



# Stephen Crane

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## The Contemporary Reviews

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Edited by  
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# Series editor's preface

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The American Critical Archives series documents a part of a writer's career that is usually difficult to examine, that is, the immediate response to each work as it was made public on the part of reviewers in contemporary newspapers and journals. Although it would not be feasible to reprint every review, each volume in the series reprints a selection of reviews designed to provide the reader with a proportionate sense of the critical response, whether it was positive, negative, or mixed. Checklists of other known reviews are also included to complete the documentary record and allow access for those who wish to do further reading and research.

The editor of each volume has provided an introduction that surveys the career of the author in the context of the contemporary critical response. Ideally, the introduction will inform the reader in brief of what is to be learned by a reading of the full volume. The reader then can go as deeply as necessary in terms of the kind of information desired—be it about a single work, a period in the author's life, or the author's entire career. The intent is to provide quick and easy access to the material for students, scholars, librarians, and general readers.

When completed, the American Critical Archives should constitute a comprehensive history of critical practice in America, and in some cases England, as the writers' careers were in progress. The volumes open a window on the patterns and forces that have shaped the history of American writing and the reputations of the writers. These are primary documents in the literary and cultural life of the nation.

M. THOMAS INGE

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# Introduction

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In the 1890s, no one took Stephen Crane lightly or casually. From the start his work sparked controversy, renewed with every publication he crowded into the single decade of his career. There was great and noisy disagreement over the merits of his journalism, his first novel, his poetry, his early stories and sketches—in short, everything he wrote. Those who championed him no less than those who attacked him worked hard at describing that writing, characterizing it or fixing it into categories. It was praised and it was ridiculed. He was personally reviled and occasionally honored. The evidence is in the reviews. Even his early death did not modify the situation, at least not immediately, though the poet Wallace Stevens thought he detected change.

On June 5, 1900, the twenty-eight-year-old Stephen Crane died in Badenweiler, Baden, where his wife, Cora, had taken him in the final days of his illness. During the long journey to his interment in Elizabeth, New Jersey, the young writer was memorialized at the Central Metropolitan Temple in New York. The *New York Tribune* man who reported on the funeral service filed a modest, non-committal and rather perfunctory account of the service. Only seventy-two years later, when a selection of the unidentified reporter's letters was published, did the world learn that Wallace Stevens had covered the funeral service for Crane, a fellow-poet only three years his senior. Here is what Stevens set down in his journal:

This morning I went to the funeral of Stephen Crane at the Central Metropolitan Temple on Seventh Avenue near Fourteenth Street. The church is a small one and was about [a] third full. Most of the people were of the lower classes and had dropped in apparently to pass away the time. There was a sprinkling of men and women who looked literary, but they were a wretched, rag, tag, and bob-tail. I recognized John Kendrick Bangs. The whole thing was frightful. The prayers were perfunctory, the choir worse than perfunctory with the exception of its hymn "Nearer My God To Thee" which is the only appropriate hymn for funerals I ever heard. The address

was absurd. The man kept me tittering from the time he began till the time he ended. He spoke of Gladstone + Goethe. Then—on the line of premature death—he dragged in Shelley; and speaking of the dead man's later work he referred to Hawthorne. Finally came the Judgement day—all this with most delicate, sweet, and bursal gestures—when the earth and the sea shall give up their dead. A few of the figures to appear that day flashed through my head—and poor Crane looked ridiculous among them. But he lived a brave, aspiring, hard-working life. Certainly he deserved something better than this absolutely common-place, bare, silly service I have just come from. As the hearse rattled up the street over the cobbles, in the stifling heat of the sun, with not a single person paying the least attention to it and with only four or five carriages behind it at a distance I realized much that I had doubtfully suspected before—There are few hero-worshippers.

\* \* \*

Therefore, few heroes.<sup>1</sup>

It is tempting to see in Stevens's reaction to the poor showing in every aspect of Crane's New York funeral service an emblematic foreshadowing of what would in a few short years become of the living Crane's literary reputation—one of such neglect such that, just a few years later, in 1914, prompted the brilliant English critic Edward Garnett to deplore the American critic's "grudging, inadequate recognition of the most original genius it has produced in story-telling."<sup>2</sup> Garnett was ready therefore when Thomas Beer appeared before him in 1923 with an appeal for support in his request for an interview with Joseph Conrad, and when Conrad agreed to write an introduction for Beer's book, Garnett wrote to Conrad, on March 19, 1923:

