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A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF  
STEPHEN CRANE'S "THE MONSTER"

BY

JAMES M. SCHUBERT

A thesis submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree Master of Arts, Major in  
English, South Dakota  
State University

1969

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A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF  
STEPHEN CRANE'S "THE MONSTER"

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Stephen Crane is an American writer whose works appear more popular now than they were in his own day. Most critics believe that his honesty, originality, and artistry are responsible for his current popularity. His most popular works, including The Red Badge of Courage (1894) and "The Open Boat" (1897), were very successful when they were first published and are still widely read. The fact that Crane led such an exciting and original life makes him an especially interesting author, but he has received increasing critical recognition as an important figure in American literary history. Crane is associated with various literary movements such as realism, naturalism, and impressionism, but he cannot be critically confined to any one of them. Instead, his innovation and individuality make his work both current and relevant in mid-twentieth century America.

Stephen Crane spent most of his early life in Newark, New Jersey, where he was born in 1871, and later in Port Jervis, New York, the model for his Whilomville Stories. He attended several colleges in New York, all for short periods of time. He played varsity baseball while at these institutions, but he could develop very little interest in classes and failed to finish the work for most of them. While at Syracuse University in 1891, Crane probably started his first draft of Maggie: A Girl of the Streets. This novel was finally published in 1893 although its sales were limited. In 1894 Crane achieved considerable popularity with the publication of The Red Badge of Courage. Just as

he wrote perceptively of Bowery life in Maggie without having experienced it directly, so in The Red Badge of Courage he wrote of the psychological and physical effects of war on Henry Fleming without having experienced war himself.

In 1895 the publication of The Black Riders, a volume of poetry, increased Crane's popularity. In the next year, another Bowery tale, "George's Mother," and an unsuccessful novel, The Third Violet were published. Also in 1896 Crane became involved in the Dora Clark case in New York. His defense of this prostitute prompted rumors of his drunkenness and debauchery and had a lasting effect on his reputation. In 1897, as a war correspondent bound for Cuba, Crane was shipwrecked from the Commodore off the coast of Florida. Crane formed this experience into one of his best short stories, "The Open Boat." That same year, he travelled with his wife, the former Cora Howarth, to Greece as a war correspondent in the Greco-Turkish War. Later in the year, Crane moved to England with Cora, where he wrote some of his best short stories, including "The Monster," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," "Death and the Child," and "The Blue Hotel."

In 1898, eager to experience war more completely, Crane left Cora in England and worked as a war correspondent in the Spanish-American War for several months. When he returned to England after experiencing many hardships and dangers, he was very weak, and his lungs were damaged. Despite his suffering from tuberculosis, Crane received numerous guests at his rented country home. These visitors often took advantage of his hospitality. Crane's generosity and his wife's extravagance caused him to worry constantly about money, and

most of his writing was done under pressure. During his illness, before his death in 1900, his best works were a volume of poems, War Is Kind, and the Whilomville Stories.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the non-conventional aspects of his life, Crane was praised and befriended by many contemporary writers. These include Hamlin Garland, William Dean Howells, Willa Cather, Harold Frederic, Henry James, Edward Garnett, Ford Madox Ford, H. G. Wells, and especially Joseph Conrad.

Although some criticism of Crane's work was written before 1950, since that date the increase in critical work has reflected Crane's increasing popularity. Especially prominent are critical studies of The Red Badge of Courage, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, "George's Mother," "The Open Boat," and "The Blue Hotel." Notable critics of Crane include Edwin Cady, Maurice Bassan, Robert W. Stallman, Eric Solomon, and Richard Chase. A book length study of Crane's poetry has been written by Daniel Hoffman and was published in 1957. Comments on Crane and his writings are included in most literary histories of the United States, and some of his works are included in most American literature anthologies. There are three biographies of Stephen Crane. Those by Thomas Beer (1927) and John Berryman (1950) cannot equal the complete and authoratative biography done by Robert W. Stallman in 1968.

One work of Crane's that has had less critical attention than his more familiar novels and short stories is his long short story, "The Monster." This tale appeared in Harper's Magazine in 1898 and was

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<sup>1</sup>Edwin H. Cady, Stephen Crane (New York, 1962), pp. 15-16.

published in book form in 1899 and 1901. It was not received as enthusiastically as his earlier work. In the last twenty years, however, "The Monster" has received much more critical attention. Traditionally, Crane critics have made only passing reference to "The Monster." They usually point out the shock effect of Henry Johnson's injury or consider the story as an example of Crane's social criticism. Edwin Cady, for example, recognizes that "The Monster" is a criticism of small town life. He also mentions the racial implications of the story and the courage and heroism of Dr. Trescott, but his references are brief.<sup>2</sup> Probably the most lengthy and perceptive analysis of the story has been written by Eric Solomon in Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism (1966). Solomon considers the story to be basically a criticism of society.<sup>3</sup> However, such criticisms are too narrow to furnish a complete understanding of "The Monster." No critic has analyzed the story completely in all its aspects, considered the possible influences of Crane's life and philosophy in the story, and attempted to discover the unity of an artistic whole in these various approaches to "The Monster."

While making a brief reference to "The Monster," Charles C. Walcutt says that the story "has received little critical attention, perhaps because it is so unpleasant to think about."<sup>4</sup> Edwin Cady, in

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<sup>2</sup>Cady, pp. 159-160.

<sup>3</sup>Eric Solomon, Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1966), pp. 177-179.

<sup>4</sup>Charles C. Walcutt, American Literary Naturalism, A Divided Stream (Minneapolis, 1956), p. 82.



his study of Crane's works states, "'The Monster' cries out for a more adequate criticism than it has received."<sup>5</sup>

It is the purpose of this paper to evaluate "The Monster" thoroughly, through the approaches of its social criticism of the small town, through its attack on racial prejudice, through its relationship to literary naturalism and impressionism, and finally through the character of Dr. Trescott. In each critical approach, both available critical commentary and the narrative itself are examined, as well as events in Crane's own life where they are pertinent. Chapter II deals with the forces of hypocrisy and conformity as the most frequent targets for criticism of life in Whilomville. In Chapter III the element of racial prejudice is analyzed in the character of Henry Johnson and in the treatment of the Farragut and Williams families as stereotyped "stage" Negroes. Chapter IV is an analysis of the elements of naturalism and impressionism in Crane's style in "The Monster" including his diction and imagery. Finally, Chapter V will show that the artistic unity of "The Monster" is found in the character of Dr. Trescott. It is the contention of this writer that the basic unity of "The Monster" is best understood in the characterization of Dr. Trescott and that the basic theme of "The Monster" is Dr. Trescott's attempt to live a life of courage, integrity, and kindness as he understands them in the face of almost overwhelming opposition.

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<sup>5</sup>Cady, p. 160.

Before beginning this critical evaluation of "The Monster," it is necessary, in the interest of clarity, to include a summary of the plot of the story.

#### Plot Summary

Stephen Crane's long short story "The Monster" is set in the fictitious New England town of Whilomville (once upon a time) during the spring or early summer. In the opening scene Jimmie Trescott is playing train in the yard while his father, Doctor Trescott, is diligently mowing the lawn. Engrossed in the fun of riding in his cart, Jimmie accidentally runs over a peony. After some difficulty in communication, Jimmie finally succeeds in informing his father of the mishap. Jimmie is forbidden to play his game for the rest of the day and seeks solace in the company of Henry Johnson, the doctor's Negro stable man. Henry enjoys Jimmie's admiration and vacillates between the roles of friend and parent.

Henry has the reputation in Whilomville of being a dude, and on this particular night he dresses himself carefully and walks through town to pay a social call on Miss Bella Farragut in the Negro district of Watermelon Alley. Most of the townspeople eventually gather in the town park to listen to the band. But their amusement is abruptly interrupted by the roar of a factory whistle indicating a local fire. The volunteer fire department and numerous onlookers frantically rush to the scene of the fire--the Trescott home. The fire ultimately destroys the house and the doctor's laboratory. It also injures both

Jimmie and the doctor who, returning late from a call, rushes in to save his son. Henry Johnson, the first to attempt to save Jimmie, has carried him close to safety before collapsing on the floor in the doctor's laboratory.

Dr. Trescott and Jimmie recover rapidly but it takes great time and patience on the part of Dr. Trescott to save Henry, who has lost his reason and his face from chemical burns. When Henry is well enough to walk, the doctor takes him out of town to live in Alek Williams' shanty. Alek and his family are terrified by the unsightly Henry, but not many weeks pass before Henry escapes from his room and wanders merrily through Whilomville. He innocently breaks up a children's party, terrorizes Watermelon Alley, and is chased down Main Street by a rock-hurling mob.

As a result of Alek's fears and of the community's reaction to the harmless monster's escapade, Dr. Trescott feels obliged to care for Henry in his own home. But it soon becomes apparent that the community cannot accept the presence of the monster. Three old gossips, Martha Goodwin, her sister Kate, and Carrie Dungen feed ravenously on all rumors and news concerning Henry or the Trescott's and succeed in spreading dissent among the women of the town. Jake Winter, the father of a little girl who was frightened by Henry at the children's party, insults Dr. Trescott when the latter comes on a house call. Worst of all, Jimmie and his friends playfully but cruelly entertain themselves with Henry in the Trescott's yard.

Finally, in the fall, four town leaders including Judge Hagen-thorpe, who had cautioned the doctor from the beginning that he was

doing Henry a questionable service by saving him, visit Doctor Trescott and try to convince him to move Henry out of town, suggesting locations and offering to pay his board. But the doctor, although he admits that keeping Henry is a problem because he knows of his own son's cruelty to Henry and has experienced the anger of the townspeople, cannot personally justify moving Henry. The story ends with Dr. Trescott consoling his wife as they sit in the drawing room of their home amidst fifteen empty tea cups and untouched cake. This usually was the afternoon that Mrs. Trescott entertained and all of her friends except one had chosen not to come. Mrs. Trescott sobs, and the doctor distractedly tries to count the cups as the winter wind howls outside.

## CHAPTER II

### "THE MONSTER" AS A CRITICISM OF SMALL TOWN LIFE

Basic to a complete understanding of "The Monster" is a detailed study of the story as a criticism of small town life. Critics have generally observed that "The Monster" is a work of social criticism, and some have pointed out that it is, in particular, a criticism of small town life. None have, however, given the subject comprehensive coverage. As a criticism of small town life, this work is a part of a significant literary trend involving both naturalistic and local color writers, that extends from approximately 1870 to 1930. Crane's other Whilomville stories are also a part of this trend.

After a more comprehensive review of the above introductory material, this chapter will focus on Crane's basic criticism of life in Whilomville, particularly its hypocrisy and conformity. Particular attention will be given to an analysis of the important role that the three gossips play in Crane's criticism of the hypocrisy and conformity in Whilomville. In addition, a brief allegorical interpretation of the fire in Dr. Trescott's home is included at the end of this chapter because it symbolizes the action of the entire story and dramatically emphasizes Crane's criticism of the townspeople.

#### Criticism of "The Monster"

Almost all critics who make reference to "The Monster" mention its social criticism. Thomas Beer calls the work a study of popular

stupidity.<sup>1</sup> John Berryman says that Crane's subject is society against the person.<sup>2</sup> The story is a "study of society's fear, stupidity, persecution."<sup>3</sup> Ralph Ellison describes "The Monster" as Crane's explicit projection of his social criticism.<sup>4</sup> According to Eric Solomon, "The Monster," along with Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, contains Crane's most extensive social comment. For Solomon, Whilomville represents a state of mind that exists both sometime and all the time, depending on the amount of prejudice, hypocrisy, and fear that exist in the individual and in society.<sup>5</sup>

Several critics have also taken special note of the fact that Crane's social criticism is directed in particular against life in a small town. As early as 1926, in the introduction to "The Monster" in his collected works of Stephen Crane, Wilson Follett shows concern that the reader "take the tale as Crane meant it, construing it as before all a piece of social irony, a sort of miniature Late Victorian anticipation of Main Street."<sup>6</sup> More recently, Eric Solomon in a

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<sup>1</sup>Thomas Beer, Stephen Crane: A Study in American Letters (New York, 1927), p. 163.

<sup>2</sup>John Berryman, "Crane's Art," in Stephen Crane: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Maurice Bassan (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1967), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>John Berryman, Stephen Crane (New York, 1950), p. 191.

<sup>4</sup>Ralph Ellison, Shadow and Act (New York, 1964), p. 65.

<sup>5</sup>Eric Solomon, Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), pp. 176-178.

