The Best of the Whitesell Prize Competition
2012–2013

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

10th Edition, Fall 2013
The Writing Center at 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 students 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.

My great appreciation goes to this year’s Whitesell Prize judges. Professors Jaime Blair and Fronefield Crawford and tutors Teresa Kline and Douglas Hill awarded the prize in Foundations. Professors Mary Ann Levine and Jeremy Moss along with tutors Alexis Teevens and Alex Hartline were the judges for the First-Year Writing Requirement competition.

Many thanks go to Judith Stapleton for compiling this booklet.

Daniel Frick
Director, Writing Center
November 2013
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## Foundations

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Assignment:

Franklin & Marshall College
TDF170: Film Genre: Demons and Dancers
Professor Jeremy Moss

Objective: To better understanding Hollywood musical genre, and the latent cultural representations and social ramifications therein, by examining and comparing the politics and poetics of two song and dance numbers

Task: Analyze and make an argument around a controversy within these music numbers:

A Song, a Dance, and a Political Message

A common aspiration for little girls in our society is to become a movie star. But before 1920, many dreamt instead of the right to cast a vote as a citizen of the United States. After this dream came true with the granting of Suffrage, larger numbers of women began to bid for political offices with great strength in the 1950s. Yet, their campaigns were curtailed by an unexpected yet cherished medium -- Hollywood cinema. These films, enjoyed by most of the population, actually reinforced ideologies of female inferiority. *Gold Diggers of 1933* (LeRoy/Berkeley, 1933) and *Singin’ In the Rain* (Donan/Kelly, 1952) exemplify this dangerous form of entertainment. The musical number “We’re in the Money” from *Gold Diggers* warns that a woman in power would be fiscally irresponsible, a particular liability during the Great Depression. “Broadway Melody” from *Singin’ in the Rain* demonstrates how women would inevitably succumb to bribery at a time when they strove to fully enter the public sphere. Through the skimpy costuming, suggestive choreography, and authoritative male characters in these sequences, the directors implicitly emphasize fear of a woman in power.

At the time when *Gold Diggers of 1933* appeared on the silver screen in the early 1930s, negative attitudes about women in politics ran persistently high, despite the recent granting of suffrage to women through the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Sixty percent of all American citizens – of both genders – believed that women should not pursue a career in politics, as revealed in the first national political poll held in the 1930s. One-half of these citizens showed exceptionally strong opposition to a woman holding the specific office of governor or senator
Especially during the tumultuous time of the Great Depression, men were trusted to resolve the troubles, and women were expected to stay home, for in the home is where women have always held their matriarchal power (Stacey 13-14). These were the attitudes held by many audience members who saw *Gold Diggers* in the theatre.

Strikingly, the opening number of *Gold Diggers*, “We’re in the Money,” demonstrates the traditionalist sentiments held by the film’s makers and viewers. The girls dancing in the routine are clothed in scanty dresses made completely of silver coins, singing, “We’ve got a lot of what it takes to get along,” signifying that these girls have the qualifications – and the money – necessary to rejuvenate the hurting economy. The outfits serve as a metaphoric campaign for the female vote, and the following lyrics “with silver you can turn your dreams to gold” encourage the still-novice women voters to submit their ballot for feminist rights. But, the jolly song is interrupted by male characters in positions of authority who promptly remove Fay’s (Ginger Rogers) “coin belt around her crotch like a chastity belt” (Grant 62). This signals to the viewer that women are sexual creatures who are not responsible with money and that men are better suited to hold that executive role. One man even takes a chair away from underneath a seated female, symbolically deposing her from her throne and power to take it for himself.

During the actual musical number, even the minutest details of the costuming and choreography expand on these same old-fashioned ideologies regarding the political status of women. All the female dancers in “We’re in the Money” are dressed identically, their hats preventing the audience from discerning any individuality. The typical wide-angle shots of a Busby Berkeley film show dozens of dancers in perfect and total unison. The few women who wear the varied costumes seem to be representing different cultures of the world, even daring to extend the metaphor to all women globally. These two important elements of *mise-en-scene*
allude that all women, without exemptions, would act in the same manner if placed in a position of authority. Messages such as these are not unique to *Gold Diggers*, or to Berkeley’s directing style, but are a major part of Hollywood’s “golden age musical” contributing to paradigms of inferiority in women.

Despite these overwhelming characteristics, a hint of positivity deceivingly surfaces in the choreography, as Fay is briefly shown in an illusion of having multiple arms attached to her body, showing the viewer that a woman has the capability to juggle numerous tasks thrust upon her. However, this image quickly shatters when the camera curiously shifts into high angle, and we see the several other women standing behind her, implying that just one woman alone could not get the job done. Though the coins that these women wear as costumes read “Liberty,” they are trapped as victims of societal restrictions due to stereotypical beliefs about the capabilities of their gender, distributed to society through seemingly happy-go-lucky musical numbers.

In reality, these intended societal restrictions did not impede female ambition, as World War II demanded that women leave the home and take on men’s jobs. Feminine figures rose to the cultural spotlight, such as “Rosie the Riveter’s” call to action in the workplace, which today’s generation still hears with fondness. In 1945, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt completed twelve years of active influence in her husband’s presidency, known for campaigning with him and even giving press conferences to controversially voice her own opinion (Gruberg 18-19). What women now wanted was a broader identity of their own worth, not just as member of a family (Stacey 77). One empowered woman, Mary Donlon, gave a speech in 1947 advising women to “become proficient in politics if their voices are to be heard” (“Role in Politics Urged on Women” 52). She compares politics to “good housekeeping,” clarifying why a woman is particularly qualified for a governmental position, given her strict experience as a homemaker.
Despite the enthusiasm of the 1940s, society once more tried to suppress women into traditional housewife roles after the war’s end in the 1950s, the exact decade of the premiere of *Singin’ in the Rain*.

Fittingly, *Singin’ in the Rain* displays negative ideologies of women in power through the “Woman in Green” portion of the “Broadway Melody” segment, as initially the costuming typifies the woman as a suspiciously evil figure and the man as dignified. A characterization charged by stereotypes, Gene Kelly wears a business suit, looking ready to work a respectable job such as a politician, but Cyd Charisse is seductively clad in green, the color symbolizing envy and lust. Her short black hair and long cigarette remind the viewer of the devil, in sharp contrast to the wholesome, blonde character played by Debbie Reynolds. As the protagonist of the film, Reynolds’ character of Kathy Selden portrays an admirably strong example of what a woman can be, a characteristic that earns Kelly’s love. Yet, this love, heralded by Kelly in a previous musical number, is quickly forgotten when Charisse’s “woman in green” slithers onto the screen for her only scene of the entire film. Therefore, both the sweet, virginal lady and the sensual, fiendish figure hold the same influence over the average American represented by Kelly.

The risqué choreography and intimately close filming techniques in this scene mainly portray the political perceptions of the time and warn of the vexing powers women could assert if given the opportunity. In the “Woman in Green” sequence, the first image we see of Charisse is her foot, as the camera follows Kelly’s eyes, slowly panning up her body to her face. From the first shot onward, Charisse is the intended and willing target of Kelly’s erotic desires. During the actual dancing, the camera often only reveals the lower half of her body, focusing on the physical rather than emotional traits of her character. Her movements are very sensual, as we see mainly her backside before her front. She literally dances circles around Kelly, although they hardly
touch each other until she finally leaps into his arms towards the close of the routine, signaling that he has given in to her charm. The close-up directorial style of Kelly depicts the characters as sexual creatures and solidifies a hierarchy of men above women that the viewer subconsciously accepts (Doane 217). In a different manor than Berkeley’s wide-angle use of large groups in geometric patterns, seen in *Gold Diggers*, Kelly’s focus on individual dancers also spreads a similar message of qualms concerning a woman in a power role.

Though they are not dancing, the presence of other male characters in the scene emphasizes a woman succumbing to the gleam of bribery when tempted in both everyday life and the potential workplace. Three men in Mafia-esque tuxedos, the leader with a scar on his face and tossing a coin, watch Kelly and Charisse dance. Just as the couple nears their first kiss, the gang’s leader extends a diamond bracelet in front of Charisse, who slinks off with eyes fixated on the jewels and no second thought for Kelly. The audience feels slightly disappointed that this fleeting romance was stunted by a bribe, blaming the woman for accepting it. This causes viewers to adopt the idea that material objects will always lure women in a corruptive way, as men seem to be similarly lured by sex. When considering how this sequence parallels political attitudes toward each gender, the woman’s attraction to bribery and illegal organizations is perceived as the more dangerous fault in an elected leader because the viewer feels sympathy for Kelly that he lost Charisse to the other men and anger towards Charisse for doing so to him.

Though at the surface, a movie musical can provide an escape from reality, popular Hollywood cinema can actually solidify the beliefs of male superiority in politics and the subordinate qualities that should keep women in the home. Even across the boundaries of genre, movies were conveying the same fears of women in a power role as *Gold Diggers of 1933* and *Singin’ in the Rain*. Still, masses of people flock to the theatres, fully willing to enjoy three hours
of subliminal societal stereotypes. As India Edwards quoted, “Women get pretty much the treatment they are willing to accept” (Gruberg 36). Though the public may be accepting what they see delivered to them in these escapist movie-musicals, their complacency will only cause the beliefs to continue for generations to come.
Bibliography


First-Year Writing, Research Category

Honorable Mention

Mikayla Bean

“Amicus Brief: Cato Institute in Favor of Able”

Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
AMS160: Rights and Representations
Professor Allison Kibler

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 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.
Mikayla Bean
Professor Kibler
AMS160: Rights and Representations

Amicus Brief: Cato Institute in Favor of Able

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| Heins, Marjorie. *Not in Front of the Children: "indecency." Censorship and the Innocence of


Court Cases


Statement of interest:

The amicus curiae is Cato Institute, a public policy research organization dedicated to the principles of individual liberty, limited government, and free markets and remain unwavering in our support of these principles. Our organization, founded in 1977 is named after a series of letters written in eighteenth century England that spoke of a society free from excessive government control. Funded primarily by individual donations, the Institute conducts non-partisan research on a vast range of political issues, one being rampant media censorship by the government. As media increasingly intertwines themselves with everyday life, it is more vital than ever before to stop the spread of censorship by which the government is deciding what we and our children can and cannot do. We support Joe Able in his appeal to the Supreme Court, as
we believe in his individual freedom as well as the freedom of those who wish to purchase
certain violate or sexualized video games. Amicus submits this brief because it hopes to persuade
the Court that video game censorship and the laws based on the privatized rating system are a
direct violation of our First Amendment rights in regards to the vagueness of the rating system
and a lack of scientific evidence. This compelling government interest should surpass concerns
for restricting the exposure of sexuality and violence to children.

**Introduction:**

The Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance passed in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 2007 is in
direct violation of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This ordinance requires law
officials to enforce the Entertainment Software Rating Board, stating that retails cannot sell
games with a Mature, Adults Only, or Rating Pending to minors under the age of eighteen. This
ordinance defines a Mature rating by this standard: “predominantly appeals to minors’ morbid
interest in violence or minors’ prurient interest in sex, is patently offensive to prevailing
standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable material for persons
under the age of eighteen years, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value as a
whole for persons under that age, and contains either graphic violence of strong sexual content.”

This ordinance passed by mayor Charlie Smithgall violates the standards of liberty and
protection guaranteed to all by limiting our right to free speech and censoring artistic and literary
expression, and thus we ask that the Supreme Court take into consideration the arguments we put
forth.
A. The Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance does not pass the strict scrutiny test and is an unjustifiable form of content discrimination as it does not take into account other forms of media.

The Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance violates the First Amendment in Lancaster’s inability to prove a significant governmental interest that justifies this suppression of communication. Because the Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance regulates based on content, it is imperative that the Court reviews it according to a strict scrutiny standard. The Supreme Court’s primary concern is that limiting communication through content discrimination can “significantly impair the ability of individuals to communicate their views to others” (Stone 193). Therefore, the Court requires the government to prove that a law serves a substantial interest, is narrowly tailored and leaves open ample alternative means for communication to be considered Constitutional.

The Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance cannot be justified as a substantial government interest because there is no clear scientific evidence linking video game violence and sexuality to an increase of those behaviors in minors. In the recently decided case Interactive Digital Software v. St Louis City (2003), the city of St. Louis argued that protecting the psychological well being of minors was a compelling state interest to deter aggressive behavior in society or to themselves. The Court decided in this recent case “this vague generality falls short of a showing that video games are psychologically deleterious” (Interactive Digital Software v. St Louis City 2003). When it comes to the balancing test the Court wishes to “assure the availability of ample opportunities and outlets for expression, without needlessly undermining competing governmental interests” (Stone 193). Just as in the case of Brown v. Entertainment Merchants Association, Scalia stated that California, similarly to Lancaster, has a
much higher burden “and because (the government interest) bears the risk of uncertainty ambiguous proof will not suffice”. Therefore, this compelling state interest is void and the ordinance must be regarded as unconstitutional.

