

The Best of the Whitesell Prize Competition 2010–2011

**The Writing Center's Phyllis C. Whitesell Prizes for
Expository Writing in General Education**

**8th Edition, Spring 2011
The Writing Center @ Franklin and Marshall College
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Preface

The Writing Center's Phyllis C. Whitesell Prizes honor excellent student writing in Franklin and Marshall's General Education curriculum. Each year the Writing Center invites submissions and awards a prize for the best essay, one research and one non-research, written in a course that fulfills the First-Year Writing Requirement and for the best essay from a Foundations course. This booklet contains the prize-winning and honorable mention essays from this year's competition.

Named for the emerita Director of F&M's Writing Center, the Whitesell Prizes serve several goals. In addition to honoring both Phyllis's dedication to teaching writing and the achievements of the College's student writers themselves, the Whitesell Prizes seek to add to the vitality of the College's General Education curriculum by getting students to think of their intellectual efforts as ongoing enterprises (revision, often after the essay has been graded and the class is completed, is a requirement of the competition). Also, by involving faculty and Writing Center tutors in the judging of the essays—and by making this booklet available to the College community, the Whitesell competition hopes to foster a fuller awareness of the interesting work being done in our Foundations and First-Year Writing requirement courses. In that spirit, we are also including the text of the assignments to which these essays responded.

My great appreciation goes to this year's Whitesell Prize judges. Prof. Krista Casler, Prof. Richard Reitan, and tutors Perry Oddo, Aly Massof, and Samantha Graff awarded the prize in Foundations. Prof. Richard Pepino, Prof. Jennifer Redmann, and Writing Center tutors Sara Lupolt, Chad Wright, and Brad Woodman were the judges for the First-Year Writing Requirement competition.

Many thanks go to Jennie Leary for editing the essays and compiling this booklet.

Daniel Frick
Director, Writing Center
May 2011

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First-Year Writing - Research

Whitesell Prize Winner

Phelps v. United States: Brief Amicus Curiae of the American Civil Liberties Union
Shanni Davidowitz

Fall 2010
AMS160: Rights and Representation
Prof. Kibler

The assignment: This assignment asks you to take a side in a hypothetical or recent First Amendment controversy. You will present your argument, based on substantial secondary research, in the form of an amicus brief, or “friend of the court” brief, which is a document written by an interested person or group (not a party in the litigation) to lobby the court. An amicus brief is more than taking a side in the case; it is meant to help the court understand the broad impact of its decision, so you may speak broadly about the implications of the case.

Shanni Davidowitz

AMS160

Prof. Kibler

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Statement of Interest

The amicus curiae is for The American Civil Liberties Union, a nationwide, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the principals of liberty and equality represented in the Constitution. The ACLU works in courts, legislatures and communities to protect and maintain the individual rights and liberties that the Constitution and the laws of the United States guarantee to all citizens in the United States of America. The ACLU evolved in the years following World War I, when Americans were concerned with the spread of Communism after the Russian Revolution. During the “Palmer Raids” thousands of Americans were arrested without regard to constitutional protections. Due to these abuses of the rights and civil liberties of many Americans, the ACLU formed to take a stand on these issues. The ACLU fights for individual freedoms such as the freedom of speech, religion, free choice for women, the right to due process and other constitutional protections. The ACLU protects the politically unpopular views. The ACLU has and will continue to stand for the protection of individual freedoms for all Americans.

The goal and intent of this brief is to convince the court to protect the constitutional right of Reverend Fred Phelps, a pastor with the Westboro Baptist Church, to picket and protest at the funeral of military servicemen and women. The ACLU also is arguing that the Respect for America’s Fallen Heroes Act (2006) is unconstitutional in its prohibition of picketing at funerals. In this amicus brief the ACLU is arguing two main points: the high value of Phelps’ speech and the unconstitutionality of the Respect for America’s Fallen Heroes Act (2006). Phelps’ protests, regardless of how unpopular his views are, deserve legal protection because it is high-value, political speech. The Respect

for America's Fallen Heroes Act (2006) is content and viewpoint discriminatory in that it attacks only some forms of speech at funerals, where that form of speech is the most effective for Phelps to articulate his ideas. The Act also disregards the meaning of traditional public fora.

A. Unpopular views must receive the same amount of protection as any other speech.

The First Amendment has always allowed for all opinions to be heard. Although Reverend Phelps' protests may involve highly controversial speech, his speech still deserves the protection under the First Amendment. Among many of Phelps' religious beliefs is that "God hates homosexuality and despises and punishes America for its tolerance of homosexuality, particularly in the United States military" (*Phelps v. Snyder* 2009). These beliefs, like the beliefs of many other radical groups, are unwelcomed and unsupported by the majority of American society. Despite this, the United States has an obligation to protect the right to speak. Offensive ideas can be refuted with more speech or lead to important realizations, and therefore there is no reason to suppress unpopular views.

Case law supports the concept that it is unconstitutional to suppress ideas. In the case of *Collin v. Smith* (1978), Frank Collin, the leader of a pro Nazi group, decided to target a suburb of Chicago, Illinois by protesting and demonstrating his ideas. Collin was given the constitutional right to protest his pro Nazi views in the predominantly Jewish town of Skokie, Illinois. Although his ideas and beliefs were widely unpopular, especially in Skokie, Collin was allowed to march to promote his views. The majority

ruled that although Collin's ideas may have been offensive, there is no constitutional right for them to be suppressed. In February of 1978, Judge Decker of the District Court of Chicago stated, "It is better to allow those who preach racial hate to expend their venom in rhetoric rather than to be panicked into embarking on the dangerous course of permitting the government to decide what its citizens may say and hear" (District Court *Collin v. Smith* 1978). Decker's ruling demonstrates that even hateful and unpopular views deserve protection under the First Amendment.

Texas v. Johnson (1989) is another Supreme Court case that upheld the ruling that minority views must be defended. Johnson burned an American Flag in protest of the Reagan administration. Although the landmark decision dealt mostly with the idea of symbolic speech, Justice William Brennan Jr. stated, "[i]f there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simple because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable" (*Texas v. Johnson* 1989). Here, just as in *Collin v. Smith* (1978) the Supreme Court decided that the "First Amendment protects speech we hate just as rigorously as the speech we value" (Brownstein and Amar 1). The protection of all speech is the fundamental nature of democracy.

One may ask why offensive and unpopular views should be entitled to any protection at all. John Stuart Mill, an advocate of the free market place of ideas, believes that in a truly free marketplace the truth will be discovered and negative speech will be countered by the positive opinions of the majority. Mill also believes that the lone dissenter should have just as much freedom to speak his ideas, as those that speak for the majority. It is explained that the lone dissenter's opinion, whether true or false, must be

heard and argued, in the quest for truth. Mill states, “If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind” (Mill 1). Mill perfectly describes that even the one person with the minority opinion is justified in sharing that opinion with others. The philosophy that Mill presents accurately provides reasoning for protecting Phelps’ speech. Phelps, as unpopular and disliked as his opinions are, deserves the exact same constitutional protections as those in the majority.

B. Phelps’ protest involves high value, political speech, which must be protected under the First Amendment

Any speech that involves high-value, political speech must be protected under the First Amendment. Speech that revolves around public matters and concerns should be given the freedom to be heard. This way people from both sides can share their opinions and openly debate the issues. Also, by allowing political speech to be heard, the government can gain insight into people’s feelings surrounding an issue. All of the Westboro Baptist Church’s speech is highly political. Any speech that involves wars that are occurring, such as the war in Iraq, is deemed high-value speech because it is an issue that can and should be debated. Also, Phelps is protesting in an attempt to prove that all soldiers’ deaths are a sign of God punishing America for tolerating homosexuality in any way, shape, or form (Asbury 1). The speech that was expressed could be interpreted as religious and political views on matters that the public is currently concerned with, and therefore is viewed as high-value speech. The ACLU published an article that states, “The Senate Armed Services Committee is holding hearings today and tomorrow to

discuss the possible repeal of ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,’ a discriminatory policy that bans lesbian and gay service members from serving openly in the military” (aclu.org). It is clear that such topics are of public debate right now based on the thousands of articles on the American Civil Liberties Union’s website and other newspapers such as the *New York Times* that are related to these topics.

There is a great deal of legal precedent that political speech is high-value and should receive expanded freedoms under the First Amendment. In the case *City of Indianapolis v. Heath* (1997) the majority states, “[S]peech on public issues occupies the highest rung of the hierarchy of First Amendment values.” Heath’s speech was deemed political because it was in reference to militias occupying Indiana. The United States Supreme Court has often reaffirmed this statement, proving that according to the law, if speech is political and deals with public concerns, the First Amendment must protect it. *Garrison v. State of Louisiana* (1964) proves that in self-government, or democracy, freedom of expression is what allows for the government to function. A citizens’ right to speak on public matters “is more than self-expression; it is the essence of self-government” (*Garrison v. State of Louisiana* 1964). Freedom of speech and expression on matters of public concern is vital to the process of discovering truth. Without the wide debate over ideas, views, and policies, our government could no longer be called a democracy.

