A STUDY OF NATURALISM
IN
STEPHEN CRANE'S SHORT STORIES

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Statement of the problem. The purpose of this study is to evaluate and to analyze the form and techniques of naturalism employed by Stephen Crane in representative short stories.

Importance of the study. Comprehensive and standard critical studies of Stephen Crane's works are lacking. For the most part, commentators on Crane's works have spoken in generalizations; therefore, this study presents a detailed analysis of one of the basic elements in his works, naturalism.

Development of the study. This study of naturalism in Crane's works has been restricted to twenty-five short stories. There are two reasons for this limitation: (1) the short stories of Crane reveal perhaps a greater variety of his techniques than do his longer works; and (2), the limitation will enable us to give adequate attention to all the naturalistic elements, thus avoiding the necessity of generalizations.

The short stories analyzed are:

"A Dark Brown Dog"      "The Upturned Face"
"The Veteran"             "Death and the Child"
"A Detail"                "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky"
"A Desertion"             "The Open Boat"
"The Little Regiment"  
"A Mystery of Heroism"  
"The Monster"  
"The Men in the Storm"  
"The Fight"  
"The Price of the Harness"  
"An Episode of War"  
"The Blue Hotel"  
"An Experiment in Misery"*  

"A Man And--Some Others"  
"Twelve O'Clock"  
"Manacled"  
"Horses--One Dash!"  
"A Street Scene in New York"  
"A Great Mistake"  
"An Ominous Baby"  
"An Eloquence of Grief"  

Organization of the thesis. This study is arranged in four chapters: Chapter II discusses the term naturalism and its concomitants; Chapter III presents the study of naturalism in the selected short stories of Stephen Crane; and Chapter IV concludes the study with a summary of the important findings.

CHAPTER II.
NATURALISM AND ITS CONCOMITANTS

The term naturalism in literary criticism has many meanings and implications. Various authors, critics, and scholars have interpreted the term differently. Professor John T. Baker, in his paper, "The Precursors of Naturalism," states:

"It is as difficult to define naturalism as it is to define romanticism or classicism or realism. Abstract names like these have become for us the traditional, convenient, and inexact labels which we attach to complex and heterogeneous fashions of thought and action; and these ways of thinking and doing are as old as human history."¹

Writers, too, have not been negligent in defining the term; thus, Émile Zola, who is usually given the credit of being the "first comprehensive exponent of naturalism," sets forth the simplest sort of precepts concerning naturalism.² He writes that "naturalism means simply a formula, the analytical and experimental method namely. You are a naturalist if you make use of this method, whatever the character of


your style."3 Enlarging upon this theme, Zola says, "Naturalism in letters is equally the return to nature and to man, direct observation, exact anatomy, the acceptance and depicting of what is."4 To Zola, the naturalistic method means the transfer of the scientist's point of view into the artistic realm of literature.

Zola insisted that such experiments and observations be conducted in a scientific spirit, a spirit of seeking knowledge and the truth. The naturalistic author, as Zola saw him, was one who approached his material as the scientist would; that is, with a severely objective viewpoint. "The novelist," Zola writes, "is but a recorder who is forbidden to judge and to conclude. . . . He himself disappears, he keeps his emotion well in hand, he simply shows what he has seen."5 In keeping with a scientific austerity, Zola says, "Imagination has no longer a place. . . . you simply take the life study of a person or a group of persons, whose actions you faithfully depict. The work becomes a report, nothing more; it has but the merit

4 Ibid., p. 114.
5 Ibid., p. 125.
of exact observation, of more or less profound penetration and
analysis, of the logical connection of facts."\(^6\)

Naturalistic literature, as conceived by Zola, is both
objective and impersonal—those are the primary characteristics.
The writer's objectivity and impersonality are arrived at
through what Zola calls a "scientific formula";\(^7\) the materials
are arranged by the naturalist on an observational and analyti-
cal framework in order to present a factual interpretation.

Remembering that Zola appended the name of naturalist
to the writer who is but a scientific recorder, one can under-
stand the necessity of impersonality on the part of the writer.
He simply observes and analyzes his findings in the manner of
a scientist. He does not judge good and evil, right or wrong,
nor is he guided by the moral interpretations and implications
devised by man. The naturalist's attitude is usually described
as amoral, without a sense of moral responsibility or any ethi-
cal standards.\(^8\) The naturalist does not draw a pointed moral
from his material. His observations must stand by themselves,

\(^6\) Ibid., pp. 123-124.

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 93.

\(^8\) Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (Springfield,
p. 30.
alone and unaided. If some ethical standard or conclusion results, it must have developed normally through the naturalist's objective treatment of his material. In addition, retributive justice is non-existent as far as the naturalist is concerned. Man receives neither reward nor punishment for his actions. On this point, Zola writes:

This moral impersonality of a work is all-important, for it raises the question of morality. ... the idealists pretend that it is necessary to lie to be moral; the naturalists affirm that there is no morality outside of the truth. ... We teach the bitter science of life, we give the high lesson of reality. Here is what exists; endeavor to repair it.9

Thus, from his detached observation post, the naturalist records the relations between man and his environment. "Man is not alone," Zola writes:

... he lives in society, in a social condition; and consequently ... this social condition unceasingly modifies the phenomena. Indeed our great study is just there ... to possess a knowledge of the mechanism of the phenomena inherent in man, to show the machinery of his intellectual and sensory manifestations, under the influences of heredity and environment, ... and then finally to exhibit man living in social conditions produced by himself, which he modifies daily, and in the heart of which he himself experiences a continual transformation.10

These evolutionary processes that the naturalist studies, then, are an interplay of the natural forces upon man. The

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10 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
direction of these forces does not leave man to determine his own course of action, and the resulting consequences occur whether he wills it or not. Thus, the naturalist denies that man possesses freedom of the will.

This is considered a vital principle in the naturalistic school of thought. Professor Blankenship's discussion of naturalism in his volume, *American Literature*, points up this cardinal principle, and the resulting effect it has on the writer. He writes: "One of the primary criteria of naturalism is the rejection of the principle of free will, and no man can reject this romantic doctrine and not immediately become more or less pessimistic in his philosophy." 11

Because the naturalist believes that the will of the individual is rendered impotent by sociological and biological pressures, he pessimistically sees man victimized. To the naturalist, man is simply a product of a blind, deterministic force which has no understandable purpose. The struggling individual is held fast by the sectorial pressures of life until he is simply vaporized. For man's achievements and successes, the reward in the end is failure and disaster. He cannot escape; no beneficent power will intervene on his part; his

end lies in nothing more than a void. This conviction is commonly referred to as pessimistic determinism.

Thus far, three distinctive marks have been mentioned in regard to the naturalist: (1) the writer, through an objective and impersonal recording of data, attempts to create reality and to grasp the truth concerning man's position in the universe; (2) the writer in rejecting the moral laws and ethical standards of his social order, reflects these views within his literary compositions; and (3), the writer reveals that determinism dominates all, and that man cannot escape its consequences.

Because his interest lies in frankly revealing the pitiful and ironic disintegration of man, the naturalist's studies have been called "common" and "brutal."\[12\] His characters are treated without reserve and are depicted as encaged beasts in their environment. The central character—if there is one—does not conform to the common conception of "a fit protagonist";\[13\] he does not embody the noble attributes required in the romantic tradition. In the end, the naturalist's protagonist succumbs to the forces of nature and to his environment.


13 Blankenship, op. cit., p. 517.
"Believing in such a world," writes Professor Floyd Stovall, "the individual is persuaded to abandon both reason and morality and fall back upon his animal appetites and instincts for guidance."14

Three distinct types of characters, as pointed out by Professor Vernon L. Parrington, are employed by the naturalists.15 The most frequent type is the individual marked by animalistic traits, physically powerful, but mentally weak. The second type of naturalistic character is the maladjusted person, sometimes afflicted by a physical disability, but more often afflicted with some emotional disturbance. The final, and least used, type of naturalistic character is the individual pictured as a strong character, whose will is finally broken. Professor Farrington concludes that in all these individuals the "three strongest instincts are fear, hunger and sex. In the life of the ordinary person, the third is most critical, hence the naturalist makes much of it."16

The extensive utilization of these three instincts--fear, hunger and sex--imposes a frankness on the part of the


16 Ibid., p. 323.
naturalist. He does not blush. He sets forth the lurid details without qualms or fear. Raciness and slang become characteristics of the naturalist's style in his attempt to breathe life into the speech of his characters. 17

It might be well to point out here that a purely naturalistic work has never been written. "For all practical purposes," write Rod Horton and Herbert Edwards of New York University, "a book in which some of these characteristics are found to a marked degree can be classed as 'naturalistic'; the purely naturalistic work has never been written and, if written, probably could never be read." 18

Thus, in considering the short stories of Stephen Crane, we cannot say that they are purely naturalistic in nature. However, we shall see that Crane's short stories have unmistakable naturalistic elements--some stories more than others.

17 Blankenship, op. cit., p. 514.

CHAPTER III

NATURALISM IN THE SHORT STORIES OF STEPHEN CRANE

The investigation of naturalism in Stephen Crane's short stories necessitates the employment of the criteria of naturalism as discussed in the previous chapter. By using these criteria as a guide throughout this discussion, it is hoped that the naturalistic tendencies of Crane's short stories will be made apparent to the reader.

The first point to be considered is Crane's objective and impersonal attitude towards his stories. In order to determine Crane's status in these two matters, it is necessary to examine the following: the sources from which he derives his material; the observance of any structural concepts or unusual style of writing on his part; the point of view from which he writes his stories; and his attitude toward popular concepts of morality. By such an examination, it can be ascertained to what extent Crane relies on his creative and imaginative faculties. Because naturalism makes no allowance for imagination, such a study will reveal any deviation from this set rule.

Upon the completion of examining the attitude of Stephen Crane in regard to his objectivity, his impersonality, and his disinterest in rendering moral judgments, the investigation then approaches the subject matter of Crane's short stories.
With the aid of illustrations from his stories, the elements of determinism can be clearly seen as well as the types of characters representative of true naturalism.

Thus, the discussion of naturalism in the short stories of Stephen Crane is divided into six sections which are as follows:

I. Source Material
II. Structural Concepts
III. Style of Writing
IV. Point of View
V. Amorality
VI. Determinism

A summary of the findings will follow the discussion.

I. SOURCE MATERIAL

In their search for the truths concerning man, the earliest and most pronounced European naturalists resorted to a "scientific formula" as outlined by Zola. With Zola and his followers, the "scientific formula" reached its fullest development.\(^1\) Martin Schütze in his paper, "The Services of Naturalism to Life and Literature," says of their method:

Since their scheme of life was a purely mechanical contrivance, enabling them, as it were, to construct any individual out of its material—i.e., biological and sociological, premises which they called heredity and environment—their chief concern was to collect all data available for their purposes, give them a literary form and construct their human being from them.\(^2\)

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2 Martin Schütze, "The Services of Naturalism to Life and Literature," The Sewanee Review, 11:430, October, 1903.
This contrived method of Zola left no room for artistic considerations, or for the temperament of such an author as Stephen Crane. Although Crane could never work under such a rigid handicap as a formula, he was working towards the same goal as Zola—to present the truths of life on the written page. In a letter to the editor of Leslie's Weekly, Crane wrote, "I decided that the nearer a writer gets to life the greater he becomes as an artist. . . ."\(^3\) To a friend, Crane wrote, "We are most successful in art when we approach the nearest to nature and truth."\(^4\)

The goals of both Zola and Crane, then, were the same; but the methods of approach were different. Crane used no formula in creating his stories. His stories were not drawn from case histories; they were developed from personal experience, observation, and a vivid imagination.

