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Lindsay V. Reckson

Haverford College, lreckson@haverford.edu

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LINDSAY V. RECKSON

A “Reg’lar Jim Dandy”: Archiving Ecstatic Performance in Stephen Crane

ROUGHLY MID-WAY THROUGH STEPHEN CRANE’S 1895 novel *The Red Badge of Courage*, we witness the unfolding of an intensely peculiar post-mortem:

The tattered man stood musing.

“Well, he was reg’lar jim-dandy fer nerve, wa’n’t he,” said he finally in a little awestruck voice. “A reg’lar jim-dandy.” He thoughtfully poked one of the docile hands with his foot. “I wonner where he got ‘is stren’t h from? I never seen a man do like that before. It was a funny thing. Well, he was a reg’lar jim-dandy.” (59)

The anonymous tattered man stands poking at the corpse of Jim Conklin, whose death he has just witnessed alongside the novel’s protagonist, Henry Fleming. The scene is peculiar, but also not particularly unique in the novel; as critics have long noted, *Red Badge* is seeped in the thematic and formal visibility of death, in the stakes of death’s imaginative visualizations and in its halting, repetitive appearances in the narrative. Fleeting examinations of corpses—casual touches and long looks—punctuate the novel, itself an 1895 post-mortem of the American Civil War that it obliquely reproduces. So like death more generally, and like the particular deaths in *Red Badge*, this scene archives what we know to be a “regular,” repetitive event as much as it calls attention to the singular strangeness of death’s arrival at any particular moment, its status as a “funny thing.” Repeatedly translating “Jim” as character into a “reg’lar

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jim-dandy,”—collapsing “regular” as an army ranking with the degraded ontological status it signifies—these lines enact the transition from the ostensibly singular to the essentially repetitive, from man to sign, that the novel’s title (the *badge* of courage) announces in advance. The work of memorializing Jim Conklin drives home what the novel’s episodic, non-linear unfolding demonstrates on a larger scale: that signification is a repetitive, and often violent affair.

In the decades since Michael Fried’s seminal reading of Crane’s reflexive realism in *Realism, Writing, Disfiguration* (1987)—where the obsessive attention paid to corpses in *Red Badge* and other texts makes visible the process of writing itself—scholars have engaged a variety of approaches that work to account for the novel’s spectacular proliferation of bodies. Bill Brown, for example, has argued that the novel’s photographic casualties register the “reproduction and circulation of the body as image, site of mass identification and mass affection” (138), while Jacqueline Goldsby (in a reading of the 1898 novella *The Monster*, an important complement to *Red Badge*) has demonstrated the representational economy of lynching central to Crane’s realism.¹ Though they reach quite different conclusions, together these readings indicate the authorial, political, and material “unconscious” that surfaces in Crane’s deathly tableaux; they collectively poke, that is, at the funny things that Crane’s dead bodies so frequently seem to be, recovering the traces of extra-diegetical violence and hilarity that permeate their depictions.

This essay participates in that long-standing project of recovery, performing its own post-mortem of sorts on the body of Jim Conklin, and on the “jim-dandy” that haunts his fall into signification. Devoting extended attention to this ostensibly minor character—at the risk of reproducing the novel’s own disproportionate musing over the corpse—yields tremendous gains, and not the least because it complicates the reification of violence that critics have often read in Crane’s realism. While Jim’s descent into a “reg’lar jim-dandy” might seem to typify that process—casually translating the once-suffering subject into an object of curiosity—I argue that within Jim’s rhythmic transition lurks a much more complex approach to the narrative’s imbrication with historical memory. As we shall see, that approach is itself rhythmic, lodged in a vernacular of performance that repeatedly disrupts the apparent stillness of Crane’s bodies and the ordering function of the realist gaze.²

Turning the critical gaze towards Jim Conklin allows us to excavate two related varieties of performance that Crane's realism might be said to archive: that of racial minstrelsy, on the one hand, and scenes of ecstatic religious worship, on the other. By recovering these traces in Crane's texts, we are able to re-read the "funny things" haunting his fiction, the marginalized and often maniacal bodies it so tentatively approaches. An unlikely couple, racial minstrelsy and religious "enthusiasm" are nevertheless alike in their insistence on the body's communicative efficacy; in each, the body's ability to function as a sign depends on the virtuosity of the performance, its legibility from within a particular context (the theater, the camp meeting) or rhythm. Standing in for and complicating the historical trauma that demands representation, these performances dwell on the impracticable desire that the body itself become legible as the imprint of experience, a legibility that Crane's novel both entertains and problematizes. Not surprisingly—though perhaps with less irony than one might anticipate, for Crane—minstrelsy and religious ecstasy intersect in crucial ways, and in their overlapping resonances work to re-animate critical questions about the status of experience, performance, and spectatorship in late nineteenth-century literature.

Like the archive to which it is uneasily consigned, Jim's body registers both a disappearance and its historical trace.³ Thus "archive" is employed here not simply to signal a critical methodology, but more urgently to reexamine a process that *Red Badge* itself makes everywhere visible: the becoming-still or even becoming-archival of the body itself.⁴ Just as Henry Fleming frets over becoming, in his cowardice, a "slang phrase"—an object of derision but also (more dangerously) a word-as-object—Jim's translation into a "jim-dandy" provides a compact example of the becoming-word or becoming-object of representation more generally. As Fried and Brown have noted, Crane's bodies frequently perform such reflexive maneuvers, referencing in their obstinate thingness the materiality of literary and visual reproduction.⁵ But paradoxically, such reflexivity also unravels at the very moment of its formation; while consigning the memory of his person to the stillness of language, Jim's "jim-dandy" also revivifies a history of performance—an archive of hyperbolic, unmanageable bodies—that the text cannot or will not put to rest. Nor can it fully contain them under the rubrics of minstrel pantomime or religious madness; for while the tattered man's musing

drives home the repetitive work of signification—the rote reproduction of jim-dandies—it also archives an exuberant death scene that, in contrast, irrupts out of the apparently rational processes of historical and critical categorization. In turn, Crane’s novel reanimates what we might think of as realism’s intimate other: the ecstatic body, spectacularly beside itself.



Before turning to that exuberant, troubling death scene, we must examine the “jim-dandy” that Jim, in death, has become. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists “jim-dandy” as a colloquialism meaning “an excellent person or thing”; the phrase seems to have been popularized in the late 1880s through its use as an encomium for particularly agile baseball players. Baseball loomed large in Crane’s imaginary, and, as Brown has demonstrated, Crane’s investment in “play” continually materializes in the representational economies of his fiction. But to delve a bit deeper into the archive of this scene is to realize the non-coincidence that marks the proximity in the *OED* between the entry for “jim-dandy” and the entry for “Jim Crow.” As Gerald Cohen has noted in his *Studies in Slang*, “jim-dandy” most likely derives from the popular mid-century minstrel song, “Dandy Jim from Caroline”; though its source is unclear, “Dandy Jim” was written either in 1843 or 1844, and has been attributed variously to Dan Emmett, J. T. Norton, and others (134). Laurence Hutton’s 1891 *Curiosities of the American Stage* credits T. D. Rice (made famous for his ability to “Jump Jim Crow”) as the “veritable originator of the genus known to the stage as the ‘dandy darcy,’ represented particularly in his creations of ‘Dandy Jim of Caroline’ and ‘Spruce Pink’” (119). Perhaps intended as a caricature of South Carolina governor James Hammond, the song’s lyrics vary, but generally depict a dandified Jim who ostentatiously courts and marries Dinah in the space of its standard eight verses (Mahar 226). *Minstrel Songs, Old and New: A Collection of World-Wide, Famous Minstrel and Plantation Songs* (1882) included “Dandy Jim” with the following lyrics:

I’ve often heard it said ob late,
 Dat Souf Ca’lina was de state
 Whar handsome nigga’s bound to shine
 Like Dandy Jim of Caroline

For my ole massa tole me so,
I’m de best looking nigga in de county oh
I look in the glass an’ I found it so,
Just as massa tell me, oh.

