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## Schoberlin's Annotated Copy of War Is Kind

Donald P. Vanouse

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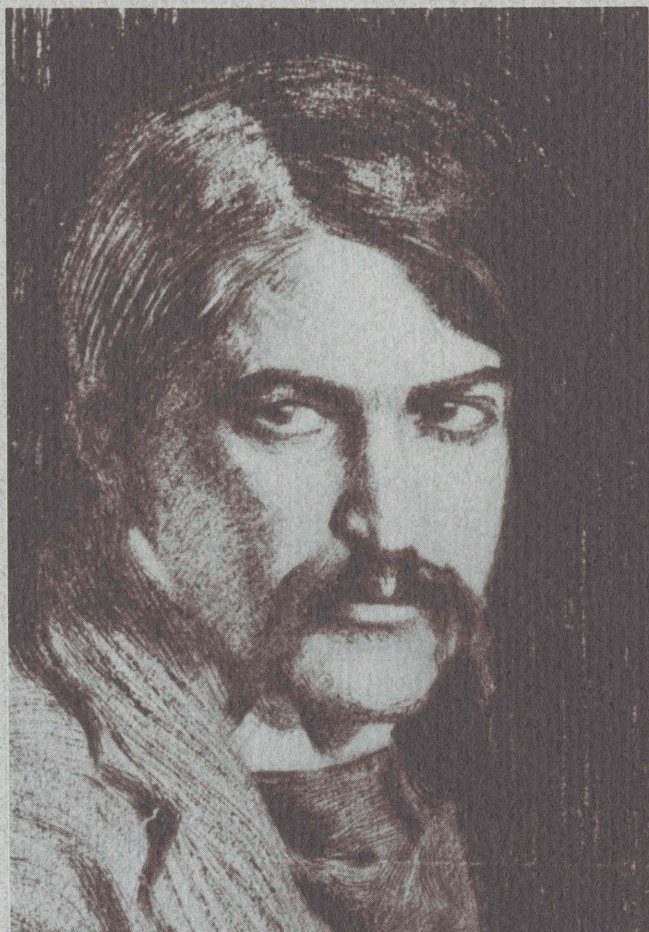
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VOLUME XXI

NUMBER ONE

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# Schoberlin's Annotated Copy of *War Is Kind*

BY DONALD P. VANOUSE

The annotated copy of *War Is Kind* acquired by the Syracuse University Library with the Schoberlin Collection is a provocative document. There are, for example, numerous brief annotations suggesting that Stephen Crane's infatuation with Nellie Crouse was the source of his inspiration for most of the disconcerting poems in the group called "Intrigue", which were published in *War Is Kind*. Nellie Crouse was an attractive young woman whom Crane met at a tea party in New York City in 1895. He had attended the tea at the invitation of his friend Lucius Button. Many months later, after travelling to the West and Mexico, Crane wrote to her a series of thoughtful and sensitive love letters that are also at Syracuse University. According to Crouse's children, family tradition held that Crane visited Nellie at her home in Akron, Ohio, before the relationship ended in March 1896.

The fifteen "Crouse" annotations appear to be in Crane's hand, but a number of problems—including the history of the development of red pencils—need to be addressed before the authority of these annotations can be established. Other annotations and erasures in the volume, though interesting, also are of uncertain origin and significance. At this point, then, the annotations provoke questions rather than offer revelations concerning Crane's relationship to the volume. The source of the unusual binding and pagination of this copy also is undocumented and uncertain.

Accompanying this volume in the George Arents Research Library are two letters from George Mitchell of London, England, to Melvin Schoberlin. Postmarked 23 October and 6 November 1948, the letters indicate that Schoberlin acquired a Crane volume from Mitchell at this time, but the letters do not identify the title. Schoberlin pasted his own desert-motif bookplate on the inside cover and signed his name on the title page, but he does not seem to have recorded

the date of his acquisition in the volume. A series of small eradicator or erasure marks on the copyright page may have been the numbers of an acquisition date, but the remaining block-like blurs do not suggest Schoberlin's somewhat florid handwriting. Similarly, the red pencil and blue ink annotations in the volume do not appear to be in Schoberlin's hand.

