JOYCE, SHELBY E. M.A. Sentimental Biopolitics and Nineteenth-Century American Literary Representations of Female Factory Work: The Power of Feeling in Savage's *The Factory Girl*, Melville's "The Tartarus of Maids," and Phelps's *The Silent Partner*. (2022)
Directed by Dr. Karen Weyler. 46 pp.

This article explores how sentimental biopolitics manifests in the labor reform efforts of the literary depictions of female factory workers in Sarah Savage's novel *The Factory Girl* (1814), Herman Melville's sketch "The Tartarus of Maids" (1855), and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's novel *The Silent Partner* (1871). Though purportedly working to establish better conditions for laborers or foster their spirituality, authors like Savage and Melville appear to be writing to maintain and reinforce their social status quo. Furthermore, Phelps' work most closely approximates true labor reform yet is not altogether altruistic. One factor that accounts for the differences between modern and nineteenth-century American labor reform texts is the authors' different understandings of the nature and value of human life. These nineteenth-century authors were operating under a different biopolitical regime—one I argue correlates to the cultural movement of sentimentalism. In Savage, we see how the tradition of Republican Womanhood set up and reinforced the gender roles that would form the basis of the neo-Lamarckian bisexual organization of race. Through Melville, we see how a sociobiologically indeterminate understanding of race and evolution merged with and expressed white masculine anxiety, leading to eugenic practices. Lastly, through Phelps, we see the beginnings of the end of gender roles that would cause the sentimental biopolitical framework to disintegrate. Analyzing the mechanisms of biopower throughout these texts augments our understanding of nineteenth-century American society's intricate and depraved inner workings and our understanding of the apparatuses of biopower in general.

JOYCE, SHELBY E. M.A. “It’s the Truth Even if It Didn’t Happen”: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, *Ratched*, and the Public Memory of Lobotomy. (2022)
Directed by Dr. Heather Adams. 28 pp.

This article explores the reflection and reproduction of the American public memory of lobotomy and the mechanisms of active forgetting in the 1975 film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest* and the 2020 Netflix series *Ratched*. The generic conventions of comedic realism and horror in *Cuckoo's Nest* and *Ratched,* respectively, work against their historical accuracy. Nevertheless, due to their ability to capture public interest, works like *Cuckoo's Nest* and *Ratched* have powerful sway over public memories. By highlighting what has been actively forgotten in the memory of lobotomy, we can call attention to not only who and what has been forgotten, but why and how. I argue that *Cuckoo’s Nest*’s omission of the stories of female lobotomy victims further obfuscates the inequalities faced by women in America at the time at the hands of psychiatry and society at large. Additionally, I contend that the displacement of blame onto Nurse Ratched is evidence of a patriarchal societal structure that is taken as so normalized that the gender of real perpetrators can be forgotten because it is deemed so normal that it is inconsequential. Furthermore, in *Ratched*, the burlesque portrayal of Ratched’s character as wholly willful and the failure to logically account for her actions in both stories further reinforces this injustice. The misremembered history of lobotomy and the consequentially negative portrayal of nurses and psychiatry in *Cuckoo’s Nest* and *Ratched* is not just a violence to the past; it has significant repercussions for the present. The stereotypes *Cuckoo’s Nest* and *Ratched* memory of lobotomy perpetuate about nurses and psychiatry can be harmful and even deadly to those seeking any type of health treatment and those in need of psychiatric care.

SENTIMENTAL BIOPOLITICS AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERARY REPRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE FACTORY WORK: THE POWER OF FEELING IN SAVAGE'S *THE FACTORY GIRL*, MELVILLE'S "THE TARTARUS OF MAIDS," AND PHELPS'S *THE SILENT PARTNER*

AND

"IT'S THE TRUTH EVEN IF IT DIDN'T HAPPEN": *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*, *RATCHED*, AND THE PUBLIC MEMORY OF LOBOTOMY

by

Shelby E. Joyce

A Thesis

Submitted to

the Faculty of The Graduate School at

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Greensboro

2022

Approved by

Dr. Karen Weyler
Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Heather Adams
Committee Co-Chair

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis written by Shelby Joyce has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Weyler

Committee Co-Chair

Dr. Adams

Committee Member

Dr. Feather

April 5, 2022

Date of Acceptance by Committee

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

I knew I wanted both of my theses to represent the diverse range of my academic interests. My first thesis, "Sentimental Biopolitics and Nineteenth-Century American Literary Representations of Female Factory Work: The Power of Feeling in Savage's *The Factory Girl*, Melville's 'The Tartarus of Maids,' and Phelps's *The Silent Partner*," emerged from my interest in cross-disciplinary critical theory. In her book *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century*, Kyla Schuller coins the term 'sentimental biopolitics' and explores how this concept elucidates nineteenth-century American understandings of sex and race. I was astonished by Schuller's ability to bring theoretical and historical frameworks to bear on how the dominant nineteenth-century American culture used sentimental discourse in literature to construct, control, and regulate gendered and raced bodies. With my combined interests in Schuller's theory and nineteenth-century American women's labor reform fiction, I investigated the way sentimental biopolitics manifested in the works of Melville, Phelps, and Savage. With "'It's the Truth Even if It Didn't Happen:' *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Ratched*, and the Public Memory of Lobotomy," I chose to focus on the 1975 film *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and the 2020 Netflix series *Ratched* because of their appeal to current American culture. My decision to use public memory and active forgetting as rhetorical apparatus allowed me to explore how their problematic portrayals of the mid-twentieth century American psychiatric institution influence current perceptions of mental illness and mental health care. Despite their disparate topics and theoretical approaches, both of my theses work toward my larger academic aspiration: to write something that matters. With hope, both of these pieces have the potential to intervene in public and academic conversations to enact social change.

CHAPTER II: SENTIMENTAL BIOPOLITICS AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERARY PRESENTATIONS OF FEMALE FACTORY WORK: THE POWER OF FEELING IN SAVAGE'S *THE FACTORY GIRL*, MELVILLE'S "THE TARTARUS OF MAIDS," AND PHELPS'S *THE SILENT PARTNER*

In a bold assertion of her desire to leave millwork and return home, Ellen Collins, a fictional textile factory operative in a short story published in *The Lowell Offering*, states, "I object to the constant hurry of everything… Up before day, at the clang of the bell— and out of the mill by the clang of the bell— into the mill and at work, in obedience to that ding-dong of a bell— just as if we are so many living machines" (Almira 112-113). By the story's end, it is evident to the reader that the author, a mill worker herself, intends for Ellen to serve as nothing more than an example of the folly of poor work ethic.[1] However, Ellen's statements capture a sentiment prevalent in nineteenth-century America— mass apprehension about the Industrial Revolution and what it meant for how those in power would value, manage, and treat those working below them. The early American factory was relatively benign. However, around the 1830s, as machines became more advanced, they eliminated the need for skilled labor, and those who manned them became inconsequential. Because workers were easily replaceable, employers could disregard the humanity of their employees and require them to work in increasingly horrid

[1] The author's didactic intentions are evidenced by the short story's final sentence, which reads, "We agreed, that since we must work for a living, the mill, all things considered, is the most pleasant, and best calculated to promote our welfare; that we will work diligently during the hours of labor; improve our leisure to the best advantage, in the cultivation of the mind, — hoping thereby not only to increase our own pleasure, but also to add to the happiness of those around us" (Almira 113-14).

conditions. In some ways, the lowly laborer was physically, emotionally, and sometimes even literally consumed by the machine. Forced to forgo their humanity to make a living, they became "living machines" themselves (Almira 112).

The Industrial Revolution's impact on the treatment of the American working class is but one component of a more extensive system of regulating lives. Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics helps elucidate this phenomenon. Foucault argues that during the eighteenth century, "human lives, at the level of the population, emerged as a distinct political problem in Western societies" (Means 1). As the problem of population surfaced, biopolitics emerged as a means of allocating life and disciplining bodies (Means 1). Ultimately, biopolitics subjugated the body to the state, enabling those in power to control lives through revolutionary means. One commonly overlooked facet of the biopolitical regime of nineteenth-century America is sentimentalism. Serving as an aesthetic, epistemology, and moral philosophy, sentimentalism was the zeitgeist of the era. It exerted power over bodies by elaborating a system of emotional norms that made workers complicit in their own submission. American sentimentalism became a biopolitical technology by asserting when and for whom sympathy, sentiment, and sentimentality were normal.

Taking literary depictions of female factory workers as my subject, I will explore how sentimental biopolitics manifests in three works: Sarah Savage's novel *The Factory Girl* (1814), Herman Melville's sketch "The Tartarus of Maids" (1855), and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's novel *The Silent Partner* (1871). I have selected these texts because they address women laborers from unique perspectives that offer insights into the authors' respective time frames and social positions. The significant date range between each text is intentional, as this analysis endeavors to show how sentimental biopolitics came into being throughout the nineteenth century.

Ultimately, analyzing the mechanisms of biopower throughout these texts will augment our understanding of nineteenth-century American society's intricate and depraved inner workings and our understanding of the apparatuses of biopower in general.

The Dawn of American Manufacturing

Before turning to the fiction itself, it is first necessary to set the historical scene in which Savage, Melville, and Phelps wrote their work. In the early to mid-eighteenth century, the production of goods primarily fell within the household domain (Atack et al. 586). When Americans needed to outsource goods, they got them from independent, skilled artisans (Atack et al. 586). However, beginning around 1790, the factory manufacturing model emerged as competition to small-scale production (Zevin 680). Factory production was popular because it increased convenience for consumers, lowered the price of certain goods, raised the ceiling of market supply, and provided employment opportunities (Zevin 681). Additionally, the "patriotic desire for economic independence" led to the general promotion of manufacturing, as Americans sought to follow the "example of British industrial progress" (Zevin 680). As a result, factories popped up across early America— most in New England (MacLean 10).

The Lowell Mill and the History of Nineteenth-Century Women in the Workforce

One of the most famous examples of the early American factory is the Lowell mills located in Lowell, Massachusetts. Founded by the Boston Associates, a group of early industrial investors, Lowell was the first planned industrial community in the United States (Eisler 13). The mill employed primarily women, many of whom came from nearby farms (MacLean 10).[2]

[2] Prior to industrialization, the employment of women was not common because manufacturing required skilled labor, eliminating the potential to employ those with little to no education. However, the debut of power machinery at the beginning of the nineteenth century made it possible to utilize unskilled labor, broadening the supply of human capital to include women and

According to Benita Eisler, women made up approximately three-fourths of the mill's laborers (15). There are many reasons that early American factories like Lowell chose to employ a predominately female workforce. For one, women's labor was cheaper. Inclined to work positions that enabled them to be their own bosses, the desire for agency over their careers drew men to the sectors of commerce and agriculture (Rosen 481). In search of these highly desirable agricultural jobs, many New England men migrated West to lands with more fertile soil, leaving a disproportionate number of young, unmarried women behind (Rosen 484). Unable to entertain the prospect of marriage, many women sought employment in factories to make ends meet (Rosen 484). Others had no desire for marriage and sought work as a means of social liberation (Barrett 46). They were willing to accept meager wages and poor working conditions "in the struggle to establish women's rights in the workplace" (Barrett 46).

However, the women working in early Lowell had comparatively good working conditions. Complete with "boarding houses, churches, schools, and improvement circles," the Lowell mills were attractive to women because they offered them the opportunity to couple labor with an education that they might not otherwise have had access to (Early 35).[3] Furthermore, the

---

children. As one proponent of this new manufactory system describes, women and children were to become the "little fingers…of the gigantic automatons of labor-saving machinery" (qtd. in Rosen 484). The number of women working in factories increased exponentially throughout the nineteenth century. By 1820, women and children made up most of the manufacturing labor force (Goldin and Sokoloff 741). Moreover, by the beginning of the Progressive era, "one in every five females over the age of ten was employed," over a million of whom worked in factories (Barrett 43).

[3] These offerings are a result of the mill's paternalistic structure. As Eisler explains, the Lowell mills adopted a paternalistic structure because "From the beginning, the Boston Associates had been aware that high wages alone would not convince God-fearing New England parents that they should permit their daughters to leave home to work in the mills" (19). Positioning mill owners as father figures and putting into place structures that would "provide a moral tariff against the evils of the English mill system" was vital for the mills to attract a female labor force that was large enough to accomplish their goals. Lowell mill girls were required to live in on-site

mills paid higher wages than other career opportunities open to women at the time, such as teaching and domestic service (Early 35). The work was difficult, and the days were long. Nevertheless, having the opportunity to earn a living and support themselves and their families was life-giving for many operatives. Compared to later factories, the early Lowell mills were conscious of their employees' humanity. As evidenced by their offering of night classes and sermons, the mill owners tried to preserve and foster their operatives' creativity, intelligence, and spirituality. However, as Annie Marion MacLean explains in her 1910 book *Wage-earning Women*, "The semi-idyllic conditions of the early New England cotton-mill [quickly gave] way to a system brutalized by greed and the exigencies of modern industry" (11).

Trouble on the Industrial Front

The conditions in American factories began to deteriorate around 1830. The economic prosperity that had characterized the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth century came to a sudden standstill. According to Robert Brooke Zevin, diminished "cotton-textile investment opportunities" collided with a number of other disastrous economic conditions, sending "...the national economy [into] a period of… real economic dislocation" (682).[4] Across America, it became more challenging to make a living without completely forgoing one's health and leisure time to one's job. Even in Lowell, this period was a time of great distress. From 1834 to 1844, the operatives worked upwards of seventy-three hours per week (Early 36). They earned "an

---

boarding houses and to adhere to "rules established by the Corporations and enforced by 'housemothers'" (Eisler 24). These rules regulated everything from "curfews, candles, visitors" and church attendance (Eisler 24). Yet, as Eisler explains, "The function of the boardinghouse as an instrument for surveillance and 'moral policing' was clear in terms of intent. Less clear was how well the system worked to these ends" (26).

[4] Additional factors Zevin identifies as the cause for this economic decline were "regional labor supplies bec[oming] much less elastic" and "the favorable movement of cotton prices [being] reversed" (682).

average actual weekly wage "rang[ing] from $2.00 to $3.00, with $1.25 automatically deducted each week for boarding-house upkeep" (Early 36). By 1845, conditions at the Lowell factories had become nearly unbearable. As Frances H. Early explains, "Whereas real annual earnings were as high in the mid-1840s as they had been in 1834, output per worker nearly doubled in this decade. Women operatives had to work harder in 1845 to receive the 1830s wage equivalent for their labour" (36).

However, concerns about compensation were far from the only struggle facing factory workers during this period. The declining economy pressured factory owners to produce more manufactured goods to maintain their income (Early 36). Factory owners kept the same number of workers to maximize output while minimizing input but forced them to work faster, harder, and longer (Early 36). As production ramped up, the work environment went from bad to worse. MacLean describes the conditions typical of cotton mills during this time, explaining,

> ...[T]he air is full of cotton fluff in the card room, and it's usually extremely hot in summer in the spinning rooms, where the rapidly revolving spindles generate great heat. The weaving rooms are generally hot and always slightly damp. The necessary moisture is ordinarily supplied by spraying steam into the room… In the average mill a temperature of 120 degrees in some rooms is not uncommon. (14-5)

The situation was similarly abysmal in paper mills, wherein workers continuously inhaled dust from cloth rags that were "filthy to the last degree and dangerous to health" (MacLean 24). Moreover, employers provided their workers no means of preventing dust from collecting in their lungs, and fresh air circulation in the factory itself ranged from minimal to non-existent (MacLean 24).

Employers knew what was going on in their factories yet refused to allocate resources toward improving them. MacLean cites one anonymous employer in particular who explains his disregard for his factory operatives' well-being by stating that "he believes the Almighty decreed some of us to work by brains and others by muscles, and that the latter class was made without

the ‘virtue of appreciation’” (27). “Therefore,” MacLean continues, “he thinks it is foolish to take the trouble to improve conditions” (27). Many factory owners felt the same way, viewing workers as endlessly replaceable and innately invaluable. With every year that passed, workers and on-lookers alike were more and more appalled by the utter dehumanization and disregard for human life that ran rampant in the factory work environment.

