



Books

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LITERARY HORIZONS

The Short Story Was His Medium

ALTHOUGH Stephen Crane died in his twenty-ninth year, he left a large body of writing. Indeed, *The Work of Stephen Crane*, when it was put together by Wilson Follett and published by Alfred A. Knopf in the Twenties, ran to twelve volumes, and at that, according to the specialists, it is incomplete. (Published in a small, very expensive edition, the set has long been out of print.)

One of the most diligent of Crane specialists, Professor Thomas A. Gullason of Rhode Island University, has performed a useful task by making Crane's prose available in two volumes. (*The Collected Poems*, 1930, is still in print, and a new and presumably more comprehensive collection of the poetry is being prepared.) In 1963 Gullason published *The Complete Short Stories and Sketches of Stephen Crane*, arranged as nearly as possible in chronological order; and now he has published *The Complete Novels of Stephen Crane* (Double-day, \$5.95).

Gullason wrote a long introduction for the first volume, and he has written an even longer one—nearly a hundred pages—for the second. He has a good deal to say about Crane's life and particularly the effect of his family on his work. He also discusses literary well-springs, maintaining that too much has been made of the influence of Tolstoy and Zola, and finding Hamlin Garland more important to Crane's development than W. D. Howells. He talks about each of the six novels, usually in a perceptive fashion and without claiming too much for the lesser ones.

Although I am grateful for the information Gullason has provided in his introduction, I deplore the many lapses in his style. At the outset, for example, he speaks of Crane's father's "sermon-type books," a phrase that neither Bernstein nor the Evanses would sanction in formal prose. Crane, he says, "had a strong and mystic-like yearning for the death-wish." (How does one yearn for a wish?) "Stephen must have also been

impressed by Howells's courage to defend the naturalism of Tolstoy. . . ." Usually when he voiced an opinion about an author his attitude rarely changed. "Instead of plots, Stephen Crane usually thought in terms of sketches—in both his novels and short stories—because, for one, he was interested in a 'dramatic point of view.' One what? "Crane has shown a marked improvement in controlling his style and to make it work with and not against his theme." George (in *George's Mother*) "thinks that life with Bleeker and his hoodlums give [sic] him position and purpose, but they are sterile traps and help to destroy him."

As for the six novels, one of them—*The Red Badge of Courage*—is familiar to everyone, and deserves to be. Two, *Maggie* and *George's Mother*, are known to Crane's admirers, and, though they have obvious flaws, are of literary importance. The other three I had never read, partly because they were hard to come by, partly because the critics seemed to agree that they were no great shakes.

I am now in a position to say that I haven't been missing much. *The Third Violet*, begun shortly after the success of *The Red Badge*, contains scarcely a line that couldn't have been written by any one of the scores of hack writers who were contributing serials to the popular magazines of the Nineties. The young farmer-artist and the beautiful heiress who meet at a summer resort are as lifeless as the dummies in a store window. (The "kittenish" Howells, as Gullason calls him, treated a similar theme with infinitely more vitality and insight in *The Landlord of Lion's Head*.) The secondary story, which is laid in Greenwich Village garret studios and features a cigarette-smoking model, is sickeningly coy with its hints at naughtiness. One would almost say that the man who had written *The Red Badge* and *Maggie* couldn't have written *The Third Violet* if he had been trying to win a bet.