I drest myself from top to toe,
And down to Dinah I did go,
Wid pantaloons strapped down behind,
Like Dandy Jim of Caroline
For my ole massa, &c.

De bull dog cleared me out ob de yard,
I tought I’d better leabe my card,
I tied it fast to a piece ob twine
Signed ‘Dandy Jim of Caroline,’
For my ole massa, &c.

She got my card and wrote me a letter
And ebery word she speldt de better
For ebery word and ebery line
Was Dandy Jim of Caroline
For my ole massa, &c.

Oh, beauty is but skin deep
But wid Miss Dinah none compete,
She changed her name from lubly Dine,
To Mrs. Dandy Jim of Caroline.
For my ole massa, &c.

An ebery little nig she had,
Was de berry image of de dad,
Dar heels stick out three feet behind,
Like Dandy Jim of Caroline,
For my ole massa, &c.

I took dem all to church one day
An hab dem christen’d without delay
De preacher christen’d eight or nine
Young Dandy Jims of Caroline
For my ole massa, &c.

An when de preacher took his text,
He seemed to be berry much perplexed,
For nothing cum across his mind,
But Dandy Jims of Caroline,
For my ole massa, &c

While the text of “Dandy Jim” locates it firmly within the discursive and geographic parameters of southern slavery, it is useful to remember—as Robert Toll and others have noted—that mid-century blackface “dandy” performances largely served to reinforce stereotypes of free black men in the urban North, condensing antebellum racial and class animosities in regionally-specific terms (Toll 69). As William Mahar notes, “topical references to fiddlers, dancers or dancing, courtship practices, and public rituals in some of the ‘Dandy Jim’ songs were tied to the promenade scenes on New York streets, that is, the typical . . . display activities that took place on Sundays and holidays on lower Broadway and the Bowery . . .” (226). In its attention to dress and display, “Dandy Jim” envelops performative acts within the performance itself, winking (however paternalistically) at the layers of artifice embedded in blackface, where “beauty is but skin deep.” While Jim was dressing for Dinah, of course, he was also dressing for his white audience; Jim’s hyper-sexualization in most versions of the song makes visible and audible the dynamics of cross-racial desire embedded in performances of blackface minstrelsy.⁶ Eric Lott has noted, for example, that the dandy figure marked “the class limit to interracial identification” while it “literally embodied the amalgamationist threat of abolitionism, and allegorically represented the class threat of those who were advocating it” (134). Daphne Brooks argues in turn that the dandy’s embodied threat to class boundaries was even more pressing in the wake of Reconstruction; reconfigured by black performers such as George Walker, “the drag of dandyism,” Brooks writes, became “both a threat and a catalyst toward the public adulation of the black body” (260). Thus Lott and Brooks signal the complicated cathexis involved in these performances, the intimacy they simultaneously enable and prohibit. Such intimacy was indeed part of the logic of “Dandy Jim’s” chorus, where mastery and admiration are fluidly mixed: “my ole massa tole me so, / I’m the best looking nigga in de county oh / I look in the glass an’ I found it so, / Just as massa tell me, oh.” While consolidating stereotypes of racial mimicry, “Dandy Jim” also depicts

DANDY JIM FROM CAROLINE.
(A Nigger's Courtship, Marriage an' what come of him afterwards.)

Nº 1.

EMMETT'S
CELEBRATED
NEGRO MELODIES.

W. D. Emmet as Dandy Jim.

OR SONGS OF THE VIRGINNY BANJOIST
Composed & Sung with great applause
AT ALL THE PRINCIPAL THEATRES BY
D. D. EMMET.

LONDON, DALMAINE & CO 20, SOHO SQUARE.

Contents of Emmet's Celebrated Negro Melodies

<i>OLD DAN TUCKER.</i>	2/	<i>NEVER DO TO GIB IT UP SO.</i>	2/
<i>GRINE OBER DE MOUNTAINS.</i>	2/	<i>MY OLD AUNT SALLY.</i>	2/
<i>WALK ALONG JOHN.</i>	2/	<i>BOATMAN'S DANCE.</i>	2/

End Star Bell *Price 7* **COPYRIGHT.**

Fig. 1. D. D. Emmet Daniel Decatur Emmett, Dandy Jim from Caroline, ca. 1844

racial identity as a veritable hall of mirrors, literally refracting white desire back onto itself via the black(ened) body. Similarly, while the song's emphasis on Dandy Jim's reproductive potency ("De preacher

christen'd eight or nine") works primarily to inscribe stereotypes of black virility, it also attests to the very popularity of the "Dandy Jim" type—its replication in performance after performance, as newly christened Dandy Jims and their kin appeared regularly in theaters. Such performances were at once ephemeral and utterly repeatable, a duality emanating from their archival remains (see Fig. 1). As in the image, the performer's body—itsself continually reproduced and circulated—becomes the site of a rhythmic reproduction of racial tropes, a vernacular lodged in choreographed gesticulation.

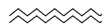
While theatrical and print reproductions of Dandy Jim served to reify racial parody, the form also yielded significant improvisational variation. One of the most notable features of "Dandy Jim of Caroline" is the ease with which it was co-opted and revised for explicitly political ends: during the 1844 and 1848 election seasons, campaign versions of the song proliferated in the press, glorifying each of the candidates as an iteration of the virtuosic (if not dandified) Dandy Jim. In 1844, "Jimmy Polk of Tennessee" went up against "A Whig Melody" in support of Henry Clay (both to the tune of "Dandy Jim"), while the 1848 cycle saw Dandy Jim songs in support of Zachary Taylor, Lewis Cass, and Free Soil candidate Martin Van Buren.⁷ An abolitionist version of "Dandy Jim" entitled "A Song for Freedom" was printed in William Wells Brown's 1848 *Anti-Slavery Harp*, and reprinted the same year in Frederick Douglass's *North Star*—it began with the lines, "Come all ye bondmen far and near, let's put a song in massa's ear, It is a song for our poor race, Who're whipped and trampled with disgrace" (W. Brown 37).⁸ Written for use at abolitionist meetings, "A Song for Freedom" rejects a solo display of class-specific virtuosity for a collective performance "for our poor race," and reverses the dynamics of passive listening embedded in the original chorus. Preserving the tune but changing the lyrics opened up space for ironic critique; "For my ole massa tole me so" is transposed first into "let's put a song in massa's ear," and finally into wry commentary on discourses of American exceptionalism: "My old massa tells me O, this is a land of freedom, O." In Brown's 1858 play *The Escape: or, A Leap of Freedom: A Drama in Five Acts*, Cato—a sartorially-minded slave reminiscent of Adolph in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—sings "A Song for Freedom" before politely acquiescing to his mistress's demands, transforming the already-transformed minstrel song into an ironic pause in the minstrelsy of Cato's performance. While never staged, Brown read

aloud from the play during his lectures, themselves sly performances of transformation.⁹ From the theater to the abolitionist meeting and back again, Brown revised the trope of Dandy Jim’s reproductive prowess into sheer power in numbers, begetting one right-minded audience after another.

