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Civil Warfare: Naturalism, Isolation, and Place in Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* and *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*

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ABSTRACT

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CIVIL WARFARE: NATURALISM, ISOLATION, AND PLACE IN
STEPHEN CRANE'S *THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE* AND
MAGGIE: A GIRL OF THE STREETS

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Stephen Crane relayed two significant American war stories in *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895) and *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893). While one bildungsroman details aspects of the American Civil War, the other unveils a subtler, societal war transpiring within the slums of New York City. Henry, the protagonist of *The Red Badge of Courage*, combats psychological turmoil when facing his terrors of war. Conversely, Maggie, the protagonist of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, remains naively unaware of the social war occurring within her New York community, the Bowery. Crane's works suggest that inner-city New York may be as perilous as combat in the American Civil War. Crane posits that Naturalism extends beyond physical, environmental influences to also include psychological, emotional influences. Whether affected by influences of emotionality or physicality, Henry and Maggie stumble toward societal acceptance and become one with their war-torn environment.

CIVIL WARFARE: NATURALISM, ISOLATION, AND PLACE IN
STEPHEN CRANE'S *THE RED BADGE OF COURAGE* AND
MAGGIE: A GIRL OF THE STREETS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY

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CHAPTER I
STEPHEN CRANE AND AMERICAN NATURALISM

By 1895, Stephen Crane had published two of American literature's most notable works of Naturalism. Following the immediate success of Crane's 1895 publication of *The Red Badge of Courage*, readers and critics were prompted to revisit his 1893 work *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. The young writer received instant international recognition, and his works have been credited as "marking the beginning of modern American Naturalism" (Poetry Foundation). Using a variety of sources, I argue that Crane's depiction of social encounters, isolation, and place are circumstantial influences that affirmed his impact on American literature and solidified the establishment of American Naturalism, which emphasizes a more philosophical perspective than does American Realism. However, Crane also uses American Realism's emphasis of literary techniques to authentically represent reality in tandem with the philosophical approach of Naturalism. Crane employs aspects of both Realism and Naturalism. He uses psychological realism in *The Red Badge of Courage* and an accurate portrayal of inner-city, American poverty in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* to dissect psychological and physiological stressors associated with emotional and societal discord.

During the latter half of the 19th century, American writers and artists began to repudiate the ideals of Romanticism and tapped into forms of expression that aligned with a more realistic perspective. American writers, such as Henry James and William Dean Howells, displayed a harsher, godless, yet authentic man-centered perspective. Howells explained, “Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material” (qtd. in Carter 36). Realistic writers maintained authenticity in dialect, depictions of environments, and the unbending classifiers dictating class. Naturalistic writers, such as Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris, Jack London, and Edith Wharton, apply the principles of Realism to include Naturalism’s philosophical approach. Naturalistic writers indicate that not only do those existing under relentless hardships, such as generational poverty or combat in war, suffer any means of escape, but they are also powerless against environmental forces. Naturalistic works reveal that characters are morphed by social interactions, both familial and communal. The individual is subject to, and therefore becomes a “product” of, the occurrences of one’s environment as detailed in Emile Zola’s support of determinism. According to Zola, human beings do not innately possess morality or amorality. Instead, he proposed that humans should be studied as “beasts”—as “products” of their environment (qtd. in Scheidenhelm n.p.).

In *The Red Badge of Courage*, the narrator describes the protagonist as a victim of war. In *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, the protagonist is portrayed as a victim of poverty in a social war against her family and community. Significantly, neither character possesses the power to alter his or her circumstances. Instead, the characters are forced to rely on their own will power to improve the situations in which they are born. *Courage’s*

protagonist is one soldier in a war that has engaged thousands of soldiers in battle. In *Maggie*, the protagonist is one individual in a community in which countless residents exist in poverty and virtually without any possibility of an improved future. The members of Maggie's family and the members of her community are engaged in a war for survival. In both instances, the protagonists are ineffective in single-handedly combating their unfortunate predicaments: Henry against his duty as a soldier in the American Civil War and Maggie against her destructive family and apathetic community. The characters must endure the brutalities that threaten their existence. Crane depicts his protagonists' aspiration for advancement and autonomy as a barren ambition that is gradually diminished by the burden of reality. In *Courage* and *Maggie*, the protagonists are engulfed in adversity, and they are refused the opportunity to transcend their misfortune.

In Phillip Barrish's *American Literary Realism, Critical Theory, And Intellectual Prestige*, Barrish defines Realism as depicting "the realest reality" (3). The grimness of the run-down community depicted in *Maggie* initially dissuaded publishers from considering it for publication. Maurice Bassan describes *Maggie* as "the first dark flower of American Naturalism" (3). Before Crane self-published *Maggie* in 1893 under the pseudonym Johnston Smith, several sets of American eyes had been virgin to the bleakness and desperation portrayed in works of American Naturalism. Naturalism expanded beyond literary techniques and authenticity, both of which are used to present lifelike depictions in Realism. Like Realism, Naturalism portrays realistic trials. Unlike Realism, Naturalism depicts those affected by misfortune as unable to conquer their inevitable hardships that are based solely on the socio-economic class into which they are

born. As in Crane's short story "The Open Boat," which depicts a group of men attempting to survive a shipwreck, the protagonists of *Courage and Maggie* are tossed around by their circumstances. Parallel to the wrath of a storm, the characters' environments have no regard for their well-being. Their difficulties do not symbolize a heavenly reward that will be inherited as a result of earthly hardships. Crane shows that to conquer one difficulty does not ensure salvation as another trial is guaranteed to follow. The characters' difficulties, their attempts to overcome adversity, and their failure or success are ultimately meaningless. Barrish continues to explain the pragmatics of Realism, writing:

Categories of human experience put forward as the realest reality at different moments of literary realist texts include, for instance, physical suffering, life in the slums, money and sex (or, at some moments, desire as such), people's overriding need for social converse, death, and the class hierarchies of American society. At other moments, American realist works also position linguistic events, whether regionally marked speech or facets of the actual scene of writing, as 'most real' in the implicit hierarchies of realness that they set up. Finally, that which occupies the category of most resistantly *there* in American realist writing can even be not-strictly tangible notions such as, for instance, the impossibility of justice, or the ironies built into being a middle-class radical. (3)

"The impossibility of justice" Barrish describes is depicted in *Courage and Maggie*, as the protagonists are incapable of permanently overcoming their difficulties (3). There is

no atonement for the trials faced by the protagonists. Crane's protagonists are forced to continue their futile attempts at triumphing over their birth-assigned plight. Their sole guarantee is either the continuation of their current trial or the arrival of the next.

Instead of highlighting religion, government, or any part of larger society, American Realism is centered on the characters in the work. Although chaos may surround a character, the emphasis is placed on the method in which a character copes with the external factors that he or she cannot control. The presence of the author's voice and opinion of a character's circumstances also influence the author's literary portrayal of real-life events.

Crane's own life experiences obviously led to his Naturalistic approach to his writing. Crane briefly attended Lafayette College and Syracuse University, but he accepted a job as a freelance writer in 1891 before completing his degree. Crane lived in the underprivileged neighborhood depicted in *Maggie*, the Bowery, while working in New York as a journalist. This experience afforded him first-hand insight on the conditions of those living in extreme poverty in possibly America's most renowned inner city (Poetry Foundation). While Crane, born in 1871, did not participate in war as a soldier, he heard innumerable war stories from veterans of the American Civil War. Crane conducted countless hours of research and interviews with war veterans to ensure the authenticity of his work. Phillip Barrish explains this relationship between author and work, writing:

Literary realist works elaborate new forms of intellectual prestige, which are, in various cases, identified with an authorial persona, personified

through a fictional character, instantiated in a text's narrating voice, and/or implicitly proffered to readers. Claims to what we might call 'realist prestige' exhibit at their center the assertion of a paradoxical relationship—comprising a unique degree of emotional and cognitive intimacy with, yet also controllable distance from—whatever category of experience a given literary work posits as the most recalcitrantly real, most intransigently material, that life has to offer. (3)

Crane possessed a keen interest in war and the lives of the underprivileged. His emphasis on a character-centered or man-centered approach allows his works to begin and conclude with the conditions of the character. In lieu of placing characters under the predestined fate of God or gods, or assigning meaning to the tribulations experienced by characters, Realist writers place characters within environments that are directly responsible for the character's circumstances. A character's circumstances are not exclusive to one particular character, but to all individuals existing under the same conditions—whether partaking in war or attempting to survive in an impoverished society. Realist writers do not describe characters as exceptional or unique for having their assigned set of experiences. Their characters do not have a divine hand guiding them and orchestrating occurrences for their good. Instead, characters are alone in their war—singular in their defense against entities that threaten their existence. They are simply human beings—no more and no less.

The Red Badge of Courage is arguably Stephen Crane's most character-centered work. While the protagonists in *Maggie* and "The Open Boat" are victims of their

surroundings, Henry falls victim to himself. Although societal and environmental wars transpire in *Maggie* and “The Open Boat,” respectively, Henry is involved in combat as a Union soldier in the American Civil War. However, Henry is tormented by his thoughts more than his physical surroundings. The narrator writes of Henry’s budding doubt, “He wished to be alone with some new thoughts that had lately come to him” (2). *Courage* is relayed through a lens of psychological realism. Maggie’s character is presented differently than Henry’s character. While readers are aware of the action surrounding Maggie, her thoughts are not known. Readers can only infer about Maggie’s psyche, but in *Courage*, readers are given glimpses into the intricacies of Henry’s mind. Maggie is reactive to the unfavorable occurrences in her home and community because she is unaware that she should be armored to protect herself against her environment, while Henry is proactive in analyzing his level of heroism, the function of the war, and all of his previous knowledge related to the art of battle. Amy Tikkanen describes the insight readers are given in works of psychological realism in *The Encyclopedia Britannica*:

[A] psychological novel [is a] work of fiction in which the thoughts, feelings, and motivations of the characters are of equal or greater interest than is the external action of the narrative. In a psychological novel the emotional reactions and internal states of the characters are influenced by and in turn trigger external events in a meaningful symbiosis. (Tikkanen, n.p.)

Henry’s thoughts take precedence over the physical battles occurring around him. The narrator shows that Henry’s perception of war is of greater importance than the actual

war itself. Henry proves that he is capable of conditioning himself to accept any belief he finds most convenient to his circumstances. He convinces himself to believe that he is of a higher caliber than his fellow soldiers, which allows him to justify escaping battle during the heat of combat. Henry assures himself that if all Union soldiers die in the current battle, there will not be any soldiers left to fight and ultimately win the war. He is momentarily at ease in his seclusion, viewing himself as “enlightened” and his comrades as “fools.” The narrator explains, “He, the enlightened man who looks afar in the dark, had fled because of his superior perceptions and knowledge. He felt a great anger against his comrades. He knew it could be proved that they had been fools” (38). *Courage* defies the accepted and praised belief in the bravery of American soldiers. Crane’s use of psychological realism unearths previously accepted notions that American soldiers are natural-born, supreme fighters. Henry questions the entire purpose of war. He doubts his role within both the war and the world. The narrator explains, “He was brought then gradually back to his old ideas. Greeklike struggles would be no more. Men were better, or more timid. Secular and religious education had effaced the throat-grappling instinct, or else firm finance held in check the passions” (5). Although *Courage* details Henry’s experiences in an unnamed battle in the American Civil War, Henry represents all soldiers, both Union and Confederate, both past and present. *Courage* reveals that vulnerable, apprehensive human beings may, in fact, hide behind masks of bravery and gallantry more often than not.

