STEPHEN CRANE AND THE NOVEL OF THE GREAT WAR

Tom BURNS
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerai

RESUMO: Neste artigo, procura-se estabelecer alguns parâmetros para o: romances de guerra, especificamente o subgênero romance de combate cuja narrativa emprega, de modo geral, uma estrutura livre de narrativa (segue uma ênfase psicológica focalizando alguns poucos homens, pessoa: indiferentes às conseqüências maiores da guerra na relação que mantên com seus camaradas mais próximos. Demonstra-se que esses padrões foran utilizados eficazmente em *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), o romanc clássico de Stephen Crane do século XIX sobre a Guerra Civil Americana São também discutidos outros exemplos de romances que tratam d: Primeira Guerra Mundial (a Grande Guerra).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: narrativas de guerra; Stephen Crane; romance d combate.

ABSTRACT: This article attempts to establish some parameters for wa novels, specifically the sub-genre of the combat novel, whose narrativ generally employs a loose narrative structure and follows the psychologica emphasis on a few men indifferent to larger outcomes in their dependenc on their immediate comrades. These patterns are shown to have been usec to effect in Stephen Crane's classic nineteenth century novel about th American Civil War, The Red Badge of Courage (1895). Subsequen examples of novels that came out of the First World War (the Great War are also discussed.

KEY-WORDS: narratives of war; Stephen Crane; combat novel

1 INTRODUCTION: THE PATTERN OF THE COMBAT NOVEL

The novel of war famously escapes generic parameters. The actuality of the two world wars extended far beyond the men at the front to nearly everyone, soldier and civilians, belonging to a nation involved in a total world war. Joseph WALDMEIER's broad definition of a World War II novel, "one in which the war—on land, sea, or in the air, in any branch of the services, in any theater of operations or on the home front—plays an integral, motivational, decisive role," shows clearly the problem of over-inclusiveness (W, 1971, p. 12). Such a category, as he admits, is too broad for a study of specific works and as a result he had to focus on what he calls "ideological novels" of the Second World War. An example of a panoramic fictional work that takes in a war, in this case, the First World War, as well as a segment of British society during wartime, is Ford Madox Ford's modernist classic, *Parade's End* (1924-1928), an undertaking that required four novels to follow the career of one man.

The combat novel, a sub-genre of the all-inclusive "war novel," has a much narrower focus: the individual's experience of battle. Typically, it consists of a first-hand account of a young, inexperienced male, who undergoes the dangers, rigors, and stresses of combat and lives to tell the tale: male, because woman have only exceptionally been combatants; young and inexperienced, because young men for their physical vigor make up the lists of those sent off to do the fighting, and, for better or worse, war has often been regarded as a kind of ultimate test of manhood, a coming-of-age for youth, resulting in a personal account of someone who "went through hell" and survived. In the combat narrative of modern technological war—survival depends, as the combatant recognizes, through no merit of his own, nor does he fully understand why he came to be there in the first place, since his original impulses—whether patriotism and moral righteousness in the service of a cause, on one hand, or escape from banality and a desire for adventure, on the other—have been lost or irreparably modified by what he has endured. The combat novel has therefore become primarily a narrative of problematic experience. This article will attempt to establish some parameters.

One might begin with the basic socio-psychological pattern of the combat novel, which has been summarized by Catharine BROSNAN as one of "Manichean" opposition, with the possibility of the internal conflict of the psychological novel and contextual conflicts of the novel of manners—with the crucial difference from those kinds of fiction being that in the combat novel such conflicts are acted out violently (B, 1991, p. 10-13). Such novels, in their insistence on personal experience, typically attempt two things. The first is to be an unsentimental and yet emotionally involved account of war's human devastation, an attempt to communicate to those who have no direct experience of battle, its terrible physical and psychological costs, what one might call the *didactic* function of the combat novel. The second aspect—what one might call the *socio-psychological* function—is to chart the mental, emotional, psychological, and spiritual conflicts of the individual in war, as well as the young soldier's relation to his superiors and his comrades, and to deal with questions of maturity and the meaning of manhood.

