CHAPTER THREE

STEPHEN CRANE

Stephen Crane was a very well known writer of eminence who experimented in various media of journalism, fiction, poetry and play writing. His impressionistic biography, which was published by Thomas Beer, served to focus attention on Crane once more and The Works of Stephen Crane (1925-27), edited by Wilson Follett, made most of his writings available to scholarly audience. The limited edition contained laudatory prefaces by creative writers such as Amy Lowell, Sherwood Anderson, H.L. Mencken, and Willa Cather, a few assessments by professional critics, and reminiscences by fellow journalists. The thirties saw in him a champion of the cause of the common man, and the forties continued to see him into a realistic tradition.

Stephen Crane, who had deep roots in the soil of New Jersey, was extremely proud of his American heritage. The man who wrote The Red Badge of Courage was, on his father's side, descended from a long time of Sheriffs, judges, and farmers, and another Stephen Crane had been
one of the leading patriots of New Jersey during the Revolution. Mrs. Crane was a well-educated woman, and she also dabbled in journalism to eke out her meagre resources and reported on the summer religious meetings on the New Jersey Shore, contributing mostly to the New York Tribune and the Philadelphia Press. Her religious zeal did not inspire a similar response in Stephen and he left the fold of the church. But he remained dominated by fundamental religious precepts and patterns, charity, fraternity, redemption and rescue, which he usually kept at an earthly level. His university education lasted only one year; it began at Lafayette College, a presbyterian institution at Easton, Pennsylvania, where he spent the autumn term of 1890 and ended at Syracuse University the following June. His oldest sister, Nellie, who then kept an art school in Ausbury Park, may have introduced Stephen to the world of colour and prepared him for an aesthetic exploration of his environment.

Then began his apprenticeship in bohemianism in the metropolis, where he lived with struggling young artists, occasional visits to his brothers Edmund and William helped him keep from starving. They provided him with handy refuges where he could escape from the hardships and turmoil of New York. His pride, however, prevented him from making frequent use of them. In 1893 he published
his first book, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, under a pseudonym and at his own expense. The audacity of the subject did not deter Hamlin Garland and W.D. Howells from praising that novel, but they were almost the only critics to notice it. They both encouraged him to write proletarian sketches, some of which appeared in the *Boston Arena* and others in the *New York Press* enabling him to attain some financial security. His picture of the big city was centered around the life of the underprivileged in their ordinary setting, the southern tip of Manhattan. Gradually acquiring self-reliance, experience, and ambition, he immersed himself in the most significant venture of his literary life, the writing of *The Red Badge of Courage*, an imaginative reconstruction of civil war battle; it was first printed in an abbreviated form as a newspaper serial distributed by the Bacheller Syndicate in December 1894. The success of the story had to an assignment as roving reporter in the West and Mexico at the beginning of 1895.

At the age of twenty he had fallen in love, at Avon-by-the Sea, a resort near Asbury Park, with a certain Helen Trent, who was already engaged. In 1892, a love affair with a young married woman, Lily Brandon Munroe, enlivened his summer in Asbury Park and inspired some
of his love-making letters. The year 1896 was not marked by any really new work from his pen, except his "Tenderloin" sketches for the New York Journal. Crane was too busy with his public and private life. Maggie made respectable by the success of The Red Badge and slightly revised, came out under his real name, accompanied by another tale of the slums, George's Mother, which had been completed in November 1894. A volume of war stories, The Little Regiment appeared in New York late in 1896 and in London in February 1897. The Greco-Turkish war, which he covered in a disappointing manner for the New York Journal and the Westminster Gazette, took him to Europe in the Summer 1897.