If the annotations were in the volume when Schoberlin acquired it from England in 1948, then the annotations could possibly have been made by Crane himself or, more likely, someone in his confidence—a friend, or relative, or even Cora Crane. This seems a reasonable possibility in that Stephen and Cora Crane lived in England from the time of the publication of *War Is Kind* until his final illness in 1900 and in that Crane's relationship to Nellie Crouse was not widely known in 1948. The love letters Crane wrote to her were not known by Thomas Beer when he wrote his groundbreaking biography of Crane in 1923, for example, and John Berryman was not permitted to quote from the letters when he wrote *Stephen Crane* (1950). Jerre Mangione had written about the love letters in the Syracuse University *Chap Book* in 1930, but the letters remained with dealers or in private hands until George Arents bought them and presented them to the Syracuse University Library in 1950.<sup>1</sup> *Stephen Crane's Love Letters to Nellie Crouse*, edited by Edwin H. Cady and Lester G. Wells, was published by Syracuse University Press in 1954.

The first legible markings in the Schoberlin volume are the date "8-14-99" in faded black ink at the center of the copyright page. A copyright deposit of *War Is Kind* was made in the United States on 17 April 1899, and reviews began to appear in June.<sup>2</sup> It seems, then, that 14 August is somewhat late for the arrival of a copy at Brede Place in Sussex, England, where Crane was living. It is especially late if, because of the unusual binding and trimming of the pages, this volume is, as has been suggested, a "pre-publication" copy.

The binding and trimming of the volume indicate professional expertise, but neither the size, nor the shape, nor the pagination correlates with other copies documented in the bibliographies or with

1. Edwin H. Cady and Lester G. Wells, eds., *Stephen Crane's Love Letters to Nellie Crouse* (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1954), 17.

2. R. W. Stallman, *Stephen Crane: A Critical Bibliography* (Ames: Iowa State Univ. Press, 1972), 141.

the three other copies at Syracuse. The binding of the Schoberlin copy lacks the distinctive lettering and designs by Will Bradley: the boards and the spine are wrapped in plain gray paper. Also, the boards and the leaves of this volume have been trimmed with rounded corners and hence reduced in size.<sup>3</sup> The Schoberlin copy includes eight additional gray leaves: four preceding and four following the text. Although similar to the printed pages in texture and color, these additional leaves lack the chain pattern found in the laid paper of the text. Finally, the leaf containing the unnumbered pages [75] and [76] has become separated from its signature and misplaced so that it follows page 78. The evidence strongly suggests that this volume has a history of professional, though somewhat careless, rebinding. It is troubling that such a history is not recorded in the volume.

The fifteen red pencil annotations of "Intrigue" are either valuable supplements to our understanding of the sources of these poems, or they are merely the speculations of a species of vandal. I have not, at this time, found references to red pencil markings observed on other Crane documents. Because the fifteen annotations are brief, simply "Crouse", "Crouse?" and "Crouse Button", the handwriting sample is difficult to evaluate with certainty, though it bears a tantalizing similarity to manuscript examples of Crane's own handwriting.

Unfortunately, Eberhard Faber Pencil Company has lost its records concerning dates in the development of the red pencil. The company does, apparently, have a specimen red pencil dating from approximately 1910, however, and it holds records indicating that early pencils were pigmented with "cadmium or magnesium reds" that were later removed "for toxicological reasons".<sup>4</sup> The date of that chemical change-over is not certain. A scanning-electron-microscope analysis of samples taken from these annotations has revealed no cadmium or magnesium.<sup>5</sup> To complete the picture insofar as we can, it will be

3. The leaves of the "standard" copies of *War Is Kind* measure  $8\frac{3}{8}$  by  $5\frac{1}{8}$  inches; the Schoberlin copy measures  $7\frac{5}{8}$  by  $4\frac{7}{8}$  inches.

4. Letter, Eberhard Faber Pencil Co. to the author, 3 January 1986.

5. I am especially grateful to Professor Clarence Pfluger of the Syracuse University Chemistry Department and to Associate Professor David L. Johnson of the College of Environmental Science and Forestry, State University of New York, for setting up these tests.

necessary to consult European pencil manufacturers, such as Conté in France, to date the chemical composition of red pencils in their manufacture.