Labor Reform and Fiction as Activism

In response to these horrific conditions, labor reform efforts broke out across the nation. With a keen eye for topics of sensation, white, middle-class writers used the factory as raw material for their fiction. Authors like Herman Melville and Elizabeth Stuart Phelps discussed factory work in their writing as a mechanism of labor reform. Other writers, like Sarah Savage, used fiction to reform laborers. However, these texts are far from what one might expect of a modern labor reform piece. At times, they reflect their authors’ ignorance and anxiety about the impact of the factory system on the social order. Though purportedly working to establish better conditions for laborers or foster their spirituality, authors like Savage and Melville appear to be writing to maintain and reinforce their social status quo. Phelps’ work most closely approximates true labor reform yet is not altogether altruistic. Though certainly not exhaustive, one factor that accounts for the differences between modern and nineteenth-century American labor reform texts is the authors’ different understandings of the nature and value of human life. In other words, these nineteenth-century authors were operating under a different biopolitical regime—one I argue correlates to the cultural movement of sentimentalism. To truly grasp this concept, it is critical first to establish a more thorough understanding of what contemporary scholars mean by sentimental biopolitics.

Sentimentalism as a Biopolitical Technology

Kyla Schuller argues that nineteenth-century American sentimentalism was biopolitical in several of her works. She explains that sentimentalism can be "understood [as] a disciplinary and regulatory technology that tempered the impulses compelled by sensory stimulation with the forward-thinking habit of emotional reflection" ("The Biology of Intimacy: Lamarckian Evolution and the Sentimental Novel" 458). Due to its disciplinary and regulatory force, sentimentalism had a biopolitical function. In his lectures, Foucault describes biopolitics as "the attempt, starting from the eighteenth century to rationalize the problems posed to governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birthrate, life expectancy, [and] race…" (Foucault 317). Biopolitics is the force that administers life, meaning it decides what lives and bodies are normalized and which are ostracized. Biopolitics aims to "'optimise' the life of populations, a fact that typically manifests as eugenics in varying degrees of visibility. For biopolitics to regulate a population, it must work alongside disciplinary power. According to Mona Lilja and Stellan Vinthagen, disciplinary power is "a system of knowledge that seeks to know the individual as an object to be known in relation to others who can be known" (109). It is the very force through which the state interpolates the individual as a part of a population. Typically, disciplinary power is present in institutions such as hospitals, prisons, schools, and courtrooms (Chhibber). Disciplinary modes of power set the norms for behavior and identify those who deviate from those norms (Lilja and Vinthagen 109).

Sentimentalism functioned as a biopolitical technology because the dominant nineteenth-century American culture used it to manage and control the sensations experienced by racialized and gendered bodies. As Shirley Samuels explains, "Sentimentality in nineteenth-century

America… appears not so much a genre as an operation or a set of actions within discursive models of affect and identification that effect connection across gender, race, and class boundaries" (6). Its disciplinary modes become apparent when one considers that "[w]hat might be called the aesthetics of sentiment appear[ed] in advice books, statues, photographs, pamphlets, lyric poems, fashion advertisements, and novels" (Samuels 6). By analyzing the biopolitical role of sentimentalism, we become privy to the emphasis placed on maintaining apparent sexual and racial differences to maintain a "stable" society. Sentimentalism would not have had nearly as much intellectual influence, however, without its biological underpinnings, a great deal of which come from the theories of eighteenth-century French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck.

Lamarckian Evolutionary Theory

Lamarck published a considerable amount of biological theory in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, covering topics from botany to zoology. His evolutionary theory, however, is one of his most lasting legacies. Although Darwinism would ultimately become the dominant evolutionary framework accepted by the scientific community, scientists on both sides of the Atlantic endorsed Lamarckism throughout the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Like Charles Darwin, Lamarck believed evolution was a slow process that had likely taken thousands, if not millions, of years (Hubbard 49). However, Lamarck's and Darwin's theories differ in their conceptualization of the origin of species change. While Darwin believed in natural selection, Lamarck believed that random mutations could occur upon the chance that they are well-adapted to a given environment. In his well-known 1809 work *Philosophie Zoologique*, Lamarck proposes as law the following concept:

> In every animal that has not reached the end of its development, the more frequent and sustained use of any organ will strengthen this organ little by little, develop it, enlarge it, and give to it a power proportionate to the duration of its use; while the constant disuse of such an organ will insensibly weaken it, deteriorate it, progressively diminish its faculties, and finally cause it to disappear. (qtd. in Burkhardt, Jr. 796)

bIn other words, the body parts that an animal uses frequently will enlarge, and the body parts seldom used will shrink and potentially even vanish. After an organism acquires a trait through habit, Lamarck believed that it would then be able to pass that trait onto its progeny, a concept generally referred to as the "inheritance of acquired characteristics."[5] In this theory, the individual is linked to the current population and subsequent generations.

The Terminological Coincidence of Sentimentalism and Lamarckism

The conceptual terminology oft used in sentimental discourse takes its theoretical underpinnings from Lamarckian theory and the eighteenth-century psychoperceptual scheme of consciousness. Terms like sensibility, impressibility, and sentiment derive meaning from a Lamarckian framework. Because these are the terms that arise most often in both fiction and non-fiction nineteenth-century works, it is important to take some time to establish a clear understanding of what each term means and the differences between them.

Sensibility, for instance, denoted the "receptivity of the senses and… connoted the operation of the nervous system, the material basis for consciousness" (Barker-Benfield xvii).[6] In

---

[5] Burkhardt, Jr. points out in his article that "…while it is true that Lamarck endorsed the idea of the inheritance of acquired characters and made use of it in his evolutionary theorizing, neither Lamarck nor his contemporaries treated this as Lamarck's signature idea. Certainly, he did not claim the idea as his own. Instead, he treated it as commonplace, which it was. He believed it was so transparently obvious that it needed no assemblage of facts or trial by experiment to confirm it" (794).

[6] This definition arose out of the traditions of British empiricism and sensationalist psychology. It was especially influenced by the "psychoperceptual scheme explained and systematized by Newton and Locke" (Barker-Benfield xvii). In eighteenth-century England, the concept was incorporated into the Romanticist movement (Barker-Benfield xvii). Sensibility as a "psychoperceptual scheme became a paradigm, meaning not only consciousness in general but a particular kind of consciousness, one that could be further sensitized in order to be more acutely responsive to signals from the outside environment and from inside the body" (Barker-Benfield xvii). By this era's logic, "If sensibility was the necessary condition for cognition and the formation of ideas for the empiricist tradition, it was strongly linked to the capacity for feeling and emotion as responses to sense experience in the more general intellectual and literary culture

other words, sensibility refers to the capacity for an organism to sense, perceive, and react to its environment. As Schuller explains, sensibility enables an organism to "avoid harmful sensation and pursue pleasant feelings" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 48). In a Lamarckian framework, this means that sensibility is directly related to the evolution of a given life-form. Unlike impressibility and sentiment, all organisms, regardless of complexity, were believed to have some degree of sensibility (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 51). Even a prokaryotic cell could be sensible. However, Lamarckians believed that more complex organisms had greater sensibility than others (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 51).

Impressibility is directly related to sensibility. When an organism has a sensation, that sensation might have an impression, i.e., the organism will respond to the environmental stimuli (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 7). The term "impressibility" refers to an organism's capacity to receive sensory impressions—to be impacted by its environment. Nineteenth-century theorists thought impressibility varied in degree amongst different species (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 7-8). As Schuller explains, "the more refined and delicate the tissue, and by association the individual, the greater the organism's capacity for impressibility" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 40). To be impressible, however, is also to be vulnerable. While those with greater impressibility have an increased potential for species growth, they are also prone to excess responsiveness and delicacy

---

of the eighteenth century" (Wickberg 665). Because of the popularity of this definition, it may be easy to confuse sensibility in this context, thinking it to be a concept more akin to sentimentality. However, in this context, sensibility merely refers to the capacity for an organism to be sensible. In nineteenth-century America, the moral elements of sensibility were extrapolated and combined with "the intensity of evangelical Protestantism and its epistemologies," which ultimately "helped to define a new middle-class set of values to which historians have given the name 'sentimentalism'" (Wickberg 665).

(Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 40). The only way to mellow this vulnerability to excess is through the faculty of sentiment.

Sentiment refers to "an emotional response to a physical impression" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 36). Unlike sensibility, nineteenth-century American theorists believed sentiment to be deliberate rather than impulsive (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 40). Sentiment allows an organism to receive a sensory impression and consciously decide its reaction. Thus, from a Lamarckian perspective, sentiment enables an organism to self-regulate and direct its own evolutionary progress As such, sentiment was liberatory. Rather than being powerless, forced to respond in a predestined way to given environmental stimuli, the concept of sentiment suggests that, though an organism may not be able to choose its environment, it can choose the way it responds to its conditions (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 37). Sentiment, however, was believed to only be achievable by the most advanced, most civilized organisms (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 37). For many nineteenth-century Americans, this meant it was only possible for white men, just one of the many ways that social roles were forged in and forged by the discourse of sentimentalism (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 37).[7]

Sarah Savage: Didactic Sentimentalism and the Role of the White Woman

Scholars believe Sarah Savage's 1814 novel *The Factory Girl* to be the first novel that features the early American factory (Lovell 4). The story centers around Mary Burnham, a devout young Christian woman who navigates the everyday trials of life while remaining true to her values. In the wake of her father's death, Mary must work in a cotton mill to provide for herself and her grandmother, Mrs. Burnham. Though she faces loss and disappointment, Mary

[7] Per this line of thinking, women were incapable of sentiment because they could not control their emotional impulses.

continuously reacts to her circumstances in a virtuous way. Savage's intentions for Mary's character are evident. Mary functions as an example for contemporary women readers as to how they could fulfill their many different roles— from daughter to worker to teacher to lover, wife, and mother— without ever forgetting their larger purpose: to serve as exemplars of piety and morality.[8] The didactic function of Mary's morality is a part of the text's sentimental literary conventions. To describe a text as sentimental is to acknowledge it as "a political enterprise halfway between sermon and social theory, that both codifies and attempts to mold the values of its time" (Tompkins 126). As a decidedly sentimental work, *The Factory Girl* is the perfect artifact to facilitate a discussion of the mechanics of sentimental discourse and its biopolitical function because its attempts to codify and mold social norms are not shrouded from the reader. Specifically, this text is the perfect example of how literary sentimentalism exerted biopolitical influence over gendered bodies.

Sentimental Gender Roles and Lamarckism

Although the novel was published in 1814, it nonetheless displays elements of the neo-Lamarckian theory that would rise to cultural consciousness around 1860. A key component of sentimental Lamarckism is its elaborate and enmeshed racial and gender hierarchies. Subscribers to neo-Lamarckism believed that there were two categories of people: the "civilized" and the "primitive" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 4). They thought that the civilized had an increased capacity for impressibility and sentiment, allowing them to continue to evolve toward divine

[8] *The Factory Girl* might have been a consequence of the Second Great Awakening. During and after the Second Great Awakening, "...women's charitable and reform associations burgeoned, creating what historians of the nineteenth century called 'the benevolent empire'" (Norton 616). The novel's propagation of Christian ideology and attempt at social reform are evidence that the text may be in conversation with this movement.

perfection (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 37). They believe the primitive, on the other hand, to be completely unimpressible (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 13). In other words, they thought that "primitive" individuals could perceive their environment but that their circumstances could not impact them in a way that would modify the individual and, consequently, the population. Thus, neo-Lamarckians believed so-called "primitive" individuals to be incapable of evolving further and even thought them to be essentially dead inside. From their perspective, the Anglo-Saxon race was the only race to have achieved the rank of "civilized"; people of color were deemed "primitive" and thought of as a threat to civilization (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 4).

However, to be impressible is also to be vulnerable. Because of this, those who ascribed to this style of thinking believed that the "liabilities of impressibility" must be split "across the two sexes" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 41). According to this theory, "the Anglo-Saxon female absorbs the instability of impressibility and its tendency to excess, leaving her male counterpart to enjoy the benefits of sentiment while relieving himself of the liabilities of sentimentality" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 37). They believed that the civilized alone had achieved this bisexual organization (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 59). Furthermore, they thought that the more significant the difference between the sexes, the higher the degree of evolutionary attainment (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 59-60). The "liabilities of sentimentality" lie primarily in the tendency to excess. Having augmented impressibility means that one is more likely to be held to the whims of their environment. In excess, this means that the potential to have an emotionally regulated response to one's environment, i.e., the capacity for sentiment, would be impossible. However, if the Anglo-Saxon race were unimpressible, they would not evolve. Thus, to resolve this quandary and allow white men the capacity for sentiment, women were relegated the pejorative components of

sentimentality, leaving the complementary elements to the white male (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 60).

Savage elaborates the role of the early American white woman in fine detail throughout *The Factory Girl*. This role, dubbed Republican Womanhood, constitutes the tradition upon which sentimental Lamarckism would form its theories of gender and the crux upon which their racial hierarchy lay. Furthermore, the novel's enactment of the sentimental complex— through which a text interpolates its readers as sentimental subjects— demonstrates how people used sentimentalism to regulate the population.

A Labor Novel Without Labor: The Labor of Virtue

Ironically, despite the novel's self-purported focus on factory work, actual labor is scarcely represented in the story. On the few occasions that labor is depicted, it seems wildly idealistic. Although Savage would have been able to witness cotton mills firsthand near her hometown of Salem, Massachusetts, as the title page states, this piece is, after all, about "A Factory Girl. *By a Lady*" (Savage 1, emphasis added). Consequently, there are instances in the novel that reveal the middle-class white woman's lack of awareness of the nature of work outside the home. One instance in the text where we see Savage's lack of understanding of the nature of non-domestic labor manifest is Mary's account of her first day at the mill. After returning home, Mary reports that her work was "neither difficult nor laborious" (Savage 10-11). The only difficulty Mary encounters in her work at the mill is the struggle of being a stranger to her co-workers and feeling like an outsider because of her devout religiosity. In like manner, later in the novel, after receiving the opportunity to take on the extra work of teaching a Sunday charity school to local children, Savage states, "Mary went to the factory the next morning with a cheerful heart, and a countenance beaming with benevolence" (Savage 41). William, another

factory worker and one of Mary's potential love interests, reportedly "stood a moment to look at her, as she entered the door, struck with the contrast her sprightly appearance bore to the haggard looks and languid movements of her companions" (Savage 41). The contrast built between Mary and her coworkers suggests that the trials of labor are merely a matter of perspective— that one can simply change their point-of-view, focus on their faith and the practice of virtue, and no longer toil under the physical and mental pressures of factory work.

This focus on virtue is evidence of the limitations of the middle-class perspective on labor. As Thomas Lovell explains, Mary's work in the factory is simply a vehicle to extend the reach of her virtue and extend her religious practice into the public sphere (3). Eric Schocket expands upon this idea in his article "'Discovering some New Race': Rebecca Harding Davis's 'Life in the Iron Mills' and the Literary Emergence of Working-Class Whiteness," stating, "*The Factory Girl* is… a labor novel without labor—or, to be more exact, a labor novel where the laborious exercise of virtue so predominates that work as an exogenous activity, something in operation apart from moral typology, simply does not exist" (41). Thus, the novel's goal does not appear to be labor reform. Instead, the novel's focus is teaching readers how to use labor to extend the reach of their virtue. In other words, Savage's objective is to use the novel as a means of reforming current or potential female laborers, reminding them that the practice of virtue is to be their focus in life.

Mary Burnham: The Virtuous Factory Worker

By the time Savage was writing, society had already called into question the moral reputation of female factory operatives. People believed that the factory could either be "the road to moral salvation and financial security or sexual perdition and social disgrace," depending upon the morality of the factory owner (Cook 14). The reputation of mill workers was a common

topic of debate in early nineteenth-century labor novels. As Sylvia J. Cook explains, "In… early nineteenth-century books, the debate about the potential benefits or harmfulness of factories and the wider realm of consciousness to which they introduced their female workers is framed in religious terms, intensely concentrated on working women's moral and sexual conduct" (14). In *The Factory Girl*, Mary's commitment to her faith is apparent. Throughout the novel, Mary remains faultlessly devoted to her religion, almost to the point of hyperbole. Perhaps, Savage intended to combat the prevailing stereotype that female factory operatives were immoral. Regardless of Savage's intention, however, Mary's extreme piety serves to reify virtue as a vital component of the role of the white woman in the social order.

