Reading Structures of Feeling in Stephen Crane’s “The Blue Hotel”

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Among the American literary naturalists, the writing of Stephen Crane has always stood out for its unique poetic quality. Critics have long debated the degree to which it might be appropriate to apply the visual term “impressionist” to the author. In the past, studies have sought to find definite links between Crane and the plastic arts in order to justify representing his style as a kind of painting with words. A glance at the opening paragraph for *The Red Badge of Courage* hints at the motivation behind the desire to make this connection. The richness and depth of description contained in those four sentences is only enhanced by the sense that all that is mentioned—trees, road, river, fog, mud, and army—is equally organic to the narrator’s view. Each is simply a component within the frame of vision, and each may freely signify upon the other, crafting a statement through this specific combination of their parts. Crane uses the paragraph to provide a backdrop that at once reflects the characters to be introduced and creates anticipation by implying the absence of the human by blending the framed elements together as *mise en scène*. This symbolic practice—the building of impressions for the reader through the narrative voice—has resulted in critics overlooking how much Crane’s writing depends on the interchange of impression between characters. The act of defining an impression requires the dissection of contextualizing information and the feelings that adhere to it through cultural conditioning. Stephen Crane’s “The Blue Hotel” (1898) is a story in which the narrative is entirely based on how the mismatched impressions of the characters toward each other result in extreme conflict. Using Raymond Williams’ “structures of feeling” as a critical tool, this interaction can be broken down and observed. More, however, understanding the interiority in this sample of Crane’s writing lends itself to explicating Crane’s work on a broader scale.

Raymond Williams’ most succinct definition of structures of feeling appears in his 1972 *Marxism and Literature*. While addressing the difficulty of theoretically understanding any moment, he struggles with the problem that has beset philosophers for millennia: the proper relationship between the subjectivity of individual experience within the social
discourse that encompasses all experiences. Williams writes: “We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint, and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind” (132). That which is experienced in any moment is molded by myriad forces which bring a uniquely nuanced meaning to that moment, different for each individual. Yet, individuals exist in a social continuity which is a central shaping force of that experience. Williams notes that this complex appreciation of what it means to know gets no less complex when focused on the fictional events depicted in literature since literature is not a static object; it is only literature as it is experienced within the mind of the reader (129). So, for instance, the setting in Crane’s “The Blue Hotel” is Romper, Nebraska. The Oxford English Dictionary shows a relatively consistent usage for the word “romper” over the past two centuries, indicating those who move energetically, especially children; sometimes it is applied to the clothes which such dynamic people wear. Yet, on encountering the name Romper and becoming aware that the premise is that this is a placename, the reader might feel an ever-so-slight tug towards the positive or the negative in how they feel about their personal connotations to the word. These might be discerned through questions. Would I like to live in a place called Romper? What sort of people name a place Romper and then live there? Are they child-like and boisterous? Is that a good thing?

What Williams indicates is that such acts of judgment occur over and over as we encounter such facts, moment by moment, in life, in literature, and in thought, but that individuals tend to adopt patterns which are common to their social construction of identity, allowing the understood values of a social set to stand in the place of the reasoned values which overt questioning might develop. The individual settles with his/her impression. If I am well-educated, well-cultured, I may automatically assume a superior attitude to that which advertises its physical boisterousness. Alternately, if I am surfeited with education and culture, I may find the concept of a place named Romper naively refreshing. In neither case am I likely to ponder this, but merely to instantly accept the “normal” feeling I have toward Romper and move on into the story despite the fact that this feeling is one of the critical blocks to how the rest of the story will be received and interpreted. The narrative progresses, and word after word adds its own nuance to this one, each an unheard but not unfelt note in the symphony of “The Blue Hotel.”

