"DEATH AND THE CHILD"
A KEY TO THE CRANE CANON

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by

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ABSTRACT

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The close association between Crane's journalistic and fictional account of the Greco-Turkish war makes "Death and the Child" one of the most forthright works in the Crane canon. From both a philosophical and technical standpoint, this short fiction work reveals Crane's maturity and sophistication at the end of 1897. A tension-release-shift structure directs the major flow of action, while at the same time suggesting the process of psychological change which the protagonist undergoes. The interpretation of the final scenes of the work, a subject of some controversy, is aided by an examination of the corresponding and contrasting elements found in The Red Badge of Courage.

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INTRODUCTION

"Death and the Child" was written in the closing months of 1897 -- one of Crane's most productive years. Shortly after his return from the Greco-Turkish war, during his first half-year of residence in England, Crane wrote "London Impressions," "Irish Notes," "The Scotch Express," "The Monster," "Death and the Child," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," and "The Blue Hotel" -- what R.W. Stallman refers to as "an astonishing succession of first rate works."[1] Of these seven works, the last four are generally considered among the author's best short stories, with "The Blue Hotel" and "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" receiving the most critical attention in the last 15 years. "Death and the Child," which Milne Holton claimed in 1972 "remains one of Crane's most challenging and provocative works,"[2] has been either ignored or largely misread. Even Crane's contemporaries failed to take note of this story's publication in 1898. In the Crane bibliographies of both R.W. Stallman, and Williams and Starrett, there are no contemporary reviews of this war story while Stallman notes thirteen contemporary reviews of "The Monster" and Williams and Starrett note seven for the same story.

[1]Robert W. Stallman, Stephen Crane: A Biography (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1968), p. 309.

[2]Milne Holton, Cylinder of Vision: The Fiction and Journalistic Writing of Stephen Crane (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), p. 183.

Shortly after Crane's death in 1900, H.G. Wells claimed to have detected in "Death and the Child" what he referred to as "the encroachment of journalism . . . an underlining of intended meaning: there is just that touch of insistence . . . as of a writer not sure of his reader . . . and seeking to drive his implication (of which also he is not quite sure) home."[3] This would seem to be in conflict with Crane's own evaluation of his writing. As R.W. Stallman reports, Crane "wanted art straight."[4] He recognized that "Preaching is fatal to art,"[5] and would have certainly tried to avoid whatever "over-insistence" Wells claimed to have found. Finally, were this true, it seems to me, "Death and the Child" would not be the misunderstood work that it is. Nevertheless, Crane's journalism and his fiction are in some respects similar. Behind them both is Crane the writer, and his personal style is imprinted on all he wrote. Moreover, when his fiction grew out of the experiences he encountered as a journalist, one notes striking parallels. Chapter One of this work will be devoted to a study of the war dispatches Crane wrote while covering the Greco-Turkish conflict in 1897, and their influence on "Death and the Child," undoubtedly the best piece of fiction to grow out of those experiences.

In considering "Death and the Child," what immediately strikes the Crane reader is the deficiency of criticism on the initial work of fiction to come out of Crane's first real war experience. In light

[3]Quoted in Stallman, pp. 289-90.

[4]Stallman, p. 224.

[5]Stallman, p. 244.

of the abundant criticism surrounding The Red Badge of Courage, one would assume that "Death and the Child" would have been immediately descended upon as a touchstone for Crane's first imaginative war story. In recent years, both R.W. Stallman and Milne Holton have, on a superficial level, mentioned some of the similarities between the two works, while J.C. Levenson (Virginia, V, p. lxxxii), James B. Colvert (Virginia VI, p. xvi), and Maxwell Geismar (Rebels and Ancestors, p. 106), point out the differences, but fail to go far enough in explaining what those differences mean to an understanding of either work. Indeed, Geismar refers to "Death and the Child" as "a sequel and key, as it were,"[6] to The Red Badge of Courage, but devotes a scant four pages to the work, the major thesis of which is a rather weak Freudian interpretation.

Maxwell Geismar, in 1953, was one of the first critics to recognize the true literary value of "Death and the Child."[7] He praised several passages from the short piece of fiction as "Crane's writing . . . at its most brilliant and inspired peak." He feels, however, that the story "faltered and ended on a note of moral verities." Geismar's objection is based on the portrait of the "child" who questions Peza in the closing scene. Chapter Four of this thesis will treat the two concluding sections of "Death and the Child" and demonstrate that the child was, as Crane wrote, "a powerful symbol,"[8] and an integral and

[6]Maxwell Geismar, Rebels and Ancestors: A Study of the American Novel 1890-1915 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1953), p. 106.

[7]Geismar, pp. 103-107.

[8]Fredson Bowers, ed., The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane, Volume V (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1970), p. 140.

necessary part of the work. We shall see that the work did not falter at this point, but rather took on broader and more universal implications.

Robert F. Gleckner, in the Autumn, 1959, special Stephen Crane number of Modern Fiction Studies, notes what he refers to as "perhaps Crane's finest symbolic portrayal" of the relationship between man and the universe in the "too-little-known" story "Death and the Child."[9] Unfortunately, after Gleckner's all too brief treatment of the work it remains too-little-known. Eric Solomon, in 1966, made the first real attempt to give "Death and the Child" a fair hearing.[10] In his study, Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism, the noted Crane critic compares "Death and the Child" with some Ambrose Bierce war sketches and Mark Twain's "The Private History of a Campaign that Failed." He refers to "Death and the Child" as Crane's "greatest war story" but errs in citing 1898 as its date of composition. J.C. Levenson in the Introduction to Volume V of The Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane proves conclusively, by citing letters to Crane's literary agent, that the story was completed and in the agent's hands by mid-December, 1897.[11] This is admittedly a small point, but it is characteristic of what is often the sad state of a great deal of Crane scholarship.

Solomon gives a general summary of the story, pointing out the contrast between Peza and the young Lieutenant, Peza's eager explanation of his desire to fight for Greece, the multiplicity of points

[9]Robert F. Gleckner, "Stephen Crane and the Wonder of Man's Conceit," in Modern Fiction Studies, V (Autumn, 1959), pp. 276-77.

[10]Eric Solomon, Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp. 106-13; 116-17.

[11]Bowers, ed., p. lxxxviii.

of view, and the "study of contrasts." He also refers to the work as "a study of fear . . . and a mocking denunciation of the intellectual."[12] Referring to the work as "the ultimate burlesque of the sensitive hero,"[13] Solomon appears to be according "Death and the Child" a very shallow reading. As shall be demonstrated in the course of this thesis, "Death and the Child" is much more than a study of fear, fear being but one aspect of the work, and to read the work as "a mocking denunciation of the intellectual" seems to be somewhat severe. Solomon is to be credited with noting the element of burlesque in the work, but his application of that element is unfortunately misdirected. Furthermore, at one point Solomon writes:

> Crane is not interested in bringing his hero through the war trauma to a better manhood . . . . This story is not another depiction of the learning process . . . .[14]

Yet on the following page he reports:

> Peza's enlightenment continues.[15]

Such is the state of much of the scholarship on Crane's "greatest war story." Finally, Solomon concurs with Geismar regarding the conclusion of the work. He finds that Crane fails to end the story at the moment of climax and "over-extends the conceptual framework into an unnecessary symbolic and parodic anti-climax."[16]

[12]Solomon, p. 107.

[13]Solomon, p. 107.

[14]Solomon, p. 107.

[15]Solomon, p. 110.

[16]Solomon, p. 112.

Donald B. Gibson sees "Death and the Child" as "a good story," but not among Crane's best.[17] He analyzes the story in terms of positive and negative forces, identifying the experienced soldiers and the child as the two "centers of value," and Peza's behavior as "undesirable."[18] He finds the work "inconsistent" because, in his opinion, there is no relationship between the "centers of value." However, the child clearly lends an essential thread of unity to the work, and, as shall be demonstrated, is related to the experienced soldiers. Crane establishes this quite early in the work by presenting the child imitating the motions of the soldiers on the field. Finally, Gibson shares Stallman's view,[19] that the story is "sentimental."

Significantly, the most valuable criticism of "Death and the Child" appeared in the years 1972-73, by Marston LaFrance[20] and Milne Holton[21] respectively, following the publication of Stallman's Stephen Crane: A Biography, and The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane. LaFrance views "Death and the Child" as "a much misunderstood story," and identifies five important elements brought together in the work: "Peza himself, external nature, the child, the common man both

[17]Donald Gibson, The Fiction of Stephen Crane (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1968), p. 100.

[18]Gibson, p. 101.

[19]Stallman, p. 325.

[20]Marston LaFrance, A Reading of Stephen Crane (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 214-22.

[21]Holton, pp. 182-91; 276-85.

as soldier and as peasant, and the officers." LaFrance fails, however, to grasp the full impact of the child as a unifying character, noting only the link between him, external nature, and "the external universe."[22] When the child asks his pointed question at the conclusion of the work, according to LaFrance, "he merely voices the implicit question that Crane's universe puts to all men." Noting the similarity in the conclusions of "Death and the Child" and The Red Badge of Courage, the author is apparently in disagreement with the comments cited earlier by Solomon and Geismar, writing, "Although the story ends at the climax,[23] Crane implies that Peza will eventually emerge as a man from his enchanted forest."[24] Noting correctly that Peza will emerge as a man, LaFrance presents a far different interpretation of the conclusion than R.W. Stallman's unfortunate statement that "Peza dies"[25] and Earle Labor's contention that Peza can never recover from his physical and emotional wounds.[26]

Milne Holton in his 1972 publication Cylinder of Vision: The Fiction and Journalistic Writing of Stephen Crane, presents the most scholarly evaluation of Crane's writings to date.[27] In his well documented work on "Death and the Child," he has done more than any other

[22]LaFrance, p. 217.

[23]Italics mine.

[24]LaFrance, p. 220.

[25]Stallman, p. 289.

[26]Theodore L. Gross and Stanley Wertheim, Hawthorne, Melville, Stephen Crane: A Critical Bibliography (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p. 239.

[27]Holton, pp. 182-91; 276-85.

critic to elevate this work to its rightful position in the Crane canon. Holton recognizes that in "Death and the Child" Crane "came to terms with the meaning of war for himself, and with the implications of the search for that meaning."[28] Beginning with a comparison between Henry Fleming's romantic notions of war in The Red Badge of Courage and those of the protagonist in "Death and the Child," the Crane scholar turns to a consideration of Peza's role as objective observer and participant in the Greek struggle. He notes that the formal manners of the professional soldiers block Peza's view of real war and that the hero's failure to fulfill his role is signaled by his flight from war (death) at the end. Disagreeing with both Stallman and Gibson in their evaluation of the story as "sentimental," Holton finds it "profoundly tragic." He also finds the work "profoundly more negative" than Solomon's view that it is a "mockery of the intellectual."[29] Concluding that "it is Peza's very capacity to apprehend which has defeated and dehumanized him," Holton seems to project onto Crane's work a fatalism or nihilism which is not consistent with the bulk of Crane's writing. I have no wish to engage in the controversy over whether or not Crane was a naturalist or determinist; almost every major literary camp of the twentieth century has alternately claimed Crane as their own. However, I will suggest an alternate reading of the conclusion in the course of the present study.

