of four representatives of the effects of environmental forces." See William T. Lenehan, "The Failure of Naturalistic Techniques in Stephen Crane's Maggie," an original essay in Stephen Crane's Maggie: Text and Context, ed. Maurice Bassan (Belmont, California, 1966), pp. 66-173.

tremendous thing," Crane's tone indicates that Maggie is not merely a product of the forces surrounding her. As several critics have observed, if Maggie were merely a product of her environment, she would be more like her drunken mother or her overbearing and selfish brother.[16] Instead, she is created only as a unique symbolic blend of positive and negative ability. She is alien to everyone and everything in the world around her.

A second focus of irony in this story is determined by Crane's juxtaposition of scenes.[17] When Maggie is about to commit suicide, for example, Crane abruptly shifts the scene from Maggie to Pete, her former lover. The placement of these scenes effectively produces ironic parallels and contrasts. Because of Pete's seduction of Maggie, she is about to die. Simultaneously, it seems to the reader, Pete is himself seduced. Like Pete, the women who surround him are not interested in human worth, and Pete's lack of awareness, contrasted with the reader's perception, serves to drive Crane's ironic meaning home.

Another example of such ironic juxtaposition occurs earlier in Maggie. In Section vi Maggie contemplates her surroundings in the tenement (the battered clock, the "vanished flowers in the carpet pattern," the "dingy curtain") and her job in the collar and cuff factory ("eternal collars and cuffs"), and later waits for Pete amidst the rubble left from her mother's drunken rage. In Section vii Crane briskly introduces the busy scene of the show hall. Characteristically the scene is

[16]See for example, Max Westbrook, "Stephen Crane's Social Ethic," American Quarterly, XIV (Winter, 1962), 587-596; and Ray B. West, Jr., "Stephen Crane: Author in Transition," American Literature, XXXIV (May, 1962), 215-228.

[17]For further comments see, Joseph X. Brennan, "Ironic and Symbolic Structure in Crane's Maggie," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XVI (March, 1962), 303-315.

laced with double irony: seeing the contrast between this place and her usual surroundings, Maggie views the hall as a wonderous manifestation of a "blare of pleasure," whereas the reader sees a less attractive scene including "bald-headed men," women in "yellow" silk, "tipsy men," and quiet Germans with "expressions of happy cows." The contrast works well here, for as Maggie perceives the differences between these two environments, the reader learns a good deal about her innocence from her reactions--"She drew deep breaths of pleasure. No thoughts of the atmosphere of the collar and cuff factory came to her." Crane's ironic juxtaposition of these scenes focuses attention on the poverty of Maggie's existence, reveals her innocence and vulnerability, and forces the reader to consider the consequences which may follow.[18]

Crane's irony in Maggie functions multilaterally. He chooses the familiar sentimental story of a young girl led astray, and in focusing through a detached point of view he objectively presents her femininity, tolerance, and tenderness. He emphasizes the irony and sorrow of her position, not as a street walker, but as a human being rejected by her family and society.[19] Secondly, through the juxtaposition of various scenes, notably the scene of Maggie's death and Pete's seduction, Crane manages to produce ironic parallels and opposites. Finally, however, the major ironic focus is developed through exaggeration.

Crane had been given the gift of language, and one of his most

[18]X, pp. 161-168, et passim.

[19]One of the results of the bifurcation in Crane's thought is a parallel split in his attitudes toward society and nature. Nature is uncontrollable, but society can be changed, and the individual has a responsibility to show, as Russel B. Nye suggests, "humanitarianism, tolerance, and justice." "Stephen Crane as Social Critic," Modern Quarterly, XI (Summer, 1940), 48-54.

effective uses of it was in his ability to surprise. Unusual words, ideas, and situations are yoked; metaphors are sent splashing across the page. The total effect, whether humorous or ironic, was created by Crane's ability to exaggerate, to make bigger than life. The following paragraph bears his indelible mark:

> It is possible, perhaps, that this young man would have derided, in an axle-wide alley, the approach of a flying ferryboat. Yet he achieved a respect for a fire-engine. As one charged toward his truck, he would drive fearfully upon a sidewalk, threatening untold people with annihilation. When an engine struck a mass of blocked trucks, splitting it into fragments as a blow annihilates a cake of ice, Jimmie's team could usually be observed high and safe, with whole wheels, on the sidewalk. The fearful coming of the engine could break up the most intricate muddle of heavy vehicles at which the police had been storming for half an hour. A fire-engine was enshrined in his heart as an appalling thing that he loved with a distant, dog-like devotion. It had been known to overturn a street-car. Those leaping horses, striking sparks from the cobbles in their forward lunge, were creatures to be ineffably admired. The clang of the gong pierced his breast like the noise of remembered war.[20]

Part of the effect created by this paragraph, typical of those throughout Maggie, comes from Crane's reportorial training. He knew how to observe, to watch for the key details that make a story come alive. The "leaping horses, striking sparks from the cobbles" came from close observation and a photographic mind. But in suggesting the simile of the engine and the blocked trucks as like a splitting cake of ice, Crane uses his unique ability to find similarities in diverse situations and to bring them together to create striking images.[21] The pattern of these images seen as a whole, or as absorbed by a reader, exaggerates the story into something bigger than reality and more

[20]X, p. 155.

[21]Reconsideration suggests that although ice is common today, perhaps the image as Crane created it is meaningful only to those who can remember the fifty pount (ten cent) cakes of ice used to refrigerate food in ice boxes long before "Frigidaire."

meaningful than any interpretation of it.

Indeed, Stephen Crane was granted the gift of language. Only he could write, "Above all things he despised obvious Christians and ciphers with the chrysanthemums of aristocracy in their buttonholes," or "Over on the island a worm of yellow convicts came from the shadow of a grey ominous building and crawled slowly along the river's bank."[22] Unfortunately, Crane was not granted an ear for dialect. Maggie is cluttered with such linguistic miscarriages as:

> Pete continued. "say, I jes' jumped d' bar, an'd way I plunked dat blokie was outa sight. See? Dat's right! In d' jaw! See? Hully gee! he t'rowed a spittoon t'rough d' front windee. Say, I t'ought I'd drop dead. But d' boss, he comes in after, an' he says: 'Pete, yehs done jes' right! Yeh've gotta keep order, an' it's all right, ' he says. Dat's what he said."[23]

However, the impulse which led Crane to attempt such over-ripe dialogue derives from the same sort of feeling for expansion and exaggeration which led him to his best fiction. Maggie is Crane's apprentice work; his later efforts at dialogue and dialect show the growth and the development of his ear and artistic instinct. Had the readers of his day been a little less prudish, perhaps Crane might have been permitted a more candid expression than, "Hully gee!"

Crane uses another form of exaggeration in developing characters. Maggie is a pale, passive flower in her story, while her brother Jimmie attains real significance only twice: once in his reverence for the fire engine, and once in his deliberation about Maggie's conduct with Pete:

> "Ah, dat's anudder story," interrupted the brother. "Of course, dat Sadie was nice an' all dat—but—see?—it ain't dessame as if—well, Maggie was diff'ent—see?—she was diff'ent." He was trying to formulate a theory that he had always unconsciously held, that

[22] p. 152; p. 138. [23] p. 159.

all sisters excepting his own could, advisedly, be ruined.[24]

These are the major ironic highlights Crane gives to Jimmie's otherwise pugnacious and dully drunken life. He saves the full force of his irony for Mary Johnson, the dominant force in Maggie's life. Maggie's escape into the arms of Pete is primarily a revolt against the influence of Mrs. Johnson, and to a lesser extent, that of her father. Crane's description of the mother exposes and inflates her abnormality; she is a living sickness, a human monster faintly reminiscent of Spenser's lady monster in Book I of The Faerie Queene:

> Therewith she spewd out of her filthie maw
> A floud of poyson horrible and blacke,
> Full of great lumps of flesh and gobbets raw,
> Which stunck so vildly, that it forst him slake
> His grasping hold, and from her turne him backe:
> Her vomit full of bookes and papers was,
> With loathly frogs and toades, which eyes did lacke,
> And creeping sought way in the weedy gras:
> Her filthied parbreake all the place defiled has.[25]

Crane's description of Mrs. Johnson is packed with almost as much hideously specific detail, and certainly as much ironic repugnance:

> The urchin stole forward. He began to shiver in dread of awakening his parents. His mother's great chest was heaving painfully. Jimmie paused and looked down at her. Her face was inflamed and swollen from drinking. Her yellow brown shaded eyelids that had grown blue. Her tangled hair tossed in waves over her forehead. Her mouth was set in the same lines of vindictive hatred that it had, perhaps, borne during the fight. Her bare red arms were thrown out above her head in an attitude of exhaustion, something, mayhap, like that of a sated villain. [Italics mine.][26]

The words which Crane puts into her mouth wax with irony she is unable to perceive. To Maggie as she is about to go out with Pete Mrs. Johnson screams:

[24] p. 180.

[25] The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser, ed. R. E. Neil Dodge (Cambridge, 1936), I, i, xx.

[26] pp. 149-150.

> "Yeh've gone t' d' devil, Mag Johnson, yehs knows yehs gone t' d' devil. Yer a disgrace t' yer people. An' now, git out an' go ahn wid dat doe-faced jude of yours. Go wid him, curse yeh, an' good riddance. Go, and see how yeh likes it."[27]

Mrs. Johnson forms the major target for Crane's irony in Maggie: A Girl of the Streets. She is prideful and drunken, a parody of mother love, embodying none of the qualities a mother ideally should have; she is a caricature, the result of Crane's intentional exaggeration, an excellent example of how he inflated and then punctured hypocrisy.

As others have noted,[28] Mrs. Johnson is the first of a type of female character to appear fairly often in Crane's stories--the shrew. In Maggie, she is a coarse, unfeminine dragon who rolls around the tenement in a drunken stupor most of the time. She appears again, however, in The Third Violet, rocking diabolically on the porch of a summer hotel; and in The Monster in her own kitchen contemplating the fate of Henry Johnson. Basically, the shrew, whatever her social level, thrives on the misery of others. The genesis of Crane's ironically devastating portrait of her appears to be an incident recorded in a letter to an unknown recipient sometime in 1894:

> ...I will not insult any dog by comparing this damned woman to it. There is a feminine mule up here who as roused all the bloodthirst in me and I don't know where it will end. She has no more brain than a pig and all she does is sit in her kitchen and grunt. But every when /sic/ she grunts something dies howling....[29]

Thus, the irony in Maggie: A Girl of the Streets functions on many levels. It slices through the passivity of the poor, and the lack of human sympathy which exists on general social levels and specifically

[27]pp. 176-177.

[28]See Eric Solomon, Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism, p. 214; Wilson Follett, Work, III, xvi; and footnote in Letters, p. 42.

[29]No. 49, p. 42.

within family units. It attacks the hypocrisy and belligerence of humanity, and exposes the evil spawned by a lack of human love. The major target of the irony is Mrs. Johnson, but no character escapes Crane's attack. By manipulating point of view, juxtaposing of scenes, and exaggerating, both in description and dialogue, Crane brings attention to the meaning of the story which can be capsulized in Crane's own phrase, "The girl, Maggie, blossomed in a mud-puddle." The flower, a positive symbol of natural beauty, and the mud, suggesting the filth and hypocrisy of the Bowery and Maggie's life, form the poles between which the irony of the story oscillates. Crane uses that irony to highlight the implicit ambiguity of life, the contrast and conflict he saw in it.

2. Irony in The Monster

Maggie: A Girl of the Streets marked the beginning of Crane's short literary career, while The Monster appeared shortly before it ended in a sanitorium in Badenweiler, Germany. The years between these two important publications were spent in experimentation. Crane wrote newspaper articles, novels, notably The Red Badge of Courage, George's Mother, and The Third Violet, poetry, The Black Riders; but he found his most effective medium in the short story. The year 1898 saw the publication of some of Crane's best fiction--"The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," "Death and the Child," "The Blue Hotel," and, of course, The Monster. In spite of the diversity in what Crane wrote there is a common strain running through all. He continued to try to maintain an uneasy balance between the warring impulses within him. He continued to question and to probe, and in most of his work irony continued to dominate.

The difference between Crane's use of irony in Maggie and in The Monster shows a growth of artistic control, an ability to use a lighter, yet surer touch; his strokes are cleaner and deeper, striking to the heart, rather than slashing in all directions. The Monster demonstrates that Crane was no longer an apprentice--he was a journeyman. He had perfected his techniques: he could juxtapose scenes with greater skill, so that instead of an immediate ironic effect, he could gradually build the suspense with the irony and give his work more solidity and depth; he could angle point of view, allowing the reader to perceive a character's feelings and thoughts without authorial intrusion; he had learned to curb his impulse toward exaggeration and to direct it, in both description and dialogue, toward humorous as well as ironic effects.

