AN EMPATHIC CONSIDERATION OF THE SCAPEGOAT IN
THE NOVELLAS OF STEPHEN CRANE AND HENRY JAMES

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Abstract

Late 19th century literature often responds to the anxieties of class, gender, and race by participating in justifying the hierarchies as it relies on a deterministic setting and typically explores the grimmer, but often realistic, themes in American life. Critics who maintain a Naturalist reading today take the time period into account and justify the characters’ reactions by considering them as victims of their severe environment. But what is ultimately disregarded with this sort of reading is human compassion and one’s inherent desire to help another. In examining Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and “The Monster” as well as Henry James’ “Daisy Miller: A Study,” this thesis will argue that by having such harsh characters contrasted with caring (though fallen) characters, the concept of hierarchies and what is “natural” becomes problematized.

By offering a new reading, contemporary readers may have a different viewpoint of what should be deemed as a justifiable action. With a more sympathetic reading, we may view these texts not just as a validation for this pessimistic literature, but texts that provide alternatives to how one could react in harsh situations. Crane and James offer the opportunity to question these social constructs and consider the unnaturalness of what has been previously deemed “natural.” We need to resist categorizing these important texts so that we can keep them alive and relevant. To accomplish this, we need to add to the Naturalist reading by considering our changing values and experiences and how they affect our approach to a text and acknowledge that these layers of meaning can change over time.
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Introduction

Late 19th century literature often responds to the anxieties of class, gender, and race by participating in justifying the hierarchies, and critics often claim that the purge of the fallen individual is necessary in a Naturalist text, as it relies on a deterministic setting and typically explores the grimmer, but often realistic, themes in American life. Stephen Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) and Henry James’ “Daisy Miller: A Study” (1878) both confront class and gender issues. In *Maggie* and “Daisy,” the heroine dies when trying to progress in social standing and defy her prescribed role as a woman, signifying the community’s success in purging these scapegoats and keeping the community’s hierarchies intact. Crane’s “The Monster” (1898) focuses on class and racial divides within the community as chaos ensues after a black stable hand, Henry, is left effaced and considered subhuman, with the town’s doctor, Dr. Trescott choosing to fall in the Whilmoville hierarchy by taking care of him.

Naturalist readers, who view these texts as artifacts and historical lessons, often ignore the gravity these works hold in terms of social hierarchies and the scapegoating processes. In this three chapter thesis, the scapegoating processes and social hierarchies within these three works is analyzed. Maggie, Daisy, Henry, and Dr. Trescott are read as scapegoat figures who lend themselves to a more empathetic reading and expose these hierarchies as inauthentic social constructs. In the introduction, background is provided regarding theories of hierarchies and scapegoating as well as a discussion about the historical anxieties of the time. Then, the subsequent chapters are devoted to the novellas
to the exploration of gender and class in *Maggie* and “Daisy Miller,” and race and class in “The Monster.”

Before the Civil War, hierarchies appeared natural, pre-determined by a certain criteria: those who possess favorable characteristics deserve the higher position over their lower counterparts. These characteristics may be decided based on one’s biological make-up such as having a lighter skin tone or being the favorable gender. With the rise of industrialization and class anxieties, favorable characteristics shifted into more abstract concepts such as wealth and social power. Kenneth Burke considers that biologically and acquired traits as a criteria for creating a hierarchy are not new concepts; the basic principles that make up certain hierarchies are “found in both Darwinian doctrine of natural evolution and Marxist doctrine of social evolution” (139). In a systematic world, Burke argues that the hierarchies do have their benefits as people strive to develop themselves in order to achieve a higher position. He uses the example of an apprentice growing into a professional; we need to start somewhere on our journey to greatness, and that beginning is, more often than not, at the bottom. Burke suggests that “the ‘universal’ principle of the hierarchy also happens to be the principle by which the most distinguished rank in the hierarchy enjoys ... its special privileges” (141). From this perspective, when one surpasses another in ranking, the real victory lies in the perquisites that come with the position rather than the position itself.

Because there is an acknowledgement towards those who are superior in rank, the problem arises when those who are in lower ranking envy and, therefore, rebel against those who are higher. To help ease these apprehensions, Burke suggests that those with
the higher position and privileges rely on “mystifications” by “mystifying” those who are lower through displaying love or compassion as a means to cloud the division among the ranks (141). Although these actions from those in the higher position appeared genuine, these “virtue” guises were built on false premises in order to trick those in the lower positions into thinking that those in the higher position were taking care of them. Certainly, if there is someone who is in a lower position, if he is to witness someone in a higher position with the accompanying prestige, the lower individual would logically be determined to attain the same rank, if not surpass the higher individual, but if the person in the higher position shows the necessary “virtues” towards the person in the lower position, the lower person’s anxiety and need to rebel would be alleviated. Employing such preventative tactics ultimately allows the hierarchy to be preserved and stable. Indeed, the primary goal of those in higher positions is to have the hierarchy remain outwardly peaceful while maintaining their position, if not advancing.

Likewise, if someone in a higher position fraternized with those who may potentially compromise his/her position, getting rid of those contaminants would be necessary, as they would jeopardize not only the higher individual’s position, but the entire hierarchical foundation because this unbalanced relationship has potential to expose the duplicities that most hierarchies are built upon. This purge is commonly known as the “scapegoat process.” Chris Allen Carter builds on Burke’s theory of hierarchies to compose his analysis of scapegoating. Carter claims, “A characteristic feature of human life is the act by which an insecure person raises his or her own sense of self-esteem by lowering the status or attacking the confidence of someone else” (9).
Indeed, Carter considers that much of our ethical, hierarchical, and mortal anxieties are relieved due to the existence of scapegoats (18). It harkens back to the idea of remedying our anxieties by remembering that we are better off than someone else and that, at the very least, we are not like “that other person.” In order to define what is “good,” we need to contrast it with something “bad,” and when we do figure out what is “bad,” the only logical step would be to eliminate that which would contaminate the “good.”

Melvyn Fein draws a similar picture of the scapegoat’s role. In discussing the scapegoat in the lower classes, Fein addresses how the communal or familial unit creates a scapegoat, and even though the scapegoat may have no faults, his/her main purpose is to protect the unit from suffering. Fein considers that the pressures imposed on the scapegoats may be so severe, they may even come to believe that they are deserving of the burdens (300-01). Without them, certain groups would be left unprotected from oppressors. In these scenarios, it would be wise to sacrifice one person to save an entire group; this idea had been seen in the animal kingdom and we, as humans, have adopted this mindset in order to secure our own positions. While some may consider this a pessimistic perspective of the scapegoat, Carter and Fein assert that the scapegoat is just another component that helps create and maintain a hierarchy; they are a necessary part of life.

The scapegoat idea was even more important during industrialization because of the rise of the middle class, who demonstrated the fluidity in the classes, thus threatening the upper class’ position. As these classes were becoming more unstable, people became even more protective of their position by using the scapegoat process as a way to reassert
these hierarchies. Americans believed in having a clear position in society (the hierarchy) and not associating with those who could potentially harm their place (scapegoats) would be the solutions to this societal unrest; however, those in the hierarchy further demonstrated that these “natural” solutions lent themselves to a series of injustices.

During the turn of the 20th century, America faced multiple changes that challenged people’s roles in society. Women suffered greatly as their naturally considered role was a submissive one, whose position lacked the fundamental freedoms that their male counterparts possessed. Because women were often the faces of their families’ social statuses, it was necessary for them to preserve their position and not deviate from what was deemed proper behavior. Nonetheless, such stifling circumstances led to a backlash, expressed in the concept of “the new woman:” a woman who refused to adhere to her traditional role as the obedient and self-sacrificing wife and mother and who wanted to establish a place in society and obtain the same freedoms that men had over her. The rise of the “new woman” brought about much trepidation as women yearned for these freedoms, but often found themselves in an even lower standing in comparison to traditional women as a woman was viewed as “ruined,” especially if she ventured too far into sexual boundaries, whether fully consummated or only implied. This was even more problematic for her family members because if they had a fallen woman as a relation, they too, would be considered fallen, and be victim to a town’s slander and wrath, which prompted many families to purge themselves of this supposed female contaminant.
Families placed much importance on their economic statuses, but as the industrial revolution caused the American economy to shift from agrarian to mechanics, many saw their hopes of achieving the “American Dream” being shattered. People’s romanticized notions of the North’s metropolises, particularly New York, triggered hoards of people to move to the city, causing the cities to become densely populated. Soon, these cities became divided by extremes: the slums and the elite. Those in the lowest end of the spectrum faced dire conditions as they were often pitted against each other and were abused for their upper-class employers’ benefits. Many immigrant and migrant workers competed for minimal pay, which led city dwellers to group together in the slums. With such squalid and degrading circumstances, the death rates in these ghettos rose dramatically. The place one thought to bring prosperity and happiness soon grew to be an eternal hell for the poor.

Nevertheless, these metropolises did provide some people, though exceptions, the financial successes so many sought after. Those like Carnegie, Harriman, and Rockefeller helped form the elite and create a plutocracy, which allowed them to govern much of the financial and economic structures within the big cities. This authority only further established their status while compromising those below them. Yet, the central claims for their positions revolved around the “high risk, high reward” mentality and the Social Darwinian philosophy that biological and genetic differences between the groups led those with a superior make-up to progress in the social ladder. Such mindsets also applied to those that were newly entering this rich society. The nouveau riche, as opposed to the “old money,” acquired their own sets of distinction as money was no longer considered
the primary factor in high society. This proved problematic as those who were “new money” like Carnegie, Harriman, and Rockefeller were influential in society, and because their wealth was vast, they could not be ignored from “old money” society and the two societies were forced to amalgamate. Those with established wealth built their economic empire based on a long succeeding line of fortune and, therefore, earn a high level of dignity and class, whereas the nouveau riche were considered to lack the internal characteristics that set the wealthy apart from the rest of the world. Because there was an existence of both meant that there was a great need to identify moral characteristics of the “true” upper class.

In addition to the competition between the old and new money, there was a growing awareness of the cultural differences between them and the European elite. Joseph Epstein observes that “most Americans in any educational pretensions … have long felt a cultural inferiority towards Europeans. In the nineteenth century, no one else felt this more strongly than the best-educated Americans” (204). If in America, those in the expatriate elite would not fear that their positions would be compromised, but once they removed themselves from comfort and into a place where they may either advance or regress socially, their once dominant hierarchy position became insignificant. Their positions were much more fragile and, with the upper class facing anxieties with the rising middle class, being exceedingly selective in the allowances into high society became necessary. Since the expatriates were not wholly a part of the European elite, they were more susceptible to losing their honorary European status.
One of the greatest changes after the Civil War was the emancipation of slaves, and while emancipationists and ex-slaves hoped blacks would receive the same treatment as whites because they were legally “equal” to each other, the white population employed strategies to instill the idea of the “white ideal” versus “the lowly black.” Many whites argued that there would be a violent backlash from ex-slaves to whites, which prompted an unwarranted fear and justification of lynching parties and other tyrannical oppression towards blacks. As Linda Frost notes, “the real terrorism that would occur as a result of Emancipation would be prompted and perpetuated not by, but against blacks” (35). Indeed, the “white” definition of what it mean to be human was shattered, and in order to reaffirm their once “safe” and “higher” positions, they convinced themselves that going to extreme measure was the only necessary response.

*Maggie* takes place in the New York slums with the heroine, Maggie becoming the fallen woman and the family scapegoat by being sexually linked to Pete, therefore prompting her mother, Mary, and brother, Jimmie, to refuse any association with her. Maggie then comes in contact with a catalogue of city people, all in which expose a level of hypocrisy and antipathy. Fitelson asserts that when first published, *Maggie* was barely considered a novel, but more of a sociological study due to its “impersonal style” (183). Fitelson considers that the slum setting of the novel is heavily influenced by violence and the characters’ grim realities consequently remove morality from its characters since the fundamental goal for the characters is survival. Maggie is not fit for this reality, as she possesses compassion rather than the need for care for herself, and though her dismal fate is sad, Fitelson claims “it is no occasion for this sympathy. It is merely an instance of
self-destruction and failure” (184). With this Naturalist reading, Maggie only has herself to blame for her demise, and those who interact with her, mainly Mary and Jimmie, should be excused, if not rewarded, for their behavior because they successfully survive in the slums. Fitelson’s core argument is that Mary’s and Jimmie’s behavior is comparable to an animal’s, thereby preventing them from exercising moral tendencies (186). Therefore, as Fitelson concludes “in the world order of this novel, either one’s life conforms to the demands of the struggle, or it is extinguished” (194). Rather than relying on moral or humanistic grounds to govern one’s circumstance, the basis of survival lies in one’s instincts to succeed and surpass those who are not socially fit.

*Daisy Miller* focuses on the opposite economic scale by considering the American elite and the idea of nationalism. While Daisy’s family visits Geneva, Daisy, a naïve, American adolescent, attempts to enter the European and expatriate elite society. Although she lacks the decorum necessary to distance herself from the brash American stereotype, her charisma and desire for equality categorize her as the “new woman,” which threatens the positions of the expatriates, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker, whose positions are just as fragile as Daisy’s since they are not fully a part of the European elite due to their American roots.

James’ fiction tends to focus on higher society, and Alwyn Berland considers that James is not reflective or commentating on societal matters, but that James looks to Western Europe to define his vision of high society, which makes much of his prose reflect these ideals. And while James acknowledges the flaws in high civilization, his commitment lies with maintaining and glorifying high society. Berland suggests that in
James’ fiction, “he defended [European civilization] when the challenging force was either the crude moralism or the crude materialism which American so often represented” (10-12). It would be detrimental for those of such high status to contaminate themselves by associating with others who choose to not conform to the status quo. Berland outlines James’ novels with innocence and betrayal making up the primary framework of the plot; those who are innocent yearn for knowledge in regards to the ideal civilization, and the villains who betray the innocent do so because there is something to be gained and the villains “themselves [are] intelligent … sensitive … subtle [and] they are civilized enough to know how to appeal to their aspiring victims” (39). In Daisy’s case, she is aware that she lacks the fundamentals for the European elite, so she relies on Winterbourne to help her advance, all while he tries to further a flirtation with her and takes advantage of her naiveté to boost his ego. Winterbourne’s flirtation contributes to Daisy’s ruin and with no consequence to himself, but in a Naturalist society, in striving for the same goal, a place among society’s highest tier, Winterbourne can only associate and aid Daisy in her desires until it begins to tarnish his own reputation and compromise his position.

*The Monster* focuses primarily on the racial boundaries in Whilmoville among the whites and blacks and the economic boundaries that divide those in the community. The pandemonium that ensues in the town occurs when those committed to the racial and economic hierarchies attempt to purge Henry Johnson, an effaced black stablehand, and Dr. Trescott, a white doctor who protects and cares for Henry, because they do not fit the
molds of the Whilmoville hierarchy. There is no place for Henry or Trescott, and they are eventually ostracized from the town.

Lee Clark Mitchell focuses on the value of having a face and a voice in *The Monster*. In having a face and the ability to speak, one has an identity; therefore, based on this formula, Henry, who loses both, consequently loses his identity. Mitchell describes this relationship in more detail:

Disfigurement tends to deny the identity it also boldly reasserts by compelling us to imagine a perfectly unmarred former configuration, reminding us of a family resemblance at ‘all but’ the moment we mark the defect … disfiguring a portrait thus alters identities into what they are not, transfiguring them into negative instances. (175)

In Henry’s situation, his regression is more apparent than Maggie’s or Daisy’s because he has a physical alteration. It is undeniable that his physical and mental states are much lower than they were prior to the accident. Therefore, as Mitchell suggests, “to be confronted by disfiguration is to desire precisely what is now gone, to want nothing more than the deformed object restored to its original state” (175). The Whilmoville townspeople are frightened by Henry’s monstrosities, and while there was a level of condescension from the townspeople towards Henry before his effacement, there was still a level of respect. Through the Naturalist lens, Henry is reduced to something sub-human, and based on humans having natural fears of the unknown and the grotesque, the initial reaction would be for the townspeople to be afraid of Henry and want to rid themselves of the monster who has no face, voice, or identity. Mitchell makes the connection of one “losing face” to one who loses credibility, and that is exactly what happens to Henry; he loses all credibility in being considered a human (179).
Critics viewing literature of this period also confirm these social structures by using Burkean ideologies and the concept that scapegoats are necessary in relieving the tensions that underlie these hierarchies; they help validate the hierarchy by establishing what is right and what is wrong and naturalizing the hierarchy’s purpose. Susan L. Mizruchi suggests that there needs to be a consensus of what constitutes just behavior, which is usually governed by the majority ruling (315). Such is the case in these literatures. Indeed, when considering a Naturalist reading, much of the literature at that time had the fallen individuals possess some type of moral shortcoming which eventually leads to their demise. Maggie and Daisy are both fallen women; Henry becomes a physical monster and Trescott becomes his protector and, therefore, inherits Henry’s defects.

These fallen characters authenticate the necessity of having and maintaining a strong hierarchy as it would be considered unnatural to let those who jeopardize the hierarchy to still have a place within society as they could further damage the underpinnings of the community. In agreement with Herbert Spencer, the champion of Social Darwinism, Mizruchi claims that sacrificing these individuals is the only means for society to rid themselves of these contaminants for their benefit: “some die, so others can eat” (158-59). Those who are stronger should be the ones who survive and those who are weaker should meet their fates.

Much of these critics’ focus in regards to hierarchies and the scapegoating process relies heavily on the hierarchy’s role in creating the scapegoat and maintaining the hierarchy. Therefore, we are to believe that that people in that hierarchy are reasonable in
creating the scapegoat. After all, those with scapegoat roles often possess negative connotations. This “group versus the self” mentality favors the dominant ruling, but the critique tends to stop there. What happens after the scapegoat is removed from society? Based on the previous information, it would seem likely that members of the hierarchies would then be able to resume their lives and reestablish their peaceful society. What, then, happens to the scapegoat? Oftentimes, the scapegoat is left dead or ostracized from the community. But there is that small window when those in the hierarchy are eradicating themselves of the scapegoat, right before the scapegoat faces his/her demise. It is this small window that I would like to address in subsequent chapters. With so much emphasis on the actual scapegoat, little is discussed regarding the hierarchy and the damage that occurs to both parties when an individual is burdened with the moral corruption that fundamentally controls a hierarchy-driven society.

Thus far, the readings of these texts and their social hierarchies have been mainly rooted in Social Darwinian thought and Naturalist lenses. This sort of reading focuses primarily on the external relationships between the characters and the results of those who contradict their Naturalist worlds. That being said, there is one crucial component that is neglected: human compassion. Rather than considering how these scapegoats validate hierarchies and this “survival of the fittest mentality,” contemporary readers may be more likely to see hierarchies as socially constructed and contextual, and are able to see another function for scapegoats: They expose the flaws in the hierarchy by highlighting the corruption and inauthenticity of these hierarchies. The scapegoats
emphasize the value of human compassion through their interactions with others and ultimately offer a new reading of these texts.
Chapter One. Survival of the “Moralists”: The “Fallen Women” and Social Hierarchies in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*

During the late 19th century, with the rise of industrialism, New York City developed into a place that possessed a diverse population, especially within the various social classes. According to Michael Spindler, “the relatively homogeneous society that existed in the North before the Civil War became polarized into rich and poor, millionaire entrepreneurs … and much of the working population become concentrated in the urban-industrial centres” (2). With this diversity came class hierarchies ranging from the upper class to the slums. While the social elite reveled in New York’s splendor, daily life in the city presented a constant struggle for those living in run-down neighborhoods. Edward Margolies summarizes the lower classes’ anxieties: “The [lower classes], when not resigned to their plight, may of course express smoldering resentment or at times outright violence … [T]he frustrated energies of the underclasses often turn them against one another rather than against their rulers” (93). Even though there were those who attempted to seek a better life in New York, the industrial city, as John Dudley describes it, was “a dangerous and corrupting place” as those who “succumb[ed] to the temptations of the city … [were] ultimately destroyed by them” (144).

In concurrence with industrialization growing at an alarming rate, during the late 19th century writers, such as Herbert Spencer, translated Charles Darwin’s theory of “survival of the fittest” into a concept of Social Darwinism. From this perspective, only those who were strong enough in society were able to adapt, and those who were not socially fit would not survive, which prompted an abundance of scientific discussion.
regarding natural selection. In addition, Eric Carl Link states “these scientific and
philosophic theories increasingly sought to explain humankind and the natural world
through reference to natural phenomena and physical laws” (2); it was believed that those
who were able to rise above economic turmoil deserved higher status in that they were
more equipped than their “lower” counterparts. Link claims Crane was aware of this
phenomenon, which may have contributed to his writing (2). The growing anxiety over
the industrial revolution combined with new philosophies concerning the human
condition created context for Maggie: A Girl of the Streets as a Naturalist text, in that one
has no real governance in his/her own fate; the external forces determine whether one is
to survive or perish.

