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The Spanish-American War as a Bourgeois Testing Ground

Richard Harding Davis, Frank Norris and Stephen Crane

The men who hurried into the ranks were not the debris of American life, were not the luckless, the idle. The scapegraces and vagabonds who could well have been spared, but the very flower of the race, young well born. The brief struggle was full of individual examples of dauntless courage. . . A correspondent in the spasms of mortal agony finished his dispatch and sent it off.

—Rebecca Harding Davis, 1898¹

By implying the death of a heroic but doomed newspaperman in the charge at Las Guisimas, Rebecca Harding Davis was, fortunately, premature. Davis's son, Richard, who witnessed the incident, made a similar misapprehension when he reported, "This devotion to duty by a man who knew he was dying was as fine as any of the courageous and inspiring deeds that occurred during the two hours of breathless, desperate fighting." The writhing correspondent was Edward Marshall of the *New York Journal* who, hit by a Spanish bullet in the spine and nearly paralyzed, was nonetheless able to dictate his stirring account of Roosevelt's Rough Riders. Taken to the rear and his condition deemed hopeless, Marshall somehow survived his agony and after a long convalescence was restored to

health. Marshall would later capitalize on his now national fame by penning such testimonials as “What It Feels Like To Be Shot.”²

Fundamentally, the Spanish-American War was fought for and, to a lesser degree, by the middle and upper classes—Rebecca Harding Davis’s the very flower of the race, young well born. The young men who clamored for limited positions in the army and navy, and the unlikely chance to actually see battle, were disproportionately drawn from the higher strata of American society, the sons of established families and the relatively well to do. Ivy Leaguers deluged the recruiting office; those who were denied often re-organized their fraternities into unofficial mini-militias. While the regular soldier did most of the fighting, in short, the quarter million volunteer army was primarily comprised of young men who could afford to spend the summer of ‘98 in domestic camps, such as Jacksonville’s Camp Cuba Libre, drilling, taking target practice, enacting mock battles, while reading newspaper accounts of the quick American victory.

In his groundbreaking essay, “Cuba, the Philippines, and Manifest Destiny (1952),” Richard Hofstadter examined the appeal the Spanish War held for the middle and upper middle classes. According to Hofstadter, the Depression of 1893 left the middle classes in a fearful and uneasy mood as they watched the growing Populist and labor movements. Many perceived that national unity, power and vitality were waning and that the country was ready for a collapse due to internal upheaval. The wave of nationalistic and patriotic rhetoric that accompanied the Spanish War worked to restore and reinforce the authority of the leading classes.

Written for white, middle class audiences, the short stories of Crane, Davis, and Norris are neither anti-war, pacifistic, nor critical of the Cuban Campaign. For the most part, the stories do not deviate from the conventional historical narrative; the battlefields of Cuba, whose names and heroes were so familiar to their audiences, are recreated as a series of inevitable victories. In this sense, Crane, Davis and Norris’s stories testify to and endorse the popular image of the war as an unalloyed American triumph. At the same time, the stories explore, test and contest prevailing ideas that war could be the vehicle for personal and social redemption. Ultimately, Crane, Davis and Norris represent the war as a political success, but question its possibilities for personal or cultural transformation. In doing so, Davis, Norris and Crane illuminate, and cast doubt upon, a series of cultural formulations that made war a positive and transformative event: life at war as an exhilarating and regenerating experience; the glorification of war correspondents and civil engineers; upper class men proving their manhood as their fathers had done in the Civil War; and imperial adventures as an expression of middle class power.

Within this context, it is not surprising that most of the stories by Davis, Norris and Crane featured civilians or volunteers—journalists, engineers, medical doctors, college men—rather than the regular soldiers who did most of the fighting. Given that many of their readers would have gladly gone to Cuba, these clearly identifiable bourgeois characters function as surrogates or class representatives.

Finally, given the popularity of Davis, Crane, and with Norris's growing, the three together provide a productive lens in which to see how the battlefields of Cuba become the stage for the bourgeois class to test itself and its rhetoric.

Raised in genteel Philadelphia society and educated at Johns Hopkins University, Davis can be characterized as the quintessential bourgeois writer of his day. Osborn succinctly and convincingly states that Davis “used his Northeastern urban upper-middle class standards as criteria for appraising the world” and cultivated his fiction to appeal to the popular tastes of his class.³ In many ways, Norris shared Davis's upper middle class values. The son of a wealthy San Francisco businessman, Norris attended Berkeley where he joined the California State Militia and Harvard where he immersed himself in Rudyard Kipling's Anglo-Saxon reveries. In his writings, Norris catered to an audience that agreed with his nationalistic and racist stances. Of the three, Crane is the most difficult to categorize. Crane came from a respectable New Jersey background and went to Lehigh College and Syracuse University. As a self-styled avant-gardist, Crane's viewpoint was disengaged from the typical middle class reader. Nonetheless, Crane's fiction appealed to both sophisticated and mainstream audiences.

The Man with One Talent

“The Man with One Talent” by Richard Harding Davis was first published in *Cosmopolitan* in March 1898 and later appeared in Davis's 1899 *The Lion and the Unicorn* short story collection.⁴ Following the February explosion of the *USS Maine*, public opinion was rapidly moving towards intervention in Cuba and war with Spain. That same month, Senator Redfield Proctor, a Vermont Republican, visited Cuba on a fact-finding mission. Proctor delivered a highly acclaimed speech denouncing Spanish policy and calling for intervention; a speech that Henry Watterson claimed “constituted America's highest and best justification for going to war and had more influence in determining public opinion than any other single agency.”⁵ On April 22, Congress officially declared war.

During this period, Davis himself was an outspoken advocate for intervention. In 1897, Davis had covered the Cuban insurgency for William Randolph Hearst's *Journal* and won acclaim for “The Death of Rodriguez,” an account of the execution

of a heroic Cuban freedom fighter. Later that year, Davis published *Cuba in War Time*, a collection of war dispatches, in which he argued that Cuba should be liberated in the name of humanity and American destiny.

In 1897, Davis also published *Soldiers of Fortune*, the most successful novel of his career. Robert Clay, a dashing and virile civil engineer, goes to a fictional Latin American country to oversee the mining operation of his millionaire employer. When revolutionaries threaten to nationalize the mines, Clay forms an army of American workers and almost single-handedly defeats the insurgency. Throughout the literature of the 1890's, the figure of the civil engineer emerged as a middle-class cultural hero, the very embodiment of the virtues of the strenuous life. In her analysis of engineering narratives, Ruth Oldenziel sees *Soldiers* as emblematic of the genre. As Oldenziel demonstrates, "the engineer of genteel fiction was a ruling class figure, visionary, and a leader who was portrayed as an ideal professional: 'social, civil and stable.'" ⁶ Giorgio Mariani argues that much of the popularity of *Soldiers* can be attributed to its celebration of "the chivalric virtues of an untainted hero bent on defending American investments and political interests abroad." In doing so, Davis provides "cultural and economic imperialism with a noble, civilizing mission" and, through the display of Clay's martial heroics, contributed to "the myth that life at war was an exhilarating and regenerating experience." ⁷ Clay functions as an exemplary model through which Davis's bourgeois audience can imagine war as coinciding with personal and social salvation.

The protagonist of "The Man with One Talent," Henry Arkwright, is an American civil engineer who can be seen, in some ways, as Davis's surrogate. In Cuba, Arkwright fought for the insurgency and witnessed the brutal treatment administered under the authority of General Valeriano Weyler, who the yellow press had nicknamed "The Butcher." Recently returned to New York, Arkwright's goal is to expose Butcher Weyler's atrocities and to rally support in favor of intervention and war. In Arkwright's account of the execution of a rebel leader, Davis repeats almost verbatim the episode he memorialized a year earlier in "The Death of Rodriguez." In addition, Arkwright's arguments for intervention, in which war is the opportunity to express American greatness, almost exactly match those propounded by Davis in *Cuba in War Time*. In some ways, "The Man with One Talent" is an extension of *Soldiers of Fortune*. The political message of the story is clear: the United States should intervene in Cuba, and the resulting war with Spain will strengthen and reinvigorate the country. Additionally, by creating another civil engineer, Davis introduces a character already known and liked by his audience. The identification of Arkwright with Davis himself enhances the

elements of verisimilitude. The martial spirit that gripped the country in the 1890s is mirrored in both these pieces.

