THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE DRUNKARD
IN SELECTED FICTION OF STEPHEN CRANE

by

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

"The world is silly, changeable, any of its decisions can be reversed."

--Stephen Crane in a letter to Nellie Crouse, January, 1896.

In the last seven decades Stephen Crane has become one of America's most explicated and elusive writers. In 1900, the year of his death, Crane was regarded as a homegrown genius, a "marvelous boy" whose career had been cut off at its budding.¹ Before long he began to fade into obscurity. But with the advent of World War I, readers again began to notice Stephen Crane; and now it was Crane the realist, the remarkable technician, the poetic innovator, who was the object of attention.² In the twenties Crane was admired as

¹Hamlin Garland's obituary opinion in The Saturday Evening Post, 28 July 1900, pp. 16-17, is fairly representative. Garland saw Crane as an undisciplined genius, an uncontrolled and minor talent who died young.

a rebel against Victorian conformity and hypocrisy. 3 "It was a fashion in America among the younger writers," said Alexander Woollcott, "to spend ten minutes each day in severely admiring Stephen Crane." 4

Crane came to academic respectability in the late twenties and early thirties, first as an example of a "school of American writing." 5 There were by then two biographies (one the noteworthy but undocumented life by Thomas Beer), 6 and Wilson Follett's edition, the first general collection of Crane's work. 7 Yet, although many aspiring writers read Crane, these works provoked no great general


5 Holton, p. 4.


response in the reading public during the decade which ensued. Some of the more societally aware critics of the later thirties were displeased by what they considered to be his insensitivity to social causation. But then came the forties and another war, and with Stephen Crane thoroughly established and classified in books such as Alfred Kazin's *On Native Grounds*, readers remembered and reread America's war classic, *The Red Badge of Courage*.

By the late forties, when the important World War II novels were being published, reviewers and critics began to draw the inevitable comparisons, and Stephen Crane was up for another major critical rediscovery. John Berryman's psychoanalytically oriented biography and R. W. Stallman's symbolic readings of the fiction soon turned Stephen Crane


11Their memory was no doubt jogged at that time by the enthusiastic support of a writer of the heroic stature of Ernest Hemingway. See Ernest Hemingway, ed., *Men at War* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1942).

into a major academic subject. Since 1952 there have been well over two hundred publications dealing wholly or in part with his life and work. Some critics, disciples of Stallman, have searched Crane's fiction for symbols, Christian and otherwise. Other critics have focused their attention upon Crane's irony, or his imagery. There have been exhaustive source studies, and many new facts concerning his life have lately come to light. New critical orientations have been developed; his work has been


17 Only one example of the many source studies is Thomas A. Gullason, "New Sources for Stephen Crane's War Motif," Modern Language Notes, 72 (Dec. 1957), 572-75.

examined by anthropological critics; more recently some have tried to show his stories to be prototypes of existential fiction. And two full-length studies of Crane's fiction have attempted to establish his work, respectively, as parody and as enactment of psychic conflict. Indeed, critics of almost every prejudice and method have turned to Crane for their subject.

Not all of the important scholarship on Crane has been critical, however. Lillian Gilkes' remarkable biography of Cora Crane is a valuable collateral source, and her collaboration with R. W. Stallman has produced the collection of Stephen Crane's correspondence. Joseph Katz's edition


20 This approach to Crane has many proponents. One example is Peter Buitenhuis, "The Essentials of Life: 'The Open Boat' as Existentialist Fiction," Modern Fiction Studies, 5 (Autumn 1959), 243-50.


of the poems certainly establishes their texts,\textsuperscript{24} while Thomas A. Gullason has discovered and published short stories long out of print, local color sketches, and journalistic pieces, as well as the little known fiction and articles of Crane's parents, the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Townley Crane and Mary Peck Crane.\textsuperscript{25} R. W. Stallman's biography is comprehensive and marks one of the high points of Crane scholarship.\textsuperscript{26} Perhaps most important of all—and unfortunately late in arriving—are the editors and collectors, Stallman, Hagemann, Gullason, Fryckstedt, and, most recently and significantly, Fredson Bowers. The CEAA definitive texts, a long-needed project in Crane scholarship, are currently in progress at the University of Virginia under the general editorship of Fredson Bowers.\textsuperscript{27} Only in the late sixties

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24}Joseph Katz, \textit{The Poems of Stephen Crane} (New York: Cooper Square, 1966).
\item \textsuperscript{27}The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane, edited under the direction of Fredson Bowers, is presently in preparation. Begun in 1969, four volumes have appeared at this writing. This edition, sponsored by the Center for the Editions of American Authors, should certainly be definitive, and I have used it whenever possible.
\end{itemize}
have serious efforts been undertaken to establish a text for the heavily criticized poetry and prose of Stephen Crane.

Yet for all this effort, the centers of Crane's novels and stories somehow remain obscure. One can never quite settle on meanings appropriate to the allegedly symbol-bearing images. One can never be entirely sure whether, at a given moment, Crane is being ironic. One can never quite characterize the style or explain the almost unbelievable unevenness in the quality of his work. And many excellent and difficult stories, somehow inconvenient to the usual generalizations, remain unconsidered or only fleetingly examined. Too often an understanding of one story, when finally arrived at, contradicts a seemingly sound assertion about another. The critics retreat to biography and intellectual history, while Crane's fiction remains elusive, its meanings still relatively unclear.

If Stephen Crane's works defy classification and refuse to fit literary patterns, then the most logical approach, by necessity, to Crane scholarship is to admit at once that Crane is versatile and unpredictable, and, therefore to avoid the usual literary "tags" such as imagist, impressionist, or naturalist, and concentrate on the particular characteristics of Crane's writing technique. In any attempt to discuss a pattern in Crane's writing, the first and most
important aspect to consider is any subject (characters, images, themes, etc.) which Crane often repeats.

One of the most consistently recurring concerns of Crane is his characterization of the drunkard, for many of his stories and novels repeatedly represent or turn upon some event effected by his drunkard characters.

To trace the concern expressed by Crane for his drunkard characters, it will be necessary to establish firmly the basis for Crane's point of view. Crane retained to some extent a singularly pure vision of the truth of "primitive" Christianity which he often expressed through the creation of his characters. It cannot be denied or ignored that the parents of Stephen Crane, the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Townley Crane and Mary Peck Crane, played an important role in the development of this attitude expressed in his fiction. Despite the good quality and the reach of recent Crane scholarship, one area has been neglected, notably the influence on Stephen Crane by his parents. Little credit has been accorded to the parents of Stephen Crane for not only introducing him to literature and writing as a career (both parents were writers) but also as responsible for establishing his moral concern. From the moralistic treatment of the question of alcohol present in the early Crane novels,
Maggie: A Girl of the Streets and George's Mother, the influences of the Reverend Dr. Jonathan T. Crane and Mary Peck Crane became evident. It is interesting, but not surprising, to find that when writing these two early novels Crane utilized the tractarian device of the "horrible example" story. But more than this, the major influence of the Cranes on their son may be seen not in the actual style of his writing but rather in his concern expressed through and by his characters--for the moral condition of man. However Stephen Crane was not to be restricted to a narrow "tractarian" point of view. For we find that progressively, in his later works, he alters his view of alcohol from the early, rather severe position, to one of assigning alcohol a position as one of device or catalyst which effects a confrontation, creates suspense, or allows a character to gain some measure of insight. The significance of this transition of attitude is that Stephen Crane as a young writer reflects his parents' concerns with morality, particularly the issue of temperance, while his later fiction represents Crane's concern not with moral issues but with writing techniques, and, as such, illustrates his maturation as a craftsman and an artist.

28 Maggie: A Girl of the Streets will hereafter usually be referred to as Maggie.
The purpose of this thesis, then, is two-fold: first, to examine the moral and literary legacy of the parents of Stephen Crane as evidenced by his "tractarian" approach to the issue of alcohol in his early works, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) and *George's Mother* (1896); and second, to reveal Crane's maturation as a writer through his progressive change in attitude toward alcohol from his early position of alarm to a more objective viewpoint as seen in his later works, "Horses--One Dash" (1896), "The Five White Mice" (1898), "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" (1898), "The Blue Hotel" (1898), and "Twelve O'Clock" (1899), while illustrating in each instance Crane's particular use of the drunkard for moral comment or purely as a literary device. In the study itself, I shall treat in depth the only two of Crane's novels which deal extensively with the subject I have selected. *Maggie* was Crane's first novel and as such

conforms to his early moralistic view of alcohol. In my treatment of his first work I shall show Crane's concern with the problem of alcohol and more particularly the place of alcohol as one of the forces figuring prominently in the Bowery environment of which he speaks so explicitly in his preface presented to Hamlin Garland. The second novel, George's Mother, did not immediately follow Maggie, but the novel treats, perhaps more so than Maggie, the problem of alcohol as a motivating and central factor in the leading character's failure and downfall. These two novels are the two most significant commentaries by Crane on the damning effect of alcohol.

When Stephen Crane set out in January of 1895 on a trip through the American West, he also began a period of new literary directions, a period during which many new experiences and imagined possibilities would infuse his writing. The maturation of Stephen Crane was effected through his own experience with a world discovered through travel. He was to feel the disorientation and reaffirmation of reality which comes with first travels. In 1895 began the process of growth in which Crane's own experience validated and sharpened his vision of objective reality and of man's apprehension of it. "Horses--One Dash" begins my study of the

30 See p. 42 of this thesis for the inscription.
Crane Western stories, five of which I shall consider in the latter part of my thesis. It is through my studies of these stories that I shall show the effect that Crane's Western travels had in the change of attitude toward alcohol by Crane from the moralist viewpoint to a more objective adaptation of the drunkard as a literary device. Beginning with "Horses--One Dash" in which a Mexican bandit becomes drunk and, as a result, becomes violent and potentially dangerous, which in turn allows Crane to explore his theme of fear, I shall move to the other stories, "The Five White Mice," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," "The Blue Hotel," and "Twelve O'Clock," illustrating in each story the varied treatments of alcohol by Crane, which run from still rather serious comment to parody, satire, and even humor, while making a distinction in each case of Crane's use of the drunkard as a literary device rather than for moral comment.

I have omitted some other important Crane works such as The Red Badge of Courage, "The Monster," and "The Open Boat," because, while somewhat moral in subject, they do not specifically treat the issue of alcohol. Other works briefly mentioning alcohol have also been omitted as I have limited the works to be included to those novels and stories which most explicitly illustrate Crane's use of alcohol for moral comment or as a literary device.

After reading extensively, in secondary sources, I have
found only brief mention of the subject stated and have not
found another study which covers this subject to the extent
of this present one. The moral issues of many Crane works
have been discussed at great length, but none have attempted
to examine in depth the influence of the parents of Stephen
Crane on his fiction and his resultant and often-changing
view of his much-used device of alcohol. Such a study
would seem to me to be valuable, for much disagreement pres-
ently exists as to what exactly Crane's moral position was,
or if he was consistent in his moral views. Was Crane, a
man admittedly guilty of many so-called "sins of the flesh,"
really a tractarian? And, if indeed he was a tractarian,
did he remain fixed in his viewpoint? My thesis will demon-
strate that, like his father, Stephen Crane saw the flaws
and paradoxes of life, and he progressively found that he
could present a truth dramatically, allowing the reader him-
self to confront a problem and see it resolved in private
and human terms, something that sermonizing could not always
do.
CHAPTER TWO

A TRACTARIAN HERITAGE

"I began to write special articles and short stories for the Sunday papers and one of the literary syndicates, reading a great deal in the meantime and gradually acquiring a style."

--Stephen Crane in a letter to an editor of Leslie's Weekly, 1895.

Born November 1, 1871, in Newark, New Jersey, Stephen Crane was the youngest of fourteen offspring of parents whose marriage marked the union of two lines of hard-preaching, fundamentalist Methodist ministers.¹ The time and place of his birth and his parents' concern with conduct, morality and eloquence were, when joined with his self-dedication to precise feeling and writing, perhaps as portentous and as difficult a gift to bear as any seer's obligation to peer through walls and into the secret places of the heart, or around windy corners and into the enigmatic future. Indeed, such words as "clairvoyant," "occult" and "uncanny" have been used to describe his style, and while these tell little, there was nonetheless an inescapable aura

¹Stallman, p. 1. Stallman discusses in considerable depth the ancestors of Stephen Crane.
of the marvelous about Stephen Crane. He revealed a unique vision of the human condition and an unusual talent for projecting it. His was a costly vision, won through personal suffering, hard living and harsh artistic discipline.