The choice of example for this affective method within Cultural Studies is not coincidental. “The Blue Hotel” is a classic instance of American literary naturalism, a genre which Donald Pizer notes “is rich with social implication [...] ripe for re-examination along the lines of this new approach” (226). Because the movement of literary naturalism developed in response to the advent of Darwinian perspectives during the nineteenth century, it is strongly concerned with dramatizing the conflict between exterior social forces and the individual. Since this is the very problem that Raymond Williams struggles with, naturalism seems to offer an artistic appraisal of the situation that Williams attempts from the view of the critic. Meredith Farmer observes that “a concern that is predominant in Crane’s work [is that] set meanings are problematic” (69). This impressionistic quality is precisely the feature that the structures of feeling lens exploits, seeking the meaning between meanings, that moment of transition in the dance from one stance to another. “The Blue Hotel” is frequently read so that it simply demonstrates themes of determinism, the helplessness of the individual in the face of
societal pressures. However, when the story is addressed as being about how the characters’ own impressions of their situation, their attempt to reconcile structures of feeling, “The Blue Hotel” shows something beyond fatalism.

During a blizzard in the central plains, three travelers noted as the Easterner, the Cowboy, and the Swede take shelter in a hotel run by the Irish immigrant, Scully. The odd man in the scenario, the one who does not fit in, the Swede, meets the very violence that he enters the stage fearing. In the tradition of the Western plot, he catches one of his chance companions cheating at cards and satisfaction is obtained through physical confrontation. Adjourning from the hotel to a nearby saloon, the Swede carries his belligerence with him, this time confronting a man who responds by escalating the violence and leaving the Swede dying on the barroom floor. Richard Lehan, in a typical critical observation, restates the deterministic theme: “The point of the story is not that he becomes the victim of the Old West codes but that each character acts true to his temperament and the combined result is inevitable” (236). My suggestion is that perceiving a character being “true” to a temperament continues the pattern observed in the first paragraph of *The Red Badge of Courage*, where the human is conflated with the natural, with the inanimate. While this device is clearly in evidence, seeing it as the sole motif Crane uses to address character glosses over the author’s very real efforts to represent and explore situational dynamics.

The narrator opens the scene in “The Blue Hotel” by observing the outward appearance of that structure, drawing attention to its color. The description contains characteristics common to naturalism, a multifaceted approach to the significance of the human in relation to nature. It calls upon the reader to recognize the cultural meanings that nature has acquired through romantic themes. At the same time, it also forces the reader to reconcile the grotesque “nature” of human works in comparison to the ideals that underwrite romance. The result is a constant duality of perception where the meaning of each element evades any static determination. By examining the exterior of the hotel, Crane implies by extension the as yet unknown interior, establishing the motif by which characters will be examined, on the merits of their experientially observable appearance and actions. In addition, he presents the first element of his story which has variable affective possibilities, the color blue. This color is immediately associated with a natural one, “the shade that is on the legs of a kind of heron,” which is justified by explaining that the color serves the same function for both bird and building, as advertising for others to find it (179). Shortly, however, the name of the eponymous building is disclosed, the Palace Hotel, making a social connection between color and nobility, suggesting that the hue is intended as a royal blue. For the reader, the color is one thing, and, at the same time, it is another. This split is mirrored within the text, as well. Easterners passing through Romper regard the gaudy brightness of the edifice with more than distaste, evincing “shame, pity, horror” (179). Simultaneously, the citizens of rural Romper swell with pride because of the singularity, the originality of their local landmark.