While *Courage* and *Maggie* maintain components of Realism, aspects of Naturalism are emphasized by Henry and Maggie’s incapacity to control their

surroundings. In addition to depicting the cruelties of war and living under extreme poverty, Crane also portrays his characters as defenseless in their battle to alter their circumstances. Henry and Maggie are unable to change the families into which they are born, and, thus, are unable to change the class in which they exist. Henry is unable to single-handedly end the American Civil War, and Maggie is unable to progress forward beyond her poverty-stricken existence. Her neighbors' reaction to the continual dysfunction of her household is described: "Curious faces appeared in doorways, and whispered comments passed to and fro. 'Ol' Johnson's [Maggie's father] raisin' hell agin'" (13). Representative of mankind, neither Henry nor Maggie is responsible for existing in their current place in time, and, therefore, both are subject to the hardships of their era. Roger Lathbury explains this quality of Naturalistic writings:

One constant in this thinking was the idea that people were not free, that their destinies were controlled not by themselves but by their environment. A writer who follows Naturalism aims, like a realist, to describe life as it is lived, without false, sentimental or contrived 'happy' endings. Unlike realists, though, naturalists do not believe human beings can control what they do: they are not free. They may lament the harshness of life, but they feel powerless to alter it. (70)

Henry and Maggie are defenseless against both their local environments and larger American society. Though each character desperately wishes for an improved existence, both are eternally bound to their birth-assigned plight: Henry as a distraught soldier and Maggie as a destitute young girl. Though surrounded by chaos and unrest, both Henry

and Maggie longingly envision a destiny that can be fostered through their escape from their current world. In *Courage*, the narrator describes Henry's nostalgia: "He wished, without reserve, that he was at home again making the endless rounds from the house to the barn, from the barn to the fields, from the fields to the barn, from the barn to the house" (14). In *Maggie*, the narrator writes, "She imagined a future, rose-tinted, because of its distance from all that she previously had experienced" (60). The narrator describes each character's environment as unapologetic and unchanging. Henry's war and Maggie's slums are equally uncompromising to those fellow human beings alongside them who are also battling to survive. These inflexible terms of existence are pronounced in other Crane works as well.

Crane's "The Open Boat" and "The Blue Hotel" were published in 1897 and 1898, respectively. Publishers and the general American public were developing a growing appreciation for American Naturalism following the international acceptance and celebration of *The Red Badge of Courage* in 1895. In "The Open Boat," the narrator makes it evident that the forces of the sea are uncaring of man's desperate yearning for survival. The narrator depicts a captain, cook, correspondent, and an oiler in a dinghy struggling to stay afloat after experiencing shipwreck along the Florida coast. The narrator writes of the correspondent's mounting dismay following his dwindled hopes of survival: "For it was certainly an abominable injustice to drown a man who had worked so hard, so hard. The man felt it would be a crime most unnatural. Other people had drowned at sea since galleys swarmed with painted sails, but still—" (*Other Stories* 3270). A man's wish to survive is miniscule in relation to the strength of the ocean's

wrath. Similarly, in “The Blue Hotel,” the occupants of a Nebraska bar are not concerned with a Swedish traveler’s earlier experiences. After the Swedish traveler triumphs over a hotel owner’s son in a fight to settle a card game dispute, he retires to a local bar in hopes of celebrating his victory. The Swedish traveler repeatedly attempts to force the bar’s occupants to have a drink with him, but he is fatally wounded after grabbing one of the town’s most notorious gamblers by the throat. The Swedish traveler exclaimed:

‘What! You won’t drink with me, you little dude? I’ll make you then! I’ll make you!’ The Swede had grasped the gambler frenziedly at the throat, and was dragging him from his chair. The other men sprang up. The barkeeper dashed around the corner of his bar. There was a great tumult, and then was seen a long blade in the hand of the gambler. It shot forward, and a human body, this citadel of virtue, wisdom, power, was pierced as easily as if it had been a melon. The Swede fell with a cry of supreme astonishment. (*Other Stories* 4769)

The Swede’s volatile actions are not excused by his possible inebriation or obvious unfamiliarity with his current environment. The men in the Nebraska bar are not concerned with the Swede’s recent victory in a street fight. They do not care to know the Swede, and when threatened, the men do not hesitate to take the life of the Swede. Similarly, in “The Open Boat,” the sea possesses no regard for the safety of a dinghy occupied by shipwreck survivors. The storms of the sea occur with or without the presence of four men clinging to life in a dinghy, and the norms of a Nebraska bar exist regardless of each night’s patrons. The Swede’s murder is not a remarkable or

unfathomable occurrence. It is solely a seemingly natural, and even expected, occurrence. The Swede simply falls victim to his environment, the developing American West—a place he describes as “very dangerous” (*Other Stories* 204). Crane’s Naturalistic works reveal that danger not only lies within fields of battle, but also in Nebraskan bars, along the Florida coast, and within inner-city New York—as the individual is subject to, and therefore directly influenced by, the occurrences within one’s community.

One may argue that the revisited *Maggie* and the critically-acclaimed *Courage* prepared American readers and critics to more easily accept future works of Naturalism. D. Graham’s “Naturalism in American Fiction: A Status Report,” explains Americans’ initial rejection of Naturalism: “Perhaps naturalism stimulates such strong attacks because its bleakness—which is different from laboratory pessimism—so cuts against the grain of American optimism that some critics are led by their own positive democratic spirit to misread and abuse novels that are not nearly as pessimistic as they believe” (3). While America is a nation founded on optimism—on the belief in the possibility of a better life—historically it has not upheld this belief for all of its citizens. Crane describes characters ironically entrapped in the land of the free, both physically and mentally. Henry seems seized by both the grips of war and the horrors of his mind, but Maggie is trapped by poverty and despair. American Naturalism is not pessimistic; it is realistic. The lapse in comprehension and appreciation of the genre existed due to American readers’ refusal to accept that individuals struggle in their beloved American nation, just as some level of hardship exists in every nation throughout the world. Crane reveals that trials, poverty, and war are not American issues or European issues, but are human issues.

The rest of this work will dissect how Crane uses social isolation and place in *Courage* and *Maggie* to familiarize his audience with American Naturalism. Although the narrators detail grim, unchanging circumstances, *Courage* and *Maggie* propel readers through the works. Crane relentlessly maintains his grasp of his readers' attention. Upon the release of these first works of American Naturalism, it is likely that readers possessed an expectancy of Henry's and Maggie's eventual triumph. Stanley R. Harrison explains this innate inclination of American Naturalism's first readers in "Hamlin Garland and the Double Vision of Naturalism":

The compelling fascination of literary naturalism resides in its somber tone and its nonexit circumstances when, in fact, it is excitation of hope and the potential for escape that create the naturalistic vibration.

Naturalism ... is a mature fiction of counterpoint that derives its vitality from contrast and its ironic poignancy from the futile struggle to achieve or maintain an enclosed area of freedom. (318)

It can be argued that the freedom that Henry and Maggie obtained is not the type of triumph initially anticipated by Crane's readers. While the closing of *Courage* is ambiguous, Maggie loses her life at the conclusion of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. Nevertheless, she escapes her burdened existence, though not via a life of affluence and comfort that she once imagined.

Crane aims to emphasize one's struggle against both systemic, societal war and organized, civil warfare. He shows that regardless of characters' seeming goodness or good intentions, their circumstances often do not ultimately work in their favor. In fact,

he reveals that even the most genuine and good-hearted characters can be destined for destruction. Similarly, despicable characters, such as Maggie's mother, Mary, can incite hurt and devastation, yet emerge unscarred following episodes of abuse. Maggie's father is unable to protect Maggie and her siblings from her mother. The frequent occurrences of the Johnson family's violent altercations seem normalized in the work. The family's neighbor, addressing Jimmie, Maggie's brother, asks, "Eh, Gawd, child, what is it dis time? Is yer fader beatin' yer mudder, or yer mudder beatin' yer fader?" (10). Clearly, Maggie's family is as war-torn as the United States during the American Civil War. But Maggie is at a greater disadvantage than Henry because she is unprepared for combat and entirely ignorant of the war occurring on her home front. She is, in fact, naive to bitter social wars transpiring within her home and community.

Crane's untimely death at the age of twenty-eight following a bout with tuberculosis continues the narrative relayed in his works. The hardships any individual may experience are unforgiving, uncaring, and unremorseful. Hence, Henry must fight in a war that he does not support. Like Crane, Maggie must fight to survive her condition—both in her home life and community—just as Crane fought to achieve publication of his literary works—only to lose his life after his short-lived victories in the literary sphere. While Crane's short life and concurrent limited years of literary success may seem bleak as recognized in the experiences detailed in his works, he seized both time and opportunity by devoting his twenty-eight years to observing, dissecting, and documenting "humanity," which he describes as "[the most] interesting study" of all (Poetry Foundation).

CHAPTER II
COURAGE AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

The Red Badge of Courage reveals the psychological consequences of isolation in the family, as well as in war and larger society. Henry possesses a pronounced consciousness of the imminent threats that constantly envelop him during his service as a Union soldier in the American Civil War. Henry's self-awareness is heightened when he is isolated—when his opinions are less affected by societal expectations. In the following section, I analyze Crane's reasoning for describing Henry as a character who attempts to foster autonomy in isolation. Though Henry is a victim of war, he achieves a deeper self-consciousness when isolated from social norms constantly enforced by his surroundings. Crane maintains critical aspects of Naturalism as he characterizes Henry as a product of his environment. Henry endures the impact of the ever-present societal norms both when he surrounds himself with other people and even during moments of isolation.

Though engaged in battle against the Confederate Army, Henry's greatest foe is his psyche. Once faced with battle, Henry repudiates his expectations of war and his current circumstances. The inevitable onset of battle distresses Henry, and he complains: "Well, I wanta do some fighting anyway. I didn't come here to walk. I could 'ave walked to home—' round an' 'round the barn, if I jest wanted to walk" (22). Before the first firing

of his rifle, Henry is locked in bitter psychological contention about his opinion of war.

Henry experiences his greatest self-discoveries in moments of isolation when allowed to challenge social norms with his own perspectives. Henry allows himself to entertain ideas that he would have found cowardice and repulsive while in the presence of his regiment. Crane displays the constant infringement of societal values on individuals' psyches, even while in isolation. In *Courage*, Henry contests Confederate soldiers, the expectations of fellow soldiers, and his anxieties.

In the opening chapter of *Courage*, Crane reveals Henry's infatuation with war. Henry possesses a romantic view of war in which fearless soldiers are nearly god-like and true manhood is obtained through fearlessness, grit, and an undying devotion to one's homeland. However, Henry views extreme valor as a characteristic that has lessened over time. Henry believes mankind has become more refined, less brute, and more civilized than in past centuries. Therefore, he believes that his participation in a modern-day war is a reversion towards a more barbaric version of humanity. The narrator explains:

He had, of course, dreamed of battles all his life—of vague and bloody conflicts that had thrilled him with their sweep and fire. In visions he had seen himself in many struggles. He had imagined peoples secure in the shadow of his eagle-eyed prowess. But awake he had regarded battles as crimson blotches on the pages of the past. He had put them as things of the bygone with his thought-images of heavy crowns and high castles. There was a portion of the world's history which he had regarded as the time of

wars, but it, he thought, had been long gone over the horizon and had disappeared forever. (2)

Crane shows that Naturalism is a progression from Romanticism in his depiction of Henry's man-centered perspective of war. Henry is trained to view and approach war with deep respect. While Henry covets the idea of possessing honor in war, he covets survival far more. Crane magnifies the existence of a more relatable, human reaction to war. It is this seemingly innate reaction that can be credited for the survival of mankind itself. Henry's actions support the ideals of Darwinism—of “the survival of the fittest” (Lennox). This seemingly innate ability of human beings to adapt in situations that threaten their existence spares Henry's life. The narrator details Henry's suspicions of the war and deviation from the expectation of his complete loyalty to the Union Army:

From his home his youthful eyes had looked upon the war in his own country with distrust. It must be some sort of a play affair. He had long despaired of witnessing a Greeklike struggle. Such would be no more, he had said. Men were better, or more timid. Secular and religious education had effaced the throat-grappling instinct, or else firm finance held in check the passions. (2)

It is the belief in survival over patriotism, over loyalty, and over legacies that affords Henry the opportunity to survive. Henry is not protecting a family legacy surrounding his surname, Fleming, like heroes in beloved works such as *Beowulf* and *The Odyssey*. Henry represents the modern American man and the supreme will to survive. He represents someone whose ultimate devotion is to self. Henry's desire to see his home again

outweighs his loyalty to the Union Army. He is not concerned with the outcome of the war because he values his life more than battle.