Crane's dedication to art was no less disciplined or deadly serious than that which characterized his preaching forefathers' concern with religion. Indeed, John Berryman and Robert Wooster Stallman, two of the most perceptive of Crane's recent critics, see much of the tension in the work as arising from his desperate struggle with his parents' Methodism--an insight which is at once highly suggestive.

Surely if fundamentalist Christianity could get so authoritatively into national politics (especially in the Bible Belt), so ambiguously into our system of education (as in the Scopes trial issue), and into our style of crime

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2 For further discussion of Crane's unusual twists in imagination and style see Holton, pp. 244-73.

3 Holton, p. 9.

4 Holton, p. 10.

5 For further discussion of the effects of Methodism on Stephen Crane see Berryman, pp. 7, 8, 9, 35, 54, and Stallman, pp. ix, 2, 3, 4, 203, 611.
(through prohibition's spawn of bootleggers)—it only follows that religion has a deep relationship to the art of our American literature and not simply as subject matter, but as a major source of its technique, its form and rhetoric. Crane's example suggests that, for the writer, a youthful contact with the emotional intensity and harsh authority of American fundamentalism can be as important an experience as contact with those churches which possess a ritual containing elements of high art and a theology spun subtle and fine through intellectualization. Undoubtedly the Methodist Church provided Crane an early schooling in the seriousness of spiritual and moral questions—of the individual's ultimate relationship to his fellow men, to the universe and to God—and was one source of the revolt which taught him to look upon life with his own eyes. Just as important, perhaps, is the discipline which the church provided him in keeping great emotion under the control of the intellect, along with an awareness of the disparity between the individual's public testimony (a rite common to evangelical churches) and his private deeds—a matter intensified by the fact that the celebrant of this rite of public confession was his own father, the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Townley Crane. In brief, Crane was concerned very early with pri-

6 Stallman, pp. 5, 14, 17.

7 Stallman, p. 16.
vate emotions publicly displayed as an act, real or imagined, of purification and self-definition—an excellent beginning for a writer interested in the ordeals of the private individual struggling to define himself against the claims of society. This central struggle can be seen early in the trials of such Crane characters as Mrs. Johnson, Maggie, Pete, George Kelcey and in such later characters as the Swede and Scratchy Wilson. To a greater or lesser degree these characters share a common bond in the problem with which they struggle—the problem of alcohol.

Another characteristic of fundamentalist religions, those which are not concerned with webs of intellectualization, is an outward manifestation, a symbol of sin, and, in Crane's time, the major symbol became alcohol and the drunkard. It is not at all surprising, then, to find that Crane was excessively concerned with the curse of drink, and that he should incorporate in his early art, as a personal concern or preoccupation, the role of alcohol in the moral decay and fall of his characters. Thus it may be said that Crane, who might well have become a minister, turned from religion but transferred its forms into his early art.

Granting that religion plays an integral role in the total scope of society and that parents provide the early

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8Stallman, p. 5.

9Stallman, p. 2.
guidelines for an individual's intellectual and moral development, the combination of these factors must play an unquestioned role in the development of such a personality and intellect as Stephen Crane. In order to understand the emotions, thoughts and morals of the Stephen Crane who undertook a project such as Maggie, an investigation of his formulation is of an utmost necessity.

The parents of Stephen Crane, Mary Helen Peck and the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Townley Crane, were married on January 8, 1848. Stephen's father was a gentle-hearted minister of the Methodist faith who bolted the Presbyterian Church as a young man because he refused to believe that God punished unconfirmed infants in the fires of hell. The Reverend Dr. Crane, however, was an editor of various church periodicals and wrote books inveighing against the evils of card-playing, dancing, and drinking, with the self-sufficient logic of the theologian. "God could," he wrote in his book Holiness the Birthright of All God's Children (1874), "if he deemed it best, so reveal himself that unbelief would be impossible. He might write his laws upon the azure skies. . . . He could smite every sinner at the very

10 Stallman, p. 4.

11 Stallman, p. 4.

12 Stallman, pp. 5-8.
moment of his transgression with so stern and so visible a hand that obedience would have little moral value. . . .

That moral liberty may not be destroyed, God withdrew himself from human vision."\textsuperscript{13}\

The Reverend Dr. Crane excused Noah's lapse from temperance: "The Scriptures tell us that Noah planted a vineyard and on one occasion drank of the wine until he was drunken. Very possibly the process of fermentation had not before been noticed, the results were not known, and the consequences were wholly unexpected."\textsuperscript{14} Stephen appraised his father as "a great, fine, simple mind."\textsuperscript{15} The Reverend Dr. Crane declared that:

By means of intoxicants the adjustments of the moral world are deranged, put out of joint. A man with alcohol in his veins is not the man that God made. He has not the sense that God gave him, nor the tender affections and sensibilities which God bestowed upon him. He has reconstructed himself after another model, which, so far as it differs from the original, is marred, perverted, distorted--not what Divine Wisdom intended or what man's true interests demand.\textsuperscript{16}


\textsuperscript{14}Cited by Stallman, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{15}Stallman, pp. 5, 6.

Dr. Crane had yet much practical common sense. Although his *Arts of Intoxication*, a tract against tobacco, opium, and alcohol, had sold four thousand copies and had been praised by the Sons of Temperance, he had some misgivings about the Christian Temperance Union League when four ladies from Ohio came to consult with his wife in 1873. Mrs. Crane is much impressed by this project. I do not think it exactly practical." Mrs. Crane, nevertheless, joined the New Jersey Women's Christian Temperance Union and became its eloquent spokeswoman for the rest of her life. The Reverend Dr. Crane died in Port Jervis, New York, in 1880. Still a child when his father died, Stephen always cherished his memory and he was reading his father's sermons on his death bed. If Stephen Crane, as a young pupil, ever had the opportunity to read or listen to his father's tracts, he might have been sufficiently inspired to see his own future calling as a writer. Years later Stephen lost the

17 Stallman, p. 6.
18 Stallman, p. 6.
19 Stallman, p. 6.
20 Stallman, p. 8.
optimism of his father, who was not altogether naive nor idealistic, but who saw the flaws and paradoxes of life, which he tried to confront with gentleness and wisdom.

Mrs. Crane's viewpoint and religion were not so gentle. Descendant of a long line of fire-breathing Methodist preachers of the "old ambling-nag, saddle-bag, exhorting kind" (as Stephen Crane described her), she, too, was a writer of religious tracts.\(^22\) After the death of her husband Mrs. Crane returned to Newark for a while, but soon made a permanent home in Asbury Park, New Jersey, which was a new stronghold of American Methodism.\(^23\) There she settled in 1883 and, that same year, was elected president of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of Asbury Park and Ocean Grove.\(^24\) Frequently lecturing in neighboring towns, she occasionally traveled to distant cities as a delegate of that organization. Stephen recalled, "She was always sailing off when she felt well enough to some big prayer meeting or experience meeting and she spoke very well. Her voice was something like Ellen Terry's but deeper. She spoke as slowly as a big clock ticks and her effects were

\(^{22}\)Stallman, p. 4.

\(^{23}\)Stallman, pp. 8, 9.

\(^{24}\)Stallman, p. 11.
impromptu. . . . It is in me to think that she did good work for public schools. One of my sisters [Agnes] was a teacher, and mother tried for years to get women placed on the school boards and to see that whiskey was not sold to boys under age." When the sale of alcohol to New Jersey school children had become a scandal, she proposed to stop it, and her work on this project brought her some recognition by women of various religious sects. They admired her dignity as a speaker on the platform.

A well-educated woman, she also dabbled in journalism to eke out her meager resources and reported on the summer religious meetings on the New Jersey shore, contributing mostly to the New York Tribune and the Philadelphia Press. Most of her journalism, however, took the form of tracts, concerned primarily with the cause against drinking. In her article, "Change of Base," appearing in the Ocean Grove Record in 1884 she writes:

In the little back room in the drug store our young men may be initiated into drinking habits, and take their places just as surely among the moderate drinkers ultimately to swell the great army one hundred


26 Stallman, p. 13.

27 Stallman, p. 9.

28 Stallman, pp. 9-14.
thousand strong, who go to a drunkard's death every year, as in the open saloon. "No drunkard shall enter the kingdom of heaven." 29

Mrs. Crane declared that she planned her campaigns against intemperance just as any army general would marshal his forces before battle. 30 It was not that their mother "was bitter or mean but it hurt her that any of us should be slipping from Grace or giving up eternal damnation or salvation or those things," Stephen recalled. 31 From this portrait of a moral, human, but indomitable woman, an immediate reaction is to look for a character of Crane who embodies similar attributes, and some critics have indeed done so. Although George's Mother was not published until 1896, Crane began it early—perhaps as early as 1891 or 1892—and was at work on it soon after Maggie went to press in 1893. 32 But as he became disillusioned with Maggie he put the second slum novel aside and wrote The Red Badge of Courage. He returned to George's Mother in 1894 and com-


30 Stallman, p. 13.


32 Holton, p. 55.
pleted it in November of that year.\textsuperscript{33} What has perhaps seemed most important, however, is the fact that Crane's conception of \textit{George's Mother} must have occurred around the time of Crane's own mother's final illness and death, for \textit{George's Mother} has long been the subject of biographers' conjectures.\textsuperscript{34} Richard Chase has said that "George and his mother are not too remote projections of Crane and his own mother, a strong Methodist and lecturer on religious subjects."\textsuperscript{35} And both Beer and Berryman have made similar suggestions, though Stallman sees the novel's George Kelcey as a presentation of Crane's own drunken brother Townley.\textsuperscript{36} The biographical parallel must not be pressed too far, for in spite of Crane's own testimony any such parallel must at best remain conjectural.

Mrs. Crane suffered from mental illness for some months and was to die in 1891.\textsuperscript{37} Her religious zeal did not inspire a similar response in Stephen, and he left the fold of the

\textsuperscript{33} Holton, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{34} Holton, p. 56.


\textsuperscript{36} Stallman, pp. 76, 212. For additional discussion on the sources of \textit{George's Mother}, see Beer, pp. 48-51, 225, and Berryman, pp. 32-47, 155, 163.

\textsuperscript{37} Stallman, p. 44.
church; but he remained always to some extent dominated by fundamental religious precepts and patterns—charity, fraternity, redemption, and morality—which he usually kept at an earthly level.  

But much like his mother, one of the first and most important and lasting of Stephen Crane's "earthly" moral concerns was the problem of alcohol. For example, in Crane's first novel Maggie Mrs. Johnson's drunken rages force Maggie out of her home and into the streets to become a prostitute, which in turn leads eventually to her own self-destruction. And for George Kelcey in Crane's second Bowery novel George's Mother, the problem of alcohol attains center stage as George himself becomes a confirmed drunkard, destined for failure as he observes the death of his righteous and broken-hearted mother. Both figures, Maggie and George, are victims of the torment of drink which spells their doom.

These brief illustrations of hostility and despair show that Crane was indeed assigning alcohol the role of a condition that creates the acts of violence and immorality which are operating as active forces in the environment of the Bowery.

From such an obvious approach to the problem of drinking which exists in these early Crane novels, Maggie and

38Stallman, pp. 8, 14, 15, 16, 17.
George's Mother, the legacy of Mary Peck Crane and the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Townley Crane--a concern for morality and temperance--becomes clear. And when he wrote these two early novels it is not at all surprising to find that Stephen Crane, too, effectively employed the time-tried tractarian method of the "horrible example" story, a method firmly established in Crane's mind by his parents.
CHAPTER THREE

MAGGIE: A GIRL OF THE STREETS

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!

--Crane, The Black Riders, LVLL

The inescapable trait of Stephen Crane as a writer is his desire to express his own mind candidly, regardless of accepted opinion or conventions. The world first appeared to him with the colors, shapes, and sounds of the Psalms and of Wesleyan hymns, and he consciously made frequent use of the imagery of Biblical stories.¹ His parents' participation in charitable work encourages his interest in slum life, and he soon discovered, through his own deep concern with the mainsprings of life, a strange curiosity about the moral nature of man.²

In Crane's generation "low life" was a subject of re-

²Stallman, p. 77.
portage, fiction, and tracts. When he moved into this area of literature he did so with the seriousness, the intentness, and the acuteness of a minister's son who had received his training as a journalist.  

Even if he did not know New York well at the time he wrote Maggie, he must have caught by then a few glimpses of the poorer districts of the American metropolis, which was so close to Asbury Park where he lived between his stays at boarding school or college. Concerning Crane at Syracuse University, Stallman reports that,

Prostitutes and criminals fascinated Crane, and his curiosity about the demi-world led him into interviewing the lower strata of Syracuse civilization. . . . He thought the police court was the most interesting place in the city, and that he could get a better education than any university had to offer if he probed life itself.  