While Crane creates a Social Darwinian setting by having the characters strive for
survival through creating their own hierarchies and pushing others down, this Naturalist
reading does not provide the opportunity to account for the unwarranted sense of
superiority among the characters, nor does it provide the opportunity for in-depth analysis
regarding the characters’ relationships and the concept of empathy. With a new reading,
instead of focusing on the externalities, modern readers may question, critique and
evaluate the complexities in Maggie’s relationships with her family, Pete, and those who
she meets in the streets. Crane’s heroine, Maggie Johnson, is the exception to the usual
fate in the slums because she is not hardened by the cruel realities in the slums; rather,
she is beautiful and compassionate, though naïve. Instead of viewing these characteristics
as disadvantages, contemporary readers may consider Maggie to be more humanistic and
sympathize with her situation. However, her mother, Mary, and Maggie’s brother,
Jimmie, assume that to help Maggie would mean to fall with her, therefore prompting them to shun and associate her to as a lower being, but by condemning and purging Maggie from the slums, they only further expose how they are morally corrupt. The contrast in character between Maggie and her family shows how unnatural these hierarchies truly are and the difficulty in reading this text as purely Naturalistic. As readers, since we are empathetic beings, our empathy may be transferred into our readings and instead of viewing characters’ responses to Maggie as valid, we are able to analyze and judge them based on our evolving values and morals. This critique is then expanded to a societal level through those who interact with Maggie in the streets; those who have claim to higher positions scorn Maggie, thus ironically exposing how they are morally devolved and lower in the moral hierarchy. Maggie is only able to receive any comfort in her death, and with her death she demonstrates that it is better to fall than to rise by sacrificing the innocent and with a new reading, we see the harsh consequences of those who lack compassion.

From a young age, Maggie’s family attempts to survive at all costs, yet her family is barely scraping by due to prior addictions and behaviors that are not discussed in the novella, but heavily influence the family dynamic. Maggie’s mother, Mary, has a life that is hopeless and her alcoholism prevents her from moving forward in life. She recognizes her lack of control, so she channels her frustrations onto her children to compensate for her current position. Rather than assuming the role of a caring mother, Mary uses her higher position to become an oppressor. For example, when Jimmie comes home battered and bruised after getting into a fight, Mary unleashes an unprecedented fury towards her
son: “The mother’s massive shoulders heaved with anger. Grasping the urchin by the neck and shoulders she shook him until he rattled … Jimmie screamed in pain” (9; ch. 1). Mary instills in Jimmie that he may engage in brawls in the streets, but his mother is superior in the home, for truly, that is all she has left. Mary is not aware that Jimmie’s fight consisted of numerous boys assaulting him; the only thing that matters is that Mary was not the one who exercised her power over Jimmie, but someone else instead. Her punishment towards Jimmie far exceeds his actual crime. This overreaction foreshadows the rest of the novella: because of the lack of compassion combined with the fear of falling, such a panicked response causes more damage to the persons involved than correction. With these types of responses, the possibility for growth in the moral sense lessens severely.

David Fitelson justifies Mary’s behavior from a Naturalist perspective by describing her as “an animal not ranked among the fittest, but capable of swallowing many others before being swallowed itself” (189). Because she does not measure up to the “fittest” standards, she must create her own standards by preying on her family as a protective mechanism. Nevertheless, this reading only focuses on one aspect of “natural law,” and even if this is “natural” behavior, one does not necessarily need to partake in such actions. By Mary choosing to exert her power over her son, she reveals how she is an inept nurturer and undeserving of motherhood. While contemporary readers may argue either perspective, the primary goal should be to have a discussion about whether or not Mary is just in her actions, rather than simply classifying as a “Naturalist character.” Her significance goes beyond just literary character types; by acknowledging our values
within the reading, we can debate on Mary’s person in more depth and recognize the value in the story.

In the rest of the family, Naturalist conventions provide context for their persons. Darwinian survival genes are passed down from one generation to another, and in the Johnson family, defense mechanisms emerge through nature and lack of nurture in the home. From a young age, Jimmie has knowledge of hierarchies as indicated in the opening scene when he and the other boys from Devil’s Row and Rum Alley throw stones at each other to determine who the true champion of the slums is. Jimmie starts off “upon a heap of gravel for the honor of Rum Alley” and hurls rocks at those who make “a furious assault on the gravel heap” (3; ch. 1). There is a continuous battle of him forcing others down with violence, and other boys using violence to overthrow Jimmie. While this scene is a violent version of child’s play, Crane’s use of honorable war-like language such as Jimmie holding “victory in his fists,” “exchanging vainglorious remarks” and being “enlarged to catapultian power” is purposefully inappropriate (5; ch. 1). Aggrandizing their “heroic” actions highlights their dishonorable intentions. The game insinuates that one may only attain a better position by harming another; in order for there to be a winner, there needs to be a loser, but at what cost? The loser’s punishment is a very vile beating. After the attack on Jimmie, he is still triumphant, but not without injury as he is left with “blood-wet features” (5; ch. 1). His need to advance does not stop with his antagonists because even after his opponents retreat, Jimmie wants to prove his superiority among his friends by instigating another fight with one of them, which again warrants an unparalleled description of their fighting. While the boys begin
“to weep and their curses struggled in their throats with sobs,” the two boys consider themselves “fighting in the modes of four thousand years ago” (6; ch. 1). The stark contrast between heroic characteristics and lowly bullying behavior provides the overall tone for the novella; the characters hide their foul conduct behind false heroism. Even so, regardless of their “heroic” facades, they are still vicious young boys.

Jimmie continues such behavior as he grows from a young deviant to “a young man of leather” (15; ch. 4), becomes more aggressive with age, and accumulates a hefty criminal record with “quite a number of miscellaneous fights, especially in general bar-room rows that had become known to the police” (19; ch. 4). Since Jimmie cannot raise himself in New York society, he generates his own hierarchy and counteract his rough circumstances by exhibiting hostility towards those of higher stature:

He maintained a belligerent attitude toward all well-dressed men. To him fine raiment was allied to weakness, and all good coats covered faint hearts. He and his order were kinds, to a certain extent, over the men of untarnished clothes, because these latter dreaded, perhaps, to be either killed or laughed at … He considered himself above … these classes. (16-17; ch. 4)

Jimmie prides himself on his callousness and, it seems, rightfully so considering what he had to endure as a young child. The only way he can cope with his circumstances is to abhor those who are better off. His reactions to those of a higher stature, unbeknownst to him, resemble his mother’s reactions to her children: His unwarranted anger and condescension exceeds the treatment of society around him. Regardless of the imaginary order Jimmie creates for himself, his reality is that he will be bound to an unfulfilled, deviant life.
Jimmie continues fashioning his own hierarchies in order to endure his poor condition by promoting himself and by showing disdain for those he deems of lower status. When Jimmie gets a job as a truck driver, he uses his occupation to look down upon those in a lower position, literally and metaphorically. He views himself as a “god-driver” and is “continually storming at [pedestrians] from his throne” because he considers “foot-passengers [as] mere pestering flies with an insane disregard for their legs and his convenience” (18-19; ch. 4). In rationalizing his behavior, we see the imbalance of his perception and the reality; his exaggerations only incriminate him. Because Jimmie is incapable of high status financially, he must force his own way into society by being a tyrant, but his hierarchy is completely invalid. Being a truck driver is not a reputable job, and Jimmie’s requirements for his higher position are solely based on him literally being above foot passengers; nonetheless, those who are walking in the streets may very well be wealthier than him. Therefore, there is no true distinction that Jimmie is any better than those walking on the streets, which proves his self-constructed hierarchy to be false. And with this false hierarchy, readers may question the overall validity of viewing this text through a Naturalist lens. Again, readers need to view Jimmie, the person, rather than Jimmie, the Naturalist stock character. In trying to naturalize the hierarchy, it becomes more of a social construct, which contradicts the notion of the characters not being able to combat their current environments.

Initially, it appears that Maggie is doomed to follow the same paths as her mother and brother, although while Mary and Jimmie try to elevate themselves, Maggie is constantly pushed down in the family and in society. Maggie’s younger brother, Tommie,
is the lowest in the home because he is the youngest, but proves unfit for the hard circumstances and dies, leaving Maggie to replace him as the youngest and, therefore, the most insignificant in the house. Eventually, when his father dies, Jimmie assumes the role of the head of the house along with Mary, which leaves Maggie to be the only “child” in the home without any influence in the family.

Maggie is equally irrelevant in the slums. She blends in with her surroundings: “Attired in tatters and grime, she went unseen” (20; ch. 5). There is no need for her to try to present herself differently because her life matches her appearance. Her job is to “[perch] on a stool and [treadle] at her machine all day, turning out collars” (20; ch. 5), as she goes unseen in with the “twenty girls of various shades of yellow discontent” (20; ch. 5). The slums are also a direct reflection of Maggie’s home life. Just like her mother, her boss is tyrannical. He is a man who “[sits] all day delivering orations, in the depths of a cushioned chair. His pocket-book deprived them the power of retort” (32; ch. 8). The two significant figures that play a role in Maggie’s future only use her to exercise their dominance. By constantly being reduced, there is a high probability that Maggie will never find anything remotely better than her current situation.

In contrast to the trials of her daily life, Crane provides Maggie with qualities may relieve her lifestyle: compassion and beauty. Maggie’s lowered standing in the home and in society makes her more sympathetic towards those who are degraded. When an already-beaten Jimmie comes home and gets more abuse from Mary, Maggie attempts to nurse him: “Will I wash the blood?” (10; ch. 2). Although Jimmie rejects his sister’s offer, Maggie demonstrates a more nurturing demeanor than her own mother; her mother
is there to inflict the wounds while Maggie is there to clean them. Later, after Tommie
dies, there is no mention of the family’s reaction other than Maggie providing the flower
in her brother’s hand as “he went away in a white, insignificant coffin” (15; ch. 5). She
experiences the grief of losing someone, regardless of how “insignificant” that person
may be. Such instances may not appear to be as important as they are simple gestures, but
in Maggie’s selfish family, Maggie expresses substantial compassion. Rather than
emulating the oppressors in her life, Maggie willingly embodies the role of an
unconditional servant to her family.

Maggie’s beauty also proves to be her saving feature as she “blossomed in a mud
puddle. She grew to be a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a
pretty girl” (20; ch. 5). Just as Maggie provides a glint of light in her home, she offers
some beauty in the slums. Being a “pretty” girl is not an extremely high compliment, but
her physical beauty is highlighted when her surroundings are so dismal. Even the slums’
occupants puzzle over how “none of the dirt of Rum Alley seemed to be in her veins”
(20; ch. 5). While Maggie is physically pretty, she also proves to be pretty internally as
demonstrated by her interactions with her family. With such qualities, Maggie is already
setting herself apart from her family and those in the slums. She is not yet contaminated
by the cruelty that infuses the town’s occupants, and there is some hope that she may able
to dwell in the slums untarnished.

Maggie is seemingly portrayed as someone with potential to do well in her life
because she has not wronged anyone and is the antithesis of everything the slums
represent, but in her fall, the debate over how “special” she truly is comes into question.
Susan L. Mizruchi has a Naturalist perspective in why Maggie is “sacrificed” in the novella by suggesting that sacrifices are necessary in order to save the whole: “By selecting a sacrificial victim who is innocent, society avoids the risk of contamination by violence. And by substituting an innocent victim drawn from groups loosely, if at all, integrated into the social order, society prevents itself from the likelihood of vengeance” (32).¹ In the Naturalist sense, Maggie being sacrificed as the “fallen woman” is fitting because she would not reciprocate any violence towards her oppressors, like Mary and Jimmie probably would. With a Naturalist reading, such characteristics are considered weak because they do not account for the individual’s survival; if anything, Maggie is lessening her chances of succeeding in such a dismal world. However, unlike Mary and Jimmie who would probably not have readers’ sympathy if they did fall due to their severely coldhearted natures, Maggie’s softness lends herself to be cared for by the readers. The difference between Mizruchi’s reading of Maggie’s sacrifice and my own is the motivation behind the sacrifice. Mizruchi argues that society committing the sacrifice is valid as the sacrifice protects further damage from occurring, but as we see from Mary and Jimmie later on, their motivation is not to protect the whole, but themselves, thus taking a potentially honorable decision into one based in fraud. Rather than considering Maggie’s fall as another defense mechanism in maintaining the hierarchy, we should consider a new reading that complicates the hierarchical notions of protecting oneself at the expense of someone else. With our sympathy towards Maggie and her conscientious decision to rid herself, her motivation, or lack thereof, to continue provides opportunity for us to question these preconceived hierarchies. Is one’s innocence reason enough for
her to die? Could innocence even be considered a defect? Are we supposed to neglect her kindness towards those who seemingly did not deserve it and the cruel actions towards her when she did not deserve it? Simply pushing Maggie into an archetype discounts her being an actual person and would mean that she is an incarnate of any other fallen woman during her time. If we read this text in the same unsympathetic manner as those who commit callous actions towards Maggie, are we really pushing our reading and delving into an analysis that goes deeper than the text?

Maggie’s fall begins when “Maggie observed Pete” (21; ch. 5). Her eventual ruin comes from her sexual consummation with Pete, a young “gentleman,” and for many, including the other characters and Crane’s contemporary readers, such a fall would be unpardonable. According to Keith Gandal, “The late nineteenth century morality of character is sexist, and the ultimate sin in slum literature was a woman’s loss of purity … This in the story of the slum girl, the moral stakes were higher, the fall greater” (“Modern Soul” 762). Indeed, since Maggie is truly the only person in her family that has a possibility of having a better fate, her fall has greater implications than her family as they already carry fallen characteristics and are low in position and morals to begin with. But Crane offers a different perspective on the fallen woman. Through Maggie’s fall, she gains a growing awareness of her condition and herself. Prior to her actual fall, Maggie is naïve about the slum’s hierarchies and its duplicity, and Pete exposes the many flaws within this new culture. In reading this text with a more sympathetic viewpoint, Maggie’s fall has more gravity than the other characters as we grow to care about Maggie, not as a simple character, but a person.
In the process of her fall, Maggie experiences a series of awakenings that lead to her realization of the deceptive slums. Upon meeting Pete, Maggie acquires knowledge of her physical condition; this new awareness allows her to recognize that she does not want to be a part of her family’s dismal circumstances. Pete enters Maggie’s life when he calls on Jimmie so the two of them could attend a boxing match. Pete is a bartender, so he is better off than Mary and Jimmie and, therefore, higher in the slums’ hierarchy. Unlike Mary and Jimmie, who have to create illusions to promote themselves, Pete’s proper attire gives the impression that he does not have to validate himself to anyone. Maggie takes note of this distinction and begins to analyze Pete’s person when he enters the Johnson apartment:

His mannerisms stamped him as a man who had a correct sense of his personal superiority. There was valor and contempt for circumstance in the glance of his eye … He had certainly seen everything and with each curl of his lip, he declared that it amounted to nothing. Maggie thought he must be a very elegant and graceful bartender. (21; ch. 5)

Certainly, it is improbable that one could judge another’s character solely based on “the glance of his eye” or the “curl of his lip”; Maggie makes these associations because she wants to believe that Pete’s demeanor is justified by his character, regardless of how uninformed her perceptions may be. Pete’s bartending position is much closer to the “upper class” than Maggie’s family. For the first time, Maggie recognizes that there is something better than the slums, which she might attain, if she connects herself to Pete. She assumes that since Pete has a higher stature, he must possess higher qualities than her family and her surroundings: Maggie equates monetary success with respectability and power. Maggie is young and inexperienced, so she falls for him in the same way any
young girl might fall for an experienced gentleman. Ironically, Maggie reads Pete in a similar fashion to how Naturalist readers would critique the characters: based on the characters’ appearances and demeanors, we could typically predict the outcome of the characters, but in doing so, we only have a shallow read of them. It is not until we strip away the externalities that we are able to view and value the characters for their complexities. In Maggie’s case, her lack of any meaningful relationships prevents her from being able to see Pete for who he is, rather she views him the way she wants to view him.

While Maggie acquires a new awareness of the social orders, her innocence prevents her from seeing Pete’s true, deceitful nature, and that leads to Maggie’s fogged view of these orders. In many of their outings, Pete’s exterior and disposition divert Maggie’s attention away from his character failings, which further reveals Maggie’s naïveté of the cruelty in the slums. Gandal suggests that Maggie’s “seducer is a cad from a higher class whose moral qualities and social trappings appear dazzling to a woman accustomed to mean and vicious surroundings” (“Modern Soul” 764). Indeed, Pete’s shoddy intentions are not transparent like those who surround Maggie. Since she is accustomed to those wanting to push her lower, Pete appears to be the epitome of a gentleman by praising her beauty. In being so trusting towards Pete, Maggie is unaware of his underlying falsities. When the two go out on a dinner date, the theater’s surroundings are artificial and are not as appealing as Maggie paints them to be: “The place was crowded with people grouped about little tables … Little boys, in the costumes of French chefs, paraded up and down the irregular aisles vending fancy cakes” (26; ch.
A place that is truly sophisticated would not have the disproportional ratio of patrons to table size; this place is certainly crowded with no regulation. The façade continues by having the little boys dressed in farcical fraudulent attire. The night’s program contains acts that would be considered an abomination if performed for aristocrats, as they are utterly vulgar and their only purpose is to serve for cheap thrill for the male customers:

“In the finale, [the performer] fell into some of those grotesque attitudes which were at the time popular among the dancers in the theatres up-town, giving to the Bowery public the phantasies of the aristocratic theatre-going public, at reduced rates” (29; ch. 7).

Despite this crude entertainment, Maggie is ignorant of its lowliness and is left in awe. She falls victim to this false “superior” affair because she is so excited over Pete taking her out on a date. If Pete considers this viable entertainment, so does Maggie. Maggie also becomes Pete’s audience and he puts on a show for her regarding what her life could be like if she yields to him.

Later, Pete takes Maggie to the Central Park Menagerie and the Museum of Arts on Sundays, and while Maggie assumes that Pete spends a considerable amount on their outings, admissions to these places were free on Sundays, therefore causing no financial strain on Pete (32-33; ch. 8). In particular, Pete “took her to a dime museum where rows of meek freaks astonished her. She contemplated their deformities with awe and thought them a sort of chosen tribe” (32; ch. 8). Pete manipulates Maggie into believing that he is wealthy and views her as an object to promote himself, similar to how the dime museum owners profited from their “freaks.” More importantly, Maggie is able to compare these deformed beings to herself to prove that she is obviously superior and is entertained by
their lack of normalcy. In this brief scene, Maggie begins to believe that she has a higher position in the hierarchy, even though this belief is ungrounded. When considering the attitudes towards freak shows during the late 19th century along with the various schemes of exhibits containing people with forged deformities that continuously surfaced, the whole premises for many freak shows were based on lies and deception as is Maggie’s and Pete’s interaction with them.\(^2\) Naturalist readers may view this newly constructed hierarchy as another illustration of Naturalism within the text; for those in a lower position, the “natural” response who be to construct their own hierarchy in order to lift themselves, similar to how Mary and Jimmie forge their hierarchies. However, contemporary readers may see this false superiority and be more sympathetic to the victims, in this case, Maggie, and even briefly for the so-called “freaks.” As modern readers, we are aware of the mistreatment towards “freaks” during that time and how they endured squalid conditions and abuses from their owners, all for the sake of profit. Ironically enough, Pete trying to manipulate Maggie gives us the opportunity to see Pete’s true intentions and become more concerned for Maggie. Pete misuses his powers over Maggie for his sheer benefit. Unlike the freaks, however, Maggie is not fully aware that she is the one who is being taken advantage of. Instead, she uses this opportunity to feel a sense of superiority, even though it is unfounded.

Maggie bases her ideas of progressing in her life on these lower outings. When watching a play about an impoverished heroine who begins the play as “poor and virtuous” but is eventually able to triumph over “the wealthy and wicked” (35; ch. 8), she believes that she can emulate the heroine and have a better future; however, there is a
hazard in looking to a fictional character for inspiration. David Huntsperger argues that the dangers of these unrealistic melodramas have on those who consume them: “If melodrama does nothing but pin fictional happy endings onto lives dominated by an irrational economic system, then it has little potential as a subversive mode” (307). At the same time, according to Brown, even though the melodrama “blinds her to reality,” the drama provides her only way out of her economic strains (53). These plays, like her relationship with Pete, are unrealistic, but because Maggie lacks the knowledge of what is reality and what is fantasy, she views these plays as viable outcomes, which exposes her to danger as she chooses to accept these false notions as truth and ignores the signs of deception.