Within the first few pages, Savage brings this underlying tension about the decency of female factory workers to the forefront. For example, when Mary first offers to go work in the mills, her grandmother expresses concern, stating, "It will, indeed, it will, be a sad day to me when you go into the factory; for I shall be thinking all the time, what your poor father would say, were he alive, to have you get your bread in such a manner…" (Savage 3-4). Later in the conversation, Mrs. Burnham elaborates on this statement, explaining that, upon his deathbed, Mary's father had made Mrs. Burnham vow not to let Mary work for anyone who is not religious out of fear that she may forget the teachings of the Bible and "go astray after all" (Savage 6). Nevertheless, when Mary begins her work at the factory, it becomes clear that her father did not need to worry.

In fact, Mary's virtue in the factory verges on exaggeration. Throughout the story, Mary serves as the paradigm of Christian values. While her coworkers are laughing at "capital jok[es]," Mary remains resolutely unamused (Savage 12). When her friends go out to dance, Mary declines her invitation, pointing out that the group had avoided giving charity to a man in

need and yet had spent unnecessary money paying for the room, musical performance, and horse and sleigh for transport (Savage 16-7). Upon accusations that she would have them experience no pleasure ever, Mary, referencing the teachings of Mr. Seymore, their preacher, states, "He would direct us to give poor Cato a warm jacket and a comfortable supper, instead of gratifying ourselves with an expensive amusement" (Savage 18). Later, Mary routinely denies herself necessities like food and clothing to provide for her adopted children.

Furthermore, when her grandmother passes away, Mary is more concerned with comforting others than allowing herself to indulge her grief. Additionally, Mary's virtue is recognized as exceptional by her peers. For example, Jane Sandford, a fellow factory worker, remarks to other workers gossiping about Mary and says,

> Come, come, let's go to supper, and laugh no more about the poor child. [S]he has, I dare say, the beauty my good mother is always advising me to get, the *beauty of the mind*, for they say she rises before day-light to read, and is kind to the sick, and dutiful to her grandmother; and, what I can hardly believe, sweetly patient with a terrible old scold, that lives with them. (Savage 13)

Though tinged with jealous disdain and social pressure, Jane's comment reveals that Mary's peers secretly view her as someone to emulate. However, it is unclear whether the narrative intends to suggest this is an attainable goal for them or not. All of these instances, Cook suggests, serve as evidence "that being a good 'factory girl' is simply taking to extremes woman's traditional role of self-sacrifice for the sake of others" (16).

Mary's extreme piety and virtue exemplify how the "ideal" white woman was supposed to behave. Savage's characterization of Mary reflects the ideology of Republican Womanhood, wherein "[t]he ideal American woman was to be the nurturant, patriotic mother who raised her children, and especially her sons, to be good Christians, active citizens, and successful competitors in the wider arena of life" (Norton 617). As Norton explains, during the late eighteenth century, "Women became the keepers of the nation's conscience, the only citizens

specifically charged with maintaining the traditional republican commitment to the good of the entire community" (Norton 617). As later manifested in neo-Lamarckian doctrine, white men designated women the role of moral protectress because the cultural paradigm considered them to have a greater capacity for sensibility.

The Price of Sensibility

The heightened sensibility that accompanied women's enhanced virtue came at a price. As evidenced by the neo-Lamarckians to come, white America believed that women "suffered from the vulnerability and excess of sentimentality" but were "allocated increased sympathy to both capitalize on and mediate their extreme impressibility" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 65). Schuller explains the fine line between impressibility's favorable features and deplorable ones, stating, "…while impressibility of tissue provides the conditions for growth, impressibility of character connotes emotional excitability or the tendency to an emotional response above and beyond its stimulating impression" (*The Biopolitics* 47). The more sensitive someone is to sensory stimuli and impressions, the frailer they are believed to be both mentally and physically.

We see this frailty readily in Savage's presentation of Mary's character. Soon after Mary's grandmother passes away, Mary is so overcome with emotions that she faints from the effort of trying to get dressed. This instance brings about a much longer ailment for Mary, one that Dr. Mandeville pronounces a "slow, nervous fever" (Savage 56). Thus, even Mary, emblem of righteousness that she is, is still unable to overcome her innate feminine tendency toward sentimentality and its accompanying frailty. Mary's illness serves as a physical representation of the risks associated with being highly impressible and sympathetic. Just before falling ill, Mary herself acknowledges the dangers of sympathy. Savage writes,

> Mary was deeply afflicted with the loss of this affectionate associate of her childhood and youth, but she endeavored in the presence of her grandmother to repress her own grief, and that which she felt for Mr. Danforth and his two infant sons. For she knew that even

> sympathy, unless it can be brought into active usefulness, ceases to be amiable when it afflicts those who depend on our cheerfulness for a large portion of their own. (Savage 55)

This conception of sympathy in excess as a type of selfishness is not solely contained within the covers of *The Factory Girl*. In her self-awareness of this cultural understanding of sympathy, Mary demonstrates the capacity to reflect upon her emotions critically; however, she is ultimately so overcome by her feelings and her inability to thwart them that she becomes physically ill, thus demonstrating the difficulty of the sentimental affliction nineteenth-century American culture believed women faced. Nevertheless, no matter their internal strife, women were to remain firm in their support of their male counterparts, setting the standard for holy living. Mary is the paradigm of this appropriate, virtuous femininity—the example of living righteously while still being "inherently" prone to excess.

White Women's Relationship to Men

Interestingly, according to Republican womanhood ideology, women were supposed to function as moral guideposts in their relationships to men, reminding the a-sentimental, but sentiment-full, man to be sympathetic toward others. We see this dynamic manifest in Mary's relationship with William. Despite not being the perfect, pious man that one would think that Mary would seek out, Mary is drawn to William, perhaps precisely because of his brokenness. After knowing William for some time and being the object of his constant attention,

> Even her own sober and well-regulated mind, would sometimes give way to the suggestions of fancy, and she would look forward with delight to the period when she might use the influence of a wife to lead the mind of William to clearer notions of the true spirit of Christianity, and more uniform consistency of conduct. (Savage 46)

Mary's desire to exert the "influence of a wife" reflects a ubiquitous, though differentially interpreted, cultural sentiment. Per the ideology of Republican Womanhood, a woman's role in their relationships with men is to serve as a tempering force to men's tendency toward

immorality. Mary's embodiment of virtuosity is supposed to help reign in William's lack of piety. However, William's actions later in the novel call into question the nature of woman's influence over man. While presented with the prospect of taking Mary as a wife, William is inspired by her devout religiosity. The text reads:

> A character, superior to any he had been accustomed to contemplate, astonished and delighted him; and mistaking the admiration of the woman, thus suddenly conceived, for a love of the *virtue* which rendered her so pleasing, he determined to form his own life on the same model, and to make her conduct the rule of all his actions; looking forward to being the husband of Mary, as a sufficient reward for any sacrifices his new mode of life might require. (Savage 44-5)

Though they are not yet married, Mary serves as a positive religious influence for William. He is in love with her virtue because of its potential to make him a better person by proxy.

William does make changes, going as far as to thank Mary for her critique of his decision to spend a significant sum of money on the dance while denying charity to a man in need. However, when Mary falls ill with a nervous fever later in the novel, and they are no longer in continual acquaintance, quickly for William "[t]he novelty of being good had ceased; Mary was absent; there was no eye to approve—no eye but his Maker's; that he had never had in view; and religious duties became irksome, and, at length, disgusting" (Savage 69-70). This quote perfectly demonstrates latent beliefs about women's role in maintaining social order that the neo-Lamarckian movement would make explicit in the late nineteenth century. Without women, men would quickly fall away from virtue and God and into cruelty. Although their lack of sentimentality endowed them with sentiment, it left them vulnerable to an almost mechanical apathy that could quickly erode their connection with God. Though Mary's relationship with William never comes to fruition, she is able to fulfill the role of virtuous exemplar in her relationship with Mr. Danforth, whom she marries and has children with by the end of the novel.

Woman's Role as Mother and Teacher

In addition to functioning as the emblem of Womanhood and wifehood, Mary is also the perfect mother by sentimental standards. By the end of the story, Mary had adopted and birthed children. In the novel's conclusion, the narrator reports that Mary's adopted children "…shared equally with her own children her solicitous and diligent attention; she was their instructress in health and their nurse in sickness. Nor was that all… she was truly the *feeling, sympathizing mother*" (Savage 110, emphasis in original). This passage exhibits the role of the Republican woman precisely. In their motherhood, they were tasked with molding their children in faith and patriotism so that they may one day contribute to the well-being of the future nation (Cruea 188). In essence, women were to use their sentimental capacities to impart upon their children the capacity for sympathy and compassion, ensuring the nation's character for generations to come.

Mary extends the influential force of sympathy beyond the private sphere in her occupation as a teacher. While society did not unequivocally endorse women's education at the time, women were encouraged to have enough education to best perform their domestic duties (Cruea 192). As a devout Christian, Mary would have received a great deal of education through her interactions with the church. Because of this, when Dr. Mandeville, a proprietor of a local cotton factory, approaches Mary with the request that she host a Sunday charity school to teach child factory workers about religion, she takes the opportunity in stride. Her discussion with Dr. Mandeville both reifies the role of women as pious influences and reveals significant hypocrisy in the middle/upper-class perspective on child laborers.

Dr. Mandeville's discussion of child labor reveals much about prevailing understandings of the relationship between childhood education and the welfare of future society. When discussing his factories, Mandeville states, "In these establishments the labors of children are so

useful as to render their wages a temptation to parents to deprive their offspring of the advantages of education; and, for immediate supply of pressing wants, to rob them of their just rights—the benefits of those publick schools, which were founded peculiarly for the advantage of the poor" (Savage 37). Here, we are at once alerted to the presence of child labor as an issue and made privy to Mandeville's ignorances as a wealthy white man. Dr. Mandeville fails to recognize the broad societal issues at hand. He continues:

> These thoughtless parents do not consider that they are taking from their children an essential good, for which money cannot compensate. Ignorance will necessarily lessen their future respectability in society, and check the stimulating hope of rising into eminence, which, in a free country like ours, may and ought to be cherished, for next to religion it is the best security for honest industry and laudable exertion. (Savage 37-8)

Rather than being attuned to the social structures that likely played a significant part in people's decision to send their children to work instead of school, Dr. Mandeville adopts a biased and hypocritical perspective, absolving himself of any blame and placing the fault of the nation's proposed potential downfall solely in their hands. Savage's non-critical, unironic portrayal of Dr. Mandeville as hypocritical further indicates that this was not truly a labor reform text but a text intended to reform the laboring class itself.

As an additional layer of complexity, Savage herself adopts the role of instructress through writing the novel itself. Described by Henri Petter in his work *The Early American Novel* as manifesting "grievously didactic sentimentalism," the goal of the text is to function as an instructional guide for children, particularly young women, in a sentimental society (79). Throughout the text, the reader feels sympathetic toward Mary and her circumstances. Because Mary is a pious young woman, it is evident to the reader that her trials are undeserved. The reader grieves the death of Mrs. Burnham and the loss of Mr. Danforth alongside and through Mary. By evoking an emotional, sympathetic response in its reader, *The Factory Girl* interpolates its readers as a part of the sentimental complex. By conditioning readers to respond

to specific events and individuals sympathetically, the novel works to discipline the sympathies of its readers into forms that the author believes are useful to and beneficial for society. Via sentimental literature, authors had the power to delineate who was worthy of sympathy and who was not. However, in works that do not perfectly fit the mold of sentimental literature yet are nonetheless steeped in a sentimental culture—like Melville's "The Tartarus of Maids"—precisely whom an author intends their readers to feel sympathy for is less clear.

Herman Melville's "The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids"

By the time Melville published his diptych "The Paradise of Bachelors and The Tartarus of Maids" in 1855, the public opinion of female factory work had become unfavorable. Through the mid-nineteenth century, many women workers went into factory life to enhance their marketability on the matrimonial market. This, however, was a false hope. Women that went into factories often ended up either staying there, never making enough money to enact their supposed newfound freedom, or found their reputations tarnished by stereotypical opinions of their occupations.

Transcendentalist reformer Orestes Brownson captured this cultural sentiment in his 1840 article in the *Boston Quarterly Review*, stating, "'She has worked in a Factory,' is almost enough to damn to infamy the most worthy and virtuous girl" (qtd. in Cook 14). Compounding these perceptions were investigative reporting endeavors that highlighted factories' hazardous working conditions (Barrett 43). Long workdays, poor air quality, dangerous machinery, and little to no legal regulation meant factory work was not only a threat to one's social life but one's life itself (Barrett 43).

Due to the shifting public perception of female factory work, scholars have traditionally interpreted the second sketch of the diptych, "The Tartarus of Maids," as a sympathetic critique

of white male factory owners' wrongful exchange of women's lives for wealth. Literary scholar Carolyn L. Karcher, for instance, argues that the sketch serves as a testament to the "prescient insight [Melville] displays into the central problems of our culture: alienation, violence against women, and the repression of the 'feminine in man' that usually accompanies it, the widening gap between a decadent ruling class and the workers it immiserates" (qtd. in Kutzbach 182-3). By this logic, Melville was a man wildly ahead of his time, with a disdain for sexual inequality that nears protofeminism. However, the reality of Melville's intentions was likely not so rose-tinged.

I contend that the overuse of sexual allegory throughout "The Tartarus of Maids" complicates the modern interpretation of Melville as a benevolent social advocate. I argue that sexual allegory in "The Tartarus of Maids" executes a crucial function: it serves as testimony that the narrator's feelings of uneasiness, distress, and pity upon witnessing the factory girls are not entirely altruistic. Considered in the light of nineteenth-century sentimental modes of biopower, the narrator's troubled reaction to the working women is much more likely coming from a place of voyeuristic racial self-interest. The nineteenth-century American understanding of racial differentiation can be understood as sociobiologically indeterminate. This means that race was not determined by biological forces alone but rather genetics and social forces. Across an individual's lifetime, they could acquire characteristics that could be passed on to subsequent generations. Consequently, white men believed their "superiority" directly resulted from their self-controlled evolution rather than biological predestination. With each generation passing on acquired refinements to the faculty of sentiment, white men believed that the Anglo-Saxon race

was on track toward moral perfection.[9] As a white man, witnessing the vacant impassivity of the factory workers was distressing because it brought to his awareness that his self-proclaimed evolutionarily privileged position in the social hierarchy was impermanent and under attack.

The Biological Threat of Women's Employment

"The Tartarus of Maids" is a literary sketch narrated by a seedsman visiting an obscure paper mill to acquire paper for the envelopes he uses to package his product. The sketch opens with vivid descriptions of the seedsman's treacherous journey through the woods to the mill in the dead of winter. Scholars have recognized the sexual allegory embedded in Melville's description of various landmarks.[10]

Once the seedsman reaches the paper mill, he asks a male overseer named Cupid to take him on a tour of the facilities. As he is shown about the factory, the narrator asks Cupid many questions, one of which is why "female operatives, of whatever age, are indiscriminately called girls, never women" (Melville 13). After learning that the workers are all virgins, the narrator reports feeling a "strange emotion" (Melville 13). In the context of a sentimental biopolitical regime, it seems arguable that this strange emotion comes from the fact that witnessing the factory girls threatened to undermine the stability of the narrator's worldview. Due to their burgeoning careers as factory workers and the growing likelihood that said careers would not lead to marriages, the paper mill girls had abandoned their reproductive duty altogether. In a Lamarckian framework, this would have been seen as a significant threat to the Anglo-Saxon

[9] It would have been a great insult to suggest that this progression resulted from the natural selection of random mutations (as Darwinian theory would suggest) because they believed their "supremacy" to be the result of their ancestor's diligence.
[10] See Sterlin, Allen, and Wiegman.

race. When fewer women opt to reproduce, the potential for the acquired advances in sentimental capacity to be passed onto subsequent generations would diminish.[11]

The most conspicuous metaphorical depictions of biological production's exchange for industrial production is the sketch's description of the paper-making process. As the narrator witnesses the start of the paper-making process, he describes the paper pulp to readers, stating that it is "white, wet, wooly-looking stuff, not unlike the albuminous part of an egg, soft-boiled" (Melville 10). In addition to this imagery, the process is reportedly precisely "nine minutes" long, an analogy for the nine months of pregnancy (Melville 10). Lastly, driving the metaphorical nail into the coffin of this allegorical comparison is the description of the paper being clipped at the end of production: a "scissory sound… as of some cord being snapped," the paper product "still moist and warm"—a clear simile for the cutting of the umbilical cord after a child is born (Melville 10). From the narrator's perspective, the machines' alarming reproduction rate combined with Cupid's explanation that "'[The pulp] must go. The machinery makes it go just so… The pulp can't help going,'" serves as a direct threat to Anglo-Saxon reproduction (Melville 12). Fearing his race may go entirely extinct, the narrator is driven to an anxiety-fueled sexual fervor—a fact portrayed by his use of excessive sexual imagery.