The approach of Crane's first novel, Maggie (1893), to slum life was new in that it did not preach and did not encourage "slumming"; it simply aimed, he said, to "show people to people as they seemed to him." Maggie is the daughter of the Johnsons, a family of poor tenement dwellers living on the lower East Side of Manhattan. A large part of the story is devoted to drinking bouts, and Maggie's

3 Stallman, p. 78.

4 Stallman, pp. 29-30.

home is the scene of a daily fight for survival. We thus attend the growth and brutal extinction of the heroine who has "blossomed in a mud-puddle" (I, 24) to become "a pretty girl" (I, 24) strangely undefiled by her surroundings. She tries to escape the degrading atmosphere of her home by working in a collar-and-cuff factory, but soon discovers the dull routine and corruption of the sweat-shop. Then Pete, a commonplace bartender, comes into her life, and to Maggie he seems to be "a supreme warrior" (I, 27), "a knight" (I, 28). He takes her to dime museums, beer gardens, and theatres, and thus satisfies her vague and romantic longings for culture and refinement. Seduced and abandoned by her lover, rejected by her drinking mother and callous brother on "moralistic" grounds, Maggie finally turns to prostitution. Shortly afterwards, "upon a wet evening" (I, 68), she abruptly ends her life in the East River while in the distance "streetcar bells jangle with a sound of merriment" (I, 70).

Maggie falls because "environment is a tremendous thing in the world,"⁶ because she herself is romantic and weak, and also because nobody is interested in her fate. She redeems herself, however, by committing suicide, her only

⁶From a Crane inscription in Maggie to Hamlin Garland. Cited by Stallman, p. 78. For the full inscription see p. 42 of this thesis.
possible escape from a life of moral degradation. By so doing she undergoes an ironic purification in the foul waters of the East River while her brother Jimmie, who had "clad his soul in armour" (I, 20), Pete who abandons her, and her mother, who belatedly "fergave" (I, 77) her, are allowed to continue their degenerate lives of vice, hypocrisy, and drunkenness in the human jungle to which they are perfectly adapted.

However, to get beneath this obvious surface realism is to encounter another element which intervenes between it and Crane's specifically imaginary construction. This aspect of Maggie is conventional, sentimental, and moralistic. Maggie is an innocent lamb created only for slaughter, seduced and abandoned by a wicked man, rejected by her "righteous" family, and cast out upon the streets to the horrors of prostitution and suicide. Considered from this point of view, the novel is conventionally moral; actually it is as moral as a tract. It is an indictment, prepared with the fervor of an evangelist. And for Crane, the evangelist, the central images for this indictment are the saloon and the drunkard.

The Bowery world of this novel has two faces, the tenement and the saloon--two institutions which are found at the heart of slum life, and while separate in concept are, in fact, linked through the presence of alcohol in each. Pete
dominates the saloon side of this world just as Mrs. Johnson dominates the tenement side. We know that Maggie is familiar with the tenement and her own mother and brother, at least so far as she is capable; but Pete is an unknown to her, and she sees him in the illusory light of her wildly romantic day-dreams. Thus, with implicit help from Mrs. Johnson and the tenement, Pete becomes initially, in Maggie's mind, the idealized "Galahad," which he certainly is not.

Maggie's vision is badly distorted by innocence and adolescent love; and this distortion, fed by the cheap offerings of the Bowery theatre, is immensely increased by her desire to escape from the tenement world with its alternatives of sweat-shop or prostitution. Because Pete really embodies all the sham glitter and cheap sophistication of the saloon over which he presides, he lures Maggie with the illusion of happiness just as the saloon lures the tenement dweller--Maggie's own father in Chapter II--with the illusion of escape.

During the evening he had been standing against a bar drinking whiskies and declaring to all comers, confidentially: "My home reg'lar livin' hell! Damdes' place! Reg'lar hell! Why do I come an' drin' whisk' her thish way? 'Cause home reg'lar livin' hell!" (I, 17).

Crane emphasizes Pete's "manners," his dandy's clothes and patent-leather shoes, the superficial toughness which make him seem unique to Maggie, far above the rest of her world. Mrs. Johnson and the tenement world of hostile drunkenness which she embodies are actively negative forces in Maggie's life,

The woman [Mrs. Johnson] screamed and shook her fists before her husband's eyes. The rough yellow of her face and neck flared suddenly crimson. She began to howl. "You've been drinkin', Mary" he said. "You'd better let up on the bot', ol' woman, or you'll get done."

"You're a liar. I ain't had a drop," she roared in reply. They had a lurid altercation, in which they damned each other's souls with frequency.

The babe was standing out from under the table, his small face working in his excitement. The ragged girl [Maggie] went stealthily over to the corner where the urchin lay. (I, 19).

Maggie's illusions about Pete are the more understandable, if we associate them with anticipation or wishful thinking. For Maggie, in other words, a conflict is set up which places Pete and the illusion of escape into happiness on one side and her drunkard mother and the tenement world on the other. In her search for happiness Maggie succumbs to the temptations of Pete. Maggie is seduced by Pete and shortly afterward abandoned by him. Alone and helpless in the Bowery world Maggie turns to prostitution in order to survive. But prostitution and the sordid life of the Bowery leave her spiritually empty, and in quiet desperation
she takes her life.

Through death Maggie will ultimately be redeemed; it is Pete who will be condemned to suffer the curse of alcoholism, the fate of his many former customers. The indictment by Crane first becomes evident as Pete succumbs to drink and falls from "grace." Maggie is "privileged" to witness the preliminary scene of Pete's end as she watches Pete collapse beneath the blandishments of Nell. It is a wild scene, a chaos of noise, alcohol, and savage music. Maggie loses Pete to Nellie, an old flame, a sophisticated woman of the world. Pete goes off with Nellie as if Maggie did not exist. Nellie's date, "a mere boy," discusses this unfair action with Maggie, while proceeding to get quite drunk. He, at last very drunk, even condescends to offer to sleep with Maggie. Although at this point Maggie does not realize it, she has witnessed the weakness in Pete which will lead him to a pitiable state. Maggie is dead by the time Pete begs for redemption.

Chapter XVIII is a long treatment of Pete's degradation. He is drunken, slobbering, incoherent, maudlin. He mumbles about his pure motives while a gang of whores, led by Nellie, hover about, only waiting for him to pass out so they can "roll" him. Superficially, it would seem that the glimpse we receive of Pete, proclaiming to six rapacious women that he is one fine fellow, functions merely
as an ironic contrast to what immediately precedes, but upon much closer examination one perceives that in its real meaning and implications this chapter reaches much further. It is significant, first of all, that once Pete falls into drunken paralysis, the women upon whom he has lavished his funds abandon him in the saloon compartment, the exit from which is now obscured by the stifling smoke from the lamps.

Looking back to the various beer-hall scenes from this point, one finds that there is a steady retrogression here as well, from the Bowery version of the deluxe--the great hall in Chapter VII--to the shabbiness of the hall of irregular shape in Chapter XII, to the unabashed sordidness of the hilarious hall in Chapter XIV. Commensurate with this movement from one level of vulgarity to another lower still, there is also a spatial contraction, an increased density of smoke, and most of all, an intensification of drunken hilarity. In the present scene, accordingly, it is purely symbolic that Pete is abandoned by a pack of prostitutes in a narrow saloon compartment from which the way out becomes progressively less apparent. More important, however, is the last sentence of this chapter, where Crane illustrates the posture of Pete's present debasement, his inevitable and complete degeneration: "The wine from an overturned glass dripped softly down upon the blotches on the man's neck" (I, 74). In the wine drops upon the
blotches, Pete's end in drunkenness and disease, one condition leading to and aggravating the other, is thus pointedly symbolized. The meaning is reinforced if one recalls now the previous section where on the lowest level of her inexorable descent to destruction Maggie encounters first a drunkard, then "a man with blotched features" (I, 70), and finally "the ragged being with bloodshot eyes and grimy hands" (I, 70). Nor is this the only verbal tie-up between the two chapters. Just as Maggie has been addressed earlier in Chapter XVII as "old girl" (I, 69) and then "old lady" (I, 69) the woman of brilliance and audacity speaks to Pete in the same patronizing manner: "Never you mind, old boy" (I, 72); and later, "And we're not goin' back on you, old man" (I, 72). By the end of this chapter, at any rate, Pete has reached the point where even women of no high standing pick up their skirts and recoil from him in disgust. Thus Crane would have us understand that Pete's fate is as inevitable as Maggie's and certainly less pitiable, since unlike Maggie he lacks both the conscience and the objectivity to perceive the hopeless waste of his existence.

Mrs. Johnson's function is to make retreat and acceptance of the tenement world extremely undesirable for Maggie. Thus, although the full force of the physical slum reality probably strengthens Mrs. Johnson's role, this
drunken hypocrite needs no help from her environment. She is never seen as a merely passive creature; she is always presented as actively destructive, and as such she assuredly determines her environment herself. No matter how bad her environment, either physical or moral, may be at any point in the novel, Mrs. Johnson inevitably acts to make it worse. Mrs. Johnson's drunken rages symbolize the animal fury of the slum. The tenement home is merely squalid before she is turned loose in it, and she reduces it to chaos by smashing everything too heavy to pawn.

At home, she [Maggie] found her mother often drunk and always raving. It seemed that the world had treated this woman very badly, and she took a deep revenge upon such portions of it as came within her reach. She broke furniture as if she were at last getting her right. She swelled with virtuous indignation as she carried the lighter articles of household use, one by one, under the shadows of the three gilt balls, where Hebrews chained them with chains of interest. (I, 35).

The father, indifferent and irresponsible, is at least at home and sober until his wife's actions excuse his leaving to get drunk at the saloon. The children can know hunger and cold from their environment, but with their mother present they also know fear and pain.

Especially significant in Chapter III is the extreme and curious terror the mother inspires in Jimmie. Though he stands up with dauntless courage to all the abuse of the neighboring roughnecks and responds on occasion with kicks and curses to his father's violence, he dodges from
his mother in abject terror, screaming more from panic than from pain, it seems, once she takes hold of him. So much does he live in dread of her violent outbursts that he has even learned to detect their ominous approach: "He cast furtive glances at his mother. His practised eye perceived her gradually emerge from a mist of muddled sentiment until her brain burned in drunken heat. He sat breathless" (I, 14). Once the outburst comes, though, it is directed at Maggie; Jimmie runs out of the flat "shrieking like a monk in an earthquake" (I, 15). When at last the battle subsides and his parents collapse in drunken stupor, the mother in the middle of the floor, the father across the seat of a chair, Jimmie enters the room stealthily, still trembling with fear. What follows upon this is particularly interesting. "A glow from the fire threw red hues over the bare floor" (I, 18), and in this symbolically suggestive light, half hypnotized between dread and fascination, Jimmie studies the grotesque figure of his mother:

His mother's great chest was heaving painfully, Jimmie paused and looked down at her. . . . He was fearful lest she should open her eyes, and the dread within was so strong that he could not forbear to stare, but hung as if fascinated over the woman's grim face. Suddenly her eyes opened. The urchin found himself looking straight into an expression which, it would seem, had the power to change his blood to salt. He howled piercingly and fell backward. (I, 19).

Though the mother sinks again into drunken sleep, Maggie and Jimmie clutch one another and huddle in a corner, to
spend an all-night vigil gazing with expectant horror at the mother's prostrate form. "They crouched until the ghost mists of dawn appeared at the window, drawing close to the panes, and looking in at the prostrate, heaving body of the mother" (I, 19). This passage serves to rivet the reader's attention, at the very threshold of the adult lives of these children, upon the drunken figure of the mother, the strongest formative force in their lives, and in that sense the chief symbol of the novel. For symbolically embodied in the mother--drunken, brutal, yet hopelessly maudlin, irresistibly aggressive and invulnerably self-righteous--are all the evil forces of this society that work Maggie's and eventually its own destruction.

A connection between the aforementioned passages and that of the fire engine can be perceived in the pattern of Jimmie's psychology. Towards both his mother and the fire engine his attitude is clearly ambivalent; both command that incontestable brute force which fascinates him because it overawes, and wins his respect because it over-whelms.

She [Mrs. Johnson] raised her arm and whirled her great fist at her son's face. Jimmie dodged his head and the blow struck him in the back of the neck. "Damn yeh," he gritted again. He threw out his left hand and writhed his fingers about her middle arm. The mother and the son began to sway and struggle like gladiators.
Maggie shrieked and ran into the other room. To her there came the sound of a storm of crashes and curses. There was the great final thump and Jimmie's voice cried: "Dere, Damn yeh, stay still." Maggie opened the door now and went warily out. "Oh, Jimmie!"

