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“Narcissism and Stephen Crane’s *The Monster*: A Psychoanalytical Reading
of Dr. Trescott”

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Stephen Crane's novella, *The Monster*,¹ written in 1898, is now often considered one of his best works – but what accounts for that perception? Is it simply due to Crane's talent as an imagistic author? Although *The Monster* was Crane's second novella, the story has generated a vast amount of literary criticism, including dozens of articles highlighting the role of Dr. Trescott. Throughout the years, several critics have suggested that Dr. Trescott exemplifies immense and sincere compassion for Henry Johnson, and, as a result, he becomes a victim to the horrific townspeople of Whilomville. In his article, "Responding to Crane's 'The Monster,'" Ronald K. Giles argues that "Thematically considered, 'The Monster' is about the consequences of moral courage. Dr. Trescott devotedly cares for Henry Johnson, the man who has saved his son. He treats him, finds a family to take him in, and pays for his keep the doctor's moral victory causes the community to ostracize him" (46;50). Another critic who comes to the doctor's defense is Sy Kahn who argues that the townspeople are "monstrous" for "their terror and eventual persecution of Dr. Trescott" (37). While such suggestions seem to hold some validity on the surface, when we delve deeper into the psyche of Dr. Trescott, we begin to realize the true motive behind his "sincere compassion"; furthermore, explicating Crane's specific use of language decenters the dominant view of Trescott's genuine acts of kindness. Although there is no concrete evidence that Dr. Trescott suffers from any sort of diagnosed disorder, there are various incidents throughout the story

¹ *N.B.* It is important to note the differentiation in the citations of *The Monster*; some authors cite the work as a novella, placing the title in italics, whereas others prefer to cite it as a short story, therefore surrounding the title in quotations. Please note that for purposes of this essay I have chosen to cite Crane's story as a novella, *The Monster*, consistently throughout the work.

which suggest that he is affected by a personality disorder known as Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD).

Before we can begin to understand the disorder of NPD, we must be familiar with what the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* defines as a personality disorder. According to the *DSM -IV-TR*², the term “personality disorder” is defined as:

...an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the expectations of the individual’s culture, is pervasive and inflexible ... is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment
 Only when personality traits are inflexible and maladaptive and cause significant functional impairment or subjective distress do they constitute Personality Disorders. (685-686)

Aside from NPD falling into the category of a type of personality disorder, another reason knowledge of personality disorders is essential to our understanding of NPD is that such mental conditions are often grouped together in what is known as “clusters” with similar personality disorders based on the overlapping criteria they share; for example, NPD is categorized under Cluster B of disorders which “...includes the Antisocial, Borderline, Histrionic, and Narcissistic Personality Disorders. Individuals

² The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders Text Revision (DSM-IV TR)* is the handbook used by mental health professionals for diagnosing mental illness. Specific diagnostic criteria are included for all currently recognized mental health disorders. Originally published in 1994 by the American Psychiatric Association, it was released in 2000 as a text revision. The DSM-IV-TR uses a five level diagnostic system to classify illnesses and disorders. When considered together, these five levels give the treatment provider a complete diagnosis that includes factors influencing psychiatric conditions (About.com Health *Medical Review Board*).

with these disorders often appear dramatic, emotional, or erratic” (*DSM-IV-TR*, 685). According to the *DSM-IV-TR*, the critical feature of Narcissistic Personality Disorder is marked by a “pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy that begins by early adulthood and is present in a variety of contexts” (714). Having previously established how NPD falls under the Cluster B category of mental disorders, how is it that Trescott’s behavior exemplifies specifically NPD and not for the other illnesses listed in that category? While Trescott may exhibit some antisocial and/or borderline personality tendencies, his actions are predominantly motivated by intrinsic desires and are not primarily influenced by social rejection or mental instabilities,³ his behavior warrants a stronger diagnosis for NPD than it does for the other two mental conditions⁴. This new reading suggests that from the onset of *The Monster*, Trescott is predominantly concerned with himself, which is one of the central diagnostic features of this personality disorder. Why, then, have critics continuously overlooked the possibility of Trescott as a character who suffers from NPD? Perhaps one of the most underlying reasons why Trescott has never been seen in this context is that no such illness had been discovered in the world of psychology or even in the medical industry during the late nineteenth century; in fact, the term “narcissistic” would not even be introduced until 1968 by psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut (*Wikipedia*). Taking into consideration Trescott’s

³ According to the *National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)*, Antisocial Personality Disorder (APD) is often marked by a disregard for social norms and laws whereas Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) is primarily characterized by unstable moods and behaviors.