Because Maggie is exposed to the slums’ falsities, she, too, begins to construct her own hierarchies that are based in external appearances, but unlike those around her who try to promote themselves at the expense of others, Maggie pushes herself at the bottom of her personally conceived social order. She contrasts her stifling work environment with the well-dressed women she sees on the streets: “She envied elegance and soft palms. She craved those adornments of person which she saw everyday on the street, conceiving them to be allies of vast importance to women” (31; ch. 8). Maggie understands that she may never achieve such luxuries; the women she encounters “smiled with serenity as though forever cherished and watched over by those they loved” (31; ch. 8). Her observation of these women, whom she knows nothing about other than what they wear, implies that they are the opposite of her physically, so they must also be the opposite emotionally and held in high esteem by those who surround them.
Consequently, Maggie yearns to attain this type of lifestyle, not only because she would be better off materially and without the monotonous, crippling work, but because she would gain the respect and care she desperately desires. Pete symbolizes both the physical and emotional gains for Maggie, which strengthens her admiration and devotion to him. Maggie’s hierarchy is not well informed, so she does not have a realistic view of society; she only goes by her observations and overlooks the realities in the slums.

Since Maggie relies too heavily on Pete’s façade, she illustrates the hazards of living in a false reality as she gives her whole person to Pete: “She leaned with a dependent air as if fearing his anger or displeasure. She seemed to beseech tenderness of him” (48; ch. 12). Maggie is too inexperienced to construct her own reality, so she must rely on Pete, but she also comprehends that her happiness depends on his happiness so she must conform to Pete’s every whim, thus bestowing him more power over her. Likewise, Pete needs Maggie: he revels in her worship of him and uses her as a tool to make himself appear higher. Even though Maggie believes that she is escaping her previous life with her family, her relationship with Pete repeats the relationship between her, her mother, and her brother: while Mary and Jimmie pushed Maggie lower in their familial order, Pete emphasizes that he is elevated in the relationship. Pete is much more cunning than Maggie’s family, and she is blinded by his manipulation and cannot see this replicating lifestyle as she goes deeper and deeper into her relationship. Yet readers are aware of Pete’s exploitation by viewing their outings independently and noting that the couple’s dates are not much of a progression from Maggie’s current condition. We see
the dramatic irony of Maggie yearning to leave her past, only to repeat her oppression in her future.

Maggie’s fall does not lie in her sexual consummation with Pete, but the realization that she is merely an object in Pete’s game and has failed in moving up in the slums’ false hierarchies. During her final date with Pete, they come across Nellie and her male companion, and Maggie observes that Nellie is everything that she is not: “[Maggie] perceived that [Nellie’s] black dress fitted her to perfection. Her linen collar and cuffs were spotless. Tan gloves were stretched over her well shaped hands. A hat of prevailing fashion perched jauntily upon her dark hair” (55; ch. 14). Maggie compares herself to Nellie the same way she did to previous wealthy women in the streets. This acknowledgement only solidifies the fact that Maggie’s own shabbier appearance does not fit in with the slums’ social “higher” structure. Nellie is even more advanced than Pete in standing, so when she condescends towards him, she does so “with a coldness that seemed to reduce Pete to a pulp” (57; ch. 14). Pete seizes the opportunity by being with someone higher and quickly goes off with Nellie, leaving Maggie with the latter’s crude date. It would be severe enough if she is left alone, but now she is in a worse position as she is now accompanied by someone lower than her. Indeed, Gandal argues that what drives Maggie’s tragedy is the “constant pursuit of respectability, acceptance, or admiration. What looks like a principled assertion or behavior is really nothing but self-promotion, usually at another’s expense” (“Modern Soul” 779). Even though Pete gains a certain amount of esteem through impressing Maggie, he profits more from being with someone of a higher standing. The new relationship between Nellie and Pete acts as a foil
to Maggie’s relationship with him, and this comparison demonstrates that even those who are seemingly higher are constantly trying to advance as well. This recognition provides Maggie the opportunity to learn that her attempt in her own hierarchy is false, and her dependence on someone deceitful proves to be her downfall.

Maggie accepts that she is fallen when Pete leaves her. Before, she viewed her sexual union with Pete as a way to strengthen their relationship and therefore a positive choice; however, this consummation only demonstrates that she is disposable. It is not a sexually matured woman that is fallen, but a sexually matured woman who ends up deserted. Nevertheless, even though Maggie is left by herself, according to Stein, Maggie commits a “‘pardonable sin’ of assuming that love will redeem all” (186). She is still guiltless and she has not constructed her hierarchies to the point of corruption; she is still relatively innocent in comparison with the other characters. Also, the basis of her social order is love, not power, therefore allowing her to keep her innocence and be forgiven by readers. Maggie’s fall shatters the notion of the false hierarchies and through these breakdowns, stronger relationships may emerge by not having the individual looking out for oneself, but by beginning to show compassion.

Contemporary readers may see the loss of Maggie’s purity and reputation as an opportunity provide Maggie’s family the ability to raise themselves with integrity and reconstruct their family if they stood by her. As a cohesive unit, they could move past the Social Darwinian notions of survival and band together to create a family unit, thus making them morally stronger as individuals. This potential moral transformation highlights the possibility that a new reading of this text may be formed. Crane does not
provide such an ending, but rather conveys the realistic and pessimistic view of society by having one’s selfishness outweigh the desire to help one’s own. Yet, in acknowledging an alternative, rather than accept the pessimistic ending, we, as readers, may challenge this notion and not just view it as expected, but see the gravity in the situation and debate on the validity of the characters’ actions.

Given that Mary and Jimmie are associated with Maggie because she is fallen, they, too, are automatically compromised in position, which eliminates their previously invented hierarchies; therefore, they assume that in order to help Maggie, they would have to fall with her. This harkens back to Mizruchi’s ideas regarding sacrificing one to save the whole, but in this case, Mary and Jimmie purge Maggie from their family to save themselves, respectively. In their attempt, because they know that they cannot make a hierarchy based on their position socially, they are forced to recreate one on different premises. Both Mary and Jimmie decide to maintain their selfishness and they seize this opportunity to lift themselves above Maggie to recreate another “moral” hierarchy by condemning the poor girl. After Maggie returns home to seek refuge in her family, her family turns her into a scapegoat and spectacle for the town in order to boost their “morality.” Mary taunts and exposes Maggie to the jeering crowd:

Maggie’s mother paced to and fro, addressing the doorful of eyes, expounding like a glib showman at a museum. Her voice rang through the building.
‘Dere she stands,’ [Mary] cried, wheeling suddenly and pointing with dramatic finger. ‘Dere she stands! Lookut her! Ain’ she a dindy? An’ she was so good as to come home teh her mudder, she was! Ain’ she a beaut? Ain’ she a dindy? Fer Gawd’s sake!’ (61; ch. 15)
Mary uses her daughter’s “moral failings” to highlight her “righteous” behavior in the similar fashion to the freak shows that were used to contrast the “freaks” to the “ideal” man and woman. In freak show exhibits, as Bogdan mentions, audiences that went to freak shows often did so as a way to justify to themselves that they are superior. A freak’s deformities would act as a platform for someone to feel better about him/herself, especially if that person is considered lower in other social areas such as income (10).

Maggie was put in such situation when she saw the freak shows with Pete, but now her role as the viewer is reversed into the freak with Mary having the ability to view Maggie’s deformities as a platform to elevate herself. Mary publicly humiliates Maggie in order to solidify that she has no relation to her own daughter. To further her standing, Mary takes on the persona of a ringleader and presents Maggie as a freak, something to be gawked at for her deformities. As the crowd grows larger, Mary’s laments become more dramatic. Indeed, she can only “redeem” herself if she has an audience.

Paradoxically, by attempting to condemn Maggie to mask her moral deficiencies, Mary unmaskers her true nature, provoking a moral judgment on her own behavior and not Maggie’s. Ironically, Maggie is reduced to a freak similar to those that she glowered at during her outing with Pete, yet through those outings, Maggie is placed in her current position.

Likewise, Jimmie uses this same opportunity to publicly deprecate his sister. During this public humiliation from her mother, one is reminded of Maggie volunteering to nurse Jimmie’s wounds after the group of boys threw stones at him in the first chapter; only this time, the roles are inverted. This opens up the occasion for Jimmie to redeem
himself to Maggie by defending her. Nonetheless, while Maggie pleads for Jimmie to save her from this verbal stoning, “he drew hastily back from her” and mocks her as well. When looking down on her, “radiant virtue sat upon his brow and his repelling hands expressed horror of contamination” (62; ch. 15). Jimmie also considers Maggie to be something subhuman and treats her as such; even the slightest touch would signify Jimmie’s association with the fallen individual, which he considers to be social suicide. Jimmie’s morality is as artificial as his mother’s and while he and Mary tower over Maggie, we look down upon Jimmie and Mary.

The ultimate disparagement occurs after Maggie’s death. At this point, Maggie can no longer “mar” Mary or Jimmie because she is dead, so it would be unnecessary for her family to curse her; however, even after Maggie’s death, Mary attempts to profit at her daughter’s expense, but this time, she uses forgiveness as her weapon. Mary learns of Maggie’s death from Jimmie and begins to weep; initially, it appears that she is truly mourning the death of her daughter. However, once again, when the neighbors start to observe Mary’s reactions, she gets more and more hysterical. The neighbors contribute to her lamentations: “‘Ah, me poor Mary,’ sobbed the woman in black. With low, coddling cries, she sank on her knees by the mourner’s chair, and put her arms around her. The other woman began to groan in different keys” (73; ch. 19). The scene is similar to a dramatic play with musical undertones and dramatic stage directions, which looks more orchestrated than sincere as it harkens back to the melodrama that Maggie considered realistic. Yet, unlike Maggie, we are able to distinguish the fraudulence within this performance. In the end, Mary and Jimmie are not devolved humans – they are evolved
tyrants. They are skilled at benefitting from others’ pains, and while they may be technically “higher” than Maggie in reputation, Crane calls upon the readers to evaluate their corrupt behavior.

The familial moral obligation to a fallen individual is extended to the societal level through Maggie’s encounters with those in the streets. Because Maggie has no place in the home, she attempts to find a place in the slums, but without success. Members in their society are given the opportunity to care for and redeem the girl, but they prove to be just as callous. Even though these characters are in higher positions than Maggie, their lacking moral characters overshadow their social status, again giving readers the occasion to question the validity of these Naturalist hierarchies.

The most significant encounter occurs when Maggie meets with Pete at his work because he is the likeliest candidate to redeem Maggie by accepting responsibility for causing her ruin. He is the first person that Maggie turns to for refuge after her family because she trusts him. During their meeting, “respectability” is constantly referenced to ironically describe Pete’s character, appearance, and occupation. When Maggie initially comes by the bar, Pete is “fearing for the … eminent respectability of the place” (63; ch. 16), but at the same time, “he threw a swift, nervous glance about him, all at once feeling guilty. No one was in the room” (63; ch. 16). At this point, there seems to be some hope for Pete because by having the room unoccupied, there is not a specific person to plant this guilt; it comes from his own conscience. He is able to fathom what he has done to the poor girl and seize this opportunity to resolve his past ways; conversely, when Maggie enters the bar, he suddenly gains an inflated demeanor because Maggie becomes his
audience. He is able to ignore his conscience and focus on the person whom he believes potentially jeopardizes his position.

Even though Crane provides a way for Pete to restore himself, like Maggie’s family, he, too, chooses to profit from Maggie’s fallen position. He wants to prevent his public humiliation from becoming apparent to his employer, so he forces Maggie to leave the bar. When Maggie begs him to care for her, “Pete glanced profound irritation. His countenance reddened with the anger of a man whose respectability is being threatened” (64; ch. 16). Indeed, Pete would rather preserve his appearance to his employer and the public than fulfill his obligation to the unfortunate girl. Instead, he uses Maggie as a platform to obtain a god-like position by telling her to “go teh hell” (64; ch. 16). These are the last words that Pete says to Maggie and he denounces her like a saint to a heathen—the same way Mary and Jimmie do to Maggie. By pushing Maggie lower on his moral ladder, Pete convinces himself that he can hold on to his “good standing.” But, this meeting only demonstrates to readers Pete’s utmost deceit towards the poor girl. Once he has gained all that he needed from her, she is no longer valuable to him. Even though Pete believes that he is demonstrating moral superiority, he is revealing his moral failings.

After Maggie leaves, Pete continues to try to maintain his moral “respectability” by attempting to convince himself that he is a good person. He knows he committed an injustice towards Maggie, so when he is in the bar with Nell and other ladies, he persistently reiterates, “I’m good f’ler” (69; ch. 18), which he has already proven that he is not. Instead of focusing on his respectable position as a bartender, Pete shifts the focus
to his morals. Because he stripped away his decency by condemning Maggie, he tries to rebuild his character, but it is too late. He drinks himself into a drunken stupor, and Nell and the other girls eventually leave him with Nell’s final words to sleeping Pete: “What a damn fool” (72; ch. 18). Indeed, Pete is shown for who is really is: a fool. By the end of Pete’s narrative, he goes from a man who Maggie greatly esteems, to a drunken waste on the floor in a cheap bar. He is the only person that is punished for his actions towards Maggie because he is the inception of her demise. Still, the repercussions Maggie experiences are immeasurable to his; Pete’s punishment is isolated and after the night he will be able to continue with his life. Maggie has no such luxury.

After Maggie’s rendezvous with Pete, Crane catalogues a number of stock characters that Maggie meets. Those who initially shunned Maggie (Mary, Jimmie, and Pete) have names and distinct identities, but Crane extends his critique of those who are not willing to fall socially through a variety of generic character types. Crane also ties these types together by giving them similar characteristics, which allows the readers to judge them as a whole. Michael D. Warner argues that Crane’s characters are mainly grouped together to embody a particular “type” and “almost never function as realistic representations of people; they are abstractions and surfaces” (84). By making his characters allegories, readers may focus more on his critique regarding the failings of a Social Darwinian culture, the underlying preset for Naturalist texts.

Even though Maggie meets men of lower standing in the streets, most of the disdain she experiences comes from men of higher stature. One of Crane’s most surprising characters is the religious figure Maggie meets because those who attain a
higher, religious power are associated with charity. Maggie “had heard of the Grace of God and she decided to approach this man” (65; ch. 16). His physical description also matches Maggie’s assumptions: “His beaming, chubby face was a picture of benevolence and kind-heartedness. His eyes shone good-will” (65; ch. 16). At this point, Maggie is in tatters and nervously approaches the man; surely, someone with such a religious aura would pity her. However, the character’s externalities prove to be a false façade: “As the girl timidly accosted him, he gave a convulsive movement and saved his respectability by a vigorous side-step. He did not risk it to save a soul” (65; ch. 16). The religious figure attempting to protect his respectability echoes Pete’s desire to protect his respectability, and like Mary, Jimmie, and Pete, the religious man shows disdain for anyone who may contaminate his reputation. The irony is that those who are religious achieve morality by helping those who are less fortunate; yet, it is only through his appearance that the man receives any respectability. Crane uncovers the hypocrisy that dwells in all types of people, not just those who are victims in the slums. Even the narrator views this as an injustice, sarcastically remarking, “For how was he to know that there was a soul before him that needed saving?” (65; ch. 16). This tone signifies to readers the cruelty that accompanies self-preservation, and this concept is heightened by seeing this contradiction in a man who supposedly possesses “the Grace of God.”

Crane connects the religious figure with two upper class gentlemen that Maggie encounters in the streets. One man “had on an evening dress, a moustache, a chrysanthemum, and a look of ennui, all of which he kept carefully under his eye” (67; ch. 18). He is similar to the religious man in that he does not want to risk his appearance
for anything lowly, and when he sees Maggie’s state, his response is also similar to the
religious man’s by giving a “slight convulsive start” (67; ch. 18). Maggie also comes
across “a stout gentleman with pompous and philanthropic whiskers” (67; ch. 18), who
resembles the religious man who is “a stout gentleman in a silk hat and a chaste black
cocat” (65; ch. 18). Crane takes these two types, the religious and the rich, and presents
them together as if they are one person. These types of people have already maintained a
certain level of esteem, so it is unnecessary for them shun Maggie for they would not be
directly affected by helping her. People of success, according to the Darwinian notion of
“survival of the fittest,” want to preserve their social standing; however, in doing so, the
men risk the readers viewing them as amoral characters. Those who choose self-
preservation over empathy are revealed to be selfish and morally crippled.

Despite the coldness Maggie experiences in the streets from those who want to
preserve their façades, she does experience some mercy from the old woman in the
apartment. If one is to judge the old woman based on her physical features and
reputation, she would be considered suspect. She is a “hideous” beggar who lives off of
pennies and “once, when a lady had dropped her purse on the sidewalk, the gnarled
woman had grabbed it and smuggled it with great dexterity beneath her cloak” (12; ch. 3).
The old woman’s occupation is the least honest out of all the characters, so it would
seem unlikely that she would have anything positive to contribute to Maggie’s story.
Nevertheless, earlier in the story, she showed compassion to Jimmie by letting him stay
in her home while his mother went on her tirade (11; ch. 3). Later, when Maggie is
purged from her home, the old woman helps the poor girl by sharing her home: “Well,
come in an’ stay wid me tehnight. I ain’ got no moral standin’” (62; ch. 15); however, the old woman proves to be the only one who shows any moral sensibility by not fearing to be associated with Maggie. Although Maggie eventually chooses to seek Pete for help, the old woman provides the only amount of kindness Maggie will ever receive after her fall.

How, then, could someone who is so low in the hierarchy based on her appearance and lifestyle be deemed as one of the only moral characters? Why is it that the people who have such higher standing commit demonstrate such moral deficiencies? If we are only to acknowledge the hierarchies in place during Maggie’s time, the old woman and the wealthy people Maggie encounters contradict the principles that govern these hierarchies: external factors are reflections of people’s characteristics. Indeed, certain behaviors may be expected such as Mary and Jimmie initially possessing harsh qualities as they are lower in social standing. Yet, what are we supposed to do with those that complicate these ideas that hierarchies are naturally composed as those in higher standing are deserving of their positions? As readers, could we determine the old woman’s place in the slums as justified regardless of her compassion for Maggie? Could we rationalize those who are above Maggie socially and their disdainful actions towards her? In going beyond just a Naturalist reading, there is no real answer for these questions; the characters themselves and their relationships are more complicated than that.

It is not until Maggie witnesses countless heartless people that she begins to lose hope. Even the actual slums begin to turn its back against her: “The shutters of the tall buildings were closed like grim lips. The structures seem to have eyes that looked over
her, beyond her, at other things. Afar off the lights of the avenues glittered as if from an impossible distance” (68; ch. 18). The personified slums resemble her previous meetings with those on the streets; she is completely neglected and scorned. It is here that Maggie experiences her final awakening: she will never achieve that better life in the slums. Her dreams and hopes will always be “an impossible distance.” After she comes to this realization, she goes to a blackened river and drowns herself, finally achieving some type of solace: “The varied sounds of life, made joyous by distance and seeming unapproachableness, came faintly and died away into a silence” (68; ch. 18). Even as she is about to die, Maggie proves that she is separate from those in the slums by accepting her fate and not pining to be better than others.

Crane provides multiple hierarchies in “Maggie,” which are formed and maintained based on one’s access to power over another individual. Yet, such structures become increasingly unstable and ironic when morality is used to justify one’s position; indeed, Mary, Jimmie, and Pete form an alternate morality to advance themselves above Maggie, their scapegoat, who represents to them what they deem “immoral behavior.” In so doing, Maggie’s belittlement from them and other stock characters reveal that she is not the contaminant, but innocent amidst the chaos, and those who attempt to preserve the hierarchy with a false sense of entitlement are really the ones who are morally regressing, thus exposing the flaws of artificially constructed hierarchies. With this new reading, the value in this text does not lie in the literary conventions of the period, but more so with the multifaceted relationships between characters.
Notes

1. Mizruchi primarily focuses on The Red Badge of Courage in her analysis, but *Courage* and *Maggie* have their similarities in that they rely on sacrifices to create theatre (77). Mizruchi argues that Crane’s *Courage* uses wartime as a representation of “modern society” with the “description[s] of the relentless sociability of war” (83). *Maggie* captures a type of “war” in the slums; the harsh realities the characters live provides occasion to them to want to save themselves.