[28]Holton, p. 183.

[29]Holton, p. 191.

It should be clear that there is a considerable amount of controversy among the half-dozen critics who have approached "Death and the Child." This is due generally to either a lack of, or misapplication of, critical tools. I propose an examination of Crane's most significant war dispatches growing out of his personal observations and experiences in the Greco-Turkish war, as a means of approaching what perhaps most deeply impressed the young writer upon his first confrontation of the realities of war. We will find that there are striking similarities between his war correspondence and his short story, and with some idea, gleaned from his journalism, of his own particular perception of that war, a clearer understanding of "Death and the Child" should become available to us. Secondly, a thorough analysis of this short fiction work will clarify a great deal of the controversy and misunderstanding surrounding "Death and the Child," while revealing Stephen Crane's maturity and sophistication as both writer and thinker at the end of 1897.

CHAPTER ONE:
From Fact to Fiction

> ST-PH-N CR-N-
>
> BRINDISI, April 24. -- Able students of the art of war who read my "Red Badge of Courage" said that beyond a doubt I must have borne arms in our Civil War but as a matter of fact, I wasn't even borne in arms until a year or so after it was finished. Now if I could write so graphic and convincing an account of a conflict, the varying colors of which had faded and gone before I came upon the scene, it follows that I ought to be able to write an account of the present Graeco-Turkish war that shall be at least as highly colored as any other man's and that too from a point where I am able to give my whole attention to writing and mixing my colors and am in no danger from stray bullets. From what critics say, I know all about war without ever having been near one. What have I to expect by being on the scene except an incapacitating wound? It is more fair to those who sent me out as war correspondent that I stay here in Italy. So I will give my imagination free play and sling in lots of color, and there's not one man in a million can tell where I'm wrong if I am.[1]

The preceding account, the lead paragraph of a parody of Crane as war correspondent, appeared in the May 1 edition of The Critic, in 1897. Appearing over the name of Charles Battell Loomis, poet and humorist, the sentiments expressed are equivalent to what many people felt would be the stance taken by Crane upon his approach to a war that used real bullets. Richard Harding Davis, a rival correspondent, wrote in a letter home after the battle at Velestino, "Crane came up for fifteen

[1]Quoted in Robert W. Stallman and E.R. Hagemann, eds., The War Dispatches of Stephen Crane (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 50. Hereafter referred to as WD.

minutes and wrote a 1300 word story . . . . He was never near the front, but don't say I said so."[2] In another letter, Davis wrote: "There is nothing to be said about what Crane did on the battlefield of Velestino."[3] Correspondent John Bass tells a different story. In a dispatch titled "How Novelist Crane Acts on the Battlefield" (Journal: May 23, 1897), Bass writes:

> Your correspondent sought shelter in a trench and cautiously watched the pale, thin face of the novelist as the latter seated himself on an ammunition box amid the shower of shells and casually lighted a cigarette. Stephen Crane did not appear surprised, but watched with a quiet expression the quick work of the artillerymen, as they loaded, fired, and jumped to replace the small canon over-turned by the recoil.[4]

Bass's account seems to be the more reliable, as Crane was later to incorporate into "Death and the Child" a scene similar to the one depicted here. The young correspondent, Peza, is "seated upon an ammunition box" (134)[5], watching the bullets fly overhead. Shortly thereafter, Crane describes the recoil action of small howitzers in the words, "The howitzer had thrown itself backward convulsively, and lay with its wheels moving in the air as a squad of men rushed toward it." (136)

[2]Robert W. Stallman, Stephen Crane: A Biography (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1968), p. 280.

[3]Stallman, p. 281.

[4]Quoted in Stallman, p. 281.

[5]Fredson Bowers, ed., The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane, Volume V (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1970), p. 134. All subsequent references to "Death and the Child" will be to this edition.

The point to be made here is that Crane was actively involved in covering the Greco-Turkish war, and that "Death and the Child" is based largely on what Crane saw at Velestino, and the impressions of war which he carried away with him. "Death and the Child" is not simply a re-working of The Red Badge of Courage, with merely the time and place changed. Crane was a reckless young man, who early in his career severely damaged his reputation by consorting with the "low life" of the New York Bowery district to gain material for "The Experiment in Misery" and his short story "Maggie." He insisted that his writing be honest, and with the notable exception of The Red Badge of Courage, most of Crane's major work grew out of experiences he had personally observed. It is essential to a full appreciation of Crane's writing, especially "Death and the Child," that this be understood. For in the course of this work, of which Crane's war dispatches will be the touchstone, I hope to demonstrate not only the artistic sophistication of Stephen Crane, but his philosophical evolution as well.

A comparison of the text of Crane's war dispatches with the text of "Death and the Child" will reveal first, that "Death and the Child" is based firmly on real war experience. The war dispatches provide us with an opportunity to check the validity of "Death and the Child," while at the same time giving the reader some indication of how Crane reacted to the war, not merely how he made his fictional characters react. Secondly, the war dispatches offer insight into what Crane considered important in war. Attention, for example, is strongly focused on the displaced citizens, something not mentioned in The Red Badge of Courage. Thirdly, the war dispatches will provide a basis

for much of Crane's imagery in "Death and the Child." And finally, the question of perspective or point of view, developed in The Red Badge of Courage and expanded in "The Open Boat," becomes important for more than just its ironic implications, in both the war dispatches and the short story.

J.C. Levenson notes that Crane's dispatch "The Dogs of War" was probably the inspiration for the inclusion of the abandoned child in "Death and the Child."[6] The author discovered an abandoned "Greek pup" during his retreat from Velestino, and noted with amusement the animal's total disinterest in the war raging around him. In a separate dispatch, "A Battle in Greece," Levenson notes the appearance of a prototype for Crane's protagonist, Peza, in a "'tall, pale, young man in civilian garb' for whom an officer concerned with his business could spare little time."[7] Peza is a composite of a number of personality traits Crane encountered while reporting on the Greek war. The passage which Levenson partially extracted continues as follows: "He was obviously English and to this distinction was added a wild, wild eye . . . . He addressed the captain in rascally French . . . . The captain went away . . . . When he returned . . . he said in excellent English, 'Sir, if you will speak in English instead of French I may be able to understand you better.'" (WD, 72) Reference to the young English gentleman speaking French sheds some light on what was the

[6]Bowers, ed., p. lxxxiv.

[7]Bowers, ed., p. lxxxv.

slightly puzzling description of Peza speaking French throughout much of the story. An Italian by residence and education, and a Greek by birth, Crane makes a point of mentioning that Peza addressed the young lieutenant he first encountered, and the officer at the second Greek infantry position, in French:

> He spoke to the officer in rapid French, waving his arms wildly, and often pointing with a dramatic finger. (122)

And again,

> 'A fine scene, sir,' he cried airily, upon the approach of Peza. It was like a blow in the chest to the wide eyed volunteer . . . . 'Yes sir, it's a fine scene,' he answered. They spoke in French. (136)

French is, of course, generally spoken throughout the continent, but the author's apparent determination to include the above observation in his story, especially the abrupt "They spoke in French," appears to be more than merely an opportunity for Peza to ostentatiously display his education.

Reviewing Crane's war correspondence, one finds a number of rather unflattering references to the French. Crane's observations regarding the French, stationed with the fleet of the Concert of Powers off the coast of Crete, juxtaposed with some passages describing Peza, reveal what Crane was about:

> The French made the most uproar, and they were the authors of whatever bungling was done. They were at the same time by far the proudest and most conscious. The eyes of the world were upon them surely, and they wanted to do everything with such heaven born accuracy

> Peza imagined a million eyes staring at him. (131)

> Peza bowed to the officers. He understood at the time that he had made a good and cool bow. (133)

> . . . he found himself extremely embarassed, composing

> that they lost their minds at times. (WD, 15)
>
> Whenever officers came aboard of (sic) the mail steamer, the passengers crowded around them and to the French, this was food and wine apparently. They flourished and expanded and waxed taller under this nourishment. They were sublime. As for the Russians, they didn't care. (WD, 16)

> his face with difficulty, wondering what to do with his hands. (126)
>
> They stared at the figure of him surrounded by officers. Peza, gaining sense of the glances and whispers, felt that his coming was an event. (134)
>
> Peza . . . believed that his action was receiving the attention of the wrathful foe . . . . He was abashed; perhaps he even blushed as he ran. (138)

Thus, Peza's concern with his appearance, his pre-occupation with behaving properly, and his view that all eyes were upon him, reflects Crane's observations of the French. Peza, unlike the young Englishman, speaks French then, not merely as a display of his linguistic abilities, but to link his behavior to that of the pompous French, toward whom Crane assumed a comic stance. Another Englishman, not the one described above, may have further influenced Crane to present Peza as a well educated young man. Introducing himself to the lieutenant, Peza exclaims: "I have been educated in Italy. I have spent nearly all my life in Italy. At the schools and universities . . . . I was a student -- a student." (122) Crane refers to an English passenger on the Guardiana as "cock-sure by education." (WD, 12)

Crane's theorizing about the course of events which led a Greek youth to his death, may also have been incorporated, partly by inversion, into the composite character of Peza. The following account from Velestino, set in opposition to a description of Peza, reveals some interesting similarities:

> To the rear lay the body of a youth who had been killed by a ball through the chest. The youth had not been a regular soldier apparently; he had been a volunteer . . . . As for the clothes . . . they were cut after a common London style.
>
> The dead young Greek had nothing particularly noble in his face. There was expressed in this thing none of the higher thrills to incite, for instance, a company of romantic poets . . . . The whole episode was almost obvious . . . . he came to war on the smoke, so to speak, of the new fires of patriotism . . . . He had been perhaps a little inclined to misgivings, but withal anxious to see everything anyhow . . . . (WD, 70)

> It was like a blow in the chest to the wide eyed volunteer. (136)
>
> At the passing of the young man in the very nice tweed . . . . (126)
>
> Peza felt dimly that there was a distinction between this man and a young student who could write sonnets . . . . (139)
>
> Now I want to fight. I want to do battle for the land of my father. (123)
>
> The ardor of the correspondent surpassed the full energy of the soldier. Several times he turned and shouted: "Come on! Come on!" (125)

Peza's blow in the chest was not a bullet, but his education through humiliation which became equally traumatic.