If this duality was observable in this single instance alone, it would still be worth remarking on in terms of a demonstrable usage of structure of feeling. However, Crane incorporates such duality into the entirety of “The Blue Hotel.” The Easterner never discloses his origins to the other characters, and because it is stated that he does not look
like someone from the East, there is no reason to suspect that anyone other than the narrator and the audience is aware of this. The Easterner, then, is an Easterner to the reader, but not necessarily to Scully or Bill, the Cowboy. The farmer who passes time with Scully’s son Johnnie at the hotel is noted for having “both gray and sandy whiskers,” pinning this transient character as both old and young (180). Ultimately, the Swede is characterized through the first part of the story as being threatened, while he spends the latter half as the one who threatens all. Even the solid world described in the parlor of the hotel, by virtue of its centrality, is paired over and again with matching opposites: Scully’s room upstairs, the haven from the wind outside where the fight is settled, and eventually, the completely separate setting of the saloon in town. When Scully returns to the parlor, having pacified the Swede with whiskey, he astonishes the other guests and his son by seeming to be in perfect sympathy with the Swede. However, at the first chance, he drops this façade and relays the information that the Swede thought Scully was trying to poison him. The current appearance of Scully’s complicity with the Swede is merely a front which the hotelkeeper justifies by virtue of his chosen profession. Regardless of this rationalization, the fact remains that Scully is in two positions at once, a fact carried through the fight sequence where he must be both referee and father to one of the combatants.

The multiple roles of Scully provide one of the most obvious ways in which Crane utilizes structures of feeling through categorizations acknowledged by characters within the story. As a hotelkeeper, he feels that he has an obligation to keep the peace within his chosen domain, no matter the personal cost. His explanation of this to his son and guests impresses them as admirable. However, this correlation of identity and function is by no means unique. The guest, Bill, is known for the bulk of the narrative as the Cowboy. Johnnie’s original partner at cards when the scene first opens on the hotel parlor is simply labeled as the farmer. The bartender in the closing scene is primarily just that and, only at the last instant, the man named Henry who runs into the night seeking help. Crane does not employ epithets as suitable pronouns to substitute for characters’ names in order to provide variety in his diction. Rather, he implies a layering of character, a differentiation between the self that is known only to the individual and the self that participates in social processes. Each of the characters, like each reader, enjoys multiple levels of interaction with the world, and yet, each has chosen (or had imposed upon them) a particular frame by which they are known. In the American tradition, this frequently equates to profession: a person is that which they commercially produce.

Scully’s role as hotelkeeper carries many assumptions that society has paired with it as a profession. In “The Hospitality Code and Crane’s ‘The Blue Hotel,’” Ronald McFarland takes these assumptions in two directions, a perspective that parallels the split in the individual. First, he establishes the provenance of the concept by relating the hospitality in Romper, Nebraska to the hospitality accorded Odysseus on the isle of Phaeacia, establishing the near archetypal traditions in western culture that delineate how outsiders are treated. Scully clearly refers to a higher calling when he cites his duty to his guests. McFarland points out, however, that Scully is not engaged in a ritual exchange with a possibly noble or divine stranger; he is the proprietor within what is termed the “hospitality industry.” What he does, he does for money, not to remain in accord with social customs. This obvious fact is brought painfully to the forefront as he attempts to sway the Swede to accept his welcome within the Palace Hotel. Attempting to leave, the Swede demands to know what he owes the hotelkeeper, drawing from his pocket a
handful of change. Scully refuses the cash, but both freeze in place at the foiled exchange. Crane writes: “they both stood gazing in a strange fashion at three silver pieces on the Swede’s open palm” (188). Why does the businessman in Scully refuse to take payment for his inconvenience, at least for the meal already consumed by this guest? The answer is the one that he provides to the other guests. In his capacity as hotelier, the service of value that Scully provides is not simply shelter but the seeming adherence to the traditions of hospitality, which require that the guest be kept safe by the host. By not acknowledging that safety, the Swede invalidates the service that Scully believes he is providing, reducing the transaction from a lofty one built upon tradition, to the purely commercial one which it masks. The meaning of hotel has connotations to Scully which the Swede refuses to recognize. The intersection of the structures of feeling for the two men on the subject of the hotel do not match, leading to antagonism on both sides. Acknowledging outright the business nature of their relationship voids Scully’s pretense of actually adhering to an ancient structure of feeling and exposes how this structure has now been transformed into a commodity. McFarland notes in his analysis the “artificiality of Scully’s behavior” (449). Extrapolating from that point, however, demonstrates how intricately intertwined this duel position is for the hotelkeeper. Keeping up the lofty pretense of his position is not merely a matter of stroking his own ego about the worthiness of his profession; the Easterner and the Cowboy both immediately concur with Scully about the correctness of his doing so. The fact is that it is simply good business to retain such a point of view, to make guests like the Easterner and the Cowboy feel as though they are being treated special, not merely as customers with money. At some level, each knows that cash is the thing around which their stay at the hotel revolves, but both host and guest are willing to subscribe to a mythical understanding of their position which makes each feel better about the exchange. In this action, the Easterner and the Cowboy and Scully are demonstrated to partake of the same structure of feeling, while the Swede remains exterior to it.