The second strict scrutiny standard that a law must be narrowly tailored towards the substantial government interest is not met because the Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance is too narrow. To restrict access to children for violent and sexual video games because of their obscenity and supposed negative affects, the ordinance must also take into consideration the many books, movies, television shows, and music that children are also exposed to. The courts have “uniformly rejected any state attempts to set video games apart, instead concluding that modern video games are analytically indistinguishable from other protected media” (Dunkelberger). The majority in Brown rejected the idea that because video games are highly interactive they should be distinguishable forms of media: “The ideas expressed by speech – whether it be violence, gore, or racism – and not its objective effects, may be the real reason for government proscription” (Brown v. Merchs Ass’n). The Brigham Young University Law Review discusses the “Choose Your Own Nightmare” series in which the reader makes choices that determine the plot of the story. This series demonstrates that other forms of violent media are also highly interactive. Brown quotes Judge Posner’s observation that “literature when it is successful draws the reader into the story, makes him identify with the characters, invites him to judge them and quarrel with them, to experience their joys and sufferings as the readers own” (Brown v. Merchs Ass’n). For media to be entertaining and meaningful, the viewer must interact in some way with the media. In “Professor Jenkins Goes to Washington”, Henry Jenkins discusses how “all the media wants to talk about is video game violence” (Jenkins). He explains the video game industries attempts to “build new forms of
interactive storytelling as part of popular…culture”, but the media increasingly focuses on violence and sexuality leading parents and government officials to develop an unfounded concern (Jenkins).

Lancaster is falling in the media trap and overstepping its Constitutional powers by deciding that video games are the main influence on the increase in children’s aggression and sexuality. The Eighth Circuit United States Court of Appeals stated, “We see no reason why the pictures, graphic design, concept art, sounds, music, stories, and narrative present in video games are not entitled to a similar protection” (Interactive Digital Software v. St Louis City). The court explained, "violent video games contain stories, imagery, age-old themes of literature, and messages, even an ‘ideology,' just as books and movies do” (Interactive Digital Software v. St Louis City).

Lastly, by limiting the sale of rated Mature video games to minors who are accompanied by their guardians, the government does not leave open ample alternative means to acquire and engage in this type of expression. Therefore, many positive affects of video games would be lost to minors with no other open channel of communication. One of the most important values found in the gaming world is social interaction. Many of the violent or sexual games the Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance censors for minors “contain what is know as a strong multiplayer component” (O’Holleran). For many minors, this is the easiest way for them to communicate and interact with others due to social aspects such as bullying and ostracizing that occurs most commonly in minors. Censoring these games denies many users their only source of comfort, a community in which they belong and are accepted. The argument that violent and sexual video games are harmful to the development of minors cannot hold up when one looks at ethical gains. Because video games are interactive, “players’ actions and decisions in ethically
compromising situations have an effect on the evolution of the character” (Sicart 208). Players become attached to the characters in the game, as readers do to characters in books or viewers do to characters in TV shows. The only difference is, in video games, players can act on this attachment and learn from it. In the video game *Fahrenheit*, “ethical judgment is necessary to preserve the integrity of the character and the fidelity to the game event, and to contribute to the flourishing of a player community where the player’s character can achieve excellence without being broken or harmed” (Sicart 81). In this way, video games, even when they contain violent or sexual content, can be more valuable than either books or television shows due to the ability they present for the minor to actively learn.

An example of a controversial video game whose positive affects would be lost to many minors without other means of retrieve is *Grand Theft Auto*, which contains ethical lessons that children would not be exposed to through the Lancaster ordinance. The main character in *Grand Theft Auto* wishes to begin a new life, but his poverty has led him to a life of crime on the streets. Through this game, although it contains violence and sexuality, players empathize with the main character even though he is made to live a life of crime. This game forces its players to question “our values, our behaviors, our conscience” (Sicart 105). It is a game that makes people think about the world from a different point of view without physically having to step into the life of crime.

**B. The Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance is a clear and unjustifiable restriction of the Constitutional rights of minors.**

The mayor of Lancaster cannot sign into law something that the community at large believes to have negative effects on minors; it must be supported by well-documented facts to be
constitutionally justifiable. In Lancaster, the government is acting to “silence speech by wrapping itself in the cloak of parental authority” (Interactive Digital Software v. St Louis City). It is not under the authority of the government to declare what content should be available to our children and what content should not. Although many courts have been willing to acknowledge “preventing harm to minors is a compelling state interest…in the abstract,” the government must prove that “the regulation will in fact alleviate these harms in a direct and material way”, which the city of Lancaster has not, therefore it cannot be permitted to regulate video games based on their content (Video Software Dealers Ass’n v. Schwarzenegger).

Although the government has an interest in protecting the youth, the Lancaster ordinance is attempting to create a new category for Constitutional content-based regulation aimed only at children. Although the First Amendment recognizes varying standards for adults and children and the governments right to protect the welfare of children, a suppression of speech still must be justifiably proved necessary. According to Scalia, “Minors are entitled to a significant measure of first amendment protection, and only in relatively narrow and well-defined circumstances may government bar public dissemination of protected materials to them” (Brown v. Merchs Ass’n). The issue is not whether the government has the power to protect children, but whether power to protect children includes a “free-floating power to restrict the ideas to which children may be exposed”(Brown v. Merchs Ass’n). Because a clear scientific connection has not been drawn, Lancaster does not retain the ability to freely censor what minors are exposed to in fear of potential harm.

Because this ordinance follows the rating system of the Entertainment Software Rating Board, the law is open to change whenever the ESRB alters its rating. The ability for a private, non-government regulated company to have this amount of sway over the law is dangerous at
best. To delegate this power to the ESRB is an “unconstitutional delegation of powers” (Calvert and Richards). The ratings of video games, according to ESRB, are given by “three trained raters” who assign ratings based on “the viewing of videotaped footage of the game supplied by the games producer, along with additional game descriptors” (Kirsh 316). It is alarming that three people have the power to assign ratings to games that are then implemented by law. Who or what is in place to balance the power these three individuals hold? For a special interest group or corporation to influence the decisions of three individuals would not be out of the question, and thus a system needs to be put in place to assess for this risk. Children are at risk of losing their freedom of speech and expression through video games due to the ESRB’s faulty rating system.

In *American Amusement Machine Ass’n v. Kendrink* (2001), Judge Posner states “people are unlikely to become well-functioning, independent-minded adults and responsible citizens if they are raised in an intellectual bubble”. Children have forever grown up exposed to the theme of violence, such as in fairy tales collected by Grimm or the horror movie Frankenstein. All literature, movies, television, and other photographic media are in some sense interactive, and thus to create laws that censor only video games based on the rating system is grossly erroneous. Judge Posner also describes how “shielding children right up to the age of eighteen from exposure to violent descriptions and images would not only be quixotic, but deforming” (*American Amusement Machine Ass’n v. Kendrink*). If children are sheltered to such an extent that they cannot experience some forms of violence and sexuality that are extremely prevalent in the world today, they would lack the ability to properly respond. Due to this ordinance, parents or guardians cannot even give blanket consent for their child to purchase or play a Mature game but must accompany the child. Judge Posner discussed how “many parents are too busy to accompany their child to a game room; most teenagers would be deterred from playing these
games if they had to be accompanied by mom” (*American Amusement Machine Ass’n v. Kendrink*). This ordinance based upon the rating system is not only suspicious and dangerous in terms of the power it grants to a private system, but it is detrimental to the child who wishes to play and learn from certain games and cannot. Judge Posner speaks correctly when he argues, “conditioning a minor’s First Amendment rights on parental consent of this nature is a curtailment of those rights” (*American Amusement Machine Ass’n v. Kendrink*). The rating system and its consequences on Lancaster’s ordinance are undoubtedly unconstitutional in their nature due to the unjustifiable restrictions placed on minor’s speech and expression that they cannot attain from alternate media forms.

C. It is unjust for Lancaster to single out violent and sexual video games under the name of obscenity.

The Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance passed in Lancaster, Pennsylvania uses the language of the obscenity exception to band together both sexuality and violence. Violence is not obscenity, and the two must be kept separate in the law. The appellate court under Judge Posner refused to “conflate the regulation of obscenity with the regulation of violent images” (Calvert and Richards). Justice Burger delivered the opinion in which the Court defined the Miller Test as the three-pronged rule for determining obscenity. Violence does not appeal to the prurient interests of the average person or describe in a patently offensive way sexual conduct defined by state law (*Miller v. California*). The Court has previously observed, “Material that contains violence but not depictions or descriptions of sexual conduct cannot be obscene. Simply put, depictions of violence cannot fall within the legal definition of obscenity for either minors or adults” (*Interactive Digital Software v. St Louis City*).
Violence must be considered a separate category under the First Amendment as many times stories and portrayals of violence are strategically used to express strong emotions and opinions. The rating given by the ESRB does not differentiate between violence and sexuality in its ratings, and the ratings themselves are too broad and varying. This is an issue for retailers because parents do not understand the ratings and thus assume a game rated Mature contains both violent and sexual content. Ratings can be found on the front of every video game. Mature, or M, is defined as for ages seventeen and older and contains mature sexual themes, intense violence, and/or strong language. In this way, the rating is defining six year olds and sixteen year olds as having the same maturity level and moral sensibility. Although the Supreme Court decided in *Ginsburg v. New York* that there is a variable definition for obscenity, meaning more obscenity can be restricted for minors, this decision was weak to begin with and has deteriorated even further since. The majority leader in *Ginsburg*, Justice Brennan, has since expressed “‘grave doubts’ that the variable-obscenity test he had created in *Ginsburg v. New York* ‘could be sustained today’”(Heins 86). In her book *Not In Front of the Children*, Marjorie Heins describes the Commission for Obscenity and Pornography, appointed by Congress, conducted research regarding the influence of obscene materials on minors. The Commissioners concluded, “that it was not speech about sex but ‘disorganized family relationships and unfavorable peer influences’ that generally accounted for ‘harmful sexual behavior or adverse character development’”(79).

The rating of Mature given to games by the ESRB then put into law by the Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance is overly broad in its description of obscenity. Allowing the private ESRB to regulate the law through ratings could be “economically burdensome to retailers” (Dunkelberger). A main reason for this is because a majority of parents use the rating system as a guide for what they will buy and allow their children to play, although many do not
fully understand it. In *Children, Adolescents, and Media Violence: A Critical Look at the Research*, Steven Kirsh states, “nearly 80% of parents surveyed state they use ratings to help guide their choices” (Kirsh 318). A majority of parents do not understand that a game can be rated Mature simply because there is a use of strong language. For Lancaster’s ordinance to resemble *Miller’s* obscenity, it implies that the government misunderstands the rating system and parents will assume that rated Mature video games are always obscene.

Even when video games contain sexually explicit content, they cannot be regulated constitutionally due to their artistic value. Because video games are highly interactive, their artistic and literary value is even greater. In *The Ethics of Computer Games*, Miguel Sicart describes the artistic aspects of video games that players can be involved in, such as designer their own characters. He describes the “multiple options for customization…present in many contemporary computer games” (Sicart 78). Creating ones “avatar” could possibly take hours, and for many “the way their avatar looks is extremely relevant” (Sicart 78). The artistic detail and creativity put into these video games gives it value not only for the creator but society who is able to interact and create as well.

Because the Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance violates the First Amendment to the Constitution through its content regulation, restriction on the speech and expression rights of minors, and the misuse of the obscenity doctrine, this ordinance should be found unconstitutional.

**D. Researchers have never been able to draw a clear connection between violent and sexual video games and minors who exhibit increased violence and sexuality in the real world.**
The author Marjorie Heins describes how “obviously, countless violent and sexual acts throughout history have occurred in the absence of any stimulus from television, books, or pornography; likewise, teenage girls became pregnant long before soap operas portrayed explicit sex; and children misbehaved before the introduction of crime comics or Tom and Jerry cartoons” (241). This humorous anecdote illustrates the point that no researchers have been able to prove a direct link with violent and sexual media and an increase in those activities among minors. At most, to this date, “researchers have been able to show a correlation between playing violent video games and a slightly increased level of aggressive thoughts and behavior... but it is impossible to know which way the casual relationship runs” (O’Holleran). Much of this research does not take into effect the many other factors that contribute to the levels of aggression found in children.