His shipwreck has inspired him to write a brilliant short story, "The Open Boat," which Scribner printed in June 1897. About the same time he published The Third Violet, a novel based on his experience in the highly contrasted world of Hartwood, New York, and New York City. Many of his western adventures and several accounts of urban poverty went into a volume published in 1898 under the title The Open Boat and Other Tales of Adventure. This volume, which contains seventeen tales, gives a sample of Crane's best talent. Early in 1899 he was back in England and because of harassing creditors in Oxford,
decided to move from Surrey to Sussex, his English residence being the medieval manor of Brede place situated near Rye on the charming Sussex coast. There his literary production reached a peak, but his efforts to avoid bankruptcy proved vain in the face of a rising tide of debts and recurring signs of failing health. In the course of 1899 three other books saw print: a volume of verse, War is Kind, containing a variety of poems whose composition embraced a period of seven years; Active Service, a novel which he himself regarded as second-rate; and the American edition of The Monster and Other Stories. Taking a mild interest in Cora's passion for entertaining, he watched streams of guests come to visit him in his dilapidated mansion, among whom were some distinguished writers (Conrad, Wells, Henry James) and many parasites. During the festivities he almost died of a lung hemorrhage. He was to drag on for a few more months, his body and his brain gradually weakening, but he went on writing to his deathbed. With the help of Kate Lyon, Harold Frederic's mistress, he turned out a series of articles on nine great battles of the world for Lippincott's Magazine, outlined the plot and wrote the first twenty-five chapters of The O'Ruddy, a picaresque novel of the eighteenth century with an Irish hero and
an English setting. But it was left uncompleted when Crane died on June 5, 1900, in Badenweiler, Germany, where Cora had seen fit to take him in the idle hope of miraculous recovery from tuberculosis.

The approach to slum life of Crane's first novel was new in that it did not preach and did not encourage 'shunning'. It simply aimed, he said, to "show people to people as they seem[ed] to [him]." We thus attend the growth and brutal extinction of the heroine who has blossomed in a mud-puddle to become "a pretty girl" strangely undetailed by her surroundings. Seduced and abandoned by her lover, rejected by her drinking and callous brother on "moralistic" grounds, Maggie finally turns to prostitution. The problem this story hinges on is not primarily a social one, and Crane is not merely content with studying the causes and consequences of prostitution. Mainly concerned with the "soul" of the young prostitute, he tries to challenge the beliefs of Sunday school religion. Can an "occasional street girl" be expected to end up Heaven, irrespective of the indignant frowns of "many excellent people?" Maggie falls because "environment is a tremendous thing in the world," because she herself is romantic and weak, and also because nobody is interested in her fate. As a first novel Maggie
revealed on the part of the author a deep seriousness and the powerful urge to gain an audience. It posited the imperative need for a new ethical code and, through a consistent use of irony, debunked the false values worshipped by society and exposed the part played by collective passivity in the destruction of innocence.

Crane's novel *The Red Badge of Courage* came into being against this background of urban literature. The book is not an ordinary civil war novel. Although the theme is the baptism of fire of a union private, Henry Flaming, during the battle of Chancellors-ville, the tone is psychological rather than military. Its main characters are most of the time designated as figures in an allegory, "the tall soldier," the "land soldier," the "tattered man," the man of the "Cheery Voice" and the protagonist, usually referred to as "the youth" in the early chapters only acquires his full identity in Chapter XI.

A constant ironic counterpoint aims to debunk the traditional concept of glorious war. The whole thing seems absurd; generals shout, stammer, and behave childishly on the battlefield; Henry's wound confers upon him a spurious glory; Wilson, the "land soldier," has become
as meek as a lamb in the last chapters, and the whole tumult has resulted in no gain of ground for the union forces and no loss for the confederates. What remains in the mind of the reader is a series of confused movements with, from time to time, "men drop(ing) here and there like bundles" and, in the protagonist's "procession of memory" sad nerve-racking images suddenly blurred with a sense of relief when the "sultry nightmare (is) in the past."

The Red Badge of Courage contains the account of a half completed conversions. It is only in a satellite story entitled "The Veteran" that Henry pays the full price for his "sin" and goes through the final stage of his itinerary of redemption. Then, belatedly but unequivocally confessing his lack of courage on the battlefield, he purges himself of his former lie. In the last scene of "The Veteran," determined to save two clots trapped in his burning barn, he plunges into the flames never to come out, thus making a gesture of genuine and unconventional bravery. Rejecting his previous irony, Crane presents here a real conversion grounded on cool, selfless determination and not on spurious enthusiasm as was Henry's sudden reversal of mood on the battlefield.
In Crane's war novel, religious imagery prevails, centered as an itinerary of spiritual redemption which leads not to eternal salvation but to blissful impasse.