This anxiety was not confined to the story world. Yet, few were brazen enough to publish these views for public consumption. However, thirty-three years after the publication of "The Tartarus of Maids," the American School of Evolution put this latent fear into words. Edward

---

[11] To connect Melville's "The Tartarus of Maids" to the American School of Evolution's theory of race is not to suggest that either Melville or his narrator have necessarily read or were consciously aware of all this scientific theory, as the American School was not established until after the work's publication. Rather, the sketch can be used to garner a general understanding of the breadth of the subjective ideas of race and gender that would eventually form the backbone of the neo-Lamarckian worldview.

Drinker Cope, the leader of the group, "proposed 'voluntary polygamy' for exceptionally virtuous and energetic white men "so that their abundant affection would produce even more civilized offspring" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 61). In other words, they proposed "eugenic hyperheterosexuality" as a solution to the decline of the Anglo-Saxon race (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 61). Although Melville would not have been acquainted with this call for polygamous relations, we see a similar eugenic sentiment reflected in "The Tartarus of Maids," suggesting even such extreme concepts were present decades prior to the American School of Evolution's debut. The narrator's profession as a seedsman is not only a sexual allegory but is also used to implicitly promote the eugenic hyperheterosexuality of white men. Near the beginning of the sketch, the narrator remarks,

> Having embarked on a large scale in the seedsman's business (so extensively and broadcast, indeed, that at length my seeds were distributed through all the Eastern and Northern States and even fell into the far soil of Missouri and the Carolinas), the demand for paper at my place became so great that the expenditure soon amounted to a most important item in the general account. Of these small envelopes I used an incredible quantity—several hundreds of thousands in a year. (Melville 2)

Here, the narrator's "seeds" are not just those of plants but a flagrant euphemism for his sperm. Furthermore, the "envelopes" he intends to spread his seeds in are the factory operatives he repeatedly compares to the paper from which the envelopes are made. The narrator's needless explanation of how it "need hardly been hinted how paper comes into use with seedman" brings attention to the symbolic nature of his occupation. His unnecessary elaboration as to the breadth of the geographical spread of his seeds and the almost bragging tone with which he mentions the sheer quantity of envelopes he uses to spread his seeds further highlights the metaphorical hyperheterosexuality that palpates through the passage. In a Lamarckian framework, it seems likely that the anxious sexuality of this passage is a direct response to the narrator's worry about the factory girl's apparent lack of impressibility.

Impressibility and the Paper-Faced Factory Girls

While the societal forces preventing the narrator from copulating with and impregnating the factory girls destabilizes the narrator's worldview, so does their perceived lack of impressibility. The sketch calls the superior impressibility of the Anglo-Saxon race into question. Perhaps the most blatant example is the narrator's account of factory girls' relation to the Blood River. In conversation with Cupid, the seedsman states, "I looked, and saw that the turbid waters of Blood River had not changed their hue by coming under the use of man" (Melville 7). "'You make only blank paper; no printing of any sort, I suppose? All blank paper, don't you?'", the seedsman asks (Melville 7). Cupid replies, "'Certainly; what else should a paper-factory make?'" (Melville 7). "'Oh, to be sure!'" the seedsman replies, "'it only struck me as so strange that red waters should turn out pale chee–paper, I mean'" (Melville 7). Even though the river that powers the paper mill is supposedly a deep red hue, the paper they produce has no color. The connection here— made rather explicit by the narrator's verbal slip, almost saying "cheeks," rather than "paper"— is that the white women are as unaffected by their environment as the paper they produce.

The fact that the factory workers' environment does not ostensibly affect the women indicates a problem with their impressibility. Based on the nineteenth-century "impression theory of sensation," this lack of reflection of perpetual sensory stimuli suggests a decreased "capacity for impressibility" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 40). While their job-mandated sterility would mean this trait would not be passed onto future generations, given that an incapacity to be impressed was thought to be characteristic of

only “primitive” peoples, to see this characteristic present in white women threatened his worldview.

Furthermore, Melville directly alludes to John Locke’s impression-based theory of knowledge in “The Tartarus of Maids.” As he watches the blank paper drop at the end of production, the narrator’s “mind ran on in wonderings of those strange uses to which those thousand sheets would be put…” (Melville 11). Pondering their blankness, the narrator reports that he “could not but bethink [himself] of that celebrated comparison of John Locke, who, in demonstration of his theory that man had no innate ideas, compared the human mind at birth to a sheet of blank paper; something destined to be scribbled on, but what sort of characters no soul might tell” (Melville 11). The product of the factory girls’ labor was the same medium upon which those with greater agency conducted intellectual and political actions. Nevertheless, as metaphorical blank sheets of paper, the factory workers are damned never to perform such productive actions themselves.

The factory girls’ impressible deficiency poses an additional threat, as it endangers the careful sex-gender role balance that both the gender and racial hierarchy of the 1800s depended upon. As we explored with *The Factory Girl*, to maintain a “balanced” distribution of the liabilities of impressibility, women were supposed to be highly impressible, allowing them to have increased capacities for sympathy and increased fragility. In addition, women were supposed to take on the emotional labor of absorbing excess sentimentality, allowing white men to have higher-order moral and intellectual processes that would enable them to advance the race further. Without women taking the brunt of the pejorative adjective form, “sentimentality,” the negative aspects of

impressibility would be transferred to men, undermining their capacity for sentiment (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 60).

We see this fear become a reality in the final line of the sketch. After leaving the factory, the narrator exclaims, "alone with inscrutable nature," "'Oh! Paradise of Bachelors! and oh! Tartarus of Maids!'" (Melville 13-4). Here, the narrator displays an action typical of feminine sentimentality, not masculine sentiment. By screaming out into the woods, the narrator is effectively "display[ing]... emotion for its own sake beyond stimulus and beyond propriety," a trait critic of British literature Janet Todd characterizes as one of the definitive qualities and source of nineteenth-century critique of feminine sentimentality (qtd. in Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 60). Thus, by visiting the factory and simply being a voyeur to women forced to defy their socially constructed role in the system of impressible balances, the narrator is afflicted with the weight of unrestrained feminine emotion, unable to moderate his emotions, and unable to avoid hyperbole. This marks the beginning of the crumble of the social order. As the sex balance tilts and the white man is forced to accept the role of the uncivilized, civilization itself, in his eyes, is over.[12]

The anxiety the narrator exhibits in "The Tartarus of Maids" is much more than discomfort with the morality and ethics of the working conditions of the paper mill. In the context of Lamarckian evolutionary theory and sociobiologically indeterminate race theory, his anxiety is self-reflective. He is not worried about the girls' conditions but about what the girls' conditions mean for him and other nineteenth-century American white men.

---

[12] The hyper-civilized world of "The Paradise of Bachelors" serves to underscore this fear of impending societal destabilization.

In a moment of reflection, the narrator describes the factory workers as "their own executioners; themselves whetting the very swords that slay them; meditated I" (Melville 9). This statement's backward, paraprosdokian-esque construction captures the mirrored meaning of the sentiment in style. Not only are the girls "whetting the very swords that slay them," but, in the eyes of the nineteenth-century white man, so is the entire Anglo-Saxon race (Melville 11). By allowing Industrialization to continue in this way, they are not approaching the ideal industrial nation once dreamt of, but rather moving with the inevitable evolution of the industrial machine that threatens to undermine the precarious hierarchy atop of which they have placed themselves (Melville 11).

The technology of sentimental biopolitics would persist for many decades following the publication of "The Tartarus of Maids." With the emergence of the American School of Evolution in the late 1860s, it would reach the height of its perceptibility. Yet, the beginning of the regime's demise is discernible just a few years after the group's debut. American culture began to shift away from its oppressive traditions and embarked on the long road to freedom and equality for all citizens. Although elements of the work still align with the concepts of sentimental biopolitics, the beginnings of retaliation against tradition via the defiance of gender roles are visible in Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' 1871 novel *The Silent Partner*.

Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' *The Silent Partner*: The Emergence of Realism and the Beginning of the End of Sentimental Biopolitics

Following the Civil War, sentimentalism began to fall out of fashion, taking with it some of its accompanying literary, philosophical, and biopolitical influence. In its place, realism rose to prominence. With most Americans having experienced some degree of trauma and loss during

the Civil War, there was a growing recognition of the value of realistic depictions of the world, as gruesome as they may be. Nevertheless, realism maintained some aspects of the sentimental style of thinking that it intended to reject. While the superficial stylistic elements changed, the end goal of inspiring sympathy remained the same. Thus, works published shortly after the Civil War, like Elizabeth Stuart Phelps' *The Silent Partner*, tend to exhibit both pro-and anti-sentimental components—a fact representative of the shifting biopolitical regime contextualizing each text.

Published in 1871, *The Silent Partner* continues Phelps' practice of using writing to effect social change. Throughout her career, Phelps used her platform "to motivate her mostly female audience to actively participate in reform movements" (Privett 71). *The Silent Partner* centers around the budding relationship between Perley Kelso, a wealthy silent partner of a manufacturing company, and Sip Garth, a factory operative who works to provide for her deaf and blind sister, Catty. As Perley gets to know Sip and the conditions she faces as a mill worker, she becomes passionate about helping the laboring class. With such subject matter, the superficial goal of the text is to motivate middle-class white readers to take an interest in the burgeoning labor reform movement.

In her early career, readers celebrated Phelps for her long-form domestic and sentimental fiction (Blanton and Phegley 6). *The Silent Partner*, however, represents Phelps's turn toward realism. Phelps intended for *The Silent Partner* to "show the world how the poor and laboring classes live[d]" (Privett 68). In fact, in realist fashion, in the novel's opening notes, Phelps references the Massachusetts Bureau Statistics of Labor Reports as the "facts that form this fiction" (v). Today, scholars recognize Phelps as a critical figure in the history of literary realism because she shows that the traditionally masculine style of writing was also embraced and

produced by women writers (Watson 6). Nevertheless, despite its realist leanings, the novel maintains an allegiance to sentimentalism through its intended use of sympathy as a means of social change. Furthermore, the book reveals the remnants of Lamarckian sentimentalism by describing impressibility as the origin of Catty's disabilities. Most importantly, however, the novel represents the beginnings of a departure from this perspective by promoting a role for middle-class white women that defies the Cult of True Womanhood's expectations.

The Role of Sympathy in *The Silent Partner*

One of the main ways Phelps' work maintains a sentimental aesthetic is through its suggestion that sympathy is the primary way to motivate social change. This idea is most evident in Perley's relationship with Sip. When Perley first met Sip, her reaction was not the most congenial. Perley was "singularly uncomfortable" in her interaction with Sip (Phelps 22). When the girl brushed Perley with her coat, Perley "sickened and shrank" (Phelps 26). However, after having several conversations with the young girl and coming to understand the degree of suffering the child had already endured in her few years on earth, Perley's heart begins to soften, and she develops a keen pity for the child and her sister.

For instance, when Sip tells Perley that, just a few weeks prior, her father "got smashed up…caught in the gearing by the arm," and passed away, Perley "sickened and shrunk again, as she had sickened and shrunk from this girl before, but said quickly, 'O, I am sorry!'" (Phelps 45). This initial response comes from a place of disdain and disgust rather than pity. However, after Sip elaborates upon the story, saying that she does not mind her father being dead because he was never kind to her, Perley's reaction shifts to a place of empathy: "Something in their kindred deprivation moved Perley; an emotion more like sympathy than recoil, and more like attraction than disgust, took possession of her as they walked slowly and more slowly, in the

ever-widening pat, side by side into town" (Phelps 45). By finding a way that her own life story intersects with Sip's, Perley is able to move beyond her disdain of Sip's working-class life and feel a genuine, empathetic connection with her. This bond is critical to her ability to care about Sip's working and living conditions. In essence, life is only given meaning through sentimentality, and bodies are only granted power through the sentimental gaze.

This idea is reinforced later in the novel when Perley is moved to tears as she witnesses the strength of the connection between Sip and Catty. "'Look here!' said Sip; her brown face worked and altered. She said, 'Look here!' again, and stopped, 'That's nigh enough. I'll take that. I like you. Look here! I never said that to one of your kind of folks before; I like you. Generally I hate your kind of folks" (Phelps 94). As Jaime Osterman Alves explains in their analysis of this scene, "Because of Catty and Sip's talk, … capital and labor begin to treat one another with compassion and increasing affection, and this action begins to pave the way for changes to the factory system that laws alone could never enact nor ensure" (Alves 142). Sip's repetition of the phrase "Look here" highlights one of the central features of the sentimental worldview. To connect with another person and care about what they are experiencing, one must first see them and interpolate them as an object of sympathy.

This is the principal logic upon which the labor reform efforts of the novel are based The relationships developed in sympathetic situations are asymmetrical. As Glenn Hendler and Elizabeth Barnes explain, sentimental sympathy is an "act of imagining oneself in another's position" that ultimately works as a form of self-actualization for the sympathizer (qtd. in Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 56). By reading a novel about a sympathy-inciting topic, readers were able to practice refining their emotional responses into sentiment, a process that often worked

toward the betterment of the sympathizer rather than the sympathized.[13] Like *The Factory Girl*, *The Silent Partner* interpolates readers as a part of the sentimental complex. Catty, however, did not elicit this type of reaction from the novel's contemporary audience.

Catty's Disability and the Rhetoric of Impressibility

One of the more interesting examples of the novel's incorporation of the rhetoric of impressibility and its accompanying sentimental biopolitics is embedded in Sip's description of the origins of Catty's disabilities. Sip explains,

> …they were running extra time…in the town where we was at work before Catty was born. They were running fourteen hours a day. Mother was at work, you know. There's no two ways to that… She begged off from the extra; but it was all, or quit… Quit she couldn't… she worked till a Saturday night, and Catty was born on a Monday morning… Catty was born deaf—and queer, and dumb, you know… (Phelps 51-2)

The causal link between Catty's disabilities and her mother's overexertion during pregnancy reflects the rhetoric of impressibility. As Schuller explains, "Impression theory placed a heavy burden on the pregnant woman, for her… public contacts were thought to materialize in the flesh of her fetus" (*The Biopolitics* 86). Per impression theory, even a mother's desires could have a perceivable impact on their babies (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 86). Because of this, a woman's actions during pregnancy and their child's early years were considered crucial. Nineteenth-century neo-Lamarckian theorists believe that "each layer of impressions absorbed by the body would impact the future development of the individual organism and the race as a whole, especially those stimulations affecting the highly malleable phases of embryonic development and infancy" (Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 88).

Furthermore, in the novel, Catty's condition, described as "deaf-mute," is a disability figured through impression theory in the nineteenth century. At the time, people believed that

---

[13] The only exception would be if the reader or viewer takes action because of their sympathy toward a given person, group of people, or situation.

being “deaf-mute” meant that someone was utterly “incapable of communicating” (Alves 138). When the novel was written, “the term was most often applied to deaf users of signed language who were perceived, even by such well-known deaf writers as Harriet Martineau, as being ‘incapable of any high degree of intellectual and moral cultivation, by being cut off from all adequate knowledge of the meaning of language, and from the full reception of most abstract ideas’” (Alves 138). In a sentimental framework, this meant that someone who was “deaf-mute” would have been utterly incapable of receiving sensory impressions. They would have been considered entirely insensible, having less capacity to have a meaningful interface with the world than single-celled organisms.

Today, this idea is preposterous. However, contemporary readers did not have positive attitudes toward Catty, perhaps precisely because of this reasoning. While most reviews failed to mention her, others were outright rude. Alves mentions one published in April 1871 in the *Literary World* that reads,

> Of Catty… we hardly know what to say. She is utterly repulsive—one almost feels his flesh creep in reading about her. Half bestial and wholly disgusting, one cannot pity her, and only through recognition of her aid in deepening the intense tragedy of the story, and in pointing—we had almost said poisoning—the shaft which the author aims at our manufacturing system, can one tolerate her presence in the book. (Alves 138)

The reduction of Catty to the level of animal is a direct reflection of the sentimental Lamarckian framework. Without the capacity for impression, Catty was considered primitive. Embodying the de-evolution that nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon neo-Lamarckians feared, Catty elicited more disgust from the audience than fear. However, perhaps more threatening to their worldview is the novel’s rejection of domestic Womanhood.

