

**STEPHEN CRANE: IMPRESSIONIST**

**By**

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## *Introduction*

The brief writing career of Stephen Crane placed him among the leading figures in American literature. His fiction was bold and evocative, and though it was overlooked at first, actually derided by conservative publishers, it nonetheless forced its way into the American and British literary scene. Published in 1895, his novel *The Red Badge of Courage* was for the most part responsible for this breakthrough. It was a novel of the American Civil War, but considering the impact it made on the public, such a description is hardly adequate. There was something special, even extraordinary, about the novel something that had little to do with its subject matter. It was extraordinary because *The Red Badge of Courage*, like Crane's others good literary works, drew elements from at least four different schools of literature: realism, naturalism, symbolism, and impressionism. Though Crane's readers were fascinated by his style, his critics discovered that a critical interpretation of his art was next to impossible because the distinctions between the literary terms (realism, naturalism, symbolism, impressionism), were not clearly defined at the time. In terms of influences on Crane a further complication was that three of the schools, realism, naturalism, and impressionism, were born in America at about the same period in which Crane began to write (the latter part of the nineteenth century).

The task of describing Crane's art did not cease to be one when critical terminology became more exact; scholars to this day still argue over which literary term, or school, best describes his work. Joseph Katz (*The Portable Stephen Crane*, 1969) wrote:

Crane is difficult to label. In his own time he was called either an impressionist or a decadent; but as later criticism sought a perspective in the literary nineties he was variously considered a realist, a naturalist, a symbolist, a parodist, and even a romantic.<sup>1</sup>

In his *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus* (1952), R. W. Stallman wrote that he saw a sociological realism in Crane's work<sup>2</sup>, but was assured that Crane was above all "a symbolic artist."<sup>3</sup> Some scholars, looking primarily at Crane's *Bowery Tales*, concluded with some justification that Crane's works were of the naturalist tradition. Charles Child Walcott, for example, wrote in 1956 that "the works of Stephen Crane ... are an early and unique flowering of pure naturalism."<sup>4</sup> Four years later Richard Chase, in his "Introduction" to *The Red Badge of Courage*, also argued that "like the other significant new writers of his generation — Frank Norris, Jack London, and Theodore Dreiser — Crane is, generally speaking, of the naturalist school."<sup>5</sup> In an essay published in 1976, Bert Bender labelled Crane as a realist, a "psychological realist";<sup>6</sup> and the works of Rodney O. Rogers (1969), Benjamin Giorgio (1969), and James Nagel (1980), have declared that Crane is essentially an impressionist.

The predominant trend over the last thirty years, however, was to avoid any grappling with the task of trying to identify Crane's art.

Thomas Gullason (*The Complete Short Stories and Sketches of Stephen*

*Crane*, 1963), was one of many who maintained that “though he is still called a realist, naturalist, symbolist, impressionist, and existentialist, Crane cannot truly be labelled.”<sup>7</sup>

This thesis, however, proposes to assert that Crane's fiction can be labelled. Though there are characteristics of naturalism, realism, symbolism, and impressionism in his work, not all schools are equally important. Only one school of literature, apparent in all of his best stories, can adequately describe the artistry of Stephen Crane, and that is the school of impressionism. The elements of impressionism, its tenets, form a more consistent pattern in Crane's work than do the other schools. The problem of knowing and understanding the world (epistemology) is a problem that faces most of Crane's characters and is a characteristic of impressionism. Third-person limited as a narrative mode, the mode typical of Crane's work, is the narrative device that best suits impressionistic fiction. And Crane's method of conciliating objective reality with his characters' subjective vision is probably the most fundamental quality of the school.

Joseph Conrad, a friend of Crane's while Crane lived in England, stated that Crane was “an impressionist, and only an impressionist.”<sup>8</sup> Crane was not “only an impressionist” however, at least not in the exclusive sense that Conrad implies. Elements from other schools, as mentioned, are evident in his work. But Crane never followed the mainstream tenets of the other schools as he did those of impressionism. Indeed, though there were other writers who were described as impressionists, Ford Madox Ford, a major figure in the development of literary impressionism in Britain, stated that “it was perhaps Crane of all

that school or gang — and not excepting Maupassant — who most observed the canon of impressionism.”<sup>9</sup>

Thus drawing from Crane's best and most anthologized prose works I will show that to various degrees his prose is influenced by the schools of realism, naturalism, and symbolism. But I will conclude in the final chapter that Crane's works cannot be considered in the mainstream of any of these schools, and that his writing is essentially impressionistic.



## NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

- <sup>1</sup> Joseph Katz, *The Portable Stephen Crane* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1969), p. 4.
- <sup>2</sup> R. W. Stallman, Introduction to *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, Ed. R. W. Stallman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. xix.
- <sup>3</sup> R. W. Stallman, Introduction to "War Tales" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus* Ed. R. W. Stallman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 190.
- <sup>4</sup> Charles Child Walcutt, *American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956), p. 22.
- <sup>5</sup> Richard Chase, Introduction to *The Red Badge of Courage*, Ed. Richard Chase (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), p. vi.
- <sup>6</sup> Bert Bender, "Hanging Stephen Crane In the Impressionist Museum", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 35 (1976-77), p. 113.
- <sup>7</sup> Thomas Gullason Introduction to *The Complete Short Stories and Sketches of Stephen Crane*, Ed. Thomas Gullason (New York: Doubleday, 1963) p. 45.
- <sup>8</sup> R. W. Stallman & Lillian Gilkes, in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, Ed. R. W. Stallman and L. Gilkes (New York: New York University Press, 1960) p. 8.
- <sup>9</sup> James Nagel, *Stephen Crane and Literary Impressionism* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), p. 20.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**Crane and Literary Realism**

Realism had its aesthetic origin in France where the term was first applied to the paintings of Gustave Courbet. Courbet's art though appreciated for its technical merit, was of note mainly for its realistic depiction of everyday life. In literature the movement's first writer became Honore de Balzac (1799-1850). But it was the publication of Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857), a work that inspired no hope and contained no moral,<sup>1</sup> that proved to be the masterpiece of the movement in France. Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1863-69) held the same distinction in Russia as did George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72) in Britain. All contributed greatly to the fundamental concept of what realistic literature was intended to be: an honest and true interpretation of life without favouring specific social classes or environments. The artist of realism was to present life not as he imagined or wished it to be, but as he saw and experienced it as being.

Though the works of these great novelists were known and influential in America, the literary transition from romanticism to realism nevertheless remained largely indigenous. Economic, social, and political changes in America at the time (latter quarter of the nineteenth century), were creating kinds of attitudes and behaviour patterns that no longer suited the transcendentalism of previous literature. To the new generation life was a hard, everyday struggle for existence.<sup>2</sup> Thus in the intellectual climate of the 1880's and '90's realism became a more congenial form of literature, and leading the way William Dean Howells (1837-1920) became the movement's central voice.

Originally a journalist, then an editor, Howells gained public attention mostly as a writer and supporter of realistic fiction. His most

enduring work is his realistic novel *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885); however, American anthologists seem more interested in Howells the critic and supporter of realism than Howells the fiction writer.

As a critic and supporter of realism Howells developed certain ideas of what elements constituted good literature. He spent the last quarter of his professional life voicing these ideas and hoped to expand and solidify them as a school through the fiction of young and aspiring writers. Good writing, he preached, represented life truthfully: "If I do not find that it (literature) is like life", he said, "then it does not exist for me as art."<sup>3</sup> Art, for Howells, was unpretentious. It was without the "graces of style," the "feats of invention", and the "cunning of construction".<sup>4</sup> In his essay "Novel-Writing and Novel-Reading", a work published in 1899 though built largely on the ideas expressed eight years earlier in his essay "Criticism and Fiction" (1891), Howells laid down the specifics that not only distinguished realism from its romantic predecessors, but constituted the school's aesthetic superiority. Using "the novel" as a synonym for realism he says:

The novel I take to be the sincere and conscientious endeavor to picture life just as it is, to deal with character as we witness it in living people, and to record the incidents that grow out of character. This is the supreme form of fiction...<sup>5</sup>

Romanticism, on the other hand, is "false to nature"<sup>6</sup> and in direct opposition to realism. Though it professes to portray life, as does realism, romanticism fails because of its "excess of drawing and colouring"<sup>7</sup>:

It [the “romanticistic novel”] attributes motives to people which do not govern real people, and its characters are of the quality of types; they are heroic, for good or for bad. It seeks effect rather than truth ... it revels in the extravagant, the unusual and the bizarre.<sup>8</sup>

One of the aspiring writers affected by Howells' literary ideas was the young Stephen Crane. Crane at the time was a newspaper reporter working out of New York City and had already completed his first serious endeavour in fiction-writing: his *Sullivan County Sketches* (1892). He referred to these stories as “eight little grotesque tales of the woods which I wrote when I was clever.”<sup>9</sup> His reference to himself as “clever” is meant as a disparagement, for it represents the times he spent at Claverack College and Syracuse University, times he felt were wasteful; however, “clever” also represents the style he incorporated in his fiction-writing. It was a style he attributed to his conscious imitation of Rudyard Kipling. It was only when he renounced his “clever, Rudyard-Kipling style” that he began to produce the kind of literature that was deserving of his enormous talent. According to Crane, in a letter of 1894, this change in his writing occurred as a natural result of his own artistic development:

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.<sup>10</sup>

Further in the letter Crane describes his “little creed”: “we (as writers) are the most successful in art when we approach the nearest to

nature and truth".<sup>11</sup> This description seems quite similar to the one Howells used in his "Criticism and Fiction": "if the book is true" wrote Howells, true "of life ... of human nature ... it will be great and beautiful."<sup>12</sup> Crane takes full responsibility for his change in writing, but the date of the letter (1894: after Howells' essay and his meeting with Howells) seems to suggest that the influence of Howells was more important than Crane wished to admit.

The birth of Stephen Crane as a writer of skill and power seems nevertheless to be the result of his transition from clever and witty expedients to this concept of realism or, from Rudyard Kipling and the *Sullivan County Sketches* to *Maggie*, a work intended "to show people to people"<sup>13</sup> without moralising or teaching. This intention, of course, is in accord with realism. The proponents of Crane as a realist also feel that he did little to alter this transition in his subsequent years of writing. The following will be an examination of Crane's work as it corresponds to the principles of the realism of his day.

As a school of literature realism is represented by certain characteristics. One characteristic is its narrative methodology. According to Janet Holmgren McKay (*Narration and Discourse in American Realistic Fiction*) the school allows for a wide range of modes:

The author might narrate the story in his own first-person voice or in the third-person voice of the traditional story-teller, or he might allow his characters to speak for themselves, even to the point of yielding primary responsibility for narration to one or more characters.<sup>14</sup>

Echoing McKay, James Nagel points out that in narrative methodology “realism demonstrates a great deal of variation”<sup>15</sup> and that its access to information is great.<sup>16</sup>

Also, while the story is being told, realistic fiction demands complete objectivity and/or distance from the author. It requires that the author never intrude between the reader and the reader's perception of the story and characters. The author must be invisible, or suppressed, just as the playwright is suppressed in his play.<sup>17</sup> Howells likewise regards complete objectivity as important, and he states that if there is a lesson to be learned it must come from the novel and not from the author. The author, writes Howells, “had better not aim to please, and he had still better not aim to instruct ... (only) the novel can teach ... (and) only by painting life truly.”<sup>18</sup>

What realists write about in their fiction represents another characteristic of the school. Jacob Kolb writes,

The realists write about the common, the average, the unextreme, the representative ... They concern themselves with ordinary human lives seen in the context of normal social relationships.<sup>19</sup>

However, according to James Nagel, the ordinary characters that realists write about are also individualized by “unique crises of intense moments.”<sup>20</sup> As a result realism cannot help but focus a great deal of attention on its protagonist.

Reportorial and photographical detail is yet another feature. The picture the artist is painting, so to speak, must be as vividly descriptive as

possible in order to sustain the presentation of life as it is. A realist, says Howells, must report life in his fiction as it is in reality: "he will not rest till he has made his story as like life as he can."<sup>21</sup> This means that detail, descriptive or otherwise, is essential. The realist must have, according to Howells, a "devoted fidelity to particulars."<sup>22</sup> The use of colloquial expression by the characters is such a particular in that it allows the story to be true to a realistic depiction of people.