Many people argue that there is an inherent “First Amendment right to engage in what might be considered ‘core political speech’ [even if that speech] objects to and dissents from government orthodoxy or policies” (Clavert 2). This proves that even if political speech is not accepted and is the opinion of the minority, if it is speech of public

concern, then it ought to be protected under the First Amendment. Phelps' speech involved opinions having to do with the war and views on homosexuality. Both of these issues are of public concern, as seen by the current issue of "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy, gay marriage, and homosexually rights in general, and therefore need to be protected by the First Amendment. Both of these matters are highly debated in society today and the ability to speak freely is crucial in discovering the truth in these matters.

C. The Respect of America's Fallen Heroes Act (2006) and the prohibition of Phelps' protest are unconstitutional in that they are content and viewpoint discriminatory.

Since the ruling of *Clark v. CCNV* (1984), expression is subject to reasonable time, place and manner restrictions. In order to be constitutional, ordinances must be content and viewpoint neutral, narrowly tailored to serve a significant government interest, and there must be alternate means of communication. Time, place and manner restrictions cannot apply to The Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act (2006) because the act is content bias. Kiel states, "generally, a content-based regulation is one where the government seeks to restrict speech because it disagrees with the ideas or views of the speakers message (Kiel 3). The Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act (2006) should be deemed unconstitutional. When looking at whether a law is content-neutral, it is vital to look at the intention of the law, the law itself, and the outcomes of the law. Although linguistically the act seems content and viewpoint neutral, it is because it was made in response to Phelps and his demonstrations. Some statutes, including the Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act (2006), "discriminate among messages under a veil of

seemingly neutral language” (Cornwell 1336). Because the Act was made purely in response to Phelps’ speech, it is undoubtedly content-biased. It is very apparent that because the act was made directly in response to Phelps’ speech, it is inherently discriminatory. When looking at the outcome of the law and Phelps’ demonstrations it is clear that the act is not content and viewpoint neutral. When Phelps demonstrated at Arlington National Cemetery to challenge the Respect for America’s Fallen Heroes Act (2006), he was quickly arrested for violating the law. On that same day, at the same funeral, the Patriot Guard Riders were not arrested for their demonstrations. The Patriot Guard Riders are a group that aims to honor the military and tries to protect military families at funerals. Clearly Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church’s ideas are the antithesis of the views of the Patriot Guard Riders. It is obvious that Phelps was arrested based on the offensive views he protested. No matter what the views of the protestors are, it is unconstitutional to prohibit one group, while allowing another to protest.

Although the Act argues that it is content neutral because it does not name specific groups that were not allowed to demonstrate, it is still content discriminatory because Arlington National Cemetery only allowed certain views to be expressed. In *Boos v. Barry* (1989) the court ruled that “regulations that focus on the direct impact of speech on its audience” are content discriminatory because the “emotive impact of speech on its audience is not a ‘secondary effect.’” Because the display clause regulates speech due to its potential primary impact, we conclude it must be considered content-based” (*Boos v. Barry* 1989). It is not just Phelps’ speech that needs to be looked at when determining whether there is content discrimination occurring, but also the effect the speech has due to the specific words chosen. The restriction makes a clear distinction

with the regard to the topic of the prohibited speech (Augustine 5). This relates back to Phelps and his protests because of the emotional impact of the words he chooses to use. Had Phelps chosen to use different words, he would not have been able to present his ideas with such a strong impact. Phelps was arrested because members attending the funeral did not like the speech, which are essentially ideas. The Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act (2006) is therefore not content-neutral and is thus unconstitutional. Because the words Phelps chose have specific meaning to his cause, it is content-bias to ban his speech but not the speech of others, such as the Patriot Guard Riders. The Act is also content-biased in that it was made immediately after Phelps' demonstrations, proving that the intention was to stop his speech.

The opposition may argue that the Patriot Guard Riders were invited to the funeral, and therefore the act is content-neutral. Whether or not the cemetery invited the Patriot Guard Riders to the funeral of the deceased soldiers is insignificant to the argument. It is unconstitutional and illegal to allow speech that honors military members but not allow the speech of people, who, like Phelps, believe that these men deserved to die based on their homosexuality. Bessel argues, "a prohibited content-based distinction occurred when only certain topics of speech were targeted by the legislation" (Bessel 7). Phelps' opinions should not have been suppressed while the Patriot Guard Riders' opinions were welcomed. The view that homosexuality is unacceptable in today's society is just as much of an important opinion as that of the opposite side. It is viewpoint discriminatory to arrest Phelps for his views, while protecting the Patriot Guard Riders' speech.

D. **Protesting at funerals is the Westboro Baptist Church’s best form of communication in order to display their opinions.**

Time, place and manner restrictions have three components that must be satisfied in order to be considered constitutional. The problem with convicting Phelps under time, place, and manner restrictions in a public forum is that there are no alternate means of communication that are as effective as protesting at the funerals of deceased military servicemen. In the case of *City of Ladue v. Gilleo* (1994), where Gilleo placed a sign on her lawn promoting peace in the Persian Gulf, the Supreme Court decided that the ordinance was unconstitutional because, “the city had almost completely foreclosed a valuable means of communication that was both unique and important. Adequate substitutes did not exist for the medium of speech that the city had closed off, and thus the ordinance was not a valid regulation of the time, place, or manner of speech” (*City of Ladue v. Gilleo* 1994). The Gilleo case presents a similar issue to the one at stake with Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church. Although it was possible for Phelps to protest somewhere else, it would not have been as effective or have had as much of an impact as the protests at funerals.

In cases involving free speech and funerals, people argue that the protestors, such as Phelps, can protest on the sidewalks or streets near the funeral. The Respect for America’s Fallen Heroes Act (2006) states that one may protest 300 feet away from the funeral ceremony. This is too far removed and would not have the same effect. Also, Arlington National Cemetery is a traditional public forum, “one that has been immemorially reserved for public use, including citizens’ assembly, communication, and

discussion” (Cornwell 1334). Specifically in the case of *Phelps v. United States* (2010), the distance of 300 feet may include sidewalks depending on from where the measurements are taking place. If the funeral ceremony was within 300 feet of a sidewalk, which has always been a public forum and therefore open for picketing, it would be unconstitutional to prohibit Phelps from protesting in that area. It was stated in *Grayned v. City of Rockford* (1972) that, “a clear and precise enactment may nevertheless be ‘overbroad’ if, in its reach, it prohibits constitutionally protected conduct” (*Grayned v. City of Rockford* 1972). This is also proven in the cemetery protest case of *McQueary v. Stumbo* (2006). In this case the District Court of Kentucky determined that parts of the Kentucky law, which banned all types of demonstrations within 300 feet of funerals and funeral processions, “burden substantially more speech than is necessary to prevent interferences with a funeral or to protect funeral attendees from unwanted, obtrusive communications that are otherwise impractical to avoid” (*McQueary v. Stumbo* 2006). The 300 feet standard in The Respect for America’s Fallen Heroes Act (2006) is overbroad in that it prohibits speech and conduct in areas of public forum.

The case of *Frisby v. Schultz* (1989) describes that, when you limit where and when speech is allowed, what the speaker is able to say, the ideas that are proclaimed are inevitably changed (McCarthy 1484). Although in this case it was ruled that protest was not allowed on the abortion doctor’s lawn, it was not because of time, place and manner restrictions. Like many other cases, *Frisby v. Schultz* (1989) explains that although there may be alternate means of communication for the protestor, those means may not be as valuable in getting the protestors’ point across. This is exactly the problem with The Respect for America’s Fallen Heroes Act’s 300 feet policy.

It is also important to note that as the ACLU fights for freedom of speech, limiting speech at a specific location, such as a cemetery, can have a significant impact on the speaker's message. Many times the message of the speaker is tied directly to the location of their protests. If the constitution denies the speakers "access to what are the most logical targets of their expression, such regulations deprive them of access to the most important audience and prevent them from utilizing especially dramatic and effective means of communication" (McCarthy 1484). The Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act is lessening the value of Phelps' speech by putting restrictions on the location of his protests. If Phelps is prohibited from picketing at the funeral itself, he could not prove his points and protest his beliefs without losing meaning. Phelps' protests at funerals are necessary to articulate his specific view that God finds homosexuality unacceptable and kills military member to evidence his view.

Conclusion

The ACLU submits this brief in order to convince the court that Reverend Fred Phelps has the constitutional right to protest at the funerals of military servicemen. Phelps had a constitutional right to protest the Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act (2006) in October 2010 at Arlington National Cemetery. The Act that Phelps was protesting was unconstitutional in that it was content and viewpoint bias. Biel explains, "In order for state funeral protest bans to survive constitutional challenges, they must be content-neutral. A content-neutral regulation does not discriminate against or target specific speech and is viewpoint and subject matter neutral" (Biel 5). Regulating Phelps' speech but not the Patriot Guard Riders' speech is viewpoint-discriminatory. Just because the

views of the Westboro Baptist Church are detested does not mean they can be prohibited without eliminating the speech of other protestors at funerals.