If these red pencil annotations can be proved to be of early (ca. 1900–1910) vintage, it is more than possible that they were made by Stephen Crane himself or someone in his confidence. With that established, the enduring significance of Crane's infatuation with Nellie Crouse and the tone and purpose of the "Intrigue" poems could be more purposefully discussed. The interval between Crane's writing of the love letters and his writing of these poems is quite brief. The love letters to Nellie Crouse date from December 1895 to March 1896. Half of the "Intrigue" series was complete by December 1896 or early 1897. Crane's correspondence makes it quite certain that only the last five poems in "Intrigue" were written during the unusual stress of his illness and poverty in Havana, Cuba, after the Spanish-American War. Crane's letters to Paul Revere Reynolds, his American agent, indicate that the last five poems, beginning with "And yet I have seen thee happy with me", were completed by 14 September 1898.<sup>6</sup>

In the "Introduction" to *Stephen Crane's Love Letters to Nellie Crouse*, Edwin H. Cady's language suggests the possibility of a relationship between the letters and this series of poems. In discussing the sensitivity of the love letters, Cady says, "Crane went to work to intrigue her as she had him".<sup>7</sup> Subsequent scholars have not considered Nellie Crouse to be the inspiration for "Intrigue". In his 1968 biography, for example, R. W. Stallman proposes that the poems emerged from an irresponsible interval in Cuba:

Poor destitute Cora with debt-ridden Ravensbrook seized (or about to be seized) by creditors at Oxted and at London, while Crane in Havana was writing a batch of poems about his love-conflict between her and Lily Brandon Munroe! He

6. *The Works of Stephen Crane*, ed. Fredson Bowers, 10 vols. (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1969–76), 10:232–33. All the quotations of Stephen Crane's poetry in this article have been taken from the first edition of *War Is Kind* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1899) and are documented internally.

7. Cady and Wells, *Love Letters to Nellie Crouse*, 18.



Nellie Crouse.

calls these poems *Intrigue*, which defines his enigmatic situation.<sup>8</sup>

But the poems of “Intrigue” do not record a “love conflict” within a man who feels desire for two women. In fact, several of them express sexual jealousy or resentment felt by the male narrator:

8. R. W. Stallman, *Stephen Crane: A Biography* (New York: George Braziller, 1968), 426.





Cora Crane as a war correspondent in Greece, 1897.

He had your picture in his room,  
A scurvy traitor picture,  
And he smiled  
—Merely a fat complacency of men who  
    know fine women—  
And thus I divided with him  
A part of my love.

In the Schoberlin copy of *War Is Kind*, this poem is annotated (p. 83) with a diagonal line and the name “Crouse” in red pencil at the right side of the poem.

There is some external evidence suggesting a relationship between Nellie Crouse and this poem. The jealousy parallels that in Crane’s request for a picture of Nellie in his letter of late January 1896. After reminding her that Lucius Button has her photograph, he expresses a flash of whimsical jealousy: “If you refuse [to send the photo], I shall go and slay Button for his impertinence”.<sup>9</sup> This is playful hyperbole, of course, but it does imply an experience analogous to the subject of the poem. In another of the “Intrigue” poems, a more extreme displacement of desire is depicted in the “little shoe” of the beloved (p. 84). This poem about a fetish-object is not annotated with Nellie Crouse’s name.

“Crouse” and “Button” are both identified, however, in one of the annotations in the Schoberlin copy. The poem begins with a question: “Tell me why behind thee / I see always the shadow of another lover?” The poem exposes the imagination of a man who perceives the presence of a “shade” from the past between himself and the fulfilled “peace” of love (p. 91). In *The Red Badge of Courage* and many other writings, however, Crane equates the expectation of peace with deceptive delusion. Similarly, his penultimate letter to Nellie Crouse refers to infatuations as “ingenious traps for the imagination”, and he concludes, “The future is blue with obligations—new trials—conflicts”.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps Crane had learned from his experiences with Nellie Crouse that a lover’s hope for peace is a delusion. Such an interpretation indicates, of course, that this poem is a critical recre-

9. Cady and Wells, *Love Letters to Nellie Crouse*, 44.

10. *Ibid.*, 54.

ation of the mood of infatuation rather than a symptom of its ravages.