Thus, The Monster, along with the famous "Open Boat," "The Blue Hotel," and "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," stands as Crane's most effective piece of "mature" irony. The irony is deeper and more serious than in any work Crane had attempted before; it deals with human misery and grief, with rejection, prejudice, fear; it asks modern questions about human dignity and identity; it anatomizes the morality of a whole town, moving through all social levels and age groups. The Monster shows Crane in the final stages of his attempt to balance the divergent impulses within himself, finally realizing with modern alacrity that there are no answers--only questions.

The mounting irony in The Monster begins in the first paragraph, almost before the story is underway. The point of view is third person objective, but Crane's selection of words permits the reader to see what the little boy is thinking, for the details do not come from observation, but rather, from projection into Jimmie Trescott's mind. He is

engine Number 36, making the run from Syracuse to Rochester and fourteen minutes late. The difference between Jimmie's make-believe and reality is made explicit when the narrator interrupts with, "In consequence, when he swung around the curve at the flower-bed, a wheel of his cart destroyed a peony."[30] The contrast is between the imaginary and the real. Crane emphasizes it by the change in language level, using adult words such as "consequence" and "destroyed," and he demolishes the little boy's world with one concrete word, "peony." It is not just a "flower," which might be of little consequence; it is a "peony," a specific part of the adult world of responsibility and, worse, punishment. Instantly Jimmie tries to repair the damage:

> Jim dropped the tongue of the cart. He looked at his father and the broken flower. Finally he went to the peony and tried to stand it on its pins, resuscitated, but the spine of it was hurt, and it would only hang limply from his hand. Jim could do no reparation. He looked again toward his father.[31]

Here in capsule form is the whole story of The Monster. Like Humpty-Dumpty, once a flower or a man has been damaged, the life drained, the sanity obliterated, it is hard to know what to do. The consequences must come.[32]

It seems that Crane is handling his irony quite consciously here, for he uses medical terms to describe Jimmie's attempt to repair the flower—"Pins," "resuscitated," and "spine." A partial explanation might be that Jimmie's father is a doctor, and that the little boy might have learned these words by overhearing them in his father's conversation; but the story is told by an objective narrator translating Jimmie's thoughts to an adult level. Certainly, Crane is attempting to foreshadow Dr. Trescott's later attempts to save Henry Johnson.

[30]III, p. 25. [31]p. 25. [32]p. 45.

Crane also plants another thread of irony in this incident. Jimmie kills a peony, a flower, a natural symbol of beauty, as well as evidence of Dr. Trescott's pride in his garden. Later in the doctor's burning laboratory Henry discovers another kind of garden, one of chemicals being consumed in flames; "The room was like a garden in the region where might be burning flowers."[33] Only for Henry it is different. This time the chemical flowers destroy a man.

For Crane, with his reverence for clarity and brevity, the beginning of his stories was always important. The famous opening line of "The Open Boat," "None of them knew the color of the sky," is a good example, but even Crane's placid novel The Third Violet begins with a striking line, "The engine bellowed its way up the slanting, winding valley." "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" starts, "The great Pullman was whirling onward with such dignity of motion that a glance from the window seemed simply to prove that the plains of Texas were pouring eastward." Part of this was his impatience to get on with the job, and part of it was his desire to pack every line with significance so that his work would be concise and clear; but most important was his feeling for a story, his wish to make it move from the very beginning.

The first two paragraphs of The Monster set the story in motion, and the first four sections lay the groundwork for Crane's development of irony. In these sections Crane establishes the relationship between Henry and the child, Jimmie. Because of the boy's youth, he and Henry are friends. They exchange comments on authority, "Your pop done

[33]For parallel if diverse interpretations of this idea of the first garden incident as microcosm see: James Hafley, "The Monster and the Art of Stephen Crane," Accent, XIX (Summer, 1959), 159-165; and Solomon, "The Village Virus," especially pp. 182-185.

wallop yer, didn't he?"[34] And sometimes Henry allows Jimmie to witness the ceremony of washing the carriage or tells him how to harness the horse. All of these details set up the irony which comes after Henry has saved Jimmie's life and, consequently, become the town monster. After the accident, Jimmie must be dared into even approaching Henry who now, like Hawthorne's minister, wears a heavy crepe veil to hide his face from the world. As Jimmie tells his father,

> "Why, we--why, we--now--Willie Dalzel said I dassent go right up to him, and I did; and then he did; and then--the other boys were 'fraid; and then--you comed."[35]

The first few sections also give the details of Henry Johnson's personal life before the fire. Leaning heavily on stereotypes, Crane describes the young dandy:

> It was not altogether a matter of the lavender trousers, nor yet the straw hat with its bright silk band. The change was somewhere far in the interior of Henry. But there was no cake-walk hyperbole in it. He was simply a quiet, wellbred gentleman of position wealth, and other necessary achievements out for an evening stroll, and he had never washed a wagon in his life.[36]

The white customers in Reifsnyder's barbershop are amazed at the sight of Henry. They respond with such comments as: "Ain't he a taisy?", "That man was a Pullman-car porter or someding...," and "That was Henry Johnson all right. Why, he always dresses like that when he wants to make a front! He's the biggest dude in town--anybody knows that."[37]

Section iii establishes Henry's position in the Negro community of Watermelon Alley. Henry Johnson is the leading member of his social set. His mere arrival on the scene creates comic confusion in the home of his lady friend, Miss Bella Farragut:

> The saffron Miss Bella Farragut, in a calico frock, had been crouched on the front stoop, gossiping at long range, but she

[34] p. 29. [35] p. 92. [36] p. 30. [37] p. 33.

> espied her approaching caller at a distance. She dashed around the corner of the house, galloping like a horse. Henry saw it all, but he preserved the polite demeanour of a guest when a waiter spills claret down his cuff. In this awkward situation he was simply perfect.[38]

Crane's irony here is mixed with impossible comedy. Using the foundation of the common Negro stereotype, formed from vaudeville and the minstrel show, Crane multiplies the irony with incongruity. There is something classically funny in the attempts of a young lady to impress her beau. Crane uses his best techniques of exaggeration here to show the saffron lady "galloping like a horse" in her hurry to prepare for Henry's gallant arrival. Somehow the actions are funny because they are unexpected. Bella just doesn't seem the type to murmur, "Oh, ma, isn't he divine?", but this comment prepares the reader for the ironic news which comes after Henry's death is announced in the morning paper, "Miss Bella Farragut, of No. 7 Watermelon Alley, announced that she had been engaged to marry Mr. Henry Johnson."[39]

Throughout The Monster Crane uses his Negro characters for comic-ironic purposes. When Dr. Trescott brings Henry to the home of Alek Williams, for example, the scene is riddled with "black" humor:

> "Don't trouble yourself, Mary," said Trescott, entering. "I've brought Henry for you to take care of, and all you've got to do is carry out what I tell you." Learning that he was not followed, he faced the door, and said, "Come in, Henry."
>
> Johnson entered. "Whee!" shrieked Mrs. Williams. She almost achieved a back somersault. Six young members of the tribe of Williams made a simultaneous plunge for a position behind the stove, and formed a wailing heap.[40]

There is nothing funny in the terror of people, but Crane's description here is darkly comic. The sight of the "great fat statue of a mother"[41]

[38]p. 34. [39]p. 54. [40]p. 61.

[41]Although Crane does not use this expression until twelve

almost achieving a back somersault amidst a wildly scattering tribe of children comes straight from the same comic impulse which, years later, inspired Faulkner in The Hamlet. When Alek discovers that Henry is gone from his little room, Crane again uses the stereotypic Negro reaction for humor:

> Presently he /Alek/ came flying out. He grabbed his hat and hurled the outer door back upon its hinges. Then he tumbled headlong into the night. He was yelling: "Docteh Trescott! Docteh Trescott!" He ran wildly through the fields and galloped in the direction of town. He continued to call to Trescott, as if the latter was within easy hearing. It was as if Trescott was poised in the contemplative sky over the running negro, and could heed this reaching voice—"Docteh Trescott!"[42]

The picture of the frantic Negro galloping over the fields and shouting "Docteh Trescott!" can be nothing but funny at this point because Crane has prepared the reader for his unceremonious exit by using the familiar form of comic suspense in the preceding paragraphs where Williams and his wife tiptoe around their house for fear of waking Henry. The reader suspects that Henry has escaped long before Alek gathers his courage to check, but in the meanwhile, Alek and Mary take elaborate precautions to be quiet. Mrs. Williams sits motionless and silent, while Alek says, "Sh!" even though she has said nothing. He lifts his chair rather than sliding it to avoid the noise, and even coughs behind his hand. Crane's technique here is comic pantomime; the reader follows every exaggerated gesture as if he were watching it performed on a stage. This is the key to Crane's humor. The actions of all of the Negroes in The Monster are the actions of stage Negroes. They dress, talk, and act as if they had just stepped from the proverbial watermelon

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pages later, he depends here again on the stereotypic Negro "mammy," who is always rotund. p. 73.

[42] p. 74.

patch, and it is doubtful if Crane was unaware of the stereotype when he named the street where Bella Farragut lives "Watermelon Alley."

The dividing line between Crane's humor and his irony is difficult to determine. There are wildly funny scenes involving Negroes,[43] but underlying them is a suggestion basic to the broader irony of The Monster. These comic scenes form the lighter, but not necessarily less significant, edge of Crane's irony. Although the comedy, involving the same techniques as irony (manipulation of point of view, juxtaposition of scenes and characters, and exaggeration), often comes dangerously close to slapstick, Crane maintains a balance in the character of Henry Johnson. The actions of the other Negroes in Whilomville may be treated comically, but because Henry is a Negro, their actions are counterpointed by his presence.

The antics of the Negro community mirror the activities of the white society: Both react to the monster. Alek complains that his wife's lady friends no longer come to call and that his children can't eat. At the end of The Monster Crane shows similar social effects upon the Trescott family, especially Mrs. Trescott whose afternoon ladies' party illustrates the town's rejection. She is left with fifteen empty teacups and an uncut tea-cake. Thus, Crane presents the problem of the monster from two sides, the white and the black, ironic and comic, but they are two sides of the same coin.

Crane uses both sides of that coin to show the effect the monster has upon the town, for he is interested not in the monster himself, but in the effect, or the reaction, he causes among the

[43]Another comic episode occurs in section xviii, where Mrs. Farragut, who "was of enormous weight, and who for eight years had done little more than sit in an arm-chair and describe her various ailments, had with speed and agility scaled a high board fence."

citizens. To achieve that effect, Crane juxtaposes vignettes from the white and black communities. For example, Section xvi shows the monster's arrival at Teresa Page's gala party. Section xvii presents Henry's arrival at the Farragut home in Watermelon Alley where he causes equal chaos, and Section viii synthesizes the two parallel incidents. Section viii includes the police chief's garbled version of Henry's activities both at the Page's and the Farragut's. Throughout the story Crane controls the action by alternating between the two sides of town with an occasional stop at Reifsnyder's barbershop or Martha Goodwin's kitchen for a bit of gossip. However Crane's focus upon Henry Johnson remains constant. The unifying device in these shifts back and forth, he is the man "between" who, because of Trescott's attempt to save his life, is insane and horribly deformed. He belongs nowhere.

Thus, the ironic and comic-ironic patterns Crane develops begin in the first few sections of The Monster. Because Henry is to be the man "between," Crane carefully establishes his position in the Trescott household, in the Negro community, and in Whilomville as a whole. Crane begins weaving his irony by setting up the comic pattern in the activities of Watermelon Alley and in the air of normality given to the Trescott home and the streets of Whilomville.[44] A band plays a waltz as the people of the town promenade in the park. All seems normal, happy, and a touch nostalgic until the "great hoarse roar" of the fire whistle splits the air.

[44]Another device which unifies the story is the weather. As the narrative begins it is summer. By Section xxiii, the trees of Whilomville are "panoplied in crimson and yellow," and by the time Dr. Trescott fully realizes the depth of his problem the bleak cold of deep winter has set in.

The next four sections are devoted to the fire (which destroys Trescott's home), Henry's heroism, and the frantic pseudo-heroics of the Whilomville volunteer fire department. They end with a young man depositing what was left of Henry Johnson, a "thing," on Trescott's lawn.