<sup>6</sup>Wilson Follett, ed., The Works of Stephen Crane (New York, 1926), III, x.

chapter in Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism that discusses "The Monster" as social criticism states that in his work Crane has "simultaneously derided the tradition of most sentimental small-town fiction-- 'gentle and secure . . . fathomlessly peaceful . . . the genial atmosphere of the horse and buggy age, warm, kindly, tranquil, neighborly, unhurried, the home of all the virtues' --and deepened the tone of desperation that was a part of seriously realistic small novels."<sup>7</sup> Edwin Cady refers to "The Monster" as Crane's portrayal of the "terror and the beauty of American small town's security and boredom and vulnerability." He considers the compact descriptions of the substance and quality of the life of the village to be "brilliantly effective."<sup>8</sup>

Some critics have interpreted the social criticism in "The Monster" in very unique ways. These individual interpretations do not appear to be parts of any trends. Grant C. Knight is the only critic to this writer's knowledge who does not see the story as a serious indictment of man for his cruel conformity and hypocrisy. For Knight, the story is a "terse, nostalgic survey of social phenomena in a small American town." After listing the various social situations that are part of the story, he says that they are all "handled with . . . warmth and thrift . . . ." The chief value of "The Monster" for this critic "lies in its closely stitched sample of village simplicities and

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<sup>7</sup>Solomon, p. 199.

<sup>8</sup>Edwin H. Cady, Stephen Crane (New York, 1962), pp. 158-159.

village tensions, a bit of art done so affectionately and so credibly . . . ."9

Lars Ahnebrink goes to considerable length to compare Crane's story to Ibsen's An Enemy of the People. Although Crane never made reference to Ibsen and neither have any Crane scholars, Ahnebrink thinks it quite "probable" that Crane might have read Ibsen. He cites Crane's sensitivity to new literary ideas and the growing popularity of Ibsen in the 1890's as proof of this premise. The following are aspects of Ibsen's play which compare with Crane's story, "The Monster." It is set in a small town, and its structure is episodic. Its theme is the ostracism which results from the basic problem of the conflict between the individual and society. The right of the individual is pitted against the power of society, and the refusal of the individual to submit to society results in isolation. Ibsen exposes the moral cowardice of the small town and the power of public opinion while attempting to present both sides of the problem. A doctor and his family are the victims of isolation, and the doctor is skillful, truthful, just, idealistic, dutiful, and individualistic. A smug, influential bachelor, Peter Stockman, questions the doctor's point of view. The atmosphere of the play contains elements of satire, irony, humor, and tragedy. Ahnebrink admits, however, that Ibsen's optimistic ending is a departure from his comparison.<sup>10</sup> Regardless of the

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<sup>9</sup>Grant C. Knight, The Critical Period in American Literature (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1951), pp. 153-155.

<sup>10</sup>Lars Ahnebrink, The Beginnings of Naturalism in American Fiction (Uppsala, 1950), pp. 379-381.



validity of Ahnebrink's comparison, it provides significant insights into Crane's story.

### The Small Town in American Literature

For a long time during the nineteenth century, the ideal image of the American village was simply too "neat, compact, organized, and traditional" to be disturbed.<sup>11</sup> The story set in a background of "idyllic" village life was still much in public demand during the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. The popularity of the works of James Whitcomb Riley, Whittier, and Longfellow witness this fact. Such literature continued to be written in spite of the increasing number of writers who criticized it. The writer who presented a sentimental, reminiscent view of village life often stressed such "idyllic felicities" as comfort, firm religious convictions, spiritual rewards, equal distribution of wealth, and friendly atmosphere.<sup>12</sup>

Thomas Bailey Aldrich's The Story of a Good Bad Boy (1869) is a romantic look back to the early years of the nineteenth century when Portsmouth was a lively center of commerce.<sup>13</sup> The Gentleman From Indiana (1889) by Booth Tarkington is one of his many novels praising

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<sup>11</sup>Carl Van Doren, The American Novel (New York, 1940), p. 294.

<sup>12</sup>Russell Blankenship, American Literature as an Expression of the National Mind (New York, 1931), p. 651.

<sup>13</sup>Ima Honaker Herron, The Small Town in American Literature (New York, 1959), p. 116.

the middle class virtues and the honest hard work of small town people.<sup>14</sup> Sarah Orne Jewett's The Country of the Pointed Firs ignores the sordid, bleak aspects of small town life and presents "simple people" living a quiet life in the "idyllic past."<sup>15</sup> Alice Brown's Tiverton Tales (1899) ignores all hardships. William Allen White, in The Court of Boyville (1899), praises the evidences of democracy and leadership he sees in the boyhood games in a small town.<sup>16</sup> In A Certain Rich Man, also by White, a young man becomes impatient with the "virtuous simplicity of village economics" and is later corrupted in the city. The man dies believing in village life and ideals.<sup>17</sup> As late as 1922 Dorothy Canfield Fisher presents a defense of village life in the romantic Rough Hewn.<sup>18</sup>

As a criticism of small town life, "The Monster" (1899) is part of a large body of similar literature written between 1870 and 1930. The new tendency for authors to portray the small town realistically rather than romantically or sentimentally gained some popularity with the appearance of the "local color" movement in the 1870's. This realistic portrayal of small town life, which became even more

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<sup>14</sup>Blankenship, p. 653.

<sup>15</sup>Herron, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup>Vernon Louis Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought (New York, 1930), III, 374.

<sup>17</sup>Blankenship, p. 652.

<sup>18</sup>Parrington, p. 376.

widespread in the 1880's and 1890's, often included either implied or overt criticism of small town life. The realists reacted against what they considered to be a romantic, sentimental, and thus false view of small town life as they knew it.

Although Nathaniel Hawthorne depicted the narrow righteousness of a Puritan community in The Scarlet Letter (1856), the real attack on the small town came after the Civil War. The Hocsier Schoolmaster written by Edward Eggleston in 1871 presents a critical picture of the barrenness of life in a Midwestern town.<sup>19</sup> E. W. Howe in The Story of a Country Town (1883) presents the dullness of a country town rather than any lively pioneer spirit.<sup>20</sup> The novel is a "stark . . . grim" picture of the poor living conditions in a Kansas town. The dullness is only relieved by gossip; and small-mindedness, hypocrisy, repression, and discontent are common. Religion only increases the misery of life because it induces continued repression.<sup>21</sup>

Mark Twain's Huckleberry Finn, appearing in 1884, is in part the story of an individual's struggle against a repressive village moral code as represented by the Widow Douglas. Twain's sketches of small towns along the lower Mississippi are grim pictures of muddy streets and lazy, gossiping townspeople.<sup>22</sup> In The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg

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<sup>19</sup>Herron, p. 202.

<sup>20</sup>Van Doren, p. 296.

<sup>21</sup>Herron, pp. 209-212.

<sup>22</sup>Herron, p. 245.

(1898) Twain focuses quite specifically on the hypocritical respectability of the townspeople.<sup>23</sup> Their complacent honesty is easily corrupted because it is only a superficial cover for their underlying greed. Joseph Kirkland's Zury (1887) depicts a frontier farming community in Illinois in all its "stern reality." For the main character, a strict early life causes an unnatural thrift with money which is only turned into kindness in later life. The narrow intellectual and social lives of Kirkland's townspeople seem to encourage gossip.<sup>24</sup> The Damnation of Theron Ware (1896) by Harold Frederic is an "unsympathetic study of small town Methodism."<sup>25</sup> The religious prejudice of the townspeople betrays a narrow outlook on religion in particular and life in general.<sup>26</sup>

"The Monster" as a criticism of small town life is related to this body of literature which looked forward in the twentieth century to Spoon River Anthology, Winesburg, Ohio, and Main Street. While "The Monster" is set in an idyllic country town, there is no apparent reconciliation between conflicting forces. Although many of the above-mentioned writers resolve their plots so that there is some adaptation, Crane does not temper his accusations against small town life. The

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<sup>23</sup>Herron, p. 247.

<sup>24</sup>Herron, p. 187.

<sup>25</sup>Robert E. Spiller, and others, eds., Literary History of the United States, rev. ed. (New York, 1953), p. 992.

<sup>26</sup>Herron, pp. 179-180.

ending of Crane's work is pessimistic. The conflict between the individual and the town prevails.

### Whilomville Stories as Social Criticism

"The Monster" is often informally grouped with Crane's Whilomville Stories (1900), since the setting and some of the characters are the same. In these stories, beneath Crane's presentation of boyhood adventures in a small town setting, lies a "bitter version of man in society."<sup>27</sup> The stories are not intended to be "sentimental, nostalgic . . . childhood tales."<sup>28</sup> The actions of children are meant to mirror the actions of adult society. In particular, the often cruel boyhood demand for conformity is as strict as the conformity in the adult world caused by the rigid codes of a "stratified" society.<sup>29</sup> Alfred Kazin points out that "Crane's Whilomville is an abstraction that subsumes the towns of previous boy's books but adds an aura of evil."<sup>30</sup>

In "Shame" and "Lynx-Hunting," the forces of conformity are especially evident. In "Shame" the "herd instincts" of Jimmie Trescott's schoolmates cause him to be ostracized from the group for bringing his lunch in a pail. In "Lynx-Hunting" Jimmie does not really want to shoot the gun; he only does so because of group pressure. "Herd instincts" are again evident in "The Lover and the Telltale" when

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<sup>27</sup>Solomon, p. 202.

<sup>28</sup>Solomon, p. 201.

<sup>29</sup>Solomon, pp. 202-205.

<sup>30</sup>Solomon, p. 292.

Jimmie's schoolmates ridicule him for writing a love letter. In "The Lover and the Telltale," Crane is especially critical of the adult world that causes Rose Goldege to spy on Jimmie and report what she sees. In "The Stove" Crane exposes the "foolish, destructive, and illogical" actions of adults and children.<sup>31</sup>

#### Hypocrisy in "The Monster"

Crane's criticism of small town life in "The Monster" is basically a criticism of the hypocrisy and conformity that he recognizes in the townspeople of Whilomville. This criticism of small town life is closely associated with and is the necessary complement of his basic theme of man's attempt to live according to his own point of view. The hypocrisy and conformity of small town life provide threats to man's individual integrity thereby creating a conflict or struggle. "The complex interrelationship of persons" provides the force that "crushes anyone who might try to define his integrity by challenging its mores."<sup>32</sup> The townspeople are hypocritical when they act or speak in a way that is not genuine, when they do or say something that is not representative of and consistent with their true feelings.

Through his description of the town's reaction to the fire, Crane shows that the majority of the crowd are indulging themselves in the spectacular thrill and excitement of the fire while supposedly showing

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<sup>31</sup>Solomon, pp. 209-222.

<sup>32</sup>Daniel G. Hoffman, The Poetry of Stephen Crane (New York, 1957), pp. 5-6.

concern for the safety of individuals and the protection of property. They are entertained by the fire chief; they argue over rival fire companies; and they even ridicule the slow hook-and-ladder. The townspeople make a contest out of ringing the bells all over the countryside. Many in the crowd seem eager for some injury or death to talk about.

The interest and enthusiasm of the crowd burns itself out along with the fire, and only a group of the most perseverant keep vigil outside Judge Hagenthorpe's house where the injured are being cared for. Out of the crowd of news-seekers and well-wishers, Crane focuses on an old lady with a "miraculous poultice" who is attempting to gain entrance to the Judge's house in order to assist the injured.<sup>33</sup> But ironically, in an act of Christian charity, she quotes "most damning Scripture" (p. 49) to an officer who would not let her enter the house. Certainly, the incident is characteristic of all that is ironical and hypocritical about Whilomville. This old lady, the boys keeping vigil, the newspaper reporter, the extra doctors, and many of the townspeople are most concerned about the injured, when they can do little to help them. Their hypocritical concern is merely part of the excitement of the event. Later when they could really help the injured by being kind and charitable, they become vicious and cruel.

Even more hypocritical are the townspeople's attempts at good will when they hear the false rumor that Henry is dead. They "turned

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<sup>33</sup>Stephen Crane, "The Monster," in The Red Badge of Courage and Selected Prose and Poetry, ed., William M. Gibson, 3rd ed. (New York, 1968), p. 49. Hereafter quotations from the text of "The Monster" will refer to this edition and will be cited in the text of the paper by a page number enclosed in parentheses.

a reverent attention to the memory of this hostler" (p. 49). When Henry was believed to be dead it was safe for people to regret that they had not known enough to give him "a hand and a lift when he was alive, and they judged themselves stupid and ungenerous for this failure" (p. 50). Henry's death merely gives the townspeople a safe opportunity to hypocritically flaunt their charity and good-will; a dead person could not remind them of their living obligations. The true extent of the townspeople's good-will becomes evident when Henry is again present among them, and they cruelly reject him.