2 THE CONCENTRATION ON A SMALL GROUP

The notion of combat as a testing-ground, a rite of passage, for young men derives from the fear naturally inspired by violent death, dismemberment or agonizing wounds. Courage in this environment, where everyone is at more or less equal risk and only chance and the astuteness of one's leaders may determine who will be afflicted, depends on a basic conflict: the individual soldier's desire not to let his fellow soldiers down, balanced against his own intense desire for physical survival. It was found in studies of men in combat during the Second World War that while fear is experienced by all, individuals are unwilling for their fear to be expressed in specific acts

that their comrades will recognize as cowardice (KEEGAN, 1976, p. 76). While men in combat will not ordinarily take unusual risks or perform heroic acts, neither are they willing to be "considered the least worthy among those present" (KEEGAN, 1976, p. 76).

This view is corroborated by a study of combatants of the American Civil War. Following the military historian John Lynn, James T. McPherson posited three distinct motivations for soldiers in combat: the initial motivation that makes the soldier enlist, the sustaining motivation that keeps him serving in the ranks, and the combat motivation that steels him for actual fighting (WYATT-BROWN, 1997, p. 43). The first motivation ("cause") is the most ideologically inspired; the second and third ("comrades") have more to do with the soldier's self-esteem. The personal sense of honor, or, more pragmatically, the fear of dishonor, of letting down one's comrades with the concomitant negative stimuli of scorn and loss of respect, tends to override a soldier's natural fear of death and mutilation. In such a psychological climate, a man will risk his life for another, in the well-founded expectation that others will do the same for him.

The concentration of the combat novel on small, well-defined, and comradely groups is, therefore, not only a result of the preference of fictional authors for a manageable group of characters but also reflects the psychological reality of men in war. In the first systematic study of how men behave in combat, mentioned above, one of the most important revelations was that soldiers in the midst of a battle do not think of themselves as members of a formal military organization whose authority they are subject to, but as equals within a small group—typically, a squad, platoon, or company. The members of this group will fight both for personal survival, which they recognize at the same time to be bound up with the group's survival, and "for fear of incurring by cowardly conduct the group's contempt," which explains the extreme cohesion of small infantry units and the importance of the interrelationships within it (KEEGAN, 1976, p.53).

The group solidarity and the deep friendships that evolve amo soldiers in the stress of battle are attested to in virtually all comt novels.

Owing to this emphasis on personal experience, the comt narrative sacrifices a larger vision of the war—what might be call a more "strategic" point-of-view, the war as seen by the commandi general, for example—for the limitations but greater emotior intensity of the particular point-of-view of a relatively insignifica participant. The "well-ordered and clear-cut vision" of tl commander is absent to such a participant, who finds himself in chaotic environment with his emotions at the height of intensi and the "win-or-lose" concept of those who direct battles may eve be irrelevant to him, since his main concern is personal surviv (KEEGAN, 1976, p. 47). The fundamental principle is "that fictic does not show the historical event *qua* event but *qua* impact, depictir the collective experience through the actions and sufferings (individuals" (KLEIN, 1984, p. 12).

3 CRANE'S NOVEL AS PROTOTYPE

With these notions in mind, one may posit that the prototyp of the combat novel, at least in American literature, is Stephen Crane *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), whose historical context was th Civil War. Crane's novel has been cited as an important example c Naturalism, an artistic approach to reality grounded in the belief i the determining power of natural forces like heredity and th environment. Naturalism found fertile soil in the reformism of th late nineteenth century, and developed its own conventions, such a depictions of the more unpleasant aspects of life that were formerl overlooked or consciously ignored. In the attempt to give a mor socially relevant picture of life, Naturalism also resorted to symboli structures, such as, for example, the association of a particular entit with the main character, whose significance evolves along with th

fate of the character. In the *Red Badge of Courage*, for example, it is the protagonist's head wound from a blow from the rifle butt of a fellow soldier as he runs in panic from the battle. After his return to his unit, where in the confusion of the battle the others had not perceived his flight, his wound ironically marks him as heroic in the eyes of his comrades.

In Crane's novel, important themes that will become typical of the twentieth century combat novel are introduced: (i) the question of the courage or cowardice of the individual combatant; (ii) the combatant as spectator and war as a spectacle; (iii) the combatant's separation from and membership in a male group (BROOKE-ROSE, 1986, p. 29). It is evidence of the innovative nature of Crane's work that these three themes are problematized in his novel. As to (i), courage or cowardice, is it cowardice or merely blind panic that makes the Young Soldier flee the scene of battle? He continuously tortures himself with his giving in to fear and running away, but subsequently he will rush forward and lead an attack without realizing what has happened. It seems that, in the view of Naturalism, the blind, irrational impulse to run into the enemy or away from him is emotionally similar in quality. (ii) As for war as spectacle, the Young Soldier at one point finds himself removed from the battle, which he watches from a distance, but after it is over he realizes he has still not clearly understood what has really happened. (iii) Group membership: although the Young Soldier feels solidarity with some of the men of his company, and their relationships undergo subtle changes in the course of the novel, he also experiences another aspect of Naturalism when marching into battle in military formation, namely, that he is a part of a "blue machine" (a reference to the blue uniforms of the Union troops) trapped amidst a blind, impersonal force over which neither he nor any of the others has any control.