Also, there was no other form of communication that would have been as effective. Phelps' speech also must be protected because it was high-value, political speech that involves issues of public concern. Phelps speech must be protected even if it is unpopular and detested. Even though, "Westboro is controversial, it still has a right to broadcast its message. It is through exposure to the marketplace of ideas that thoughts, morals, and opinions develop and change" (Rutledge 6). Phelps has the right to protest the unconstitutionality of The Respect for America's Fallen Heroes Act (2006) at Arlington National Cemetery and as the ACLU it is our duty to protect the freedoms that Reverend Phelps deserves.

First-Year Writing – Research

Whitesell Prize Honorable Mention

A Confluence of Science, Policy, and Politics
Darielle Christman

Fall 2010
ENV172: The Great Watersheds
Prof. Pepino

The assignment: Explain the individual role of science (technology), policy, and politics in the decision making process when applying the watershed approach to impaired water segments. How can these often very different factors be brought in sync to achieve measurable outcomes for the many diverse stakeholders dependent on the watershed to meet personal, environmental and socioeconomic needs? Provide examples in your essay of stakeholder diversity, the many anthropogenic stressors that threaten watersheds, and the new technology based tools (such as GIS) of science that help us better understand the trends and dynamics of the watershed.

Darielle Christman

ENV172

Prof. Pepino

A Confluence of Science, Policy and Politics

On a warm afternoon in late spring, dark grey clouds suddenly cover the clear blue sky above Lancaster County and the rain begins to fall. A water droplet lands upon a small child's face as he plays outside in the warm air. He runs back to the house for his rain boots and slicker, eager to jump in the puddles that are beginning to form. Not far away, in a large livestock barn, a dairy farmer gazes across his recently planted cornfields. He is glad for the rain and hopeful that the crop will grow better than it did last year. Near the county's southern end, the Holtwood Hydroelectric Dam lies across the Susquehanna River. The Pennsylvania Power and Light Company depends upon the additional water in the river to flow through the turbines and produce the power necessary for the company's continued operation. As the storm presses on, it becomes a torrential downpour, which has local government officials concerned about the integrity of the county's infrastructure and the inevitable costs to repair the damage in the event of flooding. The storm eventually passes by, and a few days later, an environmentalist in Havre de Grace, Maryland stands at the Susquehanna's mouth and observes the murky, sediment laden water rushing into the Chesapeake Bay.

Like every waterway, the Susquehanna River affects the life of each person living in its immense river basin, interconnecting the lives of ordinary citizens, farmers, businessmen, politicians, scientists, and others. These diverse stakeholders must take

part in the watershed approach's decision making process to create policies that can be successfully implemented. Collaboration efforts require that all stakeholders contribute their unique skills to measurably reduce point-source, as well as non-point source, pollution in impaired water bodies while reconciling contrasting political views and meeting the economic goals of each community. Stakeholders must communicate with each other and the community for the watershed approach to function effectively. The federal, state, and local governmental stakeholders can more completely enforce laws and implement policies by disregarding political party distinctions and working closely with scientists, who use current technology to examine the stressors present in the watershed and determine the pollutants' origins. Non-governmental stakeholders also need to be informed and involved in the decision-making process and implementation of watershed related policies. Once political differences are set aside, science, and policy will complement each other to produce measurable improvements in water quality.

The goal of the watershed approach is to implement these watershed-related policies and enforce environmental laws with the collaboration of all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Unfortunately, stakeholders have difficulty reaching consensus on important environmental issues because they each have their own goals and their own economic motivations. Contrasting political views, or even a single stakeholder's political power, can affect the extent to which a law is enforced or a policy is implemented. A policy is a course of action a government pursues, in this case to reduce pollutant loadings in the Chesapeake, while a law is a regulation passed by the government, which has the authority to enforce the law. Policy effectiveness is difficult to attain because stakeholders are unlikely to trust each other or the government. Some

stakeholders will only participate to argue against the policies of officials that they disagree with, and those stakeholders who believe that the officials are creating policies in line with their own interests will remain uninvolved in the policy-making process.¹ Policies created with public input are typically easier to implement because the public is more likely to support them. Water quality affects every stakeholder; however, similar distrust exists between the members of opposing political parties, making policy movement between parties almost impossible.

The National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, was enacted to force federal agencies to consider the impact of their decisions on the environment. Although governmental responsibility may have improved from the 1960s, when the Pennsylvania Railroad's lobbyist was known as the fifty-first senator, lack of cooperation still inhibits the implementation of environmental policy.² Part of the Clean Water Act set industry wastewater limits, and the technology to effectively treat wastewater exists, yet regulators do not enforce the limits by making industries update their waste treatment operations. According to the United States Government Accountability Office, achieving compliance with environmental laws is a challenge because enforcement is not applied consistently due to differences in state laws and enforcement authorities.³ If enforcement officers consistently penalize the industries, then company owners will have an incentive to spend money on new, pollution-reducing systems. The purpose of the Safe Drinking Water Act was to protect the public from contaminated drinking water by setting standards for water

¹ Will Focht, Mark Lubell, Marty Matlock, Paul A. Sabatier, Zev Trachtenberg, and Arnold Vedlitz, eds., *Swimming Upstream: Collaborative Approaches to Watershed Management* (Cambridge: MIT, 2005), 87.

² Susan Stranahan, *Susquehanna: River of Dreams* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), 152.

³ "Clean Water Act: Longstanding Issues Impact EPA's and States' Enforcement Efforts," Testimony, GAO-10-165T (U.S. House of Representatives) Washington DC: U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2.

use. In some instances, activities that harm water quality are exempted from the Safe Drinking Water Act altogether.⁴ Many stakeholders, governmental and non-governmental, have reached the conclusion that economic gain is worth the degradation of the nation's water supply. Stakeholder groups should use mediators to encourage a cooperative watershed approach, because if the stakeholders continue to focus on personal needs alone, water quality will improve at a tedious rate. The government must keep the general public, especially the farming community, involved in environmental policy discussion to meet their socioeconomic needs, while still meeting the environmental needs of the watershed.

Government officials must seek the aid of the scientific community to become educated about the newest pollution-reducing technology that they can implement. Without knowledge of current technology and new scientific advances in pollution reduction, politicians cannot create environmental policies and laws that can be implemented and enforced with a full effect on pollutant loadings. Scientists and environmental researchers design and implement the use of new technology to help reduce the effects of both point and non-point source stressors on the environment. Teams of scientists and researchers are designing more effective waste treatment facilities and environmentally friendly farming practices. They use geographic information system technology, commonly known as GIS, to understand the pollution trends and determine and stop the problem at the source. Across the hallway, chemists are developing ways to alleviate the pollution already present in the water supply and to track the progress of water quality improvement. Industrial waste treatment plants can

⁴ Mark Clayton, "Fracking for Natural Gas: EPA Hearings Bring Protests," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 13 September 2010.

target and remove specific chemicals from the water. Stranahan cites the Hershey Foods Corporation plant as an example; Hershey pre-treats its organic-heavy effluent with digesting bacteria.⁵ Cleanup is all good, but purifying the wastewater before it enters the water supply is a simpler process than attempting to remove the pollutants already in the water. To this end, environmentalists and the government are encouraging farmers to practice sustainable farming methods, and to reduce sediment, nutrient, and pathogen runoff. Increasingly popular practices include no-till farming, stream buffers and fence enclosed streams. A relatively new concept emerging in Lancaster County is the use of regional biodigesters, which will produce electricity for farms and homes in the region, while reducing nutrient and sediment loading to the Chesapeake Bay.

To monitor the causes of pollution in a region, scientists and county planners are beginning to rely on the GIS. The GIS stores and analyzes geographical information and other data, like rainfall, to produce regional maps that predict relationships between various geographical and environmental factors. The USGS claims that the GIS computer system encourages “cooperation and communication among the organizations involved in environmental protection, planning, and resource management.”⁶

Communication is necessary between the stakeholders for a GIS to function fully because the system requires the input of data gathered by different stakeholders.

Removing pollution from the water supply challenges scientists. The EPA worked with chemists in California to complete a study on lime as a neutralizer. When lime was added to acidic mine drainage, the acidity was neutralized and the metals were

⁵ Stranahan, 175.

⁶ USGS, “Geographic Information System,” (2007), 6.

reduced to non-toxic levels by precipitation.⁷ A visible sign that the toxic waters are healing is the return of fish and other wildlife to the rivers. Fish kills have severely depleted the native fish populations in many polluted rivers. As a result researchers have raised fish, like the migratory shad, in hatcheries and released them into the river. If the fish survive and reproduce, researchers know that the water quality is improving. To track the released shad in the Susquehanna River, the fish are placed in oxytetracycline, which binds to the calcium ions in their bones to form permanent colored rings. Although scientific research has found ways to reduce point source and non-point source pollution, applying the new methods is not a simple process, because the stakeholders' personal goals cause disputes during the collaboration efforts. Once government officials understand the new pollution reduction methods, they can revise policies and laws to reflect these scientific advances in water quality improvement.