In Crane's best prose a number of these characteristics are present. Colloquial expression, as in *Clemens*, is a hallmark in the fiction of Stephen Crane. The much noted incident in which Crane's first prospective publisher asked him to omit the "swear words" in *Maggie*, and to which Crane responded: "that is the way they talk ... to leave such things out ... I am not giving the things as I know it"<sup>23</sup> is an example of his fidelity to truth. Colloquial expression remained in his prose and the variety of its forms ranged from the "yehs" of the Bowery tales to the "Gawds" of *The Red Badge*, and to the "aints" of the Western tales.

Crane's use of colloquial expression not only helps the reader distinguish the different cultural backgrounds of the characters (as the Swede and the Easterner are distinguishable from the Scullys and the cowboy in "The Blue Hotel"), but it also helps the reader focus on time and place with greater insight.

In *Maggie* the identification of the Johnson family, and Pete, as Irish is made easier by their distinctive accents. In their pronunciation of words the 'th' consonant is replaced by a 'd' or 't' depending upon the hardness or softness of the 'th' sound: and the soft vowel 'o' is given a soft vowel 'a' pronunciation: "When I comes from behind dis bar. I trows



yehs bote inteh d' street", says the angered Pete, emphasizing the former characteristics. Emphasizing the latter, Jimmy and his companion respond: "Ah, go ahn!".<sup>24</sup>

Though Crane never introduces Maggie's boss the accent he displays in her mind reveals him to be a New York Jew: "What do you sink I pie fife dolla a week for? Play? No, py tamn!".<sup>25</sup> "It is the voice of the slums", wrote Hamlin Garland in his review of the work, "It is not written by a dilettante; it is written by one who has lived the life ... it gives the dialect of the slums as I have never before seen it written".<sup>26</sup>

Colloquial expression in *Maggie* also includes the use of slang phrases that help distinguish socio-economic and cultural groups. In the New York Bowery, the slum of New York, and the setting for *Maggie*, Crane capitalizes on the references to Italians as "dago's",<sup>27</sup> and on the references to unfavourable characters as "mugs".<sup>28</sup> He shows that to people like Jimmy and Pete finely dressed men who care for their appearance are "jays".<sup>29</sup> A fist-fight, highly revered in the Bowery, is proudly labelled a "scrap";<sup>30</sup> fists are "dukes",<sup>31</sup> and a fighter is reverently called a "scrapper".<sup>32</sup> *Maggie* assures us that in the Bowery it is infinitely better to be a scrapper than a jay.

In *The Red Badge of Courage*, though the setting and time are different from the Bowery of the eighteen-nineties, the dialect is handled just as well. In this story a great many spoken words remain open at the end when they should be closed by consonants or vowels. The pronunciation of the soft or hard vowel 'u' is often replaced by the soft

vowel 'e'. The following passage, in which the corporal is attending to the youth, displays evidence of both characteristics:

“Jest as I thought ... Yeh've been grazed by a ball. It raised a queer lump jest as if some feller had lammed yeh on th' head with a club ... th' most about it is that in th' mornin' yeh'll feel that a number ten hat wouldn't fit yeh ... it's just a damn' good belt on th' head, an' nothin' more.”<sup>33</sup>

By labelling his characters with descriptive epithets Crane seems to go to the extreme in presenting representative people in his fiction. “The youth”, “the tall soldier”, “the loud soldier”, “the correspondent”, “the cook”, “the oiler”, “the captain,” “the bride”, “the gambler”, “the Swede”, all define to a certain degree the groups represented by their names. These characters, in accord with Nagel's observation, are also individualized by experiences of intense crisis; however, not noted by Nagel is that these characters are also individualized in other ways in Crane's works. Nagel's observation on realistic characters relates well to Henry Fleming (*The Red Badge*) and to “the correspondent” (“The Open Boat”), whose experiences contain crisis situations, but it falls short in describing George Kelcey (*George's Mother*) and Maggie (*Maggie*) who are individualized more by their thought processes, dreams, and visions.

George Kelcey is a daydreamer, an escapist, who succumbs easily to the lure of drunkards and undesirables. Maggie is raised in a world “composed of hardships and insults”.<sup>34</sup> Yet each is individualized by the personal visions of a better life. For George, “the world was obliged to turn gold in time”.<sup>35</sup> His life and future, he believes, held significance as

an integral part of the "Universe's" grand design. For Maggie, her vision of a better life depends upon Pete. She thinks of him when her grim life begins to oppress her. The result is that we come to understand the personalities of Kelcey and Maggie as realistic through their ways of thinking.

The individualization of Henry Fleming and "the correspondent" occur as a result of their responses to moments of intense crisis. Henry's experiences as a soldier, to fight, to run, to attempt a moral and rational justification of his running, to return spurred by guilt and circumstance, and to realize that his "grapplings and tuggings"<sup>36</sup> are not necessarily unique, but "born perhaps with the first of life",<sup>37</sup> all serve to distinguish the boy we know as "the youth".

Aboard a ten-foot dinghy with three other men, and surrounded by huge and implacable waves, the correspondent in "The Open Boat" finds himself in a near death situation. *His situation* is what individualizes him. The common desire of survival among the men in the boat, their ardent willingness to work for each other in the face of an unresponsive universe, leads the correspondent to deny his original attitude: "to be cynical of men,"<sup>38</sup> and place his trust in what he learns to see as a "brotherhood of men."<sup>39</sup>

The realistic writer, as mentioned, must ensure that he does not intrude his presence upon the minds of the readers. Crane himself answers this by avoiding personal digressions. If moral judgments are made in the stories they are made by the faulty perceptions of the characters and not by Crane.

In *Maggie*, for instance, where Pete, Jimmy, and Maggie's mother all evoke contempt from the reader, none of the three are directly labelled or referred to as contemptible figures. Where Dickens smilingly refers to Tom Gradgrind (*Hard Times*) as the “whelp”, and where Hawthorne wastes no time in labelling Roger Chillingsworth as the “leech,” Crane's references remain completely objective. Nowhere does Crane venture to judge or defame a character. By using irony to manipulate characters and events Crane distances and even clouds his authorial presence. It is impossible to find a favored character in Crane's works. For example, though the characters of Pete, Jimmy, and Maggie's mother are ironically painted with numerous flaws, the victim of the story, Maggie, is ironically painted with just as many. Rather than treat Maggie as a total victim, a “blossom” who had to contend with the “mud-puddle”,<sup>40</sup> Crane makes us see that her judgments, manifested ironically, are as much to blame for her downfall as is everything else. Pete, the lover who eventually turns Maggie away, never hides or embellishes his crude “git off d'eat”<sup>41</sup> personality. He is adept only at provoking fights and at maintaining order in his work-place, a bar. His lack of sophistication makes him typical of the Bowery area, yet Maggie ironically sees in Pete the makings of an “ideal man”.<sup>42</sup>

Maggie also exhibits an astute respect for cleanliness and the idea of respectability. She tries hard to give her apartment a semblance of order and attractiveness. When, with Pete, she finds herself approaching a table with two “painted”<sup>43</sup> women, she respectfully “(draws) back her skirts”.<sup>44</sup> Maggie's attitude, however, is shown ironically in the face of her relationship with Pete. Pete is merely a bartender, a “doe-faced jude”<sup>45</sup> according to the mother, and Maggie's indecent relationship with

him succeeds only in separating her from her family. But more, this relationship leads the neighbors to gossip about the respectability of the Johnson girl and the household, a fact that ironically angers Jimmy and his mother, and a fact that leads the neighbors figuratively to draw back their skirts from Maggie. When the Johnsons kick Maggie out, Pete, thinking of his own respectability, draws back from her as well. Even a priest, thinking of his "respectability",<sup>46</sup> turns away from Maggie in her hour of need.

Though *The Red Badge* offers a commentary on the brutality and gloriousness of war, Crane as the author does not. The story is a portrayal of war filtered through the mind of Henry Fleming. Crane once again accomplishes a realistic picture by avoiding moral digressions and by using conflicting streams of irony.

Henry Fleming enters the war because he imagines it to be a glorious endeavour: "He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts, and he had longed to see it all."<sup>47</sup> When the battle appears before him, however, in all its stark grimness, and the bullets fly over and around him "bursting into fierce bloom,"<sup>48</sup> he runs from it and believes that those who have stayed to be nothing but "machine-like fools".<sup>49</sup> This, however, is not to be interpreted as the action of a man who, finding himself, realizes that he is not naturally violent, that he prefers peace over bloodshed. For Henry does return to the regiment and to the fighting, and when he decides to confront the "blood-swollen god"<sup>50</sup> of war he also decides to fight to the end. His actions on the battle field become increasingly crude and barbaric. He gains glory, and his new-found pride ironically leads him to revel in his brutishness:

It was revealed to him that he had been a barbarian, a beast. He had fought like a pagan who defends his religion. Regarding it he saw that it was fine, wild and in some ways easy.<sup>51</sup>

Henry's thoughts of the universe change as well. Up until his fleeing from battle he had always believed that nature had an interest in his well-being; but given the extreme danger he imagines he is facing he concludes, in isolation, that nature does not regard him as important. This makes Henry angry: "He turned with tupenny fury upon the high, tranquil sky. He would like to have splashed it with a derisive paint."<sup>52</sup> When things eventually turn out for the better, however, Henry comes to regard nature as "a fine thing moving with a magnificent justice."<sup>53</sup>

The youth learns very little about his experience and the story ends, as H. G. Wells points out, without trying to assert a moral philosophy or lesson: "Was ever a man before who wrote of battles so abundantly as he (Crane) had done, and never had a word, never a word from first to last, of the purpose and justification of the war (the Civil War)."<sup>54</sup>

Authorial invisibility exists in all of his best works and it is not by accident. Crane is able to hide his presence by consciously aiming at what he feels to be the responsibility of a fiction writer. It is a responsibility that follows the precepts of Howells and of realism, and it is summed-up in a letter (1897) he wrote to John Northern Hilliard:

I have been careful not to let any theories or pet ideas of my own creep into my work. Preaching is fatal to art in literature. I try to give a slice of life: and if there is any moral or lesson in it. I do not try to point it out.<sup>55</sup>

Echoing Howells quoting Emerson, he also adds: "As Emerson said, 'there shall be a long logic beneath the story, but it should be carefully kept out of sight.'"<sup>56</sup>

Those who describe Crane as a realist look to this letter as significant support. Only a writer of realistic fiction would set out to write with this rule as the strengthening principle of his work. He was the "absolute slave of reality",<sup>57</sup> wrote Howells of Crane's fiction. It may not have been the realism of Howells, but the proponents of Crane as a realist saw him as a realist nonetheless. According to Bert Bender, Crane's fiction "was a subjective, psychological realism."<sup>58</sup>

It is evident, however, regardless of those who have sought to describe Stephen Crane as a realist that a number of non-realistic elements still characterize his work. The result is that it is difficult to label Crane as a mainstream realist even though Howell's influence is present. Proponents of another literary school argue that though Crane adheres to certain realistic literary principles, he is first, and foremost, a writer of naturalistic fiction.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

<sup>1</sup>Roland Stromberg, *Realism, Naturalism and Symbolism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, *Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction*, (New York: Russell and Russell Inc., 1961), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup>W. D. Howells in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Volume II*, Ed. Ronald Gottesman (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1979), p. 298.

<sup>4</sup>Edwin H. Cady, *Critical Essays on W. D. Howells*, (Boston: G. K. Hall and Co., 1983), p. 111.

<sup>5</sup>Howells in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, p. 300.

<sup>6</sup>Howells in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, p. 301.

<sup>7</sup>Howells in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, p. 300.

<sup>8</sup>Howells in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, p. 301.

<sup>9</sup>Stephen Crane, "Letter to Lily Brandon Munroe" (March, 1894) in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, Ed. R. W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes (New York: New York University Press, 1960), p. 32.

