

Stephen Crane's Impressionism: A Step Back

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by

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Abstract

This thesis focuses primarily on Impressionism in three of Stephen Crane's works: Maggie: A Girl of the Streets, The Red Badge of Courage and "The Monster." Impressionism is the most appropriate hypothesis to describe Crane's work because it deals with modes of perception, methods of interpretation of data, and the conflicts of interpretation of data.

Impressionism, as I will define it, relies mainly on perception stemming from the characters themselves. It promotes the conflict between their perception and the reality of the surrounding world. The role of the Impressionist writer is to present these perceptions in such a way as to point out their discontinuity. Primarily this is achieved through the use of a fragmented narrative that reflects the cognitive responses of the protagonists. Crane uses imagery that reflects the perspective of the protagonist, carefully choosing images to reflect the protagonist's state of mind. These images are chosen for the effect they will have not on the reader, but on the characters in the story. Thus, what often appears to be meaningless has meaning when taken in terms of the whole story. Atmosphere succeeds scene in importance, as space and shapes are translated into the essence of sensation.

Crane's Impressionist protagonist has difficulty processing what he sees. He is the victim of his own faulty interpretation of the data with which he is presented. He is

influenced by his emotions, in particular fear, anxiety and pride. Reality is *felt* rather than imagined, thereby making even the most unrealistic impression real for the protagonist. He loses the ability to distinguish between empirical reality and the reality he has created for himself because he is unable to judge which impressions should be rejected or accepted as real. Ultimately he ends in a world of destruction, disintegration, and exhaustion.

These concepts will be more fully explored in this thesis, with examples taken from the three works mentioned above. Emphasis will be placed on Crane's narrative techniques and his rendering of the Impressionist protagonist as a victim of his over-stimulated perception of the world around him.

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Finally, I'd like to dedicate this thesis to my Aunt Teresa, who passed away before I could graduate, but whose strength and determination served as the inspiration behind my completion of this thesis.

Introduction

XXVI

26

There was set before me a mighty hill,
And long days I climbed
Through regions of snow.
When I had before me the summit-view,
It seemed that my labor
Had been to see gardens
Lying at impossible distances.

from Stephen Crane, The Black Riders and
Other Lines

i

Critics agree that Stephen Crane's work is difficult to classify. Many arguments have been put forth as to the critical school into which Stephen Crane might fit. He has been labelled a Naturalist, a Realist, and a Symbolist. Studies have been done, and much speculation has gone on, in an attempt to trace the influences on Crane's artistic genius. It is my opinion that Crane had no set theory, but rather that he was a natural phenomenon, a talent that could not be defined by any one influence. We know that Crane was aware of certain contemporary writers, as well as of literary theories, but there is little supporting

evidence that he consciously used these influences. Though many theories may be applied to Crane's works, it is not as a direct result of them that Crane's style developed, but rather the postulates of these theories may be laid directly over Crane's works. Crane's writing came first, the theories came later.

Crane did not write with any one theory in mind, nor did he subscribe to any one philosophy. However, he did claim that to adhere to the truth was the most important philosophy when writing. If this adherence to the truth meant that he would become an Impressionist, then that is what he became. "Impressionism was his faith. Impressionism, he said, was truth, and no man could be great who was not an impressionist, for greatness consisted of knowing truth" (Berryman 55). Impressionism is only one of a number of fruitful approaches to this author's work, but it would appear to be the closest to what Crane was trying to achieve. The question remains as to what Impressionism is and how it can be applied to Crane's style of writing.

ii

Impressionism is not, as one dictionary of literary terms would have it, a vague term "which we might well dispense with" (Cuddon 326). It is an important style of literature which, because of its relative vagueness in the literary world, requires a clear working definition before a study involving its tenets can be completed.

The term Impressionism came into use when Claude Monet exhibited his painting

"Impression: soleil levant" in Paris in 1874. An art critic used the word 'impressionist' in his review of this exhibition (Nagel 10). Thereafter, the term began to acquire a certain ambiguity. Some artists resisted the term because it implied a school of painting; or the artist did not see how the term could be applied to his own work. By 1886 the artists of the original 1874 exhibit renounced the movement.

Though these French painters rejected the term Impressionism, the concept of it was represented in their philosophies. Whether they chose to be called Impressionists or not, these painters were creating out of relative confusion a certain organization of ideas. One painter declared that he did not try to reproduce Nature, but rather that he represented it because Art should express the sensations Nature aroused (Nagel 12). Another artist said that the image must be rendered as it is seen, that visual emphasis was of the utmost importance. This meant that often there was an obscuring of vision, "a systemic limitation of the sensory reception of the essentials...generally the result of natural phenomena (trees, fog, snow, darkness, distance) or, less often, problems arising from human civilization (smoke, flags, buildings, crowds)" (Nagel 12). No matter how much critics and artists alike disagreed with the philosophy or the technique, they did agree that Impressionism aimed at the representation of Nature as impressed upon the eye of the artist so as to re-create the same effect on the eye of the spectator (Nagel 14).

The fundamental concept behind Impressionism was perception, or the way an object was actually seen by the painter. The way an object was painted depended on the "ineluctable flux in human perceptions of even the most stable of objects" (Nagel 12). The

effects of light and colour on an object became of great importance to the rendering of reality. For example, an object could be rendered differently depending on the time of day that it was perceived by the artist. How an artist rendered a subject was not only dependent on the lighting, but also on the state of mind of the artist at the time of the painting's rendering. That is, Impressionism became a way for the artist to express his impression of the subject realistically because it reflected his own sense of reality.

Contemporary writers began to take an interest in the French Impressionist painters, beginning in France and gradually branching off into other countries, including the United States. In fact, although the term Impressionism did not come into use until 1874, there is evidence that the movement was already well under way before this time. Gustave Flaubert was known to associate with several of the would-be Impressionists, and so it is to him that the birth of literary Impressionism is credited. His 1869 novel, L'Education Sentimentale, is said to be the first literary work to adhere to what would later become Impressionism (Kronegger 15). However, the term was not actually used in respect to literature until 1883 by Ferdinand Brunetiere: "We can already define literary impressionism as a systematic transposition of the expressive methods of art which is the art of writing" (Kronegger 24. Translated in the notes 116).

Once impressionism made its way into the vocabulary of literary critics its definition became even ~~more~~ distorted. Impressionism is acknowledged as a literary movement in German, Danish and British literature, yet in French and American literature it still remains rather vague. It is often confused or interchanged with such terms as symbolism, imagism,

stream of consciousness, realism and naturalism (Kronegger 24). For the purposes of this thesis, it is not necessary to go into detail regarding the reasons behind the confusion of the term. What is necessary is to present to the reader a workable definition of literary Impressionism in order to focus on the works of Stephen Crane.

iii

Literary Impressionism emerged as one in a series of attempts to respond artistically to the perception of the world as chance. Impressionist writers found themselves faced with a world where faith in a higher power was being replaced with an increasing despair. The stability of reality was being shaken by ideas that were changing the way man viewed his universe. Man was no longer satisfied to leave his fate in the hands of an unknown entity. This mistrust led to something even more difficult to comprehend: if there was no higher being then how could reality be defined? Who was controlling it? The world around the Impressionist had changed from a world of stasis and security to one based on chance and unknowability.

Impressionism, then, became a way of defining one's universe. Based on the premise that the world was in constant flux, the Impressionists relied on a faith in inductive reasoning to interpret the changing world around them. Faced with a world of change, the Impressionists developed a style that more accurately portrayed what they perceived. Characters were not governed by Fate, nor was the author supposed to intrude upon their

development. Characters were forced to control their own destiny through their interpretation or misinterpretation of their individual experience. This new style of writing depicted human consciousness in such a way that the very act of perception could be felt by the reader. It recreated a "world of individualized sensory perception, epistemological indeterminacy, relativism, ambiguity, fragmentation, and surfaces" (Stowell 15). It was a world of sensation: reality was felt rather than imagined. Experience was fragmented into sensational instants: sketches and episodes replaced the chronological narrative (Kronegger 37).

Based on perception, Impressionism came to be known for its fragmented images and vivid colours, yet to view it as merely this is to miss the full scope of Impressionism. It is more than just a visual approach to literature. It is an attempt to render the ever-changing world around us in a way that reflects actual cognitive experience. It is the rendering of human consciousness and its quest for answers in a world filled with images that stimulate and over-stimulate the mind until reality and fantasy can no longer be distinguished.

Because of its cognitive nature, Impressionism necessarily relies on images as experienced by a perceiving intellect. For this reason much of the narrative technique relies on the nature of the character and how, and what, he perceives, not on what an omniscient narrator describes. The depiction and development of characters and themes are inextricably linked with the narrative technique. The Impressionist writer must remain outside the narrative, presenting the reader with sensory perceptions filtered through the consciousness of the protagonist. Any information about the character must emerge from

what he does, what he says, and from what other characters say about him (Nagel 27).

An Impressionist narrative is often composed of what appears to be sketches and episodes. Given that the Impressionist writer views the world as an ever-changing and highly sensuous universe, it is not surprising that the characters in Impressionist works are reduced to a series of states. Life is reduced to discontinuous instants because we experience it instantaneously. The linear quality of time means that each passing moment will have an effect on the future. The personality of a character is constantly being altered with each new experience. Images and instants are significant not for what they reveal about the external world but for what they suggest about the psychology of a character (Nagel 29).

What makes these characters unique to Impressionism is their inability to use their experiences, past and present, to consciously shape their futures. Overcome by their own heightened sensibilities, they lose their will to change the situation. As a result of their over-stimulated consciousness, they withdraw into a universe where nothing exists save the expression of fear and anxiety, conveyed to the reader through the use of vivid imagery, most notably that of colours (Kronegger 65). This withdrawal from reality isolates the protagonist from his family and friends. Isolation is an important theme in Impressionist literature. The protagonist finds himself removed from society because of the uniqueness of his perception. His isolation makes the protagonist acutely aware of his individuality, while at the same time it creates in him the desire to be more like those around him (Stowell 28). This desire only serves to compound the confusion and instability of the protagonist, resulting in a greater emptiness and destruction of self.

While viewing the surrounding world in terms of objects and images the impressionist protagonist can no longer distinguish between empirical reality and his own reality. As he fades into the world of objects, the protagonist's initial urge to live a full existence destroys his personality even while it exalts it. He sacrifices his lucidity and will because he is open to both beauty and ugliness (Kronegger 67). In this state of disintegration and decomposition, he cannot be a part of society. His introspective nature makes him irrational and emotional. He is unable to judge which impressions should be rejected or accepted as real because he is overcome by stimuli. Misguided by his own preconceived dreams and generalizations, he is crippled by hopelessness, disillusionment and despair when reality does not measure up to his expectations.

If the key to growth is a character's ability to make connections, and "Impressionism is the process by which impressions are absorbed by a perceiver and synthesized by consciousness into a gestalt that may lead to action or thought"(Stowell 25), then the problem for the Impressionist protagonist lies in the way in which he makes connections. He is unable to correctly interpret each fragment of experience and to connect one to another in a manner beneficial to himself. It is difficult for him to comprehend the entire picture because he is caught up in the fragments of experience. Since the author is not supposed to intrude upon the work, characters are forced to make mistakes based on their own interpretations. Based on this premise, the character is also allowed to rectify his mistakes based on new insight or experience. These 'epiphanies' take place at moments of heightened perceptual awareness, leading to a new way of viewing reality as experienced by the

character, an expanded consciousness or a change in direction (Stowell 37). However, these instances of insight are more likely to compound the original error than correct it.

Impressionistic fiction may appear to lack depth because it is so full of seemingly disconnected images. It is important to remember that Impressionism is primarily based on the psychology of the protagonist and the narrative technique must reflect this. One reason that the narrative appears to be disjointed is because the author is trying to mimic the discontinuity of time. We perceive time to pass at different rates, depending on what we are doing. For example, an hour of sleep passes much more quickly than an hour of monotonous work. The same holds true for the Impressionist protagonist. The narrative reflects this through the use of "cross-cutting of scenes, the fragmentation of image complexes, and the sensory fusion of past and present" (Stowell 35). Images are rendered as quick fragments, often blurred by the distance or some other phenomenon to reflect the momentary aspect of experience. The narrative is characterized by "fleeting impressions, vague gestalt images hurriedly glimpsed, arbitrary details selected almost to the point of triviality: splashes of colour, blurred movement, the nuances of mood, gesture, and consciousness" (Stowell 21). There is a shift from the verb "to be" to "appears," "seems," or "it was as if." These expressions emphasize the instability of perceived reality (Stowell 28). Nothing for the Impressionist protagonist remains the same for very long. The world is in a constant state of flux, and as such, he does not have the opportunity to analyze what he is experiencing. It is this rapid-fire of impressions and experience that make it so difficult for him to correctly interpret his world. He relies on an instantaneous recognition of reality, and too often this

is not accurate.

Impressionist fiction presents, but does not analyze; the analysis is left up to the reader. We are aware that what the protagonist is experiencing is real only in his own mind. We are able to connect the impressions in such a way that allows us to distinguish between objective reality and the protagonist's subjective thoughts. However, to spend a great deal of time analyzing the individual image is to miss the point of Impressionism. One must be able to step back from the work and view it as a whole; otherwise, we too will become like the protagonist - caught up in the world of impressions, unable to separate the pattern from the picture.

iv

Now that we have established a broader base for the term *impressionism*, we can more easily apply it to the works of Stephen Crane. Crane may not have stated explicitly that he was an Impressionist, but his work reveals that he was, even if only unconsciously. He did not need to write essays on style and technique for us to see that he was very much influenced by the Impressionist model. The protagonists in his stories embody the Impressionist's idea of character. Crane uses the psychology of his characters to explore themes of isolation, change, and the search for identity. Crane's use of imagery and narrative reflects the experience and consciousness of the protagonists. To study Crane in terms of Impressionism, while not the only way to approach his work, is valid.

Three of Crane's more major works, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets (1893), The Red Badge of Courage (1895), and The Monster (1897), will be studied in order to further elucidate what I have just stated about Impressionism. Each work will be discussed on its own, with the focus being the most important aspects of Impressionism as seen in that particular work.