R.W. Stallman and E.R. Hagemann, in the introduction to their collection of Crane's war dispatches, write that the Greco-Turkish war was "comically short in duration." (WD, 4) Much the same might be said of Peza's involvement in the war -- it was comically tragic, and certainly short. Crane himself, much to his chagrin, missed the first 36 hours of the battle at Velestino due to illness. His hero, the correspondent for an Italian newspaper, echoes, perhaps, Crane's own feelings: "He reflected, too, that one should always see the beginning of a fight. It was too difficult to thus approach it when the affair was in full swing." (130)

Thus far we have seen that Peza is most probably a composite of the many individuals Crane observed at war, in addition to the fact that he was a correspondent, like Crane, and is placed in scenes and situations with which Crane was personally familiar. The importance of this somewhat detailed analysis of the possible sources for Peza, is to belay the summary dispatch of the protagonist as merely an ineffectual intellectual. Peza's character takes on some rather burlesque tones at points throughout the work, but he is a realistic character trying earnestly to conduct himself in a manner befitting, from his point of view, the situations in which he finds himself. If "Death and the Child" is Crane's "greatest war story," and if, as I hope to establish, the conclusion is more than merely "sentimental," the hero of the work must be viewed as more than just another victim of Crane's ironic stance toward his characters. The integrity of Peza as protagonist must be maintained, and if we view Peza as a character based on the author's personal observations of men in a war situation, we take the first step in the right direction. As Crane suggested in his musings over the body of the Greek youth, there are neither epic nor romantic heroes to be found in the dispatches or fiction relating to this particular Greek war. The reader is cautioned to keep this in mind when analyzing the character of Peza.

The opening paragraphs of "Death and the Child" portray in fine impressionistic writing, the plight of the peasants streaming from their abandoned homes to escape the ravages of war. Crane's dispatches reveal his genuine concern for these displaced citizens. He was outraged at the inefficiency and general lack of concern displayed by

the officers charged with evacuating the fugitives. In "The Blue Badge of Cowardice," datelined May 11, 1897, Crane takes to task "a particular and sublime ass," the surgeon in charge of an English Red Cross ship, for his failure to aid the war victims because "He had some rules -- God knows what they were -- and he was the kind of fool to whom a rule was a sacred thing." (WD, 34) Crane concludes his harangue with the pledge:

> I promise myself the pleasure of writing about him later on. (WD, 34)

When Peza feels he has been criminally abandoned by the young lieutenant in "Death and the Child," he makes a similar statement:

> Nevertheless, he hated the lieutenant, and he resolved that on some future occasion he would take much trouble to arrange a stinging social revenge upon the grinning jackanapes. (131)

Neither Peza nor Crane ever took the trouble to make good their threats.

Crane's first dispatch of the war before leaving the French steamer Guardiana, contains an observation of a peculiarity of the Greek peasants which the author was to later include in his war story. The journalist observed that the "stout boats from the war ships made ill-navigation for the native craft," throwing the Cretan oarsmen into the "wildest panic":

> The twirling of their fingers as they waved their hands tragically over their heads at these times made a sight not to be seen in the west. This action seemed to stand out in their minds as being more likely to carry them safely through the crisis than a sudden and skillful application of the oars. (WD, 17)

When Crane has developed the panic of the fleeing peasants to its highest intensity in "Death and the Child," he remarks:

> . . . there arose a constant babble of tongues, shrill, broken, and sometimes choking as from men drowning. Many made gestures, painting their agonies on the air with fingers that twirled swiftly. (121)

Further on in the narrative he writes,

> In the meantime the river of fleeing villagers had changed to simply a last dropping of belated creatures, who fled past stammering and flinging their hands high. (124)

The modulation of emotional crisis, then, is partially signalled by the distinction between "swiftly twirling fingers," and hands held "high."

A New York Journal dispatch appearing on May 12, 1897, contains the young journalist's summation of the plight of the homeless and starving fugitives. Crane wrote, "It is a case for the opening of the skies, but no skies open. I wish I knew what was to become of these poor people." (WD, 36) Some months later, in composing "Death and the Child," the question of displaced citizens still occupied the author's mind. The plight of the fleeing villagers briefly penetrates the "bronzed and steady" lieutenant of the story, who echoes Crane's words: "Yes. . . . these poor people! These poor people! I do not know what is to become of these poor people!" (123)

Women in particular touched Crane's protective instincts. In his journalism he describes them as "patient, suffering in a curious silence, while the babies wail on all sides." (WD, 36) This observation was to find expression in "Death and the Child":

> One saw then a woman of the opinion of the vaults above the clouds. When a child cried it cried always because of some adjacent misfortune . . . . Into these preoccupied

> countenances one felt that needles could be thrust without purchasing a scream. (122)

This inclusion of the innocent victims of war in Crane's fiction reveals a wider range of both awareness and concern than can be found in The Red Badge of Courage. Contrary to the parody of humorist Charles Loomis, Crane did much more than simply give his "imagination free play" in "Death and the Child."

Departing from a treatment of the peasants, the wounded and war-weary were another concern of the journalist and author. Once again, we find no tales of brilliant heroism or courage. Henry Fleming's childhood dreams of heroism remain dreams. Cognizant of the fact that most critics now view The Red Badge of Courage as a work in which courage in battle becomes a small part of the multiple vehicle by which Fleming arrives at manhood, nevertheless, the general reading audience still tends to view the title of the work as somewhat of a statement of theme. Three years after the publication of Crane's most famous novel, the virtues of long-suffering and tragic dignity supplant any authorial bias toward valor in battle.

In Crane's two major dispatches from Greece, the behavior of soldiers while not involved in combat comes under scrutiny. In relating the evacuation of the wounded to Volo under cover of nightfall, Crane writes, "There was very little outcry from them, they were mostly silent." (WD, 30) Attempting to bolster the morale of some Greek officers, Crane told them that during the Civil War, the North fought for two years without victory. The officers merely "shrugged their shoulders and mildly said that fighting under such conditions must be

hard work." (WD, 36-37) Similarly, Crane reports an exchange between a battalion of new recruits heading for the front, and war-weary soldiers withdrawing:

> As the battalion reached the foot of the steep, stragglers were coming down . . . . The new men looked at them uneasily. "Well, how's it going?" they asked. Some of the stragglers said "good," . . . but others shook their heads sadly and made little reply. (WD, 69)

Of the new recruits, Crane reports, "Later they had learned that it was mainly hard work." (WD, 68) In "Death and the Child" this attitude is reinforced. Peza, as the new recruit,

> asked eager questions of passing soldiers. Some paid no heed to him; others shook their heads mournfully. They knew nothing save that war was hard work. (131)

As Peza moves closer to the front, his preconceived notions of war are slowly stripped from him. He is amazed to find soldiers in crescent shaped trenches, "tranquilly interested" in his passing, "gossiping with the hum of a tea party." (126) He notes that, "these men, menaced with battle, displayed the curiosity of the cafe." While not presently the objects of the enemy's fire, Peza nevertheless "concluded that they were fabulously brave." Further on in his journey, he finds soldiers and officers discussing politics, eating, smoking and drinking, all the while menaced by possible attack. The inclusion of this aspect of war in "Death and the Child" is further evidence of Crane's effort at accurate and honest description. Concerning this particular reality of war, journalist Crane wrote:

> People imagine battle to be one long muscular contortion with a mental condition corresponding to it. But just as it is impossible for a

> man to have convulsions eternally and without rest, so it is essential that when the other fellows are against the enemy, the soldier should be superior to worrying too much about it. His turn will come . . . . In the meantime, let him gossip, with his legs wide apart, and pass around the cigarette. (WD, 63)

Thus, those looking for glorious deeds of courage and valor amid intense combat, will be forced to look elsewhere. For Crane, the realities of war included fleeing refugees, weary soldiers for whom war was simply "hard work," and a cigarette and bit of small-talk in the trenches.

Crane's fictional character, Peza, failing to understand that fraternizing is only one part of war, is "elated," and erroneously concluded "The shells killed no one; war was not so bad." (134) Peza's state of well-being results from his feeling of comradery as he engages in animated discussions of continental politics behind the trench lines. He gains a certain distance from the death on the plains. As reported in "Crane at Velestino," "From a distance it was like a game. No blood, no expressions of horror to be seen; there were simply the movements of tiny doll tragedy." (WD, 30)

The image of "dolls" is one of many images Crane carried over from his war dispatches into his war story. In all cases we will find that the parallel images were inspired by identical or closely related perceptions. Crane appears to be approaching a collection of his own stock epithets of war. In the passage extracted above, the journalist uses the metaphor "tiny doll tragedy" to illustrate the blockage of emotive perception created by distance. When Peza is surfeited of pity for the wounded soldiers by sheer force of their numbers, the author writes, "and so it came to pass that he

cared for the implacable misery of these soldiers only as he would have cared for the harms of broken dolls." (130) Crane realized that distance, whether geographical or emotional, blunts one's perception of individuals as living, breathing, human beings. The men simply became dolls, which occasionally get damaged.

That war is man-made is asserted by Crane through the images of factories and machines. The journalist/author employs these images to debunk any romantic notion of war as something preordained by the gods -- an international Olympics to test man's mettle. The following passages from Crane's Journal dispatch and short story, reveal how these images function:

> Behind him was the noise of battle, the roar and rumble of an enormous factory. This was the product, not so well finished as some, but sufficient to express the plan of the machine. This wounded soldier explained the distant roar. He defined it. (WD, 62)

> Curiously enough, too, this first shell smacked of the foundery, of men with smudged faces, of the blare of furnace fires. It brought machinery immediately into his mind. He thought that if he was killed there at that time it would be as romantic, to the old standards, as death by a bit of falling iron in a factory. (127)

In the dispatch, the wounded soldier defines the factory-like noise; in the fiction, the factory image would have defined Peza's death.

One of the recurring phrases in "Death and the Child," finding its origin in a war dispatch, is repeated throughout Crane's war story to unite the various elements and suggest the endless repetition of the cycles of war:

> The lieutenant in command of the trench walked slowly to and fro in the rear of his men. (WD, 71)

> He [Greek Captain] walked gaily to and fro behind the guns with Peza. (134)
>
> The child ran to and fro fumbling with sticks and making great machinations with pebbles. (127)
>
> . . . at the rear of it [Turkish] battalions crawled up and to and fro plainer than beetles on a plate. (136)

The phrase "to and fro" suggests some relationship among these four elements, while the verb phrases illustrate distinguishing nuances. The young child, an unlikely member of this cast, is further joined with the Greek and Turkish soldiers by the word "machinations" (suggesting machinery, ie., war material), and the sticks and pebbles suggesting guns and bullets respectively.

Art imagery also abounds in the writing of Stephen Crane. The war dispatches and "Death and the Child" supply numerous examples. When the Guardiana approached the island of Crete, the journalist described the scene before him as "spaced high and wide precisely like a painting from that absurd period when the painters each tried to reproduce the universe on one canvas." (WD, 12) In "Death and the Child," Peza compares war-satiated soldiers to his own feeling of saturation after visiting "a certain place of pictures," where he found himself amid "all the strength of argus-eyed art; and he had whirled and whirled amid this universe with cries of woe and joy . . . ." (129)

Water imagery is the final predisposition of Crane to be examined before turning to a consideration of perspective and point of view, leading to our study in Chapter II. Crane's use of water and shifting perspective will receive more complete treatment as it relates to the

technical sophistication the author demonstrated in "Death and the Child," and for the present we will confine ourselves to the basis of this technique as found in the war dispatches.