<sup>10</sup>Stephen Crane, "Letter to Lily Brandon Munroe" (March, 1894) in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, p. 31.

<sup>11</sup>Stephen Crane, "Letter to Lily Brandon Monroe" (March, 1894) in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, p. 31

<sup>12</sup>Edwin H. Cady, *Critical Essays on W. D. Howells*, p. 111.

<sup>13</sup>Stephen Crane, "Letter to Miss Catherine Harris" (November, 1896) in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, p. 133.

<sup>14</sup>Janet Holmgren McKay, *Narration and Discourse in American Realistic Fiction*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>James Nagel, *Stephen Crane and Literary Impressionism*, p. 34.

<sup>16</sup>James Nagel, *Stephen Crane and Literary Impressionism*, p. 166.



- <sup>17</sup>Edwin H. Cady, *The Light of the Common Day*, Indiana Univ. Press, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), pp. 8-9.
- <sup>18</sup>Howells in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, p. 305.
- <sup>19</sup>James Nagel, *Stephen Crane and Literary Impressionism*, p. 34.
- <sup>20</sup>James Nagel, *Stephen Crane and Literary Impressionism*, p. 34.
- <sup>21</sup>Howells in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, p. 312.
- <sup>22</sup>Howells in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, p. 312.
- <sup>23</sup>Thomas Gullason, *Stephen Crane's Career*, (New York: New York University Press, 1972), p. 92.
- <sup>24</sup>Stephen Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, ed. R. W. Stallman (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), p. 81.
- <sup>25</sup>Stephen Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 69.
- <sup>26</sup> Lars Ahnebrink, p. 90.
- <sup>27</sup>Stephen Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 68.
- <sup>28</sup>Stephen Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 61.
- <sup>29</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 317.
- <sup>30</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 317.
- <sup>31</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 60.
- <sup>32</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 61.
- <sup>33</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 309.
- <sup>34</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 63.
- <sup>35</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 31.
- <sup>36</sup>Crane. *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 317.
- <sup>37</sup>Crane. *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 317.
- <sup>38</sup>Crane. "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 427.

- <sup>39</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 426.
- <sup>40</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 58.
- <sup>41</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 62.
- <sup>42</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 61.
- <sup>43</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 86.
- <sup>44</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 86.
- <sup>45</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 75.
- <sup>46</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 100.
- <sup>47</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 229.
- <sup>48</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 266.
- <sup>49</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 270.
- <sup>50</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 250.
- <sup>51</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 331.
- <sup>52</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 292.
- <sup>53</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 319.
- <sup>54</sup>Daniel Aaron, *The Unwritten War*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 44.
- <sup>55</sup>Crane, "Letter to John Northern Hilliard" (1897) in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, p. 158.
- <sup>56</sup>Crane, "Letter to John Northern Hilliard" (1897) in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, p. 158-9.
- <sup>57</sup>W. D. Howells in *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism*. Ed. Dennis Ponder. (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1953). p. 126.
- <sup>58</sup>Bert Bender. p. 111.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**PART A:**

**Crane and Literary Naturalism**

As with realism the school of naturalism originated in France in the latter half of the nineteenth century. It appeared after realism and because of its similarities to the school, naturalism was regarded as an offshoot of realism, often labelled extreme or pessimistic realism.

It emerged at a time when Europe seemed at a cross-roads socially and intellectually. Darwin's theory of evolution was leading many to re-evaluate their moral and religious postures. The influences of science and its challenge to traditional thought created new kinds of attitudes and perceptions. Facts, scientific observation, and experience were replacing all that was imaginative or super-natural. According to Lars Ahnebrink the era manifested itself as a repudiation of previously accepted propositions:

The century may be described as analytic, intellectual, and interrogative, in search of truth and exactness. Science ... [offered] a solution to the riddles of the universe. Nothing occult or transcendental existed ... Matter was entire reality.<sup>1</sup>

In France class strife was greater than that of any other modern state at the time. Slums and squalid lifestyles were emerging with greater visibility than ever, and the belief that man was determined, shaped, by his environment found no greater evidence than in the slum areas of French cities. As a literary school, naturalism, with its attraction to squalid life, its belief in determinism, and its acceptance of scientism, emerged as a logical development of late nineteenth century France. It was led by the works of Emile Zola (1840-1902).

Considered the central voice of the movement, Zola believed in the claims made by Hippolyte Taine's determinism, that man was subject to the influences of external forces, and he also believed in Claude Bernard's philosophy of exact science. Upon their ideas Zola wrote *Le roman experimental* (1880), a kind of guide-book to naturalistic writing which called for the novelist to research his work like a scientist and record his observations in an objective and impersonal language. Quoting from Bernard's "Introduction à L'Etude de la Medicine Experimental", Zola uses Bernard's definition of a scientist to describe what he expects from the naturalist writer:

The observer [writes Bernard] relates purely and simply the phenomena which he has under his eyes ... He should be the photographer of phenomena, his observation should be an exact representation of nature ... He listens to nature and he writes under its dictation.<sup>2</sup>

Elaborate detail is, as a result, necessary for the naturalist writer. In his own work Zola was exhaustive in his descriptive detail; streets, houses, rooms, furniture etc., were presented with enormous patience.

The determinism of Taine taught that the individual was constantly affected by his environment;<sup>3</sup> that the forces of environment shaped and determined human destinies. Zola accepted this notion, but qualified it to include heredity as an equal deterministic force:

There is an absolute determinism for all human phenomenon ... I consider that the question of heredity has a great influence on the intellectual and passionate manifestation of man. I also attach considerable importance on the surroundings [environment].<sup>4</sup>

In order to demonstrate his hypothesis Zola selected as fictional characters men and women whose destinies were easy to manipulate. Lars Ahnebrink states that “the characters preferred by the French novelists belonged to the lower classes. The heroes and heroines were workers, harlots, drunkards, servant-maids, forlorn creatures, and mass-individuals.”<sup>5</sup> They were, in accord with naturalistic philosophy, denied the principle of free-will; they were mere “pawns” controlled by external and internal forces.<sup>6</sup>

The French naturalists were not the first to expose the ugliness of lower-class life. The Goncourt brothers, great influences on Zola, were the first to write novels of the “lower depths.”<sup>7</sup> The Goncourts, however, looked for beauty in these quarters; they were attracted to the “riff-raff” as one would be attracted to a different culture.<sup>8</sup> Zola's attraction to squalid life was merely the result of his desire to be truthful. It was a truth avoided by previous literary schools and if Zola wanted naturalism to be an experiment “pour voir” then slum life with all its sordidness, prostitution, free-love, and social misery, could not be overlooked.

In America, during the decades that followed the Civil War, extreme economic, social, and cultural changes took place.<sup>9</sup> Three factors in particular, according to W. T. Taylor (*A History of American Letters*) were responsible for these changes. One was the growth of the city due to industrialization; another was the closing of the frontier; and the third was the acceptance of Darwinism as a new philosophy of life.<sup>10</sup> In his book, *Social Darwinism in American Thought (1860-1915)*, Richard Hofstadter saw late-nineteenth century America as a distant cry from the mid-nineteenth century America of Howells, who wrote that he “had seldom seen a sky

without some kind of rainbow in it.”<sup>11</sup> Post-Civil-War America for Hofstadter was quite the opposite:

With its rapid expansion, its exploitive methods, its desperate competition, and its peremptory rejection of failure, post-bellum America was like a vast human caricature of the Darwinian struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest.<sup>12</sup>

It was in the America perceived by Hofstadter, that the works of Zola and the school of naturalism found congenial ground. The writers of the 1890's rejected the implications of Emersonian idealism and the American dream. Society in their eyes was a closed rather than an open system. It created alienation among individuals, was oppressive, and gave the feeling that man was limited, shaped, and determined.<sup>13</sup> The first novel in America that was described as naturalistic, a la Zola, was Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893). The story depicted life in the slum area of New York city, and its protagonist was a woman who eventually turns to prostitution and then to suicide. These elements are notably Zolaesque. When Crane wrote that the story “tries to show that environment is a terrible thing and frequently shapes lives regardless,”<sup>14</sup> he practically identified himself as a naturalistic writer. The following examination will reveal just how much Crane adheres to the principles of naturalism.

The works set in the Bowery of New York City are the ones that particularly distinguish Crane as a naturalist. According to Lars Ahnebrink, the New York Bowery was “one of the worst nests of crime and disease.”<sup>15</sup> In each of these tales Crane characterizes his protagonists as trapped, and

victimized by an uncaring society. The environment they appeal to for help is represented by “pitiless” and “sternly high”<sup>16</sup> buildings that offer no downward glances. As a deterministic force society is powerful in both *Maggie* and “An Experiment In Misery.” In most of Crane's other works, however, “nature” and “the Universe” are the terms that represent deterministic forces. He uses these terms interchangeably from work to work for they are meant to signify the same thing; however, in “The Open Boat,” both terms are used:

He could now perceive that the universe hated him. He sank to the most sublime depths of despair .... As he walked home he thought that he was a very grim figure ... The universe would regret its position when it saw him drunk.<sup>17</sup>

*George's Mother*

Nature was miraculously skilful in concocting excuses, he thought ... When he saw how she [Nature] had cozened him out of his home and hoodwinked him into wielding a rifle, he went into a rage.

He turned in tupenny fury upon the high, tranquil sky. He would have liked to have splashed it with a derisive paint.<sup>18</sup>

*The Red Badge of Courage*

This tower was a giant, standing with its back to the plight of the ants. It represented in a degree, to the correspondent, the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual ... She [nature] did not seem cruel to him then, nor beneficent, nor treacherous, nor wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent. It is, perhaps, plausible that a man in this situation, impressed with the unconcern of the universe, should see the innumerable flaws of his life...<sup>19</sup>

“The Open Boat”



Individuals who find themselves trapped, restricted from options they once imagined existed, look to “nature”/“universe” as the force responsible. Ironically these same individuals look to “nature”/“universe” for security as well. In Crane's works, however, and in accord with naturalistic philosophy, those who seek help or some visible expression of security from “nature”/“universe” find, as in “The Open Boat”, that it is not only distant from their sensibilities, but indifferent to them as well. Crane's idea of nature seems to manifest itself as a reaction against the romantic worlds of Emerson and Wordsworth. They believed that man and nature stood in close relation to each other; that “man and nature (were) organically interfused in a unity that includes and reconciles all things.”<sup>20</sup> Crane's “nature” is dark, cold, and indifferent. Where man and “nature” experience a unity in the works of Emerson and Wordsworth, isolation and alienation are usually what envelop Crane's protagonists when knowledge of “nature's” indifference is gained.

The feeling of unimportance, of being victimized by an uncaring world, is experienced by the “youth” in “An Experiment in Misery”. In this story the deterministic force is society. Society in the story represents a world of no hope, a world that does not bother itself with “the wretches who may flounder at its feet.”<sup>21</sup> Forced to succumb to the “unspeakable odours”<sup>22</sup> of the city's dark and secret places, “the youth” is able to draw forth a larger significance. He realizes that the odours are “the expressions of a thousand present miseries.”<sup>23</sup> They symbolize the decay of humanity amid the roar and confusion of the city. As “the youth” looks upwards, the personification of an indifferent society, invisible to “the

assassin”, is quite apparent to him. He sees it represented in the “multitude of buildings”:

In the background a multitude of buildings, of pitiless hues and sternly high, were to him emblematic of a nation forcing its regal head into the clouds, throwing no downward glances.<sup>24</sup>

Social determinism is as dominant in *Maggie* and *George's Mother*, however, in these works the naturalistic picture also includes the influences of heredity. In *George's Mother*, George Kelcey thinks he is a unique man destined for wealth and happiness, and he believes that “the universe” (“nature”) has a vested interest in his progress: “The world was obliged to turn gold in time. His life was to be fine and heroic, else he would not have been born.”<sup>25</sup> Kelcey is aided in this belief by the run of good luck he enjoys with his new friends. By accepting Kelcey as one of their own the new friends give Kelcey a feeling of security and importance. Kelcey, as a result, only wishes to show his gratitude: “He [Kelcey] wished that some day one of his present companions would come to him for relief.”<sup>26</sup> It is a feeling that may be held by many people, but the ironic decline of George begins when he learns that his friends and his life are not really as fine as he thought. Jones and Bleeker are supportive of Kelcey only at their own convenience. They want Kelcey at their parties, in their clubs, but they are hardly supportive when Kelcey is in need of money. Maggie, the girl of his dreams, acts so distant to him that she does not even acknowledge his presence. These facts lead Kelcey to a new perception of “the universe”: “He could now perceive that the universe hated him. He sank to the most sublime depths of despair.”<sup>27</sup>

Kelcey's new perception makes him feel vengeful towards "the universe", and he contemplates an attitude of self-destruction; he succumbs to the lures of alcohol, parties, drunkards, saloons, and to idleness: "the universe [he thinks] would regret its position when it saw him drunk".<sup>28</sup> It is a process that eventually gets him fired and provokes his mother's illness. In the end, when George's mother dies, George seems caught, or trapped, in a life from which he is unable to break free.

