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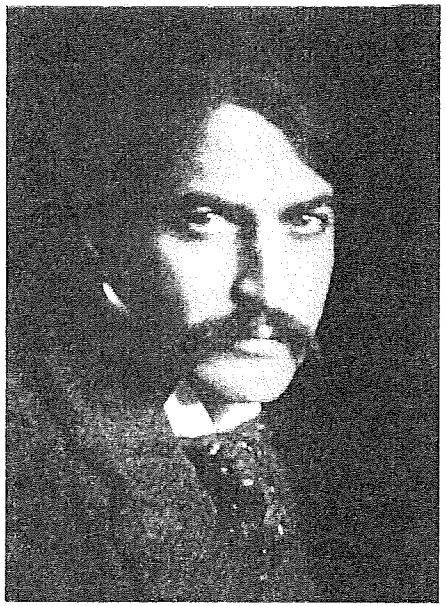

Stephen Crane Society

Stephen Crane Studies

Department of English
Virginia Tech

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Contributors' Notes

Donald Vanouse is currently examining Stephen Crane's depictions of children in his journalism and fiction, but a recent encounter with an art exhibit entitled "Traces of the Sacred" has reawakened his curiosity about the treatment of such issues by Crane. He may need to return to Paris for a further examination of the visual arts.

Robert M. Dowling is an associate professor of English at Central Connecticut State University. His first book, *Slumming in New York: From the Waterfront to Mythic Harlem* (Illinois, 2007), will appear in paperback next spring, 2009. His two-volume *Critical Companion to Eugene O'Neill* will also appear in 2009.

George Monteiro, a frequent contributor to *Stephen Crane Studies*, is compiling a selection of the contemporary reviews of Crane's writings for Cambridge University Press.

Kevin J. Hayes, Professor of English at the University of Central Oklahoma, is the author of *Stephen Crane* (2004) and editor of the Bedford edition of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1999). His latest book is *The Road to Monticello: The Life and Mind of Thomas Jefferson* (2008).

Kathryn Hilt is an independent scholar living in Chicago. She is completing a book on Stephen Crane and women. In addition to publishing on Crane, she has published works on Elinor Wylie and on Katherine Anne Porter.

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The Horizons of the Rich in the Writings of Stephen Crane

Donald Vanouse
SUNY Oswego

It is now widely appreciated by Crane scholars that Thomas Beer fabricated letters and invented other evidence which has influenced interpretations of Stephen Crane's writings. Paul Sorrentino observes that "scores of articles and books have relied heavily on Beer for evidence ("Legacy" 187). There is a particular need to reconsider Beer's influence upon Crane scholarship concerning social and economic issues. Crane's sketch "The Men in the Storm" (1894) depicts men "gathering in close bunches in an effort to get warm" (*Works* 8, 316) while a stout man, watching from a department store window, regards them with "supreme complaisance" (*Works* 8, 320). Crane questions the appropriateness of this vantage point of surveillance by the wealthy observer.

One of Thomas Beer's fabricated letters seems, however, to provide a similar vantage point for reading Crane's works about the poor of the Bowery:

> In a story of mine called "An Experiment in Misery" I tried to make plain that the root of Bowery life is a sort of cowardice. Perhaps I mean a lack of ambition or to willingly be knocked flat and accept the licking. (Beer 140)

This fabrication of Crane's "complaisance" concerning the poor has been quite enticing to scholars. Luc Sante's Maggie: A Girl of the Streets *and Other New York Writings* provides only one reference to an interpretive source, but his "Note on the Text" of "An Experiment in Misery" includes Beer's fabrication without any documentation of its source (164). It is accepted as a Crane letter. Even the Library of America edition of Crane's *Prose and Poetry* cites this Beer fabrication in a "Note" without any documentation of its source (Crane, *Prose and Poetry* 1367-68). Alan Trachtenberg, in his famous essay "Experiments in Another Country: Stephen Crane's City Sketches," refers to the homeless poor as "victims whose inner acquiescence is a form of cowardice" (284) without including any quotation marks or any acknowledgment of Beer. The acceptance of Beer's vantage point of superiority toward the poor may have distracted critical attention from Crane's depictions of the narrowness, arrogance, and brutality of the rich.

This essay will examine Crane's reports upon the distorted

Cora's former profession.)

Perhaps the least credible element of *Hotel de Dream* is the dying Crane's instruction to Cora to ask Henry James to complete "The Painted Boy." James's response is to burn the manuscript, apparently out of cowardice and repressed desire. But how can one believe that Crane—even sick and delirious—could have shown so little understanding of the vast gulf between his artistic sensibility and James's? His instruction to Cora grows even less likely as we consider that this "Crane" manuscript makes explicit references to genitals and incorporates such sexual slang as "to blow the skin flute" (105). Hardly material for James to work with.

White's sub-title, *A New York Novel*—in conjunction with his subject matter—promises a gritty balance to the more genteel New York novels of Wharton and James. And he does deliver on the promise, giving a view of lowlife and vice that those two writers avoided, details that they could not have imagined. As did Crane more than a century ago, White allows the reader to experience the mean streets of turn-of-the-century Manhattan and to understand those whose stories might otherwise have gone untold. It would have been better if White—after his initial inspiration from the Huneker story—had decided against including Stephen Crane as a character and had simply written a novel of his own and called it "The Painted Boy." What he has written instead has only the unintended effect of pointing out the originality of Crane's writing and the difficulty, even for a writer as skilled as White, of replicating that level of artistry.

existence.

Of course, no one can say for certain that Crane did *not* plan such a story. But, even accepting that Crane may have begun such a book, there remains the troubling question: Why create a "Stephen Crane novel" in a style that bears hardly any resemblance to Crane's? In an ABC radio interview, White explained, "I tried to copy some of Crane's stylistic ticks without resorting to slavish imitation." The "ticks" are seldom evident, if by "ticks" he means Crane's explosive images, impressionistic scenes, and characters given life by only one or two striking traits. White's style, although frequently vivid, is tame when read alongside Crane's.

One might compare the two writers in their rendering of New York snow scenes. In "The Painted Boy,"

> The weather had turned freakishly cold and snow was falling, though it wasn't sticking. The flakes were large; it was almost impossible to distinguish between snowflakes and pear blossoms. (187)

In Crane's "The Men in the Storm,"

> . . . the little snow plains in the street began to assume a leaden hue from the shadows of evening. The buildings upreared gloomily save where various windows became brilliant figures of light that made shimmers and splashes of yellow on the snow. A street lamp on the curb struggled to illuminate, but it was reduced to impotent blindness by the swift gusts of sleet crusting its panes.