In his search for reality, Crane sought some insight into the primary passions—pride, rage, instinct of self-preservation, shame, and fear. He relegated actions to a secondary position in his stories; expressions of feelings

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and sensations were dominant. He told a school chum who wanted to write:

Treat your notions like that--he said, scooping up a handful of sand and tossing it to the brick sea-breeze--Forget what you think about it and tell how you feel about it.--And then years later, when this same aspiring writer queried Crane whether he would now revise the advice he had given him that day on the beach, Crane said emphatically--No. You've got to feel the things you write if you want to make an impact on the world.  

Crane believed also that the best interpreter was one who had experienced the physical and psychological truths of a situation. For reality's sake, Stephen Crane insisted on testing his stories. For example, an acquaintance of Crane relates the lengths to which Crane would sometimes go in order to obtain reality in his story:

One day he told us that he had had a dream which he thought would make a good story. He dreamed that he was acting on the stage of some theatre, and in the play he was a prisoner. He had been handcuffed and his ankles were bound together. Suddenly, there was a cry of "Fire!" In his dream, all the other actors and the audience ran for the exits and forgot that he was tied up and helpless. That was his dream. He wondered, in writing about it, how long it might take him to inch his way along the corridor to an outside door. So he got Cora and me to tie his hands and his ankles together, and then he spent the morning trying, over a given distance, to hop or roll or work along like an inchworm, all in deadly seriousness. I don't know whether he published the story, but he lived it and wrote it.  


Crane's behavior in testing the reality of his strange dream illustrates his insistence on experiencing the emotional and physical reactions as presented within his stories. This belief that a person is qualified to interpret emotional happenings only if he has experienced them occurs in the concluding lines of "The Open Boat":

When it came night, the white waves paced to and fro in the moonlight, and the wind brought the sound of the great sea's voice to the men on the shore, and they felt that they could then be interpreters.7

Carl and Mark Van Doren write of Stephen Crane: "Reality for him, to be reality at all, had to be obvious and intense as he thought it is in the slums or on the battlefield."8 Accordingly, Crane moved among the inhabitants of the Bowery, living as they did to learn their ways. In order to understand the environment, he had no qualms to join the inhabitants of the Bowery in flophouses or bread lines.9 Through his sensitive observations, he developed a number of sketches such as "An Experiment in Misery," "The Men in the Storm," "An Elocution of Grief," "A Desertion," and "An Ominous Baby" from this element of life. In a letter to James Gibbons

7 Works, XII, 61.


Huneker, an American music critic and writer, Crane tersely acknowledges his debt to the roughneck tenement district, "... I got my artistic education on the Bowery..."¹⁰

Tempering personal experience and observation with his imaginative powers, Crane's trip to the West yielded such stories as "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," "Twelve O'Clock," and "Moonlight on the Snow." According to Thomas Beer, biographer of Crane, the germinal idea for "The Blue Hotel" came from a Nebraska junction town hotel "painted so loathsome, some dire action must take place..."¹¹ Beer also cites the origins of "A Man And--Some Others," a tale of a sheepherder and his fight with a party of Mexicans,¹² and the autobiographical episode, "Horses--One Dash!" in which Crane records his own emotional responses in a dangerous encounter with Mexican bandits.¹³

During the war in Greece, Crane was able to taste the real conditions of war which he had hitherto merely imagined. In comparing his fictional accounts of war with those engagements he witnessed in Greece, Crane wrote an English friend:


¹² Ibid., p. 116.

¹³ Ibid., p. 117.
"My picture is all right! I have found it as I imagined it." The Spanish-American War furthered his war experiences, particularly in the Cuban expedition. A number of sketches emerged from that engagement, along with Crane's true adventure of surviving a shipwreck and being adrift in a small boat. From this adventure, comes one of Crane's most celebrated stories, "The Open Boat." Its authenticity is vouched for in Ralph Paine's Roads of Adventure.15

On the other hand, Crane possessed an amazing imagination in his stories about the Civil War. Although he was born six years after the Civil War, he wrote as if he had personally experienced the engagements. Along with his most famous imaginary account of war, The Red Badge of Courage, he wrote short vivid accounts of the Civil War in "The Little Regiment," "A Grey Sleeve," and "A Mystery of Heroism."

In a letter to John N. Hilliard, editor on the Rochester Union and Advertiser, Crane comments:

They all insist that I am a veteran of the Civil War, whereas the fact is, as you know, I never smelled even the powder of a sham battle. I know what the psychologists say, that a fellow can't comprehend a condition that he has never experienced, and I argued that many times... Of course, I have never been in a battle,

14 Stallman, op. cit., p. xxvi.

but I believe that I got my sense of the rage of conflict on the football field, or else fighting is a hereditary instinct, and I wrote intuitively. . . .

Thus, some of Crane's stories were based wholly on his imagination; however, stories such as "The Open Boat" and "Horses--One Dash!" are derived from personal experiences without any alteration of the facts. In between these two extremes, are stories suggested by some idea or incident, and around which Crane's imagination has attempted to heighten the incident and create a predesigned effect.

From the standpoint of source material, then, Crane's objectivity is often in doubt. Because he does not always rely on factual source material, the naturalistic canon calling for simply a reportage of exact data is restricted. Imagination has a place in Crane's work; whereas Zola in his conception of naturalism does not make an allowance for it.

II. STRUCTURAL CONCEPTS

The purpose of discussing structural concepts is to show how the structure of a story influenced Crane's objectivity. If Crane adhered to Zola's naturalistic concepts, he would of necessity be an impersonal reporter who records his observations in a scientific manner, not allowing himself the power to choose and arrange those components of the materials

as he desires. As a scientific prover, Crane would not be interested in the effect achieved, or in the unification of his structure, but would concentrate on his findings.

Of course, Crane does not adhere to Zola's scientific method. He reserves the right to select those elements or events necessary in achieving a unity of meaning, carefully "staging" his story, ensuring that each element bears some relation to the other elements of his story. The characters, the plot action, and the theme involved move toward what Edgar Allan Poe calls "the unity of effect or impression."

On the subject of structural unity, Poe writes:

A skilful [sic] literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect. . . . In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred of art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction.17

A superficial examination of Crane's stories may lead one to think that no organization exists, that Crane has no preconceived design in mind. The construction of such fragments as "A Detail," "An Elocution of Grief," or "A Street

Scene in New York" may appear to have no structural concepts whatsoever. On close examination, however, one may discern certain structural concepts in even the briefest of Crane's sketches.

In examining the structure of a story by Crane, one must be aware of the three basic components of any narrative: movement, time, and the meaning that results from the movement and time concepts.

According to Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, the movement in a narrative "gives us a moving picture, its objects in operation, life in motion. Its emphasis is not on the thing in motion, but on the nature of motion itself. It is concerned with a transformation from one stage to another stage."

The process of moving from one stage to another, of course, suggests the passage of time. Brooks and Warren comment, "The movement of a process, an event, is through time, from one point to another. But narration does not give us a mere segment of time, but a unit of time, and a unit is a thing which is complete in itself." Logically, the movements and the time involved should not be a series of disconnected events, but must form some sequence, and be unified

19 Ibid., p. 263.
enough to give meaning to the whole. This is what is meant by "unity of meaning."

For example, Crane's "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" is composed of four sequences. Crane opens his story with Marshall Potter and his bride returning to Yellow Sky by train. The story leaves Marshall Potter, and in the second episode, shifts to the Weary Gentleman Saloon, where there is a discussion of Scratchy Wilson's dangerous behavior and the need for the absent Marshall to quell Scratchy's rampage. The third scene discloses a drunken, raging Scratchy Wilson gunning for the Marshall. In the final unit, Scratchy meets the Marshall and his bride.

The first three sequences are separate units within themselves, and are seemingly unrelated to each other. However, the first movement of action (the Marshall's return to Yellow Sky) and the third movement (Scratchy's search for the Marshall) converge in the final unit, the meeting of the Marshall and Scratchy.

Neither Marshall Potter nor Scratchy appears in the second movement of action, the sequence at the Weary Gentleman Saloon. However, the movement is necessary in order that the reader may see the previous relationship between the Marshall and Scratchy, and understand something about the present situation between the two men. The second movement bridges the gulf between the Marshall's return and Scratchy's rampage,
thereby giving the needed unity. This unity in turn reveals the meaning of Crane's story.

At the other extreme is "The Open Boat." The structure of "The Open Boat" is of one sustained movement, differing greatly from the frequent shifts of movement as in "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky." In "The Open Boat," Crane is able to achieve the meaning by tracing the hazardous course of four men adrift in a small boat. Sections one through four deal with a day on the open sea; sections five and six, the night; and in the seventh, it is once more day, the day the men attempt to swim to shore.

Crane begins his story after two days on the open sea. The introductory statement sets the mood of the story. The weary men cramped in a tiny boat on a limitless sea inspire Crane's classic line—"None of them knew the colour of the sky." With the aid of this somber statement, Crane sets his stage in the first paragraph, a view of the turbulent sea as would be seen by the men in the boat:

The horizon narrowed and widened, and dipped and rose, and at all times its edge was jagged with waves that seemed thrust up in points like rocks.

The first paragraph details the vast expanse of water. Crane, in his second paragraph, tells us of the smallness of the boat. The next four paragraphs introduce each of the four

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20 *Works*, XII, 29.

21 *loc. cit.*
men in the boat—the cook, bailing water; the oiler and the correspondent rowing; and the injured Captain giving the necessary instructions as he lay in the bottom of the boat. Six short paragraphs set the stage for Crane's narration.

As usual, Stephen Crane views the proceedings from a detached and impersonal viewpoint, commenting in the first section: "Viewed from a balcony, the whole thing would doubtless have been weirdly picturesque."22

The sustained movement of "The Open Boat" can easily be compared to the movements of the waves threatening the small boat. The first three pages give the reader the necessary setting, time and background. With the introductory material disposed of, Crane initiates a variety of wave-like actions, increasing and decreasing the amount of interest in accordance with the size of wave-like effect he desires.

The first crest of interest, although a minor one, is reached in a dialog initiated by the cook who tells of a nearby lighthouse. The hope of rescue is raised only to be dampened by the oiler who comments glumly, "We're not there yet." This episode causes a slight rise of development and is soon on the downward movement with the cook bailing water, the sea gulls flying near, and brown mats of seaweed floating nearby. A second crest of interest is reached when the boat

22 Ibid., p. 31.
rises on a large swell, high enough for the men to see the
distant lighthouse; but once again, the story sinks into a
trough of description and brooding despair as the men dully
hear the roar of the ominous and distant surf:

When one exchanged the rowing-seat for a place in
the bottom of the boat, he suffered a bodily depression
that caused him to be careless of everything save an
obligation to wiggle one finger. There was cold sea-
water swashing to and fro in the boat, and he lay in
it. His head, pillowed on a thwart, was within an
inch of the swirl of a wave-crest, and sometimes a
particularly obstreperous sea came inboard and drenched
him once more. But these matters did not annoy him.
It is almost certain that if the boat had capsized he
would have tumbled comfortably out upon the ocean as
if he felt sure that it was a great soft mattress.23

Suddenly, the story becomes alive with dialog:

"Look! There's a man on the shore!"
"Where?"
"There! See 'im? See 'im?"
"Yes, sure! He's walking along."
"Now he's stopped. Look! He's facing us!"
"He's waving at us!"
"So he is! By thunder!"24

The dialog becomes electric with excitement at the sight of
the man on the beach. On the next three pages, Crane records
the jumbled exclamatory statements of the desperate foursome
concerning the man on the beach. With the approach of evening,
the man on the beach gradually disappears into the haze, and
the story interest likewise settles for a long night. The sea

23 Ibid., pp. 42-43.
24 Ibid., p. 43.
ceases to play an active role as it does during the daylight hours, and leaves Crane free to philosophize in the guise of the correspondent.