The transformation of Henry Johnson from man to thing in Section viii marks the turning point in the narrative. In Section ix, Crane begins to puncture the hypocrisy of the town, cutting through both Negro and white society and ignoring no one, not Jimmie Trescott, Willie Dalzel, Martha Goodwin, Mr. Winter, Mrs. Hannigan, Judge Hagenthorpe, Alek Williams nor Bella Farragut.

Crane shows that the white community in Whilomville is willing to revere the memory of the heroic Henry Johnson but it doesn't know what to do with a "thing," a monster. Alek Williams, a representative of the Negro community, sees in Henry an opportunity to make extra money. Thus, Henry is rejected or used by everyone in Whilomville. Only Dr. Trescott, who created the monster, is willing to accept responsibility for him, and because of his acceptance, his family and profession are threatened socially and economically.

Characteristically, however, Crane refuses to end with the simple moral that Dr. Trescott is an honorable man. The situation is much more complex than that. Henry Johnson is, indeed, a monster. He has no mind, no face. There is nothing human about him except the memory of the man he was. His appearance is frightening enough to make one little girl physically and emotionally sick. Grown women run in fear before his Cyclopsian eye, and even when his face is covered with a black veil, there is an aura of terror about the monster which was once Henry Johnson. He is responsible for saving a human life, but at

the same time he is a plague, a scapegoat, and a devil.

The Monster instead of presenting an answer or a handy moral gives the reader only questions, questions for every level of society and for each individual. As Edwin Cady puts it, "Who is the monster?"[45]

Stephen Crane's story of the monster of Whilomville demonstrates that his negative affirmation had reached maturity, for his irony was deeper and surer. He had mastered the techniques of indirection and contrast essential to his irony, and he had learned to handle his language in a way that no other American had done before. The Monster shows that Crane was prepared to ask the important questions of his generation even if he thought there were no easy solutions—and perhaps no solutions at all. Perhaps there was only the uneasy balance between hope and despair.

[45]p. 160.

CHAPTER III

Until R. W. Stallman's publication of the Omnibus in 1952, and the subsequent Crane renaissance marked by several biographies, critical books, and articles, Stephen Crane's reputation rested upon The Red Badge of Courage. Little critical attention was given to his short stories. However, Crane's temperament as well as his skills of compression and suggestion showed he was equally and even better prepared to write short stories, as several recent critics have noted.[1] In his longer works, Active Service, The O'Ruddy, Crane tends to ramble, to mix plot lines, and to write confused and cliche ridden dialogue. He wrote most effectively within the restrictions of the short story (especially when he was writing under pressure), where the nature of the form helped to concentrate his images, refine his dialogue, and direct his active imagination.

This chapter proposes to show that the reasons for Crane's success in the short story and the novella originate in the fundamental ambivalence in his thinking, that this bifurcation in his thought gave birth to his ability to select effective details of setting and character which function on both realistic and imaginative levels, and that

[1]See The Complete Short Stories and Sketches of Stephen Crane, ed. Thomas A. Gullason (Garden City, 1963), "Introduction," pp. 19-20; and "Thematic Patterns in Stephen Crane's Early Novels," Nineteenth Century Fiction, XVI (June, 1961), 59-67; Roy B. West, Jr., "Stephen Crane: Author in Transition," American Literature, XXXIV (May, 1962), 215-228; Edward R. Hagemann, "Crane's 'Real' War in His Short Stories," American Quarterly, VIII (1956), 356-67; Letters, eds. R. W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes, footnote, p. 38.

although Crane considered himself a realist, his short stories reveal the modifying influence of another less practical, more idealistic stream of thought, leading to settings and characters which are not simply realistic or naturalistic, but modern, symbolic, and uniquely "Cranesque."

The first section of this chapter is devoted to a general discussion of the conflict of impulses at work in Crane's techniques of developing setting and character. It illustrates some important differences between his attempts at factual reporting and his creation of short stories; in addition illustrating differences between his work and that of three other authors. The second section contains an analysis of his use of setting, including time and character, illustrating their relationships to form and theme. "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" was selected for exemplary analysis because most critics agree that it is one of Crane's most effective short stories, and the product of his mature skill.

I

Usually, Crane's setting is disturbingly abstract; the events in his stories take place anywhere, any time. Concrete factual detail is so sparse in The Red Badge of Courage, for example, that only through internal evidence of troop movements and bridges is the practically minded reader able to determine that the battle is Chancellorsville.[2] As Larzer Ziff writes in The American 1890's,

[2]Eric Solomon in "A Gloss on The Red Badge of Courage," Modern Language Notes, LXXV (February, 1960), 111-113, suggests that "The Veteran" provides not only insight into the character of Henry Fleming but also some specifics of setting in The Red Badge of Courage. See also Harold R. Hungerford, "'That Was at Chancellorsville': The Factual

> The landscape, though presented in detail is now entirely without name; topographically we can be anywhere, so far as Crane identifies places. Although the elapsed time may be clearly traced, the sense of the specific period of the narrative, as opposed to that before or after, is missing. We know that this is the Civil War, we know, on that basis, that we are somewhere in the United States between the years 1861 and 1865; otherwise, within those limits, this can be anywhere, any time, and the use of epithets for names adds, anybody.[3]

The setting of the short story, "The Open Boat," is simply the Sea, but the newspaper article Crane wrote about this adventure, "Stephen Crane's Own Story," indicates more specifically where and when the Commodore foundered as well as mentioning many other people and specific events involved in the sinking. "The Open Boat" cites the name of the ship only in its qualifying preface. The reader knows that the blue hotel is the central feature of Fort Romper, Nebraska, but Crane's biographers Beer and Berryman report that he actually saw a "hotel of a dreadful blue,"[4] before he wrote "The Blue Hotel." Thus, although the ideas for many of the settings for his stories sprang from Crane's own experience or reading, wisely Crane elected to eliminate most factual details from his fictional accounts, and, in effect, to make them less "real." Considering his sense of humor, Crane would indeed be delighted at the numerous source studies dealing with his work.[5] Even the recent,

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Framework of The Red Badge of Courage," American Literature, XXXIV (January, 1963), 520-531. Frederick C. Crews in his introduction to the 1964, Bobbs-Merrill edition of The Red Badge of Courage makes a good deal of the factual basis for Crane's war story. He goes so far as to include maps of the battle of Chancellorsville. See "Crane's Use of the Civil War," pp. xiv-xix, and xxxii-xl.

[3]pp. 195-196. [4]Berryman, p. 208, in footnote.

[5]For example, Robert W. Stallman in Stephen Crane, pp. 237-254, "Jacksonville and Cora--The Commodore Disaster," gathers most of the factual information concerning Crane's experience in the open boat. Illustration No. 20 shows a map drawn from U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey Charts of the "course of the dinghy after the shipwreck of the Commodore."

thorough biography by R. W. Stallman is marred by attempts to prove that Crane was copying real events, while Crane was usually trying to make his stories less "real" in order to get at the "feeling."

A lack of specificity is also obvious in Crane's development of characters. The reader soon discovers a problem in Crane's fiction, for his characters lack not only full names, but often even identifying and individualizing physical characteristics. Characters are labeled simply, "the oiler," "the correspondent," "the Bride," "the Swede," "the Marshall," "the maiden," "a man," "the girl," or they have everyday names like "Henry," "Jimmie," or "Bill."[6] Occasionally, it is possible to discover characters' names in other stories or sketches. For example, in "The Open Boat," the oiler is called Billie, but his full name (Higgins) appears in "Stephen Crane's Own Story." Henry Fleming's full name is finally given, but only after several chapters in The Red Badge of Courage. In similar fashion, the lady in "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" is known only as "the bride," or perhaps, she may be more respectfully called "Mrs. Potter." Examples of Crane's excision of such conventional details abound. Why, then, does Crane choose to ignore such realistic staples as names, places, and dates, details which are such an essential part of most fiction? Why does he defy realistic convention and place an additional burden on the reader?

At least a partial explanation for the generality in Crane's settings and characters lies in the ambivalence of his attitudes toward his art. Stephen Crane was determined to give realistic "slices of life," but he was more determined to create the feeling of a situation

[6]Several critics have noted this quality in Crane's work, notably Thomas A. Gullason in his introduction to The Complete Stories and Sketches of Stephen Crane, p. 37; and Larzer Ziff, p. 195.

or character. Therefore, he chose not to overwhelm the reader with the concrete details of places and times (even if they had a basis in fact), and, thus, to limit the imaginative possibilities of his work by specifics. As Edwin Cady points out, he was a "taker-outer" in good company with Hemingway and Willa Cather.[7] Crane selected only those details of setting and character essential to the mechanical development of the plot (these were few, for Crane's plots were usually episodic) or, more significantly, essential to both realistic and suggestive levels--to use Poe's words, those details contributing to "total effect." Frequently, Crane thereby forces the reader to push beneath the surface "reality" for meaning. "Irony and expressionistic symbolism ask the reader to look beyond literal meaning, to seek beyond the immediately discernible for the underlying reality."[8] Thus, the reason for the generality in Crane's settings and his seemingly flat characters lies not (as some have charged) in his ineptness or lack of experience, but more probably in his impulse to create imaginative art, art which is grounded in reality and true to experience, but which gains significant impetus from imagination (the free expression of Crane's personal vision) and suggestiveness as well. As Donald Pizer writes,

> Crane, then, entered the literary arena armed with a powerful weapon--a belief in the primacy of his personal vision. On a superficial level, this faith led him to exploit and defend the unconventional and forbidden in Maggie, confident of the validity of showing

[7]Edwin H. Cady, in Stephen Crane, p. 135. Cady refers here to a citation by William M. Gibson of the famous letter from Thomas Wolfe to Scott Fitzgerald, dividing great writers into "putter-inners" and "taker-outers." The emphasis here is obviously on essential detail. Stallman prefers to call Crane a Redskin using Philip Rahv's categories. Omnibus, p. xxvii.

[8]Donald Pizer, Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century American Literature, p. 122; see also his earlier parallel essay "Stephen Crane's Maggie and American Naturalism," Criticism, VII (Spring, 1965), 168-175.

> "people to people as they seem to me." On a level of greater depth and significance, his faith in his own vision led him to exploit his inner eye, his imaginative conception of war and its effects. In both, Crane--like Garland--was revealing an acceptance of the strain of romantic individualism which demands that the artist above all be independent and self reliant, that he be confident that within himself lies the touchstone of artistic truth.[9]

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For the most part, then, Crane's characters find themselves in an abstract environment: the sea, the prarie, the Bowery, War. Crane devises a special microcosm for his people, one very like the real world, but designed to suggest something about it and not to reproduce it. Because of this reduction in "fullness" and specificity, as well as by its lack of historical time referents, Crane's fictional world is refined. Because of such concentration, the details of his stories carry more significance than they do in the typically realistic work of any of his contemporaries, Howells or Dreiser, for example, or even in the much later work of John Steinbeck.

If one recalls Sister Carrie, for example, the elephantine details of Dreiser's novel come to mind immediately. Dreiser plods through the particulars of dress, manners, occupation, daily life, and amusement. The reader completes Sister Carrie with both a profound respect for Dreiser's ability to reproduce the complexity of the times as well as a full knowledge of the external reality of Carrie, Hurstwood, Drouet, and the environments of Chicago and New York; but this novel, like Dreiser's others, is more impressive for weight than for depth of meaning. It is a child's accordion book. When the book opens a host of characters pop out, extravagantly detailed and

[9]Pizer, p. 98.

life-like, but having little or no complex motivation.[10]

In similar fashion, Silas Lapham becomes a "real" character, and environment (the paint factory and the city streets) also becomes "real," but the details of Howells' characters in The Rise of Silas Lapham, as suggested earlier in this study, seldom radiate more than superficial reality. Conversely, Steinbeck's world of Ma Joad exudes a kind of animal vitality and realism totally different from that in Dreiser and Howells, yet alien to Crane.[11] The scenes of Ma wiping her hands on a clean, but well-worn apron, or of her frying dough in sizzling bacon grease, or even the verdant fruit farms of California are foreign to the sort of reality in Crane's fiction, even his Bowery sketches. One does not feel that he could encounter the Swede or the Marshal (or even Maggie) on the street as he feels he might meet Ma Joad in the corner laundromat. Instead, the Crane character embodies a unique reality--undeniably true--but not necessarily accurate in its correspondence to the physical world. Frank Norris made just such a distinction in his "Weekly Letter" to the Chicago American of August 3, 1901. "He began with a distinction between Accuracy and Truth. Accuracy is fidelity to particular detail; Truth is fidelity to the generalization applicable to a large body of experience."[12] Similarly,

[10]For further parallel comments see Pizer, p. 19.