There's also the matter of sex. While "The Painted Boy" is not daring by today's standards, it would have been reckless in 1900. Whether he wished to or not, Stephen Crane, in keeping with the times, avoided explicit sexual detail in his fiction. (His poems—specifically "Intrigue"—are more likely to convey a suggestion of sexual passion.) Arguably, Crane's sexiest physical reference in prose is from a book left unfinished at his death. In *The O'Ruddy*, the protagonist muses on the attractions of his beloved: "She was not extremely plump but when she walked, something moved within her skirts." White does not stop at "something." He depicts the workplace of a prostitute friend of Elliott thus: "At the bottom of the mattress, she'd laid a strip of linoleum so that the customers wouldn't have to take their shoes off when they mounted her. They'd just drop their trousers and slide home" (69). (The whore's name is Imogene, a reference to Cora's pseudonym Imogene Carter. Apparently it is to be taken as Stephen's unkind comment on

perceptions of the rich as well as his depictions of the violence which they employ to achieve and protect their wealth. Richard Lehan has recently suggested that in writing about literary naturalism we must "distinguish between . . . constructs supplied by the author's age" and theoretical constructs which displace the historical concerns of literary naturalism (23). Naturalist writers, he argues, are deeply engaged in the political and economic issues of their world.

The period of the late nineteenth century was characterized by a vast gap between the rich and the great numbers of Americans who had little economic power. The panic of 1893, for example, produced four million unemployed, and generated broad popular concern with the plights of impoverished workers such as those depicted in Crane's "The Men in the Storm." Millionaires built vast mansions, filled them with extravagant purchases, and to a large extent either bent the law to advance their interests or disregarded the law altogether. Their power and influence threatened to transform all values into money values. Andrew Carnegie asserted, for example, that "the Law of Accumulation of Wealth and the Law of Competition . . . are the highest result of human experience, the soil in which society . . . has produced the best fruit" ("Gospel" 6). Carnegie's assertions exemplify the wealthy social Darwinist justifications for the accumulation of enormous wealth.

Crane criticizes the processes of achieving wealth and the consciousness which results from the possession of wealth and power. Some of Crane's earliest writings on the effects of wealth upon consciousness occur in his scoffing at what James B. Colvert refers to as the "vain delusion" of James A. Bradley, the millionaire founder of the Asbury Park seaside resort (*Works* 6, xvii). Crane notes that the millionaire imposes his own banality upon the beach with pretentious signs, and he distorts the relationship between his property and "that ocean of the Lord's" adjacent to the beach of James A. Bradley" (*Works* 6, 518-19). Bradley's arrogance parallels that of Stimson in "The Pace of Youth" (*Works* 5, 3-12) and blinds him to the scale and power of nature.

An early draft of Crane's sketch "In the Depths of a Coal Mine" (1894) expresses his "delight" at the coal barons being compelled to experience a shift from their ruling class perspective (*Works* 8, 606-07). He describes a group of coal barons, "who make neat livings by fiddling with the market" and who find themselves trapped a thousand feet underground threatened by "death from gas" fumes—"[f]or once, finding the coal brokers associated with the hardship and danger of the coal miner" (*Works* 8, 606-07). Edwin H. Cady describes this passage as an example of "Crane's editorializing—all for the men and against

the bosses"(*Works* 8, xxxvii). Cady says that in depicting the plight of the coal miner as an "industrial soldier, Crane felt at one with the radical wing of American literature" (*Works* 8, xxxviii). But some of Crane's radical comments were excluded from the published version of the sketch. Fredson Bowers prints the published version of "In the Depths of a Coal Mine" along with Crane's "First Draft" (*Works* 8, 590 and 600), and this clearly reveals McClure's numerous omissions. Corwin Knapp Linson, who accompanied Crane to the coal mines and provided illustrations for Crane's article, reports on Crane's exasperation at the omissions in McClure's syndicated publication. Linson observes that McClure's editors "thought the end of the article much too caustic of 'big business.'" Linson also recalls Crane's dismay at the deletions: "Do they want the public to think the coal mines gilded ball-rooms with the miners eating ice-cream in boiled shirt fronts?" (*My Stephen Crane*, 69.).

After writing about the "United Mechanics March" for the New York *Tribune*, Crane had first learned that publishers could respond harshly to his images and tone in depicting reality. It seems clear that Stephen and his brother, Townley, were dismissed by the *Tribune* because Crane described the marchers as the "spraddle-legged men of the middle class" and noted that the "bona fide Asbury Parker is a man to whom a dollar, when held close to his eye, often shuts out any impression he may have had that other people possess rights" (*Works* 8, 522). Crane sought to extend the horizon of his reader's awareness, but he sometimes encountered publishers who were willing to repress his depictions of the world.

A little more than a month after Crane saw McClure's alterations to the coal mine article, Crane criticized Copeland and Day for proposing to "cut all the ethical sense, . . . All the anarchy. . ." from *The Black Riders*, his first collection of verse (*Correspondence* I, 74). Some of Crane's attacks upon the behavior and awareness of the wealthy could have been provoked by what he saw as the repressive editorial practices of his publishers.

In "An Experiment in Luxury" (1894) and "A Night at the Millionaire's Club" (1894), Crane examines the domestic and social environments of the rich, and he reports upon severe distortions of awareness or limitations of consciousness in the men and women who inhabit those environments. In "An Experiment in Luxury" Crane demystifies the popular conventions concerning the lives of the wealthy. In a "frame dialogue" he introduces a young reporter who has been invited to visit a millionaire's mansion. The reporter is talking with

from recorded comments. ("*The Red Badge* is all right," thinks White's Stephen [8], echoing Crane's words to Joseph Conrad.) The pictured relationship between Stephen and Cora is believable—affectionate and sometimes resentful on his part, loving and often fearful on hers. Never does White indicate that Crane was homosexual. Admirers of Henry James, however, may be offended by the depiction of the master as a comic grotesque—cowardly and effeminate. (White's Cora even muses that James may be a hermaphrodite.)

As White's Stephen lies dying, and recalling episodes from his brief life, the memories serve as a tie-in to the novel's second level—Stephen's relationship with the boy prostitute, as reported by Huneker and amplified by White, who envisions a growing friendship between the author and the youth. As Stephen recalls the boy hooker, now named Elliott, he regrets the destruction of his manuscript in the name of propriety. So, not to allow further stifling of the creative imagination and to honor the memory of Elliott's blighted life, Crane begins dictating from memory to Cora. It is as though White wishes to honor Crane by creating the book that he might have written, had he not been prevented by time and circumstance.

The novel-within-a-novel, which White's Crane calls "The Painted Boy," is a tale of Elliott and a middle-aged banker, Theodore Koch, who ruins himself professionally, financially, and personally in pursuit of the street boy. The story is effective in certain aspects. The descriptions of turn-of-the century New York City are concrete and project an air of authenticity. The pathos of the older man's love for a youth unable to return it is successfully conveyed. Suspense is maintained as the plot moves relentlessly toward doom. Nevertheless, "The Painted Boy" is nothing that Stephen Crane would have written.

Many novelists have shown up as characters in the novels of later writers. Ambrose Bierce in Carlos Fuentes' *The Old Gringo* and Henry James in David Lodge's *Author, Author* are examples. However, in these cases there is, first of all, a genuine biographical foundation for the writer-as-character. Fuentes' Bierce is killed in Mexico after taking up with a group of revolutionaries; the real Bierce disappeared in Mexico after saying that he might join Pancho Villa. Lodge bases his novel on James's well-known but frustrated attempts to write for the theatre.