With the coming of day, however, the men attempt to bring the boat through the rough surf. As they approach the surf, the inshore rollers threaten the tiny craft; three rollers follow, each bigger than the preceding one. The third roller, as described by Crane, moves "forward, huge, furious, implacable" and swallows the boat, forcing the men to swim their way shoreward.

Between these two structural variations represented by "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" and "The Open Boat," there are many modifications. The necessary construction depends entirely upon the single effect Crane wishes to create. In each of his stories, there is a definite relationship between the sequences which are held together by a unit of time. Forming a chain of action, the sequences move in the direction of Crane's preconceived course to give meaning to the whole.

By doing so, however, the objectivity of the writer is impaired. No longer can the work be said to reflect the truth and actuality of a given situation. He does not act as a reporter or a recorder in the quest of factual data, but resorts to artistic impulses—the employment of certain structural concepts and a unique style of writing—to create his
impressions of reality. By proposing to select and arrange his materials as he desires, Crane thereby lessens the objective character of his works.

This is true not only in his structural concepts, but is also in his style of writing. The following section considers the aspect of Crane's style in relation to the objectivity called for by the naturalistic criteria.

III. STYLE OF WRITING

Crane strives to create an impression or a meaningful effect within his stories, thus limiting the objectivity of such studies. He cannot be thought of merely as a reporter, recording chronological events or minute details without any preconceived design in mind. "To call him a journalist of genius helps to define him," writes Carl Van Doren, "but there still remains the problem of his haunting charm." 25

Much of that charm stems from Crane's unique style—the sharp concise sentences, the use of colorful adjectives and metaphors, his method of drawing characters for the reader, the handling of dialog and dialect, the ease of visual description and the totality of impressions rendered. "Crane has a keen sense of word values," writes Petronius

Applejoy. "No other American writer handles language with finer discrimination; with greater awareness of the potency of words to color speech. Crane so uses them that as they fall on your ear, they physically typify the shade of meaning he wishes to convey." 26

For example, the word *plop* connotates a squasy thud. In "The Upturned Face," Crane employs the word in conveying the horror of the scene. In this tense situation, three men are hurriedly burying a fallen comrade. Because the enemy is advancing, the burying detail is constantly under heavy enemy fire:

"Perhaps we have been wrong," said the adjutant. His glance wavered stupidly. "It might have been better if we hadn't buried him just at this time. Of course, if we advance tomorrow the body would have been---"

"Damn you," said Lean, "shut your mouth." He was not the senior officer.

He again filled the shovel and flung the earth. Always the earth made that sound--plop. For a space Lean worked frantically, like a man digging himself out of danger.

Soon there was nothing to be seen but the chalk-blue face, Lean filled the shovel. "Good God," he cried to the adjutant. "Why didn't you turn him somehow when you put him in? This--" Then Lean began to mutter.

The adjutant understood. He was pale to the lips. "Go on, man," he cried, beseechingly, almost in a shout.

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Lean swung back the shovel. It went forward in a pendulum curve. When the earth landed it made a sound--plop.27

From this quoted passage, one can see how Crane made the ghoulish effect with the plop sound. The passage is characteristic also of Crane's sharp staccato rhythm employed to create the effect of tension. In examining the length of sentences, it was found that the average sentence was seven words.

Another effective passage in which Crane derives his effect mostly from sounds occurs in "A Mystery of Heroism." In this Civil War story, a man attempts to reach a well that is under heavy fire by the enemy. As the man crosses no man's land:

Rifle bullets called forth by the insistent skirmishes came from the far-off bank of foliage. They mingled with the shells and the pieces of shells until the air was torn in all directions by hooting, yells, howls. The sky was full of fiends who directed all their wild rage at his head.28

However, Crane more often derives his effects by combining sounds and visual description. In achieving his dismal picture of the Bowery, he employs sounds and gloomy adjectives and metaphors to create his effect:

27 Works, IX, 170-171.
28 Ibid., II, 104.
Through the mists of the cold and storming night, the cable cars went in silent procession, great affairs shining with red and brass, moving with formidable power, calm and irresistible, dangerous and gloomy, breaking silence only by the loud fierce cry of the gong. Two rivers of people swarmed along the sidewalks, spattered with black mud which made each shoe leave a scar-like impression. Overhead, elevated trains with a shrill grinding of the wheels stopped at the station, which upon its leg-like pillars seemed to resemble some monstrous kind of crab squatting over the street. The quick fat puffings of the engines could be heard. Down an alley there were sombre curtains of purple and black, on which street lamps dully glittered like embroidered flowers. 29

From this passage, one can see also Crane's extensive use of colors—red, brass, black and purple. Thomas Beer interprets such colors to mean for Crane: "... red meant comfort, thrilling excitement or desire according to the mood. ... In Crane's work one sees milder manias. Purple was sinister and repugnant. Greyish blues and strong yellow were pleasant. Above everything comes the notice of lamps seen in the dark. ..." 30

Crane uses lamp light extensively in his Bowery sketches. As with the painter, he seems fascinated by the glow of the gas jet and the ominous shadows created:

The yellow gas-light that came with an effect of difficulty through the dust-stained windows on either side of the door gave strange hues to the faces and

29 Ibid., XI, 22.

forms of the three women who stood gabbling in the hallway of the tenement. They made rapid gestures, and in the background their enormous shadows mingled in terrific conflict.31

Even more memorable is this passage from "An Experiment in Misery":

The youth sat on his cot and peered about him. There was a gas-jet in a distant part of the room, that burned a small flickering orange-hued flame. It caused vast masses of tumbled shadows in all parts of the place, save where, immediately about it, there was a little grey haze. As the young man's eyes became used to the darkness, he could see upon the cots that thickly littered the floor the forms of men sprawled out, lying in death-like silence, or heaving and snoring with tremendous effort, like a stabbed fish.32

When Crane is unable to employ gaslight, he usually manages to work into his story the sunlight rays and their changing effects on an object. This is particularly noticeable in "The Open Boat" as the day begins for the four men adrift on the sea.

The sun swung steadily up the sky, and they knew it was broad day because the colour of the sea changed from slate to emerald green streaked with amber lights, and the foam was like tumbling snow.33

As darkness settled finally, the shine of the light, lifted from the sea in the south, changed to full gold. On the northern horizon a new light appeared, a small bluish gleam on the edge of the water. These two lights were the furniture of the world.34

Of Crane's ability to use visual description effectively, Thomas Beer writes: "Half of Crane's achievement in letters was his astonishing ease of visual description and seemingly simple statements have a haunting effect of complete justice to the scene. Nothing could be better than the two lights of 'The Open Boat' which were the 'furniture of the world,' to his racked eyes."35

Stephen Crane had the ability of creating haunting effects by visual description. He also had an unusual method of drawing his characters. His characters are not well-rounded human figures. They are sketchily drawn with only a suggestion of a body. With the greatest economy of words, he emphasizes those characteristics he desires in order to fulfill the overall effect of the story. Sheriff Potter in "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" is described thus:

The man's face was reddened from many days in the wind and sun, and a direct result of his new black clothes was that his brick-coloured hands were constantly performing in a most conscious fashion.36

Sheriff Potter's bride is described as "not too pretty, nor was she very young." Crane examines her dress and her nervous agitation, concluding:

It was quite apparent that she had cooked, and that she expected to cook, dutifully.37

35 Beer, op. cit., p. 214.
36 Works, XII, 87.
37 Loc. cit.
In "The Blue Hotel" Crane quickly sums up three of the main characters in one sentence:

One was a shaky and quick-eyed Swede, with a great shining cheap valise; one was a tall bronzed cowboy, who was on his way to a ranch near the Dakota line; one was a little silent man from the East, who didn't look like it, and didn't announce it.38

Occasionally, Crane gives the reader more than just a glimpse of a character. In "An Experiment in Misery" he describes a tramp:

... there approached... a reeling man in strange garments. His head was a fuddle of bushy hair and whiskers, from which his eyes peered with a guilty slant. In a close scrutiny it was possible to distinguish the cruel lines of a mouth which looked as if its lips had just closed with satisfaction over some tender and piteous morsel. He appeared like an assassin steeped in crimes performed awkwardly.39

Crane's description does not elaborate on the physical characteristics. It is through the action of the narrative and the dialog of the individual concerned that the reader gains an insight into one of Crane's characters. For example, the wheedling-eyed tramp in "An Experiment in Misery" speaks in the manner of an "affectionate puppy" and Crane, through the use of dialect, catches much of the pathos in the tramp's plea:

"Say, Gents, can't yeh' live a poor feller a couple of cents t' fit a bed? I' got five, an' I' fits anudder two I' fits me a bed. Now, on the square, Gents, can't

38 Ibid., X, 94.
yeh jest gimme two cents t' git a bed? Now, yeh know how a respecterab'le gentlem'n feels when he's down on his luck. . . . "40

With his Bowery sketches, Crane uses much of the jargon typical of the Bowery element. He uses such catch phrases as "cheap joint," "I'd treat yeh white," "Hully Jee," "jay," "kid," and "Are yeh ready t' fly?"

Just by the use of dialog, Crane can differentiate between the speech of children of two opposite environments. In "An Ominous Baby" a child from the slums wanders into a well-to-do neighborhood and wants to play with the fire engine belonging to a rich man's child. The child of the slums asks:

"Say," he ventured at last, "is dat yours?"

"Yes," said the other, tilting his round chin. He drew his property suddenly behind him as if it were menaced. "Yes," he repeated, "it's mine."

"Well, lem' me play wif it?" said the wandering baby. . . .

"No," cried the pretty child with determined lips. "It's mine. My ma-ma buyed it."

"Well, can't I play wif it?" His voice was a sob. He stretched forth little covetous hands.41

Crane's characters are always common and insignificant persons, the private in the army, the sheepherder, the tramp of the Bowery, the cowboy. Many of his characters have no

40 Ibid., p. 24.
41 Ibid., p. 107.
names, and are simply referred to as "the youth," "the seedy man," "the assassin," "the lieutenant," etc. Those characters who do have names usually carry such common names as Willie, Fred, Henry, Ben, or Jake.