The sense that George is doomed from the beginning, that his life seems imprisoned by the vice-traps of his environment, and by his own lack of will power, forms a naturalistic picture. Nothing in George's situation, or future, suggests that there is hope for a new life. He is trapped much like Crane's other Bowery protagonist, Maggie.

In *Maggie* the city is described as dark, violent, and cruelly indifferent. It is the "mud-puddle"<sup>29</sup> in which Maggie and her family are raised. The city combined with Maggie's home-life and work place are the deterministic forces that affect her life the most. Home-life in the Johnson apartment is a "reg'lar livin' hell".<sup>30</sup> Maggie's mother, an alcoholic whose drinking sessions intensify her violent nature, repeatedly smashes furniture and beats her children. The grim monotony of Maggie's job is as oppressive. These situations at home and at work develop stronger implications with the introduction of Pete the bartender. Maggie's attraction to Pete, a man in whom she sees "elegance"<sup>31</sup> and "dignity,"<sup>32</sup> makes her more aware not only of "the broken furniture, grimy walls, and general disorder"<sup>33</sup> of her home, but the even more oppressive environment of her job. With Pete on her mind the factory becomes more disgusting, more tragic:

The air in the collar-and-cuff establishment strangled her. She knew she was gradually and surely shrivelling in the hot, stuffy room ... The place was filled with a whirl of noises and odours. She became lost in thought as she looked at some of the grizzled women in the room, mere mechanical contrivances sewing seams ... She wondered how long her youth would endure.<sup>34</sup>

Her desperate view of life may in some way be responsible for her unrealistic vision of Pete and of love. For it is this vision that leads Maggie to direful circumstances. Pete's only interest in Maggie seems to be a sexual one. He does achieve his goal, but in doing so he manages to alienate Maggie from her family. When Pete eventually turns her away, Maggie has no one to turn to. Left hopelessly lost in an environment that, viewed symbolically in the gesture of the priest, turns its respectability away from her, the isolated cry of "where kin I go"<sup>35</sup> goes unheard amidst the roar of the city. Her eventual death also signifies no visible change, or importance. Her environment, dark and alien, goes on as it always had: indifferently.

Crane's naturalism is not limited to the Bowery tales, however. "Nature" as a deterministic force is an important part in the themes of *The Red Badge* and "The Open Boat". Lars Ahnebrink describes the war environment of *The Red Badge* in terms that present it as wholly chaotic: "Uncontrollable forces ... confusion, terror, and anxiety are everywhere,"<sup>36</sup> he says. The experiences of Henry Fleming, he argues, seem to demonstrate that Henry is not a free agent acting on designed or rational motives, but a "pawn ... a nameless unit moved by implacable forces together with others nameless units."<sup>37</sup>

Henry initially intends to use the war as a means to achieve glory: “He had burned several times to enlist. Tales of great movements shook the land ... there seemed to be much glory in them;”<sup>38</sup> but when he does join, determined to be part of the great battles, and finds himself attached, trapped, to a body of men moving closer and closer to the “rumble of death”,<sup>39</sup> he immediately feels that he had been misled; that he never wanted to go to war in the first place. His decision is to blame “nature.”<sup>40</sup> According to Henry, “she [“nature”] ... had cozened him out of his home and hoodwinked him into wielding a rifle.”<sup>41</sup> This perception of “nature” is extremely disconcerting, for Henry had always believed that “nature” cared for his safety and that his life was significant. He now sees “nature” as a self-indulging trickster:

War, he said bitterly to the sky, was a makeshift created because ordinary processes didn't furnish deaths enough. To seduce her victims, nature had to formulate a beautiful excuse. She made glory. This made men willing, anxious in haste, to come and be killed.<sup>42</sup>

Like Kelcey, Henry had believed that his future was destined for greatness. He did not wish to accept the notion that his importance amounted to no more than a number in “Nature's” plan to “furnish deaths enough”. He thinks of splashing “nature” with “a derisive paint”;<sup>43</sup> to show defiance against “her” plan to make him one of “her” “dupes”.<sup>44</sup> However, his submission to events and circumstances, his return to the regiment to fight “like a beast”,<sup>45</sup> to “kiss the knife and bow to the cudgel”,<sup>46</sup> reveals the same mental development that attracted him to war in the first place. The barbaric behaviour of Henry, and his romantic

perception of it, shows that he is as much a pawn in the end as he was in the beginning.

The correspondent ("The Open Boat") also wishes for the same security from nature. Trapped, and at the mercy of the sea, the correspondent looks to nature for a sign that will secure his hope that it cares for him. "Nature", he wants to believe, is kind and will not allow him, or the others, to drown in such a meaningless way: "she ("nature") cannot mean to drown me".<sup>47</sup>

The correspondent, however, eventually sees that supplication in this manner is useless. The sign he looks for in "nature", some "personification" offering security, is revealed to him in the "high cold star"<sup>48</sup> image. Used in conjunction with the darkness and coldness of the sea, the "high cold star" metaphor fills out the naturalistic picture of a dark and alien world. Hyatt H. Waggoner describes this picture as the "cosmic chill".<sup>49</sup> The "high cold star" image enlightens the correspondent to man's relationship with "nature". It is a one-sided relationship in which "nature" does not care for man or his struggles. "Thereafter" says the narrator, "he [the correspondent] knows the pathos of his situation."<sup>50</sup>

"The Blue Hotel" deviates from Crane's characteristic presentations of naturalistic themes, since the characters do not acknowledge a deterministic force, either natural or social. But it too, because of its adherence to certain concepts, is considered a naturalistic work.

The Palace Hotel is situated in what seems to be the middle of nowhere. It stands alone on one of the prairies of Nebraska surrounded by snow, and its presence as a human centre seems an anomaly. The fact that the hotel is painted an outstanding blue supports this anomaly. The

peopled structure does not seem to belong and what the story tries to show is that though man may think of himself as belonging, as a necessary part of the universe, his existence there, in actuality, is a “marvel”:

We picture the world as thick with conquering and elate humanity, but here, with the bugles of the tempest pealing, it was hard to imagine a peopled earth. One viewed the existence of man then as a marvel, and conceded a glamour of wonder to these lice which were caused to cling to a whirling, fire-smitten, ice-locked, disease-stricken, space-lost bulb.<sup>51</sup>

In no other work of Crane's are the destinies of individuals so shaped, so determined. Though everyone in the story seems to guard against the occurrence of an event; and though one person in particular, the Swede, goes to extreme lengths to prevent it, the event does occur.

Arriving from New York the Swede seems assured that he will not survive his stay in what he perceives to be an uncivilized western community, the kind depicted in romantic dime-novels. “I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house”, he says. The men in the hotel, however, wish him no harm — they are not even westerners. Only when the Swede drinks and becomes belligerent do they become irritated. They still do not wish to kill the Swede, but as a group in opposition to him, they help confirm the Swede's biggest fear: “Oh, I know what kind of thing this is! I know you'll all pitch on me. I can't lick you all!”<sup>52</sup>

What occurs when the scene shifts to the other saloon is much the same thing. Within minutes the Swede provokes anger on the part of the patrons. but none contemplates his murder — especially not the

“delicate”<sup>53</sup> gambler. But the Swede does get murdered, and ironically, by the gambler.

“Every sin was the result of a collaboration”,<sup>54</sup> says the Easterner. The Easterner feels that because of this collective opposition to the Swede they all have “collaborated” in his murder; the Easterner became involved when he did not support the Swede in his rightful accusation of Johnnie; the cowboy's and Scully's involvement lay in their willingness to see the Swede defeated in his fight with Johnnie. “We are all in it”,<sup>55</sup> says the Easterner. The cowboy, however, doesn't agree: “Well I didn't do anythin' did I?”<sup>56</sup> This denial of responsibility over the Swede's death assumes a conscious control of action, or non-action, and as such is representative of the human “conceit” that naturalistic fiction sets out to attack. Man is not in control of his destiny, according to naturalism, he is instead shaped, directed, and determined. The Swede's death, regardless of his initial precautions, was determined. The gambler's implication in the Swede's murder, regardless of his reputation, his delicateness, was determined.

The use of symbols in Crane's works is another feature that helps signify naturalistic elements. According to James Nagel, naturalism often incorporates symbolism as an important part of its methodology:

Since the philosophy of naturalism implies a stable conception of reality ... It is possible to use this frame of reference as a basis for symbolization. Symbolism depends upon stable abstractions for its extensional meaning; in naturalism those abstractions are suggested through symbols of animalism, depravity, lust, or greed, when the referent is a genetic force, or the jungle, or machinery, or primitive humanity when describing the environment.



Often the imagery of naturalism, rather than its themes, reveals its Darwinian influences.<sup>57</sup>

Critics have described Crane as a symbolist with practically the same emphasis afforded to the other descriptions, but because the majority of his symbols are naturalistic, or support naturalistic themes, I have decided to treat symbolism in conjunction with naturalism to help distinguish the school (naturalism) as the more descriptive of Crane's work.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

- <sup>1</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 22.
- <sup>2</sup>Emile Zola, *The Naturalist Novel*, (Montreal: Harvest House Ltd., 1964), p. 4.
- <sup>3</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 27.
- <sup>4</sup>Emile Zola, *The Naturalist Novel*, pp. 10-11.
- <sup>5</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 28.
- <sup>6</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 28.
- <sup>7</sup>Roland Stromberg, p. xiii.
- <sup>8</sup>Roland Stromberg, p. xiii.
- <sup>9</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 1.
- <sup>10</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 1.
- <sup>11</sup>Harry Hartwick, *The Foreground of American Fiction*, (New York: Gordian Press, 1934), p. 332.
- <sup>12</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 8.
- <sup>13</sup>Donald Pizer, *Twentieth-Century American Literary Naturalism* (Chicago: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), p. 4.
- <sup>14</sup>Stephen Crane, "Letter to Lily Brandon Monroe" (1892) in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, p. 14.
- <sup>15</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 34.
- <sup>16</sup>Stephen Crane. "An Experiment In Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 42.
- <sup>17</sup>Crane. *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*. p. 134.
- <sup>18</sup>Crane. *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*. p. 292.
- <sup>19</sup>Crane. "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*. p. 439.
- <sup>20</sup>Thomas Gullason. *Stephen Crane's Career*. (New York: New York University Press. 1972) p. 424.

- <sup>21</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 443.
- <sup>22</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 35.
- <sup>23</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 35.
- <sup>24</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 42.
- <sup>25</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 131.
- <sup>26</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 123.
- <sup>27</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 134.
- <sup>28</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 134.
- <sup>29</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 58.
- <sup>30</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 52.
- <sup>31</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 60.
- <sup>32</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 61.
- <sup>33</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 61.
- <sup>34</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane, An Omnibus*, p. 69
- <sup>35</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 99.
- <sup>36</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 194.
- <sup>37</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 124.
- <sup>38</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 229.
- <sup>39</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 234.
- <sup>40</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 292.
- <sup>41</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 291.
- <sup>42</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 292.

<sup>43</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 292.

<sup>44</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 331.

<sup>45</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 367.

<sup>46</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 431.

<sup>47</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 439.

<sup>48</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 439.

<sup>49</sup>Thomas Gullason, p. 423.