Defying the Regime of Sentimental Biopolitics: Phelps’ Rejection of True Womanhood

While there are some ways that *The Silent Partner* maintains implicit accordance to the sentimental biopolitics of life, there are other ways that the novel begins to resist these norms.

The primary way Phelps defies expectation is through her rejection of the Cult of True Womanhood. True Womanhood is similar to Republican Womanhood in many respects. The two ideological frameworks emphasize women's role in maintaining the nation's morality and motherhood's importance (Cruea 191). However, True Womanhood differs in its emphasis on women's domesticity (Blanton and Phegley 6). Whereas men were free to participate in the public sphere, women were confined to a separate sphere— the domestic sphere (Blanton and Phegley 6). There was no place for them in politics, nor were they encouraged to take careers outside the home (Blanton and Phegley 6).[14]

Phelps asserts her resistance to True Womanhood by centering her novel around an empowered woman who declines marriage in favor of a career. As Blanton and Phegley observe, "Phelps actively decried the social code that promoted expectations of women's piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity through the romance fiction of the period" (6). Phelps wrote an essay on the topic of True Womanhood, calling the True Woman a "scarecrow" that disintegrates when "we have poked the empty ribs of the creature and wrenched away her hallow wraps, and found the broomstick and the stuffing" (qtd. in Blanton and Phegley 6). Phelps also discards the idea that women's role in society was to serve as caretakers, raising and instilling the next generation with the necessary impressions to ensure the maintenance of the social order and the progress of the nation. Rather than submitting to the role of maternal social security, Phelps believed that women should have both equal rights in marriage and equal rights in the public sphere (Blanton and Phegley 6). The subject matter of the novel reflects this sentiment.

[14] If women were to work outside the home out of want or necessity, they were viewed as women of an inferior class.

As a part of Phelps' personal "struggle for respect and meaningful work in the shadows of True Womanhood," the primary topic of *The Silent Partner* is the acquisition of middle- and upper-class white women's rights, rather than the rights of the laboring class.[15] Like Phelps, *The Silent Partner*'s protagonist, Perley Kelso, finds herself confined by a society that views domesticity and piety as her primary role in society. Nevertheless, making the bold statement to refuse marriage and demand her share of her father's factory business, Perley asserts a presence in the public sphere.

While her partners actively disdain her at the beginning of the novel, she gains some respect when she helps end a strike against the Hayle and Kelso company. Due to an unexpected notice of a decrease in their wages, workers at the Hayle and Kelso mill are deeply concerned. They attempt to calmly express their worries and inquire about the cause of the deduction but are met with disregard and disrespect. Since their leveled attempts at confrontation do not elicit a response from their employers, the workers go on strike, gathering outside the shareholders' office in protest. Despite their best, though half-hearted, efforts, the male shareholders cannot assuage the crowd. When Perley sees what is happening, she offers to help end the strike. "'There is one thing to do… only one'" (Phelps 246). Mr. Hayle smirks at her, doubting her business skills on behalf of her gender, but allows her to continue. Perley declares, "I know those men better than you do," eliciting an explosive response from Mr. Hayle: "We know them well enough… These fellows are like a horse blind in one eye; they will run against a barn to get away from a barrel… There's neither gratitude nor common business sense among them. There's

---

[15] It is easily arguable that the true silenced partner of the novel are the "hands" that work the Hayle and Kelso mill. Unlike Kelso, the millworkers have not achieved any remarkable change in social status or rights. As Watson observes, "Perley's reforms… stop short of actually altering the scanty pay, fourteen-hour workday, and generally brutal conditions in the factory" (9).

neither trust nor honor… They would ruin us altogether for fifty cents a week" (Phelps 247). Hayle disregards their capacity for intellect and moral character because they are impoverished. He does not know his workers, merely his idea of them.

Having spent time with them and gotten to know them, Perley understands the workers in the mill are not inferior to the middle and upper class, a fact that informs her proposition. "'I was about to propose… that their employers should exhibit some trust or confidence in *them*. I want Mr. Garrick to go out and tell them *why* we must reduce their wages'" (Phelps 247-8). The eldest of the shareholders scoffs at Perley's words. "Truly a young lady's suggestion," he remarks (Phelps 248). The only person who gives Perley's ideas any heed is Stephen Garrick, the man whose marriage proposal she had refused. Garrick goes out into the crowd and attempts to explain why they must reduce their wages, but they do not believe him. The crowd demands to speak to Perley: "*Call the young leddy! Let's hear what the young leddy says...*" (Phelps 250). Once she explains the situation to the workers, the crowd begins to settle, and eventually, they return home. By recognizing them as on equal footing with the mill owners, as working in silent partnership with Hayle and Kelso, Perley convinces the workers to take the temporary cut for the overall welfare of the mill.[16]

---

[16] Although Perley's advocacy for treating laborers with dignity and respect is a great first step, Perley and, by extension, Phelps fall short of true labor reform. It is unclear whether the other shareholders are fully convinced that the laborers have the capacity for rationality and morality or whether they believe that simply giving workers the illusion that they are not seen as inferior is a potentially fruitful business strategy. Perley also fails to address many of the workers' problems, including low wages, long hours, and dangerous work environments. She focuses more on providing the laborers with access to literature and art than on ensuring them a safe work experience, adequate time for rest, and access to food and shelter. For this reason, *The Silent Partner* appears to be just as much, if not more, a text working toward establishing the rights of middle- and upper-class white women than the rights of laborers.

By exerting her presence in the public sphere and proving that she belongs there, Perley threatens to undermine the gender role distinctions of the Anglo-Saxon race. By extension, in writing Perley as an empowered woman, Phelps threatens gender roles as well. In response to the increasing presence of women in the public sphere and increased movement for political rights, the leader of the American School of Evolution, Edward Drinker Cope, declared that "the effeminization of men and the masculinization of women" finds "counterfeits of both sexes, each a fraud to the other, and both together frauds before the world and the universe!" (qtd. in Schuller, *The Biopolitics* 62). In essence, by allowing women to enter the established masculine public sphere, nineteenth-century white Americans put the continued evolution of the race at risk. Much to Cope's dismay, but for much good, women would continue to push into the public sphere, and the neo-Lamarckian framework, as it was then understood, would come tumbling down—a cautionary tale of the dangerous power scientific theory can have in the wrong hands.

Concluding Remarks

By tracking the emergence of sentimental biopolitics in the works of Savage and Melville and the beginnings of its demise in Phelps's novel, we can see how ideologies exist below the level of and eventually come to cultural consciousness. No ideas emerge within a vacuum. There are always preconditions that allow a given idea to arise. Consequently, despite not having actual contact with sentimental biopolitics and neo-Lamarckian theory, the three authors' works still correlate to the tenets of this belief system. In Savage, we see how the tradition of Republican Womanhood set up and reinforced the gender roles that would form the basis of the neo-Lamarckian bisexual organization of race. Through Melville, we see how a sociobiologically indeterminate understanding of race and evolution merged with and expressed white masculine

anxiety, leading to eugenic practices. Lastly, through Phelps, we can see the beginnings of the end of gender roles that would cause the sentimental biopolitical framework to disintegrate.

Considering nineteenth-century American labor literature in terms of sentimental biopolitics broadens our understanding of the bounds of biopower. Biopolitics is not confined to institutions; they also function within seemingly benign objects and discourses. This is not, however, necessarily sinister. On the contrary, studying biopolitics is imperative because it allows us to see how they operate in our day-to-day lives and decide whether their impact is beneficial or nefarious. Like young Ellen Collins in *The Lowell Offering*, we have not yet broken out of our roles as "living machines" (Almira 113). To do so, we must understand precisely how we have become interpolated as such.

WORKS CITED

Allen, Tom. “Melville’s ‘Factory Girls’: Feminizing the Future.” *Studies in American Fiction*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2003, pp. 45-71.

Almira. “The Spirit of Discontent.” *The Lowell Offering*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1841, pp. 111-144.

Alves, Jaime Osterman. “She ‘Had Such Things to Say!’: Listening to ‘Deaf-Mute’ Catty in Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s *The Silent Partner*.” *Saving the World: Girlhood and Evangelicalism in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Taylor and Francis, 2017, pp. 136-52.

Atack, Jeremy, Fred Bateman, and Robert A. Margo. “Capital Deepening and the Rise of the Factory: The American Experience during the Nineteenth-Century.” *The Economic History Review*, 2005, vol. 58, no. 3

Barker-Benfield, G. J. *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Science in Eighteenth-Century Britain*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Barrett, Nancy J. “The Struggles of Women Industrial Workers to Improve Work Conditions in the Progressive Era.” *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 13, no. 3, 1999, pp. 43-9.

Blanton, Virginia, and Jennifer Phegley. “‘I Rebel Against the Story. I am Sure the Half of It was Never Told Us’: Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’ ‘The True Story of Guenever’ and Nineteenth-Century Women in the Literary Marketplace.” *Arthuriana*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2020, pp. 3-25.

Burkhardt, Richard W., Jr. “Lamarck, Evolution, and the Inheritance of Acquired Characters.” *Genetics*, vol. 194, 2013, pp. 793-805.

Chhibber, Anish. “Biopower.” *Global Social Theory*, 2018, https://globalsocialtheory.org/concepts/biopower.

Cook, Sylvia J. *Working Women, Literary Ladies: The Industrial Revolution and Female Aspiration.* Oxford University Press, 2007.

Cruea, Susan M. “Changing Ideals of Womanhood During the Nineteenth-Century Woman Movement.” *American Transcendental Quarterly*, vol. 19, no. 3, 2005, pp. 187-204.

Early, Frances H. “A Reappraisal of the New England Labour-Reform Movement of the 1840s: The Lowell Female Labor Reform Association and the New England Workingman’s Association.” *Histoire Social*, vol. 13, no. 25, 1980, pp. 33-54.

Eisler, Benita. “Introduction.” *The Lowell Offering: Writings by New England Mill Women (1840-1845)*, edited by Eisler, W. W. Norton and Company, 1998, pp. 13-42.

Foucault, Michel. *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality*. Translated by Robert Hurley. vol. 1, 1976.

Goldin, Claudia, and Kenneth Sokoloff. “Women, Children, and Industrialization in the Early Republic: Evidence from the Manufacturing Censuses.” *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 42, no. 4, 1982, pp. 741-74.

Hubbard, Ruth. “Have Only Men Evolved?” *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, edited by Sandra Harding and Merrill B. Hintikka, 2nd ed., Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003, pp. 31-44.

Kutzbach, Konstanze. “The Two-..., One-..., None-Sex Model: The Flesh(-)Made Machine in Herman Melville’s ‘The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids’ and J.G. Ballard’s *Crash*.” *The Abject of Desire*. GENUS, 2007, pp. 181-196.

Lilja, Mona, and Stellan Vinthagen. “Sovereign Power, Disciplinary Power and Biopower: Resisting What Power with What Resistance?” *Journal of Political Power*, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 107-126.

Lovell, Thomas B. “Separate Spheres and Extensive Circles: Sarah Savage’s *The Factory Girl* and the Celebration of Industry in Early Nineteenth-Century America.” *Early American Literature*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1996, pp. 1-24.

Norton, Mary Beth. “The Evolution of White Women’s Experience in Early America.” *The American Historical Review*, 1984, vol. 89, no. 3, pp. 593-619.

MacLean, Annie Marion. *Wage-earning Women*. The Macmillian Company, 1910.

Means, Alexander J. “Foucault, Biopolitics, and the Critique of State Reason.” Educational Philosophy and Theory, 2021.

Melville, Herman. “The Tartarus of Maids.” *Victorian Persistence*, 1855, https://victorian persistence.files.wordpress.com/2016/06/the-paradise-of-bachelors-and-the-tartarus-of-maids.pdf.

Petter, Henri. *The Early American Novel*. Ohio State University Press, 1971.

Phelps, Elizabeth Stuart. *The Silent Partner*. Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1871.

Privett, Ronna Coffey. *A Comprehensive Study of American Writers, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 1844-1911: Art for Truth’s Sake*. The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.

Rosen, George. “The Medical Aspects of the Controversy Over Factory Conditions in New England, 1840-1850.” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 1944, vol. 15, no. 5, pp. 483-497.

Samuels, Shirley. “Introduction.” *The Culture of Sentiment: Race, Gender, and Sentimentality in 19th-Century America*, edited by Samuels, Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 3-8.

Savage, Sarah. *The Factory Girl*. Munroe, Francis, & Parker, 1814.

Schocket, Eric. "'Discovering some New Race': Rebecca Harding Davis's 'Life in the Iron Mills' and the Literary Emergence of Working-Class Whiteness." *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America,* vol. 115, no. 1, 2000, pp. 46-59.

Schuller, Kyla. *The Biopolitics of Feeling: Race, Sex, and Science in the Nineteenth Century*. Duke University Press, 2017.

---. "The Biology of Intimacy: Lamarckian Evolution and the Sentimental Novel." *American Literature*, vol. 92, no. 3, 2020, pp. 457-84.

Sterlin, David Harley. "The Dialogue of Gender in Melville's *The Paradise of Bachelors and the Tartarus of Maids*." *Modern Language Studies*, vol. 25, no. 2, 1995, pp. 80-7.

Tompkins, Jane. *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790-1860*. Oxford University Press, 1985.

Watson, William Lynn. "'The Facts which Go to Form this Fiction': Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *The Silent Partner* and the *Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics Reports*." *College Literature*, vol. 29, no. 4, 2002, pp. 6-25.

Wickberg, Daniel. "What is the History of Sensibilities? On Cultural Histories, Old and New." *American Historical Review*, vol. 112, no. 3, 2007, pp. 661-84.

Wiegman, Robyn. "Melville's Geography of Gender." *Herman Melville: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Prentice-Hall, 1994, pp. 187-98.

Zevin, Robert Brooke. "The Growth of Manufacturing in Early Nineteenth-Century New England." *The Journal of Economic History*, vol. 25, no. 4, 1965, pp. 680-2.

CHAPTER III: "IT'S THE TRUTH EVEN IF IT DIDN'T HAPPEN": *ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST*, *RATCHED*, AND THE PUBLIC MEMORY OF LOBOTOMY

In a speech at a psychiatric convention in 1941, Charles C. Burlingame, a prominent New York lawyer, questioned,

> What then… of our vitamin capsules, our electric therapies, our ultraviolet lamps, our short wave treatments and our shock therapies…? Do we use these as empirically as our predecessors did their leeches and their bleedings?... Are we, in the light of those who come after us, going to be accused of being users of stupid, bizarre, or crude methods? Will they think us no better than quacks? (qtd. in Pressman 5)

Five years prior to this speech, one of the most infamous medical procedures, the lobotomy, was performed for the first time in the United States. American physician Walter Jackson Freeman II and his partner James W. Watts adapted the surgery from Portuguese neurologist Egas Moniz's leucotomy. The prefrontal lobotomy was brutal. After drilling two holes into the sides of the skull, surgeons would insert a metal tool called a leucotome into the brain, removing white matter between the prefrontal cortex and the thalamus (Caruso and Sheehan 3). While Freeman believed the surgery showed promising results, the complexity of the procedure prevented it from becoming a mainstream practice.[17] It required skilled surgeons and took about an hour to complete, necessitating resources that were in short supply at state-funded psychiatric facilities (Caruso and Sheehan 3).

[17] According to Caruso and Sheehan, "By 1942, Freeman and Watts had performed approximately 200 frontal lobotomies and published their first major case series. They reported that 63% of patients showed improvement following the lobotomy, 23% demonstrated no change in symptoms, and 14% of patients suffered severe postoperative deficits or death" (3). However, it is important to keep in mind that Freeman and Watts's definition of "improvement" is related to the values, ideas, and behaviors that their culture valued.

In search of an easier and more efficient approach, Freeman found the work of Amarro Fiamberti, an Italian psychosurgeon (Rogers). Fiamberti performed lobotomies by inserting a cannula through the eye socket and injecting formalin into the frontal lobe (Rogers). Freeman used Fiamberti's research to develop his version of the transorbital lobotomy (Rogers). Like Fiamberti's methods, Freeman's transorbital lobotomies could be performed with minimal invasion, utilizing the eye sockets as an entry point to the brain rather than drilling holes into the skull (Caruso and Sheehan 4). After lightly sedating patients with electroshock treatments, Freeman would use a hammer to beat an ice pick-like metal instrument into the brain, severing the neural fibers between the lobes of the prefrontal cortex (Caruso and Sheehan 4). Because they did not require general anesthesia or a specialized surgeon and took less than twenty minutes to perform, transorbital lobotomies could be outpatient procedures (Caruso and Sheehan 4). As such, they served as a cost-effective remedy for state hospitals that were overrun with patients and desperate to "[get] them home." (Johnson 29). Freeman would travel the country for twenty-one years, single-handedly performing over 3,000 transorbital lobotomies (Caruso and Sheehan 1).