The title term "Intrigue" suggests that Crane was not merely writing love poems. The term seems to refer to that complexity, deviousness, and manipulation which occur when love is not the spontaneous experience of desire but is fretted by social and psychological constraints. Such a meaning is indicated in his use of the term in a Cuba sketch dated 3 October 1898, two weeks after completing "Intrigue". In discussing a "fight over the lady behind the lattice", he wryly observes: "Anything connected with that intrigue was good cause for the gore of cavaliers".<sup>11</sup>

An escape from constraint and duplicity in sexual roles is found in the story which Crane sent to Nellie Crouse with one of his letters. He discusses the story briefly in his letter to her on 12 January 1896:

It is good of you to like "A Grey [sic] Sleeve." Of course, they are a pair of idiots. But yet there is something charming in their childish faith in each other. That is all I intended to say.<sup>12</sup>

In the story, a Union Army captain and his company enter a house at the edge of a battlefield. They meet a young woman who is holding an unloaded gun and attempting to protect her grandfather and her brother, a wounded Confederate soldier. The captain is obviously charmed by the young woman, and she responds to his gallant kindnesses. The "childish" trust and affection shown by the captain and the young woman enables them to elude the constraints of their battlefield meeting. The story is clearly a kind of fantasy. It ends with the grandfather and the brother protected from the soldiers, and the two "lovers" are attempting to arrange to meet again. There are no assurances about the future, but the spontaneous expression of love has transformed their world.

The "Intrigue" poems, written later, probe more disturbing relationships between power and desire:

Torn, miserable, and ashamed of my open sorrow,  
I thought of the thunders that lived in my head,

11. *The Works of Stephen Crane*, 9:202.

12. Cady and Wells, *Love Letters to Nellie Crouse*, 35.

And I wish to be an ogre,  
And hale and haul my beloved to a castle,  
And there use the happy cruel one cruelly,  
And make her mourn with my mourning.

This poem is annotated with the name “Crouse” in the Schoberlin copy (p. 90). The medieval imagery ends with both the man and woman mourning the ravages of desire. Perhaps the archaic diction and imagery in “Intrigue” indicate Crane’s emotional distance from some of these fantasies. He uses similar imagery, for example, to highlight Henry Fleming’s delusions in *The Red Badge of Courage*.

During the period when Crane was writing “Intrigue”, he also was writing about constraints upon love in the Cuban communities of Florida and Havana. One work from this period is a comic sketch entitled “How They Court in Cuba”. The constraints upon courtship are extreme:

It is full of circumlocution and bulwarks and clever football interference and trouble and delay and protracted agony and duennas. There is no holding hands in it at all, you bet. It is all barbed wire entanglements.<sup>13</sup>

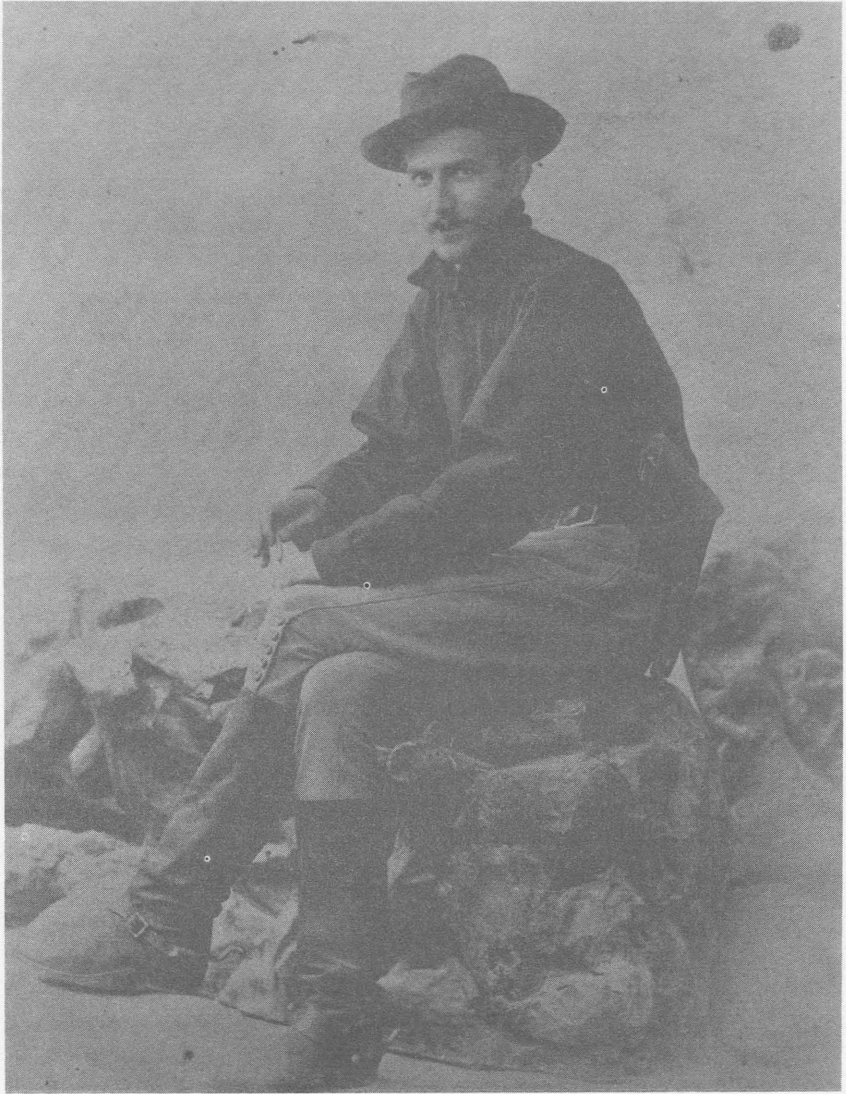
“A young man” in this environment, according to Crane, “falls in love with a fair face seen through a grated window”. Such an infatuation is not very different from his own enchantment after seeing Nellie Crouse at a tea party where they exchanged hardly a word. Drawing again from his experiences with Nellie Crouse, he debunks the love letter written by such a young man:

It breathes a passion which could only grow from the young man’s lack of knowledge of the object of his devotion. It sings a perfect adoration, which could emanate only from a young man who is not thoroughly familiar with his subject.<sup>14</sup>

It seems that Crane at this point was learning to express his awareness of the relationship between repression and enchantment. Even

13. *The Works of Stephen Crane*, 9:203.

14. *Ibid.*, 9:204.



Stephen Crane in Athens, Greece, 1897.

the short passage above makes a clear distinction between “object” and “subject” as terms for the beloved. Perhaps the comic tone of this sketch and the ferocity of “Intrigue” indicate Crane’s sense of the difference between his journalistic audience and the audience of poetry.

His story "The Clan of No Name" also was written in Havana in October 1898. It is an ambitious depiction of constraint and duplicity both in domestic society and the world of war. Manola, an outlaw in courtship and a military insurgent, exchanges pictures through a grate with his beloved Margarita. Their love is surreptitious. After he dies fighting bravely and recklessly with the Cuban insurgents, Margarita is shown meeting with her legitimate suitor, Mr. Smith. He seems to know nothing of her intrigue, and he comments ruefully on Manola's death. Then, he struggles to express his own tortured, possessive love for Margarita. "It was part of his love", Crane writes, "to believe in the absolute treachery of his adored one".<sup>15</sup>

The snarled emotions in the last section of the story are clearly parallel to those emotions expressed in "Intrigue". Smith's doubt and desire, for example, correspond to Crane's depiction of the lover's fear of love:

I doubted you  
—I doubted you—  
And in this short doubting  
My love grew like a genie  
For my further undoing.

This poem is annotated "Crouse" in the Schoberlin copy (p. 86). It has the formal and intellectual texture of one of R. D. Laing's *Knots*. Crane's poems are spare in imagery and decorative rhyme, and hence achieve directness of statement and certainty in phrasing. Often Crane affects archaisms in "Intrigue", and in some instances the imagery approaches surreality:

Thou art my love,  
And thou art the ashes of other men's love,  
And I bury my face in these ashes,  
And I love them—  
Woe is me.

This poem also is annotated "Crouse" in the Schoberlin copy (p. 71). It is no pretty prosody, but it shows the fierce commitment to diagramming structures of emotion in Crane's poetry.

15. *The Works of Stephen Crane*, 6:134.