2. Robert Bogdan discusses the many fraudulent exhibits with the “freaks” being self-made or aggrandized. Many spectators were tricked into thinking that these exhibits were real, and they clung to these constructs as a means to elevate themselves. Regardless, Bogdan’s thesis for his book revolves the false social relationships surrounding this entertainment: “‘Freak’ is not a quality that belongs to the person on display. It is something that we created: a perspective, a set of practices – a social construction” (xi).
Chapter Two: *Daisy Miller*: The Fall of an ‘American Flirt’ in a Double-Standard Social Hierarchy

During the Post-Civil War Era, while the upper class may not have felt any economic threat in their homeland, they had a growing awareness of the cultural differences between them and the European elite: “Most Americans of any educational pretensions … have long felt a cultural inferiority towards Europeans. In the nineteenth century, no one felt this more strongly than the best-educated Americans” (Epstein 204). Such envy in America may not have any consequence, but as seen in Henry James’ *Daisy Miller: A Study*, when Americans stay in Europe, there is a need to shed one’s “Americaness” and assimilate into European culture, thus adopting European customs and acquiring prestige. Yet, wanting to conform to a certain ideal invites potential dangers. According to Susan L. Mizruchi, “Henry James said that ‘it’s a complex fate, being an American, and one of the responsibilities it entails is fighting against a superstitious valuation of Europe’” (209). Such irrational esteem may lead to anxieties among expatriate Americans. As C. Allen Carter suggests:

Marks of status are neither serene nor final. Inevitably by the operation of dialectical change, the dominant hierarchy is threatened, perhaps even toppled, [with] a new sense of inadequacy… [and] the sense of insecurity that accompanies a sense of inferiority, real or potential, or imagined. (10)

If in America the elite would not feel fear that their positions would be threatened, but once they remove themselves from comfort and into a place where they may either advance or regress socially, their once-dominant positions in their hierarchy becomes insignificant. Since the expatriates are not wholly a part of the European elite, they are
susceptible to losing their honorary European status. It is unclear whether the Europeans, the expatriates, or both imposed these anxieties; regardless, to partake in actions that may have jeopardized their fragile position would be unwise.

To add to these anxieties, among the social circles, women often were the face of their families’ social status. As Epstein observes, American “society has tended to be controlled by women” and it was necessary to try to preserve their position (170). Therefore, women who attempted to gain new freedoms through their expressions and behaviors, referred to as the “new women,” brought about much trepidation as women started to yearn for the many freedoms men had over them. According to Linda Frost, the concern at the time, primarily among traditionalists, was that this new woman’s movement threatened “every aspect of social order in the United States” as they considered that the “categories that define[d] American identity [would] be completely destroyed, once … women move[d] beyond the private sphere and into the realm of public political action” (172). This lack of control was particularly problematic, as Epstein writes that “James noted that his audience was composed preponderantly of women [and] that women were the cultural representatives of their husbands” (170). Therefore, while many men were stressed from business, women would attend “concerts, galleries, lectures, imbibing culture in heady draught” as women had “social and cultural aspirations” (170-171). At the same time, Martha Banta claims James also saw a difference between men and women as he had:

anxiety over the ruinous effect upon American life when notice was granted to only two kinds of people: the man of business and the woman of society … his long-held fears were reconfirmed: lack of relational complexity between men and women stifled any chance for creative
reciprocity between attributes of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity.’ (Banta 24)

Banta asserts that James sympathized with women of his time mainly because he was deemed to possess “feminine” traits by being an artist and living abroad (24-25). Though not a “proto-feminist,” James noticed the achievements among women, especially those who were progressing politically and socially: “She is no helpless victim or inconsequential idler. By means of her intelligence, taste, and vigor, she has seized the opportunity given her by the man’s ‘default’ to make American life ‘over in her image’” (qtd. in Banta 32). At this point, women straddled both the domestic and public sphere, which came with its own anxieties. The concerns of the “woman question” juxtaposed with women’s ever-expanding successes led to a very trying time for women during the turn of the century. James embraced the idea of the “feminine” entering the male-dominated society, but not the other way around. Men still possessed a prevailing role in society, which was considered favorable to the household position.

Henry James’ “Daisy Miller: A Study” addresses the anxieties of class with expatriated Americans among Europeans, as well as the “new woman” emerging in a highly traditional society. In Geneva, the story’s primary setting, an unspoken hierarchy among the elite women consisting of the established expatriated old money, the nouveau riche, and low foreigners make up Europe’s high society. Daisy Miller, a young American, still wants to become a part of the social elite, but her naïveté regarding that society’s standards prevents her from shedding her American mannerisms, thus prompting those in high society, particularly Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker to deem Daisy as an “other.” Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker have already assimilated themselves
in European society, but since they are Americans, their critique of the young girl is not based solely on her behavior, but how her behavior may be considered a reflection of them, which would inevitably, jeopardize their status. In attempting to maintain their position, however, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker expose how cruel and slanderous they are towards Daisy, consequently lowering them morally. In conjunction with the gender hierarchy of men being superior to women, men are exempted from these rules and do not suffer any consequences, regardless of how questionable their behavior may be. Therefore, Winterbourne is able to attach himself to Daisy, but his intentions are not pure, either: he views her as a subordinate science experiment. Combining the social disdain with Winterbourne’s own recklessness, their society succeeds in purging itself of Daisy when she catches Roman fever and dies. The disease represents two types of death: both her literal death and symbolic death as catching “Roman fever” also indicates her association with a lowly, foreign contaminant: Giovanelli. Once Daisy is removed from the society through her social and literal death, Mrs. Costello and Winterbourne are able to recompose their hierarchy and accept no responsibility for the poor girl’s demise, which further solidifies their callous nature and how social status is not equated with morality, thus complicating the notions of Naturalist readings.

This chapter primarily focuses on the downfalls of having two equally unstable groups put against each other in order to maintain or advanced in their hierarchy. Daisy knows that while she acquired social status in America, she does not have the same outcome in Vevey. Likewise, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker acknowledge that no matter how much they try to assimilate into European society, they are still Americans. Because
both are at a disadvantage, the two sides have a choice: come together and progress with each other, or push the weaker one down in order to save the other’s position. Daisy attempts to do the former as her motives for entering society are innocent, and she does not quite understand the “rules” of the hierarchical game; however, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker choose to cut ties with Daisy in order to maintain their position. But in doing so, they expose their corrupt nature so that they can save themselves. From a Naturalist perspective, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker are fair in “winning” this game as they prove that they are more prepared than Daisy. But the punishment Daisy receives outweighs her offenses. Indeed, playing this game goes beyond simply possessing wealth and other character traits; what is more significant is how the characters react to the “fallen’s” actions and whether or not the characters use this as an opportunity to better themselves and the fallen individual or only themselves. This new reading problematizes the idea of going against someone of equal stature. What, then, would be considered the favorable action? What dictates the characteristics that make a person better? Another component to consider is the double standard among the men and the women.

Daisy is often compared to the males in the novella: her brother, Rudolph, Giovanelli, a “lowly” Italian whom she befriends, and Winterbourne, her primary love interest. Such disparities between the two genders signify the unbalanced reading that is conducted onto this and similar texts. As modern readers, we have a greater awareness for gender inequality, and therefore, those values affect the way we generally read texts. In *Daisy*, the constant justification for the males’ pitfalls versus Daisy’s is unfair, and readers are more apt to see the injustices that pervade those within the hierarchies.
Combining the constant condescension with the gender injustices make the hope for 
Daisy very improbable; but these premises are not valid for modern readers as they may 
be for Naturalist readers. Instead of viewing *Daisy* as a historical study, a new reading 
suggests that analyzing the injustices within the “superior” characters actions exposes the 
severity within these hierarchies and callous readings.

From the beginning, the narrator establishes a distinction between European and 
American society and merges them together in Vevey. Vevey, representing the European 
elite, “is famous, even classical, being distinguished from many of its upstart neighbors 
by an air of both luxury and of maturity” (82; pt. 1). According to William Coleman, 
“man in nineteenth-century industrial Europe represented the highest human attainment 
of civilization” (qtd. in Scheiber 76). Historically speaking, Europe is indeed older than 
America and was considered a more advanced, more civilized culture, which adds to its 
sense of grandeur, and those of the European upper class had established wealth and 
esteem. The Americans are not considered with the same regard: “Vevey assumed at this 
period some of the characteristics of an American watering place” (82; pt. 1). The 
animalistic connection makes an obvious point about where the Americans stand in this 
social hierarchy. Hence, if Americans desire to be a part of the “advanced” European 
elite, it is important for them to separate themselves from their American heritage and 
assimilate into European society in order to appeal to Europe’s high class. But, with such 
a large, comparative gap between the Americans and European elite, how probable is it 
for an American to join the top tier of European society?
James’ young female protagonist, Daisy Miller, desires to do just that. She craves society and wants to boast about her status-seeking accomplishments so she can tap into the world of the social elite, but we soon learn that she has many pitfalls in her strategies. When talking to Winterbourne, a wealthy expatriate and nephew to Mrs. Costello, about people she knows, Daisy introduces a name and adds “perhaps you know her” (89; pt. 1). Such a statement would connect Daisy to Winterbourne if he does, indeed, know Daisy’s acquaintance because they would be associated with the same circle, thus allowing Daisy to be better acquainted with Winterbourne’s high society. Yet, her approach in namedropping is rather forward and gauche, thus indicating her ineptitude for higher society.

While certainly forward in her attempts to achieve higher stature, the way Daisy seeks society in America is the antithesis of gaining society in Europe, which only highlights her social incompetence. When comparing the upper classes in Europe to America, Daisy notes that she is much more equipped in American society: “There isn’t any society [in Europe]; or, if there is, I don’t know where it keeps itself … In New York I had lots of society. Last winter I had seventeen dinners given me; and three of them were by gentlemen” (91; pt. 1). Daisy admits that she lacks awareness in European society, making it unlikely that she would be able to emulate any of the proper behavior associated with it. The only knowledge she does have about society is in America, and even that is questionable. Out of those seventeen dinners, it is unclear who provided the other thirteen if they were not gentlemen. It leaves room for Winterbourne and the readers to guess whom she received these dinners from and leaving such powers to others
may compromise her position if we are to assume that questionable persons gave them. Additionally, if she is so oblivious to the rules of society in her own country, how can she be expected to comprehend the rules of a foreign one? It seems that Daisy perhaps is not familiar with any type of society at all.

In comparison to Daisy’s loose definition of society, European high society is very tight-knit and select, which makes it more tantalizing for Daisy. Upon finding out Mrs. Costello, Winterbourne’s influential aunt, is an exclusive character, Daisy takes it upon herself to quickly follow Mrs. Costello’s attitudes towards society and wants to know her based on her selectiveness: “I like a lady to be exclusive; I’m dying to be exclusive myself. Well, we are exclusive, mother and I. We don’t speak to everyone – or they don’t speak to us. I suppose it’s about the same thing” (99; pt. 1). Daisy not speaking to everyone and everyone not speaking to Daisy are clearly two different things, but she is too ignorant to know the difference. She also contradicts her earlier boast about acquiring a vast amount of society by stating that exclusivity is synonymous with society, which suggests that she is not even confident in her views on the social order. She easily sways in her opinions so she can impress Winterbourne, but her polar views make her indecisive nature more comical than that of a serious social climber.

Daisy is not so much chastised for spending time with Winterbourne since he is of a higher class; she is only judged once the expatriates realize that she is associated with those of a lower standing. Because Daisy is unaware of these social structures, she blurs the edges between her standing and the standing of those who are seemingly “below” her. A recurring discussion among the elitists is how close Daisy’s family is to their courier,
Eugenio. Mrs. Costello gossips with Winterbourne that the Miller family “treat[s] the courier like a familiar friend – like a gentleman. I shouldn’t wonder if he dines with them” (96; pt. 1). Mrs. Costello judges the Miller family for treating Eugenio, regardless of his position, with respect. In treating Eugenio with such regard, we see that he returns the favor by being protective of Daisy’s well being. Upon meeting Winterbourne, “Eugenio had looked at Winterbourne from head to foot” and looks at him with disdain when he finds out he will take her to the Chateau de Chillon (94; pt. 1). Since it is not his place to dictate Daisy’s actions, he remains silent, but we see that he is aware and disproving of Winterbourne’s shoddy intentions. Even though Eugenio is technically lower in social standing, he is learned in proper female behavior and cares about Daisy’s well being, which shows that Daisy has at least one person who, while not high in stature, possesses sound morals. Contemporary readers who do not share Mrs. Costello’s class bias may consider that, though seemingly naïve, Daisy chooses wisely in surrounding herself with people based on their good characters rather than their wealth as being morally correct outweighs the benefits of being socially accepted. Basing her relationships on the their character allows her to trust the individuals more whereas basing her friendships solely on stature may lead to future problems, as we see later when Winterbourne, one who focuses primarily on his social standing, ends up slighting Daisy. Even though a person may have a sounder social standing, that does not necessarily mean that he possess a moral temperament.

Another man Daisy associates with is Giovanelli, a “low-lived foreigner” (120; pt. 2). He is the only European character in the novella, which one would assume makes
him a respectable figure based on the American reverence towards the European elite, but among the European hierarchy, Giovanelli is at the bottom because he is Italian and is considered a “barber’s block” (131; pt. 2). Giovanelli also becomes a scapegoat, especially by Winterbourne, who provides two contrasting views for him. Giovanelli demonstrates many gentleman-like behaviors from having “all the proper functions of a handsome Italian” (127; pt. 2), having “the most lovely [singing] voice” (126; pt. 2), and being “devoted” (130; pt. 2). Winterbourne also takes note of Giovanelli’s good nature:

Giovanelli, from the start, had treated Winterbourne with distinguished politeness. He listened with a deferential air to his remarks; he laughed punctiliously at his pleasantries; he seemed disposed to testify to his belief that Winterbourne was a superior young man. He carried himself in no degree like a jealous wooer; he had obviously a great deal of tact; he had no objection to your expecting a little humility of him. (135-36; pt. 2)

Indeed, Giovanelli’s character appears respectable and harmless; however, Winterbourne’s jealousy of Daisy spending time with her new friend causes him to vilify Giovanelli. He misconstrues Giovanelli’s behavior and projects a number of moral failings on him: He “has never found himself in personal contact with such splendor, such opulence, such expensiveness as this young lady’s … He has nothing but his handsome face to offer, and there is a substantial Mr. Miller in that mysterious land of dollars” (132; pt. 2). Winterbourne’s biased readings of Giovanelli lack any foundation; there is no evidence that demonstrates that Giovanelli is a financial opportunist. Because he is Italian, his ethos is automatically questioned much like the way Daisy is judged for being a flirt. Daisy does not acknowledge Giovanelli’s social standing and holds him with the same respect as she does Winterbourne. She honors her word by keeping her appointment to walk with Giovanelli, against the wishes of Mrs. Walker and
Winterbourne: “Did you ever hear anything so cool as Mrs. Walker’s wanting me to get into her carriage and drop poor Mr. Giovanelli, and under the pretext that it was proper? People have different ideas! It would have been most unkind; he had been talking about that walk for ten days” (127; pt. 2). Daisy shows some moral merit by considering Giovanelli’s feelings in her decision to stay. She is not willing to sacrifice someone just to preserve her own standing. While Daisy is uneducated regarding these societal norms and breaks them unknowingly, with her innocence Daisy embraces whomever without being influenced by class differences. From a humanistic viewpoint, Daisy transcends social class by wanting to amalgamate both the higher and lower classes together; she is able to look past the social standing and see the person’s qualities. Though her intentions are good, her naïveté is her downfall.

Daisy’s manner is contrasted by the expatriates, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker, who have been members of Europe’s elite group and embody the characteristics of those who choose to have this group remain highly selective of its members to the point of offensiveness. As Daisy’s hasty behavior progresses, Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker cast heavier judgment on her. They are both higher in position than she and do not have to interact with her if they choose not to; however, even though Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker have assimilated into elite European society, they are still Americans, and they are concerned that Daisy’s reckless actions may be considered representative of them as well. According to Scheiber, “Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker gravely distinguish between the intuitive ‘natural’ morality practiced by Daisy and the social codes that serve as markers of class – that is, of the more highly ‘evolved’” (88). They earned their
positions among the Europeans, and therefore are the “evolved,” elite, but with Daisy committing “immoral” crimes, they may be associated with her regression. In their attempt to preserve their standing by chastising Daisy, they only reveal how their self-preservation leads to moral digression. Robert C. Post considers that Henry James is a realist and “the task of the realist … is to constitute his characters through the presentation of successive layers of information. The reader must then construct and evaluate the novel’s characters on the basis of the information provided” (388). In that light, as we see Mrs. Costello’s and Mrs. Walker’s behavior towards Daisy, they are more causative in the girl’s demise than Daisy herself.

Mrs. Costello is described as “a widow with a fortune; a person of much distinction … She had a long pale face, a high nose, and a great deal of striking white hair, which she wore in large puffs and rouleaux over the top of her head” (95; pt. 1). Having a high nose gives the implications of her turning her nose up to others in society, which is elaborated in her guidance to Winterbourne regarding high society:

Mrs. Costello had not seen [her nephew] for a many years, and she was greatly pleased with him, manifesting her approbation by initiating him into many of the secrets of that social sway which, as she gave him to understand, he exerted in the American capital. She admitted that she was very exclusive; but, if he were acquainted with New York, he would see that one had to be. And her picture of the minutely hierarchical constitution of the society of that city, which she presented to him in a many different lights, was, to Winterbourne’s imagination, almost oppressively striking. (95; pt. 1)

In order to keep an elitist group successful, it needs to be exclusive. The group must acquire traits superior to others, in this case capital and reputation, instead of considering the person’s characters. Her entire basis of high society is the fact that it is restrictive, the
complete opposite of Daisy’s views. Mrs. Costello is also aware of this and, therefore, considers that “Miss Daisy Miller’s place in the social scale was low” and that her family is “very common … They are the sort of Americans that one does one’s duty by not – not accepting” (95; pt. 1). With the Miller family having close relations with their courier, if Mrs. Costello allowed Daisy to be a part of her society, the credibility of their group would automatically be lowered by having ties to someone significantly lower than themselves. Mrs. Costello has yet to meet Daisy, and instead judges her solely on external factors, the basis of her society. Whether she is a kind girl or not is irrelevant.

Mrs. Costello’s tactic for separating herself from Daisy is to antagonize and expose her “corruptive” faults, which helps Mrs. Costello in believing that she is even morally superior to Daisy. From the beginning, Mrs. Costello alludes that being associated with Daisy and her family would bring down her own status. While she tries to distance herself from Daisy, eventually, Mrs. Costello cannot avoid being a part of Daisy’s behavior with Giovanelli as she has “heard a dozen people speak of it” (131; pt. 2). With so much talk circulating, Mrs. Costello sees the hazardous implications of being reluctantly associated with Daisy and is not alone in this worry: “A dozen of the American colonists in Rome came to talk with Mrs. Costello … between Mrs. Costello and her friends, there was a great deal said about the poor little Miss Miller’s going really ‘too far’” (133; pt. 2). To attempt to correct Daisy’s faults would mean for Mrs. Costello to interact with her, something she refuses to do as she is already closely linked to the girl by default, so the only viable option is to push her as far away as possible from the group through condemnation.
Mrs. Costello is willing to sacrifice the young girl to only raise herself and justify her severe disdain, but it is uncertain as to who the true villain is in this situation. Mrs. Costello wants to believe that Daisy is the perpetrator because her “reckless” behavior casts a shadow on Mrs. Costello’s status, but Daisy never overtly attempts to damage Mrs. Costello’s reputation or person. Mrs. Costello, on the other hand, deliberately gossips about Daisy in an attempt to distance herself and to eliminate Daisy from the social group. Because Mrs. Costello has never encountered Daisy, all of her information is hearsay, and some of it is questionable. For instance, she accuses the courier, whom she has never met, of introducing the Italian to the young girl so the courier may receive a higher commission; however, Winterbourne quickly accounts the claim as false as Giovanelli knows that he has nothing more to offer Daisy than his handsome appearance (132; pt. 2). There is no evidence to back Mrs. Costello’s claim, and the attack on the courier, whom we have already seen appear to respect Daisy’s reputation, is overly hasty and cruel. This insult also calls into question Daisy’s and her mother’s being easily duped by someone they respect. Mrs. Costello has these stories engrained in her head either from others’ gossip or her own imagination, but judging how prominent Mrs. Costello is in her social circle, it is not unlikely that this and similar stories are being spread, contributing to Daisy’s already ruined reputation. Discounting Daisy gives Mrs. Costello more leverage in making herself appear higher not only in social standing, but in moral standing, but using her power in the social circle gives her an unfair advantage in attacking the young girl, who is still relatively unaware of the gossip revolving around her.
Mrs. Walker is more forgiving than Mrs. Costello in that she is initially more receptive towards Daisy. Unlike Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Walker became learned in European society in order to be inaugurated into the elite group:

Mrs. Walker was one of those American ladies who, while residing abroad, make a point, in their own phrase, of studying European society, and she had on this occasion collected several specimens of her diversely born fellow mortals to serve, as it were, as textbooks. (125; pt. 2)

Mrs. Walker is not as established as Mrs. Costello in the social ladder, but she comprehends what is proper and improper and evaluates Daisy’s behavior based on those criteria. But since Mrs. Walker’s position is not completely solidified, she cannot afford to fraternize with those who demonstrate improper behavior.