⁴ “Other Personality Disorders may be confused with Narcissistic Personality Disorder because they have certain features in common. It is, therefore, important to distinguish among these disorders based on differences in their characteristic features. However, if an individual has personality features that meet criteria for one or more Personality Disorders in addition to Narcissistic Personality Disorder, all *can* be diagnosed. The most useful feature in discriminating Narcissistic Personality Disorder from ... Antisocial and Borderline Personality Disorders, whose interactive styles are respectively coquettish, callous, and needy, is the grandiosity characteristic of Narcissistic Personality Disorder” (*DSM-IV*, 716).

lack of sympathy and/or sincerity towards Henry Johnson, it is possible to argue that he is merely attending to Johnson's needs based solely upon the fact that Henry had saved his son. Contrary to what other critics have maintained over the years regarding Trescott's sincere and selfless act of saving Henry Johnson's life, when we examine his character through a psychoanalytical lens, we begin to understand how - rather than to aid Henry Johnson's well-being - Trescott feels obligated to not only save this man's life, but also to continuously care for him as a means to bolster his own self-worth.

In order to fully understand Trescott's absence of sincerity in his care for Henry Johnson, we must first identify his lack of compassion towards his young son, Jimmie. In the opening scene of the story, Jimmie has been playing in the yard, and in doing so, he has accidentally destroyed one of his father's peonies:

Little Jim was, for the time, engine Number 36 and he was making the run between Syracuse and Rochester In consequence, when he swung around the curve at the flower bed, a wheel of his cart destroyed a peony. Number 36 slowed down at once and looked guiltily at his father, who was mowing the lawn. The doctor had his back to this accident, and he continued to pace slowly to and fro, pushing the mower. (190)

The mere idea that Jimmie not only fears his father's reaction to such a trifle of an "accident" but that he also feels guilty about it implies that Trescott is perhaps not the most empathetic person; furthermore, because he is so self-involved in mowing the lawn,

Trescott does not even notice his son's remorseful look towards him⁵. Although it is possible to make the argument that Trescott is simply preoccupied doing a common, not to mention necessary, chore and in consequence is not able to pay attention to the incident that has just occurred, when we look closely at the description of just how intently Trescott is fixated on his lawn, that assertion loses some of its validity:

He [Jimmie] went to the lawn, very slowly, and kicking wretchedly at the turf. Presently his father came along with the whirring machine while the sweet, new grass blades spun from the knives. In a low voice, Jim said, "Pa!"

The doctor was shaving this lawn as if it were a priest's chin. All during the season he had worked at it in the coolness and peace of the evenings after supper. Even in the shadow of the cherry trees the grass was strong and healthy. Jim raised his voice a trifle. "Pa!"

The doctor paused, and with the howl of the machine no longer occupying the sense, one could hear the robins in the cherry trees arranging their affairs. Jim's hands were behind his back, and sometimes his fingers clasped and unclasped. *Again* he said, "Pa!" The child's fresh and rosy lip was lowered.

⁵ According to *Psychology Today*, one of the main characteristics/symptoms of Narcissistic Personality Disorder is the complete "disregard [for] the feelings of others."

The doctor stared down at his son, thrusting his head forward and frowning attentively. “What is it, Jimmie?” “Pa!” *repeated* the child at length. Then he raised his finger and pointed at the flower-bed. “There!” “What?” said the doctor, *frowning* more. “*What* is it, Jim?” (190-191; my emphasis)

The description of how Trescott “...shaves [his] lawn as if it were a priest’s chin,” illustrates that the doctor is not simply preoccupied in performing a common chore; rather, the intensity of the description symbolizes his obsessive need to be so meticulous mowing *his* lawn. Dr. Trescott’s compulsiveness in “shaving” the lawn shows he is a man who is extremely concerned with appearances⁶. In his article, “Social Forms Vs. Human Brotherhood in Crane’s *The Monster*,” Charles W. Mayer explains: “[Trescott’s] efforts [in regard to the lawn] may be seen ironically as a godlike assertion of authority over nature which will later be proved futile” (30). Mayer’s description of the doctor’s “godlike” power implies how Trescott meets a portion of the diagnostic criterion for those who suffer from NPD: “[the individual] has a grandiose sense of self-importance, expects to be recognized as superior without commensurate achievements, and is preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success [and] power” (*DSM-IV*, 717).

