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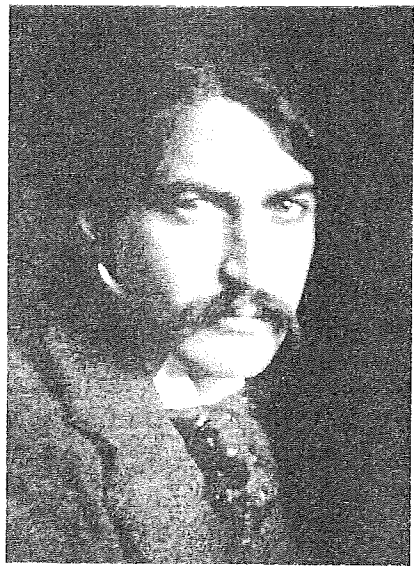

Stephen Crane Society

Stephen Crane Studies

Department of English
Virginia Tech

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Review

The Sound and the Fury in Stephen Crane's *Maggie* and *George's Mother*

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I

In his short essay "New Invasion of Britain," Stephen Crane discusses the spread of the word "bounder" in Britain to indicate a certain type of people. Saying that the term has now become a slang expression, he then discusses the definition of slang. Crane remarks that it should be used only when no conventional words are available, and humorously explains the difficulty of finding an alternative to the epithet "bounder" in describing such people.[1] In Crane's works a number of people use slang, and most of them live in the New York slums. Alan Robert Slotkin has studied Bowery slang as presented in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and *George's Mother*. His detailed linguistic and syntactical researches conclude that while in *Maggie* people use a common slang (which can therefore be defined as a dialect), in *George's Mother* the slang diction tends to differ from person to person in accordance with their respective developmental stages (and thus can be termed an idiolect.)[2] Taking a lead from Slotkin but turning my attention to an aspect of slang which he neglects, I here investigate the colloquialism of the above two novelettes.

II

In *George's Mother*, Mrs. Kelcey often admonishes her son for using profane words. Slotkin says that slang is often accompanied by blasphemous expressions like "damn" or "hell,"[3] and also according to one authoritative dictionary, slang is "characterized by the use of vulgar and *socially taboo* vocabulary" (my emphasis).[4] George's resistance to his mother seems to start with his deliberate employment of swearing. His vocabulary changes from the simple, decent terminology of his rural Handyville into the Bowery wording characterized by the use of colloquialisms.[5] Despite both the tense confrontation between the mother and the son for the latter's use of foul language, and also the explicit statement in the text that "he swore a tangled mass of oaths . . ."(167), however, the reader sees only two instances of the son's actual use of profanity.[6] The reader may assume that in line with Victorian conservatism, Crane refrained from transcribing profane words. But Crane seems driven less by prudery than by an awareness that in

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in order to make them serve as incorporated parts of a comprehensive reassessment of American thought and writing. As it is, this collection has merits; too many of its ideas, however, are merely old ones, loosely assembled fragments.

swearing meaning is determined not by the words themselves but by the context in which they are used. Therefore he rarely wrote down the actual words. Instead, Crane simply wrote "he [i. e., George] swore . . . ," as quoted above. And the two cases where we do hear George swear in sentence corroborate this. In the first example, he exclaims, "Damn these early hours!"(131), the morning after he had drunk heavily until one o'clock. By expressing those words right in front of his mother, he "damned" her for forcing him to get up so early rather than "these early hours." The other example is "Th'ell yeh won't?" in George's counterargument to his mother's reproach for profanity; he disobeys her by swearing, attaching much more importance to the fact of its use than its content.

As mentioned above, in "New Invasion of Britain" Crane accepts the employment of slang only when there is no other expression available. But if no such alternative exists, one can hardly explain a slang phrase by using other words. Crane says that the epithet "bounder" similarly defies explanation, which leads to an arbitrariness in its meaning; it can have either a positive implication or a negative. Probably on the basis of this ambiguity, Crane concludes that "[i]t is everything, and nothing, this word [i. e., bounder]"(8: 680). Crane first says that a slang expression has extremely delicate implications with no equivalence. But he finally admits it may actually have mere ambiguous significances, or even can become meaningless, exactly like swearing. George in *George's Mother* frequently uses slang and foul language in his fights against the other neighborhood punks. The hooligans strive to talk down each other by empty words; what matters is not the contents but the volume. As a result, their speech comes close to a mere raucous sound.