Mrs. Walker previously made acquaintance with Daisy, thus allowing her the ability to confront Daisy about her conduct and try to remedy the gossip surrounding the young girl, but her actions are geared to protect herself rather than Daisy. When she sees Daisy walking around with Giovanelli, “Mrs. Walker was flushed; she wore an excited air. ‘It is really too dreadful,’ she said. ‘That girl must not do this sort of thing. She must not walk here with you two men. Fifty people have noticed her’” (120; pt. 2). Like Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Walker tallies how many people have noted Daisy’s behavior, and if there are fifty people who have noticed Daisy’s behavior, there may be fifty people that associate Daisy with Mrs. Walker. Mrs. Walker tries to convince Daisy to go into the carriage so that she may privately scold Daisy for her unwarranted behavior. As Mrs. Walker tells Daisy, “You are old enough to be more reasonable. You are old enough, dear Miss Miller, to be talked about” (122; pt. 2). Mrs. Walker hides under the façade that she wants to care for Daisy’s reputation, but she really wants to protect her own because if
Daisy is being talked about, then it may be likely that others will talk about how Daisy’s “American” behavior is representative of all Americans. When Daisy turns away from Mrs. Walker’s command for Daisy to join her in her carriage, “there were tears in Mrs. Walker’s eyes” (123; pt. 2). Her plan to teach Daisy is in vain. She knows that if she is not able to educate Daisy about her behavior and how it affects those around her, then Daisy will continue with her irresponsible actions, leaving Mrs. Walker’s reputation at her mercy.

Mrs. Walker decides she must employ a more drastic action if she wants to preserve her status. Daisy attends Mrs. Walker’s party, even though she previously slighted the woman, and acts as though no ill feelings are present. Daisy’s gay demeanor sends Mrs. Walker into an outrage as she alludes to Daisy’s behavior to whoredom: “Every one knows you!” (127; pt. 2 emphasis added). Mrs. Walker implies that Daisy “knows” everyone by being promiscuous and physically involved with them. Mrs. Walker proceeds to ignore Daisy the rest of the night, even when the young girl leaves:

When Daisy came to take leave of Mrs. Walker, this lady conscientiously repaired the weakness of which she had been guilty at the moment of the young girl’s arrival. She turned her back straight upon Miss Miller and left her to depart with what grace she might. (129; pt. 2)

The hostess then tells Winterbourne, “She never enters by drawing room again!” (130; pt. 2). Mrs. Walker joins Mrs. Costello in choosing to eliminate Daisy from her society; Mrs. Walker refuses to have Daisy contaminating her household.

Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker exemplify Mizruchi’s idea that to protect one’s group, one may deem it necessary to purge the individual rather than educate her to conform to the group’s standards, even if that means it leads to destroying the individual.
As Mizruchi suggests, “Sacrifice is necessary to the maintenance of social order, the achievement of a certain level of culture, and the perpetuation of a certain kind of economy” (22-23). Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Walker, and their expatriate group “ceased to invite [Daisy]; and they intimated that they desired to express to observant Europeans the great truth that, though Miss Daisy Miller was a young American lady, her behavior was not representative – was regarded by her compatriots as abnormal” (134; pt. 2). They disassociate themselves from her, and to do so, they condemn her, yet Daisy is not an immoral being, but an “American flirt.” Daisy desires the attention and is friendly, but she does not overtly compromise her morality. She also argues that men and married women are able to talk with whom they please, so why is she not granted with the same freedoms? Daisy is being a progressive woman, but Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker are those traditionalists who refuse to jeopardize their standing because the girl wants her equal rights. Indeed, Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Walker and their friends conjure insults to further damage and lower Daisy’s reputation, but we see the group’s pettiness and cruelty are what drive Daisy into isolation. Winterbourne notes that “it was painful to hear so much that was pretty and undefended, and natural assigned to a vulgar place among the categories of disorder” (133; pt. 2). Even Winterbourne begins to see the injustices imposed upon her. Daisy is unjustly grouped with the morally corrupt, but the entire foundation of the accusations is based on gossip and the need of others to promote themselves at her expense.

Daisy’s death heralds the success of them purging her from society. What is interesting is that there is a large group at her funeral, “a number larger than the scandal
excited by the young lady’s career would have led you to expect” (142; pt. 2). This counteracts the previous point that no one wanted to continue being associated with her. She is no longer a threat to their community, so it would be safe for them to show up at her funeral. If they were not to show up at the funeral, it would imply that they would be slighting a now innocent and defenseless victim. They are able to cover for their actions by appearing sorry for her demise. The abrupt turnaround makes their presence appear orchestrated and insincere. It loosely resembles the scene in Stephen Crane’s Maggie: A Girl of the Streets when Maggie’s mother appears mournful of her daughter’s death, but the dramatics there prevent the scene from feeling genuine. While there are no dramatics in this scene, as it is briefly alluded to, there is the sense of showing superficial sympathy just so one appears to be a sympathetic character. It seems unlikely that those who had so much disdain for the young girl would attend her funeral; they did not sympathize with her societal death, but they pretend to be caring when she is literally dead and not able to harm their position any longer.

Societal hierarchies govern much of the women’s behavior, but the gender hierarchy also plays its role in shunning Daisy. Daisy’s behavior does not jeopardize the position of the men, nor do men who demonstrate similar behavior to Daisy get chastised for their actions, but when viewing their behavior in conjunction with Daisy, we see that it only further highlights how unjust society’s treatment is towards her. Mrs. Costello makes a clear distinction between the freedoms of a man versus a woman when she tells Winterbourne that he is not at fault for communicating with Daisy: “Of course a man may know everyone. Men are welcome to the privilege!” (111; pt. 2); yet women are not.
Daisy’s brother, Randolph, acts as Daisy’s foil because though he is much younger, nine years old, he lacks any supervision and has his rebellious actions justified, highlighting how Daisy is overly scrutinized. From the time we first meet Randolph, he demonstrates his rambunctious behavior: “He carried in his hand a long alpenstock, the sharp point of which he thrust into everything that he approached” (84; pt. 1). He also refuses to adhere to a bedtime: “He wouldn’t go to bed at all ... he stayed up all night in the public parlor. He wasn’t in bed at twelve o’clock” (102; pt. 1). It would be assumed that such actions would receive punishment, but they do not. Instead, those around him justify his conduct; his mother uses his age as an excuse and even Mrs. Costello does not disapprove of his behavior. Her double standard is seen when Winterbourne argues that while Daisy receives visitors at a late hour, Randolph “sits up till midnight.” His argument is quickly brushed off by Mrs. Costello’s reply: “He must be edified by what he sees” (124; pt. 2). She wants Randolph to learn from his sister’s “mistakes,” but does not consider that it is improper behavior for a young boy to go around causing a significant disturbance. He is given so much freedom in comparison to his sister, which may lead to him contributing to this double standard hierarchy in the future as we see that Winterbourne and Giovanelli are granted with multivalent freedoms, of which they constantly take advantage. People like Mrs. Costello who rationalize Randolph’s behavior are only encouraging him to continue with his immature actions rather than have him take responsibility for his own choices.

In Daisy’s death, Randolph chimes in with the rest regarding his sister’s fault in the matter. He concludes that her death resulted from “going round at night ... that’s what
made her sick. She’s always going round at night” (141; pt. 2). The positions have turned between Daisy and Randolph. Before, Daisy was the one scolding Randolph for his actions, and rightfully so, but now Randolph is the one who analyzes his sister’s behavior as he “knows” better. The one person who was below Daisy in the hierarchical structure within their family is even above her. She is reduced to someone who is lower than a child, but we see the unfairness in this reversal as Randolph clearly demonstrates his immaturity, yet he is expected to be viewed as an adult authority by pushing Daisy below him. Since Daisy is dead, she is not able to scold Randolph as she has done before; Daisy is defenseless from Randolph using her death as a platform to preach about her abominations. Randolph is similar to many other characters in the novella as he lowers Daisy in order to make himself higher.

In a more general sense, a constant critique towards Daisy is that she socializes with many Italian men, those in society that would surely “jeopardize” those who have much higher standing. Among these men, Daisy is most preoccupied with Mr. Giovanelli. Seemingly, Giovanelli and Daisy have something in common: they are blamed for their society’s anxieties and moral failings, but because Giovanelli is a man, he does not experience the wrath of the community like Daisy. Winterbourne tells Daisy that Giovanelli should have “never proposed to a young lady of this country to walk about the streets with him” (127; pt. 2). While Winterbourne accuses Giovanelli of improper conduct, he never confronts the man directly; in fact, it appears that no one addresses Giovanelli for his behavior. To be a “lowly Italian” has its negative implications, but Giovanelli does not suffer any consequence. Giovanelli’s lower position works to his
advantage because he has nothing to lose while being with Daisy. He follows her every whim, regardless of how reckless her judgment may be. When Winterbourne sees the two in the Colosseum late at night, Winterbourne thinks “simply of the craziness, from a sanitary point of view, of a delicate young girl lounging away the evening in this nest of malaria” (139; pt. 2). Winterbourne immediately reprimands Giovanelli’s lack of foresight, to which Giovanelli replies, “I told the signorina it was a grave indiscretion, but when was the signorina ever prudent?” (139; pt. 2). Rather than admitting his folly, Giovanelli projects his own carelessness onto Daisy and blames her for exposing them to the grave illness. Even Giovanelli, who in his own right is a scapegoat, links Daisy with being a reckless girl, rather than accepting responsibility.

After Daisy is diagnosed with Roman fever, Giovanelli’s cowardice prevents him from going to see her, therefore distancing him from the indiscretion in taking her to the Colosseum in the first place. Winterbourne confronts Giovanelli’s fault during Daisy’s funeral, but Giovanelli’s only defense is reiterating that Daisy wanted to go as he dismisses Winterbourne’s persistence and eventually leaves the funeral. Both Giovanelli and Daisy go to the Colosseum late in the night, but only Daisy suffers its repercussions; Giovanelli leaves her and her funeral unscathed and has the opportunity to continue with his life. Giovanelli is directly linked to Daisy’s death, just as Pete is causative in Maggie’s ruin. Even though Giovanelli and Pete receive isolated punishment, they are able to go about their business while Daisy and Maggie are left to their deaths. Due to their society’s double standards, Giovanelli is able to escape his position as the scapegoat by imposing his guilt onto Daisy.
While Daisy exposes the double standards in the European elite society, the person that takes advantage of this the most is Winterbourne. Winterbourne hastily chastises Giovanelli, but Winterbourne is the guiltiest in viewing Daisy as something subhuman: a study, hence the sub-title of the novella. He views her as a specimen, therefore making him the scientist and in control of her, which makes his motives questionable. There are times when Winterbourne seems genuinely interested in the young lady, but other times, his need to examine Daisy casts her more as an object than a love interest. From the beginning, Winterbourne acknowledges his own indiscretions by talking to Daisy:

In Geneva, as he has been perfectly aware, a young man was not at liberty to speak to a young unmarried lady except under rarely occurring conditions; but here at Vevey, what conditions could be better than these? – a pretty American girl coming and standing in front of you in a garden. (86; pt. 1)

Winterbourne’s justification is hardly excusable, but he continues with it by showing interest in this female specimen: “Winterbourne presently risked an observation upon the beauty of the view … He had a great relish for feminine beauty; he was addicted to observing and analyzing it; and as regards this young lady’s face he made several observations” (87-88; pt. 1). By establishing this scientist/creation relationship, Winterbourne is above Daisy in this constructed hierarchy and takes ownership over her. In doing so, however, Winterbourne does not consider her at all in his decisions.

Winterbourne furthers his disproportionate relationship by compromising Daisy’s position so he can advance in his “observation,” which establishes his double standard
and society’s double standards regarding their interactions. After he considers Daisy’s forward behavior, he considers other women whom he has previously observed:

He had never, as yet, had any relations with young ladies of [Daisy’s] category. He had known, here in Europe, two or three women – persons older than Miss Daisy Miller, and provided, for respectability’s sake, with husbands – who were great coquettes – dangerous, terrible women, with whom one’s relations were liable to take a serious turn. But this young girl was not a coquette in that sense; she was very unsophisticated; she was only a pretty American flirt. Winterbourne was almost grateful for having found the formula that applied to Miss Daisy Miller … He wondered what the regular conditions and limitations of one’s intercourse with a pretty American flirt. It presently became apparent that he was on the way to learn. (92; pt. 1)

Based on Winterbourne’s deduction, he has interacted with up to a few women whose reputations were questionable, and if Daisy was this way, it would be dangerous to go forward with his study of the young flirt. Since Daisy appears harmless, Winterbourne decides that it would be in his best interest to go forward in his interaction with her, but again, he does not regard Daisy’s not-yet-tarnished reputation. The limitations for a man versus a woman have already been established and the woman’s boundaries are much more strict. Yet, as a person comparable to a scientist, Winterbourne only cares about what his result will be in his experiment, not whether his specimen may be harmed in the process.

In trying to learn more about Daisy, the specimen, Winterbourne creates a type of game when communicating with her, again degrading the American girl. After acknowledging the unsuitability of interacting with an unmarried lady, Winterbourne still approaches Daisy and “wondered whether he had gone too far, but he decided that he must advance farther, rather than retreat” (86; pt. 1). Regardless of these sorts of
conditions, Winterbourne chooses to proceed in his conquest, for Daisy would be his prize. In order to safely advance in Daisy’s good graces, Winterbourne discusses with Mrs. Costello about Daisy wanting to meet her as that would “guarantee [his] respectability” (96; pt. 1), upon which his aunt replies, “And pray who is to guarantee hers?” (96; pt. 1). While Winterbourne’s tactic to gain another specimen/trophy out of Daisy may benefit him, it is likely that it would come with a consequence, that consequence being particularly hurtful towards Daisy.

Obtaining Daisy comes with its obstacles, only making the attainment that much more rewarding. One of those challenges is Daisy’s mother, Mrs. Miller, who is aware of the proper behavior that is expected from young girls. Daisy announces to her mother that Winterbourne will take her to the Chillon castle alone, which renders a startled response from her mother, yet Mrs. Miller’s reluctance only fuels Winterbourne to push for their engagement: “Winterbourne took for granted that she deeply disapproved of the projected excursion; but he said to himself that she was a simple, easily managed person, and that a few deferential protestations would take the edge from her displeasure” (102; pt. 1). Winterbourne succeeds by convincing Mrs. Miller to allow her daughter to go to the castle, and he almost succeeds in taking Daisy out on a boat in the night, a time that would guarantee Daisy a tarnished reputation. The logical choice would be for Winterbourne to want to preserve Daisy’s innocence based on his gossiping aunt’s disdain for the young girl, but his need for advancing for his prize overshadows any regard to protect her respectability.
Winterbourne’s motives grow more questionable as the novella progresses, and he goes from him being a protector to chastising her and considering her a condemnable figure. He chooses to abandon his “project” once he discovers that there is competition: Giovanelli. Upon meeting the young Italian, Winterbourne’s contempt is utterly apparent, but not so much for Giovanelli as for Daisy as he ridicules Daisy’s behavior and not Giovanelli’s. When he sees the couple at the Colosseum, he realizes that Daisy may not regard him the same way she does the Italian. To cope with his loss, Winterbourne convinces himself of an awakening: “It was as if a sudden illumination had been flashed upon the ambiguity of Daisy’s behavior, and the riddle had become easy to read. She was a young lady whom a gentleman need no longer be in pains to respect” (138; pt. 2). Winterbourne refuses to accept the defeat of Daisy desiring the company of another “lower” gentleman, so he provides an alternate view on the situation.

Daisy’s behavior is starting to affect Winterbourne’s position as his one-time experiment leaves him and moves on to another suitor. Therefore, he sacrifices Daisy with the justification that he is above her and rids this “contaminant” from his circle. Instead of considering his blame in slighting Daisy on numerous occasions, he deems her a fallen woman, someone who easily duped him. In making a victim of himself, Winterbourne thinks he is free from any responsibility in Daisy’s ruined reputation, but only a few scenes prior he hoped to take her to a castle alone and on a boat late at night. Since her companion is no longer him, her behavior is suddenly unpardonable for Winterbourne and it only underscores his responsibility.
Not only does Daisy’s death help Winterbourne in relieving himself from any blame for her fall, but her death also marks the triumph of the expatriates purging themselves from the ruined girl and them being able to restabilize their once conformed hierarchy. When Mrs. Costello and Winterbourne briefly discuss her, Mrs. Costello denies that Winterbourne had committed any injustice towards the girl. Winterbourne does admit to Mrs. Costello that he may “have lived too long in foreign parts,” implying that he has been too heavily influenced by Mrs. Costello and is not ready to be callous towards those who do not live up to elitist standards, but his remorse for Daisy is short-lived since he eventually goes back to Geneva to resume his “studying” (143; pt. 2).

Kenneth Graham notes that Winterbourne’s “studying” echoes his “studying” in the beginning of the novel, which “contradictorily locks the door on change and openness … [he is] caught, thus, in his eternal treadmill” (57). In this final scene, both Winterbourne and Mrs. Costello could have used this event to reflect on their wrongdoings, but they refused to accept any responsibility. James presents a hierarchy that is structured based on the need to achieve an ideal. In trying to emulate the European elites, the expatriate group is already an outsider trying to conform. Therefore, if someone like Daisy compromises their fragile position, rather than correcting or empathizing with her, the group considers it in their best interest to eradicate her from their community, for they believe that if they are associated with her, they would fall in their position as well.

Robert Weisbuch suggests that James provides a warning for expatriate Americans attempting to attain European sophistication the wrong way (68), but what is more significant than trying to attain the same status is the overwhelming competition that
accompanies it. With this competition comes the unnecessary, cruel treatment towards those who are undeserving. With a modern reading, what is considered is not whether or not one can play the game, but if someone is capable of possessing the human compassion that is essential in progressing. Indeed, in ruthlessly sacrificing a young girl, Mrs. Costello’s, Mrs. Walker’s, and Winterbourne’s exposure in being morally questionable overshadows their standing in the social hierarchy. In trying to stifle this new woman, they prevent social progression. With this vantage point, we may be adept to view the reactions towards Daisy as a social regression rather than justifiable measures. Instead, we may view Daisy in a more sympathetic light, again going beyond the notion of her being a fallen woman and someone who is taken advantage of and an unnecessary scapegoat in the preservation of the false hierarchy.
Chapter Three: Class and Racial Disruption within Stephen Crane’s *The Monster*

“Johnson halted for a moment in the threshold. He cried out again in the negro wail that has in it the sadness of the swamps” (Crane 465; ch. 6).

These last sounds from Henry, immediately before Henry braves Dr. Trescott’s laboratory to save Jimmie Trescott from his family’s burning house, suggest why Henry Johnson is the most unfortunate scapegoat of the three works under consideration. This is the last time we see Henry possess any human characteristics: determination and then pain. From here, he is nothing but a monster, from both the townspeople and the narrator’s perspectives. The only person willing to look past his physical defects is Trescott, who values Henry’s sacrifice for his son, and ultimately is willing to sacrifice himself to return the gesture. Even though Trescott indirectly causes Henry’s effacement by owning the combustive chemicals, Henry directly influences Trescott’s social fall as Henry appeals to Trescott’s compassion. The relationship constitutes the underlying irony in the novella; in a town governed by social economics and racial divides, Henry’s physical and mental effacement as well as Trescott’s social suicide are viewed as grotesque contaminants. Indeed, critics argue that the ridding the community of these two figures are necessary in preserving the hierarchy and peace.

In viewing the hierarchy, there are typically two trends: trying to aggressively progress up the social ladder by pushing others down, or attaching oneself to a more favorable group in order to increase one’s status by association. Trescott and Henry violate those notions when they are presented with pivotal choices. Henry is given a choice: let Jimmie lose his battle to the fire, or give his own life to try and save the boy.
Likewise, Trescott is given a choice: go with the majority in expelling Henry from the society, or risk his own status by caring for someone from a lower position. Both choose the latter, the antithesis of hierarchical and “natural” law. Refusing to acknowledge this humanist trait only further demonstrates how the social hierarchies are unfeeling and unnatural. Such societal falls come with dire consequences; indeed, the Whilmoville townspeople try multiple times to remove Trescott and Henry from the town, but such is the cost of refusing to participate in the hierarchical game. Yet, such a reading negates the foundation for humans’ emotional intelligence: empathy. If we are to view the scapegoat with this reading, the scapegoat, generally considered a vile being, is actually the highest in a moral hierarchy.

In the beginning, Whimoville is described as an orderly town where everyone gets along with one another, but we soon find that this harmony is due to the social hierarchy that governs the town. Everyone sticks to their role in Whilmoville: the protagonist, Dr. Trescott, is the prominent town doctor and employer and, therefore, above Henry Johnson, his stable hand and friend to Dr. Trescott’s son, Jimmie. The rest of the townspeople also function in their prescribed roles as numerous stock characters with their own employed positions: judge, barber, grocer, etc. Yet, regardless of the predetermined roles, because these characters are white, they portray themselves as automatically higher than Henry based on his skin color. When Henry is dressed in his lavender trousers, he struts through town while “profane groups” call out to him: “Going to walk for a cake to-night?” “Why, you’ve got the cake right in your pocket, Henry!” “Throw out your chest a little more” (454; ch. 3). Henry ignores these jeers referring to
the “cake-walk” contest, the practice among Southern slaves to see who would strut the best with the cake being his prize, but it is apparent that while he wants to improve his appearance. They may be considered a threat to the whites in the community because Henry is essentially putting himself in a higher plane because of his attire. Therefore, the whites in the community try to lower Henry by making him into a comical figure and the subject of their entertainment. These comments initially appear as jest, but there are darker, underlying implications that the whites poke fun at Henry as a means to validate their “higher” positions.

