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English 1A 1001-53

26 October, 2011

Part 1

Stylistic Analysis Worksheets

Title:

The Small Brown Dog by American Naturalism / Impressionist writer Stephen Crane

Crane uses the simple language of a primary reader for the title of this work. This offers a glimpse of the baseness of the tale to be unfolded. Crane intimates this tale is not that of the complexities of adult behaviour but rather the primal view of the world of a child

Genre & Tone:

The genre for *The Dark Brown Dog* is a tragedy in the classical sense of Aristotle's *Poetics* and is written in the form of a short story. The tone of this short story is both one of the flâneur¹ offering a strolling glimpse of society that is the style of American Naturalism dispersed with moments of irony.

[flâneur] "Here the child uttering loud cries, came valiantly forth like a knight. The father of the family paid no attention to these calls of the child, but advanced with glee upon the dog. Upon being knocked down twice in swift succession, the latter apparently gave up all hope of escape (143).

¹ The term *flâneur* comes from the French masculine noun *flâneur*—which has the basic meanings of "stroller", "lounger", "saunterer", "loafer"—which itself comes from the French verb *flâner*, which means, "to stroll". Charles Baudelaire developed a derived meaning of *flâneur*—that of "a person who walks the city in order to experience it". Because of the term's usage and theorization by Baudelaire and numerous thinkers in economic, cultural, literary and historical fields, the idea of the *flâneur* has accumulated significant meaning as a referent for understanding urban phenomena and modernity.

[irony] “But the father was in a mood for having fun, and it occurred to him that it would be a fine thing to throw the dog out the window” (143).

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Atmosphere, Setting, Place and Time periods:

The atmosphere of *The Dark Brown Dog* is a gloomy, foreboding sense of an impending sorrowful event. The setting for this short story is the Bowery district of New York City at the cusp of the transition from agrarian society to that of the industrial revolution. The Bowery and its neighbouring Lower East side was the site for the tenements that housed the new immigrants from Eastern Europe and the poor Irish who had immigrated at an earlier time but had yet to elevate from the working class to the burgeoning middle class.

[setting] “A woman watering plants in an opposite window gave an involuntary shout and dropped a flower pot. A man in another window leaned perilously out to watch the flight of the dog. A woman, who had been hanging out clothes in the yard, began to caper wildly. Her mouth was filled with clothespins, but her arms gave vent to a sort of exclamation” (143).

Narration (Points-of-view), Character & Themes:

The narration for *The Dark Brown Dog* is in third person, and recounts the inter-action of a small boy, his family and more specifically his father, and the main character of a little dark brown dog the child has rescued from the mean streets of the Bowery.

[narration & character] “Here the child uttering loud cries, came valiantly forth like a knight. The father of the family paid no attention to these calls of the child, but advanced with glee upon the dog” (143).

The theme of this short story is that of the overwhelming familial dysfunction that was the norm for many of the families living in the poverty of The Bowery.

[theme] “The father of the family paid no attention to these calls of the child, but advanced with glee upon the dog”(143).

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Imagery: Descriptive & Sensory (sound, touch, taste, feel, and smell images):

The Dark Brown Dog is rich with both descriptive and sensory imagery, one hears the sounds of anguish and the cacophony of the ghetto streets, “Here the child uttering loud cries, . . .” and “Children ran whooping”(143). Crane offers a sharply focused view of the denizens of the Bowery tenements vividly describing their day-to-day affairs with the clarity that was the style of American Naturalism , “A woman watering plants in an opposite window gave an involuntary shout and dropped a flower pot. A man in another window leaned perilously out to watch the flight of the dog. A woman, who had been hanging out clothes in the yard, began to caper wildly. Her mouth was filled with clothespins, but her arms gave vent to a sort of exclamation. In appearance she was like a gagged prisoner “ (143).

Language (emotional, detached, matter-of-fact, ornate, formal, informal, word choice): Crane’s language in *The Dark Brown Dog* is both formal and although the story is ripe with emotion, the telling of the tale is somewhat detached, almost ethnographic. “So he reached down and grabbing the animal by a leg, lifted him, squirming, up. He swung him two or three times hilariously about his head, and then flung him with great accuracy through the window” (143)

Figurative language: (simile, puns, metaphors, personification, alliteration, irony, foreshadowing):

Crane uses a variety of figurative language throughout *The Dark Brown Dog*.