Chapter 1 - Maggie: A Girl of the Streets

LVII

57 With eye and with gesture
 You say you are holy.
 I say you lie;
 For I did see you
 Draw away your coats
 From the sin upon the hands
 Of a little child.
 Liar!

 from Stephen Crane, The Black Riders and Other Lines

i

If we are to believe the biographers, Stephen Crane hired several people to go about on the subway and to sit on park benches reading his first novel, Maggie: A Girl of the Streets. Published in 1893 under an assumed name and at his own expense, Crane's first novel was unsuccessful. Three years later, after Crane had published The Red Badge of Courage to much critical acclaim, and was working on other projects, including a book of poetry, he tried again with Maggie. The public, believing it to be a recent work, was not impressed by this novel because it was not as well written as its predecessor. But it is unfair to judge Maggie

as a later novel even though that is the order in which the public received the two works. Since Crane wrote Maggie first, it is logical that it be studied first. From it we might better determine whether or not there is any development of style in Crane's short but prolific career.

Even at this early stage of Crane's writing there is evidence of Impressionism in his work. Crane's theme and technique throughout Maggie illustrate many of the characteristics of literary Impressionism outlined in the introduction. Each character is searching for his or her role in a world of constant change, while at the same time plagued with an inability to view the surrounding world in realistic terms. Their inability to separate illusion from reality gives the novel a fragmented quality. They become isolated from society because of their illusions and their search for identity in a world made up of fleeting instants. Crane's imagery reflects the isolation and fragmentary quality of his Impressionist characters.

Consistent with Impressionistic fiction and painting, illusion, "as the distortion of either apprehensive data or comprehensive analysis" and the faulty interpretation of experience, is used to show each character's view of reality (Nagel 92). They do not see the world as it is. Crane's use of irony emphasizes this theme of illusion in the novel. Characters are blind to reality, and to their own moral degradation. They are caught up in the illusion they have created of themselves and of the world that surrounds them.

Crane uses more than one perceiving intelligence in the story. Though this approach is not as common, it is still valid in terms of Impressionist technique. In Maggie most of the narrative emphasis is placed on Jimmie and Maggie, with lesser importance given to Pete and

Mrs. Johnson. The narrative records the perceptions of each of these characters through a variety of techniques. Since the narrative technique of Impressionism reflects the psychology of the protagonists, it must therefore reflect the cognitive processes of the characters. The use of episodic detail and colour imagery, the manipulation of time, and themes of isolation and illusion realistically reflect the cognitive nature of the impressionist protagonist, and therefore reflect the representation of perception.

ii

Critics have attempted to fit Crane's narrative style into formal genres, accusing him of writing Maggie as a "play within a play" (Overmyer 184) and as a "three-act drama with an appended conclusion" (Solomon 203). To view Maggie under such rigid constraints is to miss out on the power of Crane's writing. Crane's main objective was to strive for simplicity and truth (Berryman 55). His images are quick, fragmented, seemingly unrelated blotches of colour and emotion, with an emphasis on visual imagery that is often overwhelming.

Crane employs a conscious technique, carefully choosing each image for the effect that it will have not only on the reader but on the characters themselves. Images reflect the unrealistic perception that the characters hold of each other. Detail is laid upon detail in order to create a deeper meaning out of what at first appears to be very shallow. Each seemingly unrelated image is carefully chosen for the impact it will have on the reader, successfully creating a lasting impact that makes us want to go back and look more closely at the process.

A brief paragraph in the first chapter illustrates Crane's method of layering image upon image, just as the Impressionist painter layered colour to create shadow and depth. Our attention is drawn to a fight by drawing attention to the various observers:

From a window of an apartment house that upreared its form from amid squat, ignorant stables, there leaned a curious woman. Some laborers, unloading a scow at a dock at the river, paused for a moment and regarded the fight. The engineer of a passive tugboat hung lazily over a railing and watched. Over on the Island, a worm of yellow convicts came from the shadow of a grey ominous building and crawled slowly along the river's bank (Maggie 3).

On the surface this scene seems only to provide a description of the Bowery environment. Crane's vision is "figurative and exclusive. Details are few and carefully selected, and they never quite come into spatial or temporal focus"(Bowers, Introduction xlv; The Works of Stephen Crane I). However, Crane does not merely describe a woman, some labourers, an engineer, and some convicts. The images are carefully chosen to create a vagueness which is characteristic of Impressionist writing. With each image the point of view recedes from the foreground scene of Jimmie and the other boys fighting for the gravel heap. From the apartment, to the dock, to the tugboat, to the Island, Crane effectively uses the distance to blur the scene. Thus,

no object has any clear and detailed outlines, and thus, automatically, the subject itself is subordinated to the melodious effect of colors and sounds, which then can be used to

evoke a particular mood...Colour, together with sound and light effects, creates harmony. (Kronegger 46)

As the perceptual distance increases, the mood of indifference also increases. One might assume, as one critic does, that this paragraph emphasizes the theme of "human indifference to human suffering" as these spectators take no more interest in the fighting boys than a passing distraction (Brennan 180). The convicts do not even take a passing interest in the boys. Clearly this "worm of yellow convicts" is even further removed from society than the other spectators, being physically separated on an island. Though indeterminate in number, there are enough that when seen from a distance they lose their individuality, becoming a single "worm" as they move along the shore. The image of a worm also conjures up a picture of a slithering agent of decay, but Crane further emphasizes their lack of humanity by making them "yellow." The colour yellow may allow for several interpretations, but most effective is its association with jaundice, a condition characterized by the yellowing of the skin due to the presence of contaminants in the blood. Further, these contaminants of society emerge from the shadows, and are crawling toward an indistinct destination. Perhaps, as one critic asserts, this image foreshadows the "ultimate desolation and insensate degradation towards which this abandoned segment of society tends"(Brennan 180). The uniqueness of the image forces us to pause, and to think about what we have read. The impression remains with us as we continue to read the novel, illustrating how the affective representation of colour conveys the concept of the fleeting glimpse of the passing world.

Crane's choice of diction adds another dimension to this paragraph. He uses adjectives in a way that is specific to his writing, and we shall see that this is a technique that he develops even further in The Red Badge of Courage. The adjectives he chooses personify the environment. For example, the tugboat is "passive," the stables are "ignorant," and the building is "ominous." The curious woman watches from a window in an apartment house that "upreared its form from amid squat, ignorant stables." Not only do the stables become personified by being "ignorant," but the apartment house also exhibits motion. The engineer watches from a "passive tugboat," here indicating a consciousness in the boat. The environment appears alive and animated, lending an almost nightmarish quality to the narrative. This is significant to Impressionism because it indicates that things glimpsed share in the motion of the perceiver's glance and can therefore be registered in the consciousness as moving, or, in effect, living.

iii

Much of the narrative emphasis in the novel is placed on either Jimmie or Maggie. Interestingly, it is Jimmie's childhood and Maggie's adulthood that concern Crane. Jimmie's early years are presented in order for the reader to gain insight into his character. He is blinded by his experiences, and therefore lacks the vision to see the effect they might have on his present and future.

Crane provides a thorough and accurate psychological profile of Jimmie. The first four chapters provide the details of Jimmie's childhood and adolescence. Consistent with the philosophy behind the Impressionist character, the adult Jimmie is a product of his past experiences, and Crane uses fragmented incidents to show the whole picture. Jimmie is not merely a street punk and a bully. He is the product of poverty and a dysfunctional family, but he is unaware of the connection between his past and his final character. Jimmie cannot process the impressions that he experiences in a manner beneficial to himself or anyone.

Crane uses the narrative language here to effectively show the disparity between reality and Jimmie's perception of it. Jimmie is a bully, beating up on others who are weaker than himself, but he sees himself as being very heroic. The language reflects this illusion of heroism, tending toward the mock-epic with words such as "honor" and "battle." Crane juxtaposes images of heroism with realistic images to show the dichotomy between reality and Jimmie's perceptions: "A very little boy stood upon a heap of gravel for the honor of Rum Alley. He was throwing stones at howling urchins, from Devil's Row who were circling madly about the heap and pelting him" (Maggie 3). The description of the battle emanates from Jimmie's perception. Crane achieves this through a third person projection of what Jimmie's mind perceives as reality (Nagel 64). Since Jimmie views himself as being heroic, the language used reflects his illusion. Crane's diction denotes a higher level of education and knowledge than Jimmie possesses, thus indicating a disparity between what is real and what is illusory. Further, the language is juxtaposed with the reality of the situation, making the

reader aware of the distinction between a character's perception and reality itself.

Jimmie's impression of Pete also indicates a flaw in Jimmie's perception. He sees Pete as a "boastfully sauntering ...lad of sixteen years...the chronic sneer of an ideal manhood already... upon his lips" (Maggie 4). Crane undercuts Pete's heroism by juxtaposing images that denote a tough young man with the reality that he is appalling only to the timid. He makes an impression only on the small boys, over whom he holds a certain power and fascination based primarily on the fact that he is bigger than they. Jimmie admires and looks up to Pete because he embodies everything that is heroic in the Bowery. Though he is basically a coward, he succeeds where Jimmie could not, and, in a place where strength means power, victory is what counts. The juxtaposing of Pete's actions and Jimmie's impression of him shows that the values held by the Bowery inhabitants are inappropriate to reality.

A similar case can be made for Jimmie's father. Outwardly the father is tranquil, but Crane's diction reveals the underlying hostility and violence of the man. Though he "plodded slowly" and smoked "an apple-wood pipe", he has "sullen eyes"(Maggie 5). This is a technique used frequently by Crane to indicate the disparity between the character's perception of reality and reality itself. Jimmie's father ironically sees himself as a peacekeeper, but the only way he knows how to keep order in his household is through violence.

Jimmie's father tries to maintain an image for the rest of the world to see. Although he is violent by nature, he does not wish his neighbours to see him in this light. When Maggie voices her opinion on her brother's fighting, Jimmie answers "Shut up er I'll smack yer mou't'.

See?" (Maggie 7). When he hits her, their father tells Jimmie "Leave yer sister *alone on the street* [my emphasis]"(Maggie 7). Crane constantly shows improper and unexpected motives behind proper appearances (Brennan 176). Jimmie's father says nothing about beating Maggie. His main concern is that Jimmie should not do it in public because this could give the neighbours the wrong impression.

In Chapter IV Jimmie grows from a boy to adolescence to manhood in the space of a few short pages. Since memory does not rely on the spatial aspect of time, Crane effectively renders the episodes of Jimmie's adolescence in a way that is analogous to memory. Crane relies on cross-cutting of scenes, fragmented images, and the "sensory fusion of past and present" to create a sense of simultaneity in the perception of Jimmie's past experiences (Stowell 35). This technique of giving "time the character of space, to impose spatial relations on time, to do away with a chronological narrative and replace it with sketches" is common to impressionist works (Kronegger 58).

Crane's Impressionism reflects a way of seeing that collects only disparate and unconsecutive data. This makes it nearly impossible for characters such as Jimmie to make any sense out of their experiences. Each fragment confirms Jimmie's impression of the world. Jimmie believes in nothing because there was never anything in his life in which to believe. He "never conceived a respect for the world, because he had begun with no idols that it had smashed" (Maggie 13). Jimmie's attitudes about the world around him are formed early in his life, but his perceptions are not realistic. They are based on his impressions of the Bowery

and its code of honour, already shown to be unfitting to the situations. Influenced by his earlier experiences (the fight on the heap, his father's public persona, and Pete's 'heroism'), he is unable to correctly interpret what he sees, nor is he able to see a connection between these experiences and his present situations. Instead, Jimmie despises weakness, and respects only those who are stronger than he is. In his mind he must treat everyone with suspicion:

the police were always actuated by malignant impulses and the rest of the world was composed, for the most part, of despicable creatures who were all trying to take advantage of him and with whom, in defense, he was obliged to quarrel on all possible occasions" (Maggie 14).

Jimmie's past experiences lead him to believe that everyone is against him. He is incapable of seeing the world in any other way. In his mind, he can have no influence on the present or the future. He becomes apathetic because he sees that his actions have no impact on his life.

Characters in Impressionism lack the ability to understand why things happen to them. Jimmie is incapable of the sort of reflection that would yield answers to his questions. He cannot see the logical progression of events. He simply experiences life. At one point he does try, but he does not have the mental capacity to be introspective. For example, he "had an idea it wasn't common courtesy for a friend to come to one's home and ruin one's sister. But he was not sure how much Pete knew about the rules of politeness"(Maggie 31). Though he wonders vaguely on two occasions "if some of the women of his acquaintance had brothers" (Maggie 32 and 41), he does not see that what he has done to other women has been done to

his own sister. "Within the strict constraints of ironic implication [Crane] achieves a subtlety of meaning utterly beyond the reach of the characters" (Howard 105). Jimmie can only "vaguely wonder" and is therefore incapable of self-analysis. His experiences and the contrast between his words and actions imply something to the reader, but not to him. Jimmie is not capable of seeing that his actions and Pete's are similar. In his view his friend should not have taken advantage of his sister, yet he sees little wrong with his having taken advantage of the sisters of others.

iv

Each character in Maggie exhibits aspects of the Impressionist protagonist, but it is Maggie who can best be described in these terms. She is not merely blind to her moral obligations. She is a victim of her own innocence and heightened sensibilities. Crane goes only so far in describing the perceptions of the other characters. Each is "limited to his own 'cylinder of vision,' and must base all of his conclusions and actions upon the limited information available"(Nagel 44), but Maggie is overcome by hers. The others will survive by actively merging with the "supersensual multiverse"(Stowell 13) but in succumbing to it, Maggie cannot and will not survive.

The character of Maggie may appear on first glance to be superficial, but her increased sensibilities make her painfully aware of the fact that she does not fit in with her environment.

Typical of the Impressionist protagonist, she is a "spiritual exile who cannot be part of a society which is itself in a state of disintegration and decomposition....[She is] an individual without roots, going from one locale to another in search of something tangible" (Kronegger 66). She desperately wishes that her life were different. When Pete comes to visit, Maggie can only see that he is everything that she is not. Jimmie believed that "fine raiment was allied to weakness, and all good coats covered faint hearts" (Maggie 14) but even he is impressed with Pete's fine clothes and worldly manner. Pete is the answer to Maggie's dreams of an ideal man. Her "thoughts were often searching for far away lands where, as God says, the little hills sing together in the morning. Under the trees of her dream-gardens there had always walked a lover" (Maggie 19). Searching for a confidence that she does not feel, Maggie sees these characteristics in Pete, basing her impression on his appearance:

To her the earth was composed of hardships and insults. She felt instant admiration for a man who openly defied it. She thought that if the grim angel of death should clutch his heart, Pete would shrug his shoulders and say, 'Oh, ev'ryt'ing goes'(Maggie 20)

Maggie interprets his chronic sneer and fancy clothes as worldliness, and places him in a class above herself. Her sensitivity leaves her "open to all impressions without passing moral judgments as to which type of impressions [s]he should reject or adhere to wholeheartedly" (Kronegger 66). Impressionist characters lack the ability to use their experiences to consciously shape their future. They become unable to judge which impressions are real and which are imagined. Maggie mistakenly perceives Pete to be a gentleman because she is

incapable of separating her own dreams from reality.