Many preexisting conditions enable and exacerbate aggression without the presence of violent video games. The studies, which randomly select children, do not test for these preexisting conditions if they are not already listed, leading to inaccurate test results. Some children have a predisposition towards aggression. Environmental experiences “can alter the child’s genetically predisposed aggressive tendencies, either by increasing them or by decreasing them” (Kirsh 252). These environmental factors can include parenting styles such as authoritative parenting and permissive parenting. Children with authoritative parents “display high levels of self-esteem and are more sociable” while children with permissive or uninvolved parents “show the greatest levels of aggressive behavior across development” (Kirsh 260). Environmental factors also include siblings, peers, and neighborhoods in which children live. For example, children living in violent neighborhoods experience high levels of victimization and impoverishment, as well as witnessing violence against others. In such neighborhoods, between
“40% to 60% of children report witnessing a shooting, stabbing, or killing” and in turn are more likely to “endorse the use of aggression in their personal lives than are children who have not witnessed violence firsthand” (Kirsh 265). Temperament is a biological predisposition that is also greatly affected by an individual’s environment. By randomly selecting children to participate in studies that attempt to link video game aggression to increased aggression in an individual, not taking such factors into account generate erroneous results.

In addition to genetics and the influence of environment, there are many other biological factors that contribute to aggression in ways that flaw date reports. In the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis (HPA) the “relative difference between the hormones DHEA and cortisol release may play an important role in aggression” (Kirsh 253). Throughout childhood HPA Axis activity changes, thus as some points children can have a greater predisposition to aggression than other times throughout development. Because “children are subject to so many influences – their parents, their teachers, their peers, poverty, and crime – that it is difficult to isolate any particular variable as the source of their troubles” (Calvert, Bunker, Bissellx). Proving a connection between violent and/or sexual video games and a child’s aggressive or inappropriate behavior is not a task that easily lends itself to empirical analysis.

Effect studies of video games are flawed in that they neglect the “two elements of fundamental importance for the ethics of games: the game as designed object/experience, and the moral presence of the player” (Sicat 202). Video games are designed so the player is able to submerse themself into the experience of the characters. This submersion creates a more moral player due to the desire for all players to share a fair and equally challenging game. By leaving these two aspects out, effect studies are calculating only the negative effect size without taking into consideration any of the outweighing positive effects. Sicart describes how “the design of
computer games is not neutral” (202). Therefore, games are balanced by creating an “appropriate equilibrium between the actions the player can do against other agents and the negative consequences of those actions” (Sicart 203). Additionally, out of the two main studies used to conduct this research, both studies contain experimental flaws. Experimental studies are those in which a researcher “randomly assigns participants to different treatment and control conditions” (Gentile 15). In addition to the problem that random selection leads to the lack of knowledge of a child’s background or biological disposition to aggression, experimental studies “cannot measure the most serious levels of aggression for ethical reasons” (Gentile 15). Researchers cannot assign newborns to grow up in certain controlled environments, and thus their findings all have some elements of uncertainty. The second type of study is a cross-sectional correlation study in which the independent variable and dependent variable are measured once at the same point in time. In these studies, “causality is much more difficult to establish”, and thus even a “strong positive correlation does not guarantee that video game violence exposure causally contributed to the fighting behavior” (Gentile 16). It would be wrong for any ordinance or government to rely on studies that are so flawed in nature.

Conclusion

The Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance in Lancaster is unconstitutional in its censorship of First Amendment right to freedom of speech. A compelling government interest cannot be proven because the relationship between violent and/ or sexual video games and aggression and inappropriate behavior in children has not been accurately established. The stated negative effects of violent and sexual video games do not take into account the many positive effects, such as social connections and the gratification of overcoming challenges, leading to
skewed results. The amicus curiae respectfully submit this brief in hopes that the Court will seriously consider the glaring unconstitutionality of the Family Entertainment Protection Ordinance. To protect the freedom of minors and their ability to communicate as the founders of this nation intended, the Court must rule in favor of Able and in favor of liberty.
First-Year Writing, Research Category

Honorable Mention

Erin Moyer

“The Way We Were: The Far-Reaching Effects of Nixon’s Failed Rehabilitation”

Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
AMS110: America in the Age of Nixon
Professor Daniel Frick

From the list provided, select a topic—with a corresponding question—that interests you. Next, research what historians, journalists, cultural observers, and perhaps even documentary filmmakers have to say about your topic and question. Then, write a seven to ten page essay that:

• Answers your question. (If you discover that there is no consensus behind a single answer, map out the areas of disagreement and take a position in the argument.)

and

• Explores what the answer to your question (or the lack of a definitive answer) tells us about the United States during the Nixon era.
“The Way We Were”: The Far-Reaching Effects of Nixon’s Failed Rehabilitation

“It’s not your imagination, you are seeing Richard Nixon everywhere.” So assures a therapist to his stricken patient in a classic 1988 *New Yorker* cartoon by James Stevenson. Though but one glum man lies on his couch, the therapist’s words would spread and speak to wracked Americans everywhere. No, it wasn’t the country’s collective imagination; Richard Nixon was suddenly everywhere. Just twelve years after Watergate and the world seemed to finally swallow him up, Richard Nixon was back, and, by all appearances, taking that world by storm once more. Upon his death in 1994, many historians even began to assert that Nixon had somehow eked out the ultimate comeback, transforming himself from America’s most absolute crook into an avuncular, intellectual elder statesman. Though widespread, these claims ultimately prove to be fatally far-flung. Richard Nixon could never untangle his legacy or his image from the web of Watergate, and the attention his (noticeably transparent) character campaign received is often mistaken for a surplus of redemption. Neither Nixon’s image nor American trust in the governmental system could fully recover from the societal sense of cynicism and betrayal spawned by the Watergate scandal, a turn which proved a curse for Nixon and a blessing for American politics.

The many stops Nixon made along his “road back” are often taken as evidence of his successful comeback; many scholars choose to look simply to a rough sketch of what Nixon did in his retirement as proof of its redeeming qualities. Graduate student Irina Belenky, for instance, claims in her *Presidential Studies Quarterly* article, “The Making of the Ex-Presidents, 1797-
1993: Six Recurrent Models,” that Nixon, classified fittingly in her group “Seekers of Vindication” (161), did attain the exoneration he so desperately sought in a decades-long process of composing nine successful books, accepting select speaking engagements, and traveling overseas, where he was met at every turn with a warm welcome (162). Likewise, television magnate Sir David Frost, who so famously put Nixon on a televised trial before the American people in the Frost/Nixon interviews, carefully chronicles the details of Nixon’s post-resignation life in his book *Frost/Nixon: Behind the Scenes of the Nixon Interviews*, from his cautious beginnings on the public-speaking circuit (164), to his sudden swell of public success in 1980 (167), all of which culminated in, to quote Frost, “one of the most remarkable achievements in the history of American politics” (183). The scope of these material achievements seems to many far too vast to deny Nixon’s comeback; surely he could not have remained a broken man with such padding to his résumé.

The staggeringly “good press” Richard Nixon and his campaign of character received from the media, his classic arch nemesis, also move many to conclude that he rehabilitated his legacy. As Belenky is quick to note, in his retirement, journalists practically swarmed him for interviews, and even the *New York Times*, the Gray Lady of Journalism, once referred to him as an “elder statesman” in 1984 (162-163). Indeed, in a most remarkable turn-around for the man so famously beleaguered by the press throughout his career, *Newsweek* magazine—spearheaded by his former enemy Katherine Graham—ran an almost gloriously triumphant cover story hailing Nixon’s resurgence, blaring “He’s Back!” from newsstands and supermarket check-outs across America (Martz et al 26). When Nixon had ‘enemies’ like these in retirement, who needed friends? This positive press attention, therefore, is often used as evidence of Nixon’s rejuvenation.
The purportedly large amount of respect and consideration Nixon received from dignitaries in his retirement is often taken as further proof of his revival. A 1985 *New York Times* piece by journalist Gerald M. Boyd, “On Nixon’s Rehabilitation of Nixon,” takes note of the apparent amount of respect and even deference paid to Nixon by President Reagan and his team, from consulting the ex-president in the 1984 presidential campaign, to the frequent phone calls between the two men (A32). As Frost affirms, Nixon even took to hosting dinners in his home specifically for dignitaries (176-177), not so much pandering to the establishment as creating his own. The *Newsweek* article “The Road Back” also highlights some of the deference paid to Nixon as a self-cast “master of foreign policy,” from his selection by Reagan to stand alongside Presidents Ford and Carter as American representation at Anwar Sadat’s funeral, to the memos and advice he paid to Reagan from his home in Saddle River, New Jersey (Martz et al 29). These instances are often taken at face value as incontrovertible proof that Nixon’s wounds had been mended, and his status restored.

Many latch on to the image of a kinder, gentler Nixon allegedly on display in his elder years as additional evidence of his rehabilitation. Historian Conrad Black is quick to note in his exhaustive, aptly titled biography *Nixon: A Life in Full*, that the ex-president became quite the surprise family man in his retirement, lavishing attention and affection onto his three grandchildren (1031). “The Road Back” also paints a rosy picture of Grandpa Nixon, seeking sanctuary in his family life, and often indulging in a long-distance love of baseball with his grandson, Christopher, by watching the same game over the phone (Martz et al 30). Nixon also gave off the aura of a more mellowed, easygoing soul in his retirement, one who stood on slightly warmer—albeit, perhaps, lukewarm—terms with Henry Kissinger (Black 1031) and could land a dicey joke about his biggest lesson in life (“just destroy all the tapes”) in front of the
American National Press Association (Martz et al 27). These images of a retired Nixon, telling jokes and watching ballgames, contrast so sharply to those of career Nixon, cheerless and cold enough to manipulate even his family dog into a tool for political gain, that many scholars and surveyors alike find it impossible to deny Nixon’s recoup of his legacy.

Ultimately, though, the shadow of Watergate loomed too large for Nixon to ever outrun; the American people never managed to separate Nixon, as a man, from Watergate, an association that would doom his legacy. Take, for example, the text of a front-page New York Times article published upon Nixon’s death by journalist R.W. Apple. Within the very first paragraph, the fallout from the Watergate scandal is situated front and center (1). Note that the article does not lead off with the opening of relations with China, his extensive international travels and knowledge, or any other classic, positive achievements of Nixon’s made mid- or post-presidency. Rather, it focuses on the fact that he resigned the presidency at all. This distinction stands as proof, then, that Nixon’s fall from grace would always be fated to eclipse his good work. But Watergate’s dominance over Nixon’s legacy is not limited to obituaries; even Richard Nixon himself, his own best friend, his own biggest fan, seems to worry about the place Watergate will occupy within his public memory. In his memoir, In the Arena, for instance, Nixon dedicates a rather large section of text to tackling the falsehoods of all that has been claimed of the Watergate scandal, going to great pains to debunk no less than a dozen highly specific “myths” of the affair (34), from the most “unfair,” that he somehow benefited monetarily from his post as President (38), to the most “ridiculous,” that he was the first Commander-in-Chief to ever record all official and unofficial proceedings. Surely these nitty-gritty recitations of denial are not healthy or expected behavior from a man who also wistfully reminisces about the first time he saw the Grand Canyon within the same work (368), and
announces that he has finally, finally achieved that Quaker goal of inner peace (369). It is plain, then, that the nature of the Watergate scandal is so overwhelming, even the never-say-quit Comeback Kid himself is embroiled in doubt over the state of his legacy.

Moreover, portions of Nixon’s career and presidency that stand entirely separate from the Watergate scandal still remain hopelessly linked to it. According to scholar James D. King’s 1999 article featured Presidential Studies Quarterly, for example, Nixon’s post-presidency approval ratings defy the typical “absence makes the heart grow fonder” bump that boosts the ratings of every other modern president, an anomaly he shares only with Lyndon Baines “How Many Kids Did You Kill Today?” Johnson (170). Nixon, additionally, stands as the only post-World War II president to be overwhelmingly graded by both historians and average Americans alike as a “failure” (172). These studies, conducted five years after Nixon’s death and twenty-five years after his resignation, point to the quantifiable, statistically concrete truth: in far cry from the redeemed family man of loyalist lore, the public could never see President Nixon as anything other than a flop.

Those who assure Americans of Nixon’s rejuvenation, furthermore, often tend to mistake attention for redemption. For instance, the Newsweek article “The Road Back,” which ran under the triumphant banner headline “He’s Back!” stands as a classic example of Nixon’s marvel of a rebound. But look to the reasons the article cites to back up its dramatic proclamation: being swarmed at Burger King stop, writing an article about summitry, fielding phone calls from Ronald Reagan, appearing on a Rolling Stone’s list called, “Who’s Hot: The New Stars in Your Future” (Martz et al. 26). While enumerating such achievements and accolades may sound remarkable on paper, one must read on with a critical eye, and try to remember the actual value—or rather, the lack thereof—of what is being described here. As nice as it must be to, say,
be accosted for an autograph at a Burger King, there is no significant, material takeaway of any form of respect to be found here. Though Nixon is receiving press, and even good press at that, this cannot be mistaken for existing at a level equal to receiving regard and respect. There is a very real and clear difference between getting the press and getting renewed respect, and Nixon, as the *Newsweek* article makes plain, only managed to accomplish the former. Graduate student Belenky, too, falls into a similar trap as *Newsweek* with her *Presidential Studies Quarterly* article, “The Making of the Ex-Presidents, 1797-1993: Six Recurrent Models.” She seems to forget the same distinction *Newsweek* also overlooks: the causes for attention surrounding Nixon are not necessarily causes for celebration or commendation; one cannot, as Belenky seems to, assume that the press follows respect. Though Belenky proceeds to relate other instances to assert Nixon’s vindication, they all follow in the same vein—despite the fact journalists “besieged” him for interviews, the *New York Times* called an “elder statesman” in 1984, and his 1994 funeral was indeed attended by all five living presidents (163), it seems a bit quick to make the leap that his legacy was entirely restored, and his vindication was entirely achieved, simply for the attention that, arguably, would be paid to a highly controversial figure ordinarily, a turn of phrase used at one point by a newspaper, and an act of respect that, arguably, would have been paid to any president upon their passing. Belenky therefore makes the critical, yet common error of mistaking attention with redemption in her assessment of Nixon’s legacy.