Unquestionably, the Bowery is a clamorous world. *George's Mother* is noted for its impressionistic representation by vivid colors, but it also stands out in its frequent use of auditory expressions:

> Horse-cars, aglitter with new paint, rumbled in steady array between the pillars that supported the elevated railroad. The whole street resounded with the tinkles of bells, the roar of iron-shod wheels on the cobbles, the ceaseless trample of the hundreds of feet. Above all too, could be heard the loud screams of the tiny newsboys, who scurried in all directions. (1: 116)

One may readily imagine the additional deafening roar when a train runs past on "the elevated railroad." Presumably, too, people's voices become louder in order not to be overwhelmed by the furious din of their surroundings. In the novelette, Mrs. Kelcey's first appearance is

ironically welcomed by the "curse" and "swearing" (119) of one of her neighbors. Probably out of some irritation or despair he hurls a glass bottle to the ground, and it makes an ear-splitting sound. Then follows another man's shout. As if to oppose these noises, the mother purposefully raises her voice in hymn:

> . . . her voice was often raised in a long cry, a strange war-chant, a shout of battle and defiance, that rose and fell in harsh screams, and exasperated the ears of the man with the red, mottled face. (120)

The mother has set herself apart from the other tenants of her dilapidated apartment house by refraining from using slang or swearing. Instead, she puts her anger into her hymn. She never answers her son back in the blasphemous words that he defiantly uses at her. Against his flat refusal to go to church with her, she confronts him in "a battleful way" with "despairing rage" in her eyes, but in a suppressed "choking voice"(155).

Her restraint disappears on her deathbed. Mentally confused, she sees an illusion, and in opposition to this phantom, "her voice pealed forth in a scream" (177). By contrast, the son who had overpowered her by the volume of his loud voice "felt himself being *choked*" (177) (my emphasis). Finally the mother cries in a "peevish" voice "Go away!"(177), probably challenging the specter which she somehow fears will take away her dearest son. Outside the room in which she is about to breathe her last, voices are incessantly heard: an argument between a displeased child and his scolding mother, and the subsequent screaming of the child against the typically noisy slum background of "an endless roar, the eternal trample . . . [and] vague cries"(178). This scene may suggest the start of another confrontation between mother and son;[7] like this child George used to be obedient to his nagging mother, but he has gradually grown otherwise. But at the same time Mrs. Kelcey's shout, the first time she has thus raised her voice directly at another, although it is merely at an illusion, may imply her ironical integration into the Bowery; the slum mothers will often cry out against their disobedient sons or those who take them away. If they meet vocal resistance, the mothers will simply raise their voice and try to silence their opponents. Shout against shout is the Bowery practice. The conflict between Mrs. Kelcey and George is explained by the time each has taken to naturalize to the Bowery from Handyville. It stands to reason that the younger more easily adjust themselves to a new place than the elder. Sooner or later, however, assimilation is inevitable, and even Mrs. Kelcey finally succumbs. Even the Bowery church, her spiritual asylum, cannot be

importantly—what ethical consequences may or may not be concluded. Though Crane never studied philosophy and did not (unlike Norris, London, and Dreiser) presume to have philosophical opinions, he was a pragmatist in the sense that William James explained it. After all, as Dooley suggests, Crane and James were contemporaries, affected by the same Zeitgeist.

One of these essays (not previously published) might be singled out for special attention. "'Matters of Conscience' and 'Blunders of Virtues': Crane on the Varieties of Heroism, or Why Moral Philosophers Need Literature" addresses a new issue. This essay deals with a subject currently being explored in philosophy by ethicists: supererogation, a field of moral philosophy that treats acts beyond the call of duty. Supererogation appeared first in the Latin translation of the Greek Bible to describe the actions of the Good Samaritan. Dooley finds philosophers lacking in dealing with the complexity of these important moral decisions; instead, they often deal with trivial instances—such as, how much should I tip the waiter? Dooley revisits several scenes in Crane's work that may qualify as supererogatory acts. Henry Fleming seizes the regimental flag and leads his comrades to battle. Old Henry Fleming rushes into a burning barn to save the colts. A thirsty Fred Collins gives a fallen officer a drink of precious water. Henry Johnson saves Jimmie Trescott in a burning house. Dr. Trescott saves Johnson's life and protects him from Whilomville. Are these acts supererogatory? Like a good pragmatist, Dooley responds: partly but not entirely. Crane's scenes are epistemologically and morally complex and unavoidably ambiguous.

Unfortunately these essays do not contribute important new insight into Crane's writing. More often they merely repeat Dooley's pragmatic bias without further extending it into new areas of Crane's writing. The collection is also flawed by several errors of fact that the editors should have corrected, and more importantly by the many passages in these essays that are lifted (without acknowledgement) verbatim from *The Pluralistic Philosophy of Stephen Crane*. The whole discussion of "The Open Boat" in the fifth essay, "Human Solidarity in an Indifferent Universe: Crane's Humanism," is virtually copied from the earlier book (pp. 63-66). Here and there sentences and even whole paragraphs in *A Community of Inquiry* are lifted from the same source.