Of Crane's style in general, Robert W. Stallman writes, "Crane's style is itself composed of disjoined sentences, disconnected sense-impressions, and chromatic vignettes by which the reality of the adventure is evoked in all its point-present immediacy." 42

Because of these impressionistic tendencies, however, Crane's objectivity is again questionable. As indicated in the examination of his source materials and in his structural concepts, the artistry of Crane interferes with the objectiveness of his studies. His imagination and creativity limit the truly scientific approach as desired by the naturalistic precepts. However, Crane does achieve a measure of objectivity by appearing in the guise of a non-participant, observing and reporting the interplay of his prefabricated stories with the detached air of the scientist.

This detached attitude on the part of Crane may be examined in two ways: (1) by examining his point of view; and (2), by examining any prejudicial attempt by Crane to

42 Stallman, op. cit., p. xlv.
jeopardize the truth of a given situation by inserting a pointed moral. Each of these points will be examined in turn.

IV. POINT OF VIEW

In discussing Stephen Crane's detached and impersonal attitude, one must consider the means by which the author approaches his stories. This is usually referred to as "point of view." Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren explain "point of view" to mean: "a person who bears some relation to the action, either as observer or participant, and whose intelligence serves as the index of the action for the reader. Point of view... involves two questions: Who tells the story? What is his relation to the action?" 43

Broadly speaking, a narrative may be approached from two points of view: (1) as told in the first person with the author as a participant of his story; (2) as told in the third person with the author acting as a reporter or observer to the occurring events. In this regard, Stephen Crane generally uses the third person point of view, and acts as a reporter or observer. There are two narratives told from the first person view, "A Tale of Mere Chance" and "War Memories"; however, his more renowned stories are told from the impersonal third person viewpoint.

43 Brooks and Warren, op. cit., p. 293.
Brooks and Warren point out the possible variations of the third person point of view at the author's disposal. "One extreme we may call the PANORAMIC point of view," explain Brooks and Warren. "In this method the author may report any aspect or all aspects of an action, and may go into the head of any or all of the characters involved in the action. His eye, as it were, sweeps the entire field and he reports whatever is interesting or relevant."\(^{44}\) The opposite variant of the panoramic third person viewpoint is referred to as the "sharp focus" point of view. Of this method of presenting narration, Brooks and Warren say, "The author does not sweep the entire field of the action, but keeps his, and his reader's, attention focused on one character and on that character's relation to the action."\(^{45}\)

An examination of Stephen Crane's short stories discloses the author's extensive use of both the panoramic and the sharp focus viewpoints. It is a part of Crane's art to employ the panoramic view in recording scenes of mob panic, the battlefield, and slum life. On the other hand, Crane often sharply focuses his attention on the psychological reactions of men confronted with death or some such horror.

\(^{44}\) Ibid., p. 295.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., p. 296.
Many times, however, Crane's narratives will employ both the panoramic and the sharp focus views, intersplicing the two viewpoints wherever needed. Crane's editing of his sequences suggests certain parallels with later motion picture techniques, giving variety and the emphasis needed. The introductory material of Crane's "Death and the Child" is illustrative of Crane's use of the panoramic point of view:

The peasants who were streaming down the mountain trail had, in their sharp terror, evidently lost their ability to count. The cattle and the huge round bundles seemed to suffice to the minds of the crowd if there were now two in each case where there had been three. This brown stream poured on with a constant wastage of goods and beasts. 46

At this point in the narrative, Crane shifts his viewpoint from the overall view of the crowd to several specific creatures:

A goat fell behind to scout the dried grass, and its owner, howling, flogging his donkeys, passed far ahead. A colt, suddenly frightened, made a stumbling charge up the hillside. 47

Once more, Crane returns to the panoramic viewpoint, focusing his attention on the panic-stricken peasants:

The expenditure was always profligate, and always unnamed, unnoted. It was as if fear was a river, and this horde had simply been caught in the torrent, man tumbling over beast, beast over man, as helpless in it as the logs that fall and shoulder

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46 Works, XII, 241.

47 loc. cit.
grindingly through the gorges of a lumber country. It was a freshet that might sear the face of the tall, quiet mountain; it might draw a livid line across the land, this downpour of fear with a thousand homes adrift in the current—men, women, babes, animals. From it there arose a constant babble of tongues, shrill, broken, and sometimes choking, as from men drowning. Many made gestures, painting their agonies on the air with fingers that twirled swiftly.48

At this juncture, Crane abruptly leaves the fleeing peasants of the mountain, and turns his attention to the panoramic view below him:

The blue bay, with its pointed ships, and the white town lay below them, distant, flat, serene. There was upon this vista a peace that a bird knows when, high in air, it surveys the world, a great, calm thing rolling noiselessly toward the end of the mystery. Here on the height one felt the existence of the universe scornfully defining the pain in ten thousand minds.49

From this illustration, one feels a curious remoteness on the part of Stephen Crane. He sees, he hears, he observes. Only once does he vaguely refer to himself in the picture presented: "Here on the height one felt the existence of the universe..." To the reader, Crane seemingly stands nearby, impersonally and contemplatively recording the panic-driven peasants and the contrasting sight of a serene view below him.

To present his idea in "Death and the Child," it is necessary at times for Crane to move his action from the raging

48 *loc. cit.*
battle in the valley to the mountain above where a child is playing. Sometimes, this change of scene is made very abruptly; however, on other occasions, the transition is made smoothly from the panorama of the battle on the plain to the focusing of attention on the child of the mountain. The following illustrates the point:

The battle-lines writhed at times in the agony of a sea creature on the sands. These tentacles flung and waved in a supreme excitement of pain, and the struggles of the great outlined body brought it near and nearer to the child. Once he looked at the plain and saw some men running wildly across a field. He had seen people chasing obdurate beasts in such fashion, and it struck him immediately that it was a manly thing which he would incorporate in his game. Consequently, he raced furiously at his stone sheep, flourishing a cudgel, crying the shepherd calls. He paused frequently to get a cue of manner from the soldiers fighting on the plain. He reproduced to a degree any movements which he accounted rational to his theory of sheep-herding, the business of men, the traditional and exalted living of his father.50

Crane's use of the panoramic view is not limited to scenes of vast sweep. He employed the same technique effectively on a smaller scale; for instance, in "An Experiment in Misery" he used the panoramic view in describing the room of a flophouse:

And all through the room could be seen the tawny hues of naked flesh, limbs thrust up in the darkness, projecting beyond the cots; upraised knees, arms hanging long and thin over the cot-edges. For the most part they were statuesque, carven, dead. With the

50 Ibid., p. 251.
curious lockers standing all about like tombstones, there was a strange effect of a graveyard where bodies were merely flung.\footnote{Ibid., XI, 27-28.}

In "A Street Scene in New York" one finds a sustained panoramic viewpoint. Crane does not use the sharp focus technique once, but seemingly gives the reader a byplay of the street scene viewed from a second-story window.

The situation is one in which a man has collapsed on the street, "like a corpse sinking into the sea." The sea, in this case, refers to the great crowd of curiosity seekers.

Down under their feet, almost lost under this mass of people, lay a man, hidden in the shadows caused by their forms, which, in fact, barely allowed a particle of light to pass between them. . . . The body on the pave seemed like a bit of debris sunk in this human ocean.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 189-190}

Crane records the mood of the crowd and leisurely examines any person who enters its vortex to assist the stricken man. One man loosens the stricken man's collar; a policeman arrives and roughly takes charge; a doctor examines the man, and finally the ambulance arrives to carry off the unknown man. Part of the crowd disburses while

Others still continued to stare after the vanished ambulance and its burden as if they had been cheated, as if the curtain had been rung down on a tragedy that was but half completed; and this impenetrable blanket intervening between a sufferer and their curiosity seemed to make them feel an injustice.\footnote{Ibid., p. 194.}
In "An Episode of War" Crane sharply focuses his attention on a lieutenant whose task it is to divide the daily coffee rations for the company. The battle is raging in the background, but Crane focuses the reader's attention on the lieutenant who is absorbed in dividing the supply of coffee that has been poured on his rubber blanket.

The lieutenant was frowning and serious at this task of division. His lips pursed as he drew with his sword various crevices in the heap, until brown squares of coffee, astoundingly equal in size, appeared on the blanket. He was on the verge of a great triumph in mathematics, . . . when suddenly the lieutenant cried out and looked quickly at a man near him as if he suspected it was a case of personal assault. The others cried out also when they saw blood upon the lieutenant's sleeve.

He had winced like a man stung, swayed dangerously, and then straightened. The sound of his hoarse breathing was plainly audible. He looked sadly, mystically, over the breast-work at the green face of a wood, where now were many little puffs of white smoke. 54

Crane follows the wounded lieutenant through a series of acts, minutely recording the lieutenant's attempt to sheathe his sword with his left hand, the hesitant assistance rendered by companions who shy away from the wounded officer, and the lieutenant's journey to the field hospital. The journey to the hospital enables Crane to find a logical excuse for turning from the sharp focus viewpoint on the lieutenant to the panoramic view of the battle. Crane writes: "As the

54 Ibid., IX, 129.
wounded officer passed from the line of battle, he was enabled to see many things which as a participant in the fight were unknown to him. 55

Crane, then, is able to give an overall view of the battle as the wounded lieutenant saw it:

A battery, a tumultuous and shining mass, was swirling toward the right. The wild thud of hoofs, the cries of the riders shouting blame and praise, menace and encouragement, and, last, the roar of the wheels, the slant of the glistening guns, brought the lieutenant to an intent pause. The battery swept in curves that stirred the heart; it made halts as dramatic as the crash of a wave on the rocks, and when it fled onward this aggregation of wheels, levers, motors had a beautiful unity, as if it were a missile. The sound of it was a war-chorus that reached into the depths of man's emotion. 56

Crane's attention once again returns to the wounded lieutenant who makes his way toward the rear lines. By a roadside, his wound is treated by a fellow officer, and Crane records the minute details.

He [The fellow officer] appropriated the lieutenant and the lieutenant's wound. He cut the sleeve and laid bare the arm, every nerve of which softly fluttered under his touch. He bound his handkerchief over the wound, scolding away in the meantime. His tone allowed one to think that he was in the habit of being wounded every day. The lieutenant hung his head, feeling, in this presence, that he did not know how to be correctly wounded. 57

55 Ibid., p. 131.
56 Ibid., pp. 131-132.
57 Ibid., p. 133.
These illustrations suggest Crane's extensive use of the third person point of view. His deft variations of the third person, the employment of the panoramic and sharp focus views, enable him to create the effects he desires. With the exception of those narratives mentioned earlier, Crane removes himself completely from participating in the action of the story, and in this way, manages to keep a psychological distance at all times. "... a distance from what he is writing about so definite that it could almost be measured," says Robert Littell in an article, "Notes on Stephen Crane."58

Thus, Crane's distant and impersonal viewpoint suggests the detached manner of the scientist. It must be kept in mind, however, that Crane manipulates his viewpoint, shifting from the panoramic and the sharp focus views, in order to create the effect he desires. By using the impersonal third person point of view technique, however, he creates an aura of self-detachment.

In turn, this suggestive self-detached point of view reflects itself from the standpoint of moral judgments. Crane's detached attitude does not give him the privilege of judging or moralizing on the issues involved in his stories. How Crane handles this element will be examined in the following section.