Since it is unlikely that Stephen Crane considered a novel on a boy prostitute, why attribute such a work to him, even in fiction? Perhaps White had heard of "Flowers in Asphalt," was fascinated by the idea, and then learned too late—after spending time and effort on his novel—that hardly any Crane authority accepts the validity of its

Hotel de Dream: A New York Novel. **By Edmund White. NY: HarperCollins (Ecco), 2007. 221 pp. $23.95.**

Kathryn Hilt
Independent Scholar

Recent Stephen Crane scholars have generally dismissed the notion that he began, but then destroyed, a novel about a boy prostitute. Of Crane's acquaintances, only James Gibbons Huneker referred to such a work, and Huneker was unreliable—"such a liar" in the words of Crane biographer John Berryman. For one thing, he was inconsistent regarding the date of Crane's beginning this novel, allegedly entitled either "Flowers of Asphalt" or "Flowers in Asphalt." Huneker apparently indicated to Thomas Beer that the time was the spring of 1894 and to Vincent Starrett that it was October 1898 (when Crane was actually in Havana). Also, Huneker's claim that the work had its genesis in an encounter between Crane and a young male prostitute is questionable. Huneker reported that Crane, being "damned innocent about everything but women," was "disgusted" when he finally realized he was being solicited by the boy, "who looked like a Rossetti angel." However, considering Crane's frequent visits to the sordid neighborhoods of lower Manhattan, it is unlikely that—at either 22 or 26—such an encounter would have shocked him.

Nevertheless, the writer Edmund White, although admitting in a "Postface" that "everything about [the alleged manuscript] appears to be uncertain," has written *Hotel de Dream* inspired by Huneker's story. White's title is an allusion to the Jacksonville nightclub/brothel of Cora Stewart, Crane's companion. However, the title also has a literal significance. Not only does each of the novel's major characters have dreams that go unrealized, but, more significantly, the title refers to the literary imagination in its role of transforming reality into the illusion that is fiction.

Hotel de Dream consists of three levels of fiction—or of "dreams." The last two weeks of Crane's life, during which he and Cora move from Brede Place to Dover to the Black Forest, serve as a frame for the novel. Here, White adheres rather closely to biographical fact, alluding to the social circle of Stephen and Cora at Brede, to the literary friends who paid a last visit to the dying Stephen at Dover, and to the channel crossing, complete with his favorite dog, Sponge. The remembered details of New Jersey, New York, and Jacksonville are valid. Even the fictional thoughts of Stephen and Cora are sometimes extracted

an old friend, who suggests that the mansion could provide "another social study" paralleling "An Experiment in Misery." The reporter replies, "If they caught me making a study of them, they'd attempt a murder"(*Works* 8, 293). He understands that the ruling class becomes violent in protecting its privacy, its behavior, and its vantage point upon the world.

The reporter's "old friend" responds with some popular ideas concerning the emotional effects of wealth. He recalls the belief that the "millionaire is a very unhappy person" and observes that "wealth does not release a man" from ordinary, human suffering. He concludes, however, with a sharply phrased statement concerning social injustice: "there are those who have opportunities; there are those who are robbed of—" (*Works* 8, 294). The term "opportunities" appears to be a euphemism for the advantages derived by the rich from stolen goods. The reporter does not fully accept this critical dualism, asserting that his friend, Jack, "isn't criminal because . . . he is benefited by a condition which other men created" (*Works* 8, 294).

Upon arriving at the mansion, however, the reporter expresses resentment at the arrogant flunkeyism of the footman, "who must be more atrociously aristocratic than any that he serves." The footman appears to be one of the ostentatious possessions of the rich, like the "broad staircase" and the "thick rug" and the "immense fireplace" (*Works* 8, 295-96). But these descriptions of the luxurious possessions of the rich express the awe of the reporter, not the concern with "conspicuous consumption" in the rich themselves which Veblen was to discuss in his *Theory of the Leisure Class* (44-131).

There are, however, passages in Crane's sketch which identify the *consciousness* of the rich. Upon arriving at the "stolid" brownstone mansion, Crane first describes it as a "homely pile of stone," but he adds that it "stood as a fetich, formidable because of traditions of worship" (*Works* 8, 295). Slavoj Zizek discusses the "fetish" both as "a reified expression of relations between people" and as an expression of the "uncanny fact that a commodity really appears . . . as a magical object endowed with special powers"(Zizek 377). On the one hand, the fetish is a social marker defining the owner's relationship to other people in his society, but it also functions as a fountain of narcissistic *significance* for the individual. Such a fetish operates, then, upon the members of society as a whole as well as upon the owner's need for a dimension of magical, quasi-religious power.

Crane describes the wife of the millionaire as the bearer of a "terrible pride" as a result of "mistaking the form for the real thing,

worship[ping] itself because of its devotion to the form" (*Works* 8, 299). As an example, he identifies her as a woman whose ears displayed her diamonds instead of one whose diamonds displayed her ears. In this example, Crane suggests that personal identity can be *transformed* by the emotional investment in the fetishized objects until there is no self behind the devotion to the objects of social power. The horizon becomes a "sky ablaze" with fiercely held "traditions and superstitions" affirming the value of the self (*Works* 8, 300). The reporter's friend, Jack, advises him to avoid "getting off anything which resembles an original thought before my mother" (*Works* 8, 298). An original thought might threaten her certainties of fetishized value, challenging the mother's own identity and provoking her angry response.

Furthermore, the reporter, Crane, notes the effects of the beauties and comforts of the mansion upon his own *consciousness of suffering* in the world:

> Hues and forms had smothered certain of his comprehensions. There had been times in his life when little voices called to him continually from the darkness; he heard them now as an idle, half smothered babble on the horizon's edge. . . . There was the horizon, he said, and, of course, there should be a babble of pain on it. Thus it was written; it was a law, he thought. And, anyway, perhaps it was not so bad as those who babbled tried to tell (*Works* 8, 297).

The reporter's comprehensions contract in the environment of luxury, and comfortable evasions and rationalizations replace sympathetic sensitivity to the people of the world who are experiencing pain. The horizon is not "ablaze" with sublime energies of fetishism for him, but it has become drained of human significance by the reporter's delight and awe in the "garden" of abundance.

In "Regulars Get No Glory," Crane observes that journalism from Cuba is similarly distorted, overwhelmed by the association of war with the fetishistic glamour or the evasions of awareness induced by the environment of wealth. According to the press coverage, "[t]he public doesn't seem to care very much for the regular soldier." Crane says,

> The public wants to learn of the gallantry of Reginald Maramaduke Maurice Montmorency Sturtevant, and for goodness sake how the poor old chappy endures that dreadful hardtack and bacon (*Works* 9, 171).