As far as Nixon’s “Uncle Richard” image goes, the realms of American political and popular culture alike actually reveal a contradictory image: that of a nefarious, “dark Nixon.” David Greenberg speaks to this image of the dastardly “dark Nixon” throughout his work *Nixon’s Shadow: The History of An Image*. Greenberg concludes that honest assessments of Nixon’s entire life cannot be made without actually digesting Watergate, without confronting the
fact that no other president ever rang such a ring out of the Oval Office as Richard Nixon did (345). How, then, could anyone reasonably expect a “good-guy Nixon,” or a “rehabilitated Nixon,” to pervade American culture, when the overarching factor at play, Watergate, so obviously calls for a more “Machiavellian Nixon” model? American culture does not cuddle with an avuncular Nixon, but rather, cower from a villainous one.

Indeed, some contemporary portrayals of Nixon’s image take that villainous persona quite literally; aside from simply being “dark,” America’s ol’ “Uncle Nixon” is often regarded today as nothing short of a genuine criminal, tainting his legacy with an even more corrupt twist. Take, for instance, the fresh perspective two old hands offer on Watergate. In order to recognize the Watergate break-in’s fortieth anniversary, journalistic giants Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward published a reflection on the affair in the June 10 issue of this year’s *Washington Post*. The two speak to the scandal from a modern lens and ultimately conclude that they only peeked at something far, far larger and more insidious than they could have known (7). The record now shows that the worst of Nixon’s crimes were actually not committed around a cover-up gone awry; rather, Nixon’s White House corroded into a bona fide “criminal enterprise” (7), one which, as Bernstein and Woodward point out, he himself created a permanent record of with those notorious tapes. Bernstein and Woodward’s modern-day conclusions, therefore, convey the sheer persistence of Nixon’s criminal legacy, and illustrate beyond a doubt that Watergate, as well as its criminal connotations, stuck to Nixon far more than any of his positive, post-presidency markers ever did. Thus, Watergate functions as the footprint at the crime scene, the clue betraying Nixon’s seemingly squeaky-clean legacy.

The campaigning behind Nixon’s comeback, additionally, was far too plain to far too many of his countrymen to ever be construed as effective. Take, for instance, Boyd’s write-up of
Nixon’s rehabilitation in *The New York Times*. Though Boyd makes it clear that Nixon is indeed, by all outward appearances, bouncing back, his language also betrays a level of skepticism and even exasperation toward Nixon, calling on words such as “attempt,” “exercises,” and “effort to construct an image” to describe Nixon’s interactions with his party and President Reagan (A32). Make no mistake, the daily schedule of a kindly elder statesman would not be dismissed as an “exercise,” or viewed curtly an “attempt” at anything. Boyd’s article, therefore, makes it clear that some Americans were well aware of what Nixon was selling, and they were not so interested in buying. Even “The Road Back,” whose title is fairly self-explanatory in its assessment of Nixon’s legacy, seems to divulge a certain amount of awareness at Nixon’s campaign. One telling heading within the piece reads, “Plotting a Comeback” (Martz et al 27). This is, again, not the way a wise, well-regarded man-of-the-land would typically be described. This heading alone is proof, then, that many Americans took Nixon’s “resurgence” with a grain of salt, keeping ever in mind his famously tricky nature. Stephen E. Ambrose, additionally, author of a three-volume biography of Nixon’s life and an adamant believer in ‘the comeback’, cannot help but acknowledge the cunning at play behind the ex-president’s rise, describing his actions at various points as “brilliant,” “master strokes,” and “ingredients” (574-575). This frank language wholly acknowledges and even commends the calculation behind Nixon’s actions; even someone as loyal as Ambrose cannot get around it. As Greenberg further asserts within *Nixon’s Shadow: The History of An Image*, the very fact that so many insist Nixon remade his identity after his resignation is proof that they knew he was ruthlessly determined to be in control of that identity (Greenberg 346). Many Americans knew, then, that this “new Nixon” was not so new at all; the halo he tried to affix over his head could not obscure the gears whirring within it.
Nixon’s flop in his final turn as the “comeback kid” can be taken as a reassuring sign of the pragmatism of the American people; had Nixon been welcomed back to the top with open arms, it would have revealed a dangerously flip and apathetic public. For the American public to dismiss Nixon’s downfall as unfair or overblown, or, as Bernstein and Woodward suggest, succumb to the present notion that “the cover-up was worse than the crime” (1), is a terrifying proposition. It would indicate a people unaware of and uninterested in what truly happened as the tapes were rolling. It would indicate a people perfectly content to brush off illegal activity in their highest and most sacred branch of government. It would reveal a public who simply does not care about virtuosity in their leaders, or corruption in their government. Welcoming back a leader after he betrayed the American people so egregiously, so enormously, would actually be a betrayal of America itself. A forgiven Nixon would mean a forgiven crime. A forgiven crime would mean a forfeited stake in the nation and its most core values.

In death as in life, Richard Nixon is still everywhere. That ski-jump nose is forever inserted into the realms of pop culture, pressed against the glass of every government scandal, and stuck in book after book of cultural and historical discussion. This omnipresence, though revered by some and reviled by others, is ultimately an altogether encouraging sign. Try as he might, Nixon could never untangle his post-presidential image from its web of wrongdoing. Had he ever been able to accomplish the ultimate feat of prestidigitation and make Watergate disappear, it would have only meant the disappearance of American consciousness and concern in the common good.
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First-Year Writing, Non-Research Category

Whitesell Prize Winner

Erin Moyer

“No Country for Non-Men?: Vidal’s Critique of the Role of Women in American Politics”

Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
AMS110: America in the Age of Nixon
Professor Daniel Frick

Task: We have a “best man.” Maybe. But what about a “best woman”? Does Vidal’s play offer a critique of the role of women in American politics? (If so, explain and demonstrate what it is.) Or does the play itself buy into a sexist perspective? (If so, offer, and argue for, your own critique of Vidal’s drama.)
No Country for Non-Men?: Vidal’s Critique of the Role of Women in American Politics

A husband and wife huddle in their hotel suite, heads together. The first ballot of their party’s convention is just days away. The husband will do anything to be on it, and the wife intends to help him get there. They trade poll numbers, insights, and statistics back and forth, back and forth, like a particularly well-matched game of tennis. Suddenly, the husband receives word that the former President will arrive at the suite any moment to relay a crucial message. The husband leaps up, frantic, and turns to his copilot. He is desperate. He points. There is the bedroom. “Honey, you go in there… fix your face or something. The president’s on his way down” (Vidal 31). And with that, the woman who was just a resource, a colleague, a political partner in full, is back to being another “little wife,” whose rightful place is banishment in the bedroom. Countless American women have known this sort of understated affront. Within The Best Man, a play largely dedicated to, as one might imagine, men, American playwright Gore Vidal managed to capture those quietly marginalizing moments with a group of three different women. Through his focus on these women, he offers up an equally subtle, yet powerfully resonant critique of the limited role women play in American political life. By portraying his women characters as capable, potential politicians, be it for their sense of conviction, manipulation, or “politickin’,” Vidal is able to effectively critique how American women are often marginalized or unfairly branded by their roles in the political system.

Alice Russell, Bill’s long-suffering wife, serves Vidal as a particularly good example of the conviction and character that women are capable of bringing to the world of politics. At the convention, for example, it would seem that both the Russells’ campaign and marriage are
heading for the rocks after one nasty allegation. Though Alice generally shares her husband’s moral high ground (and will, at the play’s end, reunite with him there), she is so tortured by thoughts of their family’s problems becoming public fodder and of Joe Cantwell winning the nomination that she exclaims, “If you took a gun and shot him I’d help you if I thought that was the only way of keeping our lives…private” (Vidal 58). President Hockstader is there to proudly remark to Bill that, unlike him, his wife “doesn’t run away from a fight” (Vidal 58). This moment asserts Alice’s inner sense of principle. When confronted with a question of character, she displays an unwavering dedication to what she believes in the most: her family, her husband, and their cause, even if it should mean risking a fight. Alice also displays a great sense of commitment toward her husband, a trait made all the more remarkable given the rickety foundations of their relationship. She “said [she’d] do what [she] could to help” (Vidal 18) on the campaign trail, for instance, long after their spark and marriage vows have each fizzled out. She also answers with a clear, resolved “no” when he first asks her if he should drop out of the race (Vidal 43), and, at the play’s conclusion, agrees to stay with him (Vidal 79). This commitment relays Alice’s vast sense of character: she committed to this man, this life, and this cause long ago, and she will be seeing it through. Alice’s senses of conviction and character are, plainly, rock-solid, and there can be no doubt that her set of principles would stand head and shoulders above any practicing politician.

But Alice Russell is ultimately defined more by her plight than her sense of purpose. Vidal demonstrates how painfully limited the roles of women are in modern American politics by painting her character as the designated wife-along-in-tow with the Russell campaign. President Hockstader, for instance, reveals his take on Alice’s presence in a rather sardonic quote: “You’re an inspiration to me, Ms. Alice. Excuse me for not getting up, but would you
fetch me some branch water?” (Vidal 56). To Hockstader, her role is purely to serve a function, for show and for branch-water retrieval. Mrs. Gamadge, additionally, seems to view Alice’s place in the campaign in similarly functional terms. She describes her at one point as a “tremendous asset” (Vidal 15), the way one might also discuss a new investment or life insurance policy, and details her appearance—“the women like the way she doesn’t wear make-up and looks like a lady and seems shy…” (Vidal 15)—as though there is a certain, intentional strategy to how she looks. Alice is essentially kept around, not for her insight into the campaign, and not even for any love lingering between her and Bill, but rather because, in Mrs. Gamadge’s words, “it did Adlai Stevenson great harm, not having a wife” (Vidal 15) and, in Alice’s own words, “it’s considered bad form to get rid of the old wife” (Vidal 18). The role Vidal crafts for Alice in the campaign and therefore in politics is that of the trophy wife who is less and less of a prize every day. This poignant plot point is the perfect illustration of the limits Vidal perceives around women in politics: They take up whatever space men leave for them.

Ms. Mabel Cantwell, yet another of Vidal’s leading ladies in The Best Man, proves herself to be just as capable of mastering political happenings, as well as an often unkind code of conduct, as any male leader present in Philadelphia. Take, for instance, the very first scene the audience meets this Southern belle: She sits in the Cantwell’s suite, fussing over how her new hat looked on television—“clearly a mistake” (Vidal 29). But as soon as her husband and campaign fellow Don Blades enter the room, she flips a switch. She begins to talk politics and polls with the two gentlemen, rattling off numbers with striking precision: “Anyway, you’re two percent higher than last week with twelve percent undecided. Merwin gained one percent and Russell’s lost two percent” (Vidal 30). Where Mr. Cantwell has a question—“And Red China?”—, Mrs. Cantwell meets him with an answer—“(Promptly.) Forty-seven percent against
recognition. Twenty-three percent in favor. Thirty percent don’t know…” (Vidal 30)). The message here is subtle, yet unmistakable. Mabel is not just some Southern peach plucked from the student section at State College. She has an intelligence and an identity entirely her own, one just as well suited for politics as that of her husband. That affinity for politics is on display again when, as her husband and President Hockstader nearly come to blows in the Cantwell suite, Mabel—naturally, having been listening at the bedroom door—abruptly enters the room (Vidal 35). Her sudden appearance and simpering Southern hospitality—“Why, Mr. President! What a nice surprise, you dropping in on us like this!” (Vidal 35)—successfully force Hockstader to “regain his composure” (Vidal 35). Mabel’s entrance was a remarkably deft maneuver to diffuse an explosive situation, and it is further proof that she has the makings of a first-rate party leader.

But Mabel’s remarkable way with manipulation is best put on display during a press conference between herself, Alice Russell, and Sue-Ellen Gamadge. After cooing a of hymn praise for Alice’s children and her “courage,” Mabel is suddenly “ready for the kill” (Vidal 51). She begins to attack Alice for her involvement with a committee on birth control twenty years before, all the while sprinkling her assaults with that cloying brand of honeyed hatred: “…I think it took the courage of a lion…Of course I guess you didn’t know then your husband would be running for president one day and when you do that you just can’t afford to offend a lot of nice people who vote” (Vidal 51). Here Mabel passive-aggressively, skillfully, methodically takes Alice down, and with all of the practice and precision of an old political hand. Mabel Cantwell is, therefore, just as capable of ruthlessness and tricky tactics as any modern male politician; she might even “out-Cantwell” the original Cantwell himself.