He was leaning against the wall and swearing. Blood stood upon bruises on his knotty forearms. . . . Maggie standing in the middle of the room gazed about her. The usual upheaval of the tables and chairs had taken place. (I, 40).

It is also noteworthy that, whether intentionally or not, the mother is frequently described in terms strongly suggestive of the fire engine: she is "immense," "rampant," "chieftain-like," "crimson," "puffing and snorting," "fervent red," and "inflamed." Nor is it any wonder, when one recalls the scenes of her drunken rampages, that the "clang of the fire gong pierced Jimmie's breast like a noise of remembered war" (I, 23). Like the fire engine, the motherSmashes everything in her path once her drunken rage runs wild; but whereas the fire engine symbolizes in Jimmie's psychology an ideal destructive brute force, her outrageous physical strength betokens something more, the devastating moral and psychological might by which she smashes the minds and souls of her children. As the fire engine symbolizes overpowering physical force in Jimmie's brutal world, the mother represents its destructive spiritual counterpart.

The woman [Mrs. Johnson] on the floor cursed. Jimmie was intent upon his bruised fore-arms. The girl cast a glance about the room filled with a chaotic
mass of debris, and at the writhing body of her mother.

"Go t' hell an' good riddance."

Maggie went. (I, 41).

Another set of symbols worth attention is the lambrequin. "It lay in a bedraggled heap in the corner . . . the knots of blue ribbons appeared like violated flowers" (I, 29). This passage corroborates symbolically what was said earlier, that it is the mother who is really culpable for Maggie's destruction and ruin, for it is the drunkard mother who has most ruthlessly outraged Maggie, who has violated her soul repeatedly and trampled her sensibilities.

In the final use of these symbols in Chapter X there are several interesting implications concerning Maggie herself. The night before, in the height of her drunken fury, the mother has driven Maggie out of the house and into the willing arms of Pete. Before leaving her home the next day, however, Maggie first attempts to restore appearances:

The rooms showed that attempts had been made at tiding them. . . . The floor had been newly swept. The blue ribbons had been restored to the curtains, and the lambrequin, with its immense sheaves of wheat and red roses of equal size, had been returned, in a worn and sorry state, to its place at the mantel. Maggie's jacket and hat were gone from the nail behind the door. (I, 42-43).

Though repeatedly abused and trampled upon, Maggie con-
stantly picks up the remnants of her life and tries to restore them, even if "in a worn and sorry state," to some semblance of decency. When she leaves home to live with Pete, she does so in the full conviction that under the circumstances what she is doing is expedient rather than immoral; now that she has been driven from her home and seduced, going to live with Pete is, from her point of view, the only decent restoration of her life possible. "She did not feel like a bad woman" (I, 52); we are informed further on: "to her knowledge she had never known any better" (I, 52).

Most damning of all, when Maggie returns home after being seduced, she is not yet either a prostitute or potential suicide, and she becomes both only after being driven from home by her mother. No environment could long endure the assaults of Mrs. Johnson because she is consistently destructive—physically, through her aimless and drunken rage; morally, through her egregious hypocrisy. It is this environment, created by a drunken hypocrite, of which Crane writes. He intended to depict Maggie as the innocent victim of these brutal forces around her, a flower which "blossomed in a mud-puddle," only to be sullied and broken and trampled back into it. The fact is certainly clear enough in the novel, but it is interesting to note how Crane himself phrased it in the inscribed copy he sent
to Hamlin Garland:

It is inevitable that you will be greatly shocked by the book but continue, please, with all possible courage, to the end. For it tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless. If one proves that theory one makes room in Heaven for all sorts of souls (notably an occasional street girl) who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people. It is probable that the reader of this small thing may consider the Author to be a bad man, but, obviously this is of small consequence to

The Author

Although the story itself, fortunately, is nowhere so explicit about heaven and salvation, it nevertheless dramatizes quite forcefully this central thematic irony: the self-righteous condemnation of a woman who is good by the very society responsible for her downfall. Pete's "respectability," the drunken, hypocritical self-righteousness of Mrs. Johnson and Jimmie, and the adjectival use of "Bowery," all define the same loud and offensive falsity of weaklings not brave enough to confront the dishonesty of their own actions. The entire novel bears this critical intent. Crane's focus in Maggie, however, is less on the harm done by hypocrisy or the Bowery environment and more on the problems created by the presence of alcohol in that environment. His concentration on the drunken figures of Pete and Mrs. Johnson proves that Crane was showing the

8 Cited by Stallman, p. 78.
destructiveness of alcohol as a controlling factor which ruins homes and, more importantly, lives. Crane's portraits of these drunkards, then, becomes an evangelistic indictment against alcohol which he has specified in his "tract," Maggie, as the evil at the root of Bowery life.
CHAPTER FOUR

GEORGE'S MOTHER

Once when I was fourteen an organ grinder . . . gave me a nice long drink out of a nice red bottle . . . . I had been sulky all morning and now I was perfectly willing to go to a prayer meeting and Mother was tickled to death . . . . I have frequently wondered how much mothers ever know about their sons, after all.

--Crane to Willis B. Clarke, Nov., 1899

George's Mother (1896), which prior to publication, was tentatively entitled A Woman Without Weapons, may be seen as a companion piece to Maggie. The relationship between the two novels might, at first reading, be considered a superficial one of materials and setting; but the reader has to admit that even on the surface there appears to be plentiful evidence of kinship. The Kelceys and Johnsons live in the same tenement, Maggie and Pete appear in both stories, George and his mother are as gulled by illusions as Maggie is, and all these characters are directly affected by the problem of drinking. The drinking in George's Mother is an elaboration of the saloon function of which Crane wrote in Maggie. The saloon is a jolly place where the wounds of life are at least temporarily healed; and

1Stephen Crane: Letters, pp. 242-43.
hence, courtesy and the fraternal warmth of the saloon society that George encounters through Jones and Bleecker are illusory—as George learns when he attempts to borrow money from members of this club—just as Maggie's view of Pete is illusory. The church is as repulsive to George as the tenement is to Maggie, and for the same reason: the moral failings of those entrusted with the keeping of these institutions, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Kelcey, the plump young minister, have destroyed them. The pointless formalism of Mrs. Kelcey and her kind strangles all spirit and leaves only "dreary blackness arranged in solemn rows... made by people who tilted their heads at a prescribed angle of devotion" (I, 124). The analogy between Maggie and George's Mother is strengthened by Mrs. Kelcey's being as far out of reality as Mrs. Johnson is; at the same point in life that Mrs. Johnson escapes from reality by taking to drink, Mrs. Kelcey escapes from reality by taking to dreams about George; and these wishful illusions are colored by her empty religion: George will "become a white and looming king among men" (I, 135) if only he will work hard, eschew alcohol, and go regularly to prayer meetings.

Within the context of the novel, then, Crane seems to be concerning himself with, again, a concern of the temperance novel. Mrs. Kelcey, like Crane's own mother, is an active and devoted member of the Women's Christian Temper
ance Union, and George's revolt and downfall to a large extent result from his drinking habits. While the temperance novels always show the evil, degrading effects of drink, these stories are marked by turgid passages of moralizing as well as overwhelming sentimental melodrama. The author of a temperance novel leaned heavily on a generalization; for instance, Walt Whitman's *Franklin Evans or The Inebriate* (1842) tells us, "The truth is that habits of drunkenness in the head of a family are like an evil influence--a great dark cloud, overhanging all, and spreading its gloom around every department of the business of that family, and poisoning their peace, at the same time that it debars them from any chance of rising in the world." In these temperance novels or, more properly, tracts, the victim takes to drink, destroys his prospects, and ruins his wife and children or his parents, or both, who die of shame or starvation. "In *Three Years in a Man Trap* (1872), T. S. Arthur's sequel to his famous *Ten Nights in a Barroom* (1854), a son's drinking causes bitter and protracted death scenes. The taverns themselves in these

2 Stallman, p. 6.

3 Solomon, p. 51.

works are settings of devilish vileness and shame."⁵ "A wretched scene!" wrote Whitman. "Half-a-dozen men, just entering the busy scenes of life, not one of us over twenty-five years, and there we were, benumbing our faculties, and confirming ourselves in practices which ever too surely bring the scorn of the world and deserved disgrace to their miserable victims!"⁶ The protagonists, though entrapped by their appetites for alcohol, loudly bewail their fates; thus, the hero of Edgar Fawcett's A Man's Will (1888): "He thought of his mother, and the tears rushed to his eyes. Crouched on the floor, he wept passionately. 'How can I ever look on her face again?'' Why the outburst? "He had been drunk; he had broken his pledge."⁷ Most temperance novels, after ringing the last charges on the themes of drunken bestiality, maudlin self-pity, and agonized failure, recount the hero's salvation through the power of the church or, more properly, religion combined with the "glorious temperance pledge."⁸


⁶ Franklin Evans, p. 146.


⁸ Holman, p. vii.
Although a tract with no pretensions as fiction, the book written by Stephen Crane's father is particularly significant. The Reverend Dr. Jonathan Townley Crane's *Arts of Intoxication, The Aim and the Results* exhorts readers to help those engaged in combat with the deadly enemies, smoking and drinking. The book is generally calm in tone, historical and scientific, logical and argumentative, but it finally works up to an analysis of drunkenness that is similar to the party scene in *George's Mother*.

When a company of men are drinking together they tend, at least for a time, to be talkative and merry, and the feeblest attempt at a jest is greeted with unlimited laughter. . . . So if one of the company takes it into his bewildered head to try to reason about something, he is, in his own eyes, a veritable Solomon . . . . When he is so far gone as to stammer in his speech and totter in his gait, and be helpless in his mind and body, his sense of his wisdom, his strength, his greatness, and his goodness is at its highest point. 9

In Chapter IX George at once becomes the picture of the previous description of the Reverend Dr. Crane's drunkard.

He was all at once an enthusiast, as if he were at a festival of a religion. He felt that there was something fine and thrilling in this affair isolated from a stern world, and from which the laughter arose like incense. . . . He rejoiced at their faces, shining red and wrinkled with smiles. He was capable of heroisms . . . his legs were a trifle uncertain under him. They bended and did not precisely obey his intent . . . . They drank reverently . . . . The old man sat like a fat, jolly god. (I, 146).

George's Mother follows some of the traditions of the temperance fiction. George does drink and fall from grace; but he never really moralizes, and he is not "saved." The scene of his awakening after Bleecker's drunken party reveals the extent of his awareness:

As he lay pondering, his bodily condition created for him a bitter philosophy, and he perceived all the futility of a red existence. He saw his life problems confronting him like granite giants, and he was no longer erect to meet them. He had made a calamitous retrogression in his own war. Spectres were to him now as large as clouds.

Inspired by the pitiless ache in his head, he was prepared to reform and live a white life. His stomach informed him that a good man was the only being who was wise. But his perception of his future was hopeless. He was aghast at the prospect of the old routine. It was impossible. He trembled before its exactions.

Turning toward the other way, he saw that the gold portals of vice no longer enticed him .... Upon reflection, he saw, therefore, that he was perfectly willing to be virtuous if somebody would come and make it easy for him. (I, 150-51)

Unlike the "temperance" youth who concludes his experiment and returns to manhood with his new awareness, George chooses, with the same awareness, to sink deeper into futility.

Crane's novel opens in a bar where George, having met an old friend from the country, drinks beer to his friend's whiskey. The saloon, as in the temperance novels, is an evil place of temptation—but Crane's diction impugns the familiar descriptions: "a little glass-fronted saloon that
sat blinking jovially at the crowds. It engulfed them with a gleeful motion of its two widely smiling lips" (I, 116). George's drinking, even the "one more drink" (I, 118), does not instantly unman him, and he is able to deceive his mother quite easily.

Actually his mother's W. C. T. U. rigidity is possibly as absurd as George's drinking. The section describing George's mother at her housework is, in a sense, quite funny when considered in reference to the problem of drink. As she works she sings a hymn in defiance of the drunken curses of a neighbor with a red, mottled face who hurls a bottle crashing down to the courtyard. And as she fights dirt and dust in the tenement, her son is in a bar, and a somewhat ludicrous image comments on this irony.

In the distance an enormous brewery towered over the other buildings. Great gilt letters advertised a brand of beer. Thick smoke came from funnels and spread near it like vast and powerful wings. The structure seemed a great bird, flying. The letters of the sign made a chain of gold hanging from its neck. The old woman looked at the brewery. It vaguely interested her, for a moment, as a stupendous affair, a machine of mighty strength. (I, 120)

10 Crane uses the same images in "An Experiment in Misery" (1894): "The swing doors, snapping to and fro like ravenous lips, made gratified smacks as the saloon gorged itself with plump men" (XI, 22).