Crane’s repetitions sound remarkably different when set to this particular rhythm: onto the death of Jim Conklin, *Red Badge* superimposes a fraught performance of racial mimicry, an archive of productions, reproductions and revisions that become apparent only belatedly, in the aftermath of Jim’s fall. Minstrelsy offers a way to read Jim’s body, a discursive frame for a performance-in-death that remains only partially legible within the space of the novel. To be clear, hearing the strains of Dandy Jim’s multiple incarnations in Jim’s discursive declension into a “jim-dandy” does not require a direct correspondence—there is no evidence that Crane witnessed performances of Dandy Jim (though his predilection for Bowery entertainment venues makes it plausible that he saw at least one of its post-bellum incarnations), and the slang phrase’s provenance may or may not have been audible to contemporary readers.¹⁰ What the “reg’lar jim-dandy” instead suggests is the ghostly presence of minstrelsy more broadly, the way its encoded appearance operates as the very sign of a historical return, and of identities made or performed through repetition.¹¹ Thus while critics have characterized *Red Badge*’s representational effect as that of a historical blind spot—citing its emphasis on individual experience over the political context of the war—turning our attention to Jim Conklin (a figure marginalized in the text but central to its meditation on experiential disjunction) helps to uncover the novel’s representational investment in history’s bewildering repetitions. Read through Jim’s very iterability (as anonymous “tall soldier,” as “jim-dandy”), history looks more like ambivalent performance, embodied testimony to the eventfulness of the past, than a narrative of individual development: “‘Yeh know,’ said the tall soldier, ‘I was out there.’ He made a careful gesture. ‘An,’ Lord, what a circus! An’, b-jiminey, I got shot—I got shot. Yes, b’jiminey, I got shot.’ He reiterated this fact in a bewildered way, as if he did not know how it came about” (55).

Into the space of historical knowledge, *Red Badge* inserts reiteration, replacing narratives of national reunification and suture with the circularity of traumatic repetition and the wound’s belated impact. Cir-

cular, circus-like, Jim's performance in battle, like Crane's novel more broadly, is indeed a performance: a rhythmic, gestural re-telling of the violent event.¹² Far from neutralizing its force, the absence of an affective charge in these lines—the strange displacement of pain by a repetitive insistence on the event itself—heightens the ambivalence that the novel everywhere attaches to the representation of suffering.¹³ Though not yet a corpse, Jim's reiterative account echoes Henry's repeated confrontations with the suggestive (even communicative) physiology of the dead: "The mouth was opened"; "The dead man and the living man exchanged a long look"; "with it all he received a subtle suggestion to touch the corpse" (47–48). If the novel forecloses communication with corpses—refusing the transmission of experience that Henry so ardently desires, even to the point of touching—it also dangles their expressive details before him, continually gesturing to the possibility of their re-animation (and not least their re-animation in language itself). As we shall see, that minstrelsy's troubling bodies haunt Jim's already-troubled body introduces into post-bellum literary production what Saidiya Hartman has described as "the instability of the scene of suffering" in antebellum performance: the strange conjunction of hilarity and violence, of exuberant bodies and enslaved subjects (21).¹⁴ Jim's body remains utterly ambiguous in the novel, gesturing towards a well of experience that the novel nevertheless refuses to co-opt for the purposes of narrative progression. No sentimental artifact of pre-war entertainment, Jim's performance-in-death draws our attention to the post-war reverberations of such hilarity and violence, instantiating their uncanny return.



Still, this outlay of historical context—this archival enthusiasm—may seem a bit excessive, particularly given Jim Conklin's apparent status in *The Red Badge of Courage* as little more than a foil for Henry Fleming, the sacrificial hero to Henry's morose, self-conscious survivor. Indeed, to refocus the critical gaze on Jim Conklin is to write in tension both with the novel's own narrative mode—which closely follows Henry's consciousness—and with an immense body of criticism that has predominantly worked to unpack the literary, psychological, and historical implications of Henry's exhaustive navel-gazing.¹⁵ This critical elision of Jim parallels and reproduces an explicit diegetical elision,

both in *Red Badge*, where Henry must turn his back on Jim's corpse for the narrative to proceed, and in its brief 1896 sequel "The Veteran." In the later text, one of a series of Civil War sketches commissioned on the basis of *Red Badge*'s popular success, an elderly Henry recalls his wartime experience in the very terms of Jim's non-recollection: "Now, there was young Jim Conklin, old Si Conklin's son—that used to keep the tannery—you none of you recollect him—well, he went into it from the start just as if he was born to it. But with me it was different, I had to get used to it" (*Tales of War* 83). Thus Henry narrates a history for Jim (a father and a trade), even as he marks its utter erasure in the local memory of the town, an absence registered rhetorically in his halting, dash-heavy speech. Henry produces a narrative through-line for Jim in place of the broken genealogical line, while he gestures to the memory loss that makes such testimony necessary.

And yet Jim does not simply stand in for this loss. One of Henry's auditors is his grandson "Jim," a detail that underscores "Jim's" repetitive returns, and hints at a level of intimacy that the narrative both reveals and obscures. Indeed this move—the conversion of Jim into a familial relation in the subsequent sketch—recalls the peculiar intimacy born of his non-characterization in *Red Badge*, his status as a strictly relational yet somehow crucial figure. This strange status emerges near the opening of the novel, as Henry works to retain Jim's formal function as foil, and ends by revealing a personal history in the very act of its repression: "The tall soldier, for one, gave him some assurance. This man's serene unconcern dealt him a measure of confidence, for he had known him since childhood, and *from his intimate knowledge* he did not see how he could be capable of anything that was beyond him, the youth. Still, he thought that his comrade might be mistaken about himself" (13, emphasis added). The claim to intimate knowledge cuts in both directions, here, assuming a knowable subject—and an intimate one, at that—even as it effaces the reliability of any such knowledge, maintaining a blankness to Jim-as-character that secures his marginal status in the narrative.

Thus the passage simultaneously introduces and undermines a narrative logic whereby Jim (here, significantly, the "tall soldier") can only be the mimetic, sacrificial "other," whose death in battle allows the reconciliation of self-difference on Henry's path to manhood, self-knowledge, self-sameness, and (we might argue) whiteness—a violent

psycho-socialization. As Susan Mizruchi notes, Crane's novel depicts "society itself as a blood-swollen god that feeds on human armies" (82), and indeed the text might be said to quite literally devour Jim as testimony to this logic of consumption and expenditure.¹⁶ One of the few details offered by way of characterization is Jim's love for food: "During his meals, he always wore an air of blissful contemplation of the food he had swallowed. His spirit seemed then to be communing with the viands" (*Red Badge* 27). This trope of minstrel corporeality finds its grotesque reversal later in the novel, as in death Jim's body itself resembles something partially eaten: "As the flap of the blue jacket fell away from the body, he could see that the side looked as if it had been chewed by wolves" (58). Jim's death becomes, in this formula, the ritual expenditure necessary for Henry's socialization, and a microcosm of the sacrifices underwriting social (and national) "development" more broadly. As Mizruchi attests, this logic of sacrifice and surrogation was very much in the air that Crane breathed: the 1890s abounded in memorials to those sacrificed on the altar of national unity, and not long after the novel's appearance, William James would call for a "moral equivalent of war," a non-violent expenditure of energy that might serve as surrogate for the "civilizing" militancy of American imperialism.¹⁷