In “Insensibility in *The Red Badge of Courage*,” William B. Dillingham describes Henry’s loss of infatuation with the art of war. In his isolation, Henry drifts more toward his true self, but he is still heavily influenced by societal expectations. While Henry rationalizes his retreat, he is also tormented by his acts of cowardice. Dillingham explains:

The first part of the book deals with the anatomy of cowardice, which is in Henry the result of an active imagination and a disposition to think too much. Until he receives the head wound in Chapter 12, he is characterized by a romantic and thoughtful self-consciousness. In his anxiety about how he will conduct himself in combat, he speculated constantly about himself and the nature of battle. (195)

While possessing a romantic view of war, Henry is simultaneously gripped by his consciousness, which serves as the source of his desire to survive. Henry is anxious about participating in battle, and his self-awareness and higher level of self-consciousness can be credited for his survival. He combats Confederate soldiers, Union soldiers, and the American Civil War itself. The narrator shows that perhaps most of the battle lies in knowing against whom one is fighting and possessing the awareness that one is actually involved in a war, despite how civil and familiar it may seem.

In *Private Fleming at Chancellorsville: The Red Badge of Courage and the Civil War*, Perry Lentz considers the notion that Henry is largely ignorant. Lentz proposes that

since Henry does not possess a stance on the issues surrounding the war, he is ignorant to the purpose he serves. Therefore, he more easily succumbs to his anxieties of battle.

Lentz proposes that Henry is incapable of determining “what he is,” writing:

Private Fleming’s indifference concerning the cause to which the Union army is committed—that of the preservation of the American republic—is immediately obvious in even a cursory reading of *The Red Badge of Courage* and is certainly of considerable significance in any assessment of his character and of the novel itself. But Crane’s success in involving his reader with Fleming’s self-absorbed ‘problem’ may obscure something even more surprising about this young man. To put it simply, he has no idea what he is facing. This is because he has no idea what he is; he has no perspective at all upon his situation or his circumstance. None of these ‘new thoughts’ with which he is wrestling has anything to do with the very real possibility that, in the course of taking this particular test, he may be shot dead, or maimed for life. Once brought out into the open, all this suddenly seems too obvious to need stating: that he is not facing a classroom examination but a battle in which he may very well lose his life. This is not at all obvious to Private Fleming. He is not even conscious of the fact. (75)

Lentz suggests that Henry considers himself as no more than a young farmer who—if not for the American Civil War—would be looking forward to a future of simple living, farming, and comfort. Lentz analyzes Henry’s decision to protect himself first before

protecting the American republic. Perhaps Henry is not interested in promoting the Union's cause, but solely in ensuring his survival. If so, again, it is loyalty to self that affords Henry the chance to survive.

Henry drifts closer to his true self when alone, away from his regiment. Henry is alone in his repudiation of traditional views of war. He longs for another soldier in whom he can confide: "The youth would have liked to have discovered another who suspected himself. A sympathetic comparison of mental notes would have been a joy to him" (10). Henry makes concerted efforts to unveil his comrades' authentic opinion of war through "seductive sentences." After a day of anticipating a battle that never occurs, Henry inquires of Wilson's expectations of himself in battle. The narrator writes, "'How do you know you won't run when the time comes?' asked the youth" (15). While Wilson is confident that he will be heroic in war early in the novel, after a few skirmishes, he rapidly develops into a more reserved soldier. Once boasting about his fierceness in war, Wilson gives Henry a letter to deliver to his family in the event of his death. Since Henry so greatly dreads being alone in his wavering faith, he relishes in Wilson's moment of insecurity. Henry later reflects on the power he believes himself to possess over Wilson when recalling the existence of the letter and his instruction of delivery. The narrator writes:

He now rejoiced in the possession of a small weapon with which he could prostrate his comrade at the first signs of a cross-examination. He was master. It would now be he who could laugh and shoot the shafts of derision. The friend had, in a weak hour, spoken with sobs of his own

death. He had delivered a melancholy oration previous to his funeral, and had doubtless in the packet of letters, presented various keepsakes to relatives. But he had not died, and thus he had delivered himself into the hands of the youth. (75)

Henry worships the authority he possesses over Wilson. Though Henry experiences moments of doubt and outright fear, his anxieties are not revealed to others. Therefore, Henry continues to attempt to convince himself that he is not utterly, and completely, terrorized by the mere prospect of war. He adopts a sense of “superiority” and “an air of patronizing good humor” towards his comrade, Wilson (75).

After deserting his regiment during an oncoming battle, Henry begins to dissect his thoughts in his idleness: “He thought that he must break from the ranks and harangue his comrades. They must not all be killed like pigs; and he was sure it would come to pass unless they were informed of these dangers. The generals were idiots to send them marching into a regular pen” (20). Henry possesses a sense of superiority over his fellow soldiers. He believes himself to be the sole soldier capable of determining that his survival in battle is essential to the Union Army’s victory in war. In P. J. Bellis’s “Individual and Crowd in Stephen Crane’s *New York*,” the seemingly innate quality of Henry to retreat and constantly relocate to avoid battle is explained. Bellis writes, “In the archetypal American success story, social mobility often depends on physical mobility” (75). Since Henry is aware of the threat of war, he realizes his only chance of survival is to physically remove himself from his surroundings. Henry intentionally places distance between himself and battles that threaten his life.

Henry moves constantly to avoid battle, and he also constantly thinks of his marred reputation if his desertion is discovered. Dillingham describes Henry's psychological discord and craving for acceptance thus: "This constant activity of Henry's reason and imagination compels him to feel isolated until he experiences a vague sense of unity with his fellows during the first battle. Here he becomes suddenly caught up in the fight almost by accident" (195). It is only through likeness with his comrades that Henry feels accepted. He proves that civil warfare is incited against individuals who deviate from societal norms. Henry is unlike his regiment in his opinion of the war.

Up until Henry's last battle, moments of doubt arise in his psyche. Having once thought himself a coward, Henry is enlivened when he exhibits courage in battle near the novel's end. Henry progresses from experiencing his first moments of apprehension, to fleeing battle, to eventually rejoining his regiment and claiming his credibility as a soldier. Though Henry receives a feigned "badge of courage" when he receives a blow to the head from a retreating soldier while separated from his regiment, his "badge of courage" is a physical embodiment of his cowardice. Henry's alleged battle wound is a reminder of his gutless moments, and it further separates him from his fellow soldiers. In "Monomyth Structure in *The Red Badge of Courage*," Michael Schneider writes:

We can begin by more closely scrutinizing Henry's concluding change of soul. Despite the accumulating irony in Crane's portrayal of Henry, there are reasons not to be surprised by the end. First, instead of consistently building all the way, the irony actually modulated somewhat during

Henry's last day of battle. Crane does not totally withdraw his scalpel, for after the battle we still see Henry failing to achieve self-reliance. (46)

Henry views himself as a developing soldier throughout the work. It is not until the novel's end that he believes he realizes his goal of achieving manhood and honor in battle: "He felt a quiet manhood, nonassertive but of sturdy and strong blood. He knew that he would no more quail before his guides wherever they should point. He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man" (116). Despite Henry's multiple mental and emotional backslides, he believes himself to have beaten his tests in war.

Crane shows that one must fight to survive whether secluded or surrounded by others. The narrator describes Henry as possessing a near madness in his fierceness towards battle near the novel's end. Henry's temporarily inflated confidence allows him to abandon his former self and prove himself a courageous war hero. Henry realizes that either he must become a ferocious soldier, retreat from battle, or be killed. In "Monomyth Structure in *The Red Badge of Courage*," Schneider describes the mania—the acute fight-or-flight response—that overcomes Henry. It is the immediate understanding that one must metaphorically—or in *Courage* and "The Blue Hotel" literally—kill or be killed. This same madness afflicts deuteragonists in Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, "The Blue Hotel," and "The Open Boat." Schneider agrees with Jean Cazemajou in suggesting that Crane "seems to strive for in his work is the projection of a mental image to convey his personal conception of truth" (49). Schneider writes:

Central to Crane's conception of truth is his belief that intensity and passion matter for their own sake, as a kind of sacrament, without regard to consequences. Crane's intense living of his own life and his reckless disregard for personal safety exemplified this belief. He expressed it not only in *The Red Badge of Courage*, but in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, for instance, where the barroom brawl is the scene of most vivid action and color. Jimmie fought 'with the face of a sacrificial priest.' The street fight in a blizzard in 'The Blue Hotel' conveys a similar intensity; and in 'The Open Boat,' the totality of the situation, the struggle for survival, presents a return to a primitive state of consciousness. The opening sentence – 'None of them knew the color of the sky' – immediately presents the idea of immersion in the intensity of experience, the unconsciousness of the sea, and lack of conscious awareness. (49)

Again, one must consider Crane's characters' level of consciousness. In *Courage*, the narrator reveals that war may be incited by one's family, community, or larger society, and in any instance, it should be instinctual to defend oneself. The narrator describes Henry's natural inclination to spare himself as a primal response to the threat of one's survival. Crane's work indicates his belief in the importance of unwavering self-preservation and suggests that failing to defend oneself—against one's family, community, or nation—is to willingly and unquestioningly accept death.

The isolation depicted in *The Red Badge of Courage* is shown first in Henry's thoughts that isolate him from the stereotypical courageous soldier. Henry is isolated

again when he physically separates from his regiment to avoid battle. During Henry's desertion, he receives a head injury from a fellow retreating soldier. Henry's wound, which he allows others to believe is a battle wound, further separates him from his regiment by deepening his inner secrecy. Crane uses isolation in innumerable ways in *The Red Badge of Courage*. He shows the drastic influence social norms have on the individual's mindset both in isolation and in the presence of others. Despite Henry's temporary physical isolation and his isolating thoughts, he eventually finds comfort in supporting the stereotype of a fearless warrior and fighting alongside his regiment. Crane reveals how one's family and community have the potential to be more detrimental than war. Crane suggests that one's environment and, more importantly, one's accurate perception of one's environment are factors that greatly define an individual's existence.

CHAPTER III
COURAGE AND PLACE

Most of *The Red Badge of Courage* narrative occurs within the psyche of Private Henry Fleming. Therefore, Henry's mind is one of the most notable places in *The Red Badge of Courage* that will be analyzed in this section. Since Naturalism allows "characters [to] be studied through their relationships to their surroundings," Henry's surroundings are imperative to achieving a thorough comprehension of his journey from boyhood to manhood—from deserter to soldier (qtd. in Scheidenhelm n.p.). The narrator details flashbacks of Henry's experiences preceding his involvement in the American Civil War to further explicate Henry's emotional state and attitude towards the war. Henry experiences excessive emotional distress, and he adopts an alternate persona when isolated from his regiment. While Henry attempts to locate likeminded soldiers who share his anxieties within his regiment, he is largely unsuccessful. Henry allows his apprehensions of war to flourish when isolated and free of his regiment's scrutiny. Henry often retreats into the confines of his mind while physically surrounded by others. The narrator chronicles Henry's odyssey to various physical and psychology places throughout *Courage*. This section highlights Naturalism's emphasis of environment and the effect of one's environment on physical and emotional wellbeing. *The Red Badge of*

Courage opens with internal chaos brewing within Henry's regiment. The soldiers are anxious to determine if they will engage in battle shortly or if they must continue to await combat. Henry's friend and fellow soldier, Jim Conklin, excitedly announces rumored information: "We're goin' t' move t'morra— sure." Jim continues, "We're goin' 'way up the river, cut across, an' come around in behind 'em" (1). Jim's proclamation is immediately met with a rebuttal from another young soldier who exclaims, "It's a lie! That's all it is— a thunderin' lie!" The young private adds, "I don't believe the derved old army's ever going to move. We're set. I've got ready to move eight times in the last two weeks, and we ain't moved yet" (1). Crane establishes the theme of the novel by describing disorderliness among the regiment in the work's opening. Similar to Henry's convoluted mind, his regiment is divided and engaged in an internal war with itself before the onset of battle. While the possibility of battle becomes a reality for Henry, it is met with varying responses revealed by both his physical and emotional reactions. Henry is suspended in "a little trance of astonishment" as he processes the inevitable onset of battle (2).