Another important aspect of the combat novel concerns the narrator. The protagonist may be the central focus or "subject" of the narration, or he may be the narrator himself (i.e. first-person

narrator), and the difference here proves to be crucial. The narrator of *The Red Badge of Courage* is "objective" (no intervention, no moralizing on the narrator's part) and yet not omniscient. The narrator is knowing but impersonal, a circumstance that allows for the constant employment of irony. There is no wide-angle panoramic view of the action. The data are given in "impressionistic" increments and the reader perceives the "strokes" of the brush, i.e. segments of events, images, and impressions that seem to be disconnected but may be linked together through cross-references.

The importance of this technique for the novel is seen in the many critics who misread the novel as a "coming-of-age" story, in which the protagonist gets through the ordeal of war and so becomes a "man." Even so learned a critic as Stanley COOPERMAN, for example, thinks that, despite Crane's irony, war "is still the magnificent proving ground, an area where cause is internal rather than external" (C, 1967, p. 47), but the idea that war is a proving-ground for manhood is not Crane's but his protagonist's, which is shown by the discrepancy between young Fleming's self-satisfaction and the reader's perception that this feeling, like so many others he has during the course of the narrative, is not justified. And yet, the Young Soldier (Fleming) is so relentlessly exposed by the narrator's ironic observations of his constantly shifting fear, elation, bitterness, and self-justification, it is doubtful in the end whether he has learned anything at all about the meaning of war, as opposed to feeling a certain, mostly undeserved, self-satisfaction in having faced it. The emphasis on internal will that Cooperman mentions is, as I have been laboring to prove, the whole point of the combat novel. While Crane, the author, was no doubt aware of the external (i.e. social, economic, and political) causes of the war, Fleming, his protagonist, like most soldiers then and now, is not.

In *The Red Badge of Courage*, the Young Soldier is often surprised by the discrepancy between his own intense but individual experience of combat and the actual results of the battle. The novel radically

withholds factual information, so that the reader cannot even tell from the text, except for a few vague place names and the colors of the uniforms, *which* war he/she is reading about. This feeling of radical disorientation widely reported by veterans may also be the reason why the combat novel generally eschews a well-defined narrative structure. BROSNAN posits a generally sequential narration, with the relation between subject and object one of "will" or "purpose" rather than desire, but a weak plot structure may result from the will of the subjects' being directed toward the war itself or toward mere survival (BROSNAM, 1991, p.10-13). On the other hand, lack of structure may also be in the interest of authenticity, which is perceived as demanding an episodic or even chaotic narrative. The narrative, that is to say, must follow the unforeseen contours of battle itself. Typically, as will be seen below in the discussion of examples, the loose overall structure has intense episodes of battle interspersed with peaceful intervals.

While the late nineteenth century philosophical notions of Naturalism have only partially survived in later examples, the experience depicted tends to be the experience of men in the ranks everywhere. The main point is that *The Red Badge of Courage* typifies the sub-genre of the combat novel by exploring the psychology of an unreflective subject while it portrays a deterministic environment in which that subject can do little but be bent and swayed by incomprehensible forces. Troop movements, for example, are never explained to the men in advance (nor are they explained to men in real armies), who therefore thrive on rumor. The men only move when ordered to and they have little realization of where they are going.