Maggie's heroic impression of Pete is reflected in the imagery used in association with him. He is always described by colours that are traditional to heraldry (Simoneaux 228). When Maggie first sees Pete he is dressed in a "blue double-breasted coat, edged with black braid, buttoned close to a red puff tie, and his patent-leather shoes looked like murder-fitted weapons"(Maggie 17). Maggie sees Pete as a hero, but his clothes do not reflect his inner character. Jimmie's opinion of Pete also influences the way Maggie sees Pete. When Pete and Maggie show a mutual interest in each other, Jimmie allows his friend to date his sister because he believes him to be an honourable fellow. Ironically, Jimmie bases honourability on Pete's stories of his strength, but Pete wins his battles by preying on the weak and helpless. In reality there is nothing heroic about Pete. Maggie's perception that Pete is a gentleman is based on the image he projects of himself and the admiration her brother affords him.

Maggie's perception that Pete lives "in a blare of pleasure" and that "he had friends and people who were afraid of him" (Maggie 21) is based not only on the clothes he wears and the stories he tells, but also on Maggie's own fantasies of the ideal lover. She wants to see Pete as a gentleman, so she ignores all evidence to the contrary to make a forgone conclusion.

Maggie bases her assumptions on her imagination of better things because she lacks the experience and the moral capacity to do otherwise. Crane juxtaposes Maggie's impression of Pete with an example of his culture, showing him to be rude and impolite. Maggie is blinded by her illusion that Pete is a gentleman because she has never actually met one, and therefore

has nothing to compare him to. She "perceived that Pete brought forth all his elegance and all his knowledge of high-class customs for her benefit"(Maggie 23). Ironically, Pete also believes he is behaving in an elegant manner, though it is evident that he knows little of high class customs. Crane uses irony as a tool to level our "normal assumptions and expectations" (Brennan 176). Though we are aware of Pete's lack of knowledge, Maggie is unable to see the true manner of his actions. She interprets his rudeness and indifference as confidence and class because that is what she sees in her mind. What Maggie perceives as reality is really only the projection of her own fantasy.

The more Maggie sees of Pete the greater her dissatisfaction with her world becomes. The world in which she lives does not measure up to the world she believes Pete to inhabit. She lacks the ability to use her experience to consciously shape her environment. Her over-stimulated imagination forces her to withdraw into a world filled with fear and anxiety, making her somewhat paranoid. She becomes irrational and emotional and she is unable to judge which impressions are real and which are imagined. Her increasing awareness that her surroundings are not of the same apparent calibre as Pete's. creates for her a feeling of isolation. She tries to impress Pete by attempting to fix up the wreckage of her home, but he takes no notice. Maggie sees his indifference as proof that she is not up to his standards, not as evidence that Pete comes from an environment similar to her own. Desperate for someone to love her, Maggie is grateful when Pete shows an interest in her *despite* her "worn black dress"(Maggie 21) and her ruined home. She is so sensitive to her own impoverished

surroundings that she is incapable of noticing that Pete's world is no better than hers.

For example, the plays to which Pete takes Maggie are cheap and ill-performed, and are of the sort frequented by the lower class, yet they heighten Maggie's belief that Pete will take her away from the poverty that she so detests. Maggie associates Pete with the hero of the theatre and herself with the damsel in distress. In Maggie's fantasy there is a hero to rescue her from her terrible existence. Maggie's perception of Pete as a man of honour and a gentleman leads her to believe incorrectly that Pete is the hero who will save her from her unsatisfactory world.

When Maggie needs someone to confide in and to help her see Pete in a realistic light she has only herself to rely on. Her mother is unapproachable: "She would have liked to discuss his admirable mannerisms with a reliable mutual friend. At home, she found her mother often drunk and always raving" (Maggie 26). Jimmie and his mother fight in Chapter IX, resulting in "the usual upheaval of the tables and chairs" (Maggie 30). It is at this point that Pete takes Maggie away from the mess of her family home, offering her the opportunity of escape and "a hell of a time" (Maggie 31). As she is leaving, Maggie's mother curses her daughter:

`Yeh've gone teh deh devil, Mag Johnson, yehs knows yehs have gone teh deh devil. Yeh a disgrace teh yer people, damn yeh. An' now, git out an' go ahn wid dat doe-faced jude of yours. Go teh hell wid him, damn yeh, an' good riddance. Go teh hell an' see how yeh likes it' (Maggie 30).

Maggie's mother is unaware of the effect her actions have on her daughter. The irony of the situation is obvious. Mrs. Johnson tells her daughter to go to hell, and yet that is exactly what Maggie is leaving when she leaves her mother's home. It is this impression of the drunken mother and the hell she inhabits that makes flight seem like the only solution for Maggie.

Again this episode is tied with the values of the Bowery. Maggie's mother is not concerned with Maggie's well-being, but rather with the appearance that she is a fallen woman. Just like her father in the earlier chapters, Maggie's mother is more concerned with outward appearance. She is incapable of admitting her role in her daughter's decisions. Mrs. Johnson's comprehensive analysis of reality is distorted. Clearly it is she who has "gone to the devil." Like Pete, she is limited to her own "cylinder of vision" and therefore bases "all of [her] conclusions and actions upon the limited information available"(Nagel 44). In her own mind she believes that she has been a good mother to her daughter, and that Maggie comes of good stock. Her "cylinder of vision" allows her to react to her daughter's situation precisely because she sees only what she wants to see. Maggie makes her own decisions regarding Pete, and to her he represents an order and stability that she cannot find anywhere else. She associates Pete with the museums and menageries to which he takes her on their dates, yet he is bored by these visits. He only takes an interest when he sees the "spectacle of a very small monkey threatening to thrash a cageful" of other monkeys (Maggie 26). Pete's personality is closely associated with disorder and violence but Maggie, in her blindness to Pete's shortcomings, is incapable of making this correlation.

Pete is also very much affected by his own view of reality. His job as a bartender allows him to maintain an air of respectability and valour, characteristics that in reality he does not possess. While behind the counter he perceives himself as a man to be respected and feared, throwing people out of the bar and keeping everything neat and tidy. Crane undercuts this illusion of orderliness through his use of diction. The interior of the saloon is papered in "*imitation* leather". The bar is of "*counterfeit* massiveness", with "a great mahogany-*appearing* sideboard" behind it [my emphasis] (Maggie 33). The bar becomes for Pete a barrier behind which he can maintain his air of respectability. It is also symbolic of Pete's outward appearance of honour. He too is a "fake," his white jacket only an imitation of honour. Like the bar, which relies on the "begrimed hands and munching mouths" for its survival (Maggie 33), Pete also relies on the sliminess of mankind to make his living. Crane juxtaposes this image of "opulence and geometrical accuracy" with a description of a cheap and dishevelled buffet counter to further emphasize the incongruity of Pete's outward appearance and his true character (Maggie 33). Pete is so influenced by his own impressions of himself that as his relationship with Maggie progresses he too begins to see himself as being in a class above Maggie.

During the early stages of their relationship the beautiful Maggie becomes for Pete a part of his illusion of respectability and strength. Pete does not view Maggie as anything more than part of his attire, a prop to lend a distinguished air to his person: "with Maggie gazing at him wonderingly, he took pride in commanding the waiters" (Maggie 38). He needs her to

prove to himself, and to others, that he is not a bully but a hero and a gentleman. In his 'cylinder of vision' he is not the cause of Maggie's ruination; he thinks he has saved her from a life of drunken frenzy and debris and raised her up to a level above her previous station. Though Pete shows Maggie a world that is little better than the one she has left, he perceives his presence as giving her a life of respectability. Ironically it is Maggie's association with Pete that ruins her, though Pete later imagines that it is his reputation that is tarnished because of the association. Crane makes it clear that it is the *appearance* that Maggie is a kept woman that is her downfall. Maggie's sexual relationship with Pete is not important to the plot, and in fact is never mentioned by Crane. What is important is that Maggie continues to see him even at the expense of isolating herself from her family. She does not see that her connection with Pete will lead to her destruction.

When Maggie pleads with Pete at the saloon he is afraid that Maggie's reputation will also stain his. Pete must maintain his honourable reputation at all cost. Though Maggie was previously a suitable accessory, now that a shadow has been cast on her reputation Pete cannot risk being seen with her. He is only too happy to tell her to "go t'hell" and to return "with an air of relief, to his respectability" behind the bar (Maggie 50). He is so caught up with the impressions of those around him that he cannot comprehend the reality behind the situation. Pete does not even possess the sight that Jimmie does in terms of the women he has been with. It at least crosses Jimmie's mind that perhaps he has had some role in the downfall of his women. Pete only sees that Maggie's presence is now putting his reputation at risk.

This blindness, this need to maintain public appearances is at the heart of the Impressionistic text. Characters are concerned mainly with the *impression* that they make on the surrounding world, and not on their feelings. The one character who does appear to be concerned with her own feelings is Maggie. As long as Pete says he loves her, she perceives herself to be happy. But Maggie bases her assumptions on fantasy and illusion. Essentially Maggie has lived most of her life in a vacuum. Because she has no past experience, she is overwhelmed by her relationship with Pete. Her initial urge to live a full existence destroys her personality as she becomes less able to judge between impressions that are beautiful and those that are ugly. For example, she makes a distinction between the beer halls that Pete takes her to and her former Rum Alley environment, even though there is no difference.

Crane is not interested in pursuing the path to Maggie's moral degradation. His interest lies in her increasing inability to make connections. Maggie does not view herself as a bad woman yet she feels justified when "with a shrinking movement [she] drew back her skirts" (Maggie 39) on passing two painted women. She is unable "to correctly perceive the world she lives in and to come to a personal judgment about how to behave within it"(Nagel 96). Maggie is incapable of seeing herself in the same light as these painted women because she is incapable of making the connections between their situations and that of her own. Maggie relies on her ability to recognize reality instantaneously, but her perceptions are inaccurate.

By Chapter XIV Maggie has changed from having "blossomed in a mud puddle" (Maggie 16) to having an "air of spaniel-like dependence"(Maggie 43). She has lost her sense

of self and independence in her search for love and acceptance. She has withdrawn into a universe filled with the anxiety and fear of being abandoned. Already abandoned by her family, Maggie must rely on Pete for acceptance, and yet she does not see that the more she relies on him the less interest he has in her. Pete drops Maggie for Nellie, perceiving her to be a more impressive accessory. Pete is so caught up in a world of other people's opinions that he can no longer recognize reality. Ironically, it is now *Nellie* who is interested in *Pete* as an accessory. Blinded by his illusion of respectability, Pete is unable to judge who is genuinely interested in him, and who is taking advantage of him.

Maggie is dimly aware that Pete changes in Nellie's presence. She "thought she noted an air of submission about her leonine Pete" (Maggie 45). For one rare instant Maggie sees Pete for what he really is and she is "astounded". In keeping with Impressionist literature Maggie tries to rectify her mistakes based on this new insight into Pete's character but her decision to return home comes too late. Her family will not accept her back into the house, and without their support she is forced into the street. Like most Impressionist characters, her problem lies in her inability to make sense out of what she sees. Her epiphany comes too late, and she is left to live out the illusion that society has created for her. She becomes the fallen woman that everyone assumed her to be already. As a prostitute Maggie is able to maintain an illusion of respectability by wearing a "handsome cloak" (Maggie 52), but she cannot hide from the truth of her situation and she ends her life in suicide.

v

Maggie is clearly an Impressionistic text. Characters are blinded not only by their own illusions but by the impressions of those around them. Maggie's mother ends in a superficial pose of forgiveness, acted out for the benefit of the neighbours. Pete ends up in a saloon, much like the one he believes gives him his respectability, passed out and abandoned by the woman he thought was loyal to him. Jimmie is incapable of seeing his own role in the ruin of other women. Of the three, perhaps he comes the closest to seeing connections between his experiences, but it is clear that none of them has the mental and moral capabilities to see any connections, no matter how incorrect they might be, between their own actions and their experiences. Maggie has the capacity to see connections, but because she has little experience her perception is inaccurate. She is destroyed as much by her urge to live a full life as by the illusions and expectations of society, therefore making it necessary for her life to end in suicide.

It is clear that even at this early stage of his career Crane is a very powerful and talented writer, and his style as an Impressionist is beginning to emerge in Maggie. His talent lies in creating impressions on the mind of the reader. We will see that his flare for words and memorable images only improves with time and practice. In Maggie, we are often aware of his voice, but later he will master the Impressionist technique of limited narrative, identifying with only a single center of intelligence instead of several.

Chapter 2 - The Red Badge of Courage

113 A soldier, young in years, young in ambition
 Alive as no grey-beard is alive
 Laid his heart and his hopes before duty
 And went staunchly into the tempest of war.
 There did the bitter red winds of battle
 Swirl 'gainst his youth, beat upon his ambitions,
 Drink his cool clear blood of manhood
 Until at coming forth time
 He was alive merely as the grey-beard is alive.
 from Stephen Crane, Uncollected Poems

i

In Maggie: A Girl of the Streets we are very much aware of Crane as a visual artist, painting images with his pen. In The Red Badge of Courage imagery is inextricably linked to the protagonist and his perception of the world. Crane uses imagery in such a way that "a sudden flash of insight into a particular situation or physical setting" is given to the reader (Hough 192). The function of images in Impressionist works is not necessarily to present us with an accurate and exact view of the world, but to present a style of description that is "ephemeral, evanescent, constantly shifting its meaning and hence continually defying precise definition" (Rogers 265). Crane's imagery is realistic because it reflects the protagonist's cognitive experiences. This reflection necessarily creates a work filled with fragments,

surfaces and ambiguity.

The Red Badge of Courage depicts the psychological meanderings of a young soldier experiencing his first battle during the Civil War. We are privy to the feelings, thoughts, ideas, state of mind, and experience as *impressed* upon Henry's mind. Images of nature, animals, colour and religion combine to create the composite impressions of what Henry feels, either consciously or subconsciously. The imagery is "suggestive rather than definitive, recording brief sensations without organization and interpretation"(Nagel 28). Since the imagery reflects Henry's psychology, it is made up primarily of sensory details: colour, light, shadow, depth. What we are left with is a visualization of war that is at once hallucinatory and realistic: hallucinatory because of Crane's use of "streaming and strident colours, his slashes of raw, brute verbal pigmentation" to depict battle and to emphasize Henry's fear and confusion (Knapp 73); and realistic because these images reflect not only the chaos of war, and the frenzy of battle, but also the psychology of a soldier at war. Since Henry's perception changes from moment to moment, the way in which Crane uses images also changes in order to recreate Henry's impression of reality at a given moment.

