
A Study Of Impressionism in Stephen Crane's Book

Stephen Crane was an American author who has been lead to believe that he really first introduces the style of exposing the unfavorable conditions and war in America. Stephen Crane has been known for using an amount of impressionism, realism, and symbolism in his stories. Furthermore, it is his impressionism and realism that seems to attract audiences. For example, according to L. Marston, "The real source of these novels and any other important Crane work seems to simplify the ironist's incredible awareness of human nature. " Crane's ability to paint these vivid pictures with his words in *The Red Badge of Courage* and *Maggie: A Girl of The Streets* allowed him to entice his readers to connect their lives with his works.

The Red Badge of Courage seems to be one of his stories that includes the most realism. With realism being a manner of treating subject matter that presents a careful description of everyday life, usually of the lower and middle classes, Crane uses a soldier named Henry Fleming to demonstrate how the average person would react to each situation in war. According to H.G. Wells, "I suppose that it must have said hundreds of times that this book is a subjective study of the typical soldier in war." In this story Crane paints the picture of war, and with its detail it shows the realness of it all; it doesn't have much sweetness and uplift in the story. This is showing how war truly is, that every soldier going in won't be the country's next big hero. The story also delves into the mental state of some soldiers out there. Referring to V.S, Pritchett, "The Red of Badge Courage, where the young man is seen in the camp listening to the rumors and torturing himself with questions. He feels courageous but will courage stand? Will he stay or will he run in panic? These are overcasting questions." Crane uses his ability to get inside of Henry's mind to make decisions most average soldiers would make. For example, either running away from the action and war, or being brave enough to pick up the flag when the flag bearer is down. Therefore, B. Weisberger says, "The Red Badge of Courage is both realistic and modern precisely because of its mastery handling of interior action." Crane even goes deeper, to the emotional level of Henry and his family. For example, when Henry's mom is warning him about war and Henry is just letting his courage and pride block her warnings. For any mother letting their son go to war would be hard, especially when the thought of them not being able to see them again goes through their mind. Crane uses this passage in his story which relates to some mothers today those who also forewarns and worry about their sons about the dangers of war. Crane also speaks of fallen humanity quite well within this story. For example, Lean and the Adjutant could be said to have lost their way because of their duties, and yet they know that this is not wrong but it can't be right. This is seen in their dialogue to each other, their hesitation in between words. An example would be, "lets us-say something- while he can still hear us." (Crane 274) Also it can be seen in their actions, "both were particular that their fingers should not feel the corpse."(Crane 274) They do not wish to have contact with the body, which would seem odd since they are preparing the service. They are remorseful, but questioning their morals. Morals, or the loss of morality could be the fallen humanity in this story. According to D. Pizer this exerts shows, "This book seeks to demonstrate the falsity of a moral or romantic vision of the amorality which is war." Due to these reasons, *The Red Badge of Courage* is said to be the best Realism American novel by many critics.

Just like realism Stephen Crane uses Impressionism throughout the novel. Impressionism is a strong effect produced on the intellect, feelings, conscience, etc. According to J. Conrad, "This

war book, so virile and so full of gentle sympathy, in which not a single declamatory sentiment defaces the genuine verbal felicity, wielding analysis and description in a continuous fascination of individual style." However, Crane does a great job painting a vivid picture telling about certain things without really describing them. For example, Crane characterized his people by giving an impression of a loud soldier, a tall soldier, a tattered soldier, or a cheerful soldier. Although the reader knows a great deal about Henry Fleming, he does not know what he looks like physically. Crane also used the impressionist style simple like a painter going beyond physical level, and creating vivid images within the mind. For instance, Crane uses a river is "amber-tinted" in the early morning. Green trees and bushes appear blue in the distance. According to G. Wyndham, "Mr. Crane has composed his palette with these colors, and has painted a picture that challenged comparisons with the most vivid scenes..." Indeed Crane handled the detail that impressionism quite well with describing scenes from the book. Some critics say that he may have even invented the style of impressionism the way he did it so well. For example, W. Cather says, "You see at once that Crane was one of the fire post-impressionists; that he began it before the French painters began it, or at least as early as the first of them." Crane also tells us of the hidden meanings behind the emotions within the story. Such as when the battle is beginning and there is a yellow haze in the air making it impossible to see anything but the flag which seems to move up and down. As the battle begins Crane tells that "The youth and his fellows were frozen to silence. They could see a flag that tossed in the smoke angrily. Near it were the blurred and agitated forms of troops." (28) The flag shows Henry the beauty and invincibility it has, as the most protected piece of the war, and the way it thrashes angrily shows that there is a struggle. With using both Realism and Impressionism Crane dealt with the effect upon the sensitive individual who is inextricably involved; he used war as a fictional test of mind and spirit in a situation of great tension. This is why Crane's writing is different from any author. For example, according to A. Kazin, "No one in America had written like him before; but though his books precipitately gave the whole esthetic movement of the nineties a sudden direction and a fresher impulse."