The opening paragraph of "Death and the Child" is diffused with water imagery to convey the feeling of movement and mounting pressure as the peasants flee down the mountain. A corresponding use of water imagery is found in "A Fragment of Velestino," where Crane describes the initial advance of the Turks as "little trickling streams" which "began to flow slowly." (WD, 70) When the advance gains momentum, the trickling streams become "dark streams, rivulets . . . which poured along the plain." (WD, 71) In the fictional parallel to this scene, the Turks advance "heavily, languorously, as oily and thick as one of the streams that ooze through a swamp." (137) Thus, Crane displays a certain versatility and adaptability in his use of corresponding images. To create the sense of rapid movement and tension, the streams become rivulets. To portray slow movement and suspense, as the Greek regiment Peza has momentarily joined await the appropriate moment to open fire, the streams become "oily and languorous" like those which "ooze through a swamp."

A great deal has been written about Crane's visual imagery, but few critics have studied the author's use of aural imagery. Water again serves as Crane's medium. Describing the sound of the volleys of fire, the journalist wrote: "It was the thunder of a monstrous breaker against hard rocks." (WD, 66) Analogously, the sound of distant battle heard by the child on the mountain "resembled the sound of the beating of surf upon rocks." (127-28) Crane was personally

impressed with the sound of war, noting, "It was the most beautiful sound of my experience, barring no symphony. The crash of it was ideal." (WD, 29) He added, however: "This is one point of view. Another might be taken from the men who died there."

Crane uses the method of shifting point of view in his war dispatches and in "Death and the Child," not simply for its ironic implications or as an indication of Crane's lack of sympathy for the characters he creates.[8] In a lead-in to an interview with some wounded Greek soldiers, Crane describes the traumas of the blood-stained field hospital and the suffering patients waiting for treatment. In the same paragraph he shifts to: "A hundred yards away there was some long grass and daisies, and a peasant asleep in the shade of olive trees." (WD, 79) The shift does not represent any lack of sympathy, but merely the paradoxical coexistence of tranquility and suffering which is a part of any real picture of life.

Finally, in the introduction to his collective interviews, Crane wrote:

> They may be this, they may be that, they may be anything, but they are reported with some care and some conscience, and perhaps they contain a suggestion from time to time of a view point which has not been particularly heeded. (WD, 75)

Thus, Crane attempted in his journalism and in "Death and the Child" to report "with care and some conscience" his views on the multiple aspects of real war. The author offers his readers a portrait of war as it affects peasants and children, seasoned officers and new recruits, the fearless and the wounded, and a young correspondent, Peza by name.

[8]See Joseph X. Brennan, "Stephen Crane and the Limits of Irony," Criticism, XI, pp. 183-200.

CHAPTER TWO:
Tension-Release-Shift

A recent discovery of a manuscript page from "Death and the Child" indicates that Crane first developed the plot and then worked out the final language.[1] This would be consistent with Crane's statement to a Book Buyer's reviewer: "I don't believe in inspiration. I am one of those who believe that an enthusiasm of concentration in hard work is what a writer must depend on to bring him to the end he has in view."[2] As we have seen, Crane's role as journalist largely determined what developed from the initial plot to the end he had in view. Taken together, this would seem to indicate that with regard to "Death and the Child" Crane was functioning as an artist conscious of his craft.

From what we have seen, Crane's own code of personal honesty might be the motivation of this work. Part of his frequently quoted literary code bears repeating:

> I write what is in me. A man is born into the world with his own pair of eyes and he is not at all responsible for his vision -- he is merely responsible for his quality of personal honesty.[3]

[1]Milne Holton, Cylinder of Vision: The Fiction and Journalistic Writing of Stephen Crane (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), p. 318, n 18.

[2]Robert W. Stallman, Stephen Crane: A Biography (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1968), p. 168.

[3]Quoted in Stallman, p. 215.

Crane's honesty and maturity as an artist are borne out by the new vision he achieved in "Death and the Child," and account for the major differences between his short story and his earlier war novel. It is because his vision changed after his first real experience of war that "Death and the Child" and The Red Badge of Courage do not read the same. Had they been identical, one would be forced to conclude either that it was miraculously coincidental, or that Crane departed from his code of artistic honesty in order to produce a quick piece of fiction for a quick piece of pocket money. Fortunately and deservedly so, "Death and the Child" escaped the severe criticism which the London Academy aimed at Wounds in the Rain: "No one can escape from the reflection that this last war book ridiculously resembles the first . . . where almost every impression was preconceived."[4]

The question of one's personal vision or perspective is central to an understanding of Crane's fiction. His definition of his own literary code, then, might be seen as a major portion of the informing image of his work. Crane's talent is in establishing early in his writing different points of view, and shifting these perspectives, which process often reveals more about the individual characters than it does about the objects of their perception. This technique has been cited by many critics in their analyses of The Red Badge of Courage and "The Open Boat," usually with the purpose of demonstrating Crane's ironic stance toward his characters, or to support statements that Crane is either a naturalist, realist, symbolist or impressionist. The most significant observations have been made by Robert C. Albrecht,

[4]Quoted in Stallman, p. 489.

Joseph X. Brennan, Edwin H. Cady, James B. Colvert, Donna Gerstenberger, Stanley B. Greenfield, Eric Solomon, and R.W. Stallman. Eric Solomon first alluded to the importance of the perspective of the various characters in "Death and the Child," when he wrote in 1966, "Peza tries to understand war from the store of knowledge he has accumulated out of his experiences as lover and student; the child tries to comprehend war from the only viewpoint he has of life -- sheep herding."[5] This is at best an oversimplification, and to refer to Peza as a "lover" on the basis of a singular and rather innocuous use of the word "love" in the text is to grossly misrepresent Crane's protagonist.

It remained for Milne Holton to first uncover the potential importance of what he referred to as the "apprehensional states" of the characters in "Death and the Child."[6] Holton cites the opening paragraphs in the work where the apprehension of the peasants fleeing is set in opposition to the narrating voice describing the "blue bay, with its pointed ships . . . [which] lay below them, distant, flat, serene."[7] He remarks that "shifts in perspective are meticulously recorded," and cites the most evident examples. What Holton fails to mention is the complexity and, often, the subtlety of these shifts of perspective, as a constant under-current throughout the story, and their importance to a full appreciation of "Death and the Child" in particular and Crane's evolution and maturity as a writer in general.

[5]Eric Solomon, Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 110.

[6]Holton, pp. 184-91.

[7]Holton, pp. 184-85.

The first point to be firmly established is that the shifting of perspective or point of view is not simply one isolated aspect of Crane's style in "Death and the Child," but rather is part of an under-current -- simply the most obvious manifestation of an intricate and subtle web which encompasses all of the tensions Crane is to develop in the work. Further, these tensions build to a point where they periodically seek and find release.

Shifting in perspective then, is linked to the structural tension achieved through Peza's advance toward the war while the peasants are fleeing (and, subsequently, while the troops are retreating), plus the repeated reference to movements up and down the mountains and hills, and movements of troops and characters from left to right, "to and fro." Failure to grasp this inter-relation of tensions (ie., opposing physical movements and shifting points of view) results in the errors attendant on any attempt to isolate and excise from context any one of Crane's contrasting situations without deference to the over-all unity of the work.

Milne Holton's contention that Crane "establishes" Peza as a character "acutely sensitive and highly educated," and therefore in isolation, "when Peza is set in opposition to the natural flow of humanity, which is flight from the war,"[8] is a case in point. If this were true, how does one account for the colt who earlier changed direction and made a "charge up the hill," going against the movement of fleeing peasants and animals, and the lieutenant who is also walking against the "natural flow" and who will shortly, in Holton's words,

[8]Holton, p. 184.

serve as Peza's "Virgil in this Dantesque journey?"[9] What I hope to demonstrate here is not that Holton's evaluation of Peza as a character in isolation is incorrect, but that he has chosen an inappropriate example to "establish" his observation, and has overlooked the link between Peza, the colt, and the lieutenant. Do they all suffer the fate of the "acutely sensitive and highly educated?" Both the Crane reader and critic must be conscious of their own perspectives, as it were, lest in seeing a fragment, they mistake it for the whole.

In the opening paragraph of "Death and the Child," Crane describes the peasants' flight down the hillside as a stream, and expands this image to a river, a torrent, a freshet, and finally a flood. Thus, as the peasants and their flowing emotions gather strength and momentum in their journey downward, much like the impact of a spring thaw in the mountains, the pressure and tension build and seek release by rising beyond their natural boundaries, with the resultant flood. In the second paragraph, the narrator shifts his attention from the "sharp terror" of the peasants to the "blue bay with its pointed ships . . . distant, flat, serene."[10] The narrator has chosen for his shift in perspective a mass of water which is distant, as opposed to the immediacy with which the peasants view their critical situation; flat, as opposed to the steep incline which gives force and momentum to the metaphor of fear as a stream; and serene, as opposed to the tension of the peasants reflected in the water imagery. Finally, the peasants' "sharp terror" is juxtaposed with the "pointed ships" which are safely moored in the bay.

[9]Holton, p. 186.

[10]Fredson Bowers, ed., The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane, Volume V (Charlottesville: The University Press of Viriginia, 1970), p. 121. All subsequent references to "Death and the Child" will be to this edition.

Crane is not merely playing with words here. He is establishing an important pattern of tension and release which is to continue throughout the work. The tension of the first paragraph is outlined by the words "stream," "river," "torrent," and "freshet." But these are hardly emotive words. An analysis of the language which complements this outline demonstrates a steadily building crescendo:

> The peasants . . . were streaming down the mountain trail . . . . This brown stream poured on with a constant wastage of goods and beasts . . . . The expenditure was always profligate . . . . It was as if fear was a river and this horde had been caught in the torrent, man tumbling over beast, beast over man . . . . It was a freshet . . . this downpour of fear with a thousand homes adrift in the current -- men, women, babes, animals. From it there arose a constant babble of tongues, shrill, broken, and sometimes choking as from men drowning. (121)

Thus, Crane takes us from the relatively sedate image of peasants streaming down the mountain to "a constant babble of tongues, shrill, broken, and sometimes choking." The order of the complementary water-related words, "poured," "downpour," "current," and "drowning," firmly establish the writer's purpose and technique.