Aside from Dr. Trescott’s infatuation with his lawn, (it is almost as though he thinks of the lawn as a child the way it is described as being “strong and healthy”), it is interesting to note not only that Jimmie repeatedly attempts to gain his father’s attention,

⁶ Obsessive self-interest, along with the exaggeration of achievements/talents and the perusal of selfish goals all fall under the category of an individual who suffers from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (*Psychology Today*). Dr. Trescott exhibits all of these characteristics when dealing with *his* lawn.

but it is also significant that Trescott seems almost annoyed through his “frowning” and constant questioning “What is it?” Crane’s diction here decenters the dominant reading by critics regarding the doctor’s empathy; because Trescott is so seemingly bothered by such an insignificant incident, it becomes increasingly evident that he is extremely self-involved.

Trescott’s lack of empathy towards his son is also illustrated when we see how Jimmie seeks a paternal figure in Henry Johnson. After Jimmie has destroyed the peony in his father’s garden, he goes to the stable where Johnson is working:

It was apparent from Jimmie’s manner that he felt some kind of desire to efface himself. He went down to the stable. Henry Johnson, the negro who cared for the doctor’s horses, was sponging the buggy. He grinned fraternally when he saw Jimmie coming. These two were pals. In regard to almost everything in life they seemed to have minds precisely alike.

(192)

Crane suggests that because he seeks paternal attention from Henry, Jimmie does not receive paternal affection from his father. Also, the fact that Jimmie “[feels] some kind of desire to *efface* himself” implies that Trescott has made him feel as though he is a disappointment as a son (192; my emphasis). The literal definition for “efface” is “to expunge, erase, or obliterate”; Jimmie feeling the need to “do away” with himself—coupled with later events in the story—may suggest that Trescott may show signs of having a narcissistic personality (Dictionary.com). When we think about how Trescott is

so displaced emotionally from his only child—so much so that Jimmie thinks of their hired hand as more of a father figure than his own biological father—it becomes that much more difficult to imagine that the doctor would express such immense concern towards his African American stable hand.

After having established Trescott's unstable relationship with Jimmie, we can now explore how that same absence of emotion is mirrored in his care of Henry Johnson. In his critical essay, "The Black Man's Part in Crane's *Monster*," Joseph Church makes an argument regarding Henry Johnson's and Trescott's mutual compassion for one another: "Given the compassion of Trescott and Johnson for each other, critics tend to view *The Monster* as having a socially advanced attitude about racial issues" (376). While Crane suggests that Henry Johnson embodies genuine love and respect for Dr. Trescott, there is no substantial evidence that Trescott does in fact reciprocate that same kind of love toward Johnson. In the same scene where Jimmie goes to the stable to "efface" himself, the narrator expresses the intensity of Johnson's reverence for Trescott:

...on all points of conduct as related to the doctor, who was the moon, they [Jimmie and Henry] were in complete but unexpressed understanding. Whenever Jimmie became the victim of an eclipse he went to the stable to solace himself with Henry's crimes. Henry, with the elasticity of his race, could usually provide a sin to place himself on a footing with the disgraced one. Perhaps he would remember that he had forgotten to put the hitching strap in the back of the buggy on some recent

occasion, and had been reprimanded by the doctor. Then these two would commune subtly and without words concerning their moon, holding themselves sympathetically as people who had committed similar treasons. (192)

The mere fact that Trescott is described as being “the moon” in Henry Johnson’s mind exemplifies not only his compassion for the doctor, but also reinforces Trescott as being a cold and unfeeling man; just as the moon is distant and a symbol of immense power, so is Dr. Trescott. In the description of Jimmie and Henry’s view of the doctor Crane uses abrasive diction, amplifying our understanding of just how un-empathetic Trescott can be. One of the first phrases in this scene that suggests Dr. Trescott’s harshness is Crane’s characterization that “...Jimmie became the *victim* of an *eclipse*” (192; my emphasis). One major reason this delineation of the relationship between Jimmie and his father illustrates the doctor’s lack of compassion is Crane’s use of the word “victim.” Not only is Jimmie considered a victim here, but Trescott is also described as causing an eclipse, which symbolizes how he is “overshadowing [or being] cut off” emotionally from his son (Dictionary.com). While this scene exemplifies Trescott’s ill-affection towards his son, it also brings to light his similar relationship with Henry Johnson. That Henry could “...provide a sin to place himself [on the same level] as the disgraced one” and is often “...reprimanded by the doctor” speaks volumes about Trescott’s character. In one way, referring to Henry’s mistakes as “sins” places Trescott on the same level as a God-like figure, therefore exaggerating his power – as well as his self-righteousness – over Johnson, and, at the same time, being reprimanded by his boss places Johnson on the

same level as Jimmie, which emphasizes the doctor's "moon-like" qualities of being insensitive, distant, and in control (192).