In “The Man with One Talent,” however, Davis makes Arkwright a doomed figure whose dream of American intervention goes unrealized. In New York, Arkwright offers his services to the powerful Senator Stanton, who has recently adopted a pro-war stance. Arkwright asks Stanton to visit Cuba with Arkwright as his guide. Arkwright tells the Senator that upon their return, Stanton will only have to give three speeches, and “before you [Stanton] have finished your last one the American warships will be in the harbor of Havana.” To Davis’s audience, Arkwright’s proposal would immediately recall Redfield Proctor’s actual visit to Cuba and his speech, which did, in fact, trigger the war with Spain. A political opportunist, Stanton agrees. At the last minute, the other members of Stanton’s party, fearing that war might disrupt the business interests of their wealthy backers, compel Stanton to reverse his pro-war position. Like many interventionists, Davis believed that the Wall Street financial community, despite the overwhelming public sentiment for war, was either against intervention or too slow to embrace the cause. On March 26, Davis’s friend, Theodore Roosevelt famously told an audience of business leaders, “We will have this war for the freedom of Cuba in spite of the timidity of the business interests.”⁸ In the story, business interests prevail; the trip is cancelled. Betrayed and abandoned, Arkwright returns to Cuba alone where he is killed in a Spanish raid.

Fundamentally, Davis casts Arkwright as a casualty of war. In Cuba, he had been captured, imprisoned and tortured by the Spanish. In New York, still suffering from prison fever and emaciation, Arkwright’s ravaged body is almost repellent to those he tries to convince to go to Cuba. Although it first appears that Arkwright’s health will recover, the shock of war and his rejection by Stanton trigger a nightmarish flashback to scenes of horror that he had witnessed and experienced in Cuba. He recklessly returns to Cuba and rejoins the insurgency. Ambushed in a guerilla raid, his badly mutilated corpse is found lying in a road three miles behind Spanish lines. Davis’ imagery of rejection and damage introduces a discordant note into his otherwise straightforward polemical story. The martial spirit does not, at least in Arkwright’s case, regenerate and empower. As will be discussed, this trope of a rejected, broken body—the wounds of war—is used by Davis again in “On the Fever Ship,” the story that precedes “The Man with One Talent” in the 1899 *The Lion and the Unicorn* edition.

Ultimately, making the fevered and unstable Arkwright the object of scrutiny—to Stanton, the other influential politicians and to Davis’s middle and upper class

readership—casts doubt on the possibility of war as redemption. In contrast to Clay, the masterful civil engineer/soldier, Davis presents Arkwright as victimized, thwarted, and traumatized, raising the anxiety that the martial ideal cannot be realized, in which Arkwright's elimination from the text leaves the question unanswered.

The story is structured around three episodes involving Arkwright and Senator Stanton. In each episode, Arkwright makes the case, first embraced and then rejected, for American intervention. In each sequence, Arkwright's health fluctuates between physical infirmity, seeming recuperation, and mental collapse. The story begins outside Madison Square Garden following an address by Stanton, a gifted Southern orator, to a gathering of New Yorkers sympathetic to the Cuban cause. During this period, Cuban expatriates, led by Tomás Estrada Palma, established an insurgent government, or junta, to generate support for the war effort. American backers, including Theodore Roosevelt, formed the Cuban League, which sponsored mass meetings to raise money and rally public opinion.

In the opening passages, the narration focuses on a young man who is pushing his way through the exiting crowd towards Stanton. Davis provides a portrait of a gaunt figure:

His [Arkwright's] face was burned to a deep red, which seemed to have come from some long exposure to a tropical sun, but which held no sign of health. His cheeks were hollow and his eyes were lighted with the fire of fever and from time to time he was shaken by violent bursts of coughing which caused him to reach toward one of the pillars for support.⁹

In his analysis of Davis's use of impressionistic techniques, Osborn has shown that Davis often "did not present a scene by detailed recapitulation, but instead expressed a dominant, fragmentary perception in a bright, sharp visual or auditory image."¹⁰ The initial foregrounding representation of Arkwright's unbalanced and sickened body becomes that dominant visual image, through which his unhealthy condition potentially undermines his narrative authority.

Upon reaching the Senator, Arkwright launches into a passionate but disjointed account of the horrors of Cuba and the need for military intervention. Stanton, only half-listening, instead was "looking with a glance of mingled fascination and disgust at Arkwright's hands." Displaying the physical evidence of his imprisonment, Arkwright shows "that the wrists of each hand were gashed and cut in dark-brown lines like the skin of a mulatto, and in places were a raw red,

where the fresh skin had but just closed over.”¹¹ Ragged, sunburned, and bearded, Arkwright looks more like a Cuban refugee or the Lieutenant disembarking from his Fever Ship than an American civil engineer. Unsure exactly how to process the object of his scrutiny, the civil engineer/soldier as invalid, refugee, victim, Stanton proffers an initial diagnosis: “This man needs a doctor.”

The next scene opens in Stanton’s office. Now composed and lucid, no longer in need of a doctor, Arkwright’s health appears restored. On a map of Cuba, the civil engineer diagrams the plan to bring the Senator to Cuba, expose Spanish brutality, and bring the United States into war. Invoking the rhetoric of “Destiny and Destiny” soon to be employed by McKinley to justify the American intervention in Cuba and the Philippines, Arkwright promises that Stanton “will go down in history as the man who added the most beautiful island in the seas to the territory of the United States, and who saved thousands of innocent children and women.”¹² Able to make sense of the seemingly recuperated Arkwright, the Senator embraces the blueprint and its augur of moral grandeur, national glory and personal aggrandizement. For the moment, “The Man with One Talent” envisions a harmonious ideological alliance—civil engineer/soldier, statesman and the bourgeois establishment they serve—very similar to that enacted in *Soldiers of Fortune*.

In the climactic scene, Arkwright has a final chance to deliver his “War Message” (the phrase used by McKinley when he asked Congress to declare war on Spain) to a gathering of Stanton and his party leaders. The Party has again vetoed Stanton’s trip to Cuba. Stanton, who refuses to spend his “One Talent” (an allusion to Jesus’ Sermon against timidity), will not become Proctor; Arkwright will not be the agent of war; the harmonious ideological alliance is ruptured. The rejection triggers Arkwright’s mental breakdown. Arkwright’s collapse is crucial because within the story Arkwright’s body and his narrative have functioned as the meter by which the positive value of war—national glory, class solidarity, empire—could be gauged. In the breakdown episode, however, the sympathetic identification of the reader with the idealistic Arkwright is jarred and perhaps undermined.