But Mabel can never know for sure if she could best the resident family politician in a sparring match, for Vidal has created her character solely to stand as an example for sidelined
women across the nation. Despite the fact that Mabel is obviously a bright, politically skilled woman, she is marginalized for, quite simply, being a woman. Take, for example, that husband and wife sitting closely together in their suite. Those were the Cantwells, and that exchange captures the kind of rapport they share. But the arrival of Hockstader sends Mr. Cantwell into a tailspin, and, by extension, Mrs. Cantwell hustling for the bedroom. There is no real reason why she may not meet Hockstader; after all, he and Alice get along well (Vidal 20), and Mabel would certainly prove later that her presence can, at times, be quite valuable (Vidal 35). Yet instead, Mabel is instructed to go “fix her face or something” (Vidal 35), while the men sort out the small matter of who may or may not be running the country. Mabel is literally left shut out, cut off, and completely marginalized. Another significant, albeit subtler, example of this marginalization also occurs at the hands of Sue-Ellen Gamadge, who, in describing Mabel to Alice, glowingly refers to her as “one of the girls” (Vidal 16). Though Mabel is not being physically shut out of a room, as was the case before, she is still being denied a full role. Her every feature is condensed into one blithe, little phrase. By painting Mabel into such a corner, Vidal, therefore, seeks to illuminate how unfairly compressing the limitations of politics can be on clearly capable women.

From the wives, Vidal moves to Sue-Ellen Gamadge, the vibrant widow who relishes her status as the “Voice of the American Woman,” never mind the fact she attained it “by default” (Vidal 13). Out of the three women, Mrs. Gamadge holds perhaps the most expected qualities of a general politician—relentless hand-shaking, charisma, a certain degree of adroitness—and she carries herself just as effectively on the job as any man would. Simply observe, for example, her stage directions: Mrs. Gamadge first “sails into view,” and “seizes Russell for a picture,” deftly maneuvering the two of them into an amicable, patriotic pose, with “her left arm around him, her right arm raised in a salute” (Vidal 13). Mrs. Gamadge has thus but entered the room, and the
audience can already take a stab at her character. She is incredibly at ease with herself, and comes off as a confident, poised leader. For all of that poise, however, Mrs. Gamadge’s political instinct quickly emerges, and soon she is advising Alice Russell on her appearance (the verdict: “You…couldn’t…look…better!” (Vidal 16)) as well as the ideal, White House-hostess persona. Both of these pieces of insight show the depths of Mrs. Gamadge’s analysis and know-how, and the terrifying little hint she leaves as she departs from the Russell’s’ suite (described in the stage direction as the knife) about the “surprise” Joe Cantwell has in store for him (Vidal 17) is an eerie piece of proof that Mrs. Gamadge can weave a web of politics just about as well as any man on the market.

For all of her “deft maneuvers,” however, Sue-Ellen Gamadge cannot quite get out of the role into which she was pigeonholed. Vidal wrote Mrs. Gamadge as the only leader of a population of women to convey the imbalanced division of gender spheres within politics. Though men can lead all, women, even the “Voice of the American Woman” herself can only lead other women. As much as the men of the Russell and Cantwell campaigns seem to appreciate her company, for instance, they could never take Mrs. Gamadge seriously if she came to them with an insight that began with something other than “women think…. .” Her attempts to reason with Cantwell regarding what he planned to unleash on Russell ended with a kiss on the back of the neck and a quick getaway (Vidal 53). Mrs. Gamadge, therefore, absolutely capitalizes on her gender so as to capitalize on all the power she is allowed, hosting “real old-time hen fests” in her suite (Vidal 62), talking of bringing “us girls” together (Vidal 16), and speaking of who “the women” favor, as though she has intimate knowledge of every woman’s innermost thoughts (Vidal 14). For all of her tangible talent, Vidal has irrevocably boxed Mrs. Gamadge into a narrow leadership position in order to show the absurdity of America’s
oppressive political boundaries for gender. At another time, Vidal seems to say, Mrs. Gamadge could have been a star for her party. But in 1960, she was just a star for her gender.

_The Best Man_ is largely about, spoiler alert, finding the best man. But what many audiences of Gore Vidal’s timeless work often miss is the meaning associated with the three women of the ensemble, an ironic sort of twist within Vidal’s own critique of women being missed in American politics. Vidal deliberately paints his three leading ladies to each be equally strong women in their own right, each uniquely capable of leadership, and yet each all too commonly unable to truly be leaders. His restrained rebuff of the American political system takes American audiences that much closer to a greater awareness, a greater acceptance, and, eventually, to finding a “best woman.”
First-Year Writing, Non-Research Category

Honorable Mention

Shi Eun Lee

“Dancing Townsmen, Drunks, and Hunters in a House of Mirrors”

Assignment:
Franklin and Marshall College
MUS107: Composing
Professor John Carbon

Your paper will focus on Antonio Vivaldi’s *L’Autunno*, one of the four concerti in his famous *Le quattro stagioni* (The Four Seasons). First published in 1725, these concerti feature extra-musical elements used in very specific ways. One might argue that the resulting effects, specified in the music itself, pushed the concerto form towards the more modern version we think of today where soloist(s) are featured as virtuoso protagonists battling the orchestra.

Going to the musical score itself, provide a detailed analysis explaining how Vivaldi uses specific extra-musical associations to structure *L’Autunno*. In what ways do elements of the sonnet that the composer includes shape the instrumental writing? What kind of written indications does the composer place in the score and parts? How are these intended to give insight to the audience and the performers? You probably will want to include excerpts from the score in the body of your paper to make your arguments more coherent and convincing.

Does Red Priest’s performance of *L’Autunno* take any liberties with the written score that deviate from traditional Baroque performance practice? To answer this question you will need to rely on not just your own relatively uninformed opinion. Consult and cite writings of respected music critics. Do they agree or disagree about Red Priest’s interpretation of this piece?

*Your paper should be controlled by a modest thesis that you develop that is original, probably a synthesis of the ideas of several musicologists.*
Dancing Townsmen, Drunks, and Hunters in a House of Mirrors

Antonio Vivaldi is a celebrated baroque composer, most famously known as the author of *Le Quattro Stagioni*, or *The Four Seasons*, a group of four violin concertos remarkable for its use of word painting—a technique he borrowed from the Madrigalists of the Renaissance era—to illustrate objects, feelings, and ideas. In *L’Autunno*, the third season of the group, Vivaldi employs various techniques to portray a vivid picture of dancing townspeople, drunks, and huntsmen. Vivaldi provided a sonnet of unknown origin to accompany each season. These sonnets, when provided, can give the performers and audiences greater insight regarding the piece. Understanding the relationship between the sonnet and these musical elements is crucial to a deeper appreciation of *L’Autunno* and for a critical evaluation of a recent, unconventional performance of the aforementioned given by Red Priest, a modern baroque quartet famous for its unorthodox reinterpretations—or perhaps misinterpretations—of traditional works of classical music. In order to develop an informed opinion about this matter, it is important to explore different perspectives regarding interpretive liberty, and critically examine the composer-performer relationship. Having taken all these elements into account, my verdict on Red Priest’s *L’Autunno* is that it is an innovative but respectful interpretation of the piece.

Imagine waking up on a clear autumn day. The inviting crispness of the air, the rich foliage, and the satisfaction arising from the knowledge that one’s labor has been fruitful call for a celebration. The first movement of *L’Autunno* describes such a feast in which townspeople

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celebrate the harvest. Starting from measure 1, the strings usher the audience to a cheerful dance where peasants are celebrating the harvest. The musical phrases are short and repetitive, reminiscent of dance routines. The steady repetition of the pitch ‘A’ and regularly interrupting neighboring notes depict the pacing of the dance, suggesting stomping movements. The use of major chords through measure 32 transmits the cheerful lightheartedness of the dance.

From measure 33 however l’ubriaco, or the drunk, disrupts the scene. For the first few measure, he is still able to keep up with the rest, as the first violin describes him through rapidly descending arpeggios that denote the cheerful but slightly frenzied state of the drunk. From measure 36 the drunk becomes increasingly intoxicated and incoherent. It seems as though he is faltering in every step, as illustrated by the rapid stepwise descents and downward leaps played by the first violin. In measure 39 he seems to rise and steady himself temporarily—only to lose his balance once again. Until this point, the first violin acts as the sole drunk.

In measure 41, however, Vivaldi indicates the rest of the instruments to join as l’ubriachi, thus suggesting that others have also gradually become intoxicated, creating an atmosphere of general inebriation. In the midst of this ruckus, the initial drunk is still the center of attention as the first violin uses a series of ascending trills to illustrate l’ubriaco making an effort to find his balance in every step but ultimately falling (measures 49-56). Vivaldi then pans out and momentarily shifts the audience’s attention back to the general confusion and increasing
agitation, as depicted by the minor chords from measure 57. The attention returns to the first violin depicting *l’ubriaco* in measures 67-77. At this point, Vivaldi employs ascending and descending arpeggios in minor mode to perhaps illustrate how the drunk is frustrated at his impaired motor skills. His frustration is fleeting, however, and he decides to discard his inhibitions entirely and continue to dance until he falls asleep in measure 89. In measure 106, the audience is transported back to the general scene, where Vivaldi reintroduces the dance. The dancing gradually comes to a halt, however, and *l’ubriachi* remain asleep.

The second movement is mainly concerned with *l’ubriachi* in their slumber. To illustrate this scene, Vivaldi writes in *adagio molto* and indicates the performers to play this part of the piece *con sordini*, in order to produce a muffled and distant sound, as one normally perceives when he or she is sleeping. The notes in this movement mainly consist of various sustained notes, to indicate stillness, with occasional half-step or stepwise changes, mostly in the minor mode, perhaps indicating slight stirrings and disturbed sleep. The entire movement is played softly and gradually fades away into a *pianissimo* by the end of the movement.

The third movement illustrates a hunt, and Vivaldi writes a cheery, brisk melody that depicts the hunters and their dogs confidently romping in search of prey. The pitch and intensity of the music builds up until measure 59 when they find their quarry. A chase ensues from
measures 59-68. Vivaldi depicts the flight of the prey by writing rapid arpeggios for the first violin. He introduces the rest of the instruments as they illustrate the dogs energetically chasing the animal by playing rapid demisemiquavers.

The first violin continues to play the part of the prey until the end of the movement. With the exception of measures 97-103 and 116-122, where the initial phrase is reintroduced, the violin illustrates the prey’s frantic plight until measure 129 by playing rapid ascending notes in undulating motion, until it becomes exhausted, slows down (measures 137-141, where the first violin plays in eighth notes in contrast to the demisemiquavers played in previous measures) and is finally killed by the hunters in measure 142. In measures 142 to 157, the hunters return victoriously—and thus concludes L’Autunno.

In a recent performance at Franklin and Marshall College, Red Priest interpreted the aforementioned concerto. Before the performance, recorder player Piers Adams gave a brief presentation of L’Autunno and a summary of the sonnet accompanying it. Although the original edition of the score calls for three violins, a cello, and basso continuo (accompanying instrument or instruments, usually a harpsichord, bass violin, or the orbo), Red Priest’s arrangement for L’Autunno consisted of one violin, two recorders, a cello, and a harpsichord. As the performance progressed, the quartet’s interpretation of the piece grew increasingly unconventional. The performers employed abrupt and unexpected tempi changes and physically enacted their
interpretation of the piece. Their performance concluded with the recorder player being dragged behind the stage.

Some would say that such performances are fresh, insightful, and give the audience a more dynamic and comprehensive interpretation that reflects the composer’s original intent. On the other hand, critics also argue that groups such as Red Priest take too many interpretive liberties and manipulate the composer’s work for their own purposes. Critic John Shinners remarked that Red Priest’s interpretations of Vivaldi were “very self-indulgent, and very dismissive of Vivaldi’s greater artistry and the average listener’s intelligence.”

Fortunately, there are many other interpretations of *Le Quattro Stagioni* and those disgruntled by this performance can go in search of the “proper” interpretation. One may wonder why some critics have such restrictive attitudes toward interpretive freedom, but their concerns are certainly valid. What if only one performer ever played a piece by a certain composer, and did so rather unfaithfully, and that is the only memory we have of that composer?

On the other hand, what if somebody argued that the piece was to be played only a certain way, but was not, indeed, what the composer intended? In their website, the quartet explains its performance philosophy by quoting a wide range of musicians and composers who share their belief in the importance of delivering content over submitting to form.