I am glad that you are going to do that chapter on Crane. And part of it I think you should devote to Crane's style—it's perfection at its finest. I have tried to rub into those blasted Americans that Crane was a master & do you know that my essay on Crane in "Friday Nights" was rejected in turn by the half a dozen American quarterlies I tried. You are in position to say things emphatically. If you look up my paper you will see I have touched concisely on his best work & his *quality*.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, Holly Stevens, ed. (New York: Knopf, 1972), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup> "Some Remarks on American and English Fiction," *Atlantic Monthly*, 114 (December 1914), 747–756; reprinted in Edward Garnett, *Friday Nights* (New York: Knopf, 1922). I quote from the latter, pp. 248–249.

<sup>3</sup> Letter to Joseph Conrad, March 19, 1923, in *A Portrait in Letters: Correspondence to and about Conrad*, J. H. Stape and Owen Knowles, eds. (Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 1996), pp. 206–207.

Yet even four years after the appearance in 1923 of Beer's study, with Conrad's "commonplace" introduction (as it was called by the critic Ernest Boyd<sup>4</sup>), Garnett was still convinced that Crane had never been given his just due. "Crane was a genius," he wrote to his young protégé H. E. Bates, "& do you know since the day he died he has been shockingly 'put on the back shelf.' Nobody cares a damn."<sup>5</sup> Apparently in Garnett's view neither the Beer volume nor even the publication over the years 1925–1927 of the twelve volume collection brought out by Knopf in an edition of 750 copies had made much difference in Crane's fortunes with the American reader, reviewer or critic.

Yet, to return to Wallace Stevens's reaction to the service for Crane, it seems notable to me that the young reporter and fledgling poet ends his journal entry not by focusing on Crane's achievement as a writer but as some sort of heroic figure. Crane, a professional writer—reporter as well as author of fiction and (what must have had great appeal to Stevens, whose own work occasionally echoes Crane's) as poet—had achieved fame and notoriety. His name was not only prominent in the journals of large circulation but even more frequently present in the newspapers where his comings and goings were chronicled no less than his scrapes with the New York police. His heroism in Cuba during the Spanish–American War had set him apart from his fellow reporters, his fellow-writer and war correspondent Richard Harding Davis decided in *Harper's Magazine* in 1899:

The best correspondent is probably the man who by his energy and resource sees more of the war, both afloat and ashore, than do his rivals, and who is able to make the public see what he saw. If that is a good definition, Stephen Crane would seem to have distinctly won the first place among correspondents in the late disturbance . . . Of his power to make the public see what he sees it would be impertinent to speak. His story of Nolan, the regular, bleeding to death on the San Juan hills, is, so far as I have read, the most valuable contribution to literature that the war has produced. It is only necessary to imagine how other writers would have handled it, to appreciate that it could not have been better done. His story of the marine at Guantanamo, who stood on the crest of the hill to "wigwag" to the war-ships, and so exposed himself to the fire of the entire Spanish force, is also particularly interesting, as it illustrates that in his devotion to duty, and also in his readiness at the exciting moments of life, Crane is quite as much of a soldier as the man whose courage he described. He tells how the marine stood erect, staring through the dusk with half-closed eyes, and with his lips

<sup>4</sup> "Readers and Writers," *Independent*, 114 (June 6, 1925), p. 645. Eric Solomon, however, describes Conrad's introduction as "powerful"—*Stephen Crane in England: A Portrait of the Artist* ([Columbus]: Ohio State University Press, 1964), p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> Letter to H. E. Bates, February 2, 1927, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas. Quoted with consent.

moving as he counted the answers from the war-ships, while innumerable bullets splashed the sand about him. But it never occurs to Crane that to sit at the man's feet, as he did, close enough to watch his lips move and to be able to make mental notes for a later tribute to the marine's scorn of fear, was equally deserving of praise.<sup>6</sup>