In short, this is a fine application of philosophical perspectives to literature. Unfortunately, *A Community of Inquiry* is fragmentary. To endure as a philosophical lens, Dooley might have rewritten his articles

A Community of Inquiry: Conversations Between Classical American Philosophy and American Literature. **By Patrick K. Dooley. Kent, OH: Kent State UP, 2008. xxvi + 255 pp. Paper $45.00.**

John Clendenning
California State University, Northridge

A versatile student of philosophy and literature, Patrick K. Dooley has made important contributions to both fields. As a specialist in American pragmatism, he published *Pragmatism as Humanism: The Philosophy of William James* (1974); as a contributor to Crane studies he compiled *Stephen Crane: An Annotated Bibliography of Secondary Scholarship* (1992) and authored *The Pluralistic Philosophy of Stephen Crane* (1993). The present volume is a collection of eighteen (mostly previously published) essays on American fiction from Stephen Crane to Norman Maclean, consistently interpreted through the lens of pragmatism—sometimes through the pragmaticism of Charles Peirce, through the instrumentalism of John Dewey, or even through the quasi-pragmatism of Josiah Royce, but always through the mainline pragmatism of its chief spokesman, William James. Often Dooley intones a broader theme: literature and philosophy as cultural criticism. This is especially the case in a single essay on William James and Theodore Roosevelt: "Public Policy and Philosophical Critique: The James-and-Roosevelt Dialogue on Strenuousness." Otherwise these essays deal with canonical writers: Howells, Frederic, London, Norris, Cather, and Steinbeck. In this review I will confine my remarks to Dooley's five articles on Crane.

Reading Crane through a philosopher's lens entails a commitment to the categories of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. Thus, if one is a Jamesian pluralist, there is no single Truth, only truths; no single Reality, only realities; no single Good, only a variety of ways of becoming increasingly human and virtuous. To the pragmatist, knowledge (including ethical insight) is limitless experience in a world where no single perspective is privileged. Crane's readers seem to respond instinctively to this cornucopia, especially in urban sketches such as "A Lovely Jag in a Crowded Car" (cited by Dooley) and "The Broken-Down Van" (not cited). This lens seems also useful when discussing *The Red Badge of Courage*, where Crane centered the narrative on a single perspective—the Youth, Henry Fleming—surrounded and bombarded by a variety of conflicting viewpoints. "The Monster" is an even more gripping illustration of epistemological pluralism. In this work we have multiple perspectives as to what exactly happened, and—more

exempted from this fate:

> In the dark street the little chapel sat humbly between two towering apartment-houses.... Farther up the brilliant lights of an avenue made a span of gold across the black market. A roar of wheels and a clangor of bells came from this point, interwoven into a sound emblematic of the life of the city. It seemed somehow to affront this solemn and austere little edifice. It suggested an approaching barbaric invasion. The little church, pierced, would die with a fine, illimitable scorn for its slayers. (156)

Unbecoming to the general image of decency, this church unhesitatingly exposes an indecent and even defiant attitude towards the similarly indecent Bowery. As I have suggested elsewhere, if the church put into words its "fine, illimitable scorn," it would be likely to express it in slang or swearing, ironical evidence of the church's integration into the vulgar slum.[8] One thus finds that Mrs. Kelcey's search for spiritual relief in this church has been fruitless. It seems unsurprising that on her death bed, casting off her usual decorum and following her church's crude "fine, illimitable scorn," she expresses her anger with a curse. As mentioned above, Slotkin remarks that in *George's Mother* the vocabulary of the Bowery people alters as their characters develop. Though he does not mention this, in Mrs. Kelcey's case, the change in her wording is corroborated in her final loss of hesitation in the use of swearing, evidence of her character change from a decent widow into an aggressive Bowery resident.