In addition to experiencing "a little trance of astonishment" following the realization of his closeness to battle, Henry reflects further and questions his decision to enlist in the Union Army (2). Though Henry had "looked upon the war in his own country with distrust," he succumbs to a deep longing to claim honor that he believes to be bestowed solely upon war soldiers (3). The narrator explains:

He had burned several times to enlist. Tales of great movements shook the land. They might not be distinctly Homeric, but there seemed to be much

glory in them. He had read of marches, sieges, conflicts, and he had longed to see it all. His busy mind had drawn for him large pictures extravagant in color, lurid with breathless deeds. (3)

Although Henry's mother initially attempts to deter him from war, he is persistent in his resolve to assume his place in battle. Yet when threatened with violence, Henry immediately mentally withdraws and analyzes the occurrences that led up to his current predicament. The narrator describes Henry's mind as a safe haven that repeatedly serves as his refuge. The narrator establishes that Henry's thoughts may prove to be more realistic than the occurrences that surround him.

Henry is a product of both his physical and psychological environment.

Therefore, his place is not solely determined by the location of his physical body, but also the condition and health of his mind. In "The Use of Place in Writing and Literature," Milford A. Jeremiah explores the function of place in literature:

Place, in its literary sense, can be defined in several ways. For one thing, we may define place as the physical aspect of the environment at hand. In another sense, we may define place as the environment removed from the speaker or writer. In some instances, place is the term used to describe the setting in which issues of writing and other language-related skills are housed and discussed. In the literary world, place is usually combined with time and events to establish what is known as the social setting or the social context of a literary work. (23)

Crane uses “social setting” and “social context” to depict cowardice and courageousness as equally ingrained in Henry’s psyche. Henry’s physical environment directly contradicts his mental environment. Instead of preparing himself for battle, Henry examines the occurrences that have resulted in his participation in the American Civil War. Crane inverts the stereotype of fearless, heroic soldier and instead portrays a wavering, developing young man. Crane tampers with his American readers’ sensitivity towards battles and beliefs that divided the United States by creating a war novel inspired by the recently-ended American Civil War. The narrator depicts a forlorn soldier from the triumphant Union Army—displaying that even the victorious falter and, at times, prove to be fickle.

Henry reminisces about his journey to Washington and remembers that his “spirit had soared” (5). His decision to enlist and the preparation process that followed enliven Henry. He feels essential and masculine—possibly for the first time in his life. Henry’s mother reminds him that, unlike other soldiers, he has not had experiences away from home. However, the praises he later receives temporarily eradicate any hesitations. The narrator writes, “As he basked in the smiles of the girls and was patted and complimented by the old men, he had felt growing within him the strength to do mighty deeds of arms” (5). Though Henry’s forged self-assurance deteriorates, he is momentarily uplifted by the culture and pride of American citizens—specifically citizens in Union states. Milford A. Jeremiah explicates the influence imposed by tradition, customs, and social norms: “Some examples of the use of place in literature are novels, biographies, narratives, and short stories. Place serves a function in that it puts the reader where the writer intends

him or her to be mentally, and this information gives the reader some insight into the history, the terrain, the people, the customs of a community, and so forth” (25). While Henry idolizes ancient soldiers, he is also influenced by the culture and social norms impressed upon him. The “insight into history” that Crane relays indicates the United States’ supreme respect for American soldiers. Henry’s faintheartedness not only contradicts the expectations of honorable American soldiers but also the heroism that has been expected of all soldiers for centuries. Crane exposes the lesser-known, unfathomable realities surrounding the art of war. While some soldiers willingly relinquish their lives in honor of their homeland, others are obligated more to the self rather than the war. *Courage* displays a familiar, more relatable response to factors that threaten human existence.

Since Henry is largely unsuccessful in discovering another soldier who, like himself, is haunted by self-doubt, he does not fully allow himself to accept his cowardice. Although fellow soldier Wilson gives Henry a yellow envelope to pass along to his family in the event that he perishes in battle, explaining, “I’m a gone coon this first time and— and I w-want you to take these here things— to— my— folks” (23), Wilson does not blatantly fear and avoid battle as does Henry. During Henry’s initial skirmish, he faults the United States government for threatening his survival. The narrator explains, “As he perceived this fact it occurred to him that he had never wished to come to the war. He had not enlisted of his free will. He had been dragged by the merciless government. And now they were taking him out to be slaughtered” (18). Henry becomes disillusioned because he had, in fact, enlisted in the Union Army under his free will. It is Henry’s

sudden placement in battle that incites his retaliation against the United States government. Nevertheless, he is steadfast in his belief in his evolution. The narrator explains, “The youth had been taught that a man became another thing in a battle. He saw his salvation in such a change” (21). The commencement of Henry’s first experience with battle forces him to self-evaluate. While Henry experiences discomfort in idleness as he awaits battle, his discomfort soon elevates into outright panic—into Henry’s literal run for his life.

Prior to Henry’s flight from battle, he attempts to withstand the oncoming violence. However, in the moments immediately preceding battle, he rationalizes the need to amputate himself from his regiment should he feel that his life is threatened. Henry mentally prepares himself and attempts to view his upcoming performance in battle with optimism. The narrator describes Henry’s preparation for combat:

Before he was ready to begin—before he had announced to himself that he was about to fight—he threw the obedient, well-balanced rifle into position and fired a first wild shot. Directly he was working at his weapon like an automatic affair. He suddenly lost concern for himself, and forgot to look at a menacing fate. He became not a man but a member. He felt that something of which he was a part— a regiment, an army, a cause, or a country—was in a crisis. He was welded into a common personality which was dominated by a single desire. For some moments he could not flee no more than a little finger can commit a revolution from a hand. (28)

Henry's profession of heroism is short-lived. The narrator explains the occurrences of the ensuing battle, "The youth stared. Surely, he thought, this impossible thing was not about to happen. He waited as if he expected the enemy to suddenly stop, apologize, and retire bowing. It was all a mistake" (33). Henry's emotional inconsistencies reflect a realistic reaction to physical combat in war. The narrator's depictions of Henry's reactions to his various physical and mental places disallow dichotomized characterization. Henry is neither entirely gallant nor entirely cowardly. It cannot be determined if his pessimism taints his optimism or if his optimism taints his pessimism. Henry represents the duality of American soldiers and, likely, of all soldiers.

In Henry's haste to evade the repercussions of battle, he "ran like a blind man" (34). He chastises his fellow soldiers during his escape, demeaning them as "Methodical idiots! Machine-like fools!" (35). Upon Henry's realization that the Union Army had defeated the Confederate Army in the battle from which he had retreated, he experiences rage, guilt, and regret. The narrator explains:

A dull, animal-like rebellion against his fellows, war in the abstract, and fate grew within him. He shambled along with bowed head, his brain in a tumult of agony and despair. When he looked loweringly [sic] up, quivering at each sound, his eyes had the expression of those of a criminal who thinks his guilt and his punishment great, and knows that he can find no words. (38)

Henry resorts to retreating into the woods to "bury himself" (39). While ravaging his thoughts in his isolation, Henry stumbles upon a deceased Union soldier. The soldier's

corpse lay within a canopy that has grown into a chapel-like structure. The narrator explains, “The dead man and the living man exchanged a long look” (39). Henry “feared that if he turned his back the body might spring up and stealthily pursue him” (40). Aside from Henry’s mind, the chapel of forestry is another one of the most noteworthy places in *Courage*. Henry ironically faces the fear from which he is retreating—death. Crane’s choice to depict a deceased Union soldier instead of a deceased Confederate soldier better enables Henry to imagine himself as the fallen soldier. This place, the canopy chapel, is representative of the places within Henry’s mind. In one instance, Henry’s mind allows him to escape back to his home to lead a simple life as a farmer, but in the next instance, he believes it is his utmost duty to uphold his allegiance to the Union Army. The “living man” within Henry’s psyche views his tasks in battle with optimism, but the “dead man” within his psyche beckons him to retreat, desert, and survive. The “long look” shared between the living and dead parallel Henry’s evaluation of himself throughout the novel (39). He is a civilian seeking to be a soldier, a coward endeavoring to be a hero, and a boy hoping to be a man. Henry continues to wander in search of his place.

In *On Writing Well*, William Zinsser explains the necessity of a thorough description of place as well as characters in literature. Zinsser argues, “Next to knowing how to write about people, you should know how to write about a place. People and places are the twin pillars on which most nonfiction is built. Every human event happens somewhere, and the reader wants to know what that somewhere was like” (116). Zinsser’s argument seems particularly valid in relation to *Courage*. While *The Red Badge of Courage* occurs on a battlefield and its surrounding areas, the narrator transports the

reader into the past via Henry's memories. It is not solely battle-related, physical expectations in war that weigh upon Henry, but also the emotional weight made heavy by a mother's hope to reunite with her son, the bountiful smiles and praises from young girls, the veterans' pride and confidence in the next generation of American soldiers, and his obligation to camaraderie and brotherhood.

During Henry's scurry through the forest, he encounters other soldiers who are also experiencing psychological disarray. Henry witnesses the death of his fatally-injured friend and fellow soldier, Jim Conklin. Jim's death is physically distanced from the regiment, which is representative of the death of Henry's former self while he is physically separate from the regiment. Henry receives a head wound when attempting to converse with frantic soldiers, which results in his imitation "badge of courage." Upon encountering the first soldier from his regiment, Wilson, Henry explains:

Yes, yes. I've— I've had an awful time. I've been all over. Way over on th' right. Ter'ble fightin' over there. I had an awful time. I got separated from th' reg'ment. Over on th' right, I got shot. In th' head. I never see sech fightin'. Awful time. I don't see how I could 'a got separated from th' reg'ment. I got shot, too. (66)

Though Henry is not gravely wounded, he assumes the role of a greatly injured and disturbed soldier. Henry is the recipient of tales of battle, and he also shares his own fabrications. The narrator explains, "His self-pride was now entirely restored . . . He had performed his mistakes in the dark, so he was still a man" (75). It is the realities that occur in the darkness that Crane seeks to magnify.

Due to Henry's increased self-confidence, he becomes a domineering soldier. When Henry encounters battle again, he fires relentlessly and gains the respect of his regiment. In the beginning of *Courage*, Henry is a timid young private, but his evolution results in others perceiving him as a "war devil" (85). The narrator explains:

He had fought like a pagan who defends his religion. Regarding it, he saw that it was fine, wild, and, in some ways, easy. He had been a tremendous figure, no doubt. By this struggle he had overcome obstacles which he had admitted to be mountains. They had fallen like paper peaks, and he was now what he called a hero. And he had not been aware of the process. He had slept and, awakening, found himself a knight. (85)

The enlivened, more confident Henry is infuriated upon overhearing a general refer to his regiment as "mule drivers" (88). He despises the general's lack of confidence in his regiment more than he despises the Confederate Army. The narrator reveals, "A dagger-pointed gaze from without his blackened face was held toward the enemy, but his greater hatred was riveted upon the man, who, not knowing him, had called him a mule driver" (97). Henry evolves from timid private into prideful soldier. His separation from his regiment is essential to his development into a contributing soldier.

Similar to Odysseus of *The Odyssey*, Henry must endure a journey, a metaphorical examination, and return to his figurative, temporary home, his regiment, in order to achieve sustainable development. As the novel ends, Henry reflects: "He had been to touch the great death, and found that, after all, it was but the great death. He was a man" (116). In order to claim his manhood, Henry partakes in civil warfare. He

combats his mother to enlist in the Union Army and participate in the American Civil War. He combats his fellow soldiers, the Confederate Army, and himself. *Courage* supports the fundamentals of Naturalism: “the idea that environment determines and governs human character” (*Literary Devices*). The narrator documents Henry’s experiences leading up to his tests in battle. Henry’s mental and physical place greatly account for most of his psychological strife. Henry is not characterized as an exceptional or proficient soldier. Instead, the narrator depicts him as an ordinary soldier who authentically reacts to the threat of war. In Henry’s isolation and his various emotional and physical places, he is allowed to be his true self. Henry is neither entirely courageous nor entirely cowardly, thus illustrating that bravery and cowardice are not mutually exclusive. He reveals that mankind is equally capable of exhibiting both qualities. Crane adds value to the genre of American Naturalism by detailing the experiences of an average soldier coping with relatable fears and attempting to survive the American Civil War.