However, during the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, lobotomy would fall out of practice. Many medical historians attribute this shift to the rise of psychopharmacology (See Feldman and Goodrich, Gallea). Others, like Jenell Johnson and Jack Pressman, attribute this surgery's demise to changing cultural paradigms. In 1967, Freeman performed his last lobotomy (Johnson 183). Due to a massive brain hemorrhage, his patient died on the table, causing him to lose his surgical privileges (Johnson 183). In light of the procedure's disastrous effects, from that point forward, Freeman would be regarded as one of the biggest "quacks" in the history of medicine. Yet, as Burlingame observed, our memory of medical history is biased by hindsight.

Too often, the narratives we construct about the development of medical knowledge overestimate the inherent truth-value of specific procedures. As Pressman explains, the belief that the quality of "any particular therapy is… equally visible across the decades" has led to an "assumed timelessness of medical potency that has distorted our historical vision" (5). In the case of lobotomy, this "distorted historical vision" has resulted in a narrative that simplifies the surgery's champions as malicious villains, perpetuating a procedure they knew to be ineffective for the sake of power or outright malice.

However, while the blame placed on Freeman for the disastrous effects of the lobotomy is an understandable conclusion given his role in the development of the procedure, some representations of the lobotomy in popular media distort this history to the point of absurdity, displacing blame onto women. The idea that women had a significant role in the proliferation of the lobotomy is preposterous. At the peak of the surgery's practice, only six percent of doctors in America were women (Nilsson and Warren). Often, they were the victims of the procedure. By 1942, seventy-five percent of lobotomies that Freeman performed were on women (Tone 625). In 1951, at the surgery's height, sixty percent of lobotomy patients in America were women (Kramer). Nevertheless, in the transition from history to story, the stories of female lobotomy victims are often left unheard, replaced by sensationalist narratives that twist the story for fantastical results.

Due to the film’s popularity, the depiction of lobotomy in 1975 hit *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (hereafter *Cuckoo's Nest*) has come to considerable prominence in the public's memory of the procedure. After receiving five Oscars at the 1976 Academy Awards, the movie proved its cinematic preeminence and became a quintessential component of the American cinematic canon. The film follows Randle McMurphy, a convict feigning insanity to avoid hard

labor at a work farm, as he takes on the head nurse in a 1963 psychiatric facility, Nurse Ratched, a stern woman depicted as a vindictive tyrant. Ultimately, McMurphy's attempts to usurp the system of authority in the ward lead him to be lobotomized in the film's final scenes. Interestingly, in *Cuckoo's Nest*, the gender of the typical victim and the perpetrator are reversed; Randle McMurphy becomes the victim of Nurse Ratched, who uses lobotomy as a mechanism of control.

In 2020, Netflix released *Ratched*, a series that advertises itself as a prequel to the events in *Cuckoo's Nest*. Set in 1947, *Ratched* expounds the infamous Nurse Ratched's backstory. The wild psychological thriller details the abuses of Ratched's childhood and her early years working as a fraudulent nurse in a psychiatry asylum in Saint Lucia, California. Her brother, Edmund Tolleson, is on trial for the murder of five priests. In a last-ditch effort to save him from an impending death sentence, he pleads insanity and is sent to Saint Lucia for a psychiatric evaluation. Throughout the series, Ratched goes to drastic, and sometimes murderous, measures to prevent her brother from being put to death. Like in *Cuckoo's Nest*, lobotomy plays a significant role in the plot's progression. Five people are lobotomized within the first three episodes, providing much fodder for an investigation into how the memory of lobotomy has shifted and stayed the same between the two cinematic works' releases.

Putting the film and series in conversation, I explore how the two motion pictures have reflected and reproduced the public memory of lobotomy. The decision to orient this discussion around these two works comes from the massive reach and publicity that the cinematic genre poses and its accompanying influence over overarching memorialization. Lobotomy is so commonly discussed on television that it is very likely that most of the American public's knowledge about the surgery comes from movies and television shows like *Cuckoo's Nest* and

Ratched. Americans learn more history from cinema than their history teachers (Edgerton, "Television as Historian: A Different Kind of History Altogether" 3). The appeal of celluloid depictions of history comes from the medium's "affinity and ability to embody current concerns and priorities within the stories it telecasts about the past…" (Edgerton, "The Past is Now Present Onscreen: Television, History, and Collective Memory" 90). As Gary Edgerton describes, screenwriters and producers utilize stories based on historical events to "clarify the present and discover the future" (Edgerton, "Television as Historian" 3). Unfortunately, this often means that historical accuracy is exchanged for sensationalism. The generic conventions of comedic realism and horror in *Cuckoo's Nest* and *Ratched*, respectively, work against accuracy. Nevertheless, due to their ability to capture public interest, works like *Cuckoo's Nest* and *Ratched* have powerful sway over public memories.

It is precisely this influence that I tap into to garner a greater understanding of the content and mechanisms of the American public memory of lobotomy. This argument will proceed chronologically, split into two main sections. First, in my discussion of *Cuckoo's Nest*, I will explore how the portrayal of willful women as the perpetrators of lobotomy and heroic men as the victims works to actively overwrite historical details that counter this patriarchal narrative**.** In my analysis of McMurphy, I will explore how the cultural and political climate at the film's release influenced his characterization as a masculine hero, priming viewers to view the lobotomy as an attack on manhood, individualism, and American patriotism. Regarding Nurse Ratched, I contend that the film's burlesque representation of her character as purely willful diminishes the capacity for viewers to understand and identify with her character, rendering her and the institution she symbolizes unequivocally villainous. Then, I will examine *Ratched*'s attempt to actively remember and humanize patients and perpetrators of lobotomy. Ultimately, I

will argue that the maintenance of the burlesque characterization of Nurse Ratched and the undifferentiated representation of those wielding the ice pick undermines these recovery efforts.

Rhetorical Foundations: Public Memory and Active Forgetting

Over the past thirty years, public memory has become a hot topic in rhetorical studies.[18] Despite their common use of the term, scholars define public memory differently. Kendall R. Phillips encapsulates these variances in two definitions. On the one hand, public memory can be understood as "'[p]ublic' and 'memory'...conjoined around the sense of a public, or a group of people, who hold a certain memory…" (Phillips, "The Failure of Memory: Reflections on Rhetoric and Public Remembrance" 219). On the other, it can refer to "...the ways in which memories are made 'public' through their presentation to others through monuments, speeches, films, etc." (Phillips, " Failure" 219). Public memory encapsulates both *what* and *how* a collective understands the past. Though closely related to history, public memory is unique because it allows for "multiple, diverse, mutable, and competing accounts of past events" (Phillips, *Framing Public Memory* 2). One of the fundamental issues with history as a concept is that, in its attempt to form a singular, cohesive narrative of the past, it eradicates the complex diversity of perspectives present in any given era. As a theoretical lens, public memory allows for multiple accounts of the past, turning history into histories (Möckel-Rieke 7)

Furthermore, public memory's emphasis on the present's impact on our understanding of past events elucidates the subjectivity of historical narratives. Sara VanderHaagen expands upon this idea, explaining that public memory "accompanies the view that certain public or popular

[18] There are currently 2,932 peer-reviewed articles in the ProQuest database that mention "public memory." This is up 1395.92% since Phillips assessed the same data in their 2010 article "The Failure of Memory: Reflections on Rhetoric and Public Remembrance," at which time there were only 196 (208).

historical narratives are not simply a collection of petrified facts about the past but are living documents with implications for the present" (20). The past has not passed entirely; it has a tangible impact on the present and heavily influences people's decisions for the future. By figuring history through the process of memory, the rememberer is made visible, allowing scholars to think more critically about not only what is remembered but how and why. Hannah Möckel-Rieke encapsulates this thought: "Memory is, so to speak, the place where past and present interact and thereby define each other" (8). As such, public memory holds considerable sway over a society's present understanding of who they are and what they stand for.

Another actor at the junction of the past and present is active forgetting. Coined by Bold et al. in their article "Feminist Memorializing and Cultural Countermemory: The Case of Marianne's Park," active forgetting describes the filtering of the present through oppressive hegemonic structures that work to forget certain details of events as they happen. Bold et al. contend that active forgetting

> ... functions most effectively as repression rather than forgetting— repression through shifting out of conscious memory to the level of naturalized behavior that is learned, embodied, and internalized through ritual practices and habitual action and made available through societally 'prescripted' narratives and performances. (127)

In other words, the pre-existing structures, hierarchies, and ideologies present in a given culture influence what is recognized as memorable. For instance, in a society that normalizes gendered violence, gender-based hate crimes are registered simply as "violence." As Bold et al. explain, active forgetting "is [an] apparatus through which the systemic nature of gendered violence is denied while each violent event is treated in isolation as the pathological behavior of a deranged individual rather than as behavior into which such individuals have been socialized" (127). When a situation occurs because of inequality, the dominant structures of power actively forget the "why" in their memory of the "what." Studying active forgetting is a valuable academic endeavor because of its covert function in oppressive regimes. In theory and application, it

emphasizes stories that have been neglected, ignored, and overlooked. Moreover, it opens a space in memory studies for those perspectives and voices who have been routinely oppressed to be brought back to the level of cultural consciousness.

Because of its prevalent yet often false representation in popular culture and its function as gendered violence, lobotomy is the perfect subject for a public memory study exploring active forgetting mechanisms. In my execution of an analysis of this type, I am intervening in several academic conversations. My discussion of the public memory of lobotomy is in dialogue with Jack Pressman and Jenell Johnson, who have offered immense insight into the topic in their respective books *Last Resort: Psychosurgery and the Limits of Medicine* and *American Lobotomy: A Rhetorical History*. Pressman's astute assessment of the medical community's acceptance of the lobotomy upon its debut serves as a theoretical guidepost for this piece. Johnson's work excavating memories produced by popular representations of the lobotomy is a model for this investigation. Although Johnson mentions *Cuckoo's Nest* in passing at a few points in her book, I expand upon her discussion of the film by delving deeper into the issue of gender and how characterization works to persuade viewers that lobotomy was a threat against masculine American individualism. Moreover, coupling my analysis of *Cuckoo's Nest* with *Ratched*, which has received no scholarly attention, presents the opportunity to consider the ways the public memory of lobotomy may have shifted in the forty-five years between the film's and series' releases.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

With few setting changes and a comparatively uneventful plot, the primary appeal of *Cuckoo's Nest* lies in the film's characters. The cast is filled with household names, including Jack Nicholson, Louise Fletcher, Danny DeVito, and Will Sampson. Overall, the men on the

ward are likable and comedic. However, with little backstory and significant narratorial distance, they are underdeveloped and relatively flat. Rather than feeling like complete, dynamic characters, they are static— suspended in an isolated world of repeated and predictable actions. Nurse Ratched is similarly undeveloped. However, unlike her male counterparts, her character is far from likable. Exploring the characterization of McMurphy and Ratched in light of the movie's historical context makes the film's intentionally misremembered details about the lobotomy visible and highlights what has been actively forgotten.

Randle McMurphy and the Lobotomy as a National Security Threat

Brimming with confidence, bravery, and machismo, McMurphy represents the 1970s' American conception of the masculine. At his essence, McMurphy is the quintessential masculine hero, carrying himself with the same swagger as a cowboy in a traditional Western film. Viewers first encounter him as he is brought onto the ward handcuffed and restrained by two police officers. Once inside the building, his handcuffs are removed. With this small glimmer of freedom, McMurphy promptly laughs in one police officer's face and leans over and kisses the other— the first of many defiant acts against authority. Waltzing around the ward in a leather jacket and jeans, McMurphy stands out from the crowd of white uniforms. Within minutes on the ward, he has shaken everyone's hand and has taken over a poker game, swiftly swindling money from his ward mates.

Critics have often discussed McMurphy's dogged sway over the ward. As Van Nostrand explains, "[Those in] his presence are instantly captivated by his adolescent charm and defiant independence… [H]e is the very essence of sanity and passion" (24). However, like the other men on the ward, McMurphy's appeal comes in part from his lack of development as a character.

"From the very start, we are deprived of an all-important sense of perspective on these people that would help to determine the course and content of their struggle" (Van Nostrand 25).

[19] The persuasive effect of McMurphy's presence is shockingly effective considering the terms for his admittance. McMurphy's charges are no petty crimes; he has been convicted with statutory rape of a fifteen-year-old girl he describes as "fifteen years old going on thirty-five" (*Cuckoo's Nest* 00:14:13-00:14:15). In his own words, he is being punished because he "fights and fucks too much" (*Cuckoo's Nest* 00:13:17-00:13:19).

Yet, the audience contemporary to the film's release seems to be little affected by this detail. One film reviewer from 1976 acknowledges McMurphy's charge of statutory rape but says that McMurphy "justifies" it (Milne 32). Instead, his character is received as warm, charming, and humorous. A reviewer in *Parents' Magazine and Better Homemaking* recommends the film for families with children, regarding the movie as overall "too shallow to be taken seriously," and describes McMurphy as simply a "free-spirited prankster" going up against a "castrating ward supervisor" (Ripp 15). While this interpretation of McMurphy is in part a sign of the times, the film plays a role in the diminution of this detail through its lack of character development. The ultimately undifferentiated characterization of McMurphy is part of a larger narrative framework that reduces the characters and the subject matter they are associated with down to an oversimplified dichotomy. McMurphy is at once a champion of male individualism and a helpless victim.

---

[19] Scholars like Slater and Van Nostrand identify McMurphy as the hero of the narrative. Some critics, including Thomas Slater, have even noticed the film's portrayal of McMurphy as a Christ figure, noting several scenes when he "stands briefly with his arms stretched out in the crucifix position" (Slater 127).

Exploring the context of the film helps elucidate why McMurphy's character was framed in this seemingly paradoxical way. When the movie was released in 1975, America was in the middle of the Cold War. As geopolitical tensions mounted between the United States and the Soviet Union, American masculinity became a form of national security, and male docility was considered a public threat (Johnson 71). As K.A. Cuordileone explains, during this time, many people believed that

> American males had become the victims of a smothering, overpowering, suspiciously collectivist mass society—a society that has smashed the once autonomous male self, elevated women to a position of power in the home, and doomed men to a slavish conformity not wholly unlike that experienced by men living under Communist rule. (qtd. in Johnson 71)

Throughout *Cuckoo's Nest*, McMurphy embodies the virile, nation-saving masculinity that Cuordileone describes and works to actively defy one of the institutions believed to be undermining individualism and American patriotism: psychiatry. Especially following the Watergate Scandal in 1972, "People did not tend to blame the political system… but they did generally distrust social institutions" (Slater 132). The social institutions in question are those described by Peter N. Carroll, who states that "The loss of faith in doctors and lawyers, the skepticism of corporate leaders, the omnipresent distrust of politicians—all produced a spreading disillusionment about the competence of the dominant institutions of society" (Carroll 235).[20] As we see in *Cuckoo's Nest*, some of Americans' mass paranoia manifested in their suspicion of psychiatry.

---

[20] Furthermore, "A national opinion surgery of 1975 show that 69 percent of the respondents felt that 'over the last ten years, this country's leaders have consistently lied to the people.' These suspicions implicated all the major institutions of American society… The problems of confidence and credibility extended far beyond questions of willful dishonesty, touched the most basic foundations of American culture" (Carroll 235).

Psychiatry is an inescapable authority in the film. When McMurphy acts out against higher-ups, he is beaten down and punished. The culmination of this tyranny is the lobotomy at the end of the film. The idealized portrayal of McMurphy's character sets up the film's argument that lobotomy is a femininized weapon. McMurphy is lobotomized as punishment for strangling and attempting to rape Nurse Ratched, which he does because he considers her to have pushed Billy Bibbit to suicide. Although the lobotomy itself is not shown on screen, its impact on McMurphy is pictured clearly. When McMurphy enters the ward, he is supported on either side by two orderlies, clearly unable to walk unassisted. His gait is zombie-like and weak, a stark contrast to the confident strut he had walked into the ward. After the orderlies leave, Chief Bromden (Will Sampson) sneaks over to his bed, seeming at first to believe that McMurphy was faking it, as he had jokingly mimicked a zombie-like demeanor before following electroshock treatment. However, upon further inspection, Bromden finds that McMurphy is entirely unresponsive, unable to respond to Bromden's questions or support his head. He is alive but lifeless nonetheless—a shell of who he was before, a completely different person.