That by the time of his death Crane's celebrity, fame, and literary fortune on either side of the Atlantic was already in decline (as suggested by the note Stevens strikes at the close of his journal entry) was not immediately noticeable in the public arena of books, reviewers, and publishers. If the London *Times* obituary concludes that Crane's "early death removes from the ranks of letters a man of real ability, from whom not only the public, but his fellow-craftsmen, expected a good deal,"<sup>7</sup> there were still more books to come. After all, in the summer of 1900 there were new Crane books about to appear. *Bowery Tales* (a combined edition of *George's Mother* and *Maggie*), *Whilomville Stories*, and *Wounds in the Rain* were published in the days and weeks following Crane's death, while *Great Battles of the World* (a collection of historical essays researched by Kate Lyons, the novelist Harold Frederic's wife) and *Last Words* (a collection of fugitive pieces, stories, and sketches) were to appear in 1902. To cap all this was the talk about the unfinished novel *The O'Ruddy* and who would bring it to conclusion. Eventually the task would be taken up and completed by Crane's friend the historical novelist Robert Barr. Indeed, most reviewers of *The O'Ruddy*, which did not appear until 1903, bent over backwards to praise the book, even though, as most of them agreed, it was not in Crane's customary line. Crane's "Irish" pieces—"At Clancy's Wake," published in *Truth* in 1893, for example—which might have given critics a head's-up on how to take *The O'Ruddy*, were buried away in newspapers and other periodicals, and *Maggie* and *George's Mother* were much too seriously taken (ignoring their spots of unmistakable comedy) to offer a clue to Crane's humor as evidenced in a satirical account of the genial escapades of a "King of the Irelands," as Crane's hero was dubbed by one reviewer, following a hint in the novel itself.<sup>8</sup>

Early on Crane showed signs of interest in writing. His first known "literary" piece, "Uncle Jake and the Bell Handle," dates from 1885 when he was fourteen. The boy's talent was soon recognized and put to profitable use by his brother, Jonathan Townley Crane, Jr., a reporter from the Jersey shore

<sup>6</sup> Richard Harding Davis, "Our War Correspondents in Cuba and Puerto Rico," *Harper's Magazine*, 98 (May 1899), p. 941.

<sup>7</sup> "Mr. Stephen Crane," *London Times* (June 6, 1900), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> "King of the Irelands," *New York Times* (November 21, 1903), p. BR8. See also Stephen Crane and Robert Barr, *The O'Ruddy*, in *The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane*, Fredson Bowers *et al.*, eds., vol. IV (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1971), p. 20.



during the summer months. Young Stephen assisted him with copy furnished to New York newspapers. After a short stint at Lafayette College, followed by a year at Syracuse University, Crane seems to have decided upon a career as a reporter-writer who kept imagining his way out and away from facts as an end in themselves. It is not known just exactly when he decided, while still writing pieces on various themes and subjects, most of them datelined Hartwood, New York, to write a novel about the Bowery and its inhabitants. In 1893, at the age of twenty-two, he published at his own expense and (mysteriously) under a pseudonym—Johnston Smith—his first piece of extended fiction, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (A Story of New York)*. He could hardly give it away, let alone sell it. But it did come to the attention of Hamlin Garland and William Dean Howells, who became champions of the precocious work of this newcomer to what was called (by Crane himself) this “beautiful war” for realism.<sup>9</sup> In an interview published in the *Philadelphia Press* on April 15, 1894, Howells is quoted on Crane: “He has written one novel so far—*Maggie*, I think that as a study of East Side life in New York *Maggie* is a wonderful book. There is so much realism of a certain kind in it that we might not like to have it lying on our parlor tables, but I hope that the time will come when any book can safely tell the truth as completely as *Maggie* does.”<sup>10</sup> In the next year Howells once again tried to call attention to Crane’s achievement in *Maggie*. In his “Life and Letters” column in *Harper’s Weekly*, he wrote:

I referred last week to the work done in “tough” New York dialect by the author of the Chimmie Fadden stories, but this had been anticipated by Mr. Stephen Crane in a story called *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets*, which was printed some years ago, but could not be said to have been published, so wholly did it fail of recognition. There was reason for this in its grim, not to say grimy truth, and in the impossibility to cultured ears of a parlance whose texture is so largely profanity. All its conscience and all its art could not save it, and it will probably remain unknown, but it embodied perhaps the best tough dialect which has yet found its way into print.<sup>11</sup>

But “in June 1895, no one could know that by Christmas *The Red Badge of Courage*, published in the fall, would have made the author famous,” writes Edwin Cady.<sup>12</sup> Preceding that outbreak of fame, however, was another important Crane publication. A version of *The Red Badge of Courage* was syndicated to newspapers around the country. When the novel was published by

<sup>9</sup> Letter to Lily Brandon Munroe, [March–April 1894], in *The Correspondence of Stephen Crane*, Stanley Wertheim and Paul Sorrentino, eds. vol. I (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> Edward Marshall, “A Great American Writer,” *Philadelphia Press* (April 15, 1894), p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> William Dean Howells, “Life and Letters,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 39 (June 8, 1895), p. 533.