[11]Certainly many of Crane's stories are about characters described in animal terms; however, for the most part such animal references are usually ironic. All of Crane's characters are human, capable of human empathy and human thought; his comparisons with animals merely point ironically to that fact. In Steinbeck's fiction, on the other hand, his people are recognized as real because of his emphasis on their animal, physical natures. For an opposing view see Marcus and Erin Mordecai, "Animal Imagery in The Red Badge of Courage," Modern Language Notes, LXXIV (February, 1959), 108-111.

[12]Donald Pizer, "Frank Norris' Definition of Naturalism," "Notes and Discussion," Modern Fiction Studies, VIII (Winter, 1962-3),

Crane's characters and settings spring from reality and suggest it; however, they are not accurate, nor are they in that sense "real."[13]

In some ways, strangely enough, Crane's characters and settings resemble Hawthorne's, and although Crane would certainly rebel at being compared with that arch-romancer (and one wonders what Hawthorne would think of Crane), he probably would agree with Hawthorne's comments in the "Preface" to The Blithedale Romance written in 1852. In commenting on the necessity of atmosphere in American fiction, Hawthorne says,

> This atmosphere is what the American Romancer needs. In its absence, the beings of imagination /Italics mine./ are compelled to show themselves in the same category as actually living mortals; a necessity that generally renders the paint and pasteboard of their composition but too painfully discernable.[14]

Crane's preoccupation with the "beings of imagination," with feeling and sincerity, emotions and imagination, parallels Hawthorne's comments on the interdependence of setting (directly related to atmosphere) and character.[15] Like Hawthorne, Crane attempted to create settings and characters which were not necessarily faithful to external reality, but which could reflect inwardly upon human nature and the human condition. To use Crane's word they must express "feeling."[16]

408-410. See also his earlier essay "Romantic individualism in Garland, Norris, and Crane," American Quarterly, X (Winter, 1958), 463-475.

[13]For similar ideas shaped from another perspective see Max Westbrook, "Stephen Crane and the Personal Universal," Modern Fiction Studies, VIII (1962-1963), 351-360.

[14]The Scarlet Letter and Related Writings, ed. H. Bruce Franklin, (Philadelphia, 1967), p. 305.

[15]Several critics have also shown similarities with Hawthorne, notably, Cady, p. 122, and Frederick C. Crews in his introduction to The Red Badge of Courage (see note 2, page 59), p. xxi.

[16]Linson, p. 37.

Neither author wished to create characters who were living mortals, or who had any existence outside their own fictional setting. That is not to say that these characters were irrelevant to the real world, but merely, that, unlike the "paint and pasteboard" characters of Dreiser, Howells, Garland, and other realists, they had a separate, imaginary life within their stories, a life which would not induce the reader to say, "Yes, that is real," but rather, "Yes, that is true. That is how it feels." Both authors wished to make the reader see beneath the surface of their fiction, and, in order to do this, they took liberties with the conventions of the realistic novel. Thus, in spite of Crane's overt affirmation of the code of realism, none of his characters--not the Swede, Maggie, Fleming, no, not even the oiler--could step from his pages and meet Ma Joad in the corner laundromat. Crane's characters would be much more at home in the romantic atmosphere of Pearl, Young Goodman Brown, Judge Pyncheon, and Ethan Brand.[17]

Crane's details of setting, time, and character, are, therefore, not merely the conventional tools of a realistic author attempting to copy external reality with mechanical precision. They are carefully selected particulars, chosen for their connotative value, for their possibility of suggestion, for their thematic implications. Names and places, consequently, usually lose ordinary temporal significance; details of realistic time become only momentary references, usually more important for suggestion within the situation than for identification with occurrences in the physical world. The details Crane does include, hence, become extremely important, especially in his short

[17]R. K. Gupta in "Hawthorne's Theory of Art," American Literature, XXXX (November, 1968), 309-324, casts a new light on Hawthorne's "realism," suggesting some of the ideas which have been adapted for the comparison with Crane noted above.

fiction and poetry.[18]

These details deserve to be examined in terms of their special function in Crane's work. As a conscious, and sometimes self-conscious, author Crane must have been aware of the conflict between his realistic and imaginative impulses and of the effect of this tension upon his techniques. Crane's selected details are supercharged with connotations, functioning simultaneously as tokens of the real world from which they spring, helping to satisfy Crane's thirst for reality and experience, and also more significantly, serving as emblems of his imaginative world beyond.

II

1. Of Setting and Time

"The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," as one of Crane's later (1898) and more mature works provides typical examples of his fully developed techniques of establishing a sense of place. First, Crane uses two basic settings and juxtaposes them for ironic effects, a familiar pattern in many of his other short stories ("The Blue Hotel," "The Open Boat," Maggie, The Monster). Second, the train and the town of Yellow Sky (presenting two sub-settings, the Weary Gentlemen Saloon and the streets of the town), like the settings in other stories, provide an environment for imaginative expansion and suggestion. They are not merely "realistic." Third, the dual scenes of the story are not simply

[18]Although it is not within the scope of this paper to deal with Crane's poetry, much of what this study attempts to show about Crane's work is substantiated in his poetry as is suggested by the pioneer work of Daniel G. Hoffman in The Poetry of Stephen Crane. Although Hoffman's work is flawed by his unfortunate tendency to extend Berryman's Freudian interpretations, much of what he says is important and insightful. He is the only critic to deal seriously with the poetry of Stephen Crane, and much work still needs to be done.

grounded in the realistic world; they suggest, in conjunction with Crane's carefully selected details of characterization, a broad universal meaning, one which transcends the practical limitations of the realistic or naturalistic story.

Typically, "The Bride" as noted above opens with a dynamic picture of the "great Pullman" "whirling onward." The tremendous motion of the scene is striking, "A glance from the window seemed simply to prove that the plains of Texas were pouring eastward."[19] The train is caught in a vortex of rushing forces, marked only by "vast flats of green grass, dull hued spaces of mesquit and cactus," and punctuated by "little groups of frame houses, woods of light and tender trees." The details suggest both rapid movement and in a sense change. A sort of time capsule, the Pullman is isolated from the outside "sweeping to the east, sweeping over the horizon, a precipice." The two views, the inside and the outside are concentrated and specific, concentrating the reader's attention momentarily on the mechanical environment of the story. The few specifics foreshadow the broader meaning and the significance which develop later.

In the next few paragraphs, Crane stresses the position of the train itself. The dull speckled prairie sweeps eastward as the self-contained train moves resolutely westward toward its destination, carrying the self-conscious newlyweds. Inside the train, in contrast to the outside, all motion seems suspended. Everything is controlled and polite. Potter and his wife are dropped on the stage of a play-like setting, the luxurious interior of the train.[20] Insulated from that

[19]XII, p. 87.

[20]Crane's dramatic techniques are important here. As David Fitelson in "Stephen Crane's Maggie and Darwinism," American Quarterly,

part of Texas through which they are passing, the couple is not merely transported but practically captured by the coach with its "dazzling fittings"; "the sea-green figured velvet, the shining brass, silver, and glass, the wood that gleamed as darkly brilliant as the surface of a pool of oil."[21] The description of the richness of the coach prepares for later contrast of the opulent East with the simpler pleasures of the sleepy town of Yellow Sky. The distance between the inside of the coach and the vast sweeping prairies suggests the ironic suspension of time and space within the car.

The other passengers and employees, part of the setting, seem at home in the luxurious world of "frescos in olive and silver" (colors connoting not only wealth, but art and knowledge), and, indeed, they seem in control of this strange modern time machine:

> To the minds of the pair, their surroundings reflected the glory of their marriage that morning in San Antonio; this was the environment of their new estate; and the man's face in particular beamed with an elation that made him appear ridiculous to the negro porter. This individual at times surveyed them from afar with an amused and superior grin. On other occasions he bullied them with skill in ways that did not make it exactly plain to them that they were being bullied.[22]

Significantly, Crane uses a commonplace of romanticism here, the mirror image. In sophisticated fashion, he uses the suggestive possibilities of the word "reflected" to give the reader insight into the minds of the characters. The coach, along with the other passengers, then

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XVI (Summer, 1964), 182-194, suggests, "As a novelist, Crane displays many of the techniques of a dramatist....As an unfolder, he is rather conventionally the dramatist." See also R. W. Stallman and E. R. Hagemann, The War Dispatches of Stephen Crane (New York, 1964), especially "Crane as Dramatist," p. 315. See also Charles Child Walcutt, American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream (Minneapolis, 1956), pp. 66-86.

[21] p. 88 [22] pp. 88-89.

becomes a mirror for their feelings, and, in doing so it reflects a shift in attitudes parallel to their own "new estate." The coach is rich, it comes from the east (or at least more east than Yellow Sky), and it mirrors the pretensions of the newly married couple.

However, Crane does not terminate the suggestive possibilities here; instead, he injects the irony of the attitudes of the employees aboard the train through a shift in narrative perspective. The interior of the train may reflect the pair's new estate, but accustomed to such Eastern finery, the others judge the bride and the Marshal by their differences. Crane highlights these differences by contrasting the interior activities of the train and the awareness of the pair. The porter, thereafter, "bullies" them, "oppresses" them, and uses "all the manners of the most unconquerable kind of snobbery."[23] Later they are taken over by a Negro waiter in the dining car who "paternalistically" (Certainly, Crane is aware of the irony here.) steers them through their one dollar meal. As they leave the train at Yellow Sky, the porter who brushed Potter's coat for a coin, "chuckles fatuously" at their departure. Thus, although the Marshal and his bride bring elements of their new estate and easternization with them, the decor and activities within the train show that their transformation is only partial, to a middle ground, the ground between richness, culture, and sophistication of the east and the poor, unsophisticated, romantic past of Yellow Sky. (The details of this section also foreshadow Scratchy's bullying in Section iii.)

The California Express as the initial setting of the story strikes a singular contrast to the second. Although the train travels

[23]p. 89.

over Texas, the technical setting of the story, the train is not a part of the country through which it passes--it is a vehicle of suspension. In Texas, the train is modern, sophisticated, civilized, and above all alien.

The town of Yellow Sky, conversely, is old fashioned, savage, and strangely comfortable. Crane's details reveal a town infused with a relaxed air of sociability. The barkeeper's dog snoozes on the boardwalk in front of "The Weary Gentlemen Saloon," while a "man without a coat" smokes his pipe at the "cooler end" of the railway station. Inside the saloon (described only briefly) the customers exchange tales and sip the local beverage. Even the announcement that "Scratchy Wilson's drunk, and has turned loose with both hands," fails to upset the natives who are accustomed to Scratchy's escapades. They take immediate precautions, but Scratchy's raids are a part of the town, and a part of Crane's setting in "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky":

> The voices had toned away to mere whisperings. The drummer wished to ask further questions, which were born of increasing anxiety and bewilderment; but when he attempted them, the men merely looked at him with irritation and motioned him to remain silent.[24]

Only the stranger is upset by the regular festivities of the town. For the residents, Scratchy's appearance forms part of the usual schedule. Scratchy, the epitome of the adolescent attitudes of Yellow Sky, is the town in microcosm.

Thus, the pivot for the conflict in "The Bride" lies in Crane's opposition of the train and the town and in the suggestive details he includes about them in the first two sections of the story. The remaining two sections take place in the streets of the town. Section iii,

[24]pp. 95-96.

primarily devoted to the childish tantrums of Scratchy occurs outside the saloon. In this section, the town becomes character, as the sea does in "The Open Boat," for Yellow Sky in the absence of the Marshal becomes Scratchy's opponent and toy, the object of his abuse.[25] In Section iv, the three major characters confront each other in the street in front of the Marshal's adobe home.

Basically, the four part structure of "The Bride" heightens the contrasts in setting. The fundamental design of the story is established in the shape of a triangle, much like the map-figure Crane describes as the train approaches Yellow Sky:

> To the left, miles down a long purple slope, was a little ribbon of mist where moved the keening Rio Grande. The train was approaching it at an angle, and the apex was Yellow Sky.[26]

The story opens inside the California Express. Then in Scene ii, Crane shifts to the town, but more specifically to the inside of the town's social center, "The Weary Gentlemen." From these two settings, then, Crane directs his story to the outside, the streets of Yellow Sky. The first two scenes are inside, suggesting the inner natures of the couple and the townspeople.[27] The streets form the apex of interest in Scene iii, involving Scratchy's physical confrontation with the town, and, in Section iv, dealing with his meeting with the Marshal and the bride, and Scratchy's internal realization.