Like the French Impressionist painters, Crane combines seemingly unrelated images that when viewed from a distance create a greater picture. Crane believed that a novel "should be a succession of ... clear, strong, sharply-outlined pictures, which pass before the reader like a panorama, leaving each its definite impression" (Kwiat 187). The Red Badge of Courage is:

composed of disconnected images, which coalesce like the blobs of colour in French Impressionist paintings, every word-group having a cross-reference relationship, every seemingly disconnected detail having inter-relationship to the configured whole. The intensity of a Crane work is owing to this patterned coalescence of disconnected things, everything at once fluid and precise (Stallman, An Omnibus 185).

Since this novel is based on the experiences of Henry Fleming, Crane utilizes short fragments that seem to be discontinuous and unrelated. At the beginning we might surmise that this work is a hyperbolized vision of war, but as we continue reading we become increasingly aware that the images are a manifestation of Henry's mind. Though we are aware of the subtle manipulation of the narrator, the action is viewed through Henry's consciousness. Each image, each situation, each fragment, is screened through Henry's perception. We must therefore look at more than just the imagery in order to grasp the depth of this work.

Point of view is an important aspect of the novel. In French Impressionist paintings, "atmosphere succeeds scene in importance" (Rogers 265). Space and shapes are not rendered in a geometric sense, as distinct shapes, but are "translated into the essence of a sensation" (Rogers 265). Crane's control of narrative point of view reflects Rogers' assertion that reality is based primarily upon subjective impressions. "A corollary to this idea is that a person's psychology affects the way he conceives the world". The narrator "registers and simultaneously evaluates the various, frequently contradictory views of the world which define his protagonist's sensibility"(Rogers 265). Reality, and one's perception of it, are constantly

changing from moment to moment. The narrator must be able to treat each reality as the protagonist sees it, and still maintain a plausibility with the reader. As long as Crane adheres to this tenet of Impressionism, namely that reality is based on momentary impressions and images, then his narrative technique has credibility. Instead, Crane employs a restricted point of view to relate what Henry is feeling, seeing, and experiencing, as told primarily through the consciousness of Henry.

Since the narrative voice is identified with Henry's, "there is no narrative capacity to enter [other characters'] minds or to explore their backgrounds"(Nagel 27). Therefore, what is known about these characters must manifest itself in what others say about them, or what they themselves say or do. For example, we know Henry Fleming only as 'the youth' until we hear his mother calling him Henry a few pages into the novel. Even after Henry's given name has been revealed he is still referred to as 'the youth'. Not only does this emphasize the youthfulness and inexperience of Henry as a soldier, but Crane uses this image ironically. Juxtaposed with the image of the army as an entity introduced in the opening paragraph of the novel, Henry is seen as a self-centred character with delusions of grandeur. It is not important for the reader to know exactly who Henry is. What is important is the *impression*. On the most superficial level Crane is interested in portraying the experiences of an untried soldier in battle. By using the image of the youthful private, Crane effectively identifies and universalizes the character of Henry Fleming. On a deeper level, Crane is able to explore the cognitive experiences of Henry Fleming, the soldier at war.

A significant facet of the Impressionist protagonist is his inability to realistically interpret his experiences. Crane uses four main events to explore Henry's impressions of war: his enlistment; his first battle and subsequent flight; his return to his regiment; and the battles they fight together. Each episode is filled with sensory perceptions based on fear, anxiety and pride which reflect what is going on in Henry's mind at the time. Rather than describe the actual events, Crane relies on fragments and surfaces to portray Henry's experiences. When Henry's experiences do not measure up to his expectations he becomes disillusioned and introspective. As an Impressionist protagonist, Henry is given the opportunity to control his own destiny through the interpretation (or misinterpretation) of his experience. Henry's character unfolds as his experiences increase, but he is unable to see connections that will benefit him in the future.

ii

In the first half of The Red Badge of Courage Henry's experiences will take him on an emotional roller-coaster. His passionate nature readily responds to fear, pride, rage, and shame, but the fact that he has little time to reflect on his experiences leaves him confused and bewildered. In the second half of the novel we will see Henry finally experiencing exultation during a battle, acting with a new confidence, but we will also see that his ability to correctly interpret his experience has not improved.

Crane's description of Henry's enlistment in the first chapter shows the extent to which Henry's perceptions are based on his own illusion. Henry remembers this experience as a composite of romance, Homeric battles, and his own "eagle-eyed prowess"(RBC, ed.Bradley 7). His desire to enlist is based on a fantasy of glory, "extravagant in colour, lurid with breathless deeds"(RBC, ed.Bradley 7), but his mother's reaction to his enlistment does not match his illusion:

[S]he had disappointed him by saying nothing whatever about returning with his shield or on it. He had privately primed himself for a beautiful scene. He had prepared certain sentences which he thought could be used with touching effect. But her words destroyed his plans (RBC, ed.Bradley 8).

Henry's romantic vision of war blinds him to its realities. He does not see the connection between his mother's reaction and the possibility of his death. Henry bases his decision to enlist on his desire to become a hero. He does not realize the implications of his decision until he is faced with his first battle, and by then it is too late to change his mind.

Crane makes it clear that Henry bases his interpretation of his experiences on Henry's ever-changing psychological state. When a battle seems imminent Henry's visions of grand battles turn to "hideous possibilities" (RBC, ed.Bradley 11). He becomes introspective, trying to "mathematically prove to himself that he [will] not run from a battle"(RBC, ed.Bradley 11). His courage as yet untried, Henry does not know for certain that he will not run. It is this uncertainty, perhaps more than the actual battle, that frightens him. Governed by pride, Henry

is afraid that "those qualities of which he [knows] nothing should everlastingly disgrace him (RBC, ed. Bradley 11).

Henry, like the characters in Maggie, is concerned more with the opinion of those around him than he is with owning up to his insecurities. He would rather maintain an air of courage than allow his peers to see his fear. As a result, Henry fails to notice that his comrades are also facing similar fears. He gains some courage from the tall soldier, but pride forces him to continue alone with his mental anguish.

As the regiment approaches the battlefield, Crane indicates that Henry's perception is becoming increasingly irrational. He deludes himself into thinking that he was forced into joining the army, and he feels helpless and doomed. Still, he is irresistibly drawn to the battlefield, a slave to his curiosity. At this point, Henry is open to both beauty and ugliness. His impression of the battle front reflects an impressionist painting, filled with colours and seemingly indistinguishable objects: "He was aware that these battalions with their commotions were woven red and startling into the gentle fabric of softened greens and browns"(RBC, ed. Bradley 22). Nothing is fully defined in this image. The colours and the ambiguity of the scene become a backdrop for Henry's first vision of battle. He expected to be frightened by the sight of the battlefield, but instead it becomes woven into the softness of the countryside. Henry will feel this incongruity between Nature and the battles of mankind to a greater extent as his experiences unfold. Crane uses Henry's red rage of his first battle to represent this inability to judge which impressions are real and which are imagined:

he began to feel the effects of the war atmosphere - a blistering sweat, a sensation that his eyeballs were about to crack like hot stones. A burning roar filled his ears.

Following this came a red rage. He developed the acute exasperation of a pestered animal, a well-meaning cow worried by dogs. He had a mad feeling against his rifle, which could only be used against one life at a time. He wished to rush forward and strangle with his fingers. He craved a power that would enable him to make a world-sweeping gesture and brush all back. His impotency appeared to him, and made his rage into that of a driven beast (RBC, ed. Bradley 31).

This image of Henry's state of mind during his first real experience of war clearly emphasizes Henry's openness to his experiences. Crane indicates that Henry becomes so caught up in this experience that he loses all sense of reality. The imagery reflects the intensity of Henry's experience. He is incapable of anything less than full involvement in his experiences. Henry loses his sense of self, his vision of who he is, while he is involved in the battle experience. Crane uses a poetic method which utilizes "minimal but exact detail, in an aura of psychological, not objective, reality, [in order that] the experience is precisely, forcefully communicated" (Cady 136). The images create a powerful representation of Henry's state of mind. On the surface he appears to be the epitome of a soldier, but in reality his anger is "directed not so much against the men whom he knew were rushing toward him as against the swirling battle phantoms which were choking him, stuffing their smoke robes down his parched throat"(RBC, ed. Bradley 31). Henry loses all awareness of the world around him,

as he fights "frantically for respite for his senses, for air, as a babe, being smothered, attacks the deadly blankets"(RBC, ed.Bradley 31). He sacrifices lucidity and will because he is incapable of distancing himself in any way from his experiences.

Crane shows Henry's inability to separate his emotional experiences from his physical experiences by showing Henry's wholehearted embrace of his battle experience. He experiences life instantaneously, with no past and no future. Henry has no sense of where he is, either physically or emotionally. There is only 'now'. Overcome by stimuli, he loses his sense of reality. His urge to live a full existence as a soldier is destroyed by his hyper-sensitivity to the world around him. When the reality of war does not measure up to his romantic vision of it, he is crippled with hopelessness, disillusionment and despair. He is unable to maintain such an extreme reaction to the battle experience, and he therefore must retreat in order to regain control of his emotions.

Crane's juxtaposition of images of nature with images of the battle not only further emphasizes Henry's inability to judge between beauty and ugliness, but it also shows his distorted view of the importance of his actions. Before he recovers from his battle sickness, Henry "felt a flash of astonishment at the blue, pure sky and the sun gleaming on the trees and fields. It was surprising that Nature had gone tranquilly on with her golden process in the midst of so much devilment" (RBC, ed.Bradley 34). Perceiving himself to be of some consequence, he cannot comprehend the beauty and tranquillity of the rest of the world. Crane undercuts Henry's egocentric existence, and the importance of the battle, by calling it

merely "devilment."

As he regains control of his senses, Henry begins to see himself again in terms of his heroic fantasies and illusions. He sees "himself even with those ideals which he had considered as far beyond him" (RBC, ed. Bradley 34), but when the battle begins again Henry's fears return with greater intensity. This time he is overcome by his emotional red rage, and he withdraws into a world governed by his fear and anxiety.

Crane uses Henry's isolation to indicate Henry's conflicting impressions of himself, the battle, his comrades, the enemy, and nature. Henry isolates himself precisely because he wants to be like everyone else while at the same time believing himself to be unique in his experiences. His pride tells him "he had fled...because annihilation approached" (RBC, ed. Bradley 39), when in reality he is trying to make sense out of his experiences. Henry lacks the ratiocinative-receptive resources to effectively interpret his experiences, and his reactions to them.

Crane uses the image of the squirrel fleeing at the first sign of danger to explore Henry's attempt to analyze his impressions into some sort of unity. Henry's assumption that the laws of Nature are in accordance with his actions further emphasizes that he is incapable of making a deduction based on reason:

He threw a pine cone at a jovial squirrel, and he ran with chattering fear....

the youth felt triumphant at this exhibition. There was the law, he said. Nature had given him a sign. The squirrel immediately upon recognizing a danger, had taken to his

legs without ado (RBC, ed. Bradley 41).

Henry's assumption here, when juxtaposed with the image of a small animal pouncing in the black water and emerging with a "gleaming fish"(RBC, ed. Bradley 41), appears superficial. Henry interprets these acts of Nature in a manner that suits his actions, but he fails to recognize the true connection: that the prevailing law is survival of the fittest. Since war is an unnatural and unnecessary fight for survival, Henry's attempt to transpose the laws of Nature onto the laws of man is not feasible.

The forest chapel sanctuary scene illustrates Henry's attempt to make sense out of his impressions by continuing the theme of his efforts to convert Nature and her laws into his ally. Henry's initial impression of the sanctuary suggests that nature is sympathetic to his plight, that there is pathetic fallacy at work here. In this chapel Henry expects to find further exoneration for his actions, but instead he is confronted with the image of death: "He was being looked at by a dead man who was seated with his back against a column-like tree"(RBC, ed. Bradley 42). The dead soldier with the unseeing eyes represents a reality in keeping with the sense of Nature's indifference, but sharply at odds with Henry's view of Nature. He cannot understand why in this "religious half light" he should find the body of a soldier. The corpse becomes a mirror in which Henry finds a reflection of himself that he does not wish to see. He does his best to deny, evade and deflect this reflection. He is particularly struck by the "sight of the black ants swarming greedily upon the gray face and venturing horribly near to the eyes" (RBC, ed. Bradley 42), which emphasize Crane's insistence on perception and

on its terrifying imperfections.

Henry tries to return to the battle front, not to fight but to *watch*. He reasons that, "if the earth and the moon were about to clash, many persons would doubtless plan to get upon the roofs to witness the collision" (RBC, ed. Bradley 42). The "crimson roar [coming] from the distance" (RBC, ed. Bradley 42) prompts Henry to re-evaluate his previous experience. He sees

a sort of a humour in the point of view of himself and his fellows during the late encounter. They had taken themselves and the enemy very seriously and had imagined that they were deciding the war. Individuals must have supposed that they were cutting the letters of their names deep into everlasting tablets of brass, or enshrining their reputations forever in the hearts of their countrymen, while, as to fact, the affair would appear in printed reports under a meek and immaterial title. But he saw that it was good, else, he said, in battle every one would surely run save forlorn hopes and their ilk (RBC, ed. Bradley 43).

Yet again Crane shows Henry trying to pull his impressions together into some sort of unity, and yet again we see that Henry is incapable of coming to any reasonable conclusions. He insists that if an individual did not view his actions as important then he would run. He does not see the connection between this theory and his own actions because for some reason he includes himself amongst those who remained and fought. Henry took himself and the enemy so seriously that he could not remain and fight; he ran away. He is incapable of separating

his heroic notions of war from his actual experience.

Crane uses the image of brambles "form[ing] chains and tr[ying] to hold him back", and trees that stretch out their arms to forbid Henry's passage once again to show Henry's attempts to convert Nature into his ally (RBC, ed. Bradley 39). Henry seems to be searching for vindication by incorrectly interpreting his own clumsiness as Nature's interference, just as earlier he misinterpreted Nature's laws. Nature has nothing to do with Henry's subsequent life or death, nor does it play any role in the war of man. Crane indicates that Henry is capable of connecting fragments of experience, not in a realistic manner, but in ways that benefit his confused and irrational state of mind.