III

In *Maggie* the Bowery people try more unflinchingly to overpower each other by their raucous voices, and accordingly the neighborhood becomes more clamorous. Few scenes can be found where people talk calmly without blasphemy or slang. The novelette keeps its volume high. It starts a battle between little rascals, cursing each other. Jimmie, one of the Johnsons' children, comes back from his prolonged fight and is loudly scolded by his mother. His father attempts to stop his wife and begins another wild battle full of foul language and colloquialisms. In the presence of the confused Maggie and Jimmie, the father says "Go t'hell" (13). The message is clear; it means "no" to his wife, who had ordered him not to meddle in her handling of the children. Unquestionably, this message does not derive from the literal meaning of his words; any swearing would have meant the same. Enraged by her husband's curse, meanwhile, the wife "screams"

and "begins to howl" (13). Crane does not take the trouble to explain the content of her "howl," as it has no solid meaning. But by the use of these strongly aural verbs, Crane indicates her unreserved enmity against her husband. Then the husband acutely points out her drinking, a rare case in this scene of a meaningful sentence. She violently denies it, which is, of course, untrue. Thereafter they resume their contest of curses. In short they swear consistently and lie occasionally. They care little for the meaning or even the truth of what they say, but depend upon how loudly they can say it. Thus they are virtually detached from the meanings of their words. One might say that since they care little about the "quality" of words, they depend upon their "quantity": the volume when uttered. Hence the prevalence of swearing; they "scream," "howl," "bellow" (17), and literally "curse," "shriek" (18). Such words are too many to enumerate in the novelette. The Bowery residents could not be heard in this clamorous world unless they "screamed." But even if they "scream" loudly enough to be able to be heard (as indeed they do), all those capable of listening to them are too busy shouting back to do so. The Bowery is a world of relentless self-assertion.

The Johnsons' sons are no less noisy than their parents. In the fights at the beginning of the novelette, Jimmie vehemently hisses at his neighborhood urchins, and even the infant Tommie cries out at his family. The grown-up Jimmie, as a truck driver, "bursts forth into yells" (21) at the passers-by and forces them to clear the street. He roars back at his fellow drivers and refuses to give way, as if in order to prove his authority. His apparently mysterious reverence for fire engines actually may derive from the sounds they make: "The clang of the gong pierced his breast like a noise of remembered war" (23). By contrast, the Johnsons' only daughter is unusually quiet. All the children either crawl under the table or retreat to the corners of the room to keep away from their parents' brawl. But Tommie still feels an "excitement" (13) in his parents' row, and Jimmie also "raises his voice in defiance" (12) to his father. Maggie has no such spirit. Terrified, she breaks a plate and is roared at by her mother. Maggie's "screams" (16) are not self-assertion but a painful appeal for forgiveness. Her curse is "quavering" (12), and she often laments in a quiet voice, and is ready to weep at any time.

Understandably, Maggie dreams of leaving the riotous Bowery and leading a pastoral life, where sounds are romantic and comfortable: "the little hills sing together" (26). Able to endure neither her mother's scolding at home nor the noises of the collar and cuff factory where she works, she seeks for momentary comfort in Pete. Maggie is driven away by her mother, who "blasphemed and gave her daughter

deep, dark dank abysms of nothingness—and I so young—ah!—my eyes—I see a coward's heart all striped with yellow, pink polka dots, and green squares with red center—ah! I hear the demon death song pounding in my ears like an overgrown trip-hammer hammering down a record—ah! ah!—a scream!—a lurid howling like that of a crimson-stained skeleton with jumping toothache and complications of hay fever, neuralgia and too much sesamoid!"

He sobbed.

"What must be, must be," he continued, "even though the entire astronomical apparatus gets out of-focus—read again the terms proposed."

"And," came the thundering tones of the second, "the contestants shall take their places at a distance of forty yards, neither shall advance or move from his place, the seconds shall withdraw, and they shall beat each other to the death with stuffed clubs.

The man was doomed.

Hartford Courant (Dec. 10, 1897), p. 8.

Notes

[1] David Paul Nord, "The Urbanization of American Journalism," *Organization of American Historians Magazine of History* 6 (Spring 1992): (www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/communication/nord.html).

[2] Named for Dr. Leslie Keeley, whose Institute in Dwight, Illinois, advertised the controversial "Cure" as treatment for liquor, tobacco and drug addictions.

The man was sad. "I go to meet Death," he said, and sighed.

The other smiled. "I am Death," he said. "Come, have one on me."

But the man fled affrighted and Death laughed.

Duluth News-Tribune (Aug. 6, 1897), p. 3.

A man stood on the top of a high mountain and looked down.

"Beautiful," he said. And he descended the fields below. Many people came to greet him.

"Hello!" they cried; "come and work!"

But the man fled for the mountain.

--

An Amused One sat alone in a great wide place and laughed.

"Why is it you laugh?" asked another.

But the Amused One only laughed louder in answer, and the other wondered. "It is funny to laugh at nothing," he said.

And the Amused One spake: "Yes," he said. "It is funny to laugh at nothing."

And then he laughed.

Duluth News-Tribune (Aug. 21, 1897), p. 4.