Fredson Bowers, who has contributed bountifully to the dating of the poems in *War Is Kind*, argues on the basis of those dates and “the terms of sexual intimacy” that the poems of “Intrigue” were written to Cora Crane.<sup>16</sup> Cora nursed Stephen after the sinking of the *Commodore* and his brush with death in the open boat. She appreciated his literary genius, and she seems to have been an adventurous and intellectually independent woman. It seems likely that Crane’s relationship with Cora, an outlaw intimacy masquerading as a marriage, could have enabled him to see the more demonic and contradictory aspects of his earlier infatuations with Nellie Crouse and Lily Brandon Munroe.<sup>17</sup> Bowers identifies Cora’s literary interests and says, “a sequence of poems to her would have proved most acceptable”.<sup>18</sup> It seems unlikely, nonetheless, that this strenuous and abrasive sequence would have been “acceptable” as a depiction of their love.

One of Crane’s letters to Cora contains a paraphrase of a poem printed in *War Is Kind* but not a part of the “Intrigue” sequence.<sup>19</sup> “I explain the silvered passing of a ship at night” is a love poem which would have proved most “acceptable” as a gift to Cora, but it was published before they met. Interestingly enough, the Schoberlin copy includes chemical erasure stains on pages 24 and 25 where the first two stanzas of this love poem are printed. Although the erasures are utterly illegible, the poem had a special significance, and Stephen or Cora could have made an annotation.

Another ink erasure, found on the verso of the title page of the volume, strongly suggests “Edmund”, the first name of one of Crane’s older brothers. Crane lived with Edmund at Hartwood, New York, during 1896, and Edmund might very well have known of Crane’s love letters to Nellie Crouse. Of course, Edmund’s relationship to the volume is, at this time, only speculation.

The two legible blue ink annotations—the ones that have not been deleted—in the Schoberlin copy are written in what could be

16. *The Works of Stephen Crane*, 10:213.

17. R. W. Stallman and Lillian Gilkes, eds., *Stephen Crane: Letters* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1960), 20–23. Although the letters to Lily Brandon Munroe suggest the mood found in some of the poems in “Intrigue”, they are beyond the scope of this inquiry.

18. *The Works of Stephen Crane*, 10:214.

19. Stallman and Gilkes, *Letters*, 138.



Brede Place, Sussex, in 1944 (Photo: Ames W. Williams).

Cora's script. The date "Dec. 5, 1897" is written at the bottom of page 45, next to the poem beginning "The successful man has thrust himself". The poem is a fierce attack upon the robber barons of the Gilded Age. The date refers to the first period of desperate penury which Stephen and Cora experienced in England.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps this poem is an expression of his rage. The same date is written in Crane's hand on a manuscript of the poem held by Syracuse University. This correlation could suggest an annotating scholar who knew of the manuscript, or it could be Cora's dating of an experience which was vivid in her memory.

The second blue ink annotation in the Schoberlin copy is found on page 22. It includes an overmarking of the capital "W" beginning the first word, and "Separate poem" written on the margin. This annotation reawakens a somewhat difficult textual question. It was first raised by the discrepancy between Crane's manuscript, reproduced in Elbert Hubbard's *The Fra*, and the version of the poem(s) printed in *War Is Kind*. Either there is one poem beginning "A little ink more or less" (p. 21) or there are two, and the second poem begins, "What / You define me God with these trinkets?"

20. Stallman and Gilkes, *Letters*, 156–57.



Fredson Bowers, after discussing Elbert Hubbard's integrity, decides that the *War Is Kind* text has greater validity. But he adds a note of hesitation: "It is true that superficially the connection between the two stanzas does not seem to be intimate".<sup>21</sup> This blue ink annotation, like that dating "The successful man", suggests the marking by someone familiar with the publishing history of the poem. Of course, this annotation could have been supplied by Cora. When she went through Crane's papers after his death, she was very concerned to identify the titles of published works. Until the handwriting of this annotation is identified, its significance must remain uncertain.

The annotations in the Schoberlin copy of *War Is Kind* are, at this point, of uncertain authority. They do not resolve the mysteries concerning Crane's inspiration. They do, however, point to the need to look more closely at Crane's other writings in order to understand the context of "Intrigue". The love letters to Nellie Crouse are an important part of that context. Crane's prose writings about love-relationships are equally important. His fictions and journalism seem to show that he had a critical interest in defining the elements of emotions such as his enchantment with Nellie Crouse. If these are seen as the context for "Intrigue", then the poems appear to be analyses of desire when it has been distorted by constraint and dread. Love becomes tainted by cowardice and terror. Reading "Intrigue" in this way also seems to indicate why Crane included these poems in *War Is Kind*.

21. *The Works of Stephen Crane*, 10:253.