CHAPTER IV

MAGGIE AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

One may argue that isolation is of greater significance in *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* than in *The Red Badge of Courage*. *Maggie* chronicles a young woman's relationship with herself, her family, and her community. Like the protagonists of other works of Naturalism, Maggie Johnson is not only subject to the unfavorable conditions of her home life and community, but she is also incapable of improving her circumstances. The residents of Maggie's neighborhood, the Bowery, seem to have accepted misery as an unavoidable condition under which they must exist. The most discernable difference between Maggie and Henry of *The Red Badge of Courage* is their susceptibility to environmental threats. While Henry is keenly aware of the hazards that surround him, Maggie is unaware of the dangers that exist within her home and community. It is Maggie's oblivion that leads to her premature death. Henry's isolation enables him to possess more authenticity, as he is able to explore the emotions that he has to stifle when in the presence of his regiment. However, Maggie becomes more delusional and disassociated from reality while secluded. Maggie is alone in her battle against her family, community, and society. She combats society's prescription to perpetual poverty and struggle. Maggie is a lone soldier, yet she is unprepared for battle. In fact, Maggie is unaware of the existence of the war entirely.

Maggie opens with both isolation and chaos. Maggie's brother, Jimmie, is single-handedly attempting to defend "the honor of Rum Alley" against the children who inhabit a neighboring community known as Devil's Row (1). The narrator reveals that the children of the Bowery have been conditioned to accept and perpetuate violence and disorderliness. Jimmie's street brawl is interrupted by his disapproving father. Jimmie's father, "a man with sullen eyes," stumbles upon the chaotic scene and disciplines Jimmie with another bout of violence: "Jimmie arose painfully from the ground and confronting his father, began to curse him. His parent kicked him. 'Come home, now,' he cried, 'an' stop yer jawin', er I'll lam the everlasting head off yehs'" (4). Before readers are introduced to Maggie, the isolating premise of the work is established. Jimmie acts as a child soldier combating against his surroundings—loyal only to himself—and their "sullen-eyed" father's movements through the Bowery are lifeless and monotonous (5). The opening descriptions begin to explore the complex meaning of being "of the streets."

As Jimmie and his father journey home through crowded, overpopulated streets, they encounter Maggie as she yanks along her younger brother, Tommie. Upon noticing her bruised and bloodied brother, Maggie chastises Jimmie for engaging in street scuffles, claiming that their mother punishes the entire family for his disobedience: "The little girl upbraided him, 'Youse allus fightin', Jimmie, an' yeh knows it puts mudder out when yehs come home half dead, an' it's like we'll all get a poundin'" (6). Again, the narrator emphasizes the severity of the unwarranted violence inflicted upon the children of the Johnson household. Jimmie responds to Maggie with violence when she expresses concern for her and her siblings' safety. The narrator explains:

As his sister continued her lamentations, he suddenly swore and struck her. The little girl reeled and, recovering herself, burst into tears and quaveringly cursed him. As she slowly retreated her brother advanced dealing her cuffs. The father heard and turned about. ‘Stop that, Jim, d’yeh hear? Leave yer sister alone on the street. It’s like I can never beat any sense into yer damned wooden head.’ (6)

The Johnson children are born into a community of cyclical violence. Not only do the Johnson children witness habitual violence, but they are powerless against the violence within their home and community. As shown by Jimmie, they are forced to physically defend themselves in order to survive. The Johnson children fight against one another, their family, and others in their community.

The intensity of the violence the Johnson children experience is heightened due to their seclusion. Unlike Henry, who has the moral support of his mother and the physical support of his comrades, the Johnson children lack support entirely. Maggie’s emotional, and later, physical, isolation is magnified by her inability to defend herself. In *The Color of the Sky: A Study of Stephen Crane*, David Halliburton analyzes the ongoing violence depicted in Crane’s *Maggie* and in numerous of Crane’s sketches based in New York: “Social reality has become so much a matter of mere oppugnancy that conflict goes on by itself, interminably: Conflict, to use a word that becomes prominent in the New York sketches, is a ‘condition’” (38). Halliburton continues: “A current of energy that must always flow somewhere, conflict can be interrupted, stalled, or diverted, but it cannot be shut off . . . In *Maggie* the ultimate outsider, in the end, is Maggie herself” (38).

According to Halliburton, the violence witnessed in the Bowery is not contingent on external variables. The disorderliness detailed in *Maggie* is depicted as a normal and natural byproduct of residing in the Bowery. None of the Bowery's citizens are exempt from the negative effects of a constant "flow" of domestic abuse, alcoholism, poverty, and abandonment. Crane authentically depicts the bleak realities that Naturalist writers seek to unveil. Maggie is an archetypal character representative of young girls who preceded her, young girls reared with her, and all of the young girls yet to be born into the streets. The Bowery's "flow" of conflict continues without interruption before and after Maggie's existence.

As Maggie foresees, her mother responds to Jimmie's street brawl with rage. Mr. Johnson interrupts Mrs. Johnson's antics to inquire about her sobriety: "'You've been drinkin', Mary,' he said. 'You'd better let up on the bot', ol' woman, or you'll git done.' 'You're a liar. I ain't had a drop,' she roared in reply. They had a lurid altercation, in which they damned each other's souls with frequency" (8). This altercation between Mr. and Mrs. Johnson reveals that the home is governed by the unpredictable emotions of Mary Johnson. While Henry Fleming's foes are the Confederate Army, his terror, and the notion of war itself, Maggie's foes are her mother and her community.

One may argue that Mary Johnson single-handedly undermines the Johnson family. In the opening chapters of *Maggie*, the narrator depicts the Johnson household as a war zone. Maggie sends her mother, Mary, into a drunken rage when she accidentally shatters a plate. The narrator explains that Jimmie immediately retreats to the hallway in an effort to avoid his mother's violent outburst. This incident, placed early in the work,

establishes a theme of isolation. Instead of scurrying towards his mother for refuge, Jimmie flees his mother and—like Henry’s avoidance of the Confederate Army—he attempts to create as much space as possible between himself and his mother. Jimmie’s isolation from his mother and the terrors inflicting the Johnson family home also results in Jimmie’s isolation from his siblings. The narrator establishes the nonexistence of an alliance among the Johnson children early in the work as well. While isolating himself from his mother, Mary, Jimmie indirectly isolates himself from Maggie, which, in turn, lessens the number of individuals in which Maggie can seek consolation. In *Courage*, Henry flees the wrath of the Confederate Army, and in *Maggie*, the Johnson children flee the wrath of their mother. The narrator explains that it is routine for Jimmie to escape to his neighbor’s residence following one of his mother’s violent episodes:

He floundered about in darkness until he found the stairs. He stumbled, panic-stricken, to the next floor. An old woman opened a door. A light behind her threw a flare on the urchin’s quivering face. ‘Eh, Gawd, child, what is it dis time? Is yer fader beatin’ yer mudder, or yer mudder beatin’ yer fader?’ (10)

The Johnson’s neighbor anticipates the latest bout of violent activity occurring within the Johnson home because Mrs. Johnson’s antics have become ingrained as an accepted facet of the community. The Bowery consists of families stricken by poverty, alcoholism, and abuse. Mary Johnson is representative of other mothers residing in the Bowery who also routinely terrorize their families. Jimmie and Maggie are representative of other children within the Bowery who—although living nearly on top of one another—are painfully

alone and isolated within both their home and community. The Johnson children's environment is not conducive to the existence of a sibling alliance. Instead, each child defends one's self without regard to the others' wellbeing. The narrator does not describe Jimmie as intentionally disregarding the safety of his younger siblings. Instead, the narrator details the impossibility of Jimmie preserving both himself and his siblings simultaneously—indicating that solely the fittest maintain survival.

The narrator closes the third chapter with Jimmie's return home and he and Maggie being "drawn, by some force, to stare at the woman's [their mother's] face, for they thought she need only to awake and all fiends would come from below" (16). The Johnson children are safe temporarily—as long as their terrorizer retires. However, such moments of stillness are scarcities. The narrator opens the fourth chapter by revealing that the Johnson's youngest family member, Tommie, has passed away. The narrator does not detail how Tommie dies, but based on the occurrences of the previous chapter, readers can infer that his death is likely related to the episodes of violence that continually ravage the Johnson's home—which furthers Maggie's isolation. Jimmie can easily escape the Johnson family home, but Tommie—and eventually the rest of the Johnson family—can escape only through death. Thus, proposing the notion that perhaps the sole means of escaping the Bowery is through death—whether it be an expedited expiration of the physical body, or the gradual diminishment of one's hope to overcome the negative cycles embedded within the environment, a death of the soul.

In the fourth chapter, the narrator reveals that, like Tommie, Mr. Johnson also passes away, and his death is equally as unremarkable. The deaths of members of the

Johnson family are casually detailed as if the deaths of baby brothers and husbands are routine aspects of daily living—suggesting that loss and isolation are habitual within the Bowery. In addition to losing a sibling and father, Maggie and Jimmie continue to tiptoe around their mother’s land mine of a temper. Jimmie also develops a tumultuous relationship with law enforcement—beginning in adolescence and expanding into adulthood. He pursues a career as a truck driver and fosters a deeply-rooted contempt for the police. As Jimmie explores his budding manhood, Maggie continues to develop as well: “The girl, Maggie, blossomed in a mud puddle. She grew to be a most rare and wonderful production of a tenement district, a pretty girl” (23). Maggie’s dissimilarity affirms her isolation from both her family and her community. As Jimmie’s involvement in unlawful dealings “of the streets” increase, any glimpse of a healthy brother-sister relationship diminishes. In fact, it is seemingly impossible for Maggie and Jimmie to ever possess a functional, beneficial brother-sister relationship, as the narrator does not indicate the existence of any healthy relationships within their immediate family. Maggie and Jimmie do not witness a functional marriage or a healthy parent-child relationship. The children are not exposed to any gratifying relationships altogether, thus rendering them unable to replicate a healthy relationship. Still, the narrator describes Maggie as blossoming into a beautiful young girl despite the “mud puddle”—the ceaseless conflict—that surrounds her (23). She is one light encompassed by generations of darkness.

The residents of the Bowery perceive a marked difference between Maggie and themselves. Her attractiveness summons an opinion from the men residing in the Bowery.

The narrator explains: “There came a time, however, when the young men of the vicinity said: ‘Dat Johnson goil is a puty good looker’” (23). In an effort to ensure that Maggie sustains a reputation of respectability, Jimmie encourages her to focus on her occupation as a shirt factory worker, “‘Mag, I’ll tell yeh dis! See? Yeh’ve edder got teh go teh hell or go teh work!’” The narrator explains: “Whereupon she went to work, having the feminine aversion of going to hell” (23). As a young man ingrained into the Bowery’s “streets,” Jimmie is hyperaware of the often-fatal destinies of beautiful, lowborn young women. Like Maggie’s inability to select the family into which she is born, she is also unable to control her natural beauty, sexual appeal, and favor received by men in her community. Maggie’s ruination is inevitable. Though “blossomed in a mud puddle,” Maggie is destined for deflowering from birth (23).

Jimmie’s apprehensions escalate once Maggie develops an interest in his childhood friend, Pete. Maggie is attracted to the qualities that differentiate Pete from others. Pete’s dress is more stylish than the other men of the Bowery. In addition, he speaks with a degree of “elegance,” unlike the Bowery boys, a quality appreciated by Maggie (32). Although Pete fraternizes with men of questionable character, such as Jimmie, Maggie discerns a noticeable difference in Pete’s demeanor and class, and she is immediately drawn to the possibility of attaining insight into Pete’s dealings. The narrator describes Maggie’s initial impression of Pete when he visited the Johnson home:

His hair was curled down over his forehead in an oiled bang. His rather pugged nose seemed to revolt from contact with a bristling moustache of short, wire-like hairs. His blue double-breasted coat, edged with black

braid, buttoned close to a red puff tie, and his patent-leather shoes looked like murder-fitted weapons. His mannerisms stamped him as a man who had a correct sense of his personal superiority. There was valor and contempt for circumstances in the glance of his eye. He waved his hands like a man of the world, who dismisses religion and philosophy, and says 'Fudge.' 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. (24)

Maggie is permanently altered after her observation of Pete. She yearns for a chance to further her examination following her initial exposure to a man seeming to be more esteemed than any other man to whom she has direct access within the Bowery. The narrator describes the ideal platform for Maggie's attempt at socio-economic mobilization. Pete appears to be the prime individual to assist Maggie in elevating herself up and out of the cycles of poverty and abuse into which she is born.