Collaborative watershed approaches are necessary to implement environmental policy because a multitude of stakeholders contribute to the anthropogenic stressors that damage water quality, destroy the environment, and endanger human health. Industries such as mining, logging, agriculture, and electrical power companies cause most human-derived pollution, with little to no government effort to reduce the level of pollutant loading. During the mid-1800s to early 1900s, the coal industry played an important role in Pennsylvania's economy. Despite monetary gain for the mine operators, coal wreaked havoc on the Susquehanna. Mine workers rinsed the coal and dumped the sediments into the nearest river or estuary, effectively coating the riverbed with coal silt. Today, water continues to flow through the abandoned mines, polluting Pennsylvania's waterways with

⁷ "Active and Semi-Passive Lime Treatment of Acid Mine Drainage at Leviathan Mine, California," *Innovative Technology Evaluation Report*, March 2006, U.S. EPA, 4.

deadly orange acid.⁸ As industry continued to strip the land of coal, it was stripping the land of another valuable natural resource: trees. At one time rivers served as the main source of transportation for the large, majestic trees hewn from their shorelines. Clear-cutting the forests eliminates the natural riparian buffer zone, and the amount of sediment runoff increases without the roots to prevent soil erosion. Heavily logged regions are also prone to flooding.

As the logging companies moved on, the agricultural industry began to develop the deforested regions with soil suitable for farming. The fields extend to the edge of the streams and creeks meandering through the farm properties, and even the lightest rainfall will wash the nutrient-rich fertilizer off the well-tilled fields. Large concentrated animal farming operations (CAFOs), such as those in Lancaster County, contribute pathogens from animal excrement into the waterways, rendering the water undrinkable and unswimmable. This excrement also provides an excess of nutrients for algae, which can cause oxygen-depleting algae blooms in the Chesapeake Bay. Lancaster County's agricultural industry is the largest producer of non-point source pollution in the Susquehanna River. In addition to the impact of farming, Electrical power companies have built dams, like the Holtwood Dam in Pennsylvania or the Conowingo Dam in Maryland, and nuclear reactors, such as the three reactors located on Three Mile Island. Although dams provide hydroelectric power, and the lakes they create provide areas for recreation, they have many negative effects on a watershed. Dams alter the flow of water downstream, collect a threatening build-up of sediment, and prevent fish migration, while nuclear plants release radioactive effluents directly into the water supply and maintain a risk for nuclear meltdown. Other industrial sites along the Susquehanna and its

⁸ Stranahan, 153.

tributaries also contribute point-source pollution to the watershed. Although industries have introduced many anthropogenic stressors into the watershed, scientists have the capability to remove a majority of the pollution as soon as the environmental policy collaboration efforts are successful. Collaboration efforts will remain at a standstill until government officials decide to implement and enforce scientific-based policies and laws despite their political differences.

The Susquehanna River flows through New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland, permanently and complexly linking the life of each person who lives in its basin. These unique stakeholders and their ancestors have contributed to the pollution of the river and its tributaries. Research efforts have developed management practices that are capable of reducing sediments, nutrients, and toxic waste in the watershed. Now the stakeholders must understand that the watershed has to be treated as a single unit, affected by the actions of each living thing inhabiting its ecosystem. Once watershed stakeholders are able to trust each other and contribute their cooperation in spite of their personal and political differences, the water quality in the system will respond and measurably improve to meet both the environmental needs of the region and the socioeconomic needs of the region's diverse communities.

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First-Year Writing - Non-Research

Whitesell Prize Winner

Female Subservience in *The Bell Jar*
Nicole Zee

Fall 2010
ENG167: Fictions of Adolescence
Prof. Hartman

The assignment: In an essay published in *Women's Studies* journal in 1990, critic Diane Bonds quotes scholar Paula Bennett as claiming that: "Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* offers a brilliant evocation of 'the oppressive atmosphere of the 1950s and the soul-destroying effect this atmosphere could have on ambitious, high-minded young women like Plath.'" Bonds then goes on to argue that "it has not been widely recognized, however, that the 'soul-destroying effect' of Plath's social context is dramatized as vividly by the putative recovery of the heroine as by her breakdown and attempted suicide. The novel presents the transformation of Esther Greenwood from a young woman who hates the idea of serving men in any way to one who appears to earn her exit from the asylum by committing herself, albeit unwittingly, precisely to that project."

In your essay, summarize and evaluate Bonds' claim. What is she arguing? Do you agree or disagree with her assertion?

Nicole Zee

ENG167

Prof. Hartman

Female Subservience in *The Bell Jar*

Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* chronicles protagonist Esther Greenwood's descent into madness and apparent recovery. The novel is seemingly about a transformation: that of Esther from crazy to sane, from malcontent to accepting. However, as Diane Bonds argues in *Women's Studies* journal, Esther's transformation is not so much a moving forward as it is a circling back. Bonds believes that Esther's recovery is incomplete because instead of freeing herself from the concept of serving men, Esther commits herself to it, demonstrating the repressive effects of society at the time. Bonds presents a valid argument because while Esther's incompatibility with society contributes to her mental illness and she faces an incomplete recovery, the only way she can free herself from the patriarchy that initiated her insanity is to ironically recommit to serving men.

Bonds' argument is threefold. First she asserts that "the oppressive atmosphere of the 1950s" has a "soul-destroying effect" on Esther. In other words, the social pressure to become a wife and mother wreaks havoc on Esther, who dearly wishes to become a poet and have a career. Next, Bonds claims that Esther achieves a "putative" recovery instead of a complete one. Esther's potential release from the asylum is not based upon the fact that she is fully sane and problem free, but rather the fact that she has achieved some sort of compromise with society and is better than before. Finally, and most importantly, Bonds contends that Esther's recovery and release from the asylum hinge

upon her ultimate commitment to serving men. I will demonstrate the validity of Bonds' first claim through Esther's attitude towards marriage, and her claim that Esther only realizes a partial recovery with a close look at Plath's use of metaphor. Bonds' assertion that Esther's recovery is contingent upon serving men is proven by Esther's acceptance of traditional gender roles, her questioning of the ideal of purity, and ultimate conformation to society.

Bonds' assertion that 1950s society is the cause of Esther's illness is supported by the protagonist's conflict between her dream of having a career and being a poet and the social norms of housewifery and suburbia. She hates the idea of marriage because it implies being subservient. She sees marriage as a "totalitarian" relationship in which the wife is enslaved and "brainwashed" (85). These negative terms express Esther's extreme distaste for married life and for serving men. Her conflict comes from the fact that society dictates that she should love having a husband and children. Esther does not identify with this and expresses feelings of alienation when she sees a mother and child in a doctor's waiting room: "How easy having babies seemed to the women around me! Why was I so unmaternal and apart?" (222). Her environment demands her to serve the patriarchy by being a wife and mother to such an extent that failure to meet this demand leads to status as an outcast, not to mention internal feelings of inadequacy. Esther struggles with meeting such a requirement, and the social repercussions of this decision contribute to her mental breakdown.

The next aspect of Bonds' claim is that Esther does not achieve a complete recovery, but rather a "putative" one. The path of Esther's partial recovery can best be paralleled by her shoes. In the beginning, they are new, fresh, ordinary: "those same

size-seven patent leather shoes” every other college girl wears (2). Initially, like her shoes, Esther is whole and pulled together. However, as the novel progresses, her shoes, like her mental state, fall into disrepair. They are filled with blood when she cuts her calves in the bathtub (148), don’t fare well in the sand on the beach (151), and are cracked by the harsh winter weather (231). Esther follows their progress and becomes more depressed and broken too, as each mention of her shoes corresponds with a suicidal thought or attempt. However, at novel’s end, her black patent leather shoes are “cracked, but polished,” indicating not a total healing, but an improvement (243-244). In this way, Esther is not completely recovered and whole, but she isn’t utterly broken and dysfunctional either.

Esther’s accord with the 1950s social expectation that women should be subservient and do as they are told is a large part of the recovery that allows her release from the asylum. At the time, females were supposed to put the needs of others, particularly those of their husbands and children, before their own. One example of Esther conforming and fulfilling the obedient role of women is her ski trip with Buddy. Despite the fact that Esther has no desire to learn to ski, she “obediently” traverses the slopes “pleas[ing]” Buddy because “It never occurred to [her] to say no” (95-96). In this case, not only does she suppress her own desires, but she also elevates the wishes of others above her own and in doing so neglects to stand up for herself. After this, Esther suffers a mental breakdown due to these repressive expectations for women, only to revert back to this role in order to heal. For instance, during her first sexual encounter, Esther ignores the pain and as a result begins to hemorrhage. Nervous and afraid, she asks Irwin about her condition, and he nonchalantly assures her that it is all right and that

it happens sometimes (229). Instead of protecting herself and stopping when something is obviously wrong, Esther puts Irwin's needs before her own and follows his advice. Shortly after this experience, Esther is deemed improved and released from the hospital. In this way, Esther's recovery is contingent upon her adoption of the unselfish and obedient role expected of women at the time, the role whose main purpose is to serve men.