The example between Henry and the other townspeople is just one example of how the town itself runs on a series of social rules. Even though they appear to be content, underlying tensions imply that the townspeople are constantly trying to elevate themselves socially. The most informative scene undermining this structure is during the town’s summer party. The young men who attend the gathering consider themselves “superior” to the band in order to establish a hierarchy at the party. For example, the young men inflate themselves by putting down the band’s talent (457; ch. 4). While the young men may not be able to prove their own talent, they are still able to raise themselves by mocking the talents of another. To add to this condescension is that there is a guaranteed female audience at these gatherings. If one can prove his superiority, especially in front of an audience, then he solidifies his position. Conversely, the band members also try to brag about their positions. As a drummer, Billie Harris, is “surrounded by a throng of boys, who adored his every whack” (458; ch. 4). Both groups’ credibility may come into question: are the young men better than the band, or is the band
better than the young men? There is never an answer, but what is more important is how they present this debate. Their battle for superiority hides behind the façade of having good fun; the rule here is that the hierarchy and the battle is unspoken, for, if they were to overtly state that they were going to pursue a higher position than the other, then where would the game and strategy lie?

If those at the party are unable to attain a high position, the townspeople conform to groups that have strength to help secure their status. For example, the girls at the event care more about their associations than enjoying the gathering:

The girls were sure to attend this concert, strolling slowly over the grass, linked closely in pairs, or preferably in threes, in the curious public dependence upon one another which was their inheritance. There was no particular social aspect to this gathering, save that group regarded group with interest. (457; ch. 4)

What is important is not the socializing aspect of the gathering, but summing up other groups and assessing one’s own worth with another. The event is not for them to socialize, but to establish where they lie in status in comparison to the other groups. The girls only deem the gathering worthy when they discover Gertie Hodgson and her sister, who are assumingly popular, are in attendance. Such an observation reiterates that they are among the right groups. If the girls themselves are not able to achieve a great status, then the next best thing would be to associate themselves with the “right” person and, more importantly, in a public setting. There is a need in Whilmoville to establish one’s place, preferably one that is higher, and to maintain that position by accompanying those who are in a like position in order to validate one’s place. When organizing the structure of the town, Crane does not use the main characters in this scene and we do not see these
people in the rest of the story. The main function of the gathering’s attendees is for the
readers to not view these stock characters as actual beings but an overview of how the
town functions. They act mainly as an allegory for a town being run as a hierarchical
game and preconceived system, with those trying to either progress or conform to these
pre-set conditions.

Since these notions of the hierarchy are primarily silent, it is necessary for these
structures to be disturbed in order to see the moral falls that dwell within these
hierarchies. Following this composed social configuration, an outside force pervades the
town in the form of a factory whistle, heralding chaos (458; ch. 4). The whereabouts of
the whistle is unknown as “it raised and swelled to a sinister note, and then it sang on the
night wind one long call that held the crowd in the park immovable, speechless” (458; ch.
4). This initially mysterious whistle leaves the town dumbfounded; this outside force is
foreign to the people. Once it registers to the townspeople that this is whistle signals
something potentially destructive, “in a flash the company of indolent and cynical young
men had vanished like a snowball disrupted by dynamite” (459; ch. 4). The scene is
described with two contrasting adjectives. In this metaphor, the snowball and the
dynamite are man-made structures, like the structures within Whilmoville. The snowball,
a compact, rounded sphere, would remain so until it melted; the dynamite, though a
dangerous device, can remain dormant if not ignited. Both would remain peaceful if left
by themselves, and even when combined they would coexist, but the disruption comes
when the dynamite is ignited. There needs to be a third party involved in order to ignite
the mayhem. In this case, a third party is necessary because those who are in higher
positions and conform follow these pre-set rules without any retort; there has yet to be a situation where Whilmoville has to react to something out of the ordinary, and it is because there is an unlikely event that pushes the townspeople to respond.

We soon learn that this whistle is meant to alert the townsmen about a nearby fire at the Trescott residence, the second outside force that enters the town. The first sign of the house being endangered is the “wisp of smoke [that comes] from one of the windows at the end of the house … from the street, however, the house maintained its dark quiet, insisting to a passer-by that it was the safe dwelling of people who chose to retire early to tranquil dreams” (461; ch. 6). Like the whistle, the origins of the fire are unclear. Mrs. Trescott is completely unaware of there being any fire in her home, and Jimmie is found in his bed where the fire reaches but was not ignited. How did this fire start? The question regarding the fire’s inception is never answered, but we see that the natural force of the fire spreads through the house slowly, until it engulfs most of the house in flames (460-61; ch. 6). The fire does not only attack the house but leaves Henry marred mentally and physically when he saves Jimmie from the fire. Having an outside force like the fire enter the town is disruptive and leads the townspeople to react, ultimately exposing their true traits. This outside force’s influence seeps through the town via Henry and exposes the underlying cruelty within the townspeople’s hierarchies, but it also highlights those who are truly innocent of the town’s corruption.

This pivotal scene provides the opportunity for the townspeople to react, and they certainly do. Many of the townspeople seize the occasion to profit from Trescott’s and Henry’s fall, thus prompting their exposure. For those like Alek Williams and Jake
Winter, they are finally able to step over the people who were once of higher stature, which ultimately uncovers Williams’ greed and Winter’s cowardice. Conformity is also addressed with the characters John Twelve and, more severely, Judge Hagentrope. The most disheartening characters are little Jimmie and his friends who herald a new generation and one that is engulfed, not only by conformity, but tyrannical power. Critics who frequently identify Crane’s work as Naturalist may consider these behaviors as natural, human characteristics, but that does not mean that they need to succumb to these “natural tendencies.” Through these characters we learn that there needs to be a level of self-restraint and compassion for others in order to establish a hierarchy built upon a better foundation.

The attempt to advance up the social ladder knows no boundaries when the need for power outshines the value of friendship and compassion. After Henry’s severe accident, Trescott chooses Alek Williams to care for Henry because Williams is Henry’s friend, but we soon find that Williams’ greed trumps his responsibility for Henry. In Henry’s mind, Williams is still his friend, so Henry makes fun of Williams to Trescott: “He don’ know a hoss from a pig” (475; ch. 12). Henry’s joking about Williams’ ineptitude with livestock indicates that the two may have a friendly banter, and perhaps Henry deems himself higher with his animal knowledge as possessing greater understanding demonstrates one’s higher knowledge capacity, thus establishing a pre-set hierarchy between him and Williams. Henry is oblivious of his current situation, which demonstrates that there is an immediate role reversal between him and Williams. What is ironic is that Henry jeers that Williams does not know anything about animals, yet Henry,
who is now considered something subhuman because of his physical appearance, is now in his care. There is already an underlying current that Williams’ lack of knowledge in taking care of any living creature makes him not suitable for caring for Henry and he is therefore, wrongly placed in a higher position.

Williams continues with his need for dominating by taking advantage of Trescott and seeking more money from him. When Williams first meets the effaced Henry, his and his family’s frightened reactions are understandable, but Williams still takes Henry in because Trescott is providing Williams with a considerable paycheck. Later, this paycheck of five dollars a week is not good enough for Williams, so he goes to Judge Hagenthrope to appeal for more money. Because Hagenthrope is higher than Williams in standing, when Williams goes to appeal to the judge, this meeting symbolizes Williams attempting to triumph over an authority for more money; however, while Williams progresses in finances, his moral character is in jeopardy. Williams’ meeting with Hagenthrope at first appears like a David and Goliath story with Williams’ being the disadvantaged smaller person against the ever-present judge. When viewing the story through this lens, then, indeed, Williams’ intended feat would be considered a triumph as he is overcoming an unconquerable obstacle; however, Williams’ proves that his accomplishment is not an admirable one as it only exemplifies his greed.

Initially, this financial want seems justified because of Williams’ terror upon meeting Henry, but Hagenthrope makes it very clear from the beginning that he knows Williams has ulterior motives: “Now that Dr. Trescott pays you five dollars a week for Johnson’s board, you live like millionaires. You haven’t done a stroke of work since
Johnson began to board with you” (477; ch. 13). Williams’ real purpose to earning more money is to fuel his greed and nothing more. Because Hagenthrope can see through Williams’ gluttony, Williams tries different maneuvers to persuade the judge. For example, Williams tells Hagenthrope that his children cannot eat when Henry is in the home and when the judge asks why, “in answer, Williams said, with mournful emphasis, ‘Hennery.’ Moved with a kind of satisfaction at his tragic use of the name, he remained staring at the judge for a sign of its effect” (478; ch. 13). Williams also discloses that no one in his house is able to have any sleep either since Henry started staying with them (479; ch. 13), which is a complete lie because when Williams goes home he finds his children “strewn upon the floor of the living-room, … softly snoring. After a hearty meal they had promptly dispersed themselves about the place and gone to sleep” (485; ch. 15). Indeed, it does not appear that Williams’ family is even affected by Henry living with them; Williams’ need for money is solely for himself and not to benefit his family. Williams is certainly cunning in his appeal to the judge, but he loses his credibility because the foundation for is argument is built only on lies, which further demonstrates the falsity in trying to overcome others. In Williams’ case and those similar to him, having the motivation only focused on the self prevents him allows the opportunity for sly and dishonorable tactics to come through.

Williams overcomes the judge by receiving more money, which fuels his sense of pride, but there is a trade-off; William’s inflated self exposes his greed. Upon leaving the courthouse, Williams “began to gesture and talk to himself. An elation had evidently penetrated to his vitals, and caused him to dilate as if he had been filled with gas … he
was unconquerable … Williams’s mind seemed to be a balloon” (484; ch. 15). The narrator makes a distinct connection between Williams’ head being “filled with gas” and being compared to a balloon. These metaphors do not indicate the mind of a true hero who overcame an honorable triumph; instead, as the cliché goes, Williams is “full of hot air.” His entire persona is blown up and empty. Williams has the bravado of someone who has accomplished a great feat as his triumph goes beyond just Judge Hagentrope. He already elevated himself over Henry by taking him in and profiting from his friend’s severe deformities and takes advantage of Trescott by gaining more money from the doctor without him knowing. This trifecta demonstrates that even though Williams believes he is victorious, readers see the actual Williams, who is manipulative and gluttonous, so he is really lesser a man than he thinks. Because Hagentrope is not affected by Williams’ cheating, Trescott and Henry are the true victims in this scheme.

Another character who tries to overtake a higher position is Jake Winter and through his ordeal with Trescott, he exposes his severe cowardice. Jake Winter, one of Trescott’s regular patients, does not provide any real contribution to the Whilmoville community and is lower in social standing than Trescott as Trescott is in the position of the doctor, and Winter the patient. After Henry leaves Williams’ home, Henry meanders through the town, which leads to an uproar within the community. One of the people Henry frightens is Winter’s daughter at a party, who is left “sick” after the whole ordeal. Like Williams who lies about his family’s “condition,” Winter’s daughter’s aggrandized condition lends the occasion for Winter to push himself above the doctor. Winter immediately blames Trescott for Henry going through the town and, according to the
chief of police, “has gone clean crazy over this business” and wants Trescott arrested (491; ch. 18). If Winter was, indeed, able to arrest Trescott for Henry’s escapade, then he would succeed in ruining the doctor; however, even the chief of police could see through Winter’s preposterous demand: “He is a fool. I told him to keep his trap shut. But then you know he’ll go all over town yapping about the thing” (491-92; ch. 18). This sets up the grounds for Winter wanting to outrank Trescott because now he is provided with a motive. Like Williams, Winter’s motive is not based on any internal factors, but only on externalities. Even though Winter claims that he wants to seek justice for his daughter, Winter’s main motive is to maintain a higher position over Trescott, which is possible because Trescott’s role in the community is already weakening and we can already foresee that Winter is not finished in trying to overcome Trescott.

This prediction comes to fruition when Trescott visits Winter’s home to check on his daughter. Winter argues that Henry is the monstrous root of this pandemonium, but when Winter verbally harasses Trescott, Winter demonstrates that his subhuman characteristics, though they are not in his physical appearance, are deeply rooted in his psyche. Trescott remaining calm during the ordeal and leaving in a “placid retreat” only “arouse[s] Winter into ferocity” (502; ch. 21). Certainly, Trescott’s retreat from Winter would allow Winter to revel in his victory, but that is not enough. Winter still tries to provoke Trescott by hurling insults and “barking in a fiery rage” as the doctor leaves Winter’s home, but the narrator notes that Winter does so “from a respectful distance” (502; ch. 21). Winter believes he is stronger than Trescott, but in reality, Winter’s craven behavior shows that he lowers his position more than the beginning. By being at a
“respectful distance,” he acknowledges that there is still a level of reverence towards Trescott and that he does not have the courage enough to attack the doctor from a nearer position. To further solidify Winter’s cowardice, while Trescott leaves unperturbed, “Winter stood on the porch, still yelping. He was like a little dog” (502; ch. 21). This is a much different description than his “barking in a fiery rage;” the more Winter tries to prove himself greater and stronger than Trescott, the less heroic he becomes. Winter acting like a worthless dog reiterates how inferior he is in position; even if he expresses animal tendencies, these tendencies are not powerful, but cowardly. Also, Winter demonstrates that even though it may be considered “natural” to have these violent tendencies, that does not mean that one should succumb to those tendencies; rather, he should express his self-restraint like Trescott.

There are those in Whilmoville that do not need to progress in social standing so there is no need to further their positions; however, there is a need to purge the community from those who deviate from Whilmoville’s rules. Like the twelve members of a jury that come together to decide one’s fate, John Twelve is a powerful figure in the Whilmoville community and has earned respect based upon his financial wealth. Twelve is also among the “four very active and influential citizens” who visit Dr. Trescott in the attempt to rid the town of Henry (505; ch. 23), and who provide a conformed decision and, grouped together, make them stronger than the individual, therefore making it easier to prey on him. Sheer logic dictates that four are bigger and more powerful than one but only in physical numbers and not necessarily in ethics.
Money plays a major role in determining one’s success and power, which may be the reason why Twelve is the speaker for the group; he is “worth” more than the rest of the men: “the wholesale grocer, who was worth $400,000 was reported to be worth over a million” (505; ch. 23). Like the other townsmen, Twelve engages in his own abrasive attitudes in order to assert his power over the individual. When given the opportunity to state his position, “Twelve abruptly advanced on the main attack” (506; ch. 23). Twelve tries to appeal to Trescott to remove Henry from the town to save his doctoral practice, but the primary reason for Twelve and the group’s meeting is “to beat the game somehow” (507; ch. 23). The “game” in this sense is the pandemonium that ensued after Henry’s disfigurement. In order to end this game, there needs to be a purge of the being that “contaminated” the town, that person being Henry. In Twelve’s and the other men’s views, this is simply a challenge for them to rebuild their once structured town, but because Henry is viewed as an “other,” there is no consideration for him. The devised solution is to “get Johnson a place somewhere off up the valley … [in] a no-good farm” (507; ch. 23). This need to purge an individual from society and leave him in dire conditions shows that, in order to preserve a hierarchy, sacrifices are made even if that means that they are unjust. In doing so, as Molly Hiro suggests, the men lack “the kind of universal human sympathy that would allow them to recognize [Henry’s] fundamental human sameness and, thus, his right to a place in their community” (180). Trescott’s willingness to protect Henry from the townsmen’s wrath highlights how morally devolved Twelve and the other men’s mindsets are. Henry is a man, just like the rest of them, and their sacrifice of him is not a safety issue but a moral one.
Probably the most significant member in the community is Hagenthrope for he is a judge and considered the voice of reason. When the narrator describes the judge, it is immediately apparent that he possesses alpha male traits. A particular detail about Hagenthrope is his “cane with an ivory head. He could never think at his best until he was leaning slightly on this stick and smoothing the white top with slow movements of his hands. It was also to him a kind of narcotic” (472; ch. 11). The narrator places much more emphasis on Hagenthrope’s relationship with his cane than the descriptions of other characters’ appearances and relationships. He grows irritable “if by any chance he mislaid it” (472; ch. 11), which may be in part because the cane suggests power and masculinity, and has phallic connotations. Hagenthrope wants to make it very clear that he possesses a high level of power on a career and moral level because he is a judge and though he is arrogant, he earned this trait by earning this power.

While Hagenthrope’s career implies he is just, the comparison between Hagenthrope’s and Trescott’s views regarding Henry’s life demonstrate that Hagenthrope relies too much on his narrow-minded logic and negates his ethical responsibility. Trescott spends a significant amount of time with Henry, more so than with his other patients and “he slept and ate almost every meal in the long nights and days of his vigil” (472; ch. 11). Trescott acknowledges how he is indebted to Henry for saving his son and it is natural for Trescott to believe that it is his duty to try and save Henry. Hagenthrope has a different perspective and tries to persuade Trescott that Henry would be better off if he did not survive:

“As near as I can understand, he will hereafter be a monster, a perfect monster, and probably with an affected brain … that is one of the blunders
of virtue.” The judge had delivered his views with his habitual oratory. The last three words he spoke with a particular emphasis, as if the phrase was his discovery. (473; ch. 11)

Hagenthrope uses his guidance as a way to demonstrate his higher knowledge towards Trescott. Discussing virtues, his habitual oratory, and stating his views as if they were a discovery are all ways of asserting Hagenthrope’s authority. But his goal in appealing to his authority is not to persuade Trescott to do what is ethically sound, but to reaffirm his position above Trescott. By saying that Trescott is committing a wrongful act, it would only mean what Hagenthrope believes is right, which initially would make sense because Hagenthrope is, after all, a judge and should possess sound reasoning. Yet, it is Hagenthrope who is really committing the “blunder of virtue” by lacking any human empathy. He only focuses on his reasoning, and refuses to consider Trescott’s point of view or Henry’s humanity.

Even after Trescott argues that Henry sacrificed himself for his son, the judge still tries to insert his false authority on the issue with a red herring fallacy: “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, and with no mind” (473; ch. 11). Hagenthrope describes Trescott as a ruthless, self-absorbed mad scientist, who is everything that Trescott is not; Hagenthrope tries to turn Trescott’s care into something selfish so Hagenthrope does not have the guilt of being heartless. There are two different perspectives here, and in order for one to be right, the other has to be wrong. The judge is the personification of justice and, therefore, his moral views should be sounder to begin with. Because Trescott challenges Hagenthrope’s
ethos, the judge tries to exert his power, but he does so ineffectively. By using natural law in his critique, it appears that Hagentrope is really the one who believes that he is above nature because he is determining what is natural and unnatural.

Hagentrope’s credibility is immediately shattered when Trescott rebuts the judge’s claim with his own critique: “‘He will be what you like, judge,’ cried Trescott, in sudden, polite fury” (473; ch. 11). Trescott then reiterates that Henry saved his son’s life and makes it clear that Hagentrope lacks the credibility to judge Trescott’s situation by telling him, “You don’t know all about your own boy being saved from death” (474; ch. 11). It is impossible for Hagentrope to comprehend what Trescott is facing, and with this comment, Hagentrope understands that he is, indeed, not more knowledgeable than Trescott as “it was not his spot” (474; ch. 11). The judge relies too much on rational logic and lacks human empathy by claiming what the “natural” decision should be is one that does not consider human compassion. If the novel supported a Naturalist world, then Hagentrope would be correct; there is no use in keeping Henry alive if he will be physically and mentally devolved. Henry simply lost in the game of survival. Yet, with a new reading, Hagentrope’s callousness is considered the lesser argument because he disregards Henry’s sacrifice. The judge only considers his logic (which is deeply rooted in Naturalism as the basis for Naturalist texts is whether or not one may “realistically” survive in his/her environment), but without any humanistic qualities, this argument is only sound on a superficial level. On the other hand, with a more modern reading, Trescott’s empathy outweighs Hagentrope’s insensitivity, as we view Henry as a person and not a mere object. What is more significant in the decision-making process is not
necessarily the outcome but the initial motivation. Since Henry’s motivation to save Jimmie was selfless, Trescott reciprocates with his own selfless act. Because Trescott’s compassion is more honorable than Hagentrope’s determinism, Trescott’s position is elevated as compassion is the more ethical and desirable action. Still, Hagentrope maintains his Naturalistic tendencies by agreeing with Trescott’s stance.