If military courage had been one of the values pitilessly probed in The Red Badge of Courage, it also furnished the central topic for a satellite story entitled "A Mystery of Heroism." Primate Fred Collins ventures into no man's land under the pretext of procuring some water for his company; but in fact his action has been prompted by the desire to prove to himself that he is not "afraid to go." "Death and the Child" deals with the same theme, the scene being now the Greco-Turkish war of 1897; the central character, a war correspondent, soon sees his battle fury die out and, instead of fighting by the side of the soldiers of his mother country, flees and encounters a child who asks this embarrassing question: "Are you a man?". In his reporting of the same war and of the Cuban conflict, Crane fell in with the conventions of his time and did not aim at more than ordinary journalistic style. But when reworking his factual accounts of battles and recollecting his war experiences in tranquility he achieved the space and severe economy of Wounds in the Rain, in moving and realistic adaptation in fiction of his own adventures with the American forces sent to Cuba in 1898.
A gradual reduction of the concept of war to the archetype can be found in Crane's later stories, if we leave aside as mere pot-boiling an unoriginal work, his *Great Battles of the World*. Sent to the West and Mexico by the Bachelor Syndicate as a roving reporter early in 1895, he drew upon his tour for a few outstanding stories. His shipwreck off the coast of Florida in January 1897 furnished material for "The Open Boat," a tale which won immediate recognition and found Conrad and H.G. Wells two faithful admirers. The latter even went so far as to say about it: "[It is], to my mind beyond all questions, the crown of all his work." The short stories "The Blue Hotel," "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" and "The Open Boat" outline his personal attitude towards the literary utilization of experience. The real right he saw in a saloon in Lincoln, Nebraska, which is supposed to have been the germ of the "The Blue Hotel" was transmuted by him into a moral study on the theme of collective and individual responsibility. The real power of the story lies in its subtle use of irony and in its cascading evocations of fear in a Western-style pursuit. In "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" Crane reached a peak in his exploration of the humorous overtones of fear. A favourite of the author himself and of many of his admirers, "The
"Bride" raises the Western story to the level of the classic by consistently applying to a tight but dramatic situation the powerful lever of irony. However no judgement of Crane's ability as a story teller can be reached without a proper assessment of "a tale intended to be after the fact" entitled "The Open Boat," which relates the concluding phase of an almost fatal adventure. The newspaper report he sent to the New York Press in January 1897 immediately after his shipwreck, gave a detailed account of every episode excluding the "thirty hours" spent in an open boat. It took a few weeks for the definitive story to crystallize in his mind as a parable of human existence.

Crane never wrote a more orderly tale, the correspondent acting as point-of-view character -- although he is also a participant -- helps to bring the main facets of the story into focus. We learn much about the transformation of his mind in the crucible of experience. The shipwreck is for him a journey leading from cynicism to humility. The true power of this story comes from a style which, in descriptive passages, is almost that of a poem. The dialogue, spare and accurate, gives balance to the general tone. Abhorring as he did
the "Little Lord Fauntleroy" craze which had swept his country in the 1880's, Crane did not hesitate to show us real children. He is aware of their tastes and distastes and conscious of their cruelty -- at times they appear to him as "little blood fanged wolves." In fact, more than a picture of childhood, he gives a picture of town life, since the children project an image of their parents stripped to its essentials. By profession a journalist and a writer of fiction, Crane had a higher regard for his poetic endeavours than for the rest of his literary work. In spite of the "damned Red Badge," Crane agreed to write more war stories because of the hounding of his publisher, McClure, and a ubiquitous need for money. His efforts resulted in The Little Regiment published late in 1896. Crane called The Little Regiment a novellette, perhaps in the same way that we think of Hemingway's In Our Time and Joyce's Dubliners as novellettes of closely linked short stories. Although the stories employ many of the same methods and themes as The Red Badge, it is important to note that there are marked exceptions, and that some of the themes are different from those of the war novel. The Little Regiment comprises six stories: "The Little Regiment," "Three Miraculous Soldiers," "A Mystery of Heroism," "An Indiana Campaign," "A Grey Sleeve" and
"The Veteran." The typical hero of these stories is the naive man, similar to the "little man" of the Sullivan Country tales: unaware of his naivete, he misinterprets events. The recurrent motif is the contrast between the hero's deluded sense of order and the chaos of the universe, which is represented by the vast indifference of war. Unlike The Red Badge and Crane's later war stories, those in The Little Regiment come closest to portraying the protagonists not as isolated individuals, but as indiffereniated naturalistic types. Whereas Henry Fleming, the youthful protagonist of The Red Badge, spends most of the novel separating himself from the group, the protagonists of The Little Regiment are identified not as individuals but as members of group.