In addition, losing her virginity to Irwin is seemingly a step toward equality, as it is an act of defiance against the social norms that allow men to have more sexual freedom than women. When Esther obtains birth control, for example, it is under the assumption that birth control and having sex will set her free: she will be free from being tied to an accidental baby and obligatory marriage (223). Also, having sex would "even the playing field" with Buddy Willard, reducing his perceived superiority, as each would now have had one sexual partner (78). However, Esther's definition of freedom from serving men by losing her socially imposed purity ironically requires a man to achieve. For instance, as soon as she gets birth control, she states, "I [am] my own woman." This declaration is immediately followed by: "The next step [is] to find the proper sort of man" (223). As soon as Esther is finally free from male dominance, she reverts back to needing a man. In addition, it is clearly evidenced that Irwin, her means of obtaining freedom, is a womanizer. He admits to having had several affairs and affirms that he "get[s] on with the ladies" (227). In this way, the reader discovers Irwin is only using Esther for sex and that she is serving his sexual needs in the name of progress and gender equality. Esther ironically must serve a man to become his equal. This also brings light to the fact that her very definition of being independent is predicated on males. Esther cannot simply

become a poet and declare herself independent, but rather must prove her independence from men, suggesting an implicit attachment and servitude to men.

Finally, the last evidence that Esther commits to serving men is the single glimpse into the future the novel provides. While mentioning tokens she had been given while working at the magazine, Esther shifts into retrospective: “I use the lipsticks now and then, and last week I cut the plastic starfish off the sunglasses case for the baby to play with” (3). This statement very clearly implies that Esther moves on to fulfill a domestic role with a baby. In other words, the only insight offered to the reader about Esther’s future after the asylum is not about poetry or writing, but a child. Thus, it can be inferred that Esther’s recovery ultimately does include serving men and conforming to society.

Critic Diane Bonds argues that the social environment of the 1950s drives Esther to madness in Sylvia Plath’s *The Bell Jar*. Further, she claims that Esther does not make a complete recovery and that this so-called recovery is predicated on Esther’s commitment to serving men. One example of Esther’s servitude is her rededication to obedience and placing the wishes of others, particularly men, before her own. Before this acceptance of a subservient role occurs, Esther makes a feeble attempt to establish her independence from and equality to men by losing her virginity. However, in doing so, she ironically proves that her freedom from men requires them, demonstrating a covert attachment and servitude towards them. For a release to be granted, she must accept the society in which she lives and the underlying ideologies behind it, regardless of the effects such acceptance might have on her mental health. The reader’s glimpse into Esther’s future is the final piece of evidence that demonstrates her complete adoption of a subservient and

domestic role, showing that, by the end of *The Bell Jar*, Esther has sadly returned to her starting point: trapped in the same unkind society that turned her insane in the first place.

First-Year Writing - Non-Research

Whitesell Prize Honorable Mention

Oppression in the Russian Autocracy
Sarah Weyl

Fall 2010
HIS170: History of Russia I
Prof. Schrader

The assignment: What do Gogol's stories about Russia in the first half of the nineteenth century convey to us about the nature of the autocracy, its officials, and life in the capital city of St. Petersburg?

Sarah Weyl

HIS170

Prof. Schrader

Oppression in the Russian Autocracy

Nicolai Gogol's "The Overcoat" tells a tale of repression, ridicule, and retribution through the monotonous life of Akaky Akakievich. After his purchase of a new overcoat, the security of Akaky's life disintegrates. The characters of Akaky and Important Person, as well as this scenario, reveal oppression between the classes and a lack of a social mobility. Through his evaluation of the bureaucracy, Gogol depicts how repressive Russian officialdom is, and at the end of the story, suggests that this system can be dangerous -- as it can inspire a desire to rebel among the lower ranks within society.

Akaky is identified by his diligence at his job, copying documents. This mindless and insipid job does not stimulate creativity. Gogol writes: "If he had no work from the office, he would copy out something else, just for his own personal pleasure - especially if the document in question happened to be remarkable not for its stylistic beauty, but because it was addressed to some newly appointed or important person" (144). By copying documents at work, and then by continuing to do this at home, Akaky familiarizes himself with one specific skill and becomes consumed by it. As a result, he does not realize or experience other activities that exist in the world. Furthermore, by perfecting this skill, Akaky is unable to learn of or think of anything different than what he has been taught or trained to do. This inhibits his ability to contribute to and improve both the bureaucracy and society. Despite his efficiency at his job, Akaky lacks

inspiration. This is advantageous to the higher-ranking officials of the Russian bureaucracy because the system allows them concurrently to sustain and enforce their power and control over those beneath them. Without intelligence and innovation, the lower ranks of officialdom cannot make progress because they do not possess the necessary skills with which to do this. Therefore, they will not improve their status or rank, and consequently, will not threaten the higher ranks (Gogol 142-144).

Even though Akaky maintains a better work ethic than his colleagues do, he is tormented by them because he lacks a dignified appearance; this causes him to be oppressed not only by the ranks above him, but also by those beneath him. Akaky's younger coworkers bully him, as "The junior clerks laughed and told jokes at his expense..." (Gogol 142) and "No one showed him the least respect in the office" (Gogol 142). Gogol describes Akaky as wrinkled and bald with poor eyesight and a hemorrhoidal complexion. In addition to this, he is known for wearing a thin, ragged overcoat that is often covered in trash and waste. Akaky's sloppy appearance signifies that he does not have a worthy place or a crucial role in society. His appearance also resembles that of someone in the lower class—not someone who is a poor official. Because Akaky looks similar to a member of the lower class, his coworkers treat him as a pariah—disengaging him from the world (Gogol 140, 142-144).

The superficiality illustrated above benefits the high-ranking officials of the Russian bureaucracy. These officials can simultaneously maintain their power and obtain high-quality work, primarily from Akaky. They do not have to worry about losing their position to one of Akaky's colleagues as they are not competent and would not be able to exceed the officials above them. Akaky, the only lower rank who has the ability to

overshadow the higher officials, is not threatening because his appearance suggests that he is not capable or worthy of a higher rank. The bullying he receives from his coworkers reinforces this; if they are able to oppress Akaky, then the higher-ranked officials, likewise, will be able to repress him. (Gogol 140, 142-144).

The Russian bureaucracy further exhibits its power over Akaky by paying him poorly, which forces him to live in a modest manner. The below quotation illustrates the challenges and sacrifices that Akaky encounters when trying to save money in order to purchase a new overcoat.

...he would have to stop drinking tea in the evenings; go without candles; and, if he had copying to do, go to his landlady's room and work by the light of her candle. He would have to step as carefully and lightly as possible over the cobbles in the street - almost on tiptoe - so as not to wear his shoe soles out before their time; avoid taking his personal linen to the laundress as much as possible; and, to make his underclothes last longer, take them off when he got home and only wear his thick cotton dressing-gown.... (Gogol 153)

Gogol exaggerates and draws attention to the fact that Akaky is powerless because he does not have control over his essential necessities. When Akaky mentions that he will have to “go without candles” and complete his work in his landlady's room, he not only forgoes a necessity, but he also degrades himself (by working in his landlady's room). As the passage continues, he states that he will walk on tiptoe in order to uphold the integrity of his shoes and that he will preserve his clothing. The reality that Akaky cannot buy new shoes, if needed, and that he feels pressure not to damage his current clothing is nonsensical. Living in Russia demands warm layers of clothing and a high-quality, good pair of shoes. Regardless of his rank as an official, Akaky's salary should allow him to have these needs. Akaky experiences oppression from the bureaucracy because he has to deprive himself of crucial needs in order to buy an overcoat. This is a

drastic contrast to the higher-ranked officials who do not have to struggle for their survival. Realistically, Akaky will never be able to consider improving his status because his salary obliges him to concentrate on survival and to live a meager lifestyle.

Furthermore, his low income strengthens the superficiality that occurs at his job.

Because Akaky cannot afford a new or luxurious overcoat, he will continue to maintain his unattractive appearance and will sustain torment from his coworkers (Gogol 153).

A final way in which Gogol demonstrates the power and control of the Russian bureaucracy is through Akaky's encounter with Important Person following the theft of his new overcoat. Gogol writes, "Even so, he still ordered the clerk to wait, just to show his old friend (who had left the Service a fair time before and was now nicely settled in his country house) how long he could keep clerks standing about in his waiting room" (165). In this scene, Important Person expresses his dominance over Akaky by forcing him to wait for an unnecessarily long time. He chooses to do this simply because he possesses such power and ability. Important Person continues to control and repress Akaky by refusing to assist him in finding his new overcoat.

'...Don't you know how things are conducted here? It's high time you knew that first of all your application must be handed in at the main office, then taken to the chief clerk, then to the departmental director, then to my secretary, who *then* submits it to me for consideration.' (Gogol 165-166)

By informing Akaky of the process described above, Important Person explains that recovering the stolen overcoat is not his duty. Moreover, Important Person is intimidating and supercilious. This fear, instilled by the higher ranks of the Russian system, allows Important Person to oppress Akaky, or any lower rank. Regardless of the circumstances, the bureaucracy discourages the lower ranks from seeking help when they need it by terrorizing them and by denying to help them. In Akaky's situation, he is not

only robbed of an overcoat, but he is also robbed of justice. Ultimately, because he is repressed and does not recover his overcoat, Akaky dies and becomes a ghost. His death advances the power of the higher-ranking officials because they have managed to kill a lower rank (Gogol 165-166).