The reporters or their editors are preoccupied with the glamour

people met, played tennis, talked art. Imagine a Miss Tanhall [sic] talking art. She dropped a violet on the tennis court, he picked it up. She gave him a second violet at what seems to us a very unexpected place in the story. At still another place, in the story, where he tells her about the two violets, Miss Tanhall [sic] says, "Here! Here's a third." Hawker did not take it at once, dropped it on the floor, then picked it up, looked at her and said, in an explosion of surprise and delight, "What!" Then she slowly raised her eyes and later told him he was perfectly ridiculous not to have proposed long ago.

We are amazed at Stephen Crane—we wrote to him and told him so. He replied "My friend, I wrote that story to sell: I can sell anything I write and I needed money." To think we have praised him so. There is only one tiny grain of consolation for us. A weaker man than Crane would have changed that artist's name—called him Van Rensalaer Brown, or Prudholme Jones, or something like that. That young man was named Hawker, and it speaks well for Mr. Crane, that he did not "go and change it," because the young fellow dabbled in paints and was just a man in a book and couldn't help himself.

We promised Mr. Crane to recommend this book to the "younger swell set" in Fort Worth. We have done so; only, my dear girls, there is no earthly use for you to go to dropping a violet each day on a Lamar street tennis court, for not a thing will come of it.

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The Third Violet in Fort Worth

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Having established his literary reputation with *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) and solidified it with two hard-hitting slum novels, *Maggie* (second edition, 1896) and *George's Mother* (1896), Stephen Crane surprised readers with the release of *The Third Violet* (1897). "Inverting the procedure of Virgil," *The Spectator* observed, "Crane has in *The Third Violet* turned aside from the battlefield into the realm of the pastoral idyll" (Weatherford 204). As the following extract shows, the columnist who wrote the society page of the *Fort Worth Morning Register* reacted similarly, registering his surprise at Crane's latest book. While ultimately recommending the book, this Texas reader begins his discussion of *The Third Violet* by calling it light and trashy.

The book was so surprising that this columnist wrote Crane to ask why he wrote it. Crane wrote back. The column quotes from this otherwise unknown letter. Crane's comments about *The Third Violet* in his known correspondence are mixed. They largely derive from the period of the work's composition. In his personal letters, he expresses uncertainty about its lasting value, but in his letters to Ripley Hitchcock, the literary adviser at D. Appleton and Company, his comments are generally positive (Crane 1: 128, 136, 144, 161, 191, 292). Recent criticism has shown that *The Third Violet* is a much more sophisticated work than has been formerly recognized (Hayes 45-53; Sorrentino 265-91). As the excerpt from his letter to Fort Worth suggests, he was still speaking of the book disparagingly.

The following extract from "In the Social World," the society column of the *Fort Worth Morning Register*, appeared on Sunday, July 4, 1897:

> But suppose you want something light, trashy, read *The Third Violet*, by Stephen Crane. Of all men on earth we never expected to see the author of *The Red Badge of Courage* grow sentimental over "just a little faded flower," though ever so fondly dear. But that is just what Stephen Crane lets his hero, Mr. William Hawker, do in *The Third Violet*. Miss Tanhall [sic] has a lot of money; Mr. Hawker, artist, a lot of ambition. Mr. Hollanden, writer, as the common friend of both parties, desires to see a match made. So the two young

of the wealthy young men adventuring with the Rough Riders. Crane's reference to "the poor old chappy" suggests that it is a particular linguistic community and social class which is preoccupied with the wealthy adventurers. Such an audience cannot—or does not wish to—acknowledge the "Private Nolans" whom Crane identifies as doing the grunt work and dying in the war. Later in his report, Crane becomes harshly ironic, suggesting the press might ignore the publishing of casualties in order to report its fascination with the fetishized glamour of the rich:

> The disposition to leave out entirely all lists of killed and wounded regulars is quite a rational one, since nobody cares to read them anyhow, and their omission would allow for oil paintings of really important persons, limned as they were in the very act of being at the front, proud young men riding upon horses, the horses being still in Tampa, and the proud young men being at Santiago. . . . (*Works* 9, 171)

The wounded and the killed regular soldiers could disappear behind the fraudulent depictions of "proud" young men on horseback—even though their horses never made it to Cuba. The horizon of war would become a fetishized idealization of an heroic misrepresentation. Like the journalist (Crane's persona) in "An Experiment in Luxury," these correspondents—or their editors—are overwhelmed by their desire to celebrate their association with the fetishized glamour of wealth. This displacement of awareness threatens to numb the newspaper readers to the actual suffering on their horizon and re-enforce devotion to the artifacts of the rich. Crane concludes that "maybe someday, in a fairer, squarer land" (*Works* 9,173) the news reports may be able to acknowledge the pain and sacrifice of the regular soldier and enhance their readers' awareness of actual human suffering and dignity.

Crane's fantasy, "A Night at the Millionaires Club," was first printed in the New York humorous magazine *Truth* on April 21,1894, eight days before the publication of "An Experiment in Luxury" in the *New York Press*. The fantasy opens with a dozen millionaires in their club library—not reading or talking, but staring "at the ceiling where the decorations cost seventy-four dollars per square inch" (*Works* 8, 280). This is the gaze of fetishistic self-absorption and self-aggrandizement. Much to the perplexity of the millionaires, however, they are intruded upon by an announcement of the arrival of a deputation of American heroes: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, George Washington, and Alexander Hamilton. The millionaires respond with expressions of confusion that indicate their ignorance: "What's their

names?" "Who do you say?" "What the devil do they want here?" (*Works* 8, 281). The "seventeen-cent lackey upholstered in a three hundred dollar suit of clothes" responds that the visitors "desire the favor of an audience." His suit is the deceptive, fetishized labeling of the gap between social classes.

At this announcement, the millionaires become hostile: "Don't let 'em in here," "Throw 'em out!" and one even says, "Kill 'em." A gentleman named Strathmore rises to the challenge by delivering very specific instructions to the lackey. He begins with an assertion: "it is not possible that we have had the honor of their acquaintance," and he concludes with instructions to "sponge off the steps" and "give the doormat to one of those downtown clubs" (*Works* 8, 282). These uninvited outsiders threaten to defile this private space. The others in the club celebrate his skill at evading the challenge of new information or ideas: "what diplomacy! Egad but you have courage!" Mr. Depew, who is irritated to discover it is 12:10 A.M., leaps to his feet and, enraged, throws a champagne bottle, breaking a $4,675 clock (*Works* 8, 282). It appears that, for this millionaire at least, any disruption of his schedule provokes rage and destructive aggression.

In an article on "the representations of wealth in American culture," Winfried Fluck suggests that increasing economic "inequality establishes new hierarchies of worthiness or worthlessness, of superiority or inferiority" (55). The literary, philosophical, military, and political heroes of America simply do not register on the hierarchies of value held by the millionaires. After rejecting a meeting with these culture heroes, the millionaires—the new heroes of America—fall asleep, or in the case of Chauncey and Willie, gab foolishly on their way to have a drink, which they term "an antidote" (*Works* 8, 283). No doubt it is an antidote to the threat of being infected by an idea or an obligation. In their rejection of a meeting with the heroes of the past, the millionaires exemplify a money-based vanity combined with ignorance and power that is incompatible with human achievement.