In *The Color of the Sky: A Study of Stephen Crane*, David Halliburton also describes Maggie's journey into the confines of her mind and her exploration of the possibility of upward socio-economic mobility. Pete himself serves as an inspiration to Maggie. He is representative of a savior. Pete's existence and Maggie's access to him enable her to consider her capacity to conquer her poverty-stricken existence. Maggie's confidence in Pete correlates to her confidence in her improvement—as she believes him to be her sole medium of escape. Halliburton writes:

Maggie goes where her perception leads her, though in saying this it is well to remember the degree to which the meaning of the word 'perception' has changed. In Crane's day it still designates a true apprehending; to perceive was to see, to behold accurately. More recently the word has come to suggest the reverse. When one states that one has a perception, one is saying simply that one has a point of view; perception becomes a claimed apprehending. Maggie's perception verges *upon* being perception of this kind. (Halliburton 43)

Maggie is not enamored of Pete's personality but with her "perception" of the potential socio-economic advancement that he represents. As Maggie's attraction to Pete intensifies, her familial relationships begin to dwindle. Maggie's birth into the Johnson family affirms her place into a home and a community of poverty and violence, but Pete represents her rejection of her society-assigned relegation to unceasing struggle.

Pete promptly recognizes the attention he receives from Maggie, and he notices how greatly she differs from other girls in the Bowery. Pete remarks: "Say, Mag, I'm stuck on yer shape. It's outa sight" (27). Pete solely remarks on Maggie's "shape," as, like the majority of young men in the Bowery, he does not value her companionship for any reason other than for sexual gratification. Maggie and Pete are attracted to one another because of their differences. Maggie is intrigued with Pete's slight socio-economic elevation above other young men in the Bowery, and Pete simply finds Maggie's body more seductive than other young girls in the Bowery.

Pete perceives Maggie's heightened attentiveness and displays a more refined version of himself. During Maggie's initial outing with Pete, she suspects him to be exhibiting his finest self on her behalf: "Maggie perceived that Pete brought forth all his elegance and all his knowledge of high-class customs for her benefit. Her heart warmed as she reflected upon his condescension" (32). Maggie believes that her social class is beneath Pete's social class. However, she remains naively unaware that Pete's interest in her is solely sexual. Ironically, while Maggie feels that she is witnessing herself drift closer towards the possibility of an improved lifestyle through her interactions with Pete, she is actually drifting further into isolation. Maggie lacks experience with men—especially men "of the streets," such as Pete, and she is, thus, poised for ruin.

Maggie's relationship with Pete, leads to her dissatisfaction with her appearance: "As thoughts of Pete came to Maggie's mind, she began to have an intense dislike for all of her dresses" (37). While Maggie's disdain for her clothing represents a general dislike for her substandard material possessions, she also experiences a mental evolution as well and begins to envision a better quality of life. Maggie's vision takes seed as a result of her experience at the theater with Pete. The narrator details Maggie's evolution in her thinking following exposure to the theater:

Maggie always departed with raised spirits from the showing places of the melodrama. She rejoiced at the way in which the poor and virtuous eventually surmounted the wealthy and wicked. The theatre made her think. She wondered if the culture and refinement she had seen imitated,

perhaps grotesquely, by the heroine on the stage, could be acquired by a girl who lived in a tenement house and worked in a shirt factory. (40)

The theater lifts Maggie's spirits because it implants, ironically or not, the concept of opportunity into her mind. Ultimately, Maggie's experiences and deviation from the Bowery's norm only provide her with fleeting glimpses of improved living. Once Maggie's mind is expanded following her experiences with Pete, her fate is sealed. She cannot return to her old way of life, but she has no control over her new-found life, either. Sarah Kane explains the gravity of the effect of Maggie's environment in "Zola and Stephen Crane Compared." Kane argues:

As for Stephen Crane, he shows in *Maggie a Girl of the Streets*, how environment can affect people and change their lives. Crane wrote that the novel 'tries to show that environment is a tremendous thing in the world and frequently shapes lives regardless.' But he went on to write that, 'if one proves that theory, one makes room in heaven for all sorts of souls who are not confidently expected to be there by many excellent people.'

Maggie attempts to transcend her environment, but her environment incapacitates her ability to improve her social standing. Maggie's encounters and experiences with Pete instill in her the ability to imagine, but not to actuate change. Previously, Maggie had not dreamt or possessed hope. She had simply accepted her conditions just as all young girls of the Bowery accepted their conditions before her. However, Maggie's visualization of an alternative, enriched lifestyle becomes etched in her psyche. But Maggie's awareness of socio-economic progression coupled with the complete impossibility of advancement

only serves to further perpetuate her isolation. Perhaps Maggie would have remained content had she not met Pete and been exposed to a lifestyle that seemed starkly better than her own.

Maggie is further isolated from her family following an altercation between her mother and Jimmie. Conflict between Mrs. Johnson and Jimmie becomes more frequent following the death of Mr. Johnson and Jimmie's assumption of the role of head of household: "Jimmie grew large enough to take the vague position of head of the family. As incumbent of that office, he stumbled upstairs late at night, as his father had done before him. He reeled about the room, swearing at his relations, or went to sleep on the floor" (23). Jimmie successfully, and almost naturally, assumes the role of violent drunkard—increasing the mounting rift between him and Maggie. The expanding distance between Maggie and her family increases after Pete visits Maggie's home during the heat of a battle between Mrs. Johnson and Jimmie: "The door opened and Pete appeared. He shrugged his shoulders. 'Oh, Gawd,' he observed. He walked over to Maggie and whispered in her ear. 'Ah, what deh hell, Mag? Come ahn and we'll have a hell of a time'" (44). Maggie immediately leaves the melee with Pete, evidencing that she has aligned herself with Pete rather than with her family. For their part, Mrs. Johnson and Jimmie, though aware that Maggie and Pete have been spending time with one another, neither had perceived the breadth of Maggie's infatuation with Pete nor Maggie's imagining the possibility of advancing into a higher social class via her association with Pete. Mrs. Johnson curses Maggie as she departs with Pete. Mrs. Johnson damns Maggie

for her sexual ruination and the disgrace that her rendezvous with Pete have brought the family:

‘Teh hell wid him and you’ she said, glowering at her daughter in the gloom. Her eyes seemed to burn balefully. ‘Yeh’ve gone teh deh devil, Mag Johnson, yehs knows yehs have gone teh deh devil. Yer a disgrace teh yer people, damn yeh. An’ now, git out an’ go ahn wid dat doe-faced jude of yours. Go teh hell wid him, damn yeh, an’ a good riddance. Go teh hell an’ see how yeh likes it.’ (44)

Maggie’s mother curses her for her decision to continue to engage in a sexual relationship with Pete instead of enduring another bout of domestic violence in her home. Based on the accepted norms of the Bowery, a woman openly participating in fornication is more punishable than a mother terrorizing her children. The narrator builds the familial tension until this point in the novel, allowing for the impending, unavoidable sever in the relationship between Maggie and her family. Mrs. Johnson and Jimmie reject the evolved, more ambitious Maggie. Jimmie ponders Pete’s violation of his friendship by courting Maggie: “Jimmie had an idea it wasn’t common courtesy for a friend to come to one’s home and ruin one’s sister. But he was not sure how much Pete knew about the rules of politeness” (47). Jimmie and Mrs. Johnson mull over Maggie’s eternal ruination. However, Maggie’s differences from others surrounding her seem to destine her to become ruined according to the Bowery’s criteria of ruination. Following her experiences with Pete, Maggie is forced to exist in the margins of her home and her community.

Despite her isolation, Maggie finds temporary refuge in Pete. Mrs. Johnson and Jimmie are appalled at her prompt dismissal of their recurring violent and damaging antics.

The occurrences surrounding Maggie are not exclusive to her or her family. There are likely numerous instances in the Bowery in which young girls are viewed as permanently tainted following carnal interactions with men. The narrator explains:

“Jimmie walked to the window and began to look through the blurred glass. It occurred to him to vaguely wonder, for an instant, if some of the women of his acquaintance had brothers” (48). Jimmie’s numerous sexual encounters with women, several of which resulted in pregnancies, do not make him sympathetic to his sister’s situation. Jimmie had not previously been concerned even in the most seemingly extreme case when women claimed to have bore his children: “Two women in different parts of the city, and entirely unknown to each other, caused him considerable annoyance by breaking forth, simultaneously, at fateful intervals, into wailings about marriage and support and infants” (22). The “considerable annoyance” caused by the various mothers of Jimmie’s bastard children is also experienced by Pete when he is no longer interested in Maggie as is noted when one of the Johnson’s neighbors rushes to relay to Jimmie a conversation overheard between Maggie and Pete. According to the neighbor, Maggie had questioned Pete about his love for her. The neighbor reported:

An’ she, the dear, she was a-cryin’ as if her heart would break, she was. It was deh funnies’ t’ing I ever saw. An’ right out here by me door she asked him did he love her, did he. An’ she was a-cryin’ as if her heart would break, poor t’ing. An’ him, I could see by deh way what he said it dat she

had been askin' orften, he says: 'Oh, hell, yes,' he says, says he, 'Oh, hell, yes.' (47)

The neighbor's news causes Jimmie to express to Mrs. Johnson, "Well, Maggie's gone teh deh devil! Dat's what! See?" (48). Mrs. Johnson replies, "'May Gawd curse her forever,' she shrieked. 'May she eat nothin' but stones and deh dirt in deh street. May she sleep in deh gutter an' never see deh sun shine agin. Deh damn—'" (49). Fuming, Jimmie "was trying to formulate a theory that he had always unconsciously held, that all sisters, excepting his own, could advisedly be ruined" (49). Jimmie and his mother ironically accept double-standards—Mrs. Johnson, a drunkard, can neglect and beat her children, and Jimmie, a philanderer, is free to impregnate and leave his paramours with impunity. Their standards for Maggie, on the other hand, are severe.

Maggie is oblivious to the familial war brewing within her household. Maggie is banished and marginalized within the Bowery community. Maggie's family and community repudiate her for challenging her assigned poverty-stricken lot. Maggie attempts to enhance her family's home aesthetically just as she attempts to advance herself beyond her environment through her relationship with Pete. However, Maggie's aspirations are stifled by the damnation associated with women's sexual ruination in her male-dominated, poverty-stricken environment. Maggie's patriarchal, underprivileged community permanently stamps out her dreams of upward mobility. A quintessential work of Naturalism, *Maggie* solidifies the disregard of the individual and the supreme, encompassing influence of environment. Maggie is a single young woman who dreams of conquering the crowd that is the Bowery's community—a community that existed before

Maggie's birth and that will continue after her death. After all, Maggie is but a single blossom among a sea of mud puddles. And her difference is what dooms Maggie no matter what she does, for she simply does not fit into the Bowery community.

In "Individual and Crowd in Stephen Crane's New York," P. J. Bellis offers insight on the function of crowds and individuals in Crane's work. *Maggie* was published during 1893—during the same year that Crane was writing New York-based sketches. In *Maggie*, the narrator positions the crowd—the Johnson family and the Bowery community—against the individual—Maggie. Based on Bellis's analysis, Maggie is defenseless against the enveloping influence of the crowd. Bellis writes:

If Crane's fiction offers a naturalist critique of capitalist tales of individual success, his newspaper sketches of 1892-94 suggest a different vision: here too the city often grinds to a halt, but this New York comes alive when things stop moving. The sketches are not built around individuals or temporal progression, but instead constructed in spatial terms: they focus on crowds, which gather and then disperse, occupying space rather than moving through it. Such impromptu groupings seem to coalesce and disappear alongside or beyond the divisions of the economic order. Potential conflict is diffused, the latent energy of the crowd reshaped into a kind of community. For a moment at least, their collective force re-appropriates and reshapes both city and text, yielding what Lefebvre terms a 'representational space,' a 'lived' space that may generate a new kind of mass culture. (77)

Paralleling with Crane's New York sketches, *Maggie* also focuses on the grouping and disbursement of crowds. The Bowery's citizens perpetuate a "mass culture" consisting of immediate congregation, publicized judgment, and eventual disbandment following the ruination of one of the community's citizens. Instead of supporting Maggie's chance at prosperity and progression, the "collective force" comprised of the Bowery's citizens seems subconsciously to long for, and even relish in, her demise.