The limited point of view in war narratives is here to the point. Novels with a first-person, naive narrator—what are often "autobiographical fictions"—are perhaps as common in the combat novel as the focus on the protagonist from the outside. The motivation is presumably a greater intensity and attempt at "authenticity." Yet,

war fiction is as intertextual as other kinds of fiction, so that even the narrator as survivor-who-bears-witness is not necessarily a mar of authenticity (despite the proliferation of novels of this type writte by unsophisticated writer-veterans) so much as a well-establishe convention. Here, the trajectory is from innocence to experienc but very often, as in Crane's novel, the notion of war as the site fc the formation of manhood—a *bildingsroman* of action—i problematic, and the autobiographical "I-was-there" claim of eve contemporary writers is called into question. The author publishe his novel at the age of twenty-four without ever having experience combat, at a time when the Civil War was already thirty years in th past. Nevertheless, he acknowledged in letters that while forme combatants thought that he must have been a veteran of the Civ War to write so realistically about it, he in fact "wrote intuitively after absorbing many stories of the war from veterans while he wa growing up (HOFFMAN, 1957, p. viii-ix). His novel turned out t be so convincing that he found himself in demand as a wa correspondent.

4 THREE EXAMPLES FROM THE GREAT WAR

It remains to show how important the basic parameter; established by *The Red Badge of Courage* are for the examples of a later war. There need be no question of "influence," because it has been argued that both the loose narrative structure and psychological emphasis derive from the circumstances of modern wars, of which the American Civil War is said to have been the first. These parameters are not limited to the Great War but are also present, for example, in the combat novels of the Second World War—such as Harry BROWN's minimalist *A Walk in the Sun* (1945) or Norman MAILER's more ambitious *The Naked and the Dead*, 1948)—as well as a large number of combat novels of the Vietnam War, such as John DEL VECCHIO's *The 13th Valley* (1983) or Robert ROTH's *Sand in the*

Wind (1974). For reasons of space, however, the discussion in this article will be confined to two or three examples from the First World War.

The two most influential novels of that war were Henri BARBUSSE's *Under Fire* (1917) and Erich Maria REMARQUE's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1928), originally published in French and German, respectively. Barbusse's novel was based on the trench diaries of the author and written while he was in the hospital. Like other combat novels, it concentrates on the members of a single squad, who are varied in age, occupation, and regional background, but, perhaps because of their greater number, are neither "types," as in Crane's work, or as individualized as much as the characterized members of the protagonist's squad in Remarque's novel.

Beginning with the unit in reserve, *Under Fire* is essentially plotless—episodic and aimless—which, as I have suggested above, formally represents the aimlessness and uncertainty of purpose of the lives of the combat soldier, who is kept in ignorance of the directions of the war and his own part in it, while at the same time his emotional moods are carefully recorded. The men eventually take part in an attack, during which several die or are wounded (the battle has been said to be the Battle of Verdun, the major action of the French army, although once again the historical context is not made explicit). The men have a brief respite, after which, while on a work-detail, they undergo an artillery bombardment that destroys the trenches and makes the battlefield a flood of water and mud in which drowned men are found. As they observe the mess made of the landscape and exchange reflections on the futility and meaninglessness of the war from various points of view, the earth opens up and a twisted corpse is revealed sitting among them. The "meaning" of the war seems to them to be epitomized by this macabre figure, not only the physical presence of death, but also war as "a production of death" rather than an opportunity for glory that non-combatants seem to think of it. As the men await the dawn and yet another

attack, the novel ends, but closure is refused. The war seems (as it often seemed to the actual men fighting it) to go on forever.

The realism of *Under Fire* is in its details. Although the men are stoical about the war itself, what they constantly grumble about in barracks slang is the ordinary vicissitudes of their situation: cold and rain, the stench and mud of the trenches, insufficient food, the falsity of newspaper reports, the constant rumors of movement, and the endless waiting: "In a state of war, one is always waiting. We have become waiting-machines," says one man (BARBUSSE, 1926, p. 17). In another novel of the same war by a British author, the protagonist will comment on the "whimsical fortitude of the men who accepted an intense bombardment as all in the day's work and then grumbled because their cigarette ration was one packet short" (Sassoon 1937:140). As in the British novels, Sassoon's characters have no particular grudge against their enemies ("I don't know...if at bottom they're not men pretty much like us" (BARBUSSE, 1926, p. 13) is a typical comment. They reserve their irony and venom for complacent, rear-echelon non-combatants:

> ...all those individuals fiddle-faddling and making believe down there, all spruced up with their fine caps and officers' coats and shameful boots, that gulp dainties and can put a dram of best brandy down their gullets whenever they want, and wash themselves oftener twice than once, and go to church, and never stop smoking, and pack themselves up in feathers at night to read the newspaper—and then say afterwards, "I've been in the war!" (BARBUSSE, 1926, p. 109).