<sup>12</sup> W. D. Howells as Critic, Edwin H. Cady, ed. (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 232.

D. Appleton in the autumn of 1895, possibly due to the book's success in the newspapers, the cuts that had been made to meet journalistic requirement were restored along with some revisions in matters of detail and style.

Between the syndication of the shortened version of *The Red Badge of Courage* and its book publication in full form, Crane took a flier at publishing his verse, "lines," as he called his poems. Published by the Boston firm Copeland and Day, "among the first of American publishers to issue works of literary merit in an attractive format," write Ames W. Williams and Vincent Starrett.<sup>13</sup> The presentation of the poems, all words in capitals, along with the design of the cover and title-page, was, to many reviewers, an open invitation for ridicule, not only of the book as an artifact, but of Crane's often puzzling poems, which sounded like no other poetry they were familiar with but which "looked" like the verse then being published by the English-language decadents abroad.

The book found no more than a small handful of sympathetic reviewers, some of them writing, significantly, due to the initial success of *The Red Badge of Courage* in late 1895.

It was his Civil War novel, of course, that put Stephen Crane on the literary map both in the United States and Great Britain. Although there would be a lasting controversy in the journals and newspapers over whether it was the English reviewer who first recognized the greatness of Crane's novel and thus spurred the American press to take notice or it was the American reviewer who had noted its importance and worth right off, it is clear from the evidence now gathered that the favorable reviews of the novel followed close upon the book's publication, first in the United States at the end of September 1895 and then in Great Britain two months later. There were other controversial matters. One of them revolved around the discovery that the book was not based on Crane's personal experience of the Civil War, which had ended six years before he was born. That Crane had imagined his boy's tale brought him both praise and scorn. The scorn took what has become its storied form in an attack by Alexander C. McClurg, a Civil War volunteer who had risen from Private to Brigadier General, who impugned Crane's presentation of the private soldier's temperament and psychology as being in any way representative of those soldiers engaged in battles that he had experienced. "Nowhere are seen the quiet, manly, self-respecting, and patriotic men, influenced by the highest sense of duty, who in reality fought our battles," complains McClurg. In short, the book is "a mere work of diseased imagination."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Crane's ignorance in matters relating to warfare, he argued, extended to the falsity of his style; and he listed examples of solecisms and the absurdity of his language and imagery. Others, of course, came to Crane's defense, including

<sup>13</sup> Ames W. Williams and Vincent Starrett, *Stephen Crane: A Bibliography* (Glendale, California: J. Valentine, 1948), p. 16.

<sup>14</sup> A[lexander] C. McClurg, "The Red Badge of Hysteria," *Dial*, 20 (April 16, 1896), pp. 227-228.

military officers. The controversy seems not to have hurt the book's popularity or its sales. *The Red Badge of Courage* proved to be Crane's one great popular, financial, and critical success during his lifetime; and it remains so to this day, with some of its strongest adherents among writers. William Faulkner said, "It is the only good war story I know."<sup>15</sup> Ernest Hemingway would later call it "that great boy's dream of war that was to be truer to how war is than any war the boy who wrote it would ever live to see. It is one of the finest books of our literature. It is all as much of one piece as a great poem is."<sup>16</sup> William Saroyan did not stop with *The Red Badge of Courage*. The culmination of a character sketch is the advice: "Say kid, read Stephen Crane's Red Badge of Courage. You'll like it. Read anything of Crane's!"<sup>17</sup>

Hoping to cash in on the attention he was getting for his war novel, Crane reached agreements with his publisher Appleton to reissue *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, but with changes, at least one key excision, and significant re-writing, mainly for stylistic reasons, and with a different publisher Edward Arnold to publish *George's Mother*, a second Bowery novel about two figures—a young man and his mother—living in the same tenement house as Maggie Johnson and her family. Publication of *George's Mother* preceded that of *Maggie* by a matter of days, such that reviewers sometimes considered the two books together. Both the applauders and detractors of these novels agreed that Crane was definitely a realist (for having chosen to offer a somber portrait of how "the other half lives"—to borrow the phrase made famous by Jacob Riis in his sociological study of that title). But they disagreed over whether or not such books should be written. Those who opposed Crane's ventures in this area of social realism, opting to dismiss them as works of realism, did not acknowledge that Crane's literary realism went beyond the reproduction of details and stock situations, that his characters had thoughts and feelings beneath their superficial impressions. Behind *Maggie* and *George's Mother* was the same impulse that led him to write *The Red Badge of Courage*. "I wonder that some of those fellows," he said, writing in the "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War" series in the *Century Magazine*, "don't tell how they *felt* in those scraps. They spout enough of what they *did*, but they're as emotionless as rocks."<sup>18</sup> His own narrative would supply what was left out in those accounts. *George's Mother* and *Maggie*, along with *The Red Badge of Courage*, were also Crane's de facto answer to the widespread general complaints about literary realism in his time. "If 'Realism' is only half of life as the body is only part of the Man," wrote