Scully, however, is the one who makes heroic efforts, commercially inspired or not, to bridge the gap between the Swede’s perspective and the one understood commonly between the rest of the guests. Entering, and finding the Swede violently estranged from the others in the parlor, the Swede declaring that the others mean to kill him and that he is leaving, Scully howls in his brogue, “What does it mane?” (186). When no one can satisfy him as to what event or interaction he has missed that can account for this situation, he assumes that whatever it was must have been of such dire proportions that it cannot be spoken, and he sets about assuaging the feelings of the Swede. Following this guest to his room, Scully first offers the intelligence that the hotel is located within a broader setting, one that, for all of its remove from the East coast, is still part of the system of progress effecting the civilized world. Electric lights and streetcars are only a year away in the Nebraska town, he posits as proof that it is not a place where murderers and ne’er-do-wells congregate, but a normal, modern outpost of society, and he indicates that to think otherwise is madness. The Swede, however, responds with a tangent to this assessment. He says, “There are people in this world who know pretty nearly as much as you do” (149). Here, Lehan observes that since the Swede has recently removed from a stay of many years working in New York, the fact that he is not soothed by signs of progress is significant (235). The Swede’s fear of the wildness of the West is a premise which drives the beginning of the story, yet he has made the trip away from the urban, so it may be inferred that while we see him trepidatious in this setting, perhaps the setting he has left fills him with even greater dread. Scully’s offering of the images he associates
with security and stability may have an opposite meaning to the Swede. With the suggestion of material progress, however, the Swede offers his payment at this point, and Scully sees the dead-end of this line of reasoning and moves to his next gambit. He takes the Swede into his own compartment, ushering him physically into a personal space in order that he might understand the vulnerable openness of the host. There, Scully points out pictures of his children. This serves the purpose of removing Scully from the role of hotelier and, instead, demonstrates his role as a family man, presumably with the intention of establishing a bar to measure a standard experience between himself and the Swede.

11 Significant about this decision to reach the Swede are the subjects of the material objects which Scully offers as his new proof. Scully first shows a portrait of a daughter who died in childhood, using a hook baited with pathos to snare the Swede. Failing that extreme emotional appeal, the subject of loss introduced by the Swede’s talk of murder is transformed into a personal awareness of the effects of death. Scully is informing his guest that he is well aware of the presence of death in the world, but that while it is sad and perhaps sudden, it is not the lurking, immediate danger that the Swede apprehends. The proof in this is in the next portrait he offers for the inspection of his guest, that of his son who is a successful lawyer in Lincoln. Scully seems to offer a wide spectrum for the possibilities that the world might have to offer, with a seeming subtext that these possibilities occur within the lives of all, even a simple man like himself, without the presence of rogues and villains to intercede. Further, Scully demonstrates the ethereal bonds that extend out, unseen, from each human. This is emphasized by his choice of evidence. The pictures are of his children, now absent, one by misfortune, one by success. However, these absent children are not the only children that Scully has. His son Johnnie sits by the stove even as they speak, and his other daughters tend to the next meal in the hotel kitchen along with Scully’s wife. By pointing to images, signs, of those who are not present, Scully does more than demonstrate the literal meaning of each, he gestures toward what lies between himself, as a man, and these conceptualized people. He is nodding to his understanding of a particular structure of feeling, trusting that it should have meaning to any other man.