Undoubtedly Jim functions in the text as Henry's intimate double, and surely the narrative demands his death so that Henry might learn, mimetically, how to die. But that intimacy and self-knowledge are precisely at stake in the above lines—that Henry might be linked to a mistaken or delusional subject—is cause enough to reject any overly schematic reading of this relation. And Jim's subsequent erasure in the text (his quick decay, as it were) signals the volatile stakes of reading his death scene, which might help to account for its belated yet crucial appearance here. To note the sacrificial language that attends Jim's death is to revivify R. W. Stallman's 1968 observation—still reverberating—that this scene recalls the crucifixion (174), though it is also to trouble the redemptive suffering that such an archetypal reading would suggest. To read Jim's body as implicitly racialized—ambivalently, through minstrelsy—is to insist, with Jacqueline Goldsby, on a historical and cultural as well as narrative "logic" of sacrificial death.¹⁸ In these terms, the violence done to Jim's body would function as the excess detail, the "reality effect" that locates Crane's text concretely in its post-Reconstruction moment of racial terror and rampant lynch law. But turning

now to that deeply strange, extended death scene, we might also ask what it means to read Jim's extinction not only as a violent purging of the narrative's expendable surplus, but as a scene haunted by—and indeed archiving—performance. As his conversion into a "jim-dandy" suggests, Jim's body functions as the site of an archive, repeatedly marked and marking historically specific bodies-in-motion, while reminding us of that forgetfulness, that death drive at very the heart of archive fever. To borrow a phrase from Joseph Roach, Jim is "forgotten but not gone" (2); he is invoked and erased, singular subject and repetitive sign, a "funny thing" and a "regular jim-dandy." His body is (like the archive) a palimpsest, and never more so than in death:

The tall soldier turned and, lurching dangerously, went on. The youth and the tattered soldier followed, sneaking as if whipped, feeling unable to face the stricken man if he should again confront them. They began to have thoughts of a solemn ceremony. There was something rite-like in these movements of the doomed soldier. And there was a resemblance in him to a devotee of a mad religion, blood-sucking, muscle-wrenching, bone-crushing. They were awed and afraid. . . .

At last, they saw him stop and stand motionless. Hastening up, they perceived that his face wore an expression telling that he had at last found the place for which he had struggled. His spare figure was erect; his bloody hands were quietly at his sides. . . . He was at the rendezvous. They paused and stood, expectant. . . .

Finally, the chest of the doomed soldier began to heave with a strained motion. It increased in violence until it was as if an animal was within and was kicking and tumbling furiously to be free.

This spectacle of gradual strangulation made the youth writhe and once as his friend rolled his eyes, he saw something in them that made him sink wailing to the ground. He raised his voice in a last, supreme call.

"Jim—Jim—Jim—" . . .

Suddenly his form stiffened and straightened. Then it was shaken by a prolonged ague. . . .

He was invaded by a creeping strangeness that slowly

enveloped him. For a moment, the tremor of his legs caused him to dance a sort of hideous hornpipe. His arms bent wildly about his head in expression of imp-like enthusiasm.

His tall figure stretched itself to its full height. There was a slight rending sound. Then it began to swing forward, slow and straight, in the manner of a falling tree. . . .

The body seemed to bounce a little way from the earth. . . .

The youth had watched, spell-bound, this ceremony at the place of meeting. His face had been twisted into an expression of every agony he had imagined for his friend. (*Red Badge* 57–58)

It is worth lingering at this rendezvous, as the text does—Jim’s death stretches over the length of an entire chapter, culminating in the (here much-abbreviated) climax. Like the corpses it will soon resemble, Jim’s body is unsettling in its wounded endurance, its extended and mostly-mute teetering on the brink of extinction, its bewildering mobility in death itself. Part of the intense strangeness of this scene is the difficulty of locating where in the text Jim actually dies: described as a “spectral soldier” from the beginning of the chapter, his death seems both to have already occurred, and to occur repeatedly, as the passage’s rhetorical transitions point to a larger transition (“At last” “Finally,”) repetitively and painfully postponed. Thus death is descriptively dispersed, a “creeping strangeness” that resists any effort to situate it within the flow of the narrative. The prolonged death ague—a fever that the text cannot shake—simultaneously stokes and frustrates Henry’s expectancy (as well as our own), cultivating spectatorial desire while refusing the dividend, as Jim’s “hideous hornpipe” both compels and resists the interpretive gaze.

The stakes of witnessing here are manifold. Henry’s attention to Jim at the moment of his death is an act of protective supervision, as Jim is threatened both by his wound and by the possibility of being trampled on the road by an approaching battery (Henry promises: “I’ll take care of you, Jim! I’ll take care of you!”) (55). But as the passage demonstrates, it is also a self-interested, quasi-scientific investigation, a study in the physiology and performance of death. Eager to make the death scene instructive, Henry questions Jim repeatedly, desperate for clues to the knowledge that he has gained or ostensibly will gain by

dying: "Where you going, Jim? What you thinking about? Where you going? Tell me, won't you, Jim?"; "Why, Jim . . . what's the matter with you?" (57). Insisting on the proper name here—against the depersonalizing effect of the narrative, which more consistently refers to Jim as the "tall" or "spectral" soldier—Henry is soon left with only the proper name in his effort to arrest, and thereby understand, the transition from person to thing that the passage describes ("Jim—Jim—Jim—"). Against Henry's arresting impulse, the entire sequence seems to occupy a transition, tarrying with Jim in suspended motion: "He seemed to be awaiting the moment when he should pitch headlong. He stalked like the specter of a soldier, his eyes burning with the power of a stare into the unknown" (51). Thus if Henry's spellbound observation is complicit with a narrative reproduction of suffering, it also exceeds simple voyeurism; Henry watches Jim watching, looks to penetrate the repeated fastening of Jim's gaze on the "unknown," his search for "the mystic place of his intentions" (57). Jim is looking for a place to die in this passage, but he is also "going" somewhere that Henry cannot—a pairing that imparts to Jim's abjection a monstrous form of privilege. When Jim reaches the appropriate spot, he is "at the rendezvous," the "place of meeting" where the dance ensues, and where Henry cannot hope to look away.