<sup>50</sup>Crane, "The Blue Hotel" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 524.

<sup>51</sup>Crane, "The Blue Hotel" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 518.

<sup>52</sup>Crane, "The Blue Hotel" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 526.

<sup>53</sup>Crane, "The Blue Hotel" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 530.

<sup>54</sup>Crane, "The Blue Hotel" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 580.

<sup>55</sup>Crane, "The Blue Hotel" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 580.

<sup>56</sup>Crane, "The Blue Hotel" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 530.

<sup>57</sup>James Nagel, p. 32.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**PART B:**

**Crane and Symbolic Naturalism**

The naturalistic elements related symbolically in Crane's work are landscapes, tall structures, scenes that reflect the serenity, or indifference, of "nature", emotions, and states of mind.

Charles Child Walcutt describes Crane's fictional environments, especially the ones of his Bowery tales, as dark "landscapes of hysteria".<sup>1</sup> Lars Ahnebrink refers to *The Red Badge's* environment as one in which "confusion, terror, and anxiety are everywhere."<sup>2</sup> These statements on the presentation of a scene or environment help define one of the symbolic elements in naturalistic fiction. Crane's concept of environment as dark, cold, and ugly, or dominated by chaos and confusion stands as a repudiation of the roseate world depicted in earlier literature. In Crane's works environment is a terrible thing, and there is no better way of presenting this than to use symbolically dark, chaotic, and cold images.

In "An Experiment in Misery" Crane's setting typically is a composite of dark and gloomy images. It is "cold and storming"<sup>3</sup> says the narrator; cable cars as they pass exhibit an appearance "dangerful and gloomy"<sup>4</sup>; people are "splattered with black mud"<sup>5</sup> and the alley features street lamps with "purple and black"<sup>6</sup> curtains. Once inside the building of his potential shelter the "youth" notices "from the dark and secret places, ... unspeakable odours, that assailed him like malignant diseases with wings."<sup>7</sup>

In *Maggie* the Johnson household is located in a region described succinctly as "dark", and in a building containing "a dozen gruesome doorways."<sup>8</sup> When Maggie is about to take her life, her descent is symbolically related to the changing environment she passes through. The closer she gets to her destination, the river, the gloomier her surroundings

become. It is a slow and grim procession that ends, quite suitably, with the blackest feature:

The girl went into the gloomy districts near the river, where the tall black factories shut in the street ... Farther on in the darkness she met a ragged being with shifting, bloodshot eyes and grim hands.

She went into the blackness of the final block. The shutters of the buildings were closed like grim lips...

At the feet of the tall buildings appeared the deathly black hue of the river.<sup>9</sup>

The sea in "The Open Boat", perceived through the eyes of the correspondent, is everywhere "grim" and "slaty",<sup>10</sup> and everywhere tragically "cold".<sup>11</sup>

In *The Red Badge* the naturalistic universe is symbolized by "storms of shot and shell."<sup>12</sup> Amidst an environment of "guns" arguing "with abrupt violence",<sup>13</sup> "shells ... bursting into fierce bloom,"<sup>14</sup> and forces advancing like an "onslaught of redoubtable dragons",<sup>15</sup> it seems at times to Henry that death and destruction are everywhere. In fact when he runs from battle it is because "Destruction threatened him from all points."<sup>16</sup>

The feeling of being trapped is an essential element of naturalistic fiction. Maggie's cry of "where kin I go" illustrates best the influences of social and hereditary forces. Her environment, like those of the other Bowery tales, seems to close in on her in times of crises. Environment directs and limits her as it does Kelcey. In *The Red Badge* these same limitations, symbolically, show Henry to be trapped, tied down, led

against his will in every direction. He seems to be a plaything of “nature”.

The following passages reveal just how limited Henry is:

... [Henry] saw that it would be impossible for him to escape from the regiment. It enclosed him. And there were iron laws of tradition and law on four sides. He was in a moving box.<sup>17</sup>

“We just get fired around from pillar to post and get licked here and get licked there, and nobody knows what its done for. It makes a man feel like a damn' kitten in a bag.”<sup>18</sup>

They rolled their eyes [the regiment] toward the advancing battle as they stood awaiting the shock. Some shrank and flinched. They stood as men tied to stakes.<sup>19</sup>

Tall and distant structures are symbols of an indifferent “society” and “nature” in Crane's works. In *Maggie*, at the moment of Maggie's suicide, the representation of an indifferent society is made visible by the presence of “tall buildings”.<sup>20</sup> In “The Open Boat” a “tall wind-tower”<sup>21</sup> is perceived similarly to the “sternly high buildings” of “An Experiment in Misery”. As the “sternly high buildings” of “An Experiment” ignore the wretches at their feet, the “tall wind-tower” stands as a “giant ... with its back to the plight of the ants.”<sup>22</sup>

The depiction of a whole environment may also be symbolic of an indifferent society or “nature”, of the serenity of such things “amid the struggles of the individual.”<sup>23</sup> The bloody and noisy fracas between Jimmy's gang and the kids from Devil's Row (*Maggie*) raises little, if any, interest on the part of society. Passive and lazy stares are paid, but that is all. Maggie's descent to the black river, and to her death, is mirrored by crowd laughter and the merry sounds of street-car bells.<sup>24</sup> George



Kelcey notices the sudden visibility of a clear blue sky at the moment preceding his mother's death; and Henry Fleming, feeling the thunderous exchange of gunfire as if it were "under his nose",<sup>25</sup> is amazed to see the sky as beautifully clear and blue as it was: "Nature", he sees, "had gone tranquilly on with her golden process in the midst of so much devilment."<sup>26</sup>

The last of Crane's naturalistic symbols are his use of the colours red and yellow. These colours are almost always used in conjunction with terms specifying poverty, anger, despair, ugliness, old age, tragedy, and death. The colours are not used interchangeably, however. Each colour has its own set of meanings.

The colour yellow, for example, is used by Crane to symbolize ugliness, old age, and despair. In "An Experiment In Misery" the "man in rags"<sup>27</sup> is presumably an old, very poor and unattractive looking man. His epithet is as a result, preceded by the colour yellow. He is not merely the "man in rags", he is the "yellow man in rags" as if yellow is all the detail necessary to describe his old and ugly appearance. Later in the story when the "youth" is set-up for a bed in a room that has the "strange effect of a graveyard",<sup>28</sup> he finds himself lying next to a "corpse-like being". The "corpse-like being", like the corpse in *The Red Badge* whose face was "an appalling yellow",<sup>29</sup> has "yellow breast and shoulders."<sup>30</sup> Even Maggie's mother, the grey-haired alcoholic willing to scrap with anyone who opposes her, is distinguished, among other things, by the "rough yellow of her face."<sup>31</sup>

Yellow seems the perfect symbol pervading the oppressive cuff-and-collar factory (*Maggie*). The "grizzled" women of this establishment,

twenty of them, grinding away their youths, are perceived by Maggie as “twenty girls of various shades of yellow discontent.”<sup>32</sup>

The representation of dark and dangerous environments are also symbolized by the colour yellow. George Kelcey's apartment is the constant environment of his elderly and worn mother, and it is located in a “red-and-black” tenement in an area described as a “jungle”.<sup>33</sup> The one feature of the apartment illuminated by Crane is its “yellowed walls”.<sup>34</sup> Surrounding the dark region of Maggie's apartment building is “yellow dust”.<sup>35</sup>

As a sign of ominousness, a symbol of bad or dangerous things to come, the colour yellow again is significant. Immediately prior to Maggie's suicide “some hidden factory,” in the story's blackest region, ominously sends up “a yellow glare,”<sup>36</sup> just as a “glass-fronted building” shed “a yellow glare”<sup>37</sup> moments prior to Jimmy's brawl with Pete. In *The Red Badge* immediately prior to the youth's first “move” a “yellow patch like a rug”<sup>38</sup> appears in the sky. This image becomes more apparent when the regiment actually undertakes its move, for then, while the men are marching closer to the roars of battle “the yellow of the developing day”<sup>39</sup> emerges behind their backs. Prior to Henry's outburst of rage, and his encounter with the man who partially knocks him unconscious, a “yellow fog”<sup>40</sup> appears wallowing on the tree tops above his head. When, at the end of the story, Henry thinks that his experiences have matured him, made him better, smarter, he turns to “nature” “with a lover's thirst to images of tranquil skies:”<sup>41</sup> however as these thoughts pass through his mind Crane ends the story ironically with a ‘yellow’ image:

Over the river a golden ray of sun came  
through the hosts of leaden rainclouds.<sup>42</sup>

Though the ray is not yellow it is close enough to imply the same ominousness depicted thus far. If we were allowed to read beyond the conclusion of the story it seems certain that Henry will encounter more rages of war and anguish.

Crane uses the colour red to represent feelings or images that seem animalistic. Naturalistic characters, often portrayed as mere degenerates of instinct, think and react animalistically. According to Zola men are like animals, dominated by their instincts.<sup>43</sup> In Crane's works feelings and raw emotions of conflict, violence, and rage, employ the colour red as their symbol. The groans of despair and protest that come from the wretches in "An Experiment In Misery" express "a red and grim tragedy".<sup>44</sup> "Blood-red dreams"<sup>45</sup> pervade the thoughts of the hostile Jimmy Johnson, just as the violent eruptive nature of his mother is symbolized by red features.

In *The Red Badge* war is a "red animal"<sup>46</sup>, a "blood-swollen god".<sup>47</sup> Shells, as they fly through the air, explode "redly".<sup>48</sup> The rage and anger experienced by Henry is also "red".<sup>49</sup> Murder is "red".<sup>50</sup> For Henry to emerge from battle positively, with some sense of hope or optimism, he must overcome the "red, formidable difficulties of war"<sup>51</sup> and its "red sickness".<sup>52</sup>

The colours red and yellow are also used, at times, to emphasize description, the colour of the object, but they are used more frequently to emphasize emotion, state of mind, the connotation of the adjective. As such they are more important as symbolic tools than descriptive tools.

Naturalism, as mentioned, accomodates the use of symbolism because it implies a stable conception of reality. Symbolistic elements are abundant in Crane's fiction. The result is that a number of scholars believe that Crane is above all a naturalist. Robert E. Spiller states that Crane was influenced more by Zola than by anyone else: "for *L'Assommoir* probably provided the plot for *Maggie*, (and) *La Debaclé* bears a close resemblance to *The Red Badge*."<sup>53</sup> Though Crane has always denied Zola's influence, Spiller seems assured that "Crane's work shows the stamp of European naturalism."<sup>54</sup> Lars Ahnebrink asserts that "Crane was fundamentally a psychologist, and his psychology was largely naturalistic."<sup>55</sup>

Crane's works, however, for reasons that will be discussed in the following chapter, do not adhere to mainstream naturalism. The school of literature that Crane's works do adhere to is the school of impressionism. Stephen Crane is primarily an impressionist, rather than a realist or a naturalist, and the following chapter will be devoted to the support of this argument.

## NOTES

1. Charles Child Walcutt, p. 68.
- 2Lars Ahnebrink, p. 194.
- 3Crane, "An Experiment in Misery, in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p.  
32.
- 4Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p.  
32.
- 5Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p.  
32.
- 6Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p.  
32.
- 7Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p.  
35.
- 8Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 46.
- 9Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 102-3.
- 10Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 422.
- 11Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 445.
- 12Thomas Gullason, p. 423.
- 13Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*,  
p. 264.
- 14Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*,  
p. 266.
- 15Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*,  
p. 268.
- 16Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage*. in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*.  
p. 268.
- 17Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*.  
p. 248.
- 18Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*.  
p. 326.

- <sup>19</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 327.
- <sup>20</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 103.
- <sup>21</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 443.
- <sup>22</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 443.
- <sup>23</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 443.
- <sup>24</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 103.
- <sup>25</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 265.
- <sup>26</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 265.
- <sup>27</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 33
- <sup>28</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 37.
- <sup>29</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 275.
- <sup>30</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 36.
- <sup>31</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 49.
- <sup>32</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 68.
- <sup>33</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 115.
- <sup>34</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 116.
- <sup>35</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 96.
- <sup>36</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 103.
- <sup>37</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 79.
- <sup>38</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 239.
- <sup>39</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 241.