First, the muscles of Arkwright’s face twitch; tears begin to come to his eyes and his brain is overcome with a “dull, numbed feeling.” Slipping into a semi-conscious state, Arkwright imagines that he is back in Cuba:

And then beyond the sideboard and the tapestry on the wall above it, he saw the sun shining down upon the island of Cuba, he saw the royal palms waving and bending, the dusty columns of Spanish infantry crawling along the white roads and leaving blazing huts and smoking cane-fields in

their wake; he saw skeletons of men and women seeking for food among the refuse of the street; he heard the order given to the firing squad, the splash of the bullets as they scattered the plaster on the prison wall, and he saw a kneeling figure pitch forward on its face, with a useless bandage tied across its sightless eyes.¹³

Replete with auditory and visual hallucinations, the flashback invokes the image of impaired Lieutenant from “On the Fever Ship.” Today, Arkwright’s condition might be diagnosed as post-traumatic stress syndrome. Returning to consciousness with “the dull, heavy look in his eyes of a man who has just come through an operation under some heavy drug,” Arkwright releases a disjointed, borderline paranoid, diatribe in which he may be hearing voices:

“Don’t talk to me like that,” he said in a low voice. The noise about the table ended on the instant, but Arkwright did not notice that it had ceased. “You know I don’t understand that,” he went on; “what does it matter to me!” “‘Wall Street,’ ‘trusts,’ ‘party leaders,’” he repeated, “what are they to me? The words don’t reach me, they have lost their meaning, it is a language I have forgotten, thank God!”¹⁴

The Party Members, staring and frowning “as though they were spectators in a play,” think that Arkwright has suddenly gone mad in their presence. As the object of scrutiny, Arkwright is first a drugged, incoherent patient and then a madman on display. (see *Howard Chandler Christy’s accompanying illustration*)



You are like a ring of gamblers around a gaming table.

Arkwright, trembling, quivering, shaking his finger, covering his face, continues his denunciation by adding religious fervor to both his “War Message” (the glory of dying for the flag) and his indictment of the party members who have forgotten the “men are giving their lives for an idea, for a sentiment, for a flag . . . Can your ‘trusts’ save your souls—is ‘Wall Street’ the strait and narrow road to salvation.”¹⁵ Finally, the leader breaks the silence, asking, “Does the gentleman [Arkwright] belong to the Salvation Army?” The reference to the Salvation Army is telling. During the 1890s, the increasingly popular Salvation Army, known for its militant and aggressive variety of evangelism and biblical literalism, believed that that personal salvation was the only ultimate remedy for all human misery. According to Edward McKinley, the Salvation Army was “enthusiastic about the spiritual possibilities of the Spanish-American War,” hoping to find converts in the ranks of the American military. In the summer of 1898, *The War Cry* (the movement’s official publication) produced a “War Special,” in which the cover picture was captioned “The Battleship ‘Salvation’ Opens Fire on Fort Sin.” The Salvationists even petitioned, to no avail, the follow the American troops to Cuba.¹⁶ The leader’s comment is significant on several levels. Arkwright is, of course, not a member of the Salvation Army. Nonetheless, the leader’s confusion or misrecognition makes sense. Arkwright no longer seems recognizable as the stable figure of the American civil engineer. Instead he is marked by the signs of fanaticism. Given that Davis meant the “The Man with One Talent” as a polemical attack on bourgeois anti-interventionists who were delaying the start of the War with Spain, it is not surprising that the party members are left unmoved. Davis’s implicit critique of the timidity of the business interests is that they—“Wall Street, the Trusts”—fail to apprehend the redemptive benefits of war. In reality, of course, war did come; Arkwright’s dream of war is not denied but only deferred. At the same time, Davis problematizes his own message by creating Arkwright as a disturbed and disturbing, if not unpalatable, martial subject.

A Derelict

First published in *Scribner’s Magazine* in August 1901, the long short story “A Derelict,” was Davis’s final Spanish War fiction.¹⁶ The story revolves around two New York journalists who witness the battle of Santiago Bay of July 3, 1898, where Admiral William T. Sampson’s American fleet destroyed Admiral Pascual Cervera’s Spanish fleet: Keating the star reporter for the Consolidated Press, a large establishment news bureau, and Channing a brilliant but irresponsible free-lance writer.

Bill Brown and Amy Kaplan have both shown that a significant feature of Spanish War reportage was the extent to which the correspondents often made themselves or their colleagues the heroes of their stories, and depicted the act of reporting as the main plot. Brown argues that the fashioning of the reporters as quasi-combatants meant, “fighting to get the news and fighting the war were all but indistinguishable.”⁷⁷ Kaplan says that this focus “turned writing into a strenuous activity and the reporter into a virile figure.”⁷⁸ As Mariani has shown “correspondents like Davis should be seen as among the most important and influential propagandists of the myth that life at war was an exhilarating and regenerating experience.”⁷⁹

The audiences of the professional journalists saw the correspondents as fellow members of the bourgeois class, in which the international war correspondent held an especially privileged status. During the Cuban Campaign, the correspondents performed multiple roles. Beyond the basic function of providing updates of the war’s progress to the American public, these reporters regarded themselves, and were regarded by their readers, as soldiers and full military participants in the American victory. Reporters accompanied American forces throughout the campaign and virtually all carried side arms. Often they acted as aides, participated in reconnaissance missions, and sometimes engaged in combat. A *New York World* correspondent led a charge on a Spanish blockhouse and captured its flag. Crane, who had tried to enlist in the Navy but failed the physical exam, was cited for bravery in a skirmish between Marines and Spanish guerrillas. Davis was also praised for his valor.²⁰ Thus, the messenger, the glorified bourgeois journalist, represented, and was representative of, the message, America’s glorious martial triumph.

Fundamentally, “A Derelict,” like “The Man with One Talent” and “On the Fever Ship,” registers cultural preoccupations with the martial ideal, located by Mariani in the figure of the war correspondent. War could not only give a purer sense of selfhood to the bourgeoisie but could reinforce social dominance. The Spanish-American War, at the end of the decade, can be seen as a culmination of this martial preoccupation.

Davis’s story, while it does not outright challenge the idea that war can be a curative to the ills of the social order, registers anxieties as to whether the “martial spirit”—with the Cuban Campaign as one instance—can adequately function, or be imagined, as the cultural vehicle for the revitalization of bourgeois men. Essentially, the story allows the question: are Davis’s bourgeois readers meant to see the Cuban Campaign, and war in general, as a place of regeneration? The answer lies in the relationship between the two protagonists, Keating and Channing

and the implications of their actions. Although both appear to have sprung from bourgeois origins, they represent different cultural types.

Keating is a member of the establishment: a respectable, married, company man, the epitome of middle-class propriety. Described as the “good and faithful servant of the Consolidated Press,” Keating is popular with both the elite and his vast readership; “Senators, governors, the presidents of great trusts and railroad systems would send for Keating and dictate to him whatever it was they wanted the people of the United States to believe, for when they talked to Keating they talked to many millions of readers.”²¹ Given this widespread appeal, Keating should be an ideal surrogate or medium through which the glorious war can be made visible.

In contrast, Channing is marked by his bohemian appearance and manners. Free floating, dissolute, disdainful of convention and “dressed like a beachcomber,” Channing is introduced as a “sort of derelict.” Marginalized within the world of the professional newspapermen, Channing’s stigmatization is made clear when Keating criticizes him for giving the “crowd a bad name” – that is, those journalists who maintain, “some regard for their position and the paper.” Finally, Keating tells Channing he must “brace up.” Within the social universe of the story, Channing is a hybrid character. On one level, as a born writer, a daring journalist and sophisticated man of the world, he contains elements of the heroicized correspondent whom Davis’s middle and upper class audience identified with and found so captivating. At the same time, Channing is characterized as a loafer, drifter, and a tramp, he simultaneously functions as an unpalatable negative exemplum. The casting of Channing as erratic and in need of rehabilitation allows him to be seen as a projection of the bourgeois anxieties and fears about its own disempowerment.

“A Derelict” follows these two from May to August of 1898. Lacking an official assignment—no one would take the risk to hire him—Channing has been relegated to minor tasks on the Siboney beachhead, several miles behind the front lines where he only hears about the war through rumor and misinformation. To make matters worse, he has contracted the fever. At the same time, Keating, at the front reporting the Guisimas skirmish, has begun to fall apart; his shattered nerves have triggered a drinking binge.