II: Maggie: A Girl of The Streets

Crane once again used doses of Realism and Impressionism throughout this novel. For example he uses Realism by showing that Maggie's environment could assist in her struggles. This is just like some children today who are stuck doing bad things because their environment won't let them do certain things. Referring to D. Fitelson, "Crane himself has been gnomish. He observed on one occasion that "I had no other purpose in writing Maggie than to show to people as they seem to me," and on another that the purpose was to show that environment is a tremendous thing..." However, within this Crane uses Maggie as an outlet figure to show his vision of woman hood. For example, Maggie went through three major stages that Crane thought every woman went through while dealing with love and poverty. The first stage was that of childhood. She was a realist, fashioning her image of the world from the object lessons to which she is daily exposed. After this came her second stage which was womanhood. This persists together with her awareness of the actual world a sense of the possibility of escape to the other world, thus her fashioning of a lambrequin a pathetic symbol of beauty. The third stage then enters when she has entered love with Pete. When this happens she suddenly loses all contact with the actual world. Unstable to bear any longer the misery of her life at home, particularly the ill use she suffers at the hands of her mother, she gives herself physically to Pete. Now when Pete leaves her, he is fine and casual, but Maggie is not. She then cannot jolt back to her vision of the actual world, and desperately continues to yearn for her lover. This is realism because this happens to many young women whose environment isn't the best for

them. They have nothing at home to look to, so a young man comes and takes her, but once he leaves she then has nothing to look to and can't seem to shake back to reality and becomes scarred from the emotional, physical, and mental pain. According to R. Ellison, "The point at issue is the cost of moral perception, of achieving an informed sense of life, in a universe which is essentially hostile to man and in which skill and courage and loyalty are virtues which help in the struggle." Furthermore, with Maggie's situation she then continues on the downward path that leads with fewer morals which eventually lead to her defeat.

Maggie continues to also show impressionism in the work. With impressionism being a strong effect produced on the intellect, feelings, conscience, etc. Crane used his picture skills to give his vivid image. For example, T. Gullason says, "Many of the combat scenes in Maggie refer to warlike children that Crane must have observed closely. Such as, "Tattered gamins on the right made a furious assault on the gravel heap. On their small convulsed faces shone the grins of true assassins." Many scenes seem to have shown the image of war; for example, at the beginning of the book when Jimmie and the other kids seem to be engaging each other with rocks. Crane used the image of a boy hurt, "The little champion of Rum Alley stumbled precipitately down the other side. His coat had been torn to shreds in a scuffle and his hat was gone. He had bruises on twenty parts of his body, and blood was dripping from a cut in his head. His wan features looked like those of a tiny insane demon."(p. 1) Crane furthered his images with describing his characters and the raging fights between family members and others.

Crane had a tendency in using realism and especially impressionism in his writings. With using Realism and Impressionism Crane was said to even change how war books are written. Numerous critics have said that he had crushed the stereotype soldier with Henry's indirect characterization of Henry as a fallible, egocentric anti-hero. According to C. Wolford, "No one lives of soft and eternal peace, except in deluded dreams, and Crane knew it. He was almost illusion less, whether about his subjects or himself. Perhaps his illusion was the heroic one; and not even this... escaped his irony." Even with his story Maggie does that quote apply to noting that her failure was also in the end. Some say that Crane was able to write such realistic stories due to his personal experiences, and even though Maggie was written due to his slum life in New York and The Open Boat was written due to his offshore crash. Crane has written The Red Badge of Courage due to fact that he didn't like the way the Civil War books were written. However, Crane's impressionism and realism in The Red Badge of Courage and Maggie: A Girl of the Streets has landed Stephen Crane the title of being one of best in writing with these styles.