With Trescott's personality traits having been previously explored—specifically, that of his insensitivity—it is important to look at the scene in the story that is a precursor to the doctor's ethical dilemma. The beginning of chapter eight opens with the fire in which Henry Johnson gets injured saving Jimmie. Crane writes:

Dr. Trescott had been driving homeward, slowly smoking a cigar, and feeling glad that this last case was now in complete obedience to him, like a wild animal that he had subdued, when he heard the long whistle, and chirped to his horse under the unlicensed but perfectly distinct impression that a fire had broken out in Oakhurst, a new and rather high-flying suburb of the town which was at least two miles from his own home (206).

Trescott's feelings of smugness that his last case was "...in complete obedience to him..." suggests the doctor's sense superiority, power, and control⁷. Critic Charles W. Mayer provides a very different reading of this scene in his essay, "Social Forms Vs. Human Brotherhood in Crane's *The Monster*." In his examination of Trescott, he asserts that:

Trescott ... has struggled hard against the usurping powers of nature. At the time of the fire he has just left a patient, 'glad that this last patient was

⁷ According to the third criterion in the DSM – IV – TR, "Individuals who suffer from Narcissistic Personality Disorder believe that they are superior, special, or unique and expect others to recognize them as such" (714).

now in complete obedience to him, like a wild animal that he had subdued....' (p. 47). His complacency at this point is ironic, but hardly indicative of a proud sense of power....he has been in the presence of destruction and is able to perceive the need for working towards an order based on vision instead of blind fear. (33)

Mayer perceives the doctor's act as one of necessity and vision as opposed to "a proud sense of power" when Crane's language clearly contradicts this view; Crane's diction of "subduing" the case "like a wild animal" as a means to exact "complete obedience" implies Trescott's delighted sense of supremacy.

Now that we have a clearer understanding not only of the relationship Dr. Trescott has with his patients, but also a better grasp of his relationship with Henry Johnson, we can begin to evaluate the doctor's motives for taking care of Johnson after the fire. In her essay, "How It Feels To Be Without A Face: Race and the Reorientation of Sympathy in the 1890s," Molly Hiro explains how the townspeople of Whilomville lack sympathy for anyone and/or anything that is different:

What is lacking in the townspeople of Whilomville, for these readers, is the failure to find an answer to Reifsnyder's question ['How does it feel to be without a face?']; they lack, that is, the kind of universal human sympathy that would allow them to recognize not only Henry's sacrificial act, but also his fundamental human sameness and, thus, his right to a place in their community. (2)

While the townspeople of Whilomville never stop and think about what it must feel like to not have a face, it is also true that Dr. Trescott never stops to consider that question either, leaving him just as unsympathetic towards Henry's situation as the rest of the townspeople. In the critical scene where Judge Hagenthorpe discusses Henry with Trescott, it becomes more obvious to the reader that the only reason he is seeing to the care of Johnson is based solely on the fact that he feels as though he owes Henry something for saving Jimmie's life. The scene warrants quotation in full:

The doctor made a weary gesture. "He saved my boy's life."

"Yes," said the judge, swiftly – "yes, I know!"

"*And what am I to do?*" said Trescott, his eyes suddenly lighting like an outburst from smoldering peat.

"*What am I to do?* He gave himself for – for Jimmie. *What am I to do for him?*" The judge abased himself completely before these words. He lowered his eyes for a moment. He picked at his cucumbers.

Presently he braced himself straightly in the chair. "He will be your creation, you understand. He is purely your creation. Nature has very evidently given him up. He is dead. You are restoring him to life. You are making him, and he will be a monster, with no mind."

"He will be what you like, Judge," cried Trescott, in sudden polite fury. "He will be anything, but, by God! *he saved my boy.*"

The judge interrupted in a voice trembling with emotion: ‘Trescott! Trescott! Don’t I know?’

Trescott had subsided to a sullen mood. “Yes, you know,” he answered acidly; “but you don’t know all about your own boy being saved from death.” This was a perfectly childish allusion to the judge’s bachelorhood. Trescott knew that the remark was infantile, but he seemed to take desperate delight in it.

But it passed the judge completely. It was not his spot.

“I am puzzled,” he said in profound thought. “I don’t know what to say.” Trescott had become repentant. “Don’t think I don’t appreciate what you say, Judge. But— ”

“Of course!” responded the judge quickly. “Of course.”

“It —” began Trescott.

“Of course,” said the judge.

In silence they resumed their dinner.

“Well,” said the judge ultimately, “*it is hard for a man to know what to do.*”

“It is,” said the doctor, fervidly.

There was another silence. It was broken by the judge:

“Look here, Trescott; I don’t want you to think—”

“No, certainly not,” answered the doctor earnestly.

“Well, I don’t want you to think I would say anything to – It was only that I thought that I might be able to suggest to you that – the affair was a little dubious.”