Pallid was the brow of the challenged man. Paroxysms of fright threw his features into the convulsions of an awful fear; before his eyes swam a mist of yellow, behind him all was a chaotic mob of raveled-out idiocies. He gibbered aimlessly.

Before him stood another. This was the second. He held in his hand the fatal challenge, and the man gasped to him faintly:

"Read—read—" he cried, "read!"

"Coward!" came from the other, with a sibilant hiss, "these are the terms of the fight—"

A wild delirium of harsh, feverish laughings interrupted him.

"Ha! Ha!" shrieked the man, "death—death—

a bad name" (29), and accompanies Pete to the music hall where the orchestra first plays a gentle waltz. "There was a low rumble of conversation and a subdued clinking of glasses" (30). Maggie is content with this atmosphere, which, however, does not last long; the orchestra turns up its music and the players on the stage make an uproarious performance. The audience becomes enthusiastic over this, and the hall thus changes from the heroine's spiritual asylum into an unbearably clamorous place.

Philip H. Ford has pointed out the degradation in the music halls that Maggie visits.[9] This is reflected also in the increasing volume of their noise; at the second music hall, the audiences are excited from the outset and show their frenzy over the singers; "men . . . applauded loudly, pounding the polished wood with their beer glasses" (51). The sound of the hall becomes "deafening rumble"(51). At the third hall the further increase in the noise is evident from the following sentence: "The *rumble* of conversation was replaced by a *roar*" (57) (my emphasis). There are exchanges of "oaths" (57), and the room resounds with the women's near-screaming voices. The musicians play angrily, and no one listens to the singers on the stage. The full volume makes Maggie more taciturn. At the second hall she sits rather depressed, yet at least talks about her misery to an uninterested Pete. But at the third hall she is "unable to formulate an intelligent conversation" (58). After all, Maggie is followed by the raucous noises wherever she goes out in the Bowery district. And going back to her house, she is scolded much more vehemently than before by her drunken mother. Maggie can hardly answer her mother back or defy the inquisitive eyes of the neighbors. She has no choice but to return to Pete, but to him "[s]he . . . could not find speech" (67). Finally, she becomes able to talk only to herself: "She wandered aimlessly for several blocks. She stopped once and asked *aloud* a question of herself: 'Who?'"(67) (my emphasis). Ironically, she can raise her voice only to herself.[10]

Jimmie once threatened the still young Maggie by suggesting the ominous alternatives about her future: either work or prostitution. Maggie cannot stand the din of her factory for long, and then she becomes a streetwalker, as if to obey her brother's prophecy. In prostitution, one is spared the need for much talk and can initiate business with only a smile, exactly as Maggie does as a street girl:

> She smiled squarely into the face of a boy who was hurrying by with his hands buried in his overcoat pockets, his blonde locks bobbing on his youthful temples, and a cherry smile of unconcern upon his lips. He turned his head and

smiled back at her, waving his hands. (69)

Though fluency may not necessarily be needed, a show of willingness greatly matters in touting for customers. The heroine, who is awkward in expressing herself, soon finds this beyond her powers, and having lost both the alternative means of life available to her, she is obliged to choose death. Maggie finds a place to die in the outskirts of the Bowery, where the clamorous noises of the district do not directly reach:

> At the feet of the tall building appeared the deathly black hue of the river. Some hidden factory sent up a yellow glare that lit for a moment the waters lapping oilily against timbers. The varied sounds of life, made joyous by distance and seeming unapproachableness, came faintly and died away to a silence. (70)

The word *deathly* implies her suicide; Maggie, who longs for a calm life, integrates herself into the "silence." She has not been able to accustom herself to her surroundings, her inability being symbolized by her reticence, a rare character in the raucous slum and presumably a virtue among the din of the residents' self-assertion. But it is fatal in the Bowery, where the struggle for existence can only be won by a forceful appeal. As mentioned above, Slotkin holds that in *Maggie* the characters share the slum idiom. However, there is one exception to this; the heroine's silence paradoxically stands out among those talking in the common Bowery idiom at full volume.