<sup>15</sup> Letter to Bennett Cerf, Christmas 1932, in *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, Joseph Blotner, ed. (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 69.

<sup>16</sup> Ernest Hemingway, Introduction to *Men at War* (New York: Berkeley, 1958), p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> William Saroyan, "Portrait of a Bum," *Overland Monthly*, 86 (December 1928), p. 424.

<sup>18</sup> Corwin Knapp Linson, "Little Stories of 'Steve' Crane," *Saturday Evening Post*, 175 (April 11, 1903), p. 19.

the *New York Tribune* at the beginning the decade, “how can a book or a play presenting only the outside of things be true to nature and life?”

It is easy to picture a lean and slippered pantaloon hobbling along the crowded street; then on the paper one may see his bent back, the wrinkles in his leathery cheeks, the faded rustiness of his once black coat, the cracks in his dirty linen, the knotted veins, the enlarged knuckles of his old hands. But it takes a Balzac to show the tragedy in the man’s soul—not by pasting a label on the man’s breast, but by making his soul live before you.<sup>19</sup>

Crane was not always credited with bringing out the soul of his Bowery denizens. But to do so was his intention, if we are to credit the now familiar dedicatory message he wrote in several copies of the 1893 *Maggie*: “this book . . . tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless. If one proves that theory, one makes room in Heaven for all sorts of souls, notably an occasional street girl, who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people.”<sup>20</sup>

Still eager to strike while the iron was hot, Appletons brought out a small collection of Crane’s war stories, as the subtitle has it (echoing the subtitle of *The Red Badge of Courage*) of “Episodes of the American Civil War.” Brought out in London as well, as had all of Crane’s books following *The Red Badge of Courage*, *The Little Regiment* attracted considerable attention, especially for a grouping of merely half a dozen tales, with most of the reviewers applauding Crane as an accomplished writer of war stories. The publication of this book helped to solidify (petrify, in some cases) the notion that Crane was at his best as a writer of war stories. This prejudice was helped along when it was noted that the composition of both *George’s Mother* and *Maggie* had preceded the writing of *The Red Badge of Courage*, though the recognition of that fact might just as well have indicated to them that Crane, a professional writer, would not allow himself to accept such a limitation.

It was in this professional spirit, one imagines, that he next undertook a different subject: the bohemian art world of New York, something he knew much about at first hand. He was certainly aware of George du Maurier’s *Trilby* (1894), a novel on the “artist and model” theme that had recently been a sensation of enormous proportion on both sides of the Atlantic, and realized that he could bring his own quite different talent to bear on the New York world of painting. His novel would not follow du Maurier’s Svengali theme but would pursue the twists and turns of a wry love story. Published simultaneously in both the United States and England in mid-spring 1897, *The Third Violet* evoked a wide range of responses, ranging from the negative criticism of the

<sup>19</sup> “Literary Notes,” *New York Tribune* (July 19, 1891), p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Stanley Wertheim and Paul Sorrentino, *The Crane Log: A Documentary Life of Stephen Crane 1871–1900* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1994), p. 89.

*Critic*—"it is inconceivable that even for an experiment in inanity a writer should be willing to follow up a book like 'The Red Badge' with such a vacuous trifle"<sup>21</sup>—to the extravagantly positive reaction—"a remarkable piece of purely literary craft; as a study in handling and technical originality it is something unprecedented."<sup>22</sup> Needless to say, *The Third Violet* did not come close to bringing Crane anything resembling du Maurier's popular success with *Trilby*.

In 1898, eleven months after the publication of *The Third Violet*, Doubleday & McClure brought out the American edition of *The Open Boat and Other Tales of Adventure*, which, along with the title story, included the stories "A Man and Some Others," "One Dash—Horses," "Flanagan and His Short Filibustering Adventure," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," "The Wise Men," "Death and the Child," and "The Five White Mice." The British edition, published at just about the same time, was a more substantial volume, containing all the stories printed in the American edition now presented under the rubric "Minor Conflicts" as well as a second section titled "Midnight Sketches," containing "An Experiment in Misery," "The Men in the Storm," "The Duel that was not Fought," "An Ominous Baby," "A Great Mistake," "An Eloquence of Grief," "The Auction," "The Pace of Youth," and "A Detail."