As evidenced through the death of Akaky, the Russian bureaucracy was incontrovertibly responsible for oppression. Their ill treatment of their subjects revealed the major flaws of the system, the most obvious one that the system did not benefit, but actually failed, the majority of the Russian people. Gogol concludes this short story with a haunting message for the higher ranks and for the autocracy: if the system does not change, a rebellion, or possibly a revolution, is likely to occur. This message is expressed when Akaky's ghost attacks Important Person. By attacking Important Person, Akaky condemns the higher ranks for their repression of the lower ranks and for their obstruction to having fundamental necessities and privileges. Because the ghost harms those who have power and control, it conveys to the Russian people that the bureaucracy is unjust. This retaliation indicates that repression is only effective for a certain amount of time. Eventually, those who suffer from the oppression, are going to respond and rebel. This could prompt a revolution and devastate the Russian system – which strives to prevent this. Gogol employs Akaky's ghost as a way to demonstrate that people will rebel in order to bring down the bureaucracy and transform society if they do not change (Gogol 169, 171-172).

Russian officialdom was unquestionably oppressive during the 1830s. Every aspect of Akaky's life portrays this. Akaky's uninspiring job is repressive because it inhibits intelligence and creativity. The low income that he receives causes him to live modestly and dress poorly – both of which result in torment from his colleagues. Most importantly, Akaky is unable to receive help or justice when he needs it. While this is to

the advantage of the higher-ranked officials, it is well to remember that repression is not always permanent. As Gogol implies, eventually, the oppressed ones will retaliate and demand a better life.

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Foundations

Whitesell Prize Winner

Untitled
Nathan Gill

Spring 2011
FND 169A: Wisdom and Deception
Prof. Hendricks

The assignment: Plato, Machiavelli, and Michael Walzer all argue that there are conditions under which it is necessary for rulers to lie to the people or to violate other kinds of “ordinary” moral rules. Are these kinds of political actions ever justified? If so, under what conditions, and to what extent?

Nathan Gill

FND169A

Prof. Hendricks

Consequentialism makes sense. Whether it is found in Plato's impassioned exposition of an ideal city, Machiavelli's dark analysis of political power, or the efficiency of modern utilitarianism, its cold, hard reasoning is difficult to refute, especially in politics. Plato and Machiavelli both hold noble ends, and they rightly ask how justice and peace in society could be sacrificed for absolute moral principle. Indeed, it appears impossible that society could function if leaders never used deception or even murder for necessary ends. Despite this, there exist moral rules that certainly are wrong to break, even for the highest of goals. In the face of this, it seems necessary to admit that politics is fundamentally paradoxical; good leaders are at once required to break moral laws and face the evil of their actions.

The end justifies the means is the quintessential consequentialist statement. Plato, Machiavelli, and Walzer all stand by this idea, though with various distinctions. Plato, in the Republic, claims that deception is required for the maintenance of the ideal city-state. He argues for the creation of a myth to convince citizens of their place in society as well as their fundamental unity, saying, "I wonder if we could contrive one of those convenient stories... some magnificent myth that would in itself carry conviction to our whole community, including, if possible, the Guardians themselves?" (Plato 115-116). Plato seems to believe that such a myth is not merely convenient, but in some ways essential to the survival of his city. As is later illustrated in his allegory of the cave, Plato

believes that most people are incapable of comprehending what is truly good in the world, and so he holds they must be led and, as the above quotation shows, even deceived into living righteously (247). Plato never questions the goodness of the philosopher rulers who perform the deception, and he certainly never suggests punishing the rulers for deceiving the people, saying of the deception, “Even so it should serve to increase their loyalty to the state and to each other” (117). If all of Plato’s assumptions about human nature and the universality of his definition of justice are taken as true, it seems that the sort of deception he calls for is more than justified by the aim of creating an ideal society. However, there are reasons to doubt the truth of Plato’s assumptions, reasons that Machiavelli doesn’t hesitate to address.

Machiavelli aims not, unlike Plato, for the ideal society, but rather for the functioning one, and for him even securing that requires far more questionable action than Plato advocated. He says, “for it is so far from how one lives to how one should live that he who lets go of what is done for what should be done learns his ruin rather than his preservation” (Machiavelli 61). This neatly summarizes Machiavelli’s entire theory. What is critical is his idea of “what is done”, and what must be done in light of that. For Machiavelli, the world is a dangerous and brutal place, and leaders must be dangerous and brutal as well -- they must “learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity,” both for their own sakes and those of their subjects and states (61). Learning not to be good, Machiavelli claims, means being prepared not only to use deception but also treachery and murder for the good of the state. What is fascinating about this idea is that Machiavelli, unlike Plato, seems to recognize the evil in deception and murder, but claims it to be necessary nonetheless. Despite the disturbing

nature of this concept, practical experience shows that there are times when murder and deception can be effectively turned to worthy goals. It would be difficult to argue that the plots to assassinate Hitler were misguided. However, there are some difficulties here. As Walzer says, "It is important to stress Machiavelli's own commitment to the existence of moral standards." Machiavelli does not believe that good and evil only exist in consequences; he does, by his use of the phrase "learn to be able not to be good...", admit the existence of an absolute standard of moral good (Walzer 175). Only if this standard is discarded will the leader become great. In effect, the great leader is rewarded rather than punished for breaking and discarding the moral laws. Machiavelli may be right about the necessity of at least some bloodshed for effective political order, but that cannot necessitate the sacrifice of moral law. The leader that kills for his people may have done the right thing, but he is still a murderer, and ought to be treated as such.

The consequentialist argument is strong, particularly as explained by Machiavelli. It is unreasonable to say that a leader should never use questionable means, whether deception or murder, to save lives. All manner of hypothetical situations can demonstrate this. In fact, it would seem that to claim that leaders as well as everyone else are bound by the same absolute standard of morality requires a radically different conception of the nature of the universe than the one found in Plato and Machiavelli. Augustine supplies this conception.

Augustine approaches the problem of moral boundaries with an eye towards duty, specifically our duty to God. For Augustine, each human being possesses an immortal soul, and "The mouth that lies slays the soul..." meaning a single lie can condemn the soul to eternal damnation, to say nothing of murder (Augustine 4). Clearly the stakes are

higher here than they were in *The Prince*. However important the stability of an earthly state may be in the eyes of a leader, it does not carry the same weight as the fate of his soul for eternity. From this position, Augustine argues that no immoral act can be justified, no matter what the consequences. Leaders as well as common citizens have a duty to God to try not to sin. He says, “With my good will, neither ill should be done; but only the one was in my power, and I could take care that this should not be done; the other rested with another, and when by my good advice I could not quench the purpose, I was not bound by my evil deed to thwart the doing” (Augustine 9). Augustine is saying here that no matter what the evil is that could be prevented, no matter what its magnitude, no sin should be done to prevent it. Even if a single murder could save a thousand lives, a leader has a duty not to order it, for the death of the thousand is not her sin, but rather another’s. Augustine’s view seems odd at first, but basically he is saying that individuals are not responsible for the actions of others, and if forced to a choice, people ought always to avoid their own wrongdoing rather than commit a wrong to avoid some one else’s (9).

Clearly, Augustine’s hard, unforgiving view of morality poses problems for the idea that leaders must sometimes break moral laws for the greater good. As clear, however, is the fact that Augustine’s conception of morality is largely dependent on an all-powerful God who presumably absolutely defines right and wrong. Much like Plato, Augustine’s ideas are dependent on his assumptions about the nature of reality, and unlike Machiavelli’s assumptions, they are hard to accept without faith. Nevertheless, his view of morality as a duty is deeply appealing in its certainty and, in a way, its vision. If

everyone abided by such standards of moral conduct, there would be no need for leaders to commit wrongs for any ends.

However, the world does not live according to Augustinian standards. If a politician is to be a great leader and fulfill their responsibilities to their country and their people, they must, at least on occasion, lie, be treacherous, and murder. This does not mean, as a pure utilitarian might say, that moral rules do not really exist, that “it cannot be the case that it is or even might be a crime to override them” (Walzer 169). By the very fact that individuals justify and excuse their behavior when they believe that they are breaking rules, it seems such rules exist in very real way (170). If, then, moral rules are real yet must be broken, it appears Machiavelli is correct in his paradoxical explanation that moral rules do exist and that it is bad to break them, but that a leader becomes good when he is willing to break them all (Walzer 175-176). If there is moral law though, then it must be a crime to break it, and like any crime, deserving of punishment. Thus, the Machiavellian paradox cannot be accepted as just or even desirable. Political leaders must be willing, because of their responsibilities to their society, to commit murder, but they must also accept the proper punishment for their actions. As Walzer says, “...just assassination, I want to suggest, is like civil disobedience. In both men violate a set of rules, go beyond a moral or legal limit, in order to do what they believe they should do. At the same time, they acknowledge their responsibility for the violation by accepting punishment or doing penance” (178). No sane person can say that calculated murder is in itself anything but profoundly wrong or even evil, yet leaders must sometimes do it for a greater good. Because of the evil of the action though, they must never be too willing to perform it, and even the most powerful leader must be willing to bear the burden of

appropriate punishment. Says Walzer, “They override the rules without ever being certain that they have found the best way to the results they hope to achieve, and we don’t want them to do that too quickly or too often. So it is important that the moral stakes be very high—which is to say, that the rules be rightly valued.”