Since Hagentrope understands that he is not in the superior position, he quickly conforms to what he believes is the “right” side and is in full agreement. Once recognizing that Trescott has the authority in the situation, the judge conforms to Trescott’s opinion, which is odd because it was only a few moments prior that Hagentrope reprimanded Trescott for wanting to save Henry. Still, Hagentrope finds it difficult to give up his authority entirely and then considers Trescott’s dilemma as “dubious” (474; ch. 11), but this is a far cry from his previous statement of Trescott committing a “blunder of virtue.” Hagentrope is slowly giving up his position so that he may appeal to Trescott. He gives up his position entirely when Trescott begins to get heated over the idea of killing the man who saved Jimmie; he cries, “‘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 the deed” (474; ch. 11). Hagentrope’s argument is surface-level, so he is able to change his position at a whim. There is no real consequence for him to convert since Trescott is the only audience member and person judge Hagentrope. In seeing Hagentrope’s quick conversion, his morals and judgment come into question. How strong are Hagentrope’s
convictions if he is able to change them so easily? Even though Hagentrope is in a place of power, his credibility is unstable.

Hagentrope shows the value in conforming, and to survive in Whilmoville, it is important for one to be able to adapt, but does being a part of the popular position automatically make it the right one? Hagentrope is very quick to change his viewpoints to match Trescott, but he is easily swayed to conform to the townspeople’s view that Henry needs to be eradicated from the community. Hagentrope does not say anything during the encounter between the other men and Trescott: “In the background of the group old Hagentrope was thoughtfully smoothing the polished ivory head of his cane” (507; ch. 23). Trescott is outnumbered four to one, therefore making Hagentrope a part of the “superior” side as he revels in his win by stroking his phallic cane. This moral role reversal demonstrates how easily one is able to succumb to a group’s pressure. If one follows the majority, he is more likely to convince himself that he made the right decision, even if he is lying to himself.

Because Hagentrope values his position in the community more than his friendship with Trescott, he grows cowardly as he is unable to stand up for Trescott during their meeting at Hagentrope’s home, which strengthens the notion of conformity being more important than one’s own moral standards. Hagentrope knows that he is turning away from Trescott and refuses to look at him so he can avoid any judgment from his one-time friend. If he does not have to face Trescott, he does not have to acknowledge any wrong or try to overcome his friend, which he knows would be unrighteous in this case. This gesture is similar to Hagentrope wanting to talk to Trescott about Henry’s life.
away from Henry. When with Henry, Hagenthrope avoided saying anything to Trescott so he could avoid “the scrutiny of [Henry’s] unwinking eye” (472; ch. 11). Surely, in Henry’s physical and mental state, it would be impossible for him to counter any of the judge’s claims, but even in his condition, “the maimed black man does not confirm the judge’s authority. He mirrors it, while transforming the juridical into the moral” (Brown 233). Regardless of where he stands, Hagenthrope does not want to be judged, which is ironic because his occupation is to judge others’ actions. Hagenthrope is the only character who changes his views regarding Henry, and he does so twice. He is the one person who is supposed to stand for justice yet is the shakiest in his own morals.

Ironically, Hagenthrope initially appears as someone who is steadfast, masculine, and authoritative, but he changes his position when confronted by Trescott and the townspeople, two opposite stances.

Another significant reveal comes from Trescott’s son, Jimmie, the youngest character, as he goes from an innocent boy into a bully. In the beginning, Jimmie possesses a certain level of understanding of what is right and wrong. “Little Jim” opens the novella by playing in the family’s garden and accidentally breaks a flower while playing. Immediately, Jimmie reports to his father and shows his apparent remorse with his “hands behind his back, and sometimes his fingers clasped and unclasped” (449; ch. 1). He is obviously nervous to approach his father, but he knows that is what he has to do, and his father calmly scolds him to not play in the garden. Jimmie leaves the scene “with his head, lowered, shuffling his feet” (451; ch. 1). It is engrained in him at a young age to not harm things, to be truthful about one’s faults, and to feel shame for being
reprimanded by someone of a higher power. Jimmie engages in these feelings because Trescott upholds these values and since Trescott is a higher and more admirable figure to Jimmie, Jimmie wants to exhibit these values as well; he wants to emulate the being who influences him.

It is equally apparent that Jimmie is the lowest in the hierarchy when he goes to Henry after the garden incident. Jimmie is unaware that Henry is the family’s help: “Whenever Henry dwelt for a time in sackcloth, Jimmie did not patronize him at all. This was a justice of his age, his condition. He did not know” (452; ch. 2). Jimmie’s naïveté about Whilmoville’s hierarchies allows him to become friends with Henry and admire Henry for his skills and workmanship and not judge him based on his race. It may be for this reason that Henry takes advantage of Jimmie being impressionable and establishing some authority to the young boy. While Henry is fond of the boy, he wants to make it clear that he is higher in the relationship. Like Jimmie’s father, Henry also scolds Jimmie for his failings, and does so in a more dramatic way. The two have a give–and–take relationship: Jimmie respects Henry and gives him the feeling of importance, and Henry gives Jimmie the opportunity to have a valuable friend in the home. When comparing Jimmie’s relationship to his father and to Henry, it seems that Jimmie has a stronger bond with Henry. Jimmie’s father is more of the disciplinarian, whereas Henry is the role model. In any case, Jimmie’s place in the social ladder is the lowest, and he accepts this position before the fire because there has yet to be an opportunity for him to gain such power.
Thus far, Jimmie’s hierarchy is based on age and experience, but what happens when he is put in a group among those who are equal to him? Through Jimmie we see that one is never too young to yearn for power; one can never be too young to acknowledge the differences between himself and others and determine what makes a person better than another. Just as Jimmie was affected by Trescott and his values when Jimmie broke the flower, Jimmie is affected by his peers, especially when they are highly influential in the group.

Henry is the one who saves Jimmie from the fire, but when Jimmie returns from his stay in Connecticut, he has no connection with the current Henry, a monstrous figure, and “[can] not identify it in any way” (495; ch. 20). However, even in Henry’s disfigured state, Jimmie is aware that the creature is, indeed, Henry, the same Henry that saved his life. This information is irrelevant when Jimmie is provided the opportunity to gain power over his peers. Jimmie and his friends are known as the “baby class,” which means they are able to leave early from school (495; ch. 20). “Baby” gives the implications of someone who is pure and guiltless, and combining that term with “class” suggests that this group is the lowest and perhaps least significant in the social hierarchy. Because they are seemingly insignificant to others, the group tries to build a hierarchy within itself. There is already a leader in place in the group and that is Willie, the boy that is larger than the rest of them. Jimmie’s friends are like him in that they are curious about this foreign figure lurking on the Trescott property. Since Henry’s deformities are hidden by a veil, this allows the opportunity for the boys to reach into their imaginations to picture the
deformed being, thus heightening their fears. The boys are frightened by Henry’s appearance even though he has a veil to cover his deformities.

Jimmie is much more familiar with Henry than the rest of the boys, so he uses this to his advantage when trying to gain power over them. He acknowledges his new sense of entitlement by showing off the creature:

Jimmie waves his hand with the air of a proprietor.

“There he is,” he said

“O-o-o!” murmured all the little boys – “o-o-o!” They shrank back, and grouped according to courage or experience, as at the sound of the monster slowly turned its head. Jimmie remained in the van alone. “Don’t be afraid! I won’t let him hurt you,” he said, delighted … Jimmie seemed to reap all the joys of the owner and exhibitor of one of the world’s marvels, while his audience remained at a distance – awed and entranced, fearful and envious. (495-96; ch. 20)

Jimmie showcasing Henry resembles the scene in Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* in which Mary displays Maggie as an immoral creature in their apartment. In both situations, Mary and Jimmie express their power over the individual. While Mary highlights herself as a higher moral being and Maggie as a contaminant to the slums, Jimmie’s treatment towards Henry is much more disturbing. As a “proprietor,” he makes himself Henry’s owner, which reminds us of the owner/slave relationship that has since been vanquished, though not yet forgotten, and places Jimmie as the owner of a freak show. Jimmie falls in this category as he is a child and does not possess authority like those older than him. In displaying Henry, Jimmie tries to prove to his peers, and mainly himself, that he has power over this being and that Jimmie is closer to this “ideal” than Henry will ever be. Jimmie now as the power and is a fully-functioning human being whereas Henry is barely coherent and essentially has no face.
While Henry the stable hand was above Jimmie in stature, Henry the monster is reduced to something completely insignificant and, therefore, provides Jimmie with the motive to profit from his current state. With Jimmie’s audience, Henry is further degraded, as Bill Brown observes: “Jimmie has produced an ‘audience’ that legitimates the monster’s being-in-public, transforming him into a ‘freak’ ... [imitating] the postbellum American entertainments – the freak show, the dime museum – that helped to bring the thrills of adventure to the streets” (207-08). Jimmie takes pleasure in his newfound glory, but at the expense of a harmless being, just as dime museum owners gained profits at the cost of “deformed” people. The rest of his friends follow him by forming their hierarchy based on “courage or experience”: those who are not afraid of the monster are much higher than those who are.

Jimmie further gains status by establishing his position as a conqueror. Henry’s role as a freak show exhibit has morphed into him being a frightening and terrible monster, and there is a dare to see which boy could go the closest to the “thing.” Instead of being something to laugh at, Henry becomes something that needs to be vanquished and a test for the boys to prove their manhood. This test is sparked by a challenge from “one of them [who] addressed Jimmie gloomily. ‘Best you dassent walk right up to him.’ He was an older boy than Jimmie, and habitually oppressed him to a small degree. This new social elevation of the smaller lad probably seemed revolutionary to him” (496; ch. 20). Now, rather than Jimmie having the opportunity to conquer Henry, he has the chance to be better than the large boy. The stakes are much higher and Jimmie has the
opportunity to have the utmost triumph out of the group, essentially making him have the greatest success in the hierarchy among the rest of the characters in the story.

Jimmie succeeds in his task by touching Henry, but what is more significant is the aftermath; when he returns to his companions, there is a distinct role reversal between him and the larger boy. Jimmie is now the oppressor and the larger boy, the potential coward. The other boys, led by Jimmie, taunt the larger boy to touch the monster, with the assumption that he would not actually do it. The boy succeeds and returns back to the crowd. There is a moment where Jimmie is “discomfited for a moment” (498; ch. 20), but in the end, he and the larger boy “recognize a truce, and they swiftly combined and began to parade before the others” (498; ch. 20). The two of them exert their authority over the rest of the group: “They were people of another class. If they had been decorated for courage on twelve battle-fields, they could not have made the other boys more ashamed of the situation” (498; ch. 20). This militant connection is ironic because it does not have the honorable implications that exist when one goes off to war; this feat is much more cruel and jarring. This language also connects in Maggie when her brother, Jimmie, and the other boys are described as war-like heroes when they throw stones at each other. The boys in Maggie focus on overthrowing and injuring each other to see who is the strongest in the group. And while the boys in Maggie initially look honorable with the war-like descriptions, their actual actions are menacing. These two scenes employ deliberately superfluous descriptions in regard to the boys’ actions, and such language only further solidifies how cowardly their actions are.
Throughout the scene, the boys are described as animals, implying that the boys are devolving both physically and morally, and thus highlighting how cruel their actions are. When challenging the larger boy, the group “crowed like roosters and bleated like lambs, and made many other noises which were supposed to bury him in ridicule and dishonor” (496; ch. 20). Like Winter, whose behavior is considered dog-like, the boys attempt to make themselves appear better by taunting the larger boy to touch this “subhuman” creature, but in reality, the boys are the ones who are truly monstrous. They believe that they have overcome a monster, but readers see that they only bullied a defenseless person, the same person who saved Jimmie’s life. At such a young age, the boys offer no hope for the future in Whilmoville; they are replicas of the male figures in the town. They emulate the conquering mentality by sacrificing the innocent, which weakens their self-justification.

The townspeople consistently obey the fundamental components of Naturalism; they make choices that they believe will help them survive in their world, based upon our ideas of what it means to survive. They are following the orders in the hierarchy and, therefore, are making the appropriate decisions. In their eyes, it is Henry and Trescott that should be eliminated from the community because they disregard the preconceived notions that govern the town and fuel the chaos. The fire at the Trescott home sparks the disruption that exposes the false ideals that govern the town and reveals that those who contribute to this disruption and are castigated by the community are truly innocent of the corruption. Critics who believe Crane is supporting a Naturalist philosophy would take readers’ responses to the townspeople’s judgment as evidence that we are simply
offended by Naturalism. But the scene and the reaction it creates could have another purpose – to highlight the importance of compassion.

The one who is the most affected by the fire is Henry Johnson, and through the narrator, we are able to track Henry’s climb and descent in the social hierarchy as he undergoes multiple transformations. In the beginning, all the men in the story are referenced by their last names, except for Henry. When we first meet Henry conducting his job as a stable hand, the narrator refers to him on a first-name basis, implying that a man of his position does not command as much respect as the rest of the men. When Henry puts on his suit and goes into the town, the narrator switches between “Henry” and “Johnson;” he now earns more respect with his appearance but, again, is still not at the same level as his white peers. It is not until Henry is deep within the fire at the Trescott residence that the narrator only refers to Henry as “Johnson.” In this scene, Henry is the highest that he will ever be in the narrator’s and in the community’s eyes. He commits a valiant act in rescuing the young boy and attempting to overcome the vicious fire. Because Henry’s climb takes him to the highest point of reverence, his fall, which ends even lower than his initial status, is even more severe. As soon as Henry is brought forth from the fire, he becomes a “thing,” and for the rest of the story, the narrator erases Henry’s name and replaces it with “monster,” “creature,” “thing,” and other subhuman vocabulary. Ironically, it is in Henry’s “monster” form that we are able to see his true innocence in the corruption that pervades Whilmoville.

Prior to the fire, Henry had two personas, the stable hand and a somewhat distinguished man. The two appearances are distinct from each other. After he is done
working for Trescott and goes into town, he transforms into an entirely different person. He is described as “a very handsome negro, and he was known to be a light, a weight, and eminence in the suburb of the town … He was simply a quiet, well-bred gentleman of position, and other necessary achievements out for an evening stroll, and he had never washed a wagon in his life” (451-53; ch. 2). Though there are people in town who poke fun at Henry’s demeanor, the men agree that “he’s the biggest dude in town” (456; ch. 3). Miss Bella Farragut, Henry’s love interest, idolizes the man and considers him “simply perfect” and “divine” (456-57; ch. 3). There are many complimentary descriptions of Henry; however, these do not change the fact that Henry is a black man and therefore lower than the rest of the Whilmoville’s white community. His bold image does not matter. Because he is a black male, many of the compliments are back-handed, which reiterates the racial hierarchy within the town.

In the fire scene, Henry is raised in standing because he follows the town’s rules in conquering a feat with zeal, thus supporting the narrator’s switch from calling Henry by his first name to his last name. Henry approaches the burning house with “fabulous speed,” implying a speed that is radically superior than others in the town (462; ch. 6). This initial description sets the tone with Henry trying to overcome the fire to save Jimmie. Henry’s combat with the fire is admirable as his intentions are valiant. The fire itself exhibits animalistic qualities, making it a strong, primal force: “An orange-colored flame leaped like a panther at the lavender trousers. This animal bit deeply into Johnson” (465; ch. 7). When Henry hallucinates from the doctor’s chemicals reacting in the fire, he sees a fairy lady blocking his escape by being “swifter than eagles, and her talons caught
in him as he plunged past her” (465; ch. 7). There is also a “red serpent” that comes from one of the chemical jars and attacks Henry’s face while he lies defeated and helpless on the ground (465; ch. 7). Henry does not win in his battle against the fire; the blazing animal proves to be too strong for him and he is punished brutally by being reduced to a deformed creature. During this experience, Henry’s reactions may validate Naturalist notions that he is deserving of his fall because he was not able to overcome the natural element, the fire. He ultimately lost and, thus, bears the consequences of being a weaker human being. Yet, in reading this way, we neglect his ethical response in trying to save Jimmie because he cares about Jimmie and is willing to sacrifice himself for the cause. Henry’s reactions to the fire highlight his moral character. While it may be “natural” to think of one’s well-being first, that does not mean that it is the best way to act in a situation. In many situations, particularly this one, sacrifices are to be made, but what separates people is how they choose these sacrifices. Are people willing to sacrifice others for themselves or are they willing to sacrifice themselves for others? In a Naturalist world, the choice would be the former as it demonstrates the notion of protecting oneself; however, a new reading shows that a more humanistic response when approaching the idea of sacrifice is to consider what would cause the greatest good. The more natural response to a situation would be to compromise the self in order to alleviate any pain and destruction on others.

Regardless of his heroic feat, Henry has two falls in the Whilmoville hierarchy: first he is declared dead, and then is resurrected in the form of a monster, something subhuman. When he comes out of the burning house, it is apparent that “he could not
live. His body was frightfully seared, but more than that, he had no face. His face had simply been burned away” (471; ch. 10). A face is associated with one’s character, and without that, it is impossible to figure out the person’s identity. Henry not only lacks life, he loses his identity as a person and becomes a “thing.” He is more alive and respected in his eulogy; after his announced death, people in the town begin to wish they had spent more time with him (471; ch. 10). Perhaps it would have been better for Henry if he was dead because then he would be immortalized in a positive light by the townspeople.

We soon find that Henry is not dead, just severely burned and under the care of Trescott. But he is no longer referred to as “Henry”; rather, he is a monster. He is described by a young girl as “simply a thing, a dreadful thing” (488; ch. 16) Even the narrator contributes to Henry’s perceived monstrousness when he goes to visit Bella Farragut and describes Henry as “a monster making a low and sweeping bow … it even raised a deprecatory claw” (489; ch. 17). What Henry is actually doing is politely bowing to Bella and holding out his hand to ask her to dance with him. He is still sweet and kind to Bella and gives her compliments: “I gwine ax you to go to er daince with me, Miss Fa’gut. I ax you if I can have the magnificent gratitude of you’ company on that ‘casion, Miss Fa’gut” (490; ch. 17). The narrator skew Henry’s attempt to ask Bella to dance into that of a monster trying to prey on an innocent victim; however, it is Henry who is truly innocent in this situation. He is completely unaware of his hideous exterior and is still kind and polite. While he loses his physical self, the juxtaposition of his marred face and sweet interior demonstrate that there is nothing monstrous in his character; instead, we are more likely to sympathize with his situation and judge those who are unkind to
Henry. This type of reading again pushes readers to connect with “The Monster” on a more significant level in comparison to a Naturalist reading. Through a Naturalist lens, this scene would lack much meaning other than Henry being degraded and losing his relationships, which would be justified considering one’s intrinsic nature to be fearful of monstrous deformities. Yet, rather than viewing Henry as a monster as the novella’s narrator implies, we see Henry for who he is as a person, which complicates the notion of preconceived hierarchies. If Henry is degraded into a monstrous form, why is it that we care for him? Because we are aware of Henry’s compassion and sacrifice prior to the fire, to see his failed attempts in trying to connect with his lover is heartrending.

Because Henry is innocent of any crimes, the poor treatment towards him is even more heinous as he is defenseless against those who take advantage of him. Even though Henry makes fun of Williams, “He don’ know a hoss from a pig” (475; ch. 12), Williams gets the final laugh because he is profiting from Henry’s effaced state. Henry is also defenseless when Jimmie uses him to bring himself up amongst his friends. He simply sits and breathes slowly while Jimmie treats him like a freak. When the police officer discusses with Trescott about Henry going through the town, he states that “no charge could be made” because Henry did not do anything violent or wrong. Instead, it was town that was vicious towards him: “a big crowd chased him, firing rocks” (491; ch. 18). In all these situations, Henry becomes a scapegoat monster, but who is the true monster here? Through the townspeople, it is apparent that one becomes a monstrous character by preying upon those who are unable to protect themselves and gaining perceived stature at one’s own moral expense. Indeed, it is better to be hideous by physical appearance than
have a false moral standard. Henry is elevated in the hierarchy according to readers who view his moral character as more valuable than his physical appearance. This offers us a change in how we view these hierarchies. They are not rooted solely by externalities but by people’s characters. Naturalist readings tend to only focus on the former and imply that because characters possess “favorable” physical traits, they are automatically at an advantage. Henry complicates this notion by being physically deformed but morally sound and challenges the fundamentals that these hierarchies are built upon by appealing to readers’ sympathetic natures.

While Henry is ignorant of his condition, Trescott chooses how to respond to the townspeople’s unforgiving hierarchy; he purposely falls in the social ladder by giving up his practice to care for Henry. He disregards the popular idea of preserving the town’s secure state and chooses to neither dominate or conform, but by doing so, he becomes a more enlightened individual and consequently higher morally than the rest of the townspeople. We see him undergo this transformation after the fire scene. Before the fire, Trescott abides by the rules of Whilmoville. He upholds a dominant attitude and follows the idea of conquering others. After the fire, his newfound nurturing and submissive attitudes go against the town’s values, thus prompting the town to slowly reject Trescott in a similar way to Henry, until Trescott also becomes a “monster.”