Two of Crane's stories are parodies of the major popular genre created for the justification of wealth, "the success story" (Fluck 58), and they indicate a collapse of the Calvinist justifications of wealth as God's reward to the righteous. In "A Self-Made Man: An Example of Success that Anyone Can Follow," Crane catalogues a series of chance events and deceptions which lead the central character to wealth. At the beginning of the narrative, Tom is out of money and using his last few playing cards to patch the soles of his shoes (*Works* 8, 124). After borrowing 5 cents for tobacco and asking an old man for a match to

[1] Stephen Crane, *Tales, Sketches, and Reports*, Vol. 8 of *The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1973), p. 848.

[2] Stephen Crane, "Hunting Wild Hogs," in *Tales, Sketches, and Reports*, 203.

[3] B. F. Henley, "Wild Boars in America," *Forest and Stream* 35 (November 6, 1890): 309.

[4] B. F. Hurley, "Shawangunk Wild Hogs," *Forest and Stream* 37 (July 23, 1891): 5-6. Incidentally, in the following year, it was reported that "W. H. Crane, of Port Jervis" served as a witness in the prosecution of an individual charged with selling "venison out of season" ("The Port Jervis Deer Case," *Forest and Stream*" 38 [April 14, 1892]: 351).

[5] "Between Two Rivers," *Forest and Stream* 36 (April 23, 1891): 267.

[6] B. T. Henley, "A Shawangunk Wild Boar," *Forest and Stream* 38 (February 25, 1892): 176.

On Thursday, Jan. 21, a party among whom were Charles B. Stearns, of Oakland Valley, and that well-known sportsman, Lew Boyd, of Hartwood Park, were out to hunt the wild boar and succeeded in killing one. Following some tracks these two gentlemen came upon two of the animals in their nest—a very large boar and a young sow, apparently about a year and a half old. The hogs took the alarm when at too long range to be killed, but Boyd selected the boar for his game and sent two loads of buckshot after him, wounding him, as the blood-stained trail proved. Mr. Stearns reserved his fire and the sow, having turned about and changed her course toward the hunters, he fired both barrels and killed her. She ran about 100 years after being shot and fell dead. Her weight was about 215 pounds, being about the size of the wild hog killed by Judge Crane in October, 1890.

On Friday morning the party took up the bloody trail of the big boar again and pursued it all day but failed to overtake the animal. It is a peculiar characteristic of these animals that when aroused they keep on running for a long time and travel many miles before stopping, unlike the deer, which, if not pursued, will soon stop to reconnoiter and rest. At last accounts all but Boyd had abandoned the trail. That worthy girded up his loins with the remark, "I want that boar's head," and those who are acquainted with the man perceive the boar to be in imminent danger unless a fresh snowfall hides the trail. Lu is a long stepper, and with the present depth of snow, something less than two feet, a tramp of ten or fifteen miles is a mere constitutional with him.[6]

light his cigarette, Tom consents to read a letter for the illiterate old man . After learning from the letter that his son is cheating him of money from a Western real-estate scam, the old man recruits Tom to impersonate a lawyer in order to intimidate his own son and regain the money. After the son has been intimidated, the old man invites Tom to a partnership in additional Western real-estate scams. As a result, Tom "learned that he had not succeeded earlier because he did not know a man who knew another man." Soon, Tom becomes widely recognized for having "carved his way to fortune with no help but his undaunted pluck, his tireless energy, and his sterling integrity" (*Works* 8, 129). These are the terms of the conventional Calvinist justifications for achieving wealth, but self-indulgence, luck, and fraud are the actual elements in the confidence game which Crane's narrative presents as a model for economic success in America. The old ideals of frugality, industriousness, and integrity are turned inside out. The horizon of the "success story" is a fraudulent construct, fabricated by social and narrative deceptions.

"A Christmas Dinner Won in Battle" was published in January 1895 in *Plumber's Trade Journal*. Howells had discussed the genre of the "Christmas Story" and the "Thanksgiving Story" in *Criticism and Fiction* (1891), noting that Dickens had been most successful with the form, but that his characterizations were false and fantastic (82-3). Crane discusses the experiences of Tom, a young shopkeeper, who lives in a town with the democratic name, "Levelville," but rides upon the "froth of the wave of progress" following the arrival of the railroad. Soon, Tom becomes an "intimate acquaintance" of the president of the railroad, Colonel Fortman, and even rescues him from being killed by a train that is speeding through the town as a result of Fortman's own illegal policy. A year later, however, the Colonel scoffs when Tom proposes to marry Mildred, the railroad president's own daughter:

> My dear man, I think you are insane. Mildred will have over a million dollars at my death, and while I don't want to push the money part of it too far forward, yet Mildred with her beauty, her family name and her wealth can marry the finest in the land . . . so you see, my dear man, it is impossible that she could consider you for a moment (*Works* 8, 83).

Crane says that the Colonel soon became "more massively aristocratic," and, in spite of its name, "Levelville had developed about five grades of society." Tom is resentful of being addressed as "My dear man," and he is isolated from the "iciest grades" of society until, as Crane says,

"almost the entire force" of the railroad workers went on strike. This near unanimity suggests that Fortman is violating labor laws or agreements with the workers as he was earlier violating the regulations on the speed of his train.

The passages describing the strikers' attack on the Fortman mansion impose a severe intensification in the tone of social conflict in the story. Crane's descriptions of the striking railroad workers are comparable to Émile Zola's descriptions of the striking mineworkers in *Germinal*. Crane says the strikers "resembled a parade of Parisians at the time of the first revolution":

> ...Tom could see women—gaunt and ragged creatures with enflamed visages and rolling eyes. There were men with dark sinister faces whom Tom had never before seen. They had emerged from the earth, so to speak, to engage in this carousal of violence. And from this procession there came continual threatening ejaculations, shrill cries for revenge, and querulous voices of hate, that made a sort of barbaric hymn, a pagan chant of savage battle and death. (*Works* 8, 85)

When this crowd of striking (and seemingly foreign) workers threatens to invade the Fortman mansion, Tom is as begrimed as the strikers, but he realizes that Mildred is threatened by their attack upon the mansion. Entering the house, he throws a heavy, oaken chair at four of the strikers and plunges at them with his fists (*Works* 8, 87). Although he is knocked unconscious in the fray, he prevents the strikers from entering the dining room, where Mildred is trapped. When he awakens, Tom is being comforted by Mildred. In the last lines of the story, he is invited, by the Colonel, to have Christmas dinner in the mansion the next day and to discuss marrying his daughter (*Works* 8, 88).

Tom has succeeded in gaining admittance to a ritual at the top of the icy peak of social life in Levelville. What he sees on the horizon is uncertain. But he has gained his admittance by battling delirious "foreign" strikers in a protest against a capitalist who has clearly revealed his contempt for the law in the opening of the story. Although he has shown pluck and courage, Tom may be on the track to becoming a criminal or a lackey. The Christmas dinner of the title might be seen as a rite of admission to the "fat church" that Crane discusses in *Black Riders* XXXII (*Works* 10, 19).