Edgar Allen Poe, in "The Poetic Principle," notes the inability of man to sustain a single, intense emotion for any length of time. Crane was, no doubt, aware of this verity, and applied it to both his readers and characters. After achieving a level of emotional intensity in the opening paragraph, he provides a release valve when, as previously mentioned, he allows the rising waters to escape their natural boundaries with the resultant flood: "Then too, it sometimes happened that a face seen as it passed on the flood reflected the

spirit of them all . . . . One saw then a woman of the opinion of the vaults above the clouds." (121-22) As the water seeks its own level, it settles, like the calm picture of the bay and the calm spirit of resignation on the face of the passing woman. In brief summary, then, Crane, in the first two paragraphs of "Death and the Child," has established the technical pattern which directs the major flow of action in this work. He has established tension, orchestrated this tension to a crescendo, and provided release through both a shift in perspective and a careful control of his imagery. Concurrent with the function of imagery to establish tension and climax is its function of essential unity, a unity of opposites, as the bay, another mass of water, becomes the focal point of the contrasting perspective.

As Peza ascends the mountain, the fleeing peasants serve as a catalyst for his own emotional agitation: "He looked at everything with agitation and pity . . . . He exhibited wonder and awe." (122) Peza discovers a young officer behind him, "marching the same way." Crane tells us that his protagonist "waited then, subconsciously elate at a prospect of being able to make into words the emotion which heretofore had only been expressed in the flash of eyes and the sensitive movements of his flexible mouth." (122) The lieutenant may be geographically "marching the same way," but as the writer makes clear, he is a foil to Peza's emotional intensity: "The officer was also a young man, but he was very bronzed and steady." (123) Nevertheless, neatly paralleling the juxtaposition of torrent and bay, the lieutenant is linked to Peza by their joint ascent of the mountain, contrasted to him by his "bronzed and steady" temperament, and serves as a release for

Peza's emotions -- a fact which "subconsciously elate[d]" the latter. Peza effects his release by wild gesticulations and short disjointed sentences, repeatedly punctuated with the word "I." Beginning with the thrice repeated lament, "this is too cruel, too cruel, too cruel," Peza continues with the echoing refrain, "I did not think it would be as bad as this. I did not think . . . I did not think at all." (122)

One's immediate response to Peza's statement "I did not think at all," is that Crane is, as J.X. Brennan contends with regard to The Red Badge of Courage, "Maggie" and "The Open Boat," ridiculing his characters.[11] However, "I did not think" becomes "I did not dream," and finally "I had no dream -- I had no dream that it would be like this." (123) Recalling the earlier admonition to view Peza as a composite of the various personalities Crane observed during his experiences in Greece, and not to expect any heroics of epic proportion, one should view the phrase "I had no dream" as the simple admission that the correspondent had no idea that war involved the suffering of so many innocent people. As previously mentioned, Crane's focus of attention on the fleeing peasants is one of the elements which distinguishes "Death and the Child" from his "imaginative account" of the Civil War. Thus it appears that perhaps Crane "did not think," "had no dream," had no idea that war could be so cruel.

Immediately after Peza's expression of naïveté with regard to the cruelties of war, the protagonist proclaims, "Now I want to be a soldier.

[11]J.X. Brennan, "Stephen Crane and the Limits of Irony," Criticism, XI (Spring, 1969), pp. 183-200.

Now I want to fight. Now I want to do battle for the land of my father." (123) LaFrance, commenting upon Peza's decision to "do battle for the land of my father," places emphasis on the word "land," and regards it as "just so much insensate dirt."[12] LaFrance contends that this is an early indication of Peza's failure to see that war involves people, not just land. However, the word "now," repeated three times, is what should have caught the critic's attention. The protagonist's decision to enter the war comes "now," immediately after he has witnessed the plight of the fleeing peasants. Crane could not have made the relationship between Peza's decision and the opening scene any clearer. Peza's failure then, if one chooses to call it such, is that his decision to commit himself to war was precipitated by a "soft overflow" of emotion, rather than by any "rational" or "intellectual" motive. The inability of the character to sustain a single intense emotion will partly explain the shifts in his allegiance throughout the work. Regarding Peza's susceptibility to strong emotion, the author writes, "His eyes glistened from that soft overflow which comes on occasion to the glance of a young woman." (122) One might assume that the "soft overflow" which caused Peza's eyes to glisten was tears. Thus, his vision is blurred by emotion, his perception is fogged. This same technique is used later in the work to suggest the flaws in Peza's ability to perceive things objectively because of close personal involvement:

> Peza, breathless, pale, felt that he had been set upon a pillar and was surveying mankind, the world. In the meantime dust had got in his eye. (136)

[12]Marston LaFrance, A Reading of Stephen Crane (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 218.

In a single paragraph wherein Peza introduces himself to the young lieutenant, the protagonist uses the word "I" fifteen times in short, abrupt sentences. The narrator follows this with the statement, "his first words . . . had been an active definition of his own dimension, his personal relation to men, geography, life." (122-23) Thus, whatever Peza perceives or defines is filtered through the "I," the self. There are many dangers attendant upon any attempt to superimpose a psychological interpretation on a work of fiction, especially when there is no evidence that the author was familiar with any particular psychological theory. Maxwell Geismar's Freudian interpretation of two scenes in "Death and the Child" is a case in point. I would suggest, however, that Crane, an astute observer of human behavior, may have anticipated perceptual psychology as it evolved into a "psychology of self" in the mid-twentieth century. Milne Holton notes that "Henry James, in Crane's own time, was asserting in his stories of writers and artists the significance of interpretation of experience."[13]

Briefly stated, perceptual psychology is opposed to the stimulus-response theory which asserts that, given the proper stimulus, one can regularly evoke a desired response. Perceptual psychologists insist that there is a "self" which intervenes between a stimulus and the desired response, so that one cannot guarantee that different individuals will respond in the same way to identical stimuli. Crane's shifting of point of view in his fiction indicates that he was aware of the fact that different people perceive things from different points

[13]Holton, p. 168.

of view. To rephrase this in psychological terms, the same stimuli are filtered through different selves, producing different responses. The peasants in the opening scene respond to their situation with panic, Peza responds to their plight with pity.

In like manner, Peza the observer responds with sympathy upon first viewing the wounded men returning from the front. However, Peza the participant, once he moves closer to the scene of battle, perceives the same scene, but responds differently:

> Peza was no longer torn with sorrow at the sight of wounded men. Evidently he found that pity had a numerical limit, and when this was passed the emotion became another thing. Now, as he viewed them, he merely felt himself very lucky, and beseeched the continuance of his superior fortune . . . . His whole vision was focused upon his own chance. (130)

Thus, Peza's perception of himself intervenes between the original stimulus, wounded men, and the former response, pity. Since the way he perceives himself has changed (he now feels personal danger), his view of others has changed. Just as Peza's inability to long sustain an intense emotion can be demonstrated as a partial cause of his shifting allegiances and sympathies ("no longer 'torn' with sorrow"), so too does the change in the way he views himself affect his perception of, and response to, others. William James, in The Principles of Psychology, postulates that man has several "selves" which filter experience to determine what is "significant."[14]

[14]William James, "From The Principles of Psychology," in William James: The Essential Writings, ed. Bruce Wilshire (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 85.

Peza's emotions build to the point where he can no longer sustain them, and he seeks release, either through tears, outrage (when the lieutenant "deserts" him), or apathy. Analogously, his shifts in perception, often resulting from his changing self-concept, afford both the character and the reader a release from the tension built into the work.

One of the several unifying elements which permit Crane to establish mounting tensions and contrasting situations without threatening the internal continuity of the work is the use of water and water-related imagery. As we have seen, the rising flood waters are both in contrast to and joined with the "blue bay." Similarly, Crane describes the constant babble of the fleeing peasants as "shrill, broken, and sometimes choking as from men drowning." Describing the battle lines on the plain as they appear from the top of the mountain, the author inverts the image "as from men drowning," as follows:

> The battle lines writhed at times, in the agony of a sea-creature on the sands. These tentacles flung and waved in a supreme excitement of pain . . . . (128)

A sea-creature "drowns" on land, as a man drowns under water. Furthermore, the tentacles which "flung and waved" recall the peasants who fled with "twirling fingers," and were later seen "flinging their hands high." Concomitantly, the narrator opens Section III with, "It was as if Peza was a corpse walking on the bottom of the sea, and finding there fields of grain, groves, weeds, the faces of men, voices." (129) Through this simile the protagonist is linked with the peasants and soldiers, but whereas the former are in the process of drowning, Peza is already a "corpse."

Crane, a compulsive smoker, utilized this image as a natural signal of release from tension. Demonstrating Peza's sense of relief upon arriving at the first battalion position, Crane portrays Peza "seated upon an ammunition box," and engaging in animated conversation with various officers. Whereas, when war appeared to be overwhelming, Peza was reminded of his experience at the gallery and "saw himself walking toward the cafe, puffing upon a cigarette," Crane signals Peza's shift in perspective by writing, "Peza was elated. The shells killed no one; war was not so bad. He was simply having coffee in the smoking-room of some embassy . . . ." (134) The cigarette while approaching the cafe becomes coffee in a smoking-room.

Peza's behavior during these brief interludes is the most potentially disturbing of the work. As demonstrated earlier, Peza is a composite character, based partly on Crane's observations of the French. However, his constant bowing and inflated language as he introduces himself to the officers he meets along his journey appear to threaten his credibility as a character. However, it should be noted that the officers he meets generally conduct themselves in similar fashion. Milne Holton remarks that "Peza continually finds his apprehension [of war] blocked by the formal manners of professional soldiers,"[15] but makes no reference to Peza's own inflated rhetoric and formal manners. Eric Solomon is the only critic to mention the element of burlesque in this work, and while he dangerously over-extends himself by referring to "Death and the Child" as "the ultimate burlesque of the sensitive

[15]Holton, p. 187.

The technique of establishing tension, orchestrating it to a crescendo, and providing release, has been established earlier in this work through a study of imagery and shifts in perspective. This tension is reinforced through the movement of Peza up and down the hills and mountains and finally surfaces in Section III as Peza theorizes about the attitudes of the "gunless and jaded men" returning from the front: "Peza tried to define them. Perhaps during the fight they had reached the limit of their mental storage, their capacity for excitement, for tragedy, and had then simply come away." (129) In his attempt to define them, Peza turns inward in search of something within his own frame of reference which will enable him to empathize with these men:

> Peza remembered his visit to a certain place of pictures, where . . . he had whirled and whirled amid this universe [of argus-eyed art] with cries of woe and joy, sin and beauty, piercing his ears until he had been obliged to simply come away . . . .
>
> This was a different case, but in his thoughts he conceded the same causes to many of these gunless wanderers. They too may have dreamed at lightning speed until the capacity for it was overwhelmed. (129-30)

Thus, one is able to sustain an emotion, tolerate tension, "until the capacity for it was overwhelmed." Release is then demanded, and one must "simply come away."