Crane uses "fragmented scenes to form episodes,...[restricting] narrative comments to perceptions rather than logical conclusions"(Nagel 9). For example, the horrific episode of Henry's walk with the wounded is made up of fragmented images that are based on Henry's impressions. A tattered man turns to Henry and speaks of the one topic that should be familiar to both soldiers - the battle. This character is known only as "the tattered man." He is an anonymous soldier in the army, identifiable only by this epithet, but the use of an epithet is consistent with Crane's technique. The image is central to Impressionism because it creates a creature made up of impressions, yet refused by Henry as datum. The fact that Henry does not even take the time to learn the man's name, indicates that Henry is not willing to see him as anything more than an impression. The tattered man, like the corpse in the forest, is a mirror image of Henry; and as with the corpse Henry does his best to evade this image and

everything that it has to say about himself.

The image of the tattered man tells us a good deal about the process of taking impressions. The tattered man's impression that Henry has a deep wound that goes beneath the flesh indicates that there is more to impressions than merely the visual. He is correct in his impression of Henry, even though Henry cannot see the connection. It is significant that Henry will later find his red badge of courage in a head wound, because at this point it is Henry's conscience that is wounded.

Henry escapes the tattered man but he remains among the wounded. In his self-conscious state, Henry is sure that every person is "contemplating the letters of guilt he felt burned into his brow" (RBC, ed. Bradley 46). He wishes that he had an injury, a red badge of courage, so that he could walk among these men without guilt. He is envious because he sees their wounds as signs of courage. Henry is once again affected by his perception that everyone is watching him. He is influenced by what *he* believes to be others' opinion of him.

We see Henry's failure to use his impressions as data when he fails to notice that the spectral soldier who now walks by his side is Jim, the tall soldier of his regiment. He is unable to offer Jim comfort in his last moments because Jim's death-march reminds him not only of his own fear of death, but also of his cowardice, characteristics of himself that he does not wish to face. After Jim's death, Henry is powerless to take any action toward the emotions he feels because he is paralyzed by fear and shame.

When Henry becomes aware again of his surroundings he is confronted with the image

of death in the form of the tattered soldier. Then he is more concerned that he will be "the tortured witness of another grim encounter"(RBC, ed.Bradley 51) than he is with his companion's suffering. Crane calls attention to this egoism by showing the tattered man's concern for Henry's wounds. Henry becomes angry with the tattered man because he is afraid not of his friend's impending death, but because he is afraid that the man's questions will reveal that Henry does not deserve to walk with those wounded in battle. Henry does not see that the man's questions are a sign of his concern and selflessness because he is consumed by his own feelings of guilt and shame.

Crane effectively renders Henry's rapidly changing emotions through fast-paced images and fragments of experience, indicating Henry's vacillating between his desire to be a hero, and cowardice. We see that Henry is trying to reformulate the images with which he is struggling into a new reality, but it keeps slipping away, only to be replaced with ever-changing and new realities. Seeing a troop retreat, Henry believes that his actions have been vindicated. Then, seeing an advancing column, he is beset with visions of glory. Though he is still plagued with doubt, Henry sees the approaching soldiers in heroic terms and wishes that he too could be a hero. He imagines his own death:

Swift pictures of himself, apart, yet in himself, came to him - a blue desperate figure leading lurid charges with one knee forward and a broken blade high - a blue, determined figure standing before a crimson and steel assault, getting calmly killed on a high place before the eyes of all. He thought of the magnificent pathos of his dead

body (RBC, ed.Bradley 55).

When Henry's vision is juxtaposed with Jim's death in the previous chapter we see that there is nothing heroic about Henry's desire to die in battle. He had been frightened by his friend's death, his resemblance to "a devotee of a mad religion, blood-sucking, muscle-wrenching, bone-crushing" (RBC, ed.Bradley 49). Henry's vision of war is continually changing as each new reality replaces his fantasy of heroism. The 'mad religion' of his friend is not in accordance with his impressions of war and heroism.

Crane shows Henry's attempt to fabricate an elaborate tale to tell his peers upon his return to his regiment to emphasize the concept of reality versus the appearance of reality. Henry imagines that the whole regiment would say "Where's Henry Fleming? He run, didn't 'e? Oh, my!" (RBC, ed.Bradley 58). Henry is so afraid of being laughed at that he does not realize that no one will even notice his absence. Just as his imagination exaggerated the threat of the opposing army, so too does it exaggerate the reception he will receive when he returns to his regiment. This is also a good example of the protagonist's desire to maintain a 'public' persona, an appearance that fulfils the expectations of society. These expectations are based on *Henry's* perception of society's expectations, not on what it actually does expect. Henry is afraid that everyone will have the impression that he is a coward, and this becomes for him even more frightening than anything he has yet experienced.

In the first half of the novel Crane has brought together the passions of destruction, fear, pride, rage, and shame to create an intensity that is both passionate and spiritual (Garnett 226). In the second half of the novel the passion of exultation in the heat of action will manifest itself in Henry's heart. But is Henry more of a man because of these passions? How much does Henry learn from his first battle experiences and his flight from them? Many critics argue that The Red Badge of Courage is a novel of initiation and growth. Others say that Henry is little more than the youth he was when he began; that he does not become a hero. In my opinion the evidence for Henry's stasis outweighs that for his growth toward manhood.

Chapter XII is a turning point in the novel. Henry has a more rational perception of reality but it is no more accurate. Crane manipulates images to represent Henry's increasing self-confidence, as he attempts to take more control over his impressions and his actions. However, Henry's world changes at such a rapid pace that he continues to misinterpret his experiences, and his attempts to correct the situation only serve to compound the problem.

Henry's "impulse to make a rallying speech, to sing a battle-hymn"(RBC, ed. Bradley 59) is not, as Marston LaFrance asserts, attributable to a courageous desire to return to the front (LaFrance 136). Henry's actions are nothing more than a reaction to the stimuli around him. As when he experiences his 'red rage' Henry is overcome by sensory impressions that blind him to the situation around him. As Crane points out, it is an 'impulse'. It is not calculated or premeditated in any way. Is it courageous to try to be noticed among a group

of terrified soldiers? When Henry's query of "why" is ignored he grabs a man by the arm, holding on so tightly that he is "dragged several paces"(RBC, ed.Bradley 59). It is this action, also committed on impulse, that results in Henry's head wound. There is nothing heroic about it.

As if to further refute LaFrance's argument, Henry is powerless to act upon his desire to make a rallying speech, instead asking "'Why - why - what - what's th' matter?'"(RBC, ed.Bradley 59). Henry experienced a similar speechlessness when his friend Jim died. Then he "seemed about to deliver a philippic", but could only reply "'Hell -'" (RBC, ed.Bradley 50). Crane renders Henry impotent at such moments to indicate that Henry is not able to process his past experiences into anything useful to him in the present. Henry is bombarded with stimuli, resulting in a paralysis both physical and emotional, because he lacks the capacity to process the data. His previous vacillations between heroic deeds and paralysis offer proof that Henry's desire to sing a battle hymn does not indicate that he is any more able to process, and thus act upon, the impressions he is perceiving. He has previously had grandiose visions of his role in a battle and yet remained outside of the fighting.

Crane undercuts the severity of Henry's head wound not only to illustrate Henry's exaggerated perception, but also to crystallize Henry's impotency. Henry's reaction to being struck parallels that of the tall soldier's battle with death, yet when Henry touches his wound, his fingers are only "*dabbled* with blood [emphasis mine]"(RBC, ed.Bradley 60). Crane indicates Henry's exaggerated perception with examples of Henry's melodrama: "he imagined

blood moving slowly down under his hair" and he "imagined terrible fingers that clutched into his brain" (RBC, ed. Bradley 61). Henry is rendered ineffectual by what he *imagines* to be a deathly blow, a blow that turns out to be only a slight wound, and yet the tall soldier exhibited an uncanny strength before his death.

Crane uses the man with a cheery voice to further emphasize Henry's unwillingness to acknowledge those around him as anything other than mere impressions. This man helps Henry locate his regiment, and extends a camaraderie that the self-absorbed Henry is incapable of reciprocating, and yet Henry does not think to look at the man's face. His only impression of the man is that he has a cheery voice. Henry is totally unaware of what is going on around him, as evidenced by the fact that he never looks at the man, nor does he learn the man's name. Like the tattered man, the image of the man with the cheery voice creates a creature made up of impressions, yet refused by Henry as datum.

Henry's wound provides him with the excuse he needs to return to his regiment and maintain his reputation. Henry is still greatly concerned with appearance. He needs to be wounded because he cannot allow the others to see that he was not able to fight in the battle. He needs to maintain the appearance that he is something that he is not; brave and courageous. The man with the cheery voice is able to comprehend the true significance of a wound when he remarks that the injured officer has probably had "all th' war he wants" (RBC, ed. Bradley 62), and that a wound does not make a soldier brave. Henry cannot see this connection. Instead he sees his wound as a badge of courage, an outward sign of his courage and bravery.

With this in mind, Henry returns to the regiment with the impression that he is going to die from his wound. Crane has already made us aware of the slightness of the wound, but he emphasizes this further to illustrate Henry's insignificance, and to illustrate Henry's inflated impressions of himself. After a corporal examines Henry's wound "the youth remained on the ground like a parcel"(RBC, ed.Bradley 65). Crane creates the impression that Henry is no more important than a parcel, like the mere detritus of war. His appearance is corpse-like, similar to those he has seen on the battlefield that look like bundles. Henry, who is struggling to become something larger than human, is reduced to a thing.

Henry's friend Wilson perceives Henry to be more than just a parcel on the ground. He is the only one who affords Henry some measure of comfort. Henry, though he desires to be treated as a hero, cannot accept Wilson's concern without lying to him about how he received his wound. This lie is part of Henry's attempt to construct a workable reality out of the constantly changing features of the physical and psychological landscape. Henry not only wishes to give Wilson the impression that he is of some significance, but he needs to believe it as well. Otherwise Henry will become so overcome by the ever-changing world around him that he will not be able to function in any capacity.

For a brief period it appears that Henry has not convinced himself of his own heroism. Henry is grateful for the attention Wilson shows him. He does not complain about his friend's fumbings and is even concerned about where Wilson will sleep. But upon waking Henry is once again afflicted with pride, and he is irritated by Wilson's clumsiness. Wilson reacts

with "tenderness and care"(RBC, ed.Bradley 69). Henry perceives a change in Wilson:

He had been used to regarding his comrade as a blatant child with an audacity grown from his inexperience, thoughtless, headstrong, jealous, and filled with a tinsel courage....The youth wondered where had been born these new eyes; when his comrade had made the great discovery that there were many men who would refuse to be subjected by him. Apparently, the other had now climbed a peak of wisdom from which he could perceive himself as a very wee thing. And the youth saw that ever after it would be easier to live in his friend's neighborhood (RBC, ed.Bradley 69).

There is no evidence that Henry ever thought of Wilson as a child. In fact, though Wilson was a loud braggart, Henry *envied* his lack of fear and his confidence. Though Henry cannot see the connection, it is he who is now the blatant child. He is the one bragging about battles he has not seen and wounds received in less than heroic ways.

Henry perceives the packet of letters and personal objects that Wilson entrusted to him before the battle as leverage. Henry's perception of reality is made up of a false heroism, and every action seems to support that perception. He sees that he can maintain his appearance of courage by exerting his advantage over Wilson. Further, his red badge will give him a safe conduct through the war because it is evidence of his heroism in battle. But Henry's feelings of heroism are as spurious as his previous cowardice. Recall that earlier he had been sure his cowardice was written on his forehead.

Wilson remembers his previous feelings of doubt with humility, and he asks Henry to

return the packet. Unable to think of a remark, Henry hands the packet back without comment, an act he considers to be generous. Henry's perception of himself is only strengthened by Wilson's position. Now, when it supports his current perception of reality, Henry sees Nature as being indifferent to his deeds. If Nature is indifferent then he must only make atonement to himself. Henry perceives "retribution [as] a laggard and blind"(RBC, ed.Bradley 73). Since his actions were performed in secret, if he can forget what he did then no one need know and he can continue to act out his role as someone "chosen of gods and doomed to greatness"(RBC, ed.Bradley 73).

Crane indicates the extent to which Henry has accepted his inflated perception of reality by showing how Henry sees other deserters: "As he recalled their terror-struck faces he felt a scorn for them. They had surely been more fleet and more wild than was absolutely necessary. They were weak mortals. As for himself, he had fled with discretion and dignity"(RBC, ed.Bradley 73). He sees his flight as a result of his superior knowledge, not of his cowardice. Crane shows that Henry is not superior to the other soldiers by presenting images as viewed through Henry's perception. His retreating comrades become weak mortals, in contrast with whom Henry sees himself as something super-human.

Crane's use of imagery reflects Henry's newly accepted view of reality. There are no more monsters and demons in Henry's perception. He becomes more vocal, bragging and overcompensating for his tenuous sense of courage. When a nearby soldier asks him if he thought he fought the whole battle the day before, Henry's pride is momentarily pierced, but

he is unable to remain silent. He acts as if he cannot wait to enter the battle, and yet when the time comes he is not exempt from the "peculiar kind of hesitation" that makes the men stand as if tied to stakes (RBC, ed. Bradley 78).

Henry cannot maintain his current view of reality. After one day of near-battle Henry has "received his fill of all exertions and he wished to rest"(RBC, ed. Bradley 79). The rage that stoked the fires of Henry's courage turns to hate and the images reflect his state of mind. Images of serpents and monsters return, as he views his enemies as "creatures who were slippery"(RBC, ed. Bradley 79). Henry's inability to judge which impressions are real and which are imagined parallels Henry's first battle experience. As before, he is incapable of anything less than full involvement in his experiences, as he loses his sense of who he is. He becomes so absorbed in his fighting that he continues to fight after the enemy has ceased fire. Afterward Henry ponders his defense of a little tree with much pride and exaggeration: he had been a tremendous figure, no doubt. By this struggle, he had overcome obstacles which he had admitted to be mountains. They had fallen like paper peaks, and he was now what he called a hero. And he had not been aware of the process. He had slept and, awakening, found himself a knight (RBC, ed. Bradley 81).

It is significant that Henry is not aware of the heroic process taking place. While fighting he has lost all awareness of the world around him, sacrificing lucidity and will because he is incapable of distancing himself in any way from his experiences. He experiences life instantaneously, with no sense of past or future. Even in his reflections he cannot think his

way through his experiences. Henry emerges as a hero because that is the way he expected himself to emerge. Before Henry's first battle he was sure he would flee. He expected himself to react in this manner and he did. This time, Henry believed he would emerge a hero, and of course, he did. It has nothing to do with the way he fought, or his actions during battle. It has everything to do with his preconceived notions of how he will emerge from the battle, either coward or hero.