As the subject who gazes and the object of Henry's gaze, the abject and the privileged, "Jim" or Jim's body becomes the place of meeting, a rendezvous for competing signifiers. The specifics of the scene support the minstrelsy reference that directly follows it: historical evidence suggests, for example, that "Dandy Jim" was often performed with castanets made of animal bone, a detail that helps us to read Jim's "bone-crushing" movement as a suggestive overlapping of minstrelsy and ritual sacrifice.¹⁹ Sacrificial resonances abound: the "solemn ceremony" that Henry anticipates and the "rite-like" quality of Jim's procession suggest that Jim's death is a rite—of sacrifice or passage.²⁰ This framing of the death as a ritual—an exorcism of social tension that consolidates the socio-political order, much like minstrelsy in these terms—heightens the strangeness adhering to Jim's body, a strangeness that might rationalize, in nineteenth-century racial politics, his violent removal from the narrative for the sake of Henry's development. But while Jim's body is no doubt a problem that the text simultaneously purges and archives, his performance exceeds the formal bounds of ritual, gesturing towards alternative resonances that complicate the logic of Jim's sacri-

fice and Henry's salvation. It is the hornpipe, perhaps, that best signals the ambivalence attached to Jim's rest-less body: a folk-dance derived from the wind instrument that shares its name, the hornpipe was an up-tempo, rhythmic variation on the jig that was popularized in the US during the nineteenth century and generally performed solo, a vehicle for virtuosic display and popular recognition.²¹ Thus while the passage is propelled by the expectation of stillness—the suspense dependent on where and when Jim will finally stop moving—the hornpipe re-invests the body with an uncanny liveliness, drawing our attention to its ongoing movement as the death scene is momentarily transfigured into the site of exuberant performance.²²

Neither willed nor obviously compelled, neither fully natural nor entirely supernatural, the hornpipe serves as a kind of floating signifier, with Jim's body dangling hideously in the uncharted space between life and death, between the minstrel past and the performative present. In re-animating Jim's body through performance, *Red Badge* might be said to historicize the affective structure that Sianne Ngai has termed "animatedness," wherein "the seemingly neutral state of 'being moved' becomes twisted into the image of the overemotional racialized subject, abetting his or her construction as unusually receptive to external control" (91). As Ngai points out, within such a structure—made particularly visible by moving image technologies and their emphasis on "liveness"—the racialized subject-in-motion resembles both person and thing, automaton and virtuoso. And while Ngai focuses on animation's twentieth-century iterations, her observations are germane to *Red Badge*; as scholars have noted, the novel is deeply indebted to the technologies of turn-of-the-century visual culture, partaking fully of early film's hypnotic sequences as it projects the image of Jim's body in continuous, flickering motion.²³

If such "strained," strange animation is precisely the work of historical narrative—literally bringing the past back to life, as it were—*Red Badge* insists on the performative bodies that haunt any such project, and on the impact of their bewildering repetitions. And if the lurching movements of Jim's body archive a singular trauma ("An', b'jiminey, I got shot—I got shot. Yes, b'jiminey, I got shot"), they also signal the instability of the novel's larger archive of fallen bodies, its refusal to remain a still collection.²⁴ Jim's final collapse resembles a fall into history as linear progress; in contrast to the grotesque levity of the "hid-

eous hornpipe," the tree-like manner of the body's fall—"forward, slow, and straight"—conveys the linearity achievable only in the aftermath of a death that resists any such description. Yet even this apparent linearity circles back on itself: before the fall, Jim's enthusiasm is described as "imp-like," a word onto which is grafted not only the idea of a mischievous (minstrel) spirit but also the very notion of grafting. In its archaic sense, "imp" indicates the "young shoot of a plant or tree," an outgrowth or offspring (*OED s.v.*). Thus if Jim's body swings swiftly into stillness, "in the manner of a falling tree," it nevertheless carries the trace of "live" performance with all its reproductive unruliness.²⁵ In death, Jim's body remains a living archive, a family tree.



In the aftermath of this deeply strange scene, recovering the resonances of minstrelsy provides one method by which to critically manage this unwieldy dance-in-death. Read as minstrelsy, the strange conjunction of mobility and constraint mapped onto Jim's body becomes legible as the performance of a racialized subject. And Jim's "jim-dandy" gives historical weight to the imbrications of performance and violence that the text everywhere demonstrates: Henry's dilemma around the wound is itself a sort of performance anxiety, a repetitive tendency to falter at the prospect of a violent self-making and unmaking. In these terms, the novel confronts the minstrel subject as a site of intense curiosity and desire, a limit point (much like death) for realism's effort to represent the experience of the other. But alongside and irrevocably tangled up in minstrelsy's discourse of agency, experience, and performance is another figure that haunts the hornpipe, and one that critical attention to minstrelsy alone threatens to obscure. This is the figure of the religious "enthusiast," that spectacularly embodied subject of ecstatic experience or virtuosic pantomime. A problem for realist description at least since the Enlightenment—when debates over enthusiasm, as Ann Taves has shown, shaped the broader philosophical discourse on experience—the enthusiast's bodily manifestations continually threaten to derail the project of empirical knowledge and unsettle the very possibility of a stable, rational subject.²⁶ Thus the strangeness of Jim's death seems enmeshed with the possibility courted throughout the scene of an otherworldly agency literally invading Jim's body, while his wild gesticulations and "imp-like enthusiasm"—which rehearse the movements

of minstrelsy without collapsing into it—trouble the categories of performance and experience that might otherwise contain them.

For scholars of Crane, this turn to enthusiasm necessarily invokes the specter of family history: the prominence of Crane's father and grandfather in the Methodist ministry and their post-war familial rift over Holiness revivals, which emphasized a return to dramatic spectacles of intense religious experience.²⁷ As Christopher Benfey points out, Crane's maternal forebears referred to 1870s revival campsites as "battlegrounds," extending and literally "reviving" the war as a mass metaphysical reckoning, and pointing towards the unfolding of the Holiness Movement in eminently repeatable scenes of individual battle with the Holy Ghost (29). Jonathan Townley Crane, in contrast, preached against contagious outbreaks of religious and political sentiment. In the wake of John Brown's 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry, Crane's father urged caution: "I am aware," he preached, "that every strong tide of popular conviction and emotion creates what men call enthusiasts, just as every mountain stream creates foam. Still, he is not a prudent helmsman who makes a bubble his pilot through a tortuous, rocky channel" (n.p.). Registering both the effervescence and the effective force of enthusiasm in fomenting popular feeling, Reverend Crane worked to chart a course away from its unpredictable currents.

The links between enthusiasm and revolution were less clear in the post-bellum era. And while the racial politics of the Holiness movement were multiform, ecstatic worship—and particularly black religious experience—was increasingly the object of popular curiosity and journalistic exploitation, partaking of a nascent vogue for local "color" in the aftermath of national sectarianism.²⁸ In July 1872, for example, *Harper's* profiled the "wild exaltation" of "A Negro Camp Meeting in the South"; posing as the "calm observer," the author noted the "true devotion" of the camp-meeting even as he proffered a series of minstrel stereotypes, depicting for instance the "pickanniny, solemnly munching her bit of corn-bread," and "evidently 'taking notes' for future use" (623). Quasi-ethnographic depictions of post-bellum black or interracial camp meetings invariably attributed a mix of emotional excess and mimetic skill to African American worshippers. One observer described the African American "religious method" as "emotional and hypnotic to the core," noting of the black enthusiast, "He is in the highest degree suggestible" (Davenport 50). Citing Herbert Spencer, he continued,

“The group of motor manifestations, the rhythm, the shout, the ‘falling out,’ are exceedingly characteristic. High feeling, discharging itself in muscular action, and discharging itself rhythmically, is everywhere a spontaneous manifestation of children and of child races” (54). Learned and spontaneous, muscular and hereditary, the “irrational rhythmic ecstasy” (50) of black worship was read as a primitive atavism at odds with modern society, as debates over worship style (entrenched in racial and regional stereotypes) were interwoven with the status of social progress at large.