Active Service is even worse. In 1897

- 31 Literary Horizons: Granville Hicks reviews "The Complete Novels of Stephen Crane," edited by Thomas A. Gullason
- 32 Letters to the Book Review Editor
- 33 "The Jews Among the Nations," by Erich Kahler
- 34 "The New Christianity," by William Robert Miller; "Alternatives to Christian Belief," by Leslie Paul; "No Other God," by Gabriel Vahanian; "The Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age," by Leslie De-wart
- 36 "End of the Game and Other Stories," by Julio Cortázar; An Interview with Julio Cortázar by Phyllis Méras
- 37 "The Singing Lizard," by John Knowler
- 37 "The Sailor from Gibraltar," by Marguerite Duras
- 38 "North to Yesterday," by Robert Flynn
- 38 "The Diary of Anaïs Nin," edited by Gunther Stuhlmann
- 39 "The Selected Letters of Dylan Thomas," edited by Constantine FitzGibbon
- 40 "The Soviet Military and the Communist Party," by Roman Kolkowicz; "The Role of the Chinese Army," by John Gittings
- 41 Check List of the Week's New Books
- 42 Books for Young People, by Zena Sutherland

Crane covered a brief war between Greece and Turkey for the *New York Journal* and the *Westminster Gazette*. After his return to England, his friend Harold Frederic, whose early novel, *The Damnation of Theron Ware*, Crane had admired, urged him to write a novel that would make use of his experiences as a war correspondent. Once more he concocted a conventional romance: a newspaper reporter, known to be "fast," falls in love with the daughter of a distinguished professor; the professor whisks his daughter off to Greece to get her away from this undesirable suitor; the outbreak of war gives the reporter a chance to follow her and to perform various heroic deeds. Again the secondary theme introduces a woman of dubious virtue, an actress turned correspondent, and again the good girl gets her man. All this is bad enough; but in order to utilize his war material Crane

botched the telling of the story, which was feeble enough to begin with.

It is not surprising that Crane, desperate for money, should note the great popularity of historical romances in the late Nineties and decide to have a try. Gullason insists that *The O'Ruddy* was deliberate satire. I can believe that Crane was, in the current phrase, putting his potential public on; but he hoped that they wouldn't know and would buy the book. He died before he had finished it, and the completion was left to a friend, Robert Barr. The early chapters are pleasantly lively, but Crane seems to have grown weary of his job before he was forced to abandon it.

Our literary history is full of writers whose powers declined in their later years, but I know of no case quite like Crane's. In the first place, *The Third Violet* is not simply inferior to *The Red Badge* in the way that Faulkner's *The Mansion* is inferior to *The Hamlet*, or Hemingway's *Across the River and Into the Trees* to *The Sun Also Rises*. It is in a completely different category, as Elia Kazan's *The Arrangement*, say, is in a different category from *The Brothers Karamazov*. In the second place, Crane's literary powers had not failed in the last three or four years of his life; it was then that he wrote his greatest short stories—"The Open Boat," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky," "The Monster," and "The Blue Hotel."

That he needed to write books that might sell, and therefore tried to cater to popular taste, is understandable. Men of even greater genius have written pot-boilers, but there has almost always been a touch of genius in the work that kept the pot boiling. Now that I realize to what depths Crane fell in these late novels, I find the problem of his life and work doubly perplexing.

—GRANVILLE HICKS.

FRASER YOUNG'S LITERARY CRYPT NO. 1250

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. Answer No. 1250 will be found in the next issue.

E YCJ'H PJCG OAWQ ZSCAH

ORYEWEJR, SAH E PJCG GQZH

E DEPR. —NRBRDOZJ

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 1249

To most people a savage nation is one that doesn't wear uncomfortable clothes. —FINLEY PETER DUNNE.

LETTERS TO THE Book Review Editor



Greek Justice

MR. ROBERT CLEMENTS BEWAILS [SR, June 3] for Mr. Andreas Papandreou, presenting him as a dedicated patriot, struggling to bring Greece "out of feudalism" and suffering now in the hands of the Greek overlords like Kazantzakis's Manolios.

All the above, from the beginning to the end, are lies:

1. Mr. Papandreou himself never contended that he is a dedicated patriot, nor a simple one in the true sense of patriotism, that is in the sense of personal sacrifice, because, as everybody knows well, when between 1940 and 1949 our country (Greece) was fighting against Fascism, Nazism and Communism, Mr. Papandreou, although the proper age, did not come here and fight on the side of all other Greeks. He preferred to stay in the USA very, very far from the war dangers. . . . Let Mr. Clements know that his friend came to Greece in the recent peaceful years on the purpose of a \$2,000 a month salary.