Politics is both noble and dangerous. Noble for the often lofty goals of its practitioners; dangerous for the temptations of power. These characteristics are further revealed by its paradoxical nature. The politician willing to bear the burden of punishment for necessary sins is a truly great leader, but the temptation to follow *The Prince*, doing the deed and skipping the penance, weighs heavily on their shoulders. This is the nature of political power, and until the day comes when all may live as Augustine demands, it cannot be otherwise.

Foundations

Whitesell Prize Honorable Mention

Untitled
Joshua Wesalo

Spring 2011
FND151: Altered States
Prof. Nelligan

The assignment:

Joshua Wesalo

FND151

Prof. Nelligan

Few industries can claim to have had as much impact on American society as fast food. At this point, the largest fast food company, Yum! Brands, Inc., which owns KFC, Long John Silver's, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and A&W (among others) has over 37,000 locations worldwide (Yum! Brands, Inc.). McDonald's follows in close second with more than 31,000 locations globally (McDonald's Canada), and Burger King holds its own with over 12,000 restaurants (Burger King). The industry makes up a massive portion of the U.S. economy; Americans spent more than \$110 billion on fast food in 2000, and presumably spend even more today. This is greater than the amount Americans spend on "movies, books, magazines, newspapers, videos, and recorded music, combined" (Schlosser 3). Not only are the restaurants physically ubiquitous, but they are culturally so, considering that ninety-six percent of American schoolchildren recognize Ronald McDonald, who, among fictional characters, is only surpassed by Santa Claus (4). Even academic economists use fast food in their line of work, in the form of the "Big Mac Index," a measure of purchasing power parity, which compares two country's exchange rates by looking at how much currency it takes to buy a Big Mac in each nation (*The Economist*). The fast food industry would not be so pervasive without its keen marketing. A major portion of this marketing hinges on subtle psychological phenomena that attract repeat customers. Fast food restaurants design their food and their restaurants to make their customers dependent on fast food without arousing a stir.

I. The Addictive Design of Food

A. The Chemical Basis for Food Addiction

Any nutritionist will tell you that nearly everything on the menu at fast food restaurants contains unhealthy amounts of sugar. Menu items such as soda, milkshakes, and desserts all come to mind, but, as Michael Pollan explains in *In Defense of Food*, fries and buns also contribute to the problem. These foods are not “whole;” processing has removed part of them. These removed parts (specifically, the potato skin for fries and the wheat bran and wheat germ in white flour) contain the vast majority of these foods’ fiber. This fiber slows down the digestion of the carbohydrates in whole potatoes and whole wheat products, but when processors remove it, the resulting foods quickly metabolize to sugar. Pollan gives an evolutionary rationale for our taste for these refined foods: “There is something in us that loves a refined carbohydrate, and that something is the human brain. The human brain craves carbohydrates reduced to their energy essence,

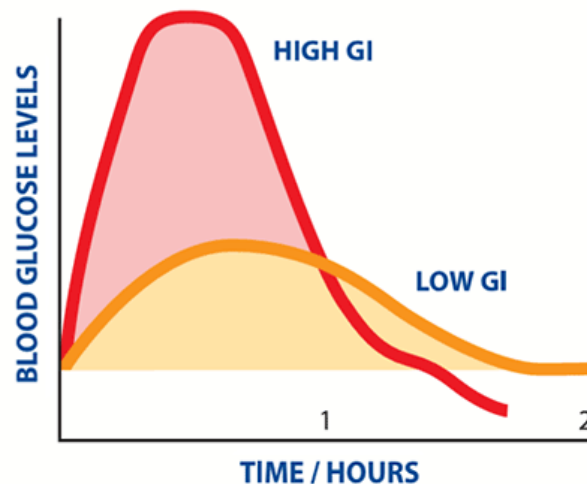


Fig. 1. Blood sugar levels over time for people that consume refined carbohydrates (High GI) and whole carbohydrates (Low GI). Notice the “crash” consisting of abnormally low blood glucose levels shortly after consuming High GI foods (University of Sydney).

which is to say pure glucose” (111). We also seek sweet foods because whole, natural sweet foods (i.e., fruits) contain essential vitamins and minerals that we cannot obtain from any other foods. We metabolize the sugar to blood sugar slowly, and they keep our blood sugar relatively steady (122).⁹ But fries, buns, and sugary desserts, on the other hand, quickly digest to sugar, which causes a dramatic spike in blood glucose, followed by a massive crash (see Figure 1). This crash activates brain mechanisms that warn the brain of starvation (113), sending McDonald’s customers scrambling back to the counter for more food.

Fast food companies take care to design their products with delicious flavor profiles so that customers keep coming back for more. In *Fast Food Nation*, Eric Schlosser explains the power of flavor. “Royal empires have been built, unexplored lands have been traversed, great religions and philosophies have been forever changed by the spice trade,” he says (124). He goes on to explain that flavor (via the sense of smell) forms lasting memories. This phenomenon makes childhood comfort foods a lifetime “source of pleasure and reassurance,” and fast food chains use this to their advantage (123). Schlosser explains that natural and artificial flavors abound in fast food menu items.¹⁰ But how powerful of an effect can natural and artificial flavors have? When Schlosser went to International Flavors and Fragrances, a massive company that makes these chemical cocktails, he sampled one of the company’s beef flavors:

⁹ Fruits’ high fiber content and sugar composition typically blunts their effects on blood sugar compared to refined carbohydrates.

¹⁰ Today, these chemicals give McDonald’s fries their subtly beefy flavor. As Schlosser explains, McDonald’s used to fry their fries in ninety-three percent beef fat to imbue them with this flavor, but switched to oil and natural flavoring amid much criticism about the cholesterol and saturated fat in their fries (120).

I dipped a [strip of testing paper] into [the flavor]... I closed my eyes. Then I inhaled deeply... I suddenly smelled a grilled hamburger. The aroma was uncanny, almost miraculous. It smelled like someone in the room was flipping burgers on a hot grill. But when I opened my eyes, there was just a narrow strip of white paper and a smiling flavorist. (129)

These powerful chemicals, in concentrations as low as three parts per billion by weight (125), allow fast food companies to create powerful psychological impressions through the neurologically potent sense of smell.

Not only do fast food companies use a surprising amount of chemistry in designing their food, they also make use of physics. The growing field of rheology, “the branch of physics that deals with the deformation and flow of matter,” assists fast food companies to this end (*New Oxford American Dictionary*). Many of them use Texture Technologies Corporation’s Universal TA-XT2 Texture Analyzer. This machine, “essentially a mechanical mouth,” crushes food while monitoring it with twenty-five different sensors. After performing sophisticated calculations, it quantifies “bounce, creep, breaking point, density, crunchiness, chewiness, gumminess, lumpiness, rubberiness, springiness, slipperiness, smoothness, softness, wetness, juiciness, spreadability, springback, and tackiness” (128) to allow fast food companies’ labs to tailor products to get the exact “mouthfeel” they want (127). To do this, they turn back to chemistry and add “fats, gums, starches, emulsifiers, and stabilizers” until they reach exactly the mouthfeel they want (128). The textures of these foods contributes to the overall psychological experience of eating them, helping to indelibly etch them into customers’ memories.

B. The Nutritional Basis of Food Addiction

Pollan provides an interesting analysis of the dearth of nutrients in fast food, which, surprisingly, makes the body crave more fast food. He writes that according to “Bruce Ames, the renowned Berkeley biochemist... a body starved of critical nutrients will keep eating in the hope of obtaining them... unrelenting hunger ‘may be a biological strategy for obtaining missing nutrients’” (123–4). Agribusiness noticed that this would help improve business; *The Packer*, a produce industry publication, reported that declining nutrient levels in food would boost profits since people would have to eat more to take in the same amounts of nutrients (Pollan 119). If fast food companies get people to eat enough fast food that they become starved of nutrients, their bodies will compensate through physiological alterations that result in massively-increased appetites.

Not only do fast food companies serve low-nutrient foods, they choose foods that exert little-known but immensely powerful effects on the mind. These foods contain enormous amounts of complex chemicals. One class of these chemicals with particularly important implications for fast food dependence is the opioids. These chemicals activate opioid receptors in the brain. If enough opioids activate opioid receptors, many neurological events occur, resulting in “elation, a feeling of well-being...” (Hobson 274). The chain of events includes a release of a chemical called dopamine in the nucleus accumbens, an area of the brain that forms a “core component of brain reward circuits” (Johnson 1). This contributes to the euphoria that accompanies the presence of opioids (Hobson 275).