As this passage shows, it is not only pretensions of these people to acts they have not earned that are galling, but the simple comforts enjoyed and taken for granted that are denied the combat soldier.

The original title of Remarque's novel, *Im Western Nichts Neues*, means "nothing new in the west," an ironic reference to the presumed lack of something to report on the Western front even while men

were anonymously dying, a nuance perhaps less clearly suggested in English translations, whose title is *All Quiet on the Western Front*. The novel purports to be the first-hand account of a common soldier, Paul Baumer, and is evidently based on the author's personal experience (Remarque was wounded five times in the conflict, which would indeed make him exceptional as a survivor). While both *Under Fire* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* are concerned with showing the horror of the Great War, what makes the latter more interesting is its consideration of the ideological question of why men go to war at all, a question that also is not considered in *The Red Badge of Courage*..

It is to be recalled that the historical details of the combat novel are often so insignificant that, *mutatis mutandis*, one war could quite easily be substituted for another in the narrative. In these novels of the First World War, it is not being French or English or German that counts to the narrator but his condition as an infantryman in the trenches (nationality, of course, does count in the works of the Second World War, a conflict fought primarily to stop the Fascism of the Axis powers). It is striking how Barbusse's and Remarque's narrators offer no historical references within which the reader can situate himself. Like Crane's narrator, they give no dates and hardly any place names; they do not mention the names of any battles or seem at all concerned with chronology. What might place these novels in their historical context, beyond any mention of place-names, dates, military units and so forth, is that psychological states and social attitudes also change in time, which means that history does after all enter the narrative even if only unconsciously.

Like Crane's and Barbusse's novels, *All Quiet on the Western Front* offers the reader the day-to-day life of a few characters and the give-and-take between them—Baumer, his friend Kropp, and their leader, Kat, among a few others—in battle and at rest. The devastation of the real war, as opposed to the strategic fantasies of the elders, is illustrated by Baumer's loss, one by one, of the members of his squad, many of whom only a short while ago were his adolescent school-

mates. In the descriptions, all the full panoply of horrors are presen the blue heads of men killed in a gas-attack, bloated bodies rotting i no-man's-land, wounded and dying men crying out at night in agon body parts hanging in a tree, the sheer terror of lying under a incoming artillery barrage.

The plot again is simple: the Second Company has just bee relieved from the front, with nearly half of their numbers kille They await a rumored attack, which finally comes. Within thi bracketing of two battles, the characters show their persona solidarities and conflicts, their need to cope with the death o comrades and find workable solutions to deal with their fear. A these things take on more importance than any "official" participatio in a national (in this case, German) effort against an enemy. In fact such values are associated with civilians and are ridiculed. Baume admits, for example, that his reasons for joining the war were, a with so many other young men, sentimental, and he has becom unsentimental only after becoming irretrievably hardened by sufferin This effect on his personality is part of his story, as he relates in a unrelentingly bitter tone how the war has also permanently damage the mentality of the once idealistic German youth. When he obtain leave from the front and goes home to visit his family, a sense o "strangeness," of being out of place and no longer belonging there will not leave him, a condition commonly reported by veterans by al modern wars, not least those who fought in Vietnam.

This example, like many subsequent ones, goes beyond th basic elements identified in Crane's work, especially in this concer with ideology. Baumer puts the blame for his shattered ideals and hi alienated spirit on the false teachings of his elders: "The idea o authority, which they represented, was associated in their minds wit a greater insight and more humane wisdom. But the first death w saw shattered this belief" (REMARQUE, 1958, p. 12). The wron people, therefore, have to do the fighting. As one of Baumer's mate jokingly proposes:

...a declaration of war should be a kind of popular festival with entrance-tickets and bands, like a bull-fight. Then in the arena the ministers and generals of the two countries, dressed in bathing-drawers and armed with clubs, can have it out among themselves" (REMARQUE, 1958, p. 41)

This type of bitter joke, in which the people really responsible for wars should be the ones who have to pay the price for them, will be repeated in war novels and films ever after. It was in fact the boys' schoolmaster, Kantorek, who drilled them and lectured them on the "virtues" of war, even leading them all down to the District Commandant to enlist in the army. In his case, they have their revenge when the patriotic schoolmaster eventually joins the "territorials" and comes under the command of one of his students, who mercilessly harasses him.

