

Members of SAAP are very aware of the major revival of interest in classical American philosophy—indeed many of them were the driving force behind this renaissance. Bringing out critical editions has had much to do with this resurgence. Younger scholars now take for granted the collections of easily accessible and reliable texts we casually refer to as the Harvard James edition, the Southern Illinois Dewey project, the Chicago Royce series and, well underway now, a chronological edition of Peirce and a Santayana edition. (See John McDermott, "The Renaissance of Classical American Philosophy," American Studies International 16 (1978): 5-7 for a brief history of these definitive editions).

Many SAAP Newsletter readers are also aware of a parallel but more extensive edition effort in American Literature. Critical edition projects on Thoreau, Emerson, Whittier, Adams and dozens more are currently under the supervision of the Center for Editions of American Authors. (See Arlin Turner, "Interpreting Nineteenth-Century American Literature," American Studies International 18 (1980): 5-21 for information on the Center, its editions and the status of the texts of some seventy American authors).

Momentum from critical editions in American philosophy and literature has fueled increased interdisciplinary scholarship. Our colleagues in literature are keen on philosophical issues and influences; their interest is not peripheral or incidental but is often the focus of lead and major articles in first-rate journals. See, for example, Ron Thomas, "Thoreau, William James and Frost's 'Quest of the Purple-Fringed': A Contextual Reading," American Literature 60 (1988): 433-450 or W. David Shaw, "The Poetics of Pragmatism: Robert Frost and William James", The New England Quarterly 59 (1986): 159-189. (Incidentally, Shaw explicates Frost's pragmatism with reference to Royce and Peirce as well as James). Perhaps the best instance of literary response to philosophers and philosophy has been the influence of Stanley Cavell's The Senses of Walden, first published in 1972 by Viking Press, re-issued several times now available in an inexpensive paperback (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981).

Therefore, I am reviewing two books on Stephen Crane in a newsletter addressed primarily to philosophers to underscore a tremendous opportunity. Interdisciplinary scholarship in American philosophy and literature has, in terms of access to reliable texts, never been easier and, in terms of interest, never
been as welcome. Our colleagues in literature are attentive to philosophy's "angle of vision." If we philosophers do not offer our expertise, scholars not trained in philosophy will meet the demand.

Interdisciplinary studies notwithstanding, there are purely parochial philosophical motivations for studying American literature. Crane, Frederic, Twain, Norris, Drieser and Howells were nourished by the same culture as the classical American philosophers. I was struck to discover, in the work of Stephen Crane, treatment of: pluralism, meliorism, the strenuous mood, a finite God, environmental determinism and pragmatism. However, a look at the leading magazines, The Arena, Forum, McClures and Century and the influential newspapers of the day, the New York Herald, Tribune, World and the Philadelphia Press revealed that all intellectuals of that era initiated and, of course, responded to a common agenda of ideas, issues and problems.

For example, James found that he had to use various strategies to get his audiences to confront reality's multiplicity. It was difficult to dislodge his listeners' assumption of a monistic, "block-world" and their belief in the Truth. James should have had his audiences read Stephen Crane's tale "An Eloquence of Grief." Crane did not explain to the reader that the meaning and significance of events depends on one's point of view. Instead, Crane maneuvers the reader into experiential contact with richness, novelty and surprise: "This girl scream . . . was so graphic of grief, that it slit with a dagger the curtain of commonplace" (Stephen Crane: Prose and Poetry: 863). Crane's tactic was to disorient the reader, weaken his confidence in the ordinary and conventional account of things and then to suggest compelling alternative points of view.

Stephen Crane: Prose and Poetry contains the best of Crane. Levenson has reprinted most of the University of Virginia edition, The Works of Stephen Crane, (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1969-76, 10 vols.). The editor of the Virginia series was Fredson Bowers who was also the general textual editor of the Harvard University critical edition of William James! Stephen Crane contains five short novels, two books of poetry and nearly one hundred stories, sketches and newspaper reports. Levenson has also provided a useful chronology, ample notes and a good index.

Reading Crane is its own reward. But, beyond his glittering and frequently arresting style, philosophers will profit from Crane's handling of metaphysical, epistemological, anthropological and ethical matters. In the interest of brevity, here are brief samples, by title only:

1. The complexity of experienced reality.
   "An Episode of War"
   "Death and the Child."
   "An Experiment in Misery."
   "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky."
2. Ethical duties toward animals.
   "A Dark-brown Dog."
   "In the Depths of a Coal Mine."
   "The Price of the Harness."
   "Stephen Crane in Mexico."

3. Moral vs. supererogatory acts of heroism.

   **The Red Badge of Courage.**
   **The Monster.**
   "The Veteran."
   "The Clan of No-Name."
   "The Mystery of Heroism."

4. Human solidarity in an indifferent universe.

   "The Open Boat."
   "Nebraska's Bitter Fight for Life."
   "A Man and Some Others."
   "One Dash--Horses."