The editorial staff of the newspaper seems eager to announce the death of Henry, death being more newsworthy than mere injury. Their eagerness to flaunt their literary talents and sell newspapers overcomes the genuine concern for Henry that is claimed in the editorial. Thus, what they write is hypocritical.

The men in the barbershop provide another sampling of the town's hypocritical reaction to Henry. In their superficial discussion they express great sympathy for the doctor and for Henry. But their sympathy is meaningless and hypocritical because it is only part of an unnatural, forced conversation in a barbershop. It is also hypocritical because it never gets out of the barbershop. In their conversation they sympathize with Henry and the doctor; later, in their actions, they will condemn both of them.

Judge Hagenthorpe, supposedly a man of reason, a protector of justice, and a friend of Dr. Trescott, is one of the more hypocritical characters in the story. He shows that he is really none of the things



he pretends to be when he gives up all responsibility for the doctor's actions, assuring him that he is creating a monster without a mind.

A discussion between the judge and Alek Williams concerning a raise in pay for boarding Henry emphasizes the self-righteousness and hypocrisy of Judge Hagenthorpe. The judge treats Alek as less than an equal. The following quotes illustrate the Judge's attitude: "If you have flour in the barrel and meat in the pot, your wife can get along without receiving lady callers, can't she? . . . Well let them stay home if they are such silly people . . . Your old woman is an idiot. . . . You don't care what a lot of foolish people say. Go on tending to your business, and pay no attention to such idle nonsense. . . . What do you care what he looks like" (pp. 56-59). These remarks are extremely hypocritical because the judge and the rest of the townspeople will prove that they are not capable of doing what the judge has so self-righteously asked a lesser citizen like Alek to do. The judge's own wife, as well as ten other women in town, become the "silly people" (p. 56) who refuse to visit because of Henry's presence. The judge and the rest of the town become the "foolish people" (p. 57) who gossip about Henry. One expects greater understanding and sympathy from a man of the judge's intellectual background and social position than he shows toward Dr. Trescott and Alek.

When Henry visits Watermelon Alley the second time, as a "genial monster" (p. 68), Bella's actions, which are easily lost in the humor of the situation, actually reveal the extreme hypocrisy of her earlier claim of being engaged to Henry. In her panic, she shows absolutely

no concern for the pathetic Henry. Her reaction is certainly not a loving one, and not at all consistent with her earlier praise of Henry.

Through the police chief the reader learns that crowds have chased Henry and thrown rocks at him. But the chief tempers the report adding that "they never touched him. Of course nobody really wanted to hit him, but you know how a crowd gets. It's like--it's like--" (p. 69). Whatever it's like, it is certainly a distinct contrast to the "hand and a lift" (p. 50) that the people wished they had given Henry when they thought he was dead. Like Bella, they expose their hypocrisy because their actions are not at all consistent with their earlier praises and regrets when Henry was thought to be dead.

It is unfair to say that the personal concern that the four men show for Dr. Trescott's economic security is totally hypocritical. However, their presence as "very active and influential citizens" (p. 83) is somewhat hypocritical because in that respect they are really town leaders and must represent the "hostility of the community."<sup>34</sup> As representatives of the townspeople their first concern is obviously with getting Henry out of town. The townspeople are not concerned with Dr. Trescott's economic security, for they are directly responsible for the ruin of his practice. When the situation is looked at in this way, there is a certain lack of genuineness in their motives for visiting Dr. Trescott.

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<sup>34</sup>Thomas A. Gullason, "The Symbolic Unity of 'The Monster,'" MLN, LXXV (1960), 677.

## Conformity in "The Monster"

If Crane uses "The Monster" to show the hypocrisy of the small town, he also uses it to reveal the demand for conformity. A very prominent entry in Crane's notebook emphasizes his point of view about conformity. It is a well-known statement of Ralph Waldo Emerson's: "Congratulate yourselves if you have done something strange and extravagant and have broken the monotony of a decorous age."<sup>35</sup> The demand for conformity is one of Crane's basic criticisms of small town life because it is responsible for social and religious repression that results in narrow-mindedness and dullness or lack of spontaneity in life. Conformity challenges the individual's incentive and his personal point of view. The conformity of the townspeople is prompted, in part, by their need for domestic security which is threatened by Henry Johnson's presence in the community.

Several critics have made special reference to the scene in which the picture entitled "Signing the Declaration" burns and falls to the floor as being symbolic of the subsequent destruction of Dr. Trescott's independence of thought and action as a result of the townspeople's demand for conformity. It will become apparent in the story that conformity is the way of life in Whilomville, and independence is only a word on a plaque. Much of the control of conformity in Whilomville is accomplished through the under-currents of kitchen

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<sup>35</sup>Robert W. Stallman, Stephen Crane: A Biography (New York, 1968), p. 334.

gossip. Crane uses the three gossips as representatives of this hidden force. As a result, the demand for conformity that causes the ostracism of Dr. Trescott is something negative and covert; people simply refrain from visiting and consulting Dr. Trescott. The reader is only presented with the effects of that conformity. However, there are several scenes in the story where conformity is overt, and Crane intends these scenes to be indicative of the negative conformist capabilities of the townspeople.

Early in the story, Crane makes a point of revealing the conformity of the young men at the band concert in the park. "Most of the young men of the town affected to be superior to this band, even to despise it . . . they remained thus beyond the borders of the festivities because of their dignity" (p. 36). While the more open and honest younger boys enjoy themselves by running through the crowds and show open admiration for the snaredrum player, the self-conscious older boys stand around passively and make sarcastic comments about the band "because it was fashionable to say that manner of thing concerning the band" (p. 36).

The conformity that Crane reveals in the thoughts and actions of these young men is certainly rather innocent and understandable in young people, but when this childish conformity is mirrored in the lives of adults it becomes cruel, and its result is tragic. As is the case in his Whilomville stories, when Crane includes a children's scene in the action of the story, he is very frequently mocking "the familiar boyhood idyls" and using the form to disguise his savage attacks on the adults in the town. For Crane, the actions of children

reflect the universal "human condition."<sup>36</sup> And he often sees in their actions "the instinctive immoral cruelty and ruthless herd impulse" that is responsible for the "martyrdom of the individual."<sup>37</sup>

Another example of this overt conformity is the report by the police chief of the stoning of Henry Johnson. Regardless of the crowd and their fears, individuals must still be held responsible for their actions. This mob action is the very epitome of conformity, and the result of conformity is the complete negation of the individual responsibility that Dr. Trescott exercises. Thus the fire and the resultant disfiguration of Henry have finally exposed the townspeople in an overtly cruel act. But the overt cruelty of this act is only an indication of the cruelty of the hidden conformity that causes Dr. Trescott to be excluded from the society.

The actions of Jimmie and his friends in their game with Henry indicate the conformity of adults in their childish fear of and lack of respect for Henry. The children act with the same blind conformity as the unreasoning mob that earlier stoned Henry. Like adults, the children feel no sorrow for having been cruel to Henry; they simply do not realize what they have done. The demand for conformity overcomes any other human considerations. It is this demand that causes the basic conflict between Dr. Trescott and the people of Whilomville. It eventually masses public opinion against the doctor and seals his fate.

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<sup>36</sup>Solomon, p. 200.

<sup>37</sup>Maxwell Geismar, Rebels and Ancestors (Boston, 1953), p. 126.

A significant cause of this excessive conformity in the community is the townspeople's concern for domestic security. Crane subtly indicates this concern early in the story, just after the fire alarm sounds.

As the crowd rushes down the street to the fire, a young boy pleads almost violently with his mother to let him join the crowd. It is an unusual and exciting event for the boy and he does not want to miss it. Aside from his own interest in the fire, he will certainly want to be a part of the group of important boys who can say they saw the whole thing. But the boy's mother responds negatively, and in a last desperate attempt the boy pleads, "Just down to the corner, ma?" And his mother responds, "Willie, it's half-past nine now" (p. 39). Thus the "firm tones of domestic security" intervene to keep the child from doing something out of the ordinary.<sup>38</sup> While domestic security is not openly stressed in the story, it is a very real concern for the people in Whilomville. It is a contributing cause of their conformity in ostracizing Henry and Dr. Trescott. The townspeople feel that Henry is endangering their safety. He and Dr. Trescott are threats to their peaceful, routine lives. Henry's rampage through town causes this concern for domestic security to become a frantic obsession.

This obsession is apparent when the cowardly, small-minded Jake Winter insults Dr. Trescott. Like many other townspeople, Jake allows his own personal fears for the domestic security of his daughter to

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<sup>38</sup>Solomon, p. 186.

take precedence over a greater more humanitarian concern for his fellowman. Such a small-minded person is a typical target for Crane's criticism of the small town.

The four town leaders represent the townspeople's need for domestic security when they appeal to Dr. Trescott to allow Henry to be placed on a farm or in an institution.

### The Three Gossips

Crane's condemnation of hypocrisy and conformity gains momentum as he nears the end of the story. It reaches its height in his treatment of the three gossips, Martha, Kate, and Carrie. Critics have correctly pointed out that Crane seems to have lost his sense of proportion in the two parts where he characterizes the women. Martha, especially, "is drawn with a fury out of all proportion to any part she is given to play."<sup>39</sup> His discussion of the gossips is more lengthy and his condemnation more intense than is apparently necessary. A further flaw seems to be Crane's inconsistent characterization of Martha. At first she is completely condemned as an extremely hypocritical bigot, but later she defends Dr. Trescott against the rest of the town. Donald Gibson believes that this dual view of Martha makes Crane's attitude toward Dr. Trescott confusing. This confusion, according to Gibson, is possibly indicative of Crane's reservation about Dr. Trescott's decision.<sup>40</sup> Gibson considers Martha's final stand

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<sup>39</sup>Follett, p. xvii.

<sup>40</sup>Donald B. Gibson, The Fiction of Stephen Crane (Carbondale, Ill., 1968), p. 139.

to be based on her recognition of human responsibility.<sup>41</sup> Eric Solomon also expresses confusion on this issue, wondering why, if Martha is supposed to be the epitome of small town intelligence, she seems to voice Crane's opinions in scorning her friends.<sup>42</sup>

The following discussion is not intended to excuse these flaws; it is rather an attempt to explain them from both a biographical and a textual point of view in order that these weaknesses might become more understandable as a part of Crane's criticism of small town life.

Stephen Crane admitted at one time that he had Port Jervis at least partially in mind when he wrote "The Monster." His most obvious reference to that town is his characterization of Martha Goodwin.<sup>43</sup> In 1893 the author wrote the following letter from Port Jervis bitterly complaining about a self-righteous, hypocritical matron whom he had the misfortune of meeting. "There is a feminine mule up here who has roused all the bloodthirst in me and I don't know where it will end." This woman, who has "no more brain than a pig," is also referred to as a "mummy" and a "maggot." She "sits in the kitchen and grunts," and "when she grunts something dies howling." Using wording similar to what he uses four years later in "The Monster," he says, "This lady in her righteousness is just the grave of a stale lust and every boy in town knows it."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Gibson, p. 138.

<sup>42</sup>Solomon, p. 196.

<sup>43</sup>Stallman, p. 334.

<sup>44</sup>Berryman, Stephen Crane, p. 91.



According to Wilson Follett, this woman "seems to be one of the few phenomena that Crane never got over, never saw with detachment."<sup>45</sup> A year later he condemned a lady who complimented him on his poetry. "And the absolutely false tongue of her prattled away for ten minutes in more lies than are usually heard at one time."<sup>46</sup> Further emphasizing his intense dislike for this type of woman, Crane wrote in 1896, "Let a woman once take an interest in the shortcomings of her neighbors, and she immediately and naturally begins to magnify events in a preposterous fashion. . . ."<sup>47</sup> Considering these opinions, it is not entirely surprising that Crane would devote more space to his characterization of the three gossips than is apparently necessary. These women are simply more significant to Crane as social forces contributing to the hypocrisy and conformity of the whole town than they are to most readers.

Crane also allowed himself the pleasure of criticizing such gossips in "The Lover and The Telltale," one of his Whilomville stories. Little Rose Goldege, who tells on Jimmie Trescott, represents a group of women who exist in a "pretentious and often exasperating virtue. . . . The principle and indeed solitary joy which entered their lives was the joy of talking wickedly and busily about their neighbors. It was all done without dream of its being of the vulgarity of the alleys."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Follett, p. xvi.