With an appearance of suddenly disclosing his real mental perturbation, the doctor said: “Well, what would you do? Would you kill him?” he asked, abruptly and sternly.

“Trescott, you fool,” said the old man, gently.

“Oh, well, I know, Judge, but then – “ He turned red, and spoke with new violence: “Say, *he saved my boy* – do you see? *He saved my boy.*”

“You bet he did,” cried the judge, with enthusiasm. “You bet he did.” And they remained for a time gazing at each other, their faces illuminated with memories of *a certain deed*.

After another silence, the judge said, “It is hard for a man to know what to do.” (213-214; my emphasis)

In this exchange between the two men, then, we can see that Trescott’s main concern in attending to Henry Johnson’s care and recovery stem solely from the ethical dilemma that Johnson “saved [his] boy.” In fact, when we examine the discussion

between Judge Hagenthorpe and Dr. Trescott, we see that the doctor's exclamations of "What am I to do?," and "He saved my boy!," are each repeated three separate times; this repetition emphasizes Trescott's ethical dilemma about saving Henry, but at the same time, it deepens his displaced emotions as a human being—he does not find it necessary to save Johnson's life based on the fact that he is a living individual; rather, Trescott debates whether or not to save him because Johnson saved Jimmie, and therefore he feels a moral responsibility. Also, in the earlier part of their conversation, Judge Hagenthorpe explains to Dr. Trescott that: "He will be your creation, you understand. He is purely your creation. Nature has very evidently given him up. He is dead. You are restoring him to life" (213). Understanding the different connotations of the term "creation" during the nineteenth century—that a creation was formed through "God-given power"—coupled with Judge Hagenthorpe's description of Henry as Trescott's "creation," strengthens the doctor's sense of self-worth; based on the realization that he has been given the power to "restore life" to Henry Johnson, it is clear Dr. Trescott sees himself as a God-like figure⁸.

One critic who supports such an ethical reading of Trescott's caring for Johnson is Michael D. Warner. In his article, "Value, Agency, and Stephen Crane's 'The Monster,'" he too explores the possibility that Trescott's care for Henry Johnson is undertaken to merely take care of the doctor's indebtedness to Johnson for saving Jimmie, through explaining how:

⁸ During the late nineteenth century, the term "creation" was defined as, "[s]omething created by *divine* or natural *agency*" (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1896; my emphasis).

Trescott accords value to Henry because of Henry's actions in the fire. 'He saved my boy's life,' he explains....Trescott's saving of Henry is exactly parallel to Henry's saving of Jimmie in that in each case the act fails of its purpose, and in each case the value of moral courage feels appropriate even though no basis for that value is readily discernible. The crucial point is that a distinction has been made within the concept of choice; freedom obtains, but pure intent does not One can still point to moral agents and their acts, but Crane has put in question the kind of relation between those agents and their acts that we must assume in order to understand our machinery of valuation. As a consequence, ethics in 'The Monster' seems suspended, even as ethical values continue to operate. (84-86)

Although the doctor's devotion to saving Johnson's life originates from an ethical standpoint, it is also true that Trescott's motives and/or intentions are not genuinely pure, as Warner has maintained. In fact, based on Warner's assertions, the seemingly moral and/or ethical characteristics on Trescott's part become null and void⁹. Trescott's "valuing" Henry's life can therefore be seen as superficial rather than genuine for the fact that his actions of saving Johnson's life is "...exactly parallel to Henry's saving of Jimmie ..." (85). If the doctor's act of rescuing Johnson from the fire were actually

⁹ "The essential feature of Narcissistic Personality Disorder is a pervasive pattern of grandiosity They routinely overestimate their abilities and inflate their accomplishments, often appearing boastful and pretentious A sense of entitlement is evident in these individuals' unreasonable expectation of especially favorable treatment" (DSM-IV-TR, 714-15). From these descriptions, then, it is reasonable to argue those who suffer from NPD are often superficial beings, therefore making any act of kindness suspect.

genuine, Trescott would not be so bent on the idea of how Johnson “saved [his] son ...”; rather, Trescott would want to save Henry for the sole purpose that he valued another human being’s life—not just as debt of gratitude.

We are also able to see how Trescott exhibits characteristics of narcissism in his argument with Judge Hagenthorpe, which is all about him and *his* belongings: “You don’t know all about *your own* boy being saved from death” (214). It is not as though Trescott seems genuinely concerned with Jimmie’s well-being at this point; rather, it seems to be more about the fact that Johnson rescued *his* son for him. Through this conversation between the two men, then, we can see how Trescott exhibits certain symptoms of someone who suffers from NPD based on how he “reacts to [the judge’s] criticism with anger, exaggerates his own importance, [no one can possibly understand his feelings] and pursues a mainly selfish goal” (*Psychology Today*) in keeping Henry alive when it would more than likely be the more humane choice to let him die, as Judge Hagenthorpe suggests here.