Because he deviates from the Whilmoville norm, Trescott slowly devolves in the eyes of the Whilmoville community and is then considered fallen in the community. The fire at the Trescott residence seared Henry quickly and left him in a frightening state, and it also symbolizes the outside force that enters the town and exposes the town’s
corruption. The fire metaphor continues with Trescott. When the fire erupted at Trescott’s home, “the window brightened as if the four panes of it had been stained with blood” (461; ch. 6). Since the fire, Trescott experiences a series of falls. When he talks to the chief of police about releasing Henry from the jail, the police officer advises Trescott to go to the jail discreetly: “If I were you, I’d come to the jail pretty late at night, because there is likely to be a crowd around the door, and I’d bring a –er—mask, or some kind of a veil, anyhow” (492; ch. 18). In another scene, Henry also has a veil to cover his deformities. While Henry’s deformities are exterior, Trescott’s “deformities” are internal as he does not conform to Whilmoville’s ideals, and his family is eventually purged from the town. His wife has lady callers every week, but after he is approached by the group of men and refuses to put Henry away, no visitors come, except for Mrs. Twelve, for Grace’s afternoon tea. The description of the house during the scene has similarities to the fire that ignited in the Trescott home: “Sometimes the coal in the stove settled with a crumbling sound, and the four panes of mica flashed a sudden new crimson. As he sat holding her head on his shoulder, Trescott found himself occasionally trying to count the cups. There were fifteen of them” (508; ch. 24). Just as the fire heralds Henry’s descent, the fire coming from the stove completes Trescott’s family’s isolation from the rest of the community.

Even though Trescott appears to be lowered in the town, his actions demonstrate that he is evolving morally and becoming a better person than the rest of the townspeople, thus, debunking the hierarchical notions. When we are first introduced to Trescott, he is in his father role and disciplines Jimmie after he breaks the flower: “‘Well, Jimmie,’ He
said, slowly, ‘I guess you had better not play train any more to-day. Do you think you had better?’” (450; ch. 1). He uses a very matter-of-fact tone. While his punishment is not necessarily severe, it is not nurturing, either. It appears that Trescott and Jimmie’s relationship is strictly based upon Jimmie following orders from his father, but it does not go beyond that. Since Trescott is in a higher position, there is no reason for him to explain to Jimmie why it is wrong to break the flower in the garden; his authority is enough to confirm the consequences. After Henry’s effacement, Trescott sees Jimmie and his friends taunting Henry. Rather than assert his authority as he had done previously, Trescott uses this as an opportunity to educate his son to not be like the rest of the town that ostracizes Henry. This time when he disciplines Jimmie, Jimmie starts wailing (though it is unclear if his cries are sincere or an act), and Trescott begins soothing him: “‘There, there. Don’t cry Jim,’ said Trescott, going round the desk. ‘Only—’ he said in a great leather reading chair, and took the boy on his knee. ‘Only I want to explain to you—’” (501; ch. 21). Trescott does not rely on his authority as he has done previously; what is more important is for Jimmie to understand the severity of the issue. Before, Jimmie was required to follow his father’s reprimands blindly and assume the rules that were in place; however, as we have seen with the townspeople, following the hierarchy blindly leads to oppressive and conformist mentality. Now Jimmie may follow his father, who has the credibility of a moral person, to do what is right instead of following the false ideals of his young comrades who will likely follow the ways of the rest of the townsmen. Perhaps in the future, Jimmie may undergo a transformation as well.
Through Henry’s accident, Trescott abandons the mentality that pervades the town. Initially, after he finishes helping a patient, he is left “feeling glad that this last case was now in complete obedience to him, like a wild animal that he had subdued” (466; ch. 8). This suggests that Trescott’s patients are comparable to animals and that their treatment is a constant struggle and a feat that Trescott needs to accomplish. Trescott’s views towards his patient are degrading; it is as if his patient is something subhuman, which is the same way that the town sees Henry. Only after Henry’s effacement does Trescott undergo development regarding his attitudes towards those “lower” than him. Trescott acknowledges what Henry endured to save his son, so he does not leave Henry’s side during his recovery: “[Trescott] slept and ate almost every meal in the long nights and days of his vigil” (472; ch. 11). Trescott gives Henry the amount of respect and compassion that he deserves; he does not see Henry as a hideous monster, but a heroic figure. William Morgan considers that Trescott receives a “sociable and sentimental awakening” as he goes “from a professional ethos of control to one of care … [in the] counternarrative … that entails an inverted exchange between past and present relations” (79-80). Whilmoville treats Henry cruelly, even before his defacement, but Trescott is a progressive figure in that he regards Henry not only as a human being but an equal who deserves the same amount of respect as everyone else. He has a growing awareness of valuing others and not judging solely based on externalities.

Trescott grows very protective of Henry, and as we have already seen with his encounter with the influential men, he stands his ground in wanting to care for Henry. Even though the men in the town try pressuring Trescott to remove Henry from society,
the doctor refuses to do so. Keith Gandal considers this an “ethical action … the refusal to submit to a threatening power – especially on the behalf of someone else; it is the facing down of tyranny in the interest of a potential victim” (Virtues and Vicious 124), which shows that Trescott transcends the hierarchical forces and is willing to lower himself socially in order to protect Henry when he cannot protect himself.

Overall, Henry and Trescott demonstrate that they are not causative in the town’s chaos; the root of the Whilmoville’s pandemonium is derived by the townspeople trying to maintain their structured society. The value in the town is social power, but in trying to move higher in the social hierarchy, they sacrifice the innocent and fail to show compassion or empathy. In regards to Henry, Whilmoville mirrors the many anxieties during this postbellum era when there was a struggle to maintain an order, especially the structure of whites being higher than blacks. With Henry and Trescott, Crane provides progressive characters who are heroic based on their deeds to help others, even at the cost of themselves. Crane presents the moral pitfalls that occur when a group reduces a person into a spectacle and chastises those who are willing to fall in the hierarchy to stand for what is ethically right.
Notes

1. Critics who consider Crane to be Naturalist: Bill Brown, William Morgan, and Michael D. Warner. Though Warner argues that Crane’s characters have more significance than standard “stock characters,” he argues the point of determinism outweighing morality (85).

2. Rosemarie Garland Thomson observes that “freak shows acted out a relationship in which exoticized disabled people and people of color functioned as physical opposites of the idealized American … The freak soothes the onlookers’ self-doubt by appearing as their antithesis” (64-65). Freak shows were particularly popular among those who did not consider themselves as close to the American “ideal” and would attend these dime museums to validate themselves.

3. Molly Hiro discusses how readers may look to Henry’s inner self in order to find sympathy; however, one’s facial expressions are crucial in expressing emotions: “Without a face to contort in an expression of pain, suffering, or fear, how can his injury evoke sympathy in others? What is left behind once a face is burned away?” (188).
Conclusion

A Naturalist reading for these texts has thus far relied on the justification of characters’ choices based on their surroundings and their need to cope with their current situations. Characters who participated in previously established hierarchies are considered to have a duty to obey the underlying hierarchical principles in effect during that time period: men are more capable than women; whites are above blacks; money determines one’s character and so on. Ultimately, those who are in a higher standing validate their positions by claiming that their external characteristics reflect their inner selves. There are certainly some factors that the characters cannot control; for example, a woman at that time could not change her gender and, based on the literary conventions of the time, was destined to live a suppressed life or suffer a “fall” because of her rebellion. Many texts follow this sort of pattern: individuals attempt to change their fate, which ultimately leads to their demise because the individuals go against the social constructs. Contemporary readers tend to suspend their current reality to view the texts the way 19th century readers did in order to value and consider the texts for the time period. Those who accept these works as historical artifacts see only Naturalism, which is problematic because we would only value the them based on the textbook definition of Naturalism and other literary conventions, not on our own accord. We need to look at them again to see how they challenge the 19th century hierarchical conventions and the multifaceted characters and relationships that are often overlooked. Focusing on Naturalist patterns leads to surface-level reading, and if we do not see the complexities in the characters and their situations, we miss the important humanistic qualities and struggles that are specific
to the individual which are needed in order to establish a stronger connection and understanding of the text.

The plots within the discussed texts revolve around those who attempt to elevate themselves in the hierarchy while oppressing others and those who fall in the hierarchy are faced with dire consequences. Depending on the fallen character’s actions, the community reacts to the situation and determines the fallen individual’s fate. With this type of disruption, what is considered a “natural” response becomes debatable. Because Naturalism relies on surviving in an already unforgiving environment, the expected response to the chaos should be to protect the self at all costs. In keeping with this reading, Maggie’s Mary, Jimmie, and Pete, “Daisy Miller’s” Mrs. Costello, Mrs. Walker and Winterbourne, and “The Monster’s” townspeople demonstrate justifiable actions as they all react in a way to protect themselves, even if that means compromising another. Even though a Naturalist reading may not consider their decisions admirable, such a reading suggests that these characters are simply responding to their environment and how they are previously programmed to function. Furthermore, a primary convention of Naturalist texts is the fact that they typically are pessimistic in nature, so having an unhappy ending would not be an issue as it was expected at that time, which again allows readers to rely on accepting these texts as historic artifacts.

*Maggie* and “Daisy Miller” are commonly known Naturalist and quintessential “fallen women” texts since they follow the pattern of two young women who choose the “wrong” path and have to suffer the consequences. If taken at face value, both these texts are very similar and, with the exception of minor setting and characters differences, they
are nearly the same story. They may be read and studied side by side because of these similarities and as examples of Naturalist texts; they reaffirm the harsh realities for women at that time and how not following their expected paths lead to turmoil. But what about Maggie and Daisy as individual? Their importance goes beyond their mortal fates and being mere examples of textbook definitions. By analyzing each character respectively, we see that what they endure is unique to them and that their struggles are entirely different as they expose different issues.

*Maggie* helps define this new reading by examining how one’s life struggles and conflicting priorities lead to difficult choices. On the surface, Mary appears as a belligerent mother who serves no other purpose than belittling her children and being a drunk. She may be deemed the antithesis of motherhood, but when considering her background and her living situation, the question arises: should Mary exhibit mothering qualities regardless of the callous treatment towards her? Mary is constantly brought down by authorities and is the brunt of many jokes throughout the slums, so should she be blamed for her harsh nature? At the same time, is it valid to have her environment justify her actions to such an extent? Mary brings into discussion whether or not one’s inherent compassion should outweigh the grim realities. Rather than focus on what she is, the real question we should consider is how and why she came to be and where she should go from here. Even though she begins as an unredeemable character, can she still be redeemed? Instead of accepting Mary’s actions, we should encourage a dialog revolving around Mary’s treatment of Maggie and how the two are interlocked together.
If we are to read their relationships with a purely Naturalist lens, we resist the opportunity to critique and question Mary’s character and actions.

Jimmie and Pete both utilize others in order to boost themselves, and both having dueling personalities, they too, are more complex than stock characters. Jimmie’s sole purpose in the beginning is to push others down so that he may lift himself up, and when he finds himself in a compromising position by being associated with his fallen sister, his reaction is to repel her as well. In doing so, Jimmie’s hostility is highlighted and his morality becomes more inferior than it was before. While his previous actions may have been justified due to his harsh conditions, Maggie, someone who was below him from the beginning and is even further below after her fall, goes to him for aid, and his chastisement becomes ironic. In trying so hard to save himself, his character becomes questionable and is revealed to be a lower moral being.

Pete initially appears to only care about himself and deserts Maggie when he no longer has use for her, but there is the scene at the end where he repents for his actions and becomes the fool that he thought Maggie to be. When his character is reduced to such dismal circumstances, he is placed in a similar position as Maggie and experiences a fractional fall, but in such a state, could we consider him redeemed? Because Pete was the primary culprit in Maggie’s fall, does his societal backlash possibly compensate for his action? All three use Maggie, the “fallen” individual, as their scapegoat and use her to advance their own standing. By contrasting Mary, Jimmie, and Pete to Maggie, even though they regard themselves as superior to Maggie, her fall exposes their own flaws and complicates the hierarchy that they once established.
Maggie, the only character who shows compassion, illustrates how one’s choices do not necessarily ruin a person, but how the rest of society reacts to those choices lead to one’s fall and demise. Maggie’s strong moral character is exemplified through her unconditional love for her family and Pete. When examining Maggie’s relationships with her family and Pete, we see that she is more than simply a “fallen woman” but a person who tries to better her life and find a new place in society. While some of her situations may appear deterministic by nature as her dire consequences motivate her to find a new path, her decision-making process and her developing relationship with Pete along with her deteriorating relationships with her family show that any choice made would come with its consequences, and purely attributing her surrounding environment to her fall is a superficial reading as her path is more complex than just relying on what is going on around her. We need to give Maggie more recognition for her actions and see her decision-making process in more depth. Even though she is the heroine, she, too, possesses flawed characteristics; Maggie’s own inner turmoil in choosing Pete over her family shows that her choices are not solely based on her environment but are layered with numerous complexities. In her fall, she relies on others for sympathy, and in being heartlessly shunned by her family and those in the slums, Maggie shows that her fall is not entirely her own but contributed to by others as well. In combining the two, we see that one’s fall is not as simple as that in the Naturalist reading; there is no real formula in a “fallen woman.”

“Daisy Miller” considers how two groups, both similar in standing, are competing rather than caring for one another, which leads to moral regressions and unnecessary
vindictiveness. Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker are more concerned with adhering to the “rules” of society and contributing to the hierarchical game and are thus determined to be the winners of their position; they have no consideration of the “loser’s” (Daisy’s) outcome. Because Naturalist readings rely on characters making choices to protect themselves, contemporary readers may not judge Mrs. Costello’s and Mrs. Walker’s harsh treatment towards Daisy but see it as inevitable because they do not want to compromise themselves. With a modern reading, readers may see that while Mrs. Costello and Mrs. Walker pride themselves in believing that they “won,” we see their true, degrading behavior. Even though the rules of society are laid out, that does not necessarily mean that those rules should be followed; instead, we are given the opportunity to analyze their decisions, see the harsh consequences, and witness how they affect not only Daisy but these women as well.

Likewise, the males in the story, primarily Winterbourne, only have their self-interests in mind and have no regard for others. Winterbourne’s game with Daisy consists of him viewing Daisy as a mere specimen instead of a person, yet a Naturalist reading does not consider this sort of relationship detrimental. Because of his condescension towards Daisy, contemporary readers may grow more sympathetic towards Daisy as our values regarding gender equality have conditioned us to view such treatment as wrong. This relationship complicates Daisy’s fall even further because now we see her fault less and less in her demise; rather, the culprit in her fatal path is Winterbourne. Once he realizes that he will not possess what he wants from Daisy, he is cruel to her and shows how one’s greed overshadows the necessity to be sympathetic to someone, especially if
that person is in need of help and guidance. Since her value as a person is not considered by him, he is quick to distance himself enough and take into account her well-being in any of his decisions; he only cares about how her decisions will affect him.

Daisy, on the other hand, is innocent in regards to how society works and, therefore, acts upon her own notions of what constitutes good society. Because she is not yet corrupted by society, she allows herself to build relationships with whomever she pleases, not just those who have a higher standing. The respect that she has for her courier, Eugenio’s opinion is comparable to how she views her own mother or Mrs. Costello. When Daisy meets Giovanelli, she acknowledges that he is Italian, but she enjoys his company regardless whereas others view Giovanelli and is ethnicity with disdain. This naïveté should be emulated because Daisy does not possess the veneer of the others; money and standing do not define the individual. Since Daisy’s view are more similar to our own evolved perspectives on society, we may be less severe on her when she does travel down the wrong path and revels too much in immature activities. Because she is shunned by the rest of the community, she is reduced to nothing in their eyes, but contemporary readers may view her as a more respectable person because she is not entirely deterred by how others categorize her.

“Daisy Miller” further complicates the idea that the natural response would be to protect the self as Mrs. Costello, and Winterbourne refuse any responsibility for Daisy’s death. An admittance would ultimately lead to a potential compromise in their position, but in not accepting responsibility, they show how they commit a moral fall because they attempt to justify their harsh behavior toward her. Not altering their behavior allows us to
acknowledge that they are stuck in this self-centered mentality and do not have the capacity to progress. While modern society has hopefully progressed socially since then, we do not have to suspend our values and experiences when reading the text; we can see that this lack of responsibility is sad and wrong as well as see the value if Mrs. Costello and Winterbourne were to change their mindset towards Daisy and their situation.

“The Monster” is lesser known in the literary canon but appeals to current scholars because Crane is a popular Naturalist and the novella focuses quite a bit on race. Even though race makes the novella different from Crane’s other texts, narrowing the concentration on race and Naturalism oversimplifies the writing. Rather, the text brings up the question of falling for someone else based on natural instinct or moral values and how that compares to sacrificing someone else to save the self. What makes it initially appear unnatural is the reaction from others. Since they have not yet changed their mindset, the townspeople are self-serving and feed off of greed and tyranny. Henry and Trescott go against this norm by compromising themselves in order to help someone else. When saving Jimmie from the house fire, we see no hesitation from Henry; his natural instinct is to go into the fire without even evaluating the situation so he could save the boy. No one else actually goes into the house to save the boy; they just stand by and make feeble attempts to put the fire out, which would have led to Jimmie’s inevitable death. Part of what makes Henry’s quick decision so commendable is that the logic behind his choice revolves around Jimmie and not himself. As a consequence Henry is left severely marred, both physically and mentally, which makes his decision even more disheartening. His selfless actions combined with his severe condition would
presumably make more people feel sympathetic towards him, so when the townspeople antagonize him, seeing Henry being treated as an actual monster is upsetting. Because Henry is so innocent, the way the townspeople treat him is even crueler as they lack any justification; they simply prey on him in order to raise themselves in the Whilmoville hierarchy.

In a Naturalist reading, Henry becomes a forgotten hero and is primarily discussed because of his race. Naturalist readers may consider that, because Henry is black and already in a subservient position from the beginning, he cannot advance in the social ladder regardless and in conjunction with his situation, his being recoiled from is inevitable; Henry simply does not possess the qualities to make him survive in such a world. Yet, this sort of reading reduces Henry’s character to nothing more than a black man who becomes a degenerate, and we would negate all that he has done as a person and miss the amount of compassion that he has for Jimmie. Acknowledging that sincere, selfless love is more significant that Henry’s skin color, for if we only focus on his race, then we are simply judging a text for external characteristics and missing the many layers that make up Henry as a person.

Trescott is also placed in a critical situation since he is provided with the choice to end Henry’s life or allow Henry to live in his harsh state. Unlike Henry, who reacts on his initial instinct, Trescott has the opportunity to consider his options before making his decision to help Henry and he struggles throughout his decision-making process. He acknowledges the amount of turmoil that his family would face if he chooses to take care of Henry, and he also feels indebted to Henry for saving Jimmie’s life. Trescott has the
choice to “play the game” that the townspeople have established and go along with their decision to purge Henry or to protect Henry and compromise himself. Trescott choosing the latter demonstrates that he does have a choice and does not have to succumb to his environment and continue with the injustices in Whilmoville. Most readers deem Trescott to be the heroic figure in the novel because he shows mercy for Henry, but Trescott is more complex as he possesses his own flaws. He has to overcome his own pride and sacrifice his family in order to do what is just. Because Henry’s and Trescott’s decisions have greater implications in sacrificing themselves, they are true heroes and cannot be considered as mere examples of Naturalism.

If we are to consider the time period, depicting the harsh realities that the characters faced often leads them to make decisions based on their environment, leaving no real argument for the case of free will. Likewise, those who maintain a Naturalist reading today often take the time period into account and justify the characters’ reactions by considering them as victims of their severe environment. But what is ultimately disregarded with this sort of reading is human compassion and one’s inherent desire to help another. I argue that by having such harsh characters contrasted with caring (though fallen) characters, such as Maggie, Daisy, Henry, and Trescott, the concept of hierarchies and what is “natural” becomes problematized.

Indeed, much of what we consider natural today has been changed. Throughout history, we applaud those who have committed selfless acts and disparaged those who acted upon their own selfish desires. As contemporary readers, when we consider the progressions we have made in society in terms of breaking down hierarchies based on
unjust, external factors, we may automatically read these texts differently from those during the literature’s time period; we may be more likely to be compassionate towards the fallen individuals and question if those chastising them are really valid in their position.

By offering a new reading, contemporary readers may have a different viewpoint of what should be deemed as a justifiable action. With a more sympathetic reading, we may view these texts not just as a validation for this pessimistic literature but texts that provide alternatives to how one could react in harsh situations. Crane and James offer the opportunity to question these social constructs and consider the unnaturalness of what has been previously deemed “natural.” We need to resist categorizing these important texts so that we can keep them alive and relevant. To accomplish this, we need to add to the Naturalist reading by considering our changing values and experiences and how they affect our approach to a text and acknowledge that these layers of meaning can change over time.
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