Desperate to get closer to the action, Channing agrees to Keating’s offer to hire him as a stoker on the Consolidated Press boat, now moored outside the Santiago Harbor. As Cervera’s Spanish fleet tries to rush Sampson’s blockade, Keating is incapacitated. Despite his worsening fever, Channing writes a vivid account of the



“We’ve got a great story! We want a clear wire.”

American victory. For the dispatch to be accepted and published, Channing must sign it with Keating's name, an act that also saves Keating's career and reputation.

Channing's witnessing of the battle and his creation of the stirring rendition signifies his martial epiphany and valorization as a martial subject. Davis displays Channing as a heightened, exemplary model of the transformative effects of war. Turning writing into a strenuous activity, as Kaplan would say, Channing composes the story overnight, only stopping to drink fever-reducing quinine:

The turmoil of leaping engines and throbbing pulses was confused with the story he was writing, while his mind was enflamed with pictures of warring battleships, his body was swept by the fever which overran him like an army of tiny mice . . . Feeling as though he had lived through many years; that the strain of the spectacle would leave its mark upon his nerves forever. He had been buffeted and beaten by a storm of all the great emotions; pride of race and country, pity for the dead, agony for the dying, who clung to blistering armor-plates, or sank to suffocation in the sea; the lust of the hunter, when the hunted thing is a fellow-man; the joys of danger and of excitement, when the shells lashed the waves about him, and the triumph of victory, final, overwhelming and complete . . . He had seen an empire, which had begun with Christopher Columbus and which had spread over two continents, wiped off the map in twenty minutes ...²²

Davis's thickly laid images set the terms of martial redemption both personal: nerves strained and strengthened excitement, joyful danger, and national: military might, the birth of a new empire. Moreover, in "On the Fever Ship" and "The Man with One Talent," Davis employed the trope of fever as a troubling sign of potential disturbance. In "A Derelict," Davis shifts the valence. Channing's battle with the fever is synonymous with the battle against the Spanish, so much so that, in Brown's phase, fighting to get the news and fighting the war are indistinguishable. Finally, Channing's epiphany signals and endorses what Mariani calls the middle class myth and desire that life at war was an exhilarating and regenerating experience.

Bourgeois militarists believed that their class could only remain intact if imbued with the martial spirit. In a sense, Channing's narrative, the flawed bohemian strengthened and purified through war, enacts that ideological vision. Channing's redemption, however, is unsettled by the presence of Keating, who has reached the nadir of his disintegration. Inebriated and incoherent, he lies below deck,

semi-comatose. As a sign of debility, Keating's inebriation is especially damning. Unlike the ambiguous trope of fever, whose cause may be external, self-induced drunkenness is a purely negative marker of weakness: failure of nerve, cowardliness, and dereliction of duty.²³ An abject failure, Keating's collapse is troubling given that initially he is cast as an exemplary bourgeois journalist.

The story's final episode takes place in New York after the fighting in Cuba is over. The mutual fraud perpetrated by the two correspondents (the signing of Keating's name to Channing's dispatch) has remained a secret. Restored to health and reunited with his new wife, Keating is being feted by his colleagues at a fashionable restaurant favored by newsmen. He is acclaimed a "wonder war hero" and the dispatch from Cuba is toasted as the "*The* story of the war." Channing, recovered from his fever, is standing in the foyer but decides not to go in. Instead, he asks a fellow correspondent to deliver a message to Keating: "It's all right." (This other correspondent, a very minor figure in the story, is named "Norris.")²⁴

Finally, to what degree does the story imagine the Cuban Campaign as a site of both class regeneration and personal transformation? It is useful to look at "A Derelict" from the perspective of two different audiences:

The first is the "fictional" audience present at the New York restaurant where Keating's exploits are celebrated. The audience inside the restaurant does not know, of course, the "facts" about the fraud perpetrated by Keating with Channing's complicity. Does it matter that the crowd is worshipping the wrong man?

The second is the "real" audience that read Davis's story when featured as the lead piece in *Scribner's* magazine in August 1901, by which time the hero of Manila Bay, Admiral Dewey, had completed his national victory tour, and the hero of San Juan Hill, Teddy Roosevelt, was sitting in the White House. Davis supplies this audience with all the troubling facts in the Keating-Channing case. It was the "derelict" Channing who created, "The only piece of literature the war has produced."²⁵ Keating was not the embodiment of the correspondent-de-facto soldier but instead a non-hero, an anti-hero, a fraud, a counterfeit, a drunkard who unraveled under the strain of battle. From all perspectives, Keating's secret narrative is one of progressive disintegration.

In the end, Channing proved loyal to his class, gracefully exiting the text with the secret intact, content with his personal experience that life at war was an exhilarating and regenerating experience. Ultimately, what Channing and the 1901 audience can see is that Channing's act did far more than just save Keating's career. More significantly, Channing provided Consolidated Press with a jingoistic, patriotic dispatch worthy of dissemination to the millions. "The Man with One

Talent” ended with a class schism. “A Derelict” ends with a vision of class solidarity: Channing, Keating, their middle class readership and the New York audience enjoying the benefits of war. Still, Davis leaves the troubling question open: does it matter—how can it not?—that the crowd is worshiping the wrong man?

On the Fever Ship

The plot of “On the Fever Ship” is deceptively simple: an unnamed Lieutenant awakes from an apparent eight-day coma, finding himself confined in bed on a military fever ship. The Lieutenant, wounded at San Juan Hill and then stricken with fever, suffers from temporary amnesia. He is frustrated and bewildered by his condition and the diagnosis that he must remain in bed. One of the Lieutenant’s most frenzied concerns is the whereabouts of his New York fiancée. In his overwrought imagination the Lieutenant expects her imminent arrival on board the ship. At the height of his terror, he mistakes (and embraces) one of the ship’s nurses for his fiancée. The nurse is offended; the ship’s Doctor, however, concludes that perpetuating the illusion is essential for the patient’s survival and sanity. The nurse enacts the masquerade; the Lieutenant is kept alive long enough to disembark in New York and reunite with his fiancée, although his condition is still feeble. Despite the surface happy ending, the story is far from a romance. Literally, the Lieutenant is being treated for a wound and the fever. But the narrative minutely focuses on his internal psycho-traumas, and raises the possibility that his faulty mind is partially responsible.

The ship can be seen as a metaphor for an emerging technocratic society that often renders individuals helpless. The story begins with explicit images of confinement. To the feverish Lieutenant the ship’s rails, viewed from his window, are prison bars and his small room a cell. The ship is a penitentiary; “the iron bars around her sides rose and sank and divided the landscape with parallel lines.”²⁶ The sense of suffocation is linked to his visual impairment, for he cannot judge whether the ship or the distant island is moving.

[H]e felt a distinct sense of ill use, of having been [wronged by someone]. There was no other reason for submitting to this existence save these tricks upon the wearisome, glaring landscape; and now, whoever it was who was working them did not seem to be making this effort to entertain him with any hardiness.²⁷

His observations have lost their certainty (the male gaze is dazed); instead the world is playing games and victimizing him. His foremost antagonist is a young male Red Cross volunteer whose responsibility is to keep him quiet.

The Lieutenant opened his lips to ask another question; but his own body answered that one, and for a moment he lay silent. . . . The soldier moved uneasily, and the nurse in him [the volunteer] became uppermost. "I guess the Lieutenant hadn't better talk any more," he said. It was his voice now which held authority.²⁸

The only recourse against the de-authorization is the language of pain: "his own body answered that one." For a moment the Lieutenant contemplates diving overboard, but his infirmity prevents the escape:

But as he balanced for the leap, a swift weakness and nausea swept over him, a weight seized upon his body and limbs. He could not lift the lower foot from the iron rail, and he swayed dizzily and trembled. He trembled. He who had raced his men and beaten them up the hot hill to the trenches of San Juan. But now he was a baby in the hands of a giant, who caught him by the wrist and with an iron arm clasped him around his waist and pulled him down, and shouted, brutally, "Help, some of youse, quick! He's at it again. I can't hold him." More giants grasped him by the arms and by the legs.²⁹

Not only is he infantilized and silenced but also his body has mutinied. The return to his cot is marked by feminization, as "he found it so good to be back again that for a long time he wept quite happily, until the fiery pillow was moist and cool."³⁰ Later, he sheds more tears, not from physical pain but psychic frustration:

Then the prisoner wept again. It was so disappointing. Life was robbed of everything now. He remembered that in a previous existence soldiers who cried were laughed at and mocked. But that was so far away and it was such an absurd superstition . . . at least one is strong enough to cry.³¹

These opening scenes, marked by the Lieutenant's sense of injustice, misdiagnosis, waste, and powerlessness, as well as his compelling need to talk about his trauma.