12 This example of familial relationship may be intended as the proper substitute for the adversarial expectations with which the Swede has imbued his view of the world. The Swede, however, is far too engrossed in keeping a watch over his shoulder to invest himself in the subtle suggestions of the host. Having failed to influence the Swede by bringing him into his personal space and introducing him to his personal experiences, Scully resorts to yet another structure of feeling, one that he supposes is the most basic possible between those that are seeking to find common ground, the sharing of a drink. His error in this is in supposing that the Swede will, in the end, regard this effort in a positive light. Scully passes the whiskey bottle to the Swede, but the effect is far from positive. The Swede drinks, but “he kept his glance burning with hatred upon the old man’s face” (189). Flushed from the cover of his own subjectivity, the Swede at last begins to interact with the structures of feeling that he has been offered, but he does so with a relentless disregard for their meaning. The primary lesson he has learned is that these structures require his assimilation, and he is determined from this point on, to aggressively enforce each structure of feeling that he encounters. All others must conform in their demonstration of good faith in them, as he has been forced to do. On re-entering the parlor, he becomes the board-whacker in the card game, appropriating the
part previously played by the Cowboy. When Johnnie oversteps the rules, nothing will do but that they settle the dispute by fists, as a commonly understood precept. Finally, the Swede sails away from the hotel to the saloon, but he carries with him the same resolve to make others conform, as he was made to conform. The sharing of the drink becomes the symbol of that conversion into a particular structure of feeling, and when he attempts to forcibly impose it upon the Gambler, the Swede dies at his hands. Crane closes that scene by writing: “The corpse of the Swede, alone in the saloon, had its eyes fixed upon a dreadful legend that dwelt a-top of the cash-machine. ‘This registers the amount of your purchase’” (209). The full irony of those words is only available with the recognition of the failure of exchange between the structures of feeling of the characters involved.

Incidental social structures that attach themselves to the sharing of a drink or the profession of an acquaintance provide the key to understanding how each of the characters in “The Blue Hotel” identifies himself, and how the reader can come to know and understand the characters and their actions. This instance of application of structures of feeling, however, can be used as a way of explaining more than the interactions of Scully and the Swede. In fact, it may prove to be a useful tool for understanding other works by Stephen Crane.

Once it is discerned that the relative perspective between characters is the basis for the story told in “The Blue Hotel,” it is particularly tempting to extend this affective technique to Crane’s other writings. His famous western tale, “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky,” falls easily into similar patterns. Here, characters experience real schisms to parallel those built up by emotional and experiential contexts. Jack Potter, sheriff of a Texas border town, takes an unannounced journey to San Antonio to acquire a wife whom he has met through correspondence. The story centers on the events that occur during his return trip via train with his bride; one part follows the newlyweds while the other details events in Yellow Sky, where former desperado Scratchy Wilson has gotten drunk and spoils for a fight. As in “The Blue Hotel,” physical interiors mirror the interiority of the psyche. The bulk of the story finds the Potters located within the railcars. The sheriff, an archetypal figure of the frontier, feels himself alien to the elegance that he experiences amid the “sea-green figured velvet, the shining brass, silver, and glass, the wood that gleamed as darkly brilliant as the surface of a pool of oil” (214). That this interior is unknown does not keep the newlyweds from attempting to appropriate the splendor as a metaphor for the transition they have lately undergone through marital union. Crane writes of them, “This was the environment of their new estate” (214). As happens in “The Blue Hotel,” payment for service extends beyond the superficial; the couple has paid for transportation from one location to another, but they regard the trip as much more. That Potter is able to proffer some claim to this interior must contrast sharply with the tacit story of his original trip to San Antonio, a stealing away from his responsibilities and the social relationships of his home. That journey is suggested by the unease Potter feels on his return. Further, the proprietorial attitude of the Potters is immediately challenged by the structures of feeling that are arrayed against them by all around. The rustic couple is sized up with “careless scrutiny” by fellow passengers, and the Potters find themselves patronized and bullied by the native denizen of the railcar, the porter (213). Through it, the newlyweds remain unaware of any special derision, the
awkward self-consciousness of two strangers entering married life drowning out any awareness of exterior judgment. Potter does expect judgment on returning home, but it is only significant to him within the context of his home, the potential for shame acting as the real indicator of the place of belonging for the sheriff.