<sup>46</sup>Stallman, p. 197.

<sup>47</sup>Solomon, p. 291n.

<sup>48</sup>Solomon, p. 210.

Crane also criticizes women in "The Blue Hotel" saying "usually there are from a dozen to forty women really involved in every murder. . ."<sup>49</sup> This quote is especially indicative of the power and conformity of women's opinions. Biographical references as explanations of Crane's excessive criticism of the gossips are secondary to a textual analysis of this criticism and its significance in further developing Crane's criticism of small town life in "The Monster."

Martha Goodwin is a hardworking, respectable widow about whom Crane ironically states, "She was a woman of great mind" (p. 70). He proceeds to show that she is really a narrow-minded, hypocritical bigot. She had never known violence, but in her intellectual narrowness, she "advocated drastic measures" (p. 70) against Cuba, China, and Armenia. In her younger days her mind was filled with romance; now it is filled with kitchen gossip and United States foreign policy. "In regard to social misdemeanors, she who was simply the mausoleum of a dead passion was probably the most savage critic in town" (p. 71). Characteristically, she hypocritically condemns several local lovers. Her sniff as part of her "exalted contempt" (p. 70) for others and their ideas fits her perfectly. In emphasizing Martha's control over the thoughts of others, Crane states that "This unknown woman, hidden in a kitchen as in a well, unknowingly had considerable influence upon the opinions of others" (p. 71). Indeed, "every time the town moved a yard, she had personally contributed an inch" (p. 71). She is a force that causes conformity in the community.

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<sup>49</sup>Walcutt, p. 73.

Because of Martha's odious personality, her acquaintances, who flock to her with gossip, form unofficial alliances in support of one another against her. Although they would later disbelieve all of her "theories" (p. 71) they always respect her for speaking out on issues. In their cowardly hypocrisy they do not dare to confront Martha with their disagreements. One of these acquaintances, Carrie Dungen, is especially hypocritical. "Afterward, under another sun, she always laughed at Martha and pretended to deride her ideas, but in the presence of the sovereign she always remained silent and admiring" (p. 71). Thus Martha's opinions are significant because they cause most of the women in Whilomville to conform in their disagreement with her.

Through the comments of Carrie Dungen, Crane further emphasizes the influence of conformity on the opinions of gossips. Carrie reports what "a lot of people say" (p. 72) about Dr. Trescott's confrontation with Jake Winter. When Martha disagrees with Kate and Carrie by saying that she would not be afraid of Henry and that Sadie Winter is not very ill, Carrie cautions her saying, "You can't go against the whole town" (p. 81). She assures Martha that "everybody's afraid of him," and "everybody says so" (p. 81). Emphasizing the influence of comments such as "everybody says so," Crane says in an earlier reference to the merits of the fire chief that "'My father says' was a very formidable phrase in argument" (p. 47). Through Carrie's comments, Crane is giving the reader an example of the force of public opinion. This appeal to conformity is a significant influence in molding public opinion against Dr. Trescott.

Kate and Carrie are so afraid of Henry, because of public opinion, and they are so narrow-minded, that like Jake Winter they lose sight of all concern for humanity and absolutely condemn Dr. Trescott. Kate, a weak little woman is especially cruel in her comment that Dr. Trescott deserved to lose all of his patients. Martha makes little of Henry's frightening appearance and Sadie's illness and defends Dr. Trescott mainly for the sake of disagreement. As a result, Kate and Carrie, so cruel in their condemnation of Dr. Trescott and Henry, are forced to form an alliance against Martha.

Thus, besides making it very obvious that these ladies are vicious gossips, Crane is also presenting the reader with a significant cause for the Trescott's social ostracism. Without realizing the ultimate effect of her opinion, Martha causes her associates to disagree with her defense of the Trescotts. As a result, it is likely that many of the women of the town form definite opinions against the Trescotts and Henry just because they know they must conform in their disagreement with Martha. The point of view Martha takes need not be considered inconsistent with her characterization. It is in keeping with her superior air and recalcitrant nature to be in disagreement with her lady friends, and by voicing their opinions first, Kate and Carrie leave Martha with no choice but to defend Dr. Trescott.

In addition, Crane possibly manipulated his plot in this way in order to stress the fact that the cruelty of these women is really unintentional. In their desire for conformity the women of the town lose sight of the effects of their gossip. Thus the process by which Dr. Trescott is ostracized becomes even more frightening when one

realizes that the women who are a part of that process are really unaware of what they are doing. They act in blind conformity.

Considering the tremendous influence of Martha, Kate, and Carrie upon the forming of public opinion in Whilomville, and keeping in mind Crane's personal feelings about gossips, one can interpret these rather inconsistent scenes as an important part of Crane's criticism of conformity and hypocrisy in a small town. The significance of these three gossips in furthering Crane's exposition of the conformity and hypocrisy that exists in Whilomville makes the comment by one of the town leaders in part twenty-three quite credible. In attempting to place the blame for Dr. Trescott's ostracism he says, "It's the women" (p. 84).

#### The Symbolism of the Fire

It is difficult to overlook the fact that Crane's description of the fire in the Trescott home stresses the difference between the appearance and the reality of the fire. This description makes the fire symbolic of the later hypocritical actions of the townspeople. Crane's description starts with the calm and quiet atmosphere which surrounds the Trescott home. The dog prowling the area and Pete Washington strolling past whistling for Henry and finding the loft deserted add to the calm, lazy quality of the summer night. But the peaceful night is transformed gradually into a nightmare. The transformation begins as an innocent and delicate "wisp of smoke" drifts "quietly into the branches of a cherry tree" (p. 39). Hidden within the house, the fire continues to build up momentum. Even when it finally breaks forth and the alarm is sounded, the fire blazing at the

windows and the smoke rolling out are only a small indication of the intense heat and flames that are destroying the house from within.

The fire forms a symbolic microcosm of the action of the entire story. Henry's injury and the methodical destruction of Dr. Trescott's laboratory and house are symbolic of the treatment that Henry, the doctor, and his family receive from the townspeople after the catastrophe. In particular, the deceptive innocence and beauty of the fire and its beginnings are symbolic of the hypocritical, deceptive lives of the townspeople. The viciously destructive qualities of the fire in reality are reflected in the cruel conformity of the townspeople in their actions toward Henry and the Trescotts. Just as the apparently innocent and beautiful fire destroys Henry and the doctor's office and home, so the flames of the townspeople's fear and hate will ostracize Henry and the Trescotts and destroy their lives. Thus it can be truly said that in "The Monster" Crane exposes man's inhumanity to man.

### CHAPTER III

#### "THE MONSTER" AS CRITICISM OF RACIAL PREJUDICE

Of particular significance to the modern reader is the element of social criticism in "The Monster" that takes the form of criticism of racial prejudice. Other writers who were roughly contemporary with Crane reacted against the romanticism of writers like Thomas Nelson Page and Harriet Beecher Stowe and tried to depict Negro characters more realistically. These more realistic writers include George Washington Cable in his later writings such as The Silent South (1885) and The Negro Question (1888); Kate Chopin in her short story, "Désirée's Baby" (1893) and Theodore Dreiser in "Nigger Jeff."<sup>1</sup> Crane's treatment of the Negro is, however, more complex and subtle than that of these writers. It is the purpose of this chapter to analyze Stephen Crane's criticism of racial prejudice as another critical approach to "The Monster." Evidence of this criticism can be seen in Crane's characterization of the Farragut and Williams families as stereotyped stage Negroes. More clearly, criticism of racial prejudice is apparent in the town's treatment of the Negro character Henry Johnson, both before and after the fire, and also through an allegorical interpretation of Henry's reactions to being trapped in the burning home of Dr. Trescott.

Crane's humorous descriptions of the actions of the Farragut and Williams families in his brief characterizations of them as stage

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<sup>1</sup>Clarence Gohdes, "The Later Nineteenth Century," in The Literature of the American People, ed. Arthur Hobson Quinn (New York, 1951), p. 654.

Negroes subtly reveal the prevailing tendency of white people to consider the actions of Negroes in the given situations to be more humorous and absurd than their own. The stereotype implies a prejudiced, condescending attitude on the part of white people.<sup>2</sup> Prompted by Henry Johnson's appearance in Watermelon Alley, Bella Farragut madly dashes around the corner of her house to get ready for Henry's visit. Crane continues to exaggerate the visit between the Farraguts and Henry. "After a great deal of kowtow," Henry and Mrs. Farragut "exchanged the most tremendous civilities;" when Bella presents herself, there is "more kowtow on all sides." Her white teeth are "like an illumination." Further humorous reference is made to the "long-winded stew" attended to by Mrs. Farragut at times and to Sim's going to bed in the corner as "domesticities" (p. 35). Crane says that they continue the bowing, smiling, ignoring, and imitating until a late hour.

The next time Crane focuses on the Farraguts, he makes them look even more ridiculous. They are understandably frightened by Henry's disfigured face and incoherent talk, but they are still humorous. Mrs. Farragut heads for the back fence and scrambles over it; Sim silently falls off the railing, eyes sticking out; and Bella scrambles up the front steps. This commotion takes place in spite of the fact that Henry is as polite as he was on his other visit.

Almost all of Crane's references to Alek Williams and his family are equally humorous. Like the Farraguts, the Williams seem to be

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<sup>2</sup>J. C. Levenson, ed., "Stephen Crane," in Major Writers of America, ed. Perry Miller (New York, 1962), II, 395.



characters off the stage of a minstrel show. They can hardly control themselves at their first sight of Henry's disfigured face. After letting out a yell, all Alek can say is "ma Lode a' massy" over and over again. Mrs. Williams shrieks and almost achieves a backward sommersault. The rest of the "tribe of Williams" forms a "wailing heap" behind the stove (p. 55). When Alek asks Judge Hagenthorpe for a raise in pay for boarding Henry, his speech contains a malapropism, he slaps his knee with his hat, he scratches his wool, swings his head from side to side, and kicks the ground. In the scene where Alek checks on Henry and finds his room empty, Crane describes the reactions of the Williams family in the same humorous and exaggerated way. In these scenes, Crane is showing that the white people's condescending attitude toward the Negro is a foolishly prejudiced one because in similar situations white people would, and in fact do, act no less absurdly and humorously. Certainly, the men in the barbershop, the boys on the street corner, Jake Winter, and the gossips are not without absurd qualities.

A number of critics recognize the fact that through characterization and narration Crane is exposing racial prejudice in the townspeople's reactions to Henry Johnson. Donald Gibson sees Henry as a symbol of other Negro monsters created by society after he has been freed from its confining structures.<sup>3</sup> Recognition of Crane's criticism of racial prejudice is also apparent in Robert W. Stallman's comment on the social irony in "The Monster." He states that "the white man's

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<sup>3</sup>Gibson, pp. 137-138.

face is also disfigured--by white society's cruelty to the Negro."<sup>4</sup> However, no critic to this writer's knowledge has combined his comments on the racial prejudice of the townspeople with an allegorical interpretation of Henry's struggles in the upper hallway of Dr. Trescott's home. A combination of these two elements results in a fuller understanding of the extent of Crane's criticism of racial prejudice.

Crane must have realized that he was doing something unusual when he had a Negro perform a heroic act in "The Monster." According to Ralph Ellison, no white author of American literature had ever done this before.<sup>5</sup> It also seems likely, then, that Crane was aware of the possible influences of Henry Johnson's race on the reader's interpretation of the story. While he may not have intended these influences to be dominant in the story, Crane certainly would not deny their existence.

Because Henry Johnson is a Negro, a new dimension is added to Crane's criticism of man's inhumanity. It is no doubt true that the townspeople would also have treated a white person who had been left scarred and mindless by an accident with considerable prejudice. But the fact that Henry is a Negro makes it possible for Crane to expose white prejudice in a more extreme way by showing that the townspeople are as blindly prejudiced before his injury as they are after it.

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<sup>4</sup>Stallman, p. 334.

<sup>5</sup>Stallman, p. 334.

Henry's social standing in the community is in many ways the same before his injury as it is after it. Before the fire, judging from the reactions of the young men on the street and the men in the barbershop, Henry is just a "dude," identified by his lavender trousers (p. 34). He has no real identity; his face and his mind seem inconsequential. Except for his relationship with the Trescott's as their hired man and his friendship with Jimmie, it is not apparent that Henry interacts at all with white people. The results of the accident merely exaggerate this situation in an expressionistic way. After the accident, Henry literally has no face or mind and is physically ostracized from the community. He is stoned, chased, jailed, and finally confined with the Trescotts.