The Lieutenant's disorientation is exacerbated by a pressing physical need, hunger. To the Lieutenant the medically prescribed light-diet is a form of starvation. Initially he tries to flee his bed for more provisions. When stymied, his mind instead resorts to fantasies of food.

These excursions afield were always predatory; he went forth always to seek food. With all the beautiful world from which to select and choose, he sought only those places where eating was studied and elevated to an art. . . . But his adventure never passed that point [awakening from the dream], for he was captured again and once more bound to his cot with a close burning sheet.³²

The Lieutenant is trapped in an oscillating world between dream and actuality; his nocturnal flights convey the aura of somnambulism. The Lieutenant's descent into madness is forestalled with the ambiguous arrival of his "cure" and the intervention of the Doctor and his assigned nurse.

Miss Bergen halted beside the cot of the Lieutenant and asked, "Is this the fever case you spoke about, Doctor—the one you want moved to the officer's ward?" . . . The Lieutenant raised his head and stared up at the white figure beside his cot. His eyes opened and then shut quickly, with a startled look, in which doubt struggled with wonderful happiness. His hand stole out fearfully and warily until it touched her apron, and then, finding it was real, he clutched it desperately, and twisting his face and body toward her, pulling her down, clasping her hands in both of his, and pressing them close to his face and eyes and lips. He put them from him for an instant, and looked at her through his tears. "Sweetheart," he whispered, "sweetheart, I knew you'd come."³³

At first the Nurse is angered by the Lieutenant's groping. The Doctor quickly analyzes the disturbing episode.

"Good God!" cried the young Doctor, savagely. "Do you want to kill him?"

When she spoke, the patient had thrown his arms heavily against his face, and had fallen back, lying rigid on the pillow.³⁴

To prevent further relapses, the Doctor convinces Miss Bergen to temporarily play the role of the absent fiancée.

The scene presents a series of problems if we read beneath the literal surface. The straightforward interpretation is that the Lieutenant's fever-induced hallucination is entirely ingenuous and proves his devotion to his fiancée. The reader is left to speculate on the unbreakable power of true love. Still, the story is more nuanced than that. The story's crisis occurs when the Lieutenant almost discovers his hallucinatory error. Whether a delusion or not, the Lieutenant appears to have experienced sexual desire for the body of another woman. The prevailing sexual codes required a denial of erotic motives and the Lieutenant's absolute physical loyalty to his betrothed. His desire would seem to represent a sexual dysfunction, a symptom of his psychic distress. The Lieutenant's descent has reached new depths. His bodily control has eroded, his libido is either perversely released or entirely ruled by fantasy, and he may have lost his mind.

Howard Chandler Christy's accompanying illustration in the book's first edition depicts the Lieutenant's hallucination and the Doctor's penetrating gaze. In the illustration, the Lieutenant imagines that he sees his fiancée. The Doctor, like the reader, knows differently. As the sketch is rendered, the Doctor looks through the Lieutenant's mirage, casting his diagnostic scrutiny directly at the patient. In doing so, the illustration registers the Lieutenant's feminization. The bedridden and partially exposed Lieutenant, medicine or absinthe at his side, is contrasted with the standing and fully clothed Doctor, the sword hung at his side.

Also—as a suggestion rather than assertion—it seems possible that above the image of the virginal fiancée is the faint outline of a nude female torso, arms twisted and hair strewn. Earlier, I argued that the Lieutenant appeared to experience sexual desire for Nurse Bergen. However, in the illustration, Christy has effaced Nurse Bergen and perhaps substitutes the eroticized torso.



“ Listen,” he said.

At this point, the story, and the illustration, allows us to ask: do the Lieutenant’s hallucinations and impulsive actions arise solely from the fever or do they originate in his dysfunctional mind? Or, were they caused by the very shock of his charge up San Juan Hill? The doctor’s intervention, especially in the use of a hypnotic or mental cure, highlights the plasticity of the Lieutenant’s psyche; he is now subject to clinical manipulation. The doctor’s deception transforms him into a specimen.

As homeopathic treatment, the nurse’s masquerade reduces the Lieutenant’s delirium to manageable levels. While still hallucinating, he becomes docile enough to forgo a twenty-four hour watch, and survives until disembarkment in New York. The story zooms to a climax with the entrance of the “real” fiancée. Initially her sympathetic tears wound his masculine pride by drawing public attention to his wrecked state: “Of course it is not real, of course it is not She,” he assured himself. “Because She would not do such a thing. Before all these people She would not do it.” Then, in a moment of painful lucidity, to verify his perceptions the Lieutenant interrogates the steward and the Doctor.

Is this the same young lady who was on the transport—the one you [the steward] used to drive away?”

In his embarrassment, the hospital steward blushed under his tan, and stammered.

“Of course it’s the same young lady,” the Doctor answered briskly. “And I won’t let them drive her away.” He turned to her, smiling gravely. “I think his condition has ceased to be dangerous, madam.”³⁵

The cure is complete. It is the fiancée who drives the Lieutenant away: “the carriage moved forward, and She put her arm about him and his head fell on her shoulder and neither of them spoke.” The sentimental ending apparently corroborates the Doctor’s methods:

“Do you think,” he [the Lieutenant] begged again, trembling, “that it is going to last much longer?”

She smiled, and bending her head slowly, kissed him. “It is going to last—always,” she said.³⁶

An alternative reading yields instead a tortured convalescence. His fiancée has assured him *not* that her love is eternal but that his emasculated, self-doubting condition is irreversible. It may be the Lieutenant who is no longer dangerous. At disembarkment he is clothed in his old uniform, now several sizes too large following his emaciation.

But the real looming figure of despair may be the seemingly innocuous naval physician, one agent in the soldiers’ ordeal. The Lieutenant has been funneled through the military-medical complex and transformed into a shrunken test case. Davis’s Lieutenant ends up where this chapter began—at a gathering of curious New York civilians. To the reader of the story—when the screen of malarial fever is set aside—the ironic message is there. “It” will last always, and the worst may yet to be.”

In his story of the invalid’s return to domestic life, Davis imagines vulnerability—in the body and mind of the hallucinating Lieutenant—in ominous tones. The Fever Ship—with its complex staff of doctors, nurses, and orderlies—becomes metonymically linked with the emerging bureaucratic society, one based on surveillance, specialized knowledge, and one-sided control over the individual.