Unfortunately, the author of *L’Autunno* is physically indisposed and cannot tell us whether he approves of their performance or not. In fact, many of the composers whose works we interpret today are deceased, and even if they were living, they would have no way to listen to every single performance of their works to express their approval or disapproval of a certain

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interpretation. These conflicting perspectives over interpretive liberties arise from different views about the role of a performer, the role of a composer, and their relationship between each other.

What is the role of a performer? Does he or she merely connect the composer and the audience, or is he or she an artist in his or her own right? How much does the performer contribute to the appreciation of a piece? In his article “Interpretive Freedom and the Composer-Performer Relationship”, Terrence O’Grady presents various perspectives about such questions and refers to numerous historical and philosophical considerations that one should make in response to such questions. In the end, however, O’Grady concludes that while the performer’s personal input into a piece is important, the composer ultimately holds ownership over a piece as its creator and therefore the performer should respect the composer’s indications⁴.

Similarly, composer Samuil Feinberg argues that while the performer has an important responsibility of demonstrating his musical abilities, he or she also holds obligations as an intermediary between composer and audience. While most other forms of expression between creator and audience are direct, the composer usually relies on a performer to deliver his artwork to the world, and it is important for the artist to understand the composer’s intentions in a piece to deliver a faithful interpretation. However, Feinberg grants that not all misinterpretations should be attributed to the performer. For example, a composer’s intentions may be distorted through changes in the copying and printing process. He argues that a musical piece cannot be

skillfully delivered unless interpreted and understood by the performer and concludes that well-thought out, well-practiced performances are the best interpretations a performer can give.  

Conversely, one could question whether it is the performer’s role to interpret at all. Perhaps a performer’s role is to simply present the music and allow the audience to appreciate the piece without any hint of the performer’s individuality as an artist. In her essay titled “Against Interpretation,” Susan Sontag argues that form should be respected and not manipulated according to someone’s notion of the content of the work.  

Respecting the form of a piece ensures that the performer will not read more than is actually there. Those who limit interpretive freedom do so with the certainty that they know and understand the composer in the absolute. The human soul, from which music is born, is infinite, and to claim that one has captured another person’s infinity is not only impossible, but arrogant and insulting. Claiming to know the only true interpretation of a composer’s piece is an affront to the composer’s humanity. It is telling the individual who he or she is and must be, without the slightest consideration that he or she could be otherwise. While the composer’s specific indications are a composer’s definite affirmations, there are many more unknowns to be explored, and they should not be limited to one particular interpretation. The composer should also recognize this about his or her self, and concede the possibility that he or she could discover a different aspect of the self through unexpected interpretations of the pieces.

That, however, does not entitle the performer to disregard the written specifics as well. Ignoring the indications of a composer is rejecting the affirmations he/she has made and is equally unacceptable. The most faithful interpretation of an author’s work is free interpretation

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within the written indications of the composer; with infinite possibilities for exploration and
discovery, someone is bound to capture the essence of a composer’s intent.

A musical score is a map leading to fascinating destinations, and a performer who reads
through it in a straightforward manner will likely reach those destinations. However, one can
make discoveries not only by staring fixedly at the map and following it verbatim, but also by
taking the time to look around and wonder. So must be a performer’s engagement with a score.
A careful understanding of the composer’s intent and a searching effort to discover what lies
between the lines is essential in bringing a piece of music to life, and will result in a deeper
appreciation of such by composers, performers, and audiences. This is precisely what Red Priest
did. There is no way to ascertain whether Vivaldi would approve of Red Priest’s performance of
L’Autunno, but I believe Vivaldi would be more forgiving toward a possible misinterpretation
than an absolute—but stagnated—interpretation.

This page on Red Priest’s official website expresses Red Priest's performance philosophy regarding musical inspiration, rules, tempo, dynamics, etc.-based on the ideas of various composers, performers, and musicologists.


This chapter gives an in-depth explanation of how Vivaldi used musical elements spanning across tempo, dynamics, and tonalities to give a musical illustration of the sonnet provided in The Four Seasons.


Composer Samuel Feinberg presents the performer as an intermediary between the composer and the listener and explains how a performer's interpretation of a piece can further enrich or distort the composer's connection with his or her audience. Feinberg analyzes various aspects of the compositional, interpretative, and even editorial process of a musical piece, and how they collectively influence the final performance of the aforementioned. Conclusively, Feinberg argues that a composer's directions are not meant to be limiting, but as instructive, and that so long as a performer conscientiously strives to understand the essence of a piece, he will be able to give an interpretation that will be both faithful to the composer's intentions and indicative of the performer's artistic individuality. This publication presents insightful ideas about interpretative freedom from a composer's perspective.


O'Grady analyzes the relationship between a composer and a performer and attempts to define the limit for a performer's interpretative freedom. The article analyzes how the composer-performer relationship has evolved historically throughout various musical periods, and questions to what extent the performer can claim the piece for himself or herself. O'Grady argues that composers spend much time and consideration constructing the scores as they are, performers should respect the composers' efforts by adhering to the indications given by them.


Critic John Shinners gives a scathing review of Red Priest’s interpretations of Vivaldi. He accuses the quartet for taking too many interpretive liberties with Vivaldi’s pieces, claiming that their interpretations are not only inaccurate, but also offensive to both the composer and the audience.

Sontag argues that interpretation hinders an appreciation for art as an end in itself and often causes the interpreter to take improper ownership of the artwork. The author advocates art for the sake of art and emphasizes the value of its sensory perception. While Sontag's arguments are more directed toward the literary and visual forms of art, many of her ideas are applicable to the field of music as well, and questions how a performer should interpret the indications given by the composer, if at all.
Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
FND126: Self in Life and Literature
Professor Curtis Bentzel

Essay topic discussed individually with the professor.

What is the self? Several of the theorists we discussed in Self in Life & Literature deal with this issue and support theories of who we are, how we live, and why we behave as we do. Using textual evidence from each of the theorists we've discussed, form an opinion on what the self is and how we develop one over the course of our lives. The ensuing paper should be around 10 pages in length and include citations in the correct format.
“Clients seem to move toward more openly being a process, a fluidity, a changing. They are not disturbed to find that they are not the same from day to day, that they do not always hold the same feelings toward a given experience or person, that they are not always consistent. They are in flux, and seem more content to continue in this flowing current. The striving for conclusions and end states seems to diminish.”

Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*, 171

We grow emotionally throughout our lives. We proceed through different life stages and accompanying modes of thinking via relatively stable intermediate states in between periods of transition. Although theorists disagree with exactly how, the nature of our disposition and situation determine how we respond to events that start these transitions and who we are at the end of them. Similarly, chemical reactions proceed from reactants to products via transition states that lead to relatively stable intermediate “species.” Just like humans interacting with other humans and events, chemical compounds that come together interact in unique ways depending on their properties (their disposition) and the environment in which they meet (their situation). While the movement of electrons among atoms can describe chemical reactions, the flow of emotional energy among people can describe interpersonal relations. Both of these phenomena exist within equilibria and are products of the creation and destruction of bonds. They are each made easier by catalysis and each requires the input of energy of activation. Our journey through different life stages parallels the change of a chemical compound from a reactant to an intermediate and finally to a product.
Stability over time is the principle goal of both chemical reactions and interpersonal relationships. Chemical compounds tend to react to form products that are lower in potential energy and people tend to avoid conflict and stress. Yet, change is often necessary to either maintain or improve this stability. According to Le Chatlier’s Principle, when stress is placed upon a system at equilibrium, the system will react by attaining “a new equilibrium condition that minimizes the impact of the imposed change” (Hall et al., 589). The ‘position’ of equilibrium is not necessarily the same. Addition of higher concentrations of reactants will cause the creation of more of the product, and vice versa. Similarly, addition of emotional energy can cause an individual or a relationship among individuals to change. When a situation creates emotional stress for an individual, two reactions occur in succession. Theorists see these reactions as either “unintentional product[s]” (70, Goffman) of the situation or as a function of the person’s disposition (Rogers). Both of these ideas contribute to the reality. First, the individual reacts to the stress according to his or her disposition and the specific stress caused by the situation; second, the other recognizes and responds to that person’s reaction. Since even minute events cause emotional responses, the individual is subject to constant intrapersonal and interpersonal change. His or her position of equilibrium changes with every passing second. Thus, as the social scientist Mark Catherine Bateson observes: “Fluidity and discontinuity are central to the reality in which we live.” (13). Constant, new inputs of emotional information buffet our psyche, and, ironically, in order to remain stable we must change.

Bonds that exist among compounds or people allow the transmission of this information and thus create a dynamic system of influence. Like the flow of electrons between chemical compounds, emotional energy can flow between people. Even the language we use to talk about interpersonal relationships reflects this analogy – we say we “formed a bond” with someone to
indicate that we have an emotional connection with them. Like a chemical bond, it takes time to make but often allows the release of energy. Emotional energy in a relationship is constantly exchanged in a similar way to the constant, probabilistic flow of electrons around two bonded atoms. As the historian Roy Baumeister (1986) observes, “The modern ("other-directed") person is crucially sensitive to and guided by the reactions of others,” (92). Each person is innately connected with the “other” and so each person recognizes and responds to the emotions and attitudes of the other. If one is sad, the other is likely to offer comfort and to try to raise the other’s spirits. In this way an emotional bond behaves like a chemical one: both “species” participate by “donating” emotional connection or electrons and create a bond that gives each fundamental influence over the other.

Just as a bond between atoms can allow the spreading of a charge, a bond between people can allow the dispersion of emotional energy. When a compound is “resonance stabilized,” the negative or positive charge on one of its atoms is spread out over many atoms. Thus, the compound is stabilized. Spreading emotional energy over multiple people or groups of people also increases the overall stability of the situation because multiple things each take a small piece of the energy’s effects. The psychologist Carol Gilligan’s (1993) concept of an “ethic of care” reflects this process: “This ethic…evolves around a central insight, that the self and other are interdependent… The activity of care enhances both others and self,” (74). The ethic of care forms a bond between the caregiver and receiver and therefore allows the spread of emotional energy from one to the other. The caregiver is like an electronegative atom capable of accepting electrons and taking on their negative charge, or in other words the caregiver helps the receiver to deal with stress or harm. “Sarah,” one of Gilligan’s case-study subjects, provides an example of this transfer. Sarah “hope[d] that [the welfare people] would refuse to provide the necessary
funds” because then “the responsibility [for the abortion] would be off my shoulders” (91). In this situation, Sarah tries to spread the emotional responsibility of the decision to have an abortion out over others. The caregiver, albeit an involuntary one, is the “welfare people.” Despite not knowing whether or not they would refuse her request for funds, putting some of the responsibility (and blame) on “the welfare people” lessens her own emotional stress and helps to stabilize it. However, this strategy can also backfire. If the welfare people feel emotional pressure to care for the unborn child, too much strain will be put on the bond of shared responsibility, and it can break. In this case, the welfare people would destabilize the situation by granting Sarah’s request and putting all the emotional stress back on her shoulders. Similarly, a bond between lovers can break if over-strained. When someone says to their lover, “This just isn’t working,” what they really mean is, “This bond is allowing you to put too much emotional energy on me and I need to break away.” While chemical and emotional bonds allow the dispersion of energy, they are only as strong as the individual parts.

Both chemical and emotional bonds can be broken with an input of energy such as this. The energy can come from the situation applying excess force on the bond or from the species themselves. For example, when heated, a liquid will become a gas because the bonds between molecules of the liquid weaken and break (Silberberg, 4). On the other hand, in many reactions, electronegative atoms such as bromine and chlorine act as leaving groups by breaking off of a compound and forming a new bond (Klein, 258). If an atom or person has enough chemical or emotional energy, it or he can “pull” hard enough against the force of the bond to break it. For example, by playing a role, an individual necessarily makes a bond between himself and his observers. The sociologist Erving Goffman (1983) described this relationship: “When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is
fostered before them,”(17). The observer’s faith in the reality of the person’s role is like a bond between the two that, when broken by a mistake or inconsistency, decreases the stability of the situation and leads to changes in the people’s outlook. Like chemical compounds, we can become “charged species” by loss or gain of the emotional energy from these bonds. We unconsciously and actively search for another person to take extra emotional energy, whether by listening to our complaints or taking on responsibility, and if none exist we seek a new relationship. We are like atoms with certain orbitals that can or cannot accept more electrons in that some of us are well adapted to deal with emotional stress, while others need to spread the “charge” out over a support group of other individuals.