Towards the end of the novelette, the lack of substance in the slum vocabulary becomes further obvious through Pete. His speech gets slurred and still more devoid of content because of his drunken state, and his speech can hardly be understood by his new disloyal lover, Nellie. In the Bowery, unfaithfulness is quite routine. As mentioned before, people abuse language through meaningless swearing and slang, and they hardly commit themselves to the meanings (if any) of their words. Their indifference to words leads to an indifference to the promises they make. Therefore they nonchalantly betray others; Pete has betrayed Maggie, and is going to be betrayed by Nellie. The grown-up Jimmie also betrays two women; each begs him for marriage, or at least child-rearing expenses. Annoyed by these troubles, Jimmie says "D'moon looks like hell, don't it?" (23) This sentence illustrates Bowery people's lack of concern for wording. There is no connection between Jimmie's current troubles and his response. He makes this remark when he happens to look up at the moon in the sky. It certainly has a literal meaning, but in the context this hardly matters. Jimmie

> ""Twas upside down," said he.
>
> And the man laughed again.
>
> "I was a fool," he said, "but now I am not," and as he read again he buffooned with merry gibes at what he saw.
>
> "Now you are a bigger fool," said the other and passed.
>
> *Minneapolis Journal*
> (Mar. 9, 1897), p. 1.

A man walked along a crooked road.

The road was so twisted that sometimes the man met himself coming back.

"Ah," he said, and smiled. "Nit."

He was a wise man and bought a bottle of Keeley cure.[2]

--

A man stood above the dark waters. The darkness shuddered down in an enveloping gloom of night and the hopeless sobs of unseen things rang out in shrieks.

"Ah!" said the man. He looked down at the darksome void beneath. Naught disturbed the quiet. No crisp rustling of the ebbing water: no grim rhythm of its siren song to lure the lost to its black depths—and the man sighed.

"Death!" he cried, smiled and plunged forward.

The silence was broken by a loud smack. But the pieces immediately got together again and all became quiet.

A loud yell came—mad ravings tearing through raucous gutturals. "Foiled!" shrieked the man from the depths below; there was the sound as of a suction pump at work and the man struggled wildly across the Chicago river and climbing on the dock, began to wipe the mud from his trousers.

--

Death met a traveler.

"Whither goest thou?" he asked.

"Our Own Steve Crane" in Chicago

George Monteiro
Brown University

With the appearance of *The Black Riders and Other Lines* and *The Red Badge of Courage* in 1895, Stephen Crane became fair game for those with a bent toward parody. Many such parodies, usually of Crane's "lines," have been reprinted. Unnoticed, however, have been the prose parodies published in 1897 in the *Chicago News*. Although I have not examined the newspaper itself, I have found a number of those parodies reprinted in three other newspapers, which, besides acknowledging their source in the *News*, published them under the same rubric "Our Own Steve Crane." (I'm inclined to believe that a search of the pages of the *Chicago News*, a four-page daily with an astonishing circulation of 200,000 in the mid-1890s,[1] would turn up more of these parodies of "Steve" Crane.) These items are a form of indirect criticism of Crane's writing—most frequently his poetry—focusing on his grand themes and his stylistic tics. They provided judgment (and suggested dismissal) in encapsulated form, fully in keeping with the overall strategies of the *Chicago News* at the time.

> The universe insanely fled asunder. A million stars drove madly through the shuddering air and the affrighted earth shrank into a hollow speck and wept in ecstacious, silent agonies.
>
> The bottom dropped out of everything. The sun and moon collided, crashed and split into a thousand flaming fragments. Fire came in a whitened glare from the uttermost beginnings of the universe, a silent, blackened void arose, the skies toppled with a thundering crush.
>
> And the man picked himself up from the icy pavement.
>
> *Minneapolis Journal*
> (Feb. 3, 1897), p. 4.

> A man stood reading a newspaper and laughed in disgust.
>
> "Such rot," he said.
>
> Another passed and turned the paper round.

is unable to face the serious situation seriously, so he casually utters irrelevant words. Through the very fact of their irrelevance, their real meaning becomes clear: he has no intention of taking responsibility for his behaviors towards the women.

Her mother is no less irresponsible than he. She merely swears when she hears of Maggie's "degradation." By raising her voice, the mother easily puts to silence the neighbors who come to ask about Maggie. She tells the police-justices a fabricated story about her daughter to win their sympathy. Learning of Maggie's suicide, she simply repeats "I'll fergive her" (77). There, the mother, whose previous remarks have seldom been appropriate, contrives to say the very opposite of what she ought to have said; unquestionably, the mother should have asked Maggie's forgiveness. Mother and son both use words with an almost whimsical disregard for the actual situation.

Crane's definition of slang in "New Invasion of Britain" can hardly be applied to Bowery slang. It is never delicate in meaning; far from that, it virtually has no meaning. Bowery residents do not include any subtle implications in their slang or swearing, as such subtlety seems alien to them, but instead they put a range of crude feelings into a limited vocabulary. For example, they say "What'd hell?" when they are angry, defiant, indifferent or even expectant. However, Crane's further remark on the slang expression "bounder" seems more appropriate to the slum. "It is everything, and nothing . . . this word": the irresponsible use of words in the Bowery both reflects and is reflected in the environment, where promises are unknown and morality disregarded; unlettered by any concept of promises or ethos, the inhabitants too can nonchalantly say "everything and nothing." One might ask the question of cause and effect in naturalistic terms: to what extent are they held responsible for their irresponsibility? Or are they victims of circumstances that condemn them to so poor a vocabulary?