In the exchange between the two men, in fact, we can also see how Trescott does not disagree with anything the judge is saying; rather, the doctor actually agrees with him: “Oh, well, I know, Judge, but then – “(214). Agreeing with Judge Hagenthorpe underscores Trescott’s emotional distance from Henry Johnson, because if he genuinely cared about Johnson as a person, he would be more likely to stand up to the judge and defend Johnson. It is also intriguing to see how Trescott seems as though he is about to stand up for Johnson—“but then—” —however, in the end, he simply reverts back to the

fact that Johnson saved his son. Although Trescott's near-defending of Henry against the judge may seem as though he is compassionate about saving Henry's life, in reality, as a result of Trescott's reverting to the position that "he saved my [son]," this scene merely reinforces the depiction of the doctor as a truly unfeeling man (213). As Hiro notes, Dr. Trescott is as unsympathetic a being as the townspeople have proven to be, stating how:

In the face of what he sees as their too-easy forgetfulness about what Henry has done for his son, Trescott refuses, remaining steadfastly committed to his promise to protect and care for him. Trescott's gesture may seem to come from something like sympathy for Henry, but the story presents it as more akin to a compulsive ethical commitment with no emotional content whatsoever (19).

Once the reader can acknowledge that Trescott is saving Henry more for his own benefit—that is, to clear his conscience through "repaying" Henry Johnson for his "good deed"—it is then that we realize the doctor is essentially no better than any of the other unsympathetic townspeople of Whilomville.

Following the debate between Judge Hagenthorpe and Dr. Trescott regarding Henry Johnson, the doctor decides the wisest thing to do is to send Johnson off to live with a local African American family, the Williams, for the time being. Once Trescott has arrived at Alek Williams's home with Henry, he tells Alek's wife: "Don't trouble yourself, Mary," ... "I've brought Henry for you to take care of, and *all you've got to do* is to carry out *what I tell you*." Learning that he was not followed, he faced the door, and

said, “Come in, Henry” (217; my emphasis). Based on how the doctor instructs Mary Williams that all she has to do is what *he* tells her illustrates Trescott’s belief that he holds a higher degree of power over Mary, not only because of his dominant gender, but also because of his preeminent race as well as his superior social class status.¹⁰ Crane’s use of language to describe the arrival of the doctor and Henry’s arrival to the Williams’ place also decenters the dominate reading of Trescott’s sincere intentions to devotedly care for Johnson:

Trescott had taken the silent shape by the arm and led it forward into the full revelation of light. “Well, now, Alek, you can take Henry and put him to bed, and in the morning I will - ”

Near the end of this sentence Old Williams had come front to front with Johnson. He gasped for a second, and then yelled the yell of a man stabbed in the heart.

For a fraction of a moment Trescott seemed to be for epithets. Then he roared: “You old black chump! You old black – Shut up! Shut up! Do you hear?”

Williams obeyed instantly in the matter of his screams, but he continued in a lower voice: “Ma Lode a’ massy! Who’d ever think? Ma Lode a’ massy!”

Trescott spoke again in the manner of a commander in the battalion.

“Alek!” (216)

¹⁰ As a result of how Trescott has “expect[ed] others to go along with [his] ideas and plans” as well as his “taking advantage” of the Williams’, it is a clear indicator that the doctor likely suffers from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (*Mayo Clinic*).

Trescott and Johnson's encounter with Alek Williams suggests Trescott demonstrates compassion toward Henry based on how he defends Johnson against Alek's outbursts; however, while the doctor does in fact defend Henry, it is also true that Trescott is shirking his responsibilities and instead placing them onto the Williams' family. Critic Giles' argument regarding the moral consequences Trescott endures for his devoted care of Henry Johnson loses validity when the language and the content of the previous scene is taken into consideration (46). If Trescott were genuinely concerned with the well-being of Johnson, he would be likely to take on the responsibility of solely attending to Johnson's medical needs, as opposed to shipping him off to another family's home as he had done. When we examine the language of how: "Trescott spoke again in the manner of a commander..." it becomes more apparent that Trescott is also exemplifying characteristics of NPD¹¹.