Pawel K. Olszewski and Allen S. Levine, two biologists at the University of Minnesota’s Minnesota Obesity Center, reviewed the dietary importance of opioid

receptors in the scientific literature. In one study that they discussed, researchers gave human subjects nalmefene, a drug that blocks opiate receptors. The people who took this drug temporarily lost their preference for their favorite food (507). At the other end of the spectrum, research subjects (in this case, rats) with abnormally high opiate levels in the brain ate significantly more than control rats, and, when given the choice, these rats opted for high-fat, high-sugar foods (509). But what brought about these heightened opiate levels? As it turns out, the consumption of sweet foods over time changes the pathways of neurons in the brain, increases opiate levels, and activates key areas that increase appetite and the preference for fatty, sugary foods (508). Another study discovered that such a diet increases the levels of opiates in the hypothalamus (508). The hypothalamus controls eating behavior (Martindale 27), which may have precipitated the effect of an increased preference for fatty, sugary foods. Based on these studies, we know that diets rich in fat and sugar lead to increases in opiate concentrations in the brain. In the short term, these cause a mild high or euphoria. In the long term, these opiates change the structure of the brain and lead to a preference for eating more fatty, sugary foods.

Not only do foods affect the brain's production of opioids, but foods themselves can actually contain opioids. Spinach, wheat, and milk contain molecules called opioid peptides that bear chemical similarity to the body's opioids, to morphine, and to heroin, and can bind to the brain opioid receptors (Zioudrou 2446). Stanisław Kamiński in the University of Warmia and Mazury Department of Animal Genetics reviewed the scientific literature about opioids in dairy products. One of the main proteins in milk is casein, which, when broken up, can form molecules called casomorphins. These

molecules can cross from the bloodstream to the brain, and, when they do this, they bind to opioid receptors and influence the functioning of the brain (194). Free casomorphins are present in minute amounts in milk (192), although many more casomorphin molecules are bound up as part of casein molecules (190). But when dairies process milk, more casein molecules are broken up, releasing more casomorphins. Coagulation and ripening in cheese release even more casomorphins, and the process of digesting dairy foods releases still more (190). Because of these opioids, milkshakes, ice cream, and cheese in menu items at fast food restaurants not only have euphoric and subtly addictive properties, but also cause customers to develop stronger appetites, especially for fatty and sugary foods. Refined white flour in cheeseburger buns also contributes to this effect; it contains chemicals that the body converts to opioids.

Not only do fast food companies use their knowledge of opioids to induce dependence on fast food in their customers, they also take advantage of the leptin system to influence people to eat more of their products. In *New Scientist*, Diane Martindale explains that fat cells secrete leptin, which curbs the appetite (especially for fatty foods). Normally, when people gain weight (as fatty tissue), their new fat cells add to the amount of leptin in the bloodstream. When leptin reaches the hypothalamus in the brain, it signals the hypothalamus to curb the appetite. Conversely, when people lose weight, they lose fat cells, causing leptin levels to drop, which signals the body to eat more to prevent starvation. Unfortunately, this mechanism is sensitive, and obese people often override it and “develop resistance to leptin’s power” (27). Prolonged time eating far too much food with far too much fat makes the hypothalamus begin to interpret elevated leptin levels as normal. This also means that the hypothalamus will interpret returns to normal levels

(from weight loss) as a starvation warning (28). Because of this, obese fast food addicts often fall into positive feedback loops where their fatty diets lead to increased leptin, their brain interprets this higher leptin level as normal, and they binge on even more fatty foods whenever they lose even a bit of weight. In the lab, Jiali Wang from the Albert Einstein College of Medicine found that this phenomenon—known as leptin resistance—develops rapidly after overfeeding. He interprets this as a mechanism for storing up fat when the body knows that food is plentiful (2786), but this mechanism, of course, does not make sense in a modern Western context that has nearly unlimited access to fast food. In rats, Wang noticed leptin resistance kicking in after just three days of overfeeding on a fatty diet (2786). In this experiment, however, no treatment group had its leptin levels checked after a time frame of fewer than three days, so the possibility exists that leptin resistance could set in even earlier.

Most cocaine and heroin addicts, according to Paul M. Johnson and Paul J. Kenny from the Scripps Research Institute, know the “negative health and social consequences” of their addictions, yet they continue to use drugs. Analogously, these two authors claim that “overweight and obese individuals continue to overeat despite the well-known... consequences” (1). Johnson and Kenny performed a study in which they looked at the brain activity in the reward circuits of rats. They had three different groups of rats. One group only got to eat standard lab rat chow. The other two groups could choose from standard lab rat chow, or a “cafeteria-style” diet for limited amounts of time. “The cafeteria diet consisted of bacon, sausage, cheesecake, pound cake, frosting and chocolate” (6). One of these two “cafeteria-style” diet groups could eat the cafeteria food for one hour per day, and the other could eat it for eighteen to twenty-three hours per day

(1). After forty days of this, the extended-access rats gained massive amounts of weight compared to the other two groups. Their reward systems developed a tolerance to this diet, and they had to eat more of the cafeteria food over time to reap the same psychological rewards. The researchers noted that this tolerance manifested as a depression of the brain's reward system that appeared similar to rats addicted to cocaine and heroin (2). This study raises perhaps the most startling idea of them all: fast food lovers may develop addictions not particularly different from cocaine addicts and heroin junkies.

II. The Addictive Design of Restaurants

Fast food companies do not just stop at engineering addictive foods. The individual restaurants also tailor their color schemes to subtly boost customers' hunger. As Jung said in *Mandala Symbolism*, "I knew from experience that vivid colors seem to attract the unconscious" (qtd. in Riley 306). Modern science has confirmed this. "Studies show that babies cry less in blue light, and that people overestimate the passage of time in red light," writes Steinhart. "Factory workers who complained that black boxes they had to lift were too heavy stopped complaining when the boxes were painted green. Clearly, there is a world of color to which we respond without really understanding" (8). As shown in Figure 2, the McDonald's exterior makes extensive use of red and gold. According to Riley, who once again quotes Jung, "Gold is the single most important color. It expresses 'sunlight, value, divinity even,' the apex of spirituality, and intuition'" (307). This shrine to addiction also uses copious amounts of

red, which “Jung... mentions in conjunction with blood and wine, whose further resonances are unmistakable” (308). Steinhart explains that the color red “makes us hungry, which is why restaurants often have red walls or furnishings” (9). McDonald’s recently got a makeover that will add even greater appeal to its franchises. Although the “traditional McDonald’s yellow and red colors will remain,” the renovated restaurants all have softer lighting, and also have terra cotta and sage green added to the color scheme (Pallavi). These comforting earth tones and natural greens will theoretically complement the comfort food flavors in the menu.



Fig. 2. A renovated McDonald’s restaurant’s exterior. Note the extensive use of red and gold coloring (Pallavi).

The basic design features of McDonald’s restaurants also cater to increasing the influence of the altered state. The “Playplace,” kid’s meals, and cartoon characters accompanying the food attracts children to the high-fat diet, which, according to Martindale, will result in a preference for fatty foods and a propensity towards obesity

when they grow up (28). The drive-through window, long hours, and ubiquity of fast food restaurants allows people extended access to fatty foods, just as rats had, which will result in more effective hijacking of their reward systems, leading to addiction.

Interestingly, McDonald's competitors could actually help McDonald's in getting people addicted to fast food by offering it in more places and at more times, indicating a possible synergy from competition.



Fig. 3. The “Linger Zone” in a newly-renovated McDonald's restaurant. Note the use of red, gold, earth tones, and sage greens, and the comfortable atmosphere (Pallavi).

McDonald's redesign adds a new feature to the franchise's basic design that will allow McDonald's to take further advantage of its psychoactive products. Renovated McDonald's franchises have a “Linger Zone,” an area with armchairs and wireless internet access, as shown in Figure 3 (Pallavi). First, the “Linger Zone” will prolong meals, which will give opiates, the glycemic crash, and perhaps even leptin resistance time to take effect. This will send customers back to the counter to order seconds.

Second, this “Linger Zone” appeals to a young demographic, which will impress in more young people a loyalty to McDonald’s. “The key to a successful franchise, according to many texts on the subject, can be expressed in one word: ‘uniformity,’” writes Schlosser (5). With this in mind, McDonald’s is forcing this redesign on all of its franchises, ensuring that each franchise maximizes its exploitation of the altered state.

In the end, we see that fast food companies are very effective at exploiting their customers. It is no wonder that they have grown so wealthy and so powerful. This represents a terrible burden on Americans’ health. It also shows us that we do not make our decisions about food and restaurants as objectively as we think we do. Perhaps the profit motive for such exploitation of the altered state exemplifies the horrid outcomes that come from capitalism. Yet in such a system, we can vote with our dollars, and, in doing so, make sure that Yum! Brands, Burger King, and McDonald’s do not get elected.

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