"The patent of a lord" is an epigram defining a parallel instances of moral and economic uncertainty: "The patent of a lord / And the bauble of a bandit/ Make argument/ Which God solves/ Only after

> Hartwood Park Association, who reside mostly in New York city, were generally anxious for a boar hunt, and efforts were made last December to definitely locate the herd. It was at this time that, as mentioned in a previous article, several deer were seen by the guide and as officer of the Association, standing within easy rifle range as if tempting them to break the gaming laws. In a conversation shortly afterward with the latter gentleman he expressed a wish that the boars might prove as difficult of capture as he believed they would. Whether wholly due to brute strategy or in part to lenient design on the part of the Hartwood Park Association, the boars have not incurred serious molestation since last fall.[4]

"Between Two Rivers," an unsigned piece published on April 23, 1891 concludes with these two paragraphs:

> Within recent years a species of animals of foreign origin and fearful ferocity have taken up their quarters in Forestburgh. These are the descendants of the Black Forest boars that a few years since escaped from the Plock estate on the side of the Shawangunk Mountains near Port Jervis. The known presence of a genuine mountain cat could hardly make the mere deer slayer more uncomfortable in Forestburgh than does the fact that "wild hogs" are prowling around. The animals whose ancestors the Caesars were wont to chase in the forests of Illyria, are reputed no less dangerous than the mountain lion.
>
> The boars of Forestburgh, however, have thus far proved excessively shy. Last November a sow weighing two hundred pounds was shot on the margin of a big swale into which the numerous drove to which she belonged plunged immediately afterward. Food is plentiful at present, but doubtless when their numbers press on the margin of subsistence their native savagery will reveal itself, for these creatures have come to stay.[5]

A month or so prior to the filing date noted for the *New York Tribune* piece attributed to Crane, appeared "A Shawangunk Wild Boar," which reports on Lew Boyd's adventure before it was successfully completed. It runs to two paragraphs:

surrounding his summer resident on the side of the Shawangunk Mountains, near Port Jervis.[3]

The second piece, "Shawangunk Wild Hogs," published on July 23, 1891 issue, includes these paragraphs:

> That the wild boars of the Shawangunks have been increasing in numbers almost from the time of their escape is now generally believed in this vicinity. Indeed, the killing of a two-year-old native of the species last fall put the fact beyond dispute. That event proved that there were at least two distinct herds, one in Forestburgh, one inhabiting the mountain fastnesses east of the Neversink. Shortly after the boar was slain a denizen of Lumberland, an adjoining township of Sullivan county, but separated from Forestburgh by the Mongaup River, announced that he had seen wild hogs in the woods on his side of the river.
>
> When the strange quarry was exhibited in Port Jervis immense excitement prevailed among our local nimrods, and several parties started out after the game, boasting that they would not return without securing at least one porker. The announcement of the departure of these hunting parties by the local press fairly glowed with excitement, and readers were led to expect great things. Alas, not one of these expeditions returned, judging from the silence of the newspapers on the subject. So far as I have been able to learn, not a glimpse of the wild boars were again seen by any one for several months. It was even mooted that Judge Crane's "wild hog" was secured from elsewhere, the whole affair being an ingenious electioneering doge. However, the close cover within which the creatures have succeeded in keeping themselves did not at all disturb the confidence of many that blue boars were ranging the woods around us in considerable numbers. At various times last year, from early spring until snow, the gamekeeper at Hartwood discovered boar tracks (which, by the way, are quite different from deer tracks). They range in size from those of a few-weeks'-old pig to the fathers of the herd—tusky, ugly-looking customers, no doubt.
>
> After Mr. Crane's success, members of the

lighting more candles" (*Works* 10, 90). This poem has seemed too gnomic for the understanding of several of Crane's critics. Crane says that the possession of property—an entitlement to an estate or a bauble—is an unverifiable assertion raising questions such as "how did you get it?" The date of the poem is uncertain, but the comparison of aristocrats and bandits may have been raised by one of Crane's British friends, the Fabian socialist Edwin Pugh, who wrote stories about "lower class life in London" (*Stephen Crane Remembered* 296). Pugh could have heard a similar observation made by another Fabian socialist, George Bernard Shaw. In one of his lectures entitled simply "Thieves," Shaw argues "that the proprietor of an unearned income inflicted on the community exactly the same injury as a burglar does" (Shaw 97-98). Shaw's concern with the "injuries" supplements Crane's questioning of the justice of ownership.

Two of the poems published in *War Is Kind* (1899) are explicit criticisms of the injuries inflicted by wealth. These poems are among Crane's most harsh criticisms of the violence of gaining wealth and upon the resulting qualities of consciousness. "The successful man has thrust himself" (*Works* 10, 54) opens with images of competition:

> The successful man has thrust himself
> Through the water of the years,
> Reeking wet with mistakes,
> Bloody mistakes,
> Slimed with victories over the lesser,
> A figure thankful on the shores of money.

After this identification of the blood and slime of the *processes* of economic competition, Crane shifts to images of a grotesque, narcissistic consumerism:

> Then with the bones of fools
> He buys silken banners
> Limned with his triumphant face;
> With the skins of wise men
> He buys the trivial bows of all
> Flesh painted with marrow
> Contributes a coverlet
> A coverlet for his contented slumber.

Like Tom, "A Self-Made Man," the successful man "delivers his secrets to the riven multitude." But though he is "complacent, smiling," Crane's imagery is monstrous:

> He stands heavily on the dead.
> Erect on a pillar of skulls

He declaims his trampling of babes;
Smirking, fat, dripping
He makes speech in guiltless ignorance,
Innocence (*Works* 10, 54).

His "innocence" appears to parallel the ignorance of those at the "Millionaires Club." In this poem, Joseph Conrad's friend declares his own understanding of the "heart of darkness" in the Empire Builder and in the society which tolerates such crimes.

"The impact of a dollar on the heart" (*Works* 10, 57) opens with a brief glimpse of the warmth provided by a dollar to the poor, and then presents a long verse paragraph cataloging the greed, destructiveness, and ignorant fetishism which result from "the impact of a million dollars on the heart":

The impact of a million dollars
Is a crash of flunkeys,
And yawning emblems of Persia,
Cheeked against oak, France and a sabre,
The outcry of old beauty
Whored by pimping merchants
To submission before wine and chatter.

Two words in the line "Whored by pimping merchants" were too fierce for Elbert Hubbard to include in the *Philistine*. Hubbard published a murky, bowdlerized version of the poem (*Works* 10, 264-65). Crane notes that the millionaires of America were hiring flunkeys to pillage the art of the old world, and the rich were transforming the pelts of nature's creatures into décor:

The rug of an honest bear
Under the feet of a cryptic slave
Who speaks always of baubles
Forgetting place, multitude, work and state,
Champing and mouthing of hats,
Making ratful squeak of hats. (*Works* 10, 57)

The forgetfulness concerning "place, multitude, work and state" speaks to the ignorance of the "Millionaires Club," and the "hats" which conclude this poem concerning success refer to a fetishizing of fashion. The millionaire's speaking "always of baubles" echoes the "bauble of a bandit" in Crane's poem. Like "the doomed assassin's cap" which is the horizon of the "man adrift on a slim spar" (*Works* 10, 83), the consciousness of the millionaire has shrunk to a horizon measured by fashionable hats.

