

スティーヴン・クレイン『赤い武勲章』：アイロニーの戦略

Kotani Koji
九州大学言語文化部

<https://doi.org/10.15017/1355917>

出版情報：英語英文学論叢. 40, pp.45-79, 1990-02. The English Language and Literature Society
バージョン：
権利関係：



Stephen Crane's Strategy of Irony in *The Red Badge of Courage*

Koji Kotani

There are mainly three types of interpretation in the criticism of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage*: (1) the protagonist, Henry Fleming, reaches some kind of growth at the end of the novel and the narrator's attitude toward him changes from ironic undercutting to sympathetic approval; (2) Henry does not grow at all and the narrator is always ironic toward him; and (3) the text itself is inconsistent and does not make sense. Henry Binder, investigating the extant manuscripts of the novel, asserts that this ambiguity or confusion in interpretation is caused by the maimed condition of the current text based on the Appleton first edition. Steven Mailloux points out that after the Civil War the historical romance was replaced by the realistic war novel and this transition established a new generic plot convention of initiation, which has influenced the reader's interpretive response to the novel. While the two critics emphasize the significance of the manuscripts in understanding Crane's original intention to portray Henry ironically, my reading is an attempt to get the same ironical view of the protagonist without having much recourse to the manuscripts.

The main structural principle in *The Red Badge of Courage* is a constant use of various "negative" contrasts reinforced by techniques of doubling and repetition. This principle works effectively to produce a network of ironical meanings in many aspects of the novel. Crane depicts a rapid fluctuation in Henry's contradictory thoughts and feelings and quite subtly exposes his self-deceptive turn of mind.

Crane also makes use of the outward pattern of the initiation story as a framework of the novel, but on the other hand he undermines the convention by showing that Henry remains essentially unchanged in spite of various significant experiences, such as his encounters with the dead soldier in the forest chapel and the death of Jim Conklin. In addition, the contrast with Wilson, who may be regarded as a typical character in the initiation story, reveals that Henry does not fit into the superficial pattern of the novel. All this treatment of Henry makes it considerably difficult for the reader to have an affirmative view of his growth. In the light of Crane's strategy of irony, the concept of "fraternity" or "brotherhood," which he is said to value quite highly, seems to lose its moral or ethical connotation. And the pervasive irony in the work reflects his inclination to destroy or undermine what he himself has constructed.