At stake in enthusiasm (and, at least to a certain extent, in minstrelsy), was the very difficulty of reading ecstatic performance as the sign of authentic experience. This was of course not at all a new problem, but one that took on new meaning in the waning years of the nineteenth century, as the nation continued to grapple with the war’s mass expenditures, religious practice diversified exponentially, and pragmatic philosophers described reality as the perception of “effects,” revisiting and revising eighteenth-century debates over the embodied semiotics of grace. If enthusiasm’s place in the popular imaginary had largely yielded to hysteria and other cultural specters by the time *Red Badge* appeared on the scene, Jim’s religiously inflected, racially ambiguous ecstasy cannot easily be dismissed as a vague atavism or residual form. It smacks instead of the spectral or uncanny, enacting at a micro scale the de-familiarization of war at work in the novel at large, its strange lingering in this text of the 1890s. Indeed, enthusiasm lingered long enough to require ardent disavowal in the age of realism: William Dean Howells—the era’s don of American literary production and an early champion of Crane—declared in an 1897 article for *Harper’s* that American patriotism itself was “no longer an enthusiasm, and certainly not ceremonial,” linking the modesty of national sentiment to the propriety and earnestness of modern, white, Protestant worship (84). Howells’ rather remarkable repression finds its dramatic reversal in Crane where enthusiasm’s extended afterlife is everywhere on display. While his forebears worked to naturalize and defuse enthusiastic fervor, Crane reveled in its uncanny returns, its irruption from within the tortuous detail of realist description.

Such irruptions were not limited to *Red Badge*, as Crane returned time and again to scenes that seem to echo and redouble the indeterminacy of Jim Conklin. Perhaps the most striking of these appears in

Crane's 1898 novella *The Monster*: "The monster on the box had turned its black crêpe countenance toward the sky, and was waving its arms in time to a religious chant. 'Look at him now,' cried a little boy. They turned, and were transfixed by the solemnity and mystery of the indefinable gestures. The wail of the melody was mournful and slow. They drew back. It seemed to spellbind them with the power of a funeral" (*Tales of Whilomville* 56). Like Jim Conklin, the "monster"—formerly the dandified black stable-hand Henry Johnson—oscillates on the box between subject and object, between spiritual martyr and saleable good, as the auction block is rehearsed and transformed here in the unsettling ambiguity of the monster's "indefinable gestures." Earlier in the narrative, before the grisly fire that defaces Henry, "profane groups" of onlookers taunt him with the kinesics of minstrelsy: "Hello, Henry! Going to walk for a cake to-night?" (14). As the narrative unfolds, *The Monster* substitutes violent trauma for minstrel performance, highlighting their proximity; it also translates Henry's experience into a peculiar mysticism, rendering that experience (like the black crêpe) entirely opaque. While associating pain and religiosity might, in a different context, essentialize the scene of suffering and consolidate Henry's sacrificial role, here it has the opposite effect: yoked to the disturbingly ecstatic subject, the body is re-covered as utterly confounding, rather than offered up for view. Henry's rhythmic arm waving reconfigures Jim Conklin's hornpipe, but Henry's body is for the most part only a ghostly presence in the text. If the scene explicitly demands we look at "the monster," ("Look at him now"), it proffers very little by way of visual description, insisting instead on the ambiguity of the encounter.

Thus Crane trafficked in popular depictions of black ecstasy and suffering even as he quite literally effaced the affective immediacy and essentialized subject that such caricatures presumed. The tendency of enthusiasm to empty out subjective content—leaving the body as a provocative remainder, a blank slate or sieve—is perhaps what made it so useful for Crane. Eighteenth and nineteenth-century debates over enthusiasm centered on the evacuation of theological content, evincing an anxiety that the gesticulating believer might simply be adept at mimicking the symptoms of divine influx. As Crane knew from his Methodist upbringing, such questions of belief were invariably entangled with questions of performance, and the ambiguity of enthusiasm's contagious sentiments both transfixed and repelled him. Like minstrelsy,

enthusiasm in Crane's works marks the site of a highly charged encounter, where questions of experiential authenticity melt into those of performative agility, and where the body becomes legible—or not—as the index of otherness. And like minstrelsy, enthusiasm lives in repetition, dependent on the body's communicative force rather than its putative identity.

As potent the threat of self-delusion or theatrical deception, it was enthusiasm's communicability—its tendency to spread from body to body in patterned expressions of grace—that most unsettled the critics of religious exuberance. Fittingly, Jim Conklin's death scene, like Henry himself, is entirely preoccupied with the possibilities of transmission. With his face "twisted into an expression" of Jim's imagined agony, Henry's self-interested spectatorship—his effort to glean some knowledge of death without having to experience it—transitions into a fascinated, agonized mimicry of enthusiasm's disfigurements, and Henry himself grows desperately corpse-like in his effort to understand. Indeed, while the tattered soldier later interprets Jim as a "jim-dandy," Henry performs an alternative critical praxis: "The youth desired to screech out his grief. He was stabbed. But his tongue lay dead in the tomb of his mouth. He threw himself again upon the ground and began to brood" (*Red Badge* 59). Henry's writhing, wounded response is to circumvent his own linguistic arrest by throwing himself "again" upon the ground, performing an imitative sympathy with the corpse. Here observation and participation are irrevocably blurred, and if he is not literally wounded by Jim's death, Henry does not emerge unscathed from the experience of witnessing it. The "intimate knowledge" that Henry claims of Jim is both exploded and extended, as Jim's enthusiasm suggests the possibility of intimacy without knowledge, a grafting of experience across bodies drawn together by its strange, performative force.

Once more, Jim's "jim-dandy" sounds dramatically different in these terms, and if Jim Conklin is soon forgotten in the space of the narrative, he invariably reappears elsewhere in altered form. With practiced gesture, Crane's texts habitually return to scenes that seem both to register and to exceed the terms of individual trauma, groping for what Cathy Caruth terms "an *ethical* relation to the real" even as they hold in suspense whether or not obsessive return might constitute such a relation (90). Crane's repetitions do little to diminish the ambiguity of the scene of suffering/performance, nor do they dampen the aesthetic and politi-

cal stakes of reproducing them in realist description. Rather, in repeatedly archiving the ecstatic body, Crane's texts offer ecstasy as a figure for history's own erratic movements: if history is anything, it is beside itself (*extasis*, out of place or body, quite literally animating the present). This is the reality that *Red Badge* makes palpable, without redeeming the violence—and specifically the racial violence—that reinforces it. Jim's "jim-dandy" re-animates a violent history without claiming to comprehend it, and gestures towards the ambivalence of performance as precisely the arena in which literature might grapple with history's unaccountable remainders. Dramatizing the proximity between ecstasy and abjection that Julia Kristeva has theorized, *Red Badge* suggests that both linger within the very process of signification; that is, that literature's "making sense" of the body and of the war invariably archives the rhythmic return of their spectacular senselessness. At the site of Jim's transition into a regular "jim-dandy," we find the return of that repressed enthusiasm at the very heart of realist aesthetics.