Groups of women that criticize Maggie are "occupying space rather than moving through it," aligning with Bellis's description of the function of crowds in Crane's New York-based fiction (77). The Bowery's citizens do not live with a sense of advancement, instead they merely exist, and the sole pleasures of their existence are discussing the rumored collapse of a local, promising young lady. Maggie's isolation from her family and her community is more pronounced than Henry's isolation in *Courage*. Henry's regiment is ignorant of his isolating doubts—making Henry isolated psychologically. Maggie is isolated because, unlike Jimmie, she does not accept and perpetuate the Bowery's culture of violence. Maggie does not become fully ingrained into the Bowery's community. She is in the Bowery, but she never reveals characteristics that indicate that she is of the Bowery. Maggie is inclined to possess grander thoughts than her family and her neighbors. She fantasizes of advancement, but others around her are comfortable with ongoing complacency and negativity. Maggie's attraction to Pete, who to Maggie symbolizes stability, contentment, abundance, and a rejection of abuse, poverty, and conflict, only furthers her detachment from her environment.

At a crucial point, Jimmie, in a drunken rage, confronts Pete about his relationship with Maggie. The Johnson family's disapproval of Maggie's and Pete's relationship further isolates Maggie from her family. As Maggie perceives the increasing isolation, she confides in Pete about the horrors of her past home life. The narrator explains:

At times Maggie told Pete long confidential tales of her former home life, dwelling upon the escapades of the other members of the family and the difficulties she had to combat in order to obtain a degree of comfort. He responded in tones of philanthropy. He pressed her arm with an air of reassuring proprietorship. (60)

Pete's "air of reassuring proprietorship" is indicative of Maggie's mounting dependence, and her lack of independence proves detrimental. While Maggie seeks refuge in a person, Pete, *Courage's* Henry finds refuge in his own thoughts. Henry is suspicious of all that surrounds him, but Maggie is suspicious of no one either in her home or community. She is blind to the disdain her family and her community have towards her, and she is also unaware of Pete's fickleness. Maggie is the ultimate victim and the ultimate outsider. Maggie knows she has no protection within her family, but she naively believes that Pete will serve as her protector: "As to the present she perceived only vague reasons to be miserable. Her life was Pete's and she considered him worthy of the charge . . . To her knowledge she had never seen any better" (60). Maggie believes she is gradually progressing towards the "rose-tinted" future she imagines (60).

The courtship between Pete and Maggie is abruptly interrupted once Pete's former lover, Nellie, reappears unexpectedly. The return of this more cultivated woman

bewilders Maggie as she witnesses Pete unquestioningly submit to each of Nellie's desires. The narrator details the initial encounter: "Maggie took instant note of the woman. She perceived that her 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 a prevailing fashion perched jauntily upon her dark hair" (68). Maggie is unable to compete with Nellie, for Pete's attention to Nellie erases Maggie's presence altogether. Maggie's heart-wrenching tales of her dysfunctional home life fade from Pete's mind as Nellie regains Pete's undivided attention. Maggie is left alone as Pete and Nellie depart in one another's arms. Maggie's only recourse is to return home where she is not wanted.

Mary Johnson does not welcome Maggie back into the Johnson household. Instead, Mrs. Johnson is infuriated by Maggie's homecoming. Not only does Mrs. Johnson openly mock Maggie, but she also demeans her in the presence of her neighbors. The narrator explains that Mrs. Johnson taunts Maggie while Jimmie rejects Maggie:

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,' she 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!' The jeering cries ended in another burst of shrill laughter. The girl seemed to awaken. 'Jimmie—' He drew hastily back from her. (77)

Maggie begins her descent when rejected by both her mother and her brother. Mrs. Johnson and Jimmie consider Maggie eternally ruined and incapable of redemption. The mother and son are against any justification of Maggie's actions, and they seemingly delight in their mutual disdain for the fallen young girl.

Following Maggie's moments of humiliation that are incited by her family, she returns to her sole source of refuge, Pete, who is extremely surprised by the abrupt return of his former lover, Nellie. Unable to comprehend her rejection by Pete and her family, Maggie drifts into shock. The narrator explains:

The girl seemed to have a struggle with herself. She was apparently bewildered and could not find speech. Finally she asked in a low voice: 'But where kin I go?' The question exasperated Pete beyond the powers of endurance. It was a direct attempt to give him some responsibility in a matter that did not concern him. In his indignation he volunteered information. 'Oh, go teh hell,' cried he. He slammed the door furiously and returned, with an air of relief, to his respectability. Maggie went away.

(81)

Maggie's experience of rejection relegates her to a permanent existence within the margins of the Bowery. Maggie's idleness in the streets parallels Henry's idleness in the woods during his temporary desertion from battle in the American Civil War. In their isolation, Maggie and Henry are able to ruminate on their thoughts. However, the protagonists differ in their awareness of their agency. While Henry contemplates his return to his regiment or his escape of the war entirely, Maggie seems to mindlessly stray

towards prostitution with a spirit of defeat—as it appears to be the default occupation for the Bowery’s aimless girls of the streets.

The narrator asserts that Maggie has become one with the streets. Maggie continually roams the streets due to her lack of both a home and a companion. In *Courage*, Henry is comforted by thoughts of his mother and memories from his previous life as a farmer. However, Maggie is fragile and unstable, and she does not possess one nostalgic thought of her past other than her moments with Pete. The narrator details Maggie’s final demise:

The girl went into gloomy districts near the river, where the tall black factories shut in the street and only occasional broad beams of light fell across the pavements from saloons. In front of one of these places, whence came the sound of a violin vigorously scraped, the patter of feet on boards and the ring of loud laughter, there stood a man with blotched features.

Further on in the darkness she met a ragged being with shifting, bloodshot eyes and grimy hands. (86)

Maggie does not return following her encounter with the “ragged” individual. In the final chapter of the work, Jimmie informs his mother of Maggie’s death. Mrs. Johnson, believing herself to be the victim, exclaims that she will “fergive” Maggie for her transgressions (95). Interestingly, all of the characters in *Maggie* are flat characters. Mrs. Johnson is equally as egotistical and uncaring in the novel’s end as in its beginning. The narrator emphasizes the Naturalistic component of the work. The environment and the characters remain stunted. Maggie is the sole character that undergoes an attempt at

evolution, and despite her development of aspirations and following collapse, the Bowery continues on without interruption. Perhaps if Maggie had not dreamed, she would not have died.

Donald Pizer, in *The Theory and Practice of American Literary Naturalism: Selected Essays and Reviews*, explicates the battle in which Maggie has unknowingly participated. After Pete and her family rebuke her, Maggie is completely alone. Unlike Henry, Maggie is unaware that she has herself. Maggie is oblivious to the notion of self-preservation and adapts to unthinkingly moving through the Bowery's streets. Pizer writes:

Crane's allegory of life as a battle is thus appropriate for another reason besides its relevance to the violence of discovery. Few battles are clearly or cleanly won or lost, and few soldiers are clearly God's chosen. But men struggle, and in their struggle they learn something about their limitations and capacities and something about the nature of their relations with their fellow men, and this knowledge is rewarding even though they never discover the full significance or direction of the campaign in which they are engaged. (100)

While Henry discovers his "limitations and capacities," Maggie submits to the pressures of the Bowery. Crane's works posit that attempting to survive in communities such as the Bowery may be more difficult—and more deadly—than attempting to survive a civil war. Maggie is unable to sustain the "violence of discovery."

In *Courage*, Henry isolates himself, but individuals surrounding Maggie isolate her. External factors do not prompt Henry to seclude himself, but, instead, his thoughts of desertion haunt him most. Maggie, however, is attracted to Pete's more comfortable lifestyle, and she finds the cyclical poverty and abuse of her home and community repulsive. Henry is a byproduct of his psychological environment, and Maggie is a byproduct of her physical environment. Maggie easily succumbs to the pressures of her community because she is ignorant to the necessity of self-defense. Henry's previous fantasies of valor in war and the pride he will experience upon proving himself as a tenacious war hero encourage him during battle, but Maggie loses all of her ambitions completely. In *Maggie*, the narrator depicts a lesser-known civil war by detailing the downfall of a young girl—of society's most vulnerable member.

CHAPTER V
MAGGIE AND PLACE

The Red Badge of Courage occurs mostly in Henry's mind, but all of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* occurs in Maggie's physical surroundings. As Emile Zola explains, humans are to be studied as "products" of their environment. In this section, I will analyze the relationship between Maggie and her environment. Maggie lacks the self-awareness that Henry possesses. As Henry mentally navigates through his thoughts and physically navigates through his physical terrain during the American Civil War, Maggie seems to get hurled about by her circumstances. Crane's works suggest that the streets of New York could possibly be more deadly than facing battle in war. Maggie is blindsided by her enemy mostly because she is unaware of the existence of the social war surrounding her. As "a girl of the streets," Maggie is both a child and a victim of war.

On the other hand, in *Courage*, Henry's regiment, his mobile, military home, is both a source of comfort and disdain. Henry feels empowered when in the company of his fellow armed soldiers, but he is also anxious about the onset of battle. This immense fear prompts Henry to imagine his seclusion away from his regiment, a separation that deflects him away from the threat of battle. Maggie's home is a place of horror. When Maggie accidentally drops and breaks a plate, Maggie's brother, Jimmie, is the first to react

by fleeing the home in an effort to avoid an assault from his infuriated mother. Drunk, Mrs. Johnson overresponds to the accident howling, “Good Gawd.” Mrs. Johnson’s “eye glittered on [Maggie] with sudden hatred. The fervent red of her face turned almost to purple. The little boy [Jimmie] ran to the halls, shrieking like a monk in an earthquake” (9). The narrator explains that Jimmie finds refuge with an elderly neighbor:

Jimmie and the old woman listened long in the hall. Above the muffled roar of conversation, the dismal wailings of babies at night, the thumping of feet in unseen corridors and rooms, mingled with the sound of varied hoarse shoutings in the street and the rattling of wheels over cobbles, they heard the screams of the child and the roars of the mother die away to a feeble moaning and a subdued bass muttering. (11)

In this early scene of the work, the narrator not only depicts chaos in Maggie’s home, but also the pandemonium in most of the neighboring tenement homes in the Bowery. Although family and countless neighbors surround Maggie, she is most alone when in her home. Maggie’s befriending Pete, her job in the shirt factory, and her ability to more easily blend in with the other citizens of the Bowery outside the home allow her to have more companionship. In the home, Maggie is a victim and a target. She is the recipient of domestic and verbal abuse inflicted by her mother and her brother—both of whom eventually become the only other residents in the home. On the other hand, In *Courage*, Henry is comforted by thoughts of his home. Henry’s home is synonymous with comfort, safety, and solace, but Maggie’s home mostly serves as a bloodied battlefield.

During Maggie's first date with Pete, she is amused by the relaxed, fun-loving environment of the people enjoying music and drinks. Until this point in the work, Maggie is inexperienced outside of her home or her job at a shirt factory. The narrator describes the workingman's leisure within the confines of the Bowery:

An orchestra of yellow silk women and bald-headed men on an elevated stage near the centre of a great green-hued hall, played a popular waltz.

The place was crowded with people grouped about little tables. A battalion of waiters slid among the throng, carrying trays of beer glasses and making change from the inexhaustible vaults of their trousers pockets. Little boys, in the costumes of French chefs, paraded up and down the irregular aisles vending fancy cakes. There was a low rumble of conversation and a subdued clinking of glasses. Clouds of tobacco smoke rolled and wavered high in air about the dull gilt of the chandeliers. (31)

Maggie greatly enjoys melodramas and ponders the probability of a girl like herself acquiring a better lifestyle. Maggie's aspirations are birthed out of her experiences with Pete. Both Pete and the new places of leisure that Maggie visits represent her potential access to a better way of living. While Maggie's exposure to bars, theater, and music halls symbolize the possibility of a better life, her dreams of acquiring a higher socio-economic status dissipate after her relationship with Pete ends. Nellie, Pete's former lover, returns suddenly, and Pete exits Maggie's life as quickly as he entered.