<sup>40</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 222.

<sup>41</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 320.

<sup>42</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 370.

<sup>43</sup>Emile Zolá in Lars Ahnebrink, p. 26.

<sup>44</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 37

<sup>45</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 55.

<sup>46</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 250.

<sup>47</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 250.

<sup>48</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 257.

<sup>49</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 261.

<sup>50</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 333.

<sup>51</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 265.

<sup>52</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 320.

<sup>53</sup>Robert E. Spiller in Lars Ahnebrink, pp. 249-50.

<sup>54</sup>Robert E. Spiller in Lars Ahnebrink, pp. 249-50.

<sup>55</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 190.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Crane and Literary Impressionism**



**You are an everlasting surprise to me.  
You shock — and the next moment you  
give the perfect artistic satisfaction.  
Your method is fascinating. You are a  
complete impressionist. The illusions of  
life come out of your hand without a  
flaw. It is not life — which nobody  
wants — it is art — art for which  
everyone — the abject and the great —  
hanker —**

**Joseph Conrad**

**A letter to Stephen Crane  
(December 1897)**

Impressionism as a literary movement emerged in late nineteenth century France as an outgrowth of the realist-naturalist schools. Where realism and naturalism sought an exact, impersonal reproduction of material, a photographic imitation of nature, the school of impressionism sought “la reproducción de la impresión de las cosas”.<sup>1</sup> It sought to render a “vistazo”,<sup>2</sup> an instant perception of an outstanding aspect of an object and the effect produced by the object.<sup>3</sup> As its most important feature the impressionist school attempted to portray life not as it was in actuality, but rather “as it was seen or felt”<sup>4</sup> by the author. In this sense the movement was similar to the earlier movement of impressionist painting which also had its genesis as a reaction to the realist-naturalist movements. In mid-nineteenth century France the painters Manet, Monet, Degas, Renoir, and lesser others revolted from the realistic conceptions of painting and argued that it was aesthetically more important to retain the impressions an object makes on an artist than to carefully present the actual object in precise detail.<sup>5</sup> Herbert Muller argues that this concept of art, this reliance on subjectivism where the emphasis is on the seer rather than the seen, upon sensations rather than generalization, is a direct result of the character of the age: “of the decay of faith, the dearth of universally accepted values and symbols ... the spiritual anarchy (in general).”<sup>6</sup>

Indeed subjectivism is at the heart of impressionism. Impressionists believed that by stripping themselves of all intellectual preconceptions, forgetting that the sky was blue and the grass green, they would be able to assert a personal objectivity. The “innocence of the eye,”<sup>7</sup> to impressionist painter Paul Cézanne, was what was necessary in order to be completely objective and aesthetically creative. In his own

work Cezanne avoided reproducing nature. "Art", he said, "should not imitate, but should express the sensations aroused by nature."<sup>8</sup>

In literature the first wave of impressionism came in the works of the Goncourt brothers (1860's). Their scientific approach and morbid subject matter seemed more suited to naturalism, but their writing was presented, according to Beverly Jean Gibbs, in a way that renounced elaborate detail and aimed at a careful selection of words and phrases of high sensory appeal.<sup>9</sup> It was a "vibrant style", according to Louis Cazamian; "their manner of revealing an object by capturing its successive phases in a series of quick flashes"<sup>10</sup> revealed an impressionistic technique at its earliest stage. Interestingly enough, however, the man who learned to develop this technique further was ironically labelled as the head of the naturalist movement: Emile Zola. It was the technique that Zola incorporated though his material was largely naturalistic.

In England, Zola's technique and the works of the impressionist painters were introduced to the public by novelist George Moore (1852-1933) during the eighties and nineties. His book *Modern Painting* (1893) dealt specifically with impressionist painting, and his early novels, *A Modern Lover* (1883), and *A Mummer's Wife* (1885), fused elements of both naturalism and impressionism.<sup>11</sup> One of Moore's more significant features was the use of impressionist metaphoric language to heighten emphasis on particular details and to render them clearly to the reader.<sup>12</sup> The use of synecdoche was another of his characteristics, and one imitated by Stephen Crane. For his role in English fiction Moore was called "the father of Anglo-Saxon Impressionism."<sup>13</sup> However, the development of the school is predominantly credited to Henry James, Joseph Conrad, Ford Madox Ford,

and Stephen Crane. Impressionism for these writers was not merely a style or method of writing, a fanciful technique, but a way of fusing technique and theme into a structural whole. They saw that life could not be represented. Life was a montage flashing before them, an everchanging picture defying exact imitation. Thus, concentrating on the moods, feelings, and sensations evoked by an object, rather than the object itself, these writers rendered life through their subjective visions. And to Ford this way of writing was more realistic in its portrayal of life than the other schools:

We saw that life did not narrate, but made impressions on our brains. We in turn, if we wished to produce on you an effect of life, must not narrate but render ... impressions.<sup>14</sup>

In America Hamlin Garland was responsible for the literary articulation of impressionism. Though he was indebted to, and influenced by, the realist Howells, Garland considered himself more as an impressionist than a realist. He was one of the first writers in America to use impressionistic techniques.<sup>15</sup> "I believe with Monet," he once wrote, "that the author should be self-centred, and should paint life as he sees it."<sup>16</sup>

In devising a literary creed Garland used the word "veritism" to describe the form of writing he admired most. However, in his book of essays, *Crumbling Idols*, a work that opposed traditional methods of writing and preached "individual expression".<sup>17</sup> Garland defined veritism using practically the same terms with which he defined impressionism. Impressionism, he said, was "the statement of one's individual perception of life and nature, guided by devotion to truth."<sup>18</sup> Similarly, writing for the

veritist was “a statement of his passion for truth and individual expression.”<sup>19</sup>

It was during this time (1891) that the young and aspiring Stephen Crane became befriended by Garland. Garland first met Crane when Crane covered Garland's lecture on American Literature.<sup>20</sup> Rodney O. Rogers believes that Garland was probably the “most influential upon Crane,”<sup>21</sup> and as a result the most responsible for Crane's knowledge of impressionism. Benjamin D. Giorgio writes that Crane's contact with Garland “may well be considered the most significant factor in the formation of Crane's philosophy and art.”<sup>22</sup> Both Garland and Crane believed in teaching “by effect,” as in impressionistic painting, rather than by “direct expression.”<sup>23</sup> And the reputation of impressionism as a literary school, “a war cry for those who sought escape from Victorianism,” and a “swear word for conservatives”<sup>24</sup> seemed the most congenial for the rebellious nature of Stephen Crane. Corwin Linson wrote that “Stephen Crane seemed born with no sense of what tradition might be except to shy at any mention of it.”<sup>25</sup>

Crane, as mentioned in chapter one, followed certain principles of Howells and of realism, but he opposed the realist's philosophy that life should or could be imitated. As a fiction writer his job, he believed, was not to tell how life was, as Zola and the naturalists professed to do. “We can never tell life,” says Crane through a young correspondent in *War Memories*; his idea was to give his personal impression of life. In a letter to John Northern Hilliard (1896) he writes: “I understand that a man is born into the world with his own pair of eyes, and he is not responsible for his vision — he is merely responsible for his quality of personal

honesty.”<sup>26</sup> In other words an artist should not be criticized for painting an unrealistic picture, his task is merely to render what his perception receives as truthfully and as honestly as possible.

To “render” life as opposed to narrating life is what Ford believed. Conrad wrote that his task, as an impressionist, was “by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel – it is before all, to make you see....”<sup>27</sup> In his essay “Impressionism and Fiction” Herbert Muller offers possibly the best summary of the aims of these impressionists:

In general their aim is an immediate, pure recreation as opposed to a formal report or an orderly analysis or any generalization of experience ... Instead of talking about life, the impressionists accordingly seek to convey directly the actual sensation of living. They seek to suppress, or at least subordinate, the habitual precepts and concepts that separate us from actuality; to communicate the live, instantaneous, total sensory impression before common sense has transformed it or intellect abstracted its conventional “meaning”; in short to give a full intense realization instead of a mere comprehension of experience.<sup>28</sup>

“To suppress” whatever stands “to separate us from actuality” is important, and to Ford Madox Ford one such obstacle was the discernible presence of the author/narrator. As in realism, and naturalism, the author/narrator had to be suppressed in impressionistic fiction. Once again Ford states that,

The main and perhaps most passionate tenet of impressionism was the suppression of the author from the pages of his books. He must not comment, he must not narrate; he must

present his impressions of his imaginary affairs  
as if he had been present at them.<sup>29</sup>

On the same matter S. L. Weingart says:

The impressionist novel abjures omniscient  
narration and establishes, instead, a limited  
point of view so that its focus is not upon  
stimuli but upon the receptor of stimuli.<sup>30</sup>

According to James Nagel this meant that the narrative  
intelligence could not be any more knowledgeable than the characters,<sup>31</sup>  
and this idea suits Crane's dislike of preaching in literature. Fictive  
information should be rendered as coming from the perceptions of the  
characters. The author records what the characters experience and think  
and nothing else.<sup>32</sup> According to Nagel, the narrative mode that best  
accommodates this idea is third person limited: the mode that Crane most  
frequently used and "the natural expression of Literary Impressionism."<sup>33</sup>

In Crane's fiction nothing is told in an objective omniscient way.  
His purpose in *Maggie* was "to show people to people as they seem to  
me",<sup>34</sup> rather than as they are. In his best works, *The Red Badge*, *Maggie*,  
"The Open Boat", *George's Mother*, "The Blue Hotel", there is a disparity,  
manifested ironically, between what is generally known as reality and what  
is subjectively perceived as reality by the protagonist; that is, rather than  
imitate life, Crane has it subjectively rendered through the perceptions of  
such characters as Henry Fleming, Maggie, the correspondent, George  
Kelcey, the Swede, the Easterner. A consequence of this, according to Orm  
Overland, is that in Crane's works "we in our imagined roles as spectators

never have a larger view of the field than has the main character.... things become real through the act of perception.”<sup>35</sup>

In viewing *The Red Badge* as a triumph of “impressionistic technique” Sergio Perosa says that “practically every scene is filtered through Fleming’s point of view and seen through his eyes.”<sup>36</sup> Henry, according to Perosa, is the “source and receptacle of impressions”<sup>37</sup>; reality is ‘felt’, ‘perceived’, ‘observed’, ‘gazed at’, ‘disclosed’, ‘discerned’, ‘watched’, ‘witnessed’, etc. The following examples taken from *The Red Badge* are quite typical and are indicative of what Henry ‘sees’, rather than what is actually occurring (italics always mine):

The youth *shot a swift glance* along the blue ranks of the regiment. The profiles were motionless, carven.<sup>38</sup>

The youth *felt* the old thrill at the *sight* of the emblem. They were like beautiful birds strangely undaunted in a storm.<sup>39</sup>  
The youth *turned quick eyes* upon the field. He *discerned* forms begin to swell in masses out of a distant wood. He again *saw* the titled flag speeding forward.<sup>40</sup>

He stood, erect and tranquil, *watching* the attack begin against a part of the line that made a blue curve along the side of an adjacent hill. His *vision* being unmolested by smoke from the rifles of his companions, he had opportunities to *see* parts of the hard fight. It was a relief to *perceive* at last from whence came some of these noises which had been roared into his ears.<sup>41</sup>

What “the youth” sees is real only to him. Giorgio describes this method of portraying reality as a conveyance of “doubleness”.<sup>42</sup> It is a doubleness that exists between the reader’s sense of what is real and what is perceived by the characters to be real. Rodney O. Rogers states that



concept that the nature of reality depends in part upon the psychology of whoever perceives it.”<sup>43</sup> He offers an example taken from Crane's poetry:

To the Maiden  
The sea was blue meadow  
Alive with little froth-people  
Singing

To the sailor, wrecked,  
The sea was dead grey walls  
Superlative in vacancy  
Upon which nevertheless at fateful time  
Was written  
The grim hatred of nature.