   *The Red Badge of Courage* made Crane famous at twenty-five, he was dead of TB at twenty-nine. Although, the ever elusive Crane continues to defy a definitive biography, *The Correspondence of Stephen Crane* is, to date, the best access to the "real" Crane. Six full-length biographies of him have been published, each has flaws. At least four other biographers have thrown in the towel. William McBride, an artist acquainted with Crane during his New York City days said, "I spent ten years planning a study of Crane and ending by deciding there was no such animal, although I had known him for eleven years." In the late fifties, Louis Zara did not capitulate, but he half-surrendered. He called his "biography," *Dark Rider: A Novel Based on the Life of Stephen Crane.*

   The primary impetus behind *The Correspondence of Stephen Crane* was the acquisition by Syracuse University of the research collection of Melvin Schoberlin. From 1936 until about 1952 Schoberlin worked on a biography of Crane, *Falcon of Despair*--a line from one of Crane's poems. In his travels and studies Schoberlin acquired important Crane materials including sixty-two new letters by Crane and thirty-nine by his common-law wife Cora. Along with Schoberlin's new letters, Sorrentino and Wertheim have included 400 letters and inscriptions not found in *Stephen Crane: Letters,* eds. R. W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes, Columbia UP, 1960.

   Wertheim and Sorrentino are masters in sorting out Crane's comings and goings, correcting his careless and often faulty dating and identifying his correspondents. Their explanatory notes and short essays at the beginning of the major sections of the book are unfailing helpful and nearly always devoid of editorializing. Unfortunately, they did not resist the temptation to put spin on their general Introduction.
For instance, they go out of their way to comment:

Writing to his older brother William from Greece in April 1897 (No. 315), Crane expresses delight over the possibility of attaining military glory in "a position on the staff of the crown Prince. Wont that be great? I am so happy over it I can hardly breathe. I shall try--I shall try like blazes to get a decoration out of the thing. . . ." The irony that a writer who had exposed the futility of war and had treated heroic exploits cynically should lust for glory in battle seems to have escaped Crane, who was the master of irony; but Crane knew that his conventional brother would value high position and decorations, and he skillful manipulated people from whom he wished to borrow money. (5-6)

I, however, find duplicity and manipulation mostly in the eyes of the two editors. The facts are that Crane was fascinated with war and things military. His mother sent him to Claverlack College and Hudson River Institute at the age of sixteen precisely for its military training--Crane was thereafter planning to apply to West Point. As Crane's sister-in-law put, he "was passionately fond of outdoor sports, as well as of everything pertaining to military affairs. He loved to play at soldier's from his early childhood. Most of his playthings were in the form of toy soldiers, guns and the like." (Mrs. George Crane, "Stephen Crane's Boyhood," New York World (10 June 1900: E3). Crane did very well at Claverlack and he thrived on military drills, rising to the rank of captain of the student battalion. After Crane's abbreviated formal education, war tales, both factual and fiction, were a mainstay of his writing.

Readers who find Crane treating heroism cynically can not be careful readers. Crane often examined heroism in his short but bountiful career. In many tales he carefully separated false from genuine heroism; he clearly delineated heroism's duties both within, and above and beyond, the pale of morality. One of Crane short gems (almost all of his sketches and tales run less than ten printed pages) is "A Mystery of Heroism." Private Fred Collins complains so long and loudly about his thirst that he was given permission to run across a no man's land to a well. Amid Collins mixed motivations, his selfish desires and the high probability of his death in a trivial matter, Crane probes heroism. Soldiers on both sides of the battle watched as Collins, with a full bucket of water, "ran in the manner of a farmer chased out of a dairy by a bull." (Stephen Crane, 630). No one could understand why he did it. Not his comrades, his superiors nor himself. To Collins "it seemed to him supernaturally strange that he had allowed his mind to maneuver his body into such a situation" (628). If this was heroism, either "heroes were not much" (628) or "he was an intruder into the land of fine deeds" (629). Near the end of the story Crane deftly distinguishes reckless daring from morally praiseworthy risk as he described Collins turning back to give the water to a wounded and dying
artillery officer pinned under his fallen horse.

It is regrettable that Wertheim and Sorrentino felt the need to "help" readers interpret the very facts they worked so hard to sort out. If they had only observed Crane's own creed:

I have tried to observe closely, and to set down what I have seen in the simplest and most concise way. I have been very careful not to let any theories or pet ideas of my own be seen in my writing. Preaching is fatal to art in literature. I try to give my riders a slice out of life; and if there is any moral or lesson in it I do not point it out. I let the reader find it for himself. (Letter No. 240)

Wertheim and Sorrentino, and also Bowers and Levenson richly deserve our thanks. With these two books scholars have at their fingertips the writing of this astounding genius of American literature. Whether there is wisdom in this youth's writings I leave for you philosophers to decide. Begin, if you will, by considering two stanzas from War is Kind:

"Have you ever made a just man?"
"Oh, I have made three," answered God
"But two of them are dead
"And the third---
"Listen! Listen!
"And you will hear the thud of his defeat." (1327)

A man said to the universe:
"Sir, I exist!"
"However," replied the universe,
"The fact has not created in me
"A sense of obligation." (1335)

Patrick K. Dooley, St. Bonaventure University

QUERY: LETTERS OF WILLIAM JAMES.

The American Council of Learned Societies, supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, is sponsoring the publication of the letters of William James, to include both letters by him and to him. John McDermott, Texas A & M is the general editor, Elizabeth Berkeley, Charlottesville, Va., is associate editor. The series is to be published by Harvard University Press. Everyone is encouraged to examine libraries and private collections. Special attention should be paid to presidential and faculty papers in archives of college and universities. Information should be addressed to the editor, Ignas K. Skrupskelis, Department of Philosophy, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S. C., 29208.