In part two of the story, the reader becomes aware that Henry is only looked up to by Jimmie because he makes himself important. He apparently informs Jimmie that he is a talented hostler, that his job is an important one, and that he is respected by the Negro community in Watermelon Alley. Henry is only noticed by the townspeople in part three because he is good looking and walks gracefully down the main street in lavender trousers. To be even superficially considered a part of Whilomville society, Henry has to create an image or an identity for himself. Society does not recognize the change that takes place "somewhere far in the interior of Henry" that gives him "an underground complacency of superior metal" (pp. 32-33). This and other references to Henry's nobility further expose the extreme blindness of racial prejudice. This blind prejudice not only makes society incapable of

recognizing a Negro as an individual, but it also makes society incapable of recognizing a Negro of superior worth.

Later in the story Henry is referred to as a "thing which he laid on the grass," a monster, and "a thing, a dreadful thing" (pp. 46, 67). Innocent and harmless though he is, Henry is gossiped about, persecuted, and isolated. If Henry is a monster, it is only because he is created by the townspeople by this kind of action. Henry becomes symbolic of most Negroes in society; they are monsters created by racial prejudice.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, Crane uses Henry's injury and the townspeople's reaction to that injury to further expose man's inhumanity to man. Society really becomes the monster because its racial prejudice causes it to "lose face" and "go mad."<sup>7</sup>

Taken allegorically, the fire and Henry's reaction to it become significant as a representation of the prejudiced way in which the town in particular and society in general treat Negroes.

At one point in his struggle against the fire, Henry gives up both the idea and the desire to escape the overpowering flames. He submits "because of his fathers, bending his mind in a most perfect slavery to this conflagration" (p. 42). Like the fire, the prejudices of society often force Negroes to accept a life that makes them subservient to the rest of society. They must pick potatoes as Peter

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<sup>6</sup>Gibson, p. 138.

<sup>7</sup>James Hafley, "'The Monster' and the Art of Stephen Crane," Accent, XIX (Summer 1959), p. 160.

Washington does or be insulted and talked down to as Alek Williams is by Judge Hagenthorpe. Prejudice also forces Negroes to live in houses that lean together "like paralytics" (p. 35). This same prejudice makes Henry the brunt of the jokes of the young men on the street and of the ridicule of the barbershop group. Just as Henry must submit to the fire, Negroes must submit when the force of society is overpowering. They cannot help but become very passive when there is no apparent possibility of relief.

But when Henry remembers the back stairs, and a means of escape is available, he fearfully, frantically battles his way toward the door. Likewise, Henry grasps at the means available to him to express his freedom and individuality. He makes Jimmie aware of his real worth because he knows that the boy is impressionable and will listen to him. He is proud of his looks and dresses carefully when he goes out. Wearing his lavender trousers, he walks before the crowds with a complacent nobility. In a society where the life of the Negro is controlled by racial prejudice, these are the only chances Henry has to express his individuality.

Reacting to similar prejudice, but in a more negative way, Alek Williams greedily jumps at his chance to get a raise for boarding Henry and thus better himself. Similarly, Bella Farragut uses the saintly and heroic Henry to gain importance in the eyes of the community by claiming that she was engaged to Henry.

Henry's Negro "wail" that has in it "the sadness of the swamps" stresses the futility of the Negro's traditional and contemporary struggle for freedom from prejudice against a society that would deny

that freedom. Although not in a Southern plantation environment where a slave might be hunted in the swamps, Henry seems to indicate that the power of racial prejudice that prevailed in the past also prevails in Whilomville.

The fire represents a society which on the surface appears to protect freedom for all. Hidden within that society, however, racial prejudice exists, and Negroes are forced to struggle for their freedom and identity as human beings just as Henry struggles for his life hidden within the Trescott house.

## CHAPTER IV

### NATURALISM AND IMPRESSIONISM IN "THE MONSTER"

Crane is regarded by many critics as an early naturalist and by still more as an impressionist. Both of these elements appear to some extent in "The Monster." It is the purpose of this chapter to analyze those elements of naturalism and impressionism, particularly in Crane's style as they are evidenced by his diction and imagery in "The Monster."

Literary naturalism, of course, includes more than just diction and imagery. However, this writer chooses to focus on these aspects in this chapter because the more profound aspects of naturalism such as the forces of heredity, environment, biology, and nature as determining forces in man's destiny are less significant in "The Monster." In this critical study of "The Monster," these determining forces can be seen more clearly in relation to Crane's criticism of small town behavior and in the character of Dr. Trescott.

Crane's work after 1897 when "The Monster" was written tends to be less naturalistic than his earlier writings such as Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (1893), "George's Mother" (1896), and "The Open Boat" (1897). These latter works especially group Crane with Garland, Frederic, Norris, London, and Dreiser, as an American literary naturalists. As naturalists all of these writers were influenced by the French authors Flaubert and Zola, and the more pessimistic Russian writers Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Dostoevski. At first, the naturalism of these foreign writers was too frank and darkly pessimistic for American writers. But as novelists began to see the great evils of economic and political

growth that victimized man, as they recognized the narrowness and repression of small town life and the futility of the farmer's life, and as they became familiar with the biological determinism of Darwin and the economic determinism of Marx, they believed that the true picture of American life was not being presented by the earlier realists such as Howells.<sup>1</sup>

Following the lead of foreign writers, the American naturalists found it necessary to dig deeper into American society and to expose all that was evil in order to present a true picture of society.<sup>2</sup> The naturalists wrote of characters who were victims of heredity and environment, and social and natural forces. They began to approach their subjects in a more consciously objective way. They saw man as victimized by forces over which he has very little control. Such subject matter as alcoholism, prostitution, slum life, and man against an apparently indifferent nature became matter for artistic development as in Crane's Bowery tales and "The Open Boat." In addition, characters that naturalistic authors depicted were often controlled by their instincts and passions.<sup>3</sup>

In "The Monster," Crane does not use the more obvious naturalistic setting. However, his use of violent diction and plant and animal imagery in "The Monster" reflect this latter characteristic of

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<sup>1</sup>Rod W. Horton and Herbert W. Edwards, Backgrounds of American Literary Thought, 2nd. ed. (New York, 1967), pp. 251-258.

<sup>2</sup>Van Doren, p. 225.

<sup>3</sup>James D. Hart, The Oxford Companion to American Literature, 3rd. ed. (New York, 1956), p. 517.



naturalistic fiction. His diction and imagery make it evident that Crane did believe that man is at times controlled by his instincts and his passions, and that his actions can be inhuman or animalistic.

If the first scene of the story, the description of Jimmie's accident with the peony, is seen as a foreshadowing of future events, then Lars Ahnebrink's idea that "parallels between man and plants" as well as animals are often used in naturalistic fiction is relevant here.<sup>4</sup> Toward the end of the story, again in the garden, Jimmie unintentionally mistreats Henry and is reprimanded by his father. Henry is treated as if he were no more than a mere plant in this second scene. Jimmie's actions, of course, are also indicative of the townspeople's tendency to treat Henry inhumanly.

Beginning with the fire scene, however, Crane's diction directly exposes the instinctual, subhuman actions of the townspeople in their reactions to the fire. They behave like animals. The following words describe the wild animal-like actions of the volunteer firemen: they "wrenched," "tore," "jumped," "leaped," and "kicked." They reply to a question with a "compact howl" (pp. 37-38). The men are completely overcome by their adventurous instincts. Elsewhere men rushed and shouted wildly, and a youth "began to buck and fume like a mustang" (p. 39), eager to see the fire.

Aside from the understandable reactions of Mrs. Trescott, Mr. Hannigan, and Henry, Crane reveals the reactions of the Whilomville

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<sup>4</sup>Ahnebrink, p. 29.

citizens to the fire as something less than human. The fire appeals to their lower natures. In a civilized part of the country where men are seldom challenged by nature, the fire satisfies their desire for adventure. Crane's description of the crowd at the scene of the fire shows, in general, that the townspeople have instinctively gathered there as a result of a rather inhuman passion for the excitement and thrill of watching a house burn and watching the firemen at work. In a newspaper article written in 1894 entitled "When Everyone is Panic Stricken," Crane's sensitive eye catches the gleam of the fire "in the eyes of the crowd that were up-turned to it in an ecstasy of awe, fear, and, too, half barbaric admiration."<sup>5</sup>

Crane's use of animal imagery in the fire scenes gains naturalistic significance when an allegorical interpretation of the fire is considered. If the fire's destruction of the house, the laboratory, and Henry is representative of the townspeople's ostracism of Henry and Dr. Trescott, then the animalistic images of the fire are representative of the animalistic, inhuman cruelty of those townspeople. The "silent grey monkeys," "the fire-imps," the "flame that leaped like a panther," the "sapphire shape like a fair lady" that is, nevertheless, "swifter than eagles, and her talons caught in him as he plunged past her," and the "ruby-red snake-like thing" (pp. 40, 43-44) are only some of the examples of animalistic imagery in Crane's description of the fire.

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<sup>5</sup>Stallman, p. 123.

Although Crane does not use the image, it can hardly be overlooked that the gossiping and wrangling of Martha, Kate, and Carrie is often like so many old cats clawing away at each other and at the reputation of Dr. Trescott. Further, Crane at one point describes Kate as "shrill and excited" (p. 80), acting as if she were "at some kind of feast" (p. 80). She questions Carrie with "fearsome glee" (p. 80) and talks in "blood-thirsty tones" (p. 72). In the same scene, Martha polishes her pans as "no reasonable person" (p. 72) would and holds an iron spoon as if she were "going to attack" (p. 80) Kate and Carrie. The naturalistic significance of these violent and animalistic actions becomes greater when one considers that the actions of these three women are representative of similar occurrences throughout the entire community. The naturalistic elements of animalism and inhumanity thus pervade the community.

Near the end of the story, in the scene where Jimmie and his friends play with Henry, Crane uses the animal-like actions of little boys to mirror the inhumanity of adults. The boys "uttered a derisive shout" and "hooted" Jimmie's opponent. Then these "small enemies . . . crowed like roosters and bleated like lambs" in order to bury their opponent in "ridicule and dishonor." They are termed a pitiless "mob" as they continue their deafening "crowing and bleating." After crouching like a young cat and finally running and touching Henry, the boy "sped away, while his laughter rang out wild, shrill, and exultant" (pp. 74-75). Crane makes the same revelation and proves the correlation between child and adult actions a few scenes later when Dr. Trescott is confronted by the weak and cringing Jake Winter. Jake "barks with

fiery rage from a respectful distance." The doctor leaves him on his porch "yelping . . . like a little dog" (p. 79). Again, naturalistic, animal imagery is used to suggest man's subjection to animal-like instincts and reactions.

Perhaps it is even significant that in the final scene little Jim reads a book about animals in the sitting-room of the Trescott home, seemingly unaware of his parents' plight. Crane's intent may be to show that Jim is acquainting himself with the ways of the townspeople in order to better combat them--or possibly even adapt to them.

Stephen Crane's impressionistic style classifies him with the aesthetic movement of impressionism which began during the late nineteenth century as a French school of painting. Artists such as Degas, Monet, and Renoir attempted to present on canvas the impressions an object made upon them "rather than a realistic version of the object itself." They were more concerned with "moods or sensations than with the observation of details." The impressionistic artist also dealt with the "transitory effects of light and with capturing a momentary luminous atmosphere." The movement was adapted by French writers such as Baudelaire and Mallarmé. In the United States, Hamlin Garland's early writing shows the influences of the impressionist movement. There are also evidences of impressionism in the works of Pound, Sandburg, Aiken, Marianne Moore, and Wallace Stevens.<sup>6</sup>

Many critics show as much awareness of Crane's impressionistic style as they do of his naturalism. Often, a critic will include both

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<sup>6</sup>Hart, pp. 351-352.

words in the same sentence because the terms are not mutually exclusive as they apply to Crane's writing. Impressionism most often refers to the style of Crane's work, especially his use of color, light, and shadowy description, while naturalism refers to his violent diction, animal images, and the various forms of determinism apparent in the themes and characterization of his work. Crane's impressionistic style does, however, affect his naturalism. His impressionism is a subjective vision of reality that tempers purely naturalistic objectivity. The series of brief sense impressions in short sentences gives a sketchy effect, more evocative and suggestive than descriptive and documentary.<sup>7</sup> This impressionistic style led Lars Ahnebrink to comment that Crane's naturalism is "restrained," and "refined."<sup>8</sup> For the same reason Carl Van Doren observed that Crane is "too much of a poet" to be a true naturalist.<sup>9</sup>

Crane seems to have been influenced by Hamlin Garland's enthusiasm for impressionism as it is recorded in an essay in Crumbling Idols (1894). In a letter to a friend, Garland declared himself an impressionist saying, "In truth I was an impressionist in that I presented life and landscape as I personally perceived them."<sup>10</sup> Garland asked that fiction divorce itself from tradition and develop a form

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<sup>7</sup>Sergio Perosa, "Naturalism and Impressionism in Stephen Crane's Fiction," in Stephen Crane: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Maurice Bassan (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1967), p. 86.