Simile: “Here the child uttering loud cry, came valiantly forth like a knight” and “In appearance she was like a gagged prisoner (143).

Personification: “At the same time with his eyes and his ears he offered up a small prayer” (143).

Foreshadowing : “Upon being knocked down twice in swift succession, the latter apparently gave up all hope of escape” (143).

Irony: “But the father was in a mood for having fun, and it occurred to him that it would be a fine thing to throw the dog out the window”(143).

Cultural assumptions (arguments, evaluations & analysis):

The reader can assume Crane is writing about a segment of late 19th century post Civil War urban denizens who are barely eking out an existence. They live in each others pockets, so to speak, in the crowded, raucous tenements of New York City’s Bowery district. Using the examples of the woman hanging her laundry, the man leaning perilously out his window to witness the demise of the main character all help to form this cultural assumption.

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The violence the father inflicts on the little dog and his complete disregard for the protestations of his child, offer the suggestion that he does not come from a refined or civil segment of society. The three paragraphs never once offer so much of a hint at anything other than a glimpse at darker, baser segment of Post Civil War Urban America.

Your Personal Views:

This is an exquisite tale of urban blight and the dis-ease of poverty that was so rampant at the end of 19th century America. Crane captures the essence of poverty and brings it to life in the few lines of his short story. He provides a focused view of familial dysfunction, the trickle down effect of violence by those experiencing it to the target that dwells at a lower level on the hierarchy of the familial power structure. Crane's punctuation of the tale with the ambivalence and malaise of those bearing witness to the little dog's demise is done with the mastery of the Baudelairian flâneur.

Part 2

The Small Brown Dog is a short story written in 1893 by American Naturalism / Impressionist writer Stephen Crane. It is a tragedy from the classical sense of Aristotle's *Poetics*. Set in The Bowery district of New York City at the cusp of the transition from agrarian society to that of the industrial revolution, Crane sets a tone that is both one of the flâneur offering a strolling glimpse of society that is the style of American Naturalism "Here the child uttering loud cry(sic), came valiantly forth like a knight. The father of the family paid no attention to these calls of the child, but advanced with glee upon the dog. Upon being knocked down twice in swift succession, the latter apparently gave up all hope of escape "(143), dispersed with moments of irony; "But the father was in a mood for having fun, and it occurred to him that it would be a fine thing to throw the dog out the window" (143). Crane creates an atmosphere that suggests a gloomy, foreboding sense of an impending sorrowful event; "Upon being knocked down twice in swift succession, the latter apparently gave up all hope of escape. He rolled over on his back and held his paws in a peculiar manner. At the same time with his eyes and his ears he offered up a small prayer (143).

The Dark Brown Dog is rich with both descriptive and sensory imagery, one hears the sounds of anguish and the cacophony of the ghetto streets, "Here the child uttering loud cry . . ." and "Children ran whooping"(143). Crane offers a sharply focused view of the denizens of The Bowery tenements vividly describing their day-to-day affairs with the clarity and grace that was the style of American Naturalism , "A woman watering plants in an opposite window gave an involuntary shout and dropped a flower pot. A man in another

window leaned perilously out to watch the flight of the dog. A woman, who had been hanging out clothes in the yard, began to caper wildly. Her mouth was filled with clothespins, but her arms gave vent to a sort of exclamation. In appearance she was like a gagged prisoner “ (143). Crane uses formal language throughout and although the story is ripe with emotion, the telling of the tale is somewhat detached, almost ethnographic. “So he reached down and grabbing the animal by a leg, lifted him, squirming, up. He swung him two or three times hilariously about his head, and then flung him with great accuracy through the window” (143). It is with these techniques that Crane captures the essence of poverty and brings it to life in the sparse few pages of his short story. He provides a focused view of familial dysfunction, the trickle down effect of violence by those experiencing it to the target that dwells at a lower level on the hierarchy of the familial power structure. Crane’s punctuates the tale with the ambivalence and malaise of those bearing witness to the little brown dog’s demise is done with the mastery of the Baudelairian flâneur.

Work Cited

Crane, Stephen. *Maggie, A Girl of the Street and other New York Writings*. Toronto: Random House Canada, 2001. 138-44. Print.