Continuing his journey upward, Peza endows war "with the intelligence of a barbaric deity." He feels sure that this deity "had knowledge of his coming," and increases his pace because "he wished to surprise war, this terrible emperor, when it was only growling on its throne." (132) As he approaches four soldiers guarding the army's pack animals, he finds that they "did not seem to be impressed by anything august." Reassured by their calm posture, the hero concludes:

> They were accepting the condition of war as easily as an old sailor accepts his chair behind the counter of a tobacco shop. Or it was merely that the farm-boy had gone to sea, and he had adjusted himself to the circumstances immediately. (132)

Again we have the use of water imagery, but this time the sailor "accepts" his land environment, and the farm-boy "adjusted" to the circumstances of the sea. Here we find no reference to drowning, choking or writhing, as Crane moves away from the struggles of life, the struggles of war, to a view of acceptance and adjustment for his protagonist. This use of imagery points toward the conclusion and the stance Peza must assume if he is to profit from his experiences. Nevertheless, the hero is not quite ready to surrender to the inevitabilities of life. Viewing these peasants he was both "proud and ashamed that he was not of them." (132) What LaFrance refers to as Peza's "famous indictment" of the peasants follows, wherein, similar to Carl Sandburg's "The People, Yes," he observes both their importance to the progress of the world and their ignorance and indifference to the abuses they suffer at the hands of their rulers. Peza "mentally abased himself before them, and wished to stir them with furious kicks." (132) Thus, he is humbled by their collective power and apparent stoicism and at the same time wishes to goad them on to more active awareness, in this case an awareness of the realities of war.

As the protagonist moves closer and closer to his final confrontation of war and death, he is mentally and emotionally torn between intense fear and a feeling that "war was not so bad." When he is alone, journeying from encampment to encampment, his imagination magnifies the power and horrors of war. All along the way, however,

he meets different groups which allay his fears and put him at ease. This is further demonstration of the technique of rising and falling tension. After the young lieutenant finds that his duty is in another direction, Peza is to join three different battalions before his "capacity" for facing death overwhelms him and he runs in panic and fear. Between these four main check-points of his journey, he feels extremely isolated and personally threatened by the sounds of war. Yet each time he unites himself temporarily with a unit of fighting men, his fears depart and he assumes an attitude of courage and valor inversely proportionate to the fears which previously seized him. In one sense, his perspective is changed. He no longer sees himself "alone, isolated, wondering, an individual, an atom taking the hand of a titanic principle," (125) as, somewhat ironically, he had viewed his "confrontation" of love. Now, as he confronts another power, war, he is supported by the calm officers he meets at the front and proceeds to elevate himself above them when "he resolved that he could with temerity do something better." (134)

When Peza defines the war-weary soldiers in terms of his own experience of satiation in "a certain place of pictures," he recalls that as he emerged from the gallery, "he had lit a cigarette with unction and advanced promptly to a cafe." (129) As he watched the retreating soldiers, "he again saw himself walking toward the cafe, puffing upon his cigarette." (130) While these thoughts are transversing his mind, "As if to reinforce his theory, a soldier stopped him with an eager but polite inquiry for a match. He watched the man light his little roll of tobacco and paper and begin to smoke ravenously." (130)

Crane, a compulsive smoker, utilized this image as a natural signal of release from tension. Demonstrating Peza's sense of relief upon arriving at the first battalion position, Crane portrays Peza "seated upon an ammunition box," and engaging in animated conversation with various officers. Whereas, when war appeared to be overwhelming, Peza was reminded of his experience at the gallery and "saw himself walking toward the cafe, puffing upon a cigarette," Crane signals Peza's shift in perspective by writing, "Peza was elated. The shells killed no one; war was not so bad. He was simply having coffee in the smoking-room of some embassy . . . ." (134) The cigarette while approaching the cafe becomes coffee in a smoking-room.

Peza's behavior during these brief interludes is the most potentially disturbing of the work. As demonstrated earlier, Peza is a composite character, based partly on Crane's observations of the French. However, his constant bowing and inflated language as he introduces himself to the officers he meets along his journey appear to threaten his credibility as a character. However, it should be noted that the officers he meets generally conduct themselves in similar fashion. Milne Holton remarks that "Peza continually finds his apprehension [of war] blocked by the formal manners of professional soldiers,"[15] but makes no reference to Peza's own inflated rhetoric and formal manners. Eric Solomon is the only critic to mention the element of burlesque in this work, and while he dangerously over-extends himself by referring to "Death and the Child" as "the ultimate burlesque of the sensitive

[15]Holton, p. 187.

hero,"[16] he suggests what might have been Crane's purpose for portraying Peza in this manner.

In Cora Crane's list of books at Brede Place, she lists forty volumes of the plays of Shakespeare.[17] Early in "Death and the Child," Crane describes Peza in the following manner:

> The latter in particular was sunk in a great mournfulness, as if he had resolved willy-nilly to swing to the bottom of the abyss where dwelt secrets of this kind, and had learned before hand that all to be met there was cruelty and hopelessness. A strap of his bright new leather leggings came unfastened, and he bowed over it slowly, impressively, as one bending over the grave of a child. (123)

In Act II, scene i, of Hamlet, Ophelia describes her distracted suitor similarly:

> Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced
> No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
> Ungartered and down-gyved to his ankle,
> Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
> With a look so piteous in purport
> As if he had been loosed out of hell
> To speak of horrors . . . .[18]

Both Hamlet and Peza are portrayed as sensitive young men undergoing severe emotional trauma. Just as Shakespeare provided Fortinbras as as foil to Hamlet, so does the young lieutenant, "bronzed and steady,"

[16]Solomon, p. 207.

[17]James E. Kibler, "The Library of Stephen and Cora Crane," in Proof: The Yearbook of American Bibliographical and Textual Studies, Vol. I, Joseph Katz, ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), pp. 199-246.

[18]William Shakespeare, Hamlet, ed. Cyrus Hay (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1963), p. 27.

function as a foil to Peza. I would not suggest that the character of Peza is firmly based on Shakespeare's Hamlet. The two works are miles apart. I would suggest that Crane was familiar with the works of Shakespeare and may have been subconsciously influenced by some of the playwright's techniques. Shakespeare was a master at comic relief, and often included in even his most serious plays elements of burlesque to relieve tension. I suggest that the inflated rhetoric and elaborate demeanor which Peza displays in "Death and the Child" are intended to produce the same effects. Solomon's contention that "Death and the Child" is "the ultimate burlesque of the sensitive hero" fails, because as Peza moves from check-point to check-point the elements of burlesque decrease in preparation for the serious, almost tragic conclusion. The demeanor of the officers also becomes more serious as the author begins to once again raise the level of tension in preparation for the climax. Finally, when Peza introduces himself to the last officer before his flight from war, he speaks in Greek, not French, as Crane attempts to retrieve his hero from the admittedly dangerous precipice of burlesque.

When Peza finally arrives at the advanced infantry position, he is forced to confront death before he can confront war. It is at this point that Crane humbles his character so that he may be later redeemed. When Peza asserts his desire to fight, the officers point to "some dead men covered with blankets." The protagonist interprets this gesture as an allusion to the dangers of battle. The officer quickly corrects Peza's misconception: "No . . . . I mean cartridges -- a bandoleer. Take a bandoleer from one of them." (138) Paralyzed by fear, Peza is unable to touch death, and the officer directs a soldier

to remove the cartridge belt for him. Even as Peza raced from hill to hill, the reality of war eluded him until he was forced to confront death. The grotesqueness of war is conveyed by the author's surrealistic description of Peza's plight. Moving from burlesque to black humor, Crane writes, "The bandoleer gripped him tighter; he wished to raise his hands to his throat like a man who is choking. The rifle was clammy . . . it was crawling and frightful." (139) One recalls the "choking as from men drowning," in the description of the fleeing peasants; Peza now becomes a participant in a panic he had formerly merely observed. He hears the voices of the dead "speaking to him of bloody death, mutilation."

The author modulates the level of tension here by shifting perspective once again from a scene of panic to one of rest:

> The bearded man sat munching a bit of hard bread. Fat, greasy, squat, he was like an idol made of tallow . . . . This old blockhead was cooly gnawing at the bread, while he, Peza, was being throttled by a dead man's arms. (139)

Crane builds the tension to its highest level in the next paragraph, describing the eyes of the dead men staring at Peza. The protagonist feels himself being drawn down to "some mystic chamber under the earth." Just as Peza had "whirled and whirled" amid the universe of argus-eyed art, "with cries of woe and joy, sin and beauty, piercing his ears until he had been <u>obliged</u> to simply come away," now, "He was <u>bidden</u>; they had <u>commanded</u> him; He was going, going, going."

The final paragraph of this section, which Eric Solomon and Maxwell Geismar contend should have constituted the conclusion of this

story, returns the work to the proper perspective:

> An officer's voice was suddenly heard calling out the calculation of the distance to the enemy, the readjustment of the sights . . . . The men turned their eyes to the front. (140)

The entire work has been about a readjustment of sights as Crane has taken both the readers and protagonist through a series of crises culminating in tension and release. The final and most important readjustment occurs in the concluding section.

CHAPTER THREE:
The Child and Peza

The role of "the child" has been intentionally excluded from the preceding study of Crane's technique and imagery. This is not to say that the child is extraneous -- added simply as a vehicle for Crane's final statement. To the contrary, the child is an extremely important element, whose most obvious function is that of providing an over-riding unity to the work, a unity necessitated by the tension-release-shift structure.

Just as the soldiers are ordered to readjust their sights in preparation for this encounter with battle, so must the reader readjust his sights and focus on the child at the conclusion of the work. In order for the child to perform his function as focal point, he must encompass all of the important elements found therein. These elements are the peasants, nature, the soldiers, war, and most importantly, Peza.

Crane first presents the child in Section II, after the reader has been introduced to the fleeing peasants, Peza, the lieutenant, and the scene of battle. The only transition the author supplies is the opening sentence: "A child was playing on a mountain, and disregarding a battle that was waging on the plain." After devoting four paragraphs to a description of the child's activities, the author shifts to an impressionistic study of Peza as he moves toward the battle lines. Throughout the remainder of the work there is no overt reference to this abandoned child until the conclusion. The rather abrupt

introduction and conclusion of Section II should suggest to the reader that the author is not merely including the portrait of a child in his large scenario of war. Shifts in perspective are used throughout the novel, but here Crane signals the shift by the opening and closing of a chapter. He wished to imprint the child on the mind of the reader as a type of subliminal image. The work is short enough for this to be carried through successfully, and the reappearance of the child at the conclusion unites and explains much of the intervening action and imagery.

The child's relationship to the fleeing peasants is most clear. He is of peasant stock and had been left behind when "fear had swept the parents away."[1] The image of fear as a river is again suggested here, linking the child to the streaming peasants of the opening scene. Terror, "deluging them with fears," had caused the parents to lose sight of their child as they attempted to salvage their possessions from the advance of war.