V. AMORALITY

The amoral tone of Crane's short stories is a contributory factor in conveying the illusion of Crane's detached attitude. Instead of passing some moral judgment or making a statement on the significance of an ethical standard, Crane presents the images within his stories with such clarity that direct moralizing on his part is unnecessary; besides, the idea of such moralizing is evidently distasteful to the writer. In a letter to John Northern Hilliard, editor of the Rochester Union and Advertiser, Crane writes:

I have been very careful not to let any theories or pet ideas of my own creep into my work. Preaching is fatal to art in literature. I try to give to the readers a slice out of life; and if there is any moral or lesson in it, I do not try to point it out. I let the reader find it for himself. The result is more satisfactory to both the reader and myself. 59

In his war stories, Crane never says that war is harsh and cruel. He does not need to point it out; he paints it, devoid of all the romantic glamour so that the reader will feel the terribleness of war, not be told of it. H. G. Wells in an article, "Stephen Crane From the English Standpoint," asks, "Was there ever a man before who wrote of battles so abundantly as he has done, and never had a word, never a word from first to last, of the purpose and justification of the war? And of

the God of Battles, no more than the battered name; "Holly Gee!"—the lingering trace of the Deity!"  

The same holds true of his Bowery sketches. Crane is most effective when the reader feels the wretchedness of such dregs of humanity. One remembers vividly the revolting smells, sights, and sounds of the flophouse, the saloon, and the greasy eating places as shown in "An Experiment in Misery."

In a letter to Miss Catherine Harris, November 12, 1896, Crane wrote: "In a story of mine called 'An Experiment in Misery,' I tried to make plain that the root of Bowery life is a sort of cowardice. Perhaps I mean a lack of ambition or to willingly be knocked flat and accept the licking."  

By picture and by tone, Crane is able to present that essence in his sketch. Crane's idea is vividly focused at one point in the sketch:

In Chatham Square there were aimless men strewn in front of saloons and lodging-houses, standing sadly, patiently, reminding one vaguely of the attitude of chickens in a storm.

Often Crane will substitute some ironic twist at the end of his story. This method leaves more of an impression.
than anything that could be said. The lieutenant of "An Episode of War" loses his arm from a bullet wound. Crane concludes:

And this is the story of how the lieutenant lost his arm. When he reached home, his sisters, his mother, his wife, sobbed for a long time at the sight of the flat sleeve. "Oh, well," he said, standing shamefaced amid these tears, "I don't suppose it matters so much as all that."63

In such stories, there is no visible sentiment, no tenderness. Crane, with characteristic coldness, presents an impersonal narrative. Professor Blankenship concludes:

There has been some doubt as to the thoroughness of Crane's naturalism, but doubt is unwarranted. Crane was a real naturalist, though his impressionistic methods kept him from laboring over detail in the manner of many of his fellows. Testing his work by the canons of naturalism, one discovers a scientific impersonality in the treatment of material, and a resolute purpose to record facts and impressions without passing moral judgment upon anything. Furthermore, the principle of determinism appears. ... 64

The principle of determinism as evidenced in Stephen Crane's short stories will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

VI. DETERMINISM

One of the most important concepts of naturalism is determinism. To the naturalist, man is a product of a blind,

63 Ibid., IX, 134.

deterministic force which has no understandable purpose. Man is not free. His actions are determined by forces greater than he is. J. Donald Butler of the Princeton Theological Seminary writes:

Though the world is a pluralism, the operation of causes and effects is essential to its orderliness. The multiple forces interrelated in the universe can only have such effects on one another as are appropriate to the causative influences they exert. Therefore no single event just happens by chance; it is the only event which could have taken place, the forces immediately surrounding the event being what they were. Now the human individual is a part of this world of cause and effect, living within and not outside of it. Therefore, he can scarcely be regarded as possessing some sportive independence of the law of cause and effect, such as freedom of will.\(^65\)

These criteria of determinism, portraying man as being harnessed to environmental and hereditary influences, are evident in the short stories of Stephen Crane. Crane's characters have no more freedom of will than the brown mats of seaweed in an unfriendly ocean. They are impotent in their surroundings, and we see them helplessly tossed about by the whims of fate, nature, and circumstances, trapped by their animalistic instincts and society's pressure in the form of social and economic status. Crane leaves no doubt in the minds of his readers that man is victimized by a web of forces. It is with these passages that we shall be most concerned.

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The naturalist's attitude toward nature is a gloomy picture, says Joseph Wood Krutch. In *The Modern Temper*, he writes:

Nature's purpose, if purpose she can be said to have, is no purpose of [man's] and is not understandable in his terms. Her desire merely to live and to propagate in innumerable forms, her ruthless indifference to his values, and the blindness of her irresistible will strike terror to his soul, and he comes in the fullness of his experience to realize that the ends which he proposes to himself—happiness and order and reason—are ends which he must achieve, if he achieve them at all, in her despite.66

The idea of nature's callous indifference to man and his puny efforts is clearly represented in Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat." As the small boat with its four occupants nears the surf, the correspondent sights a tall wind tower.

To the correspondent:

This tower was a giant, standing with its back to the plight of the ants. It represented in a degree, to the correspondent, the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual—nature in the mind, and nature in the vision of men. She did not seem cruel to him then, nor beneficent, nor treacherous, nor wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent. It is, perhaps plausible that a man in this situation, impressed with the unconcern of the universe, should see the innumerable flaws of his life, and have them taste wickedly in his mind, and wish for another chance.67

Crane's view differs from the usual view of man: that he is something apart from nature's scheme. Because he has


67 *Works*, XII, 55-56.
come to believe that he is special, above and beyond all the
other elements of the universe, he feels that his activities
are all-important, whether he constructs a skyscraper or
destroy an army of men. Only when he stops and observes the
indifference of nature to his petty schemes, does he find him-
self disconcerted. In "Death and the Child," Crane's central
figure, Peza, is reminded that nature continues her reproduc-
tive cycle in spite of man and his most destructive activities.

A fierce battle is being fought between the Greeks and the
Turks. Peza, a correspondent, finds himself in the midst of
the fighting.

The roar of fighting was always in Peza's ears. It
came from some short hills and to the left. The road
curved suddenly and entered a wood. The trees stretched
their luxuriant and graceful branches over grassy
slopes. A breeze made all this verdure gently rustle
and speak in long silken sighs. Absorbed in listening
to the hurricane racket from the front, he still re-
membered that these trees were growing, the grass-blades
were extending, according to their process. He inhaled
a deep breath of moisture and fragrance from the grove,
a wet ordour which expressed the opulent fecundity of
unmoved nature, marching on with her million plans for
multiple life, multiple death.68

In another passage of "Death and the Child" Peza is
amazed that the trees, the grass, the flowers, and particularly,
the poppies, have not fled from the searing flames of battle.
He sees nature standing her ground against the on-slaught of

68 Ibid., p. 249.
man-made destruction, and her elements accepting their fate as consigned by their creator. 69

Several of Crane's short stories are illustrative of nature's creatures requiring no explanation of their existence or of the fate that befalls them. They accept the judgment decreed, and adjust the best way they can. For example, the little pup in "A Dark Brown Dog" accepts the thrashings from his young master without a thought of their justification. Crane writes:

Sometimes, too, the child himself used to beat the dog, although it is not known that he ever had what truly could be called a just cause. The dog always accepted these thrashings with an air of admitted guilt. He was too much of a dog to try to look to be a martyr or to plot revenge. He received the blows with deep humility, and furthermore he forgave his friend the moment the child had finished, and was ready to caress the child's hand with his little red tongue. 70

Man, however, has enough instinct to ask the questions: "Why? Why is it so? Why did it happen?" He wants to know if there is some justification for his efforts. Such questions, however, only point out to him that he is just a cog in a vast and impersonal machine called existence. Because he has been endowed with some sort of reasoning faculties, he attempts to elude the chains that bind him. He becomes mutinous, inventive. He tries to escape from his prison, and as a result,

69 Ibid., p. 252.
70 Ibid., XI, 121.
finds himself in trouble. For example, the four men in "The Open Boat" are perilously close to death on the open sea. They are far from the habitat that nature set up for them, and are very close to destruction. In contrast to these four men on an unfriendly sea is a group of canton-flannel gulls who scrutinize the intruders:

Sometimes they sat down on the sea, near patches of brown seaweed that rolled over the waves with a movement like carpets on a line in a gale. The birds sat comfortably in groups, and they were envied by some in the dinghy, for the wrath of the sea was no more to them than it was to a covey of prairie chickens a thousand miles inland. Often they came very close and stared at the men with black bead-like eyes. At these times, they were uncanny and sinister in their unblinking scrutiny... 71

Crane not only recognizes nature's complete indifference to man and his futile attempts to escape her jurisdiction, but he senses that a man-made environment, such as a large city, is as indifferent to the individual as nature is. To Crane, the city colossus is as flatly indifferent as the symbolic wind tower in "The Open Boat." When Crane examines the city and its forms of life, he finds himself confronted with a torrent of movement as relentless, as unyielding as a rock slide. In a brief sketch, "A Detail," he observes a tiny old woman trudging along a thoroughfare in New York. To Crane, she seems like "a chip that catches, recoils, turns,

71 Ibid., XII, 33.
and wheels, a reluctant thing in the clutch of the impetuous river."  

The old woman is looking for work, needlework, and hesitantly asks two girls if they know of such employment. At first the girls are amused, then sympathetic. As a gesture, one girl takes the old woman's address. The tiny old woman then moves down the avenue.

As for the two girls, they walked to the curb and watched this aged figure, small and frail, in its black gown and curious black bonnet. At last, the crowd, the innumerable wagons, intermingling and changing with uproar and riot, suddenly engulfed it.

In Crane's Bowery sketches, however, the insignificance of the individual is most poignant. Here, he observes the damp, unhealthy coldness of the city and its dwellers. The inhabitants are really no better than the sea gulls looking impassively on the misery of the four drifting souls of "The Open Boat." Crane's picture is particularly bitter in "An Experiment in Misery." He sees that the fantastic masses of people and the cold tall buildings of the city shrink the individual soul to nothingness, especially those who are hopelessly downtrodden. Crane finds that their only outlet to their misery is through an impassive bitterness. The youth in "An Experiment in Misery" sits on a city hall park bench and views his hopes, dreams and ambitions as dwarfed by this environment:

72 Ibid., XI, 85.
73 Ibid., p. 87.
The people of the street hurrying hither and thither made a blend of black figures, changing, yet frieze-like. They walked in their good clothes as upon important missions, giving no gaze to the two wanderers seated upon the benches. They expressed to the young man his infinite distance from all that he valued. Social position, comfort, the pleasures of living were unconquerable kingdoms. He felt a sudden awe.

And in the background a multitude of buildings, of pitiless hues and sternly high, were to him emblematic of a nation forcing its regal head into the clouds, throwing no downward glances; in the sublimity of its aspirations ignoring the wretches who may flounder at its feet. The roar of the city in his ear was to him the confusion of strange tongues, babbling heedlessly; it was the clink of coin, the voice of the city's hopes, which were to him no hopes.74

In other stories, such as "The Open Boat," "An Episode of War," and "An Eloquence of Grief," Stephen Crane grasps his main character roughly by the collar and drops him from his self-made pedestal. Crane reveals how little, how infinitesimal man really is; and because of this newly-gained knowledge, how bitterly man feels towards his infinite jailer, nature.