In his introduction to a 1960 reprint of *Red Badge*, Ralph Ellison described Crane as the most "war haunted" of nineteenth-century American novelists, despite his having been born six years after the end of the war (60). Always attuned to the uses of haunting, Ellison reads the novel less as a post-mortem on the Civil War than as a sustained grappling with its aftershocks, less as historical fiction than as fictional testimony to history's ghostly—but no less effectual—returns. Republished in Ellison's *Shadow and Act* (1964) as "Stephen Crane and the Mainstream of American Fiction," the essay subtly testifies to the reverberations between Crane's 1890s and Ellison's 1960s, continually evoking the war's twentieth-century afterlife:

To put it drastically, if war, as Clausewitz insisted, is the continuation of politics by other means, it requires little imagination to see American life since the abandonment of the Reconstruction as an abrupt reversal of that formula: the continuation of the Civil War by means other than arms. In this sense the conflict has not only gone unresolved but the line between civil war and civil peace has become so blurred as to require of the sensitive man a questioning attitude toward every aspect of

the nation’s self-image. Stephen Crane, in his time, was such a man.” (67)

Ellison’s vision of history (much like Crane’s) is chiastic, rhetorically registering the injurious reversals and continuations—the proliferation of Dandy Jims and jim-dandies—that marked Crane’s moment as well as his own.²⁹

Like Ellison after him, Crane wrote from within the blur of post-Reconstruction America, performing radical stylistic breaks while insisting on a yet un-exorcised or under-exorcised historical excess within modernity’s streamlined aesthetics.³⁰ Part of Crane’s work was to keep that excess spectacularly visible, to register the lingering ambiguity of the wounded national body, itself a figure of constant, strange reanimation, always threatening to fall or fall flat. And like Ellison after him, he had an ear for sardonic rhythms in the background or underground; he knew well that writing realist fiction in the aftermath of the war meant representing the “mirrorlike reversals” that were everywhere on display (Ellison 67). Crane had his own army of invisible or less visible men (and women), ostensibly minor characters whose performances are nevertheless central to how we read his fiction. If such figures invariably disappear in fictional and (literary-) historical memory, their disappearance itself is significant—moreover, it is never complete.³¹ We might look, for example, to what Jim’s performance itself represses or archives: that of an earlier, even more obscure figure in *Red Badge*, whose fleeting presence has repeatedly perplexed critics (Ellison and others). In the early pages of the novel, we are briefly introduced to “a negro teamster who had been dancing upon a cracker-box with the hilarious encouragement of twoscore soldiers,” who is “deserted” as soon as Jim begins to prophesize about the movement of the army (3). In the absence of an audience, the teamster sits “mournfully down,” anticipating the scene with which we began, the dance that it both mourns and archives.

It is possible to read the teamster’s dance—and others have—as a self-conscious gesture towards the novel’s omission of historical and political context, a figure for what must be forgotten in order to represent the experience of a single soldier.³² But such a reading would need to avoid re-inscribing the teamster and Jim as Henry’s sacrificial others, for in their very repetition, in their rhythm and hilarity and sadness, these others are not simply visualized and discarded, nor do their bodies

submit fully to the stillness that the realist text would seem to impose. Read together, it is easier to see how Jim's dance repeats and transforms the teamster's, testifying in gesture to its reverberative force. Without collapsing these two performances, or losing sight of the compulsion and violence that they also register, we might note that each projects the body through space and time, supplementing the interpretive impulse—Henry's and our own—with embodied (performed) relation. If *Red Badge* remains obsessed with badges, wounds, and other signs of codified experience, these dances—their very status as undetermined play, as fitfully embodied performances—resist the realist effort to order experience through language. Instead they archive—bury, mourn, and revivify—enthusiasm, that invariably suspect, indeterminable force that welds bodies together in the fantasy of shared experience, which is also what we call history.

University of Texas, Austin

NOTES

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1. For readings that build on this critical preoccupation with Crane's bodies, see Esteve, Fleissner, Thrailkill, and Sweet.

2. On realism's will to order, see Cary, Fleissner, and Kaplan, *Social Construction*.

3. I am drawing here on Derrida's articulation of the archive's own troubled body, its double work of conservation and dissolution: "the archive, if this word or this figure can be stabilized so as to take on a signification, will never be either memory or anamnesis as spontaneous, alive and internal experience. On the contrary: the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory" (11).

4. Seltzer has usefully described the ways in which the "becoming-artifactual" of persons in *Red Badge* dovetails with the novel's sustained focus on the mechanization of the human body (*Bodies* 112).

5. In my attention to the performative aspects of Crane's not-yet-dead bodies, I am indebted to Bill Brown's reading of the photographic tableau in *Red Badge*, which as Brown suggests, "inflates the photographic into the theatrical, disclosing carnage itself as an object of fascinated sight" (152).

6. As Miller notes, “despite the placement of Dandy Jim’s excessive sexuality within an intraracial family structure, his quest to populate the world with as many little dandies as he can . . . is nonetheless threatening” (99).

7. Songs circulating in advance of the 1844 election included: “A Song, After the Manner of the Whigs, to the Tune of ‘Dandy Jim of Caroline,’” *Mississippi Free Trader and Natchez Gazette*, Saturday, August 3, 1844; “Jimmy Polk of Tennessee,” by J. Grenier, Tune—“Dandy Jim of Caroline,” *Raleigh Register, and North-Carolina Gazette*, August 13, 1844; “Whig Melody,” by F. J. Otterson, Air—‘Dandy Jim of Caroline,’ Printed in the *Great Whig Procession of Artists and Tradesmen of New York City*, October 30, 1844. Songs in advance of the 1848 election included: “Rough and Ready of the Rio Grande,” “From the *Philadelphia True Sun*,” Tune—“Dandy Jim of Caroline” (in support of Zachary Taylor), *Raleigh Register, and North-Carolina Gazette*, July 26, 1848; “Toe the Mark, ‘Tis Taylor Can,” Tune—“Dandy Jim of Caroline,” *Bangor Daily Whig & Courier*, October 31, 1848; “The John Song,” “Written for the Natick Free Soil Glee Club,” *Emancipator and Free Soil Press*, November 1, 1848; “Music for the Million,” Air—“Dandy Jim” (in support of Democrat Lewis Cass), *Vermont Patriot*, July 27, 1848; “The Yankees’ Cass Song,” Tune—“Dandy Jim,” *Dover Gazette & Strafford Advisor*, November 4, 1848.

8. The song appeared in the *North Star* on July 14, 1848.

9. Brooks describes Brown as “a one-man, slow-burning insurrection of black-face minstrelsy” (1). In their commentary on *The Escape*, Garrett and Robbins note that Brown’s play “repeats and revises a signal trope in the nineteenth-century black cultural imaginary” (W. Brown 264). See also Elam.

10. In his reading of an 1896 sketch “Stephen Crane in Minetta Lane,” Robertson notes Crane’s debt to the racial stereotypes reproduced in nineteenth-century minstrelsy, specifically the Dandy Jim and “happy darky” figures. While Dandy Jim is not specifically referenced in the sketch—and Robertson notes that the use of minstrel types is relatively scarce in Crane—it offers a useful primer on Crane’s familiarity with such figures (107–09). The sketch’s closing lines suggest the more complex overlay of humor and violence—of performance and suffering—that contemporary critics have uncovered in minstrel performances, and that Crane explored in *Red Badge*: “Knowing the negro, one always expects laughter from him, be he ever so poor, but it was a new experience to see a broad grin on the face of the devil. Even old Pop Babcock had a laugh as fine and mellow as would be the sound of falling glass, broken saints from high windows, in the silence of some great cathedral’s hollow” (*Tales, Sketches*, 405–06).

11. Fleissner has argued for a similarly repetitive dynamic in *Red Badge*’s construction of gender, noting how the novel “enacts a project of attempted, necessarily failing, but continually repeated ‘completeness’ that is itself seen as defining of history and of ‘becoming a man’” (64). Hartman has theorized the dynamics of repetition in black performance as archiving “a subterranean history of rupture. Repetition is an outcome, a consequence, or an accumulation of practice, and it also structures practice. Repetition enables the recognition of the self and points

to that which can never be fully recollected and to the impossibility of restoring that which has been breached" (76). See also Butler, *Bodies That Matter and Gender Trouble*.