Henry's heroic view of himself is temporarily shattered when he overhears the general and an officer making plans to sacrifice their regiment. He is startled "to learn suddenly that he was very insignificant"(RBC, ed.Bradley 84). James Nagel asserts that Henry gains new insight into his character, that with this feeling of insignificance he now sees the world through new eyes (Nagel 90). Henry does see the world through new eyes, but it is made up of the impressionistic material available to him. Because he ignores his real cowardice in making up this new character he must now prove his significance to the colonel, and also to himself. Each small victory is dedicated to making these officers realize their mistake in misjudging his worth, but also in building up his newly formed perception.

Thomas M. Lorch argues that Henry fails when he "isolates himself, exaggerates his own importance, gives himself over to self-centred thought and imagination, and falls into romantic illusions"(Lorch 353). We have seen this theory at work throughout the novel. The only time Henry seems to succeed in battle is when he becomes lost in a red rage. Lorch asserts that Henry succeeds when he becomes one with the army and "sees things as they are"

(Lorch 353). But even when he is caught up in his red rage Henry's perception is unrealistic. He over-estimates the distance that the regiment has covered during battle. On two occasions Henry defends a tree or a clump of trees, believing them to be the enemy. The following passage, often quoted as an epiphany, indicates Henry's lack of realistic perception:

It seemed to the youth that he saw everything. Each blade of the green grass was bold and clear. He thought that he was aware of every change in the thin, transparent vapor that floated idly in sheets. The brown or gray trunks of the trees showed each roughness of their surfaces. And the men of the regiment, with their starting eyes and sweating faces, running madly, or falling, as if thrown headlong, to queer, heaped-up corpses - all were comprehended. His mind took mechanical but firm impressions, so that afterward everything was pictured and explained to him, save why he himself was there (RBC, ed. Bradley 86-87).

Realistically Henry cannot see with such distinctness. But Henry's sight is manipulated and highly selective. In the past he believed the enemy to be made up of monsters and serpents. He believed that he had a clarity of vision that no one else had because he was the only one to have the presence of mind to flee from the enemy. Once again, Henry becomes the victim of his hyper-sensitivity to the world around him. Henry believes that he has come to some great conclusions about his experiences, but in reality, he has learned nothing. He has not dealt with his feelings of cowardice, nor has he reflected upon his true role in the battle. He even states that he cannot explain his presence. As with the corpse in the chapel, the tattered

man, and his own parcel-like appearance, Henry cannot truly comprehend his impressions now. He is still trying to evade making any connections between himself and the corpses on the field.

Several critics argue that Henry and his comrades become most man-like during battle, citing, for example, that when the regiment's "strength and their breath had vanished, they returned to caution. They were become men again"(RBC, ed.Bradley 87). Perhaps, but an impressionistic reading of the text indicates that Henry is no more man when he fights than when he does not. Recall that in his earlier battle experiences Henry fights well. But then, as now, he is repeatedly referred to as a "mad man" or an "insane soldier" while fighting. Henry is not a man during battle. He is merely the product of his inability to judge which impressions are real and which are imagined.

During this battle, Henry does not fully lose his ego, and thus he cannot fully participate in the action. He is still caught up in the act of self-construction. More than once Wilson performs the deeds that Henry only wishes to perform. He performs without thought of self while Henry is either wondering "what would confront him on the farther side" (RBC, ed.Bradley 88), or feeling "unspeakable indignation against his officer"(RBC, ed.Bradley 89). Henry does not fight because he is a natural leader, or brave, but because he cannot separate real impressions from those that he imagines: "the distances, as compared with the brilliant measurings of his mind, were trivial and ridiculous....The time, too,...he saw to have been short" (RBC, ed.Bradley 95). When the battle is over he reflects upon his actions, and

"appreciate[s] himself"(RBC, ed.Bradley 95), but he is selective as to which impressions he wishes to reflect upon.

Nagel contends that Henry experiences an epiphany and a new awareness in the final chapter, but I do not agree (Nagel 91). Henry contemplates the past few days, and he is pleased with his actions, but he still bases his perception on selected impressions. He takes pleasure in "viewing the gilded images of memory" and he has no regrets because "his public deeds were paraded in great and shining prominence"(RBC, ed.Bradley 107). Outwardly he has gained the appearance of quiet manhood, but in reality Henry still cannot separate his emotional experiences from his physical experiences. He is still concerned that his companions "must discern in his face evidences" of his conscience (RBC, ed.Bradley 108) as he remembers his abandonment of the tattered man. The fact that in the final chapter Henry seems able to make sense out of his experiences only emphasizes the fact that Henry creates his version of reality out of impressions that are highly selective, and often manipulated by his own consciousness. The image of a "golden ray of sun [coming] through the hosts of leaden rain clouds", must, then, be interpreted as Crane's ironic undercutting of Henry's subjectivity and delusion. As William B. Dillingham asserts,

it is a mistake to think of [Henry] as having become rejuvenated through humility or in any way changed into a better person morally. He has simply adapted himself through experience to a new and dangerous environment. When the last battle is over, he is the same prideful youth, bragging on himself as he reviews his deed of valor (Dillingham;

Pizer 103).

In terms of Impressionism, it is appropriate that Henry has made little change in his character throughout the novel. He has been constantly bombarded with new and varied experiences, and at such a rapid pace, that he has had no time to fully comprehend them. As the victim of an over-stimulated consciousness, he has done his best to interpret his experiences, and to make some sense out of them, and though he might believe that he has done this, in reality he has not.

iv

Crane was never completely satisfied with The Red Badge of Courage because he felt that since he had not yet experienced war, he could not be certain of the authenticity of his rendering of it. Crane did eventually experience war first hand, yet his later stories are no better for his experience. While writing these stories, and his reports on war, Crane was still "less interested in the manipulations of armies on a chessboard than he was in the way that extremes of stress and the imminence of death disrupt the unreflecting passage of life and cause men to reveal themselves" (Katz, Introduction xvi; Portable Stephen Crane). Crane presents more than just a story about Henry Fleming and his experiences. The Impressionist protagonist does not have to show growth in order for the novel to be successful, but the author must realistically render that character's impressions. The Red Badge of Courage

realistically portrays Henry Fleming's world, and his struggle to make sense out of it.

Chapter 3 - "The Monster"

96 A man said to the universe:
 "Sir, I exist!"
 "However," replied the universe,
 "The fact has not created in me
 A sense of obligation."
 from Stephen Crane, War is Kind

i

The previous chapters have explored works that have been traditionally viewed as Crane's best, and most popular works. This chapter explores one of Crane's later works, a long story entitled "The Monster", and its contribution to Crane's Impressionism. Though relatively unknown, "The Monster" is a good example of how Crane's style of writing changes, and yet still adheres to many of the aspects of Impressionism. Crane adheres to his belief in simplicity and truth, choosing the images for the effect they have not on the reader, but on the characters themselves. The combination of seemingly unrelated images creates a greater picture when viewed from a distance; hence Crane's use of fragmented narrative becomes an important

technique in the impressionistic rendering of the story. Illusion, as the distortion of either apprehensive data or comprehensive analysis, becomes a key theme throughout the story.

At first glance, it appears that "The Monster" does not lend itself naturally to a discussion of Impressionism. There is no obvious persona through which the action is viewed. The story is seemingly narrated in a conventional manner, with an omniscient narrator. However, Crane's use of a fragmented narrative, and his manipulation of time and imagery illustrate that Crane is still very much influenced by the school of Impressionism. His subtle manipulation of the reader leaves us believing that the story's narrative is smooth and logical, yet episodes are not brought to completion, leaving us not only to make our own conclusions, but creating a greater impression out of what appear to be unrelated images. Every seemingly disconnected detail has an inter-relationship to the configured whole.

Crane's style of writing in "The Monster" differs from that of the previous two works. In both Maggie and The Red Badge of Courage each chapter represents an episode, with the fragmentary quality of these works emanating from Crane's manipulation of the imagery to reflect the mental state of the protagonists. For example, in The Red Badge of Courage the mode of narration is such that there is no narrative capacity to explore simultaneous and parallel events. In "The Monster," there is no perceiving intellect through which to view the action. Although this omniscient narrative form seems to contradict what I have stated earlier about Impressionism, Crane adheres to Impressionism through his manipulation of time. The narrative is fragmented not because it reflects a character's mental state, but because it reflects

the passage of time. It is common in Impressionist works to give "time the character of space, to impose spatial relations on time, to do away with a chronological narrative and replace it with sketches" (Kronegger 58). Crane's rendering of time changes from moment to moment depending on the episode and the effect he is trying to achieve, making the narrative of "The Monster" consistent with Impressionism.

ii

Time, and the manipulation of it, are important aspects of Impressionism. The Impressionist writer manipulates time to create discontinuity. For example, although time is chronological and hence 'linear', time is sometimes said to stand still; or it may seem as if mere seconds have passed, when it has actually been hours. Events may occur simultaneously, but are remembered out of sequence, thus interrupting time's linear quality. By giving time the character of space, Crane is able to create the impression that atmosphere succeeds scene in importance. Space and shapes are translated into the essence of a sensation. That is, Crane creates an *impression* based on his manipulation of time. The impression, then, reflects a character's point of view, as in, for example, time stands still. But for whom? It is not for the reader, but the characters of the story.

In "The Monster" the passage of time is rendered through techniques common to Impressionism: fragmentation of image complexes, cross-cutting of scenes, and a fusion of

past and present (Stowell 35). Since we can only process a single action at a time, Crane's technique of dividing chapters into fragments enables him to relate parallel but separate actions in such a way as to achieve the affect of simultaneity. Further, Crane only relates part of one event before cutting to the next, alternating from one action to the other, and not always in a logical pattern. Not only does this emphasize the simultaneity of the actions, but it also creates a tension during a particularly intense part of the plot.

When we finish reading "The Monster" we are unaware of the fragmented narrative because the action occurs so quickly that it becomes blurred in our mind. It is analogous to editing techniques used in the cinema¹. Crane also employs this technique of cross-cutting

¹A description of the frames from an early film entitled The Life of an American Fireman illustrates this analogy very well, especially in light of the similarities between it and the "The Monster":

2. Close-up of a fire-alarm box and an anonymous hand pulling its lever...

....

5. Exterior of the firehouse as the doors are flung open and the engines charge out...

6. Suburban street scene: eight engines rush past the camera from right to left, passing a crowd of bystanders.

7. Street scene: four engines rush past the camera, which pans (moves horizontally on its vertical axis) slightly to follow the fourth and comes to rest on the front of a burning house.

8. Interior of the house: mother and child in an upstairs room filled with smoke.

9. Exterior of the house: the mother approaches an upstairs window and calls for help.

The film continues in the same manner until the interior and exterior actions converge, and the woman and child are rescued.

At first glance the description of a film may not seem to be of use, but given the visual aspect of Crane's writing, it helps to illustrate the techniques used by Crane, especially for the modern reader. We are very familiar with cinematic techniques, something which contemporary readers would be unaware of. When this particular film was produced, it was thought that the average viewer would be incapable of following the cross-cutting of the scenes. Crane was experimenting with this technique long before this film was produced, and to great effect. We are not unaware of what is happening in the scenes. In fact, this technique is highly effective.

from one scene to the next, within chapters, manipulating us into believing that the action occurs simultaneously. A summary of the events that surround the fire helps to illustrate cross-cutting:

- Chapter IV: shows activities surrounding the bandshell, including the fire alarm being heard.
- Chapter V: shows the fire station, and a young admirer of the fire department.
- Chapter VI: shows the fire starting at Dr. Trescott's house, Henry entering the house, Mrs. Trescott's panic, and the sounding of the fire alarm.
- Chapter VII: shows Henry reaching Jimmie, but he is stopped by the fire as he tries to escape.
- Chapter VIII: shows the town going to the Trescott's. Dr. Trescott hears the alarm, and arrives home to rescue Jimmie. Henry is rescued by someone else.
- Chapter IX: shows the arrival of the firemen, as people discuss the merits of the fire department. Rumours spread that Dr. Trescott, Jimmie and Henry have perished in the fire.
- Chapter X: takes place at Judge Hagenthorpe's house. It is revealed that the Trescotts are only slightly injured, and it is announced that Henry has perished.

Each chapter is made up of several fragments, but when taken together, these chapters make up the evening's events. As would later become the norm in cinema, Crane was experimenting with the "arrangement of shots in relation to one another"(Cook 27). The narrative structure

"need not be that of scenes arranged ... [to] observe the unities of time and place"(Cook 27). Crane deliberately violates linear, chronological time through his rendering of events out of sequence in order to give time temporal space.

Since the representation of time is based on the experience, some fragments are rendered as passing more quickly than others. Certain episodes are longer than others, but when compared with the time it takes for a parallel action to progress, they occupy the same amount of time. For example, the time between the triggering of the fire alarm and the arrival of the fire department at the Trescotts seems to be long. However, in that same space of time, Henry enters the house, tries to escape with Jimmie, nearly dies, and is finally rescued. This suspension and telescoping of time reflects the way the characters experience time. Hence, Crane uses the elasticity of time to indicated the power of psychological time.

To further illustrate this concept, some chapters are divided into several episodes, while other chapters encompass only one. Chapter VII, for example, is composed of a single episode, Henry's attempt to rescue Jimmie. By doing this, Crane is able to make time appear to stand still. In the other chapters, when there is a great deal of action taking place, there is a frenetic quality that hurries the chapter. But in chapter VII, the suspense and tension are heightened by this concentration on a particular episode. The duration of the action is drawn out, making us aware of Henry rushing against time to save Jimmie, and yet time seems to stand still.

Time appears to be suspended in chapter VII, when the fire burns Henry's face. Crane

makes sure that we pay more attention to the detail of chapter VII because it is an important point in the story. This is achieved through the imagery which is carefully chosen to delay the action, and makes it painfully slow and dramatic:

Johnson had fallen with his head at the base of an old-fashioned desk. There was a row of jars upon the top of this desk. For the most part, they were silent amid this rioting, but there was one which seemed to hold a scintillant and writhing serpent.

Suddenly the glass splintered, and a ruby-red snake-like thing poured its thick length out upon the top of the old desk. It coiled and hesitated, and then began to swim a languorous way down the mahogany slant. At the angle it waved its sizzling molten head to and fro over the closed eyes of the man beneath it. Then, in a moment, with a mystic impulse, it moved again, and the red snake flowed directly down into Johnson's upturned face.

