

In late nineteenth-century America, the notion of a gender power hierarchy is well constructed throughout literature. Specifically, the depiction of men being the more powerful gender compared to women is a recurring theme. Literary depictions of a gender power hierarchy dominated by men abound in late-nineteenth-century American literature. (Consider including a couple sentences like this: The social hierarchy was incorporated into the separate spheres ideology that permeated the American Dream. Women not only remained subservient to men, they remained in the domestic sphere, keeping house and raising children. Not only is this hierarchy seen in literature, but in advertising as well (consider cutting this sentence and rewording to transition into your analysis of the artifact). This aspect of the American Dream is so popular it is marketed to citizens in advertisements as well as literary works, such as Mary Wilkins Freeman's short fiction. American gender identity is constructed via a power hierarchy as shown in the works of Mary Wilkins Freeman and in film advertisements. For this particular essay, I think it would be effective to begin with an analysis of the artifact and THEN give a more complete statement of purpose to guide the reader from the ad analysis to the literary analysis because the artifact provides CONTEXT for the rest of the argument – consider reorganizing like this (I moved this paragraph from the end of the essay):

Finally The film advertisement for Flash Cleaner (give title and date here) depicts a gender power hierarchy. The advertisement states that the cleaner is a necessity for mechanics. It then states that it also does wonders in the household. Thus, this cleaner is very important for a mechanic to stay clean, but at the same time it has a secondary use (redundant, consider cutting). By showing that the cleaner's secondary use is for women to clean the home, it is implied that men's needs are the more important of the two.

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Comment [1]: Consider combining these two sentences and rephrasing to launch the reader into your argument in a smoother manner.

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Comment [2]: As we discussed during the in-class conference, you may want to incorporate American identity into your argument (because it will set this paper apart from that of other scholars, such as Cutter). Consider inserting a sentence here about the relationship between the gender hierarchy constructed in literature and American identity/the American Dream. See example sentence in text.

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Another interesting characteristic of the advertisement is that the factory men are present in every scene. Even when the woman cleaning the home is displayed, half of the screen is dedicated to showing men leaving the factory. There is also a giant hand in the middle with two men cleaning it throughout the entire commercial, showing the importance of men. Thus, both of these further demonstrate the power divide among men and women. By men being in every scene, this shows that they have higher importance. (Consider adding a sentence here connecting this hierarchy to the American dream. By depicting men in both scenes, does this advertisement reinforce the idea that a man maintains the domestic sphere through his income as an essential part of the American Dream?)

In late-nineteenth-century America, women did not have many rights, such as the right to vote. Thus, their political power was extremely limited. At the same time, women's career choices were also very restricted. Thus, their power in society was considered much lower than that of a man. According to --- Carter in "Article Title Here," many scholars that masculinity during this time was the opposite of femininity, specifically a lack of being submissive, chaste, and domesticated (Carter 33). Thus, women were considered overall to give in to men and to remain in the domestic sphere. This lack power for women contributes to their role in society as well. As Dorothy Hartman states in "Article Title Here," "A women's God-given role was as wife and mother, keeper of the household, guardian of the moral purity of all who lived therein" (Hartman page number). Therefore, the popular role for women to take on during this time was for them to remain in the house and take care of only duties pertaining to the home.

Consider inserting another statement of purpose either at the end of this paragraph (above) or the beginning of the paragraph below. This would guide the reader from your construction of context to your literary analysis. For example, you might say something like:

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Comment [3]: Consider minimizing some of the material here and tying it to your ad analysis. This paragraph creates context, but (if you re-arrange the paragraphs), you can now use your ad to create that context and minimize this.

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Comment [4]: The first time a scholar is referenced in a paper, they should be introduced to the reader in the text itself.

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Comment [5]: If you choose to minimize this paragraph, I think you could simply relate this observation to your ad analysis. How does this ad illustrate the woman as guardian of the home and *still* subservient to men (i.e. her position as guardian is NOT empowering).

While Freeman's stories attempt to undermine ideas about the complete subservience of women to men within the domestic sphere, her fiction reinforces this stereotypical construction of the American dream, where women remain within the house and men function as the primary bread winners for the family by working outside the home.

In the short story, "A New England Nun," Freeman's use of language makes evident of a division of power between men and women. Just from the descriptions Freeman provides on Louisa and Joe's behavior, one can notice this divide. For instance, Freeman states, "He [Joe] sat bolt-upright, toeing out his heavy feet...She [Louisa] sat gently erect, folding her slender hands in her white-linen lap" (Freeman 655). Freeman's use of descriptive words, such as bolt, heavy, gently, and slender, shows the power divide between the two characters. Joe is seen as the more powerful individual, compared to Louisa, through the way he is presented.

(Consider making a paragraph break here because this seems to be a slightly different thought). This power difference illustrated through Freeman's word choice is primarily based on financial status. More specifically, it is related to the difference between Joe and Louisa's occupation. Joe built his fortune through working overseas for fourteen years. On the other hand, the reader never sees Louisa actively earning money for herself. Louisa is always shown taking care of her home and maintaining its cleanliness. Even though both are financially stable individuals, by Freeman showing Joe actually earning his money, he is thus shown as having more power.