While it is obvious that Trescott is not genuinely concerned with the well-being of other characters in the story, his lack of empathy is deepened when we explicate the language when he learns that Henry has been arrested: "Was he hurt any?" ... "No. They never touched him. Of course nobody really wanted to hit him, but you know how a crowd gets" "*Yes, I know*" (230; my emphasis). Trescott's condoning of the crowd's insensitivity therefore excavates his own passivity to the situation. Because Henry's face has been so disfigured from the fire, when he watches a children's party through a window and stops to see Bella Faragaut, he inadvertently throws the entire town of

¹¹ Believing they are above the average person, individuals suffering from Narcissistic Personality often demand special attention (as would a commander in the military) (DSM-IV-TR, 714-715).

Whilomville into a frenzy. After Johnson has been “terrorizing” the town, the chief of police decides the safest place for him is the county jail; when Trescott comes to get Henry from the jail, the chief explains to the doctor how members of the town are holding Trescott responsible for Johnson’s actions:

For a moment the chief of police looked reflectively at the floor. Then he spoke hesitantly. “You know Jake Winter’s little girl was the one that he scared at the party. She is pretty sick, they say.”

“Is she? Why, they didn’t call me. I always attend the Winter family.”

“No, didn’t they?” asked the chief, slowly. “Well – you know – Winter is – well, Winter has gone clean crazy over this business. He wanted – he wanted to have you arrested.”

“Have me arrested? The idiot! What in the name of wonder could he have me arrested for?”

“Oh, he is of no consequence...”

“Well, you’ll be down tonight and take [Johnson] out, eh? You’ll get a good welcome from the jailer He’s got no use for him.”

“But what is this business of Winter’s about having me arrested?” (230-231)

In this discussion between the chief of police and the doctor, instead of being concerned for Henry, we see how Trescott is primarily worried about his reputation; not only does he question why Winter did not call on him to attend to his daughter, but he is also perturbed that Winter wants him to be arrested. In fact, we see that Trescott asks about the reason over his possible arrest twice in the same brief conversation. Trescott's use of language here – “I always attend to the Winter family” and his referene to Jake Winter as an “idiot” – provides additional evidence that the doctor displays such personality traits as conceit and outbursts of anger in reaction to criticism.¹²

Aside from Dr. Trescott's unsympathetic attitude towards other characters throughout the novel – particularly his son and Henry Johnson – when we delve deeper into the doctor's psyche, the extent of his egotism becomes increasingly evident. Near the end of the novella, when a few of the more prominent members of Whilomville – including Judge Hagenthorpe and John Twelve – confront Trescott about removing Johnson even further from the town and placing him in an institution, we are able to catch a glimpse of the doctor's egotism:

“So we've talked it over – about a dozen of us – and, as I say, if you want to tell us to mind our own business, why, go ahead; but we've talked it over, and we've come to the conclusion that the only [thing] to do is to get Johnson a place somewhere off up the valley, and –

¹² One's own exaggeration of importance and/or abilities, as well as the negative response to any kind of criticism reflects an individual who suffers from Narcissistic Personality Disorder (*Psychology Today*).

“Trescott wearily gestured. “...Nobody can attend to him as *I do myself.*” ...

Trescott arose and went to the window. He turned his back upon them. They sat waiting in silence. When he returned he kept his face in the shadow. “No, John Twelve,” he said, “it can’t be done.”

There was another stillness. Suddenly a man stirred on his chair.

“Well, then, a public institution—” he began.

“No,” said Trescott; “*public institutions are all very good*, but he is not going to one.” (245-246; my emphasis)

While Trescott’s plea to keep Johnson in town so that he can personally attend to Henry’s medical needs seem to be an extremely altruistic and selfless act of compassion on the doctor’s part, when we look more closely at his objections, his true motives begin to surface. When Trescott expounds that “No [one else] can attend to [Henry] as I do myself,” and that “public institutions are [...] very good, but...” he is essentially flaunting his belief that no other doctor has the proper abilities and knowledge as he does to care for Henry Johnson. It is also ironic that Dr. Trescott is adamantly against the men’s idea to send Johnson off to be taken care of because Trescott had done that same thing earlier when he sends Johnson to live with Alek Williams. In the opening scene of chapter twelve, Trescott is explaining to Henry that he is taking him to stay with Alek Williams, saying: “Henry ... ‘I’ve got you a home here with old Alek Williams. You

will have everything you want to eat and a good place to sleep and I hope you will get along there alright” (215). Since Dr. Trescott had previously sent Johnson somewhere else to live, why is it that he is so obstinately opposed to these men’s same suggestion? The only difference between these two parallel incidents is that Trescott’s decision to relocate Henry to Alek Williams’ home was solely *his*, whereas when the townsmen approach him about sending Henry away near the end of the story, they did not consult him. In exaggerating his own self-worth, and appearing to be hypocritical, Dr. Trescott demonstrates his enormous egotism, which is the most preeminent symptom associated with individuals who suffer from NPD (*Psychology Today*). In an essay entitled “Crane’s *The Monster*,” William Spofford discusses how Trescott’s ego serves as part of the overall dilemma in saving Henry Johnson’s life:

Dr. Trescott, the man of science and good will, debates with Judge Hagenthorpe, the man of law and realism, over the wisdom and morality of saving Henry’s life The problem moves from the realm of medical ethics – ‘the questionable charity’ involved in saving ‘a monster, a perfect monster and probably with an affected brain’ – to a matter of the doctor’s ego ... what the judge considers a possible ‘blunder of virtue.’ (6)

In other words, because this “problem” starts off with “medical ethics” and ends with “the doctor’s ego” it is plausible to argue that the dilemma Trescott endures through the entirety of the story is centered solely around him, rather than Henry Johnson; as alluded

to previously, everything that Trescott advocates for—supposedly on Johnson’s behalf—is, in reality, only to inflate his own importance and abilities.

Although several critics assert that Dr. Trescott’s primary concern throughout the novella is the well-being of Henry Johnson, in the final scene, it becomes evident that his primary concern is, in fact, his own well-being. One critic who defends the motives of the doctor is James Nagel, in his essay “The Significance of Stephen Crane’s ‘The Monster.’” Nagel emphasizes how Trescott displays a kind of unyielding sense of devotion towards Johnson: “...Trescott is amazingly free of internal turmoil, for he never [...] wavers in his resolve ... the opposition of the neighborhood does not figure in the doctor’s calculations” (4-5). Based on the assertion that Nagel proposes, it is intriguing to observe the scene where Trescott is attempting to console his wife after the townswomen refuse to attend her receiving days:

Glancing down at the cups, Trescott mechanically counted them. There were fifteen of them. “There, there,” he said, “Don’t cry, Grace. Don’t cry.”

.... As he sat holding her head on his shoulder, Trescott found himself occasionally trying to count the cups. There were fifteen of them (247).

Even though it is obvious that Trescott’s wife feels ostracized by the townswomen, what most critics fail to consider is the idea that the doctor also feels rejected by the entire town as well. With that being said, Nagel’s argument is weakened through Trescott’s

display of “internal turmoil” in the counting of his wife’s unused teacups, which exemplifies how “the opposition of the neighborhood *does* [...] figure in the doctor’s calculations” (4-5; my emphasis). Two critics who challenge such a rendering of the final scene, that Nagel has proposed, are Molly Hiro and Sy Kahn. Hiro notes the counting of teacups represents “[Trescott’s] hyper-rational one-for-one system of ethics [...] as a meaningless gesture of repetition” (19), whereas Kahn argues that:

The final scene of the story provides us with a tableau symbolizing the ostracism and isolation which not only Trescott but his family must suffer because of his decision. He arrives home on a Wednesday evening, recalling that Wednesday is the day when his wife “receives.” He finds her crying and complaining of a headache. It appears that only Mrs. Twelve stopped by. There are fifteen unused teacups to testify in the town’s response to his integrity. As the Doctor comforts his wife, the whining wind and the slanting snow emphasize their isolation, and “the coal in the stove settled with a crumbling sound, and the four panes of mica flashed a sudden new crimson.” These last, subdued images of sound and fire, the flare and mutter, understate, obliquely comment on the weariness of the scene. (45)

In other words, then, the doctor’s repetitive and meticulous counting of the cups illustrates not his concern for his wife (as it may seem), but, rather it depicts just how intently he is absorbed in his own self-pity. Trescott’s lack of empathy towards his

wife's feelings as well as the exaggeration of his own unhappiness—the idea that his degradation is the only thing that matters in this situation—shows that he displays characteristics of an individual who suffers from NPD.

After having examined Stephen Crane's *The Monster* stringently, it becomes plausible not only to see how the story is in reality not focused around Henry Johnson, but it is also conceivable for the reader to perceive Dr. Trescott as someone who exhibits characteristics associated with NPD. The psychological evidence of the history, medical definitions, and diagnostics of NPD make it harder to dismiss this groundbreaking interpretation of Trescott's actions and/or motives throughout the story. With that being said, however, there continues to be numerous critics who focus on the acts of heroism Trescott performs, disregarding the social consequences on his career as a doctor, and label him a compassionate and altruistic human being. On the contrary, however, there is ample evidence to suggest that Trescott's behavior—including the ways in which he chooses to interact with his fellow man—are consistent with the psychological diagnosis of NPD. Through this lens, the doctor's selflessness becomes quickly decentered, and the argument in favor of the doctor as a hero becomes void of its validity. In fact, the argument is as empty as the teacups on the table in his drawing-room.

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