IV

Crane's representation of the slum people and their slang is unquestionably vivid, but the vividness of their slang does not depend on its meaning, as has been seen. Instead, their meaningless diction reveals their meaningless actions or thoughts. In this sense, their hollow vocabulary paradoxically has a solid message. A few examples from Crane's other works may be sufficient to illustrate how often he translates sounds into sense, while exposing the emptiness of words. In "The Blue Hotel," the Swede's shrieks and screams, and the kaleidoscopic tonal alterations in his voice often make a more powerful

impact on the other characters than the implications of his words, and these "sounds" greatly influence their view of the Swede. In "The Upturned Face," the terror of death is mysteriously but strongly felt in the sound "plop" unexpectedly made when Timothy Lean flings dirt on the fallen comrade's face lying in the improvised grave.[11] Compared with this "plop," Lean's clumsy prayers for the dead hardly render the reality of death. In *The Red Badge of Courage*, the unreliability of words is first implied by the irresponsible rumors among the soldiers, whose behavior on the battlefield is actually governed by the deafening clamor of the cannons or the hoof beats of the charging cavalry. Critics have much investigated Crane's visual descriptions, but my attention has been upon his aural representation and the inarticulate sounds which seem more prominent than intelligible voices, at least in Crane's two Bowery tales. Benedict Giamo says that in *Maggie* visual delineation comes to the front when the raucous Bowery has turned its volume up to maximum. But whereas he regards the auditory description as merely the prelude to the story, I would treat it as an indispensable component of the whole text.[12] One may take Crane's inclination towards aurally-based description as an expressionistic trait.[13] A few critics have indeed studied his expressionistic tendencies.[14] However, their full meaning still seems insufficiently appreciated. Crane has been called realistic, naturalistic, impressionistic and expressionistic. My present study of Crane's remarkable ear for the sounds and fury of the Bowery hopefully serves to promote the appreciation of the least investigated aesthetic field of Crane's, his expressionistic representation.

Notes

[1] See *The University of Virginia Edition of The Works of Stephen Crane*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1969-76), Vol. 8, pp. 678-80. All the quotations from the works of Crane will be from this edition. Volume (if different from the former quotation) and page references will appear in parentheses after each quotation.
[2] Alan Robert Slotkin, *The Language of Stephen Crane's Bowery Tales: Developing Mastery of Character Diction* (New York: Garland, 1993).
[3] Slotkin, p. 26.
[4] *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, 2nd ed.(New York: Random House, 1993), p. 1795, s.v., "slang." Also, *Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang* (New York : Random House, 1997) has entries for "damn" and "hell."
[5] Slotkin, p. 126.

Notes

[1] Alexander's exact title was "Envoy Extraordinary, Minister Plenipotentiary, and Consul General to Greece, Roumania, and Servia [sic]," as we know from his letter of appointment, now in collection # 1209, the Eben Alexander Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, of the University of North Carolina. The name Eban, given in the heading in the *Correspondence*, should be corrected to Eben.
[2] Collection # 1209, the Eben Alexander Papers, Southern Historical Collection, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The note and inscriptions are published here with the kind permission of the Southern Historical Collection and of Mrs. Eben Alexander, Jr.
[3] The text of the note is clear and presents no problems. The "dont" in the second sentence was inserted by Crane above the line, with a carat after "Please" to indicate the insertion.

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Wertheim, Stanley, and Paul Sorrentino. *The Crane Log. A Documentary Life of Stephen Crane 1871-1900*. New York: G.K. Hall, 1994.

Dear Mr Alexander: I met a man from the legation in Constantinople who had happened in Athens since we left and he said you liked us and we are awfully glad. Please dont take that wretched old steamer from France but come to England and see us for a minute at least.

Your friend
Stephen Crane

Second, the inscriptions. On another photograph, this one of both Crane and Bass, each of the two men has written a short thank-you to Alexander beneath his portrait. Crane writes:

With many best wishes
Stephen Crane

And Bass writes:

With thanks for many
kindnesses to Hon. E Alexander
John F. Bass

The short note published here, from Crane to Alexander, may be the note of July 2 to which Alexander referred in his letter. But it might also be a subsequent note, since it mentions Alexander's plan to sail from France, a plan that Alexander mentioned in his letter of July 14. In any case, the new note helps confirm the friendship between the two men, and the photograph with inscriptions of both Crane and Bass is a welcome indication of close associations between the two of them on the one hand, and, on the other, between both of them and Alexander, the professor of Greek.