Comida: An Experience in Famine

Of the three journalists-novelists, Norris's Spanish War writings are the least extensive. Unlike Crane and Davis, Norris, covering the war for *McClure's Magazine*, was assigned to the First U.S. Infantry, a far less glamorous unit than the Rough Riders. Norris went to Cuba believing that it provided him the opportunity to participate in what he felt was an essential chapter of his nation's, as well as his generation's history. Norris would produce "*Comida: An Experience in Famine*," a short piece of quasi-fictional reporting in his naturalistic, novelistic manner and four published articles.³⁷

Norris's "Santiago's Surrender," the account of the Spanish capitulation following the destruction of Cervera's fleet, is an unalloyed celebration of American victory in which Cuban battlefields are placed at the forefront of national glory:

And the great names come to mind again: Lexington, Trenton, Yorktown, 1812, Chapultepec, Mexico, Shiloh, Gettysburg, the Wilderness, Appomattox, and now—Guisimas, San Juan, El Caney, Santiago.³⁸

Norris's identification of the Spanish-American battlefields as comparable to those of the Civil and Revolutionary War strikes an appropriate note, underscoring the popular belief that his generation had passed the test of manhood. Furthermore, Norris projects an almost unalloyed vision of Anglo-Saxon imperial supremacy: "Santiago was ours—ours, ours by the sword we had acquired, we, Americans, with no one to help—and the Anglo-Saxon blood of us, the blood of the race that fought its way out of a swamp in Friesland, conquering and conquering and conquering, on to the westward, the race whose blood instinct is in the acquiring of land . . . the fine brutal instinct of the Anglo-Saxon. . . triumphant, arrogant, conquerors."³⁹ Apparently, Cuba is only the latest stage in the nation and the race's forward march.

First published in the March 1899 edition of *The Atlantic Monthly*, "*Comida: An Experience in Famine*" recounts the Red Cross Relief Mission that aided Cuban civilians who had fled the countryside during the siege of Santiago. Under the guidance of Clara Barton, the American Red Cross set up a hospital in an El Caney church to treat the sick and wounded and field kitchens in the surrounding countryside, feeding about 50,000 refugees in the first five days after the July 22 Armistice.

"*Comida*" tells the story of a group of war correspondents who report on and offer their assistance to the Relief Mission. The vignette is narrated by an unnamed journalist who is a thinly veiled version of Norris himself. (Norris spent several

days in El Caney preparing and distributing supplies.) Set in the aftermath of battle, Norris uses the occasion to render a nascent version of an American imperial landscape; for Caney, as Santiago was now “ours, ours, ours.” This imperial panorama is beset with chaotic scenes of desperate Cuban civilians pleading for food and medicine. Throughout the sketch, Norris, akin to the Anglo-Saxon chauvinism of “Santiago’s Surrender,” portrays the Cuban populace as not quite fit, not just physically but morally: “listless, stunned, and stupefied,” “starving little wretches, “trembling on the verge of hysteria,” “utterly inefficient,” “they [the relief committees composed of Cubans] did absolutely nothing.” Furthermore, the narrator notes with pride the signs of American presence. Inside the El Caney church, he finds boxes of clothes from Waltham, Massachusetts; his own horse was a bronco pony from Southern California, and he even praises an African-American trooper on guard at the Red Cross shelter.

At the center of the imperial spectacle is a singular Anglo-Saxon character, Dr. Bangs, who we are told was “Here, alone with no one to help him but a couple of utterly inefficient Cubans.”³⁹ Norris’s character is based on one of Clara Barton’s staff doctors from the hospital ship the *State of Texas*, who Norris met while distributing supplies for the Relief Mission. During the Mission, the “real” Bangs contracted yellow fever at the El Caney church/hospital. In “The Story of a Red Cross Nurse,” J. Helen Bull briefly mentions the stricken Bangs (referred to as Mr. Bangs) who was noted for his heroic tending to the wounded:

Mr. Bangs, one of Miss Barton’s staff, was as truly a soldier as though he had met his death on the field of battle. When I met him he had passed through the horrors of Siboney and Caney, and the stamp of death was on his face.⁴⁰

Within a week after Bangs and Norris parted, Bangs would be dead.

In *Comida*, the fictionalized Bangs is the picture of robust health. Like one of Davis’s globetrotting civil engineer/soldiers, Bangs, the physician/soldier, seems to represent an idealized version of the bourgeois martial subject. Describing Bangs as “at last the right man in the right place,” the journalist is astounded by his forceful presence:

He was a stout man, with a very red face and a voice like the exhaust of a locomotive. He wore an absurd pith helmet battered and out of all shape, and his beard was a fortnight old. But there was the right stuff in Dr.

Bangs. Early and late, hot or cold, rain or shine, the doctor toiled and toiled and toiled, feeding the thousands, building fires, sending this man for wood and that man for water, perspiring, gesticulating, bellowing, but in the end “getting the thing into shape.”⁴¹

Just as Norris imagines the first American imperial landscape, via Bangs, Norris constructs a prototype of a new imperial bourgeois man, one apparently energized, vitalized and empowered by the Cuban adventure.

The pivotal (and problematic) episode occurs that evening as Bangs and the journalists are gathered around the campfire. As the correspondents gaze at the martial doctor, presumably to tell his story to their readers—the right man in the right place with the right stuff—the narrator’s perception of Bangs is abruptly complicated.

We were tired enough, Heaven knows, and keyed up to the highest tension, so that one of the incidents that closed that eventful day affected us more deeply and keenly than otherwise it might have done. We were all standing by the fire just before turning in, listening to the starving thousands settling themselves to sleep close at hand, when the doctor suddenly exclaimed, in that thunderous trumpet voice of his, “Well, fellows, here’s something I do every night that you can’t do at all!” and with those words he took out his left eye and polished it on the leg of his trousers. I was faint in an instant; the thing was so unexpected, so positively ghastly. Not even the sight of the division hospital, a week before had so upset me.⁴²

The doctor’s gesture and the narrator’s nervous reaction—vertigo and nausea—raise several questions. Why exactly is Bangs’s polishing act so disturbing, ghastlier than scenes of actual soldiers shot through by Mausers and Remingtons? Is there something wrong with Bangs? Or with the narrator?

Norris provides clues in the next scene when, the following morning, the narrator discovers that he been “sleeping under strange conditions” -- “An amputated arm had been buried in the dirt of the terrace close to where we had spread our blankets, -- half buried, as we were able to judge in the morning.”⁴³ Presented to the reader in quick succession, Bang’s empty eye socket and the detached limb, conjuring the hideous image of a severed shoulder, evoke disfigurement, dismemberment and vulnerability. In his 1932 biography of Norris, Franklin Walker offers an even

more grisly reading of the “strange condition.” Walker contends that the narrator, assumed to be Norris himself, had accidentally fallen asleep on the amputated arm, described by Walker as “the log-like object which he [Norris] had chosen for a pillow,” only to discover in the morning the awful truth. Walker concludes that the two episodes “shattered Norris’s nerves.”⁴⁴

While I find Walker’s reading of the arm as a pillow overly impressionistic, the episodes, inflected by tropes of disability, mutilation and psychic distress, do shatter Norris’s earlier constructions of both the hardened war correspondent chronicling the Anglo-Saxon forward march and the impervious doctor-soldier imperialist. Throughout the story, it had been the Cubans who were universally unfit. Now, it is the imperialists themselves, the oddly deformed Bangs, whose doppelganger will be dead in a week, and the traumatized journalist eager to flee back to California, for whom the redemptive power of war may be lacking.⁴⁵

The Second Generation

On April 10, 1899, Theodore Roosevelt, Governor of New York and soon to be Republican Vice Presidential candidate, delivered perhaps his most famous address, “The Strenuous Life,” to a gathering of prominent Chicago businessmen at the prestigious Hamilton Club. Roosevelt’s immediate objective was to rally support for McKinley’s recent annexation of the Philippines and the decision to prosecute war against Emil Aguinaldo’s insurgent army. At the same time, Roosevelt used the occasion to instruct the Club on the value of the “Strenuous Life,” Roosevelt’s version of the martial spirit. Written in the afterglow of victory in Cuba, Roosevelt assures his audience that, when “brought face to face with the problem of war with Spain,” this generation, proved itself the equal of their fathers: “iron-blooded men” who had “carried the great Civil War to a triumphant conclusion.