(Again, consider making a paragraph here – it seems to be a new thought). We also see this power divide on how Louisa is constantly picking up after Joe. For example, Freeman states, "Louisa got a dust-pan and brush, and swept Joe Dagget's track carefully" (Freeman 656). Once again, this shows Joe's higher power since Louisa must clean up after his mess. Finally, Louisa

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Comment [6]: This analysis of "A New England Nun" is very strong – I like how it uses a close reading of specific material to make an argument. During conferences you discussed the way this analysis is predicated on the idea that Freeman does give women *some* power in her stories. You are MODIFYING existing scholarly readings of Freeman by showing the existence of the hierarchy through language and financial power despite the heroine's ability to resist proscribed roles like "wife" and "mother". You may want to LEAD with that argument: Despite the heroine's apparent independence...

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is also seen being submissive to Joe, which once again shows Louisa's power inferiority. For instance, "...Joe could not desert his mother, who refused to leave her old home. So Louisa must leave hers" (Freeman 657). All of these examples clearly show the power divide between Louisa and Joe, and in general the divide among men and women in America at this time. This also reinforces the relationship between the separate spheres ideology and the American dream.

As a result, this all leads to a conclusion on American identity. It illustrates that it is a man's responsibility to earn money for the family, while women are supposed to do household chores. Even when Louisa lived alone without Joe, she is still seen doing the same household duties, such as cleaning and gardening. Regardless if the woman is living independently or with a spouse, Freeman implies that the role of a woman is to work only in the house.

Additionally, in *The Revolt of Mother*, Sarah Penn is shown wanting a new house for her family. Adoniram, her husband, resists Sarah's desire for a new house, and instead works on building a new barn. In the end, Sarah gets what she wants by moving her family into Adoniram's new barn and making it into a home. Throughout the story, Freeman is able to depict a gender power hierarchy. Specifically, we see that Adoniram as the more powerful individual compared to Sarah.

One example of this power divide is in who gets to have the knowledge that Adoniram is building a barn. Only, Adoniram and Sammy know of the barn, while Sarah and Nanny do not have any idea of it. Freeman writes, "'Sammy, did you know father was going to build a new barn?' ... 'Yes, I s'pose I did,' he said..." (Freeman 663). Thus, this shows that men are the ones who are worthy of knowing certain facts while the women are excluded.

In Martha Cutter's article, *Frontiers of Language: Engendering Discourse in "The Revolt of 'Mother,'"* agrees that there is a gender power divide between Sarah and Adoniram. For

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Comment [8]: I like this paragraph about the relationship between this social/familial construction and American identity – consider expanding out to the American Dream. How are these separate spheres reinforced as an American IDEAL? Joe leaves to make money (in a foreign country) so that he can return home and have this ideal – even if money cannot be made locally, men (modeled by Joe) desire to have/maintain a domestic sphere within the U.S.

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Comment [9]: In conferences (during the RD workshop) discussed the ways that Sarah *does* challenge accepted power constructions *even though she remains within the home*. Consider adding that idea to your analysis. Sarah's initial subservience is (in *some* ways) reversed in the final scene, where Adoniram is crying on the step and she is STANDING over him (even the visual image there is one of Sarah's strength/empowerment). HOWEVER, this story still reinforces assumptions about the importance of maintaining separate spheres (women/domestic vs. men/public) as a part of the American Dream. This is where your analysis really differs from the critics you reference later.

example, Cutter states, “Sarah Penn is forced repeatedly to understand her powerless status, a status that stems from her position in a patriarchal [society].…” (Cutter 279). Cutter is saying that men rule Sarah’s society and she is thus powerless. Cutter directly supports the notion that women are the less powerful gender in the household. Through the way Freeman depicts the behaviors of Adoniram and Sarah, men are thus seen as the more powerful individual. For instance, Freeman shows many instances of Sarah being controlled by Adoniram. Freeman states, “I wish you’d go into the house, mother, an’ ‘tend to your own affairs,’ the old man said…But the woman [Sarah] understood: it was her most native tongue” (Freeman 662). Thus, Sarah listens to what Adoniram tells her to do, making her less powerful. Similarly, Martha Cutter also implies that women do not have a say in the household and that decisions are to be made by men. For instance, Cutter states, “...they [women] cannot speak; they are excluded from a discourse that is patriarchal in intent and meaning” (Cutter 280). Therefore, whatever the man says must go.

Furthermore, even though Sarah is able to move her family into the new barn, the fact that they live in a house that is made for animals shows how powerless Sarah truly is. After wanting to have a new house for years on end, Sarah must live in a house designed for animals, and thus showing her wants are not as important as Adoniram’s. This directly leads to further showing the division of power among Sarah and Adoniram.