"Forgetting place, multitude, work and state," the mind of the

Judge William Howe Crane Gets His Wild Boar

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"Hunting Wild Hogs," an unsigned piece published in the *New York Tribune* on February 28, 1892, was first attributed to Stephen Crane by "T. A. Gullason and [Robert W.] Stallman, independently, in 1968."[1] It is basically an account of a storied hunter's tracking of a wounded wild boar over two hundred miles of snow-covered terrain. In the long historical preamble to this detailed telling of Lew Boyd's successful hunt, Crane refers to his brother:

> The first man to kill one of them [wild boars] was Special County Judge William H. Crane, of Port Jervis. While on one of the Hartwood Park hunts, he was standing on a 'runway' for deer. He suddenly heard a great scampering of feet and crackling of brush ahead and to the right of him. The next moment a small herd of what afterward proved to be the wild hogs dashed through the brush to his right. Turning quickly, he caught a glimpse of a brown body and fired. They carried home a wild hog weighing 200 pounds. The carcass was inspected, photographed and sketched. A magnificent skin, with stuffed head, now hangs in the club-house at Hartwood Park.[2]

This reference to Judge Crane's successful killing of a wild hog, however, was only the latest such mention outside of the boundaries of Hartwood and Port Jervis. Preceding it were four accounts in *Forest and Stream*, three of them signed out of Port Jervis, New York, and attributed, variously, to "B. F. Henley," "B. F. Hurley" and "B. T. Henley"—who is probably one and the same person.

The first of these accounts, "Wild Boars of America," was published in *Forest and Stream* on November 6, 1890. It begins:

> The first specimen of genuine wild boar slain in America was that shot by W. H. Crane, Esq., of Port Jervis, September last, in the town of Forestburgh, Sullivan county, N. Y., near the Orange county line. Although native born the animal was of German stock, descended from members of a herd imported six years ago from the Black Forest by Otto Plock, a New York millionaire, to stock an extended wooded estate

[12] Richard M. Weatherford, ed. *Stephen Crane: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1973), pp. 231, 232, 239.
[13] John Berryman, *Stephen Crane: A Critical Biography* (New York: Farrar, 1977), p. 269.
[14] Milne Holton, *Cylinder of Vision: The Fiction and Journalistic Writing of Stephen Crane* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1972), p. 20.
[15] Berryman, *Stephen Crane*, p. 272.

millionaire in this instance is as empty as the minds of the members of the "Millionaire's Club." Violence and greed are not inconsistent with a horizon empty of curiosity and understanding. Crane's comments on the actions and awareness of the millionaires in America at the end of the nineteenth century are among the most harsh comments on behavior anywhere in his writings. These works appear to reflect his awareness of large concentrations of wealth and power emerging in America during this period. Richard Lehan suggests that to displace naturalism's concern with historical reality in our critical writing is to ally ourselves with the attempts to establish a "constructed reality" by the current officials in Washington (16-17). Donald Pizer, in a recent discussion of the social and economic concerns addressed in Garland, Crane, and Dreiser, argues that we should "re-establish the credentials of naturalism as a form of radical expression" (201). Stephen Crane's "radical expression" on the consciousness and the perceptions of the rich is important to this aspect of American naturalism.

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which he renders their misapprehensions."[14] Crane never presumes that the power of literature might alter the course of such forces; instead, he forthrightly presents the socially constructed nature of their behavior. As John Berryman writes of "War Is Kind," it is a "domestic, terrible poem, what it whispers is: 'I would console you, how I would console you! *If I honestly could*!'"[15]

"War Is Kind" is a poetic expression of the continuous personal confrontations in which Crane found himself taking part. Just as society requires a loved one to honor the loss of a son, father, or lover to the madness of war (which Crane by March 1896 had still not experienced), it is equally difficult to court a woman of society if one does not accept society's notions of respectability. The subtext beneath the arresting imagery of Crane's lyric reveals a world of social construction; but also, when read side by side with his last letter to Crouse, an alienated young soul caught between two worlds.

Notes

[1] The other three would be Lily Brandon Munroe, Amy Traphagen (who assumed the name Amy Leslie), and his companion Cora Taylor.
[2] R. W. Stallman, *Stephen Crane: A Biography* (New York: Braziller, 1968), p. 140.
[3] Edwin H. Cady and Lester G. Wells, eds., *Stephen Crane's Love Letters to Nellie Crouse*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1954, p. 53; Stallman, *Stephen Crane*, p. 199.
[4] Stanley Wertheim and Paul Sorrentino, eds., *The Correspondence of Stephen Crane*, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia UP, 1988), p. 200.
[5] Wertheim and Sorrentino, p. 201.
[6] Wertheim and Sorrentino, p. 208.
[7] Wertheim and Sorrentino, p. 208.
[8] Stallman, *Stephen Crane*, p. 199.
[9] "Stephen Crane/Washington, D. C./March 18, 1896," University of Virginia, Special Collections.
[10] The changes from the final draft include removing the comma that follows the word "Hoarse" in the first line, exchanging "that" for "who" in the second line, and proffering the word "kingdom" its own line in line six of the fair copy.
[11] Alphabet City is an industrial waterfront district east of Greenwich Village past First Avenue; the avenues are assigned the letters A through D.

beyond the reach of such a self-styled outcast.

Stallman's dismissal of Crane's infatuation with Crouse is understandable, since Crouse and Crane met only once. But rather than simply replacing one lost love for another, it is more probable that, as his reputation grew sufficiently in his mind to attempt a courtship with Crouse, the young author was agitated by exposure to a Victorian-controlled book market he openly despised, thereby widening, rather than diminishing, the social gulf between the two. In his somewhat posturing letter, vehemently denouncing Crouse's preference for members of respectable society, he recalled having given a poetry reading at the Uncut Leaves Society in 1894 and described one audience member this way:

> I distinctly remember some compliments paid me very graciously and confidently by a woman. Nothing so completely and serenely stupid have I witnessed. And the absolutely false tongue of her prattled away for ten minutes in more lies than are usually heard at one time.

Love lost, then, is not necessarily at the heart of the letter; rather, it is the angst of a man uncomfortable with an artificial world that has been thrust upon him.