Many of the reviews focused on "The Open Boat," tacking on a mere mention of the titles of the remaining stories to the end of their reviews. ("The others have the virtues of plot and character to an unusual degree," summarized the *Criterion*. "They concern Greeks, Mexicans, children and cowboys."<sup>23</sup>) Attracted by the fact that Crane's story was based on its author's own after-shipwreck experience, shared with three other survivors in rough seas trying and failing to make it to shore, reviewers in the main had nothing but praise for Crane's story. There was a strong tendency, too, to grant Crane preeminence as the writer whose forte was to depict powerful, unpleasant emotions (whether in war, slums, or shipwrecks). This was Crane's "own lurid province."<sup>24</sup> This was important not only because it implied a more accepting, broader, view of Crane's work, but also because it tied in with the controversy over whether to classify him as a "realist" or "impressionist"; that is, many critics were able to tolerate (and even commend) his unconventional lack of plot, incident, character development by emphasizing that he writes of emotions—he specializes in the psychology of minds under stress, and as such has every right to eschew plot, etc. While Conrad was still describing Crane as "*the only* impressionist and *only* an impressionist," the reviewers were looking on Crane as a sort

<sup>21</sup> *Critic*, 27 (June 26, 1897), p. 438.

<sup>22</sup> "Chelifer" [Rupert Hughes], "The Bookery," *Godey's Magazine*, 135 (September 1897), p. 331.

<sup>23</sup> "A New Book by Stephen Crane," *Criterion*, 17 (April 23, 1898), p. 25.

<sup>24</sup> "Stephen Crane's Stories," *New York Press* (May 1, 1898), p. 29.

of realistic impressionist, or impressionistic realist.<sup>25</sup> Only twenty years later did Conrad acknowledge publicly that Crane's "impressionism of phrase went really deeper than the surface."<sup>26</sup> Elbert Hubbard of the *Philistine* spoke for not a few when he described "The Open Boat" as the "sternest, creepiest bit of realism ever penned."<sup>27</sup>

In 1899 Crane published three books. In mid-spring appeared *War is Kind*, followed by *Active Service* in the fall and *The Monster and Other Stories* in December. *War is Kind*, a second collection of poems, was brought out by Frederick A. Stokes in New York. It was not published in London. Rather modishly designed, illustrated by Will Bradley, and selling for the gaudy price of \$2.50—some reviewers considered this a rip-off, given the blank space on the pages, the Beardsleyesque illustrations, and the misleading title—the book found, at best, a mixed reception.

The title poem's earlier publication, in the February 1896 *Bookman*, had evoked interested responses on both sides of the Atlantic. Jeannette L. Gilder, writing in the *New York World*, found the lines "quite remarkable for the thought in them, but they are not poetry," at least "not poetry as Tennyson understood it, for instance."<sup>28</sup> In London they were noted as "'lines' by Mr. Crane, which, while they are not poetry, are strong and original."<sup>29</sup> Although there were a few serious reviews of *War is Kind*—some favorable, some hostile—for the most part, the reviews seemed to lie in some vast gray area full of ridicule, parody, flippancy.

Like *War is Kind*, *Active Service* added nothing to Crane's literary reputation overall. The longest of Crane's novels, it draws in part on Crane's experience covering the Greco-Turkish conflict in the spring of 1897. But Crane had arrived at the war scene late and because he was also ill part of the time, he had witnessed no real action. Anticipating the possibility that potential buyers of the book would mistake it for a reporter's account of the war, the American edition of *Active Service* carried the explanatory subtitle "A Novel" on the title page. This tag would also defuse any possible disappointment that Crane, despite now having witnessed warfare at first hand, had not produced a "real" account of warfare. No such label, presumably because it was deemed unnecessary, appears in copies of the British edition.

What the premier American war novelist had produced was not a war novel as such but, curiously, a conventional love story played out against the meager

<sup>25</sup> Letter to Edward Garnett, December 5, 1897, *Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, vol. I: 1861–1897, Frederick R. Karl and Laurence Davies, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 416.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Conrad, "Stephen Crane: A Note Without Dates," *Bookman*, 50 (February 1920), p. 530.