Building and destroying relationships, like the forming and breaking of bonds, can be made easier via catalysis. By definition catalysts are chemical species that speed up the rate of a chemical reaction by providing a pathway with lower energy of activation and are not consumed by the reaction (Silberberg, 529). Catalysts for transitions between intermediate emotional life-stages can come in many forms, but they all provide a safe, stable place from which the person can ‘react.’ Therapy is one such catalyst. As the psychologist Carl Rogers (1961) says: “The therapist has been comfortable in entering this relationship fully, without knowing cognitively where it will lead, satisfied with providing a climate which will permit the client the utmost freedom to become himself” (185). The therapist eases the “client’s” transition from one state of being to another. When the client lacks the inner emotional strength or knowledge to undergo this transition alone, the therapist provides the pathway to do so. Just like a chemical catalyst, the therapist himself does not actively assist the change, but simply gives the client freedom and a path to follow. Ideally a catalyst is not used up in a reaction, yet because we are so complex sometimes the therapist becomes a reactant and he himself changes. This is unavoidable because
the therapist, too, is human and therefore is in a constant state of transition. The “psychosocial moratorium” described by the psychologist Dan McAdams (1993) provides another well-known emotional catalyst to this transition: “[psychosocial moratorium] enhance[s] the development of identity by encouraging young people to think critically about their own assumptions in life, and by promoting their explorations of alternative ways of acting, feeling, and believing” (93, McAdams). Like the therapist and chemical catalyst, psychosocial moratorium does nothing more than give the thing that is reacting (a person or chemical compound) the freedom to do so in a relatively easy way. Catalysts do not ensure that a reaction will occur, but if it does, the catalyst speeds up the rate. Sometimes the individual or chemical compound reacts spontaneously, but often catalysts help the compound or person reach its next intermediate phase.

These “catalysts” provide relatively easy pathways along which an individual can move to a new life stage. But what starts the process in the first place? In chemical reactions, the energy requirement for a reaction to begin is called the energy of activation (Silberberg, 518). In a person’s constant state of flux, cognitive dissonance provides this emotional energy of activation. The social psychologist Zimbardo (2007) describes cognitive dissonance: “When there is a discrepancy between our behavior and beliefs, and when actions do not follow from relevant attitudes, a condition of cognitive dissonance is created. Dissonance is a state of tension that can powerfully motivate change…in order to reduce the dissonance” (Zimbardo, 219). In a state of cognitive dissonance, the individual consciously wants to resolve some inner emotional conflict that decreases his or her emotional stability. This situation mirrors a system disturbed from equilibrium by the addition of a new reactant. Since stress is placed on the reactant side of the chemical equation, it is likely that the system will produce more of the product to relieve the
stress. Thus, the individual is likely to go through some sort of inner or outer transition. Even without an outside factor causing this dissonance, we are all in a constant state of flux because of our conflicting motives. As the psychologist Dan McAdams (1993) describes, “To be powerful at work and loving at home – ideally, that is what most of us want, even if we find it extraordinarily difficult to attain. But we do not all want power and love to the same extent or in the same way…each life story contains unique main characters,” (133). The conflicting desires between power and love are common to all humans and necessarily put us in a state of flux in which we are pulled in two directions at the same time. At any one moment in time we may be at a certain point on the spectrum, but since we cannot freeze time we are in constant motion between the two extremes. This creates constant cognitive dissonance, and therefore we are constantly receiving the emotional energy of activation for minute changes that influence our identity and behavior.

As we grow older, we transition through different life stages and accompanying modes of thinking that can be thought of as intermediate states of a life-reaction. The chemical analogy for the “goal” of this reaction is dynamic stability over time, which we can achieve only through constant change, or transition. Gilligan’s description of the development of an “ethic of care” over a person’s life clearly shows this kind of life-reaction. At the reactant or starting state, the individual has a narcissistic outlook on morality that helps ensure survival. They demand and get what they ‘need’ in order to be happy or satisfied. This combination of a selfish disposition and a situation that caters to their needs becomes the reactant mixture, which is ready for: “a transitional phase in which this judgment is criticized as selfish.” (Gilligan, 74). Some event, new situation, or change in the person’s psyche triggers cognitive dissonance that acts as the emotional energy of activation to their first life-reaction transition. This transition state, which by
definition is relatively short, leads the first intermediate state. Here, the individual makes up for their past selfishness by placing a high value on the ‘other.’ They now recognize the interpersonal bonds that connect them with other people, and gain an unconscious awareness of the information that they transmit and receive via these bonds. The individual learn painfully about the breaking and forming of the bonds as they encounter new situations and try to stabilize their own emotional energy by spreading it out over greater numbers of people. The individual undergoes countless minute reactions with others and different situations, yet all occur within this first intermediate state.

In all of these first intermediate interactions the individual places more value on the other than his or herself, which “gives rise to problems in relationships, creating a disequilibrium that initiates the second transition” (Gilligan 74). The second transition is again fueled by cognitive dissonance in the individual. The first intermediate elements, such as displaying generosity and valuing the other, then become the new reactants. For example, a friend may start taking advantage of the person’s unselfish generosity. The person knows that a friend should not prey on the kindness of another, yet their friend is doing just that! The individual begins to realize that people, including themself, have “real and recognizable” (Gilligan, 100) needs that do not reveal selfishness. They learn that their own wellbeing sometimes depends on being selfish. This new insight leads them over the second transition phase into the third and ‘final’ state, which “focuses on the dynamics of the relationships and dissipates the tension between selfishness and responsibility through a new understanding of the interconnection between other and self” (Gilligan, 74). Thus, the individual reaches a point where he or she can weigh out the specific elements of a moral dilemma and make the ‘right’ decision based on satisfying everyone’s needs as well as possible, including her own. Through two transition phases and intermediate states that
then become new reactants, the person has grown from a selfish egoist to a just observer of needs. The person’s overall stability ideally increases over time as they move through intermediate states that provide more universal viewpoints and thereby decrease their cognitive dissonance. Occasionally the individual gets ‘stuck’ in an intermediate state and needs the help of a catalyst in the form of a therapist or psychological moratorium, but often he or she progresses naturally. In Gilligan’s model, the growth stops at the third state, yet in reality the individual continues to grow by tweaking his or her moral viewpoint because of new events that activate new transitions.

Over time, individuals go through countless transition and intermediate states of morality, lifestyle, and indeed consciousness. Yet as with chemical equilibria the change is not necessarily linear, but rather a shifting of perspective on a spectrum based on new experience, situations, and ideas. The interpersonal bonds between individuals often cause these changes. Using analogies found in the movement of energy in chemistry, we can come to understand and appreciate this system of emotional energy connecting us all. Carl Rogers speaks of people who understand this concept:

“Clients seem to move toward more openly being a process, a fluidity, a changing. They are not disturbed to find that they are not the same from day to day, that they do not always hold the same feelings toward a given experience or person, that they are not always consistent. They are in flux, and seem more content to continue in this flowing current. The striving for conclusions and end states seems to diminish.” (171)

The emotionally mature person understands that he or she constantly changes over time and appreciates the idea that, unlike in a chemical reaction, there is no final product. The ‘end-point’ of a person’s life-reaction is simply their present, which constantly changes as time moves.
forward. Living in flux is the human condition. The flux of a life-reaction is that precept of existence with which so many philosophers, poets, and even scientists have struggled, attempting to understand its mechanisms. However, like chemical reactions, many of its mysteries still elude us and probably always will.
Figure 1: This is a model “potential energy” diagram modified to show my view of a life-reaction. PE is potential energy (emotional stress or strain), which the life reaction lowers over time because the person ideally becomes increasingly stable. Ea is the activation energy for each of the transitions, which cognitive dissonance provides and catalysts like therapy and psychosocial moratorium decrease. Each of the intermediate states clearly shows how a person could get “stuck” and need a catalyst to lower the activation energy to reach the next intermediate state. The blown-up section shows that even during intermediate state, constant small changes occur.
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Foundations

Honorable Mention

Anayeli Garcia

“Turning Time Around”

Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
FND101v: Groove
Professor Matthew Butterfield

Creative Writing: Short Story

Write a short story of 6-10 pages (1500-2500 words) based on some concept of time or a problem related to time. Approach this like a science fiction author (though your story need not be set in the future): imagine a world (or an individual) governed by a particular notion of time—eternal return, for example. What are the rules of that society? How is it organized? What do its people value that is different from us, and why? Then situate a character in that context, and see what happens!
Turning Time Around

I am in the hospital awaiting news on my son’s health. Apparently, Henry had been on his way to his usual parties when all of a sudden he and three other friends crashed into a truck transporting a heavy load of fireworks and other explosive pyrotechnic devices. The boys must have pre-gamed before taking the road because they all had alcohol in their bodies. The moment the car collided with the truck, Henry flew out the windshield and landed on the side of the road. He hadn’t been wearing his seatbelt. The moment Henry was out of the car, the truck began to shoot fireworks everywhere. One of them fired right through the car, causing the other three boys third degree burns. Regardless, the doctor believes they are all very fortunate to be alive.

I feel that perhaps this is my retribution for the way I behaved with my parents as a teenager. I grew up in somewhat of a conservative household. “Family values” were strongly instilled in me. Growing up I remember hearing the words, “Honor your Father and your Mother.” Entering my teenage years I began to rebel against my parents. I engaged with boys who were nothing but trouble. I allowed them to persuade me into things I was taught were wrong and immoral. I began to sneak out of the house, steal, and consume alcohol and drugs. When my parents found out they were very disappointed. However, like many teenagers, I felt I was at the top of the world. I was invincible. My father talked to me many times about turning my life around. He even begged me to change for the sake of my mother’s health. I ignored him. I laughed at him and told him things I don’t even want to recall. I accused him of being too strict and wanting me to be perfect when all I wanted was “freedom.” I reproached his protective behavior. He said all he did for me was for love. I couldn’t understand his love. I left home once
I tuned eighteen, breaking my parents’ hearts. With anger in my voice, the last thing I told my father was that I would be a better father to my children than he was to me.

Now that I look back, I realize how foolish and ignorant I was. My father only did what he had to do to keep me safe. The irony is that I, who promised to be a better father, have failed. At least I was never in a dangerous situation while under my father’s roof. My father kept me out of harm’s way even if it meant earning my hatred. I, on the other hand, have allowed my son the “freedom” I never had, and now that I want to change his life, it’s impossible. I never had the opportunity to ask my parents for their forgiveness. That is what hurts the most. If I could only tell my father how right he had been when he warned me against all the risks I ran with the life I was living, perhaps I could have some peace with myself.

The doctor arrives. He tells me Henry will be fine. I should go home, sleep, and come back in the morning. I take his advice, but before leaving I walk into Henry’s room. I see a pale, unconscious face. However, for the first time I realize how much of a stranger my son seems to me. Ever since his mother died, I have dedicated my time completely to my work. I believed that as long as I gave my son everything he wanted, --toys, a car, anything he asked for, -- he would be happy. Little did I know, material things are not the best way to raise a child. On the contrary, it’s company, continual advice, and example that make a young boy grow into a responsible man. Tonight I am going to sleep with the infinite guilt of my son’s failure. If I could only retrieve time and change the way my life has turned out….

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1992

I am in an antiquity store. The place looks familiar; yet, I don’t know where I am. I see my wife standing in an area surrounded by clocks. Grandfather clocks, small clocks, mechanical
clocks, water clocks, and sundials are some of the clocks I can see. Soon I see myself coming up to my wife. This is very strange. I see Cecilia picking up something that looks like a necklace. She holds it up to me, or should I say, the me that is standing next to her. The object resembles an hourglass in a golden necklace. Cecilia approaches the counter and exchanges words with the man behind it. I can’t quite make out anything of what is being said. As I see both of us heading for the door, I follow. I see them crossing the street and as soon as I attempt to cross, a black cloud appears in front of me. I close my eyes to adjust my eyesight.

***

2012

I open my eyes and I am in my bed. The alarm clock is on. I never miss my alarm clock. I must have been very tired in order to sleep through the alarm. All of a sudden I recall the dream I had. Or was it a dream? Ever since Cecilia passed away, the memories I have of her are very few. The thought of living without her was unbearable. Therefore, I told myself I needed to forget and move on. I wonder if this dream derived from one of my forgotten memories. I have heard that unused memories are semi-active in the brain. However, they can still affect our conscious awareness even though the memories are not active themselves. I wonder if perhaps this is what’s happening to me. As I get dressed, I reach for my wallet and a card falls off. The card reads, “Chelsea’s Antiquity Store.” I remember that in my dream before leaving the store I had picked up a business card Cecilia dropped on the floor. It’s the same business card I am now holding in my hand. The only explanation I have is that my mind must be playing tricks on me. In regards to the dream, perhaps now that my son is in the hospital, the longing for my wife is greater than ever.
I’m heading over to the hospital to see Henry. I have decided to walk instead of drive. It is a beautiful day and the hospital isn’t that far away from home. I enter the city’s downtown. Everyone must have the day off because the stores are busy with customers. I am looking around at the different stores. It has been a while since I’ve come here. The only times I came were with Cecilia. Since her death, I have isolated myself from the world. My daily routine is going to work and back home. I’m looking around when all of a sudden something catches my eye. It is a store that looks very familiar. One of the display glasses has numerous clocks. One by one I start observing them. I look up at the store’s banner. It reads, “Chelsea’s Antiquity Store.” I recall the name from the business card.