Crane echoes these thoughts most strikingly in "The Open Boat." With only the night sky and the black sea as his companions, the correspondent is at the oars, alone with his own thoughts:

When it occurs to a man that nature does not regard him as important, and that she feels she would not maim the universe by disposing of him, he at first

74 Ibid., p. 34.
wishes to throw bricks at the temple, and he hates deeply the fact that there are no bricks and no temples. Any visible expression of nature would surely be pelleted with his jeers.

Then, if there be no tangible thing to hoot, he feels, perhaps, the desire to confront a personification and indulge in pleas, bowed to one knee, and with hand supplicant, saying, "Yes, but I love myself." 

The irony in the above illustration is implicit. By the use of such ironic mockery, Crane is able to intensify his deterministic views, showing man's recognition of his unimportance and his insignificance.

Crane notes this condition on the battlefield when a soldier sees the death and carnage surrounding him. His view of himself is considerably altered; he discovers himself to be mortal. The importance of the raging battle and its outcome are forgotten momentarily, and he considers the mystery of death. He finds no meaning in such a phenomenon, and as a result, is made to feel as inconsequential to the mysteries of life and death as the wounded lieutenant in "An Episode of War." As the stunned lieutenant gazes at his wounded arm, Crane considers the significance of such a wound:

A wound gives strange dignity to him who bears it. Well men shy from this new and terrible majesty. It is as if the wounded man's hand is upon the curtain which hangs before the revelations of all existence—the meaning of ants, potentates, wars, cities, sunshine, snow, a feather dropped from a bird's wing.

75 Ibid., XII, 51.
and the power of it sheds radiance upon a bloody form, and makes the other men understand sometimes that they are little. 

Man, thus, feels himself inconsequential. His intellect cannot give a meaningful explanation of those events which befall or affect him. He is shackled to an existence which neither pities nor condemns him, and one which does not share his grief of being a lost soul.

In "An Eloquence of Grief," Crane pictures such a lost soul, a servant girl, condemned to stand trial for theft. As the judge pronounces his decision, Crane writes:

Then it was that a great cry rang through the courtroom, the cry of this girl who believed that she was lost.

The loungers, many of them, underwent a spasmodic movement as if they had been knifed. The court officers rallied quickly. The girl fell back opportune for the arms of one of them, and her wild heels clicked twice on the floor. "I am innocent! Oh, I am innocent!"

People pity those who need none, and the guilty sob alone; but, innocent or guilty, this girl's scream described such a profound depth of woe, it was so graphic of grief, that it slit with a dagger's sweep the curtain of commonplace, and disclosed the gloom-shrouded spectre that sat in the young girl's heart so plainly, in so universal a tone of mind, that a man heard expressed some far-off midnight terror of his own thought.

Thus far, we have cited several examples from Crane's short stories describing the indifference of nature and environment to man, and of his inconsequentiality. In his efforts

76 Ibid., IX, 130-131.
77 Ibid., XI, 93.
to escape the ignominious end awaiting him, the individual will often strike out on his own, hoping to seek his own salvation. For a while, he may feel that he has succeeded; but eventually, his way is blocked, somewhat like the wounded soldier in "The Price of the Harness." Martin, the wounded soldier, is in search of medical aid.

But he suddenly found his way blocked by a fence of barbed wire. Such was his mental condition that he brought up at a rigid halt before this fence, and stared stupidly at it. It did not seem to him possible that this obstacle could be defeated by any means. The fence was there, and it stopped his progress. He could not go in that direction.78

To the naturalist, no matter which way the individual turns, he is continually thwarted by such fences. Barriers confront the individual at every turn. Some unseen hand called fate seemingly erects these fences in order that its victim may be guided through a maze of circumstances toward some blind purpose. Of the role fate plays in the naturalistic story, Professor Parrington writes, "it is seen and felt throughout the texture of the story--a fate lurking in the background and visible to the reader--and at some dramatic moment the conviction comes home to the victim and is crystallized in bitter words wrenched from his baffled will."79

78 Ibid., IX, 31.

Thus, in "The Open Boat," as the boat enters the dangerous surf area, the correspondent silently and fearfully rages:

"If I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees? Was I brought here merely to have my nose dragged away as I was about to nibble the sacred cheese of life? It is preposterous. If this old ninny-woman, Fate, cannot do better than this, she should be deprived of the management of men's fortunes. She is an old hen who knows not her intention. If she has decided to drown me, why did she not do it in the beginning and save me all this trouble? The whole affair is absurd.--But no; she cannot mean to drown me. She dare not drown me. She cannot drown me. Not after all this work." Afterward the man might have had an impulse to shake his fist at the clouds, "Just you drown me, now, and then hear what I call you!"

Crane presents man victimized by fate. In the beginning of "The Open Boat," the correspondent wonders why he is in such a predicament. No logical explanation can be offered, except that his predicament is due to a chain of circumstances, culminating in the sinking of the ill-fated steamer and his being cast adrift on a merciless ocean. The correspondent has no more power over these events than the brown mats of seaweed have in their choice of direction. Both are moved by the whims of fate. The only action left open to the correspondent is to rage and rail ineffectually at the uncertainties of his destiny.

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60 Works, XII, 41.
In other short stories, Crane shows not only that man is a victim of fate, but that he is often a victim of his own emotions as well, the victim of his society and environment, and even the victim of the economic level in which he finds himself. Each of these forces victimizing man will be illustrated in turn.

In his war stories, Crane seems preoccupied with the mystery of death and with the reactions of his characters to it. He minutely details their facial expressions, their mannerisms, and any visible clue that will show their emotional reactions at seeing death. Occasionally, his Bowery sketches dwell upon this phenomenon, too. In "A Street Scene in New York," Crane describes the reactions of a crowd to the mystery of death. In "A Desertion," he sketches a girl's reactions on viewing the death of her beloved father. "A Desertion" opens with the girl returning home from work. Her father, sitting before a stove, has his back towards her. Because he does not speak, the girl believes him to be angry. Trying to pacify her father's stony silence, the girl comes from behind and flings her arms around her father's neck. On instant contact, however, she discovers she is hugging his corpse.

But suddenly, from this position, she leaped backward with the mad energy of a frightened colt. Her face was in this instant turned to a grey, featureless thing of horror. A yell, wild and hoarse as a brute cry, burst from her. "Daddie!" She flung herself to a place near the door, where she remained, crouching,
her eyes staring at the motionless figure, spattered by the quivering flashes from the fire. Her arms extended, and her frantic fingers at once besought and repelled. There was in them an expression of eagerness to care for and an expression of the most intense loathing.

Even though the dead man is her loved father, the girl's animalistic instincts cause her to quail before this phenomenon. Spastic impulses of love and loathing tear at the unfortunate creature.

Crane focuses his attention on the crowd reaction to the mystery of life and death in "A Street Scene in New York." In this sketch, an Italian vendor is suddenly stricken with a seizure, and ultimately, a crowd forms around the body. Crane reports the gruesome aspects of the seizure and the reactions of the crowd:

Those nearest the man upon the sidewalk at first saw the body go through a singular contortion. It was as if an invisible hand had reached up from the earth and had seized him by the hair. He seemed dragged slowly, pitilessly backward, while his body stiffened convulsively, his hands clenched, and his arms swung rigidly upward. Through his pallid, half-closed lids one could see the steel-coloured, assassin-like gleam of his eye, that shone with a mystic light as a corpse might glare at those live ones who seemed about to trample it under foot. As for the men near, they hung back, appearing as if they expected it might spring erect and grab them. Their eyes, however, were held in a spell of fascination. They scarce seemed to breathe. They were contemplating a depth into which a human being had sunk, and the marvel of this mystery of life or death held them chained.

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81 Ibid., XI, 101.
82 Ibid., pp. 190-191.
As onlookers, these people are not directly involved, but must find some horrible fascination in watching such a phenomenon. However, once the individual is himself confronted by such an awesome spectre, his whole emotional structure changes violently. He becomes a victim of his emotions with no power to quell or keep them under control. Often he is blindly led into action that can bring only disastrous results. This phenomenon plays an important role in several of Stephen Crane's short stories.

In "The Veteran," for example, a barn housing cattle is set afire. Crane compares the frenzy of the trapped cows and that of the men attempting to quench the flames. Crane notes that man is no better than the rest of nature's creatures; both are controlled by their emotions in time of crisis:

The cows, with their heads held in the heavy stanchions, had thrown themselves, strangled themselves, tangled themselves--done everything which the ingenuity of their exuberant fear could suggest to them.

Here, as at the well, the same thing happened to every man save one. Their hands went mad. They became incapable of everything save the power to rush into dangerous situations.83

The theatre fire described in "Manacled" brings out the same blind brutality, and the ferocious animalistic tendencies in a crowd of people who panic. Like stampeding cattle, this theatre audience is guided by emotional instincts and led to its destruction:

83 Ibid., I, 208.
Drowning the mocking laughter of the villain came cries from both the audience and the people in the back of the wings. "Fire! Fire! Fire!" Throughout the great house resounded the roaring crashes of a throng of human beings moving in terror, and even above this noise could be heard the screams of women more shrill than whistles. The building hummed and shook; it was like a glade which holds some bellowing cataract of the mountains. Most of the people who were killed on the stairs still clutched their play-bills in their hands as if they had resolved to save them at all costs.

Out of the theatre poured the first hundreds of fortunate ones, and some who were not altogether fortunate. Women, their bonnets flying, cried out tender names; men, white as death, scratched and bleeding, looked wildly from face to face. There were displays of horrible blind brutality by the strong. Weaker men clutched and clawed like cats. From the theatre itself came the howl of a gale.\textsuperscript{64}

Such group panic strangely affects the human being. His reasoning is nullified by his emotional impulses. Under one given set of circumstances, the individual's reasoning might prevail; but under a different set of circumstances, such as this theatre fire and the ensuing panic, the individual's emotional impulses are set in motion. Crane, in "Death and the Child," points out how much terror and panic can distort the individual's standard of values:

Terror had operated on these runaway people in its sinister fashion—elevating details to enormous heights, causing a man to remember a button while he forgot a coat, overpowering everyone with recollections of a broken coffee-cup, deluring them with fears for the safety of an old pipe, and causing them to forget their first-born.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{64} ibid., XIII, 233-234. \textsuperscript{65} ibid., p. 261.
In "A Man And--Some Others," Crane is again interested in the chain-binding emotional impulses of men in danger, and their reactions in attempting to avoid that danger. In this case, it is not a matter of instinctively fleeing with a mob as has been previously illustrated. In "A Man And--Some Others," when two men are confronted with danger, they fall victim to a momentary paralysis. In their belated decision to flee, one man is destroyed.

Two Mexican cutthroats steal up to the campsite of a shepherder, and shoot what they think is the sleeping herder. Their victim, however, is actually hidden in the bush, waiting for them. After the shooting, the Mexicans laugh, relieved that their job has been finished successfully.

... they burst out in chorus in a laugh, and arose as merry as a lot of banqueters. They gleefully gestured congratulations, and strode bravely into the light of the fire.

Then suddenly a new laugh rang from some unknown spot in the darkness. It was a fearsome laugh of ridicule, hatred, ferocity. It might have been demoniac. It smote them motionless in their gleeful prowl, as the stern voice from the sky smites the legendary malefactor. They might have been a weird group in wax, the light of the dying fire on their yellow faces and shining athwart their eyes turned toward the darkness whence might come the unknown and the terrible.

.....