[6] Slotkin, p. 110.
[7] Benedict Giamo, *On the Bowery: Confronting Homelessness in American Society* (Iowa City: UP of Iowa City, 1989), pp. 166-67.
[8] See my "Momentous Sounds and Silences in Stephen Crane," *Stephen Crane Studies* 15:1 (Spring 2006):17.
[9] Philip H. Ford, "Illusion and Reality in Crane's *Maggie*," *Arizona Quarterly* 25 (1969): 298-301.
[10] See my "Momentous Sounds and Silences," 18.
[11] For the symbolic meaning of the sound "plop," see Paul Witherington, "Public and Private Order in Stephen Crane's 'The Upturned Face,'" *Markham Review* 6 (1977): 70-71.
[12] Giamo. p. 139. William Dow similarly refers to the "performative" quality of *Maggie*; it "overflows with a hyperbolic, over-insistent roar of outrage and mockery" like a stage performance. "The language startles, calls attention to itself rather than to what it describes, and aims for impact and effect" (William Dow, "Performative Passages: Davis's *Life in the Iron Mills*, Crane's *Maggie*, and Norris's *McTeague*," *Twisted from the Ordinary: Essays on American Literary Naturalism*, ed. Mary E. Papke [Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 2003], p. 29. My focus upon the auditory, expressionistic element of the novel is concerned not so much with "impact and effect," but a more rather direct link with the characters' life as well as their lack of moral sense.
[13] See the definition of "Expressionism" by Hermann Bahr: "Distress cries aloud; man cries out for his soul; this whole pregnant time is one great cry of anguish. Art too joins in, into the great darkness she too calls for help, she cries to the spirit: this is Expressionism. (Hermann Bahr, "Expressionism" in *Paths to the Present: Aspects of European Thought from Romanticism to Existentialism*, ed. Eugen Weber (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1960), p. 224.
[14] See, for example, Bill Christopherson, "Stephen Crane's 'The Upturned Face' as Expressionistic Fiction," *Arizona Quarterly* 38 (1982): 147-61: Joseph Petite, "Expressionism and Stephen Crane's 'The Blue Hotel,'" *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology* 10: 3-4 (1989): 322-27: Charles Child Walcutt, "Stephen Crane: Naturalism and Impressionism," *American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1966), pp. 66-86: David R. Weimer, "Landscape of Hysteria: Stephen Crane," *The City as Metaphor* (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 52-64.

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An Unpublished Note and Inscription of Stephen Crane

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In the spring of 1897, Stephen Crane traveled to Greece to observe and write about the Greco-Turkish War. Arriving at Piraeus (the port of Athens) on April 8 (Wertheim and Sorrentino 248), he spent time both in Athens and at the front over the course of the next six weeks, writing stories for the *New York Journal* about the Battle of Velestino and other engagements. During the second week of May, Crane was in Athens, where he had studio portraits made of himself, of his lover and traveling companion, Mrs. Cora Stewart, and of himself with his fellow journalist, John Foster Bass (Wertheim and Sorrentino 258). Crane and Stewart left Greece shortly after an armistice was signed on May 20 and traveled, probably together, first to Marseilles, then to Paris and on to England, where they eventually settled for some months in a villa, "Ravensbrook," in the town of Oxted, just south of London (Wertheim and Sorrentino 261, 262, 266).

While he was in Athens, Crane naturally had contact with the American minister there, Mr. Eben Alexander, who both before and after his time in Greece was a Professor of Greek at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. The two men clearly liked one another, as is evidenced by a letter dated July 14, 1897. In this letter, Alexander wrote, "I have missed both of you [i.e., Crane and Stewart] sorely," and referred to a note of July 2 in which Crane had invited Alexander to visit them (meaning Crane and Stewart) in England. Alexander doubts that he will be able to accept the invitation (*Correspondence*, letter no. 324).[1]

The papers of Eben Alexander have been given, over time, to the Southern Historical Collection in Wilson Library of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill by the Alexander family, and we publish here a short note and two inscriptions that pertain to the acquaintance of Crane and Alexander.[2] First, the note, which is written on the back of one of the studio photographs of Crane. Although this note is not dated and has no address, it was clearly written from England, in July or perhaps very early August 1897. The note must have been enclosed in an envelope, since it has no mailing address. The text:[3]