The initial reviews for *War Is Kind* (1899) were not good. Ashley Smith of *The New York Times* lambasted the volume: "As a poetic production it is closely akin to a genuine disappointment." "What manner of joke Stephen Crane and his illustrator, Will Bradley, had in mind when they got up their new book has not leaked out," Rupert Hughes scoffed in a *Criterion* essay entitled "Rupert Hughes on Crane's Wasted Talent." And even *Bookman*, the first publisher of the title poem, expressed their misgivings: "[The reader] will meet with woeful disappointment in Stephen Crane's 'War Is Kind.'"[12] John Berryman smartly observes of both past and present readers that Crane's peculiar sense of irony is "felt as weird or incomprehensible. When he began a book of poems with the line 'Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind,' the reviewers treated him, reasonably, as an *idiot*."[13] In this beautifully illustrated book, Crane addresses historical figures who have trumped up the meaning of "Swift blazing" flags (line 17); the voice is one of the popular consciousness, which demands the grief-stricken to adopt its rhetorical perceptions of war; the solders too are complicit, as they are swayed by the rhetoric of others and thoughtlessly do their bidding to "thirst for fight" (line 7). Here Crane deals with what Milne Holton calls "the way men—as individuals and in groups—see what is before them, and the irony with

"Do Not Weep, Maiden": Nellie Crouse and Stephen Crane's "War Is Kind"

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In January 1895, Stephen Crane attended a tea held at his acquaintance Lucius L. Button's townhouse on 34th Street in Manhattan to honor Nellie Crouse, of Akron, Ohio. This was the first and last encounter between Crane and Crouse, but the young woman still emerged as one of the four most important romances in Crane's life.[1] It is clear from Crane's correspondence with Crouse that he imagined her as a kind of Dantean Beatrice, insofar as Crane's, like Dante's, was a love worship born of social and spatial distance. After Button's gathering, Crane bided his time until *The Red Badge of Courage* became enough of a popular success to begin correspondence with Crouse, desperately hoping that his accomplishment would elicit a warm response from the status-hungry socialite. Indeed, once sales for *Red Badge* soared, he wrote her seven letters in three months.

Crouse exhibited a coy pose throughout the courtship, subtly encouraging Crane, though offering little assurance his infatuation was reciprocated. Indeed, there is scarce evidence that she ever took her bohemian courtier seriously. "Much is given to the properties of social status and decorum," Crane biographer R. W. Stallman writes. "Miss Crouse responded [to Crane's correspondence] more out of an interest in Crane's being an Easterner than in fashioning a romance with an unkempt author. . . . [Crane] poured out his soul to a woman he knew not at all."[2] Perhaps at first Crouse mistook him for a model of Victorian gentility, rather than the actual Crane who cavorted with prostitutes, drank excessively, and roamed in the substratum of Manhattan's Lower East Side. That side of him would be unveiled in his final letters to her, a frankly stated series of missives that revealed to Crouse more of Crane's rebellious disposition than any hint of his actual respectable upbringing by Methodist evangelicals in New Jersey. In every respect, had they reunited after that initial meeting, their disparate cultural sensibilities would have precluded any meaningful relationship.

Crane began composing his final letter to Nellie Crouse in Washington, D. C. on March 8, 1896, and finished it on the very day he signed a copy of *Red Badge* with a six-line holograph excerpt laid in from "War Is Kind" dated "March 18, 1896." Crane had arrived in the nation's capital with the intention of writing a book on politics for

McClure's, which he never wrote. Crane scholars Edwin H. Cady and Lester G. Wells describe McClure's proposal as "an ill-advised effort to convert Crane into a Lincoln Steffens."[3] Crane was most likely struck by the revelation that Crouse did not take kindly to his views on Victorian "respectability," a valid suspicion expressed one month earlier in a letter responding to her comment that she preferred proper men "of fashion."[4] "For my part," Crane wrote back, "I like the man who dresses correctly and does the right thing invariably, but, oh, he must be more than that, a great deal more. But so seldom is he anymore than correctly-dressed, and correctly-speeched, that when I see a man of that kind I usually put him down as a kind of idiot."[5]

In a later letter to Crouse, written at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D. C., Crane expressed a terrible personal despondency brought on by a future "blue with obligations":

> Dear me, how much I am getting to admire graveyards—the calm unfretting unhopeing [sic] end of things—serene absence of passion—oblivious to sin—ignorant of the accursed golden hopes that flame at night and make a man run his legs off and then in the daylight of experience turn out to be ingenious traps for the imagination. If there is a joy of living I can't find it. The future? The future is blue with obligations—new trials—conflicts. It was a rare old wine the gods brewed for mortals. Flagons of despair—[6]

Crane completed the letter a full ten days later. But even then he was unable to conjure a more optimistic attitude. "Really, by this time I should have recovered enough to be able to write you a sane letter," he lamented, "but I cannot—my pen is dead. I am simply a man struggling with a life that is no more than a mouthful of dust to him."[7] Stallman contends it was probably not Nellie Crouse that inspired the melancholy tone, but a woman with whom he had intended to elope months earlier. This was Mrs. Lily Brandon Munroe, "whom he had met (or perhaps failed to meet) at this time in Washington and had not seen since January of the previous year . . . ."[8]

The signed version of his poem "War Is Kind," however, laid in a first edition of *Red Badge* was, again, written on the same day as he completed the letter to Crouse, solidifying, to my mind, a connection between the two. The University of Virginia holds the copy, which reads, "Stephen Crane/Washington, D. C./March 18, 1896."[9] But this fair copy of the poem contains only the second stanza:

> Hoarse booming drums of the regiment,
> Little souls that thirst for fight,
> These men were born to drill and die
> The unexplained glory flies above them
> Great is the battle-god, great, and his
> kingdom—
> A field where a thousand corpses lie.[10]

What Crane left out is significant, the first stanza that introduces a discussion of war by depicting a maiden crying over the loss of her lover:

> Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.
> because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky
> And the affrighted steed ran alone,
> Do not weep.
> War is kind.

The notable absence of this stanza in the signed copy of *Red Badge* signals that this was a significant day in Crane's life and might arguably provide a deeper understanding of the author's emotional center when he wrote his final passage to Crouse. In a strange way, consciously or unconsciously, Crane seems to have envisioned himself on that day as a male avatar of his maiden weeping over the lost soldier, Nellie Crouse. The deep sense of loss Crane evokes is, ironically, socially encouraged, a point he underscores by writing, "to seduce her victims, nature had to formulate a beautiful excuse. She made *glory* . . . ." (emphasis mine) Symbolically, of course, nature's "beautiful excuse" takes on many forms, including moral orders such as the Victorian cult of "respectability," whose manifestations resonate so strongly in much of Crane's work.

Often as not, Crane's novels and short stories attempt to decipher the mores of the dominant moral order in the United States of the late nineteenth century; and by the time he began writing in the 1880s, that order was decidedly Victorian, even in the West. Though he deals with Victorianism as an ideology in much of his journalism and fiction, particularly in his Bowery sketches, the theme is not as explicit in his poetry. But cultural dissemination is, and its main proponent in late nineteenth century was Victorian America. Social encouragement was not only responsible for lives lost in war, as he shows in *Red Badge*, but for creating impenetrable boundaries of opposition against unconventional lifestyles; for example, a bachelor author inhabiting artist lofts on Manhattan's East Side, as he did. As such, cultivating a relationship with a budding Victorian lady like Nellie Crouse was well