[25]There is an interesting reversal here. In "The Open Boat" the men become toys of the sea; in "The Bride" the town becomes Scratchy's toy.

[26]p. 90.

[27]For important ideas about the inside-outside contrast (especially in connection with Crane's color imagery) see: James T. Cox, "The Imagery of The Red Badge of Courage," Modern Fiction Studies, V (Autumn, 1959), 209-219; and Hugh N. Maclean, "The Two Worlds of 'The Blue Hotel,'" Modern Fiction Studies, V (Autumn, 1959), 260-270.

In the first two sections of the four part story, Crane establishes the basic conflicts of the narrative: the conflict between East and West, between new and old, between sophistication and innocence, between civilization and savagery, and progress and the past, between maturity and adolescence. Crane formulates these thematic conflicts primarily through effective control of the details of setting and through his ability to heighten ironic suggestion by juxtaposing scenes (settings).

As explained in Chapter II, such ironic juxtaposition, along with his similarly ironic manipulation of perspective, is a familiar device in a number of Crane's stories. For example, there is in "The Open Boat" the contrast of danger faced by the men in the boat and the comfortable security of those aboard the omnibus, and even more ironically, the safety of the sea gulls bobbing happily at the side of the dinghy. Crane carries the irony even further by using descriptive details involving land imagery ("islands," "prairie chickens," "carpets"); in Maggie, Crane contrasts scenes involving the seductions of Maggie and Pete, and in The Monster, he opposes scenes of the activities of the black and white communities. Such juxtaposition of scenes and settings is typical, then, of the mature techniques Crane employed in much of his later work, as well as of his early experimentation in Maggie.

* * *

Although the environmental, physical aspects of setting help to form the conflict in "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," as in his other stories, Crane's treatment of time, a more abstract aspect of setting, further amplifies the design of his story and helps to formulate its

meaning.

Ordinarily time references are included to aid the reader in following the plot. He is told that it is morning so that he will not confuse the current activities with those which occur earlier or later in the basic time frame of the story. Sometimes a realistic author will include specific references not only to the time of day, or the passage of time, but to actual years and historical events in order to show that his account is "real," patterned after or even copying real events. Other authors (like Faulkner) will deliberately confuse narrative time by skipping from day to day, or year to year, narrator to narrator, in order to involve the reader and perhaps to develop "time" itself as a theme.

Stephen Crane, on the other hand, uses time in several of these ways, but his time frames seem to be at first glance merely conventional, realistic parts of the setting in the usual definition as "time and place." Close observation reveals, however, that Crane's references to time may be grouped in several classes.

The first of these is the usually noted conventional historical time frame, employing a chronology related to the "real," historical passage of time, and tied to the ideas of the practical world and the passage of events. For example, The Red Badge of Courage may be, and, indeed, most often, is read as a story about the Civil War, a specific event marked by time in the history of the United States. There are, of course, certain details of internal evidence, some as obvious as the blue and gray uniforms and the names of regiments, others as obscure as pontoon bridges, troop movements, and dialect, which technically delimit the time span of the story. But, certainly, Crane does not emphasize his setting as the Civil War. He fails to name battles,

places, generals. Had his purpose been to place this story within realistic, historical time, he could hardly have overlooked such essential realistic references to time and place. Instead, Crane sets up a general historical time frame, not a specific one. He attempts to suggest reality, to draw on real events, but not to recreate a specific moment in actual time. In the same way, Crane excises realistic, factual details from many of his stories. The historical time frames of "The Blue Hotel," Maggie, "The Open Boat," "An Ominous Baby," "The Upturned Face," and "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" are vague; in fact, they seem almost contemporary to the modern reader. "The Bride" takes place "sometime" in the history of the West. Thus, most of Crane's fiction takes place in a deliberately non-realistic stream of time, unmarked by specific ticks of an actual clock, which parallels historical time.

Within the particularized narrative frame of his stories, however, Crane is often quite precise in his time references. A second class of time in Crane's fiction is, therefore, the product of his technical skill, dependent on his ability to set the "internal" narrative time. Each story begins at X time and the progression of time from that point on is dependent on narrative clock time, that is, the number of days or hours passing among the pages of the story. This time is unrelated to historical time. Crane's control of the internal time of the story enables the reader to keep references to characters and places in perspective and thus, to follow the actual progression of events. In establishing the clock time of his narrative, he gives the reader a secure point of reference (again not necessarily real or historical) for the physical activities of the characters and, at the same time, he frees himself from confusing references to other things

happening simultaneously.

For example, in "The Bride," Crane first gives the reader a glimpse of the couple on their way to Yellow Sky and informs him through their dialogue that they have, by quick subtraction, about three and a half hours until they reach their destination. When he shifts the scene to Yellow Sky in Section ii, the reader knows that the train will arrive in twenty-one minutes. In establishing such an internal time cycle, Crane can keep the reader's attention focused on the activities of the characters while he builds suspense. The internal time frame of any story may be in terms of specific minutes, as it is in "The Bride," or in terms of nature's cycles, as it is in "The Open Boat," or in terms of maturation as it is in "The Dark Brown Dog," where Crane uses the storyteller's techniques of transition: "one day," "that evening," or "so it came to pass." Whether general or specific, the time frame within a story remains chronological even though Crane may go into the thoughts of a character as he does in "The Open Boat," The Red Badge of Courage and others. The usual frame is flexible, for the action may cover either a very few minutes ("An Ominous Baby"), days ("The Open Boat"), or years (Maggie). Whatever the case, the reader is given a clear internal time scale, a time table of the story in progress.

The internal clock frame of a story has more than one function: it gives the reader a schedule for reference, but more often it serves (1) to unify, (2) to build tension or suspense, and (3) to develop characters. In "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," Crane has Marshal Potter announce that, "We are due in Yellow Sky at 3:42," as he shows his bride the little silver pocket watch he bought from a friend in "San Anton'." The bride gleefully discovers that, "It's seventeen

minutes past twelve," by the hands on her new husband's watch.[28] Potter's concern with time not only reveals his apprehension, but builds suspense toward the events which will occur when Potter and his bride arrive. Crane heightens this suspense with the opening of the next section, "The California Express on the Southern Railway was due at Yellow Sky in twenty-one minutes." The reader, seeing the arrival of the train from two perspectives, becomes involved in the mounting tension. Also, by using very specific references to internal time in both sections, with the common element being the arrival of the train, Crane unifies the separate settings and sections of this story as he does in The Monster and others.

A third kind of time frame also appears in most of Crane's short stories and in all of his poetry. This third time class includes his allusions to other times and places, not only in his general delineation of character, but also in his whole approach to fiction. The author tends to generalize, to make his characters citizens of any nation, culture, century--universal. How he does this will be discussed in greater detail in the following section on characterization, but, briefly, because Crane gives his characters general names, or refuses to use specific names in some cases, because he calls them "the man," "the girl," "the marshal," "the oiler," or "the boy," the reader is enticed into generalization. Since Crane does not limit his stories with specifics, the activities of his characters can be identified with the activities of man in general at any point in time. As Crane's narrator in "The Open Boat" says in commenting on the injured captain:

The injured captain, lying in the bow, was at this time buried

[28] p. 89.

> in that profound dejection and indifference which comes, temporarily at least, to even the bravest and most enduring when, willy-nilly, the firm fails, the army loses, the ship goes down. The mind of the master of a vessel is rooted deep in the timbers of her, though he command for a day or a decade; and this captain had on him the stern impression of a scene in the greys of dawn of seven turned faces, and later a stump of a topmast with a white ball on it, that slashed to and fro at the waves, went low and lower, and down. Thereafter there was something strange in his voice. Although steady, it was deep with mourning, and of a quality beyond oration or tears.[29]

The captain is all leaders in all times, his feelings the common feelings of those who have lost part of themselves. He is Man at any critical point in time.

Often, in order to strengthen the effect of universality, Crane uses general words to describe his characters' activities, and he will allude to other times and places (as he does in the passage above) using similes, metaphors and parallel allusions, fitting his characters with those in similar situations throughout time. For example, in "The Bride" Crane writes about the Marshal and his bride that "Historically there was supposed to be something infinitely humorous in their situation."[30] The Marshal is described as "like a man waiting in a barber's shop."[31] The bride later in Section iii in confrontation with Scratchy becomes "slave to hideous rites, gazing at the apparational snake."[32] Scratchy learns that the Marshal is married and becomes "like a creature allowed a glimpse of another world."[33] Through these allusions and similes and his omission of additional realistic and conventional details to personalize his characters, Crane insists that these are not merely inhabitants of their peculiar fictional world; they are, as well, symbolic co-inhabitants of mankind throughout time. Their activities

[29]XII, p. 30. [30]XII, p. 89. [31]p. 87.
[32]p. 100. [33]p. 101.

and what they learn or fail to learn are indigenous to their circumstances, but in a larger sense, they represent the human condition in all ages.

2. Of character

Although Crane's manipulation of setting and time forms the basis for the development of most of his fiction and especially for "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," it is also essential to examine his particulars of characterization. As illustrated earlier, Crane gives only a minimum of details about each of his major characters. Consequently, the reader tends to generalize, to universalize them as their names suggest. The Marshal is simply "a marshal," and the bride becomes simply "a bride." Instead of developing an individualized character, Crane depends on stereotypes and on the imagination of the reader. Consequently, each reader, in effect, creates his own Crane characters based on the outlines Crane provides. Even Scratchy Wilson, described in more detail than the other two, becomes simply, but symbolically, "a child of the earlier plains." In characteristic fashion, Crane develops characters who are like real people, but who exist in their own time, parallel to those in the same situation throughout history. Crane does not give enough information about his "possible" people to make them "real." His characters are flat, one-sided, and decidedly symbolic. For example, the reader knows that the bride wears a blue cashmere dress, decorated with distracting puff sleeves and steel buttons, and that she is used to cooking--and expects to continue to cook. Her emotionless face is flushed with blushes only because of the stares of the other passengers. The Marshal, on the other hand, is aware of his new found (but apparently not fully comprehended)

responsibility, for he self-consciously moves his "brick-coloured" hands over his handsome, black wedding suit, glancing occasionally at his new silver watch while contemplating his reception in Yellow Sky. Most conventional, realistic details are omitted; only suggestive, working particulars are included. Because the characters are outlines rather than fully developed characters, the reader tends to concentrate his attention on the few details that are supplied.

Scratchy Wilson, the town's center of attraction, is the most fully developed character. The dialogue among the men in the saloon builds anticipation for Scratchy's arrival and provides expository details about his previous adventures and fights with Marshal Potter. By the time he enters the story in Section iii, heralded very much like a character in a play ("Here he comes,"), the reader is anxious to meet the terror of Yellow Sky.

After his careful preparation, Crane describes Scratchy with punctilious care. In the first place, the gun-fighter is fully named, a distinction Crane seldom affords any but his major characters (Billie, Henry, Conklin) or his notorious ones (Scully, Reefsnyder, Neeltje). Here, however, Crane's comic sense affects his selections. The belittling quality of calling a gun-fighter "Scratchy," a name connoting irritation rather than threat, must have appealed to the Crane who was fascinated by the "Wild West," and who was himself once involved with banditos as recorded in his fiction-sketch, "Horses—One Dash." Scratchy's surname, "Wilson," is a typical Cranean last name, having little distinction and tending to cause the reader to generalize about the character, his ethnic background, his religion, etc. The name Wilson, like Fleming, Johnson, or Nolan is a blank spot on the map; it is named, but unknown and general. Thus, the name Scratchy Wilson suggests both

humor and universality.

Typically, although Scratchy's name does entitle him to special attention in the story, Crane usually calls him simply "the man," the only label given to him in the section Crane devotes to the gunfighter's description. Such general labeling tends to make the reader concentrate on the character's outstanding qualities and to associate him with his actions rather than with a name. Specifically, in this story it is possible that Crane might have destroyed the intensity of the conflict and the impact of Scratchy's realization had he consistently called him by name earlier in the story.