All Quiet on the Western Front thoroughly dismantles any notion of modern war as an arena for heroism. The anonymity of death is constant. Even apart from the danger of being killed or mutilated, the trenches are very unpleasant places to inhabit: the men are wasted from dysentery, the food is bad, and the trenches are filled with stinking mud and infested with rats. Death often comes not in heroic postures but at unexpected or even ludicrous moments, so that a man might be killed while frantically struggling for shelter or in some trivial, even ridiculous way. The troops in an attack move like inhuman "automatons" and survival depends wholly on acquired skills of avoidance (seasoned veterans, Baumer observes, can survey a battlefield and immediately pick out the minor irregularities in the landscape as places to hide their bodies from harm). British autobiographical accounts and letters confirm this feeling of unreality on the battlefield, as if the men are "zombies," images on a cinema screen or mere shadows (ELLIS, 1989, p. 41).

In one particularly macabre episode of the novel, an artillery shell has blasted open a buried coffin and Baumer crawls in and hugs the corpse to his body to escape harm from the incoming shells, a

literal embrace of death. In this ultimate uncertainty, the men become ruthlessly practical and oriented toward the immediate present. In the beginning of the novel, for example, they look on the bright side of having lost a great number of men in their company: as a result of the unexpected casualties, there will be extra food rations. And when one of their squad-mates lies dying in a field hospital, they frankly discuss at his bedside who will inherit his fine English boots this is no lack of respect for a comrade, Baumer insists, for the dying man would do the same if someone else were in his place.

A novel in English that displays most of the features discussed above and one that deserves to be better known is Frederick MANNING's *The Middle Parts of Fortune* focuses once again on experiences of the common soldier in the context of a small unit. It was published anonymously in 1929 under a pseudonym, "Private 19022," and republished the following year under the title *Her Privates We* (both titles, taken from *Hamlet* II, ii, pun on the expression "private parts" or genitals of the "strumpet" Fortune. Greatly admired by Ernest Hemingway, who thought it the finest war novel ever written, Manning's original version featured a language that reflected the rich profanity of soldier's talk, which, despite the author's protests, would be censored out of the text and only later restored Manning generally omits the gruesome descriptions of mutilations that Barbusse and Remarque thought were necessary for telling the truth about the war, perhaps because, unlike those authors, he is not engaged in the ideological project of writing an anti-war novel but attempting to give a straightforward account of the daily lives of combatants, describing their self-contained world without questioning the war's ideology (BERGONZI, 1996, p. 181).

The Middle Parts of Fortune concentrates, as usual, on a small infantry unit in order to involve the reader in the fates of the individual characters, and precisely like *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the simple structure begins with the unit greatly devastated from a recent battle and looking forward to a rest before a final attack, with a series of

unconnected episodes between the opening and closing actions. The protagonist Bourne and his mates also spend a lot of time looking for food and alcoholic drink (though in this novel there are no women), but the narrative never leaves the front and there are no contrasting scenes of civilian life or soldiers on leave. In the end, the attack (presumably, the Battle of the Somme, but again not mentioned) is finally launched with nearly all the men being killed, including Bourne, who is struck by a bullet in the chest.

The absence of the first-person narrator to record how Bourne feels about it ensures that his death is not in any way a dramatic climax but occurs merely as one more unfortunate but insignificant event in a war made up of such events. The other men, who have throughout the novel regarded Bourne as a "good fellow," immediately detach themselves from his memory, no longer referring to him or even mentioning his name. The psychological mechanism at work here, in virtually all combatants, is what Robert Jay Lifton, in his book on Vietnam veterans, has called "psychic numbing," which is a form of "protection against overwhelming and unacceptable stimuli." The combatant's mind works in a way that is essentially irrational, but, given the circumstances, is a force for self-preservation that has its own psychological logic: "If I feel nothing, then death is not taking place"; "If I feel nothing, I cannot be threatened by death all around me"; and, with respect to other men killed: "If I feel nothing, then I am not responsible for you and your death" (LIFTON, 1970, p. 32).

5 CONCLUSION

It has been shown that the elements that form the bases of modern combat novel are already present in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*. Besides the basic narrative and psychological structures discussed at length above, several themes emerge that will characterize subsequent works: (i.) veteran vs. novice (or experience

vs. innocence), seen in Crane's episode where the clean uniforms of the inexperienced men make them objects of scorn to the bloodied veterans; (ii), imagined vs. real combat (or illusion vs. reality in battle), seen in the episodes of the Young Soldier's fantasies while hiding in the woods; and (iii), the close camaraderie of men who fight, seen in the fellowship of Crane's soldiers after they repulse an attack and their care for each other in the camp. The camaraderie of warriors is perhaps as old as Homer, but the experience of the trenches of the First World War, or the foxholes of the Second World War, took the intimacy of men to a new level, creating a sense of separation from civilian life and a common identity with those who shared their suffering.