As they speed toward their home together and, uncomfortably for the sheriff, toward the inevitable revelation of his new marital status to his neighbors, another interior is explored back at Yellow Sky at the Weary Gentleman saloon. The situation of characters here resembles that found in Romper’s Palace Hotel. Among the Texans, a single drummer stands out, talking and doing so quickly, setting himself in opposition to the laconic westerners. Business has brought him to an unfamiliar location, but since sales is based upon social interaction, he is engaged in entertaining his fellows. Like Scully, he counts on a shared understanding of social constructs to smooth his way. The interiority of the scene is suddenly highlighted by the approaching danger on the street. A young man calls the warning: “Scratchy Wilson’s drunk and has turned loose with both hands” (218). With that, the door is barred, the windows shuttered, and all talk ceases as the men shelter from the storming rage of the bad man. The drummer’s experience has not prepared him for a setting that bows to a drunken rowdy, and his disconcertion is evidenced by his questions that seek assurance from the locals. Jack Potter is mentioned, the foil to Scratchy Wilson, and this reveals the gap between the expectations of the drummer and the reality of Yellow Sky. When told that it is Potter who keeps Wilson in line through direct physical confrontation, the salesman dabs away his nervous sweat and exclaims, “Nice job he’s got” (220). Surely, law enforcement anywhere in nineteenth-century America would be expected to do as much, so the surprise and anxiety displayed by the drummer have more to do with the direct necessity of intervention that Yellow Sky takes as normal. The drummer has entered a scene and imposed his expectations upon it; only when he is shut into the saloon does he realize that Yellow Sky and its people are not synchronized with those expectations. Similarly, the newlywed Potters have intersected with the Southern Railway and extended their excitement and the change in themselves out to the glamor of the railcar, understanding its luxuriousness in relation to their feelings. Both are aware of something new, but each misjudges the distance involved in such appropriation; it cannot be meaningful to others in the way that it is for them.