<sup>8</sup>Ahnebrink, p. 412.

<sup>9</sup>Van Doren, p. 233.

<sup>10</sup>Perosa, p. 84.

that was based on "the moment of experience, acutely felt and immediately expressed."<sup>11</sup> Besides Garland's enthusiasm for impressionism, Crane may also have been influenced by some artists with whom he associated in New York. Although C. K. Linson, his artist friend, denies the possibility of such an influence, it is certain that just watching an artist work with color and light would be a valuable experience for the impressionistic writer.<sup>12</sup> It is also known that one of Crane's studios in New York contained impressionistic landscapes.<sup>13</sup>

Although French impressionistic painters established themselves as true artists quite early, Crane's impressionistic style in literature in the United States was criticized for being "affected" and "superficial" by several newspapers late in 1897. Crane's style was, however, highly praised in England by Edward Garnett and Joseph Conrad.<sup>14</sup>

There is little doubt that an impressionistic style, including color and light imagery pervades Crane's writings. Even Maggie, one of his most completely naturalistic works, is considered by Van Wyck Brooks to consist of "verbal impressions mainly."<sup>15</sup> Charles C. Walcutt calls Maggie a series of "disconnected sense impressions."<sup>16</sup>

Crane's use of color and light imagery tends to give a wild, nightmarish quality to some of his scenes. The creation of this

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<sup>11</sup>Spiller and others, p. 1017.

<sup>12</sup>Levenson, p. 394.

<sup>13</sup>Stallman, p. 214.

<sup>14</sup>Stallman, p. 330.

<sup>15</sup>Perosa, p. 86.

<sup>16</sup>Perosa, p. 86.

nightmarish atmosphere emphasizes the mad, twisted morality of the townspeople, and lends a more frightening element to their inhuman actions.

The effect of Crane's impressionistic sketching is only mildly nightmarish in section three where the "shimmering blue of the electric arc-lamps" is "conquered by the orange glare" of the gaslights in the shops. Illuminated by this light, a "throng" of people "swarmed" in the street amidst the noise of the "shrill electric street-car" and its "great gong." The "sentinel" maples cast "wonderful shadow-etchings on the "blue-stone pavement" (pp. 32-33). Viewing this scene from inside the barbershop was like looking at "the inhabitants of a great aquarium" (p. 34).

In part four, the park scene, the crowd is described as a "mass" and a "throng" that "swarmed" back and forth illuminated and obscured by "wonderful traceries of leaf shadows on the ground." This light caused the upturned face of a girl "to glow with a wonderful pallor." The park was like a "great vaulted hall" beneath the "shivering light." This rather eerie scene is interrupted by a "great hoarse roar of a factory whistle" that "raised and swelled to a sinister note." The "giant voice from the night" then "died away to a wail." And a second time "the sound swelled in the night and roared its long ominous cry" (pp. 36-37).

These light and color images and sketchy descriptions in the first parts of "The Monster" foreshadow the frightening roar of the fire whistle and the dramatic nightmare of the fire that it signals,

as well as the nightmare of the methodical ostracism of Dr. Trescott and Henry Johnson.

Images of the crowd rushing to the fire give the scene a wild but foreboding quality. "Dark figures," "black crowd," "dark wave . . . whirling," and "black torrent" (p. 38) all describe the crowd. It is swept along by the "solemn and terrible voice" of a church bell "in the portentous night" (p. 39). The dark, foreboding imagery foreshadows the imminent destruction of the Trescott home and of Henry, and also the tragedy of the ultimate isolation of Dr. Trescott. The imagery is associated with Dr. Trescott because the crowd is rushing toward his house which can be seen against "the pall of the blackened sky" (p. 39).

Crane's color imagery is especially effective in his description of the fire scenes. At first, the flames appear at the windows as "bloody specters" (p. 40). Later, in the garden of fire, "flames of violet, crimson, green, blue, orange, and purple were blooming everywhere." In one area, the fire was "precisely the hue of a delicate coral." Another mass lay in "phosphorescent inaction like a pile of emeralds" (p. 43). The nightmarish atmosphere created by the color imagery of the fire scenes helps to emphasize the wild, destructive quality of the fire. Thus, the impressionistic imagery indirectly emphasizes the inhumanity of man which is symbolized by the fire.

The final paragraph of "The Monster" is an example of the effectiveness of Crane's sketchy description and color imagery. "The wind was whining round the house, and the snow beat aslant upon the windows. Sometimes the coal in the stove settled with a crumbling



sound, and the four panes of mica flashed a sudden new crimson. As he sat holding her head on his shoulder, Trescott found himself occasionally trying to count the cups. There were fifteen of them" (p. 86). Crane's description of this scene, although it includes a peaceful drawing room, really takes on nightmarish proportions when one considers the futility and the isolation of the Trescotts' lives emphasized by the fifteen empty cups and the bitter winter weather outside.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BASIC UNITY OF "THE MONSTER"

Analyses of "The Monster" as a criticism of small town life, a criticism of racial prejudice, or as an example of Crane's effective use of a naturalistic and impressionistic style all contribute to a more complete understanding of "The Monster." However, these elements do not supply the basic unity that this writer sees in the story. It is the thesis of this paper that Crane uses these elements, as significant as they are in themselves, to portray the manner in which Dr. Trescott's courage, integrity, and kindness become tragic flaws when they come in conflict with society. In Dr. Trescott, Crane presents a character who protects Henry Johnson not merely out of emotional indebtedness or a sense of guilt, but more basically, because such an act is consistent with his life values of courage, integrity, and respect for life.

Thus, the basic unity of Stephen Crane's short story, "The Monster," lies in a man's attempt to live according to his own values when such an attempt means that the man will have to come into conflict with society. The elements of criticism of small town life, and racial prejudice, and the effect of Crane's style, are all used by the author to show more emphatically the great challenge that Dr. Trescott faces in attempting to live according to his own values.

Although the unity of "The Monster" is primarily an artistic one in the characterization of Dr. Trescott, the story also reveals something about the ideas of Stephen Crane through the emphasis on individual

courage, integrity, and kindness. Stephen Crane, like his character, Dr. Trescott, was a man who struggled to live according to his own point of view.

#### A Characterization of Dr. Trescott

The initial scenes of "The Monster" are devoted to the characterization of Dr. Trescott; his son, Jimmie; and Henry Johnson, the Trescott's hired man. They are characters of personal dignity and deep feeling, and they create an atmosphere of respect and concern for others.

Doctor Trescott, although characterized very briefly in the first section, still makes a distinct and lasting impression upon the reader. He is a man concerned for both human life and plant life. The fact that he spends his leisure hours patiently and diligently caring for his lawn shows that he is hardworking and conscientious. These qualities are consistent with his just but firm disciplining of his son.

Jimmie Trescott's accident with the peony is significant because it reveals the influence that Dr. Trescott had over his son. With the correct guidance, Jimmie is also capable of honesty and deep feeling. After a fruitless attempt to repair the damage, he guiltily reports the accident to his father. He possibly undergoes "a severe mental tumult" in confessing his action, and he accepts his punishment "with infinite modesty of demeanor" (p. 29). Such respect, honesty, and depth of feeling are probably reflections of Doctor Trescott's character.

The fact that Dr. Trescott has difficulty understanding Jimmie's confession, at first, is a possible foreshadowing of the doctor's unwillingness to accept the laws of nature which cannot restore Henry's life just as they cannot restore the damaged plant. As the most successful doctor in Whilomville, Dr. Trescott seems accustomed to defying nature and saving patients. Just before the fire, as he is coming home from a sick call, the doctor is satisfied because the case is in "complete obedience to him, like a wild animal that he had subdued" (p. 45). After challenging the laws of nature and restoring Henry's life, the doctor is unprepared for the social dilemma that will result from his care for Henry. Critic Eric Solomon stresses the foreshadowing of this social dilemma, and his criticism is of special value in emphasizing early in the story that Dr. Trescott will not have the ultimate answer to the problem of saving and caring for Henry.<sup>1</sup> He will only act as he feels he must.

While Doctor Trescott's yard work and the disciplining of Jimmie are important in the development of the doctor's character, they also foreshadow his attitude toward the injured Henry Johnson. The following statement shows the Doctor's concern for life, even though it is only plant life: "The doctor was shaving this lawn as if it were a priest's chin. All during the season he had worked at it in the coolness and peace of the evenings after supper. Even in the shadow of the cherry trees the grass was strong and healthy" (p. 28-29). Besides emphasizing the doctor's concern for life, this quote also shows his diligence and

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<sup>1</sup>Solomon, pp. 183, 192.

conscientiousness. Similarly, Doctor Trescott will show diligence in working to save Henry's life and conscientiousness in being responsible for him after he has recovered.

Several more references are made early in the story to Doctor Trescott's hardworking character and respect for life. As the doctor nears his home and realizes that he is also approaching the fire, he forgets his complacent mood and grows anxious. "He took out the whip and laid it lightly on the mare." The mare acted "surprised and frightened at this extraordinary action" (p. 45). Apparently the doctor customarily had respect for animal life and was not in the habit of using a whip on his horse. Reference is also made to his laboratory where he spent many of his leisure and sleeping hours in "devoting himself to experiments which came in the way of his study and interest" (p. 43). Also, it is noteworthy that after the fire he rebuilds his laboratory before he rebuilds his house. By so characterizing Doctor Trescott, Crane is making the heroic sacrifices that the Doctor makes later, regardless of their wisdom, consistent with his life values rather than merely a result of an emotional indebtedness to Henry for saving Jimmie's life.

But the Trescott who responds to his wife's frantic screams is something more than a hardworking doctor with a respect for living things. The Doctor Trescott at the scene of the fire is an actively courageous man. He grows "hard and chill" (p. 45) and responds quickly but thoughtfully. After kicking open a side door, he rushes into the smoke and fire-filled laboratory. After he finds his son and stumbles out with him, the crowd overpowers him with wet blankets and water.

When a neighbor, Hannigan cries that Henry Johnson is still in the laboratory, Trescott "struggled with his captors, swearing." As he approaches the house again "they were much affrighted at him" (p. 46). But his attempt is unnecessary as another neighbor carries Henry out and lays him on the grass. Thus, the doctor shows that he is willing to sacrifice his life for others. Later, in caring for and protecting Henry, he shows a different courage in sacrificing his social and economic security.

A few hours after the fire, Trescott casts a "leonine and impracticable" (p. 49) glance at those who try to keep him from getting out of bed to check on Henry and Jimmie. This reaction is consistent with his hardworking and conscientious nature and also indicates what his reaction will be to those who challenge his care of Henry.

Some time later in a private talk with Judge Hagenthorpe, who has a greater understanding of small town society and their prejudices, the doctor is presented with some opposition to his work.<sup>2</sup> The judge's point of view and his thoughtful stroking of the ivory head of his cane emphasize the problem of saving someone close to death when a restoration of life will result in more misery for both the patient and those around him. The judge's stroking of the ivory head of his cane will be repeated toward the end of the story further stressing the fact that Crane recognizes that the situation is "problematic" and does not intend to be didactic about Dr. Trescott's views.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Solomon, p. 192.

<sup>3</sup>Solomon, p. 199.

Regardless of the doctor's point of view, the unifying theme of Crane's story is that he has the courage and integrity to uphold this point of view because he thinks it is right, in spite of almost universal opposition.

While Dr. Trescott does have some doubts about saving a man in Henry's condition, he is convinced that he is reacting to an "old problem" (p. 51) in the only way that he can. It is a matter of conscience with Dr. Trescott, not just because he owes a debt to Henry for saving his son's life, but because Henry is a human being who needs care. As a doctor he is devoted to saving lives, and his conscience demands that he accept this challenge. The immediacy of saving a human life is more important to Dr. Trescott than the resulting social dilemmas. Had Henry been injured trying to save his hat, the doctor would have attempted to save him. Such an attitude is only consistent with his character as presented in the story.