11 As a matter of fact, Crane often enjoyed writing with humor about drinking and drunks. See, in addition to the Western tales considered in this thesis, "A Lovely Jag in a Crowded Car" (1895). In Maggie, however, the treatment of drinking is thoroughly negative.
In a serious tone, however, the brewery, symbolizing the enemy of temperance, looms over the tenement much as the "mighty" figure of the drunken Mrs. Johnson hovers over the innocent Maggie.

Despite his mother's warnings about his new friend, Jones ("He drinks"), George refuses her plea to go to a prayer meeting and instead returns to the little smiling saloon. As Maggie charts the movement of the heroine and Pete down to the depths through changing descriptions of the beer halls they frequent, so George's first binge takes place in an elegant saloon, all polished wood and gleaming furniture. Crane very effectively describes the process of intoxication. The men gradually become ridiculously jovial, sentimentally tender, bitterly egoistic. "Each man explained, in his way, that he was totally out of place in the . . . world. They were possessed of various virtues which were unappreciated by those with whom they were commonly obliged to mingle; they were fitted for a tree-shaded land where everything was peace" (I, 129). This passage--indeed, the whole treatment of drinking in George's Mother--brilliantly exemplifies Crane's tractarian technique. As is clear from his language, which is incongruously overblown, Crane is mocking the pretensions of the drinkers. Yet while Crane ridicules his protagonists, he also understands their rather pathetic motivations and the needs to
which alcohol ministers. The novel provides both a view of the drinking-temperance clash and a serious insight into those who drink.

As always, Crane refuses to moralize directly. He presents George's opinion that his evening of drinking was delightful, shows him staggering on legs "like willow twigs" (I, 130), describes his hangover, his "baked eyes" (I, 131), and a mouth that seems to have been sucking a wooden spoon. But the victim of his alcoholic debauch, his mother, is such a whining paragon that the reader is perhaps unable to identify with her.

The second major drinking bout takes place after George has been crushed by his failure to attract a girl. In an adolescent urge for "the delicious revenge of a partial self-destruction" (I, 141), George takes part in a stag affair. Again Crane overwrites, but probably consciously. The drinking is a bacchic rite, "a festival of a religion": the host sits "like a fat, jolly god" (I, 146). The party moves from dialect jokes to dancing to fisticuffs. The rich, descriptive prose depicts the traditional drunk scenes, as George considers his inebriation to be immense, mighty. Crane treats the awfulness of the morning-after with derision, and he deliberately avoids the expected confrontation scene between the drunken youth and his aged mother by letting George deceive her about
his activities. But George does go to the prayer meeting, only to find this usually climactic event in the rake's progress to be fateful and hypocritical.

While the author does not treat George's drinking as righteous, Crane does use the fact of George's increasing alcoholism as a device for the portrayal of his weak, self-justifying character. Crane analyzes George Kelcey's drinking habits with great acumen and irony. "He understood that drink was an essential to joy, to the coveted position of a man of the world and of the streets. The saloons contained the mystery of a street for him" (I, 159). (This passage follows directly upon the narration of the church service's unmysterious lack of appeal.) "Drink and its surroundings were the eyes of a superb green dragon to him. He followed a fascinating glitter, and the glitter required no explanation" (I, 159).

George continues to drink, even after his mother discovers his flaw. He slips down the ladder another rung when he takes up with the street-corner gang of tough, cynical young hoodlums, all jobless delinquents. "Their feeling for contemporaneous life was one of contempt. Their philosophy taught that in a large part the whole thing was idle and a great bore. With fine scorn they sneered at the futility of it. Work was done by men who had not the courage to stand still and let the skies clap
together if they willed" (I, 163). This creed is attractive to George, who wants to run with these alcoholic brawlers. His chance comes when George helps one of the gang beat up another man and is thus accepted into their fellowship. Once in the group, George lets his native sloth prevail, and through drink loses his job. His mother immediately has a stroke. Crane handles this scene with some sympathetic tenderness. And when his mother suffers a second, fatal attack George is engaged in his crudest binge yet, a jostling, brawling struggle for gulps at a great pail of beer.

When they arrived ... one of the band had a huge and battered tin-pail tilted afar up. His throat worked convulsively. He was watched keenly and anxiously by five or six others. Their eyes followed carefully each fraction of distance that the pail was lifted. They were very silent ... . Fidsy drank his portion ... . Kelcey and the other youth took their shares. "Youse er a mob 'a tanks," he told the gang. "Nobody 'ud git noth'in if dey wasn't on t' yehs!" (I, 172-73)

Intemperance wins, the W. C. T. U. heroine dies, and her son is left to melt into the "endless roar, the eternal tramping of the marching city" (I, 178).

The final scene, Crane's representation of the moment of the mother's death, is particularly vivid. George watches impotently as his mother sinks into her own last illusion, a sort of pastoral fantasy. She believes she is back on the farm which she and her son left for the city. Crane reports, laconically, "She was at a kitchen-door with
a dish cloth in her hand. Within there had just been a clatter of crockery. Down through the trees of the orchard she could see a man in a field ploughing. "'Bill--o-o-oh, Bill--have yeh seen Georgie? Is he out there with you? Georgie! Georgie! Come right here this minnet!'" (I, 177). Just after George's mother dies in the throes of her fantasy, George, now experiencing a sense of isolation and vulnerability which results from the final separation, also slips for a moment into a fantasy--"Kelcey began to stare at the wall paper. The pattern was clusters of brown roses. He felt them like hideous crabs crawling upon his brain" (I, 178).

George accepts the values of the saloon as his own index of reality, and his mother accepts the formalism of the church for the same purpose. In short, both novels, Maggie and George's Mother, contain running passages of two groups of images signifying illusions, and the two illusory notions that they represent are in each novel constantly contrasted with the reality which is distinct from either. In George's Mother the reality of life is implied, just as it is in Crane's "An Experiment in Misery," by the roar of the city, the movement and purpose of the normal people; thus, both the saloon and the church represent withdrawals from this active life, and the empty rituals of fraternity practiced by Bleecker and his group of drunkards are empha-
sized to mock the equally empty religious rituals which conquer Mrs. Kelcey. While this double strand of running imagery should recall the patterns of saloon and tenement in Maggie, the use of these images in the later novel is again quite different: the saloon and the tenement represent the reality in which Maggie is immersed, but for George and his mother the saloon and church represent futile retreats from reality. And Crane is careful to observe the way in which he has patterned his imagery—he shows us that Mrs. Kelcey is as personally dishonest, as willful in her withdrawal from reality, as George is. She deliberately refuses to accept what her eyes reveal to her because she knows that her drunken and lazy son is no king among men. When she sees him loafing with the street-corner drunks by the saloon door, "she slunk away, for she understood that it would be a terrible thing to confront him and his pride there with youths who were superior to mothers" (I, 165). She refuses to see what everyone else in the tenement sees, that she has "a wild son" (I, 161).

In a somewhat different manner George assumes Maggie's romantic nature. Like Maggie he tries to escape harsh reality; he is "seduced" by alcohol and by drunkards such as Jones, Bleecker and the street gang. With great restraint Crane evokes the tension between the pair; the fact that the mother is a religious member of the W. C. T. U.
and George is a hopeless drunk only makes concrete the more fundamental conflict. Crane's novels, Maggie and especially George's Mother, show how the illusions fostered by individuals who drink lead to self-destruction and the destruction of others.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE WESTERN TALES

When the prophet, or complacent fat man,
Arrived at the mountain-top,
He cried: "Woe to my knowledge!
I intended to see good white lands
And bad black lands,
But the scene is grey."

--Crane, War Is Kind, XXII

In January of 1895 Crane left New York to travel in
the West and in Mexico for the Bacheller syndicate and did not return until May. In these five months there would occur a perceptible maturation in Crane's prose fiction. Before his departure Crane's writing--both as a journalist and as fictionist--was devoted to experiences set in a rather controlled environmental area which he himself knew. Writing on subjects of morality centering on the issue of alcohol, Crane developed writing skills which were of a predictable nature, owing largely to his parents' influences. And so it was in the years after his break with New York and the influence of Methodism that Crane was able to make more functional use of his awareness of the drunkard character, to learn to control an impulse toward a heavy-handed

1Stallman, p. 129.
and sometimes self-conscious morality and to turn a deadening archness toward his subjects into a distanced and balanced sympathy—an attitude which was to be a prerequisite to the success of his later works. But if the early years of Crane's career were marked by excessive moral concern, in the writings of those years there has been noted a recurrent pattern of action. Repeatedly apparent are the figures of drunkards and the effects of their drunkenness on the destruction of others or themselves. And in the Western tales of Crane the drunkard is again recurrent but no longer as a characterization of a moral issue but only as a literary device. Repeatedly these Western drunks are seen in moments of confrontation and in moments in which they see that which they have not seen before. This development, this learned control, this recurrence, was to be of real significance in the shape and quality of Crane's literary identity.

The myth and the reality of the American West provided Stephen Crane with the setting for some of his most brutally violent and richly humorous stories. Immensely attracted to the West as an idea, as what Vernon Parrington has called "the old frontier story of swagger and slovenliness, of boundless hope and heroic endurance—"a story deeply
marked with violence and crime," 2 Crane accepted many of the Western traditions and made them vibrant in his short fiction. 3 Simultaneously he cast a cold eye on the myth of the Western hero. Crane laughed at this myth which had become degraded into hardened stereotypes by the 1890's. 4

The clichés of the Western story were well established before Stephen Crane assayed the form. 5 Any reader of nineteenth century Western fiction knew the dance halls, the poker games, the barroom brawls, the climactic shootdowns on empty streets, and could tell instantly what fictional role in these activities a character was meant to sustain. 6 The Western hero became the archetype of the man on the run, faithful only to his horse, his partner should he have one, his code of fair draw and revenge for a slight, and, most interesting for Crane as a device, his shot of redevye.

Writers of Western stories stressed these stereotypes until


4Solomon, p. 229.

5Solomon, p. 230.

6Solomon, p. 231.
they grew to mythic proportions.\textsuperscript{7} Legendary "cowboys" neither worked, nor ate, nor changed costume--only fought and rode and drank. But Crane quickly recognized that at the origin of these myths was reality.

The realities of the West, like the realities of the Bowery led to a confrontation between man and his environment that was often abrupt and turbulent. In life, as in fiction, man kept in close touch with nature, which was, in actuality, both malign and benign. Man faced his fate in this setting, aided by actualities that fiction rapidly made symbolic: the horse, the gun and the bottle.\textsuperscript{8} Crane employed these realities in seven superb tales without stressing their symbolic import, but making effective use of them as devices. Of these three central symbols, Crane especially stressed the bottle (and the drunk) as a device or catalyst which provoked the conditions of fear, humor, the discovery of identity, or death.

Crane, however, was not alone in his vision of drink as a catalyst. Mark Twain, Crane's predecessor in the Western genre, earlier captured his impressions of drink and its role in Western life. Scratchy Wilson seems to owe something to Twain's Buck Fanshaw who "could run faster,

\textsuperscript{7}Solomon, p. 231.

\textsuperscript{8}Solomon, p. 232.
jump higher, hit harder, and hold more tanglefoot whiskey without spilling it than any man in seventeen counties."^9

Later Crane was to write, adopting Twain's familiar stance of tall-story teller:

I remember that my old friend Jim Wilkinson, the ex-sheriff of Tin Can, Nevada, got very drunk one night and wandered into the business end of the bowling alley there. Of course he thought they were shooting at him, and in reply he killed three of the best bowlers in Tin Can.^10

Most of Stephen Crane's Western stories appeared nearly twenty years after Mark Twain abandoned the vein. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, with a few exceptions, Western stories lacked any moral or social implications and became increasingly bound to tried formulae that could lead only to simplified, juvenile books.^11

Crane's Western stories did not fit the patterned juvenile formulae, nor were they especially moral or social in context. By this time Crane had matured as a man and a writer to the point where his stories no longer bore the crusading


^10Stephen Crane, "In a Park Row Restaurant" (1894), Stephen Crane: Uncollected Writings, ed. Olov W. Fryckstedt (Uppsala: Uppsala Univ. Press, 1963), p. 85. Crane repeated the anecdote in "London Impressions," Saturday Review, 84 (July 31, 1897), 105-106; (August 7, 1897), 132-133; (August 14, 1897), 158-159.

^11Solomon, p. 238.
social and moral obsessions which earlier had so clearly marked the novels, Maggie and George's Mother. The issue of drink, socialistic and moralistic in its earlier aim, had, by now, in the Western stories, reached a higher literary plain as a cleverly developed device for effecting confrontations and not for underscoring sermons. In his Western stories Crane eschewed causes and concentrated on realism.