This final scene has become one of the most popular depictions of the procedure's effects. Scientists even recognize its preeminence. James P. Caruso and Sheehan describe Jack Nicholson's performance in *Cuckoo's Nest* as "the most famous artistic portrayal of a lobotomized patient" (5). It is even listed in the entry on lobotomy on *HowStuffWorks.com*, a popular website that provides detailed, science-based descriptions of the mechanisms of anything from the stock market to Borax to interstates. Amidst an explanation of the procedure, the author, Shanna Freeman, states, "This scene… was the first time that many people ever heard of a lobotomy," and "for some, it's still the first thing that comes to mind" (Freeman). This depiction, however, while cinematically compelling, is not entirely accurate. Although most lobotomies did

not produce the intended results, very few ended up like McMurphy. As Jenell Johnson explains, "The reality for most lobotomy patients was somewhere in the wide gulf between these poles. A number of patients died from surgical complications on the operating table; one returned to his career as a doctor, one killed his father during a hunting trip; [and] some patients returned home to raise families…" (31-2).

The misconception that every patient ended up like a zombie is an exaggeration that arose from anxiety. The depiction of lobotomy patients as zombies came from underlying fears about brainwashing, personality change, and the unknown power of psychiatry. Though the term is common now, the idea of brainwashing did not emerge until the early 1950s (Johnson 83). By the 1960s, sociologists theorized the social substructure that undergirded the concept's origin and proliferation. Sociologist Albert Biderman, for instance, explained that "brainwashing [is] a word that has become embedded in our language to refer to the attempts of Communist functionaries to coerce, instruct, persuade, trick, train, delude, debilitate, frustrate, bribe, threaten, promise, flatter, degrade, torture, [and] isolate" American citizens (qtd. in Johnson 85). In general, brainwashing is used "…to refer to the attempt to persuade people to act [in ways] of which the user of the term disapproves" (qtd. in Johnson 85).

During the Cold War, the ability for psychiatric treatments to change someone's personality elicited a great deal of fear about the field's potential to be used as a weapon against the United States. Because of this, even positive advances in psychiatry were viewed as a threat to the sanctity of the individual. In his book *The Age of Treason: The Carefully and Deliberately Planned Methods Developed by the Vicious Element of Humanity*, R. Swinburne Clymer writes of psychiatry, warning people to, "Fear those who by usurped power have the means to destroy man's manhood, thereby making him incapable of thinking, reasoning and bereft of the power of

imagination; no longer a human creature, but a robot or zombie, prevented from fulfilling his Divine destiny by making it impossible to awaken the soul" (6). Responding to the rise of psychiatric treatment methods like lobotomy and psychiatric medications, both of which they refer to as the "most vicious and diabolical [procedures] the human mind could conceive," Clymer's work reveals the connection between human consciousness, reason, and manhood that underlies the dominant 1970s' American culture.

In *Cuckoo's Nest*¸ Nurse Ratched is depicted as the brainwasher; the men on her ward, the brainwashed. At one point in the film, McMurphy is baffled when he learns that most of the men on the ward are there voluntarily. Though they can leave at any time, the men stay at the facility because they have come to view themselves as incapable of participating in the "real" world. They have been repeatedly emasculated to the point of submission. McMurphy's outrage upon learning that his fellow ward mates are voluntary patients comes from deep-seated anxiety about the potential to be brainwashed— to begin one way, and become another through someone else's volition. As *Cuckoo's Nest* argues, when you go up against a regime disposed to brainwashing, the result is brute force. If bribing and manipulation do not work, lobotomy will.

The portrayal of McMurphy as a hero fighting to maintain the sanctity of masculinity in the midst of institutionalism primes viewers to see the lobotomy as an attack against men and the tenets of American patriotism. An exaggerated memory of the effects of the lobotomy facilitates a simplified narrative that frames the surgery and its procedure as manifestly evil. With the only other option being to confront the fallibility of empiricism, accepting this narrative might be easier than recognizing the capacity for an atrocity of this measure to happen again.

Nurse Ratched and the Lobotomy as a Feminized Weapon

We do not know who performs that lobotomy in *Cuckoo's Nest*; however, it is heavily implied that Nurse Ratched orders the lobotomy. However, given that women could not become doctors easily at the time, it is implausible that a woman would have been able to perform a lobotomy or granted enough power as a nurse to decide singlehandedly what treatments to provide patients. This begs the question: why is Nurse Ratched blamed?

In *Cuckoo's Nest*, McMurphy's gender is a significant element of the film's portrayal of lobotomy. Rather than figuring psychiatry as a threat to all people, psychiatry was perceived as particularly a threat to men. Regarding lobotomy, the perception that psychiatric treatments were more threatening to men likely contributed to the erasure of women's stories and led to fear-induced hyperbolic accounts of the procedure's outcomes. While most lobotomies were performed on women, in the media, male lobotomy patients are discussed in disproportionately high numbers when discussing the surgeries' failures because they were viewed as more newsworthy (Johnson 50).[21] The centering of the film's critique of lobotomy on the hypermasculine figure of McMurphy emphasizes anxieties of the procedure's perceived emasculating capacities. The fear of emasculation is heightened when the lobotomy is symbolically weaponized when it is performed by a woman. The implicit argument that suggests that lobotomy is a feminine weapon rather than a weapon that could be used against women. This focus contributes to a distorted public memory of lobotomy that not only erases but vilifies women.

[21] This disproportionality is in large part due to gender roles. As Jenell Johnson explains throughout *American Lobotomy*, gender played a significant role in the interpretation of the lobotomy's outcomes, allowing the adverse effects the surgery had on women to go unnoticed if they acquiesced to the gender roles expected of them.

Ratched's purported role in McMurphy's lobotomization solidifies her perception as an oppressor of men. She is figured as vengeful. She embodies the psychiatric institution and everything believed to be wrong with it at the time. This flat, exaggerated characterization fits the mold of Kenneth Burke's burlesque poetic frame. As described in *Attitudes toward History,* "The writing of burlesque makes no attempt to get inside the psyche of the victim. Instead, he is content to select the externals of behavior, driving them to a 'logical conclusion' that becomes their 'reduction to absurdity'" (Burke 54). Burke continues, "By program, he obliterates his victim's discriminations. He is 'heartless.' He converts every 'perhaps' into a 'positively.' He deliberately suppresses any consideration of the 'mitigating circumstances' that would put his subject in a better light." (Burke 54-55).

Scholars have applied Burke's theory of the burlesque in various ways. In their essay "Scoffing at the Enemy: The Burlesque Frame in the Rhetoric of Ralph David Abernathy," Gary Steven Selby explores Ralph David Abernathy's rhetorical conventions compared to those of Martin Luther King, arguing that Abernathy's decision to use the burlesque frame in his discussion of white people and their bigotry enabled him to move his audience away from fearing and pitying white people and toward scoffing laughter. According to Selby, this reaction helped minimize the "risks Blacks faced by continuing in further public demonstration." (134). In their article, "Religious Rhetoric and Satire: Investigating the Comic and Burlesque Frames within *The Big Bang Theory*," Todd V. Lewis and Ariana Molloy argue that the television series *The Big Bang Theory* employs the burlesque to reckon with the common conflicts between science and religion in a way validates the differences between each perspective yet treats both respectfully. From social activism to sitcom television, rhetorical choices that demonstrate what Burke would call a burlesque approach are used to elicit particular responses from a given

audience. While these examples employ the burlesque to produce audience reactions that result in public good, *Cuckoo's Nest*'s use of the burlesque may have caused harm.

By neglecting to give Nurse Ratched any backstory, *Cuckoo's Nest* frames her in a burlesque fashion. Her decisions on the ward are "reduced to absurdity" because the narrative fails to acknowledge any reasoning she might have. We know nothing of Ratched's mitigating circumstances. Does she respond to McMurphy so negatively because of his sexual crimes? Does something in her backstory make her the way she is? Without alternative explanations, the viewer assumes her only motivation is evil. Direct Milos Forman himself describes Ratched as "an order- mad, killjoy harpy" (qtd. in Wattercutter). If we assume that there must be mitigating factors at hand, we then beg the question of why Ratched was vilified in this way. Why did a woman in power elicit such a strong response from Forman and, by extension, society during the 1970s? One answer to this question may lie in Sara Ahmed's theory of willful women.

In her work *Living a Feminist Life*, Ahmed explores how women have been charged with willfulness— with "suffering from too much will" (65). Though Ahmed puts forth several definitions of willfulness through the chapter "Willfulness and Feminist Subjectivity," one of particular relevance here describes willfulness as "a way of addressing whose subjectivity becomes a problem. When we are willing to get in the way, we are willful" (66). By asserting her presence in a male-dominated institution and not shying away from her power, Ratched is willful. When we remember McMurphy's sexual deviance and reevaluate his attempt to rape and murder Ratched from a differentiated perspective, her decision to recommend that McMurphy receive treatment is understandable. Though a lobotomy may seem extreme, as Watercutter explains, "…while her methods may have been grotesque, she was operating within what she understood to be the parameters of treatment of mental illness at the time." Given the severity of

McMurphy's aggression, the dismissal of Ratched's rationale for providing McMurphy with mental health treatment aligns with one of the conceptions of willfulness that Ahmed describes: "To be filled with will is to be emptied of thought: as if speaking about injustice, about power, about inequality, is just another way of getting your way" (71). Nurse Ratched's burlesque characterization conditions viewers to view every act she takes as self-centered and power-hungry. There is no regard for the ward policies above her head, the struggles of maintaining respect in the workplace as a woman at the time, or any other potentially confounding variables.

Nurse Ratched's decision to lobotomize McMurphy contributes to the misnomer that lobotomies were performed out of spite. Because of their affective relationship with McMurphy and Ratched, viewers are positioned to view McMurphy's attempt to kill Nurse Ratched after Billy Bibbit's suicide as justified vengeance. While it is difficult to rule out the possibility that some lobotomies were executed to this end, it is highly improbable. As Pressman explains, "While the mad-doctor characterizations make for great polemics and spine-tingling science fiction, as history they are often just plain wrong…" (4). It is important to remember that the procedure was "not performed by a few doctors on the fringe of the psychiatric discipline; instead, lobotomy was a widespread, commonplace practice" (Pressman 4). Doctors with the highest accreditations and best intentions used the surgery because they believed it to be an excellent treatment option at the time. The director of *Cuckoo's Nest*, Milos Forman, even states that he intended for the horror of Nurse Ratched's character not to be the result of intentional evil. As Forman explains, "[Nurse Ratched] believes deeply that she is doing right and that's where the real drama begins… That's much more frightening than if you have an evil person who knows he's doing wrong" (qtd. in McCreadie 130). To have a more accurate understanding of the past, we need to maintain a differentiated position to historical actors. This means

admitting that we could be like Ratched, operating on our belief that what we are doing is right but being wrong.

Ratched

Cuckoo's Nest's omission of Nurse Ratched's backstory makes it easy to blame her entirely for the film's tragedies. Although the above quote suggests that Forman did not intend for Ratched's actions to be interpreted as intentional acts of evil, she is readily identified as the exemplar of villainy. Listed on IGN Entertainment's list of the top one-hundred villains in film history, she is described as "cold-hearted and tyrannical, exercising near-absolute power of her domain to the detriment of her patients. If there are national trust issues with nurses, look no further than Ratched as the cause" (Davis et al.). With its intention to function as a prequel to the events in *Cuckoo's Nest*, Ratched had the potential to correct the memory of Nurse Ratched, as well as override some of the misremembered details about lobotomy. By humanizing the lobotomizer, *Ratched* could have countered the public memory of lobotomy as the fault of evil. However, the show's maintenance of the burlesque and tendency toward sensationalism undermines this opportunity.

Ratched counters the public memory reflected and reified by *Cuckoo's Nest* by accurately describing those who received the procedure and its depiction of the operation itself. Both are impressively true to history. Our first encounter with lobotomy in the series is Dr. Hanover's (Jon Jon Briones) experimental demonstration of the procedure in front of a crowd of healthcare workers, journalists, and government officials. There are four patients: Peter (Teo Briones), a young boy being treated for daydreaming; Ingrid Blix (Harriet Sansom Harris), a former opera star diagnosed with melancholia; Len Bronley (Joseph Marcell), an older man with memory loss;

and Lily Cartwright (Annie Starke), a young woman seeking treatment for lesbianism. The selection of patients in this scene is historically accurate.

Given the series' focus on sexuality, the attempt to "cure" Lily Cartwright of her sexual attraction to women is particularly interesting. Unfortunately, many people who either self-identified as or were accused of being gay were subjected to lobotomies to force them to conform to heteronormative society. As Jonathan Metzl explains, mid-twentieth century psychiatry reproduces a "notion of gender that normalizes married women, men doctors, and other requisite components of a heterosexual symbolic order while pathologizing the lesbian, the ambitious woman, the homosexual man, and other threats as diseases in need of a cure" (qtd. in Johnson 50-1). The pathologizing of homosexuality is a direct result of heteronormativity. Seeing this aspect of lobotomy's history emphasizes how psychiatry has evolved with the world around it. The fact that Lily seeks out treatment herself shows the extent to which social norms infiltrate and manipulate the minds of their constituents, making them view their natural attractions as illnesses. Lily's desire to receive treatment and willingness to acquiesce to sexual norms reveal her position as a docile body. As willing recipients of lobotomy, Lily and her fellow patients are the epitomai of non-willfulness. Because of *Cuckoo's Nest*'s strict focus on psychiatry's impact on men, this is an aspect of the story that has often gone unheard. This added contextual nuance is welcome, much more so than the gory details added to the physical depiction of the lobotomy.

However, while horrific, the details of the surgery itself are factually accurate. Dr. Hanover opens his demonstration by stating, "Ladies and gentlemen, you're about to witness history. I present to you the lobotomy" (*Ratched* 00:08:04-00:08:10). The camera cuts to Len Bronley on the operating table, his head within metal restraints. Dr. Hanover explains, "In 1935,

Portuguese neurologist Antonio Egas Moniz first attempted a procedure that I now wish to make commonplace. A procedure so straightforward it can be performed on all four subjects in a quarter of an hour" (*Ratched* 00:08:11-00:08:25). Hanover goes on to describe what is afflicting each patient. He then explains, with a tone booming with grandeur and ominous confidence,

> All of these maladies can be subdued, if not reversed, by surgically disrupting a series of neural connections in the brain's white matter. As you can see, the patients have received only the lightest sedation… and will awaken, though slightly groggy, as brand-new individuals unencumbered by the mental illness that brought them to this place. Now, I encourage you to sit back, relax, and bear witness as I touch the mind. (00:08:37-00:09:09)

The viewer is then given an up-close view of Dr. Hanover drilling into Bronley's skull. A great deal of blood is shown. In the audience, Nurse Ratched is the only one who does not exhibit any discomfort. Instead, she seems fixated on the surgery, almost to excitement. Dr. Hanover rotates the instrument, "creating a circular lesion in the brain" (*Ratched* 00:10:03-00:10:07). Despite Dr. Hanover's insistence that the patient feels nothing, Bronley begins to moan as his arms shoot straight up, mimicking the pose of a zombie. Dr. Hanover reiterates, "A reminder that these are involuntary movements that emerge as the neural connections are severed" (*Ratched* 00:10:17-00:10:22). However, the crowd does not appear comforted. When Hanover declares the surgery complete and removes the metal instrument dripping with blood, Ms. Hardcastle, a spectator in the audience, faints and falls dramatically. A journalist snaps her photo.

This dramatization mirrors the lobotomy presentations Freeman performed throughout his career. Fainting was not uncommon at these exhibitions. At one demonstration, five people fainted and had to be dragged from the showing room (El-Hai 222). Freeman referred to this demonstration as a "particular high point in [his] evangelistic career," saying afterward that "Frank Sinatri [sic] could hardly do better" (qtd. in El-Hai 222). In isolation, the depiction of this surgery is not harmful. It accurately represents the surgery and even encapsulates some of Freeman's mannerisms and dispositions as a surgeon. Though Hanover appears overly confident

and perhaps misguided, he still seems to be someone who fully believes in the capacity for what they are doing to effect positive change in the world. In the absence of the rest of the series' context, it is in the pursuit of the higher good that Hanover attempts these surgeries, not evil.