This laugh had so chained their reason that for a moment they had no wit to flee. They were prisoners to their terror. Then suddenly the belated decision arrived, and with bubbling cries they turned to run;
but at that instant there was a long flash of red in the darkness, and with the report one of the men shouted a bitter shout, spun once, and tumbled headlong. 26

In comparing "A Man And--Some Others" to "Horses--One Dash!" one finds a definite similarity as far as the emotional stimulus is concerned. In both stories, the lives of the men are threatened. In "A Man And--Some Others," the two Mexicans become momentarily paralyzed with fright before fleeing for their lives. The result of the delay means death for the one man. In "Horses--One Dash!" however, the man in danger becomes so frightened that he begins to hate his adversary. This emotional reaction is one of the factors that save his life.

Richardson, sleeping in a Mexican hut, is awakened by the arrival of a group of bandits. The bandit chief decides to rob the American, and perhaps kill him. Confronted by the bandit leader, Richardson's fear does not permit him to move. Although his revolver is hidden under his blanket, he realizes that he cannot escape from all the cutthroats.

To Richardson, whose nerves were tingling and twitching like live wires, and whose heart jolted inside him, this pause was a long horror; and for these men who could so frighten him there began to swell in him a fierce hatred—a hatred that made him long to be capable of fighting all of them, a hatred that made him capable of fighting all of them. A 44-caliber revolver can

26 Ibid., p. 77.
make a hole large enough for little boys to shoot marbles through and there was a certain fat Mexican, with a moustache like a snake, who came extremely near to have eaten his last tamale merely because he frightened a man too much.87

Within Crane's stories, we see the numerous pressures of society on the individual. The conventions of society guide man's actions throughout his life. In his attempt to be accepted, he becomes pathetically eager to please his peers. He will go to great lengths to be well regarded by his acquaintances. To prove his worth, he will often be forced to do strange and foolish actions. However stupid the actions may be, he feels himself obliged to perform the feat expected of him. Crane demonstrates the pressure of the group on the individual with remarkable clarity in "The Fight." In this selection, Willie Dalzel, a gang leader, dares a newly-arrived boy to fight Jimmie Trescott for no other reason than to see a fight:

"Well," demanded Willie, "kin he lick you?" And he indicated Jimmie Trescott with a sweep which announced plainly that Jimmie was the next in prowess.

Whereupon the new boy looked at Jimmie respectfully but carefully, and at length said, "I dun'no."

This was the signal for an outburst of shrill screaming, and everybody pushed Jimmie forward. He knew what he had to say, and, as befitted the occasion, he said it fiercely: "Kin you lick me?"

The new boy also understood what he had to say, and, despite his unhappy and lonely state, he said it bravely: "Yes."

87 Ibid., p. 208.
"Well," retorted Jimmie, bluntly, "Come out and do it, then! Just come out and do it!" And these words were greeted with cheers.

The two victims opened wide eyes at each other. The fence separated them, and so it was impossible for them to immediately engage; but they seemed to understand that they were ultimately to be sacrificed to the ferocious aspirations of the other boys, and each scanned the other to learn something of his spirit. They were not angry at all. They were merely two little gladiators who were being clamorously told to hurt each other.88

Henry Fleming re-echoes these sentiments in his reminiscences of a Civil War episode in "The Veteran." At the country store, Henry tells his eager listeners about his first experience in battle.

"The trouble was," said the old man, "I thought they were all shooting at me. Yes, sir, I thought every man in the other army was aiming at me in particular, and only me. And it seemed so darned unreasonable, you know. I wanted to explain to 'em what an almighty good fellow I was, because I thought then they might quit all trying to hit me. But I couldn't explain, and they kept on being unreasonable—blim!-blam! bang! So I run!"89

Henry, just as the two little boys, is obliged to follow the dictates of his society. No character is free to make a choice in the matter.

This same principle is present also in "A Mystery of Heroism." During the lull in the battle, Jim Collins says

88 Ibid., V, 157-158.
89 Ibid., I, 204.
that he would like a drink from the well that has been under fire. His comrades bait him, daring him to risk his life for a drink from the well. Collins is finally forced to take a stand.

Collins was shaking his fist in the faces of some laughing comrades. "Don't ye! I ain't afraid t' go. If ye say much, I will go!"

"Of course, ye'll will! You'll run through that there medder, won't ye?"

Collins said, in a terrible voice: "You see now!"

At this ominous threat his comrades broke into renewed jeers. 90

Collins is driven by the jeers of his comrades and by his own pride to ask the permission of his captain. With the captain's assent and a few minutes to think the matter over, however, Collins' ardor for performing the foolish feat begins to fade.

When Collins faced the meadow and walked away from the regiment, he was vaguely conscious that a chasm, the deep valley of all prides, was suddenly between him and his comrades. It was provisional, but the provision was that he return as a victor. He had blindly been led by quaint emotions, and laid himself under an obligation to walk squarely up to the face of death.

But he was not sure that he wished to make a retraction, even if he could do so without shame. As a matter of truth, he was sure of very little. He was mainly surprised.

90 Ibid., II, 99-100.
It seemed to him supernaturally strange that he had allowed his mind to manoeuvre his body into such a situation. The emotional impulses pressured by his comrades' taunts that led him to act. He realizes, just as the two boys in "The Fight," that his act is illogical. However, he cannot do otherwise, even though it means death.

Crane entitles one of his episodes of the Spanish-American War, "The Price of the Harness." When asked the meaning of the title, Crane wrote: "... it is the price of the harness, the price the men paid for wearing the military harness, Uncle Sam's military harness; and they paid blood, hunger and fever." To Crane, the soldier is a part of the gigantic war machine. He is harnessed to it; he is directed by it; his personal fate is determined by it. He is merely a muddy cog condemned to follow the incomprehensible orders from an unseen authority. From "The Little Regiment" comes this picture of the soldier's plight:

The column in the roadway was ankle-deep in mud. The machinery of orders had rooted these soldiers deeply into the mud, precisely as almighty nature roots mullein stalks.

Later, two soldiers discuss the army's position. Crane writes:

To their minds, infantry and artillery were in a most precarious jumble in the streets of the town; but they

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91 Ibid., p. 102.


93 Works, II, 30.
did not grow nervous over it, for they were used to having the army appear in a precarious jumble to their minds. They had learned to accept such puzzling situations as a consequence of their position in the ranks, and were now usually in possession of a simple but perfectly immovable faith that somebody understood the jumble. Even if they had been convinced that the army was a headless monster, they would have merely nodded with the veteran's cynicism. It was none of their business as soldiers. Their duty was to grab sleep and food when occasion permitted, and cheerfully fight wherever their feet were planted until more orders came. This was a task sufficiently absorbing.94

In "Death and the Child," Crane also views the soldier caught in the harness as devised by society's invention, the war machine. In this particular picture, however, Crane sees a striking similarity in the attitude of the soldier to that of the recoiling cannon. Seemingly, both wish to flee. However, they are both held in check to perform their obligations as prescribed by society. As the artillery barrage rages, Crane notes:

The howitzer had thrown itself backward convulsively, and lay with its wheels moving in the air as a squad of men rushed toward it; and later, it seemed as if each little gun had made the supreme effort of its being in each particular shot. They roared with voices far too loud, and the thunderous effort caused a gun to bound as if in a dying convulsion. And then occasionally one was hurled with wheels in air. Those shuddering howitzers presented an appearance of so many cowards, always longing to bolt to the rear, but being implacably held up to their business by this throng of soldiers who ran in squads to drag them up

94 Ibid., p. 39.
again to their obligation. The guns were herded and cajoled and bullied interminably. One by one, in relentless program, they were dragged forward to contribute a profound vibration of steel and wood, a flash and a rear, to the important happiness of man.95

Perhaps the most graphic illustration of social pressures on an individual is a story not of the battlefield, but rather of a quiet dignified town named Whilomville. The story is called "The Monster." Of this short story, Edith Wyatt writes, "We have no more spirited portrait of the mob-meanness of our democracy... than his short story 'The Monster,' a chronicle of the cruelty of the people of an eastern town to a negro maimed in recovering from a fire the child of the town's best doctor."96

When the Negro, Henry Johnson, is believed to be dead as the result of his rescuing Dr. Prescott's boy from a fire, the town's attitude toward the Negro is one of profound respect:

The town halted in its accustomed road of thought, and turned a reverent attention to the memory of this hostler [Henry Johnson]. In the breast of many people was the 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.

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95 Ibid., XII, 262-263.

The name of Henry Johnson became suddenly the title of a saint to the little boys.97

Dr. Trescott, out of gratitude to the heroic Negro, attempts to revive the near-dead Henry, and finally succeeds in saving Henry's life. However, the doctor is warned by his friend, the judge, of the possible consequences that may follow. The judge remarks:

"Perhaps we may not talk with propriety of this kind of action, but I am induced to say that you are performing a questionable charity in preserving this negro's life. As near as I can understand, he will hereafter be a monster, a perfect monster, and probably with an affected brain. No man can observe you as I have observed you and not know that it was a matter of conscience with you, but I am afraid, my friend, that it is one of the blunders of virtue."98

The judge then warns Trescott:

"He will be your creation, you understand. He is purely your creation. Nature has very evidently given him up. He is dead. You are restoring him to life. You are making him, and he will be a monster, and with no mind."99

Although the judge admires Dr. Trescott's conscientious attempt to repay Henry for his sacrifice, the judge feels Trescott is going against nature's will, and that the doctor will suffer for it. Not able to alter Trescott's decision, the judge ineffectually concedes, "Well, it is hard for a man to know what to do."100

97 Works, III, 53. 98 Ibid., p. 56. 99 Loc. cit. 100 Ibid., p. 57.
The judge's forebodings, however, are soon borne out. The monster shocks the sensibilities of the townspeople. They try to force the doctor to get rid of the monster, but he stubbornly refuses to succumb to Whilomville's demands. As a result, his medical practice diminishes and is finally ruined. The story ends with Dr. Trescott's realization that his family, too, has been socially ostracized because he has gone against the dictates of society.

The idea that man is not a free agent is clearly crystallized in "The Monster." In the grip of society, the doctor must follow its demands or suffer. His society has employed two weapons against the unyielding doctor: social ostracism and an economic boycott. To live, it is essential that the doctor be socially acceptable in order that he may derive an income from his medical practice. The social and economic pressures are so intertwined in "The Monster" that it is difficult to unravel the two strands for separate examination. One pressure affects the other, causing a continuous cycle.

In the Bowery sketches, Crane deals more specifically with the economic pressures that affect the individual. Here again, however, there is a cause-and-effect cycle between the economic pressures and the environment. For example, in "An Ominous Baby," a child of the slums wanders into a residential district that is considerably richer than his own. Crane writes:
After a time, the wanderer discovered upon the pavement a pretty child in fine clothes playing with a toy. It was a tiny fire-engine, painted brilliantly in crimson and gold. The wheels rattled as its small owner dragged it uproariously about by means of a string. The babe with his bit of rope trailing behind him paused and regarded the child and the toy. . . . After a little the wandering baby began quietly to sidle nearer. His bit of rope, now forgotten, dropped at his feet. He removed his eyes from the toy and glanced expectantly at the other child. 101

The child of the slums has set his sights on something finer than the shabby rope, something that he can obtain only by force. The two children, with the instincts of the jungle, battle for possession of the toy:

"It's mine! It's mine!" cried the pretty child, his voice in the treble of outraged rights.