The child's relation to nature is established when his "tranquility" in the face of "the death on the plain" is described as "as invincible as that of the mountain on which he stood." (128) In the concluding section the child becomes "brother of the mountain, the sky and the sea." (141) The child is not totally oblivious to the war however. While unable to totally comprehend it, he incorporates aspects of the war into his game of sheep herding: "He reproduced,

[1]Fredson Bowers, ed., The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane, Volume V (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1970), p. 128. All subsequent references to "Death and The Child" will be to this edition.

to a degree, any movements which he accounted rational . . . ." (128) As mentioned earlier, the child is linked to the war on the plains when the narrator describes him running "to and fro, fumbling with sticks and making great machinations with pebbles." (122) The phrase "to and fro" was used in both the war dispatches and "Death and the Child," to indicate the movement of officers behind the lines.[2] The sticks might be seen to represent guns; the pebbles, bullets; and "great machinations," parallel the machine/factory image of war. Additionally, at the second artillery position, the officer

> . . . waved a little cane. Sometimes he paused in his promenade to study the field through his glasses. (136)

Similarly, the child

> . . . turned then a questioning eye upon the battle, a small stick poised in his hand . . . . (128)

The action of the story converges on the image of the child.

The movements of the soldiers are mirrored by the child, but the war itself is parodied. War becomes incorporated into the child's "game," but only, somewhat ironically, those aspects that he "accounted rational." The war did not initially frighten the child -- it was "too childish." Later, "It was mystery." (140)

The child's relation to Peza is the most significant and the least overt. Crane characterizes the child as "solitary; engrossed in his own pursuits, it was seldom that he lifted his head to inquire of the world why it made so much noise." (128) The author could well have used this

[2]See p. 24, Chapter I.

passage to describe his protagonist. Peza has felt "isolated," "alone"; he was certainly "engrossed in his own pursuits." His constant concern for his "manner" and "appearance" often blocked his perception of the world around him. The naïveté of Peza, the student of book-learning, might very well have resulted in the fact that he "seldom . . . lifted his head to inquire of the world." The child views the motions of war as "a manly thing," and compares it to sheep herding, "the business of men, the traditional and exalted living of his father." (128) Peza comes to Greece "merely because my father was Greek. I thought of Greece -- I loved Greece." (122) Later he decides, "Now I want to do battle for the land of my father." (123) Much like the young child, Peza's allegiance is connected to "the tradition and exalted living [land] of his father." No doubt, he viewed his participation in war as "a manly thing." As noted earlier, Peza adapts his demeanor, his manners, to those of the officers he meets. The child "paused frequently to get a cue of manner from the soldiers fighting on the plain." (128)

Both Peza and the child are solitary observers of the war. The child has been unwittingly deserted by his parents, and Peza views the young lieutenant's departure as "desertion," a "criminal discourtesy." (130) There are striking similarities between the child's position as observer in the concluding section and Peza's posture as observer earlier in the work. The weeping child, witnessing the struggle on the plain, is described as "seated on a boulder, surveying them while the tears streamed." (140) Analogously, Peza, "breathless, pale, felt that he had been set on a pillar and was surveying mankind, the world. In the meantime dust had got in his eye." (136)

In late afternoon the child tires of his games on the mountain, experiences the first pangs of hunger, and is "beginning to be astonished" by the war on the plain. In the most natural form of release, "without any preliminary indication," he begins to cry. The child's interest is aroused by the sound of loose stones rattling on the hillside. Turning, he sees a man "drag himself up to the crest of the hill and fall panting." (140) Previously Peza's movements up and down the hills and mountains have been described as "walking," "running," and "hurrying." Now he "drags himself up" and "falls." Reinforcing the basic pattern of the work, Crane describes Peza as one who appeared to have been "flung to and fro, up and down, by cliffs and prairies." The child's piercing question, "Are you a man?" is answered in silence.

According to Eric Solomon, the "triple irony" inherent in this question suggests that Peza may be neither man (as opposed to animal), warrior, nor mature adult.[3] To suggest that Peza has been so brutalized by his experience as to be reduced to the level of an animal is unsubstantiated. Crane writes that the protagonist "gasped in the manner of a fish," but on the same page compares the eyes of the child with "those of the animal in the house." (141) Animal imagery is common in Crane's writing, and it does not appear that he has reduced Peza to that status as the result of his panic. The question of whether Peza is a warrior is important neither for the reader nor the author. The answer is too obvious. Peza was never intended to be a "warrior." His flight was from death, not war. Solomon comes close to what I

[3]Eric Solomon, Stephen Crane: From Parody to Realism (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 112.

believe was Crane's intention when he suggests that the author may have been questioning Peza's status as a mature adult. Peza is not a man, he is a child. The analogies between Peza's behavior and that of the child function not only to lend essential unity to the work, but also to identify Peza with the child in preparation for the conclusion.

Milne Holton, Eric Labor and R.W. Stallman assert that the conclusion points to Peza's death. There is nothing in the final scene of this work to support their claim. First of all Peza has fled death in the form of the dead soldiers. He fled before the attack began, and Crane makes a clear effort to establish the fact that Peza was not shot.[4] The description of Peza's face, which "had been cut in some way," hardly suggests a fatal wound. Furthermore, after the young lieutenant leaves Peza, Crane writes: "It did not occur to him [Peza] until later that he was now going to battle mainly because at a previous time a certain man had smiled." (131) There is no point in the body of the narrative at which Peza arrives at a level of honesty and introspection which would permit this insight. One must assume that the author is suggesting the character's development after the conclusion of the work. Finally, in the closing scene the author writes that Peza "breathed as if life were about to leave his body." (141) Crane was quite well versed in the use of simile and metaphor. He is making a comparison here, not a statement of fact.

Why then have these critics, two recognized as authorities in the field, come to this erroneous conclusion? The answer lies in their

[4]" . . . . many of the soldiers in the trench thought he had been struck. But those who were nearest to him knew better." (139)

misreading of the title. Peza is with the child in the closing scene of the work, leading Stallman et al to associate the title, "Death and the Child," with the characters, Peza and the child. Thus "death" is erroneously equated with "Peza." When the young peasant repeats his question, "Are you a man?" Peza remains silent, but he "knew that the definition of his misery could be written on a wee grass-blade." (141) Peza is not a man, he is a child.

Unlike Henry Fleming, Peza does not run from the sound of war, he runs from death as represented by the corpse staring him in the eye. His reaction is childish; his naïveté throughout the work is child-like. The title then, refers to Peza exclusively, not the child on the mountain. "Death and the Child" should not be read as "Peza and the Child," but as "Death and Peza."

CHAPTER FOUR:
Toward a New Level of Awareness

The greatest controversy regarding "Death and the Child" is centered around the concluding sections. As we have seen, Milne Holton, Earle Labor, and R.W. Stallman have misread the conclusion to the point where they view Peza's death as imminent. Such a misreading makes their entire interpretation of the work suspect, as the protagonist's death at the end would certainly reveal something about the author's own evaluation of his hero. Holton's contention, for example, that the character is "defeated and dehumanized"[1] at the end, was probably suggested by his erroneous reading of the final section as "describing the death of Peza."[2] In fact, Peza has not died.

Maxwell Geismar and Eric Solomon both feel that the story "faltered" in the end, preferring that Crane end the work with Peza's flight from death.[3] At the same time, Donald Gibson and R.W. Stallman view the story as "sentimental,"[4] presumably due to the inclusion of the child in the concluding section.

[1]Milne Holton, Cylinder of Vision: The Fiction and Journalistic Writing of Stephen Crane (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972), p. 191.

[2]Holton, p. 244.

[3]See Introduction, p. 5.

[4]See Introduction, p. 6.

I suggest that a proper understanding of the final scene is imperative for an appreciation of the work as a whole, and that once understood, it will reveal the evolution and maturity of Crane's philosophical stance toward men and war. Had Crane concluded "Death and the Child" with Section VI, the impression he would have left with the reader would be one approaching fatalism. The naive protagonist, well-intentioned or otherwise, would have culminated his war experiences with a flight of panic bordering on black humor and the absurd. As the officer called for a "readjustment of sights" after Peza's flight, the protagonist would have been greatly diminished in the reader's mind. Since Peza's flight in the end is linked with the peasants' flight in the opening scene, a flight so directed by fear and panic that a young child, the "first born," was left behind, the diminishing of Peza would have to suggest a corresponding attitude toward the peasants. As a study of the war dispatches indicates, this is not the case. Had the author displayed contempt for his fleeing protagonist, his stance toward the peasants would, at the very least, seem inconsistent.

Maxwell Geismar refers to "Death and the Child" as "a sequel and key" to The Red Badge of Courage. It is the final scene which provides this key. Throughout "Death and the Child," there are a number of parallels with the early Civil War story. In the war novel we find the appearance of a "spectral soldier" to whom young Fleming offers aid. Peza, on the other hand, flees from the "spectre" he encounters behind the Greek lines:

> . . . one of the unwounded soldiers loudly shouted to him to return and assist in this tragic march. But even Peza's fingers revolted;

> he was afraid of the spectre; he would not have dared to touch it.[5]

It is true that Fleming later deserted the "tattered soldier," but his desertion was modulated by his aid to Jim Conklin and his subsequent heroics in battle. For Peza there is no such romantic redemption. Whereas Henry Fleming was haunted at the conclusion by "the dogging memory of the tattered soldier," the "somber phantom of the desertion in the fields,"[6] Peza, who viewed his separation from the lieutenant as "desertion," a "criminal discourtesy," has no such moments of insight. His behavior is neither romanticized nor excused. It is simply real.

While Crane's treatment of Peza in this later work may seem somewhat severe, the author's attitude toward the common soldiers becomes more sympathetic after he has seen real war. In The Red Badge of Courage, Crane reports the attempt of "a rather fat soldier" to steal a horse from a young girl. His comrades jeer him and advise the dauntless young girl to "hit him with a stick." (RBC, 41) The "piratical private" returns empty-handed. In "Death and the Child," a wounded soldier succeeds in commandeering a donkey from a peasant who had formerly retained possession of his animal despite the pleas of wounded

[5]Fredson Bowers, ed., The University of Virginia Edition of the Works of Stephen Crane, Volume V (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1970), p. 135. All subsequent references to "Death and the Child" will be marked DC, and refer to this edition.

[6]Stephen Crane, The Red Badge of Courage, Wilson Follett, ed., The Works of Stephen Crane, Volume I (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1963), p. 30. All subsequent references to The Red Badge of Courage will be marked RBC, and refer to this edition.

men for transportation. This final soldier "raised his staff and made threat with it," and "suddenly the row was at an end." (DC, 126)

Both Fleming and Peza view themselves as "isolated," separated from the ignorant masses, and Fleming's decision to "look out . . . for his own personal comfort" (RBC, 29) is echoed by the narrator's comment that Peza's "whole vision was focused on his own chance." (DC, 130) Young Fleming despaired that "Greek-like struggles would be no more," (RBC, 29) and Crane reaffirms that view, without the faintest touch of despair, in the lack of any type of glamorous heroics in "Death and the Child."