Importantly, the experience of the characters, always dancing between social and personal perspectives, always negotiating meanings as they apply to multiple spheres, mirrors the experience of the reader, making the story an invitation to participate in the narrative. This parallel of exteriority and interiority is supported in both “The Blue Hotel” and “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky” through the device of the train. Crane explicitly suggests the existence of an audience that is at once exterior to the insular settings and at the same time has easy accessibility to them. In “The Blue Hotel,” Crane mentions the attitudes of those who never stop in Romper, the masses of mobile Americans in “great transcontinental expresses, long lines of swaying Pullmans” (179). In “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky,” these same sophisticated travelers view the Texan newlyweds with the identical mixture of amusement and pity that they apply to judging the Palace Hotel. These travelers present the reader with a proxy allowing for physical proximity to this place, to these people, suggesting authentic tangibility to the reader, a sensory awareness of settings and characters that is supplemented by the readers’ intellectual, abstract awareness. Paul Sorrentino’s historicist examination of “The Bride”
offers insight into the multiplicity of contexts available to the audience of McClure's in 1898. Sorrentino gives numerous possible valences of reference to the selection of the sheriff’s name, Potter, allowing that these show how “Crane relies on America’s growing awareness of a commonly shared pop culture” (52). In looking for sources and allusions in Crane’s work, Sorrentino lists more than half a dozen figures in nineteenth-century history and fiction that are particularly associated with the Texas frontier. He suggests that the motifs associated with east and west are not place-specific binaries, but exist in common, in conversation. “The Blue Hotel,” has its diverse characters with diverse occupations that relate to east and west. Romper is situated in Nebraska, a very western location relative to the New York origin of the Swede, but not so very western in relation to the broad United States. Likewise, in “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky,” the expected boundaries for understanding Yellow Sky are undermined by Crane for comedic effect. The description of Scratchy Wilson, “last one of the old gang” who cows the entire town with his threatened violence, repeatedly connects Wilson to the east (221). Crane’s narrator mentions that Wilson’s dark red shirt “made, principally, by some Jewish women on the east side of New York” (221). Wilson’s boots are showy, “of the kind beloved in winter by little sledding boys on the hillsides of New England” (221). Each of these inanimate accessories works to reflect on the nature of Scratchy’s persona as a cultural construction, and it is through recognizing it as a façade that the audience finds humor, as the narrative progresses. However, the anxiety over how far Scratchy will go in his embodiment of the desperado is left unresolved until the ultimate confrontation with Potter. As has been demonstrated in “The Blue Hotel,” Crane uses multivalenced, symbolic interaction between the inanimate and the human to develop the reader’s impressions of characters within specific situations. However, the impressions between characters drive Crane’s narratives.

The gorgeous imagery that enlivens the fiction of Stephen Crane is certainly a holistic element of his style. We learn much from the things that are of and about the characters. So, the “funnel-shaped tracks in the heavy sand” at the end of “The Bride” seem to speak of the inevitable flow of time, suggesting that progress has made Scratchy Wilson obsolete (225). Yet, at the same time, Crane has included evidence indicating that Scratchy already lives an existence in communication and exchange far beyond the frontier. In “The Blue Hotel,” as the angry men exit to fight, the tireless wind courses into the parlor, and “some of the scarred and bedabbled cards were caught up from the floor and dashed helplessly against the further wall” (197). The reader gets the sense that the Swede and his antagonists are caught in a dispassionate flow of events, as helpless as the playing cards. However, as has been shown, each possesses a form of awareness, and like Scully, each is actively engaged in trying to negotiate the meaning of their interaction. This is brought home, especially, in the epilogue to “The Blue Hotel,” where the Easterner reveals the choices he made that evening, concealing his knowledge that would have supported and justified the Swede in his argument with Johnny. In this instance, Crane offers an additional reflection that allows insight into how his characters acknowledge the structures of feeling that guide them. Yet, in the works that provide no such reflection, the same patterns can be seen at play, deepening, informing, and driving the narratives of Stephen Crane.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


NOTES

1. The example that Williams provides regards the crown of Restoration England. The crown exists as an object, one that rests on the head of King Charles II. Previous supporters of Cromwell have learned the social attitude that this crown represents godless tyranny. Royalists view the crown as a sign of stability and normality. There is just the crown, but the affective meaning of crown is split.

ABSTRACTS

Cet article analyse le conflit dans « The Blue Hotel » de Stephen Crane, le définissant comme un non-alignement des attentes socio-culturelles. Le concept de « structures de sentiment », que l’on doit à Raymond Williams, et qui fut adapté en tant que motif fondateur dans certaines branches des études de l’affect, est utilisé pour expliciter ce conflit. Il s’agit de démontrer qu’en s’attardant sur la dynamique d’interaction personnelle, l’histoire peut être considérée comme
plus qu’une simple manifestation du déterminisme par un naturaliste de renom. Une fois ces éléments établis, cette étude démontre en outre que cette méthode d’interprétation est utile pour comprendre les grandes lignes de l’œuvre de Crane. En conclusion, ces structures de sentiment s’ouvrent à « The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky », qui illustre ce point.

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