Intertwined within the celebratory rhetoric, Roosevelt includes a cautionary tale. In the most quoted passage of the speech, Roosevelt inveighs against those men “who fear the strenuous life:”

The timid man, the lazy man, the man who distrusts his country, the over-civilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues, the ignorant man, and the man of dull mind, whose soul is incapable of feeling the mighty lift that thrills “stern men with empires in their brains”—all these, of course, shrink from seeing the nation undertake its new duties; shrink from seeing us build a navy and an army adequate to our needs; shrink from seeing us do our share of the world’s work, by

bringing order out of chaos in the great, fair tropic islands from which the valor of our soldiers and sailors has driven the Spanish flag.⁴⁶

Here Roosevelt has constructed a negatively rendered palimpsest of middle-and upper class figures: flabby and passive urbanites, indolent members of the Leisure Class, effete eastern intellectuals, weak Brahmin dissenters and pacifists, and neurasthenics lacking virility. In doing so, Roosevelt warns his bourgeois audience to the dangers—psychic and social—of failing sufficiently to embrace the martial spirit.

First published in the December 2, 1899 edition of *The Saturday Evening Post*, Stephen Crane's "The Second Generation" invites comparison to the themes enunciated by Roosevelt at the Hamilton Club.⁴⁷ The story focuses on the wartime experiences of Caspar Cadogan, the son of a rich, powerful U.S. Senator who himself fought in the Civil War. Influenced by the war fever that swept the country in 1898, Caspar decides that he wants to go to Cuba and fight. As framed by the title, the story allows Caspar's narrative to be imagined as representative of his generation. (Full text with illustrations saturdayeveningpost.com/wp-content/uploads/satevepost/the_second_generation.pdf)

In its premise, the narrative of an elite Easterner turned soldier, "The Second Generation" immediately brings to mind Theodore Roosevelt's memoir *The Rough Riders*, also published in 1899. Roosevelt scrupulously highlights the exploits of his young Ivy League graduates and Club Men, two-thirds of whom, like Caspar, are the sons of Civil War veterans. Entirely possessing the great fighting, masterful virtues and at ease with the cowboys and western sheriffs, Roosevelt cadre of elite martial subjects—exemplary models of their class—are tested, proved and strengthened through the experience of war.

The "Second Generation" opens in Washington in the Spring of 1898 during the period when over a million men answered McKinley's call for volunteers. Like others of his class, Caspar seeks a commission, on the assumption that, like his father in 1865, the Cuban Campaign will prove his manhood. Initially, his father is skeptical, commenting that "they've got all the golf experts and tennis champions and cotillion leaders and piano turners and billiard markers they really need as officers. Now, if you were a soldier—." On the one hand, Senator Cadogan fears that a generation of "cotillion leaders" will not be successful officers in battle. However, his essential class pride overcomes his skepticism and he decides to use his influence to obtain a captaincy for Caspar. The Senator is sure that members of his class are a "strong, healthy, clear-eyed educated collection" and that "any shindy

is enough to show how much there is in a man.”⁴⁸ Crane poses the question: what should war do for, and to, Caspar—and by extension—the bourgeois elite of his generation?

In Cuba, Caspar seems to be a complete failure; although, in the depiction of Caspar at the famous San Juan Hill charge, Crane’s elusive style leaves some room for doubt. During the first stages of the Campaign, Caspar is an incompetent commissary officer. His letters home requesting sardines and pickles and better underwear, and an embarrassing moment when he is caught eating from a private cache of potted ham and crackers negatively marks his privileged upbringing. During the charge up San Juan Hill, Caspar, who later says he “didn’t want to go up at all, struggles to keep up with the other men, apparently only managing to get halfway to the summit. When fever sweeps through the camps, Caspar besmirches his character by keeping secret a full canteen of water. Upon his return to New York, Senator Cadogan wants Caspar to remain in the army and promises to make him a major. Caspar, however, cannot bring himself to reenlist, thereby greatly disappointing his father.

Crane’s first-hand journalistic account of the action on San Juan Hill was prominently featured on the *World’s* front page; “Stephen Crane’s Vivid Story of the Battle of San Juan” is packed with jingoistic triumphalism.⁴⁹ Crane describes the taking of the Spanish entrenchments on the San Juan Heights in a celebratory tone: “It will never be forgotten as long as America has a military history.” There is a momentary “thrill of patriotic insanity” as the charge begins: “Yes, they were going up the hill, up the hill. It was the best moment of anybody’s life.” The advance of the American troops is a triumph of will; “The fighting line, the men and their regimental officers, took the hill chiefly because they knew they could take it,” whereupon they “sat down on the conquered crest and felt satisfied.” Given a collective voice, the soldiers survey the scene of their victory: “Well, hell! Here we are.”

In his fictional rendering, “The Second Generation,” Crane constructs an ironic and de-heroicized version of the battle. In contrast to the “Vivid Story,” the soldiers move up the hill not because they know they can take it, but simply: “They went because they went.” The charge itself is barely described. The only sustained images are that of the regiment’s officers being killed one-by-one: After the smoke has cleared, several soldiers discuss Caspar’s fate. What has become of the dude?

“Where’s that young kitchen-soldier, Cadogan, or whatever his name is? Ain’t seen him all day.”

“Well, *I* seen him. He was right in it. He got shot, too, about half up the hill, in the leg. I seen it. He’s all right. Don’t worry about him. He’s all right.

“I seen ‘m too. He’s done his stunt. As soon as I can git this piece of barbed-wire entanglement out o’ my throat I’ll give ‘m a cheer.

“He ain’t shot at all, b’cause there he stands, there. See ‘im?”

Rearward, the grassy slope was populous with little groups of men searching for the wounded. Reilly’s brigade began to dig with its meat ration cans.⁵⁰

The conflicting reports of the soldiers create an ambiguous picture. This passage itself is typical of Crane’s impressionist style in which each participant in battle is subjected to a stream of confusing and frightening sensations, that each soldier sees and registers only a narrow piece of what has happened. In this sense, the reader may never get the answer. If not shot in the leg, was Caspar at least shot at? How far up the Hill did he get? Or was Caspar wandering in the rear collecting meat-ration cans? Where the hell was Caspar?

In the story, Crane has endowed Caspar with those traits disparaged by Roosevelt in his “Strenuous Life” speech. Caspar is pampered, spoiled, and maybe even cowardly. Roosevelt had stated that war could provide the cure for these traits. For Senator Cadogan, tested in the great battles of the Civil War and embodying heroic the legacy of that generation, the Cuban War presents an opportunity for Caspar to prove his mettle. As Caspar leaves for Cuba, the Senator warns him: “I’ll thrash you with my own hands if, when the Army gets back, the other fellows say my son is ‘nothing but a good-looking dude.’” The Senator only verbally thrashes Caspar with the story’s last sentence; “I guess you are no damn good.”⁵¹

Ultimately, Crane’s narrative never quite answers the reader’s and the Senator’s questions regarding what kind of a man has emerged from the exposure to war. The narrator tells the reader, somewhat cryptically; “They [Caspar and the Senator] both thought the problem of war would eliminate to an equation of actual battle.” How did Caspar, as the proxy for his generation, measure up to this “equation”? The textual ambiguities about Caspar’s role at the battle of San Juan leave this equation unsolvable. But the real issue may not be Caspar’s provisional heroism on San Juan Hill. At the end of the story when Caspar turns down an offer from his father to secure him an Army commission as a major, Caspar explains that he “couldn’t get along” with the enlisted men. Immune from the changes his father had hoped for, Caspar is still an effete snob.

Taken as a whole, these Spanish War fictions constitute a kind of rhetorical scorecard for tracking the benefits of war. Although Cuban battlefields play secondary roles within the plots, the victories are there—Santiago Bay in “A Derelict,” El Caney in “*Comida*” and San Juan in “The Second Generation—victories whose value is uncontested: the quick, resounding and reassuring defeat of Spain and the successful projection of American might abroad. As imagined by Davis, Norris, and Crane, however, war may not be the antidote for the nervous middle class. For the costs are steep. Arkwright is transformed from a civil engineer into a scarred, mutilated and fanatical martyr. Ultimately Keating, the scion of middle class respectability, is not redeemed but exposed as unfit. The Lieutenant survives as a physically and psychologically traumatized invalid. Norris’s unnamed narrator/journalist loses his nerves and flees from the scene of imperial conquest. And Caspar—sent by his father to Cuba to prove the worth of his class—only demonstrates his incapacity.