<sup>27</sup> Elbert Hubbard, *Philistine*, 11 (September 1900), p. 123.

<sup>28</sup> Jeannette L. Gilder, *New York World* (February 23, 1896), p. 18.

<sup>29</sup> "Mr. Stephen Crane," *Sketch*, 13 (March 18, 1896), p. 338.

color the foreign locale had to yield. The best that reviewers could say of *Active Service*, in the words of the *Independent*, was that it was “a pleasing little story for an idle hour.”<sup>30</sup> Detractors pointed out that despite its title and the single red saber illustrating its front and back covers the book was not about war, that the love story line was not original, and that the novel was devoid of the penetrating psychology that characterized the best of Crane’s previous works. As the *Outlook* put it, “we demand that his own peculiar gift, his clairvoyance, in laying bare the psychology of men’s blind emotions should flash on us dramas of real significance.”<sup>31</sup> Writing shortly after Crane’s death, H. G. Wells offered a plausible explanation for Crane’s failure with this novel: “Much more surely is ‘On Active Service’ [sic] an effort [than *The Third Violet*], and in places a painful effort, to fit his peculiar gift to the uncongenial conditions of popular acceptance. It is the least capable and least satisfactory of all Crane’s work.”<sup>32</sup>

In December 1899 Harper & Brothers published *The Monster and Other Stories*, containing, besides the title story, “The Blue Hotel” and “His New Mittens.” Notably, when the book was republished in 1901, eight months after Crane’s death, it was so enlarged by the inclusion of an additional four stories—“Twelve O’clock,” “Moonlight on the Snow,” “Manacled,” and “An Illusion in Red and White”—that it must be considered a separate publication (as I do in this collection), not merely a reprint. As they did with the *Open Boat* collection, reviewers of this volume (especially in the shorter, first edition) were wont to focus on the title story. Generally favorable, the two most common views of “The Monster” were that it was a psychological study of hysteria and fear or that it was a detailed study of American rural life. A few critics (notably of church-affiliated periodicals) saw it as an investigation of ethics, specifically, the question as to what limits might reasonably exist in the brother’s-keeper approach to life. These readings tended to see Dr. Trescott, who saves Henry Johnson’s life, as, thematically, the tale’s central character, not, as is customary, the heroic black man. “The Monster” alone would have been sufficient to establish Crane’s literary reputation, concluded the *Spectator*. “If Mr. Crane had never written anything else,” it said, “he would have earned the right of remembrance by this story alone.”<sup>33</sup> But the story also had its detractors. They complained that there was no satisfactory resolution to the doctor’s plight, that the elaborate description (of the fire, for example) was pointless, that the subject was violent or horrible. Even as it praises Crane’s artistry, the *Chicago Evening Post* calls the story “a small and odious work of art.”<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *The Independent*, 51 (December 7, 1899), p. 3300.

<sup>31</sup> “Mr. Stephen Crane in Action,” *Outlook*, 4 (December 16, 1899), p. 657.

<sup>32</sup> H. G. Wells, “Stephen Crane: From an English Standpoint,” *North American Review*, 171 (August 15, 1900), p. 240.

<sup>33</sup> “Novels of the Week,” *Spectator*, 86 (February 16, 1901), p. 244.

<sup>34</sup> *Chicago Evening Post* (December 18, 1899), p. 5.

"The Blue Hotel" and "His New Mittens" drew much less attention than "The Monster." They were dismissed entirely by some. "Of the three stories that it [the 1899 *Monster and Other Stories*] contains, the last is childishly ineffective and the second incoherently so" said the *Churchman*.<sup>35</sup> But the *Boston Evening Transcript* thought otherwise. The other two stories were as effective as the title story. "This wonderful artist again gives us three sketches which palpitate with life," it begins:

in the first Negro traits, childhood, a village fire and the gossip and incident of a narrow community. In the second a Nebraska scrap. In the third, the tragedy of a boy's mittens. Stephen Crane's words fall like the adjustments of a magnificent and complicated mechanism.<sup>36</sup>

Occasionally there were suggestions that Crane's work in this volume was derivative. "The Monster" had its source in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, it was suggested, and "The Blue Hotel" in Bret Harte's *Snow-Bound at Eagle's*. Cora Crane offered the information that, in the latter instance, the story was "one of Mr. Crane's own experiences when he went West for the Batchelor Syndicate of New York."<sup>37</sup> This explanation stands as a sort of confirmation before the fact for Thomas Beer's "invented" account of Crane's behavior as witness to a fight similar to the one depicted in "The Blue Hotel."