At the same time, Crane's novel does not contain all of the important elements of the narrative literature of the two world wars. *All Quiet on the Western Front* and other World War I novels have added two more that are distinctly modern: the displaced feeling of the veterans on leave or after the war is over (magisterially displayed in Ernest Hemingway's short story "Soldier's Home"), which will constitute a major theme, for example, in Vietnam war literature; and the contrast between the grandiose language used to justify war in jingoist propaganda and the stark brutality of the actual experience, which is the basis of anti-war fiction and film. This latter contrast, however, is indirectly present in *The Red Badge of Courage* in the contrast between young Fleming's heroic fantasies and his inability to sustain them in his present experience. In all the important novels of the First World War, this theme becomes of primary importance. In *Under Fire*, for example, the squad members, walking about a city in a break from the trenches, have to listen to civilians talk to them about the glories of war:

> How superb a charge must be, eh? All those masses of men advancing like they do in a holiday procession and the trumpets playing a rousing air in the fields! And the dear young soldiers that can't be held back and shouting,'Vive la France'and even laughing as they die! (Barbusse 1926: 298-299).

Other elements present in *Under Fire* and *All Quiet on the Western Front* that will be characteristic of war fiction may be summarized as follows: the psychological anxiety and stress of combat and the emotional numbness it causes; the longing for home and peace, and yet the feeling that such a place and condition are not real; the relentless pursuit of food, drink, and women; the comradeship among fellow soldiers and the emotional strategies for coping with their deaths; the stupidity of the military hierarchy; and the disparity between combat and civilian life. This disparity, as I have suggested above, was especially galling to soldiers, since, while they were being killed and mutilated, life went on as usual only a short distance away (only 70 miles, for example, from the British lines in France to London): the shortness of the geographical distance was often an ironic contrast to the psychological distance of one world from another (FUSSELL 1975, p. 64).

Finally, a feature specific both to fictional and non-fictional accounts of the First World War is the "pastoral" or "bucolic" interlude (FUSSELL, 1975, p. 236), which in Barbusse's novel is called "Sanctuary," a peaceful break from the trenches that was made possible by the well-defined lines clearly dividing the "front" from the rear, or non-combat areas. These interludes are made both more pleasurable and more painful again by the ironic contrast with what the soldiers have been through and what they have to face on their return to the front.

REFERENCES

BARBUSSE, Henri. *Under Fire*: The Story of a Squad. 1916. London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1926.

BERGONZI, Bernard. *Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War*. 1965. 3rd edition. London: Carcanet Press, 1996.

BROSNAN, Catharine S. *Reading Behind the Lines*: the Interpretation of War. New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1991.

COOPERMAN, Stanley. *World War I and the American Novel*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1967.

CRANE, Stephen. *The Red Badge of Courage*. 1895. New York: Harper's, 1957.

DEL VECCHIO, John M. *The Thirteenth Valley*. New York: Bantam Books, 1983.

ELLIS, John. *Eye-Deep in Hell: Trench Warfare in World War I*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

FORD, Ford Madox. *Parade's End*. 1924-1928. New York: Vintage, 1950.

HOFFMAN, Daniel J. Introduction to *The Red Badge of Courage*. New York: Harper's, 1957, p. viii-ix.

KEEGAN, John. *The Face of Battle*. New York: Barnes & Noble, 1976.

LIFTON, Robert Jay, *Home From the War*. New York: Simon & Shuster, 1973.

MANNING, Frederick. *The Middle Parts of Fortune*. 1929. London: St. Martin's Press,1977.

REMARQUE, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*. 1928. Trans. A.W. Wheen. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1958.

ROTH, Robert. *Sand in the Wind*. New York: Miracle Books, 1974.

WALDMEIER, Joseph J. *Novelists of the Second World War*. The Hague: Mouton, 1971.

WYATT-BROWN, Bertram. America's Holy War. Review of *For Cause and Comrades*: Why Men Fought in the Civil War, by James M. McPherson. In: *The New York Review of Books*, Nov. 6, 1997, p. 43-47.