Notes

1. Rebecca Harding Davis. “The Surprises of the War.” *The Independent*, Vol. 50, No. 2. 1898, 527-528.
2. Edward Marshall, “How it Feels To Be Shot,” *Cosmopolitan*, September 1898.
3. Scott Compton Osborn, *Richard Harding Davis* (Boston: Twayne, 1978) 88.
4. Richard Harding Davis, “A Man with One Talent.” *The Lion and the Unicorn*. (New York, 1899) 102-145.
5. Henry Watterson, *History of the Spanish-American War* (New York: 1898) vii-viii.
6. Ruth Oldenziel, *Making Technology Masculine: Men, Women and Modern Machines in America 1870-1945*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1999) 123.
7. Giorgio Mariani, *Spectacular Narratives: Representations of Class and War in Stephen Crane and the American 1890s* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992) 103.
8. William E Leuchtenberg, “The Needless War with Spain,” *Times of Trial*, Allan Nevins, ed. (New York: Knopf, 1958) 190.
9. Davis, *Talent* 104.
10. Osborn, 88.
11. Davis, *Talent* 108.
12. Davis, *Talent* 116.
13. Davis, *Talent* 135-136.
14. Davis, *Talent* 135-136.

15. Edward McKinley, *Marching to Glory: The History of the Salvation Army in the United States, 1880-1980* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1980) 67-69.
16. Richard Harding Davis, "A Derelict." *Ransom's Folly* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1902) 161-212.
17. Bill Brown, *The Material Unconscious: American Amusement, Stephen Crane, and the Economics of Play* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996) 161.
18. Amy Kaplan, "The Spectacle of War in Crane's Revision of History," *New Essays on The Red Badge of Courage*, Lee Clark Mitchell ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986) 103.
19. Mariani, 105.
20. Stanley Wertheim, "Two Yellow Kids: Frank Norris and Stephen Crane," *Frank Norris Studies*, Spring, 1999, 2-8. Wertheim describes the extent and nature of the Cuban War reporting carried out by Norris and Crane.
21. Davis, *Derelict*, 164.
22. Davis, *Derelict*, 201-202.
23. Historically, alcohol abuse was relatively rare during the Cuban Campaign. Enroute from Tampa to Cuba, Theodore Roosevelt did discover that the stokers and deck hands, having smuggled liquor aboard the troop ship, were drunken, insubordinate, and half-mutinuous. Roosevelt threw the entire worker's flasks and bottles overboard, a scene similarly enacted when the Captain of the Consolidated Press Boat tosses Keating whisky bottle over the bow in disgust. In a sense, this association of drunkenness and lower class behavior makes Keating's disgrace even more pointed.
24. Was "Norris" meant to be Frank Norris? In *Richard Harding Davis and His Day*, Fairfax Downey includes an analysis of the story by Franklin Clarkin:

Some of Davis's fellow correspondents in Cuba were critical of "A Derelict." They found in it "misleading allusions," "inexact references to persons," not allowing for the circumstance that it was fiction and that, while it integrated and generalized to present a total picture, it did not pretend to be history. His characters in the tale are composites. One recalls that there was on the blockade of Havana and Santiago and the Siboney chaparral a correspondent who was brilliant, one who was caddish, one who saw the battle of Santiago and wrote the earliest description and one who was sun struck in a land battle and whose account had to written from lips by a comrade who signed and got credit for it, while the sun-smitten man received a harsh cablegram from his office for a supposed dereliction that had been genuinely heroic devotion to duty. The true Richard Harding Davis, the expression of gentlemanliness of heart which one remembered as his characteristic, came out in the climax where the derelict sees the man he had made being dined and celebrated and would not spoil the party.

Fairfax Downey, *Richard Harding Davis and His Day*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933) 162.

Nevertheless, why were the "fellow correspondents" so critical if the characters were just composites? Moreover, why would Davis use the exact name, "Norris" if he were not largely basing his fictional Norris on the real Norris? If "A Derelict" disturbed the correspondents, perhaps it was because Davis was not disguising them well enough! Was Channing the irresponsible bohemian "derelict" none other than Stephen Crane? The "real" Frank Norris was critical of Crane's disheveled appearance, writing in a letter that Crane's "hair hung in ragged fringes over his eyes." (Wertheim, 2) Furthermore, Philip Knightly reports that Crane once double-crossed his friend Davis by not awakening him as prearranged and got for himself the exclusive story of the surrender of Juana Diaz in Puerto Rico. (Phillip Knightly, *The First Casualty From Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker*, (New York and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975) Finally, was Keating a nightmarish version of Davis himself?

25. Davis, *Derelict* 211.
26. Richard Harding Davis, "On the Fever Ship," *The Lion and the Unicorn* (New York, 1899) 73.
27. Davis, 84.
28. Davis, 75.
29. Davis, 75.
30. Davis, 78.
31. Davis, 79.
32. Davis, 88-89.
33. Davis, 92.
34. Davis, 100.
35. Davis, 101.
36. Frank Norris, *The Complete Edition of Frank Norris, Vol.10* (Garden City: Doubleday, Doran, 1928) Reissued in 1967 by Kennikat Press.
37. Norris, 276.
38. Norris, 273-274.
39. Norris, 279.
40. Helen J. Bull, "The Story of a Red Cross Nurse," *Hero Tales of the American Soldier and Sailor: The Unwritten Story of American Chivalry*, Philadelphia, 1899, 224.
41. Norris, 279.
42. Norris, 285.
43. Norris, 285.
44. Franklin Walker, *Frank Norris: A Biography*, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1932) 195.
45. Russ Castronovo, "Geo-Aesthetics: Fascism, Globalism, and Frank Norris," *Boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture*, Vol.30, No.3, Fall, 2003, 157-184.

Castronovo argues that Norris's next novel, *The Octopus*, is a quasi-fascist work whose aesthetic was influenced by Norris's expedition to Cuba, his "imperial adventure." Castronovo cites Norris's rapturous description of Santiago's surrender: "It was ours—was ours, ours." A slightly different sense of Norris's adventure arises when "*Comida*" is seen as an antecedent to *The Octopus*. Even more provocatively, I suggest that a primary influence of Norris's Spanish War experiences on *The Octopus* resides in a central character, Annixter. It seems to me that Annixter is almost surely modeled after Roosevelt—the Annexor—who Norris had praised in "Santiago's Surrender." If so, Annixter's fate is ironic. In *The Octopus*, Norris casts Annixter as the doomed leader of a rancher men's League who is killed in a pitched battle against agents of a powerful railroad corporation.

46. Theodore Roosevelt, *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*, (New York: The Century Co, 1902.) Republished in 1970 by Scholarly Press, 1-21.

47. Stephen Crane, "The Second Generation," *Stephen Crane: Prose and Poetry* (New York: Library of America, 1984) 1108-1129.

48. Crane, 1110.

49. Donald Vanouse, "Stephen Crane in Cuba: From Jingoism to Criticism," *Stephen Crane Studies*, Fall, 2002, 24.

In this essay, Vanouse examines Crane's war journalism. He claims that while Crane may have taken a correspondent's assignment to gather material for his fiction, "he was clearly capable of submitting dispatches puffed up with propaganda." Vanouse says Crane's observations of a troop of Spanish cavalry directing musket fire at the American fleet (written while Crane was aboard the U.S. flagship *New York*) were a "complete dramatization of a jingoistic fantasy."

50. Crane, 1117.

51. Crane, 1110.

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