Afterwards the trail of this creature seemed to reek, and amid flames and low explosions drops like red-hot jewels pattered softly down it at leisurely intervals (Katz 465).

The chapter ends with the image of a trail of red-hot drops pattering softly down onto Henry's upturned face. Since it is implicit that the drops continue to fall on Henry's face as he remains unconscious, Crane need spend no more time describing the action inside the house. Earlier, the description of one complete scene created suspense and tension. Now the cross-cutting of scenes adds even more tension, as Henry and Jimmie are left inside to perish. We are

anxious to know the outcome, yet Crane does not reveal until the following chapter that Henry's body is recovered, and the extent of Henry's injuries is not revealed until still later. By not exploring Henry's fate at this time, Crane foreshadows Henry's fate later in the story. He becomes a non-entity, someone who is left to others to look after. No one is greatly concerned with what remains of Henry because what remains of him is essentially nothing. Crane creates the impression that Henry, as a character, requires no further elucidation, and in fact little more is said of Henry after this point. He becomes known only as 'the monster' because there is nothing else left of his character to create any other impression

It is also significant that the chemical that burns Henry's face is part of the equipment in Dr. Trescott's laboratory. Most of the substances are silent and benign, but one is described as a serpent, a red snake. The impression created is one of movement, and the sense that this one chemical is malicious of its own accord. The imagery is purposely mystic in flavour, almost evil, and Crane has chosen his images for just this effect. It reflects the hidden side of Dr. Trescott's character. He is on the surface a healer, interested in the welfare of his patients. But on the inside, he is dabbling in something greater than his own powers. Crane creates the impression that the doctor's experiments are not necessarily governed by the forces of good. Recall that in the beginning of the story Dr. Trescott is shown to be rather cold and dispassionate in his dealings with his errant son, and now the chemicals in his own laboratory are shown to have the same cold, dispassionate nature. Johnson, with his upturned face, appears to be waiting, like some sacrificial offering, to be used in this dispassionate

experiment, and in fact this is just what he becomes for the doctor. He loses his human quality, and becomes instead the horrible result of some experiment gone awry, and therefore the responsibility of the doctor.

Crane utilizes short, quick episodes to create a hurried, almost panicked feeling to Chapter VIII, reflecting the atmosphere, and not the scene, that surrounds the fire. Everyone in the town goes to the Trescotts. The fire engines are on their way, and the church bells are ringing. Time is suspended, and in fact we go back in time, as Dr. Trescott hears the fire alarm on his way home from work. (Though the fire alarm was sounded in Chapter V, relating these two episodes out of order does not detract from the narrative, nor do we find ourselves confused by this. We are aware that Dr. Trescott hears the alarm at the same time that the people in the park hear it in Chapter V. By doing away with the chronological order, Crane exhibits further the elasticity of time.) By having Dr. Trescott hear the fire alarm and arrive at the house in a few short paragraphs of a single chapter, Crane is able to speed up time. Even so, Trescott does not arrive until it appears that he may be too late to save Jimmie or Henry. His rescue of Jimmie is described in some detail, but Henry's rescue is given little attention. All that is said is that "a young man....had gone into the laboratory and brought forth a *thing* which he laid on the grass," effectively creating the impression that Henry, as a person no longer exists, even before it is revealed that Henry survives ([emphasis mine] Katz 467). The 'thing' that is laid on the grass is in fact Henry, but Crane does not say this. He only gives the impression that the spectators have of the situation. They do not know that it

is Henry. The impression relates back to the cause of Henry's disfigurement. The fluid was referred to as having some measure of sentience, while Henry is shown to be the unconscious victim. This is an important impression because it emphasizes the Impressionist's world of "*aneantissement, ...depouillement, ...desagregation, epuisement, dissolution*"(Kronegger, 16). The character of Henry has been effectively annihilated by a chemical that belonged to the doctor, indirectly linking him to Henry's destruction.

It is clear from this synopsis of Chapter VIII that the many episodes that make up this chapter contrast sharply with the single episode of chapter VII. Crane imposes spatial relations on time, giving more space to important episodes, thus giving time not only temporal space, but physical space as well. Similarly, the events leading up to, and including, the fire, occur in a single day, but it takes ten chapters to tell them. The remaining chapters describe episodes that span several months. Chapter XXIII begins in the fall: "The autumn smote the leaves, and the trees of Whilomville were panoplied in crimson and yellow"(Katz 505), and the following chapter begins in the winter: "Trescott loudly stamped the snow from his feet and shook the flakes from his shoulders"(Katz 507). Here the passage of time reflects Henry's perception of it. For him, there is little of importance in the everyday happenings of Whilomville. The events leading up to, and including the burning of the Trescott's home require more detail, and therefore more space, because they are the last conscious memories of Henry Johnson. After the fire he is rendered a monster, with no personality or consciousness. Impressionism relies on the instantaneous experience of its characters. Each

experience has an effect on the future, therefore altering the personality with each new experience. The instants of the first half of the novel reflect the influence they have on Henry's life and his future, altering his personality to such an extent that he is no longer capable of experiencing life in a recognizably human form.

iii

Based on the last two sentences of Chapter VII, we can infer that the outcome is going to be horrific. If Henry survives, and at this point we do not know if he will or not, then it is safe to assume that he will be badly burned. Yet Crane does not describe Henry's injuries in gory detail. Instead, he relies on the Impressionist technique of using minimal detail for maximum impact, relying not on *his* imagination, but on the *characters'*. Crane says only that "his body was frightfully seared, but more than that, he now had no face. His face had simply been burned away"(Katz 471). Crane never gives any more detail than this, because the description reflects the impression the characters in the story have of Henry. No one really gets a good look at the monster's face. For them, Henry's monstrosity is felt rather than imagined. Crane chooses this image for the effect it will have on the characters. The townspeople are horrified by the mere *thought* of someone without a face. They do not need to imagine what he looks like because they can *feel* his hideousness. It is an emotional response. Crane need not provide any more detail to successfully render Henry's monstrosity.

Crane uses imagery in a way that is characteristic of Impressionism. Images are fragmented, hurried and blurred. For example, the "marvels [of the room] were to be seen dimly through clouds of heaving, turning, deadly smoke"(Katz 465). Unlike the imagery in The Red Badge of Courage, which was filtered through Henry's perception, the imagery surrounding the fire, in order to be consistent with Impressionism, must reflect someone's perception. Since no one else is inside the house at this time, it can only be the perception of Henry or Jimmie, and since Jimmie is unconscious, the imagery must reflect Henry's experience. It is important that the imagery reflect Henry's perspective, even if indirectly, because he is the most affected by the fire. He is the one whose entire life will change, as if by magic, over night. After the fire, Henry will be mentally incapable of seeing reality as anything more than an echo of his past experiences. Therefore, it is significant that the impressions of the fire reflect Henry's perception, because it is his last true experience.

Crane chooses imagery that is deliberately sensuous to illustrate the character-response to the physical world. Fire is personified as "a fairy lady", and given animation, indicating Henry's response to what is happening around him. Here is the 'magic' that will change his entire life, disintegrating the world in which he has previously existed. Fire represents the power to destroy, to ruin whatever crosses its path. It is not in itself malicious, since it is not selective in what or who it annihilates. Crane describes fire in terms of floral and jewel imagery, images that reflect this characteristic. He alternates between images of marvels and animals of prey, indicating the disparity between the actual character of fire, and Henry's

perception of it. It is Henry's impression that fire has a sentient quality, not Crane's.

Crane also chooses images of snakes and serpents to represent the fire. Snakes are most often associated with Satan and the supernatural. In fact, the chemical snake is said to move "with a mystic impulse" just before it burns away Henry's face. Recall that earlier I alluded to the supernatural aspect of Dr. Trescott's laboratory, the idea that perhaps he was toying with something out of his realm as a mortal doctor. But there is a further connection here between hell and the impression given. This is in effect Henry Johnson's hell. Essentially he has been through the fires of hell, and he has returned a monster, not only physically but mentally as well. His life is sacrificed for the life of another. Crane has created an outstanding example of the Impressionist's world of annihilation, despoiling, disintegration, exhaustion and dissolution.

iv

The Impressionist protagonist often lacks the ability to correctly interpret his experience. He fails to see connections because he theorizes before he experiences and perceives (Stowell 31). Since "The Monster" does not have a main protagonist through which to view the action, Crane uses rumour to achieve a similar effect. Rumour results from people's faulty interpretation of data; it is based on opinions and assumptions which are often incorrect, and which no one takes the time to prove otherwise. People lack the ratiocinative-

receptive resources to correctly interpret their impressions.

The inhabitants of Whilomville become overwhelmed when, on a particular evening, the fire alarm sounds. They are drawn to the sensationalism of the event (Katz 469). The townspeople wish to experience the impression of excitement. They can feel it in the air, and as they become caught up in the atmosphere, they lose their ability to make deductions based on reason.

Henry's hero status is based on the premise that he has perished in the fire. The townspeople are so caught up in the atmosphere surrounding the fire that they cannot comprehend the entire picture. They do not perceive the tragedy of the situation, only the excitement and heroics. The reverent attention quickly turns into speculation and fear when it is learned that Henry survives. They are victims of their senses, neither capable nor inclined to interpret the data they have available to them. They *know* that this thing is Henry Johnson, but they continue to perceive him as something else, because they rely on their emotional response, not their ratiocinative-receptive resources.

The latter half of the story shows the reaction of the people to Henry's hideousness. Few people actually see Henry, yet the whole town is afraid of him. People's opinions are based on what they have *heard* about Henry, and much of this information is based on a little girl's reaction, and that of a Negro family in Watermelon Alley. In fact, the girl never actually describes what she sees because "she was not coherent even to her mother....She didn't know [if it was a man]. It was simply a thing, a dreadful thing"(Katz 489). The people

make emotional judgments based on this girl's reaction to Henry. Given the circumstances (it was dark, the girl was startled, and being at a birthday party she was already in an excited state), anything could have frightened her. Her impression is based on her emotional response to something that is unknown. This impression illustrates perfectly the disaster of Henry Johnson's life. Everything about him is based on the emotional response of others. Henry is effectively reduced to an *impression*.

The reactions of the Farraguts of Watermelon Alley underscore this idea. Crane has already shown them to be people of great exaggeration. This makes their reaction to an experience that is disturbing very realistic. It is their perception that is not realistic. Once again Crane illustrates the discontinuity of people's perceptions. Caught up in the emotional atmosphere that surrounds the situation, the Farraguts are incapable of making conclusions: they confuse reality with fantasy. As with an Impressionist protagonist, "the great temptation for these characters is to predict reality, to build an edifice based on deductive desires, and to turn smatterings of fleeting perceptions into facts" (Stowell 32).

Martha Goodwin is a good example of how one can build an edifice based on deductive desires. She is the local spinster who has an opinion on everything. She listens to her sister and a neighbour gossip about Henry and Dr. Trescott, but she considers herself unaffected by what "Everybody says"(Katz 504). She believes that if she saw Henry she'd "try not to be afraid of him", because she believes herself to be able to make a deduction based on reason (Katz 504). However, Crane indicates the discontinuity of her perceptions by showing her

to be a woman of "adamantine opinions" (Katz 493). Crane describes Martha as "a weak, innocent, and pig-headed creature, who alone would defy the universe if she thought the universe merited this proceeding" (Katz 494). She may believe that she is making reasonable deductions, but in reality she is prone to turning fleeting perceptions into fact. She is unaware of her susceptibility to the opinions of others as, when her friend goes outside to find out the latest gossip, she is seen "crowded at the window" (Katz 505).

Reifsnyder's barbershop is a popular spot for the men of the town to express their opinions. The men are by no means immune to gossip as they discuss Dr. Trescott's decision to save Henry. None of them has seen Henry, but they have heard that "he is the most terrible thing in the world"(Katz 482). And what makes him so terrible? He has no face. To the men, this is a horrifying thought. Unable to imagine life without a face, they wonder if perhaps Dr. Trescott should have let Henry die, but none of them can ignore the fact that Henry saved Trescott's son. Based on this fact, they can empathize with Trescott's decision, but once they leave the shop they cannot make the connection between this empathy and their emotional reactions to Henry. Their perception of Henry is once again clouded by popular opinion, and they cave in to the pressure to conform to society because they do not wish to be different.

By showing Judge Hagenthorpe, John Twelve, and two other prominent members of the town trying to talk Trescott into having Henry institutionalized Crane indicates an impressionistic-phenomenological reading of disaster to Henry Johnson. These men state that "there are a good many of [them] that admire [him] ... immensely", but they blame the women

and "a large number of people who are very thoughtless" for wanting Henry sent away, and for the decline in Trescott's medical practice (Katz 506). They are unable to "change the minds of all those ninnies" who are caught up in the impression of Henry as a monster (Katz 506). It is clear that the tragedy of Henry's existence is based on the impressions of a few, and the phenomenon of popular opinion. Trescott cannot in good conscience institutionalize Henry, because even at the institutions "everybody is so afraid of him, they can't even give him good care" (Katz 507).

Even Dr. Trescott's son Jimmie is affected by his inability to see connections in his life. Though Henry saved his life, Jimmie cannot see that "the monster who lived in the room over the carriage-house" is his old friend Henry (Katz 495). He admires Henry before the accident, but afterwards he "could not identify it [Henry] in any way"(Katz 495). Henry becomes an object by which to prove one's bravery. The children are frightened of him, but Jimmie uses this to his advantage. He and another boy become heroes among their young friends when they touch Henry: "They were people of another class. If they had been decorated for courage on twelve battle-fields, they could not have made the other boys more ashamed of their situation" (Katz 498). Jimmie believes himself to be brave, and since he does not connect Henry with being human, he does not perceive his actions as being offensive. When his father sends the other boys home, Jimmie thinks that his crime is having asked too many boys to be his guests. His father must explain to him what he has done wrong.

Dr. Trescott is also affected by his faulty perceptions of reality. He is the "product of

self-manipulated delusions, perceptions, and actions which have their impetus within [himself] (Nagel 10). Trescott deludes himself into believing that he is obligated to save Henry because he is a healer by calling. But these delusions are manipulated by more than just goodwill. Trescott is motivated by his feelings of indebtedness to Henry for saving his son, but also by his feelings of guilt. Recall the fire scenes earlier in the story. It is Trescott's chemicals that burn Henry's face. It is because of his experiments that Henry is robbed of his life. Crane spent much time indicating the cold, dispassionate manner of the chemicals and of the doctor. Now it becomes clear that Trescott is trying to clear himself of this trait, but in so doing, he has created something which, like the chemicals in his laboratory, he cannot control. Henry survives as "purely [Dr. Trescott's] creation.... and he [is] a monster, and with no mind"(Katz 473). As with the decision to keep chemicals in his laboratory, Trescott is not receptive to the effect this decision will have on those around him. Trescott deludes himself into believing that he has the power to heal Henry even when Henry is beyond hope. He is able to keep Henry physically alive, but he cannot *save* Henry. Once again, Crane creates the impression of an experiment gone awry. Trescott does not have the power to control the chemicals in his laboratory, nor does he have the power to control Henry, and the perception people have of him. He is blinded by his perception that, because he has been given the power to heal, he has the power to play God as well. Earlier, his desire to experiment nearly cost him his son. Now it has cost him his career and his position.