Once I step inside the store a man who looks familiar approaches me. He asks about Cecilia. How does he know my wife? It’s coming to me. This man was in my dream—or whatever that moment was. I have been here before and I had forgotten. The man continues to speak and says he hasn’t seen Cecilia in many years. What does he mean? He explains that after we purchased the Time-Turner, Cecilia came back every so often asking questions about the use of it. This is a surprise; Cecilia never mentioned anything. The man continues, saying Cecilia was very interested in learning about time traveling and the use of the Time-Turner. He lent her every book he had on the subject. He says that the last time he saw her, she mentioned wanting to travel back in time. He hasn’t seen her ever since. I don’t like speaking about it, but I tell him she passed away.

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2002
I am sitting in my office when my secretary enters, informing me I have a very important call. I don’t want to take the call. I am trying to finish a finance report for the corporation. However, Linda assures me it is urgent.

“Hello?”

“Mr. Mark James?”

“Yes, this is he. May I ask who is calling?”

“This is Officer Benson. I need to ask you some questions regarding the Lexus car you own.”

“You mean the car my wife drives?”

“Well, a report was made that your car was seen driving at high speed on the road near the canyons. The driver must have lost control because the car drove right through a warning sign and rolled down a steep canyon. Rescuers tried to descend down the canyon but it was too steep and dangerous. I am very sorry if your wife was in the car. We tried doing everything we could sir. We found a golden necklace with an hourglass near where the accident occurred. Perhaps you might identify it….”

***

2012

The Time-Turner is the only thing left from the accident. The car was completely destroyed. My wife’s body was never recovered. Henry was only ten years old. He wasn’t able to overcome his mother’s death. I was so overwhelmed with my own grief that I hardly paid attention to him. I decided to relieve my grief, dedicating my entire time to working. I believed Henry would be fine as long as I showered him with gifts. Perhaps his change in behavior began right after his mother’s death. I just never noticed.
It is midday and Henry hasn’t woken up. I need to return home. I don’t want to leave Henry. However, there are some important calls I need to make. I will be gone only for an hour. I will return with Henry’s iPod and computer. The doctor said he might have to stay for two more days. If I bring him these things he might be able to entertain himself. In a few minutes I arrive home. First thing I do is make those calls for the corporation. I retrieve Henry’s belongings from his room. The moment I am in there, I realize I haven’t been in his room for a long time. Everything looks different than what I remember. A feeling of shame runs through me. It seems I don’t even know my own son.

I walk into my room. I sit in bed crying. If my father were here he would be very disappointed in me. Cecilia would be too. Her love for Henry was immense. She would have liked to know that I have loved him the same. I lie in bed and close my eyes. All I can see is the image of the Time-Turner. I open my eyes and walk towards the closet. I reach the top shelve and retrieve a blue box. I have put Cecilia’s most cherished possession here. I open the box and sure enough the Time-Turner is there. I pick it up and put it in my pocket.

When I arrive, Henry is awake. We exchange a few words and I hand him over his belongings. Apparently his head pain is still very strong. The doctor comes over and asks me to leave the room so he can examine Henry. I sit in the waiting room. I take out the Time-Turner and begin to play with it, spinning it around. I have no idea how many times I spin the hourglass. Once I stop, the strangest thing happens. Everything around me goes blurry. At first I believe my eyes are playing tricks on me. I rub them and once my eyesight is adjusted I am not in the waiting room of the hospital anymore.

1985
I am standing across from my old high school. What am I doing here? I see people coming out of the gate. Among the crowd I am able to see myself. This is the young foolish Mark I am so ashamed of. As he crosses the street with his group of friends, I make eye contact with him, but he doesn’t seem to know who I am. This is a strange feeling. I am in my own past. How did this happen? I take a seat on the curb. I am trying to remember the last thing I was doing before I got here. I just can’t make sense of this situation. All I can remember is a voice saying, “It is believed that the number of times you spin the hour glass, corresponds to the number of years you go back in time.” Whose voice is this, and what does that mean? These are too many questions that I don’t have an answer to.

As long as I am here I should make the best out of the situation. I believe that one makes his own destiny, but cannot necessarily change it. I head towards the direction young Mark went. Just as I recall, he is in the park. I sit there for a while and observe him. I have forgotten how much I have changed; yet, I resemble the same young Mark. I do the same thing for a couple of days. I follow the boys to the park and observe them. I approach them on some occasions asking for directions. I develop a friendship with young Mark. One day he tells me he is leaving home. He has been having problems with his father and has made up his mind. I tell him it is a decision he will regret. I tell him my personal story. He listens attentively. I don’t know what’s going on at home, but I’m hoping I can change his mind. Weeks later I see him and he tells me that my life story has made him think things over. He doesn’t want to end up like I did. His behavior towards his father has changed. He tells me of the new relationship they have. At hearing this, joy overwhelms me. After young Mark leaves I put my hands in my pocket and feel the Time-Turner. I take it out and begin spinning it.

2015
I am at my son’s college graduation. He is graduating with honors from the same college I attended. There is no trace of the man I used to be or of the person my son was. Somehow we were both able to change our lives. Now that I am in my son’s graduation, I remember when my parents accompanied me to my own graduation. Their faces lit up with joy and happiness. I became the son I should have always been for them. Today, Cecilia is not with us, but wherever she is she must be proud.
Foundations

Honorable Mention

Shi Eun Lee

“Quiet Powers of the Tempest”

Assignment:

Franklin and Marshall College
FND110: Modernity
Professor Eliza Reilly

“Masters and Servants” is one of the key themes that Shakespeare invokes throughout The Tempest, but beyond that very specific relationship, all the characters desire power of some type, and attempt to exert I over the others on the island. Choose one character in The Tempest and write an essay that explores how that character attempts to exert power over others, and is yet, in turn, managed, manipulated, or controlled by others. You should consider the question of “power” or influence broadly (ie emotional and intellectual power should be considered along with actual physical control or legal authority).
Amidst thunder, wine, conspiracies, and magic, Shakespeare presents various types of power and power relationships in his play *The Tempest*. The protagonists as well as secondary actors of this work have a distinct ability or position that empowers them across intellectual, physical, and political fields. Nevertheless, the characters of *The Tempest* also possess weaknesses that make him or her vulnerable to others. For instance, Sebastian, Miranda, and Caliban respectively possess weaknesses such as ambition, naïveté, and intemperance, all of which make them vulnerable at some point during the play. Among these characters, Ariel and his relationship with Prospero demonstrate how one’s desire for approval can make him or her susceptible to exploitation, and how moral integrity can be both a debilitating and empowering force.

From the moment Ariel enters the stage, Shakespeare makes it evident that Ariel is an otherworldly creature who possesses superhuman abilities. Not only does he stir the tempest that shipwrecks Alonso’s crew, Ariel also summons magical creatures in various occasions, and possesses the ability to become invisible at will, which he uses to create confusion and fear. Despite his power, however, Ariel submits to Prospero in a master-servant relationship throughout the entire play.

Why did such a powerful creature as Ariel submit to Prospero? Did Prospero possess more magical power than Ariel? The text suggests that Prospero is indeed capable of physically harming Ariel. During the second scene of Act I, Prospero threatens to confine Ariel if Ariel grumbles against him.
“If thou more murmur’st, I will rend an oak, / And peg thee,” he remarks (I. ii. 295-296).

Yet a closer inspection of Prospero’s diatribe reveals that his power over Ariel is more than physical. Ariel feels indebted to Prospero because Prospero freed him from a pine tree in which he was confined by Sycorax. Thereafter, Ariel regards Prospero as his savior and feels morally obligated to serve him, even as he yearns for the day Prospero will set him free. Ariel’s motivations to serve Prospero arise not only from self-interest and fear of punishment, but from gratitude and admiration as well.

Prospero is aware of the advantages of reinforcing himself as Ariel’s savior, and does so by recounting how he freed Ariel:

“How though forget / From what a torment I did free thee?” he asks (I. ii. 250-251).

Moreover, as he retells the narrative, Prospero demonizes Sycorax in order to portray himself as a merciful master in comparison. At the conclusion of his reproach, Prospero reestablishes himself as a generous master and convicts Ariel of his ingratitude.

Aside from manipulating Ariel’s moral convictions, Prospero also controls Ariel by enticing him with promises of imminent freedom. Prospero knows that while Ariel does feel morally bound to his master, his ultimate incentive is his liberty. Upon drawing that conclusion, Prospero persuades Ariel to stir the tempest by agreeing to release him a year earlier. When Ariel attempts to claim that promise, however, Prospero rescinds and even reproaches him. Prospero continues to mislead Ariel through this carrot-and-stick approach until the very end of the play, where he finally grants Ariel his liberty.

Aside from the external circumstances that led to his submission, one particular internal condition makes Ariel susceptible to Prospero: a desire for his master’s approval and affirmation. Throughout The Tempest, Ariel conscientiously carries out each of his duties, to which Prospero
responds approvingly. For instance, Ariel’s opening speech as he appears onstage is, “All hail, great master, grave sir, hail! I come / To answer thy best pleasure;” (I. ii. 189-190). When Prospero asks, “Has thou, spirit / Performed to the point the tempest that I bade thee?”, Ariel replies, “To every article,” (I. ii. 193-195) and Prospero responds approvingly by exclaiming, “Why, that’s my spirit!” (I. ii. 215)

In addition, one can also observe that Ariel’s careful fulfillments of his duties do not stem from mere obedience or a need for acknowledgment, but from a genuine desire to please his master. In Scene III of Act III Ariel asks Prospero, “Do you love me, master? No?” to which Prospero replies “Dearly, my delicate Ariel” (III. iii. 47-48). In another instance he asks, “Thy thoughts I cleave to. What’s thy pleasure?” (IV. i. 164). It is unclear whether Prospero’s responses to Ariel’s need for approval were genuine or driven by an ulterior motive to further manipulate him. Intentions aside, it is clear that Prospero’s constant response to Ariel’s need for approval also empowers him to control Ariel. What wine was for Caliban was Prospero’s approval for Ariel. It is interesting to note that Ariel’s last words in The Tempest, were

“Was’t well done?” (V.i. 240).

Thus far we have observed how Prospero exerted power over Ariel, and based on these premises one could easily conclude that Ariel has no power over Prospero. Yet strangely enough, it is Ariel who ultimately influences Prospero’s decision to release King Alonso and his crew. When Prospero asks Ariel how the crew is faring, Ariel gives a detailed account of their suffering and remarks,

“Your charm so strongly works 'em
That if you now beheld them your affections
Would become tender.”
To this account Prospero asks, “Do you think so, spirit?” and Ariel replies, “Mine would, sir, were I human.” Shortly thereafter we reach the play’s climactic moment in which Prospero decides to demonstrate sympathy on the shipwrecked. “And mine shall,” he resolves (V. i. 15-20). While Miranda could not persuade her father to calm the tempest, Ariel’s opinion of the shipwrecked convinced Prospero to relinquish his long-awaited moment of vengeance in lieu of an opportunity to practice forgiveness and reconciliation. At the end of the day, one can conclude that Ariel is the only character in the entire play who influences Prospero in a meaningful way. Though Ariel may appear to be nothing but a simple servant at the beginning of The Tempest, a closer examination of his character suggests that aside from being a loyal and trustworthy servant, Ariel was the only character to whom Prospero could relate. This was likely true because Ariel was the only character who possessed Prospero’s intellectual faculties and magical powers, yet Ariel did not desire to control others on his own account. Prospero knew that Ariel did not act upon self-centered motives, and therefore felt that he could trust Ariel’s judgment. It is evident that Ariel’s competence, moral integrity, and benevolence toward his master somehow abridged the power hierarchy between himself and Prospero, and despite the master-slave relationship, the two developed a mutual understanding and respect toward each other.

Social constructs often mislead individuals to perceive those around him or her in a hierarchical manner. Many people regard one’s socioeconomic status as an indicator of inherent supremacy, and the beliefs arising from social Darwinism further encouraged that view. Shakespeare challenged that opinion by creating a character who was a slave, yet was an intellectual equal to his master. Ariel is a reminder that regardless of social status, an individual is capable of exerting influence over others when he or she lives with dignity and honor, and that
influence is not oppressive but benevolent; not a power to be acquired, but a power that stems naturally from.

Near the end of *The Tempest*, Prospero eventually grows to appreciate Ariel, and becomes very attached to his faithful slave. Even as he grants Ariel his long-awaited freedom, Prospero expresses his appreciation of his slave and his sadness at their parting. “Why, that’s my dainty Ariel! I shall miss thee / But yet thou shalt have freedom” (V. i. 95-96). In the end, Prospero frees Ariel (“Be free, and fare though well!” V. i. 318) and Ariel is finally released into the elements, where he will not be manipulated, nor will seek to manipulate anyone else, but will live in absolute freedom. And so Ariel sings.

“*Merrily, merrily shall I live now*

*Under the blossom that hangs on the bough.*”

(V. i. 93-94)
Works Cited