Another story depicting this parallel between private attachments and public is "A Grey Sleeve," which tells a love story about a union officer and a confederate woman. Crane describes it as "not in any sense a good story" and its protagonists as "a pair of idiots" (Letter 173, to Nellie Crouse, 6 January 1896, Correspondence, 1:171; letter 184, to Nellie Crouse, 12 January 1896, Correspondence 1: 180). He is not far from wrong. One may view the story as a parody of high-flown Romantic war fiction. The "Young Captain" has a "reddish, bronze complexion, and
yellow hair and a bright saber held threateningly." He is dashing and brave. The "young girl" tries to keep union soldiers from searching her house by holding a pistol on them, all the while imploring them "Please, don't go up there." Discovering the girl's aged father and wounded brother, both Confederates, the Union officer ignores the rules of war by ordering his men to ride off gallantly, as if no one "had been in the house." As he leaves he engages in a banal bit of banter with the girl. She wants to see him again. His hopes rise. Then she doesn't. His hopes fall. Then she does. His hopes rise. Then she says ... and the story ends, far too late to save it from silliness.

"Three Miraculous Soldiers" is another story of men and women and war. A Confederate girl hides three Confederate soldiers in her barn and helps them to escape from Union soldiers. Like the Swede of "The Blue Hotel" this young southern belle has been reading too much fictions: "Heroines, she knew, conducted these matters with infinite precision and despatch. They served the hero's bonds, cried a dramatic sentence, and stood between him and his enemies until he had run far enough away." And indeed there are many homely difficulties. During a small skirmish in the orchard,
one of the union soldiers is wounded, and all three southerners escape. The girl having watched all this through a knot hole in the barn wall, becomes concerned for the union soldier. So far, not a bad story. It ends, however, with two union officers mobilizing on the Rebel girl's concern for the soldier in blue.

"Queer" said a young officer. Girl very clearly worst kind of rebel and yet she falls to weeping and wailing like mad over one of her enemies. ...

The sharp lieutenant shrugged his shoulders. After reflection he shrugged his shoulders again. He said "War changes many things, but it doesn't change everything, thank God." (6: 47)

Conversation between Crane's men and women are almost invariably a muddle of sighs, furtive glances, blushes, and stutterings. Except when his parody is conscious and artful, as in "The Bride" and "The Pace of Youth," Crane seems more nervous, heavy-handed and unsure of himself than the characters he describes. Even this brave and intelligent considerate girl, who comes to realize the difference between illusion and reality, and who, like Crane's most significant heroes -- Henry Flemming, the Swede, the correspondent, judge Trescott and Peza -- attempts as hard as they to apprehend, to understand the significant things, is finally stereotype.
Crane's message here is one of endurance, brotherhood, and stoic acceptance of man's fate: his vision of the universe is one in which man appears frail and insignificant when isolated but surprisingly strong in a united effort. Ruthlessly debunking all the conventional views about heroism, he seems to imply that the only courage worthy of esteem is unobtrusive, silent, and more self-denying than self-assertive. The true power of the story comes from a style which, in descriptive passages, is almost that of a poem. The dialogue, spare and accurate, gives balance to the general tone.