Following the surgery, Lily, Peter, Ingrid, and Len do not show improvement from the operation. Len still does not remember things. Peter no longer daydreams but reports having no thoughts at all. Ingrid is no longer melancholic but is caught in the act of coitus with Lily by Nurse Ratched. Despite this lack of intended results, Dr. Hanover continues with another instantiation of the operation. He announces to the nurses, "I was appalled by yesterday's surgeries. The lobotomies did not go at all how I had hoped, and I alone am to blame" (*Ratched* 00:17:53-00:17:58). To him, what is wrong with the operation has nothing to do with its efficacy but the fact that its brutality makes it difficult for the public to accept. The following day, Dr. Hanover revises his procedure, deciding to perform a transorbital lobotomy instead of a prefrontal lobotomy. Hanover chooses to operate on cadavers from the Oakland County morgue to further assuage the audiences' fears. Hanover pontificates,

> Upon viewing the reaction of our guests yesterday, I realized the trepanning of the skull by boring through the sphenoid bone with a hand drill might be a bit too graphic to be accepted by the general public. I recalled the observations of the Italian psychiatrist Amarro Flamberti. He complained that the prefrontal lobotomy requires drilling through the skull at its thickest point, only to access the site of the frontal lobe, while its quivering underbelly can be more easily accessed through one of the skull's thinnest points… the eye socket. Behold… the transorbital lobotomy. As if designed to comfort any queasy onlookers, the procedure benefits from the everyday nature of its instrument. A simple tool that John and Jane Q. Public already have around the home. An ice pick. (*Ratched* 00:18:17-00:19:12)

Again, Dr. Hanover's account of the surgery's details is so true to history that they may as well have come straight from a history book. Like Hanover, advocates of the lobotomy believed that using an ice pick to perform a lobotomy made the surgery more approachable to the general public. Like Hanover, Freeman saw lobotomy "as a 'minor' operation that was 'simple,' 'safe,' and cheap" (Johnson 24).

Although these procedural details enhance contemporary viewers' memory of the medical aspects of lobotomy, the way the series characterizes Dr. Hanover reinforces preconceived notions of the surgery as evil. Early in his medical career, Dr. Hanover attempted to treat a young man named Henry, suffering from mental illness, with a new drug that researchers had not cleared.[22] Without his knowledge, Henry laced Hanover's drink with an entire bottle of the drug, causing him to go into shock and disassociate. While Hanover was out of commission, Henry attacked and killed a gardener, cut off his own hands, and tried to sew on the gardeners' limbs, believing his own limbs to be possessed. Once Hanover comes to, he must amputate Henry's limbs to stop the bleeding and prevent his death. Presuming Hanover to be at fault, Henry's mother puts a hit out on Hanover, forcing him to flee town.

Hanover's work at Saint Lucia Hospital is an attempt to start over and escape. Though fervent about his work, Dr. Hanover is stricken with vanity, ambition, and negligence. Dr. Hanover is repeatedly seen abusing drugs before performing surgery, risking doing irreparable harm to his patients. Furthermore, rather than being genuinely motivated by the potential of helping his patients, it is clear that he is more motivated to make money. His goal with the lobotomy is to bring media attention to his hospital, bringing in more patients to help line his pockets. Much like Ratched in *Cuckoo's Nest*, Hanover is reduced to a burlesque caricature of himself. While we get an elaborate backstory, the story does not rationally account for his behaviors. There is no logical progression from the past to Hanover's actions in the series preventing viewers from understanding him and making him unlikeable. Given his wild backstory, one would think that Hanover would be more wary of unverified treatment methods.

---

[22] Though we do not know precisely what drug Hanover is using here, it is shown to have psychedelic, psychosis-inducing effects.

However, Hanover's hubris damns him to repeat past mistakes. His disregard for the well-being of his patients and focus on self-serving ends fits the expectations of a public who believes the lobotomy to be the result of evil, out-of-control doctors.

Mildred Ratched and the Silencing Power of Lobotomy

Nevertheless, Dr. Hanover's villainy seems relatively tame compared to Nurse Ratched. The portrayal of Nurse Ratched in *Ratched* is paradoxical. On the one hand, the explanation of her backstory and her centrality to the series' narrative gives her character more depth. On the other, her actions are still inexplicable, and it is hard to empathize with her. As Wattercutter explains, in *Ratched*, "... Nurse Ratched ends up … far from whole, and definitely not realistic." Strangely, despite her centrality, she is inadequately developed due to her characterization as willful without reason. This flattening of Ratched's character is exemplified through her use of lobotomy in the series.

In one of the series' most horrifying scenes, Ratched performs a lobotomy unassisted in a hotel room on the outskirts of town. Her victim: the only priest that survived her brother, Edmund Tolleson's (Finn Wittrock), killing spree. Telling him that she is taking him to the hotel so that he can tell his story to receive proper treatment from Dr. Hanover for his trauma, Nurse Ratched pulls off one of the most sinister acts of violence in the series. After lacing his tea with sedatives, Ratched ties the priest to the bed and tells him hauntingly, "You've seen too much. You're suffering… I'm going to relieve that suffering" (*Ratched* 00:45:34-00:45:53). Though paralyzed, his eyes flash with terror. Whereas Dr. Hanover's movements are careful and calculated, Ratched slams the ice pick into the priest's head without regard for precision. The camera cuts, and the viewers hear a grotesque crunching noise.

Here, lobotomy is employed to enforce silence—a full imposition of willfulness. When Ratched says that the priest has "…seen too much," she is not being sympathetic to his trauma but rather referring to the fact that he knows too much about her brother and what he has done. In her mind, she has to silence him to make sure that he does not testify against Edmund. Like Nurse Ratched in *Cuckoo's Nest*, lobotomy is not a treatment but a weapon against those who defy her authority and intend to ruin her plans—a means of killing without death. When we see the priest next, he is quite like McMurphy. His nurses report that he no longer has bad dreams and has put on some weight. The medical staff views this as an improvement. However, viewers can tell that he is vacant and zombie-like, disempowered, and voiceless.

Whatever efforts the addition of detail to Dr. Hanover's lobotomies made in the correction of the public memory of lobotomy is almost entirely undermined by the unbridled horror of Ratched's hotel lobotomy. While the series toys with its potential to correct public memory, it paradoxically reifies a sensationalized memory that exaggerates the villainy of executors and falsely attributes blame to women**.** No evidence of lobotomies being performed this way exists in the historical scholarship reviewed here. Ratched's lobotomy is meant to shock and terrify viewers, to make them look away but entice them to keep watching. Ratched's use of lobotomy as a weapon in *Ratched* reinforces *Cuckoo's Nest*'s unsupported contention that she is motivated by evil. There is no justification for her use of the procedure besides the relentless imposition of her own will. The gory details make it even harder to believe that viewers misunderstand Ratched. She knows what she is doing; the ice pick is in her own hands. The depiction of lobotomy in *Ratched* complicates the public memory of lobotomy, augmenting a previously ill-fleshed-out narrative with accurate details, but maintaining a tone of horror that

fails to recognize the lack of evil intent behind those holding the leucotome. Its decision to right some historical facts while purposefully misremembering others is an act of memorial violence.

Concluding Remarks

While *Cuckoo's Nest* and *Ratched* are works of fiction, as television histories, they significantly impact popular understandings of the past and can heavily influence the public memory of topics like lobotomy. In *Cuckoo's Nest*, the omission of women victims further obfuscates the inequalities faced by women in America at the time at the hands of psychiatry and society at large. The displacement of blame onto Nurse Ratched is evidence of a patriarchal societal structure that is taken as so normalized that the gender of real perpetrators can be forgotten because it is deemed so normal that it is inconsequential. By highlighting what has been actively forgotten, we can call attention to not only who and what has been forgotten, but why and how. Furthermore, in *Ratched*, the burlesque portrayal of Ratched's character as wholly willful and the failure to logically account for her actions in both stories further reinforces this injustice. The misremembered history of lobotomy and the consequentially negative portrayal of nurses and psychiatry in *Cuckoo's Nest* and *Ratched* is not just a violence to the past; it has significant repercussions for the present.

Modern nurses are concerned about the way the series may impact their profession. While the series was being filmed in 2018, the Truth About Nursing organization put out a petition calling for Ryan McMurphy to stop the show's production. Though they acknowledge the series' attempts to show that Nurse Ratched is capable of empathy, "in the end," they explain, "the representation of nursing was still as a job for damaged, desperate, and dangerous females who may or may not have any training or any genuine concern for patients" (The Truth about Nursing). According to The Truth About Nursing, stereotypes of this nature have "played a

devastating role in the global nursing shortage that takes countless lives every year, especially through under-staffing." Though the sensationalism of these narratives provides an engaging cinematic experience, this representation is potentially deadly.

The implications for psychiatry are just as dire. In combination with stigmas regarding mental health, representations of psychiatry as horror can foster fear that prevents people who are struggling from reaching out for help. In a 2021 study performed by the Mental Health Million Project, researchers found that 45% of people with a clinical-level mental illness in America do not seek mental health treatment (Sapien Labs 3). Of these individuals, 28% avoided treatment because they lacked confidence that treatment methods would work, and 13% feared "being forced to take a medication or being committed" (Sapien Labs 4). Though the representations of psychiatry in *One Flew* and *Ratched* are both historical, they impact people's impression of the field today. Misrepresenting the intentions of psychosurgeons and sensationalizing them as evil carries on to modern psychiatrists with good intentions. Any narrative that gets in the way of people seeking treatment for their mental health concerns should be taken seriously, as it can very well be a matter of life and death.

This argument calls for stories that recognize and rectify representational neglect in history. Scholar Aleida Assmann suggests we ask ourselves three questions when perpetrating memories: First, "Does this memory bring up an aggressive potential or does it result in greater respect and dialogue between neighbours?" (qtd. in Meckien). Second, "Does it build a society that is more vengeful and more aware of its past?" (qtd. in Meckien). Finally, "Does it [make] the individual citizens more sensitive or insensitive to the violation of human rights or the conditions of minorities" (qtd. in Meckien). Understanding the relationship between culture and memory is critical. Remembering the past in all its nuance and harsh truth is essential to forming

a society that understands and is willing to correct its inequitable inner workings. We must recollect the stories and voices that have been neglected and be aware of the potentially harmful structures that our public artifacts, be they fiction or non-fiction, may unintentionally reify.

WORKS CITED

Ahmed, Sara. *Living a Feminist Life*. Duke University Press, 2017.

Bold, et al. "Feminist Memorializing and Cultural Countermemory: The Case of Marianne's Park." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2002, pp. 125-48.

Burke, Kenneth. *Attitudes toward History*. University of California Press, 3rd ed., 1937.

El-Hai, Jack. *The Lobotomist: A Maverick Medical Genius and His Tragic Quest to Rid the World of Mental Illness*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2005.

Carroll, Peter N. *It Seemed Like Nothing Happened: The Tragedy and Promise of America in the 1970s*. Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1982.

Caruso, James P., and Jason P. Sheehan. "Psychosurgery, Ethics, and Media: A History of Walter Freeman and the Lobotomy." *Neurosurgical Focus*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2017, pp. 1-8.

Clymer, R. Swinburne. *The Age of Treason: The Carefully and Deliberately Planned Methods Developed by the Vicious Elements of Humanity*, Papamoa Press, 1959.

Davis, Justin, et al. "Top 100 Villains." *IGN Entertainment*, n.d., https://www.ign.com/lists/top-100-villains.

Edgerton, Gary R. "Television as Historian: A Different Kind of History Altogether." *Television Histories: Shaping Collective Memory in the Media Age*, edited by Gary R. Edgerton and Peter C. Rollins, University of Kentucky Press, 2001, pp. 1-16.

---. "The Past is Now Present Onscreen: Television, History, and Collective Memory." *A Companion to Television*, edited by Janet Wasko, 2019, 2nd ed., pp. 79-103

Feldman, R. P., and J. T. Goodrich. "Psychosurgery: A Historical Review." *Neurosurgery*, vol. 48, 2001, pp. 647-59.

Freeman, Shanna. “How Lobotomies Work.” *HowStuffWorks*, 27 Oct 2008, www.science.howstuffworks.com/life/inside-the-mind/human-brain/lobotomy.htm.

Gallea, Michael A. “A Brief Reflection on the Not-So Brief History of the Lobotomy.” *BC Medical Journal*, vol. 59, no. 6, 2017, pp. 302-4.

Johnson, Jenell. *American Lobotomy: A Rhetorical History*. University of Michigan Press, 2016.

Kramer, Morten. “The 1951 Survey of the Use of Psychosurgery.” *Proceedings of the Third Research Conference on Psychosurgery*, edited by E. A. Mettler and W. Overholser, pp. 159-173.

Lewis, Todd V., and Ariana Molloy. “Religious Rhetoric and Satire: Investigating the Comic and Burlesque Frames within The Big Bang Theory.” *Journal of Media and Religion*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2015, pp. 88-101.

McCreadie, Marsha. “One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest: Some Reasons for One Happy Adaptation.” *Literature/Film Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1977, pp. 125-31.

Meckien, Richard. “Cultural Memory: The Link between Past, Present, and Future.” *Institute of Advanced Studies of the University of Sao Paulo*, 3 Jun. 2013, http://www.iea.usp.br/en/news/cultural-memory-the-link-between-past-present-and-future.

Milne, Tom. “One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest.” *Monthly Film Bulletin*, vol. 43, no. 32, 1976, pp. 32-33.

Möckel-Rieke, Hannah. “Media and Cultural Memory.” *American Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1, 1998, pp. 5-17.

Nilsson, Jeff, and Maude Radford Warren. “The Fight for Women Doctors.” *The Saturday Evening Post*, 14 Jan. 2016, www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2016/01/fight-women - doctors.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. Directed by Milos Forman, performances by Jack Nicholson, Louise Fletcher, and William Redfield, United Artists, 1975.

Phillips, Kendall, editor. *Framing Public Memory*. University of Alabama Press, 2004.

---. "The Failure of Memory: Reflections on Rhetoric and Public Remembrance." *Western Journal of Communication,* vol. 74, no. 2, 2010, pp. 208-23.

Pressman, Jack David. *Last Resort: Psychosurgery and the Limits of Medicine*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Ratched. Created by Evan Romansky, performances by Sarah Paulson, Finn Wittrock, Cynthia Nixon, Jon Jon Briones, Charlie Carver, Judy Davis, and Sharon Stone, Disney-ABC Domestic Television, 2020.

Ripp, Judith. "Family Movie Guide." *Parents' Magazine & Better Homemaking*, vol. 51, no. 1, 1976, pp. 14-16, 28.

Rogers, Kara. "Walter Jackson Freeman II". *Encyclopedia Britannica,* 10 Nov. 2021, www.britannica.com/biography/Walter-Jackson-Freeman-II.

Sapien Labs. "Mental Health has Bigger Challenges than Stigma." *Mental Health Million Project 2021*, 2021.

Selby, Gary Steven. "Scoffing at the Enemy: The Burlesque Frame in the Rhetoric of Ralph David Abernathy." *Southern Communication Journal*, vol. 70, no. 2, 2005, pp. 134-45.

Slater, Thomas J. "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest: A Tale of Two Decades." *Film and Literature: A Comparative Approach to Adaptations*, edited by Wendell Aycock and Michael Schoenecke. Texas Tech University Press, 1988, pp. 45-58.

Tone, Andrea. "(F)ailing Women in Psychiatry: Lessons Learned from a Painful Past." *Canadian Medical Association*, vol. 190, no. 20, 2018, pp. 624-5.

The Truth About Nursing. “Don't Let New Nurse Ratched Show Be an American Horror Story for Real Nurses!” *Change,* 2018, www.change.org/p/don-t-let-new-nurse-ratched-show - be-an-american-horror-story-for-real-nurses.

Van Nostrand, Jillian. “*One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*: A Portrait of Despair in One Dimension.” *Film Criticism,* vol. 1, no. 1, 1976, pp. 23-6.

VanderHaagen, Sara. “Practical Truths: Black Feminist Agency and Public Memory in Biographies for Children.” *Women’s Studies in Communication*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2021, pp. 18-41.

Wattercutter, Angela. “Netflix’s Ratched is a Plea for US Mental Health Care.” *Wired,* 20 Sept. 2020, www.wired.me/culture/netflixs-ratched-is-a-plea-for-us-mental-health-care.