According to Agostino Lombardo this kind of impressionism is an “instrument for the representation of the moral and psychological inner life of the protagonist.”<sup>44</sup>

In *Maggie* the major irony occurs when Maggie, the victim of a brutal home and work environment, thinks that Pete resembles a knight in shining armour. Her distorted vision leads her to “perceive” Pete as “the ideal man”.<sup>45</sup> As her state worsens, the environment, “joyous” and “alive” with the “sound of merriment” to others, appears to her in the following way:

She went into the blackness of the final block.  
The shutters of the tall buildings were closed  
*like* grim lips. The structures *seemed* to have  
eyes that looked over them, beyond them, at  
other things. Afar off the lights of the  
avenues glittered *as if* from an impossible  
distance.<sup>46</sup>

In *The Red Badge* this “doubleness”, the disparity between the reader's sense of reality and the character's psychological perception of

reality, occurs over and over again. The reality that Henry perceives, like Maggie, may not be exact, or photographic, but it is true to the mood, the fear-motivated psychology that is responsible for his vision. Focusing on the terms “seems”, “appears”, “looks”, “as if”, the following examples are Henry's subjective interpretations of a life-threatening reality:

... the youth saw that the landscape was streaked with two long, thin, black colours [rebel army] ... They *were like* two serpents crawling from the cavern of the night.<sup>47</sup>

The shells, which had ceased to trouble the regiment for a time, came swirling again, and exploded in the grass or among the leaves of the trees. [To the youth] They *looked to be* strange war flowers bursting into fierce bloom.<sup>48</sup>

He [the youth] *caught changing views* of the ground covered with men who were all running *like* pursued imps, and yelling.

*To the youth* it was an onslaught of redoubtable dragons.<sup>49</sup>

As he, leading, went across a little field, he found himself in a region of shells. They hurtled over his head with long wild screams. As he listened he *imagined* them to have rows of cruel teeth that grinned at him.<sup>50</sup>

Because in impressionism reality is dependent upon the psychology of the perceiver, it is rarely constant throughout a work. In Crane's fiction reality is constantly changing because characters are always having to re-interpret the world. Since the ability to perceive reality is never wholly accurate it is natural for a character to change his/her mind under the influence of a new vision. when he/she “sees” with “new eyes”. James Nagel says that this helps establish the epistemological process that makes up impressionistic themes. for a character's ability to “see” becomes

synonymous with his ability to interpret reality correctly.<sup>51</sup> He goes on to say that,

A character might persist throughout a work in being unable to perceive reality accurately, thus living in a world of illusions and blindness. He might receive restricted, disordered, or ambiguous signals from the external world and be limited to perpetually tentative judgements.<sup>52</sup>

The result is still a realistic way of depicting reality, for the impressionists maintain that reality is ephemeral, constantly changing its meaning and hence constantly defying precise definition.<sup>53</sup> This is, according to Perosa, “the characteristic manner of impressionistic rendering,”<sup>54</sup> and it suits the “new eyes” motif incorporated by Crane in his stories, especially in *The Red Badge*. In *The Red Badge* each vision of Henry, focused anew, serves as an ironic contrast to his previous one:

Their songs about landscapes were of no importance to him since his *new eyes* said that his landscape was not black. People who called landscapes black were idiots.<sup>55</sup>

*New eyes* were given to him. And the most startling thing was to learn suddenly that he was very insignificant.<sup>56</sup>

And at last his *eyes* seemed to open to some *new* ways. He found that he could look back upon the brass and bombast of his earlier gospels and see them truly ... With his *new eyes*, he could see that the secret and open blows which were being dealt about the world with such heavenly lavishness were in truth blessings.<sup>57</sup>

In “The Open Boat” new impressions affect the correspondent in a similar way. The correspondent's original view of nature is of a cruel and malignant thing. The sea, for example, consists of dark and slaty waves, “most wrongfully and barbarously abrupt and tall”,<sup>58</sup> and the sky exhibits a “squall, marked by dingy clouds and clouds brick-red like smoke from a burning building.”<sup>59</sup> However, in ironic contrast to this, the correspondent's widened perspective allows him to view nature differently; with “new eyes” as in *The Red Badge*:

When the correspondent again *opened his eyes*, the sea and the sky were each of the grey hue of the dawning. Later, carmine and gold was painted upon the waters. The morning appeared finally in its splendour, with a sky of pure blue, and the sunlight flamed on the tips of the waves.<sup>60</sup>

In *George's Mother* the “new eyes” motif is evident not only in the relationship between George and his environment, where his vision turns from viewing the “universe” as caring, to viewing it as “hating him,”<sup>61</sup> but also in his relationship with his friends. Initially George wants to be adopted socially by Jones and the others. He feels great respect and admiration for them — especially Bleeker; however, time and circumstance lead Kelcey to distrust his friends and to view Bleeker as a “tottering old beast.”<sup>62</sup>

The everchanging reality of George's world, however, or his everchanging perception of it, leads him to see matters differently, — as if with “new eyes.” Time makes him feel that he had not viewed things

Directly after old Bleeker's party he almost reformed. He was tired and worn from the tumult of it, and he saw it as one might see a skeleton emerged from a crimson cloak. He wished then to turn his face away. Gradually, however, he recovered his mental balance. Then he admitted again by his *point of view* that the thing was not so terrible. His headache had caused him to exaggerate. A drink was not the blight which he had once remorsefully named it.<sup>63</sup>

As mentioned, the use of impressionistic metaphoric language to heighten emphasis on particular details, and the use of synecdoche were traits of novelist George Moore. Crane read and liked the work of Moore<sup>64</sup> and he reveals Moore's style in his work. In *Maggie*, for instance, though little is known of Mrs. Johnson's physical appearance her eyes are singled out as a particular detail for their "darting flames of unreasoning rage".<sup>65</sup> The detail is evocative, suggestive, rather than descriptive. As Conrad suggests it is meant to make the reader "see", and "feel", the rendering of the story. The buildings of the Bowery tales are described with little detail aside from the references to shutters or doors resembling "lips". All we know of George Kelcey's appearance is that he is a "brown young man" with hands that "showed him to be a man who worked with his muscles."<sup>66</sup> In other stories drinks resemble "dragon eyes"<sup>67</sup> (*George's Mother*), trains are like "giant crabs"<sup>68</sup> ("Experiment In Misery"); regiments like "serpents",<sup>69</sup> and tents like "strange plants"<sup>70</sup> (*The Red Badge*). Synecdoche appears in *The Red Badge* when the rebel soldiers are referred to as "guns"<sup>71</sup>. In *Maggie*, "curious eyes"<sup>72</sup> welcome the return of the Johnson girl. Pieced together the stories of Stephen Crane become a

significant montage of sense impressions. Crane's aim is an immediate pure recreation as opposed to a formal report. The result, according to Giorgio, is that his works resemble a "sequence" of "intense, vivid, and dramatic scenes juxtaposed in a cinematographic way."<sup>73</sup>

Impressionist painters were particularly interested in the effects caused by shade, light and colour. Light and shade in Crane's work, revealed through the frequent appearances of daylight and darkness, help maintain the appearance of an everchanging reality, of a world that must be focused anew at each glance. The use of colour functions in a similar way, but colour in Crane's works, especially red and yellow, also reveals added significance.

Crane's use of the colours red and yellow has been discussed in Part II of Chapter II as symbols of naturalistic traits. What was not said, however, is that their significance as colours is derived from the German poet Goethe. Goethe's essay "Farberlehre" (1810) expressed certain ideas on the use of colours in literature, the essence of which was taken up by the impressionist painters of the 1870's.<sup>74</sup> Goethe explained that colours produced mental impressions, that they "(acted) specifically to produce certain effects and states in people":<sup>75</sup>

[Colours] [writes Goethe] produce a corresponding influence on the mind. Experience teaches us that particular colours excite particular states of feeling.<sup>76</sup>

According to Goethe there was a constant relationship between sense impression and emotion. In Crane's fiction the colour red, for example, was not normally used as a descriptive term. The emphasis of

“red” as an adjective for “red and grim tragedy”,<sup>77</sup> a “red existence”,<sup>78</sup> “red years”,<sup>79</sup> a “red rage”,<sup>80</sup> and “red cheers”,<sup>81</sup> is on the emotional and psychological effect. The colour red for Goethe, writes Robert L. Hough, produced an “extreme excitement” and was “capable of inspiring such diverse sentiments as awe, dread, dignity, grace, and majesty”.<sup>82</sup>

The colour yellow, according to Goethe, conveys a “warm agreeable impression”, but when dirtied or placed in a dark and squalid environment the colour becomes “extremely liable to contamination”:

When a yellow colour is communicated to dull and coarse surfaces ... the disagreeable effect alluded to is apparent. By a slight and scarcely perceptible change, the beautiful impression of fire and gold is transformed into one not undeserving of the epithet foul.<sup>83</sup>

As mentioned, in Chapter II, Part II, the colour yellow in Crane's work usually connotes ugliness, ominousness, and disaster (for examples see pp. 45-47).

The question at hand is whether or not Crane was familiar with Goethe's theories on colour. While little else has been proven about the influences on Crane as a writer, the influence of Goethe is validated by Crane's friend Frank Noxen. Noxen wrote in 1926 that Crane had read Goethe's theories on colours and that Crane's use of colours became “part of a program”:

After the book (*The Red Badge*) appeared he and I had somewhere a talk about colour in literature. He told me that a passage in Goethe analyzed the effect which the several colours have upon the human mind. Upon Crane this had made a profound impression and he utilized the idea to produce his effects.<sup>84</sup>

Though the influence of Goethe is scarcely acknowledged by other critics, R W. Stallman, a Crane biographer, did perceive that the use of colour, whether influenced by Goethe or not, was a purposeful dimension in Crane's work and impressionistic:

Crane paints with words "exactly" as the French impressionists paint with pigments: both use pure colours and contrasts of colours.<sup>85</sup>

Stallman goes on to say that Crane's use of colours that contrast, change, appear and disappear fleetingly symbolizing the idea of an everchanging reality, fuses well with the concepts of empiricism, epistemology, and evanescent reality central to impressionistic themes. In saying that "Theme and style", in Crane's works, "are organically conceived"<sup>86</sup> Stallman echoes the statements of nearly all who describe Crane as an impressionist. Benjamin Giorgio writes that Crane's work is a "triumph of impressionistic fiction for its coincidence of theme and technique."<sup>87</sup> Sergio Perosa says that technical method and theme "actually merge and coincide,"<sup>88</sup> and James Nagel writes that in Crane's fiction, "narrative strategy, imagery, structure, theme, and characterization coalesce into a richly satisfying aesthetic whole."<sup>89</sup>

Crane's fiction may have elements of Zolá's naturalism, and of Howells' realism, but in terms of style and theme its structure as a whole contradicts the methods of mainstream realism and naturalism. In his "Novel-Writing and Novel-Reading" Howells emphasizes the need to be patient and explicit in the process of telling a story. A novel, he says,



should grow slowly; detail is necessary. A work that forgoes this element in an attempt to get on with the story becomes, according to Howells, “weak and false” because “detail (is) wanting.”<sup>90</sup>

An abundance of detail, descriptive or otherwise, is hardly what can be said about the prose of Stephen Crane. Landscapes, buildings, and streets are presented briefly and only to point out their unusual and often-times symbolic features. In *Maggie*, for instance, the tenement buildings and streets of Maggie's neighborhood are presented in terms that connote darkness and conflict. The region in which the Johnsons live is “dark,”<sup>91</sup> and their apartment building is significant for its “dozen gruesome doorways.”<sup>92</sup> Screams, frantic quarrels, and cooking odours pervade the building, but that is all we are told. We know nothing of the neighborhood's exact dimensions, the number of buildings, their sizes; and aside from the broken furniture, we know nothing about Maggie's apartment. In *George's Mother* the most we know of George's home, the setting of at least half the work, is that the walls of his apartment have “yellow'd,”<sup>93</sup> and that it is situated in a “red-and-black tenement.”<sup>94</sup>

In *The Red Badge* the landscape is presented in colourful glimpses changing with the passing of time and emotion; but the features of the landscape are never depicted in an exact manner, or photographically, as the schools of realism and naturalism demand.