The Third Violet reflects a deep attachment to the colours and shapes of Sullivan country. It exploits both the popular theme of the "summer hotel" and Crane's own experience at the Art Students' League in New York. In this novel, the author has captured some of the flavor of bohemianism, but his treatment of this subject lacks originality. This book hints at the difficult struggle of young artists with the commercial values at their age. However, a young painter, goes to Sullivan country where his farmer parents live; he is merely in search of peace and inspiration but, in a neighbouring hotel, the summer has brought adventure in the shape of a rich New York heiress, Miss Fanhall. We close the book unconvincingly by

...
the plot which, with the gift of a final violet symbolizing the reconciliation of the two lovers, seems to be heading for a conventional epilogue. Crane did not want his novel to end tragically as his real-life romance with Nellie Crouse.

"The Monster," a story set in a rural background, can be regarded as one of the most important of his short works. It is centered on the disastrous consequences of a generous action: a doctor's son has been rescued from his burning house by a negro servant, Henry Johnson, whose face is "burned away." Besides the fear born of physical danger, the author probes the blind unreasoning panic generated by the sight of the harmless and horribly maimed Negro, and the many anxieties caused by public opinions. He has also, by the very choice of his protagonist, indicated that true heroism is not the privilege of the whites alone. Crane began reminiscing about his early youth when he had used up the store of material born of his adult experiences. Port Jervis, New York, was the nucleus around which The Whilomville Stories took shape. Abhorring as he did the "Little Lord Fauntleroy" craze which had swept his country in the 1880's Crane did not hesitate to show us real children. He is aware of their tastes and distastes and conscious of their cruelty --
at times they appear to him as "little blood-tanged wolves." In fact more than a picture of childhood, he gives a picture of town life, since the children project an image of their parents' world stripped to its essentials. By profession a journalist and a writer of fiction, Crane had a higher regard for his poetic endeavours than for the rest of his literary work. "The Blue Hotel," Crane's other masterpiece of short fiction, again deals with the relationships of a group of men, this time in a Nebraska Prairie town. Again the force and violence in nature, in the form of blizzard, is present, although it is with violence in human actions and its consequences that the story is primarily concerned. The men involved are Put Scilly, proprietor of the hotel; his son, Johnnie; and three travellers, who are induced by Scully to interrupt their railroad journey westward and stop off temporarily at his hotel. The travellers are a Swede, who has worked for ten years as a tailor in New York, a cowboy on his way to Dakota, and a "little silent man from the East." When the Swede comes back downstairs, he is drunk, and now, instead of being frightened, he is arrogant, belligerent and profane. Another card game begins and the Swede suddenly accuses Johnnie of cheating. Johnnie hotly denies the charge; and the Swede is the
victor. Some months later the easterner and the cowboy meet. They have learnt that the gambler was sentenced to three years in prison for the death of the Swede. The cowboy declares that it was all the Swede's fault for accusing Johnnie of cheating and acting like such a fool. Angrily the easterner calls the cowboy a fool and says:

Johnnie was cheating. I saw him. I know it. I saw him. I refused to stand up and be a man. I let the Swede fight it out alone. And you -- you were simply pulling around the place and wanting to fight. And then old Scully himself: we are all in it! ... Every sin is the result of a collaboration. We, five of us have collaborated in the murder of this Swede, ... and that fool of an unfortunate gambler came merely as a culmination, the apex of herman movement, and gets all the punishment. (5: 170)

To which the cowboy replies, mystified, his feelings wounded, "Well, I didn't do anything, did I?". Objection has some time been raised to this conclusion as too deliberately pointing a moral, but Crane's story is nevertheless of great intensity and power, and the figure of the Swede, first craven and fearful and then infected by herbs, is unforgettable.