12. Schechner notes the belated structure of performance itself: "Accidents conform to the basic performance pattern; even after the event is 'cleaned up' some 'writing' is left on the site: for example, bloodstains, knots of witnesses and the curious and so on. Only slowly does the event evaporate and the crowd disperse. I call such events 'eruptions.' . . . An eruption is like a theatrical performance because it is not the accident itself that gathers and keeps an audience. They are held by a reconstruction or re-enactment of the event" ("Towards a Poetics of Performance" 113). On performance, trauma, and repetition, see Caruth.

13. I am drawing here on Cavitch's attention to the work of repetition in Crane's poetry: "Repetition solicits remembrance. But more than this, repetition is a figure of truth: it seeks to weary the clamor for persuasion with the self-evidence of iteration" (44).

14. At least obliquely, the novel's emphasis on Jim's death—the insistence on its repetitive telling—might function as a form of "redressive action" in Hartman's terms, practices of "re-membering" bodies torn apart by violence in performances largely marginalized in historical memory. Jim's careful gestures and repetitive phrasing suggest a literary complement to Hartman's claim that "the forms of redress enacted in performance are a necessarily incomplete working through of the event of breach," crucial modes of "everyday practice" that are nevertheless limited in their potential for social transformation (76).

15. Examples range from early psychoanalytic readings such as that by John Berryman to more recent attention to gendered subjectivity and aesthetic experience in Fleissner and Thraikill. In his reading of the body-machine complex inscribed in *Red Badge*, Seltzer reads Henry's literal navel-gazing—his attention to his belly button—as symptomatic of a larger juxtaposition between natural and mechanical reproduction (*Bodies* 113).

16. Mizruchi asserts, "For a novel whose reputed aim is to re-create the atmosphere of war, it's striking how much time is spent describing consumption" (82). Seltzer has also evoked *Red Badge* as the literary exemplar of what he calls "wound culture": "the model of a sociality bound to pathology" where the wound functions as the symbolic nexus between individual and world ("Wound Culture" 9, 25).

17. On economies of expenditure, see Bataille, especially 116–29.

18. In light of Goldsby's crucial re-reading of the dynamics of race and violence in Crane, it is impossible not to read Jim's death as resonant with the embedded logic of lynching in *The Monster*, a narrative that reproduces the Henry/Jim pairing as well as the dandy performance.

19. An August 17th, 1847 item in *The North American*—entitled "The 'Bones' that the negroes use are not the invention of 'Dandy Jim'"—signals the popular use

of castanets in Dandy Jim performances. In a dizzying archival gesture, the article cites the Richmond's *Enquirer's* citation of an old report "of the reception of Gen. Lafayette in Philadelphia, during his visit to this country, as the nation's guest in 1824." The article quotes the report: "It is said, and we have it from one who, we believe was an eye-witness, that, after a review on Tuesday, a black man, tolerably well known to our citizens for his exhilarating sic faculty of whistling, pressed forward towards the General, and, after one or two efforts at mustering courage, Robert succeeded in saluting the General, and enquiring after his health. The General condescendingly returned the salute. After a moment's pause, 'Perhaps,' added Robert, 'the General does not remember me?' 'Were you in the army?' said the General. 'I was a waiter to Gen. Mason, of the Virginia line,' said the black. 'Then,' said the General, with a hearty shake of the hand, 'I remember you; you was *that roguish boy that used to make castanets of the dry bones in the camp*, and disturb me in my marquee'" (emphasis original). If the article records a kind of minstrel diplomacy, it also registers the disruptive force of "Dandy Jim," and the extent to which its performers (and their predecessors) blurred the boundaries of race, class, and nation.

20. See Turner; see also Schechner, *Between Theater & Anthropology and Performance Theory*.

21. As Bratton notes, questions of freedom and compulsion were always bound up in the performance and popularization of the hornpipe (66–68). The *OED* describes the hornpipe as "a dance of lively and vigorous character, usually performed by a single person, orig. to the accompaniment of the wind instrument," and lists its earliest appearance as 1485 (393). The hornpipe appears to have had an early association with the stage: "From the 16th century onwards, hornpipes appeared in dance suites and incidental music for the stage by such composers as Anthony Holborne, Byrd, Purcell, Arne, and Handel . . ." ("Hornpipe").

22. The ambivalently "determined" nature of Jim's movements here might be fodder for the ongoing critical effort to categorize *Red Badge* as a "naturalist," rather than a "realist" or "impressionist" novel. Following Fried, B. Brown, and Goldsby, I read *Red Badge* as engaged in a reflexively realist project, consistently attentive to what the space of representation offers and occludes. For alternate readings, see Mitchell and Fleissner.

23. See B. Brown and Bentley. Examining Crane's approach to mass culture, Bentley notes how *Red Badge* participates in the "sliding and flickering movement" that characterized early cinema, and cites Joseph Conrad's retrospective notion that "Crane and I must have been unconsciously penetrated by a prophetic sense of the technique and of the very spirit of the film-plays of which even the name was unknown to the world" (296). Contemporary responses focused almost obsessively on the animating force of the narrative: Frederic famously compared the novel to Muybridge's motion studies (39), while Norris gestured towards emerging film techniques in likening Crane's fiction to "scores and scores of tiny flashlight photographs, instantaneous, caught, as it were, on the run" (164).

24. On aporias in the archive of nineteenth-century black performance, see Brooks (9–10).

25. This reading both draws on and departs from Phelan's controversial argument for the non-reproductive ontology of performance: "Performance's only life is in the present. Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. . . . Performance's being, like the ontology of subjectivity proposed here, becomes itself through disappearance" (146). *Red Badge* directly approaches the ontology that Phelan elaborates, particularly as it yokes performance and death; however, as I argue throughout, the novel also registers its own historicity precisely through the repetition and reproduction of certain kinds of performance, demonstrating that disappearance and reproduction are symmetrical processes.

26. The history of enthusiasm is too expansive to be adequately accounted for here; Taves provides an invaluable examination of debates over embodied religious experience from the first transatlantic awakenings of the 1730s and 1740s to William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902). On the semantic history of "enthusiasm," see Tucker; on enthusiasm in theoretical context, see Clark; on American enthusiasm, see Lovejoy's studies.

27. Critics have made much of this inheritance, noting Crane's iconoclasm and embrace of the "popular amusements" that his father decried in an 1869 tract of that name. Biographers have been more attentive religion's reverberative force in Crane. Stallman notes, for example, that Crane's works are "haunted by his religious background" (5), while Benfey details the scandal surrounding Jonathan Townley Crane's rejection of the Holiness conception of a "second blessing," and Stephen's subsequent adaptation of this iconoclasm (28–30). See also Delbanco.

28. On black Holiness movements, see Sanders.

29. For an alternate reading of Ellison's essay, see Rowe.

30. As Ellison points out, Crane's interest in excess developed early, via a "youthful contact" with ecstatic religion—highly animated performances that blurred the boundaries of subjectivity and spectatorship, transforming the body itself into cipher (62).

31. As Woloch has argued, "The strange significance of minor characters, in other words, resides largely in the way that the character disappears, and in the tension or relief that results from this vanishing" (42).

32. See Pease, Rowe, and Kaplan, "The Spectacle of War."

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