Crane's Western realism can be seen early in his portrait of a drunken gunfighter that brings to a shocking close a predominantly humorous tale. "Caged with a Wild Man" (1896) tells of a man trapped in a freight car with a drunken gunfighter whom a gang is seeking. Crane handles the narration humorously, and the vainglorious boasts of the gunman turn him into a ridiculous figure, shouting at the crowd massive threats to make ventilators of them. "Where's all these galoots what was goin' t' shoot at me? Where be they? . . . . Let me pull 'em onct! Jest let 'em tap 'em with their fingers, an I'll drive a stove-hole through every last one a' their low-down hides!" The main character's drunken shouts retain an authentic vernacular ring. The fact too that the gunfighter is drunk serves to dispel some of the romantic notions about such infamous Western figures. But the story ends violently and somewhat appropriately:

"Oh, yes, they got him that night. . . . In a saloon some-
where. They got him all right."\textsuperscript{12} Although the scene of the gunfighter's end may seem to be carefully chosen by Crane, he does not moralize, and the fate of the gunman is simply inevitable and in character with his lifestyle.

Stephen Crane's early Western story "Horses--One Dash" (1896) is a revealing and realistic thriller. In this story Crane explores one man's confrontation with absolute fear.\textsuperscript{13} An Easterner named Richardson, accompanied by a comic Mexican servant, José, puts up for the night in a Mexican village where a group of sinister desperadoes later arrive. These outlaws are drunken, bloodthirsty, and eager to butcher the supposedly sleeping Richardson for the sake of his expensive saddle and spurs. Our hero sneaks out at dawn and rides to safety after a wild chase across the plains. Certain realistic elements are obvious in this recital of the plot. The usual Western hero is not afraid, and he almost never runs.

Richardson first appears as a figure of fun, a dude with enormous silver spurs, a huge revolver, and saddles large enough for building sites. Richardson's dreams of his beloved North are broken by the rude voices of drunken

\textsuperscript{12}Stephen Crane, "Caged With a Wild Man," \textit{Uncollected Writings}, pp. 173-74.

\textsuperscript{13}For additional information on Stephen Crane's theme of fear see Beer, pp. 41, 44, 84, 85, 109, 128, 146, 162.
Mexicans who have decided to kill him. His knee joints turn to bread. He is so terrified that he forgets his Spanish and lets the evil tones of the conversation destroy his nerve. The chief villain hardly fits the convention. He is a fat, round-faced Mexican. But he is drunk, and in such an inebriated state he is the more brutal. Devoid of all reason and mercy, he is volatile and unpredictable, and capable of unspeakable horrors.

The moment of truth, the traditional confrontation of the two armed enemies, is frightening.

The blanket was flung aside, and the red light of a torch flared into the room. It was held high by a fat, round-faced Mexican, whose little snake-eyes were black as jet. He was insane with the wild rage of a man whose liquor is dully burning at his brain. (XII, 207).

The fat Mexican stares drunkenly at Richardson, who is so horrified that he can only stare silently back. This apparent coolness disconcerts his enemy.

At the approach of their menacing company, why did not this American cry out and turn pale, or run, or pray them mercy? The animal merely sat still, and stared, and waited for them to begin. Well, evidently he was a great fighter; or perhaps he was an idiot. Indeed, this was an embarrassing situation, for who was going forward to discover whether he was a great fighter or an idiot? (XII, 208).

In "Horses--One Dash" Crane's treatment of alcohol changes from his earlier concern with alcohol as a moral and environmental factor to one in which Crane uses alcohol, or the drunk, as a pure device for creating suspense and accen-
tuating the moment of fear. This story, the first of the major Western tales, clearly illustrates the change in Crane's attitude toward and use of the drunk which continues throughout the remainder of his fiction. Crane, from this point on, is not so concerned with alcohol as a subject (as previously discussed in Maggie and George's Mother), but as a device to create situations of suspense, humor, and fear, or, to illuminate the inner qualities of his characters. The fact that the Mexican outlaw is drunk is not open to moral question as are the drinking bouts of Mrs. Johnson and George Kelcey. The Mexican is drunk merely to emphasize the violent nature of his character and Richardson's resultant fear. Through the treatment of the drunk in "Horses--One Dash" Crane begins his movement toward his maturation as a writer and the realization of his art form, realism.

"The Five White Mice" (1898)\textsuperscript{14} utilizes the Western setting to dramatize a young man's education into the ways of fear and bluff. The New York Kid attempts a cold bluff

\textsuperscript{14}The companion piece to "The Five White Mice" and the first of the two stories, "The Wise Men" (1898), does not specifically treat the character of the drunk. However, Crane indirectly reveals a humorous attitude toward drinking as he has the 'Frisco Kid and the New York Kid arrange a footrace between two bartenders. And once again, as in George's Mother, the saloon is depicted as a friendly place of brotherhood.
with the dice and fails, despite his little gambler's slogan that provides the story's coda:

Oh, five white mice of chance
Shirts of wool and corduroy pants,
Gold and wine, women and sin,
All for you if you let me come in--
Into the house of chance. (XII, 161).

The Kid explains that five white mice are as good as anything else to believe in, but, before the story is over, he has learned to believe in himself.

Later, after one of his drunken companions has accidentally jostled a dark stranger in the street, the sober New York Kid suddenly finds himself and his two staggeringly drunken companions facing three murderous, knife-carrying Mexicans who are seeking a fight. The humorous tone gives way to a sinister atmosphere of danger and impending doom.

In "Horses--One Dash" the drunken Mexican is all the more frightening because his intoxication makes him potentially violent; but the situation is reversed for the New York Kid. Crane illustrates that alcohol does not affect all men in the same ways. Rather than being violent, the Kid's companions are completely helpless in their drunkenness. Their helpless state serves to underscore the isolation of the Kid and the weight of responsibility he must bear. "Into the mouth of the sober Kid came a wretched, bitter taste, as if it had filled with blood. He was transfixed as if he was already seeing the lightning ripple on the knife-blade"
(XII, 168). The situation develops into one of absolute suspense as three thoroughly evil villains face two helpless, intoxicated tourists and one sober Kid who grips his gun.

The Kid decides to bluff, to draw his gun and face down the Mexicans; unlike the usual Western gunfighter, the Kid worries about his ability to draw the weapon. Will it be too unwieldy, will he drop it, will he entangle the gun in his coat? The Kid wins his gamble. The gun rapidly clears its holster, and the Mexicans fall back in disorganization. The Kid has a shock of recognition that allows him to perceive his own identity in relation to others. He has no monopoly on fear; all men are afraid. The Kid discovers, to his rage, that all men are vulnerable, a concept antithetical to the nineteenth-century Western mode of strong silent heroics. The story ends on a somewhat comic note as the three friends, two still oblivious of their escape, go home.

"Well," said the sober Kid, crossly, "are you ready to go home now?"

The 'Frisco Kid said: "Where they gone?" His voice was undisturbed, but inquisitive.

Benson suddenly propelled himself from his dreamful position against the wall. "'Frisco Kid's all right. He's drunk's fool, and he's all right. But you New York Kid, you're shober." He passed into a state of profound investigation. "Kid shober 'cause didn't go with us. Didn't go with us 'cause went to damn circus. Went to damn circus 'cause lose shakin' dice 'cause--what make lose shakin' dice, Kid?"
The New York Kid eyed the senile youth. "I don't know. The five white mice, maybe."

Benson puzzled so over this reply that he had to be pulled erect by his friends. Finally the 'Frisco Kid said: "Let's go home."

Nothing had happened. (XII, 174-75).

The last sentence, "Nothing had happened," is at odds with the usual violent endings of the Western story. Nevertheless, Crane shows that a great deal has happened. By having the companions of the New York Kid so drunk that they cannot comprehend the seriousness of their situation, the focus of the story shifts directly to the New York Kid. While his helpless companions stand nearby, the Kid, now isolated, must make a life or death decision. Crane has again used the drunk as a device to provoke a confrontation and explore the moment of absolute fear.

"The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" (1898) is a study of identities. Although insecure in his new role as married and responsible official, Jack Potter is conscious of his change from his former role of the lone marshall, ever ready for a fight. His opposite, Scratchy Wilson, cannot face his own two roles. For in reality Scratchy is the town bum, an aging cowboy who is an anachronism. But when drunk, Scratchy reverts to his former role of tough gunfighter. In order to sustain this conception of himself, Scratchy must define it against his antagonist, Marshall Potter, in
his earlier guise as typical marshall of the Old West, un-trammeled and quick on the draw. The serious element of this comic tale comes from Scratchy Wilson's recognition that, with Potter's shucking off his character as mythic marshall, Scratchy cannot retain his own dream role as mythic Western gunfighter.

When Potter and his bride debark from the Eastern train, so involved is he in his new identity as husband that he forgets his Western position--and assumes that the station agent's excitement stems from the sight of him with a woman. But it is Potter the marshall and not Potter the bridegroom that the agent seeks. The second part of the story opens in a world of complete contrast to the Eastern Pullman: the setting is Western, the bar of the Weary Gentleman Saloon, twenty-one minutes before the train bearing the Potters is to arrive. The time shift enables Crane not only to sketch rapidly the plot situation but also to evoke the familiar Western background. Crane supplies an Easterner, a drummer, to serve as an outside observer who must learn about the local mores and the customary epic drunks of Scratchy Wilson that disturb the dozing atmosphere. Scratchy's binges are formulaic, and the formula depends upon Marshall Potter to bring the ceremony of shouting and shooting to a halt by engaging in a ritual fight with Scratchy. The bar is locked, and its inmates, supported
by the two Western staples (guns and whiskey) that have turned Scratchy loose, take cover. Scratchy's position in the Yellow Sky social order becomes manifest: he is "a wonder with a gun" (XII, 96), "the last one of the old gang that used to hang out along the river here" (XII, 96), and, when sober, the "nicest fellow in town" (XII, 96). By creating the dual personalities of Scratchy Wilson, Crane continues to show development as a writer in his understanding of the complex natures of realistic characters. That Scratchy can be both likable and, because of drink, violent makes him more believable than the character of Mrs. Johnson who appears to be continually drunk, and always violent. Scratchy is a living cliché of the Old West, a quick draw, a deadly shot, a rough with a heart of gold: in every way out-dated. And the section closes on that most hackneyed of all Western dime-novel phrases, echo of a thousand descriptions of Indian or badman attacks, "Here he comes" (XII, 97). The travesty is that this attack is reduced to the singular absurdity of one drunken old man.  

Scratchy enters wearing a maroon shirt of the sort "made principally by some Jewish women on the East Side of

Although no definite age is given by Crane for Scratchy Wilson, I believe him to be an older man evidenced by his rather childish behavior when drunk, and the one statement by Crane that he was "the last one of the old gang that used to hang out along the river here." (XII, 96).
New York" (XII, 97), and boots with "red tops with gilded imprints, the kind beloved by little sledding boys on the hillsides of New England" (XII, 97). He is absurd and childish, perhaps, but also deadly. In his whiskey rage, Scratchy stalks the streets like a midnight cat. "The man's face flamed in a rage begot of whisky. His eyes, rolling, and yet keen for ambush, hunted the doorways and windows" (XII, 97). His identity emanates from the gun: "The long revolvers in his hands were as easy as straws; they were moved with an electric swiftness. The little fingers of each hand played sometimes in a musician's way" (XII, 97). Meanly shooting at a stray dog, fiercely demonstrating his prowess with a gun, Scratchy is playing with the town, his toy. The climax of his excursion is to be, however, when the drunken, howling, cursing, shooting Scratchy arrives at Potter's residence, and the old man churns "himself into deepest rage over the immobility of a house" (XII, 99)--which is, unbeknown to Scratchy, now a home.

All worlds meet in the final episode when the relic of the Old West runs into the new bourgeois and his wife. The narrative brings together the modes of thriller (Scratchy's hair-trigger threats), comedy (the incongruous situation of a drunken old man confronting a blushing pair of newly-weds), and realism (the pathetic realization that age and time have triumphed). The staple of Western fiction, two strong men
face to face, is accomplished through Crane's device of alcohol once more. Just as in "Horses--One Dash" and "The Five White Mice," being drunk is the essential quality in Scratchy which brings about the epic showdown. But, as before, no one dies, at least not physically. As the two men face each other, one drunk and one sober, the sober man wins and the drunk is once again dismayed. The traditional showdown in this case fails to materialize because the marshall is unarmed. Marriage has removed him from the Western scene. Scratchy's world crumbles. "'There ain't a man in Texas ever seen you without no gun. Don't take me for no kid.'" (XII, 101). But Scratchy is a kid--reduced by alcohol to an infantile state, playing a game of drunken fantasy in a world of the past. Stunned with the news of the marriage--the phrase must be repeated for him five times--Scratchy is unmanned. "'No!' he said. He was like a creature allowed a glimpse of another world" (XII, 102). And Scratchy is quick to grant that "'it's all off now'" (XII, 102). The drink-induced fantasy is over but more than this Crane has concluded that a way of life is finished. Reality has triumphed.