Isolation, either physical or emotional, is a common theme in Impressionism. Characters are unable to use their experiences to consciously shape their futures. Overcome by their heightened sensibilities, they withdraw into a world that is irrational and emotional, isolating themselves from family and friends. They remove themselves from society because of the uniqueness of their perception, making them acutely aware of their individuality, while at the same time creating in them the desire to be like those around them. Trescott isolates himself by standing by his decision, but he cannot reasonably justify saving a man who, without his intervention, would have otherwise perished. Typical to Impressionism, "isolationism leads to self-righteous individuality, and yet the desire for human communication... brings on confusion and loss of individuality" (Stowell 28). Trescott's actions isolate him from society because he feels himself to be beyond reproach in his decision to save and support Henry. At the same time, he wishes to remain in society, and to keep Henry there too. This leads to further isolation and confusion.

Crane shows that Trescott's decision to save Henry has only further isolated him from society. Crane shows that the doctor is intellectually isolated from those around him by showing the doctor as having a laboratory. This is his place to perform experiments that no one else can participate in. The impression of him shaving his "lawn as if it were a priest's chin" indicate that he is also on a higher level in terms of society. Because he is a doctor he perceives that he should be afforded a level of respect not afforded to most. Further, Trescott

is shown to be dispassionate and aloof when it comes to his son. He punishes him for the crime of breaking a flower as if it had been a serious infraction.

It is important that Dr. Trescott become further isolated throughout the story because it indicates his false perception of his world. He feels that he is better than most people, but in fact the townspeople view him as being closely associated with Henry's monstrosity, and therefore someone to be ostracized. His decision to save Henry isolates him precisely because he feels that he has made a decision above the capabilities of those around him.

Dr. Trescott does not see the affect his actions have on other people, most notably Henry. Henry is forced into isolation because he is incapable of looking after himself, and his hideousness prevents anyone else from doing so. Though not of his own choice, he is physically isolated on several occasions, a result directly relating to the impression that the townspeople have of him. Mentally incapable of awareness to his hideousness, Henry tries to resume his former life. He is caught in his past experiences, and unable to live a normal life in the present or future. His desire to return to society leads to confusion, when the Farraguts are frightened by him, and then to isolation again, when he is captured by the sheriff. Henry remains within society, but only on the fringe. Trescott restores him to his room above the carriage-house, but he is left alone and is avoided by most people.

Alek, the man who looks after Henry for a while, is also ostracized by his community. At first Alek is influenced by the perceptions of his family: "he looks like er devil, an' done skears all ma frien's away, an' ma chillens cain't eat, an' ma ole 'ooman jes raisin' Cain all the

time, an' ma rent two dollehs an' er half er month..."(Katz 479). Interestingly, he ends with the observation that his rent is two and a half dollars a month. The only real connection Alek is capable of making is between Henry and a life of ease. He is so happy to be making six dollars a week that he does not notice that his friend "Paterson had definitely shied into the dry ditch as they came to the point of ordinary contact"(Katz 484).

Trescott's decision to keep Henry at his own house further indicates his inability to see the affect of his decision on others. He is once again blinded by his desire to do the right thing, and to protect Henry. The next door neighbour plans to move away. Trescott's medical practice falls off, and still he does not see the impact of Henry on the town. He is unaware of the conflicts of the interpretation of the data available. The townspeople perceive Henry to be a monster, while Trescott interprets Henry as being his responsibility. He does not see him as a human being who is in need of understanding, compassion and care. Rather, Henry is merely an obligation that he must take care. He sees him as a burden that he must care for.

Like most Impressionist protagonists, Dr. Trescott has not, until the final image, been able to make sense out of the world around him. Believing himself to be the only one affected by his decisions, he is surprised to note that his wife's tea party has been sadly unattended. It is one thing for the people to ostracize Trescott for his actions. It is quite another to ostracize his wife merely because of her association with him. Earlier, when Jimmie and his friends used Henry as a measure of their courage, Trescott was able to dismiss it as a childish prank. Now he cannot ignore the fact that his whole family is suffering because of his

obligations. It is implicit in the final image of Trescott counting the unused cups that he is seeing the connection that until this point has eluded him. Unfortunately, as with Maggie, his epiphany comes too late. He has already given his life and his career for the man who saved his son's life, and his wife has also suffered for his obligation.

vi

"The Monster" does not, at first glance, seem to adhere to Impressionism, at least not in the same way that Maggie or The Red Badge of Courage does. But by its very nature "The Monster" must be treated as being Impressionistic. The entire story hinges on visual impressions of Henry. These impressions are based on the emotional response to what the townspeople see. They respond to the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty surrounding Henry, succumbing to images of ugliness. Victims of their faulty interpretations, they withdraw into their own worlds of fear, anxiety and even hatred.

Rumour becomes the vehicle for the distortion of apprehensive data and comprehensive analysis. People base their interpretation of the data presented to them on popular opinion. No one, not even Dr. Trescott, seems capable of making a positive interpretation of their experiences and impressions. They are incapable of seeing beyond the surface, the face (or non-face if you will) of Henry. The outer vision of the people has surpassed their inner vision, making them completely passive victims of their senses. This is key to Impressionism.

Impressionist characters become so caught up in their impressions, of the visual aspect of their world, that they can no longer process them. They react without thinking, and this is exactly what happens in "The Monster". The townspeople do not think about Henry or the affect their actions will have on him. They merely react to what they see. Space and shapes are translated into the essence of sensation.

"The Monster" must not be confused with Naturalism. It is not Nature at work in this story. The epistemological process is far more important in understanding this work. Henry is not a freak of Nature. His monstrosity is unnatural because it is the result of man's quest for knowledge. Dr. Trescott was searching for something in his laboratory. Henry's physical appearance is the indirect result of the doctor's experiments. His monstrosity is the direct result of the cognitive processes of the Whilomville people. They make him into a monster, because that is the way in which they perceive him.

Crane successfully renders the passage of time as having the character of space. He imposes spatial relations on time through his use of sketches, cross-cutting of scenes, and the fusion of past and present. This is an important aspect of Impressionism that should not be over-looked. Crane has mastered the skill of rendering life as instantaneous. He creates a more meaningful whole out of fragments.

"The Monster" is not about the cognitive processes of a single protagonist. It is rather about the ratiocinative-receptive resources of an entire town. Crane effectively shows the mentality of the small town, and the way in which it comes to conclusions based on rumour

and popular opinion. Crane investigates the Impressionist epistemology in this story, showing that the nature of human knowledge is based on the ability to reason. We are only as good as our interpretation of data, and when this process breaks down, we end up with a society governed by fear, paranoia and anxiety. It is only in the ability to correctly interpret experience that humans can make sense out of their world.

Conclusion

88

The wayfarer
 Perceiving the pathway to truth
 Was struck with astonishment.
 It was thickly grown with weeds.
 "Ha," he said,
 "I see that none has passed here
 In a long time."
 Later he saw that each weed
 Was a singular knife.
 "Well," he mumbled at last,
 "Doubtless there are other roads."
from Stephen Crane, War is Kind

i

Impressionism is primarily visual. That is, the narrative reflects the perceptions of the characters, resulting in a narrative that is often fragmented. What seems like hyperbole is actually realistic because it reflects the consciousness of a character. Impressionism is the rendering of human consciousness in a way that reflects the ever-changing world of sensation. The end product, then, is filled with vivid images, fragmented episodes, and sketches that reflect the experience of the protagonist (or protagonists).

The cognitive nature of Impressionism not only affects the narrative point of view, but it also affects the narrative in such a way as to make it fragmented and disjointed. Episodes occur at a rapid pace, reflecting the way in which they are experienced by the protagonist. This rapid pace allows little or no time for the protagonist to reflect and interpret his experiences, leaving him open to error and misjudgment.

ii

The emphasis on the visual necessarily makes imagery an important aspect of the Impressionist work. Crane renders images in such a way as to reflect the ever-changing perception of the protagonist. For example, Henry Fleming's perceptions change as he comes under the influence of fear, exultation of battle and pride. The imagery changes to reflect these influences. It is the protagonist's inability to correctly process the data that is presented to them that makes the work Impressionistic. Crane filters the imagery to show the protagonist's perceptions, but also to emphasize the disparity between reality and the protagonist's perception of it.

Crane carefully selects images so that the surface betrays a greater depth (Garnett 227).

Even in Maggie, he does not infuse the text with unnecessary images, but carefully and consciously chooses details that will stand out in the reader's mind. He uses a minimum of detail in such a way that "with a few swift strokes he gives us an amazing insight into what

the individual life (Garnett 227). For example, the image of Maggie as a flower that blossomed in a mud puddle stands out in the reader's memory because it reveals something deeper about Maggie. Each of the three works has images like this one that are burned into our memory: the ants on the dead soldier in The Red Badge of Courage, and the unused teacups in "The Monster." Even in the most descriptive of passages, Crane does not go into great detail. He applies only as much detail as is needed to effectively portray the image. Nowhere does Crane better exhibit his talent for the understated than in "The Monster" with the description of Henry's face.

Crane uses adjectives to animate and personify the environment, making it come alive with movement. The characters have their own motion, separate from the background. An analogy can be drawn with rear projection, a cinematic technique in which a foreground action is combined with a background action by projecting the background from behind onto the screen (Bordwell 385). Think of two people being filmed in a car. The passing scenery is projected into the windows of the car. In this way, the surroundings have their own movement. The same can be said about the surrounding environment in Crane's works. For example, in Maggie, the buildings are said to be "careening," and they "quivered and creaked from the weight of humanity stamping about in its bowels" (Maggie 6). Onto this backdrop the characters appear to be "pasted." There is a contrived feeling, much the same way as a backdrop is used in a play or in a movie. We are tempted to say that what we are looking at is fake. This impression is further enhanced by the fact that the surrounding imagery often

fades away because it is blurred or blocked in some way.

iii

Illusion as the distortion of apprehensive data or comprehensive analysis plays an important role in Crane's Impressionism. Characters are governed by their inability to correctly interpret their impressions. They have unrealistic perceptions of themselves and the world around them. For example, in Maggie, the main thrust of the story lies in Jimmie's, Maggie's and Pete's incorrect perception of who and what Pete really is. They are each governed by their inability to realistically interpret their perceptions. They have preconceived notions to which they mould their perceptions. It is this conflict between what is actually seen and how it is perceived that characterizes the Impressionist work.

Characters are influenced by their desire to maintain appearances, but the Impressionist character "cannot cope with the demand of a society which he feels demands that he wear masks and assume artificial poses in the presence of others" (Kronegger 88). This is perfectly illustrated by Henry Fleming, who is always haunted by the perception that others can see his cowardice. He feels that he must maintain the appearance that he is not afraid because if he does not then he will be judged as being something less than his peers. Henry cannot cope with this, and as a result finds himself isolated from society.

Crane's Impressionism is based on the ratiocinative-receptive resources of his

characters. Consistent with Impressionist theory, his characters do not have the resources to make deductions, nor are they inclined to make them. They base their perceptions on their ability to instantaneously interpret the data presented to them, which is faulty. Their outer vision is increased to such an extent as to exclude inner vision, thus making them passive victims of their senses. They become so caught up with their impressions that they can no longer make any sense out of them.

iv

Another characteristic of Crane's Impressionism is the manipulation of time. Crane effectively renders time as having space through his use of cross-cutting and the fusion of past and present. This is most effectively illustrated in "The Monster," where Crane experiments with the arrangement of scenes in relation to one another. He deliberately violates linear, chronological time in order to give time temporal space. As with all aspects of Impressionism, the rendering of time reflects the experience of the characters. Nothing is presented without it first being filtered through a character. That is, Crane chooses his techniques for the affect they have on the characters, not on the reader.

As I have defined it, Impressionism has different aspects, some regarding technique, and some regarding character. However, the philosophy behind it is simple: the author must render the world in such a way as to reflect a character's point of view, even if it means that what is rendered appears to contradict the reality of the reader. What is important is the *way* in which a character views reality, and what he *believes* to be true. So, for instance, if Henry Fleming sees the enemy as being a monster, then Crane is within his right to render the enemy encampment in these terms. Though it may appear to the reader as unrealistic, it is realistic precisely because it reflects Henry's psychology.

Crane subtly points out the disparity between actual reality, and a character's perception of it, creating a depth of meaning that we might otherwise miss. As we step back from the work to view it from a distance, we are better able to see the whole picture. Crane's works become like an Impressionist painting: close up we see what appear to be haphazard strokes of the brush, but from a distance a meaningful picture emerges.

Crane never clearly put forth any literary theories. Perhaps because he was too young when he died to have put much thought into it. He was more interested in the rendering of truth:

It has been a theory of mine ...that the most artistic and the most enduring literature was that which reflected life accurately. Therefore I have tried to observe closely, and to set down what I have seen in the simplest and most concise way. I have been very

careful not to let any theories or ideas of my own be seen in my writing. Preaching is fatal to art in literature. I try to give to readers a slice out of life; and if there is any moral lesson in it I do not point it out. I let the reader find it for himself. As Emerson said, 'there should be a long logic beneath the story, but it should be kept carefully out of sight' (Katz 534).

This is as much of a theory as Crane ever put forth, but whether Crane was conscious or not of writing in the style of Impressionism is unimportant. Impressionism was a relatively new school of thought during Crane's lifetime, and so perhaps it was he who helped to develop the style. In any event, Crane's works are successfully discussed in terms of Impressionism.

Perhaps if Crane had been born in the twentieth century he would not have been a writer. Instead, given the visual aspect of Crane's work, he might have been a cinematographer, or at least a screenwriter. Certainly, Crane viewed the world as if through a camera lens. Today's reader cannot help but see the connections between Crane's style and that of the modern cinema. Of course, Crane knew nothing of the new industry that was only beginning to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century. In Crane's time, critics compared him to Impressionist painters. Perhaps if he wrote today, he would be compared to the cinema.

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