Some critics, however, believe that Dr. Trescott is basically motivated by his indebtedness to Henry for saving Jimmie's life. One critic makes the following concluding observation of "The Monster:" "Trescott's duty to a man who has saved his son has been paid in full--with ostracism."<sup>4</sup> Another critic, while pointing out that Dr. Trescott is one of the few really noble characters in Crane's stories dealing with a social theme, emphasizes the fact that the doctor accepts the

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<sup>4</sup>Thomas A. Gullason, "The Symbolic Unity of 'The Monster,'" MLN, LXXV (December, 1960), p. 667.

moral responsibility of his debt to Henry.<sup>5</sup> Edwin H. Cady comments that despite the feelings of the townspeople against the doctor and Henry, "Trescott...will neither forget nor cancel his debt of admiration and gratitude."<sup>6</sup> Eric Solomon sees a progression in the motives of the doctor. "The problem moves from the realm of medical ethics... to a matter of the doctor's ego and sentimental involvement."<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, it is Trescott's "feelings of guilt and pride that will not let him relinquish his role."<sup>8</sup> Ralph Ellison considers the doctor's basic motivation to be medical duty but does not deny a degree of indebtedness.<sup>9</sup> Certainly the doctor is not necessarily without feelings of guilt, indebtedness, and pride, but the overriding aspect of his character as presented in the story is his respect for human life and his devotion to his profession.

Dr. Trescott continually refers to his debt to Henry for his son's life because this reason is easier for the townspeople to understand and identify with. Most of the men in the barbershop can identify with the doctor as an indebted father, at least in a very superficial way. Reifsnyder, eager to talk about something, instigates the discussion saying, "How can you let a man die" (p. 60). Considering subsequent

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<sup>5</sup>Max Westbrook, "Stephen Crane and the Revolt Search Motif," Dissertation Abstracts, XXI (1960-61), 1953.

<sup>6</sup>Cady, p. 160.

<sup>7</sup>Solomon, p. 192.

<sup>8</sup>Solomon, p. 199.

<sup>9</sup>Ellison, p. 75.



events, this quote is ironical. Rather than all of the men having the potential to do what Dr. Trescott is doing, it seems more likely that Dr. Trescott is the only one in Whilomville with the necessary strength of character to protect Henry.

When Henry is able to walk, after weeks of care, Dr. Trescott hires Alek Williams to board him in his shanty home. The most that can be said about the doctor's attempt to place Henry with Alek is that it is an honest mistake. It cannot be a serious flaw or inconsistency of the doctor's character because it is not apparent in the story that he thinks it is necessary to have Henry live in his own home. The doctor's previous conviction had been to save Henry and care for him until he had recovered. It is obvious that he is still concerned about Henry's treatment when he yells at Alek to calm him down. It is only after Henry's escape and the town's very negative reaction to him that the doctor realizes that he can be most humane to Henry by boarding him in his own home. Again, it is the doctor's honesty and integrity as a man who respects human life, qualities which make him a great man, that cause him to keep Henry in his home.<sup>10</sup>

In an emotionally involving scene, after Henry escapes and frightens Sadie Winter and half of the town, Dr. Trescott is verbally assaulted by Jake Winter. The doctor, as a man of deep feeling and concern for others, had gladly visited the Winter girl while substituting for Dr. Moser. However, his services are rudely rejected, and he is thoroughly criticized for being responsible for Henry's actions and their

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<sup>10</sup>Walcutt, p. 83.

effects. The doctor simply writes some directions for another doctor and coolly walks to his carriage without responding to the insults. This scene emphasizes the greatness and nobility of Dr. Trescott, while it reveals Jake Winter as a "yelping...little dog," who barks "in fiery rage from a respectful distance (p. 79).

Dr. Trescott comes closer to realizing the full extent of man's inhumanity when he talks with his son the day after he had seen Jimmie and his friends playing in the yard near Henry. The strength of Dr. Trescott's convictions is severely tested when he realizes that his own son whom Henry had attempted to save has acted so cruelly. When he confronts Jimmie with the seriousness of his actions, the doctor's "countenance" is "clouded in sorrow" (p. 78). The fact that Jimmie is deeply and profoundly affected by his father's reaction shows, as it did in the beginning of the story, that Dr. Trescott communicates his humane concerns to his son on a deep level of feeling.

Toward the end of the story, during the autumn of the year, four of the town leaders, including Judge Hagenthorpe and John Twelve, visit Dr. Trescott in his office. Although Trescott is somewhat surprised that these four men come to see him, he remains cool and aloof in their presence. This is the same coolness that the doctor showed at the scene of the fire and in the presence of Jake Winter. It is his characteristic courage in the face of conflict. John Twelve and the other men try to convince the doctor that he is ruining himself and that Henry Johnson should be sent away. But the men are not communicating with the doctor because they are concerned about his economic ruin resulting from his dwindling practice. The doctor is concerned about

his moral ruin should he allow Henry to be cared for by someone less competent than himself.<sup>11</sup>

The visitors show their lack of understanding of Trescott's dedication and integrity when they assure him that he cannot teach the town anything. They consider solving the problem of Henry's presence in the community to be a game saying, "There must be ways to--to beat the game somehow, you see" (p. 84). They suggest the easy solution of giving Henry a farm up in the hills, but Trescott is as "leonine and impracticable" as ever and assures them that "it can't be done" (pp. 49, 84). This scene closes with Judge Hagenthorpe, one of the four, stroking the ivory head of his cane, thus reemphasizing the complexity of the problem and the impossibility of any easy solution.

In the last part of the story, the scene in the drawing-room, Crane sketches a winter scene which contrasts the bleakness of a late winter afternoon with the serenity of a drawing room warmed by a coal stove. Outside the wind is "whining" and the snow beats "aslant upon the windows." Inside, "dull red panes" shed light on Mr. and Mrs. Trescott (p. 85-86). Around them are arranged tea cups and tea cakes. Only Mrs. Twelve had attended Mrs. Trescott's weekly tea party. The absence of the other ladies shows the extent of the entrenched scorn of the town over the Henry Johnson problem. The inside setting becomes symbolic of the warmth and kindness that exists between the Trescotts, and it contrasts with the outside setting which is symbolic of the coldness and cruel inhumanity on the part of the townspeople. Thus

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<sup>11</sup>Solomon, p. 198.

the ultimate effect of the early summer catastrophe has been the creation of two separate and contrasting worlds. Because of the fire, Dr. Trescott's nobility, goodness, and courage have become tragic flaws in the face of the hypocrisy and conformity of the surrounding community. This tragedy has caused nature's cyclic process to be mirrored in the life of man. From spring, a time of birth and promise and living things, the story progresses to winter, a time of death and despair. The world in which the Trescotts are left is one of isolation and futility as emphasized by the fifteen empty cups.

#### Determinism in the Character of Dr. Trescott

Donald Gibson may be partially correct in saying that the "final resolution" of the story is "predetermined" and that Dr. Trescott has no alternative, but he is not completely accurate.<sup>12</sup> That Dr. Trescott's action in saving and caring for Henry and resisting the pressures of society is consistent with his character as presented in the story has already been pointed out. However, this consistency does not necessarily mean that his ostracism is an absolutely inevitable occurrence and that the story is completely deterministic. Trescott's choice to resist society is consistent and logical, but the deterministic force is not overpowering. There is a certain "limited free will" in Dr. Trescott's choice.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Gibson, p. 138.

<sup>13</sup>Robert W. Schneider, "Stephen Crane: The Promethean Protest," in Five Novelists of the Progressive Era (New York, 1965), p. 91.

Unlike Maggie Johnson and George Kelcey from Crane's Bowery tales, Dr. Trescott is not doomed by his biological weaknesses; he is doomed by his virtues. Although all three of the stories end pessimistically, the characters are not doomed or determined to the same extent. Maggie and George are too weak to do anything but give in to their environment. They are helplessly overcome by a corrupt society, and their characters deteriorate, thus ruling out any chance of overcoming society. But Dr. Trescott's character does not deteriorate. Despite his feelings of isolation and futility in the final scene, he is still a man of talent and integrity; he is not completely helpless. Although Crane gives no indication that society will change, in Dr. Trescott he seems to leave the reader with a reason to hope.

As in the endings of "The Open Boat" and "The Blue Hotel," Crane gives the reader a choice between a merely pessimistic, deterministic ending and a more optimistic ending indicative of human solidarity.<sup>14</sup> Crane seems unwilling to take a one-sided view of man's condition. In "The Open Boat" the four men are victims of an indifferent nature. The oiler who worked the hardest to save the other men drowns very near shore. But the story also shows how men work together in the face of danger to save each other. In "The Blue Hotel," the short section following the Swede's murder makes the story less darkly deterministic. The Easterner at least realizes that all of the men are responsible for Swede's death.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Cady, p. 154.

<sup>15</sup>Cady, pp. 154-157.

In these stories, as in "The Monster," "the implication is that man by courage and complicity can rise superior to the pathos of his situation...answer it with the magnificence of his defiance, his acceptance, and perhaps even his use of it to achieve a classically tragic elevation."<sup>16</sup>

#### Biographical Influences on the Basic Theme of "The Monster"

The biographical information to be considered here is not included as an attempt to prove absolutely that Crane's characterization of Dr. Trescott is autobiographical or that the basic theme of the "The Monster" is directly influenced by occurrences in Crane's life. Rather, the information is intended to suggest the likely influence of Crane's way of life and his ideas on the basic unifying theme of "The Monster."

Critics who make light of the influence of the Dora Clark affair on Crane's outlook on life in general and on the themes of "The Monster" in particular can possibly be excused for not recognizing the apparent significance of the event in Crane's life because they have not had the information contained in chapter thirteen of Robert W. Stallman's recent (1968) biography at their disposal. What follows is a review of Crane's part in the affair based on the information collected in Stallman's biography.

There is a record that about September 10, 1896, Crane received William Randolph Hearst's permission to do some studies on "real

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<sup>16</sup>Cady, p. 154.

incidents of New York life."<sup>17</sup> This agreement was officially announced in Hearst's Journal on September 20. The author of The Red Badge of Courage would write "a series of life in New York. He chose the police courts as his first subject." These writings were ultimately printed under the title of "Adventures of a Novelist." On September 14, Crane visited the Jefferson Market Police Court in Greenwich Village, but he decided that to better understand the criminals he saw there and to get a more accurate view of them, he would have to search the streets and observe them in their usual surroundings. On the night of September 15, Crane met two "chorus girls" at the Turkish Smoking Parlors. They were later joined by a third, Dora Clark. After talking with these women for some time, Crane escorted one of the women to a cable car. When he returned, he witnessed the unjust arrest of the other two for allegedly soliciting. The woman with Dora immediately claimed that Crane was her husband, and Crane, as a "reluctant witness," agreed. But the detective then succeeded in jailing the other, Dora Clark.<sup>18</sup>

Crane debated within himself over the advisability of risking his reputation to defend a prostitute. While realizing that he had no real employer or wife or fiancée to bother about offending, he nevertheless knew that he did have some reputation to lose at the hands of a corrupt police department and a critical public. This reputation had been built up through the popularity of The Red Badge of Courage and

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<sup>17</sup>Stallman, p. 219.

<sup>18</sup>Stallman, p. 220.

The Black Riders. He was advised by a police sergeant not to get dirtied by the affair, but he could not, "in honesty," stay away.<sup>19</sup>

Early in the trial, some incriminating events of Dora Clark's past were introduced, and she was being forced into confessing her occupation when Stephen Crane spoke up and admitted being with her on the night in question for the purpose of writing some sketches on the district. The magistrate believed Crane, and the girl was released. However, she complained that she would be arrested again on false charges when there was no witness near. The New York Tribune and Journal carried the story, and Crane complained to the reporters that the arrest of Dora Clark was an injustice. Crane assured the reporters that he would give testimony again regardless of his reputation.<sup>20</sup> He felt that he had witnessed an injustice and was only doing his duty as a man. Crane admitted, however, that he was frightened at the trial.

The Boston Herald ridiculed Crane's defense of Dora Clark as senseless, and the Boston Traveller maintained that Crane was probably spending the night with Dora and fabricated the story upon being caught.<sup>21</sup>

Several weeks later, Dora Clark pressed charges against the original arresting detective for assaulting her. A trial date was set, and while Crane would not comment on the event, he assured reporters that he would testify against the detective if called upon. He was

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<sup>19</sup>Stallman, p. 221.

<sup>20</sup>Stallman, p. 223.