In "The Blue Hotel" (1898), one of the finest of all Western tales, the idea behind the story is also that of the search for identity and the desire of an outsider to define himself through conflict with a society. The world that the
Swede discovers in the West is dreadful and absurd, and the story chronicles the outsider's defeat, what Stephen Crane terms "a tragedy greater than the tragedy of action" (X, 117). In simplest outline, "The Blue Hotel" tells of the initial victory and eventual defeat and death of an odd, disturbed stranger. The story treats, in a mixture of fantasy and realism, the fear that drives men to acts of violence. The narrative raises many questions as to the nature of fear and courage, the responsibility for a man's death, the inability of men to communicate. The questions appear throughout and not all find answers by the end of the tale. From the start of the long story, where no one will discuss fear or death with the Swede, to the conclusion where he has lost fear and gains death, a note of inevitability prevails. Stephen Crane once spoke of the kind of tragic event that was "not the tragedy of a street accident, but foreseen, inexorable, invincible tragedy." In this 1898 story, another victim in the list of Crane's innocents, that stretches back to George Kelcey and Maggie, must meet the test of experience. In "The Blue Hotel," the Swede, new to the Western world that he perceives in dime-novel commonplaces, falls victim to the same convention of drink that Stephen Crane has well established in his earlier fiction.

16 Stephen Crane, "The Red Badge of Courage was His Wig-Wag Flag" (1898), Uncollected Writings, p. 336.
Crane indicates the nature of the Swede's fear. He is an Easterner himself, a New York tailor, who believes in the world of the wild and woolly West, where men are quick to draw and death looms near. When he lets it be known that "some of these Western communities were very dangerous" (X, 96) and looks as if he expects to be assaulted, he is responding to an atmosphere of books, a Western setting of violence that has no relevance. "'I suppose there have been a good many men killed in this room'" (X, 98), "'I don't want to fight'" (X, 99), "'These men are going to kill me'" (X, 100)--are responses that derive from the Swede's having read too many Western novels.

If the world of the Swede's mind is unrealistically savage, the world of the Blue Hotel is realistically petty. Here games are for fun, fighting consists of fisticuffs, drinking is from a clandestine bottles hidden from wife and daughters--who in themselves violate the maleness of the Western setting, where women in a bar are not wives and daughters. But the Swede will meet reality, in a real gambler, in the real saloon that holds his destiny. The Swede will attempt to dominate the real world of the saloon, where men drink, gamble, and fight--for keeps. So the two worlds of the Swede, one imagined, the other real, conspire to destroy him. One world is larger than life, and one smaller; believing in the first and briefly winning over
the second, he forms his own distorted vision of Western reality and carries it to the saloon, where genuine reality crushes him. Just as the saloon contained false illusions for Maggie and George Kelcey, so too does the Swede create an illusion of life around that ever-central image of Crane.

The Swede appears crazy, yet Patrick Scully as inn-keeper readily takes upon himself the terrible burden of interpreting the Swede to others and to himself. No one, however, can answer Scully's question as to what they have been doing to frighten the Swede. This lack of communication leads to a later dialogue between Scully and the Swede as they argue over illusion and reality. Although the dictionary—which describes Scully as resembling a murderer, refusing the Swede's money, almost forcing him to drink—could be interpreted in "tractarian" terms of betrayal or temptation, Scully is mostly a figure of fun, not an actual tempter or devil.

Scully tries to persuade the Swede to remain. Scully even tries to use the picture of his dead little girl to show his sensitivity to the Swede and to prove the innocence of the Blue Hotel. All else failing, Scully gives the Swede a drink. In a scene that mocks the conventional barroom with its shot of redeye, Scully unearths a hidden bottle. Supporter or tempter, initiator or devil-figure, Scully is ambiguous, similar to a Hawthorne character in his alterna-
tive possibilities. Is the old man helping the Swede, although accidentally contributing to his destruction? Or is Scully so apprehensive for his hotel's good name that he cares only for the Swede as an item, a guest who must not leave? Whatever Scully's motives, the Dutch courage of the bottle destroys the Swede almost as surely as liquor did its victims in the earlier "temperance" novels of Crane. All the Swede's weaknesses—his hostility to others, his willingness to gamble, to drink, to fight, his self-righteousness—come to the surface. As he finally accepts the tempting Scully's drink, the Swede seems to have substituted for his terrible fear of death a drunken courage. "The Swede laughed wildly. He grabbed the bottle, put it to his mouth; and as his lips curled absurdly around the opening and his throat worked, he kept his glance, burning with hatred upon the old man's face" (X, 106).

Before the Swede returns from Scully's room, the others discuss the outsider's nature. "'What is he then?!' (X, 106), Johnnie asks, and this is the problem. The hesitant, "travelled" Easterner knows, however: "'it seems to me this man has been reading dime novels, and he thinks he's right out in the middle of it—the shootin' and stabbin' and all!' (X, 107). The others are scandalized, for Nebraska is not Wyoming, not "out West." The Easterner avers that the Swede is convinced he is in the middle of hell.
The whiskey-brave Swede now dominates in his arrogance, profanity, and anger. Yet Scully will not allow the others to stop the Swede's offensive behavior, since Scully is attempting to fulfill a dimly conceived traditional role of host. The Swede's aggressive disdain causes the others to reveal their inner natures; the Easterner withdraws into reserve, the cowboy is stupidly amazed, Johnnie is wrathful, and Scully is embarrassed. The card game, traditional setting for Western fictional quarrels, resumes, and the "three terrible words" that are the staple of Western melodrama ring out, "'You are cheatin'!'" (X, 112). Again, everyone acts according to type: the accusing and drunken Swede is aggressive, the accused Johnnie defensive, the Easterner pale, the cowboy bovinely confused, Scully loud. In contrast to the later barroom scene, the present action is crowded, bustling, ineffectual, as the men tumble and shout in their attempts to deal with the situation, witnessed by the "fat and painted kings and queens" (X, 113) of the trampled playing cards. The Easterner, the voice of logic, importunes and questions the value of a fight over a game of cards. But the Swede is adamant, and the men go outside for a fist fight.

The fight is an impressionistic pinwheel of fists, grunts, loud shouts from the ineffectual observers, shouts that carry their own irony--"'Kill him'"--since the vic-
torious Swede will be killed. The Swede conquers and, to the Easterner, seems splendid in his isolation. When the victor takes his leave of the Blue Hotel, he is confirmed in his drunken arrogance. The Swede believes in his dime-novel West, which fact lets him think that he has met and mastered the real West. Isolated, proud, and drunk, he enters a saloon. In the saloon are men, not boys, a professional gambler, not an amateur, open drinkers, not furtive nippers. It is a complex world, that of the saloon, a subtle yet powerful social situation for which the Swede is utterly unprepared, since his experiences in the dime-novel realm of imagination have been unreal. The society in the saloon is in every way the reverse of the group in the hotel. The bartender, presiding at his "radiant bar," is indifferent, dreamy and silent, only grunting in response to the Swede's drunken boasts. The group drinking at a table is also encased in reserve. Two businessmen, the district attorney, and a "square" professional gambler make up a society of actors, not talkers. The gambler has delicate manners and quiet dignity, preys only on outsiders, and, in a realistic comment on the fictional tradition of the solitary gambler, has "a real wife and two real children in a neat cottage in a suburb" (X, 127). But the gambler, too, is an outsider. The men who drink with the gambler, admire his exemplary home life, yet exclude this "generous,"
"just," "moral," and "thieving card-player" (X, 127) from their real life. This is the way of the real world, and the gambler has long since accepted the fact that some societies are closed; not so the Swede, who loudly attempts to force his way into the group. He breaks the rules and demands companionship. Stalking to the table, he lays his hand "by chance"—an ill-fated gamble—on the gambler's shoulder. The slim man, abiding by the rule of his society against wasting words, simply remarks, "'I don't know you,'" and in a kindly manner advises the drunken Swede to mind his own business. The Swede, accustomed to the wordy expostulations and ineffectual fighting of those in the Blue Hotel, seizes the little gambler by the throat, and dies. "There was a great tumult, and then was seen a long blade in the hand of the gambler. It shot forward, and a human body, this citadel of virtue, wisdom, power, was pierced as easily as if it had been a melon. The Swede fell with a cry of supreme astonishment" (X, 129). The others flee, the gambler calmly wipes his knife on a bar towel and goes home to wait. The section ends on a note of superb, and well-prepared, irony. "The corpse of the Swede, alone in the saloon, had its eyes fixed upon a dreadful legend that dwelt atop of the cash-machine: "'This registers the amount of your purchase!'" (X, 130). The Swede has paid his price, and it is the price for pride and isolation—not for
his drunkenness. The peace and solitude that he finally finds on the floor of the saloon is not solely the result of Scully's drink. It would be easy for Crane to moralize at this point and revert to the "tractarian" or "temperance" technique in the fall of the Swede, but the causes are rooted much deeper. Crane refuses to point the moral finger and uses alcohol again as a device, a catalyst only to provoke the ultimate confrontation for the Swede.

Stephen Crane followed "The Blue Hotel" with the short and enigmatic "Twelve O'Clock" in 1899. "Twelve O'Clock" is a black comedy in three acts. The setting centers around a group of citizens who discuss, with graphic illustrations, the dangerous fury of drunken cowpunchers when they come to town after a period on the trail. The story seems to be heading toward satire, for the citizens are pompous and their main interest lies in the opinion of imaginary Eastern capitalists who would refuse to invest in a town where "'ther's too much loose-handed shootin'" (XII, 106).

Act II is pure comedy. An ignorant, half-inebriated cowboy notices in Placer's Hotel--the best within two hundred miles, replete with armchairs, brown papier-mâché

17"Moonlight on the Snow" (1900) the next to last of Crane's Western Tales is a social satire on the values of the Old West versus the New. Alcohol is not central to the plot, but Crane does use the gambler Larpent's drinking as a measure of his sophistication.
spitoons, a pink counter, and an irascible owner carefully making entries in a ledger—a cuckoo clock. Amazed by this phenomenon, the cowboy attempts to persuade his comrades of the wonder he has seen; the third act seems foretold: the drunken cowboys will invade the hotel, but the cuckoo will not appear until the hour strikes.

Act III, however, while commencing as expected, suddenly turns shockingly raw. The scene is set for a comic argument, when another drunken cowboy, Big Watson, enters into a controversy with the cowboy who first noticed the cuckoo. As the two men draw their guns and glare murderously at each other, Crane seems to have shifted the tone from comedy to melodrama. The result of the shooting affray shocks the reader who expects the traditional gunfight. In perhaps the grimmest reverse twist in Crane's pages, he sketches a frighteningly realistic scene. The angry hotel owner attempts to drive the rowdies from his lobby:

Big Watson laughed, and speeding up his six-shooter like a flash of blue light, he shot Placer through the throat—shot the man as he stood behind his absurd pink counter with his two aimed revolvers in his incompetent hands... Placer fell behind the counter, and down upon him came his ledger and his inkstand, so that one could not have told blood from ink (XII, 113).

In conventional Western tales, respectable hotel owners are usually not shot.

The implications are clear: the Old West represented by a six-shooter has destroyed the New West represented by
a ledger and an inkstand. Crane's point is that because of all its senseless violence and kicks at progress, the Old West is an anachronism. Big Watson is as outdated as Scratchy Wilson on one of his rampages. But, by having the cowboys drunk, Crane has, through the alcohol, furthered his realistic technique by blending the two seemingly incongruous genres of lighthearted comedy and shocking realism. The cowboy is quick to show the humorous absurdity often associated with drunks. Big Watson, too, is drunk; however, his drunkenness is not of the comic variety. He, like the fat Mexican in "Horses--One Dash," is volatile and unpredictable. So, through the real fact that alcohol affects men in the same situations very differently, Crane has managed to shift rapidly the tone of "Twelve O'Clock" from comedy to horror in the movement of a hand. Crane has allowed the comic drunken cowboy to convince falsely the reader he is about to read a funny story. As soon as the comic stage is set, Crane introduces the cowboy's antagonist, Big Watson, who is of a very different disposition. Violence ensues and the reader is shocked, caught totally unprepared for the scenes which follow. It is only fitting that "Twelve O'Clock" through its shifting of tone, illustrates, perhaps more than any other story, the extent of Crane's development as a craftsman and artist.