In the period of scarcely three months after Crane's death on June 5, 1900 there appeared three books with his name on the title-page. William Heinemann reissued *Maggie: A Child of the Streets* (its British title) and *George's Mother* as a single volume bearing the title *Bowery Tales*, Harper & Brothers published *Whilomville Stories* (in New York as well as London), and Frederick A. Stokes in New York and Methuen & Co. in London brought out *Wounds in the Rain*.

Heinemann's edition of *Bowery Tales*, the only edition ever published, was barely noticed, if the paucity of reviews so far uncovered is any indication. It is interesting that the existence of *Bowery Tales* enabled two well-known British writers to discover at a later date Crane's so-called slum novels. In a journal entry dated March 6, 1910, Arnold Bennett writes: "Lately I have been reading Stephen Crane's *Bowery Tales*, which was quite readable, and excellent even, in parts,"<sup>38</sup> while H. E. Bates, in a letter to Edward Garnett in 1927, writes: "My week-end was blessed with a second volume of Crane which I picked up cheap in London—*Maggie & George's Mother*. Its [*sic*] impossible to say how they impressed me . . . Blast the people that won't touch him."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Churchman*, 80 (December 23, 1899), p. 791.

<sup>36</sup> "Stephen Crane's Stories," *Boston Evening Transcript* (January 10, 1900), p. 10.

<sup>37</sup> "The Literary Week," *Academy*, 60 (March 2, 1901), p. 177.

<sup>38</sup> *The Journal of Arnold Bennett* (New York: Literary Guild, 1933), p. 370.

<sup>39</sup> Letter to Edward Garnett, January 26, 1927, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin, Texas. Quoted with consent.



*Whilomville Stories*, a collection of stories from *Harper's Magazine*, is clearly a cycle of inter-related stories. If *The Red Badge of Courage* took a Huck Finn-like boy to war, this late book delves into the mysteries, joys, and cruelties of children in a Tom Sawyer world, especially as it appears in the Phelps farm episodes of the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Reviewers expressed some disagreement over whether it was an adult book about children or a children's book. If the latter it was pointed out that Crane's language was too difficult for them. John D. Barry, who had followed Crane's career from the days of the 1893 *Maggie*, explained Crane's failure in this book as one of language.

At the time of his death he was acquiring from the world the education he had missed in his brief experience at college. Among other things, he was learning new words, fine words, the words that most writers know and never use. He snatched at them as a child snatches at bits of flashing jewelry, and he stuck them into his stories with a splendid disregard of their fitness. *Whilomville Stories*, one of his latest books, instead of being written in the simple language suitable to the child-life described, is full of such words; they fairly stick out of the page. If Mr. Crane had lived a few years longer, he would undoubtedly have stored those words in his memory, kept them shut up there, and returned to plain speech.<sup>40</sup>

In the *Nation* Annie Logan, who seldom if ever had a good word to say about Crane's writing, contended that Crane's entire literary reputation "might justly be annihilated by *Whilomville Stories*."<sup>41</sup> While the *American Ecclesiastical Review* blasted Crane's stories, including the Peter Newell drawings that illustrated them:

Twelve sketches, painfully collecting and setting forth the ugly, petty, and disagreeable things in the lives of dull and wayward middle-class children. An intolerable number of words is devoted to each idea, and both words and phrases are carefully uncouth, whensoever it is possible. The pictures precisely reflect the stories and show children much more hideous than young monkeys, inasmuch as they are clothed in atrocious garments, ill-sewed and ill-fitting. Both stories and pictures are examples of misused labor.<sup>42</sup>

The *Churchman*, on the other hand, acknowledging the loss that Crane's death brought to all "lovers of strenuous fiction and photographic realism," found *Whilomville Stories* to be "as true to life as any that Mr. Crane ever wrote," but with a difference. "It has a winning sympathy, a touch of nature that we recall but rarely in his former work."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> John D. Barry, "A Note on Stephen Crane," *Bookman*, 13 (April 1901), p. 148.

<sup>41</sup> Annie R. M. Logan, "Recent Novels," *Nation*, 72 (February 28, 1901), p. 182.

<sup>42</sup> "Recent Popular Books," *American Ecclesiastical Review*, 23 (September 1900), pp. 335-336.

<sup>43</sup> "Recent Fiction," *Churchman*, 82 (September 29, 1900), p. 385.