The sea in “The Open Boat” is rendered as dark, grey and cold with destructive power. But as the setting and most important feature of the entire story one should expect more descriptive detail than this. In all of these works Crane renders impressions, rather than pictures, of objects and places. His narrative intelligences are limited, dependent upon the

subjective and limited perceptions of the characters. The narrative intelligences of realistic works have no such limitations, or restrictions of information.

In both schools (realism, naturalism) the presentation of characters also reveals a great deal of descriptive and informative detail. In realistic and naturalistic fiction we know (or can know) what a character looks like, and we usually know (or can know) their backgrounds. In Crane's fiction the opposite seems to be the case; we know little of the character's appearance and almost nothing of their backgrounds. We know that Maggie has an "outa sight"<sup>95</sup> shape, but that is all we know of her appearance. All we are told of Jimmy is that "he became a young man of leather"<sup>96</sup>, and his past is summed-up in the sentence: "He lived some red years without labouring."<sup>97</sup>

The only description of George Kelcey's mother (*George's Mother*) is that she is old and little; and all we know of George, the protagonist of the story, is that he is a "brown young man" who looked like he "worked with his muscles."<sup>98</sup>

Henry Fleming (*The Red Badge*) is described in no distinctive fashion other than the reference to his age. The only difference between Henry, Conklin, and Wilson is that Conklin is the taller of the three and Wilson the louder.

"The Bride" ("The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky") was "not pretty, nor was she young."<sup>99</sup> This is the extent of Crane's description of her. The "marshall" ("The Bride") is introduced with only a reference to his "brick-red hands."<sup>100</sup> In "The Blue Hotel" the "Swede" is introduced as "shaky and quick-eyed,"<sup>101</sup> the "cowboy" as "tall" and "bronzed",<sup>102</sup> and

with the exception of a very few of Crane's characters we know nothing of their pasts. James Nagel points out that such portrayals of settings, scenes, and characters, portrayals that lack a great deal of information, are impressionistic. He also states that impressionistic fiction tends to prefer the expression of the surface of character over that of deep narrative analysis.<sup>103</sup> The result he says, is that

... characters are often known by descriptive epithets ["the youth", "the cook", "the oiler", "the correspondent", "the Swede"] developed from their most observable characteristics. A character will be labelled the "cowboy" if he is the only such in a group, or the lieutenant if his rank distinguishes him among soldiers or the "little man" if he is smaller than his compatriots, or the "oiler" if his occupation is his primary distinction. Under some conditions, at night or in a fog, characters may be referred to simply as "figures" or "forms", since sensory data provides no means of determining that they are human beings.<sup>104</sup>

In contrast, naturalism necessitates an exact and elaborate report of characters and action. To write naturalistically, Zola says,

You simply take the life study of a person or a group of persons, whose actions you faithfully depict. The work becomes a report, nothing more; it has but the merit of *exact* observation, of more or less penetration and analysis, of the logical collection of facts.<sup>105</sup>

In an attempt to show how vastly different Crane is in method from the realists and naturalists, a selection from Howells' (realist) *Silas Lapham*, Frank Norris' (naturalist) *Mctague*, and Theodore Dreiser's (naturalist) *Sister Carrie* will be presented and compared to selections from

Crane's works. The lengths of these passages alone are enough to indicate the difference between Crane's work and theirs; but the differences in the selections of descriptive detail will also be clear. The first two comparisons will be of character presentations, the last of setting:

There was a youthful private who listened with eagerness to the words of the tall soldier...<sup>106</sup>  
[Introduction of Henry Fleming: *The Red Badge*]

"Silas Lapham is a fine type of the successful American. He has a square, bold chin, only partially concealed by the short reddish-grey beard, growing to the edges of his firmly closing lips. His nose is short and straight; his forehead good, but broad rather than high; his eyes, blue, and with a light in them that is kindly or sharp according to his mood. He is of medium height, and fills an average arm-chair with a solid bulk, ... clad in a business suit of blue serge. His head droops somewhat from a short neck, which does not trouble itself to rise far from a pair of massive shoulders."<sup>107</sup>

[Introduction by another character of Silas Lapham: *The Rise of Silas Lapham*]

The Swede said nothing ... He resembled a badly frightened man ... He volunteered that he had come from New York, where for ten years he had worked as a tailor.<sup>108</sup>

[Introduction of "The Swede" "The Blue Hotel"]

It was August, 1889. She was eighteen years of age, bright timid, and full of illusion of ignorance of youth ... Caroline, or Sister Carrie, as she had been half affectionately termed by the family, was possessed of a mind rudimentary in its power of observation and analysis. Self-interest with her was high, but not strong. It was, nevertheless, her guiding characteristic. Warm with the fancies of youth, pretty with the insipid prettiness of the formative period, possessed of a figure promising eventual shapeliness and an eye alight with certain native intelligence, she was a fair example of the middle American class ... In the intuitive graces she was still crude. She could scarcely toss her head gracefully. Her

hands were almost ineffectual. The feet, though small were set flatly.<sup>109</sup>  
 [Introduction of Carrie: *Sister Carrie*]

The Palace Hotel at Fort Romper was painted in a light blue, a shade that is on the legs of a kind of heron, causing the bird to declare its position against any background. The Palace Hotel, then, was always screaming and howling in a way that made the dazzling winter landscape of Nebraska seem only a grey swampish bush.<sup>110</sup>  
 [Introduction of The Palace Hotel: "The Blue Hotel"]

The street [Polk] never failed to interest him. It was one of those cross streets peculiar to Western cities, situated in the heart of the residence quarter, but occupied by small tradespeople who lived in the rooms above their shops. There were corner drug stores with huge jars of red, yellow, and green liquids in their windows, very brave and gay; stationer's stores, where illustrated weeklies were tacked upon bulletin boards; barber shops with cigar stands in their vestibules; sad looking plumbers' offices; cheap restaurants, in whose windows one saw piles of unopened oysters weighted down by cubes of ice, and china pigs and cows knee deep in layers of white beans.<sup>111</sup>  
 [Introduction of Polk Street: *McTeague*]

The passages taken from *Sister Carrie* and *McTeague* indicate that the narrators are omniscient. The passage from *Silas Lapham*, because it is delivered by another character, reveals that elaborate information is at least accessible. Crane's passages, however, reveal limited narrative intelligences and a seemingly conscious unwillingness to be elaborate.

The absence of chronological or geographical detail in Crane's work is also contrary to naturalistic and realistic modes of writing, while characteristic of impressionism. Nowhere does Crane say "one year later", "two months elapsed", or "the year 1890": nor does he mention present dates. We don't know the name or location of Henry Fleming's battle; we

don't know the street of Maggie and George's apartment building; we don't know the name or location of the sea in "The Open Boat".

Things, events, occurrences, *are* a certain way in realism and naturalism. In Crane's works, and in impressionism, they *seem* to be a certain way. In both realism and naturalism reality is known, its causal forces can be interpreted. In impressionism reality is not known. Uncertainties, apprehensional difficulties, and an emphasis on the relative subjective interpretations of reality, creates the doubleness that Giorgio talked about. It is a doubleness that welcomes the use of irony, and irony, according to R. W. Stallman, is "Crane's chief technical instrument."<sup>112</sup>

All in all Crane's fiction demonstrates naturalistic and realistic elements. Environment and heredity, in some stories, have the potential to limit wills and actions; and determinism, seen in the indifference of "nature", is a naturalistic quality. The portrayal of ordinary people who speak in the vernacular and who are seen in the context of normal human experiences is realistic and part of Crane's fiction. However, in technique, characterization, theme-structure, Crane's fiction must be described and interpreted as essentially impressionistic. Crane once told a friend, one who wanted to write but could not manage to be realistic enough, that he should forget what he thought about reality and write what he "felt" instead. He may not be realistic, advised Crane, not in the photographic sense, but he would be true to his vision.<sup>113</sup> To Stephen Crane, and to impressionism, being true to one's vision is more important.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

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<sup>2</sup>Beverly Jean Gibbs, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup>Beverly Jean Gibbs, p. 176.

<sup>4</sup>Hugh Holman, *Handbook to Literature* (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1936), p. 237.

<sup>5</sup>Hugh Holman, p. 238.

<sup>6</sup>Herbert Muller, "Impressionism in Fiction", *The American Scholar*, 7 (1938), p. 364.

<sup>7</sup>Herbert Muller, p. 356.

<sup>8</sup>Herbert Muller, p. 356.

<sup>9</sup>Beverly Jean Gibbs, p. 182.

<sup>10</sup>Louis Cazamian, *The History of French Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p. 357.

<sup>11</sup>Benjamin Giorgio, *Stephen Crane: American Impressionist*, Dissertation (University of Wisconsin, 1969), p. 17.

<sup>12</sup>Benjamin Giorgio, p. 17.

<sup>13</sup>Ford Madox Ford, *The March of Literature* (New York: The Dial Press, 1938), p. 7.

<sup>14</sup>Ford Madox Ford, *Joseph Conrad* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1925), pp. 194-95.

<sup>15</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, p. 149.

<sup>16</sup>Hamlin Garland in Benjamin D. Giorgio, p. 64.

<sup>17</sup>Harry Hartwick, p. 143.

<sup>18</sup>Hamlin Garland in *Realism and Naturalism*, Donald Pizer (Chicago: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1966), p. 93.

<sup>19</sup>Hamlin Garland in *Realism and Naturalism*, Donald Pizer, p. 43.

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- 31James Nagel, p. 25.
- 32James Nagel, p. 43.
- 33James Nagel, p. 43.
- 34Stephen Crane, "Letter to Miss Catherine Harris" (November, 1896) in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, p. 133.
- 35Orm Overland in James Nagel, p. 44.
- 36Sergio Perosa in *Stephen Crane*, Ed. Maurice Bassan, p. 88.
- 37Sergio Perosa in *Stephen Crane*, Ed. Maurice Bassan. p. 88.
- 38Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 258.
- 39Stephen Crane. *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*. p. 265.
- 40Stephen Crane. *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*. p. 266.



<sup>41</sup>Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 286.

<sup>42</sup>Benjamin D. Giorgio, p. 140.

<sup>43</sup>Rodney O. Rogers, p. 294.

<sup>44</sup>Augustino Lombardo in *Stephen Crane*, Ed. Maurice Bassan, p. 88.

<sup>45</sup>Stephen Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 61.

<sup>46</sup>Stephen Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 102-3.

<sup>47</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 241.

<sup>48</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 266.

<sup>49</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 250.

<sup>50</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 269.

<sup>51</sup>James Nagel, p. 23.

<sup>52</sup>James Nagel, p.23.

<sup>53</sup>Rodney O. Rogers, p. 294.

<sup>54</sup>Sergio Perosa in *Stephen Crane*, Ed. Maurice Bassan, p. 88.

<sup>55</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 320.

<sup>56</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 335.

<sup>57</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 369.

<sup>58</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 421.

<sup>59</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 431.

<sup>60</sup>Crane, "The Open Boat" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 442.

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<sup>62</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 143.

- <sup>63</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 150.
- <sup>64</sup>R. W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes, *Stephen Crane: Letters*, p. 250-51.
- <sup>65</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 73.
- <sup>66</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 110.
- <sup>67</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 150.
- <sup>68</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 32.
- <sup>69</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 241.
- <sup>70</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, 243.
- <sup>71</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 269.
- <sup>72</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 76.
- <sup>73</sup>Benjamin D. Giorgio, p. 119.
- <sup>74</sup>James Nagel, p. 149.
- <sup>75</sup>Robert L. Hough, "Crane and Goethe", *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 17 (1962), p. 137.
- <sup>76</sup>Robert L. Hough, p. 137.
- <sup>77</sup>Crane, "An Experiment in Misery" in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 37.
- <sup>78</sup>Crane, *George's Mother* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 142.
- <sup>79</sup>Crane, *Maggie* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 54.
- <sup>80</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 261.
- <sup>81</sup>Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* in *Stephen Crane: An Omnibus*, p. 278.
- <sup>82</sup>Robert L. Hough. p. 142.
- <sup>83</sup>Robert L. Hough. p. 140.
- <sup>84</sup>Frank Noxen in *Stephen Crane: Letters*, p. 336.

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