Section iii is entirely devoted to the description of what Scratchy does; however, the description is primarily suggestive. Ordinarily, a realistic writer will quite dutifully describe a character's face, tone of voice, profession, habits of dress, and so forth, but Crane gives the reader only a few such details. He creates the illusion (or total effect) of Scratchy's personality primarily through metaphor and simile, parallel allusion (implicit), and connotative adjectives. For example, Crane gives the reader a first glimpse of Scratchy,

> A man in a maroon-colored flannel shirt, which had been purchased for the purposes of decoration, and made principally by some Jewish women on the East Side of New York, rounded a corner and walked into the middle of the main street of Yellow Sky.... And his boots had red tops with gilded imprints, of the kind beloved in winter by little sledding boys on the hillsides of New England.[34]

The suggestion of details here entails a contrast between the sandy street with the grass which "exactly resembled the grass mats used to represent lawns on the stage" and the burning sands, the "great plum-

[34] p. 97.

colored plain of mesquit,"[35] which mark the town of Yellow Sky somewhere along the Rio Grande. In contrast, Scratchy is described in cold New England terms. He wears a flannel shirt in the blazing sun; Crane points out that the shirt was purchased for the "purposes of decoration." Ironically that marvelous super-heated shirt was "made by Jewish women of the East Side of New York." He wears the traditional boots of a gunfighter, but they are childishly decorated in red with gilded imprints, and they are of the kind "beloved by sledding boys on the hillsides of New England." Thus far in his description, Crane seems to be suggesting that Scratchy is out of tune with his time and place and that he is childish. Why does he wear a flannel shirt (especially maroon--the same color as the plains) in the blazing Texas summer? Why does he choose boots with child-like designs on them? Playing with contrasts in sense impressions, Crane brings Scratchy's character into cold contrast against the heat of the sleepy town. Paradoxically, Scratchy is associated with Yellow Sky, but, like the town, he is disassociated with immediate, changeable reality, with the way mature, civilized men conduct themselves. As a representative of the town, as an accepted if eccentric member of that society, Scratchy in his confrontation with the Marshal develops into a symbol of the town, and his confrontation is with the Marshal's new qualities (the bride) and the associations that go with them.

Crane is at his best in using metaphor and simile in the next few paragraphs of description following Scratchy's confrontation with the blank face of the town. The gunfighter's face "flames" with "rage begot of Whiskey." He walks with "the creeping movement of the midnight

[35] p. 93.

cat." His weapons are "as easy as straws; they were moved with electric swiftness." Scratchy's fingers are delicate and controlled "in a musician's way." Later he "howls" and "chants Apache scalp-music," suggesting his primitive nature.[36] He churns himself into a childish rage, and, finally, when no human opponent appears, he fumes "as the winter wind attacks a prairie cabin in the north."

Through metaphor, simile, parallel allusion and connotative adjectives, Crane establishes Scratchy as an exaggeration, almost a grotesque. The reader senses something about him because of Crane's expert manipulation of the values of words and situations. The reader understands more about Scratchy than he can verbalize--even though he does not know his height, weight, his facial features, or even for that matter, that staple of realistic description, the color of his hair and eyes. The reader could no more describe Scratchy in exact terms than he could be tempted to attempt a detailed description of Conklin, Fleming, Johnson, or Maggie. These characters are created by the imaginative value of the language of their descriptions and by the connotations and allusions attached to it, and not by the conventional, accurate methods of realistic description. Scratchy is only one of many such "Cranean" characters; but he is one of Crane's most fully developed. Essentially his "whatness" springs primarily from imaginative suggestion and dramatic context, rather than from the realistic accumulation of concrete detail.

It seems reasonable, then, to assume that Crane's unique settings (including time) and characters grow from his peculiar sensitivity in selecting only essential emotive details for the development

[36] pp. 97-99

of his fiction. Any fact which does not contribute to Crane's total effect is excised. Therefore the generality of settings and characters rises not from his inability to develop and amplify these elements, but rather from his conscious effort to create a special kind of condensed fiction. That unique fiction is a blend of concrete realistic details and emotive imaginative ones, for Crane's settings and characters are real in the sense that they suggest something true about the real world, and about the universal experiences of man. Although they spring from actual experience in Crane's life or from his reading and conversations, they are metamorphosed by his imaginative ability to heighten their qualities, to make bigger than life, and, consequently, to make more meaningful. Because of the lack of specific historical time referents and fully developed "realistic" characters, Crane's short stories may be appreciated by the modern reader who finds in them characters who reside in his imaginative world and who speak to him in his own language.

CHAPTER IV

Introducing the Whilomville Stories in Wilson Follett's edition of Crane's works, William Lyon Phelps writes:

> Mark Twain, Stephen Crane, Booth Tarkington are among the greatest diagnosticians of children's diseases. They not only understand children, they know what is the matter with them; and like the wisest physicians they know that the chief remedy is time. Nothing saves the world from the small boy except his lack of force. He can fortunately be outwitted by his elders, and if that method fails, they can always resort to superior brute strength.[1]

Here Phelps summarizes the dominant spirit of the Whilomville collection of thirteen stories. Until recently, this group of short stories was largely ignored by modern critics; however, Crane's stories about children are significant for a number of reasons.[2] They merit additional attention because they are an important part of his artistic development during the last year of his life when he was also completing his war stories. These little pieces also provide a gloss on much of the rest of Crane's fiction, reflecting his major themes, ideas, and techniques in miniature. They are excellent samples of his attitudes toward children and adults in society, and, finally, like

[1]V, p. xi.

[2]For example, Donald Gibson in his new book on Crane barely mentions the Whilomville Stories (Carbondale, 1968). A notable exception, however, is Eric Solomon's Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism. Solomon devotes a full chapter to these stories and makes perceptive comments in spite of his rather shaky thesis. Another is George Monteiro's "Whilomville as Judah: Crane's 'A Little Pilgrimage,'" Renascence, XIX (Summer, 1967), 184-189. Stallman in Stephen Crane devotes ten pages to the stories, but his comments are confined to plot summaries and biographical information.

the rest of his fiction, they illustrate the fundamental bifurcation of his thought. As Phelps writes later in his introduction,

> Stephen Crane was a curious compound of patience and impatience. As a man he was wildly impatient with hypocrisy, cant, pretence, falsehood, brutality, sentimentalism, injustice, and cruelty; as an artist, he was unendingly patient in dealing with these very things.[3]

The Whilomville stories illustrate Crane's dual impulses, his desire for an ideal world and his compulsion to record the "real" thing. Crane would have liked to see children as protected, pink, cuddly, and incapable of malice and violence, but on the other hand he had seen enough of life in Port Jervis, the Bowery, and elsewhere to know otherwise. He remembered enough of his childhood to know that children were capable of prejudice, hatred, malice, hypocrisy--as adults were, and he knew that the child's world was not insulated from the violence of life.[4] Because these stories indicate the tension in Crane's thinking between these two characteristically divergent impulses, this chapter suggests how this tension influenced the composition of these stories, and how it caused him to write his peculiar "Cranesque" fiction. Although the Whilomville Stories, which Crane himself called "sure and quick money"[5] were written under the pressure of financial need and physical illness, they nevertheless, illustrate Crane's familiar attitudes and techniques and give insight into his earlier work.

The first section of this chapter examines the kinds of characters Crane creates as well as their environment, while the second

[3]pp. xii-xiii.

[4]For example, at the age of eleven Crane saw "a white girl stabbed by her Negro lover." He raced home "drenched with fear and said nothing." Berryman, Stephen Crane, pp. 13-14.

[5]Letters, No. 274, p. 212. See also A. J. Liebling "The Dollars Damned Him," The New Yorker, XXVII (August, 1961), 48-72.

section illustrates some of the important parallel themes and ideas in Crane's Whilomville Stories and his other fiction.

I

Robert Wooster Stallman, in his recent biography of Crane writes, "The true Crane style is the ironic style of The Red Badge and of Maggie, rather than the soft sentimental variety of Whilomville Stories."[6] Certainly there are sentimental elements in some of the Whilomville stories, especially in "Making an Orator," Jimmie Trescott's ordeal of reciting Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade" before his class, and "His New Mittens," the story of a boy who runs away from home after he disobeys his loving but over-protective mother. These stories deal with motherhood and mother love, and with the tenuous relationship between children and their fears as well as with the problems of social adjustment. Sometimes Crane's vocabulary suggests an excess of emotion. For example, he borrows terms and phrases from sentimental novels and, in accordance with his early training, from the King James Bible. He uses such inflated terms as "thrash," "fighting blood," "bestowed," "countenance," "pale as death," and "flaming fagots." However, in spite of the fact that Crane was attracted to romantic and sentimental situations and words, usually he uses them ironically. His stories are almost always tempered by his practical realistic sense.

Unlike some of his contemporaries who were writing in the popular stream of "children's literature" (like Five Little Peppers and How They Grew and Little Lord Fauntleroy) which depicted boys and girls as

[6]Stephen Crane, p. 483.

basically innocent, loveable creatures, Crane deliberately chose a different approach. In Whilomville Stories sometimes he is moved by a sentimental desire to see children in a romantic, soft, and fluffy light, but his compensating practicality almost always insists as well that he record the realistic, less pleasant, aspects of childhood. He never succumbs completely to the temptation of sentimentality, even though that impulse continues to influence him. Although it would be more comfortable to look back upon the rituals of childhood using nostalgic mists to crowd out the pain, Crane usually refuses the opportunity--his pictures are drawn from real life, and his characters suggest real children. Above all, his stories about Whilomville are children's stories only in that they have boys and girls as characters. The tone and point of view show that these stories were not intended for children's reading, just as the irony indicates that they are not merely nostalgic vignettes, but rather attacks on an already well established tradition of children's literature. Essentially, they are practical, adult glimpses of the world of children.

As in all of Crane's most effective fiction, the key to these stories lies in his manipulation of point of view. Crane presents the dialogue and action of the children dramatically, and sometimes goes into their minds to reveal their reactions to situations; always, however, he filters the action and thought through an adult narrator. The reader observes the action as the child sees it, but he sees it from the dual perspectives of involvement (child) and detachment (adult). Thus, seemingly simple situations take on thematic importance and rise above the elementary level of "boys' fiction." The following passage from "The Fight" illustrates this dual perspective:

> However, his short retreat was taken as a practical victory for Jimmie, and the boys hooted him bitterly. He remained inside the fence, swinging one foot and scowling, while Jimmie was escorted off down the street amid acclamations. The new boy turned and walked back toward the house, his face gloomy, lined deep with discouragement, as if he felt that the new environment's antagonism and palpable cruelty were sure to prove too much for him.[7]

Obviously, the vocabulary, "acclamations," "discouragement," "antagonism" and "palpable," is intended for adult readers. Typically, the reader knows how the children feel (in this case the "new boy") as well as what they do, and the objective adult point of view pushes the action to an ironic level, attacking the pseudo-heroics of the boys through humorously exaggerated words like, "victory," "escorted," "acclamations," and "palpable cruelty." "His ironic method is to project into the scene the values of its participants in order to underline the difference between their values and reality. So the scene has a basic chivalric cast."[8] It is essential to note, however, that although Crane presents his situations humorously or ironically, the children actually feel the pain their circumstances bring them; to view these stories simply as sentimental childhood reminiscences or as soft humorous sketches is to miss both Crane's dominant irony and the pathos in the lives of the children. As Eric Solomon says, "more than in any of his other works, the parodic principle is operative here. If one considers the tales as fundamentally about children, then one must reject the volume as a failure of tone because of the disparity between the sophisticated form and diction and the seemingly naive content. Yet Crane was far too aware of the modes of childhood thought not to

[7]p. 159.

[8]Donald Pizer, Realism and Naturalism in Nineteenth-Century Fiction, p. 122. Pizer's comment is made in reference to Maggie, but perhaps his intent is not violated by placing his remarks in this context.

realize that stories of children should be cast in a simple form."[9]

Thomas Gullason puts it another way when he writes:

> What Crane does is to bring to life the adult's former boyhood world, with all of its cruelty, pity, and humor. These stories, then, are meant for the adult reader, not for children. The pattern of each story is suggested by a remark Crane once made about children. They were, he said, "like breakers on a beach. They do something and that is all there is in it." Each story has this rhythm of movement. And with his acute psychological insight, Crane touches the "innards of the actual boy" in these stories.[10]

Like most of the characters in Crane's other work, his Whilomville children live in a typical town, have ordinary parents, and play the usual children's games.[11] (Cora imitates her mother's cooking; the other little girls in the neighborhood play with dolls and hoops; Jimmie races his velocipede, and the rest of the boys play team games.) Jimmie Trescott, Willie Dalzel, Minnie Phelps, the Margate twins, and Cora, the "angel child," appear to be average children. The very commonality of these children strikes a chilling keynote of irony in most of the Whilomville stories. If, indeed, these children are typical, Crane must be saying that regardless of environment, all the world is populated with tiny barbarians, savages, Indians. Even more frightening is Crane's implicit comment that these little savages are merely miniatures of adults in this "normal" world. "The child's actions many times travesty those of the mature members of the community; as in Tom Sawyer, adult morality is a prime target."[12] In this way, Crane's

[9]p. 204.