It is in the final and essential section of "Death and the Child" that Crane reveals the significance of the corresponding and contrasting elements of The Red Badge of Courage and "Death and the Child." Describing Peza as one who "gasped in the manner of a fish," (DC, 141) he provides the final link of his protagonist with Fleming, who was humiliated by the veterans who "persistently yelled 'Fresh-fish!' at him." (RBC, 30) Crane's closing comments regarding Henry Fleming read, "He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man." (RBC, 199) Peza, on the other hand, fails to answer the child's question regarding his status as a man.

The factors contributing to the progression from the statement, "He was a man," to the question "Are you a man?" reveal the progress Crane has made as both writer and thinker. In Crane's imaginative account of the Civil War, the protagonist is allowed to romanticize both his successes and his failures. His redemption is guaranteed

because "it came to pass . . . that his soul changed." (RBC, 199) In "Death and the Child," Peza has received no such baptism by fire. To be sure, Peza has learned much. His realization that "the definition of his misery could be written on a wee grass-blade" (DC, 141) implies a beginning of awareness. But it is not going to be quite as easy for Peza to "look back on the brass and bombast of his earlier gospels and see them truly." (RBC, 199) Furthermore, for Peza to answer the child's question in the affirmative at some future date is going to require more than simply courage in battle. Crane's concept of "manhood" has matured to more than mere physical courage and endurance. Consider Crane's comment regarding the professional German soldiers he suspected were aiding the Turks:

> I think these officers are the normal results of German civilization, which teaches that a man should first of all be a soldier; ultimately he becomes simply a soldier, not a man at all.[7]

It has been remarked earlier that Crane was concerned with the quality of one's personal honesty. In "Death and the Child" the young author reveals his allegiance to this code. I suggest that a great deal of the ambiguity of the oft-debated passages of The Red Badge of Courage resulted from Crane's attempt to create out of his imagination a work that would be both exciting and romantically appealing, without compromising too severely his allegiance to realism. However, one is not encouraged to assume a negative attitude toward Fleming's inadequacies, because of his youthful innocence and final heroics.

[7]R.W. Stallman and E.R. Hagemann, eds., The War Dispatches of Stephen Crane (New York: New York University Press, 1964), p. 30.

The youth is neatly tied together and presented to the reader with the label "He was a man." We are told that "Scars faded as flowers." (RBC, 199) The "leaden rain clouds" present the only possible gloom on the horizon. Perhaps it was Crane's attempt to stop short of promising nirvana.

Peza receives none of the gentle care Crane lavishes on his earlier hero. The fact that he is young receives little attention. Whereas Henry was presented as innocent, Peza is tagged naive. As a character he is devoid of any of the redeeming qualities of his counterpart. Neither does Peza gain the status of "interpreter" accorded the correspondent of "The Open Boat." Crane demonstrated genuine concern for the average man in "Death and the Child": the fleeing peasants, the wounded and war-weary soldiers, even the relaxed officers conversing behind the trench-lines. The peasants are in a state of panic, the weary soldiers know only that war is "hard work," and the officers refrain from stirring patriotic orations. Peza is also portrayed as the average man. He is not someone we admire as ideal, but someone we recognize as real -- a composite of the personalities Crane described in his war dispatches. The war dispatches, then, become indispensable as a tool for establishing Crane's frame of mind when composing "Death and the Child." Rather than being sentimental, "Death and the Child" presents what appears to be an honest evaluation of the men and women who find themselves involved in man's greatest folly. As Crane matured, he was able to distinguish between a fascination with war, and an admiration of war. His fascination with war remained, and eventually led him to Cuba and

premature death. But his admiration shifted, with "Death and the Child," away from feats of great heroism, to the suffering of the average man.

Finally, despite the unredeemed failures of Peza's brief encounter with the war in Greece, Crane, displaying restraint not found in the romantic conclusion of The Red Badge of Courage, suggests Peza's future redemption. After leaving the first battalion despite the officers' many attempts to dissuade him, the narrator writes, "when he reflected upon their ways afterward, he saw dimly that they were actuated principally by some universal childish desire for a spectator of their fine things. They were going into action and they wished to be seen . . . ." (DC, 135) Peza was obsessed with his appearance and manner throughout the work. When he recognizes afterward that concern for appearance and approval are both universal and childish, the author suggests insight for his protagonist. Similarly, the author writes that "it did not occur to him until later" that the reason he continued on to the front after the lieutenant had to leave him was mainly because of the challenging smile the latter cast his way when Peza first offered himself to the war effort. This also suggests an awakening in the protagonist as a result of his humiliation.

"Death and the Child" does not promise redemption for the protagonist, it merely holds out some glimmer of hope. The descendant of a long line of evangelizing ministers, the mature Crane has recognized the inherent dangers of a rigid prescription of either salvation or damnation. His credibility as an author and Peza's credibility as a character are enhanced by merely holding out the possibility, the suggestion, that Peza may be redeemed. A new level of awareness is suggested, then, in "Death and the Child" for Peza, and by "Death and

the Child" for Crane. Crane was to occasionally falter, but remains admirable. The same latitude should be granted to Peza.

CONCLUSION

In a letter to Ripley Hitchcock Crane wrote, "I cannot help vanishing and disappearing and dissolving. It is my foremost trait."[1] Crane's tendency to solipsism has contributed to the difficulty of arriving at a definitive interpretation of much of his work. However, the fact that Crane was a rather accomplished journalist in addition to his role as author should provide critics with an avenue for approaching the works of Stephen Crane that compensates for the gaps and uncertainties regarding his personal history. This approach must be put to more productive use than merely stirring controversy over whether there were four or five men in the Commodore's dinghy.[2]

The close link which exists between Crane's journalistic and fictional account of the Greek war makes "Death and the Child" a work worthy of special consideration. From the war dispatches we gain insight into how Crane himself viewed the Greek war and where his sympathies lay. One gleans some understanding of the fictional characters from Crane's stance toward their real counterparts. And yet critics, battling over the "ambiguities" in the works of Stephen

[1]Theodore L. Gross and Stanley Wertheim, Hawthorne, Melville, Stephen Crane: A Critical Bibliography (New York: The Free Press, 1971), p. 219.

[2]See R.W. Stallman, Stephen Crane: A Critical Bibliography (Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1972), pp. 373, 607.

Crane, have chosen to ignore this possible key. Clark Griffith, for example, contends, in "Stephen Crane and the Ironic Last Word," that Crane's fiction simply appears to present maturation stories whereas, in fact, the characters do not gain any insight from their experiences.[3] Rather, he asserts, they simply create new illusions which preserve their sanity in a naturalistic universe -- because they cannot help themselves, they must try to evade the facts. The critic cites the conclusions of The Red Badge of Courage, "The Open Boat," and "The Blue Hotel" to support his case. If Crane is subtly but intentionally implying such, why does "Death and the Child" end with the words, "and he knew that the definition of his misery could be written on a wee grass-blade." Peza has created no new illusions. Rather, he ran from an illusion -- the illusion of the dead soldiers calling to him. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Crane does not guarantee that Peza will emerge from his ordeal a man, but he clearly suggests the possibility. In any case, his protagonist does not try to "evade the facts." Before one attempts to provide so far-reaching an interpretation of the author's basic philosophy, it would be well to consider all the "maturation" stories -- especially a work which parallels The Red Badge of Courage and was written between the composition of "The Open Boat" and "The Blue Hotel." I do not pretend that "Death and the Child" presents all the answers, but because a joint consideration of the journalism and fiction reveals so much about this particular work, it must be taken into consideration as one of the most forthright works in the Crane cannon.

[3]Clark Griffith, "Stephen Crane and the Ironic Last Word," Philological Quarterly, XLVII (January, 1968), pp. 83-91.

"Death and the Child" is of further importance to the Crane canon because no where else in his writing does the author so thoroughly blend technique, imagery and meaning. The tension-release-shift structure of the work begins with water imagery, is reinforced by the geographical movement of the characters, and surfaces in Peza's mental analysis of the war-weary soldiers. This motif is so pervasive as to suggest its application to the concluding scenes. Peza has come close to war and death, establishing tension; flees, releasing that tension; and the shift may well be intended to extend through the conclusion to further suggest Peza's later insight. In any case, the technical complexity of the work, which directs the flow of action and thought throughout, is certainly indicative of the artistic maturity of Crane as craftsman. A great deal has been written about Crane's style, but again critics have failed to see "Death and the Child" as a culmination of that style.

Finally, those critics who have directed some attention to this work, have either allowed themselves to be misled by the title or have failed to see the importance of the conclusion. If any generalizations about a basic philosophy are to be made, they should begin with an examination of the concluding sections of "Death and the Child." Crane clearly could have opted for closing the story with Peza's flight from battle, as some critics have argued he should have. Instead he chose to end the work from an entirely different perspective. If one is genuinely concerned with Crane's "meaning," one has merely to view the movement away from fatalism which would have resulted from the termination of the work with Section VI. Since Crane chose not to

end on this note, the final section must be viewed as a more accurate account of the author's philosophy. Crane ends by neither ridiculing Peza for running nor excusing his actions, as he did with Henry Fleming in his earlier war story. Rather, the author seems to hold his protagonist responsible, which implies free will and tends to negate naturalism.

The relationship between the statement "He was a man" and the question "Are you a man?" clearly indicates both a link with and a movement away from the attitude expressed in The Red Badge of Courage. Crane's concept of what it means to be a man is no longer linked to bravery in battle, a quality of the code character later developed by Hemingway. Rather, the work takes on more universal implications. Peza's self-concept has changed. He no longer views himself as the daring young man who "could do something finer." William James writes, "A man's Social Self is the recognition which he gets from his mates. We are not only gregarious animals, liking to be in the sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably, by our kind."[4] Peza had been trying to impress "significant others" in the course of his journey. His final encounter, however, has been one of humiliation -- as he ran the soldiers in the trenches "bawled after him curses" and "cynically remarked upon the speed of the runaway."

To be a man means to accept the conditions of life, to adjust, like the old sailor retired to land and the farm-boy gone to sea.

[4]William James, "From the Principles of Psychology," in William James: The Essential Writings, ed. Bruce Wilshire (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 85.

Peza knows that "the definition of his misery could be written on a wee grass-blade," and must accept the truth -- see his behavior for what it was -- and adjust to the world as it is, not merely as he dreamed it would be. Thus, the final shift in perspective, the "readjustment of sights," involves both a change in the way Peza views the world and himself. His perception of the world and of himself has proven inadequate and humiliating. Change of some sort is inevitable, for man cannot function without some understanding of himself and his relation to the external world. Again, it must be stressed that Crane does not promise that this adjustment will be a successful one, he merely suggests it, holds out hope for it. This is hardly ambiguous; on the contrary, it is realistic.

The winter of 1897-98 was one of Crane's most productive seasons, and was the last time he was to produce first-rate work before his health began to fail. It is this particular time period on which critics should center their attention, with "Death and the Child" as the focal point.

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