Throughout most of the Western tales Crane has effect-
inely utilized the device of alcohol and the character of the drunk to create confrontations in which one or more characters have experienced the moment of self-recognition, absolute fear and even death. But perhaps nowhere has he more skillfully used his clear understanding of human behavior under the influence of alcohol than he has in constructing the short but effective plot of "Twelve O'Clock." Again Crane is concerned with a confrontation, this time with a group of civilized townspeople and some intoxicated cowboys. The disaster which is the result of the arrogance of a drunken cowboy and the fear of the townspeople is concluded only in a horrible slaughter. As in the preceding stories, central to the plot is the drunk. Here the cowboy's misunderstanding about a clock brings disastrous results with the absurd cuckoo signaling in the final sentence. "Twelve O'Clock" is told without the obsessive moral concern Crane has shown in his early novels. His concern with alcohol has developed into a cleverly conceived device for rendering the actions of men unaccountable. The bloody ending of "Twelve O'Clock" is particularly devoid of meaning. The story is an almost complete surrender to a vision of the absurd, the unexplainable which, for Stephen Crane, had become the essence of realism, and the drunkard the device for effecting that realism.
CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

"I always want to be unmistakable. That to my mind is good writing."

--Crane in a letter to Clarence Loomis Peaslee, February 12, 1895

Much of the critics' speculation that this or that literary invention of Crane represents revolt against the moral lessons of his parents must face the simple fact that Crane's writings do not reflect a continual state of revolution. The early novels of Stephen Crane, Maggie and George's Mother, in fact, illustrate quite clearly the influence of the Reverend Dr. Crane and his wife Mary on their son's fiction. With what images of his parents he grew up, we shall never know exactly. But there are items in Crane's heritage from these Christian people which are reasonably evidenced. And what Crane was to make of his heritage is very much to the point. Its very content may be seen as, predictably, religious and moral concern, and a care for personal expression. These qualities all conspired to intensify the isolation of Stephen Crane from common experience. Crane's religious heritage set certain focal requirements upon his vision. He could not avoid employing the
engaged moral concern (which Jonathan Townley Crane's religion enforced) as a check point against what he thought he saw occurring in the world of reality.

Crane's novel, Maggie, is indirectly autobiographical. Crane's own parents were dedicated reformers and tractarians and often lectured and wrote about the issue of temperance. In part, the general subject matter of Maggie and the specific scenes of drunkenness echo the tractarian world of Crane's parents. Unfortunately, Crane's attempt to be artistic collided with his moralistic impulses. As he sought to demonstrate his thesis of the evils of environment (alcohol is the controlling factor in that environment), Crane became too subjective in writing his novel. He lacked the distance to capture meaningfully the humanity, variety, and scope of his subject.

Crane depicts the whole world of Maggie with such hard-biting morality that he limits the portraits of the characters and the development of the theme. Jimmie, Maggie, Pete, and especially Mary Johnson, remain one-dimensional: Crane introduces them separately in the beginning of the novel and shows them only in extreme situations, to which they respond in extreme and grotesque ways. Consequently, the characters and moral issues harden into stereotypes. The physical scenes of the Bowery (the tenement, the saloons) and the ever-present drunken conflicts (the family quarrels,
the fights) are unnecessarily repetitious; they do not really advance very much the life of the novel and quality of the characters. Mrs. Johnson's drunken rages, the beer hall scenes, and Pete's drunken self-pity are overdrawn; while they do describe the monotony, insensitivity, and degeneration in the slums, they chart too slowly and specifically the fall of the heroine Maggie. Thus Crane seems to achieve his effects somewhat mechanically by planning the presentation of his material on drunkenness to underscore the destructiveness of the environment and to evoke a certain preconceived response from the reader.

George's Mother, like Maggie, boldly moves in the direction of the temperance novel. Many critics have noted that Crane was drawing upon his personal relationship with his mother. Crane, then, was frighteningly close to his materials and therefore unable to remain objective toward the life of George Kelcey and his mother. He could not dramatize fully and sensitively the agonizing psychological battle between mother and son, the mother's growing and pitiful awareness of her son's degeneration, and the conflict between alcoholism and religion.

A second and lesser problem is that Crane carries over materials from Maggie. George himself assumes Maggie's romantic nature, and the familiar barroom scenes take place once more. Like Maggie, George tries to escape harsh
reality (George tries to escape through drink, Maggie through romantic visions); he is entrapped by alcohol and by his need for companionship of other drunkards like Jones, Mr. Bleecker, and the street gang. George's Mother is full of drinking scenes (there are seven chapters of eighteen in which drinking or its aftermath is the central action). The bars are still smoky and the drinker's vision distorted. In continuing his moralist obsessions from Maggie, Crane prevents himself from exploring and developing the dimensions of his characters.

In the end, George's Mother remains limited in depth and fixed in vision. Crane's treatment of alcohol is again predominant and needlessly repetitious. Not enough attention is given to the development of the major characters and they again emerge as temperance novel stereotypes. Though he had not yet fully understood the use of style, imagery, and devices, he was boldly trying to adapt them to his creative work. Crane's heritage of moral causes did not in itself make Crane a great writer. But it seems safe to say that he might not have turned author at all unless he had grown up under the guidance of his parents, people of intellect who habitually expressed themselves well, if only narrowly.

Crane's recurring interest in the moral condition of man—the interest which had taken him to Maggie's Bowery—
later took him to consider the American West. But when Stephen Crane set out in January of 1895 on a trip through the West he also began a period of new literary directions, a period during which many new experiences and imagined possibilities would enter his writing. By the end of this journey Crane's imagination had matured and expanded. The maturation of 1895 was forged in the heat of Crane's own experience. In that year he was to feel the disorientation and reaffirmation of reality which comes with first travels, and he confronted in those travels environments with a potential for literature which he had only fitfully seen, perhaps, in his explorations in the Bowery or in the subjects of tracts that he had earlier read or heard. Crane confronted on the harsh Western plains a reality perhaps more ominous and overpowering than any he had hitherto seen.

After Crane's return from the West to New York in mid-May of 1895, he would write out of his experiences in the West in fictional form. Almost immediately he began writing, apparently in an attempt to bring the experiences together into some sort of coherence. These Western stories were important for Crane—important for his commitment to a new literary apprehension of the drunkard as a means to moral toleration. The writing of these stories seemed to serve Crane as a kind of apprehensional reorientation toward the role of morality (particularly the issue of alcohol)
in his fiction.

Crane employs in "Horses--One Dash" a sharply unified point of view--through the eyes and ears of the protagonist, Richardson. This point of view is used to explore the nature of Richardson's antagonist, the drunken Mexican bandit, and reveal the fear that Richardson experiences as he discovers that alcohol has rendered the Mexican violent and potentially dangerous. Here again, as in Maggie, is a representation of fear-distorted vision, but instead of the moral presentation of a grotesque image of the drunkard (Mrs. Johnson), Crane simply makes reality (drunkenness is a part of the Mexican's character which creates a dangerous confrontation) available to his protagonist. Now Crane is relying directly upon alcohol as a device rather than upon assigned moral connotations to an image.

"The Five White Mice" reflects Crane's growing awareness of the randomness of events and his interest in the lack of planned patterns of causation in reality (as opposed to the predictable patterns of moral consequences in Maggie and George's Mother). And here, in Crane's absurd but dangerous universe, drunkenness has been used by Crane to effect a seemingly random event in which his protagonist confronts a reality which he must comprehend if he is to remain unharmed. The outcome of Crane's story is not wholly in the hands of chance, but is effected by the device
of alcohol which forces the protagonist into a confrontation. After this consideration of chance and causation, the achievement of a new awareness is apparent in Crane's flat final statement which is richly ironic: "Nothing had happened."

But in his process of maturation Crane had not simply discovered one more way of looking at the drunkard. His literary growth had expanded widely his conception of this character.

Although the ending is quietly tragic, the dominant tone of "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" is humorous. Throughout the story Crane uses alcohol as the central device for humor. There is tongue-in-cheek understatement in his catalogue of the men drinking in the saloon, and particularly in his description of Scratchy's drunken rampages. This use of alcohol as a device by Crane both anticipates and supports the final comedy of the confrontation of the "ancient antagonists" who have been involved in a burlesque of the Western feud. The humor present in "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" illustrates the new diversity of Crane's often-used character of the drunkard, and indeed a degree of Crane's growth as a writer by showing his ability to alter his point of view.

Crane's use of alcohol in "The Blue Hotel" is again of a more serious nature. Although Crane does not revert to
his former position of moralist, he nevertheless assigns alcohol the role of contributing (not the primary) factor in the death of the Swede. Scully's failure to understand the Swede and establish satisfactory communication with him, a failure he shares with all the others, is the real, ultimate cause of the Swede's death. The Swede takes Scully's liquor, not as an understood, comfortable man, sealing an agreement with a ritualistic drink, but as a thoroughly frightened man who drinks to obliterate fear.

If the total refusal or inability of his associates to understand the prideful yet fearful character of the Swede is the ultimate cause for his death, it must be said that alcohol serves to bring out those characteristics of the Swede which so baffles the others. Although alcohol brings out the Swede's violent and aggressive nature, Crane does not directly place the blame on drink, but recognizes it simply as a catalyst which brings those inner characteristics of the Swede to the surface and which, in turn, spells his doom. Crane had been interested in the absurd and random situations effected by alcohol in other stories, especially "The Five White Mice," and now, in "The Blue Hotel" alcohol assumes a more direct note of causation. But again Crane refuses to moralize, and depicts alcohol simply as a condition present in reality.

"Twelve O'Clock" is a grotesque and bloody tale of
slaughter which is the absurd result of a group of drunken, naive cowboys coming to a hotel to see a cuckoo clock. Again Crane was concerned with a confrontation, and the disaster which is the result of the arrogance of a drunken cowboy and the fear of the townspeople is concluded only in a horrible slaughter. Central to the story once more is the device of alcohol, which at first makes the cowboys comic figures and then quickly turns them violent. Crane in this story employs alcohol as an influence which renders the actions of men unaccountable and without meaning, an extension perhaps of his earlier randomness, which for Crane had become the quality of reality, with the essence of that reality being the actions of the drunkard. And so by demonstrating his objectivity through the diversity he exhibits in his drunkard characters, Crane has made the difficult transition from moralist to artist.

When he began as a writer, Stephen Crane was not aware of a dichotomy—a difference between human apprehension of reality and reality itself. Crane's first attempts at capturing reality failed because he could not easily escape from his apprehension of reality so firmly impressed upon his mind through the moral influences of his parents. His early vision was an awareness which arose out of the intellectual environment of his own family and background and generated out of the secularization and concentration of
morality. One consequence of this awareness is that the writer and his subjective awareness are separated from objective reality. As his experience widened, Crane also came to know of man's capacity for apprehension beyond the limits of his background. In his stories of the American West, written from his own experiences there, Crane found contrasts in the way of seeing things which were the results of oppositions of cultures, and he also discovered stories which embodied man's fundamental problems in apprehending a real world. It is only natural, then, that, through the character of the drunkard—a figure who may embody any of reality's contradictions, morality, fear, comedy, pity and even death—the beginnings and maturation of Stephen Crane, the writer, are evidenced.
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THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE DRUNKARD
IN SELECTED FICTION OF STEPHEN CRANE

by

Robert Green Keys

(ABSTRACT)

Although Stephen Crane developed out of an ancestral and moral chemistry that might have produced a minister rather than a writer, he abandoned the letter, though not the spirit, of his parents' Methodism. Crane's studies of society, Maggie and George's Mother, are works of a writer who expresses a viewpoint through a concentrated moral vision. In these works Crane's major target was the drunkard, and particularly, the hypocrisy, the moral weakness, and the capacity for destruction embodied in the nature of this character. But Crane seemed to be imposing his views upon his material, dramatizing predetermined assessments of man and society; thus we detect most clearly in his early work the outlines of the Christian minister. Crane soon realized, however, that preaching could be fatal to literature.

Later Crane was to travel in the American West and, as a result of his experiences there, an awareness, a perception of reality occurred in Crane's writing that had not been present in the earlier works. No longer would Crane's
characters be controlled by his personal vision of reality, so severely restricted by his moralistic viewpoint. Through his exposure to the very new and different Western society, Crane would change his conception of the drunkard and adopt a more objective view of reality. No longer would the drunkard take on the one-dimensional characteristics of a temperance-novel character, but would mature with Crane's new vision into a cleverly developed literary device.