Maggie begins to covet the notion of her own social progress following her exposure to a better quality of life. However, this enhanced lifestyle is only viewable

through the “rose-tinted” lenses once provided by Pete (60). Maggie is unable to seize the resources around her and progress toward her socio-economic goals. Maggie is eager to seize her resources. She is also eager to better herself—which will likely benefit upcoming generations due to her existence alone—but she is unable to change her perspective of herself. After she is rejected by Pete and disowned by her family, Maggie resorts to prostitution. The streets are not depicted as a place of inherent evil. Instead, the streets are a place filled with people capable of both good and evil.

Maggie’s place, or more so her inability to alter her place, leads to her demise. Maggie is literally and figuratively swallowed by her surroundings. She lives in close proximity to her family and neighbors, and she is negatively affected by their disapproval of her socially-unsavory attempt to increase her socio-economic status. Maggie’s surroundings eliminate her aspirations, and she drowns in a river near the Bowery—becoming physically engulfed by her surroundings. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre discusses the purpose of place and space in literature:

The problem is that any search for space in literary texts will find it everywhere and in every guise: enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about. What texts can be considered special enough to provide the basis for a ‘textual’ analysis? Inasmuch as they deal with socially ‘real’ space, one might suppose on first consideration that architecture and texts relating to architecture would be a better choice than literary texts proper. Unfortunately, any definition of architecture itself requires a prior analysis and exposition of the concept of space. (15)

The architecture within the Bowery reflects the neighborhood's "socially 'real' space." The Bowery's residents impose upon the lives and thoughts of one another. Maggie's attempt to deviate from the general way of living in the Bowery leads to her death. The citizens of the Bowery do not support Maggie's aspiration to achieve a better lifestyle. Instead, their opinions are muddled with the prospect of Maggie becoming a ruined young woman. The Bowery's residents are blind to the prospect of leisure and joy to which Pete exposes Maggie, and they exile Maggie for refusing her seemingly natural way of life and seeking an advancement in social class. Citizens of the Bowery are solely concerned with assuming what they believe to be their civic duty to demoralize and chastise Maggie.

The narrator depicts the streets as representative of any inner-city. The narrator also describes the Bowery's citizens as continuing their daily tasks in spite of an animated scuffle occurring among children. Women casually observe from their apartment windows, boat dock workers and engineers proceed with their tasks, and inmates perform their job assignments. The narrator explains:

From a window of an apartment house that upreared its form from amid squat, ignorant stables, there leaned a curious woman. Some laborers, unloading a scow at a dock at the river, paused for a moment and regarded the fight. The engineer of a passive tugboat hung lazily to a railing and watched. Over on the Island, a worm of yellow convicts came from the shadow of a building and crawled slowly along the river's bank. (1)

This description indicates that the occurrences that the narrator relays in *Maggie* are not exceptional because of the place in which they occur. Instead, it is the people that incite the occurrences. The streets are comprised of people who create and enforce the culture. Maggie is not captured by a looming criminal of the night, but she succumbs to the risks associated with prostitution. The majority of Maggie's negative encounters with the streets occur within her own home.

The narrator suggests that Maggie becomes accustomed to surviving as a street worker. Maggie learns to target “men of rural or untaught pattern” when seeking clients. The narrator describes “[the streets]” as a place constantly filled with physical movement, but not as a place of innate corruption and crime:

A girl of the painted cohorts of the city went along the street. She threw changing glances at men who passed her, giving smiling invitations to men of rural or untaught pattern and usually seeming sedately unconscious of the men with a metropolitan seal upon their faces. Crossing glittering avenues, she went into the throng emerging from the places of forgetfulness. She hurried forward through the crowd as if intent upon reaching a distant home, bending forward in her handsome cloak, daintily lifting her skirts and picking for her well-shod feet the dryer spots upon the pavements. (83)

The greatest misdeed of the citizens of the Bowery—of the citizens “of the streets”—is their refusal to accept those who differ. The narrator writes, “Maggie always departed with raised spirits from the showing places of the melodrama” (40). Since Maggie is

exposed to “places of melodrama” during her courtship with Pete, she is familiar with the places—“the glittering avenues”—where she can locate and service higher esteemed men. Maggie becomes “a girl of the streets” because of the hardships she experiences in both her home and community. Just as a residential building in the Bowery “quivered and creaked from the weight of humanity stamping about in its bowels,” Maggie succumbs to “the weight of humanity,” including the additional weight of her mother and brother (5).

In “Individual and Crowd in Stephen Crane’s New York,” P. J. Bellis dissects place and class in Crane’s *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* and *George’s Mother*. He also references “the weight of humanity” depicted in Crane’s works (5). The streets of New York are described as unforgiving and uncaring. In *Courage*, Henry has a more communal experience with his regiment than Maggie does with neighbors who have known her from birth. Bellis explains:

Crane’s novels and fictional tales, built on linear narrative and authorial detachment, track individual economic failure in a city increasingly divided by class privilege and exploitation. In *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893) and *George’s Mother* (1896), Manhattan is a place of overcrowding, enclosure, and violence. Traffic is at a standstill, and space is brutally contested. For individuals, such physical blockage limits both individual agency and narrative possibility—moving forward in time can only mean a fall downward in class. New York remains ‘an impenetrable mystery’ to them; however much they long to ‘comprehend it,’ they will only be ‘buried’ under its ‘complexities.’ (76)

Cycles of familial dysfunction and poverty limit Maggie's advancement. In *Courage*, Henry is more mobile than Maggie—both mentally and physically. Aside from moving between her home and her job, Maggie's sole exposure to the leisure activities of New York's lower middle class exist only through her relationship with Pete. Like Maggie, the citizens of the Bowery are unable to “comprehend” the “complexities” surrounding them.

In *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, the Bowery's citizens' inability to temporarily or permanently alter their physical place indicates their socio-economic stagnation. As Bellis mentions, their “individual agency” is blocked by congested spaces (76). If Maggie had the possibility to relocate, she may have had a greater chance of surviving. In *Courage*, Henry's relocation from his childhood home to the battlefield fosters immeasurable growth. During Maggie's moments of courtship with Pete, she is still under the influence of her family and her community. Maggie is victim to the negative repercussions of daring to transcend her poverty-stricken environment. Henry is deeply affected by wanderlust—as is Maggie. Whether moving from a farm to a battlefield, from a rural town to a city, or from a city to a rural town, it is the means of escape and mobility that is coveted. Isolation and place magnify the immense effect one's environment has on one's socio-economic status—which ultimately determines one's chances of survival.

CHAPTER VI

ISOLATING PLACES

Social encounters, isolation, and place are critical influencers in *The Red Badge of Courage* and *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*. *Courage* and *Maggie* solidified the establishment of American Naturalism and branded Stephen Crane as a pioneering, American Naturalist writer. Crane is effective in his use of psychological realism in *Courage*. He describes the confines of Private Henry Flemings' psyche as more reflective of reality than Henry's surroundings—proposing that one's perception of reality is of greater significance than actual occurrences. In *Maggie*, the narrator describes New York's inner-city as an environment paralleling the chaos of a civil war. Unlike Henry, Maggie is unable to mentally retreat to the safety of her thoughts. Instead, the brutalities of her life in the streets conquer her. As William Dean Howells explains, "Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material" (qtd. in Carter 36). Crane uses *Courage* and *Maggie* to reveal unfavorable truths that affect American citizens by detailing the relationship between environment and individual.

Crane and other Naturalist writers minimize the individual and emphasize the individual's inability to alter the effects of one's environment. Henry and Maggie are molded by their environment, and they are unable to alter their circumstances. Unlike

Romanticism, Naturalism highlights one's inability to dictate one's class, race, and location. Henry does not differ from his fellow soldiers, and Maggie is representative of other young girls growing in the Bowery. In *Courage*, the narrator describes Henry's strained relationship with the members of his regiment. Henry's inability to discover a likeminded soldier serves as the source of his isolation. Maggie is also disassociated from members of her community due to her differences—first in appearance and then in her thinking. The narrator magnifies one's inclination to congregate with those of similar qualities and values, and details the negative effects of exile or seclusion.

Through Crane's presentation of characters as products of their surroundings, readers witness the environmental influences that directly affect the protagonists. In *Courage*, the narrator takes readers into the psyche of Private Henry Fleming. Readers learn that Henry's perception influences him more than the occurrences that surround him. Henry's mind is depicted as his place of refuge, but his thoughts prove to be his largest source of isolation. Henry's hesitations towards war are dishonorable according to societal expectations of gallantry in war. Henry is representative of the common, everyday man, and he is isolated because his opinion of the American Civil War differs from the opinion of others around him.

In *Courage*, the narrator also emphasizes another significant component of Naturalism—place. Naturalist writers extensively dissect characters' relationship with their environment. In *Courage*, Henry is constantly attempting to rationalize the apprehensive thoughts that haunt him. The narrator depicts Henry's relationship with his regiment, the forest, and the battlefield. Henry's evolution occurs due to his

transformation of thought. Nevertheless, it is through his various physical and mental places that Henry becomes most acquainted with who he is and who he would like to become. In “The Presence of Place in Literature – with a Few Examples from Virginia Woolf,” Sten Moslund explains the significance of place and how it is analyzed in literature:

This is the horror – or the joy – that soon announces itself to any new student of place in literature: place emerges as, and *through*, a massive complexity of socio-cultural structures and relations, behaviour and practices, language and discourses. Added to that, it is a product of historical and natural forces as well as of bodily perception, emotions and the imagination. In other words, the question of place in literature has overwhelming ramifications. (1)

American war veterans relay their experiences to current soldiers. This effort to instill a sense of tradition, pride, and honor in war increases the burden of Henry’s cowardly thoughts. Each person Henry encounters and each of his experiences sculpt his psyche. Henry is a product of the American society and culture that existed during the American Civil War.

Maggie’s social isolation is more explicit than Henry’s isolation. Henry is the only individual aware of his isolating thoughts, and his fear of others’ discovery of his fearfulness terrorizes him. While Henry’s isolating thoughts are unseen, Maggie’s differentiation from others in her community is glaring. Since Maggie develops into a “rare” and “wonderful” young lady, she is rejected by those who are not “rare” and

“wonderful”—those who despise all that is “rare” and “wonderful” (23). The differences in Maggie’s physical appearance foreshadow the differences that soon permanently isolate Maggie from her community. Maggie is not exiled following a great offense or crime against her community. Maggie is exiled for engaging in sexual relations with her courter, Pete—a man she believes will save her from a life in the Bowery. Maggie’s family perceives her rejection of the domestic abuse and alcoholism in her home as an assault against the family. Maggie’s community members operate as if it is their civic duty to moralize Maggie.

The narrator’s details of the Bowery’s citizens’ close proximity to one another indicate a suffocating effect. Maggie is suffocated by her family and community, both emotionally and physically. Maggie’s environment stifles her ambitions, and she drowns after an unfortunate encounter during her work as a prostitute. In *Maggie*, the home is a place of incessant contention and conflict. Ironically, Maggie’s demise following her life in the streets of New York is more anticipated than the possibility of Henry’s death during his service in the American Civil War. Nevertheless, the narrator does not describe the streets as a place of inherent evil. Instead, the narrator focuses on the spite and malice of some of the people who comprise the streets. Maggie’s birth into a family unwound by poverty and abuse solidifies her placement into an existence marred by interminable suffering.

Combat is a constant within Crane’s works of Naturalism. In *The Red Badge of Courage*, Henry battles against himself, social norms, and the Confederate Army. In *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, Maggie battles against her family, her community, and her

relegation to poverty and abuse. Crane repeatedly correlates one's life experiences to battles in war. *Courage* and *Maggie* are both coming-of-age novels, but Henry's awareness of himself and his environment better equip him to withstand his trials. Young, naïve girls like Maggie are the most susceptible victims because they lack an awareness of the need to protect one's self. Crane's use of social isolation and place support his emphasis on the impact of environment on an individual. Crane's years of residing in New York gave him invaluable, first-hand insight into the trials of young girls, like Maggie, attempting to conquer their circumstances. Crane's interviews with American Civil War veterans served as source material for his creation of a classic American novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*. One of the most renowned writers of American Naturalism, Crane also proves to be one of the greatest observers and recorders of humanity. He studied social norms, social patterns, and environmental conditions. Crane depicts mankind authentically and without bias. He unveils us to ourselves through his study and documentation of humanity—" [the most] interesting study" of all.

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