2. Greece is not under feudalism (at least, not more than France or Italy, etc., are) and therefore has not the need of anyone to bring her out of that sinful situation. . . .

3. Mr. Papandreou is not accused of what Mr. Clements asserts but he is accused of plotting against the security of the country. Please note that he could have proven his innocence by presenting himself to justice months before the establishment of today's government, but he was not eager to do that. On the contrary, he did everything, with the help of his father, the ex-prime minister, to avoid the presentation to justice.

4. In any case, Mr. Clements must not fear for the fate of his friend because he is not in the hands of the overlords and the churchmen of Kazantzakis's imagination. He is not, too, in the hands of rebels with whom he collaborated for two years, as he declared, to destroy the economy of the country. Mr. Papandreou is in the hands of Greek justice, which is as honorable as the justice of every civilized European country.

FOTIS LAMPROPULOS.

Athens, Greece

AS CO-SECRETARY OF THE 700-member American-Canadian University Committee for Andreas Papandreou, I am accustomed to misrepresentations of Dr. Papandreou, which now emanate understandably from Athens, but less understandably from Washington. Even the dictator Patakos has assured us in writing that Greek justice will be "unbiased" at Dr. Papandreou's cynical "treason" trial. It will suffice that I reply merely to Mr. Lampropulos's two principal charges to gain an idea of the kind of "justice" that will characterize this forthcoming trial.

Charge: Dr. Papandreou was a slacker during World War II, betaking himself

"very, very far from the war dangers."

Fact: Dr. Papandreou left his Harvard teaching voluntarily to enlist for over two years of combat service with the U.S. Navy in the Pacific area. Athens (and Washington) may choose to forget this vital fact, but his hundreds of academic colleagues in Harvard, Northwestern, Minnesota, and Berkeley do not.

Charge: Dr. Papandreou could have waived his parliamentary immunity and stood trial in connection with the alleged Aspida plot of liberal generals. Fact: He offered to do so, but was overruled by his party. It has now been widely demonstrated by European and American newspapers (e.g., the *New York Post*) that this "plot" was framed by a planted foreign press secretary in his own office, whom he dismissed and whose activities he repudiated once Dr. Papandreou was aware of them. The Army did not want the Union Centrist party to win in the May elections, which it sabotaged with the blessing of influential foreign friends, as Papandreou would have emerged as the leader of that party. What better than to trump up the charges it has?

ROBERT J. CLEMENTS.

New York, N.Y.

TR Sprang on Little Texas

IN HIS LETTER [SR, June 17] in reference to the battle of San Juan Hill, Brayton Harris was correct in pointing out that the horses of the troopers were left back on the beach in Florida, but he is mistaken in his assertion that Theodore Roosevelt was on foot. The officers had been allowed to take their horses to Cuba, and Roosevelt was mounted on a wiry steed named "Little Texas." In his book on the Rough Riders, page 124, he says: ". . . I sprang on my horse and then my 'crowded hour' began."

Mr. Harris makes another error in stating that the Rough Riders were commanded by Leonard Wood instead of Roosevelt. On June 25, the day following the Americans' first battle on Cuban soil, that at Las Guasimas, the brigade commander, General S. B. M. Young, was stricken with fever, and Wood replaced him, while Roosevelt stepped up to the regimental command and thus, on horseback, led the Rough Riders up San Juan Hill on July 1.

VIRGIL CARRINGTON JONES.

Washington, D.C.

Credit Due

WE THANK YOU for the notice concerning our two publications contained in "A Quarter-Century of Milestones" [SR, June 10]. However, the name of The Catholic University of America Press was omitted, making the reference irrelevant.

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