"I want it!" roared the wanderer.

"It's mine! It's mine!" 102

The slum child is a victim of the same misfortune as the mournful-sounding sleeper in "An Experiment in Misery." The dreamer, off in a gloomy corner of the flophouse, is observed by the youth as symbolizing the economic and environmental victimization of not only one man, but a whole class of people:

. . . of a sudden he began to utter long wails that went almost like yells from a hound, echoing wailfully and weird through this chill place of tombs where men lay like the dead.

101 Ibid., XI, 106.
102 Ibid., pp. 107-108.
The sound, in its high piercing beginnings that dwindled to final melancholy moans, expressed a red and grim tragedy of the unfathomable possibilities of the man's dreams. But to the youth these were not merely the shrieks of a vision-pierced man: they were an utterance of the meaning of the room and its occupants. It was to him the protest of the wretch who feels the touch of the imperturbable granite wheels, and who then cries with an impersonal eloquence, with a strength not from him, giving voice to the wail of a whole section, a class, a people. 103

Crane's slum child, then, is simply a small fry version of man in his earliest state—squealing, fighting, hating, raging, grasping. Crane does not show the child or his grown-up counterpart as being glorious creatures, endowed with something special, something apart from the animal kingdom. For the most part, Crane's characters have definite animalistic traits, whether they are taken as a group or as individuals. Crane's vivid description of an army preparing to charge the enemy clearly shows the animalistic traits in man:

That fierce elation in the terrors of war, catching a man's heart and making it burn with such ardour that he becomes capable of dying, flashed in the faces of the men like coloured lights, and made them resemble leashed animals, eager, ferocious, daunting at nothing. The line was really in its first leap before the wild, hoarse crying of the orders. 104

Even in his slum children of "An Ominous Baby" and "A Great Mistake," Crane uses animalistic traits. Whereas the

103 Ibid., p. 28.
104 Ibid., II, 47.
child in "An Ominous Baby" is willing to fight for what he wants, the child in "A Great Mistake" decides to use the cunning of a fox. The baby looks covetously toward a fruit stand of an Italian vendor. While the Italian's attention is on a newspaper, the child tries to sneak a lemon from the fruit stand. The babe's actions are described thus:

The baby ceased his scrutiny and again raised his hand. It was moved with supreme caution toward the fruit. The fingers were bent, claw-like, in the manner of great heart-shaking greed. Once he stopped and chattered convulsively, because the vendor moved. The babe, with his eyes still upon the Italian, again put forth his hand, and the rapacious fingers closed over the round bulb.105

Turning now to Crane's portrayal of the adult, other than on the battlefield, we see again the animalistic tendencies in the dwellers of the Bowery. The old sheepherder in one of Crane's western stories, "A Man And--Some Others," however, is really not much different from the Bowery inhabitants. A stranger approaches the sheepherder, and Crane describes what impressed the stranger:

... he saw a tattered individual with a tangle of hair and beard, and with a complexion turned brick-colour from the sun and whisky. He saw a pair of eyes that at first looked at him as the wolf looks at the wolf, and then became childlike, almost timid, in their glance. Here was evidently a man who had often stormed the iron walls of the city of success. 106

105 Ibid., XI, 113.
106 Ibid., XII, 73.
His first love is his gun. It is his defence, his protection against an unfriendly world. It is the only thing he possesses that can be counted on when all else fails. The gun is one of the few means by which its possessor can determine his own destiny and that of others. Crane writes of the old sheepherder’s devotion to his gun:

Bill loved it because its allegiance was more than that of man, horse, or dog. It questioned neither social nor moral position; it obeyed alike the saint and the assassin. It was the claw of the eagle, the tooth of the lion, the poison of the snake; and when he swept it from its holster, this minion smote where he listed, even to the battering of a far penny. Wherefore it was his dearest possession, and was not to be exchanged in southwestern Texas for a handful of rubies. . . . 107

Another example of an animalistic character is Scratchy Wilson of "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky." Crane pictures him thus:

The man's face flamed in a rage begot of whisky. His eyes, rolling, and yet keen for ambush, hunted the still doorways and windows. He walked with the creeping movement of the midnight cat. 108

Ordinarily, Scratchy is a harmless old fellow; but as the barkeeper of "The Weary Gentleman Saloon" relates:

"He's a terror when he's drunk. When he's sober he's all right--kind of simple--wouldn't hurt a fly--nicest fellow in town. But when he's drunk--whooh!" 109

107 Ibid., pp. 71-72.
108 Ibid., p. 97.
109 Ibid., p. 96.
At such times, Scratchy is transformed into a maniacal menace, carrying death in his hands, terrorizing the town of Yellow Sky. Commenting on this situation, Thomas Beer writes, "The town is Wilson's plaything but he, threshing his revolvers, is the plaything of a sardonic casual fortune. Man is just man, even in the hour of courage when Crane lets him be, homely and awkward still, an image of endurance not without honour, not, in the end without beauty."110

We have already discussed three types of characters that frequently emerge from the naturalist's pen: (1) the character marked by animal traits; (2) the abnormal being, due to physical or mental disabilities; and (3), the strong-willed character whose will is finally broken. 111 So far, most of Crane's characters examined have been marked with animalistic tendencies. Sheriff Potter in "The Bride Comes To Yellow Sky" is an exception, as is Dr. Trescott in "The Monster." Trescott comes nearer falling into the third category, the strong character whose will is finally broken. When we last see the doctor, he still refuses to succumb to society's demands; but from all indications, necessity is going to compel the doctor to reverse his stand.


111 See p. 9.
The Swede in "The Blue Hotel" appears as a candidate for Professor Parrington's second category, the abnormal being. With paranoic mannerisms, the Swede instantly distrusts everyone in the small Nebraskan hotel. "His eyes continued to rove from man to man." During a card game, he interprets the innocent behavior of the other card players, a cowboy, an Easterner, and the hotel owner's son, as being a threat to his life. The Swede's fears mount until he can no longer control them.

The Swede sprang up with the celerity of a man escaping from a snake on the floor. "I don't want to fight!" he shouted. "I don't want to fight!"

The cowboy stretched his long legs indolently and deliberately. His hands were in his pockets. He spat into the sawdust-box. "Well, who the hell thought you did?" he inquired.

The Swede backed rapidly toward a corner of the room. His hands were out protectingly in front of his chest, but he was making an obvious struggle to control his fright. "Gentlemen," he quavered, "I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house! I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house!"

The hotel manager tries to pacify the Swede by offering him a drink. The Swede is suddenly transformed. He no longer appears frightened, but becomes brash and overbearing. At the supper table,

The Swede domineered the whole feast, and he gave it the appearance of a cruel bacchanal. He seemed to

112 Works, X, 99.
have grown suddenly taller; he gazed, brutally disdainful, into every face.\textsuperscript{113}

The Swede's newly-formed attitude soon precipitates a crisis. In a card game, the Swede accuses the hotel owner's son of cheating. In the ensuing fist fight, the Swede emerges victorious. Intoxicated with his success, he swaggeringly leaves the hotel for a saloon, and because of his belligerent attitude, he soon becomes the victim of a gambler's knife.

Concerning the fate of the unfortunate Swede, H. L. Mencken, in a preface in Crane's Works, comments: "... we somehow feel that it is the fit and foreordained climax to a long series of obscure events, all bound together by chains of occult causation."\textsuperscript{114} The closing episode of "The Blue Hotel" points out how each of the five characters is instrumental in the death of the Swede. After the gambler's trial for murdering the Swede, the Easterner bitterly realizes that he and the other four are as guilty as the convicted gambler.

"We are all in it! This poor gambler isn't even a noun. He is a kind of an adverb. Every sin is the result of a collaboration. We, five of us, have collaborated in the murder of this Swede. Usually there are from a dozen to forty women really involved in every murder, but in this case it seems

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p. 110.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. xii.
to be only five men—you, I, Johnnie, old Scully; and that fool of an unfortunate gambler came merely as a culmination, the apex of a human movement, and gets all the punishment.  

"Determinism dominates everything," writes Zola, representing the naturalist's viewpoint. In examining these selected stories of Stephen Crane, it is evident that a lurking fate, nature, man's environment and heredity determine and place a definite limitation on man's so-called free will.

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115 Ibid., pp. 131-132.
116 Zola, op. cit., p. 18.
CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY

The short stories of Stephen Crane are representative of the naturalistic school. In his stories, Crane created illusions of truth and reality. He resisted the delusions of the romantic; his views were not compromised by popular decorum and propriety. He never courted sentimentality, but looked at the world in the dispassionate and precise manner of the scientist.

The coldly clinical atmosphere of his stories arises partly from Crane's fidelity of observation and partly from his impersonal workmanship. With great clarity, Crane managed to penetrate the composition of common phenomena. Oddly enough, such concise and concrete observations were achieved through a subjective technique, impressionism. Thus, the objectivity of the observations, as called for by naturalistic principles, is limited. Crane's impersonal attitude, however, is decidedly naturalistic in character. As illustrated in the previous chapter, he keeps a psychological distance from his stories. He observes and records the surface activities of life; yet within such superficial interpretations, he reveals a penetrative insight into life's depths. Because of his impersonal attitude, Crane chooses to ignore the concept that moral and ethical standards must be observed in the art
of storytelling. Crane's stories are devoid of such moral judgments. His concern is only with that mechanism called man and the dark powers which inexorably move him towards his destiny.

Man's status, to Crane, is anything but noble and lofty. In such short stories as "The Open Boat," "Death and the Child," and "An Experiment in Misery," Crane observes the ironic inconsequentialities of man's place in an indifferent world, whether it be on the sea, on the battlefield, or in the large city. The individual becomes aware of his insignificance as he finds himself buffeted by the whims of forces he cannot control.

As depicted by Crane, the individual is an ineffectual animal, driven by his instincts, and harnessed to external and internal forces. In "The Open Boat" and "The Blue Hotel," Crane shows man trapped by fate and circumstances. In "Manacled," and "Horses--One Dash!" and "A Man And--Some Others," he depicts man as being chained to his emotional instincts. The environmental and social pressures on the individual are evident in such stories as "The Fight," "A Mystery of Heroism," "An Ominous Baby," and "The Monster." Thus, determinism, the vital precept of naturalism, is clearly represented in many of Stephen Crane's short stories.
From this study of naturalism, it is noted also that Crane frequently chooses characters with strong animal natures, and keeps his characters on an animal plane. Occasionally, however, he focuses his attention on some abnormal creature with neurotic tendencies. Fear, rather than hunger or sex, is the predominant instinct examined within his characters. Their conduct, while confronting danger, is closely studied by Crane in order to convey their helplessness under such conditions. It is the coalition of environment, circumstance, and temperament that determines the destiny of Crane's characters. With the craft of a chess player, he moves his characters toward a preconceived end, convincing the reader that it could not have been otherwise.

Although Crane's artistic creed must be largely inferred, his short stories embody most of the naturalistic precepts: an impersonal and frankly amoral attitude, a denial of the principle of free will and the acceptance of determinism dominating all. Thus, the words of Stephen Crane describing the Nebraskan town in "The Blue Hotel" provide an appropriate close to this study:

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

1 Works, X, 124.
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