The power divide that Freeman and Cutter both note on directly leads to the identity that women are seen as the less powerful gender. We can also argue that power divide also leads to different roles in the household for men and women. As stated earlier, the American identity is the man working to earn money for his family, while the woman stays at home to clean and take care of the children. Achieving the American Dream for a woman entails getting married, having

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Comment [10]: In this paragraph, a good secondary source is integrated into the paper. The next step is to use Cutter as a spring board for a NEW IDEA (i.e. *advance* Cutter’s argument rather than just support it). For example, does Sarah *remain completely* disempowered? And how does this familial hierarchy relate to American identity/American Dream – that is where you BUILD upon Cutter.

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Comment [11]: I’m not sure if this paragraph belongs here – consider moving it to your analysis of “The Revolt of ‘Mother’” – and consider incorporating Cutter sooner in the argument (so that it is apparent to readers how you BUILD upon another critic).

children, and taking care of the home. This idea directly restricts women to only being in the domestic sphere. In *The Revolt of Mother*, for example, Sarah Penn states, "...a good father an' a good home as you've got. S'pose your father made you [Nanny] go out an' work for your livin'?" (Freeman 664). This shows that the ideal life for a woman is to stay at home and not have to earn money for the family.

Finally, the film advertisement for Flash Cleaner depicts a gender power hierarchy. The advertisement states that the cleaner is a necessity for mechanics. It then states that it also does wonders in the household. Thus, this cleaner is very important for a mechanic to stay clean, but at the same time it has a secondary use. By showing that the cleaner's secondary use is for women to clean the home, it is implied that men's needs are the more important of the two.

Another interesting characteristic of the advertisement is that the factory men are present in every scene. Even when the woman cleaning the home is displayed, half of the screen is dedicated to showing men leaving the factory. There is also a giant hand in the middle with two men cleaning it throughout the entire commercial, showing the importance of men. Thus, both of these further demonstrate the power divide among men and women. By men being in every scene, this shows that they have higher importance.

There are many similarities between these three works even though the Flash Cleaner advertisement is from the 1920s, while *A New England Nun* and *The Revolt of Mother* were both published in 1891. Therefore, the idea of men being the more powerful gender has lived on throughout the late 19th century through the early 20th century. As a result, these works leads to a conclusion on gender roles in America. For over 30 years in America, during the time these works were published, America was identified as having men responsible for bringing in money for the family, and in turn having more power as well.

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Comment [12]: Again, I'm not sure this belongs here – I think the argument was broken up to incorporate Cutter.

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Comment [13]: This advertisement provides good CONTEXT for the argument of the paper. Consider moving it from the end of the paper to the beginning. Your description of the advertisement is a great way to capture the reader's attention and set up the idea of a gender hierarchy in a concrete manner.

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Comment [14]: I like the way this conclusion makes the chronological connection (i.e. the fact that this hierarchy outlasts the nineteenth-century). Consider rewriting these final paragraphs and thinking about the idea that *even when women can secure some individual power within the domestic sphere* (like Sarah and... to some extent, Louisa), they are still *inside that sphere*. This separation of the public and private spheres with its distinct gender associations is important for American identity and the American Dream. **These stories, like the advertisement, depict the IDEAL – power within this structure may vary, but in order to have the American Dream, this structure must be present (according to these texts/artifacts). In the conclusion, you might want to think about WHY this was important (your observations, based on the evidence you've analyzed).**

In conclusion, gender identity in America is directly constructed through a gender power hierarchy. The works of Freeman are able to clearly show the construction of identity through power division among men and women. *A New England Nun* clearly shows the divide in gender by Freeman demonstrating that the higher powered individual in society is always the working man, regardless if the woman is financially independent or not. *The Revolt of Mother* shows gender divide through the fulfillment of Sarah and Adoniram's desires. Lastly, the Flash Cleaner advertisement depicts the divide based on uses of the cleaner itself. All of these works imply that it is the man's responsibility to provide money for the family while the woman stays at home to take care of household chores. This same idea is further depicted in the American Dream, as the dream has been about having men work and women stay at home.

Now that the Flash Cleaner advertisement comes first, consider working allusions/references to this ad throughout the paper. For example, when this paper argues that the Penn's relationship upholds the expected hierarchy, it could reference the hierarchy illustrated/marketed in the advertisement. This keeps the paper from making generalizations (and demonstrates your scholarly ability to create context with PRIMARY artifacts instead of simply relying on other scholars – this is something that is very popular in the literary world right now).

Finally, you may want to consider whether or not American manhood (CITIZENSHIP – as you point out, women were not citizens when Freeman was writing) defined through its contrast with women/womanhood? Is that why this gender hierarchy and the separate spheres ideology seems to be so important to Americans (why they KEEP renegotiating it in literature/art/ads...)? Does threatening this hierarchy threaten American constructions of masculinity and thus American IDENTITY (would we know what a "man" was if women were allowed outside the domestic sphere)? Joe's decision to make money abroad and return to

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Comment [15]: I really enjoyed reading this essay! I think this paper has ALL the groundwork for a GREAT argument.

establish a domestic sphere in the U.S. might be worth analyzing! *Really looking forward to reading your final paper!*