Crane wrote several other western stories, including "Horses-One Dash!" "A Man and Some Others," "Five White Mice," and "Twelve O'Clock." They are all somewhat bleak
and have little that is distinctive in them. But "The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky" fully merits the high praise it has invariably been accorded by critics, some of whom have placed it above "The Blue Hotel." Although the setting and characters are of the kind that Bret Harte might have treated, Crane's method is the antithesis of Harte's. Nearly everything that Harte would have played up is played down. The characters are not glamourized, nor are they made to seem odd or unusual. Jack Potter's bride "was not pretty, nor was she very young." At the end of the story, Potter is revealed to be a man of great courage, but until then he seems ordinary and not particularly heroic. On their train trip from San Antonio to Yellow Sky, the newly married potters feel the mingled happiness and self-consciousness natural to their state. They are the objects of amused glances from the other passengers and of patronizing but kindly attention from the porter and dining-car waiter. But Potter's nervousness is occasioned by something more: "He, the town marshall of Yellow Sky, a man known, liked, and feared in his corner, a prominent person, had gone to San Antonio to meet a girl he believed he loved, and there, after the usual prayers, had actually induced her to marry him, without consulting Yellow Sky for any part of the transaction."
Full of guilt feeling for not having performed a duty he obviously owed his friends but unable to muster the courage to face the tumultuous reception and enthusiastic congratulations they will give him, he can only hope that he and his bride can make their way observed to the security of his house. Ironically, he is accorded a very different kind of reception. The streets of Yellow Sky are deserted because one Scratchy Wilson is on the warpath. Scratchy is kind and gentle when sober, "the nicest fellow in town," as the barten in the saloon, whom Crane employs to provide much of the necessary exposition, tells a visiting drummer. From time to time he gets drunk and tries to shoot up the town, and on these occasions Jack Potter has had the task of subduing him. When drunken Scratchy finds the saloon shut against him, he takes it into his head to go to his enemy's house, and thus when the newly weds arrive they are confronted by Scratchy.

The belief "An Episode of War," deservedly called by Richard Chase "as perfect a thing as Crane wrote," on the ironic situation of a civil war lieutenant who is wounded in the arm by a stray bullet while he is dividing up his company's supply of coffee beans with his sword. The lieutenant is cast under a kind of spell. His sword,
which he must take in his left hand, now seems a strange thing, and he is unsuccessful in his awkward attempts to replace it in its scabbard. This would also set him apart from his comrades, who, although they sympathetically profess assistance, stand in awe of him. As he makes his way to the car, he is able "to see many things which as a participant in the fight were unknown to him." And in the presence of the doctor at the field hospital it is as if this would put the lieutenant "at a very low social plane." Certainly Crane's concluding sentence, "and this is the story of how the lieutenant lost his arm," must be regarded as highly disingenuous. What we are vividly shown is how a wound can alter everything for a man, along with all that is paradoxical, ambiguous and unreal in the experience.

Crane's other notable war stories include "The Price of the Harness," a moving tribute to the regular army soldier in the Spanish-American war; "Death and the Child," an account of Greek War correspondent who is filled with an excess of patriotism and tries intellectually to take part in a battle in the Greco-Turkish war; and "The Upturned Pace," perhaps the sparsest, most restrained, and yet one of the most impressive of all Crane's stories, in which two officers bury a fellow
officer while under enemy fire. His influence on the war literature of the twentieth century in England and America has been very significant. Many of Hemingway's novels and short stories disclose a similar preoccupation with "the moral problem of conduct" and obvious stylistic affinities; distinct echoes of The Red Badge can be heard in A Farewell to Arms. The plight of the isolated hero, which became a favourite theme of Conrad's, stemmed directly from The Red Badge of Courage. Obsession with the fear of showing a white feather haunted the soul of the author of Lord Jim as much as that of the creator of Henry Flemming. In his own fiction Ford Madox Ford used complex techniques and mixed many strands of life, but some of the most dramatic scenes in A Man Could Stand Up, which are mere vignettes of life at the front, remind us in their bare and rugged prose deliberately unpoetic descriptions of war in The Red Badge of Courage.

Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage is one of the most widely known and deeply influential novels in the history of American fiction. It became very popular soon after its publication in late 1895. William Dean Howells, a noted American writer, while reviewing The Red Badge of Courage said, "Of our own smaller fiction I have been reading several works without finding a very fresh
note except in The Red Badge of Courage." The book is written in terse and vigorous sentences, but not without some unpleasant affections of style. George Wyndham in his review of The Red Badge of Courage said, "Mr. Stephen Crane, the author of the The Red Badge of Courage is as great artist with something new to say and consequently, with a new way of saying it. His theme indeed is an old one, but old themes re-handled anew in the light of novel experience are the stuff out of which masterpieces are made and in The Red Badge of Courage Mr. Crane has surely contrived a masterpiece."

When Stephen Crane published The Red Badge of Courage in 1895, the book created an almost immediate sensation. Crane had no experience in war, but in portraying the reactions of a young soldier in battle he had written with amazing accuracy. While reexamining the The Red Badge of Courage, we would want to read it as a myth and symbolic action. Clearly the construction of the story, the moral and meaning, its reliance on symbol, follow in detail the traditional formula of myth.

The works of Stephen Crane (1871-1900) are an early and unique flowering of pure naturalism. It is naturalism in a restricted and special sense and it contains many
non-naturalistic elements. To define Crane's naturalism is to understand one of the pure perfect and successful embodiments of the theory in the American novel. Crane's naturalism is to be found, first, in his attitude towards received values, and second, in his impressionism.

It has been variously asserted that Crane's way of imagining and constructing *The Red Badge of Courage* was realist, naturalist, impressionist or symbolist. The very secret of the novel's power inheres in the inviolably organic uniqueness with which Crane adapted all four methods to his need. The evidence for a naturalistic interpretation of *The Red Badge of Courage* is overwhelming. Creating chiefly through irony a considerable degree of aesthetic distance, Crane studies the change in the behaviour of a soldier. Through half the book this character is a sensitive youth. But sensitivity is incompatible with physical courage and the ability to kill. In the centre of the story occurs the symbolic head wound, which damages the youth's sensibility and causes him to rely more on the physical and instinctive, and less on the mental. For the rest of the book, Henry is brave in battle, having arrived at the state of self-discipline which makes one in danger resemble more an animal than a man.
When dealing with his main theme war, he gradually worked out a revolutionary stand, doing away with externals and reducing human conflict to a classic drama of internal forces struggling with eternal powers. From Henry Fleming in *The Red Badge* to Timothy Lean in the "Spitzbergen Tales" the itinerary of heroism evolves from a path sprinkled with doubtful victories to a road dodgedly followed with a sturdy and silent acceptance of personal responsibility: diseased and action hampering introspection eventually gives way to selfless and unassuming patterns of affirmation. It is in the novel of manners that Crane's achievement is at its lowest ebb. He did not try to study complex human relationships born of urban settings but dealt with a few basic themes, rivalries between loves, or conflicts between generations and social classes. He experimented in the field of the picaresque novel -- a medium he had already used in several short stories -- but *The O'Ruddy* cannot be regarded as a genuine offspring of his mind since Robert Barr gave this novel its conclusion and ultimate form. His was a voice of dissent which rejected the ostensibly impregnate soundness of historical Christianity, the conventional vision of a well-ordered society and that genteel tradition of culture which never left drawing
rooms and libraries. Crane inherited the New England habit of individual assertion. He fits well into the American liberal tradition and can, in some respects, be regarded as a spiritual son of Emerson.

Crane's best work does not bulk large, but it makes an impression out of all proportions to its quantity. Crane is one of the most original and distinctive of American writers. In his style and narrative method he seems to owe almost nothing to those who preceded him. As John Berryman has pointed out, plot manipulation, contrivance, romantic love, the usual conflict between characters, characters as we expect them to be in fiction -- these and other elements that we are conditioned to look for in stories are not seen in Crane's works. What he has given us is a style of great purity, clarity, and intensity and a profound insight into both the irony and the pathos of the human condition.

All in-text citations of Crane's stories refer to the University of Virginia edition of the works of Stephen Crane. 10 vols. Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1968-76.