<sup>21</sup>Stallman, p. 225.



called to appear in court on October 15. After waiting in the lobby for ten hours, he was cool and composed on the stand according to the Journal.<sup>22</sup>

Because the police had found in Crane's room an "opium layout" that he had experimented with, a court lawyer accused Crane of being drugged by opium when Dora Clark was arrested. He was then asked whether he smoked opium and with what woman he lived in his rooms. According to the New York Sun he was also asked whether or not he lived off money given him by prostitutes. In addition, a janitor at his residence testified that he had lived with a woman for six weeks.<sup>23</sup> Another witness refuted Crane's testimony by swearing that she had seen Dora Clark alone immediately before she was arrested. Crane was next exposed as a liar for saying that he was the husband of the girl with Dora Clark. From this charge Crane excused himself saying that he wanted to protect the girl. At this response the policemen only smiled, and the prostitutes looked confused. They could not comprehend Crane's motive. Subsequently, Dora Clark was exposed as a "kept woman," and Crane was forced to admit that he "frequented a house of ill-repute."<sup>24</sup>

According to the New York Press, the world "may be divided in its opinions about this author's literary value, but it has no doubt

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<sup>22</sup>Stallman, p. 227.

<sup>23</sup>Stallman, p. 228.

<sup>24</sup>Stallman, p. 229.

about the essential worth of his nature."<sup>25</sup> The Journal also praised Crane, of course, but according to Stallman, "It was a miserable time for him...and the damaging scandal injured him more than any other incident in his life." Crane's career, "after ascending to meteoric heights in early 1896, fell to earth during the scandal of his trial with the police. . . ."26

The foregoing events could not help but make a lasting impression upon Crane. Besides embittering him toward the self-righteousness of society, the events very likely strengthened his conviction of the need for man to courageously face the challenges that society presents to his attempts to live a life of courage and kindness. Considering the fact that "The Monster" was completed less than a year after the Dora Clark incident, it is also possible that these vivid impressions furnished Crane with the basic theme of "The Monster" that I have defined.

This same theme must have become even more apparent in Crane's life when he began living with Cora Howarth. Critics have recognized the influence of his relationship with Cora on the theme of "The Monster" with characteristically varying degrees of enthusiasm. Eric Solomon favors a childhood memory as a likely source for the story while recognizing Crane's exile following his "purported" marriage to Cora as a less probable source.<sup>27</sup> Biographer John Berryman considers

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<sup>25</sup>Stallman, p. 232.

<sup>26</sup>Stallman, p. 236.

<sup>27</sup>Solomon, p. 182.

the source for his dominant "rescue and punishment" theme to include Crane's relationship with both Dora Clark and Cora Howarth. Maxwell Geismar in Rebels and Ancestors points to Crane's marriage as an "almost certain" influence upon "The Monster."

Unlike Crane's involvement in the Dora Clark affair, his marriage or association with Cora did not result in a newspaper scandal, public exposure and humiliation. The situation was a potential rather than an actual scandal. Nevertheless, Crane's relationship with Cora made him apprehensive because he knew what the press and the public could do to them. Thus, it is very likely that Crane took Cora to England because the possibility of future scrutiny was less there, rather than because of excessive criticism in the United States, especially Port Jervis, before he left. In connection with this move he is quoted as having said that it was likely that "the weasles would draw blood anyhow."<sup>28</sup>

Robert W. Stallman is also of the opinion that Crane was possibly forced to live in England because of Cora. Mr. Stallman believes that Crane's relationship with Cora was on his mind when he mentioned "unworthiness" in a letter to his brother, William, on October 29, 1897. "There seem so many of them in America who want to kill, bury, and forget me purely out of unkindness and envy and my unworthiness, if you choose."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Lillian Gilkes, Cora Crane: A Biography of Mrs. Stephen Crane (Bloomington, Indiana, 1961), pp. 68-69.

<sup>29</sup>Stallman, p. 310.

Because of these apprehensions, Crane did not mention Cora to his brothers when he visited Port Jervis after signing with the Journal as a war correspondent for the Greco-Turkish War. Neither did he introduce Cora to his brother, Edmund, on the dock in New York after Cora had arrived from Jacksonville to accompany him to Europe. His brothers were apparently not aware of Cora until Crane disappeared in Cuba late in 1898, and Cora frantically cabled Port Jervis asking for help in locating her husband.<sup>30</sup>

However, it must be admitted that the biographers of Cora and Stephen, Lillian Gilkes and Robert W. Stallman, were apparently not able to discover any significant criticism, by the public or the press, of Stephen Crane's relationship with Cora. Lillian Gilkes mentions in several places that there was considerable gossip concerning Cora's past and possible affairs with men of wealth and prominence, but it is not apparent that this gossip was directed toward Crane to any extent.<sup>31</sup>

Cora had a family background of considerable wealth and literacy.<sup>32</sup> According to Ernest McCreedy, one of Crane's fellow journalists, Cora was "handsome" and "refined" and a woman of "class" and "poise."<sup>33</sup> Stallman makes light of her profession considering the sexual repression

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<sup>30</sup>Stallman, p. 266.

<sup>31</sup>Gilkes, p. 45, 260.

<sup>32</sup>Gilkes, p. 30.

<sup>33</sup>Stallman, p. 240.

of the time. In addition, the Cranes were invited to dinners and theatre parties in London where "no eyebrows were lifted."<sup>34</sup> In general, they were well received by various literary personages in England, especially Joseph Conrad, Henry James, and Harold Frederic, and by the public.

Regardless of complimentary reports about Cora and the welcome reception in England, Crane's concern, about his "unworthiness," combined with his knowledge of what the public and the press could do to his reputation, should be recognized as significant influences upon his thinking, especially in 1897. John Berryman's "rescue and punishment" theme, while not necessarily consciously acted out in Crane's life is still relevant.<sup>35</sup> Crane did take Cora away from a lower life in Jacksonville, and he could not help but consider himself unwelcome in New England as a result of his relationship with her. Again, as in the Dora Clark affair, Crane's own way of life or life values had come into at least potential conflict with the opinions of society.

The following statements that might be said to indicate Stephen Crane's philosophy of life or basic life values are significant here for two reasons. First, they emphasize the validity of the Dora Clark affair and Crane's relationship with Cora as true manifestations of his life values. Second, they further develop this writer's opinion that man's attempt to live a life of integrity according to his own point

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<sup>34</sup>Gilkes, p. 129.

<sup>35</sup>Berryman, Stephen Crane, p. 192.

of view in spite of conflicts with society is basic to Crane's life and is very possibly the basic thematic unity of "The Monster."

In a letter to one of his editors, Crane commented that he always tried to go ahead regardless of the opinions of critics "for I understand that a man is born into the world with his own pair of eyes, and he is not at all responsible for his vision--he is merely responsible his quality of personal honesty. To keep close to this honesty is my supreme ambition."<sup>36</sup> In another reference to personal vision or individual point of view Crane states, "Truth in art consists not in fidelity to the observed or experienced facts of the actual world, but rather in the artist's fidelity to the felt truth in his vision."<sup>37</sup>

In both statements Crane indicates that he is not as much concerned with a man's opinion or point of view as he is with the courage and integrity that it sometimes takes to live according to that point of view. It was emphasized earlier in this chapter that Dr. Trescott had difficulty understanding the social dilemma caused by his actions and that he recognized the decision to save Henry as a problematic one. Crane does not intend that we accept Dr. Trescott's decision as our own. The author is only concerned that we recognize the doctor's courage and integrity in accepting what he believed to be his responsibility to society. Just as Crane felt the responsibility to present life in his writing as he saw it, so Dr. Trescott felt the responsibility to protect life whenever possible.

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<sup>36</sup>Ames W. Williams and Vincent Starrett, Stephen Crane: A Bibliography (Glendale, California, 1948), p. 12.

<sup>37</sup>Stallman, p. 178.

Crane refers again to truth as responsibility in a letter to his artist friend, Corwin K. Linson. "To know the truth and sidestep it by mental alertness is sheer hypocrisy."<sup>38</sup> If Dr. Trescott had agreed with the four town leaders and attempted to rid Whilomville of Henry Johnson, he would have been sidestepping the truth as he knew it. Crane, too, would have been guilty of the same fault had he failed to speak out in defense of Dora Clark. Emphasizing Crane's sense of responsibility toward truth James Hafley comments, "If Crane believed anything, he believed that man's acceptance of social responsibility is the means, and the only means, for his personal fulfillment as an individual."<sup>39</sup>

Besides indicating the importance of this responsibility toward one's own point of view, Crane also recognizes the difficulty and even the futility of the task. In a letter to a friend, Nellie Crouse, he said, "I will be glad if I can feel...that my life has been just and kind according to my ability.... I expect to make a sincere, desperate, lonely battle to remain true to my conception of my life and the way it should be lived."<sup>40</sup> In another letter Crane said that in order to achieve real "Human Kindness" man must often go through "disappointment, grief, and pessimism to get there."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Stallman, p. 113.

<sup>39</sup>Hafley, p. 165.

<sup>40</sup>Robert W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes, eds., Stephen Crane: Letters (New York, 1960), p. 105.

<sup>41</sup>Cady, p. 77.

The reader of Crane's biography must feel that his life was a constant struggle with very little reward. Crane travelled frequently with little concern for food or money. His living conditions, even in England, never seemed to be very comfortable. As a war correspondent in Cuba, Crane subjected himself to many hardships and often endangered his life. The women he loved early in his life did not return his love. He was never satisfied with the reception of his work, and during the last few years of his life, he was constantly pressured in his writing to earn enough money to support himself and his wife. He was in and out of debt many times. But in spite of all this, Crane was characteristically generous with his time and money. He always received guests at his various homes in England in a very hospitable way. On several occasions he is known to have loaned money to travellers who were less fortunate than himself. In Cuba he risked his life several times to help soldiers. Certainly, the challenges to man's vision or point of view, man's "sincere, desperate, lonely battle" against those challenges, and the possible "disappointment," "grief," and "pessimism" of that struggle that Crane talks about and that are a part of his life were mirrored in the futility and isolation that Dr. Trescott and his family experience in the closing scenes of "The Monster."



## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

Although Stephen Crane's short story "The Monster" is referred to by many critics as a fairly significant work, it has not received extensive critical evaluation. Criticisms are either too brief or too one-sided to furnish a complete understanding of the story. There are several possible approaches to a critical evaluation of "The Monster." The story can be evaluated through its criticism of small town life, its attack on racial prejudice, or its stylistic relationship to literary naturalism and impressionism. However, the artistic unity of "The Monster" can only be seen through an analysis of the character of Dr. Trescott.

Almost all critics who make reference to "The Monster" mention its social criticism, and some point out that it is, in particular, a criticism of small town life. As such a criticism, "The Monster" is part of a large body of similar literature written between 1870 and 1930. Crane's Whilomville Stories, like "The Monster," are also critical of small town life especially as it is reflected in the actions of children. In "The Monster" the criticism of small town life is focused on hypocrisy and conformity as these forces threaten Dr. Trescott's individuality. Although hypocrisy and conformity are revealed in the actions of most of the townspeople of Whilomville, Crane considers these faults to be especially prominent among kitchen gossips, represented by Martha, Kate, and Carrie. The difference between the appearance and the reality of the fire becomes a symbol of Crane's criticism

of life in Whilomville, as the destructive nature of the fire is ultimately reflected in the inhumanity of the townspeople in their ostracism of Dr. Trescott.

Crane's criticism of society also takes the form of an attack on racial prejudice. By humorously describing the actions of the Farragut and Williams families, Crane reveals the tendency of white people to consider the actions of Negroes to be more humorous and absurd than their own. Crane's attack on racial prejudice is more apparent in the blindly prejudiced attitudes of the townspeople toward Henry Johnson both before and after the fire. In neither case is the Negro really recognized as a human being with an individuality of his own. Further, an allegorical interpretation of Henry's reactions to the fire symbolically reveals racial prejudice toward Negroes.

Elements of both naturalism and impressionism appear to some extent in Crane's style in "The Monster," especially in his diction and imagery. The use of violent diction and plant and animal imagery reflects the tendency of naturalistic writers to depict men who are controlled by their instincts and passions. In "The Monster" these stylistic elements emphasize the inhuman capabilities of the townspeople that ultimately result in Dr. Trescott's ostracism. Crane's impressionistic use of color and light imagery gives a nightmarish quality to some of his scenes. The creation of this atmosphere emphasizes the mad, twisted morality of the townspeople and makes the inhuman actions that morality allows seem more frightening.

A characterization of Dr. Trescott reveals that his actions in saving and protecting Henry are consistent with his character as Crane



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