[10]"Introduction," The Complete Short Stories and Sketches of Stephen Crane, p. 43.

[11]As Alfred Kazin notes, however, Whilomville is a combination of all of the towns in boys' books but it adds an aura of evil. "A Procession of Children," American Scholar, XXXIII (1964), 182, and Solomon, p. 292, footnote 3.

[12]Solomon, p. 204.

children provide a critical mirror and measure not only for the adults of Whilomville but for Crane's entire fictional population.

The author points to the savagery of the children in a number of ways. His boys and girls are fighters; they rebel against the restrictions of the adult world, and they battle among themselves. Relying strictly on superior force, either social (girls) or physical (boys), these little barbarians survive in their own juvenile community and live by its harsh internal rules as well as by those imposed from above by the adults. There is no democracy here. Each child wishes to be accepted by his peers, and like an adult, to be accepted he must follow the established rituals of his society. If he breaks custom, he is subject to instant ostracism and ridicule. In this community of savage children the primary forces are knowledge of the code of behavior, the ability to turn it to one's advantage, and individual physical prowess. For example, each new boy is forced to test his courage and ability in hand to hand combat in order that his position in the hierachy may be established. Crane is careful to give the initiate's view of the situation. He is a "new" boy who had to go among "new People, a new tribe." Crane's juxtaposition of "people" with "tribe" emphasizes that these children are very much like adults, or to turn the phrase, they are little people:

> He approached slowly the group of older inhabitants, and they had grown profoundly silent. They looked him over and he looked them over. They might have been savages observing the first white man, or white men observing the first savage. The silence held steady...."I kin lick you," announced Willie Dalzel, but he stared at him again.[13]

This passage illustrates the basically barbaric and irrational nature

[13]pp. 156-157.

of the children as well as their dependence on tribal rules. Crane's editorial comments emphasize the barbarism; the boy is forced to a test of courage and prowess in this story, while in "Shame" Jimmie is ostracized and deprived of his identity. Jimmie loses his identity in the group and becomes a nameless "Him" simply for carrying his salmon sandwich in a pail.

Certainly, the reader might expect the urchins of Rum Alley to act in a savage, warlike manner as they do in the introductory sections in Maggie:

> The little champion of Rum Alley stumbled precipitately down the other side. His coat had been torn to shreds in a scuffle, and his hat was gone. He had bruises on twenty parts of his body, and blood was dripping from a cut in his head. His wan features looked like those of a tiny insane demon. On the ground, children from Devil's Row closed in on their antagonist. He crooked his left arm defensively about his head and fought with madness. The little boys ran to and fro, dodging, hurling stones, and swearing in barbaric trebles.[14]

The genteel reader of the nineteenth century might have been shocked at the reality of this violence, but reading this passage might also have confirmed his suspicions about the children of the Bowery. After all, since the Bowery was that notorious section of New York riddled with vice, its grimy urchins might be expected to reflect the warlike behavior of their uncouth elders. Those children were trained to survive in the filthy slums, and as Crane said, "Environment is a tremendous thing." But in peaceful, normal, Whilomville, probably modeled after Crane's own hometown of Port Jervis, obviously the children should be more civilized.[15]

[14]pp. 137-138.

[15]Beer reports that in "America readers of Harper's Magazine were delighted and repelled by the Whilomville stories. For the first time since Mark Twain's demigod floated with his lazy slave on the Mississippi, the national child stepped forward and yelped among the

However, children are children--everywhere, Crane says--and everywhere children are savages. They may wear rags in the Bowery, drunken parents may brawl every night, and their sisters may be prostitutes. These conditions easily explain their barbaric actions, but how, then, can the reader explain the fact that throughout Crane's fiction, from Maggie through Whilomville Stories, his children are consistently savage animals. Even in the sleepy, "normal" environment of Whilomville, where there are evening band concerts, where community members gather at the post office in sociable little groups waiting for their mail, where the fathers work at respectable jobs as doctors, farmers, barbers, artists--even in peaceful serene Whilomville, with its placid exterior and smoothly functioning social organization, the darling little children are savages with their rituals, their lies, their heartless battles for power. The dominant, dark irony of these "children's stories" tears away whatever remnants of fashionable sentimentality the scenes may possess. They deal specifically with the very real brutality and violence of children. These respectable children, reared in the impeccable homes of Whilomville, are just playing, but they are just playing with their fists ("The Fight"), fire ("The Stove"), guns ("The Carriage-Lamps" and "Lynx-Hunting"), and stones ("The Carriage-Lamps"). Unlike Twain's boys, Tom and Huck, Crane's children play pranks which are not entirely harmless. As the following dialogue between the archetypal parents, Dr. and Mrs. Trescott, indicates, the

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maples and the swinging gates of a little town, unmoral, unadorned and far from sweet." As Aahnebrink puts it, "Crane revolted not only against the social conditions of his time, but also against the smug complacency of the genteel tradition and the conventional standards of American literature," The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction (New York, 1950), p. 150.

activities of the children are more than youthful effervescence:

> "I'm sure I don't know," replied the mother. "We've tried almost everything. Of course much of it is pure animal spirits. Jimmie is not naturally vicious----"
>
> "Oh, I know," interrupted the doctor, impatiently. "Do you suppose, when the stones were singing about Peter's ears, he cared whether they were flung by a boy who was naturally vicious or a boy who was not? The question might interest him afterward, but at the time he was mainly occupied in dodging these effects of pure animal spirits.[16]

Crane breaks from his usual pattern in these stories by using names fairly consistently. The reader finishes the tales with a clear indication of the children's personalities as associated with their names. Jimmie Trescott, the unifying character of the series, appears in the majority of them, acting as the most typical member of the junior Whilomville community: he is an active aggressive youngster, sometimes given to outbursts of rebellious anger against the restrictions of the adults ("The Carriage-Lamps"). Willie Dalzel, the leader and bully of the tribe, is identified as the "bad boy," the one who reads dime novels like The Red Captain: A Tale of Pirates of the Spanish Main. He devises the Tom Sawyer-like rescue plan for Jimmie Trescott in "The Carriage-Lamps." The feminine lead for the Whilomville gang is claimed by the spoiled little tyrant from "Angel Child," Cora. (Most biographers suggest that Cora is a portrait of Crane's common law wife, Cora Howarth.) Usually in complete control of the situation, Cora has the hair of the Margate twins cut along with the tresses of the other children in the gang as a birthday tribute. In "The Stove," she also manages to bake a batch of aromatic turnips in the Trescott basement during a tea party given for the neighborhood ladies by Mrs. Trescott. The gossip in the microcosmic community is

[16]p. 94.

Rosie Goldege--a direct literary relation to Martha Godwin of The Monster and Mary Johnson the mother of Maggie.

Crane probably gives most of his fictional children names because the stories were conceived as a series, but also by naming them he also traces their development as individuals, struggling to attain their separate identities. Each one has a personality marking him as different from his peers, but ironically, despite their individualities, the band of Whilomville children is homogeneously savage. These children know only the laws of force, and it is only the superior force of their parents which keeps them in check. In this way, Crane relates Whilomville children to the unlikely imps of the Bowery tales, suggesting the contradiction in his comment that "Environment is a tremendous thing."

Several things suggest that the children's world of Whilomville not only corresponds to but provides a training ground for adult life. In the first place, a child learns to respect force. A child obeys his parents (especially his mother who is closer to his everyday life) because they are bigger and he obeys another child who is stronger, but within him the boiling rebellion is always there. One of the best examples of this obedience-rebellion pattern found throughout Whilomville Stories is "His New Mittens." Little Horace, the only child in a family of an over-protective mother and a very stern Aunt Martha, is admonished to come straight home from school and not to dirty his new mittens. Inevitably, on the way home Horace is taunted by his peers when he refuses to join a snowball fight. "A-fray-ed of his mit-tens!" they shout covering him with the shame of the group:

> Horace had turned toward home several times, but, as a matter of fact, this scene held him in a spell. It was fascinating beyond anything which the grown man understands. He had always in the back

> of his head a sense of guilt, even a sense of impending punishment for disobedience, but they could not weight with the delirium of this snow battle.[17]

Horace, like many of Crane's other characters, is caught in a vortex of conflicting wishes and codes. He would like to join the snow-war, but his mother has forbidden any such dirtying activity. In obedience to her he violates the code of his own community, and punishment is swift:

> When he raised his voice to deny the charge it was simply lost in the screams of the mob. He was alone, fronting all the traditions of boyhood held before him by inexorable representatives. To such a low state had he fallen that one lad, a mere baby, outflanked him and then struck him in the cheek with a heavy snowball.[18]

Horace, like Fleming and Dr. Trescott, faces a decision balanced between two equally attractive alternatives. He is condemned if he does participate in the snowball fight or not. He will be punished by the formidable power of either his mother or Aunt Martha, or by the swift judgement of his peers. He cannot win no matter which choice he makes, and impulsively, he makes both at the same time. Consequently, Horace is ostracized by the gang (for a while) and punished by his mother for not coming home straight from school and for lying that he had lost his mittens rather than admitting that he had been playing in the snow. Interestingly enough, the punishment of both forces is the same—isolation; the boy is completely ignored, as if he had ceased to exist:

> His mother and his aunt went briskly about the business of preparing supper. They did not display a knowledge of his existence; they carried an effect of oblivion so far that they did not speak to each other.[19]

The boy reacts to this enforced isolation in both cases. His rebellion, like Maggie's or the correspondent's, is at lack of recognition, the refusal of others to admit individual identity. Horace seeks to be admitted to both the gang and his family circle while in some degree

[17]p. 197. [18]p. 194. [19]p. 200.

exercising his own freedom. He achieves his goal at the end of "His New Mittens" when the butcher returns him to the family circle and he is joyfully admitted after he has run away from home as an act of "deadly retribution" for his isolation from the family activity.

Thus, Horace, like Jimmie Trescott and Johnnie Hedge, learns that in order to survive with honor in their childish community he must balance the delicate problem of power and force with desire, in finding his place in his society and maintaining his identity and independence in the juvenile community.

The youngsters also discover the restrictions of social etiquette, that being different in anything from dress to social habits is taboo. As Maurice Bassan notes in his introductory essay to Stephen Crane: A Collection of Critical Essays, "Crane's eye for the savageness of societal pressure to conform was as sharp as ever /in Whilomville Stories/, though the presentation was more sober and less sardonic than in the narratives of the early 90's."[20] The rules of the game are clearly outlined, as they are in adult life, and any infractions are swiftly punished by the majority; sometimes purely for the joy of ridicule or physical conquest ("Shame" and "The Fight").

II

Most critics agree that Crane's most effective fiction, "The Open Boat," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," The Red Badge of Courage, and "The Monster," deals with the themes of struggle, fear, and identity. All of these themes appear in minor key in Whilomville Stories. Their impact is somewhat tempered because Crane uses children to exemplyfy

[20](Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1967), p. 7.

them and because the stories do not deal with dreadful physical violence (unless one considers The Monster as part of the Whilomville group).[21] Containing the same indictment as his other work, these late stories strike on a lighter, less serious note, tempered with the frivolity of childhood and revealing Crane's haste in composition. In reality the games the children play in Whilomville prepare them for their life in the adult world of chance, struggle, and fear.

The theme of struggle born in Maggie remained with Crane throughout his literary career, for Crane saw life itself as struggle, even as perpetual war.[22] All of his major characters are involved in some sort of strife. Maggie is tossed into the environment of the Bowery which she cannot understand; unable to struggle, she can find only enough strength to escape in suicide. The oiler in "The Open Boat" faces the struggle of man against nature and loses only because of the element of chance. The Swede fights for a position in society and has his body pierced as "easily as a melon" because he fails to adjust to different social situations. Henry Fleming learns about war and discovers that it has a meaning in his life and that because of his experience he will be able to continue. Similarly, in a minor key, Crane's children in Whilomville learn that each time they survive one experience there will be a new one to test their ability to struggle and learn. It may be a new boy in the neighborhood, a new hunting adventure, but inevitably there will be a new test, a new struggle--with new

[21]Crane did consider The Monster as part of this group as a letter to James B. Pinker indicates, No. 206, p. 266.

[22]A letter to Nellie Crouse in 1896 shows that Crane saw life as struggle, not merely against outside forces, but against "Self" and "inherent indolence" and "cowardice," No. 131, p. 105. For a full analysis of Crane's feeling about the necessity of struggle see Hugh N. MacLean, "The Two Worlds of 'The Blue Hotel,'" Modern Fiction Studies, V (Autumn, 1959), 260-270.

rules for survival. The games the children play in Whilomville are merely miniature versions of the "big" game of survival of the fittest, training them for their future roles in a world filled with hostility and chance.

The problem of fear cuts through all of Crane's mature fiction and appears even in his early Sullivan County Sketches. It has become a commonplace of Crane criticism to say that Crane deals with the psychological effects of fear; however, it is perhaps more valuable to turn that idea upside down and say that Crane is more interested in the study of the nature of courage, and that fear is, thus, only an essential catalyst for the tests of courage. Obviously, The Red Badge of Courage provides the best example of a boy who learns the nature of his own courage through the physical and psychological tests furnished by battle.[23] The war, however, seems to be only a metaphor for the examination of the nature of courage itself, for Crane studies the idea of courage also in "The Open Boat," and in negative form in "The Blue Hotel," as well as in other important stories like "Five White Mice," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," and "The Upturned Face." In the Whilomville collection, Crane examines the nature of courage in embryonic form. Through the children's games he considers the variables necessary in a test of survival, physical and social. The children, especially Jimmie Trescott, are tested by a superior force, a parent or a larger child, chance or the unknown. Almost always the children will admit to themselves that they are afraid (the first step in courage),

[23]See also M. Solomon, "A Critical Study," Masses and Mainstream, IX (January, 1955), 32-41. "His /Crane's/ hero has the capacity to find freedom through defeat of his fear. His is not automatic absolution for sin, no greased entry into heaven; he must fight his way in."

but they will just as consistently mask their fear in false courage or in an attempt at a lie. For example, in "The Fight," Crane describes such an attempt to cover fear:

> When the children met again on the playground, Jimmie was openly challenged with cowardice. He had made a big threat in the hearing of comrades, and when invited by them to take advantage of an opportunity he had refused. They had been fairly sure of their amusement, and they were indignant. Jimmie was finally driven to declare that as soon as school was out for the day, he would thrash the Hedge boy. When finally the children came rushing out of the iron gate, filled with the delights of freedom, a hundred boys surrounded Jimmie in high spirits, for he had said that he was determined. They waited for the lone lad from Jersey City. When he appeared, Jimmie wasted no time. He walked straight to him and said, "Did you say you kin lick me?"
>
> Johnnie Hedge was cowed, shrinking, affrighted, and the roars of a hundred boys thundered in his ears, but again he knew what he had to say. "Yes," he gasped, in anguish.[24]

Both boys measure their courage within the code of their juvenile community. They admit to themselves that they are afraid, and Crane through the narrator's voice makes this clear to the reader; however, the rules of their society force them to a fight neither of them wants. They have learned that they must overcome fear and test their courage in order to survive with dignity. The same measure is used for Crane's adult characters. They, too, must confront their antagonist, whether it is another person, society, or indifferent nature itself. The test, the game, the rules--these provide (as they do for Hemingway's characters) the necessary structure for the individual to discover himself and to prove the measure of his own worth, his strength, his willingness to survive, to struggle--even though he is afraid.[25] Crane's

[24]p. 165.

[25]George Johnson notes this when he writes,

> Unlike Norris, who went on and on seeking some ultimate harmonization which would transcend his difficulties of temperament, thought,

children, in this way, provide insight into one of Crane's major themes, and although their fate is not destruction as it is with many of his adult characters, their pain is real, and they feel the pain not only physically, but psychologically as well.

In the final analysis, however, it seems that the major theme in most of Crane's fiction involves the problem of identity. As Donald Gibson points out, the theme of identity in Crane involves the development of consciousness. "To Crane 'identity' meant the ability to act freely [Italics mine.], unconstrained by fear, passion, instinct, parental domination, or social pressure."[26] Consequently, struggle and courage become necessary conditions for the examination of this broader, dominant theme, once again reflecting the tension in Crane's thought between freedom and control, imagination and practicality. For the most part, Crane examines the lives of idealistic young people searching for themselves, often in conflict with a world governed by practical older people. He seldom wrote stories about old people, but when he did, as in George's Mother, the old person is trapped in a rigid pattern of existence, unaware of the adventure in life, and happy in the rut of conformity. Usually, the adult or older person is set as an antagonist for youth, providing the restriction against which the youth must rebel and giving the story its internal tension. Therefore, the controlling person, whether a mother, father, colonel, teacher, is

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and language, Crane stopped to confront the irreconcilable....For there he had already discovered that the game of the strenuous life had no goal, that men were nothing without rules but that the rules killed them. "Stephen Crane's Metaphor of Decorum," PMLA, LXXVIII (June, 1963), 250-256.

[26]The Fiction of Stephen Crane, p. 149.

seldom a kindly advisor or mentor (The Veteran" is a notable exception.); instead he is the enemy, the superior force, imposing rules and demanding submission. The process of seeking identity in Crane's fiction is intimately connected with Crane's own rebellion, his own impulse toward freedom. Hence, Maggie rebels against her mother, Jimmie against his father, George against his mother and her religious practice, the Oiler against Nature, and Dr. Trescott against the society of Whilomville.

Crane's romantic and idealistic impulse led him to write about the young, to reiterate his own conflicting feelings about the life and times of his generation. His fiction contains no little old ladies in lace caps, nor does it glorify the wisdom of age in comfortable old men offering sage advice to aspiring youths. Instead, Crane's old people are those who have ceased to struggle and have accepted conformity as a way of life. His old people have nothing to say to a new generation seeking its identity. Youth must find its own way, and central to most of Crane's work is this vital question of identity. Again and again, in The Red Badge of Courage, Maggie, George's Mother, The Third Violet, "The Open Boat," "The Blue Hotel," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," The Monster, and even in Active Service, Crane explores this problem. Almost always the metaphor for this quest is violence and struggle, often war, or at least a fight. Most of the characters are physically young, but some, like Dr. Trescott, discover that in spite of age, there is always the necessity of struggle—even if there are no winners, only losers. The central Crane character, then, is essentially one who struggles and learns, one who attempts to discover his identity by struggling to overcome fear, physical or mental, or sometimes moral. Crane returns to this theme again and again, but each time his impulse

to record the practical realistic dangers involved in survival tempers his enthusiasm for the quest and darkens the perspective of his fiction.

The children of the Whilomville stories illustrate these conflicts as they learn on a miniature scale what one must do to survive. Their battles and their rebellions parallel the same processes which the major characters in Crane's fiction undergo. Tied with these processes is Crane's implicit social comment, his attempt to uncover the ills of an old society and to anatomize the problems in it of restriction versus freedom, fate versus free will.

Thus, Whilomville Stories although flawed by occasional sentimentality and sometimes dealing with trivia, does provide some important insights into Crane's earlier work. The stories develop parallel themes and similar characters that appear in his later fiction, and present, in their ideas and settings, the fundamental conflicts in Crane's work. None of these stories drives as deeply into the depths of human despair as Crane's most effective fiction, but they do offer insights into Crane's concepts of individual and social conflict. They also show that even under the pressure of financial need and terminal physical illness, Crane in the last year of his life was writing fiction which was still concerned with the important questions he had begun to explore earlier. The children of Whilomville prove that Crane, even at this point in his life, had not resolved the fundamental conflicts within himself. As an artist he was still struggling with his idealistic and freedom-seeking hope of what could be and forcing himself to attempt to record realistically what was--in spite of that dream. The uneasy balance remained.

CHAPTER V

Since Stephen Crane's death his fiction has undergone the familiar cycle of decline and rejuvenation, with the great Crane renaissance burgeoning almost immediately after R. W. Stallman's publication of the Omnibus in 1952. Several serious critics, Stallman, Cady, Solomon, Gilkes, have contributed considerable study to Crane's biography and works, and recently new editions of Crane for college study are being printed[1] and a complete edition is in progress at the University of Virginia under the direction of Fredson Bowers. All of this indicates that for a time at least Crane's work is finally receiving the attention it has long demanded, and, certainly, those interested in Crane are gratified to see such marks of substantial progress.

One major problem, however, prompted this study.[2] Crane scholars have attempted to classify Crane in particular, and sometimes peculiar, ways. Stallman has tried to show that Crane was a symbolic realist, while Solomon defends the shaky thesis that Crane was primarily a parodist, and Donald B. Gibson in his recent book pleads for a psychological approach to Crane's work and asks for a re-evaluation of

[1] One of the best "all around" editions of Crane, the Rinehart The Red Badge of Courage and Other Stories edited by William M. Gibson is now in its third revised edition.

[2] I am indebted here to an article by Ray B. West, Jr., "Stephen Crane: Author in Transition," American Literature, XXXV (May, 1962), 215-228. West not only laments the futile attempts at "pigeon-holing" but suggests many of the fundamental conflicts indicative of Crane's transitional state.

Crane's flaws as well. A further sample of various articles and books on Crane reveals that he has been classified in almost every possible category: "Naturalist," "Realist," "Symbolist," "Impressionist," "Parodist," and even "Existentialist." Each critic chooses to apply his own theory, insisting that Crane's work fit into his particular category regardless of the distortion.

This study has proposed that it seems more valuable to view Crane's work from a more flexible perspective because his work defies such rigid classification; it cannot be forced into any particular category. Crane wrote poetry, plays, short stories, sketches, newspaper articles, novels, and romances, and while much of what he wrote is uneven, some of it is excellent. Probably he was most effective in the short story, but it is important to take into consideration all of his work.[3] If the critic does take all of Crane's work into consideration, the only possible conclusion is that Crane was not a realist, naturalist, symbolist, impressionist, parodist, or existentialist--instead he was, as Cady suggests, an experimenter, one who tried a number of styles and techniques. Crane never fully developed a code for work, nor did he ever formulate a full philosophy, in spite of his comment that "Environment is a tremendous thing." Because of his untimely death, the whole problem of evaluation of his work is additionally complicated, but using evidence from his work and his letters it seems reasonable to conclude that Crane did not belong to any particular school; the impetus behind his work was his developing artistic

[3]R. W. Stallman, unlike many Crane critics, has read all of Crane that is available (and some that is not), but he maintains in the Omnibus that "The best of Crane is not very much, and it does not take the whole body of his writings to understand any single perfection.", p. viii.

consciousness.

In contrast to most of the critical work done on Crane, this study has attempted to illustrate that Crane did not belong to a school, but rather that he wrote as a response to the catalytic tension within him. As a young man he wished to see life from an idealistic perspective, a perspective which emphasized freedom of expression and imagination, rebellion and adventure, idealism and honor. At the same time, another side of him demanded fidelity to practical truths and emphasized the primacy of experience. It is the uneasy balance between these forces of imagination and freedom, practicality and control, which led Crane to experiment in both his personal life and in his fiction. The results of this dynamic tension are evident in the conduct of his personal life in his rebellious attitudes toward society and its standards, in his romantic pose, in his over-protection of women, in short--in his over-all conduct of life. In terms of his art, this critical tension caused him to experiment with fiction that was a combination of realistic and imaginative themes, techniques, and perspectives. That tension gave rise to his dominant irony (his negative optimism) and comic exaggeration, his unique methods of condensed characterization and setting, and, finally, to the very stuff of his fiction, his themes.

Ultimately the quality of Stephen Crane's work must be judged by that surprising quantity he gave the world in his few years of artistic fecundity. Crane must be measured against the giants of the nineteenth century, and in pitting him against the enormity of a Hawthorne or Melville, or on the other hand a Twain or James, the reader finds him a unique miniature of the great writers. Crane's scope is limited, and he wrote best about the world of men, the world

of chance and struggle. At the time of his death he was beginning to verge on the fundamental questions of modern literature, and perhaps he marks the turning point of American literature to what we call "modern" today.

Crane's place, then, must be among those who helped to shape the American war novel and short story. The dynamic tension between his practicality and love of experience and his desire for the ideal and imaginative, caused him to remain in an uneasy balance which suited him for these forms. That dynamic tension is also responsible for the feeling in the modern reader of kinship with Crane's alienated characters and their dilemmas. Crane's fiction speaks to the modern reader in his own language and offers essential questions about the nature of the human condition. The answers to those questions remain, as they did for Stephen Crane, in uneasy balance.

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